

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Beer editor/477-5450

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Open the doors! Give auto buyers a break

LIGHT THE skies and wave the flag (actually, plenty of American flags are always snapping in the breeze outside Bob Saks Olds) . . . an auto dealership finally did something with which we can agree.

Bob Saks, the flag-draped dealership that sells Oldsmobiles, Jeeps and Toyotas out on Grand River in Farmington Hills, has taken a lot of flak over the years with one thing and another, but Saturday they made a good move at Saks.

They simply opened the doors and sold cars. That's right, Saks — faced with this gagging, nagging recession that has been death on dealerships across the nation — was open for business on a Saturday. Well, good for Bob Saks and good for a man or woman who just might want to purchase a new car.

Did we hear you ask, a place was open on Saturday, so what? Check out the mall parking lots just about any Saturday. They're likely to be full. Saturday is a day for business. That's when so many consumers are free to buy. That's when the business folk had better be ready to sell.

WELL, FOR years and years that logic has been applied to just about every segment of the U.S. business community — except for the new car dealerships in metropolitan Detroit.

It's an open secret: Around here, thanks to a wink-and-a-handshake agreement, many new car dealerships have been closed Saturdays. Reason: Well, we think (and the Federal Trade Commission seems to agree) that the dealerships have closed Saturdays to prevent comparison shopping by customers for the best deal on a car. And quite often it does take a lot of hard shopping to purchase a new car. You check out what's available in your price range, you haggle, make offers, counter-offers, go over deals on the sidewalk, etc.

Eliminate Saturday shopping, and that makes doing all this and making a living, too, pretty difficult. A consumer needs to be able to spend the time at the many dealerships there are in and around a large city. Buying a new car is a bit more complicated than picking up a pair of Levis.

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SO, DEALERSHIPS stayed closed Saturdays. Dealers that dared buck the system just might hear a brick crash through their plate glass windows or find their gleaming new cars pelted with rocks.

Or they might be confronted with picketers. Unfortunately, that's what happened at Bob Saks on Saturday.

A group of about 50 picketers, most of them employees of local car dealerships, marched outside the dealership to protest the Saturday hours. Most of them said they wanted to spend more time with their families.

We can understand wanting to be with your family, but a used car salesperson isn't any different than a store clerk in that mall with the parking lots that are always clogged Saturdays.

If you're in business, you sell when the people can buy. That's why ballplayers are busy most nights and weekends in season.

We have to agree with the Saks official who told our reporter Saturday, "I don't think the economic conditions are such that we can dictate when customers can come in."

So, keep those doors open Saturday, Bob Saks, and ignore those protesters. There may be a recession raging, but at least a few car buyers (someone out there must want to buy a car) might be getting a little break.

Memorial Decency fights for funding

NO MATTER WHAT ACTION the state House takes this week when it votes on restoring partial funding for The Holocaust Center, the central point of the issue — unbridled gross ignorance born of callous budget cuts — remains.

It all started a couple weeks ago. Guiltless John Engler, fresh from his latest triumph over the disabled, poor and needy, a triumph that turned thousands out of their homes just in time for the Thanksgiving holidays, was riding a wave of his brand of victory. So, having already beat up on the defenseless, Engler turned back to the arts and cultural sciences.

Many wondered what he could do to top his other performances. The Man From Mount Pleasant already had cut state funding for the Detroit Institute of Arts, while quietly restoring a similar funding cut for the Grand Rapids Museum. Any doubt of Engler's blind loyalty to out-state interests and dislike of southeast Michigan was erased with that move.

The Holocaust Center in West Bloomfield, and its \$110,000 allocation from the state, was to be Engler's next target. He wiped out the grant as part of his continuing clumsy effort at budget balancing.

He made no friends with this latest move.

THE HOLOCAUST Center used that grant to let people, particularly thousands of students, tour the center free instead of paying admission. Rabbi Charles Rosenzweig, director of the center,

said he suspected a partial cut was coming, but was stunned when the grant was eliminated.

It seems Engler, after turning on the arts and the poor, decided the state didn't need to fund this chapter in history. His move shows a cold disregard for all those who fought against the Holocaust and for those who sustain this center as a grim reminder to keep history from repeating itself.

Michigan's Senate, sensing Engler had really blown it this time, last week passed and sent a bill to the House that would restore \$50,000 in state funding to the center. Without that restored grant, West Bloomfield's Holocaust Center was the only museum of its kind in the United States not receiving some kind of state support.

The Senate vote was 24-11. Senators David Honigman and Jack Faxon, respectively of West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills, led the charge to restore the funding. Those who voted against the funding restoration are worth noting: Sen. Arthurhult, DeGrow, DiNello, Emmons, Gast, Geake, McManus, Posthumus, Pridnia, N. Smith and Wartner.

Those who pushed through funding for the center, in the Senate and House, are to be congratulated for seeing this cut in its true light and showing the human decency to fight it.

And those who sided with Engler will be remembered as those who thought the best way for Michigan to prosper was by cutting its job opportunities, its obligation to its needy citizens, and its ties to rich artistic and cultural heritages.

Speedy trial with no high bail promised due to famous trial



THE GUARANTEES of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth (speedy trial by public jury and no excessive bail) amendments were added to the Constitution, in part, because of a famous English trial more than 100 years earlier.

The government of Charles II had forbidden William Penn, a Quaker, to speak in public. Penn ignored the order and was arrested for "riot and tumultuous assembly."

At the trial, the judge, noting that Penn had envied his hat, arbitrarily ordered him to put it back on — and then charged him with contempt for wearing a hat in court. The court then ordered Penn removed for the duration of the trial

— a violation of English common law. After testimony about Penn's public speaking, the court ordered the jury to return a verdict of "guilty of unlawful assembly." But the jury found Penn guilty only of "speaking in Gracechurch Street." Such defiance outraged the judge who ordered the jury jailed indefinitely without food or water.

The abuse of the jury was common practice to assure an acceptable verdict. The jury remained adamant and finally the frustrated judge gave in and accepted the decision.

The judge got his revenge, though by jailing Penn until he paid a fine for wearing his hat "in the face of authority."



Gathered around

A class from Redford Township gathers around for the center cut by Governor Engler. For an editorial on the subject, see the lower left corner of this page.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Reflections on death with dignity, caring

MY MOTHER-in-law died six weeks ago. Effectively paralyzed and sightless from a severe stroke, she vegetated for three years in a nursing home in Ann Arbor.

When she first was admitted, she was saddened and depressed at her predicament. Later she was angry.

Around a year ago, the tone changed. "I don't want to spend another birthday in here," she said repeatedly. "Can't you find a doctor to give me a pill? I just want to get on with it."

It broke my heart to listen to this brave woman who knew she never would recover and who wanted to die with what was left of her dignity intact.

I was never able to find that right doctor. She had another stroke, lapsed into a coma and died quietly. But like many, many others who have faced — are facing — the same situation, I am left wondering why our society cannot find a way for terminally ill or incapacitated people who wish to die when and as they want.

ONE REASON: This is a very complicated, ethically confused and politically charged issue.

Another practical reason: Those who could help the process — doctors, nurses, hospital and nursing home staff — are terrified of being sued, even in states like Michigan which have no law explicitly forbidding assisted suicide of the terminally ill.

So the dignity of those who wish to die but cannot, the pervasive anguish of loving families and the ethics and compassion of the medical profession are all held hostage to the threat of litigation. So what else is new?

WHAT TO MAKE of Dr. Jack Kevorkian and his most recent assisted suicides in Oakland County?

If I were prosecutor, I would be looking pretty carefully into whether Dr. Kevorkian's patients were in fact terminally ill. Assisting those already dying is one thing; killing two very unhappy but not terminal patients is quite different.

Beyond that, my own anguish and ambivalence on this matter are violated by Dr. Kevorkian's loose cannoning and his lawyer's publicity seeking. Together they have succeeded in seriously compromising thoughtful and serious consideration of this complicated ethical issue in Michigan.

SEN. FRED DILLINGHAM, R-Fowlerville, wants to frame the discussion as a criminal matter. The Senate has passed his bill to make assisted suicide a four-year felony.

Other legislators are setting up a special study panel of thoughtful people, which Michigan Right to Life charges is a "pall."

So we have a subject which is uniquely personal and intensely intimate now becoming the subject of a politically charged debate in the



Philip Power

Legislature. What a shame!

Fortunately, because of last week's vote in the death-with-dignity referendum in Washington state, consideration of this issue is not going to be limited to Dr. Kevorkian's antics or the rocket scientists in the Legislature. "Grandma's been talking to Grandpa, and Grandpa's been talking to the kids and the grandkids," said a 71-year-old supporter of the initiative. "It's a dinner table topic now like never before."

Initiative opponents agreed. "There are real arguments on both sides, and I can't overstate the importance of debating it openly," said a medical ethicist.

So let's debate the right to die with dignity. Let's not frame it as a criminal matter or as a publicity stunt or as a partisan squabble. Let's face it like the thoughtful, caring adults we try to be when we confront death at close range.

Philip Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

from our readers

Yoder says thank you

To the editor: I would like to thank the residents of Farmington for supporting me during the 16 years that I served on the Farmington City Council. It was acceptance by the residents that kept me in office all those years.

Also, my thanks to the Observer for the endorsement that has been given to me during the years I was in office.

Congratulations to the winners. The city remains in good hands.

Ralph Yoder, Farmington

Last but not least, I thank Ilona Gale and the other high school volunteers who worked so hard on my campaign. Such young people brighten the present and give hope to the future.

I have made so many new friends during this election and hope to make many more prior to the next election.

Don Olivero, Farmington Hills

Here's what ails country

To the editor:

What ails the country? It is hard to condense in 200 words, but a loss of manufacturing for the consumer market is one main problem. I am amazed at the number of foreign cars, particularly Japanese, purchased not only by young women but older folks who are retired.

First it was Japanese cameras, then watches, electronics, TVs and now cars or whatever else they choose because the Japanese are noted for gaining market share at the expense of profits.

Americans had better wise up because crime statistics are directly related to unemployment caused by this outflow of dollars and jobs, plus a lot of retirement benefits for the

elder folks are directly connected to the economic well being of this country.

The young people, and particularly the young women, had better start learning where their present standard of living came from.

They better know that they're the ones who are going to suffer the consequences with a very costly lower standard of living in the future. Wake up.

Don Summers, Farmington

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.

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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