

points of view

# Father's Day reminds him how lucky he is

IT IS not true that I got a gift a week early by telling my wife that Father's Day was a week earlier this year. I never thought such treachery would work. She owns a calendar.

So imagine my surprise Sunday when a tiny, gift-wrapped box appeared on the dining room table.

"You have to open it now because you have to make a decision about your present before Tuesday," she said.

Such a statement was maddening. She knows I have this love-hate relationship with suspense and gifts. I beg her to give me presents early, but I resent opening presents before the designated birthday, anniversary, holiday or whatever. Besides, when she gives me a clue, I will

spend days trying to solve it, impressing her to no end with my patience and self-control.

"Let's skip dessert and I will open it right away," I said.

The present was a shrill whistle attached to a green necklace. I was perplexed.

"This is for me," she said. "It will be needed when you use your present."

Oh, great, I think. She's purchased some wonderful labor-making device. The whistle is so she can keep me in line while simultaneously discovering other chores to be completed.

But, no. The next part of the gift was a basketball. It is to be used with the backboard she is giving me. I have to decide if I want the backboard on the garage or on a pole. I



Rich Perlberg

opt for a pole, secure in the knowledge that the Birmingham authorities are so busy keeping residents off residential streets that they won't have time to look for law-breaking basketball nets.

(I should explain: For a glorious time earlier this year, the City of Birmingham was enforcing an ordinance that prevented basketball backboards to be attached to free-standing poles — not to be

confused with the members of Solidarity who are not free-standing poles. The enforcement stopped when the city commission came to its senses and when the husband of the then mayor pro tem — now the mayor — said the city could stuff its ordinance; his net was staying put.

(Now the city police under city commission direction are writing tickets to people who are willfully, knowingly and purposefully driving through their neighborhoods on the way to and from work. After July 4th, the city is adopting a height ordinance that will limit ice cream cones to single scoops. I would write more about this, but the city requires a stoning waiver for excessive use of parentheses.)

But back to the backboard, which

serves as monumental evidence to the art of marital compromise. For years my wife has stressed her concern for my physical well-being by giving me gifts that suggest exercise.

One Christmas she gave me an exercise bike; one birthday I got a sweatshirt; one Valentine's Day I got an illustrated book of hippos, elephants and rhinos. My wife is as close to subtlety as the commission's decision on casino gambling was to a surprise.

Until now her efforts have not been very successful. I do wear the exercise bike, usually while I'm lying on a couch, looking at my hippo book and trying to decide if the exercise bike could be converted into a fast-food vending machine.

But hoops are another matter,

Jack. I've already got a brand new regulation basketball and a smaller version for my 20-month-old son who needs a prop when the Sports Illustrated photographers come by. Come Sunday, I'll be doing my thing, which includes a jump shot in which friends claim the space between my shoes and the pavement is wide enough to slide copy paper through.

Even though she will be pelted by the unrelenting sound of a basketball bouncing on the driveway, my wife will be very happy. She wants me to exercise because she thinks it will make me healthier and she says she wants me around for a long time.

If I've got any sort of head on my shoulders, every time I shoot that basketball I'll keep my eye on the rim — and my mind on the fact that I'm a very lucky man.

## School's not out for all

I USED to know just the path to take.

It was down the hallway and around the corner to reach the upper echelon in Farmington Public Schools' central office on "the hill."

Now it takes a little longer to find them, as administrators regroup and play musical offices before buckling down for a summer of more quiet work. Although the traditional school year won't arrive until fall, for many in the district, school business goes on. Summer doesn't mean a three-month recess.

And thanks to incentives from assistant superintendent Judy White and her staff, more and more Farmington school employees are taking advantage of summer training and other workshops designed to inform and challenge them for a new year.

"A lot of training goes on in the summer — a lot of it is silent," she said. "People don't know it goes on."

I FOUND White this week in what used to be the "financial" side of the central office building at Shawlessee and Farmington roads. The head of curriculum and staff development departments has not only changed offices, but is busy overseeing changes this summer that will affect kids, teachers, and other employees.



Casey Hans

She's one who doesn't slow down in the summertime — she simply shifts gears.

Before her arrival in 1988, summer in Farmington schools was a time to relax. Since her arrival, she has slowly built a summer program of staff training and curriculum writing that reached its peak this year. She is trying to make the summer months more productive and meaningful, she said.

"Virtually none of this went on (before)," she said. "You really want to write curriculum and develop teachers' skills so you're not competing with their classroom teaching."

THIS YEAR, more than 200 people are already entrenched in workshops on topics such as reading, early childhood and the new common campus concept, slated for Highmeadow Elementary School this fall. Some large topics, like these, spring from districtwide studies.

Others blossom from proposals made by curriculum coordinators, like workshops in middle school language arts, instrumental music, elementary science, computers and math, and learning to use media.

"There's a lot more involvement this year than last," White said. "People were resistant to giving up summer time."

Of course, the money has to be in place for such programs which White admits. In the coming year, Farmington will pay some \$4.5 million for instructional staff services, according to budget figures. This includes the skill building programs we're talking about, and the support necessary to carry them out.

IT MAY seem like a lot. But with all the education-bashing going on during the past five years, a district with the resources such as Farmington has should strive to take a leadership position in staff development and other key areas.

The first route to better education is through those who influence children the most.

If teachers and other school staff are willing to attend these workshops to better themselves — which will eventually better the students — let's give 'em all they can handle.

## Governor veto this bill

YOU'VE gotta wonder what the folks in Lansing have against kids. Maybe they've decided to single-handedly take on the zero population cause as their own baby.

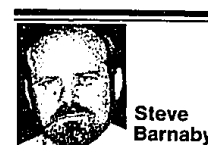
Just kind of makes you wonder after last week when both houses of the Michigan Legislature overwhelmingly passed bills to forbid surrogate parenting.

Whether you agree or disagree with surrogate parenting is hardly the issue. We all have our opinion. But Carol McCloud, a secretary here at the newspaper, put the real focus on the debate when she remarked, "Do we really want the Legislature to decide for us?"

Surrogate, of course, is a bigger than usual issue in these parts since the king of surrogate matchmaking, Noel Keane, maintains his offices in metro Detroit. Keane has paired some 225 couples with a surrogate to carry their child.

The most famous match ended in the New Jersey "Baby M" case when surrogate Mary Beth Whitehead decided she wanted to keep the child. She lost. But the case brought national attention to the issue of pregnancy-for-pay.

SOME PEOPLE love the idea, others loathe it.



Steve Barnaby

As mentioned, the majority of the state Legislature obviously doesn't think too highly of the practice and the legislation as passed would cost practitioners a \$10,000 fine. Lawyers like Keane could face a felony charge of up to five years in jail and a \$50,000 fine if they forge any more agreements.

Little or no correlation existed between political ideology and how legislators voted on this issue. In the state Senate Farmington Hills' Jack Faxon, a well-known Democratic liberal, paired up with none other than Northville Republican Robert Geake, a conservative, to make up two of the three nay votes in the upper house.

Now that's got to be a first. The house matches were just as strange. Conservative Republican Sandy Brotherton of Farmington

paired with liberal Democrat Maxine Berman of Southfield to support the issue.

Now the issue rests squarely in the lap of Gov. James Blanchard who, according to press spokesman Tom Scott, is "weighing" it. While the Gov opposes surrogacy as a profit-making venture, he wonders about the wisdom of a felony conviction for violating the law, said Scott.

Blanchard has another week or so to either approve the legislation or veto it.

Obviously the governor is testing the wind. And frankly, the wind current says that few, if any of us, need legislators as moral guides on such a very private issue as the birth of a child.

Few in the state Legislature object to abortion-for-profit. Why should they object to surrogacy-for-profit? One destroys, the other creates. If nothing else, it's a nice balance.

Let's face it, neither you nor I like the government sticking its nose in our private affairs. As the pro-abortionists like to trumpet, "a woman's body is hers to control."

We need a veto on this one, governor. Maybe then, the state Legislature will butt out of our private lives.

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