

Go to court!

Viewers need a dose of justice

Hey, denizens of daytime TV: Sick of the soaps? Tired of the talks? Feeling hollow and somehow unfulfilled now that there's no O.J. Simpson trial to keep your eyes riveted on that boob tube?

Well, according to published reports, Michigan's Trial of the, uh, Month — the assisted-suicide trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a.k.a. Dr. Death — will be available for eyeballing on certain select cable TV systems, including at least two in Oakland County.

No, our very own Time Warner (formerly MetroVision) is not among them, and we have to ask cable and city officials the following question: Why the heck not?

Let's have local access cable TV live up to its promise finally and fully by providing gavel-to-gavel coverage of the courtroom antics of Dr. D and his mighty mouthpiece, Geoffrey Fieger.

And why stop with the Kevorkian trial? Wheel those cable TV cameras into the 47th District Court out on 10 Mile Road and let them provide a sample in living color of how local justice is dispensed.

There should be daily, non-stop coverage of 47th District Court happenings: arraignments, preliminary exams, sentencing and such.

What a great idea! We're surprised it's eluded everyone all these years. People enjoy looking in on other people's misery. They care

deeply about crime, especially crime committed on their streets or in the next subdivision over. The best-read article in the Observer, we think, is the Police and Fire Calls.

TV ratings? We don't think local cable producers live and die by the numbers as they do on network TV. But, hey, with local court on the tube, every month would be sweeps month.

With local court doings on T-W's Channel 8 or 12 or somewhere on the dial, the network talks and soaps would get scrubbed from the viewing agendas of hundreds of Farmington-area viewers. We're sure of it — especially with the high-profile crime the 47th's been handling lately.

Local cable TV has played a huge role over the years in bringing officialdom into the lives of people who've wanted it. The Farmington Hills City Council meetings (remember when they were called the Monday Night Fights?) are cablecast live, as are the Farmington Board of Education meetings.

And, in recent years, no election campaign would be complete without the obligatory cablecasting of several candidate forums.

Including court coverage from both district and Oakland County Circuit Court on local cable TV would be making a good thing even better. We hope the powers that be give it serious consideration.

OCC chancellor a great choice

Congratulations to Richard T. Thompson on being selected the next chancellor of Oakland Community College, and congratulations to the board of trustees for picking him so promptly and openly.

Now 31 years old, OCC has hundreds of administrators and faculty who have been there most of their working careers. There was no lack of local talent. For the first time, an OCC board has promoted from within, to the legitimate pleasure of the constituents and the public who know Thompson. He will boost morale.

Thompson will provide almost immediate leadership — effective March 19 — in a 30,000-student college that is financially solid and well run but which needs immediate leadership.

Since a retirement June 30, the Auburn Hills Campus, a state leader in industrial education, has had three interim chiefs. Thompson must move swiftly to choose among the two internal and 33 external candidates for a new president.

There has been high turnover in deans, in part because they've been overworked, in part because time marches on. There has been turnover, for various reasons, in the district office. OCC has paid much attention to student recruitment, retention and assessment, and Thompson's administration will need to fine-tune its handling of students.

As Thompson candidly pointed out to trustees, there has been a high turnover in chief executives — six, at an average tenure of five years. "There was nothing wrong with any of the past CEOs," he said bluntly, "but we've had too many, and they've been here too short a time."

It is regrettable the board vote was 5-2 instead of unanimous. Possibly some in the community hoped the chancellor selection could have been delayed until one or two new

trustees could be elected next June 10; we, too, have sometimes criticized board majority operations. But we note, in fairness, that the recall movement has collapsed, and that delay would be harmful.

The board interviewed finalists publicly, as required by the Open Meetings Act, and seemed to have no trouble with the process. OCC has a lesson for college boards who complain they can't find good candidates under public scrutiny.

Trustee Janice Simmons, who voted no, correctly noted that Thompson lacked a doctoral degree, the first qualification on the board's list. On balance, however, the new chief executive is tailor-made for the job.

He has experience on both sides of the collective bargaining table — a strong necessity in a state still heavily unionized. He has experience in a multi-campus institution, having led three of the five campuses; that's a rarity in Michigan. His intimate knowledge of the brick, mortar and machines will help him as OCC invests tens of millions on renovations.

At age 36, Thompson has 23 years in top leadership and has accumulated a lot of trust; that should count for a college degree or two.

Thompson has personal qualities that endear him to the community: a dry wit; an ability to speak and write plain English and not "edubabble"; a respect for modern technology; an old-fashioned love of the arts; a George Washington-like ability to learn from his own mistakes; and not repeat them; a realistic view of the divided board that picked him.

And Thompson has served on 10 North Central Association accrediting panels. That makes him a known and admired quantity not only in Oakland County but throughout the Midwest. As the news spreads this week, knowledgeable people in many states will join in to say: "Great choice, OCC."

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Have you (or anyone close to you) had the flu yet this season?

We asked this question at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.



'No. We have school so I think my kids are protected.' Patricia Hanson, Livonia



'No. We're very lucky people.' Mary Shenk, Farmington Hills



'No. I must be immune what with people breathing on me all day.' Barbara Schlink, Northville



'No. My wife's had that, and I just don't get sick.' Brad Tobin, Farmington Hills

LETTERS

Program does exist

This letter is in answer to Mr. Seibert's letter in the Observer on Feb. 8 regarding handicap parking enforcement in the city of Farmington.

In the city of Farmington Hills, we have such a program that has been in effect for about five years. It is made up of strictly volunteers and we have the authority to issue citations to persons who park in the handicap spaces without a permit.

This is a volunteer program made up of mostly retirees and willing citizens. The cities of Southfield, Flint and West Bloomfield also have similar programs.

If you care to find out more about our program and possibly start a program in the city of Farmington, feel free to contact me through the Farmington Hills Police Department, Traffic Section, 473-9686.

Stanley Leeman, coordinator,
Handicap Parking Enforcement,
Farmington Hills

Cable service lousy

I am one of the 35,891 subscribers of expanded cable service provided by Time Warner in Farmington Hills. I totally agree with Mr. DeWard's Feb. 8 letter to the editor.

In addition to raising the rates without adding value or services, since becoming our local cable supplier (Time Warner Cable) has experienced consistent loss/reduction of cable service over protracted periods.

During these periods, they place themselves out of reach by failing to provide either adequate means to contact them (too few communications lines to their facility) or possibly by removing the means of communication completely (taking the phone "off the hook").

They have failed to make up any "lost time" through adjustments in rates or enhanced services and consistently provided excuses, but never answers, when finally reached for a status of the cable service.

The fact that they can "legally" raise their rates without any justification whatsoever has enabled Time Warner to become arrogant and allowed for their callous disregard for the cable customers in Southwestern Oakland County.

Competition from the other communications companies may help eventually, although this remains to be seen. In the meantime, there needs to be some accountability on their part and some way to control what they are able to charge.

Greg Zimmer, Farmington Hills

'Annie' was great

Being a parent of one of the students who had the privilege of working on North Farmington High School's recent production of "Annie," I would like to extend my thanks to the many people who were involved in making the show the tremendous

success that it was.

Having a freshman, it was an eye-opening experience for me to see the many hours of hard work that the students put in as well as the supporting staff and crew in putting the show together and yet still be expected to carry on the normal activities of daily life (i.e. eating, sleeping).

We, as parents, so often try to teach our children the value of hard work and dedication to the task at hand, but sometimes there is no better teacher than first-hand experience, striving for that goal and seeing it reached, accomplishing that end result.

We are so fortunate to have in our district some very dedicated, talented people who are willing to devote the time necessary to teach our children, show them this very valuable lesson in life.

I know that I speak on behalf of every parent whose child was somehow involved in the production when I give thanks and praise to the assistant director/choreographer, Lucy Kovak, our music director, Jan Brachel, person in charge of set design, Karen Feder and our magnificent maestro, Carl Gippert.

Last, but certainly not least, to Sue and Dean Cobb, for their endless hours of hard work in making this all happen, for eliciting from our children their very best showcasing of talent, and for bringing to us parents that magic moment that we live our lives for, we thank you.

Bonnie Murphy, Farmington Hills

Better music rooms

I would like to publicly commend the staff at Farmington High School and especially Dave Catherman who was instrumental in developing the restructuring of the Farmington High class schedule.

It is never easy to change and this change will take a lot of effort on the part of the teachers and staff to implement and evaluate its effectiveness.

I am excited that the students and teachers will be able to use larger blocks of time to delve more deeply into subjects.

I am especially pleased that more students will be able to fit vocal music, band and orchestra into their schedules.

However, I am concerned because at Farmington High we have a 1990s band in a 1950s classroom. Renovations have been "on the drawing board" for years, but nothing ever seems to get started.

Band students barely fit in the Farmington band room. There is no opportunity to use the new computer technology because there is no room. There are no practice rooms for soloists or small groups to practice, not even one.

Now that we are moving ahead with this innovative schedule, let's provide music rooms that will take our school into the 21st Century.

Kathy Hall, Farmington Hills

MEMORY LANE

This week in history as reported in the pages of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise:

40 YEARS AGO — FEB. 14, 1956 (ENTERPRISE) Farmington was expected to triple in population from 1950 to 1980, according to the Detroit Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission. Farmington Township's population would double, a commission report said. Farmington High School's debate team, coached by Lloyd Smith, was to participate in a district meet at Ypsilanti State Normal College. Aspirin tablets were advertised at 100 for 9 cents at the Oak Pharmacy, Grand River and Farmington Road.

10 YEARS AGO — FEB. 10, 1986 (OBSERVER) Some 30 cases of influenza shut down St. Paul's Lutheran School on

Middlebelt Road. A \$13.6 million expansion at Botaford General Hospital was expected to be completed by the end of 1986.

Harrison lifted its basketball record to 14-0 with a 71-64 victory over Northville High.

1 YEAR AGO — FEB. 13, 1995 (OBSERVER)

United We Stand, a group supporting Ross Perot, moved to Farmington Hills from Lansing. Mike Fluhart was named Farmington Hills Police Officer of the Year. For 80 cents, students at Larkshire Elementary School could purchase a breakfast of French toast, sausage, cereal and juice.

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— Philip Power