

## points of view

## Recall wrong way to oust MSU wrongdoers

GOOD LUCK, Dennis Martell. You'll need it if you think you can collect 600,000 signatures to recall three Michigan State University trustees.

Martell wants to oust trustees Lawrence Owen, Joel Ferguson and Kathy Wilbur. They were part of the majority that voted 5-3 to promote football coach George Perles to athletic director, over the wishes of President John D'Elia.

The petitioners say the trustees failed to follow hiring guidelines, ignored the campus constituency and, by their own admission, met in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

The underlying issue is that trustees contributed to the "Moo U" joke image. MSU has been trying to shake that image ever since it was founded in the 1860s as an agricultural college.

In Michigan. Besides, there's a better way to get rid of the offending trustees.

MSU trustees are nominated by political party conventions the last two weeks in August of election years. They're elected by the voters.

Trustees Owen and Malcolm Dade, both of whom voted for Perles, are due to face the Democratic State Convention for renomination this year.

If you're serious about deposing them, then run for precinct delegate in the Aug. 7 primary in the party of your choice. It's easy to get on the ballot. Your friendly county clerk has petition forms. You need to collect only 20 or so signatures.

Attend your county and state conventions. Make an issue of the MSU case. Support candidates whom you agree with and get them elected.

In 1992 trustee Kathy Wilbur is due to face the Republican conven-



Tim Richard

tion. Wilbur, a former Birmingham resident, voted for Perles. She works for state Sen. William Sederburg, R-East Lansing, who chairs the Senate appropriations subcommittee on higher education.

She's a good worker and a genuinely nice person. I like her. But it would be perfectly proper for Republican delegates to ask her to defend her record before routinely granting her renomination.

TYPICALLY, POLITICAL parties ask no substantive questions of candidates for university boards. They

seek enough women, blacks, Hispanics and Upper Peninsula snowbirds to balance their tickets.

Two years ago University of Michigan regents hired a president after secret meetings. They were hit by a lawsuit that is still in the Court of Appeals.

Yet not a single word was spoken in either the 1988 Republican or Democratic conventions about this substantive issue. It was buddy-buddy politics all the way.

Then there was the time Gov. James Blanchard was sore at the Oakland University board for raising tuition some 19 percent, double the amount he thought justified.

The governor appoints the OU board. Blanchard could have enforced his tuition policy by denying reappointment to two trustees whose terms expired that year.

Instead, Blanchard gave them new terms.

And that's why I wish Dennis Mar-

tell and the Council of Graduate Students at MSU good luck. Not because I want to have any opinion about George Perles. Rather, it's because they are making an issue of trustees' records and working within the law to get rid of those who vote wrong.

We need more of that.

Tim Richard is director of the SCC News Service for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## We're only messenger for trends in business

NOT WRITING about it doesn't make it go away.

We got a lot of flack recently for a story on the large number of vacancies at the Crosswinds Mall on Orchard Lake and Lone Pine roads at the north end of West Bloomfield's shopping district.

The situation isn't much different than when we wrote about the vacant storefronts in Birmingham or businesses moving out of Plymouth or empty offices in Livonia.

We don't have a vendetta against business or the chamber of commerce in our communities, as callers or letter writers are wont to say. We merely report on what's going on — its business district — of which we consider ourselves a part.

Do those who complain about these stories think that no one but the press has noticed those empty spaces? Or that no one else wonders what the problem is?

THE STORY on the Crosswinds Mall came about because on a recent Friday night my husband and I got a quick meal at Merlin's, its coney restaurant, then walked the mall to see what was going on.

Not much. Some malls are bustling on Friday nights — not this one. The empty corridors and the empty storefronts were hard to miss. But then, as we decided to rent a video at what used to be the main video store in town, we were faced with a CLOSING sign. (Since that



Judith Doner Berne

time the mall management has asked the store to take down the sign, since it won't be leaving right away.)

In its heyday that video store had been one of the main draws to the mall. It was hard to ignore that it is closing. So, strictly as a resident, I wondered what the problem was with the mall despite the facts that it is enclosed, has Krogers and Arbor Drug as anchors that appear to flourish and a Michigan Secretary of State office that even expanded to larger quarters.

"Any prospective customer reading this article would be persuaded to stay away from Crosswinds Mall," wrote Martin Malter, president of Malter Furs Inc., of our story.

I CAN understand Malter's concern. He moved to the mall from Southfield last July, and I sincerely hope his will prove to be one of the businesses that can turn this mall around.

What Malter probably doesn't know, because he wasn't around, is that this newspaper has done a number of stories on Crosswinds and its

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predecessors, some reporting its problems, others reporting on the remodeling and hopes for the future. One day, perhaps we can report on its success.

Perhaps this story, which Malter terms "negative and unproductive," doesn't have to be. Perhaps it can serve as a rallying point for mall tenants and the owner to do a better marketing job, find tenants with a real draw and staying power, study mall hours, reach out further to the community, utilize the West Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce. . . . According to one of the partners, a promotional consultant has been hired to do just this.

As in Birmingham, Livonia and Plymouth, the articles didn't create the situation, they reported the situation. That is, after all, our job.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor of the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## Future of elementary science bright

Q: I have children in the second and fourth grades. I was a math and science major in college and work as an engineer. Science teaching at the elementary levels seems to be an afterthought. Science doesn't seem to be a priority. What's the problem?

A: Probably 98 percent of elementary teachers have had only one college course in teaching science. A course called science methods.

Only 2 percent of all elementary have a major in science. Most elementary teachers took majors in reading, language arts/English or social science.

I believe the majority of elementary teachers were not turned on in their high school higher level science courses. Few if any had ambitions of becoming an engineer.

Many elementary teachers feel uncomfortable, even nervous, in setting up science experiments in their classroom. I've had elementary teachers tell me they are afraid a test tube will break in their hands or worse in the hands of one of their youngsters.



Doc Doyle

But the problem is not that simple.

Elementary teachers are generally locked into two hours of reading and a half-hour or hour of math each day. Throw in social science, health, English/language arts and time starts to become limited for subjects and choices are made.

If art, music and physical education, computer training and media (library) programs are available, it forces even more choices. Furthermore, reading, math, language arts, writing and social sciences are often times considered more important than science by not only the teachers but the curriculum director in the central office.

Compounding the issue there are

no science labs or even portable labs in elementary classrooms, yet most students enjoy and learn better through related hands-on experiments.

However, there is hope on the horizon. A program called AIMS (Activities in Math and Science) had recognized the "teacher lack of confidence in the teaching of science." AIMS training deals with helping elementary teachers overcome any imagined fears in teaching science and how to set up and present science in an exciting fashion.

I see a great break through for elementary science from those teachers who have received AIMS training. You should suggest this program to the leadership in your school district.

Dr. James Doyle is a former assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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