

points of view

Looking back

Memories of a rebel resurrected

IN MY mind, Michael Moore will always be a young rebel from Flint. That picture of him is as alive today as Harry Chapin's music.

We met in 1977 when I was a wet-behind-the-ears weekly editor in Davison, a Flint suburb. Moore ran the Davison Hotline — a crisis center in the basement of a doctor's office helping people throughout the area.

Michael was a wild and crazy guy, but his heart was always in the right place. He always looked out for the downtrodden who had trouble helping themselves. Based near Flint, he also kept an eye on GM, the major employer in the Flint area, which he called "Generous Motors."

His beliefs also brought him to eventually form the Voice — an alternative paper based in Flint. It allowed Moore to not only voice his displeasure with the system, but put it in writing.

We wrote about Moore and his hotline, and got more than we bargained for.

People in the community who were frightened and angry at Michael's challenge to tradition and authority gave us a lot of grief. With his long hair and outspoken ways, he



Casey Hans

was not the sort of hometown boy they wanted to read about.

BUT OUR hometowns are contain a lot of different people, many with new ideas. And they all deserve their special recognition.

Michael Moore has worked hard to get his. It was fun to see him featured on the cover of a regional Sunday magazine this week. In 11 years, he has grown and moved into new areas, but maintained the same ideals and rambunctious ways. Of course, these days, his hair's a bit shorter.

This people's advocate is still doing his work, but has made his cause national. He now has an office in Washington, D.C., where he is working on a screenplay, and writing an occasional article. He commutes between the East Coast and Flint, where he can still keep an eye

on his hometown.

As it was in 1977, Moore's activism can be equated with the story-telling songs of Harry Chapin, who died several years ago in an auto accident, but whose music still receives a lot of radio play. Moore and Chapin were friends of a special kind.

CHAPIN USED to do concert tours benefitting the World Hunger organization. But when Chapin came to Flint, proceeds were split between World Hunger and Moore's Davison Hotline. I guess the man who spun his yarns in song could see good in the young man from Flint.

Most people will remember Michael Moore for starting the Flint/Michigan Voice alternative newspaper and for his short stint at Mother Jones magazine in San Francisco. His foray into alternative publishing made him, at minimum, a regional hero who has left his mark in the right places.

To me, he'll always be that 23-year-old rebel from Flint, that started his hotline crisis center in the basement of a local doctor's office until he could do better.

Suburbs learn to live with the new growth

THE DETROIT suburbs have forever changed. No longer are they merely tree-shaded havens for commuters. They have evolved into cities with economic might.

Traditionalists will object. But the suburbs are experiencing one of their most exciting times.

A recent article in "The Detroit" magazine outlines the fascinating facts behind an economic explosion sweeping through the area.

Business within the metro area is expressing its confidence by expanding facilities. Other businesses have politely tipped their hats to other more popular cities, packed their bags and moved here to suburban Detroit.

Hayman Co. vice president Joel Feldman puts it this way:

"Because Greater Detroit has one of the highest occupancy rates, one of the lowest rental rates for office buildings and set new construction and space absorption records, the area has attracted nationwide interest."

For the fourth consecutive year Troy led all other Michigan cities in the office leasing sweepstakes. Several major office complexes also



Steve Barnaby

were constructed in that city including the 45-acre, 900,000-square-foot Timberland Office Park and the 300,000-square-foot Liberty Center.

Livonia is now maintaining a 94-percent occupancy rate, according to the Detroit article, with 1.5 million square feet of office space under construction and 1.25 million square feet planned.

The Victor Corporate Park in that suburb, when completed, will be a 104-acre complex with \$200 million in buildings, complete with a hotel, five restaurants and seven office buildings.

Housed at Victor will be regional headquarters for Digital Equipment Corp.

The \$100 million Laurel Park development at Six Mile and New-

burgh is well on its way to completion with a good mix of hotels, office and retail space, including the prestigious Jacobson's store.

FARMINGTON HILLS has some 4.5 million square feet of space, with an occupancy rate of 82 percent. Between its booming Northwestern Highway corridor and the 12 Mile Road development, Farmington Hills experienced its best year in 1987.

Yet to come is the 24-acre, \$44 million development which will include three office buildings and a 140-room hotel at Orchard Lake and I-696.

The Hayman Co. recent study shows that Southfield and Troy remain the suburban pace setters when it comes to office space. But the once highly-touted "bedroom communities" of Livonia and Farmington Hills are coming on strong in new construction.

The big break for Livonia came with the construction of the I-275 expressway.

Something is smelly in Illinois governor's plea for water

OVER NIGHT, Big Jim Thompson turned himself from one of the flowers of the Republican Party to a skunk.

Bypassing neighboring governors and the Canadians, the Illinois governor asked the federal government to divert water from the Great Lakes to the trickling Mississippi River because of the middle American drought.

Although the idea may have merit, Thompson's procedure was admirable.

Our Canadian neighbors need a certain flow in the Great Lakes for their hydroelectric power. Many cit-

ies take water from the Great Lakes and don't want their intake pipes exposed. Our friends the ducks and fish reproduce in the marshlands of the Great Lakes.

And our shipping industry needs 27 feet of water to carry full loads of tonnage pellets, coal, limestone, grain and all those other goodies that couldn't be carried by rail or truck.

Big Jim should ask those folks first before going directly to Uncle Sam.

Michigan's Gov. Jim Blanchard and our U.S. senators are killing Thompson on this issue. If Big Jim had any dreams of being No. 2 on the



Tim Richard

George Bush ticket, he can forget 'em.

TO THE CASUAL globe gazer, the Great Lakes look like a big pot of water that can be dipped into quite readily. Not so.

The Great Lakes have a tiny

drainage area. They have 94,000 square miles of surface and drain only about 200,000 square miles of land.

I'm looking at a map by the International Great Lakes Levels Board. Except for the state of Michigan, the average extent of their drainage basin is about 50 miles. At Chicago and Milwaukee, you need to go inland only a few miles before you're in the Mississippi River watershed.

Canada's Department of the Environment publishes a nifty little pamphlet about the Great Lakes which shows where their water comes from. For every lake except Ontario, precipitation is a more important source of water than inflowing streams.

In other words, most of the water in the Great Lakes Basin is in the lakes themselves. It drains little land.

THE MISSISSIPPI Basin is im-

mense in comparison.

Remember, the Great Lakes drain about 200,000 square miles of land. The Mississippi drains six times as much — 1.2 million square miles. That includes the basins of the Missouri, Ohio and Upper Mississippi rivers.

The Mississippi basin stretches from the western Montana Rockies to the Appalachians. "The water surplus from 31 states and two Canadian provinces swells its current," says Encyclopedia Americana.

The Great Lakes, from Duluth to the headwaters of the St. Lawrence River, extend 1,160 miles. The Mississippi connection alone is 4,600 miles long — comparable to the Nile.

WE NOW approach the heart of the question: What are the authorities in that 1.2 million square miles of Mississippi Basin doing with the

water they already have?

The Mississippi River Commission was appointed by Congress in 1879 and has dipped frequently into the federal coffers for flood control and navigation aids. There's a giant dam on the Missouri at Fort Peck, and the Tennessee River tributary has more than a score of dams. In fact, the system has so many dams that I can't find a tally of them.

Great Lakes levels are difficult to control. Albert G. Ballert, director of research for the Great Lakes Commission, taught a course on the lakes in which he summarized it beautifully: "The Great Lakes are like a bathtub drained with a soda straw."

Thompson's diversion idea, far from being new, is an old one known as the "Chicago steal." It took U.S. Supreme Court rulings to limit the outflow from Lake Michigan.

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