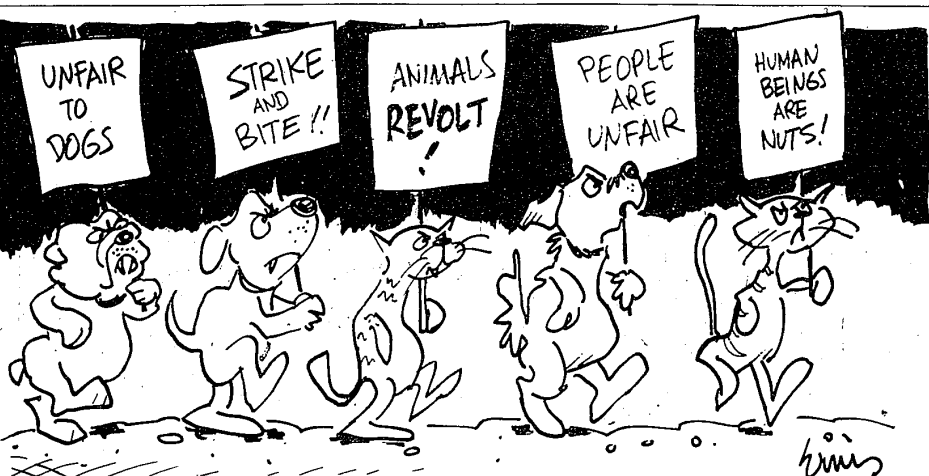


Monday, January 19, 1981



Spoofs add extra sparkle to life

Spoofs are fun. Hoaxes aren't.

The latter are usually conceived to embarrass someone or separate people from their money.

But spoofs are different. They cause smiles and belly laughs and maybe even separate us from our troubles for a while.

I would have loved to have been there when four area men decided to form a union for pets. I can imagine them sitting around brainstorming, slapping their thighs and laughing their heads off while they formulated the rules of the pet contract.

The creative geniuses involved were David Laidlow of Redford, union president, and Rodney Magnuson of Farmington Hills, vice president. Also having input were Rick Magnuson of Plymouth and Gary Bozigan of Redford.

Free associating like mad, they worked up a bill of rights for dogs with such privileges as not having to eat dog food more than two days in a row. Other pets would have their rights, too.

Bird cages would have to be cleaned bi-weekly or at the bird's request. These founding fathers decided that if a pet is exposed to hazardous conditions, he should be given safety glasses. If exposed to maternal conditions, she dogs and cats should get one maternity leave per year. Rabbits would be entitled such leaves as needed.

No wildcat strikes were to be allowed for all creatures great and small. But an annual father-and-son softball game was planned, along with an annual retirement party. The men were not planning to fool anyone. It was all in fun.

Interested, fun-loving pets can join United Pets of America, Local 738, by sending \$3 to the local at



Sherry Kahan

PO Box 39208, Detroit 48239. The head brothers of the pet union were hopeful that their spoof would go over big as did the spoof of Gary Dahls, the legendary inventor of the pet rock scheme that brought in millions.

THE NEAT PART of pet rocks was the humor they inspired. Minds that take to jokes began to play around all kinds of silly stuff.

Who, for example, can forget the famous All-Breed National Pet Rock Show, dreamed up by the geology club of Lake Superior State College. The college's whimsical publicist, Bill Rabe, informed the waiting world that both male and female rocks could participate. (I think he also had something to do with that area's annual stone skipping contest where the splashes are referred to as pity-pats.)

Detailed rules for the rock festival followed. A pedigree had to be included with the pet. Entry sizes were pebble, stone, boulder or Gibraltar. They would compete in classes as working rocks, toy rocks, sporting rocks and non-sporting rocks. Obedience trials were planned. Contestants were warned not to ship their rocks in unheated box-cars.

Possibly as the end of the strenuous competition,

the rocks relaxed by listening to people music.

I would have liked to have been listening in on sessions that dreamed up all that.

Spoof products come and go. Laura Chatain of Harbor Springs put on her thinking cap and came up with a Magic Wand, which should become a perennial gift for children. The lady made no claims for her creative spoof. Its effectiveness lies in the mind of the beholder. So far few reports have come of mice being turned into golden coaches, but after all it has been on the market for only a brief period.

A KIND OF sick spoof emerged recently in time for gifting the person who has everything, but wants more more. Called the Carrion House World of Gifts catalog, it was designed to make fun of the orgy of catalogs that arrive in American homes before Christmas.

The spoof catalog, which was guaranteed to be tasteless and lived up to its promise, offered a sawtoothed Frisbee, with or without a set of gloves, an Egyptian Plague Kit and surgical sponges for those operations that take place at home. No place for a Magic Wand here. This spoof may not have turned out to be as much fun as its authors planned.

I have read about other fun activities that should inspire all spoofers to greater things. One occurred when students of a non-jock California college changed the cards that students at a nearby university were scheduled to hold up at an upcoming football game. Up went the hands at the appointed moment. But instead of spelling out the name of the glorious university, the name of the small college appeared instead.

I should have remembered the name of the college. The story, like many other spoof tales, made my day.



Tim Richard

TV plays hooky after first hour

Most television watchers I know instinctively guess they are getting shortchanged by the 6 o'clock news. Last week I came up with more hard evidence they are correct.

At a major event, most TV crews show up for the keynote address and then skeddaddle. Their purpose is not to cover or even get the flavor of the event but to get some live footage for a 30-second spot. From this indictment I might exempt only WDIV among the local commercial stations.

The University of Michigan last week held a day-long conference on the Japanese automotive industry — "Model and Challenge for the Future." As most televisioners know, outgoing Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt issued a call of alarm, warning that the Japanese fully expect only General Motors to survive and that they "expect to pick up the others at a fire sale." He was done by 9:40 a.m.

Well, it's true Goldschmidt was stirring, and he reinforced my impression that if the Democrats have any brains, they will consider him for their national ticket one of these years and forget Ted Kennedy. But I digress.

Here is some of what the TV cameras and the Detroit daily papers missed.

FRED SECREST, former executive vice president at Ford Motor Co., saw a social reason why Japanese manufacturers have been able to grapple with their problems to capture one-fourth of the world market and 27 percent of the U.S. market.

"The Japanese are oriented toward consensus, not legalistic confrontation," he said. Secrest added the Japanese have 1/20th as many lawyers per 1,000 population as the U.S. There was long applause from the audience of 1,300 business people and academicians.

Donald Ephlin, a vice president of the United Auto Workers, was asked if weak Japanese trade unions contributed to the notion of Japanese "harmony."

"Their unions are not weak. Their wage rates are increasing faster than ours. Their unions reflect the management with which they deal," Ephlin said, adding that contract provisions grow out of real workers' problems.

Goldschmidt had said the Japanese have a cost advantage of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per car, and that only one-third to one-half was due to wages.

"There's a differential," said the UAW leader, "but not as great as has been indicated. . . We've got to be able to buy what we produce or there's no point having that productive industrial capacity" which Goldschmidt said was essential to national defense.

EXECUTIVES FROM Ford, GM and Nissan Motors were all less than enthusiastic about the government's and labor's calls for import restrictions.

"In 1959 and 1960," Secrest recalled, "it seemed the Germans were going to take over, wipe us out with the Beetle. Now the Germans are coming here (investing in U.S. plants) because their costs are as high as ours."

"I'm not an alarmist."

"I'm not an alarmist either," said David S. Potter, vice president and group executive of public affairs for GM. "We'll continue head-to-head around the world."

WHAT DID YASUHIKO Suzuki, vice president of Nissan, have to say about all this? The poor guy had the misfortune to speak while Goldschmidt was holding a news conference, so you didn't get his side of the story on TV.

Americans, Suzuki said, have concocted a view of a "monolithic Japanese auto industry," working hand-in-hand with its government "to bring the American auto industry to its knees with a flood of imports, dumped at unfair prices, and keeping American-made vehicles out of Japan."

Suzuki called that picture "highly misleading" because:

- The issue isn't imports vs. domestic cars but "small cars versus large cars." The fuel situation "caused a fundamental shift in consumer demand from large, fuel-inefficient autos to small, fuel-efficient vehicles," a shift for which American producers were unprepared.

- Japanese producers have not flooded the market. "This is not a case of Japanese push, but rather of American pull."

- Far from being monolithic, the Japanese auto industry has nine "intensely competitive" producers in a nation half the size of the U.S., which has only five.

- There are no "dumping" and government subsidies for Japanese producers. Japan's tariff has been eliminated, but it does "maintain a commodity tax on automobiles based on engine size" without discriminating against the source.

Far from expecting Chrysler, AMC and Ford to cave, Suzuki noted American companies are investing \$80 billion in re-tooling, producing more small cars of sometimes "unsurpassed" quality.

Both American and Japanese executives thought barriers would have far-reaching bad consequences for world trade.

The TV crews missed all that. They were out to school for the public speaking class and then played hooky for economics, political science, foreign languages and elementary justice.

Tips on Super Bowl viewing

Be sure to note color of team uniforms

This column may not make it into print before the World Series, or the Super Bowl, or whatever it is they call it when the football season is over, but perhaps it will come in handy next fall.

I'm going to attempt to tell everyone who knows absolutely nothing about football how to almost understand the game.

This is especially geared to those ladies whose husbands seem to be having an affair with Howard Cosell. If our husbands spent as much time on the couch with us as they do with Howard, well . . . I won't go into that.

I feel very qualified to pass on these tidbits of gridiron information, because I know so little about the game.

AND YET, with just a few relevant facts, I am actually able to sit through an entire football game with my husband — and even enjoy it a little bit. Now that's a close marriage.

To begin with, you have to pay close attention to the colors of the uniforms (I'm not sure they're called "uniforms," but that's not really important).

At the beginning of the game, you must find out the names of each team and then make a mental note of just who is wearing what color. This is important. It will avoid confusion later on in the game when cheering is required.

It's a sure giveaway that you don't know what's going on if you cheer on one team and then five minutes later mysteriously switch your allegiance to the other. Once you get the names and colors matched up, you're in good shape.

IT'S NOT necessary to get the entire team name. I once told my husband that I hoped the "Houston Oil Wells" would win. The man actually snorted at me!

I later found out it was supposed to be the "Houston Oilers." Now, I wisely just refer to the teams as "Houston," "Chicago" or "Cleveland," etc.

Team mascots and nicknames are only for the more advanced observers with good memories. I'm not one of those.

Now as you get into the actual playing, you will notice there are several big white lines drawn across the field. These lines are five yards apart.



Nancy Walls Smith

Every time a team moves the ball, it's called a "down." Each time they move the ball to the next 10-yard line, it's called a "first down."

THEY CALL it that even if it's the third or fourth time they've moved 10 yards. It's still called the first down. Remember that. It's important.

The team that has the ball has four chances to get each first down, with the main objective being getting the ball all the way across the field for a "touchdown."

Okay, say one team has the ball on the 30-yard line of their side of the field. They have four attempts allowed it to get the ball to the 40-yard line. If it does, it gets four attempts to go for the next first down.

If, for some silly reason, it fails to make the first down, it must give the ball to the other team. Well, actually it kicks the ball to the other team, which seems rather rude, but anyway it loses the ball. This is not good.

NOW LET'S say the team moves the ball five yards ahead on its first attempt. Since each first down is 10 yards apart, that means the team has three more turns to make the remaining five yards.

The announcer will tell you, "second down and five to go."

That means this is the second time the team gets to try and it has to get five more yards.

Now, say the team gets two yards on the second try. It has three more yards to go (10 yards minus five, then minus two yards equals three yards to go. Get it?) It's all really quite simple.

Once the team moves 10 yards, it just starts over with the first, second and third downs until it reaches the next 10-yard line and a "first down" again. Of course, it's not at all as easy as it sounds because

the other team keeps trying like the dickens to beat them to death rather than let them carry that little oval ball over all those white lines.

I KNOW it all sounds a little silly, but they keep doing it so they much enjoy it. I hear it pays well, too.

Now once a team makes a touchdown (gets the ball past all those crazed opponents all the way to the end of the field), it gets six points. Then they get to kick the ball and try to get it through the middle of the goal posts for an extra point.

If it should happen that they can't get the ball all the way to the end and they're running out of downs (fourth down and nine yards to go, for example), they may decide to just kick the dang thing through the goal posts from where they are rather than let the other team have the ball.

If they make it, they get three points, and this is called a "field goal."

I HOPE I haven't confused you. Just remember to keep cheering as long as the ball is moving in the direction that the team you're voting for (or betting on) is trying to get it to go. If your team is doing badly, you're allowed to swear.

I don't know anything about fouls, so I can't help you there, but I do know they're not good.

If somebody makes a foul, the men in striped shirts make them take the ball back even further than it was before they fouled up. That must be very discouraging.

Okay, now you should be ready to sit through your first game. Don't worry, it won't take long. They only get to play for four quarters and each quarter lasts only 15 minutes, although they do have this irritating habit of stopping the clock.

I once waited for half an hour for my husband to watch the last two minutes of a game.

Just think of the look of the surprise you'll get from your loved one when you turn to him and say, "Oh darn, it's third down and eight to go." Maybe he'll even let you share the couch with him.