

# editorial opinion

Carl Stoddard writes

## Learning honesty the hard way

Strange thing about honesty. In the short run, it seems like an obstacle. But over the stretch a lot of folks find out it is the easiest route.

For instance, Jim, a long time friend of mine, has never had much luck at being dishonest. When he was a sophomore in high school, he took home his junior varsity football jersey.

The school officials never missed it. He thought he had them skunked.

But, three years later, just days short of his graduation, a coach spotted him wearing the football jersey.

Return it, or you're not going to graduate, the coach told him. He returned it and was graduated.

What burned Jim was the fact that in the three years since he'd stolen the jersey, that was the first time he'd worn it. And he got caught.

HUMAN NATURE being what it is, he didn't learn his lesson.

A few weeks ago, a friend of his told him a very simple way to cheat a vending machine. And the beauty of the system was that there were no slugs going into the machine. No incriminating evidence. Beautiful.

Well, not exactly. Jim took his little vending machine

cheating device to one of those quarter car washes.

Click, click. SWOOSH. The device worked and the nozzle started pumping out soapy water.

"Daddy," he heard a young girl say. "That man didn't put a quarter in the machine."

Her father, who owned the car wash, walked into the stall to check the coin box. Jim continued to wash his car. According to Jim's figuring, there was no way the man could tell if he paid.

THE MAN OPENED the coin box. It was empty. Not one quarter.

The man spun around, grabbed Jim's dripping wet car mats and threw them into the car.

Then he grabbed Jim by the neck and started shaking him violently.

Wanting no part of this scene, Jim managed to disengage himself from the man, made it to his car and headed for the road.

I guess Jim will remain fairly honest from here on out.

The unfortunate part is that Jim, like many of us, had to learn through experience that honesty is the best way to go.

I say unfortunate, because experience tends to be the most painful way of learning. Naturally.

## Dan McCosh's Column



### Ernie and 'the dream'

A guy I knew once was one of those tolerant mechanics who attracted teenagers like a bright light in the dark rainy bugs.

He recognized a kid's voice even while lying flat on his back under the decaying transmission of some delivery truck. "Yeah, you can use the torch, just put it back," he'd say with a kind of weary reflex.

Ernie was the resident advisor to the good old boys who raced stock cars Saturday nights. He understood the language, and never hesitated to quote a price on a rebuilt starter motor when some kid asked for a "new" one.

But mainly, he understood that the big toys are part of the dream.

The big dreams are the kind you sleep next to. Monster boats crowded into the driveways of tiny houses.

Cars with gangster white walls, rolling barges of chrome parked down some side street in front of a decaying porch.

IT IS A SECRET underground. Two months ago, a truck rolled along the highway from Ann Arbor to Wyandotte, hauling the hull of a monster 48-foot boat, while the owner followed in a rickety Volkswagen. He was going to sail around the world, and start from Toledo.

The big dreams aren't the same as the little ones, the tax write offs or hobbies you can afford. Middle class priorities are reversed, and the

kids understand this better than anybody. First comes the hyped up, gut-aching need, the total desire to be immersed in something that roars around, moves, and glitters. Later for money, the job, and the payments.

Stretch this a bit and it isn't confined to adolescent fantasy. But Ernie didn't think much about things like that.

Ernie had backed off a long time ago. Saturday night he bought the beer, and when he could, he liked to be able to reach into the innards of an engine, turn an adjusting screw, listen to the sound, and then amble off.

A lot of truck drivers knew you could get him out of bed in the middle of the night, and he would get their bread and butter going again in time for deliveries.

In return, he had more work than he could handle, and did it at his own pace.

THE LAST TIME I saw Ernie he was wiping his hands off, looking at the half-finished chassis of a "chopped T" roadster, the kind of teenage fantasy that rolls onto the street with one chrome wheel and three plain ones, always a couple of paychecks away from completion.

"Yeah," he grinned with a look of secret amusement. "Pretty soon that thing will be rolling down the road."

What Ernie knew, that the kids didn't, was there really wasn't much place to go.



### Ready for school

Birmingham P.D. Richard Patterson practices for the new school year as he crosses "Bill McIntyre, 10, (left) and Harry Cogswell, 11, at the busy Adams-Maple intersection. Crossing guards and police are stationed at the corner during busy hours throughout the school year.

Birmingham police are urging motorists to drive carefully as children return to classes. During the 1973-74 school year, no school-age pedestrians were killed or injured in Birmingham, although four bicyclists were injured. (Photographed by Art Emanuel.)

## County hospital proposal to face vote Thursday

By SUSAN L. SILK

OAKLAND COUNTY—Years of debate and indecision on the future of an Oakland County medical care facility will end in a climactic vote Thursday.

County board of commission members will decide between building a new \$2.6 million extended care facility, or buying and renovating a private Pontiac nursing home at a cost of \$2.1 million.

If approved, a new structure would be built at the county service complex. The second option, remodeling, would involve the purchase of the present Woodside Medical facility on Woodward in Pontiac. Both facilities would house 120 patients.

PROPOSALS for both alternatives were reported out of the Building and Grounds Committee, without recommendation, last week, according to committee chairman Patrick M. Nowak, R-25.

Expected approval of one resolution or the other Thursday will end a three-year-long emotional debate. The controversy began when state inspectors notified Oakland County that the 1920s village hospital on the county complex did not meet safety requirements.

Since major renovations would be needed to bring the structure up to state code, debate began as to the

best long-range answer. Meanwhile, the facility has been allowed to continue in operation under an interim state license.

TENTATIVE PLANS have ranged from closing the hospital and contracting out the care of those county patients to building a 350-bed emergency care hospital facility.

Now, under the latest plans, the new hospital would not have an operating room or emergency facilities. A doctor would be on duty around the clock, and a laboratory and x-ray room would be provided, according to Commissioner Bernard Lennon, of Ferndale, Democratic Party caucus chairman.

"It would be a very high level nursing home, especially for people too ill for a nursing home or that a regular hospital wouldn't want," Lennon said.

REMODELING the 37,000 square feet Woodside site would take 120 days, Nowak estimated.

"The only significant difference (between a new building and renovation of Woodside) is about 7,000 square feet of administrative space and \$300,000 of taxpayer money," Nowak said.

An advocate of closing the hospital and eliminating county-financed medical care, Nowak considers Woodside a workable compromise.

"THOSE ARE indigent patients, I don't see why we should build a marble palace for indigent patients," Nowak said.

Woodside, unlike the present and proposed hospital, would not have a pharmacy Nowak said.

Should renovation of Woodside receive board approval, a pharmacy would be set up in the county social service office to continue to fill prescriptions for welfare recipients. Needed Woodside medical supplies would be delivered, Nowak said.

"I see that as a plus but I'm sure they (pro-construction forces) will see it as a minus," Nowak said.

LENNON AND NOWAK agreed that a final decision on one path or the other will come Thursday. And both confirm that building a new structure will probably receive the needed 14-vote majority for approval.

According to Lennon, 15 or 16 board members, including the eight Democrats expected to attend the meeting, are expected to vote in favor of a new structure.

"The Democrats will probably vote as a block (minus James Mathews, D-8, who will be absent), and there should be seven or eight Republicans on our side," Lennon predicted, based on "past votes."

## Michigan Mirror

### Small Claims court aids complaining consumers

By ELMER E. WHITE

The salesperson assures you it's perfect. So you plunk down your money, take home that bicycle or sewing machine or television set—and find it's far from perfect.

But the store won't do anything about making a fair adjustment. What now? Small claims court, if you wish.

If that conjures up visions of high attorney fees or complicated legal maneuvering, think again. Get some help from the Michigan Consumers' Council, which recently published a most informative brochure explaining "How to Sue Someone in Small Claims Court."

IN THE SMALL claims division (of district court) you do not need to know anything about the law to bring a suit," the booklet explains. "You state your case in your own words. You do not need a lawyer."

It notes that the maximum collectible in small claims court is \$300 and that the decision of a judge in this court cannot be appealed to a higher court.

Then, in simple, easy-to-understand terms, the booklet tells the would-be user just how to go about filing a claim, preparing for the hearing, testifying at the hearing and collecting his money—if the judge decides in his favor, of course.

"Every consumer should know that small claims court exist, and that they do provide a relatively quick and inexpensive remedy to marketplace complaints," says James Hunsicker,

acting council director.

If you'd like a copy of the booklet (Education Bulletin 741) send a stamped self-addressed 4 x 9 1/2-inch envelope to the Michigan Consumers' Council, 414 Hollister Bldg., Lansing, 48933.

IT'S A GOOD summer for Michigan's state park system.

The folks who note such things recently came up with figures showing more than 7.5 million picnickers and other "day use" visitors ventured into state parks through July this year. The yearly total of both campers and day-use visitors stood at more than 11.3 million, compared to 10.8 million at the same time last year.

What the Department of Natural Resources terms a "startling increase" involves the number of vehicles turned away from day-use areas. Last year, the figure was 18,131; this year, it's 30,089.

"Almost all daily use vehicle turn-aways are in the southern half of the Lower Peninsula," the department says, "while camper turnaways are almost all in the Lower Peninsula."

BERRIES to Britian and turkeys too: All told, Michigan may be selling \$200-million worth of farm products abroad this year, Gov. William Milliken predicts.

"Michigan farmers and growers have already sold or committed at least \$40-million of the 1974 farm crop to overseas markets," the governor says. "It's still early in the season," he adds, "and based on the expe-

rience of previous years, we can conservatively expect to sell five times that amount." Last year, overseas sales totaled some \$182 million.

BESIDES blueberries and turkeys, Michigan will export such farm products as cherries, bred heifers and dry navy beans.

"These sales are the result of nearly a decade of hard work and salesmanship by Michigan's representatives in Europe and Asia and a gradual building of demand and confidence in our ability to deliver high quality products," Milliken says.

How does all this square with notions of shortages caused by drought this season? No conflict, officials say.

"The dire drought hasn't hit Michigan that hard," says one, "and the worst hit crop has been corn. The products we're talking about exporting haven't been severely damaged by lack of rain."

AIMING for "greater efficiency and effectiveness," two Michigan health care organizations now are one.

The 25-year-old Michigan Nursing Home Association and the three-year-old Michigan Health Facilities Association voted this summer to combine forces and work under the name of the Michigan Health Care Association.

The association initially will represent more than 70 percent of the state's 40,000 nursing home and long-term care facility beds. It will be concerned with the areas of public information, community relations and legislative liaison.

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