

POINTS OF VIEW

A caring visionary passes from the S'fld scene

The Detroit metropolitan community will feel the loss of Leonard Simons, a Southfield advertising executive and very special human being.

Simons died recently at the age of 91. Always a visionary, he wrote in his book "Simon Says": "I believe that death is not final. Death is not final if by virtue of what I have been able to contribute to the happiness of others, I continue to live in the memory of many of the people with whom I have been associated." And, Simons said, if he reached a ripe old age, he believed he would be able to draw on a rich storehouse of memory.

Simons dedicated a large portion of his life leading the way for worthy causes with good sense and wit. It's a rare charitable organization, social service agency or public commission in Detroit that doesn't have his name embedded in its records as benefactor.

What also set Simons apart was his sincere interest in other people and his

thoughtfulness in showing his concern, even to those not fortunate enough to know him and call him friend.

I remember when I received a phone call at work from this remarkable man who I hadn't had the pleasure of meeting. He took the time to compliment me on a column I had written for the Southfield Eccentric. How many busy folks would bother to do that? We chatted on the phone for a few minutes and I wanted more than anything to meet this warm, delightful man.

A friend of mine who was taking a course in creative writing at Wayne State University had one of his articles published in a daily newspaper. Simons wrote him a letter, telling him how much he enjoyed his writing.

Wayne State University awarded Simons an honorary doctorate and named a building in his honor. He was working on raising \$5 million for WSU when he died. He also was writing a follow up to his book of folk wisdom, "Simon Says."



JACKIE KLEIN

Simons, in the 1940s, got the idea to raise money to establish the Detroit Historical Museum. He was a founder of the Michigan Cancer Foundation and Sinai Hospital.

When Simons was in his late 70s he said, "I'm getting used to my own form of retirement — the time when a man goes from 'Who's Who' to 'Who's he?'" But Simons never retired from life.

His book was published on his 80th birthday. He had worked tirelessly to

research and preserve Detroit's history and donated thousands of books on the subject to the Detroit Public Library.

He was a voracious reader. Besides poring over books, he must have read every newspaper published in Oakland and Wayne County.

Simons made a lot of speeches for a variety of organizations and causes. He always combined wit and humor with serious matters.

In a talk sponsored by the Sisterhood of Temple Beth El, he shared his impressions of mainland China.

"How I became a maven on Red China in 16 days can be explained in one word — pretend. Pretend you know more than you do," he said. "I didn't take a camera because I take what are called 'Mario Antoinette' pictures. I usually cut off the heads. I have a 25 minute talk on mainland China that will take 45 minutes. I lose my place a lot."

Simons raised money to help restore Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac's birthplace and received an order of Merit from France.

Eighty-four of his friends responded to his appeal for funding the restoration. One contributor sent a note that read, "I can't turn you down. But I've come to the conclusion that knowing Leonard Simons is an impoverishing experience."

Knowing Leonard Simons, even through a brief telephone conversation, to me was an enriching experience. I have never forgotten his kindness.

In one of his talks, Simons said, "You might like to know that my wife, Harriette, has already picked out the epitaph for my tombstone. It's going to read, 'Here lies Leonard Simons — gone to another meeting.'"

City-watcher Jackie Klein writes a weekly column for the Southfield Eccentric.

GOP leaders don't improve legislative process

When Democrats ran the Legislature, I criticized their habit of operating like union bargainings. Bills weren't passed on their merits after thoughtful research by lawmakers. One bill was bargained against another by a handful of deal-making leaders. Bills piled up and were shoved through in a glut during a "marathon" session on the last working day of the year.

Now that Republicans control all, are things any better?

I give Senate majority leader Dick Posthumus and House Speaker Paul Hillegonds some credit. There is an even flow of work. Individual bills are judged on their merits.

But is it fairer? No.

Let Bill Ballenger, proprietor of the Inside Michigan Politics newsletter, describe how Sen. Mat Dunaskias, R-Lake Orion, got the Telecommunications Act through:

"They (lobbyists for phone compa-

nies) developed — with Dunaskias's approval — a strategy that called for a series of mind-numbing and meaningless public hearings that delayed unveiling the actual bill, crafted behind closed doors by the senator's staff. Even lawmakers on Dunaskias's committee were in the dark on key aspects of the legislation until they first saw it in October."

Note the pattern: 1) generalized public input, 2) a specific, ideology-laden bill crafted in secrecy, 3) brief public hearings on a very complex bill and 4) a fast track through the Legislature.

We turn now to Rep. Martha Scott, D-Highland Park, opposing the welfare reform bill:

"This legislation has been railroaded through the legislative process. More time is needed to study an issue as complex as this and the impacts this legislation will have on the many individuals, especially single women and children... They deserve thoughtful,



TIM RICHARD

honest deliberation and a healthy debate."

Though much needed, the welfare reform bills, the biggest change in the system in 30 years, were rammed the House in a few weeks. There aren't five-day weeks. Committees meet once a week. The bills went through the full House in one session of just a couple of hours.

We come now to the school code. The

Senate Education Committee conducted extensive hearings on the general subject all around the state. I covered one in Farmington where 18 or more people spoke. Chairman Leon Stille, R-Spring Lake, and the panel gave the impression they were listening.

The new school code was quietly crafted, unveiled, and jammed through committee in just a couple of sessions. It looked nothing whatsoever like what people talked about in the hearings. It was rammed through the Senate in two sessions.

"Schools of choice" went through even faster. It was a sloppily-crafted work that invites districts to "skim" the best students and athletes from neighboring districts. It would allow parents to shift their kids to practice discrimination. Unlike the Minnesota "choice" law, it made no provision for transportation, causing critics to charge it was designed only for the rich. It requires a parent to give no reason —

educational or otherwise — for shifting a kid.

Stille held one hearing, pretended to listen but never lifted a finger to repair the multitudinous flaws.

To celebrate this new brand of ideological rush job, I have written a new verse to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

Take me down to the Senate,
Where ram and jam is the game.
Rip up the school code and sunshine laws,
Ladle the money to Grand Rapids' jaws.
We will bend the rules for polluters.
Our highways and roads are a shame.
For it's wham! bam! ram and jam
In the Senate's game.

There is one consolation: term limits. Current committee chairs won't be in office 20 years, like Mack, Jondahl and Jacobetti, and become so jaded. Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events.

'Death with dignity' is becoming more remote

I found myself thinking a lot about my father and my mother over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Part of my reflections were happy, filled with bright memories of my father's carving turkey and the smell of my mother's pumpkin pie baking in the oven.

Part, however, were sad. Both my parents died, a couple of years apart, just before Thanksgiving. They died at home, more or less at peace and with dignity. In fact, I remember vividly my father's saying to me, just a week before he passed away: "I'm not afraid to die. I've had a good life and a long life, and it's time to go."

But for most people, it's hard to die with dignity these days.

That's the disturbing message of a major study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association just before Thanksgiving. It found that after years of discussion about the right to die with dignity, nearly half of terminally ill people in America still die alone, in pain, or hooked to mechanical respirators against their wishes.

In particular, the study calls into question the effect of Living Wills, "Do Not Resuscitate" orders and other devices intended to give patients more say in how to end their lives. Although it has been 25 years since the living will movement began, the study concludes that such safeguards against unwanted medical treatment offer virtually no protection.

Nearly one-third of patients in the study, for example, did not want to be resuscitated in the event of a crisis. But less than half of their doctors knew of their preference.

Worse, a follow-up study showed that even after an intensive program to improve communications about preferences in dying, there was essentially no change in the ways patients died. "The results... shocked me," said Dr. William Knaus, a coordinator of the study.

My parents offer a case in point. They had a fine and caring doctor, who knew and endorsed their wishes to die with dignity at home. Living Will documents were drawn up and repeatedly amended to keep up with constant legislative changes. They had to be signed and posted on the refrigerator door, together with the doctor's order not to resuscitate.

But it was a constant struggle. The fear, of course, was that some nurse or ambulance technician, motivated by a compelling mixture of a



PHILIP POWER

wish to help and fear of a lawsuit, would insert a breathing tube or an IV. "Once that happens," the doctor warned, "I'm not entirely certain we can ever legally get them out, even though that's what they want, that's what you want, and that's what I want to do."

Part of the problem is that doctors and nurses, hospitals and EMS technicians are all trained to make patients well, not to counsel and comfort them as they die. Another factor is the tremendous advances in medical technology that make it possible to save patients from crises that would have killed them only a few years ago. And the pervasive infestation of medicine with fears of malpractice lawsuits cannot be overstated.

It's exactly this troubling situation that has led to such interest in physician-assisted suicide, as practiced in Michigan by Dr. Jack Kevorkian. In the mind of a person about to die, the argument has a certain elegant logic: If most people are going to die in pain and without dignity, and if the medical system — and legal system, for that matter — don't respond much to the wishes of people about to die, why not find a doctor who is willing to help out?

Most physicians I talk to are appalled at Dr. Kevorkian's antics. And many want to do what they can to help their patients die with dignity in the manner and place of their choosing.

But most are frustrated at an increasingly complex medical system that has failed to adapt to the realities of the times, and they are outraged at a legal system through which just one misstep by a doctor trying to follow the wishes of a patient can lead to a malpractice case that could ruin a career.

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OUT THEY GO!



SEMI-ANNUAL CLEARANCE EVENT

Right now, our entire stock of clearance shoes are an extra 10% - 60% off our original low prices for a total savings of 28% - 80% off department store regular prices. All your favorite brand names. Look for special color coded tags.

They've gotta go!



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