

## points of view

# It's a scenic drive, but it ends at work

### MY WAY TO WORK — PART I

THE MORNING sun is a big orange ball in my rear-view mirror as I head west on I-696. Destination: Nine Mile and Farmington roads in Farmington's "panhandle."

It's a nice drive, even if it does end at the beginning of a long day. Every working day I drive the I-696 into Farmington. What is there to see? What is there to think about as Cokie Roberts' murmurs headlines on "Morning Edition" on the car radio?

Well, first of all, please do away with this notion that there's nothing to see on the superlaid. There's a lot to see if you'll just look.

You'll notice, for example, a definite end to Southfield and a beginning to Farmington Hills. Southfield sprouts, while Farmington Hills sprawls.

The mileage sign ("Brighton 26, Lansing 74") gives me a certain leaving-home feeling... now that I'm in Farmington, am I still in metropolitan Detroit?

THE FREEWAY rolls over Inkster Road, but under Middlebelt, Orchard Lake, Farmington and just about every other highway with enough clout to cross the interstate.

One very strange thing about this stretch of I-696. There's only one exit — No. 5 at Orchard Lake Road — between Telegraph Road in Southfield to the I-375 exchange in western Farmington Hills. That's about seven miles.

Compare this to the much newer continuation of I-696 to the east. There are on-off ramps at every major road: Lahser, Evergreen, Southfield Road, Greenfield, Coolidge, etc.

What good is a freeway that you can't enter or leave? Maybe the good people of Farmington Hills wanted it that way when the road was built almost 20 years ago. Was the message: Just keep on driving, friend, and don't get off here?

Anyway, Exit No. 5 is well-used.



Tom Baer

being the only one for seven miles of busy freeway. The exit ramp starts out as one lane and widens to four before it spews its traffic onto busy Orchard Lake Road.

Commerce has really developed at this junction in the last few years. There are a couple of "sleep cheap" motels and a Silverman's restaurant that is shoehorned into tiny wedge of land north of the freeway.

A HINT FOR motorists turning left onto Orchard Lake from the exit ramp: Make the light. If you stop at the red light at that corner, you might as well spread out a blanket and open a picnic lunch. You'll just about have time to eat it before you get the green.

Another hint: A good way to get to Farmington Road (there's no freeway exit, remember) is to jog south on Orchard Lake and then turn right on Oakland Drive, which goes through the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College.

This non-stop little road has become almost a service drive for the freeway. But before you turn, notice the colorful flowers that somebody bothered to plant in the traffic islands at the intersection. Somebody deserves credit.

The first sign you'll see on Oakland Drive announces the speed limit — 25. But from experience I can tell you that almost nobody goes that slow, except maybe bicyclists.

Most days there's a steady stream of cars going through the OCC campus at about 40, and their drivers are not headed for ceramics or mar-came classes. They're just trying to avoid traffic-clogged 12 Mile Road or the no-way-off freeway to the north.

OAKLAND DRIVE ends at Farmington Road (more flowers in the traffic islands, more credit due) and another curious traffic signal.

This one just blinks (yellow-yellow for Farmington, red-red for Oakland Drive) and the cars really pile up. Some drivers take awful chances turning left onto Farmington.

That light should work — and it does at 10 in the morning when it seems as though there's not nearly as much traffic.

I'm on Farmington Road now, headed south. Farmington's one our more scenic two-lanes that is begging to be widened because of heavy traffic. A lot of green lawns and willow trees are going to bite the dust if that happens.

On past Heritage Park and the Community Center I go (Shhhhh! Watch that noise) and I notice that I'm headed downhill. There is a steady decline that continues until 10 Mile when I hit a steep hill.

I like to take the car out of gear and coast down the hill (a friend once told me, "You should live in Sweden — it's a neutral country") and see how far I can roll, sometimes all the way to Shawwassee.

There's the Farmington Schools headquarters on a hill off to the left where the board of education rules — "the gang on Shawwassee Hill," a former Observer editor called them.

Turn right, climb another hill, turn left and head for downtown Farmington, as a coach at high school used to call it. There have been lots of changes in the old central business district, but discussion of them will have to wait for another column.

Right now it's time to zoom down Farmington Road making the lights, hopefully — past Nine Mile. One difficult left turn later, I'm at work.

Next time I'll describe another way to work.

Tom Baer is the editor of the Farmington Observer.

## from our readers

### She objects to art exhibit

To the editor:

I hope you are deluged with letters against Noreen Flack's article on the Mapelthorpe exhibit.

How can a family newspaper like the Observer support raising money for something as controversial as this?

The Mapelthorpe exhibit is not only pornographic, it is also sacrilegious.

Hopefully, instead of getting a single penny, Dennis Barrie and the Contemporary Art Center will be flooded with thousands of letters objecting to this obscene farce.

Margaret Williams,  
Farmington Hills

### Don't stifle the residents

To the editor:

During the comments and question portion of a recent Farmington Hills City Council meeting, two residents from the "older, more beautiful" subdivision were allowed to speak for almost an hour and this was after the three-hour meeting of last week.

Their concerns were about 8-foot pipes, etc., and they were valid concerns. After their time, two families were denied the privilege of voicing their concerns.

These were two new families to the city of Farmington Hills and their concerns were about 3-inch pipes, etc. Their concerns were just as valid, but they did not have the opportunity to voice their comments.

Last week we celebrated in that very room the signing of the Constitution of the United States, which gives rights to all people. In Farmington Hills, we often hear about discrepancies in the "lower hills," which are the areas south of 10 Mile Road in the mature areas of the city.

We should all have equal rights whether we are a resident for 20 years or only two months, as in our case last night.

THERE HAS been much written in the past about the zoning officer for this area of the city. However, in my experience in the past three years, we need a zoning officer from general funds that would cover all the city.

In fact, I believe that we need to have the state department of build-

ing codes evaluate the performance (if you can call it that) of our city's enforcement of its own codes.

How can people move into a house (that has had and probably will have problems in the next 10 months) with an expired temporary certificate of occupancy?

How can a new home not have a working furnace? How can a resident have an estimate of \$500 to fix a sump pump problem? What happened to the written one-year guarantee the city has for these homes?

Do tax dollars again have to be spent on these homes when the \$500 bond is insufficient for the problems?

I would like to thank councilman Ben Marks for coming to the aid of the family without heat for two days last week. We did not call the city because of their inaction in the past, and because of the council's action taken last November.

Luella Hempel,  
Farmington Hills

### Insurance is their future

To the editor:

At election time, we ask ourselves what our elected officials have done for us. But perhaps better questions would revolve around what they have done for themselves.

For example, how much money do they receive from the insurance industry?

The State Commerce and Technology Committee is currently holding back legislation that would finally stop the insurance industry from price fixing, by removing their anti-trust exemption.

The same committee is holding up a bill to roll back premiums to a more realistic level. What's more egregious is that many of these same officials are in turn protecting the insurance industry by sponsoring bills that would limit the legal rights and benefits of severely injured accident victims.

Perhaps some of our legislators would be better suited to careers in the auto insurance industry. They've had lots of practice.

Timothy Lachowski,  
Farmington Hills

### Enjoy our park as is

To the editor:

Go back and look at Heritage Park

again. It is not Dan Potter's park. It belongs to the people of Farmington Hills. Dan Potter works for the city.

We put up our tax money to preserve the only large piece of open land in our city. It is being enjoyed as it is. Don't mess it up by overdevelopment.

The Spicer House, technically the David Gray House, is not ugly. Please look again.

This beautifully proportioned 1926 piece of architecture was designed to blend with its environment by the architect artist Marcus Burrows.

It is an English Country house and a gem. It is part of our Historical District and significant to our community as part of an era when country houses were built in Farmington. It was also an era when people became aware of the beauty of their environment.

This lovely house and park are significant to Farmington Hills. Don't let an over zealous sportsman make a shooting range or rock theatre out of something beautiful.

Keep it as it can be enjoyed by the people of Farmington Hills. They have worked to gain such a park and are volunteering and working hard to keep it beautiful.

Roth Moschman,  
chairman,

Farmington Hills Historic District Commission

### Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters must be signed and include the address of the sender.

Names will be withheld only for the best of reasons, and the decision to do so will be made by the editor.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

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