

Opinion

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22A(F) O&E Thursday, December 5, 1991

Season's spirit It shines in Farmington, too

THERE'S GOOD news... we think. Despite this nagging recession, people in the Detroit area seem to be spending a little more money this Christmas season they say.

We notice that Twelve Oaks Mall is jammed with holiday shoppers these days and nights. The solid-state cash registers in the stores are beeping and chirping merrily away.

A lot of Farmington-area folks with serious holiday shopping on their minds flock to that monster mall in Novi, the next suburb west of Farmington.

Sure they go there. It's close with a nice selection of stores and, of course, there are those acres and acres of free parking.

With so many people doing the majority of their shopping at the malls, we almost have to believe that Christmas would have to be canceled if some environmentalist wizard waved his magic wand and the malls suddenly reverted to corn fields, orchards and meadows.

BUT A WANDER through the brittle broadsheets of the old Farmington Enterprise newspaper, the forerunner of the Observer, seems to prove that yes, Virginia, there was life — and Christmas, too — before monster malls with their acres of free parking.

In days of old, people simply shopped their hometown business districts and apparently came away none the worse for the experience.

An Enterprise editorial from 40 years ago advises readers to "help yourself and help your home town" by giving local merchants first crack at your Christmas dollar.

"When Farmington's merchants prosper, the entire community prospers," the edit pointed out. "You not only help yourself, but you help your friends and neighbors."

But the missive also spoke of "the responsibility of the merchants to encourage and promote

greater interest in the Farmington shopping center. Cooperative effort must be made to make the entire community attractive to hometown shoppers."

That was good advice then... and now. And we're happy to see that Wendy Sirip-Sittsamer, head of the Farmington Downtown Development Association, and a lot of local merchants seem to be taking it.

SHOW UP IN downtown Farmington this Saturday, Dec. 7, and see what we mean.

There'll be a big shopping whoop-de-doo here, beginning at 11 a.m. when Santa arrives by helicopter in the parking lot of the Downtown Center. Santa's lap will be home to youngsters with wish lists at a storefront between Art Alcove and Center Tire.

Shoppers will be able to ride a free trolley from store to store in the business district. The vehicle — unfortunately it's not a really trolley, but you can't have everything — will make 12 stops and will hit all shopping areas.

The Farmington Historical Museum, also open Saturday afternoon, is on the trolley route. So is the library where kids can make free holiday decorations. Many business people will be offering holiday gift drawings in their stores.

And one of the nicest touches: The Farmington Civic Theatre — the closest thing the old business district has to an anchor — will be showing the youth-oriented movie "Home Alone" for free that afternoon.

All things considered, there are lots of good reasons to be downtown this Saturday and throughout the holiday shopping season. No, it isn't a monster mall with about a thousand stores, and we're not suggesting that shoppers desert those malls.

But please remember the spirit of the season shines in downtown Farmington, too. Show up Saturday and see for yourself.

Bad habit Real enemy is here at home

JAPANESE BASHING, a bad habit indeed, must be a practice abandoned.

Unfortunately, a growing number of Americans are having a difficult time coping with the new world realities which are being played out in their own backyards.

Drive past just about any suburban industrial park these days and the once strange-sounding but now familiar names of Japanese companies festoon the facades of one building after another.

Many of those growing up in the post World War II United States still are prisoners of their own memories. They fondly recall the days when "Made in Japan" was a sneeringly derisive term aimed at inferior imported goods.

Now that disillusioned lot is all too often comparing today's free market competition to the war between our two countries which began 50 years ago this week. Articles suggestive of this vulgar notion are popping up even in traditional media journals.

TO COMPARE economic trade to a state of war is not only stupid, it is a jingoistic thought process which could lead to dangerous consequences.

Let's put it straight. Our enemy in today's trade climate is our own defeatist attitudes and inability to change.

Americans easily mouthed the ideology of the free market as long as little real competition existed from outside of our borders.

All too often, American industry produced shoddy products and expected the consumers to take them or leave them. Those were the gray

days for those who only saw merit in making money for money's sake.

For the first time since World War II we are faced with real competition, from a competitor who knows that the path to profitability is through production of quality and that quality is produced through a team effort from employees of every rank.

Often they are willing to defer profitability for quality.

SUCH THINKING is foreign to most in American business. Once again U.S. business leaders find themselves mouthing the words but unable to perform the act.

Today, the guru of Continuous Quality Improvement, W.W. Deming, tours the country, preaching the gospel which American business rejected in the 1950s but which the Japanese adopted. Many listen, but few in U.S. business circles hear what the man is saying.

In the past decade we have nearly committed an act of economic hari-kari, slashing away at the American industrial mid-section to no avail.

Many are as surprised today at our economic impotency as we were the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor. But this time we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Fortunately, after Pearl Harbor we didn't pout. Instead we pulled together as a team, admitted our mistakes, learned new strategies and executed them with newly built, quality products.

Sounds like a winning formula for today's economic challenge.

10 Amendments guarantee rights, freedoms of people

THE BILL OF RIGHTS is composed of the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution. The amendments were ratified on Dec. 15, 1791.

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of religion, speech and of the press. It also guarantees the right of the people to peacefully assemble and to petition the government for grievances.

The Second and Third Amendments guarantee the right of the people to keep and bear arms and provide that "no soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owners."

The Fourth Amendment protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizure and defines the procedures for issuing a warrant.

The Fifth Amendment guards against double

jeopardy and ensures due process of law.

The Sixth and Seventh Amendments guarantee an individual the right to a defense and the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury and allows for a trial by jury in civil cases.

The Eighth Amendment guards against excessive bail, excessive fines and cruel and unusual punishments.

The first eight amendments in the Bill of Rights regulate the manner in which the federal government may exercise its power, and the Ninth and Tenth Amendments indicate that there may be limits on the government's power than those already specified.

This is another in a continuing series of articles marking the anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



Tapped-out

Rookie Guv cuts off dental care benefits

GOING TO the dentist is one of those dreaded chores that we often put off until the evil tooth grinch sends us a nasty message in the form of an unexpected ache, chipped tooth or cracked cap.

Only then do we seek out the department secretary for a dental form and prepare for the scolding from our always-patient but firm dentist who admonishes that if only we had come like we should have six months ago none of this would have happened.

We laugh, albeit uneasily, about the six-month checkups and the real or imagined pain and suffering anticipated from our moment under the dentist's spotlight. But one thing which has been drilled (no pun intended) into our heads by grandmothers of yore, moms, dads and dental technicians, is that frequent visits to the dentists are one of the essentials of maintaining good health.

Not surprisingly, the grinch who is stealing away good government, rookie Gov. John Engler, has once again struck out at what is becoming his favorite victims — the disabled, poor, elderly, sick and blind.

WITH SUPPORT from those courageous souls in the state Legislature, Engler has indicated the cut-off of \$18 million in payments for dental care under the Medicaid program.

All of us really ought to seriously think about the wisdom of having a state chief executive whose major

The grinch who is stealing away good government, rookie Gov. John Engler, has once again struck out at what is becoming his favorite victims — the disabled, poor, elderly, sick and blind.

policy initiatives consist of beating up on those who are unable to defend themselves.

Some tough guy, this small time, small town politician who has spent his entire career sucking money out of taxpayers' pockets.

Engler's latest prank will cut off \$800,000 from preventative and maintenance dental care. And although Engler may have convinced himself that he is saving money, in reality, we all will be paying a higher price down the road when these dispossessed start filtering through the system with much more critical health care problems than a simple tooth ache.

Think about it. Nearly 5.5 percent of Michigan residents will be without dental care. Their teeth will rot, gums fester and deteriorate and their oral cancer will go undetected. They will develop infections and digestive problems. And unless we decide to let these people languish in the streets,



Steve Barnaby

we will foot a bill much higher than \$18 million.

But let's put aside the economics of this situation for a minute and consider the type of society this governor and those of like mind are designing.

I have a tough time believing that we have become a society which holds itself in such low self-esteem that we see fit to lash out at those who can't even defend themselves.

We are a better society than the one envisioned by the jowl-cheeked, obviously insecure chief executive. Perhaps the vision from his state-bought, high-priced Oldsmobile is a little different from many of the rest of us. Perhaps he has a tough time seeing the true Michigan through the fog when looking out the window of elite governor's mansion on Mackinac Island.

A governor of the people this guy is not — especially when it comes to those without the money to fight back.

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

from our readers

Board's decisions concern her

To the editor:

I have been waiting to read letters questioning some of the recent and not so recent decisions made by the Farmington Board of Education.

Three areas of concern me: the teacher contract just negotiated this summer, the cost of taping school board meetings for cable casting, and the Whole Language Approach curriculum.

The Observer endorsed Susan Renzel for the school board last spring. Your reason for endorsing her was that teacher contracts were up and Renzel's previous experience was essential in order for a good settlement to take place. Yet, the board was only able to negotiate a one-year contract. No experience was necessary for that end result.

Parents will again be wondering whether this summer's contract will be negotiated in time for school to start.

I DO WANT to see the school board meetings on cable television. However, the decision to go with an expensive, state of the art, three-camera package with an extravagant sound system, instead of an adequate, reasonably priced basic system, is not one to be made when told the schools are hurting for money.

A more reasonable alternative is to rent the city council chambers that are already set up for taping, or use one of the media centers already paid for at the high schools. Students could run the equipment for credit, experience, or even minimum wage.

There has been a lot of discussion on choice within this school district. Surveys on year-round school are being processed right now.

But the choice I want and that is most important to parents and the community is curriculum.

The latest method being used is the Whole Language Approach. I believe this unproven, untested method is the old, failed, Look-Say program with "relevance."

THE WHOLE LANGUAGE Approach may be the latest in teaching techniques, but I don't wish my children to be the guinea pigs to see if it works. I want tried and true curriculum. I want reading taught by phonics. I want my child to learn his math facts, not calculator proficiency.

I want my child to be taught how to spell correctly, not inventively. I promise it will not impair her creativity. I want my child to have good penmanship as well as computer experience.

I want a choice. And, the parents of children who are unable to learn to read by the phonics method (approximately 15 percent of the population) should have a choice of these alternate methods.

Decisions made by the board of education affect my taxes, my place

of mind, and my children's future. I can't be the only one concerned about these areas. Where are the other letters?

Patricia A. Alspach,
Farmington Hills

Engler's actions appalling

To the editor:

As president emeritus of the Oakland County Parks Foundation, I am shocked and appalled at Governor Engler's Executive Orders 1991-31 through 34. I have dedicated many years of my adult life to the acquisition and preservation of open space and parks for the future generations of Oakland County.

The Water Resources Commission, the Air Pollution Control Commission and the 19 boards and commissions and the advisory committees he has abolished all perform valuable services in the preservation of our environment.

The arrogance and dictatorial nature of the action is appalling.

I, for one, have lived in this state longer than he has. I have done more for the environment and the preservation of parks than Gov. Engler, and I as a citizen will not voluntarily be closed out of the system.

George A. Googiasian,
Bloomfield Hills

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