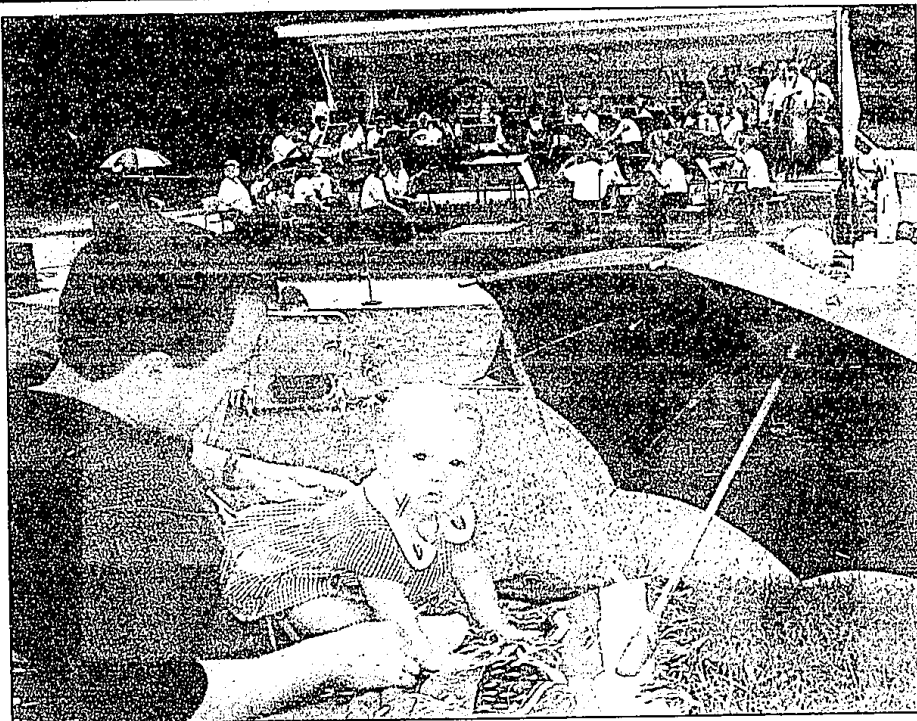




In the swing: Music director Karen Nixon Lane directs the Farmington Area Philharmonic Orchestra.

Hills hails 25 years



Soft seat: Hannah Sennett, 10 months old from Rochester Hills, sits on the lawn with her dad, Matt, as they wait for Hanna's mom, Johanna, and the rest of the Farmington Area Philharmonic Orchestra to perform. The rain canceled other performers but held off for the orchestra's performance.



Her honor: Former Farmington Hills Mayor Jean Fox returned to the community that she helped lead to present a keynote address during Saturday's ceremony in Heritage Park.



Colorful planners: Members of the committee that organized the weekend the celebration, several sporting their early 1970s-style tie-dye T-shirts, were perched on a play structure to hear Jean Fox's speech. Shown, from left, are Debra Brock (not on the committee), Sherrie Stewart, Steve Brock, Jeff Stewart and Abe Aon. The many-membered committee met monthly since last year to make the weekend's events come together.



Swing your partner: Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi twirls Jessica Fox, 8, of Washington, D.C., who was in town with her grandmother, Jean, during Friday's Coach House Hoedown at the historic Botsford Inn, the same place Henry Ford once hosted square dances. The dinner/square dance was part of the Farmington Hills celebration weekend.

Time-honored Ceremony is frosting on cake for town

By NORMAN PRADY
SPECIAL WRITER

While adults gathered under a tent to warm themselves in the glow of a community's achievements, children climbed aboard the nearby swings to propel themselves into the perfect light of a blue-sky summer afternoon.

It was Saturday in Farmington Hills' Heritage Park as the city threw a party for its 25th anniversary. Many who had a role in the city's founding and growth were there, including Joan M. Fox, a former mayor, who invoked the sentiments of 19th century poet James Russell Lowell:

"What is so rare as a day in June," Fox asked, adding that this June day was "an honor and an opportunity" for her. An honor, she said, to be the celebration's keynote speaker and an opportunity to visit again with many of those she'd worked with to help bring the city to this time.

The city's birthday party also was a time for honors to others. The "Businessperson of the Year" award went to civic activist and Councilman Jon Grant of the Reliance Group in Farmington Hills. "Business of the Year" winner was Botsford Hospital, cited for its service to the community since 1965.

In recognition of their role in the development and growth of Farmington Hills, Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi introduced

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many of the 22 others who've also held that post. And special notice was made of 25 longtime residents. The entire event was under the direction of a special committee made up of city officials and residents, including Elsie McKeown.

During the presentations at the front of the tent, McKeown was busy at the back of the tent setting up the yellow, chocolate and marble sheet cakes she'd designed, to be washed down with 34 gallons of an icy drink she'd blended using a prepared fruit punch, pineapple juice and Ecto Cooler, followed by 7-UP, she said, "To get the bubbles."

Not far from the cake table, Matthew Dornan, 5, perched patiently in his father's arms. Daddy Dornan, Michael, the city manager of Wixom, had come to do old-times in the city he'd served as assistant manager from 1974-1980. Matthew's mother, Kathy, is Farmington Hills city clerk.

Also awaiting treats was another element of Farmington Hills' next 25 years: Stephanie Cox, 3. Did she want

some birthday cake? "Yep!"

While Stephanie drooled over thoughts of sugary icing, Jennifer Hoemke, at 24, is almost as old as a city and thinks that's "pretty neat."

Hoemke is Miss Farmington/Farmington Hills, a title won last year at this time in a pageant preliminary to the Miss America Scholarship Program competition. A Wayne State University graduate in theater performance, she recently was a top-10 finalist in the Miss Michigan competition. She plans to study at San Diego State University for a master's degree in musical performances and would like eventually to teach theater arts at a college. Meanwhile, she participates in public events such as this celebration, making the floral arrangements envious.

Likely the winner of any prize there might be for the anniversary party guest from farthest away, Christina Koss, 6, wound herself over, under, and through the climbing bars while saying she was from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

She was at the park with her mother, Carmen, a Palestinian native of Jerusalem who emigrated to Canada, married a cabinetmaker, had Christina, works in an agricultural co-op, and was in Farmington Hills visiting her sister, Sue, wife of Abe Aon, a member of the anniversary committee.



Hand it to you: Above, Christina Koss, 6, reaches out from under the tent to check for rain near the end of the ceremony. She hails from Saskatchewan, Canada, and was visiting her relatives here, including Abe Aon, a member of the committee. In photo at left, John Murphy acknowledges his mention as a 68-year resident of Farmington Township and then Farmington Hills.