

Opinion

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Mr. Farmington

Let's have pageant for guys

HERE HE COMES... Missster Faar-mington... OK, so we're not Bert Parks. And we're sorry if we're singing off key.

But we are sincere when we sing the praises of a "Mr. Farmington" pageant for future Farmington Founders Festivals.

That's right, we're suggesting a Mr. Farmington "beauty and talent" competition with the same pomp and pageantry that accompanies the annual Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills Scholarship pageant, which has been an integral part of the past 17 Founders festivals.

Now we're certainly not suggesting that the Miss Farmington whoop-de-do be eliminated or in any way diminished. It's a great show -- and this year's was especially nice. Festival queen Marie Pinos is both beautiful and talented. All 10 candidates were, really.

As usual, Vladimir's banquet hall was packed as they strutted their stuff on the stage.

But a Mr. Farmington should somehow be chosen, either on the same night or sometime during the festival and with the same basic criteria (yes,

that does include the swimsuit competition) for judging.

MR. AND MISS Farmington could then reign supreme over the rest of the festival, including that big parade on Grand River.

So why have a Mr. Farmington when the community seems to have gotten along swimmingly with the all-female show? Why, it's simply a matter of equal opportunity.

Guys deserve a crack at some of the more than \$5 million worth of scholarships available in pageants on the local, state and national levels. Young men are at sort of a disadvantage when it comes to these things. If they're not great athletes or Rhodes Scholars, they often find themselves out of luck when the goodies are handed out.

One way to correct this would be to have a separate-but-equal local pageant for young men.

Hey, this is the '90s. People wouldn't tolerate the local high school offering varsity basketball for boys, but not girls. The same logic, we feel, applies to scholarship pageants during community festivals.

Support Eight Mile efforts

IT IS REFRESHING, if somewhat surprising, to see communities on both sides of Eight Mile Road work together in an effort to breathe new life into the corridor.

Full support should be given to a task force responsible for determining what can be done to spruce up the region's busiest thoroughfare. At some point, the various cities that border Eight Mile will have to pay more than lip service to the project and put up the necessary money to implement suggested improvements.

For many years, Eight Mile has represented an invisible barrier between Detroit and its suburbs. Starting with Detroit Mayor Coleman Young's infamous statement upon his election that all of his city's criminals "should hit Eight Mile," the roadway has served as an economic and racial buffer in the minds of many suburbanites.

RECENTLY, Farmington Hills councilman

Ben Marks referred to the road as his city's "Achilles heel" while suggesting the area be improved.

Southfield, the next suburb east, has much to gain from a new-and-improved Eight Mile, and has made direct investments in several business ventures there. The city is in a good position to take a lead role in making sure the task force does not become another good idea that was never followed through.

Perhaps, the project could even become a stepping stone for bettering relations between Detroit and its suburbs. Instead of turning their backs on the troubled city, suburban leaders must realize the tremendous benefits of a healthy Detroit.

Detroit cannot survive without its suburbs, and the same is true for Farmington Hills and other suburbs. Hopefully, the success of the task force will end the misperception of the good.

Bad business

Act would allow more power

TELEPHONE companies have found a host of ways to expand business.

They compete against restaurants: "Do" a phone call instead of lunch," says the brochure in our latest phone bill.

They compete against caterers: "Call a family reunion!" says the same brochure.

They compete against stationery and greeting card companies. As daughter goes to college, dad gives her a telephone credit card instead of much cheaper paper and stamps.

They compete against magazines with directories of business advertising -- the two-ton "yellow pages."

They compete against the pokey U.S. Postal Service when proliferating fax messages go over telephone lines.

If your name is in the telephone directory, phone companies make money when solicitors call you. When you take your name out of the directory, the phone company charges you each month. That's a "win-win" proposition for the telephone company.

SO NOW the telephone companies are lobbying Lansing for a chance to "compete" in a longer list of businesses.

They want to get further into "information systems" -- as if you weren't inundated with enough advertising.

They want to manufacture equipment -- as if their former parent, AT&T, and its many competitors weren't struggling.

They want to get into the long-distance busi-

ness -- as if there weren't enough long-distance companies.

Sponsors of the bills -- state Sen. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion, and state Rep. Alma Stallworth, D-Detroit -- have been hard sold a bill of goods under the code word of "competition."

MUCH IS WRONG with the telecommunications bills:

- Telephone companies are a) monopolies and b) big. As they seek to invade new lines of business, there are grave risks they can hide expansion costs in the existing monopoly business underpricing smaller firms.

- After several federal anti-trust suits the old AT&T empire was broken up, and seven regional Bell operating companies were created with restricted powers. Today the telephone companies want to recreate that empire in the name of "competition."

- This week the House Judiciary Committee noted that the Dunaskiss-Stallworth bills would create new exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act.

- Telephone systems in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and San Francisco have been failing, apparently when a deluge of 11 m calls shut down the electronic systems that route them. We wonder if it could happen in metro Detroit.

No, telephone companies have enough challenging things to do, enough businesses to compete in. Michigan doesn't need the fiendishly complex "telecommunications act" to give the powerful even more power.

Second, third amendments

protect civilians from armies

THE SECOND amendment -- the right to keep and bear arms -- is one of the most cited and least understood provisions of the Bill of Rights.

The entire amendment reads, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to bear arms, shall not be infringed."

Coupled with the third amendment, which prohibits quartering soldiers without a property owner's consent, it's clear that the founding fathers weren't looking for the proliferation of weapons and the related problems that exist in today's society.

In Britain and America, 17th and 18th century conflicts created a deep-seated fear of occupying armies and the threat they posed to the rights of the civilian population.

It was Britain's double standard in dealing with its American colonies on these issues that in part led to the American Revolution.

The second amendment has not prevented the federal government from regulating certain firearms and prohibiting some weapons. Due to the constitution's civilian controls over the military, the third amendment has never been tested



Struggles of the past help build the future

IT'S BEEN A while since I've wandered over to see the gang at the corner of 11 Mile and Middlebelt. Longtime readers of this column will know I'm talking about Farmington Hills city hall where I spent more hours than I like to remember covering the eccentricities of grass roots democracy.

Last week I returned for a couple of hours and this time I left with a much different feeling, a feeling that the sense of community is the ingredient which forces us to overcome all the other shortcomings of our present situation.

The occasion was a strange biographical colloquy Bob Sklar, formerly editor of our Farmington and Rochester editions. Bob, now an assistant managing editor, is a real local history buff and has spent considerable time writing and gathering information on the subject. He is a member of the Farmington Hills Historical Commission.

ALL OF US at the Observer & Eccentric have had our own minds this year. We are celebrating 25 years as a corporation, even though some of our editions have been around for more than 100 years.

Recently, a journalism professor from the University of Michigan was commissioned to write a history of our company. For those who are unaware, this newspaper's owner is the Power family, whose ancestors also were the founding family of Farmington back in the daunting days to the 19th century.

All of us at the Observer & Eccentric have history on our minds this year. We are celebrating 25 years as a corporation, even though some of our editions have been around for more than 100 years.



Steve Barnaby

quite an accomplished historian in her own right.

JEAN IS ONE of my local heroes since she wrote an impressive biography of turn-of-the-century Republican governor Fred Warner, whose Farmington home on Grand River is now an historical museum.

Also in attendance was local historian Kay Briggs who is simply a charm to know.

It was a special moment to stand there with present Farmington editor Tom Baer and watch as Bob Power presented pastor Edward Dunham of the First United Methodist Church with a log of that church's history from the last century.

Too often today people question the value of history, its relevance to today's developments. When I remember that recent day in the Farmington history, I know that we can only build a strong future through the struggles of those from the past.

Steve Barnaby is the managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric newspapers.

Don't ban our heritage

By Grover F. Jarvis
Sports writer

This letter is directed at two types of people: those who work at preserving the heritage of a community and those who work at suppressing activities that are designed to display this heritage.

I have been a resident of Farmington Hills for nearly 15 years. I am for all intents and purposes a Midwesterner. In my area of residence, the city is steeped in history and culture, tradition and pride.

The states of the middle-west make up the heart of our nation, and its heritage is something to be proud of. Recently, however, there have been increased efforts to stifle, in part or in whole, community events that help to remind us of our past both as a community and a nation.

One such event is the recent Civil War reenactment at Heritage Park. This two-day event is marked by the recreation of Civil War era army encampments and the reenactment of battles. This event comes complete with many aspects of military and civilian life during the 1860s.

This being the first year I have been able to attend, I was quite disappointed when I heard from several people that the encampment was much smaller than in past years. This may be in part due to the efforts of community members to have restrictions enforced on certain activities.

guest column

RESIDENTS around the area apparently complained about noise levels due to the firing of cannons during the battle reenactment. Because of this complaint, no cannons were allowed to be fired and some on display I can not help but believe that this fact discouraged many Civil War enthusiasts from taking part.

Although artillery proved to be ineffective at times during the Civil War, it was an intricate part of the conflict and its use led to many refinements in the manufacture of ammunition.

To take away this aspect of combat is to take away a part of the true impact of this tragic war between brothers that should serve as a reminder. A reminder of the dangers when people fail to communicate and when they become ethnically and racially isolated.

Men from this community fought in this war and many never came back. The Civil War reenactment brings out the true cost in defending ideals such as freedom. Is it not a part of this heritage that we may pursue happiness both private and

public. Should an entire community be forced to forego something because a few mayors are unwilling to suffer one or two days of increased noise?

COMMUNITY leaders work hard to provide events that everyone can enjoy and for this they deserve our thanks. But I charge that they work just as hard at shutting out or defusing these events in order to cater to the whims of what seem to be a privileged few.

There is an old saw about pleasing people that a few community members need to think about.

Throughout childhood my parents had gone to extraordinary efforts in order to provide an understanding of the world around me. Its past, present and future have been and always will be a source of great interest to me.

For this reason I become very irritated when individuals or small groups try forcing their interpretations of life and liberty on others.

For my part I hope events like this continue. They provide us with the means to teach younger generations about the triumphs and even the failures of mankind. In this way our children might possibly adopt the values and morals that made our nation a leader in the world.

Grover F. Jarvis, 30, is a student at Michigan State University and a U.S. Army Reservist.

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