

the Farmington

enterprise & observer

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Gentlemen ... Release The Birds!

By DAN McCOSH

"Have I got feathers," John Courville, of Farmington chamber of commerce was mumbling in the hallway leading to the parking lot at the Danish Inn, gathering spot for the annual Farmington Pigeon Derby.

He had just carted four crates of the entrants over from the east side of Detroit in his company truck.

First Casualty.

THE CONTESTANTS had gathered, along with the usual crowd of hangers-on that follow the major sporting events of the year - the "derby," the "500," and now this.

Robert DeVoss, from the Detroit Pigeon Flyers Assn. was the man of the hour. The 25 racing birds rustling in their chicken-wire-covered boxes were owned by DeVoss.

For some obscure reason, the "heavies" on the Detroit Pigeon racing scene like DeVoss are Belgian, which lent an international flavor to the scene.

While DeVoss contributed the main contenders, Earnest Van Hecke, another east side pigeon breeder, brought along three coops full to be released at the same time, just for show.

DeVoss answered the questions like he had heard them before. No, nobody knows how homing pigeons find their way home. They fly at speeds up to 60 miles an hour. It takes both breeding and training to make a good

racers. Yes, he was having a good time.

After it was clear the reason the city and township officials weren't at the Danish Inn was because they were all braving under the sun at North Farmington High, the car caravan took off behind a police escort.

Couldn't help but wondering if the good spirits of the pigeon racers were shared by motorists in the miniature jams created by our passage. The township police were efficient, though - first time the blinking lights have been viewed in front of the car, rather than behind.

Township Public Safety Director Ronald Holko made a brief appearance. "Sounds like a fly-by-night operation to me" one of his men said when he left the station. He got 30 days.

WITH A LITTLE milling around the race got under way.

Hayden Cameron, the race chairman, managed to make it sound a little like the spectacle we knew it was, but "gentlemen, open your eyes," just doesn't sound like "gentlemen start your engines."

Actually, all he said was "go."

While the rest of the starters were rustling in their boxes, one lone bird was flapping his way towards Hamtramck.

Bob Allison, from WJW radio, had let the bird out prematurely, after a couple of minutes of careful advice to his cameramen about the timing of filming the start.



THE START -- The birds take off from their boxes during the annual Farmington Pigeon Derby. (Evert photo)

What's it like to 'hold a racing pigeon in your hand? This reporter tried it once, with the proper "velvet grip" on the legs and the tiny heart beating furiously.

It feels like a pigeon. A bird in the hand.

Our entrant (the ONI bird) went mildly berserk when we pulled the box out at the starting line. The guy next to me was worried his bird was asleep, while ours nearly took

off carrying the box.

He was in the lead when the flock took off towards horizon, but he folded in the stretch.

THE WINNERS were announced at a luncheon later in the afternoon.

The News category was won by Bob Kipper of the Spinal Column. Vic Caputo, of WJBK TV placed second and the ONI Bird flapped its way to third place.

In the "broadcast" category, Deano Day, of WDEE radio was first; Bob Allison (with a second bird) was second, and Mike Andersen, of WPON was third.

In sports, Dave Diles, from WXYZ was first, James Reiss, WJLB was second and Bob Reynolds of WJR was third.

Winning time was 37.5 minutes for the 35 mile flight. Last place "honors" went to Ollie Fretter, a "TV per-

sonality," and second to last category, Deano Day, of WDEE radio was first; Bob Allison (with a second bird) was second, and Mike Andersen, of WPON was third.

The race was the kick-off event for the Farmington Founders Festival; it was co-sponsored by Thompson-Brown, Sanderson Realty and the Danish Inn.

Some Cracks Show In School 'Unity'

By MARTHA MAHAN

An image of statesmanlike conciliation which Farmington's politically divided board of education had hoped faintly to create smashed to slivers at the group's second public appearance.

After teetering perilously near a complete breakdown of officers at an organizational meeting two weeks ago, the facade of unity crumbled with President Kenneth Perrin's announcement of new committee appointments.

THE BOARD'S three so-called "liberals" accused Perrin of denying them requested appointments and of stacking all but the safety committee with a 2-1 "conservative" majority.

The trio asked postponement of the appointments to allow further discussion, but Perrin denied the requests. It is the board president's prerogative to make committee appointments.

Perrin claimed that each board member had been named to at least one of the committees in which he had indicated interest and said he had "no reason to feel" he would change his mind after further discussion.

Copies of the appointments had been distributed to the press and others, Perrin said, and were already public knowledge.

The board is divided 4-3 philosophically, with trustees Aldo Vagnozzi, Dr. Maryn Ross and newly elected William Corliss dubbed "liberals." Perrin and the remaining trustees—Mrs. Kay Stirling, Mrs. Betty Brennan and Ronald Emmitt—are regarded as "conservatives."

Vagnozzi said his appointment as a member of the curriculum committee and chairman of a policy re-write

committee represented the first time in his four years on the board that his wishes for committee assignments had not been honored.

He had asked to be continued as chairman of the curriculum committee, Vagnozzi said, and to membership on the public relations committee, a field where he has "probably as much expertise as any member of the board." Vagnozzi is editor of the AFL-CIO News.

"It reminds me of the Army," Vagnozzi says. "You're asked what field you worked in civilian life and then are assigned 180 degrees in the other direction."

DR. ROSS accused Perrin of having ignored his efforts to effect discussion of appointments before their announcement so that "some compromise" might have been worked out.

He had felt he was being "groomed" to become the board's secretary this year. Dr. Ross said but had accepted the job of treasurer instead to "maintain the facade" of unity.

However, he objected to being named finance committee chairman and suggested the post should have gone to Mrs. Brennan, "whose chief area of concern in her election campaign was finances."

"Finances aren't my bag," Dr. Ross said.

CORLISS CALLED the "strong conservative bent" of

committee appointments "directly opposed to the current expression of public will." He referred to his own election as trustee in June along with Dr. Ross.

Perrin said the curriculum committee would have had seven members and two chairmen "if all wishes had been honored," and public relations would have numbered six members and two chairmen.

With the people and committees available, Perrin said, "some 15,000 different combinations could have been arrived at, not including combinations of chairmen."

Committee assignments, with first named as chairman, are:

Building and site: Emmitt, Corliss, Perrin; curriculum: Mrs. Stirling, Mrs. Brennan, Vagnozzi; Finance: Dr. Ross, Emmitt, Mrs. Stirling; policy re-write: Vagnozzi, Emmitt, Perrin; public relations: Mrs. Brennan, Dr. Ross, Mrs. Stirling; safety: Corliss, Mrs. Brennan, Dr. Ross.

Named as Liaisons to other groups were: Dr. Ross to the Farmington Area Advisory Council, Emmitt to the Farmington Area Recreation Commission, Mrs. Brennan to the Farmington City Council, Mrs. Stirling to the Farmington Township Board, Perrin to the Oakland County Intermediate District with Corliss as alternate, Perrin to the Oakland County School Board Assn., Vagnozzi to state government and its agencies and Corliss to Task Force 22.

Man Dies In Hospital After Crash

The fourth fatal accident of the year in Farmington Township took the life of Thomas J. Lawson, 41, Northville, who crashed into an abutment on I-96 near Haslett Rd. on July 7.

He died of injuries received in the accident July 16, at Botsford Hospital, Redford Township, according to township police.

today's hot line

Volume 83 Number 81

what's inside

Storm Damage

A freak thunderstorm blew through town several days ago, and we took pictures and added up the damage. If you think your yard looks bad, turn to

Page 6A

Earth Alive

Last edition, Earth Alive was looking for a new home for its papermobile. Just two days later, they found one. We have the story on:

Page 2A

For The Doldrums

If the summer doldrums are upon you, it might help to become involved in an amateur theater production. Two groups are looking for actors, actresses and backstage help.

Page 10B

Superstars

Art's "superstars" seem to have a great deal in common, according to one student of art history. It might pay to check your qualifications against his observations.

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Convention Postview

Our religion columnist, Lester Kinsolving, takes a look back at the Democratic Convention in today's Religion Update. Find it in our Church Section.

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FOCUS: Suburbia

DON'T MISS TODAY'S FOCUS: Suburbia YOU OWE IT TO YOUR HOME...



BALLOON LAUNCH -- the balloons were launched by local boy scout troops over the field at North Farmington High School. (Evert photo)

Businessmen Offering Reward For Vandals

A reward is now being offered to anyone who has information leading to the arrest of the person or persons responsible for the recent damage to the new YMCA located at 12 Mile and Farmington.

Officials estimate that \$3,000 worth of windows in the building were broken early in July when vandals struck twice, leaving furniture and walls damaged by flying glass and thrown rocks.

In response to the vandalism, area businessmen are offering a \$150 reward for information about the vandals

which will be kept confidential.

Anyone wishing to contact the "Y" with information or contributions towards the reward should call Gary Urnsh, director, at the YMCA.

"Businessmen of the community are interested in seeing this type of vandalism stopped," said Urnsh. "I think it's quite significant that businessmen think that much about trying to establish a YMCA in the area."

Urnsh added that the community has reacted with

shock and disbelief over the vandalism.

Despite the damage, the "Y" opened last week after a delay caused by the damage. "We're doing the best we can under the circumstances, and our programs are going on," he continued.

The problems aren't over yet. "It seems like problems have multiplied. Our windows won't be replaced for one-two months, and the rain caused problems by coming through the ceiling and damaging the carpet," he explained. The windows are presently boarded up with plywood.

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