

OBSERVATION POINT

Tax Break May Keep Our Farming Heritage Alive

By PHILIP H. POWER

Sunday I went hunting, walking with the solid steel weight of the gun on my shoulder through the russets and greens and golds and purples and browns and winy air of a Michigan Indian summer afternoon.

The dog ranged far and I didn't get a bird, but I did see the wild grapes and the high weeds of the wet summer, as yet untouched by a frost. And I saw the barns glowing friendly in the

twilight and the glistering sick green of the winter wheat and heard the triumphant cackle of the big cock pheasant soaring over the fence row to the west.

It set me to reflecting on farmers and farm land and how much they, together, have meant to this country and this state, combining a system of land use with an ethic of hard work.

They created the American barn, one of our remarkable native achievements of architecture, and they worked for scores of decades to use

and preserve the land before anyone had ever figured out what the word "ecology" meant.

It occurred to me that it was too bad that so little farm land remains in the suburbs of Wayne and Oakland Counties; and how much I hoped that as suburban development progressed, we could avoid the unnecessary mistakes of the past that gobbled up all the farm land around and left us in the suburbs the poorer for it.

THE CHAIN OF devel-

opment has been all too simple. Suburbs grow, gradually spreading up to farm land; assessors, seeing that the land could be developed, instead of farming, value the land not according to its farm use but with respect to its potential once developed; taxes for the farmer go up, and eventually he has little choice other than to sell his land to the highest developer bidder and retire to Florida, contemplating his pile with a mixture of pleasure and regret.

What is left to us in the suburbs, sadly, is mile upon mile of developed subdivisions, relieved only occasionally by the big church with grounds, the strip center or the school. And of course, what many folks in the suburbs do when there are glorious Indian summer days is to take a drive way out into the country to see the farm land with that same mixture of pleasure and regret.

For it is not beyond the mind of man that the special character that farm land

contributes to a community should be available to us in such a way as not to penalize the legitimate needs of development as well as enable a man who chooses to farm to do so without going broke in the process.

THE PARTICULAR mind of man that may prove most useful in this endeavor is Governor Milliken's, which has spawned a new tax rebate proposal for farmers to prevent the continuing gobble of farm land by suburban development.

In a tax reform proposal sent to our legislative wise men, the Governor proposed tax relief to farmers, with rebates up to \$2,000 on their property taxes, if they sign commitments to keep their land in agricultural use.

The land under this kind of contract would have to be suitable for farming or an integral part of a working farm and could not be zoned for non-farm uses.

If the farmer backed out on his commitment and sold the land or changed its use,

he would be liable to pay the state a penalty equal to 30 per cent of the state - equalized value of the land. To prevent abuses of the system by rich gentlemen farmers, the beneficiary would have to show that his income is derived primarily from farming.

It's a sensible proposal. It should be passed. For, if it is, it will keep alive for us in the suburbs that remarkable and evocative experience of our farming heritage, close to home where it belongs.

Tim Riedel writes

Ford Just Another Guy In Early Days

First of all, you knew Rockefeller, Reagan and Milliken didn't have a chance to be vice president because President Nixon relies most heavily on lawyers and really considers a law degree a major qualification for high office.

Second, you could figure Nixon would shun someone who was intellectually adventurous - those who worry about population control, genetics and non-lawyer things like that.

So he came up with Gerald R. Ford, a football hero and attorney who in a generation of service in the U.S. House of Representatives has never sponsored a piece of landmark legislation.

Ford, now a healthy 60, comes across as old guard today, but there was a time he was the darling of the reformers' eye. I first heard about him in the early '60s at Boys State from some of the guys from Grand Rapids, and the next year in college.

He and the senior Paul Goebel and John Martin had whopped the McKay machine and were striving heroically to clean up Grand Rapids' politics.

There was talk in those years of pushing Ford for governor against G. Mennen Williams, but Ford said no because he was advancing well as a member of the House defense appropriations subcommittee.

As a young reporter, I covered Ford several times at political gatherings, and I can't remember a single thing he ever said. Gene McCarthy, the late Leroy Augusten, Werner von Braun and Jimmy Hoffa were the most fascinating persons I've ever covered. Jerry Ford's answers to questions always sounded as if they were cranked out of a mimeograph machine.

Ford was super - cautious in those days. Ask him a question and he'd give you a two-sided analysis, so I made a game of asking him every question twice, the second

time changing my tone of voice to: "What do YOU think of the matter, Mr. Ford?"

That changed when Ford dumped Charley Halleck in 1965 and became GOP House leader. He and Sen. Everett Dirksen developed the "Ev and Jerry Show" of prompt partisan response to Johnson Administration initiatives.

I was surprised, therefore, to see Ford come off so well in "O Congress," the diary-like book of Rep. Donald Riegle. A few months after writing the book, Riegle, one of the GOP's brightest stars, turned Democrat, and the book reveals his intense frustration with Nixon, Secretary of State Rogers and the tradition - encrusted ways and leaders of Congress.

But Ford always seems to have been kind to Riegle and seems to be the kind of man who led and respected his troops rather than one who twisted arms and brought them into line. A man who can get Congress

to sustain six Nixon vetoes must have some ability.

Earlier this year the Republicans held a state convention in Detroit at a time when it was publicly known that Riegle was considering a party switch. Many Republicans were hoping he would switch because he had been castigating Nixon in the most vehement terms. I fully expected to hear Riegle's name booed if it were mentioned that day.

Only one man mentioned Riegle. Jerry Ford publicly invited Riegle, in the politest terms, to stay under the GOP umbrella. There was some applause, no boos. Ford was absolutely gracious, never condescending.

I conclude that there's something to Jerry Ford the public doesn't see. He has no fresh ideas, but he does have an indefinable quality called "class." The Nixon Administration needs some of that.



GERALD FORD addressed a spring Republican convention in Cobo Hall and asked fellow Congressman Don Riegle to stay in the GOP. (Observer photo)

Edward Wendover writes

Time For Hunters To Heed Warnings

As hunting season starts, it is time to remind sportsmen of their responsibilities to private landowners in the western reaches of Observeland.

It seems that some hunters and target practice buffs believe they can shoot it up on anyone's property without bothering to ask for permission.

For residents of rural township roads in Plymouth, Farmington and Canton Twp., hunting season means hearing shot rain down on your roof, keeping your children from playing in the fields (which you own), penning your dogs up and keeping your cows in the barn.

Trigger happy gun nuts, who apparently cannot otherwise assert their masculinity, see fit to shoot at anything that moves even before they see what it is.

And even if they did see it, some marksmen apparently don't know the difference between a cow and a deer as demonstrated by the reports each year of some poor farmer's Holstein being bagged as a buck.

It's these gun nuts who spoil it for the others. Their thoughtlessness is what prompts landowners to post their property with "no hunting or trespassing" signs.

Not that the signs ever last long - the "sharpshooters" seem to think they are targets and that it's great sport to blast them from 10 feet away.

These thoughtless gun toppers are not to be confused with the true sportsmen who have the courtesy to ask for permission before hunting or target practicing on private land.

The sportsmen are equally as perturbed of the trigger happy few that terrorize rural residents every autumn.

If you have a gun, please remember that a little courtesy and safety makes it more pleasant - and less dangerous - for all concerned.

MRS. C. HAMILTON Detroit

Bill Thompson writes

Let's Stop 'Devil's Night' Vandalism

It started in Farmington and West Bloomfield and now has spread to most communities in Observeland where parents are being urged to keep their children at home during the nights preceding Halloween and particularly on "Devil's night."

Most certainly it will be a big relief for harassed homeowners if the parents succeed in their efforts.

How many residents of Redford Township, Plymouth, Garden City, Westland, Farmington and Southfield, to mention the communities on the outskirts of the Observer Newspapers circulation area, have been pestered by incidents on "Devil's night?"

How many have raced to the front door after a knock or ringing of the doorbell to be greeted by some snarling guffaws as youngsters vanish in the darkness?

How many have gone to the door, found nothing but a bag of scattered rubbish on the doorstep?

How many have made a solemn vow right then that they will not participate in the Halloween activities the following evening?

It is things like this that have aroused some to the point where they stick pins in apples and candy and other items that can be very dangerous to the "trick and treat" youngsters.

USUALLY THE "Devil's night" insults are staged by youngsters in the mid and late teens - the smart alecks that seem to think they can get away with most anything. The strange part of it is they do and this makes the victims madder than ever.

What ailing person wants to get up in the morning to go to work and find the family car completely covered with "soaping" on all windows - so much in fact that it takes a sharp, single blade razor to get the car cleaned?

This has happened so often in recent years on the night before Halloween. In fact, so often, that the car owners involved have batted down the hatches on Livonians, tossed their goodies into the nearest

garbage can and turned off the lights from 6 p.m. to 9 o'clock when the kiddies in their cute costumes are making the rounds.

Typical "Devil's night" vandalism in the suburbs ranges from the simple trick of soaping car windows and windows in the homes to a federal offense such as blowing up a mailbox and oftentimes worse.

That's why a group of men and women in the Farmington - West Bloomfield area drafted the resolution calling for parents to keep their youngsters at home on "Devil's night."

They worked with the advice of Farmington School Supt. Marinus Van Arneyde, City Manager Bob Deedman, Farmington Hills Mayor Robert McConnell and Larkshire Principal Al Lanigan.

A spokesman said "Our committee must assume that the majority of 'Devil's night' vandalism is done by our children and we feel the logical way to stop it is to get parents strong support for keeping their children in at night."

Copies of the resolution have been sent to every community in the area, in both Oakland and Wayne counties, and all governmental units have been asked to give it support.

If the parents in both counties and the police authorities in the communities agree on such a program, then we may have one of the quietest nights before Halloween.

AS IT IS we can expect pranks to start almost

Don't Lose Interest In Restoring Wilson Barn

Editor:

May I, through your paper, thank you and the hundreds of Livonians for the interest you have shown in the effort

to preserve and restore the Wilson Barn.

When our project was just getting started, and our supporters were few in number, it was possible for me to personally express my appreciation to all those who offered a helping hand.

Today, as you know, we have drawn support from all sectors of the community - from numerous organizations and thousands of individuals. This, of course, is as it should be, for the Barn, after all, is a community project. One day we hope it will be long to all of us and will serve all of us.

While I am enormously gratified by the far ranging support we have received, it has now, unfortunately, become impossible for me to personally thank with everyone who is contributing to our objective. I must, instead, convey my thanks by this letter and hope everyone understands just how deeply I value all the encouragement and assistance.

The absolutely unexpected results were the many new friends acquired - it has been my payment - and they know who they are. But I must also couple my

appreciation with a plea. It is extremely important that you do not permit your interest in our project to wane. We are still a long way from our goal of turning that stately old barn into the kind of cultural center our city so desperately needs. Please keep up the good work, and thank you again!

ELECTRA STAMELOS Friend of the Barn Livonia

Productivity Is UAW Pay Key

EDITOR:

Some comments on Mr. Yack's recent letter. I think whoever pays your salary is going to have a knack for letting you know it.

The UAW raises are based on productivity, a concept Mr. Yack won't be familiar with. As far as capital investment goes, neither you nor I have any complaints. Talk to any small businessman. He will explain to you just what a real capital investment is.

When it comes to maximum pay, a teacher's \$17,000 for 900 hours a year

isn't bad compared to the \$5 per hour a production worker makes.

DONALD GRIMSBY Livonia

Police Praise Gains Encore

EDITOR:

The officer wishes to thank the family who reported early Saturday morning, Oct. 6, in response to a call for help from mother.

Both parents are soon to be 88 years old. Dad fell and mother was so upset she could not adequately even give the proper information over the phone, but the Livonia police department found the apartment, put

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