

POINTS OF VIEW

Silver medalist warms to pride of local folks

Unless you were a particularly close observer of the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, you probably never have heard of John Coyle — even though he's from right here in Oakland County. But like Nancy Kerrigan, of whom you may have heard more than you care to, he won a silver medal for skating.

Coyle, a West Bloomfield resident, Southfield Christian graduate and frequent of the Birmingham Ice Arena, was a member of the U.S. men's 5,000-meter short track speed skating relay team which took the silver Feb. 26.

Coyle, 25, was honored Thursday, not by a parade through Disney World, but by a ceremony in the Birmingham Public Schools' bus garage where his mom, Dorothy, works.

He was surrounded not by hordes of strangers trying to decide whether to shake hands with Mickey Mouse or a skating doll, but by friends, family and local officials who are genuinely proud

that he represented their corner of the world so well.

Coyle, unlike Kerrigan, who quickly traded the cold of Norway for the warm, monied skies of Orlando, stayed for the closing ceremonies — a ceremony that imparts the history and spirit of the Olympics upon participants as well as those watching from the stands and from televisions around the world.

Coyle, unlike Kerrigan, didn't have a television crew following his every move, even so closely as to pick up ungracious remarks.

In fact Kerrigan's disappointment in losing was overheard by the world as she complained that gold-medalist Oksana Baiul was delayed because the 16-year-old Ukrainian orphan probably had to redo her make-up after her emotional response to winning.

In truth, it was because Olympic officials had trouble locating a rendition of the Ukrainian National Anthem for play at the ceremony.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

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It's very hard to imagine Coyle making such a petulant remark.

After marching in to the red, white and blue-decorated bus garage, with his girlfriend Billie Thomas, getting a hug from his mom and a pat from his dad, he confessed: "This is great. I never expected anything like this."

And unlike Kerrigan, he didn't talk of should haves, would haves. Perhaps his expectations weren't gold, as hers surely were, but perhaps they were — or will be, in a future Olympics.

He too has trained — 15 years worth in a type of skating that never holds the pot of gold at the end that figure skating promises — particularly as a member of a relay team.

So along the way he also picked up an engineering degree from Stanford.

"There were a lot of times when things didn't go well and money was tight," Coyle acknowledged. He said his dad kept him at it — never wavering in his support.

Like Kerrigan, after all that effort, Coyle may have reacted on a very personal level. Most of her interviews have revolved around her own views of her performance ("flawless") and seemed to have little relationship to her representation of the United States.

"When you win it, you think, 'That's great,'" Coyle said.

Then: "But when you come home (to the U.S.) you find out you didn't do it just for you but for all these people. I really feel happy about it."

And in that spirit, Coyle may actually end up richer than Kerrigan. Because whether she will be able to feel the pure happiness of the American people through all that silver is a real question.

John Coyle gave his silver medal to his dad for safekeeping. Nancy Kerrigan gave hers to Mickey Mouse.

Judith Doner Berne is managing editor of the Eccentric Newspapers. You can reach her at 901-2563.

Dual finance plans neglect needed school reform

Michigan's politicians have shown scant leadership in planning and implementing public school reform. For the most part, so have Michigan's universities.

Rather, the state's stalwarts in this revolutionary arena have been present and recent-past school district executives from the greater metropolitan area such as Bill Keene and Mike Flanagan of Oakland and Wayne County Intermediate School districts; John Schultz, Deborah Anthony, and Beverly Stone of Rochester; Gary Faber of West Bloomfield; and Observer & Eccentric columnist Jim "Doc" Doyle of Troy; soon-to-be Farmington superintendent Bob Maxfield and his past and present Berkeley colleagues Sam Flom, George Blaney, and Tresa Zumbach.

Others have included John M. Hoben, Mike Homes and Shirley Spaniel of Plymouth-Canton; Dave Sneed of Detroit; Terry Follbaum of Centerline; Marian Ginopolis of Ox-

ford; George DePillo of Warren Consolidated; Beverly Gutter and Karen Roth of Southfield; Betty Davis of Pontiac; and Bob Docking, Gary Doyle, and Dan White of Bloomfield Hills fighting the good fight for reform.

I included the ideas of most of these educators in my Third Annual Telford's Telescope publications when I was Rochester's assistant superintendent of schools (although I doubt many of them wanted this fact publicized at that controversial and tumultuous time). Public school chieftains, though, can't reform the system without help from higher education — nor can they do so without the active good will and good faith of legislators.

Michigan's government in general, and its governor in particular, have failed monumentally to provide the education to which all of the children in this state are entitled. Even so, I've met with one former legislator — gubernatorial candidate Howard Wolpe — and am impressed.



JOHN TELFORD

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I specifically liked his metaphor about not removing the patient's heart until a replacement is available — reference to Gov. John Engler's and Sen. Debbie Stabenow's opportunistic initiative to remove the property tax as school support without having a ready replacement.

The "replacements" our Lansing leaders finally came up with (which we'll be forced to choose between on March 15) are like Tweedledum and Tweedledee in that each offers schools the same amount of money. What is really needed, however, is still more money for districts with large pockets of deprived students — and much more creative short- and long-range planning for the state's entire educational institution.

Since I'm obliged to support either Proposal A or its backup, I will vote for A — the sales tax specified in the Engler-supported ballot plan. It appears to do the lesser harm to Detroit, which can absorb no more damage. Unlike the

backup statutory (income tax) plan, Proposal A gives the voter a say in what he will pay by choosing what and whether to purchase.

The statutory plan lacks the 5 percent cap on tax increases, and it also immediately hits hapless Detroiters with a crushing 9 percent income tax.

Still, what I'd really like to vote for right now is a new governor. And I'd also like to vote for a new Legislature, almost without exception. We need new leaders who have the rare courage to face up to hard choices — and the uncommon wisdom to envision them.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, is a former assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth-Canton District. He now works in an alternative school setting in Detroit. He can be reached by Touch-tone phone at 953-2047, mailbox 1879.

LETTERS

Give me freedom

I found myself on a bus from Columbus last weekend. The six-hour night ride allowed me too much time to think and write you.

Being without your own car in Middle America is like being middle class

in the Third World. Praise be to the auto industry! The freedom of an automobile is only fully realized when you're on public transit. With the loss of that "auto freedom," you must always share your time with others, waiting for them to get on and off, forced to acknowledge glances and niceties, and actually speak to new people you don't

have anything in common with beyond the route you are travelling.

I tend to meet too many people on planes, trains and buses; and it's amazing what people will tell you about themselves on a 12-hour train ride.

In cars you're safe from all this contact. Have you ever tried to catch the

eye of a driver at a stop light? When you do they speed away. There really are all kinds of looney people on public transit, most of them will talk to you.

Public transit reminds me of Socialism. Everyone moving slowly in the same direction; no one getting anywhere unique; no one arriving on time; no reason to be early because your con-

nection won't be; no cares; no worry; no performance. Utopia, but not freedom. Cars are freedom. But not Utopia, as evidenced by the freeway commute home on Friday, Feb. 25, after that snowstorm.

Freedom sometimes has its price, but it's still faster than the bus.

Bob Waun, Birmingham

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