

Teachers and pupils to depart from the halls of Middlebelt

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

The coming school year is going to be a tough one for some Farmington-area residents, including Barbara Loughlin.

So regularly in the past 20 years has she made the trip to Middlebelt Elementary School that her car "knows the way there." In September, Lough-

lin, who teaches the children of some former students, no longer will be able to depend on her automatic pilot system. Middlebelt, with an assured school board vote Feb. 8, will be scheduled to close for good this spring.

The board appointed a task force last year to determine which of the district's elementary schools should close in light of its declining enrollment. The results of its five-month study were an-

nounced at the last school board meeting.

School district employees are growing accustomed to school closings. Since 1975, when there were 19 elementary schools in operation, seven have shut their doors permanently.

"On one hand, change is very healthy. But it is, morale-wise, something we have to work out with the staff. It's a lot of work to close a school," said Wallace Prince, principal of Middlebelt, who first joined the district as a teacher 25 years ago.

"We're accepting it, but not overjoyed."

The 18-room school, built in 1949 and the district's oldest structure, has seen a drop from 700 students and 22 teachers in 1969 to its present total of 220 students and eight teachers.

Four of its rooms are vacant and unused.

Students now attending the school, located on Middlebelt north Nine Mile Road, will be reassigned to other nearby grade schools.

Those living south of 10 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster Roads will attend Larkshire Elementary. Students who live north of 10 Mile between Middlebelt and Inkster will be assigned to Beechview Elementary. The 15 percent of students now able to walk to Middlebelt will have to travel by bus to school.

For teachers and staff members, things aren't nearly as certain.

Though contracts guarantee their jobs in the district, placement will depend on seniority. And it's likely to take until August for the principal and teaching specialists to be reassigned.

PRINCE ANTICIPATES his students will notice little change with Middlebelt's demise.

"We're making a strong effort to acquaint them with their new schools. There's so many similarities — they'll still take phys ed, visit the media room and go to school with all their neighbors — so that the closing won't really disrupt them."

"Our major concern is the children. Everything we do is designed to make the change as easy as possible for them."

Sharri Krupoff, whose daughter Jana

attends second grade at Middlebelt, is "very upset" the school is closing.

"It's a super school building and the staff has bent over backwards for us," she said.

Moving on will be difficult for reading specialist Marilyn Bault as well.

"It's hard. You realize with the times the way they are that this is going to happen. But it's difficult knowing we're not going to be working together any more. And it takes a while to get to know parents and develop a rapport with them."

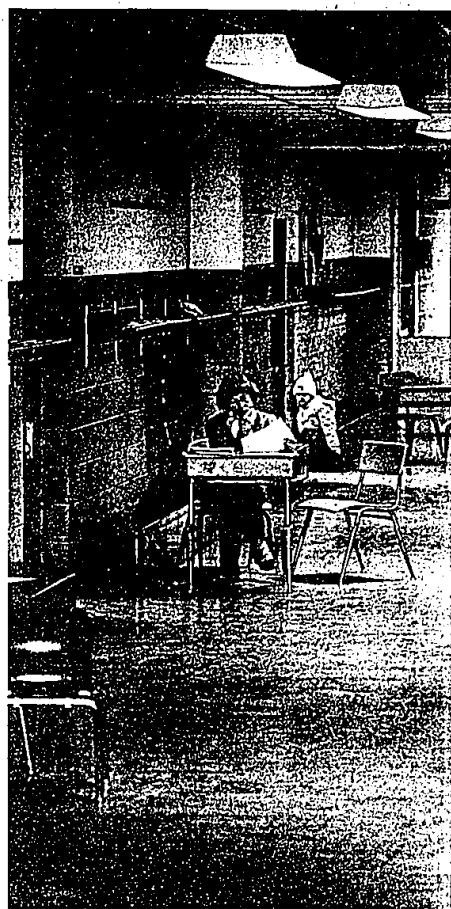
"I'll be assigned to a school — I wish I had a little more choice."

Prince, who worked at Ten Mile School before it closed in the 1970s, said student enrollment has reached a plateau and that further closings are unlikely in the near future. At present, enrollment appears to be leveling. The district is likely to experience modest increases in the next five years, according to task force members.

PARENTS OF MIDDLEBELT students have been dealt with "openly and honestly and have an understanding of how the task force arrived at its decision. They've been very supportive," Farmington Assistant Superintendent Lawrence G. Freedman, the task force chairman, said.

The task force, which included Finance Administrative Assistant Scott Bacon, Principal Al Langan, Director of Administrative Services Jack Lawling, parent Betty Nicolay, teacher Mary Jo Tinham, PTA Council President Roxanne Fitzpatrick and Freedman, also found that the closing of Middlebelt will:

- produce savings of about \$306,179;
- affect the second-smallest number of students possible
- take into account friendship patterns, future district needs and growth patterns;
- leave 11 vacant classrooms scattered throughout six of the remaining 11 buildings;
- incur no added transportation costs; and
- relieve the district of a \$150,000 expenditure for a new roof for the school as well as other high maintenance and utility costs.



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

Lenore Kingston, who counsels students and parents for three Farmington District schools, is feeling blue about the proposed school closing. It's not yet known what will become of the 33-year-old building.

INSIDE ANGLES

LORETTA CONWAY, senior adult supervisor for the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission recently received the Jaycees first distinguished service award. Conway received a plaque honoring her for the "outstanding job she has done in working toward the betterment of the community." Loreta has gone far beyond what is required of her job and her work and contribution to senior citizens and the Jaycees to pursue their goals, said a spokesman for the organization.

WHEN MICHIGAN Parks and Recreation Department hands out awards this week, it will hand one of them to Farmington Area Jaycees. Tom Brown, president of the service club will accept the award during a luncheon Friday in the Ren-Cen for the Jaycees' service to seniors. Farmington Parks and Recreation Department nominated the chapter for the award because of continued services and gifts it has given to those who frequent the Farmington Hills Senior Center and those who belong to the Men's Club in Oak Hill Nursing Home.

DONALD TREGLOWN of Farmington Hills, a 1979 graduate of North Farmington High School, will be among those whose names are published in the 1983 edition of Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Treglow of Farmington Hills.

CONGRATULATIONS to Harold (Bud) Leedy, of Farmington, who received the United Home Life Insurance Company "Agent of the Year" award at a dinner held at the Chamberlain of Dearborn. He is associated with M & O Marketing, Inc. of Dearborn.

"OTHER THINGS and Company," a troupe of dancers, singers and musicians who travel the state to perform for school children will visit the students in Forest Elementary School Feb. 2 and those in Woodcreek Elementary School, Feb. 24. The troupe is a resident company of Oakland University and doesn't need any publicity; there are no bookings left for the season. Area youth will see the troupe's performance of "Poemsicles," based on Shel Silverstein's book, "Light in the Attic."

LUNCHING is always elegant in Ridgewood Cafe where a variety of hot and cold entrees are served by the students in Oakland Community College's culinary arts program. But now comes the biggest bargain in the area for your gourmet dollar with a pay one price for an all-you-can-eat winter buffet. Lunch hours remain the same, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays on the second level of Building on Orchard Ridge Campus. Buffet days for the winter are scheduled for Feb. 8, Feb. 23, March 17 and April 5. We suggest you arrive early to beat the faculty for a head of the line spot.

PAUL HAMWAY, counselor for Farmington High School, wants to alert readers to "National School Guidance and Counseling Week." The week of observance runs from Feb. 7-11.

DR. PATRICIA La FAVE recently assumed the post of clinical psychologist with the Farmington Area Advisory Council, a non-profit counseling center that offers help to adolescents, adults and families who are alcohol or drug-dependent, financially troubled or in need of help in other areas. LaFave, who is serving two days a week at the council, is a former Farmington area resident. She replaces Jim Patton, former client services director. A resident of Chelsea, LaFave holds a doctorate and master's degree in clinical psychology from the University of Detroit and Oakland University respectively. In her private practice in Jackson, she administers psychotherapy to children and conducts marriage and family therapy. At FAAC her duties include clinical supervision to the staff, in-service training, administrative services, and some psychotherapy.

KUDOS and other good things to Ann Marie Dowd, supervisor of Mount Carmel's histology lab, who will be among the elect in the 1983 edition of "Who's Who of American Women." The volume by Varquis Press is scheduled for March 1983 publication. Dowd contributed a chapter to the book, "Mummies, Disease and Ancient Cultures," also written by MCMH's Dr. Theodore A. Reymann, head of pathology and radiologist Dr. Karl Kristlin. Her chapter concerned the technique of processing mummy tissue for histological examination.

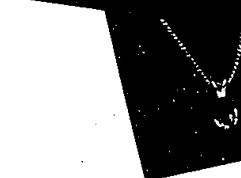
ARC offers speakers

The Association for Retarded Citizens/Detroit has speakers and slide presentations available for classes, clubs, church groups or organizations on a variety of topics related to mental retardation. Presentations include "Tomorrow's Child," "A Parent's Perspective," "Living in a Group Home," "The Mental Retardation Story," "Think of Me First as a Person," "Mental Retardation: What It Is, what it isn't," and "Take Care of Yourself: Guidelines to Preventing Mental Retardation."

Presentations can be adapted to any age range. Presentations can also be tailored to the special needs of your group.

In addition to speakers on topics related to mental retardation, ARC/Detroit offers an extensive library of information about mental retardation. The library is located in the ARC/Detroit at 51 W. Hancock. It's open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For further information, call ARC at 831-0202.



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