

# Farmington Observer

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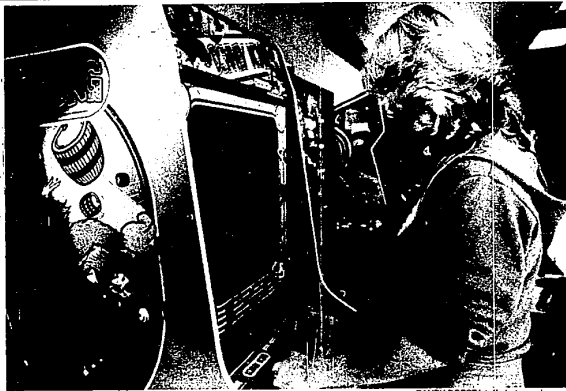
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'This game... takes a lot of skill. I used to play that all the time, but now it's just boring.'

— John Duff  
North Farmington student



Becky Pernalis of Farmington Hills tries her luck on Donkey Kong, which is approaching Pac-Man in popularity.

'It's all in how you run the place. If it's run properly there's no problem.'

— Glen Keely  
arcade owner



## Man vs. machine

## Video fans fight bad image...

By Craig Piechura  
staff writer

Corrupters of youth. Places to buy pot. Robbers of hard-earned coin. Breeding grounds of push-button zombies.

That's just a few ways opponents describe video game and pinball arcades as modern-day dens of iniquity. But what do the people who feed Pac-Man quarters have to say about the swirling controversy over the video game craze? Catch players between punches of the button at Abbey Road Amusements in Farmington Hills, and you find they have plenty to say.

"I tell you one thing, if all arcades were run the way this place is run you'd have no problem, no way," says a bespectacled 65-year-old Southfield man with a trim mustache who would only identify himself as someone in the construction business.

He and a friend, a 58-year-old Farmington Hills man in the same business, have been using the Amazing Spiderman pinball machine, playing for close to an hour on a single quarter.

The secret, both say, is knocking down the five spider webs on right side of the machine for bonus points. Their intense concentration and body English is disturbed only by an occasional shout of encouragement. The idea here is not to beat your partner but to master the machine. Zen fun.

"He's gonna get a four-banger out of this ball," shouts the pinball player, who is pushing 60. Translation: Player may get three free games for a score exceeding 550,000 plus another free game for hitting the special target when it lights up.

"SOME OF THESE games give more to a man's mind than a computer or a math class," says the Southfield man.

Both are big backers of arcades and call city councils archaic for opposing them. But the two men are reluctant to release their names to the newspaper reporter and refuse to allow the photographer to take their picture. Business associates might misunderstand, the two explain.

"If you drink a shot of whiskey every day you might not want people to know it, either," says the Farmington Hills man. "They hear that, and they'd say you're an alcoholic. Video games have got the reputation of the pool rooms of 60 years ago — the bad element."

An undeserved reputation, say the two men, but reality.

Arcade owner Glen Keely, 29, of Farmington Hills, has heard all the anti-arcade arguments and doesn't buy most of them. He admits some establishments haven't helped matters by failing to supervise the premises properly.

"It's all in how you run the place," Keely says. "If it's run properly there's no problem. We've been here eight years and haven't had a problem. You can check the police records, I'll verify it."

"You've got to put time into it. Too many people figure they can put an 18-year-old person in charge and leave him there. They come in, collect the money and go home. A lot more goes into it. I make my living this way. It's not for some extra money."

"If you don't spend the time, you lose control."

ROWDY BEHAVIOR isn't tolerated by the customers, Keely says, let alone the proprietor.

"About one-tenth of 1 percent try to give you any hassle," he says. "There's still an awful lot of good kids. Around here if someone hits a machine there's a dozen people star-

ting at you. That's their machine. Hit a machine once, and you stand out. It's not proper arcade etiquette."

The most action at the arcade, at present, is around two video games: Donkey Kong and Pac-Man.

An ape on the Donkey Kong screen is hurling barrels at a character expertly maneuvered by John Duff, 16, of Farmington Hills, a student at North Farmington High School. He racks up a score of 135,000, high score of the day, and talks about the attraction of video games.

"This game (Donkey Kong) takes a lot of skill," Duff says. "There are different boards, not like one with Space Invaders. I used to play that all the time, but now it's just boring."

Duff says he probably spends \$3 a day on video games and lately has been going to the arcade almost every day for a total of close to \$21 a week.

Home video games have their place, say players, but won't kill arcades because the establishments serve a social function.

Parents who criticize pinball parlors for corrupting youth are pointing fingers in the wrong direction, says Kerstan Auzas of Farmington Hills, who drove her son to the arcade.

"If they're not able to control kids any better than that it's the parents' fault, not the games," Mrs. Auzas says.

Still, she says, video games shouldn't take the place of physical activity or learning by young people.

"My feeling about video games is sort of mixed," she says. "The problem with them is (children) just want to play more and more. It seems to be habit-forming."

Winning a game "doesn't give them anything," she says, except the satisfaction that they scored high on a silly game.

"They feel people who come in to play games won't spend money for food. There's the anticipation that a lot of regular customers who come here to eat and grocery shop might be offended by the noise and by people running in and out," Kravetz said.

The Dell Place has its own video-game gripe with management.

The store requested licenses for six video-game machines and was approved since it meets the square-footage requirement of the zoning ordinance. But the machines' installation was prohibited after Rosenhaus' business associate, Jay Eldridge, obtained an injunction challenging the store's qualifications.



Farmington's Dan Munoz found time on a recent afternoon to enjoy his favorite pastime.

## ...Tally Hall tenants against games

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

The proposed establishment of a video arcade in Tally Hall has caused so much controversy it could be tabbed "Store Wars" — Farmington Hills' adaptation of "Star Wars."

The city's refusal to license Tally Hall for a 40-machine video arcade last winter so enraged land developer Mel Rosenhaus that he recently filed suit in Oakland County Circuit Court.

Named in the suit are Farmington Hills Zoning Supervisor Harold Rowe, City Clerk Floyd Cairns and the city of Farmington Hills. Rosenhaus contends Rowe misinterpreted the ordinance in disallowing video licenses.

The ordinance, which is in the process of being revised, currently forbids more than one video machine per 750 square feet in shopping centers. How it will be revised remains uncertain.

In March, Tally Hall management appealed the decision before the zoning board, which upheld Rowe with a 6-0 vote.

Management's efforts to win tenant support of video games has caused further conflict. The overwhelming majority of tenants oppose the introduction of video machines and recently has presented a petition to that effect to the Farmington Hills City Council.

"They (management representatives) had a couple of meetings with tenants telling how it would be a good thing," said Lawrence Kravetz, president of the Dell Place Corp. in Tally Hall.

"This represents a complete change of their original feelings. Up until 90 days ago, they felt they didn't want any games in the Hall. It wasn't in keeping with their plans at all."

Glen Keely, owner of Abbey Road Amusements, a video arcade in Farmington Hills, sides with Tally Hall tenants.

"From a city hall standpoint, I wouldn't be opposed to the idea of allowing video games in Tally Hall. But the landlord has some duty to the merchants since they're the ones lining his pocket."

"These merchants are paying top dollar for space. They should get something for their money," Keely said.

It is the money-making potential an arcade represents that has caused management to "change its whole tune," Kravetz said.

"What's good for management is not necessarily good for tenants. They're saying 'don't do as I do, do as I say.'"

MOST TALLY HALL tenants oppose the idea of a video arcade because it could be offensive to established clientele.



Merchants at Tally Hall want to avoid a scene like this at the Farmington Hills eating establishment.

## Fight drunks with harsher legislation

By Craig Piechura  
staff writer

A pair of bills calling for random roadside breathalyzer tests for drivers on weekends and holidays and increased, mandatory penalties for convicted drunk drivers has been introduced in the state Senate by Sen. Doug Ross.

Ross, who represents Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield and Lathrup Village, sponsored Senate bills 776 and 777 Monday with cosponsors Sens. Stephen Monsma, D-Grand Rapids, and William Sederburg, R-Lansing.

Ross said Tuesday he modeled the legislative package after California laws which went into effect New Year's Eve and have already resulted in fewer alcohol-related fatalities.

"We can't stop people who drink from drinking," Ross said. "But we can stop people who drink from driving. Under this legislation with the first offense for drinking and driving — even if it's plea-bargained down to driving while impaired — a person will lose his license for a minimum of three months."

"If convicted of driving under the influence, it's a minimum of six months (suspended license) and there's no judicial discretion allowed."

If enacted as proposed, the legislation would:

- Prohibit the use of suspended or delayed sentences for drunk driving convictions, requiring minimum penalty, at least, upon conviction.
- Permit prosecutors to tell, in court, that a person has refused to submit to a chemical test for alcohol.
- Set stronger minimum penalties

for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

Establish roadside check points during peak hours of drinking (such as New Year's Eve and St. Patrick's Day) in an attempt to apprehend drunk drivers before they cause an accident.

ROSS ADMITTED the idea of randomly pulling over vehicles to see if the driver has been drinking stands the chance of being challenged as an infringement of a person's civil liberties. But he compared the practice to the commonly used system of random safety checks.

"It's happened to me in Detroit where the police pull you over and ask you test your lights to see if they're working," Ross said. "In California (random checks) are a critical part of their law. If it's not, you only tend to catch people after they're causing a problem."

One of the problems with just setting stiff fines, Ross said, is that in many cases judges reduce the charge in secret plea-bargaining sessions.

"This legislation would remove the secrecy from the process by requiring a judge or prosecutor to publicly, as part of the record, take responsibility for any reduction or change in a drunk driving charge."

Persons convicted of driving under the influence of alcoholic beverages would receive a minimum fine of \$375, under Ross' proposed legislation. Those under license for a minimum of 6 months and be jailed for at least two days.

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## Courts battle budget plan

By Craig Piechura  
staff writer

District courts should take an equal share of budget cuts forced on local units of government by declining tax revenues and loss of state and federal revenue sharing funds, says State Rep. Sandy Brotherton, a Republican representing Farmington, Farmington Hills and Southfield.

"If courts feel they're above (budget cuts), then they've got a problem with me," Brotherton said in an interview.

The representative recently introduced a bill in the state House which, if passed by the Legislature, would allow communities to reduce their financial support of the district courts. The district courts are funded by local funds.

"The courts are no more sacrosanct than any other unit of government as long as they're given a fair amount of funding," Brotherton said.

House Bill 5592 — which was introduced in the Legislature a week ago last Wednesday, Law Day — is cosponsored by representatives Ruth McNamara, R-Birmingham, and James Hadden, R-Adrian.

Predictably, the bill has provoked a howl from the halls of justice. Judge Michael Hand of the 47th District, which includes Farmington and Farm-

ington Hills, said he doubts that the state legislature has the authority to allow cities to cut court budgets.

"I think (Brotherton) had better talk to a constitutional lawyer," Judge Hand said. "I think the court budget is a constitutional matter, not a statutory matter."

Hand said cutting back on court personnel at a time when the 47th district court docket has risen 25 percent is similar to laying off unemployment personnel at a time of high unemployment.

BROTHERTON said he had anticipated such opposition but said the debate over court funding has never been met head-on. His bill may force the state to resolve the long-standing dispute, he said.

"The (state) Supreme Court says the (state) Constitution gives them the right to run a court of equal, uniform justice throughout the state," Brotherton said.

In Brotherton's opinion, equal justice doesn't guarantee courts automatic approval of district court budget requests. In bad economic times the courts must share the brunt of cutbacks, Brotherton said.

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