

Tricksters, take note Faxon verdict sends message

Former State Sen. Jack Faxon's victory in a libel lawsuit against the Michigan Republican Party sends a strong message to candidates of all parties, especially this election year. The message:

No more dirty campaigning.

Faxon's suit stemmed from a 1990 campaign brochure that insinuated he knowingly sold a fake Ming vase to an art collector.

Victory in a 46th District Court jury trial vindicates Faxon, a Democrat who represented the Farmington area in the Senate.

For his part, Faxon steadfastly maintained the item was considered a genuine Ming based upon the best appraisal of art experts and, upon reappraisal, the vase is now considered older and even more valuable.

It's time for both parties to vindicate the campaign process.

While the case -- and its \$150,000 damage award -- may ultimately be appealed, the jury's verdict speaks for an electorate fed up with the cynical manner of modern "attack dog" politics.

The jury reached its verdict and agreement on the amount of damages to award in only an hour -- with no second thoughts on either subject.

Already, America is girding itself for an allegation-filled presidential campaign. But the cynicism extends even to the local level.

The Farmington area certainly isn't immune to the silliness and stupidity that characterizes dirty politics.

In a Farmington Hills Council several years ago, someone dropped a few postcards in the mail hinting that a vote for a certain candidate would be a vote for low-income housing in the

community.

In the same campaign, a Hills incumbent and his family received phone calls threatening a sexual harassment suit if he didn't support the right candidates.

Yes, there are concerns about limiting free speech and, yes, American politics has always been a rough-and-tumble affair.

Yet there are limits, both legal -- as the jury verdict points out -- and cultural.

Political campaigns have taken on an increasingly personal tone in recent years, with candidates increasingly attacked by opponents on increasingly minute and slippery issues of "character" rather than their stand on the issues.

At the same time, there's been a corresponding drop in public confidence in government at all levels.

When many of America's brightest and most respected policy makers either walk away from politics in disgust, as Sen. Bill Bradley of New Jersey did, or choose against even entering the field, as Gen. Colin Powell has apparently done, it only adds to the problem.

According to some reports, Michigan politicians themselves are skeptical over whether the Faxon verdict will make a difference.

But it should.

Unless the verdict is overturned on appeal, the state GOP will take a \$150,000 blow to the pocketbook. That, in itself, is reason for any party to rethink its campaign strategy.

This is about more than money, however. It's also about more than one man's reputation.

It's about restoring faith in the parties, in their candidates and, ultimately, in government itself.

Walk to help brighten lives

Enjoy a brisk walk Sunday morning -- and by so doing, help others with little or no control over their nervous systems.

This weekend, Oakland County will be one of Michigan's MS Walk sites designated to raise money for the battle against multiple sclerosis, a chronic disease of the nervous system that wears away the control people have over their body. Walk co-sponsors include the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Statewide, 8,000 walkers in 11 cities will hoof it in support of the 15,000 Michiganders with MS. Nationally, 350,000 Americans have MS.

The Southfield-based National Multiple Sclerosis Society Michigan Chapter asks each walker to enlist supporters to pledge money for each kilometer completed. "It's a devastating disease," said Royal Oak resident Elena Noble, public relations director for the chapter. "Unfortunately, our registrations for the walk are down."

The Oakland site is expected to attract 1,500 walkers, many of whom live or work in the county. The field will include a Troy man who will walk with his son and daughter-in-law in honor of his wife, who has had MS for 25 years. It also will include a team of West Bloomfield High School students, the Rumpshakers, who last year raised \$650 in pledges.

Loops of 15 and 20 kilometers will begin and end at Seaholm High School, 2436 W. Lincoln at Cranbrook, in Birmingham. Registration starts at 8 a.m. The walk starts at 9. The family affair will feature rest stops, lunch with entertainment, medical volunteers and support vans. Recruit friends, family and co-workers to create your own Team MS. For information on registering, pledging or volunteering, call the MS Walk Hotline:

MS Walk proceeds will help support research into the cause and cure of MS. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the world's largest private fund raiser for MS research, has just committed \$7.7 million to support 25 new research projects by top scientists.

(800) 247-7382, ext. 216.

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Walk proceeds also will be ticketed for individual and family support, educational programs, therapeutic and recreation programs, independent living assistance and advocacy.

The progress, severity and symptoms of this potentially crippling disease vary from person to person. Symptoms range from numbness to paralysis to blindness. The diagnosis usually comes between ages 20 and 40, but the wildly unpredictable physical and emotional effects linger for a lifetime.

Since the first MS Walk eight years ago, Michigan residents have logged 525,000 miles and raised \$4.5 million. The Birmingham walk stepped off in 1990 with 1,000 walkers; since then, it has involved thousands of area residents in one capacity or another.

So plan to take a walk on Sunday morning and in the process help brighten the lives of family, friends, neighbors or others afflicted with MS.

MEMORY LANE

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

40 YEARS AGO -- APRIL 12, 1956

(ENTERPRISE) Ernest Blanchard, Farmington Township supervisor, died April 10, 1956, in St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Pontiac, at age 76. His death brought to a close a period of 26 years of continuous public service.

A pilot and his passenger were in critical condition when the small airplane in which they were flying crashed-landed in a field west of the Bond Elementary School near 13 Mile and Orchard Lake.

10 YEARS AGO -- APRIL 7, 1986 (OBSERVER)

To discourage unruly young people from gath-

ering in public places, the Farmington Hills police stepped up night patrols in marked and unmarked cars.

Two construction workers were seriously injured in an industrial accident at Nova Woods cluster housing development in Farmington Hills.

1 YEAR AGO -- APRIL 13, 1995 (OBSERVER)

Linda Enberg and Jennifer Levin were the only two candidates to meet the filing deadline to run for the open seat on the Farmington Board of Education. Incumbent Susan Lightner declined to run for a fourth term.

Helen Robb, custodian at East Middle School, was named Support Staff Person of the Year in the Farmington Public Schools.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What does Earth Day (celebrated April 22 nationwide) mean to you?



"Nothing. I didn't even know it was coming up!"
Matthew Adwell, Farmington



"Earth Day's a great idea. Usually I plant a tree."
Ray Heiman, Farmington Hills



"I don't know much about it. I haven't been in this country that long."
Rubashree Dayaramda, Farmington Hills



"It's a good reminder that it's important to think of the Earth as home to millions of creatures."
Eric Peters, Southfield

LETTERS

Spread the message

I am very proud of my sixth grade students at St. Fabian School in Farmington Hills. They have a worthwhile story to tell.

This year, we have devoted a great deal of time toward finding ways "We Can Make a Difference on Planet Earth." Their efforts are certainly worthy of recognition.

They would like to spread this message of concern about our environment and the care and preservation of all creatures on Earth to a larger audience. We need your help and support.

On Friday, April 19, at 12:45 p.m. we will be celebrating Earth Day at our school. The public is invited to attend. We hope to have their support as we continue to educate others about the importance of working together toward the same goal.

Let's save the planet -- together.

Cathy Ryder, teacher,
St. Fabian School

Great coverage

On behalf of the staff of the Ann Arbor Flower and Garden Show, thank you for your superb coverage and continued support of the show.

More than 27,000 people from Michigan, the Great Lakes states, and Canada came to smell the roses and yacynthine view top-notch landscape displays, and shop the Marketplace.

We hope this show will sustain them until the real show by Mother Nature arrives in the weeks to come.

Margaret Vergth, promotion coordinator

Blowing smoke!

I have an idea to simplify mid-term elections, eliminate most of the expense and provide more accuracy in choosing elected officials. This will also provide a means to interest more of the electorate in this process.

There should be a publicly televised contest to pick winners. The contest will consist of the following five parts, with one hour time limit:

- The first part will be a smoke-blowing competition. The contestant who blows the most smoke in a given time limit wins that round.
- The second part will be a log rolling contest in a pool of water. All contestants will stand on the same log at the same time, in the interests of conserving time. The last one to fall off wins that round.

■ The third part will be wheel spinning contest. Each will take turns with the same car on the same gravel track. The longest spin wins.

■ The fourth part will be a folding used paper napkins in a given amount of time wins.

■ The fifth part is the mud-slinging contest.

An equal amount of consistently prepared mud will be furnished each contestant. Appropriate protective clothing will be furnished to each contestant who will face each other. At a starting bell, each contestant will begin slinging mud at their opponents. The winner will be judged by how little mud he/she has left and how many tases hit their target.

Cheering and hooting by the audience will be allowed, as will name calling, beer throwing and littering.

If rioting breaks out, that too will be allowed. When the contest is finished, all points in each contest will be summed-up and the winner declared, given a key to the city and a kick in the pants.

Losers will clean up the mess.

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

What traffic woes?

Re: Farmington corners Fast Trac road system (March 7). Who is this guy Lauhoff anyway?

Some \$80,000 for a system to keep traffic lights greener a few seconds longer? Have we lost our minds in turning over these kind of decisions to people like him?

The business people have indicated the traffic jam is no big deal. This Farmington resident swears it's no big deal and is not willing to pay one dime to have the traffic signal turn green longer.

This citizen hates to complain without offering alternatives.

■ Put signs up asking for patience. Cost \$300, estimated.

■ Ask Lauhoff to stand there five days a week from 4-6 directing traffic. \$10 per hour times two hours times five day per week times 52 week a year \$5,200.

■ Give our policemen more money, or hire more of them.

Does it seem reasonable to pay \$80,000 to help people from other communities drive through our city to their city.

If the lights are red longer, citizens would have a greater opportunity to get to shops and the inconvenienced driver would find alternative routes that would be almost a full minute faster.

My friends in Detroit love this.

Joseph A. Kronk, Farmington

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— Philip Power