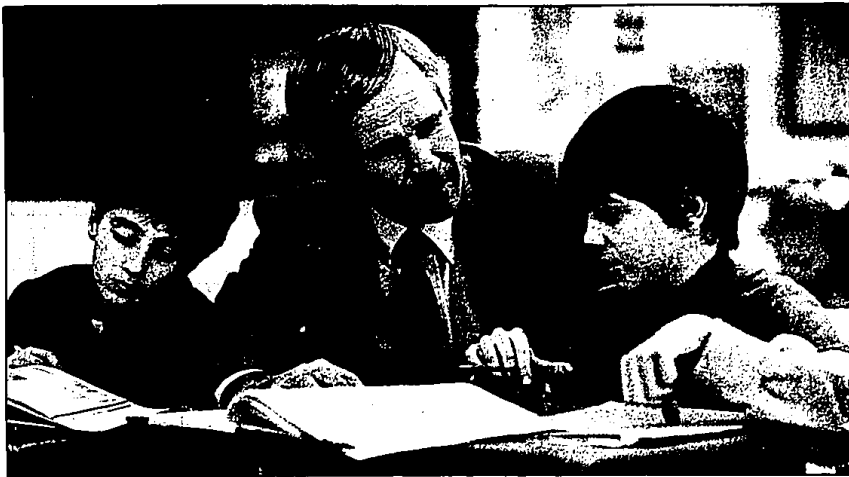


Enhancing all is top priority for principal

'What we need to do now is keep looking at ways to improve, to move forward. That is my challenge.'

— Bill Smith
Longacre principal



Bill Smith, new principal at Longacre Elementary, with fifth graders Jim Madany (left) and Mike Dujanowicz

and move your feet. I've always had that as a philosophy," he said. "That's my preferred style. I like to be out and visible."

"I need to know what we're doing instructionally and how the kids are responding to that."

Smith came to teaching — a family tradition — after pursuing an interest in math and economics. "I finally went back to what my family had carved out for me," he said. "I came out with a liberal arts background."

That carried him to Romulus Community Schools, where he served as Community Education director, Head Start director, and most recently as principal of Barth Elementary. In a written philosophy,

Bill Smith draws upon all areas of his life for his new job at Longacre.

From his love of running, cross country skiing, basketball and writing, to his former positions as community education director and elementary school principal, he says he is ready for the challenge.

The new head of the elementary school on the Farmington/Farmington Hills border is ready to take the reins, after a few weeks of working closely with outgoing principal Millie Bennett, who retired this month.

"I want to look at each area and enhance it," he explained. "What we need to do now is keep looking at ways to improve, to move forward. That is my challenge."

HIS FIRST few weeks have been spent not only learning the administrative role but visiting classrooms.

At one he showed slides, courtesy of his brother who is a national park ranger. At another he played the piano, even though he only knows one song. He even let his hair down and played a little basketball with another class.

"The new theory is management by walking around. Get off your seat

Smith said he believes in community involvement, reinforcing self-esteem for students and use of effective teaching techniques.

"I know I can be an influential elementary principal and I am anxious to search out new avenues for growth and challenge," he said.

Smith is working on getting to know each student's name, a similar philosophy carried over from Bennett's years as principal. He wants to be a friend, but not a buddy. "I'm trying to make them feel I value their work," he said. "I want them to know I'm a friend, but within the

proper framework." He also wants to be a role model to the students.

Smith's philosophy on handling problems is one of "discipline with dignity." "I hope I would do that at all times," he said.

"I couldn't be more pleased with how it's going so far," he added. "The

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

staff has made me feel welcome; they have given me a sense of energy.

It appears Smith will keep the blue, country-style heart which hangs in the school's office. It says "Longacre is Special" and Smith intends to keep it that way.



Millie Bennett, recently retired principal of Longacre, enjoyed meeting with students in the school's media center.

Educator retires with years of tales

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Millie Bennett has all sorts of funny tales. Like former students who encounter her and want to know "didn't you used to be Mrs. Bennett?" Or the kindergarten teacher who once told her "you're the best principal I ever had."

"I wanted to ask him how many principals he had had," said Bennett with a chuckle, as she cleaned out her office at Longacre Elementary School. After 16 years as principal at Longacre, and 23 years with the Farmington school district, Bennett has retired and started a new life in Florida with her husband Gerald.

"This is the end of that line," she said, talking about her years teaching and administrating. "I don't consider myself old. I'm not old. It's just time to move on."

Bennett spent the last weeks of December passing out the many ducks which she collected and which graced her office. She said she wanted everyone to have something that reminded them of her. She said she will remember "overwhelming"

community support and many days of happiness gleaned from her job.

That famous Millie Bennett laugh could still be heard coming from the principal's office in early December, even as her successor Bill Smith has already started his new job, getting to know the children who now call him "principal."

"I have always tried to make every kid think he or she is special," she said. "My actions have always been to praise a kid. The self-esteem thing is so important. I know most of my kids by name."

SHE WILL now transfer her educational ideals to Florida, where her husband, an ordained Episcopalian priest, has accepted a ministry in

Bradenton. She plans to become involved "in some people-centered thing," possibly working with the elderly and others who need help.

She leaves behind a good example, as parents and others in the community have told her at a variety of going-away parties in December. She also leaves behind some suggestions for other teachers: "Remember you're teaching all the time, just by your very being," she said. "You teach at all times, not just in the classroom. I've tried to do that."

Bennett started her career in Detroit Public Schools, coming to Farmington and the former Shawasssee Elementary in 1964. Before going to Longacre she worked at Beechview, Highmeadow, William

Grace, Flanders, Wooddale and Wood Creek. She has also been active in the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association. Bennett is a native of Detroit, and attended Albion College where she majored in elementary education and music.

Her mentor was retired assistant superintendent Larry Freedman, who was her first principal here in Farmington.

She has fond memories of her years at all the Farmington schools, but especially at Longacre where she spent the most time. "This is my life, my extended family," she explained. "But it's time to move on. We call that life."

DESIGNER

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judgment!" also comes into play, Greiger said. "How does it feel? Does it feel like we're going too fast? Does it feel like we're going too slow?"

Other concerns include "side friction," how close development is to the road, pavement condition, road characteristics, like curbs and shoulders; the "pace" of traffic, a 10 miles-per-hour span in which most drivers stay; curves, both right-left and reverse; how much development is along the road, and what type of development it is; trees, parked cars and other sight hazards; hidden intersections; and pedestrian activity.

For all these factors to consider, the decisions — between 25 and 50 mph — are somewhat limited, Greiger said.

In response to parental concerns about safety around schools, Greiger said he himself is a parent who lives on a street. "You're going to get the best I have to offer," he said.

Staff writer Bob Needham of the Novi News prepared this report.

The state police review — under a process required by state law — includes speed surveys, accident studies and meetings with all the local governments.

One important part of the study is the information and opinions from local police jurisdictions — in this case, Northville, Northville Township, Novi, Livonia, Farmington Hills and Farmington. "The local officers are the ones on the front line," Greiger said. "They typically get the first response."

Realism is another factor. The review must consider what speeds drivers will drive, and what limits the police can enforce, Greiger said. "It's a complete and total fallacy that drivers blindly obey signs. They don't," Greiger said.

The state police try to find a limit which 85 percent of drivers will obey — "the theory being, if we can get everybody to drive precisely the same speed all the time, there will be no accidents," Greiger said. "What I'm telling you runs in the face of what a lot of people believe to be true."

IN FACT, Greiger said, a higher speed limit sometimes can cause lower speeds overall. Seat-of-the-pants "engineering

State Police reviewing speed limits along 8 Mile

The future of speed limits on Eight Mile is now in the hands of the Michigan State Police for study and recommendations.

As part of a regular review of major roads, state police are working with Wayne and Oakland counties to study speed limits on Eight Mile from Napier Road in Novi to Grand River in Farmington Hills.

The eventual result could be lower speed limits, higher speed limits, or no change at all.

"On a periodic basis, we review all the roads in the area," Michigan State Police Sgt. Weldon Greiger said.

The current action is just part of the regular review of speeds, Greiger said.

The state police review — under a process required by state law — includes speed surveys, accident studies and meetings with all the local governments. "After we have all this information, we'll see what course of action we will propose," Greiger said.

Any recommendations for change go to Michigan State Police director Richard Davis for approval, and then to the Wayne and Oakland county commissions. A speed limit change becomes effective when new signs are posted.

"It's a rather involved process. There are many, many things that go into consideration," Greiger said. "I suspect we're not going to get to an on-scene survey until the middle of January. . . . Those speed limits have been there quite a few years. This does not seem to be something that needs immediate attention today."

CEMS ambulance service, a subsidiary of Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills, is offering rides this New Year's Eve for those who are too drunk to drive.

According to hospital spokeswoman Susan Perry, CEMS will offer rides to people in Farmington, Farmington Hills, Redford, Novi and Livonia.

If people are at a bar or party in one of these communities and need transportation to their homes also in these communities — they can call either 537-4450 or 344-1990. Hours for the service will run from 7 p.m. New Year's Eve until 3 a.m. New Year's Day. Rides will be given only from the bar to a patron's home, Perry added.

Botsford ambulance service offers rides

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