

editorial opinion

Carl Stoddard writes

Another barrier falls

At the entrance to the bathroom, the wheel chair came to an abrupt stop. It would absolutely not get past the screening wall that was built a few feet from the door.

Nor was there anyway, assuming it could somehow negotiate the first barrier, that it could be taken through the door itself.

Nor get past the second screening wall inside.

Nor get past the sink and urinal that jutted out from opposite walls.

Nor was it possible for the wheelchair to be taken into the bathroom stall.

Just no way.

ALL OF THIS presented a problem for my friend Greg, who has cerebral palsy, and needs the wheelchair to get around.

And to make matters worse, he just had to go to the bathroom.

So another friend and I carried Greg (all 175 pounds of him) around a tight little corner, through a narrow door, around another tight little corner, over a sink and a urinal and into the bathroom stall.

Later, we reversed the ordeal.

When it was done, Greg was relieved, but embarrassed. I was sweaty, but a little smarter. I learned a new phrase: architectural barrier.

If you can't quite grasp the meaning of architectural barrier, let me try offering an example.

Take your home. Assume you're outside of it, on the sidewalk and in a wheelchair. Now try to get inside.

First, you would probably encounter a few steps and a raised doorstep.

Inside, you might find some steep, winding steps going upstairs, and some nightmarish steps going into the basement. (You don't think your basement steps are nightmarish? Are you ready to go down them in a wheelchair?)

You might also find narrow doorways, tight corners, a sunken family room and a telephone on the wall that you can't reach.

You might find kitchen faucets that you can't turn. Or a freezer compartment you can't reach.

Of course, you're probably not in a wheelchair and probably no one in a wheelchair will visit your home.

AND NO ONE is asking you to change your home, adding ramps all over the place. But then your home isn't a public place.

If it were, it would come under the new law that requires public buildings to be accessible to wheelchairs. Accessibility may mean building ramps, lowering drinking fountains, lowering telephones, building elevators and making bathrooms bigger.

The law has been effective. In fact, one of the first questions a wheelchair-bound person might ask when going someplace is "Is this a new building?"

Fortunately, with some exceptions, most buildings in town are relatively free of architectural barriers. But there are exceptions. Just look around, you'll see them.

But hopefully, not for too much longer.

From our readers

No one above law

To the Editor:
In the days that have followed Mr. Nixon's resignation, considerable attention has been given to his future immunity from any criminal prosecution. Reasons for this have been manifold, the most popular being that it might constitute cruel and unusual punishment, in light of the hardships he has suffered since the revelation of Watergate.

I would suggest that before any such immunity begins to be seriously considered, amnesty be granted to those citizens who consciously refused to participate in the undeclared Vietnam war, a war which they believed to be illegal and immoral. In the wake of their decision came total dislocation and separation from, land, livelihood and loved ones.

Nixon pardoned, directly or indirectly, without such prior reciprocity of justice, totally cruel and unusual. Any good that might have been born from the misery of the past two years will, then, have been aborted.

Being that in America no man is above the law, neither is any man below it.

Robert Pizzi
Passenger Representative
Southeastern Michigan
Transportation Authority

Aug. 13, 1974

Bicentennial plans

Dear Editor:

As you are aware the official Southfield Bicentennial Committee has been actively working on structuring the Bicentennial for the city of Southfield. There was much paper work and defining of the three categories that we must work under in order to be a bicentennial community.

The three categories are: heritage, festival and horizons. The steering committee includes business, Southfield-Lathrup Schools, the city of Southfield, the churches, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, two students from the high schools, service groups, the arts, the historical society, news media — newspapers and audio and public relations.

The legend follows the structure guidelines of the State Bicentennial Commission which is our liaison to the district and then to the National Bicentennial Commission, which was established by the President of the United States by Public Law 89-491 on July 4, 1966.

THE CITY'S official approval came a few months ago, but we are waiting for official flag and certificate ceremonies that are now being arranged for. We as a city can be proud of this accomplishment and of our mayor for his recent appointment as vice-chairman to the National Mayors Committee on Bicentennial.

The bicentennial year is a time for citizens to re-evaluate themselves in reference to their participation with government, their schools and general participation in all community activities. The city committee to date is clearing and promoting all community activities of all our community organizations. Starting in September more definite ideas and work on committees should start to formulate under the direction of our steering committee.

The Heritage Committee is working through Parks and Recreation with the steering committee and other interested organizations on the formation of a historical village and arts workshop at 10½ and Berg Road. Many people are already involved on the input into this project.

MORE FREQUENT reports will be made on our progress through the news media. For all those interested in working, please send a letter to the Southfield Bicentennial Committee or pick an application at the Parks and Recreation Building, 26000 Evergreen Road, Southfield.

Please help us to make this bicentennial great. A large meeting and speakers on bicentennial will be arranged for in the fall. Please watch for more and up to date information.

Vicki Goldbaum,
Southfield's acting
bicentennial chairman

Festival thanks

To the Editor:
Just a note to thank you for all the fantastic coverage of the Farmington Founders Festival.

I really appreciate all your fine articles which made my job a snap.

Dan Greenberg
Publicity Chairman

Aug. 6, 1974

Criticism healthy

To the Editor:

In a recent Letter to the Editor, a Gertrude Kennedy equated criticism of former President Nixon with Communism. Her letter merits a response on at least two counts.

First, Criticism of an incumbent President should not be confused with criticism of the office of the presidency. A president doesn't become immune to criticism by assuming office, nor is he above the law created by the people's representatives and interpreted by the courts. Conservatives and liberals may and probably will differ in their response to a particular president's policies; but they ought to be united in their opposition to a president who violates the law — no matter which party he represents.

Second, Equating criticism of Mr. Nixon with Communism thoroughly confuses the issue. In allegedly communist countries such as the Soviet Union criticism is very heavily discouraged. Is this what Ms. Kennedy wants? The freedom to criticize is a cherished liberty of a secure people. Perhaps sometimes we go too far in our criticisms. But tampering with that liberty is dangerous for all of us — conservatives and liberals alike. A president, like any other trustee, has authority so long as he does not violate the terms of the trust that derive from the Constitution, his oath, and his electoral mandate. Enforcing the provisions of that trust, however unpleasant, is what a democracy must do if it is to survive.

JAMES R. OZINGA
Rochester

Aug. 15, 1974

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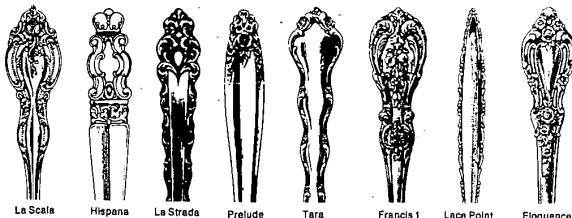
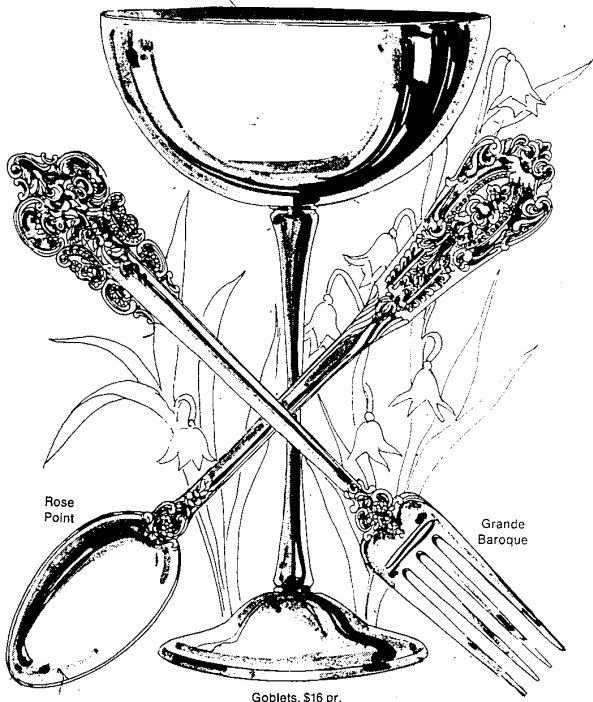
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