

# Serve all with truth ..... Had to grow with times

By PHILIP H. POWER  
Co-Publisher

Over its 96 years the Eccentric has come to be regarded as generally the finest suburban newspaper in the country. In a much shorter history, the Observer group has gained State and national recognition for excellence of local reporting and vigor of editorial content.

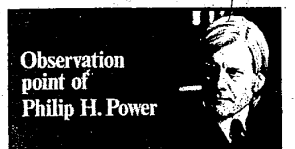
Now linked as the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, we pledge only one thing: To surpass our past accomplishments.

These newspapers will continue to be - first! and foremost - local newspapers. Our single most important characteristic is our local relevancy - to the Birmingham homeowner wondering what the effect of the new school millage will be on his pocketbook, and to the Livonia housewife learning what exercise classes are available at the Family Y.

This local quality of being a hometown newspaper for each of our readers in 11 different communities gives Observer & Eccentric Newspapers a basic reason for existing. Our localization distinguishes us quite clearly from other kinds of regional media, such as television, radio and the Detroit daily newspapers, none of which even pretend to be hometown media to the suburbs.

In fact, one of the most important outcomes of the marketing production efficiencies that have made it possible to bring to each of our 11 newspapers will have more space for local news and local editorial comment than could be provided before. This is particularly so for current Eccentric readers, since beginning early in March they will be receiving their hometown newspaper twice each week instead of once.

Our coverage of the suburban scene will not only be locally relevant, but it will also be full. You will be reading news of your own city council and of the exploits of



**Observation point of Philip H. Power**

your son's basketball team; you will find what is concerning other women in your subdivision as well as learning tips on what makes roses grow and backyard entertaining work; you will be broadening your views by reading editorials, columns and letters to the editor treating topics of local discussion and debate.

We will be bringing to these papers a probing and informed curiosity about everything of local interest, coupled with that grandest goal for any true newspaperman - to put out the best darned sheet in the country.

We will be going about this in a way that reflects a newspaperman's most deeply held ethic: That there is a difference between fact and opinion; that statements of fact belong in the news column and expressions of opinion belong on the editorial page. News is news, and no real newsman wants to slant it; if a newsman wants to express opinion, he writes an editorial which is so labeled and printed.

In short, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers will be local, full, fair and of great excellence.

It is only through this commitment that we can make real a hometown newspaper's credo: To serve the people with the truth and thereby the public as a conscience.

By HENRY M. HOGAN JR.  
Co-Publisher

The announcement this week of the merger of The Eccentric Newspapers with The Observer Newspapers probably raises many questions in the minds of our readers.

If the present Eccentric staff has produced what is called the dean of suburban-weekly newspapers in the United States, what can be gained by joining another newspaper publishing group?

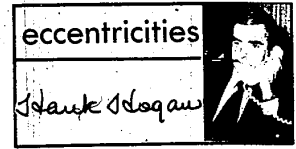
To understand this, you must understand the tremendous change in suburbia over the last several years.

The 1970 census indicated that more people live in suburbia than live in the urban areas of the United States. These people have higher incomes, spend more and have a higher level of academic achievement.

To reach this market, major retailers have changed their concept of selling from the downtown store to the regional shopping center. They apparently realized the truth of the old expression about moving Mohammed to the mountain, since the mountain was incapable of being moved to Mohammed.

As the retailers moved, their advertising needs changed. They were interested in reaching blocks of customers surrounding their shopping centers, rather than merely scattering shooting their message over a wide expanse of real estate in the state.

Since these advertisers are the people who financially support the production of a newspaper, we must provide them with a marketing package to fit their needs - or prepare to slowly go out of business, because main street ad-



**eccentricities**

verting just cannot support a product like our newspapers.

This doesn't mean that the editorial product has to be regional. Staffs can and will be located in each local community and the news part of the paper will be local, as the Eccentric has been in Southfield and Rochester over the last several years.

In addition to meeting marketing needs, we found that we had two newspaper plants which duplicated each other, at a great financial burden. It is obvious that any decrease in manufacturing costs will allow an increase in our editorial costs, providing for a better product.

Some readers would prefer not to have change of any kind, but our communities have changed and we must keep up with them.

To me, personally, an additional advantage of the merger is that I have a partner who is well respected in our suburban newspaper industry and can help share the load as we build for the future.

When Birmingham was a small town a small newspaper operation could handle its requirements, but as it has grown, so too must we.

## Jim Richard writes

### Pet Treatment Unbelievable

Except for writing about the untimely death of a young person, the saddest news-gathering project I have ever handled editing was Joan Weaver's four-part series on how our "throw-away society" treats its pets.

Statistics were incredibly hard to put together. As nearly as we could tell, one household pet in four is exterminated each year, usually because it should never have been bred in the first place and no one wants it.

Those are the merciful exterminations. There are no figures on the animals who meet unnatural deaths outside animal shelters.

It's easy to avoid thinking about killing these animals by saying they are "put to sleep." It's easy to hope they'll find new owners, but the truth is that three-fourths which enter the animal shelters never come out again.

The mere shock of thinking about the waste of cats and dogs is usually enough to make a person take the matter more seriously. But publishing Mrs. Weaver's series was one thing; getting people to read and think about it is another. We deliberately timed the project for just prior to Christmas.

Here are some notions we need to reject:

"Detroit is to blame. Detroiters take their animals to the suburbs and dump them." Some of our politicians avoid responsibility for tackling the crime problem, too, by calling it a spillover from Detroit. I don't buy any of it.

"Every child should have a pet." Nonsense. There are doggy people and non-doggy people, just as there are extroverts and introverts, artists and engineers. Some kids should have pets; many shouldn't.

"It would be nice for Daisy to have one litter before she's spayed. Otherwise, they

get fat when they're spayed." Daisy shouldn't have that litter unless you're sure she's good stock and there's a market. And all dogs, with age and lack of exercise, get fat, just like people do.

"It's a cute puppy." When shopping for a puppy look at the litter last. Try to see both the sire and the dam and, if possible, play with them. That's what your puppy will be like when it grows up.

And if you can't afford the operation, you shouldn't have got the animal in the first place.

"I wouldn't get one of those little yappers. When I was a kid, I had a big shepherd dog. To me, that's a real dog." You're bigger now than when you were eight, and the open space in your community is less. Besides, all dogs are related to the wolf, and those little critters can surprise you.

"I can't tell when she's in heat." For pity's sake, get a book and/or talk to the veterinarian.

"We can't afford to have her spayed; that's an expensive operation." It sure is, but it's cheaper than tracking down and destroying stray, unwanted dogs.

Leonard Poger writes

### Crisis finally hits home

It took a while for the national energy crisis to have a personal impact on local people.

For months, there were newspaper reports and national TV film about the gasoline shortage, fuel oil shortage for homes, and other shortages of materials needed to power machines.

But for most people, there wasn't any real inconvenience or problems.

They could get gasoline for their cars, even on Sundays and holidays when stations were supposed to be closed.

People turned down the thermostat in their homes but this was offset by throwing on a sweater.

What really resulted in a personal impact on suburban families is the school boards moving back starting times of schools to avoid having youngsters walking to school in the morning darkness.

All at once, thousands of families, particularly those with elementary school-age children, found themselves forced into a different routine.

It was difficult for those families where there are two working parents or just one parent at home.



## Had to learn to write

### Many pitfalls in new system of computerized car pools

Do you remember the good old days when a car pool meant two or three mothers getting together and saying, "You take and I'll pick up?"

In this modern era of technology and energy shortage, a company has devised a \$100,000 computerized car pooling system that will be distributed worldwide for free.

No more simple phone calls like, "Can you drive today because the dog threw up all over my car?" Employees who want to participate in the computerized "Operation Energy" will be asked to complete a questionnaire indicating where they live and work, driving time to their jobs and how far they'll be willing to travel to pick up riders.

Here's what the computerized car pool may be like. Take a company that employs 300. Two office girls get in the car. "Hello number 478, I'm number 478. We've never met, but I've admired that suit you're wearing for the past eight years."

Top management hops in an employee's 1964 two-door Ford with the fender dragging and the muffler that sounds like it's got an advanced case of galloping consumption.

"There must be a foul up in the computer," top management grumbles, wondering why he left his 1974 Lincoln at home. "You must work for a pretty chintzy company."

"Yes, sir. I've been work-

## READERS' FORUM

Please type (or write clearly) and limit letters to 300 words.

• Letters must be signed, with the writer's address. Names will be withheld only at the writer's request and for good cause.

• The editor reserves the right to reject unsuitable letters.

### School gripes get ignored

EDITOR:

Once again we have an abuse of the majority rights - the right to have our small children walk to school in the safety of daylight.

The president says we must move forward with the rest of the country to daylight saving time to conserve energy, yet there is no way I'll conserve electricity and gas. Our lights, inside and out, burn from 7 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. when our household must begin until we are sure the last child is in school.

If our children must pay the price of this insanity, then the least we can do is provide lit sidewalks and, when possible, transportation for those who do not warrant bus services and are too young to walk three or more blocks alone.

If the Livonia school board can't see clear to extend the starting hour by at least 30 minutes, then I think it's about time to reassess the purpose of their usefulness.

They are supposed to be serving the "community at large," not a select number of any group - teachers and working mothers included. Unfortunately, as usual, this position is felt by my entire neighborhood, and yet eight of them will complain to me and go on sending their children regardless.

When I take the sentiments of my neighbors to our FTA board meetings, we are made to feel our problems will be dealt with eventually - yet they never are. When we read, in this paper, a mileage is due in March and Supt. Upton is encouraging a three - mill increase. I have to question whose needs again will be met.

The very least we should be able to expect from our board is their concern for the safety of our children, and right now that is not the case.

JUDITH ALESSANDRI  
Coolidge Elementary PTA  
Board member  
Livonia

### Metro book 'falls through'

EDITOR:

I recently wrote to Metro Passbook outlining my disappointment at not receiving any of the things offered when the book was purchased.

"Typhoid Mary" starts coughing in the car, sprays her germs all over everyone and causes an instant epidemic. "Smookey the Bear" in the back seat makes his fellow passengers douse their cigarettes or get in the trunk.

What if you're the last one in the car with a guy who makes a pass and threatens, "Shape up or ship out," when you're 10 miles from home?

What if the computer blows it and you go to Paw Paw in a blizzard to pick up a passenger who's sick in bed with the flu?

I could go on but I've got to call Winkoff to see if she's talking or picking up. Maybe I'll send a questionnaire.

mind when we lose money to a group like this?

Or are we all so busy that we can't take time to see if something can be done to eliminate this type of business practice? Have we seen the end to the days when the customer was ever right, let alone always right? Is it because so many people have so much money to spend that one customer is no longer any loss to business, or is it that no one will take the time to pursue the matter when they feel they have been treated unfairly?

I no longer get a kick out of buying something new for our home or our family because it never seems to come through without a defect. This is terribly upsetting to me because I feel that I put in honest work hours for the money I get. Why should I let someone take it away from me if they cannot give me what they contracted for?

I guess I am writing to you because I don't know where to turn next - but I do know that I am tired of having to fight for decent merchandise or "my money's worth" every time I spend a little. I suppose you could call this a "plea" to the customers' all over Overland to stand up and be counted! Perhaps together in time something can be done.

JEAN D. CHESTER  
Northville

## Editorial & Opinion

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Suburban Communications Corp.

Philip H. Power, Publisher

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## Sense And Nonsense

Apparently the Wayne County Sheriff Dept. believes in separation of church and state.

They recently raided a party of a Canton Township church being held in a parishioner's backyard.

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The editorial box of "New Media," Plymouth-Canton High School's student newspaper, says (in part), "All letters must be signed and in good taste. For exceptions, please see one of the editors."

(Those editors just want to save all the untasteful letters for themselves)