

Opinion

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Separating folklore from hype

For some reason, we tend to believe that media hype is an invention of 20th century society.

Imagine we are in the office of Phineas T. 'Swifty' Hornswoggle, dealer in elixirs of life, salves to cure all that ails you, and public relations, as his next client enters.

VISITOR: "Hello, I'm John Chapman, and I hear tell you are good at fixin' up a feller's reputation."

SWIFTY: "That's me. So tell me, Johnny — if I may be so bold — what's your shik?"

VISITOR: "I travel along the highways and byways of this great land, sowing apple seeds."

SWIFTY: "Uh-huh. And?"

VISITOR: "That's it."



Richard Lech

SWIFTY: "Humm. Well, I tell ya, Johnny, that doesn't grab me too much, ya know what I mean? But I'll see what I can do. Just let old Swifty get those gray cells working."

"First of all, you gotta come up with a snappy moniker, something like Jack the Apple, Johnny B. Goodapple — Johnny Applesed, that's it. Horney, but catchy."

"Next I'll send you down to our art department. We've got some real expert arty types

down there. They'll paint a picture of you with a long beard sowing seeds. We'll get that baby distributed to every tabloid, farmer's almanac and yellow sheet in the country. For the next six months, America is gonna eat, drink, think of nothing else but Johnny Applesed, Johnny Applesed, Johnny Applesed. You're gonna be instant folklore, kiddo."

JOHNNY APPELSEED leaves and in comes Hornswoggle's longtime client Davy Crockett.

SWIFTY: "Davy, sweetie, how ya doing?"

DAVY: "Oh, pretty good. How's ya by you?"

SWIFTY: "Davy, Davy, Davy — is that any way to talk? Is that what we taught you? You're slipping, booby."

DAVY: "Sorry. Ah'll try again. Ah'm feelin' about as tickled as a baby bear in a pot of molasses, Swifty."

SWIFTY: "That's better."

DAVY: "I jus' dropped in to tell you how much ah lanked those new slogans yer writers came up with fer me. 'Killed him a bar when he was only 3,' 'Outgrinnin' a bar,' 'Patchin' up th' crack in th' Liberty Bell.' Thas dynamite stuff, Swifty of pal."

"And, whew boy, gettin' me that gig at th' Alamo — that's th' ultimate gas. Ya even got me top billin' over Jim Bowie, William Travis, and Gen. Santa Anna. How'd ya ever do it?"

SWIFTY: "Ah, it was nothing, David me boy. But I tell ya, I got a blast from our promotions department that you're just gonna have to try when you get done with that Alamo date. It's something that'll make coonskin cap mania seem about as ancient as Tippecanoe and Tyler too. Get this. You walk around wearing a glove at all times — but just one glove, the special Davy Crockett brand glove. It'll start a whole new fad — years ahead of its time."

DAVY: "Ah lank it already, Swifty. We'll talk more about it when I get back. So long till then."

SWIFTY: "See ya later. And break a leg there in San Antonio, pal."

(TO HIS SECRETARY, GLADYS): "Anybody else out there?"

GLADYS: "Just that young attorney from Illinois. Says he really has to see you."

oral quarrel

This week's Oral Quarrel question asked Farmington Hills residents: How would you vote on a proposed charter question to raise the millage ceiling from 10 mills to 11.5 mills? Following are the responses:

The question is not will we approve an increase of 1.5 mills. The question is will we decrease it by three mills. The council must be absolutely crazy as to the financial ability for everybody to pay with the financial picture of Michigan.

I would vote no for the simple reason is that nobody else is getting raises (so) why should the people in government continue to get these 7 and 8 percent raises every year. They could go without 30 percent of them. My house taxes just went up 15 percent for no reason. Nothing was done additional to the house.

No.

The answer is no, no. We have to live within our means; you live within yours.

Why don't we wait until it is on the ballot before we start voting on anything, and then let us have a private vote. Then you can start studying it.

No.

Why don't you wait until after the election ballot comes in instead of running your own election now first? The only reason you are doing this now is to see how it comes out — may be to start spending a little earlier.

I vote no. Absolutely no. No increases.

My neighbors and I feel that this should not be enforced. We feel they should be able to live within their means just like we have to live within ours. We do appreciate this.

I would vote no.

Advertisement for David M. Clark, D.D.S. and Carolyn L. Romzick, D.D.S. announcing the opening of their office for the practice of general dentistry. Includes address: Farmington Hills Dental Associates, P.C., 30330 W. Twelve Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48018. Phone: 855-4850.

Advertisement for Prime Rib Dinner, AU JUS, served with Yorkshire Pudding, Salad, Rice Pilaf or Baked Potato and our own Teacup Bread. Price \$9.95 through Sunday, August 12. Served at Meriwether's, Telegraph, North of 10 Mile, Southfield, 358-4950.

Voters back area colleges

COMMUNITY colleges clearly were big winners when the state Board of Education took a telephone survey of the public's attitudes toward higher education in May.

Michiganians think their community colleges are good to excellent. They find the two-year colleges meeting the needs of minorities, the handicapped and women quite nicely, thank you. They think highly of the community colleges as places for remedial as well as vocational-technical training.

The blockbuster finding was that 67 percent said they would vote in favor of a property tax millage increase for their community college. Only 16 percent said no, and 8 percent were undecided.

That survey was based on allegedly in-depth interviews with 802 adults. Statisticians say you can get pretty accurate results with that size of survey if you get a good cross-section.

THAT WAS music to the ears of good ol' Dick McDowell, president of Schoecraft College. The hit-the-deck running chief executive has been saying since he arrived late in 1981 that a millage proposal one of these years, soon, is inevitable.

Trustees, particularly veterans like Paul Kadish, shudder at the word. During the 1970s, they tried four times to persuade the public to pass various forms of millage increases. The best they ever could get was a 42-percent "yes" response.

They tried hard sells with lots of publicity. They tried soft sells with telephone pleas to the college faithful. Nothing worked. They couldn't even get the students to the polls.

Has anything changed now that we are in the mid-1980s? In Lansing, the politicians are so scared of tax talk that they won't even put a SEMTA sales tax on the ballot, let alone advocate it. And yet for all the hot air about recalling the governor, a dozen

state senators and a dozen or so representatives, only two recall proposals actually made it to the ballot.

I THINK it would be dangerous to put too much stock in the state Board of Education's survey. As I study the package of results, I can see a giant flaw in the survey's method.

Those taking the survey apparently asked a lot of questions about higher education, and got positive results, before popping the millage increase question. Items:

• 74 percent of Michiganians said a college education is "very important" compared to 58 percent of Americans answering a nationwide Gallup poll.

• 54 percent think Michigan colleges are as good as those in any other state, and 16 percent say ours are better.

• 22 percent gave Michigan's 29 community colleges "excellent" ratings, and 46 percent called them "good," which is a lot of A's and B's.

• 30 percent said community colleges are best at providing adults career planning and guidance services; 21 percent ranked the four-year colleges best and only 13 percent opted for adult education programs.

IN SHORT, the entire survey put the respondents in a positive frame of mind, and that probably colored the results of the millage question.

In the real world, voters don't dwell on how wonderful their community colleges are before going to the polls.

They think about inflated assessments, the 11 percent who are still unemployed, their Consumers Power bills, the self-centered attitude of unions, their own prospects for promotion and riches, Mayor Young's latest raid on the state treasury.

In other words, before voting, they think about a lot of bad news that the state Board of Education's survey failed to stir up.

— TIM RICHARD

SUMMER SPECIALS

Advertisement for CAREY/AMBASSADOR LIMOUSINE. Features an illustration of a limousine and people. Text includes: LUNCHEON IN THE PARK, For You and That Special Someone! Chauffeured Limousine Pick-Up, Gourmet Picnic Lunch with Wine, Return to the Office or Residence - 125 Complete - 150 Affordable Couple. Also mentions MATTEO'S RESTAURANT.