

CHAT ROOM



KATHIE O'DONOHUE

True friends - one of life's rare treasures

My mother used to say, "If you have one true friend, you are blessed." Over time I have come to see this as another kernel of wisdom.

I have used the term "friend" loosely, even recklessly, often including those who are acquaintances, and not all relationships progress from "acquaintance" to "friend." Friends are not a fixed commodity; they come and go, they give and take, use and misuse. Some take advantage while others give unselfishly, though the latter are rarer and much more precious.

Some people are friends till the going gets rough. During the bumps in the road of life, they abandon you. Perhaps this is the true measure of friendship: who stays when the complexities of life enter into the picture.

There are those who value you when you are of value to them, then toss you aside like yesterday's old newspaper. Others are not really friends at all, but fierce competitors, and it's not always apparent at the outset of the relationship. You share common interests, relate details of your life. Later, you begin to see these persons as predatory and capable of inflicting pain. You are forced to withdraw for your own protection.

There is not a great deal of difference between the way adults relate

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As the century turns - then and now



By DAVID LITOGOT
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One can imagine the commercialism that will attack us at the end of next year. With the calendar progressing to the year 2000, we will argue about whether the year ends or begins a century. We will be concerned about computer programs, watch special television programs, and purchase commemorative magazines. Collectibles, souvenirs, and cheap bric-a-brac will be peddled to "celebrate" the next millennium. In this age of hype, we will be bombarded.

If we could go back almost one hundred years and visit Farmington in the year 1899 and see how the citizens handle the coming of the next century, whether it be in the year 1900 or 1901 - we would see a remarkable difference. The village of Farmington and the surrounding township had only a few hundred people. The village's small businesses service the area and most businessmen and farmers were prosperous. The streets were dirt. There was no electricity or telephone service in the homes. Many residents did not have indoor plumbing or central heating. Meat was bought fresh from Schroeder's, harnesses were made at Henry Lee's, and boots purchased at Habermehl's store.

Main Street had a bakery, a barber and a blacksmith shop. E.C. Grace and L.W. Sowle ran dry goods stores. Fred Warner, not yet state senator or governor, owned a hardware, a cheese factory, and a cold storage warehouse. He was also part owner of the Warner and Cook store. Downtown was also

the site of the Owen House, a three-story inn that boasted it was the finest inland hotel in the state.

All the news

The only newspaper in town was the Farmington Enterprise, published since 1888. (There are no surviving 1899 or 1900 editions. A reprint of the Nov. 4, 1898, edition is in the Farmington History room at the city library.) Advertising for Hood's Sarsaparilla, Doan's Kidney Pills, and California Fig Syrup added interest to a paper filled with local news about clubs, meetings and local happenings. Before the government established the Food and Drug Act, products that were aimed at the common maladies of the day made remarkable promises. Some products were to appeal to soldiers returning from the Spanish American War. One elixir, named Big G, was made to cure "unnatural discharges, inflammation, and ulcerations of the mucous membranes."

The citizens of Farmington were looking forward to some new advancements in the coming year. The building of the Detroit and Northwestern railway was going to connect the village, by rail, to Northville, Orchard Lake and Detroit. This street railway used an overhead electrical system and got its power from a newly constructed brick powerhouse built on Grand River near Orchard Lake Road. This interurban rail system began service on Dec. 21, 1899. The powerhouse would provide current for 25 incandescent street lamps that were to light the main streets of the village.

Telephone service was coming to Farmington. Already by the year 1900, several pay "stations" were set up in various stores in the village. Using these early phones required patience and lung power to overcome the static and outside noises during a



call. Even cement sidewalks and awning were planned for downtown Farmington.

Farmington was rural

It is difficult to realize that the present bustling, somewhat overcrowded, Farmington area was once rural. We had one-room schoolhouses. In 1899, there were 492 students in the six school and five fractional districts. The taxes for the entire township were \$2,670.35.

People worked, went to church, and joined fraternities. We had the Methodist, Baptist, Universalist and Lutheran churches. The residents could belong to the Masonic Lodge, the Farmington Tent, the Ladies of

the Maccabees, or the Knights of the Pythias. Civil War veterans were members of the Grand Army of the Republic.

One of the more interesting events of 1899 was mentioned in the Detroit Evening News. On Dec. 10, the Russell home, a mile from the village, burned. It was occupied by a group of workers employed by the Detroit and Northwestern electric road. First reports announced that "a number of lives were lost," but the only living things that died were bedbugs. The loss of the building, tools and clothes amounted to \$100.

If one was more worldly and cosmopolitan and read the Detroit news-

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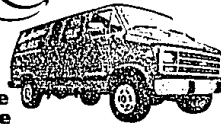
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