

points of view

Some kids lack a special gift

BOY THE RECESSION has really hit here, said my out-of-town relative as we drove through my West Bloomfield subdivision. Look at all the FOR SALE signs.

They aren't FOR SALE signs, I explained. They're for candidates and for or against the millage in the school board election.

No hum. School board elections where often there's no contest — hi there Birmingham, West Lake, Avondale, South Redford. Voter turnout is just about nil even when there are contestants — that's you Livonia (2.7 percent), Redford Union (4.5 percent) and Troy (4.5 percent).

Renewals brought out just 3.7 percent of the voters in Avondale and 10 percent in Plymouth Canton where they passed. Ten percent of the voters cast ballots for Bloomfield Hills school board and an unusually high 16 percent elected school board trustees in Rochester.

But where there's new money on the table, school board elections are not taken lightly. Signs dot lawns, leaflets invade mailboxes and accusations and rebuttals make headlines — driven by escalating property tax-



Judith Doner Berne

es and new roles for schools which go beyond test scores.

STEP TO THE front and center, Wayne-Westland and West Bloomfield. Both school districts set records for voter turnouts — 25 percent in Westland and a whopping 43 percent in West Bloomfield — in finally approving more money for schools.

Finally, it was the fourth try for new millage in Wayne-Westland, where the school board had enflamed voters by approving nearly 12 percent teacher salary increases over two years while intoning drastic program cuts including a shorter school day and no sports.

Waiting in the wings are similar raises for administrators. As a result, the three incumbent board

members bit the dust with two anti-millage candidates and a moderate elected. So look for some changes to result.

And, finally, it was the second and a half attempt in West Bloomfield for an all-or nothing-renewal plus new millage package. There, such bellwether programs as a state-wide model for alcohol and drug prevention and magnet school for gifted and talented were lined up to be gutted.

Earlier this year, a tie vote was registered, signifying defeat, and a repelling of two precincts where defective machines operated resulted in an 11-vote defeat. In Monday's 23-vote victory, the incumbent school board trustee led all candidates and an anti-tax opponent won the second seat paving the way for a more diverse, more questioning board.

SO HOORAY for the hard working, sincere residents on both sides of the issue in both districts — and for the voters who made their choice. These are communities who care about education.

Although Wayne Westland receives state aid, it has not stood around waiting for handouts. In 1988-89, the most recent year for which figures are available, residents taxed themselves \$2.86 mills to put \$4,615 behind each child. That makes them No. 65 in per pupil spending of the state's 524 school districts.

That same year, West Bloomfield, which doesn't qualify for state aid, was 19th in per pupil spending, taxed at 36.07 mills and spending \$5,888 on each child. (A mill is \$1 in taxes for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation.)

The two districts stand between school systems which spend as much as \$3,377 (Bloomfield Hills, paying 26.49 mills) and \$2,509 (Gables, taxed at 32.37 mills) which is dead last.

It has been said many times that education is the most precious gift we can give our children. Unfortunately, we have not yet realized how to extend this to all our kids.

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

His father teaches lesson after all

HE WASN'T perfect, that's for sure.

He drank and he smoked and, according to my mother, the native Texan who migrated to his native Arkansas where she met him, he could at times be considered "shiftless."

They were both in their mid-30s when they married. She was a teacher and he was a clerk in a dry goods store. They were married in April 1936 and in May 1937 I was born.

The timing was just right for a teacher. She had the summer off so she could take care of me. In the fall of '37, the superintendent asked her what she was going to do with me when she went back to work. She had never considered the question. Mothers stayed home. Fathers went to work.

But after much discussion they de-



Jack Gladden

cided that in 1937 in Arkansas — where the Depression was still on — a teacher's job was more secure than that of a dry goods clerk. So she went back to work — and he stayed home. . . . for the next seven years.

He may have been one of the first househusbands, though the word (and the concept) had yet to be invented.

IN 1944 WITH the war going strong, he enrolled in a sheet metal

school. After completing the six-week school, he took a job with Douglas Aircraft — a "defense plant" they called it then — in Tulsa, Okla.

After a few months on the job he came down with malaria and was sent home. By the time he had recovered, the war was over and he was out of a job again.

After a few more months, and with a push from his mother-in-law, he got a job selling shoes at Montgomery Ward.

Over the next several years, a progression of moves took us to Texas, New Mexico and back to Texas. He stopped working in the early '60s after having what doctors said "might have been" a heart attack. The highest salary he ever made in a week was less than I make in a day now — and I think I'm underpaid!

I often felt he taught me nothing. He wasn't educated. Despite his sheet metal training, he had few mechanical skills. He wasn't a handyman, and I certainly inherited that.

He never taught me to drive or to balance a checkbook or to repair a leaky faucet. Sometimes I blamed him for my own ineptitude.

BUT MANY YEARS later, when I found myself a single father with an 18-month-old son to raise, I somehow managed to pull it off. I won't say I did a great job over the next six years. I'm too much like him to have done a great job at anything. But the kid and I survived and last week he graduated from high school.

His grandfather wasn't there to see it. He died three years ago. But I kept thinking about him. Maybe he taught me something after all.

from our readers

Deficit spending increasing

To the editor:

By now I am sure you are aware that despite Congress' promises to use the new tax revenue to reduce the federal deficit, it did the exact opposite.

That's right, Congress enacted the second largest tax increase ever, and rather than reduce the deficit, it increased spending \$111 billion (and that doesn't include the Gulf War costs) and pushed the fiscal year 1991 to an all-time record \$320 billion.

But if you're saying to yourself, "I remember hearing Congressional leaders promise that the new budget would mean a \$500 billion spending reduction in the years ahead. How can they say that?"

Let me explain. Only in Congress can you promise a \$500 billion savings at the same time you increase actual spending by \$111 billion. Here's how it works:

When Congress talks about spending cuts, they are not talking about cutting actual spending, but reducing projected increases. If Congress just reduces the amount of increased spending, it calls that a spending cut — even though actual spending is still increasing.

Confused? Let me give you a simplified example. Let's suppose Congress today is spending \$1 on a program and it has budgeted to spend \$2 on the same program next year. However, if they spend \$1.75 next year they will call that a spending cut of 25 cents — even though they actually increased spending by 75 cents.

When Congress promised to save \$500 billion in the years ahead, this was not an actual cut of \$500 billion, it was a reduction in its "pie-in-the-sky" budget for the future. Even with their supposed \$500 billion cut, actual spending will still skyrocket.

The promise of deficit reduction was nothing more than a myth. Congress just wanted more taxes for

more spending, and would promise anything just to get more of our income.

Congress is bankrupting America. Because of Congress' non-stop deficit spending, the interest payments on the national debt exceed a whopping \$256 billion annually.

These interest payments on the ballooning national debt are already more than all the individual income taxes paid by everyone who lives west of the Mississippi River.

We are rapidly approaching the day when we won't be able to make the interest payment on our debt. I'm sure you understand what happens if you can't make the interest payments on your debts.

I urge you to tell the American people the real story — that deficit spending is increasing, not decreasing as Congress promised. And tell them that the deficit represents a very grave threat to our future.

Mr. and Mrs. Lonnie Kordis, Farmington Hills

Keep on guarding us

To the editor:

No one likes to get a ticket. Isn't it nice to yell, "Prejudice!" loud and clear.

As a resident of Farmington Hills, I urge the police department to let them yell, but keep protecting us. We don't want cars here without proper lights or brakes. It's dangerous.

Most of us do not care to deal with unpleasant folks who are careless about a safe auto or are doing the wrong thing. It's up to our police department to take care of those situations.

I urge members of the community to let the police department know we approve of them stopping defective cars or trucks before they hit us.

Please try and keep unlicensed or drunk drivers off our streets. We want them to continue to do all the things police departments need to do to keep our streets safe.

Ruth Mochlman, Farmington Hills

Observer & Eccentric reaches Michigan's Finest Suburbs!

BULOVA GIFTS FOR DADS AND GRADS 25% OFF

DESK OR TRAVEL CLOCKS

Listed clockwise from top:

- Sale 74.95, Reg. 99.95 Desk clock with temperature, humidity dials
- Sale 22.45, Reg. 29.95 Boutique alarm clock
- Sale 22.45, Reg. 29.95 Time zone alarm clock
- Sale 59.95, Reg. 79.95 Quartz boutique alarm clock with temperature

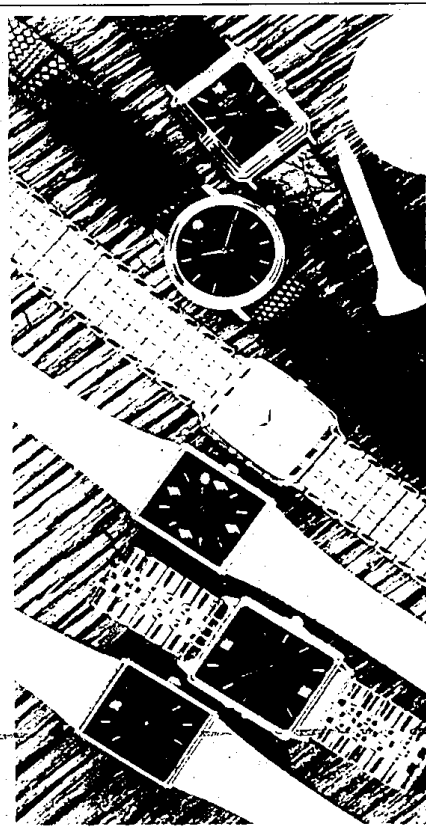
ELEGANT WATCHES

Dazzle someone special with a diamond chip watch, exquisitely designed

Listed top to bottom:

- Sale \$120, Reg. \$160
- Sale 108.75, Reg. 145
- Sale 138.75, Reg. \$185
- Sale 176.25, Reg. \$235
- Sale 138.75, Reg. \$185
- Sale 123.75, Reg. \$165

Regular prices appearing are offering prices only. Sales may or may not have been made at regular prices. Sale prices on regular priced merchandise effective through Saturday. Percentages off represent saving, on regular prices, as shown



JCPenney
Fashion comes to life

Fairlane Town Center
Michigan Ave. & Hubbard
593-3300

Lakeside Mall
M-59 Schoenherr Rd.
247-7710

Oakland Mall
14 Mile & I-75
963-3400

Northland Mall
Greenfield Rd. & Hwy 102
557-6600

Eastland Mall
16 Mile & Egan Rd.
521-0000

Southland Mall
Lynbrook & Parkview Rd.
287-2020

Westland Mall
Warren & Wayne Rd.
425-4260

Twelve Oaks Mall
12 Mile & Oak Rd.
348-3100

Summit Place
Telegraph & Exchange Aves.
683-0000

Northwood
13 Mile & Van Dyke
288-6200

Lincoln Park
4 Mile & Emerson
382-3306

Tech Plaza
5000 Lakeside Circle
573-4370

Briarwood Mall, Ann Arbor
5000 Lakeside Circle
769-7910