

# Opinion

33203 Grand River/Farmington, MI 48024 Robert Sklar editor/477-5450

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O&amp;E Thursday, February 25, 1988

## Worthy effort Value natural beauty of roads

ONE BY ONE, the few remaining dirt stretches of major roadway in Farmington Hills are being paved.

The last unpaved stretch, Drake Road, between 11 Mile and 12 Mile, is slated for paving this summer.

The transformation from rural Farmington Township to suburban Farmington Hills then will be nearly complete.

But that hardly means the city is void of roadways boasting rolling hills and eye-catching valleys.

Three distinctly beautiful roads quickly come to mind: 13 Mile, west of Drake; Halsted, north of 12 Mile; and the soon-to-be-paved stretch of Drake.

A drive along any of these roads, each with a canopy of trees and a captivating character, instantly relieves the stress of the day. For a moment, storefronts take a backseat to greenery.

So amid continuing debate about land use, Farmington Hills City Council members should make it their business to extend its Natural Beauty Road ordinance to paved roads.

THE CITY has one Natural Beauty Road, Howard. The two-lane dirt road winds through one of the city's most wooded areas, even though a stone's throw from I-696.

Granted, dirt is the most natural road surface. But the Natural Beauty Road philosophy has its roots more in the native trees, shrubs, grass, ferns, wildflowers and natural vistas lining a road than in a road's surface.

By any measurement, stretches of 13 Mile, Halsted and Drake easily qualify for Natural Beauty Road designation. It's no coincidence the two-lane roads traverse low-density residential areas and sport low speed limits.

Such designation protects native vegetation in the right of way from unintentional or unnecessary damage resulting from maintenance or

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construction activities.

Farmington Hills took that into account in planning to pave Drake. As city manager William Costick put it: "I don't see the day when we'll widen this road because every effort we're making now to save the trees and other parts of the environment would be destroyed."

THE CITY'S strongest link to its past, Heritage Park, still provides some of the most panoramic views in southeast Michigan.

Few people around still remember, but old-timers remind us the whole area used to be like that.

The Natural Beauty Road designation will help save the few remaining environmentally sensitive areas in the city.

In a fully developed suburb, no major road should be unpaved. That's because paving improves upkeep and safety. But there's no reason some of the original beauty can't be kept.

As councilwoman Jean Fox, a felty booster of saving aesthetic and historic examples of Farmington Township's early days, put it: "Natural Beauty Road designation not only calls attention to the natural beauty here, but also to our effort to save some vestige of it."

"When we're long gone, there'd still be some of this lovely, lovely environment."

Splashes of natural beauty can't help but enrich the whole city's image — and the quality of life for each of us.

## Post office Cost-cutting erodes service

Area post offices to be closed on Saturdays.

Meijer's to be open 24 hours.

— recent headlines

I'm from the government, and I want to help you.

— a bad joke

WELL, MAYBE the post offices should be run by Meijer's Thrifty Acres or some other outfit interested in servicing the paying customers while also turning a profit.

That's what being in business in America is all about — service and profit. But is our United States Postal Service reaching either goal these days?

In case it has escaped anyone's attention, Saturday hours at Detroit-area post offices are a thing of the past now that the Postal Service's Detroit division has embarked upon a massive cost-cutting campaign.

Closings are part of a drive to save \$2,657,000 in the Detroit division, postal officials have said. The division's current \$550 million budget must be trimmed to help balance the federal budget.

The 100-plus post offices in the division are closed an additional half a day per week — most on Saturday — and mail processing on Sunday is a thing of the past.

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And since misery seems to love company in the public sector, we weren't surprised to learn recently that stamp prices are expected to rise from 22 to 25 cents in mid-April.

NOW, IT IS not our intent to beat up on a postal service already battered black and blue by decades of criticism. Its problems are many; solutions are few. The stamp-licking public has come to know that through years of service reductions and price increases.

But we must say that this Saturday shutdown is a terrible idea. Saturdays often are the only time people who work Monday through Friday can handle postal matters requiring face-to-face communication with someone on the other side of the counter.

Many local postmasters gave us the old "I'm just following orders" statement when asked to comment on the closings, but at least Rochester's John W. Kessler was honest about it.

"People are used to coming on Saturdays," he said. "That's when they're free."

The way we understand it, a half a day — any day — had to be chopped at each post office. Most officials opted for Saturdays. Why not Wednesday afternoons?

POSTMASTERS like to point out that the post office lobby with its mail slots, stamp machines and scales is still open Saturdays.

That's fine, but just try telling a vending machine to stop your mail for two weeks. And if you want to see how a post office sans clerks really works, just check out the two hapless folks fiddling with the scale, trying to figure out how much postage to put on their package.

Of course, there are always those postal "convenience centers" in supermarkets and drug stores. They're sort of an extension of the post office lobbies. Some are quite elaborate with actual human beings behind the counter.

Again, fine. But if we're going to move the post office away from the post office, why not go all the way? Why not let the service-with-profit people have a go at it?

CITICUS

**NOW IT'S OK TO CHASE AND NIP AT OUR MAILMAN.**



## Growth doesn't cover long-stored memories

MY, HOW times have changed.

Until a few years ago, the 13 Mile-Halsted area was one of the few remaining links to Farmington Hills' rural days. Dirt roads, woodland and occasional houses marked the countryside.

Today, the intersection marks a crossroads for one of the city's hottest areas of residential growth.

Twenty years ago, I spent summers as a counselor at a day camp on Halsted, just south of 13 Mile. Camp Pontchartrain catered to 4- to 10-year-old youngsters mainly from Oakland County families.

Fields, forest, horses, archery, trails and swimming provided a backdrop for day camping at its best.

The low-slung, one-story camp station, including its shingled overhang under which campers used to gather on rainy days, is still there. It's the sole reminder of those long-gone days when west of Orchard Lake Road was the beginning of the country.

The site is now Children's World, a preschool and child care center. The once-expansive campground, which reached deep into the woods toward Halsted, has been whittled down to the old camp station and a play area out back. The dirt drive that circled the flagpole in a grassy area where campers met on dry days is now a



**Bob Sklar**

paved parking lot.

BUT TIME hasn't stripped the site of all its ties to the '60s. A 20-year-old newsbox for the Farmington Enterprise & Observer still stands by the roadside.

Stakes, signaling new development is on the way, dot the field directly north, where once a junor-sized softball field held sway.

A subdivision, Farmington Ridge, has sprouted on the northwest corner of 13 Mile and Halsted, once a field where softball would land after a clean stroke of the bat.

A farm that campers often visited to pet sheep was farther west along 13 Mile.

ONE ROUTE to camp followed 13 Mile.

Today, when you head west on 13 Mile from Drake, you know it's different. You quickly see fresh pavement and new homes. More new condos and houses follow along the once rural path.

To the city's credit, however, the two-lane road is still pleasant. It still

undulates and the majestic roadside trees still provide a canopy.

Attractive wood-etched markers let motorists know they're entering the Thirteen Mile Historic Area, home to six houses built between 1830 and 1870.

But I don't much care for where the markers stand. You can't slow to read them and there's no convenient place nearby to park.

ON THE south side of 13 Mile just west of Halsted, the woods where hiking, cookouts and horseback riding reigned supreme a generation ago still seemingly touch the sky.

And the rise in the road farther west provides the same great view of a red barn and a wooded valley. It also offers a panoramic view of the new Strathmore subdivision in the distance.

Barren at the moment, both sides of 13 Mile near Haggerty are being prepped for new subdivisions.

Another route to camp headed north on Halsted from 13 Mile.

Tucked in among the trees and the older homes is the beginnings of the new Chestnut Ridge cluster homes.

The city, in a nice move, has retained the country look along newly paved Halsted by using stone in retaining walls, instead of concrete.

Yep, times have changed. But memories of the 13 Mile-Halsted area are among my brightest.

## Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

### Account is challenged

To the editor:

As a national delegate pledged to Pat Robertson, I feel constrained to set the record straight vs. the account written by Tim Richard on Feb. 4.

In the August 1986 primary election, the various presidential camps endeavored to elect as many pre-candidate delegates, pledged to each potential candidate, as possible.

Pat Robertson won this election. When this victory translated to state committee members, Bush found that he had lost control of the Republican Party. This was a reflection of the will of the Michigan voters who voted in the August 1986 primary.

Realizing that this loss would jeopardize his desire for the Republican nomination, Michigan being the first major test of his strength, Bush set out to overturn that verdict of the voters.

Bush succeeded. But only in the "Mainstream Group" state convention. However, this convention is illegal, for it was called by a midnight raid (Bush-defeating Kempers-E. Spencer Abraham).

The legal convention, the so-called Downstate Convention, was called according to the rules laid down by the state committee.

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Denn Wolf remained faithful to his conservative principles and stayed with the 18th District conservative coalition.

The Robertson 1986 victory was led by Marlene Elwell of the 18th District and Farmington Hills.

Ralph C. Lorensen, Birmingham

prevention programs in your community are as a result of partial or total funding from CTF.

Most of the money we distribute comes from a single source: private donations from Michigan taxpayers. Through special legislation, CTF appears on line 34 of the Michigan Income Tax Return form.

Those eligible for a refund can help simply by checking the CTF box for \$5, \$10 or more. The money will automatically be deducted from the total refund and go directly to the Children's Trust Fund.

For more information, call me at 1-517-373-4320.

David C. Mills, executive director, Children's Trust Fund

### Your tax form can help kids

To the editor:

This tax season, we at the Children's Trust Fund are inviting Michigan residents to "Make Your Mark for Child Abuse Prevention."

Last year, more than 45,000 cases of child abuse and neglect were reported in our state.

Unlike other organizations that deal with the aftermath of abuse, the Children's Trust Fund works to prevent child abuse before it happens.

We do that by using the donation collected to fund local community programs. Many of the parent education classes, latchkey and after-school activities and sexual abuse

### Soapy stories are excellent

To the editor:

The editorial on Soapy and the article by Tim Richard and Wayne Peal (Feb. 4) were excellent. As you know, Williams was "one of a kind."

It was a great honor for me to have had the opportunity to work for him during the final years of his long and distinguished career.

Tom Farrell, Public Information Office, Michigan Supreme Court

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