

# Opinion

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## A Champ

### She shows what courage means

"Courage is to feel the daily daggers of relentless steel and keep on living."

— Douglas Malloch

**C**OURAGE — real courage — is a rare commodity in our society. That's why it should be written about when witnessed.

Beverly Cornell's story is the kind which makes all of us feel a little guilty when complaining about our daily aches, pains and imagined woes.

You've read about Beverly intermittently in the pages of the Observer. She's a 37-year-old competitive swimmer who is noted for having climbed out of the pool with more than a few medals in her hand.

Any of you who rely on swimming for your physical fitness routine realize that working out at 37 is an accomplishment, let alone winning a medal in competition.

But that's only part of the Beverly Cornell story.

**SHE ALSO** has a rare disease — polycystic fibrosis dysplasia — which recently forced amputation of her left leg. Suffering from the disease for the past 30 years, she has undergone two dozen



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby



operations to combat it. She recently learned it has spread to her back.

The disease, a degenerative one, turns bone into marrow and makes the body fragile. It is also very painful — more painful than most of us can imagine experiencing.

But you'd never know that pain was part of Beverly Cornell's life — or despair. She could tell you up close and personal about the daily daggers of relentless steel.

But she won't.

**INSTEAD OF** feeling sorry for herself after her leg was amputated just four months ago, she continued to swim. In February she won five medals in the Michigan Wheelchair Athletic Associa-

tion state regional finals. She will be off to Tennessee in May to compete in the association's national meet.

Now that's courage.

The thing that impresses me the most is the impact she has on other people.

Several reporters at this paper have interviewed her. Usually interviewing someone with a handicap elicits a reaction of sympathy from reporters after they return to the office.

I couldn't help but notice that when reporters come back from talking with Beverly, their attitudes were much different.

Instead of showing sympathy, they would smile and talk about how good Beverly made them feel — how positive she is about life.

And, of course, they always talk about her smile. It really is infectious.

**I'VE NEVER** met Beverly Cornell, although unknown to her, we've shared the same pool many a time. But thanks to my reporters, I feel like I have made a good friend over the years.

So I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thanks, Bev, for teaching us about courage and hope. You get my winner of the day award.

There should be more persons like you.



### from our readers

#### Poor upkeep at the station

To the editor:

I must comment, finally, on your headline "Police tell tale of cramped work space" in February 20th edition, with a picture of a police storage space underneath it. Are you being paid to drum up sympathy with the tax payers to have a new police administration building built? Your picture depicted extremely poor housekeeping and organization of a storeroom, not an office, and if I was an employee of that department, I would be sorely embarrassed.

We residents are all aware of the need for more space for our police department. We are also aware of vacant buildings which hopefully will be considered in order that this need for more space can be accomplished most economically. Heaven forbid our taxes should be increased even more.

I cannot help but comment also, regarding the abundance of city-owned automobiles that fill the parking lot of City Hall. When I first moved to Farmington Hills, I thought the building was open 24 hours a day because the parking lot is so full even at midnight. I question the need for so many vehicles for employee use, the insurance bill alone must be large for all these vehicles. Certainly 20 cents a mile for a personal vehicle use reimbursement would be much more economical.

Ruth H. Ballestrine  
Farmington Hills

#### Feminism is endorsed

To the editor:

Glancing through the Farmington Observer, words in bold type flashed at my eyes: "Feminism needs understanding." I felt compelled to write.

Reading through Rev. John Schaden's column (2-16-84) a second time, the following phrases stood out: "Much to lose," "anger born of fear," "fear of going against the status quo," "fear of being radical," and "understanding the issues."

A common denominator stands out: Fear. Because of ignorance and misunderstanding, Feminism has become a "disease." We have stereotyped the feminist (S/he) is a man-hater and considers homemakers beneath her. She does not believe in marriage. Her independence does not include that.

Yes, society has much to "lose." We're afraid women might be just as good (or better) corporate managers, bankers and firefighters. I have a big fear, though. It is one borne out and realized by women when crisis hits.

Example: homemaker married 25 years finds herself on the receiving end of divorce. She concludes her multifarious homemaking skills worthless as rejections greet her on the job hunt. Within that spectrum lies the chilling realization of her uphill battle searching for stable employment.

As women, we think we have it all made. But crisis such as physical abuse, divorce, rape and others: sexual harassment and credit refusal tend to open our eyes and hopefully force us to change and grow.

Feminism is an area and instrument for consideration of those changes.

Ellen M. Dryer,  
Farmington Hills

#### Station resembles a bomb shelter

To the editor:

The picture shown on the front page of the Farmington Observer on Feb. 20 of the storage room at the police headquarters is a disgrace. I have seen pictures of bomb shelters in Lebanon which look better.

Wozniak is quoted as saying, "For me to get up into a corner is a problem." I can believe that, but I think I would try to make it to one of the corners, if possible, and hide. Regardless of who is responsible, that room is nothing to be proud of. It belies, to some extent, what Mr. Nichols says in the same paper, "We feel we have been as good managers as we can . . ."

A limited space is no reason for such a shameful condition. On the contrary, where space is at a premium, it calls for extra organization and planning, not sloppiness. One cannot help wondering what the police department storage area will look like in three to five years if it has four times its present space as is now planned.

One can see lots of wasted space just by looking at the picture as printed. I have a suspicion that the room was intentionally cluttered in order to dramatize the need for more space. If so, it had the opposite effect on me.

Russell Griffiths  
Farmington Hills

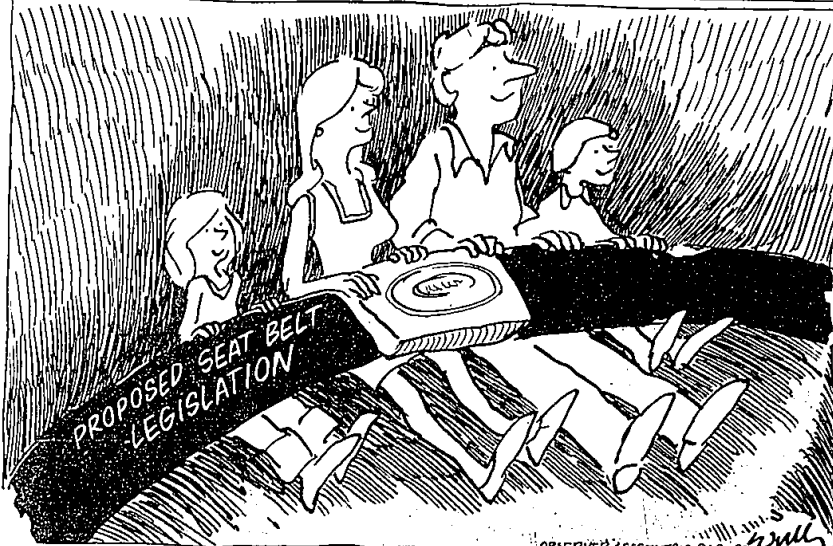
#### Share opinions

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others.

Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly, 300 words or less, signed, and include the address of the sender.

Letters may be mailed or hand-delivered to our news office at 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.



### 'Beavers' bite road funds

"Lawyers are like beavers: They get in the mainstream and dam it up."

— John Naisbitt in "Megatrends"

**YOU** WOULD think fewer accidents would mean fewer lawsuits. Not so.

The safer our roads become, the more lawsuits are filed and the more it costs the public to settle them.

This depressing information comes from James Pitz, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, and Bob Adams, his deputy for planning.

"Last year," Pitz said in a visit last week, "the state paid out \$14 million in accident settlements. That is equal to the total amount paid out in the last 29 years."

"The courts have gotten 'way off base on that issue," he added in a bit of understatement.

**MICHIGAN'S** roads are actually becoming safer. The death rate per 100 million miles traveled has dropped steadily for four years.

In 1978 and 1979, there were about 2.9 persons killed per 100 million miles. That dropped to 2.56 the next year, then to 2.31 and 2.08 last year.

In the same six years, the number of pending cases has almost doubled. In 1978, there were 212 pending suits against the state at the end of the calendar year. This figure rose to 272, 315, 371, 408 and finally to 423 suits by the end of 1983.



Tim Richard

In that time, Michigan's population has stagnated if not declined. Statewide, the number of judges has increased. So we can't blame the piling up of cases on population growth or too few judges.

**THE PAYOFF** has risen spectacularly for those who sue the state.

In 1979 and 1980, those plaintiffs collected less than \$1.4 million each year in judgments and settlements. In 1981 and 1982, there was almost a tripling to \$4 million and \$3.4 million respectively.

Last year the payoff was \$14.9 million. That payoff, said Pitz, was equal to the total payoff of the previous 29 years.

In part, sheer numbers of lawsuits are to blame. In part, a handful of multi-million-dollar settlements kicked up the total.

In one case, said the M-DOT chief, an intoxicated driver hit a tree at the rear of the right of way. That came under the doctrine of "contributory negligence" on the part of state road engineers.

**WHAT CAN** the state do about it?

One answer is to continue making safe-

ty engineering a priority, as the Oakland County Road Commission has been doing for several years. Guard rails at ramps can be collapsible. Median barriers could be concrete. Michigan's freeways are 20 years old now and need rehabilitation.

A law could be passed limiting settlements. Wisconsin has placed a \$250,000 limit on settlements against the state.

A state Senate bill would limit state liability to the outer edge of the road's shoulder rather than to the entire right of way.

Seat belts could be mandated by state law. That might not prevent accidents, but it could prevent a lot of deaths. The state Transportation Commission has endorsed the bill.

When the state must spend \$14 million to settle lawsuits from road accidents, Pitz said, it means less can be spent on roads. That \$14 million paid out in 1983 could resurface 140 miles of two-lane highway.

My first impulse was to suggest that lawsuit settlements be deducted, not from road maintenance and construction funds, but from appropriations to law schools. We probably have too many lawyers looking for cases to file.

Unfortunately, that would punish only public law schools. A pair of private law schools are turning out their share of beavers.