

Opinion

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O&E Thursday, December 12, 1991

Winnersville

Our prep stars are shining

ODDS AND ends, bits and pieces... our opinions on several Farmington-area issues.

CITY OF champions... that's Farmington Hills now that the football and girls' basketball state tournaments are history. By now everyone who cares about high school sports knows that Farmington Harrison captured the Class BB football championship Nov. 30 with a 34-7 thumping of Cheboygan in the Pontiac Silverdome. It was the fifth football title for the school.

Then Mercy High, an all-girl Catholic school located about a mile and a half southeast of Harrison, went all the way to the Class A girls' basketball finals before losing to Detroit King, 52-36, Saturday in Battle Creek.

The excellent showings reminded us of 1982, that memorable year when the same two schools won titles in the same two sports. At the time, we recall making the rather facetious suggestion that it was probably something in the water that made champions.

Of course we know better. We have a feeling that as long as the two class-act head coaches — Harrison's John Herrington and Mercy's Larry Baker — stick around there'll usually be some school to celebrate, sportswise, around those schools.

IT'S MADD-ening... that people have to resort to holding "candlelight vigils" to raise awareness about the problem of drunks driving, as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) did last Monday at Nardin Park Methodist Church in Farmington Hills.

Yes, the vigils are getting to be kind of gruesome old hat around the holidays, but we hope the MADD folks keep them up. They're needed as long as drunks continue to use autos to slaughter themselves and other people on our highways. The candles will be burning a long, long time, we fear.

The vigil also begins national Anti-Drunk Driving Week.

Mistrust

Enact legislative ethics code

Used car salesmen get a bad rap. Politicians often are compared to those hard working marketers in the same scurrilous tones. However, the car dealers quite frankly say that used cars are sold "as is."

Politicians come with no written guarantee on performance, but dedication, but maybe they should. Questionable behaviors contribute to the public's growing distrust of elected officials. That's something that conflict of interest and code of ethics legislation could resolve.

A legislator can be working in the Michigan House or Senate one day protecting the electorate's best interest and then — voila — finds employment as a lobbyist using those legislative connections to work for the new employer's best interest.

CHANGING allegiance overnight is not novel. It happened once this year when state Sen. Douglas Cruce, who represented Troy and Birmingham, resigned his position — which included chairing the state's insurance committee — to become president of the Michigan Insurance Federation, a lobbying firm in business to find the best legislative deal possible for insurance carriers.

But Cruce's two-step isn't a new legislative dance. It's happened often enough in the past — Sen. Kerry Kammer and Reps. Bobby Crim and Gary Owen. It's the case of jumping that legislative fence that makes voters wonder whose interest is being served — the public in general or the legislator in specific.

A political reputation can be dashed in just a few seconds when a legislator becomes a lobbyist

IT'S TOO BAD... that our city officials now have to worry about fending off the state in this "home rule" battle that seems to be building.

The flap revolves around Senate Bill 486, which stipulates that a registered family day care home be considered a residential use. A local ordinance couldn't prevent it.

Both city councils have indicated concern about the state trying "to take home rule away from us," according to a Farmington councilman. Well, perhaps all the facts aren't in, but it seems to us that the state's role is to help, not hinder, local governments.

Our pols have so many problems on the local level on which to test their talents. They shouldn't have to fight (or even worry about fighting) the monster in Lansing.

Two stories in the issue appeared in the Dec. 9 Farmington Observer.

JUST A REMINDER... If people at the 47th District Court in Farmington are thinking of asking again for public money to expand and renovate the courthouse (we've heard rumors), they should also come up with a leader this time — someone who can present the need for the improvements to a skeptical electorate.

A \$1.8 million bond issue for the courthouse went down in flames last election day because there simply was no plan to support it. When something was finally done, it was too little and too late.

And that was too bad, we might add, because in our opinion the renovation of the courthouse was really needed. It can get pretty crowded in that white building on 10 Mile Road.

Now we're getting letters from residents advising that the sitting judges work harder instead of asking for public money to build some country club of a courthouse. More than a few voters are turned off to the issue, we think.

Oh well, let's hope our judicial establishment learns from its mistakes.

for groups that may not serve the best interests of those who have voted for and supported the former elected official. And it's time something is done about it.

What needs to be weighed is a person's right to find gainful employment against the ideal of an honest politician. Often, perceptions mean more than reality and that probably is the case in this dilemma. If legislators were to police themselves, that would go a long way to change the minds of those voters who think that all politicians are crooks.

To punish unsavory job changes, legislators need a bill passed that specifically lists length of time before resigning a seat and taking a lobbying job plus setting penalties.

THE MICHIGAN Constitution already has that provision for its judges, which states that judges must stay clear of jobs with potential conflicts of interest for "the period of his service and for one year thereafter." Even if not re-elected, a judge still must wait one year — a cooling off period — before taking a job that could make voters question the integrity of the judiciary. A similar conflict of interest law for legislators could restore some faith in those elected officials.

A lobbying firm may not be as interested in a has-been legislator if the professional relationships have had one year to cool.

Voters should pressure lawmakers into enacting some kind of legislation that would eliminate the conflicts of interest. Legislators, too, should embrace a code of ethics that would enhance the elected position and give greater confidence in those who hold those seats.

Government fulfills promise of rights in old parchments



AMERICA HAS ALWAYS been about rights. We were the first people in history to found a nation on the basis of rights we believed we shared with human beings everywhere.

For more than 200 years, Americans have been constantly learning about individual rights and the challenges of sustaining them. We have learned by living out the promise of the "old parchments."

While many nations are based upon a common religion or ethnic heritage or upon natural geographic frontiers, Americans have made rights the foundation of our national identity.

We provided for a government to secure those

rights. Our Declaration of Independence offered the promise of such a government. The Constitution was the fulfillment of that promise in its system of ordered liberty.

Even our failure as a nation has been measured by the rights to which we aspire.

Together with the subsequent amendments and those rights contained in the original Constitution, the Bill of Rights articulates the fundamental ideals of liberty, justice and equality which not only have shaped the American experience but also have made our system a beacon to other nations seeking a better life.

This concludes our series marking the anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



Lincoln

Take heart in the small steps to reunite area

JUST AS ADDICTION can only be approached one day at a time, racism can only be alleviated one step at a time.

Some people and groups in Detroit and our suburbs are taking some of those steps.

An invitation to attend a city/suburban race relations conference, sponsored by New Detroit Inc. last week was sent to school, police, clergy and elected officials from all our Oakland and western Wayne County suburbs.

From our area, only Birmingham, Farmington Hills, Southfield and Bloomfield Hills (schools) sent representatives.

The thrust of the conference was "Building Bridges." Panel members talked about various projects they were involved in that brought people of different backgrounds together.

The idea: Here's what people are doing, so you can think about what people can do in your community.

William Nabers, president of the South Oakland NAACP, told of a two-year "Black-Jewish dialogue" with Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, which has included social and educational activities, joint charitable projects and is now branching out to address issues of economics and politics.

Edward Hustoles from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments spoke of the regional efforts that will involve many people to revitalize Eight Mile Road, as well as the efforts his predominantly white

Catholic parish is making to keep open its parochial school to serve the primarily black, non-Catholic population living around it.

Barbara Tally, a native Detroit and the first African-American ever to be elected in the city of Southfield, is a founder of the Oakland County Open Housing Center which helps pro-integrative housing moves. "I remember living in neighborhoods that were black and white. It's no good to have an Oakland County looking toward integration if we don't have a Detroit doing the same thing."

SOMETIMES SILENCE says more than applause.

The 70 or so people attending had just viewed a WTVS show, shown earlier this year, that portrayed a student partnership between a Birmingham and Detroit elementary school and how it is changing the perceptions of those students.

It is not a throw-together, let's-go-on-a-bus one-time field trip. It is a more solid program, which is being built up over time, with students talking about it, being paired up with a child at the other school, writing him or her letters, doing a video letter, spending time together and perhaps extending that to family visits.

Before starting the exchange, Bingham Farms Elementary students mimed no words as they said they associated crime, drugs and poverty with Detroit. Equally as said, students at Detroit's Newberry Ele-



Judith Doner Berne

mentary had almost no idea of what or where Birmingham was — the suburbs being no part of their world. Many of those who attended the "Building Bridges" conference were impressed that Birmingham is the only suburban school district which is committed to such a program.

NOT EVERYONE. "When you put these kids in a line, who's going to get the job?" voiced Helen Kelly, a board member of New Detroit. "The money (for education) needs to be put in one pot," she insists.

That it still comes down to economics was echoed by Hustoles: "Racism is like a fog that sits all over us," he said. "If racism were alleviated, economic problems would still exist."

Still, the small steps being taken by various groups to reunite Detroit and its suburbs can add up to that bridge. And those who care about the city we all want to share again can be heartened.

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

from our readers

Let's work with officials

To the editor:
The "concern" expressed about school board decisions (letter, Dec. 5) sounded more like tired campaign rhetoric.

Yes, many of us have parts of the latest teacher contract that we are unhappy with. But we didn't have to put a complete package together and sell it. As for a one-year contract, with a state run amok, Farmington's contract is preferable to a Troy or Rochester contract that locks in three years of 6 percent increases.

The points concerning cablecasting were well made. The board considered all of those points and more. They made a compromise based on value. Do it right, but do it economically. They could have spent a lot more and they could have spent a little less. But a little less would have been a total waste.

The points at curriculum were scary. There is no such thing in Farmington as untested, unproven curriculum. Such claims indicate parental education is needed. Typical of this is the attack on inventive spelling.

It does not mean that children are not taught to spell. It does mean that if you are interested in developing the ability, desire, and pleasure in a child to express themselves with the written word, do not stifle and/or demoralize them with what they did wrong. Celebrate what they have done right.

Reading, spelling lists, spelling tests, editing and publishing final drafts — after the idea have been generated — are the places to emphasize and teach spelling.

There are a lot of issues faced by all of us in this district — financing, secondary curriculum, facility improvements and contracts are a few. Express your expectations and concerns to the administration, board and staff and work with them in making decisions for our district rather than sitting on the sidelines and complaining after the fact.

Dave York,
Farmington Hills

He recalls editor fondly

To the editor:
My fellow band members and I would like to send our deepest sympathies to the family of Loraine McClish. She was a very kind woman.

Loraine interviewed my old band, "The Blue Factor," in 1989 in regards to our debut demo/album titled "R&B To The Max." Not only did we learn a few things about ourselves by some of the questions she asked, but also she made it fun. We thought when we were to be interviewed, it would be by some "old grouch" that probably did not even have an open mind to the music we create and/or Rock'n'Roll altogether.

We believed she would hammer us with questions quickly and without discussion or interest just to get the job done. Instead it was Loraine making us laugh and feel at ease.

I know I am not telling the people at the newspaper anything new when I say Loraine was nice, fun, and easy to get along with. She is not someone to be forgotten. We would tell everyone the same exact thing.

Michael James Polosky Jr.,
Detroit

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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