

Monday's Commentary

Fear of unknown underlines housing defeat

Poof, poof, poof. If it had been a clear night last Monday you could have seen a giant cloud of smoke wafting over Farmington Hills city hall.

But it was raining — an atmosphere which exemplified the mood of those who supported the senior citizen/low income housing plan which was torpedoed last week.

Like a puff of smoke, the four years of a now futile effort floated through the air, blown away by those who opposed the Freedom and Drake roads project.

Four of the seven present councilmembers opted for the results of the November advisory questions which told them a majority were opposed to the project.

Earlier in the year all seven had supported the very same project.

It's a sad ending for a project which held out so much hope for this city's future. But some hindsight observations shows that a senior citizen/low income housing project in this town just didn't have a chance.

Whether it would have been funded by the state or the federal government it would have been defeat-

ed. If it would have been two stories or six stories and funded by this city it would have met the same fate.

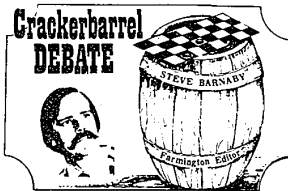
The truth of the matter is that the present city council just didn't have what it takes to stand up against the political pressure.

Previous city legislative bodies, composed of more courageous leaders would have seen it through. But under the leadership of Mayor Earl Oppenheimer, a senior citizen project just didn't have a chance.

He tried, and did other councilmembers, to compromise with those who opposed the various projects — the privately-run Nardiner's plan, the HUD-backed program and the state bonded proposal.

There was no compromise to be had. The oft repeated phrase, "the people have spoken" is true. They demonstrated their sentiments by not only rejecting the Freedom and Drake plan, but every other alternative for financing senior citizen housing.

The low income housing was just another excuse



to oppose senior citizen housing. Just remember back a few years when Baptist Manor was to be constructed. Many, many persons opposed it.

Oppenheimer, the great compromiser, believes the majority of the public will support an \$8 million bonding project for senior housing, even though it was soundly rejected in November.

He says it was defeated in the heat of the housing

debate. Standing alone, in another election on another day it would pass, he believes.

But he's wrong. A majority of Farmington Hills residents are reluctant to back a senior housing project because they're afraid. They're afraid of the possibility of property value loss, minority infiltration of their city, higher taxes, taller buildings and sicker of all — old persons.

It's unAmerican in some persons' minds to be aged and infirm. Most importantly, it's frightening to face the reality that you too may be that way someday.

You hear a lot of folks around here talk about building a senior citizens project "out" someplace, meaning in another community. It's like sticking your head in the sand to hide from reality.

And the new council in January won't be powerful enough to fight these fears. All the Don Wolfs in the world can't come up with an alternative plan to satisfy the many fears which exist in Farmington Hills.

The voters of Farmington Hills have spoken. So be it.



Around the edge

by Jackie Klein

When bombs fell Dec. 7

Where were you when the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor turning a peaceful Dec. 7, 1941 into bloody Sunday?

At 2:20 p.m. Washington time, 55 minutes after the attack started, White House press secretary Steve Early, at home in his pajamas, got the press services simultaneously on the phone and released the news. That instant, like the snap of a camera's shutter, froze the American scene.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt called secretary Grace Tully into his study and began dictating. "Yesterday December seven comma nineteen forty-one dash a date which will live in infamy dash." He would deliver that speech the next day.

I remember being stunned and frightened. But I was more shocked by the news of President John Kennedy's death years later. As I look back, the attack on Pearl Harbor didn't seem as real to me as the current crisis in Iran.

Time-Life Books has drawn a detailed picture of that day in their book, "This Fabulous Century, 1940-1950." What follows are excerpts from that book, along with some personal recollections.

On that infamous Sunday in 1941, some radio listeners called a newsroom and asked, "Have you got any score on the game between the Chicago Bears and the Cardinals? Aren't you getting anything besides that war stuff?"

"Everybody knew this was going to happen so why spoil a perfectly good Sunday afternoon worrying about it," one housewife complained.

PEOPLE THROUGHOUT the country kept eating their chicken dinners and thought the shattering news was another Orson Welles hoax.

Later, a woman saw the headlines and gasped. "What's this? We're at war. Well, what do you know, I wonder who we're fighting?"

According to the book, explosions awoke Christian Science Monitor correspondent Joseph Harsch in a Honolulu hotel. He thought how much it sounded like the air raids in Berlin where he had been the year before. He woke his wife.

"Darling, you've often asked what an air raid sounds like," he said. "Listen to

this, it's a good imitation." Then they both dozed off again.

A sergeant in the 27th Infantry at Pearl Harbor refused to issue ammunition. He pointed to a sign which said "No ammunition without the captain's orders."

On the USS San Francisco, a young engineer came topside and said to an ensign, "Thought I'd come up and die with you." The gunners on the USS Argonne shot down their own antenna.

Battery B on Oahu was issued machine gun ammunition dated 1918 — so old the bolts fell apart in the loading machines, the book recounts. A commander on the bridge of the USS Ramapo banged away at enemy planes with a pistol while tears laced his cheeks. A bomb's mate threw wrenches at the low-flying aircraft. From the magazine came a call asking what was needed. "Powder," he yelled. "I can't keep throwing things at them."

A SEAMAN boarded the USS Oklahoma which had taken six torpedoes below the waterline and was about to collapse.

"I was terribly afraid," he said. "We were cutting through with acetylene torches. We found six naked men waist deep in the water. They were badly wounded, crying and moaning with pain. We could hear SOS tapping all over the plane — no voices, just those eerie taps. There was nothing we could do."

Near the married men's quarters at Pearl Harbor, a gang of children jumped up and down screaming. "Here come the Indians."

Dashing to get a better look at the bombing, a Honolulu man yelled at a reporter. "The mainland paper will exaggerate this."

Water swirled into the USS California where a machinist's mate in the forward air compressor station was trying to feed air into the five-inch gun. The others ran, yelling to him to get out in a hurry. The machinist mate shouted, "This is my station. I'll stay here and give them air as long as the guns are going."

An hour after an appeal for blood, the Life-Life books says, 500 volunteers swamped a doctor and three assistants at the Honolulu blood bank. They ran

out of containers and used sterilized Coke bottles. The best volunteer cleaning bottles and tubes was a local prostitute.

ADMIRAL KIMMEL's orderly came out of the admiral's office at Pearl and said, "He's tearing his hair out and asking 'What should I do, what should I do?'"

In Pearl, a wounded ensign begged a friend, "Kill me."

On the USS New Orleans at Pearl, the chaplain told the gun crews he was sorry they didn't have church that morning but to "praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

Winston Churchill called FDR and asked, "Mr. President, what's this about Japan?" "It's quite true," Roosevelt answered. "We're all in the same boat."

"This actually simplifies things," Churchill said. "God be with you." He went to bed and slept soundly.

NEVER IN American history was an event more anticipated and yet more of a surprise than the attack on Pearl Harbor. The tactics of a sneak raid on Pearl — crippling the formidable U.S. fleet based there and freeing the Japanese Navy to dominate the Pacific — had been a standard part of both Tokyo and Washington's strategic thinking for more than a decade, the book notes.

Every graduating class at Japan's naval academy was asked in final exams, "How would you carry out a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor?"

Everything was ready. From Rangoon to Honolulu every man was at his battle stations. Joe Martin, House Republican leader said on Dec. 8, "I don't know how the hell we were caught so unprepared."

And on Oct. 30, 1940, Roosevelt said, "I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again. Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."

But a little more than a year later, the bombs fell. The threat of war and bombings still hang over us like dark clouds and bursting with gun powder. You may not remember where you were when the bombs fell 38 years ago. But who's to say it could never happen again?

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Skiing along Mt. Elliott

There are a few roadside chuckles being gathered these days on morning radio by a song centering around a group of dispossessed Dodge Main employees who form a ski team.

Hopefully, by skiing Mt. Elliott, they will work up enough finesse to join the Olympics and help save Dodge Main.

The record, produced by Dan Yessian Associates, Farmington Hills, finds much of its humor in the fact that the ski team is made up of Poles. One whole stanza is devoted to reciting the last names of the team members which coincidentally end in "ski."

Since the ski team is really the Dodge Main bowling team revamped, the song ends with the sound of crashing bowling pins a la the opening for "Bowling for Dollars."

That might make some early-morning commuters manage a grin as they bumper-to-bumper it, but it has Jeanette Szulec steaming.

Ms. Szulec is the chairwoman of the Polish-American Congress' Sentinal Committee, a group which takes a very dim view of jokes beginning, "how many polacks does it take..."

The folks at Dan Yessian say they didn't intend to poke fun at any ethnic group. They were after salvaging a few laughs from a bad situation. If Chrysler folds Dodge Main, Hamtramck and a few other suburbs will suffer the effects.

WHEN A COMPANY folds, the workers wave goodbye to it whether they were stationed on the line or in the carpeted offices of management.

"In any joke, there's someone at the receiving end," explained Bill Lennox of Dan Yessian.

"Tensions are tight right now with the Iranian situation and with the Chrysler situation," said another Yessian associate, David Barnes.

"We want to just let everybody blow off some steam. We want people to laugh at another side of the thing."

"If you laugh at something, then you can go on to deal with the situation," Lennox said.

Profits from the record written by George Cargo will be donated to the Chrysler Corp. in the spirit of dealing with a bad situation, according to the people at Yessian.

If Chrysler's turns down the couple thousand dollars which the record could at best turn, the production firm which writes snappy jingles for commercials (even car commercials) will donate the money to Detroit Children's Hospital.

"It would be nice if there was some way we could give the money to the workers who are laid off," said Lennox. "It wouldn't be much but even if it turned out to be only a chicken it would be nice."

TO HELP promote the record, there was a recent television spot involving a member of the ski team in gear trying to ski down the curbs of Mt. Elliott Ave. in Hamtramck.

And there is a promotion gimmick in the works with a ski lodge which would feature an appearance by the Dodge Main ski team.

"It would be nice if we could get some laid-off Chrysler workers for the team," said Lennox.

None of this altruism does anything to ease Ms. Szulec's aggravation.

"That record isn't going to make one iota of difference (in keeping Chrysler Corp. open)," she said. "It will offend a million persons in the Detroit metropolitan area."

"It's defamatory. It's filled with negative stereotypes of the Polish people. Poles don't represent the population of Dodge Main."

"The record characterizes the employees as buffoons."

While the Yessian spokesmen argue that the record's Polish emphasis comes from the fact the Hamtramck and Dodge Main is mainly Polish, it's obvious to any East-sideer that they're pulling our collective legs with that misinformation.

THE HAMTRAMCK filled with newly arrived Poles is straight out of the

'20's and '30's. Blacks, Arabic speaking peoples, Chaldeans and Yugoslavs make up a great portion of the city and the factory.

"The blacks and Arabs would object if the record were about them," Ms. Szulec said.

When asked about the black and Arabic population of the city, one Yessian spokesman joked, "Maybe we'll make a Motown version."

The Polish-American Congress Sentinal Committee isn't amused by the portrayal of "hard working people" as buffoons. But the names of the ski team members only serve to rub salt into their wounds.

"People's names are not a subject for comedy," said Ms. Szulec.

"The work of the ethnic groups helped make America great. Thinly disguised under the pretext of humor, is an untenable insult to hard-working people who make Dodge Main go."

Not content to speak out against the record, the group is approaching program directors of the various radio stations playing the song.

"IF THEY CONTINUE to promote the record over our objections they are insensitive, immature opportunists and we will go to the program directors," Ms. Szulec said.

If the program directors are reluctant to listen, the group plans to approach major advertisers and convince them not to support play of a record that to their eyes offends a large number of residents and consumers.

"This is not our initial experience with defamatory programming," said Ms. Szulec.

A large part of the ire the Yessian record raised in Ms. Szulec stems from her interpretation of what an ethnic joke is really up to.

"The intention of a Polish joke is invidious. It ridicules, demeans and dehumanizes a group."

"Nazism used humor as a vehicle to dehumanize the Jewish people," she said.

Watergate nostalgia

Ham and coke target of special prosecutor

If Hamilton Jordan could get his hands on the adman who coined the phrase, "Things go better with Coke," it would be a real rip-snorting affair. Jordan is already involved in a situation that sort of smells.

A special prosecutor was appointed last week to investigate allegations that Jordan, President Carter's chief-of-staff, used cocaine in New York in 1978 and in Los Angeles in 1977.

Now, we don't have much to go on in the way of

Washington special prosecutors, but what we do know doesn't bode well for the newly-named Arthur H. Christy's job security.

Consider Archibald Cox, who didn't hold down the post long enough to get much in the way of longevity pay. But then, Cox was involved in the somewhat more substantive issue of what did Nixon know and when did he know it.

WHICH BRINGS US to what else we know about



Mike Scanlon

Washington special prosecutors — the people they'd like to prosecute tend to get wealthy, a la Nixon.

Maybe Nixon was a fluke. Perhaps not everyone investigated by Washington special prosecutors tends to get rich. We'll soon find out.

But, so far at least, there are dim echoes from the Capitol that return us to those thrilling days of yesteryear when the White House was peopled with undicted co-conspirators and soon-to-be convicted felons.

When both President Carter and his wife Rosalynn lavish public praise on Jordan and compare his honesty and integrity to that of their own family, you can almost hear ghostly noises that sound like Nixon billing Haldeman and Ehrlichman as the finest public servants he'd ever known.

The charges against Jordan are suspect because of the sources. The New York connections are a

drug dealer and a pair of nightclub owners trying to plea bargain a tax evasion charge.

THE NIGHTCLUB owners maintain they are 100 percent, absolutely, positively sure that Jordan snorted coke in the basement of their nightclub on June 27, 1978. The drug dealer isn't quite so sure.

He says he gave somebody cocaine down in that basement, but whether or not it was Jordan, well, he just doesn't know because "I only met (Jordan) once." Obviously, the drug dealer is a guy who tends to forget a face. Or maybe the drug dealer is just his own best customer.

From Los Angeles comes the news that a couple of political supporters out there who have since switched their allegiance away from Carter didn't like the conversations White House aides had at a party in October 1977. Their talk was "licentious," complained the politicians.

Somebody else said not only that, but the aides snorted coke, too. Nobody else saw this happen.

Maybe the strangest thing of all is that even if Jordan is acquitted, he won't be. The man who appointed the special prosecutor was, himself, appointed by Carter, and the conspiracy buffs will have a field day with it.

All of which may leave Jordan crying in his Amaretto and cream for a long time to come.

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