

Fix mental barriers for a safe metal barrier

Sound suggestions for improving a proven, accident-prone intersection are sloughed off by traffic authorities in Farmington Hills, who display a punitive, rather than precautionary, approach to safety. The trouble spot is an access road that ends in front of the entrance to the Grand River Drive-In Theater. Since Jan. 1, 1980, 31 drivers — oops, make that 32 drivers — have plowed into a guardrail positioned at the end of the access road.

The latest crash happened a week ago Wednesday on the access road designed to accommodate drivers heading south on Grand River who want to get to the drive-in or the Roger Peck Chevrolet dealership.

Drivers are supposed to bear right to continue south on Grand River. Too many are continuing straight on the confusing roadway and hitting the guardrail despite a proliferation of caution signs, some of them flashing.

Drivers who have been drinking or are unfamiliar with the territory are slamming into the guardrail at least once a month. The statistic comes from Farmington Hills police officials and should tell police something. It should cause them to conclude that the road is confusing, dangerous and in need of drastic redesigning — if not for the sake of confused drivers, then for the sake of innocent drivers who share the road.

INSTEAD, traffic enforcement officials display an amazing insensitivity to the problem.

Capt. Russ Conway blames the guardrail accidents and the related problem of drivers turning the wrong way on Grand River after successfully avoiding the guardrail or drunk drivers who drive illogically and ignore signs.

"The problem is people are just not driving with

caution," Sgt. Richard Krueger was quoted as saying. "I don't know what else we can do."

He's not listening. Some suggestions that make sense have been proposed by Eldred Mason, a businessman in Farmington Hills who works near the intersection and is sickened by the lack of official response to the obvious problem.

Mason wants rumble strips installed on the roadway leading to the guardrail. That way if it's foggy or a driver is blinded by oncoming headlights, he'll know something odd is ahead.

Mason would like to see an earth berm built behind the guardrail. If a driver breaks through the railing again, he won't end up in front of five lanes of traffic entering the M-102 expressway, as one driver did two weeks ago.

To discourage drivers from inadvertently turning the wrong way from the access road, Mason would

angle the curve to point drivers in the right direction.

EVERY ONE of Mason's suggestions is met with indifference locally. But hope is in sight. Desi Strakovits, an engineer with the Michigan Department of Transportation, hopes to incorporate Mason's ideas for road improvement in an upcoming project.

The M-DOT engineer also would like to change the alignment of the access road to Grand River. Drivers shouldn't be able to continue straight on the access road dead-end, he says. The road should be redesigned to force drivers to consciously turn left and then right to use the access road.

It's nice to know somebody is looking out for our welfare because safety officials in Farmington Hills sure aren't.

— Craig Picheura



Tim Richard

TV meets its severest critic yet

Back in the 1960s, a member of the Federal Communications Commission branded television "a vast wasteland." The widely quoted remark was considered a serious indictment of the boob tube.

Well, a couple of weeks ago, Edward N. Ney topped that "vast wasteland" remark. Ney is chairman and president of Young & Rubicam Inc., an ad agency which reportedly places more dollars of TV advertising for clients than any firm in the country. Ney spoke to the Economic Club of Detroit about the future of advertising, commercial TV and payable TV. It wasn't flashy oratory, but when you study what he said, it was stunning stuff.

Although commercial TV is essentially free once you buy the receiver, Ney finds "a willingness on the part of that same wide-indoctrinated public to pay a good deal of money to get much of the same sort of fare (on cable) that they have been getting, and still can get, for free."

Despite commercial TV's being free, Ney said, one cable firm has found 60 percent of the homes it solicited were willing to sign up.

THEN CAME a series of numbers so shocking that Ney ceased into them gradually:

"Homes with cable tend to watch even more than the average U.S. television home."

"Those with just basic cable watch 6 percent more than the U.S. average. But those with payable watch 22 percent more."

"And just to stretch credibility, try this statistic: In late night fringe time, homes with cable watch 48 percent more than the average non-cable household."

What it means is that commercial TV is doing such a miserable job of programming that people are turning to pay-cable in droves.

ANYONE WITH even the most casual knowledge of the TV business is aware of what controls programming.

Much of the nation's buying — the kind which can be influenced by advertising — is done by women in the 18-49 age group. Therefore, what advertisers want to reach is women in the 18-49 age group.

The sheer volume of viewers is less important than the number of buyers who watch. Do you recall the late afternoon program "World Adventure Series"? Until its demise, it was perhaps the most popular local program ever produced in metro Detroit. Why did it die? Because old people watched it, and they simply aren't susceptible to soap commercials.

There are dozens of similar examples. The point is that commercial TV has produced vast volumes of drivel. If good entertainment is available, people will turn to it — even if they have to pay.

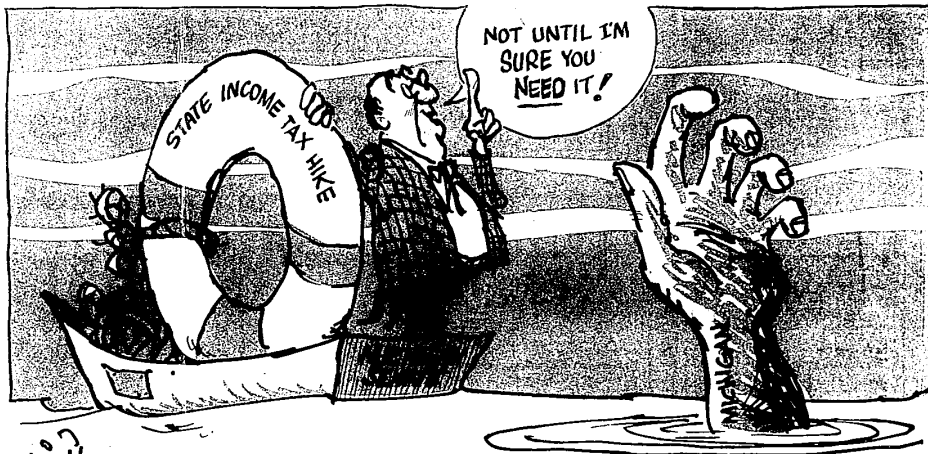
NEY'S COMPANION speaker was Frederick S. Pierce, executive vice president of American Broadcasting Companies Inc., "the world's largest advertising medium."

Well, it seems ABC is getting into the cable act. One of its four cable services is called "Arts" and is "a three-hour nightly service which provides high quality programming in areas from dramatic theater to the symphony, opera, ballet or French impressionistic painting," Pierce said.

Does that cable service sound familiar to persons over 40, it should. Back in the 1950s, commercial TV had a program called "Omnibus." Commercial TV also used to broadcast concerts by the New York Philharmonic with narratives by its dynamic young conductor, Leonard Bernstein.

Commercial TV scrapped its arts broadcasting. The networks could have continued it, but they chose not to. They chose instead to beam out a vast wasteland to a waist-high culture because the good stuff didn't sell soap.

That is a pretty damning indictment of both commercial TV and commercials.



Wills '82
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Short story is no story for politics

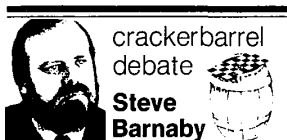
I used to be tall. Now I'm just medium. Lots of us six-footers have fallen prey to the evolutionary process.

The short of it is that America is growing taller and taller. I have a friend who is 6 feet 4 inches. Today that's average-tall — not exactly Wilt Chamberlain tall, but tall enough for us medium folks to take notice.

My brother used to be medium to medium-short. But now he's just plain short. He really hasn't grown any shorter (or is it shrunk any taller?). At any rate, he's still 5 feet 7 inches just like he has been since reaching adulthood 20 or so years ago.

Nothing has changed between my brother and me. He looks the same to me. I still love him in as big a way as I used to. But now I have a short brother rather than a medium-short brother to love. He still makes me laugh and he still makes me angry. Height has nothing to do with those things.

BUT HEIGHT does have a lot to do with this year's Michigan Democratic gubernatorial campaign. It shouldn't, but some overzealous campaign workers are making an issue out of it. A whispering campaign has been launched about one of the candidates, U.S. Rep. Jim Blanchard. My brother and Blanchard have one thing in common — they both are considered short, approximately 5



crackerbarrel debate
Steve Barnaby

feet 7 inches. They also are unlike each other in another way which will be explained later. That other way could mean big trouble for Blanchard.

The political gossip-mongers are spreading the rumor that Blanchard is hiding from the public because he is self-conscious about his height and "has a weak handshake."

NOW THAT'S SILLY, especially when so many other problems plaguing Michigan need to be debated by our gubernatorial hopefuls.

What suggested solutions come from the mouths of Blanchard or 6-foot 4-inch William Fitzgerald or medium-tall Ed Pierce or any of the other candidates is less convincing than height or handshake.

Culture priced out of family budget

The price for culture is going up. Most concerned parents worry that a constant fare of situation comedies and cartoons on television will turn their children's minds into popcorn. They often try to expose them to other facets of life — the artistic, historical and scientific. For lack of a better word, let's call that "culture."

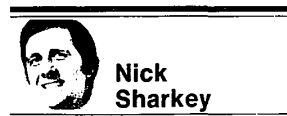
But have you considered the increase in the price of culture? It's enough to make inflation in other areas pale by comparison.

INTERESTED in seeing Henry Ford's birthplace or the Wright Brothers' bicycle shop at Greenfield Village?

Assume you are in the traditional family of four — two adults and two children. A year ago, the fare for this trip would have been \$13.50 (\$4.50 for each adult and \$2.25 for each child). The same trip today would cost \$21 (\$7 for per adult and \$3.50 per child). In June the rates will go up again, and the family will pay \$24 (\$8 per adult and \$4 per child). That's a 78 percent hike in a little over a year. (Parking for Greenfield Village is free.)

Want to take the kiddies down to the Detroit Science Center to view a 180-degree image movie on the 67-foot domed screen? Make sure you take at least \$13 in your wallet. The Science Center treats everyone 6 and older at the same rate — \$3 per person. There's no free parking here. The charge is \$1.

What about taking this family of four for a Sun-



Nick Sharkey

day afternoon ride out to Cranbrook to visit the planetarium? Don't skip on the cash here, either. It'll run you at least \$12.

You have to pay two times at Cranbrook — once to enter the grounds and again to get into the Institute of Science (the site of the planetarium). It's \$1.50 per adult and \$1 per child to enter Cranbrook. Then it's another \$2.50 per adult and \$1 per child at the science building. Parking is free.

Maybe you think it would be cheap to take the kids down to Saturday's performance of the Detroit Youththeatre in the Art Institute? Wrong again. It'll run you at least \$11.50 (\$2.50 per ticket for adults and children and at least \$1.50 for parking in the underground garage).

YOU GET THE POINT. The day of tasting cultural delights at a relatively low price is gone.

Grants from government and foundations for cultural features are either gone or seriously reduced. Many agencies must now be self-supporting.

Cultural institutions face the same rising costs as

the rest of society. Labor, material and utility charges have jumped dramatically.

Even the rapidly escalating admission charge at Greenfield Village has not made it self-supporting. Ross Callaway of the marketing and public relations staff said that each person entering Greenfield Village is still partially subsidized.

"We gain additional money through fund raisers, endowment funds, food services, gifts, souvenirs and the Dearborn Inn," he said.

Callaway said the \$8 charge for Greenfield Village compares favorably to other historical attractions across the country — such as Williamsburg. "If you consider the \$10 per person charged for some amusement parks, we are still economical," he said.

IT'S HARD to argue with the necessity of charging more money to try some hands-on scientific experiments (Detroit Science Center) or to view the chair President Abraham Lincoln sat in when he was assassinated (Henry Ford Museum).

But cultural opportunities are fast becoming limited only to those with money to spare. Middle-class people grump and complain about the rising price, but we can usually come up with the money.

And what of the future? How can the minds of bright, young, poor people be stimulated?

As government subsidies dwindle and inflation takes its toll, what will become of culture?

Our cultural heritage is too precious to be limited to the country club set.