

Journalist Skubick brings politics into the real world

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Politics matters. That's what Tim Skubick, host of the TV show "Off the Record" told Farmington High School students at an International Symposium Oct. 1. "You are aware that we may be going to war with a country in the Middle East?" Skubick asked. "You are aware of that? How many think we should go to war?" Less than half raised their hands. "The public is divided too," Skubick said. "It's a huge decision." And if a war does happen, how would students be affected? "You get drafted," Skubick said. "Your brothers or sisters could sign up and their lives would be on the line. They could cut off oil to this country." Since students weren't born at the

time of the oil embargo in the early 1970s, Skubick related stories of the long lines their parents waited in to get gas and other impacts of an energy crisis.

"It can affect the stock market. It could mean your folks might not be able to retire on time and they will need to work a little longer," he said. War also brings the reality of mass destruction and the use of weapons like anthrax and the Bomb. Sept. 11 was a wakeup call for what could happen, Skubick said.

About 12 years ago, the media had major bureaus in all the foreign nations around the world. "All of a sudden, as a cost-savings measure the consultants said, eh, nobody cares about that. It serves no purpose and it's not important."

Another question.

Less than half of the students' hands shot up when Skubick asked who would vote for George Bush today. He urged them to go to the voting booth.

He asked whether students talk about politics with their parents and know who was running for governor and urged them to look at political ads critically. Skubick also touched on a November ballot proposal that could take away the \$2,500 per student merit award money for students who score well on Michigan Education Assessment Program.

Explaining that newspaper readership has dropped off, Skubick said, "Seventy percent of people get all their news from TV. The way it's supposed to work is you watch TV to find out what is going on and then you go to the newspaper to find out more information."

Likewise, fewer media sources are

covering the Michigan Capitol on a daily basis because of budgetary considerations, he said.

"Do the math here," Skubick said. "If 70 percent of the people get their information from television and television is not covering politics, that's a bad situation. People who are watching TV aren't getting any political information at all."

Skubick cautioned that apathy shouldn't determine who gets elected. Apathy could cause government to be put in the hands of people on either end of the spectrum — the far right or the far left.

"If you sit at home, you will let the right or the left vote," Skubick said. "A lot of people will base their decision on campaign commercials. If you do that, you haven't done your job in a

political democracy. You need to do your homework."

There's not a politician around who isn't aware of a public survey, he said.

At the time of his speech Skubick said he was working on a story about "backpack" legislation in California which would regulate the weight of student textbooks which are detrimental to students' backs. He expects the Michigan Legislature will be asked the same question. While students cheered, he said, "I will be given a grand total of about 90 seconds to do this story."

Students received Skubick's speech positively. "It was very motivating," said Angela Oakford, a ninth grader. "He applied it to our lives."

Katie Konopinski, a ninth grader, agreed. "He talked about how it would affect us," she said.

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Excalibur eatery closing its doors

BY MARY McDONOUGH
STAFF WRITER

Excalibur, the swanky Southfield restaurant which has lured in some of Hollywood's most glamorous celebrities over the last 25 years, is closing its doors for good.

Owner Marty Wilk said this week, he has sold the restaurant to Gianni Belsito, the owner of nearby Il Posto restaurant, and will close its doors soon.

Belsito will re-open the establishment, after renovating it with a new name, "Cafe Milano," and a new menu and theme, that of a casual Italian bistro.

"In this business it's kind of difficult to stick around for 25 years. I have been thinking for a while, frankly, that it was time for Excalibur to be reborned."

And when this opportunity came along, it seemed like the thing to do, said Wilk, of Farmington Hills, once the executive chef of the eatery. "I'm excited about it."

The banquet center will remain open but will be renamed, "Il Posto Ballroom."

All previously booked parties will be honored, Wilk said. "The menus and the dates will be honored. Only the restaurant itself will close for renovations."

He added, "I'll stay on a consultant basis and I don't have any plans to open up any other restaurants. It's very emotional for me and my family."

Modeled after the London Chop House, the Excalibur has served steaks, chops, pasta and ribs to the likes of Frank Sinatra, Lauren Bacall, Tony Bennett and Sammy Davis Jr.

Sinatra loved the ribs from the Excalibur so much, he used to fly Wilk to different cities to cook for his parties or send out for ribs when he was in town.

"He even sang at the Excalibur after eating one night — the crowd loved it. Sinatra was one of a kind," said Wilk in 1999.

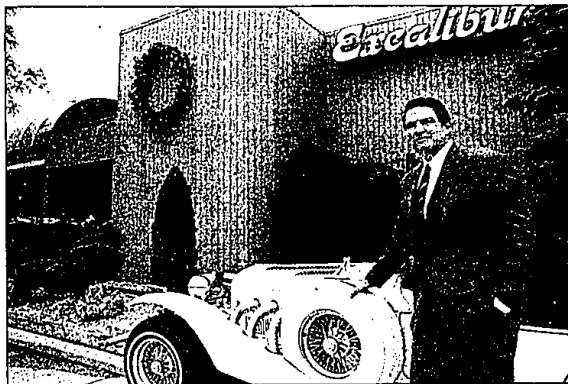
More recently, the eatery attracted celebrities like Michael Jackson, Cher and Lloyd Bridges. Wilk said celebrities like the Excalibur because they could get a great meal, without being bothered by overzealous fans.

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Marty Wilk
owner

In 1995, the restaurant was thrust into the spotlight, when University of Michigan football coach Gary Moeller was arrested for assault and battery, after allegedly striking a Southfield police officer following a heated argument with his wife inside the restaurant. A tape recording of the incident, showing an apparently intoxicated and belligerent Moeller, was released to the media and ultimately led to his resignation from his post.

Wilk's announcement marks the second upscale Southfield eatery to close its door this year.



Excalibur owner Marty Wilk shows off the 1976 Excalibur he loans to customers, back in 1999.

Just one month ago, the Golden Mushroom's owner said he is closing for good at the end of the year.

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