

Opinion

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Judges say they're 'truly outstanding'

GOLLY GEE, those Oakland circuit judges are a swell bunch of people. They even say so themselves, right in their official 1984 annual report:

"The 14 individuals who comprise the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court are dedicated public servants. They are 'active participants' in professional groups. The Michigan Judges Association executive board is 'fortunate' to have Oakland Judges Francis X. O'Brien and James Thorburn as members (P. 4).

And so it goes, for 42 pages. Collectively the judges pat themselves on the back so vigorously that it's a wonder we aren't paying heavy workers comp claims for their sore arms.

WE LEARN, for example, that the Oakland circuit judges — "truly an out-

standing judiciary" — are burdened with "managing ever-increasing dockets" (P. 7). This unequivocal statement is followed by two pages of charts showing the numbers of cases filed and disposed of in 1984.

Funny thing: Most annual reports compare this year's performance to last year's. Hmmm, wonder why the Oakland circuit judges failed to do that.

So let's look at their own earlier report for 1982-83 and compare them.

• New cases filed: 22,855, a decrease from the 22,877 filed in '83 and a further decrease from the 23,034 filed in '82. Well!

• Cases disposed of: 23,065 in 1984, a decrease from the 23,726 in '83 and still below the 23,352 of '82. Well, well!

• Criminal cases disposed of: 4,657 in 1984, a decrease from 5,046 in '83 and 5,336 in '82. Well, well, well!

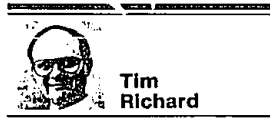
THE JUDGES don't bother to report how many cases each disposed of. But we can calculate an average — 1,647%.

Question: How does that average compare to other circuits — to, say, Kalamazoo and Wayne and Saginaw? Don't bother to look. The Oakland report gives no means of comparison to the caseload levels in other circuits.

We'll just have to take the judges' word for it that they are "truly an outstanding judiciary."

One theme running through the Oakland circuit judges' report is never, never to give any individual figures for judges. That just isn't the Oakland Way.

There are no figures to tell us whether Judge O'Brien handled more or fewer trials than Judge Frederick C. Ziem, no fig-



Tim Richard

ures to tell us whether Steven N. Andrews sentenced more or fewer persons than Hilda R. Gage.

Gossip has it that one judge has the nickname of "Hanging —," implying that that judge gives tougher sentences than the others. But the Oakland Circuit Court annual reports for 1984 and 1982-83 contain no facts on sentences. We can't verify whether the nickname is warranted or gratuitous.

BY NOW, this pattern of emphasizing the collective reputation of the judges is something Oakland voters should be used to.

Each election the incumbent judges who must face the voters raise money as a team, campaign as a team, buy advertising as a team. The purpose is to scare off opposition and, if any surfaces, to crush it with a coordinated steamroller of money and self-induced prestige.

The judges are not, however, a team — certainly not in the same way that Republican legislators and Democratic commissioners are teams. Rather, the judges are more like a closed fraternity/sorority whose members stick together through thick and thin.

But golly gee, they are dedicated.

A new generation

My friend was perturbed the other day by a group of young people. "Look at 'em," he said, "all with dyed hair, playing that garbage on their radios. They can't make out what they're hearing, they're just entertaining themselves with the vibrations of the radio."

The group affected a style of dress and hair coloring explained to me as punk.

I refused to be excited, either by loud radios, present-day music, or bizarre hair colorings or style of adornment.

I can remember various times when "adults" expressed grave concern over the styles of dress and hair chosen by young people to thumb their noses at the establishment, or authority, or their parents. The people building tax shelters today were the outcasts who were wearing dirty long hair, dirty jeans and no shoes a decade ago.

THE FIREBRANDS who said don't trust anyone over 30 are over 40 and have changed their tune. Abby Hoffman is making it on the college lecture circuit and Jerry Rubin is dealing in stocks. All the concern about where they and their ilk would lead the country has disappeared.

There is always concern about the young and there are always experts worrying about how the new generation's members will handle the variety of problems that face them as they grow up and merge into the real world.



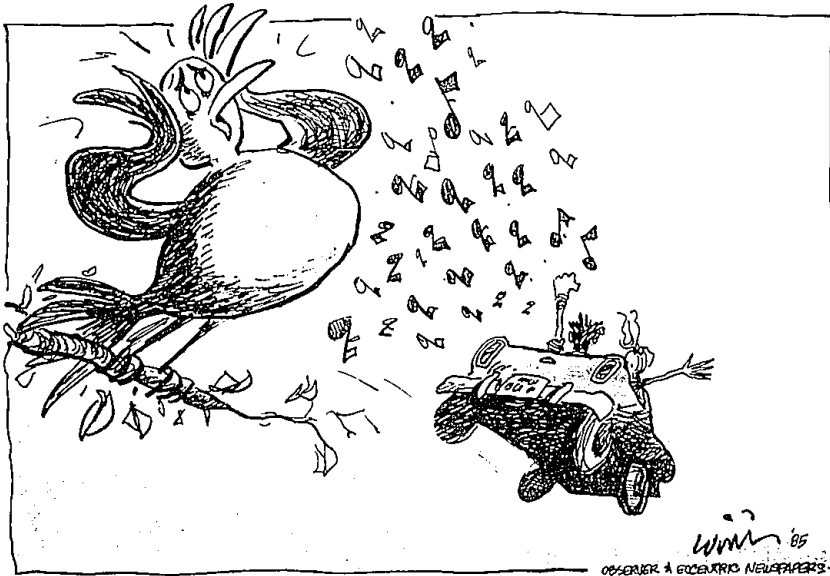
Bob Wisler

Less is said about the concern the young might have about the real world they are inheriting. Want to hear something disconcerting? Listen to a young person 18 or so complain about the state of the planet. Listen to them charge that you and your kind gave them a sorry mess — war and the threat of war, toxic wastes and poisoned water supplies, the possibility of deformed children, the distinct possibility of nuclear extinction.

THE YOUNG people in school today are inheriting a world like no other and the mounting pressures are tremendous.

Still, life goes on and the young of today will have to meet the challenges it faces just as did the generations who preceded this one. For every punk rocker who disturbs us because of a bizarre look or outlook there are dozens of young people concerned only about trying to be the best person they can be in a world they didn't make.

The best evidence is that they are at least as capable as the preceding generations and probably more so.



WMM 85
OBSERVER A GORDON NEWS PAPER

from our readers

Zoo benefits from all contributions

To the editor:

I am writing to thank you for the editorial in your May 30 issue.

We greatly appreciate your support and your realization that the Detroit Zoo is coming out of a now-maturing cocoon.

The Detroit Zoological Society has been a strong supporter of the zoo for many years. That support has escalated tremendously over the last three years and has culminated in the hiring of its first executive director, Charles M. Hammond.

This rapid growth support is providing each and every one of our visitors with a more enriched visit.

HOWEVER, there are some inaccuracies in your editorial that I think I should bring to your attention. The Zoological Parks Department does have a \$8 million budget, provided by the City of Detroit. This support has been provided for nearly 60 years.

Although growth has been slow during Detroit's lean times, it has never been stalled. Our budget has not receded, it has merely grown more slowly. It is also true that state funding has become important to us over the last couple of years and we hope it will continue.

Donations to the society do come directly to the zoo and we appreciate that, but those individuals who donate to the zoo, either in dollars or in services through the various programs like Adopt-A-Animal, are not as you paint them in your editorial.

OUR \$8-MILLION budget is based on revenues. We routinely return to the city about 50 percent of our total budget, through zoo revenues. When our revenues increase, our budget increases — not one-for-one but approximately two-for-one. So \$1 provided to the Adopt-A-Animal

program provides us with \$2 in our next year's budget.

Again, we appreciate your editorial and my only reason for writing is to let all of our patrons know that whether they come through our gate, donate to the society, or adopt a garden, etc., all of these donations directly benefit the Detroit Zoo.

Steve Graham,
Detroit Zoo director

Broker defends his actions

To the editor:

I am writing to you in response to the article written by Joanne Maliszewski entitled "A Woman's Home Deal Turns Into Nightmare" which appeared in your newspaper on May 15.

In that article, Rosanne Eggle complained about her eviction from her home at 23015 Truck Road, Farmington Hills, which she purchased by obtaining an assignment of a purchaser's interest in a land contract.

The land contract contained a provision calling for monthly payments and the statement, "All of the purchase money and interest shall, however, be fully paid within five years from the date hereof, anything herein to the contrary notwithstanding." The balance due upon a land contract at the end of its term is sometimes referred to as a "balloon payment."

Ms. Eggle claimed she had assumed that she would be able to get an extension on the due date for the balloon payment called for in the land contract.

First, while Ms. Eggle complains about a balloon payment that was due, she was not evicted for her failure to make that balloon payment. She was evicted for her failure to make her monthly payments. Second, at no time did I ever represent that she could obtain an extension of the land contract. The land contract clearly

indicated the existence of the balloon payment and its due date. Ms. Eggle was present at the closing and, as she admitted in her complaint to the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors, it did not occur to her to ask the owners if they would extend the due date for the balloon payment.

Third, the tone of the article makes Ms. Eggle appear to be a resourceless, ignorant victim, who lost her home. She is clearly not ignorant of practices in the real estate field. In fact, she represented to the Board of Realtors that she purchased the house for investment purposes.

She stated in her complaint that she had attended real estate investment seminars. In addition, Ms. Eggle currently owns several other pieces of property and engages in the purchase, renovation and sale of residential properties.

The story presented to the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors and to Ms. Maliszewski by Rosanne Eggle are inconsistent.

I believe that, in the interests of fair and objective journalism, Ms. Maliszewski should have attempted to discover those inconsistencies before writing a story like the one which appeared in your newspaper.

Steve Stockton
Farmington Hills

Relatives blame judge for death

To the editor:

We are writing in regard to the verdict rendered in the trial of our brother-in-law, Dr. Thomas Lowrey. We realize Judge Gage has not known this man as we have for the last 39 years, but how could she make the decision she made with no more evidence than the testimony of a disturbed 15-year-old girl?

By rendering this decision rather than

obtaining additional evidence, not only is a loving father lost to his family, but what guilt is now laid at the feet of the very child the court was supposedly protecting?

Are parents no longer allowed to discipline a child for repeated disobedience? Are children to be the ones to make the decisions in the family regarding their behavior? Does the judge forget that children will lie to make themselves look good or to achieve a desired end result?

We hate to place blame on Judge Gage, but we feel this unnecessary death should weigh heavily on her conscience.

Joanne Thiekstun
Columbus, Ohio
Ninitta Rexroth
Silvis, Illinois

Library patron defends Lewis

To the editor:

If a civilization is to be known for its contribution to the refinement of man's nature, then a significant portion of that cultural contribution which the Farmington/Farmington Hills community will be credited with has been formed and nurtured through the devotion, expertise, and persistent planning of Gordon Lewis.

The Farmington area library under his excellent direction has grown from a quasi-professional status to one often characterized by the library board, both city councils and administrations as "second to none."

Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding Lewis' departure cannot be hailed as the best in terms of procedure by the board, either city council or administration.

The prolonged agony of rumor, innuendo and publicity, fraught on the one hand with maddening silences by those who could have dignified the entire matter by

an honest and openhanded approach, and on the other hand by those all too eager to frivolously and irresponsibly pollute the atmosphere with invective and self-serving mewlings to all they could reach by pen or confrontation has had tragic overtones resulting in damage to the entire community, the library, and particularly, to Lewis.

Further, if it is given that a board is responsible for the direct and immediate oversight of a department then that board must assume some accountability for any errors in procedure or policy as carried out by the head of that department.

For the board president at a public meeting to acknowledge the excellent standing of the Farmington Library and fail to also give credit to Lewis' directorship, and then further to fail in assuming the collective guilt for the board for negligence in setting forth and maintaining a clear-cut policy while giving tacit agreement to the operations of the library, is cowardice at the least.

I agree with your editorial wherein you call for an accounting by the board and a more active role by councils in determining the duties and obligations of that body. Common sense and logic dictate an essential hands-off approach in day-to-day and personnel matters and that is what councils have wisely practiced. Clearly, a tuned-in, knowledgeable, sensitive, and well-working board would have forestalled any situation which could have caused the loss of so able a director as Gordon Lewis.

As for Lewis, the people of Farmington and Farmington Hills can be thankful for the benefits reaped from his tenure here as a first-rate professional in the field of library science, and we can wish him and his family well in his next endeavor.

Joanne E. Smith
Farmington Hills