



O come, let us sing
unto the Lord. Let us come
before His presence
with thanksgiving, and
make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.

Psalm 95

Tim Richard Writes

Suburban Culture Blooms In Our School Auditoriums

This is not an appeal for money, either personal donation or tax funds, for anything.

It's not an appeal for "understanding" of any burning social problem.

It's a suggestion that you have a good time. Enjoy yourself. Forget your problems and society's. Expand your mind and amuse it, simultaneously.

Take in one of Observerland's cultural events — a play, an art exhibit, a concert.

IT'S A PARADOX in suburbia that when the leaves are gone from the few trees and the spacious lawns have turned brown in the cold, Observerland blossoms culturally.

There are the theater groups in Farmington, Livonia-Redford, Wayne and (when they can get going again) Plymouth. There are the orchestras of Plymouth and Redford. There are more art exhibits than you can count.

Culturally, the suburbs seem to get all the attention and the national talent, and we don't for a moment want to knock them. It's just that you kill so much time getting there and back, and pay so blamed much to park. It's all right once or twice a year, but what about the times in between when you just want to get out of the house for an evening?

YOU'D BE SURPRISED at how good some of the local talent can be.

Some of the theater groups, for example, have former professionals in their ranks. They're people who got tired of the ups and downs of the big times and sought more stable business jobs and suburban homes to raise their families, but they want to keep their talents alive, so they join the local thespians.

The orchestras include a few hired pros, to be sure, but they are mainly staffed by local people who teach college or high school or raise kids by day. Some have 80 per cent of the talent it would take to get into a metro symphony. They didn't make it, but they're still awfully good, and you can find them in your own town.

We can recall a lawyer whose impressive baritone voice had been largely confined to church choirs. He had never had anything more than a bit part on stage, but he had an impulse to give it a whirl. A local community theater outfit issued a casting call for its annual musical comedy, and the young lawyer landed the lead. Those who saw "The Fantasticks" last spring know who we mean.

PERHAPS THE REASON that suburban culture doesn't have as good a reputation, as it deserves is that its events don't have the

downtown's external atmosphere.

Only one local theater group has its own playhouse, and practically everyone else uses schools. It would be nice to wish for a civic theater or music hall, but we in the suburbs might as well get used to the fact that we're not going to have them for a long time. If ever, and that the schools must fill the bill.

Yet it's not as bad as it sounds. For one thing, schools generally are more community and adult-minded than they used to be. Witness Clarenceville's Schmidt Auditorium, the new little theater at Schoolcraft College and the plans of some

of the other schools. Our suburban cultural institutions are not out of the gyms and all-purpose rooms yet, but they're working on it.

You might do a theater group a favor by making up your mind to attend one of these nights. We have seen a couple of opening night laugh lines fall a bit flat because the actors needed a big, live audience with which to work.

Ah, but we promised not to preach. So don't go to the community theater, concert or art exhibit to do someone a favor or to be seen by the "right people" so you can run for township office. Go and have a good time.

R.T. Thompson Writes

On The Touchy Issues, School Folks Clam Up

Recent criticisms leveled at various newspapers by members of area school boards and school administrations brings up the question: Are school boards and administrations holier than thou? Or should they be considered the same as any other news source?

Over a long period of news reporting, we have occasionally thought that those in charge of school affairs have a strong feeling that they should be exempt from criticism, should be allowed to give reporters only the things THEY feel should be in the news columns, and should not be questioned about anything, whether it be for the good of the community or not.

There isn't any question that school personnel and leaders at all levels love the newspapers when they are trying to put across a request for additional millage, for bond issues and for millage renewals.

Then, the reporters and editors are the darlings — they are the ones who can get the message home that the additional monies are an absolute necessity.

But it is an entirely different matter when a student revolt is threatened, when parents start screaming about the type of instruction, when the question of shared learning comes up, when thefts take place in buildings, and when vandals shatter windows and do considerable damage outside buildings.

For some reason, the school

officials seem to believe that these are matters that are best taken care of at the executive level — in closed sessions and without the general knowledge of the public and the taxpayers.

THE POINT AT HAND is the recent trouble at Plymouth High, principally because three young men refused to follow the school dress code and also refused to abide by the rules in regard to long hair.

There were excellent reasons for the expulsion of the trio. We have learned on the highest authority that the three students staged a sitdown in the principal's office, refused to identify themselves and refused to leave. They disrupted the normal operations of the key office in the school.

They were suspended and then granted a hearing before the school board in an open public meeting. This permission came from the board members.

May we point out this newspaper did not set up the public meeting — all we did was report to the best of our knowledge what took place there.

As could be expected, there was considerable consternation when the matter was made public in the newspaper columns. There was an outburst on the part of a minority group of students. They did threaten to demonstrate against the school, but fortunately, calmer heads stepped in and the threats dissipated.

We are not disposed to support the three young men — we have a strong feeling that they were 100 per cent wrong. We believe the school officials acted wisely in their decisions and in following up with a consensus of the student body about the much maligned dress code.

But the fact remains, the criticism has been turned on the newspapers for even daring to publish

the stories.

WE WOULD CHALLENGE the area school boards to turn over accurate figures in dollars and cents as to the amount of damage due to vandalism during a school year.

We would ask school board members and school administrators why they believe they have the right to suppress publicity about such acts.

We have tried on more than one occasion to secure figures on the total costs of window breaking, vandalism in the locker rooms and lavatories of most schools in Observerland. And the answer we get is that school officials prefer not to have such things published.

On more than one occasion, the reporters have learned of acts of vandalism weeks after the incident.

We clearly recall an incident a few years back when vandals broke into a district high school and shattered every clock in every corridor. We never could get information — only the rather coy statement, "This is a matter handle themselves."

INCIDENTS AT SCHOOL dances, some of which have bordered on wide scale fistfights, have been kept secret. Then, later, the reporter learns that such affairs have been dropped temporarily with no reason given.

We can't agree with the thinking of the school folks. If a newspaper is of value in reporting things that are laudable, then why isn't a newspaper of value in telling its readers of the other things that are taking place?

We can't believe that school boards and administrators have some sort of God-given privilege that allows them to "take care of these things as they see fit."

Profiteers Hurting Plymouth Festival

It was 13 years ago that the Plymouth Rotary Club started a chicken barbeque, that began with some 125 diners, with the thought of raising funds for one of the many charitable programs the group sponsored.

Since that time, the barbeque has mushroomed into a four-day Fall Festival which last September attracted more than 12,000 to the Rotary event on the final day.

The Kiwanis, Lions and Optimist Clubs, the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Jaycees, the Plymouth Symphony League are just a few of the better known names involved. You name a group and you'll find it involved in the Festival in some manner.

Nary a one has any thoughts of individual gain. Each of the groups is involved in a money-making project, but each devotes the proceeds to one of its ventures for the good of the community.

A few years back, a Fall Festival committee was formed for the purpose of expanding the festival program and to govern and control an event which was growing by leaps and bounds.

The plan worked admirably and ended many complaints.

But, then, as in all successful ventures, a monkey wrench has been tossed in which could endanger the future of the Festival.

THAT'S WHAT happened this year. A private venture, not connected with the Festival group in any way, opened in the Plymouth downtown business section. The operators were asked to cooperate with the association on the same basis as all others — namely, to contribute 25 per cent of the profits to the Festival to cover expenses of promotion and entertainment.

The operators indicated they had no intention of joining in with the Association but that they did take full advantage of the business brought to the area by the Festival.

They did exactly that and reportedly resped a fair sized profit.

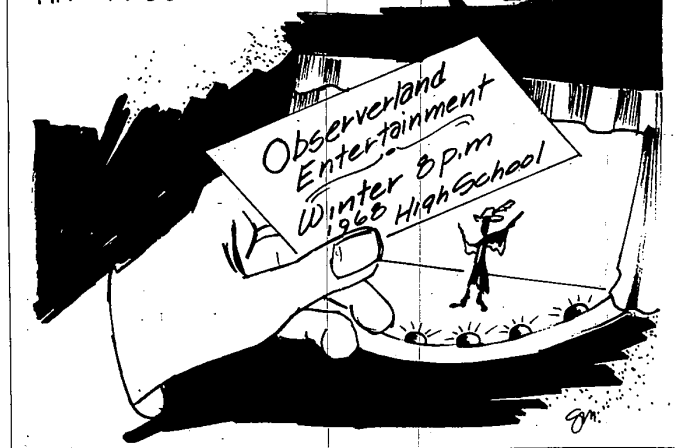
This has endangered the entire program. If one operator is allowed to participate without joining, then others will follow suit, and very quickly the non-profit Festival will be turned into a regular carnival of business "cultures."

That's the situation the Plymouth Fall Festival faces at this moment. Perhaps it's time to evaluate the entire program.

It's too bad that all can't abide by the rules but such breeds contempt, and was clearly shown in this instance.

— R. T. Thompson

HAPPINESS IS...



OBSERVATION POINT

Winning A Soviet Jackpot

By Philip H. Power

When the advertising guys get hard up for a way to get the public to glom onto the newest taste thrill, they nearly always decide to have a contest. Mr. and Mrs. NFL is one currently going at some local gas stations. A while ago, the Cigar Institute of America had one for newspaper photog-

rappers for the best picture of a public figure with a cigar stuck into the side of his mouth.

Well, a few days ago there wound up in my hands some delightful evidence that our anti-capitalist friends in Russia had come around to the same point of view. You have perhaps heard that the first newspaper ads in history were printed recently in Pravda, and Sue Shaughnessy, editor of the Farmington Enterprise & Observer, reported after her trip to the Soviet Union last year that there were advertising billboards up around Moscow.

The newest step was heralded in a copy of Soviet Life that arrived here (unsolicited) in the mail. It's a slick job of a magazine, promoting the glories of the U.S.S.R. complete with four-color printing, English text, and some pretty pictures of Soviet girls sunbathing on the Black Sea.

IDLY, I LOOKED through this issue, and then darn near fell off my chair.

There on a two-page spread, was the big headline, "Free Quiz Contest: 50 Years Of Soviet Power."

Then it became clear. They were serious. It actually was a contest on the Soviet Union,

evidently in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.

The first prize was a real gas: A 10-day trip to the Soviet Union, all expenses paid. The 50 three-year subscriptions to Soviet Life somehow didn't set my mouth watering, but some of the other come-ons sounded pretty interesting.

A Kazakh dombra (which was explained as a stringed instrument similar to the balalaika.) Kirghiz decorative wool fabric. A Byelorussian hunter's souvenir. (A stuffed Byelo, or perhaps a rusty hunting knife, I speculated.) A Turkmenian national costume.

THEN I LOOKED at the questions. And I began to realize that contests aside, there was still a big gap between the capitalist west and the socialist east.

Our contests are pretty snappy in their questions. Why do you like Woolf Dog Food, in 25 words or less? Vote for Miss Rheingold and (perhaps) receive free a case of beer.

Not so with the Soviets. Their contest questions were serious and educational. So serious and, uh, so darned boring.

"How many medical doctors per 10,000 of the population are

there in the USSR according to the last published Soviet statistics?" (So which Observerland public library is going to have the last published Soviet statistics? Anyway, there aren't enough doctors anywhere, Russia or America.)

"When and where was the first power station put into operation as part of the Electrification Program of Soviet Russia?" (I thought the only thing they did with those power stations in Siberia was send ex-premiers there for exile. Anyway, can you imagine Detroit Edison asking when and where the first power plant in Michigan was built?)

There wasn't even a chance to vote for the next Miss U.S.S.R. They had pictures, all right, and you were supposed to identify them. But all of them were of bearded guys, looking grim and anti-capitalist.

I WAS PRETTY sleepy by the time I got through the whole thing, and I realized that I had liked the Miss Rheingold contests a whole lot.

Only conclusion I could reach after tossing the thing aside was that although the Russians are trying hard, we have a lot to be thankful for in America.

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Serving the communities of:

LIVONIA PLYMOUTH REDFORD TOWNSHIP
GARDEN CITY WESTLAND FARMINGTON

Philip H. Power, Publisher

BY CARRIER (Monthly Rate): WESTLAND; GARDEN CITY... 30c
LIVONIA; PLYMOUTH; REDFORD; FARMINGTON 50c
BY NEWSSTAND... 15c a copy



Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc., 271 S. Main
Street, Box 200, Plymouth, Michigan 48170.