

# points of view

## Sorry Andy, that boat won't float

HOLD IT, please. Before you read this, let your eyes wander down the page to Andy Sneddon's guest column. Take a few minutes to savor his written gift to the Farmington area.

Ticktickticktick... a few minutes are passing.

All finished? Good. Now please continue reading this one.

**SORRY ANDY**, but your logic — like Cheboygan High's football team in the state finals — is a loser.

Now, Andy, I'm glad you wrote that column and I'm glad the Cheboygan Daily Tribune published it. And I'm happy that so many prep football fans down here in fudgie-land got to read it.

It got a lot of us down here (and up there, too, I suspect) thinking and talking about where we live and why.

Andy, we both know that's what newspapers are all about: getting people to think and talk and act. So nice going on that score. Of course, live steam was shooting out of a lot of ears around here as they read your opinions about the Farmington

area and its citizens, but that's OK, too.

I suspect our fans'll survive to blithely another day about some other reporter's column. You know sports fans, Andy. They love to gripe about what they read (or don't read) in the newspapers.

But what really bothered a lot of us was the way you tried to make the state Class BB high school football championship — our Farmington Harrison Hawks against the Cheboygan Chiefs Nov. 30 in the Pontiac Silverdome — into a Good-versus-Evil kind of thing.

**TO YOU**, A schoolboy football game amounted to: Up There versus Down Here... God's Country vs. the Devil's Domain... honest, hard-working country boys who know the value of a buck vs. fat fudgies with too much money and not enough brains or brawn.

Well, that boat just won't float, Andy, and the game's outcome — 34-7 in favor of the fudgies — has nothing to do with why it won't.

Harrison won that game simply because the coaches — Messers. Harrington and Sutter and others —



**Tom Baer**

were better prepared than the opposition — as usual.

And over the years they've managed to infuse that spirit of preparedness (both physical and mental) to their young charges in green and gold.

Sure, that's only my opinion, but it's based on almost 11 years covering sports in the Farmington area in the 1970s and early '80s.

Andy, in your column you asked us to check out the Harrison parking lot. Well, I have, my friend, maybe too many times. The school itself probably wouldn't impress you. It has the grim look of a walled penitentiary — complete with gun turrets.

In fact, a rumor has persisted for years that Harrison will be sold to the county or state and turned into a prison.

Harrison is also the runt of the Farmington public high school litter, environmentally. That's why the Hawks, with a Class A football program, always seem to be playing for B or BB titles.

**AND WHEN IT** comes to athletic facilities, well, the playing fields here certainly aren't lined with gold dust. The football press box is (or was) an infamous two-hole that resembles one of those out-buildings you up North guys might know about. There are no lights for football and the scoreboard had a way of clunking out at crucial moments.

But you see, Andy, none of this matters. It's people, not luxury facilities, that make a successful football program. Harrison's had those people over the years, and they've managed to bring five football championships to the school.

And, Andy, we had to laugh when you wrote about those \$150,000 houses in Farmington Hills. I guess that might be about low average average for this town. There are others that go for about \$400,000. (Yeah, that's out of my range, too, Andy) and still others known as "fixer-uppers" that

**Let's just try to bloom where we are — a smart move since most of us don't have much choice about where we live. We live where the job is, or where the loved-ones are.**

will never make the "Select Properties" section of our newspaper.

When it comes to houses, people and football programs, it takes all kinds, Andy, and all kinds are what we have here in our community. People, Andy, it's a solid white-collar with maybe a slight bluish tint to it.

Yes, there are doctors and lawyers and corporate executives. And there are also people who work in machine shops. Hopefully, they're all employed these days. Lots aren't around here, you know. If you don't believe it, shine around and see what there is for our Farmington Goodfellows to do.

Ah, but enough of this. Let's just

try to bloom where we are — a smart move since most of us really don't have much choice about where we live. We live where the job is, or where the loved-ones are.

Andy, if you're ever down this way, look me up and we'll brave the "grid-locked traffic" you're so concerned about and maybe hit that hated Gnopolis. I can recommend the ribs. And if I'm ever in C-town, you can show me the sights. I don't know, but the Club 27 sounds like my kind of watering hole. And any place called Hank's probably has possibilities.

Tom Baer is the editor of the Farmington Observer.

## Hills could be state's 'fudgie' capital

By Andy Sneddon  
guest columnist

**CHEBOYGAN** and Farmington Hills are about 240 miles from one another. But there is more that separates these two communities from each other. Much more.

Cheboygan is nestled here in rugged Northern Michigan. The kids grow up hunting and fishing or working on the farm. Most work during the summer at scrubbing boats or tending the little "tourist" shops in Mackinaw City and Cheboygan. Many work throughout the school year at Glen's, Carter's or Subway. Most have had their share of experiences with fudgies.

There are families of fudgies all over Farmington Hills, an upper middle-class suburb of Detroit. If you go to to the Class BB state championship game, you are going to see the sons of doctors, lawyers and white-collar executives wearing the Harrison green and gold.

Cheboygan will counter with the sons of cops, farmers, restaurant and hotel managers, laborers, roadcrew workers, teachers, small businessmen, keypunchers and people who work for the city.

Things to do in Farmington Hills: Drive around in grid-locked traffic. Go to the monstrous cinema where

there are a dozen first-run movies playing — for 6 bucks each. Put on your best clothes, hop in your Mercedes or Cadillac or Corvette or Porsche and try to impress the rest of the trendies at the mall or a so-called pub.

**DO YOU KNOW** what the bars are like in Farmington Hills? Picture the trendy spots in Petoskey or Traverse City or Harbor Springs. That is Farmington Hills. You know, 3 bucks a bottle for the latest "in" beer.

What is Cheboygan? The Kingston theatre, the Subway shop, Cheboygan's Convenience Store, Johnnie's, Hank's and Club 27, Riverfront Cigar, Kimart, The House of Belgie, Pappas', The Gold Front, Mickey's Mini Mart, The Family House Restaurant, Vito's, Kretschman's.

Two- and three-story, \$150,000 homes are the norm in Farmington Hills. Of course these houses are built about three feet from each other because of the price of real estate in metropolitan Detroit. The lawn service people come once a week to spray chemicals to get rid of the insects. God forbid mummy suffer the discomfort of a mosquito bite.

Farmington Hills epitomizes suburban sprawl. Thirty years ago, when the area was called Farmington Township, there was nothing but woods and swamp where Harrison High School now stands at 14 Mile and Farmington roads.

Except for a few developments, Cheboygan is relatively unchanged. It is, for the most part, the same as it was in 1970.

Do you know what's down the street from Harrison High? A bar/restaurant called Gnopolis where professional sports stars are said to frequent. All you have to do is walk in the place and everybody there will be more than happy to tell you about the night they bought a beer for Jack Morris or Alan Trammell or Steve Yeaman.

"He sat right here on this stool," the guy will tell you. Of course, he'll also have to tell you that he makes \$100,000 a year, his kids are 4.0 students, his wife does 800 hours a week of volunteer work at the hospital and what a great athlete he was in school.

**HARRISON HIGH** school opened in 1970. Most of those \$150,000 houses are less than 25 years old. Harrison graduates go on to places such as

Michigan State, Michigan, Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan and Western Michigan. All, of course, courtesy of mom's and dad's pocket-book.

Oh sure, Farmington Hills kids work. But I'm sorry, a part-time job at the city pool or valet parking cars at a restaurant during the summer isn't the same as bailing hay from sunup to sundown, larring a roof or slaving over a tub of hot grease in McDonald's every day after school and on weekends.

Take a look at the student parking lot at Farmington Hills Harrison High School. Convertible Mustang GT0, Chrysler LeBaron, Pontiac Sunbird, Ford Escort GT, Jeep Wagoneer. These are sweet 16 birthday presents.

At Cheboygan, it's pickup trucks, a rusted out 12-year-old Chrysler Cordoba and a Plymouth Horizon with 110,000 miles on it. It's working on that car for hours on the weekend to keep it running.

The recession hurts in both towns. The unemployment rate in Cheboygan County is 30 percent. General Assistance has been sliced and diced

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by the governor. A lot of people are running out of options. In Farmington Hills, daddy doesn't get the big Christmas bonus from General Motors because of the recession. Sorry, Skippy, you'll have to spend spring break in Daytona this spring instead of Cancun, Mexico. Sorry, Muffy, you can't go to the prom in a stretch limo. You'll have to take Biff's 2-28 instead.

If tomorrow's football game was to be decided on per capita income, Harrison would win easily. The game, thankfukily, is about 18, 17 and 18-year-old kids, blocking,

tackling and running. It's about football.

The Chiefs have a chance to knock off one of the true heavyweights in Michigan high school football. That's all they've ever asked for, a chance.

Andy Sneddon is the sports editor of the Cheboygan Daily Tribune. His column appeared in that newspaper on Nov. 29 — the day before Farmington Harrison beat Cheboygan, 34-7, in the state Class BB football championship. Sneddon, by the way, once lived in the Detroit area.

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