

Take an interest in Clarenceville District

WERE A SCHOOL DISTRICT but also a community. We're a community that thinks it's a town. Our school district is our heart, our center."

That's how Sam Prisk, a 23-year veteran of the Clarenceville Board of Education and the unofficial Mayor of Clarenceville, described the district in a 1979 Observer interview.

Although regarded by the longtime residents of the district as the Mayor of Clarenceville, Prisk, a dentist, actually is a Livonia resident. His dental office is in Redford Township.

Clarenceville is neither a city, a village nor a township.

PRISK'S DESCRIPTION of the Clarenceville community was on target. In the midst of the metropolitan area, the tiny (by metropolitan standards) district of about 2,000 students has managed to channel its smallness in some positive ways. Residents of the district — which includes parts of Livonia, Farmington Hills and Redford Township — often first refer to themselves as coming from

Clarenceville rather than their respective towns.

The district is characterized by the open, efficient and downright friendly people who run it. There's nothing pompous or pretentious in Clarenceville. It's the kind of place you almost expect to find in a rural setting, not a metropolitan area.

Mention "consolidation" and trustees, administrators and residents bristle.

"We're larger than most school districts in the state. The trustees and administrators know the employees and we still offer a sound educational program," said one administrator.

That's not to say the district has not had its share of problems over the last few years. Declining enrollment, fluctuating state aid and a static tax base have produced some pretty tough years.

ALTHOUGH CLARENCEVILLE is regarded for its neighborly feeling, its board of education is characterized by its Livonia dominance.

Although the district is comprised of three communities, Livonia residents make up the entire sev-

en-member board. It has been more than five years since a resident of Farmington Hills or Redford has even filed for election.

The last non-Livonian to serve on the board was Norman Hunt who retired in 1981.

Clarenceville trustees and residents of the district have a chance to change that. Two weeks ago, Lee McDowell, a Livonia resident, resigned from the board. A new trustee will be appointed to fill the seat. Candidates will be interviewed at the board's July 28 meeting. The board expects to fill the vacancy before Aug. 3.

The Livonia leadership on the board has been fair and productive. The district won't be harmed by another qualified trustee from Livonia. After all, trustees are elected at large to serve the entire district, not their particular town.

However, the vacancy does offer trustees and residents from Farmington Hills and Redford a chance to add some geographical balance to the board.

Granted, time is short. There's not much time to

ponder the decision. Those interested need to apply immediately.

PRESENTLY, the Clarenceville board is comprised of Prisk, Michael Manore, Richard Wood, Daniel Morrison, Barry Sherman and Lorene Erickson.

Sherman, a Livonia police officer, is a graduate of Clarenceville High School. Trusteeship runs in the Erickson family. Lorene, a former teacher in the Livonia Public Schools, was elected to the board in 1978 after her husband, Robert, decided to retire after 11 years of service.

In the last election, Sherman and Prisk were unopposed for re-election.

All organizations from time to time need an infusion of new people who bring new ideas and offer a different perspective.

Registered voters in Farmington Hills, Redford Township and Livonia are eligible to apply for the trustee post. To apply, contact Patricia Vickery at 474-5569. The school board offices are at 20210 Middlebelt in Livonia.

Chrysler turns corner, and we all feel relieved

HE'S A suburban father trying to support a family of seven on a weekly salary from Chrysler. It hasn't been an easy life.

Many times the children have gone without extras like vacations and have worn clothes purchased at the resale shop.

He had been transferred several times. At one point, he even had to work in a town 100 miles away from his family.

For all of the problems, he always knew there would be food on the table. All he would have to do is keep working for Chrysler.

In 1978-79 he began to change. His shoulders became a little stooped. The aging process accelerated. For the first time, he had fear on his face.

THIS SUBURBAN man was not alone in his worries during 1978-79. In terms of numbers, Chrysler employs 34,600 persons in the Detroit metropolitan area. In addition, it uses a network of 11,000 suppliers. Its collapse would have devastating effects on many persons and businesses in this suburban area.

The difficulties faced by the families of Chrysler workers, such as the suburban father, would only be the beginning. What about those who make a living providing goods and services to Chrysler? What about those who earn a living by catering to the Chrysler employees? What about the economic loss to this entire area?

During 1979 Chrysler was on the brink. It had recorded a loss of \$204.6 million for 1978, and the next year was worse. For the second quarter, it reported an astounding loss of \$207.1 million.

That's why all of us who lived through those times had to smile last week. Chairman Lee Iacocca announced Chrysler would repay \$800 million of its federally guaranteed loan by September, or seven years ahead of schedule.

It had been a long, hard struggle. But it looks as though Chrysler has been saved.

All this is not to say that the problems of Chrysler are over. Many critical issues still remain. It still is in debt to Michigan, Delaware, Illinois and Indiana for \$205.5 million in state-secured loans. During



Nick Sharkey

cutbacks, it damaged its design and engineering staffs — which will hurt in the years ahead.

The United Auto Workers is now demanding pay raises for its members.

BUT AT LEAST the wolf is away from the door. If the nation's economy continues to improve, Chrysler should make it.

Are there lessons to be learned from Chrysler by this state as it struggles for its survival? I think so. Chrysler originally asked the federal government for a direct grant. It argued that because of Chrysler's importance to the nation's economy, it should receive a handout.

But the government didn't buy. It required that sacrifices be made by the company, employees, bankers and suppliers before the government would help.

It was this mandated cooperation which restored Chrysler to life. All parties had to work together to make the loan agreement work.

Now, consider this state. It is racked by ever-increasing expenses and a shrinking economic base. Many groups are battling over a smaller revenue pie.

Michigan will not be bailed out by an outside source. It will take cooperation (yep, even sacrifice) on the part of government, labor, industry and the public at large to get the state moving again. So far, there's been much rhetoric about cooperation, but little action.

Chrysler couldn't have done it alone, just as our state government can't turn Michigan around by itself. If you're looking for a model for Michigan to follow, you don't have to go far.



The Spreen situation deteriorates



Tim Richard

rest of the world: "self-serving politicians, self-serving chiefs of police, self-serving media," all hell-bent on "effectively destroying and totalizing demoralizing" Spreen's department.

The specific cause of his wrath was that the Jail Study Committee had adopted "my plan with one deletion." He didn't say what the deletion was, but it was serious enough that he was threatening to sue. He didn't say what grounds he would sue on, and he didn't say what relief he would ask. He gave me the name of his attorney, but his attorney was out of town until July 25.

He denounced "politicians" though he himself is a consummate politician, even to the point of bringing along his own cheering gallery. You think that is a joke? They were in the front row of the audience section.

After this threat of a suit, after the bitter denunciations of everyone, after this grotesque display, Spreen offered to "work together" for a solution.

OAKLAND, unlike most large counties, has no one city dominating the county. Indeed, no city has as much as 10 percent of the total county population. Oakland is highly decentralized. The Oakland County Ethic is that cities, townships, county government, executives, legislators, judges all must work cooperatively in a self-effacing way.

There is just no place in Oakland government for a man who insists his plan must be adopted without amendment. There is just no place for a man who sees only himself as a "professional" and everyone else as a "self-serving politician." There is just no place for a man who only lectures and can neither hear nor respect any other point of view.

I don't and can't hate the man. It's upsetting to have to write these words, but it goes with the job. Spreen was long an outstanding cop, but that was some time back. The situation has deteriorated intolerably, and he must be replaced.

Odds against SEMTA's tax appeal



Bob Wisler

cessions out of SEMTA regarding transportation in that area.

Many Oakland officials feel that the county should be getting quid pro quo — each dollar of taxpayer funds put into the SEMTA system should go back to Oakland County in the way of services.

It is much like people whose children have grown up refusing to approve funds for schools which will no longer serve their children. Public transportation, they say, is not their problem.

As one Oakland County resident said at a SEMTA hearing recently, every family she knows has at least two cars, so who needs a transportation system? Besides the commuters served during rush hour, the system serves mostly the elderly and poor people without cars.

AT THE HEART of the antipathy toward SEMTA is the plan for a light-rail rapid transit line from Detroit to Pontiac with part of it underground, the "Coleman Young subway." Young didn't invent the subway idea, but the ensuing argumentation has made it seem like he plotted the route.

The truth is, according to Krause, that a light rail line makes transportation sense and is the kind of system favored in the cities which have good mass transportation systems.

But the thought of a subway causes shudders in the suburbs.

At the heart of the matter is the mistrust of doing any kind of traveling to Detroit or through Detroit, a xenophobic view of that city as a place to avoid.

Any public vote on a transit tax faces the problem of overcoming the who-needs-it attitude — the feeling that public transit is irrelevant to families with two cars and no desire to use public transportation, especially transportation that is viewed as being primarily to take people in and out of a city which is considered by many as unsafe at any speed.

THIS ISN'T the kind of column I enjoy writing. Political and economic issues are my usual fare. Personalities are normally the grist of the hatchet boys downtown.

But it has become too painful to listen to and write about Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen. Yet the man has such fantastic name recognition that he will be difficult to defeat in 1984.

And so the opposition Republicans need to be encouraged, right now, to select their best possible candidate, raise a hefty war chest and perform their civic duty. County Executive Dan Murphy and every incumbent officeholder will have to use their catpaws to put their candidate in.

WE IN THE newspaper and broadcasting business make Spreen look good.

Indeed, he once was good. He has a powerful brain and humane instincts. He spots problems and designs programs to solve them.

But we newspaper people quote his major ideas, his best lines, and give the impression he has his act together. In a straight news story or 10-second video clip, the emotional flavor of his thinking fails to show through.

Take his performance last week before the Board of Commissioners.

There is something of the flavor of the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Spreen speech — the battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. The difference is that there is only one Son of Light: Spreen himself, the self-described "professional" with 40 years of experience.

THE SONS OF DARKNESS consist of most of the