

An all grown-up Jerry Mathers, star of the '50s sitcom "Leave it to Beaver", was brought to town. He appeared at a

The road beckons, nowly wild and smooth slong Big Beaver. And modernization is going on loss flag heaver. The source of the sourc

ny that created a new format for Amer-ican shopping.



Kmart was the first national mass merchandiser of quality, brand name products at discount prices. It made the Blue Light Special a household

phenomenon. Landing its international headquar-ters was a feat for a city, Troy, and a region, Oakland, to be proud of. Today, most unfortunately, Kmart brings to mind layoffs, store closings and a structure long manusement

and a struggling new management

Last year during this pre-holiday time, local, national and international headlines told of hundreds of employ-ces let go from this very Kmart head-quarters. This year, its plummeting stock pric-es, a quarterly earnings report worse than analysts projected and worry over the company's "put" bonds are making pre-holiday headlines. The stock opened Monday at 8%. Loss from continuing operations was \$116 million, or 26 cents a share, com-pared to a net income of \$30 million or 8 cents a share for the same quarter inat year. And if the company's credit rating falls to less than investment ing falls to less than investment the could push Kmart into bankrupt-"o".

cy. Still, warm childhood memories of

shopping at the Kresge's store on Washington in Royal Oak pervade. So out right to know

do many years of relying on the Kmart on Orchard Lake Road in Parmington Hills, which now reflects the compa-ny's hard times and is not where I shop

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technology. The road beckons, newly wide and smoth along Big Beaver. Let's hopo Kmart can ride it out to better days ahead.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing edi-tor for the Eccentric Newspapers. You can leave her a voice mail message at (313) 953-2047, est. 1997, or send a letter to the editor by fax or mail to this



ometimes when a reporter has a dispute with the editor, the re-porter will "pull" his byline off a 5

Black journelists at The Detroit News did that a few years ago. I knew a reporter who fashioned herself a politi-cal expert who wouldn't put her byline on an education story. But now we have something new — firms that specialize in tracking and even investigating reporters. The Wall Street Journal (Nov. 10) tells how the U.S. Department of Energy, the beef and gun lobbies, Microsoft, Philip Morris and McDonald's pay firms which analyze how "favorable" a re-porter's past work might be to their in-terests.

and do p.r. for the Oakland County Road Commission. Says the Journal

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## TIM RICHARD

straightest newsmen and p.r. persons in either business. A lot of this dirty work is going on. The businesses say, shucks, "it gives us more of a sense of how to approach," in the words of one of the sleazy re-rearchers. searchers.

searchers. Says a publicist for the National Rile Association, which hired that firm, "I don't know if it would prohibit them (anti-gun reporters) from getting an interview. It might make us more cautious upfront. There might be more common onle "

und rules ground rules." One wonders what Tom Washington

B&W that barred him from talking

B&W that barred him from talking about the company. Since CBS had paid the exec a \$12,000 consulting fee on an earlier story, B&W charged it would be "tortious interference" if the network induced the ex-exec to break his contract with B&W. Wisely, the CBS attorneys told Wal-loce and his crew not to air that inter-view. The point is that businesses will impose all sorts of gag rules to keep you as consumers from finding out how bad their products are. According to the American Trial Lawyers magazine, a trend has spread since 1986 to require plaintiffs who have won settlements from business and government to agree to "seal" the court records so that tanyayers and stockholders can't find out how much their shennigans cost them. Time was when a rumb-bum re-taiter would threaten to pull his adver-tising if you put his drunk driving ar-rest in the paper. Now our leaders in business and government are playing ditty pool.

dirty pool.



tate lawmakers resume work next week, presumably refreshed by a couple of brisk weeks in deer camp and a hearty The section discussion. Thanksgiving dinner.

The main action will take place in the House which is set to consider the revision of the school code embodied in Senate Bill 679.

Make no mistake: This bill is complex. It make no mistake: i nis oili is complex. it repeals 2,841 sections of the old code, adds 15 new ones and modifies 37 others. It's also on a fast track, with conservatives pushing for quick passes and school people and teachers' unions urging delay for study.

Some of the changes are much-needed simpli-fications of a far too bureaucratic code. Others, however, are far-reaching and very controver-sigl. SB 679, for instance, does away with the required core curriculum and allows districts to pick any kind of standardized testing they want.

It also features "open enrollment," a provi-It also features "open entoiment, a provi-sion that lets kids enroll in schools outside their home districts and take with them the per-capita grant of up to 46,653. Conservatives like the idea because it introduces "competitive forces" into a monopolistic public school sys-tem, although there's no solid evidence that such composition actually improves school per-formance. formance

State Sen. Bob Geake, R-Northville, put the issue squarely at a recent school forum: "Where a family lives now should no longer control here a kid goes to school

Minnesota, which has had schools of choice alnee the mid-1980a, offers the closest compari-son. There, something like 4 percent of kids choose to attend a non-neighborhood school. en choice advocates like Sen. Geske admit that most of the kids who move do so for conenience, not to attend a better achool.

Rejoins Livonia school district trustee Frank Kokenskes: How come a "whole new law" is needed to satisfy 4 percent of the population when 96 percent are already satisfied? There are other problems with the choice no-

For one thing, "it puts a bounty on the heads of kids," according to Livonis trustee Sue Clu-low. Some districts where enrollment is not at capacity will recruit students from other dis-tricts, while others will try to attract academic



PHILIP POWER

or athletic all-stars. Especially vulnerable, ac cording to Nancy Shaw, president of the Livo-nia teachers union, are small school districts such as Clarenceville and South Redford.

Others are concerned that the bill has been Others are concerned that the bill has been designed and pushed by people with limited ex-perience in education. "I'm discouraged that so many code changes are in the hands of people who are not in education," says Linda Finkel, president of the Bloomfield Hills school board. Her feas are echeed by Ronald Miller, deputy superintendentin Birmingham: "I have difficul-und by adicians" computer with changes ve difficulty with politicians' comingup with changes without careful consultation with school peowith politicians' comingup with changes

The fast track SB 679 is on worries others "They're making too many changes too fast," says Grace Preston, who lives in Rochester and is the state PTA president.

Rep. Gerry Law, R-Plymouth, agrees: "It's just a rush, a 100-yard dash, to do this." And Law wonders about achool quality. "Most par-ents are not looking for gimmicke, just good lo-cal public schools, and Lansing tolls them no-body thinks that's important." I think Law is absolutely right. Schools of

Tuble Law as to be the silver builet of choice for most politicians who want to be regarded as doing something — anybuilty — about achool quality. Sadly, they are being stampeded by a minority of true believers whose ideology in-spires them to jam "competitive forces" down the throats of those who are trying to achieve messured, thoughtful school reform. And you thought that old saw — "Ready? Firel Aim" — was just a joks. Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047 est. 1880. choice turns out to be the silver bullet of choice



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anti-tobacco. B&W's lawyers told the CBS's law-yers that this chap had a contract with



1815 Maplelawn Drive, Troy, MI (810) 643-6900 JAGUAR