

retirement memos

Margaret Miller

These Olympics tap minds

It has been awhile since I have had a lot of contact with the high school crowd. A recent volunteering stint gave me a little, and it's something I'd recommend for any retiree whose own kids have been grown and gone too long.

What I did was help in the operation of a program called Academic Olympics, which has been running for several years in the Saratoga school district. It is a type of college bowl competition, with teams of top students from six high schools trying to come up first with the correct answers for some pretty tough questions.

A series of meets pits each school against each of the others and then winds up in semifinals and finals at the county fair. Adult volunteers are needed to do things like reading the questions, judging correctness of the answers, watching the time and keeping the scores.

Thank heavens we didn't have to answer the questions!

I FOUND INTERESTING a couple of comments made during the training session for volunteers. One came from the school district official in charge of compiling the questions (volunteers were invited to share in that task, too). He said the questions were designed to reward the student who does a lot of reading — of everything from newspapers to textbooks to encyclopedias.

The other comment was made by the coordinator of Academic Olympics. She noted that there had been criticism because so much emphasis is placed on speed.

"They do have to be fast," she conceded. "But there are plenty of situations in adult life when quick thinking can make a difference. If we can foster that, we've made a difference too."

IN MY FIRST match I was designated timekeeper. Watching that little stopwatch hand tick off seconds, five to 25 depending on the type of question, kept me so busy I couldn't register the question, let alone think of the answer.

The next match saw me serving as judge. I was apprehensive about that one, but it was much easier. The answers were on the cards and it was just a matter of being sure that what the kids said matched. Then I had a stint of score-keeping. Not too bad, but I was glad I didn't make any mistakes with a roomful of bright students watching every move.

OVERALL, I FOUND I knew answers to maybe a quarter of the questions, including a rare few that the students missed. I was truly astounded at the way they came up with five-second answers to complicated math questions, but then math isn't exactly my field. Actually, I was pretty impressed with their knowledge in general.

I came away convinced kids these days are doing just fine. I also found myself looking forward to next year's Academic Olympics.

Margaret Miller was Suburban Life editor for Observer Newspapers for 16 years. She and her husband Joe have retired to Florida, where she writes Retirement Memos.

The Flamethrowers, a group of friends from southeastern Michigan, have but one goal in mind these days, to make "Wild Willies Nuclear Chili" a nationally recognized name.

Next competition for the recipe is The Great Chili Cookoff, sponsored as a benefit for National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, Saturday and Sunday, May 4-5 in Saline. The Flamethrowers have been in competition since 1983 and in 1984 took the regional championship during the Livonia Spree days.

"All of the contests are sanctioned by the International Chili Society, and of course Wild Willies Nuclear Chili is registered," said Gerry Gazda, a professional photographer affiliated with Meteor Photo in Troy.

Gazda is a member of the Flamethrowers team which mixes up the nuclear stew with Gary Whetstone, a machine operator at General Motors and a resident of Plymouth; Bruce Rubadeux, a director of computer services and a resident of Troy; Frank Zuccaro, owner of Aero Data Instruments; William Thomas, a job facilitator from Belleville; and Rhonda Armstrong, a recent nursing school graduate from Detroit.

UNDER THE rules of the International Chili Society, cooking teams must only use commercially canned or bottled ingredients, must chop vegetables and meats at the contest site, and must not premeasure ingredients.

The group's affection for chili turned competitive after sampling Thomas's canned tomatoes, peppers and hot sauce.

"We started make chili using the name 'Bill's Wild Willies Atomic Chili Sauce,'" Gazda said.

When the group got involved in contests, members had to make several alterations in the recipe to make the commercial foods simulate the taste of Thomas's home-made foods. The recipe for Wild Willies Nuclear Chili contains about 30 ingredients.

To make certain their chili stands out during the competition the Flamethrowers have created a three-dimensional atomic bomb blast which fits over their table.

"It's our way of getting attention," Gazda said. "We compete with anywhere from 30 to 80 teams and the contests always turn into outstanding parties with literally thousands of people wanting to taste all the different recipes."



Flamethrowers Gerry Gazda (from left), Gary Whetstone and Bill Thomas, who is head chef for the chili-making team, use about 30 ingredients to make Wild Willies Nuclear Chili.

Camera buffs called to 3-part seminar

The 14th Meteor Photo Seminar for amateurs and advanced amateurs is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 1, in Meteor Photo Co., 1099 Chicago Road, Troy.

Designed as a basic camera skills review, the three session photographic seminar covers camera handling, composition and use of lenses and filters. Structured around the latest in educational audio-visual programs by East-

man Kodak, the seminar will now touch on lighting techniques and flash photography as well.

Instructor Gerald Gazda will cover photographic skills in the first session. At 2 p.m. Sunday, May 5, the class will meet at Kensington Nature Center for an outdoor shoot. The seminar concludes at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 8, with a critique of class slides and additional classroom instruction.

Meteor Photo Co. offers a \$100 gift certificate redeemable in photographic services for the best slide taken on the Sunday shoot. Additionally, three honorable mentions will be awarded \$25 certificates. Registration fee for the class is \$25, from which \$15 will be returned in the form of Meteor services. Class registration is limited to 40. For registration, call Meteor Photo, 593-3090.

Access guide available

National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) Greater Detroit Section, has reissued the original Greater Detroit Access Guide for Handicapped and Elderly.

It is the first guide of its kind in the tri-county area and contains more than 850 entries. It was planned to inform and to encourage the handicapped and elderly to live a more independent life and to increase the awareness of accessibility. The categories include banks, colleges, universities, entertainment, government services, hospitals, hotels, motels, libraries, malls, retail centers,

museums, recreation, restaurants, supermarkets and transportation.

The guide is available free of charge as a public service of NCJW. The guide can be picked up at the new location of NCJW offices, Cranbrook Office Center North, 30233 Southfield Road, Suite 100, Southfield. Cranbrook Centre is on the west side of Southfield, south of 13 Mile Road. Dates and times of distribution are from 10 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m. April 29-May 3 and May 6-10. The guide will be mailed to those unable to pick it up. Postage of \$1 must be prepaid.

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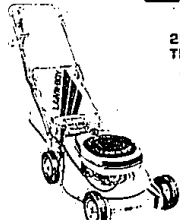
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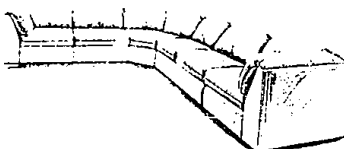
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