

They remember Tragedy defines a community

We got nothing but blank stares and silence when we asked some old-timers — longtime members of Farmington-area officialdom — what they remembered about the murder of Kathleen McLaughlin 40 years ago.

Brows were furrowed and heads tilted in concentration, but no one could recall the Feb. 17, 1955 incident near an icy pond in northern Farmington Township. A mixed-up 16-year-old named Floyd Diamond used a rock to bash the life out of 9-year-old Kathleen McLaughlin just 200 yards from her home on Gilcrest.

You'd think they'd remember. That senseless tragedy must have caused a collective shudder to run through a community that was then a small town surrounded by a mostly rural township.

We're sure that, after Feb. 17, 1955, a lot of people hunted up their house keys so they could lock their doors for the first time ever. And, of course, parents kept an extra sharp eye on their kids after the Kathleen McLaughlin murder.

Then we forgot about the former officials and started asking ordinary people through a short notice in the Farmington Focus column: "Will anyone who remembers the murder please contact us." Yes, the people remembered.

The notice, published just once, drew many, many replies for the Observer to use in a Feb. 20 story ("Memory of murder victim lives 40 years later") about the effect the act had on

the Farmington community.

It was most kind of people like the Rev. Suzanne Paul and Andrea Hall and Mike Harrison — schoolmates of Kathleen McLaughlin at Our Lady of Sorrows 40 years ago — to share with us their memories of Kathleen and her tragic end.

Kathleen's murder was brought back into focus recently with the news that Floyd Diamond, who has spent the last 40 years behind bars, could be resentenced or have an opportunity to appeal his sentence. Diamond, now 56, confessed shortly after the killing and then pleaded guilty to second-degree murder. An Oakland County Circuit Court judge will hear testimony from Diamond on March 29.

But Diamond wasn't the main reason we looked into this matter. We wanted to interview Farmington-area folks who remembered and tell how they coped with this tragedy and what they thought about it four decades later.

In so doing, we hope we were able to give some definition to a community that in the 1950s was changing rapidly from small town to subdivision suburb. If we were even remotely successful, we have ordinary people like Paul, Hall and Harrison to thank.

And perhaps recalling and talking about Kathleen's murder helped those ordinary people as well. Paul wrote in a kind note to reporter Bill Coutant, who wrote the article, "Thank you for giving Andrea and me the opportunity to remember and put closure on our remembrances."

PBS still worthy of tax money

Whatever the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is, taxpayers shouldn't allow it to mutate further and become a partisan football. It's one of the few things we, as a society, have come together to do well, and we have been successful.

Liberals and conservatives alike should take no small pleasure in the excellence presented, to anyone with a television, through the realm we call public broadcasting.

As we all know, some of our legislators in Washington — including U.S. Rep. Joseph Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Township, whose district includes Farmington, Farmington Hills, Redford Township and part of Livonia — are recommending cutting some or all federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Their positions range, such as in Knollenberg's case, from a need to trim the country's overall budget deficit at every opportunity, to House Speaker Newt Gingrich's supposition that CPB is a conscience-comforting toy for the liberal elite and should not be supported with other-than-liberal tax dollars.

The amount in question is a \$285 million appropriation.

There's a lot of back-and-forth going on in the battle to fund or not fund CPB, and if so, by how much. For instance, Knollenberg, in a letter to a constituent, noted that CPB doesn't — or shouldn't — need federal funding because programs such as "Sesame Street" gross in excess of \$1 billion.

That serve is returned by Daniel Alpert, an executive with CPB Detroit affiliate WTVS-Channel 56, who says that figure is misleading because it includes dollars from merchandising sales, licensing products to manufacturers, and the retail cut from stores that sell program-related items.

Public broadcasting doesn't get any of those dollars, Alpert says, leaving "Sesame Street" to run on the not-for-profit funding it receives from The Children's Television Workshop — about \$20 million per year, which barely covers production costs.

We can volley forever, or we can put all that aside and remember why we thought public broadcasting was worth funding in the first place:

■ As a country, we wanted to further education in every way possible, in keeping with our desire to provide a free education to anyone who wants one.

■ We wanted a non-violent programming alternative for our children. In fact, we wanted it to go beyond non-violent and address the challenge of simultaneously being interesting and educational.

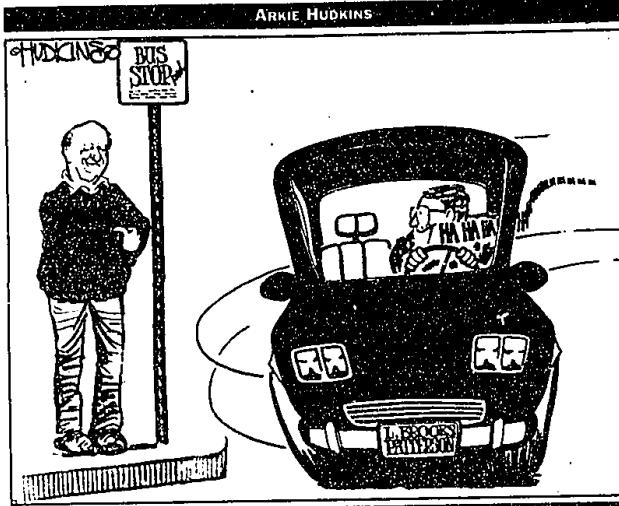
■ In-depth news and information programs, without allegiance to advertisers, were considered desirable to ensure as objective a viewpoint as possible when sensitive programming, such as a series on the tobacco industry, was presented.

We continue to think those were, and remain, worthy goals. In a society that prides itself on hard-earned freedoms of thought and speech, we have traditionally welcomed the opportunity for a good debate from a multitude of sources, and CPB is a necessary player in the process.

In order to remain strong, our goal should be to keep, not cut off, all forms of information and opinion.

That's an argument that protects everyone's interests, and can work as well for Rush Limbaugh as it can for Bill Moyers.

We should recognize the value of that discourse and look elsewhere to balance our budget.



LETTERS

Be fair to FHS

I am sick and tired of favoritism shown to North Farmington compared to Farmington High School.

I am sick of looking in the paper and seeing all the wonderful things that North Farmington has done, and hardly ever seeing anything about Farmington.

Take, for example, the musicals that were just put on by these schools. Farmington did "Fiddler on the Roof" and there was absolutely nothing publicized about it, but when North Farmington came along with its musical, "Peter Pan," it gets front-page publicity. Where is the fairness in this?

Another example of this favoritism is in sports. In last week's paper, I turned to the sports section, and what do I see? North Farmington Raiders right on the front of the section. They had won a game. Then I turn the page and see that one of Farmington's team's had also won a game, but were they on the front page like North always is? I think not.

I am tired of Farmington always being portrayed as second best and would like to see something done about this.

Jennifer Moreton, Farmington Hills

Teach facts

The Feb. 23 Farmington Observer contains several letters to the editor from eighth-grade students from a Power Middle School physical science class.

Those letters confirm that our schools are no longer educating students with scientific facts about environmental issues, but rather they are indoctrinating them with false beliefs and are turning them into advocates for a certain ideological point of view.

One letter states that "if global warming continues, because of the ozone layer's destruction, due to us, we're going to be swallowed up by the oceans. The coastal flooding has increased dramatically."

If they were taught this, shame on the teacher. Nothing in that statement is true. The facts are that global warming and ozone depletion are both unproven scientific theories and they are independent of each other. Global warming, if it is occurring at all, is not being caused by ozone depletion.

Further, if massive global warming leads to the melting of polar ice caps, it would not

cause any significant rise in ocean water levels.

Witness what happens when an ice cube melts in a glass of water. The water level in the glass does not increase but stays the same. This same principle would hold true if a polar ice cap melts: Since the ice cap is already part of the ocean, its effect on water level is independent of its physical state, solid or liquid.

Where is the evidence that coastal flooding is increasing dramatically?

If this is the kind of "education" going on in our schools, the future of our children is indeed bleak, not because of some alleged apocalyptic environmental disaster, but rather because of the scientific ignorance of kids taught a false ideology and political activism instead of scientific facts.

Let's teach them academic skills necessary to become productive members of a modern technological society.

James N. Brozovich, Farmington Hills

A real gamble

Since we're hearing so much lately about how much revenue and how many jobs casino gambling will bring, I thought I should share some statistics so that we can all see the whole picture.

According to the February issue of Focus On The Family's Citizen magazine, Atlantic City went from 50th to first in the nation in per-capita crime after casino operations began in the late 1970s.

After limited-stakes casino gambling was introduced in Deadwood, S.D., authorities reported a 60-percent increase in crime, and a 50 percent increase in domestic-abuse and child-abuse cases.

Just two years after gambling was introduced in Central City, Colo., assaults and thefts had already increased 400 percent, and child-protection cases increased 600 percent. Studies at the University of Illinois reveal that for every \$1 in revenue generated by gambling, taxpayers must dish out at least \$3 in increased criminal justice costs, social-welfare expenses, high regulatory costs, and increased infrastructure expenditure.

So when we read about all that casino revenue, ask yourself how much that "revenue" is going to cost us. Is that really what we want for Michigan?

Lynn Jahneke, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What's been your greatest challenge?



We asked this question at the downtown branch of the Farmington Community Library.

Trying to convince people that my time and advice is worth paying for.
Scott Landwehr
Farmington Hills



Living as a single person keeping the bills straight.
M.S. Obvoto
New Hudson



Right now, raising my four kids.
Ann Robinson
Farmington Hills



Being a Good mother.
Sue Lasey
Livonia

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— Philip Power