

# Farmington Observer

## OPINION

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48335

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1996

10A(F)

## As to war

### Memorial Day's real message

**M**emorial Day is coming. A nation at peace can — and should — think about war.

Memorial Day, observed May 27 this year, means time away from work and school for many. It's the start of one of our three-day weekends that we've come to cherish.

For many in the Farmington area, part of the Memorial Day fun is watching the annual parade. This year's edition will be held Monday morning along Grand River Avenue.

Thousands of people (and quite a few dogs) will line Farmington's main street to watch clowns, politicians, high school bands, Scout troops, military people (current and former) and all the other trappings of a small-town parade.

Over the Memorial Day weekend, those lucky enough to have the time off will picnic, play softball, wash their cars, dig in their gardens, relax in the sun or in the air-conditioned bliss of a suburban home.

At this time, we are encouraged to remember the "real meaning" of Memorial Day. After all, memorial means remembrance, and this is a day to remember and salute America's war heroes who died in battle.

And there are scores of people in our community who won't let us forget. They're from the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other patriotic organizations.

They're the ones who organize and participate in those parades and services held in the parks and on the main streets of our towns.

The marching and wreath-laying are an expression of our tribute to our war dead, to

**R**emember the real meaning of Memorial Day. After all, memorial means remembrance, and this is a day to remember and salute America's war heroes who died in battle.

their devotion to duty, to courage and patriotism. Indeed, our war dead have made us their debtors — for the flag of our nation still flies over a free land.

However, before we get to waxing too patriotic about this day for patriots, let us remember that there are other reasons for thinking about war and its consequences.

In past years, many would recoil in disgust and anger at what they considered to be a celebration of war on Memorial Day. There were tanks and artillery paraded down our streets, and there were military personnel in uniform with rifles on their shoulders.

They were correct: There was nothing to celebrate. But, even though we've gotten away from celebrating war on Memorial Day, it would be a serious mistake to forget about it.

War can be stupid and senseless. Even the most fervent patriot or the most fanatic ideologue will admit the truth of that statement. Perverse acts are part of most wars.

Yes, there is a whole lot to recall about war. If we think about past wars, perhaps we won't have to repeat them. We believe that's what the men and women in their uniforms with their rifles on their shoulders are really trying to tell us.

We really should listen.

## Oakland road problems linger

**F**or the last five or six years, the Observer has insisted that now was the time to address Michigan and Oakland County road problems — potholes, two-lane paths, lack of turn lanes, freeway ramps, insufficient "smart" traffic lights, aging bridges — with a fuel tax hike.

In that time, state government — the only entity capable of addressing the problem — has been in a stalemate. The governor and Department of Transportation say state roads should get the lion's share of new revenue; counties and municipalities say they need a share.

In that time, fuel prices were low and stable. Drivers would hardly have noticed it if the 15-cent fuel tax had been raised a couple cents a gallon each year.

In 1996, we've watched a battle of the planners: MDOT's people saying they should get more than their traditional 75 percent cut of federal aid; the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments insisting local planners cannot, under federal law, be ignored. SEMCOG continues to insist a fuel tax hike is needed.

Meanwhile, potholes got deeper, traffic arteries got clogged, gridlock at red lights worsened.

Since early this year, prices for regular fuel have inched up a couple of cents a week to the \$1.30s. That raises the difficulty of Michigan's increasing its fuel tax.

There are several reasons fuel prices are going up:

■ A had winter has increased the demand for home heating oil. That reduces the supply of oil available for gasoline, and the price is forced up. There's little we can do about that. And storm damage to equipment in Mexico has reduced supplies.

■ The Middle East, source of much of the world's oil, is politically unstable. Again, we can do little about that.

■ A strike by Norwegian oil workers in the North Sea also has lessened supplies.

■ Oil companies are allegedly greedy, hiking the price two cents for every penny that market forces justify. We don't know how that allegation is and leave it to the Clinton Justice Department's election year zeal to prosecute any collusion and gouging.

■ Consumers, particularly in southeastern Michigan, are buying more pickup trucks and sport-utility vehicles that burn 15-22 miles per gallon rather than compacts that get 35 mpg. We can do something about that. No way can we blame Shell, Amoco and Mobil for that phenomenon. It's fashionable to say "the customer is always right," but not this year. The customers made a collective mistake.

■ Drivers are going faster than ever on 1-696, 1-75 and other urban freeways. In 55 mph zones, they used to go 65. Now if you go 70, you'll see drivers zipping by at 80 or 85, with a blue patrol car in sight. A vehicle loses fuel efficiency drastically over 60 mph. Not only are the speedsters boorish, dangerous and unpatriotic, but they're robbing the rest of us more money.

■ Michigan still has the nation's heaviest trucks on its roads, which are naturally weakened by our freeze-thaw cycles. Tighter weight limits won't ease congestion, but they will reduce the damage these behemoths do to the pavement.

The current governor and Legislature have brought the teachers' unions and trial lawyers to their knees. Let's see if they have the nerve to tackle the truckers' lobby.

Drivers need to take the feet off the gas pedal and rethink their need for four-wheeled tanks. Lawmakers need to go lower truck weight limits and make at least a token hike in the fuel tax, which pays for state, county and local roads.

We'll keep telling you so.

### MEMORY LANE

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

#### ■ 40 YEARS AGO — MAY 24, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

A cornerstone was placed for the new \$1 million Boys Republic on Nine Mile between Inkster and Middlebelt in Farmington Township. Boys Republic's director at the time was Dr. Milton Huber. All Farmington Township and city police officers will be on duty during the day.

Memorial Day weekend to handle what was expected to be a record volume of traffic through the community.

Attractions at the Civic Theater were "Our Miss Brooks" and "Hell on Frisco Bay."

#### ■ 10 YEARS AGO — MAY 22, 1986 (OBSERVER)

"Say yes to parks." That's the name of a new committee formed to promote passage of a special 0.6-mill levy for five years to pay for development of parks and recreation facilities in Farmington Hills.

Officials of a Big Boy restaurant in Farmington will be allowed to pave an unimproved area of city right-of-way to provide additional parking.

Gary Schwedt pitched a two-hitter to pace Harrison's 8-0 baseball victory over Farmington High.

#### ■ 1 YEAR AGO — MAY 22, 1995 (OBSERVER)

Homeowners on historic Power Road are still uneasy, even though the Farmington Hills Planning Commission turned down a plan for a residential development on their road.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

**QUESTION:**  
WHAT KIDS GAMES DID YOU LIKE BEST?

WE ASKED THIS QUESTION AT THE SENIOR CENTER.



WE ROLLER SKATED, JUMPED ROPE, PLAYED CHECKERS.



ANDY OVER: WE'D THROW THE BALL OVER THE GARAGE.



MARY VARTANIAN, FARMINGTON



WE USED TO PLAY KICK THE CAN. THEY WOULDN'T PLAY GAMES LIKE THAT NOW.

ED WERNY, FARMINGTON



DOMINOS, MONOPOLY, JUMP ROPE AND JAX WERE A BIG THING.

CHRIS WALDRON, WIXOM

### LETTERS

#### An endorsement

**P**risilla Brouillette is, I believe, an outstanding choice for the Farmington Board of Education.

Priscilla's managerial and financial experience and her computer background — she was vice president of a successful software company — bring a rare combination of talent to public service.

She cares deeply about education and about the community.

She is the parent of two children in Farmington public schools and has worked hard on school technology, accreditation, strategic planning and other school improvement committees.

Priscilla Brouillette will be a real asset to the board of education, safeguarding taxpayers' interests and assuring quality education for our children.

**Margaret Schaeffer, Farmington Hills**

#### Share the expense

**T**he North Farmington High School Varsity and JV boys baseball players and their families are to be commended for volunteering their precious time on May 3 to clean-up and reconstruct the boys varsity field at North Farmington High.

Both coach Horowitz and coach Ferguson donated their personal time and expertise to the project. They are to be commended, too.

It is amazing to see what can be accomplished through team-work. With concern over the dangerous condition of the varsity field at North, and after reporting it to the school administration, these volunteers provided both sweat-equity and family donations to help fund the necessary field repairs.

There is still costly work to be done, however. It's time for the Farmington School District along with the city of Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation and NFWB to take ownership of the poor conditions of this field and its potential liability and share the expense of the work to be done.

**Toby Gosselin, Farmington Hills**

#### About the search

**S**ome citizens have written and expressed concern regarding the selection process for city manager of Farmington Hills.

It is not an easy decision. When Bob Deadman, retired I recall there was much discussion that the city of Farmington did not do a more in depth search, although everyone admits the result of their selection is outstanding.

Recently, Troy tried to hire a new city manager without using a recruiter and stopped mid-way through the process and hired one,

because, in their words, it simply wasn't working out on their own.

In addition to the fact that Farmington Hills is the largest city in Oakland County it is also a city in transition, that is, we are becoming a city that is not in a high growth pattern but one that must address redevelopment and maintenance issues.

We spent a great deal of time crafting a challenge statement with our recruiter, who has the additional background of just having completed a management audit for us.

Council attempted to be very careful in outlining the needs of the community. The result is the challenge statement used as a criteria for the selection of candidates for city manager.

All candidates were told the discussion would be in a public forum unless they requested confidentiality in writing. Several applicants did request confidentiality, none of our current staff did. This procedure is not one of council's design, but in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act as outlined by our city attorney, John Donohue.

Council, as you might imagine, has no control over what is reported in the press. Dale Countegan, Steve Brock and Dave Call have my utmost respect and confidence and their competence to perform has never been in question. Anything that causes them injury concerns me greatly and I am very sorry if this procedure hurts them.

In regards to the process, in addition to using the services of our recruiter, I personally interviewed several staff members, our former city manager and elected officials from other communities about the selection process and, in some instances, the various applicants.

I am comfortable with the decision to move forward in the manner we are pursuing. We are a public body.

Our actions are subject to the scrutiny of others. If some were displeased, I hope this will help them to understand the process better. I know of no other way to handle this differently and still be within the requirements of the law.

I appreciate those who expressed interest and concern. Please know every effort is being made to accomplish this important task in a responsible, reasonable manner.

**Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills City**

**O**pinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

**L**etters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Hills 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

## Farmington Observer

**Tom Bach, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-5450**

**Tom Byrd, PUBLISHER, 810-901-2807**

**Robert Shular, MANAGING EDITOR, ECLECTIC NEWSPAPER, 810-901-2563**

**Mary Scott, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, ECLECTIC NEWSPAPER, 810-901-2548**

**Steven K. Pope, GENERAL MANAGER, 810-901-2595**

**BUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION**

**PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JOHN REDDY, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD ASHMAN, PRESIDENT**

**O**UR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power