

Alas, let's honor our Constitution with special day

CONSTITUTION DAY? Hey, I'm in favor of that.

The Constitution is a big thing in this country, the world's oldest surviving republic. Our basic document was signed by the members of the Constitutional Convention on Sept. 17, 1787, and then submitted to the states.

So we should observe Constitution Day — simple enough?

Well, not so simple, the way they do it in Lansing.

REP. JUSTINE Barns, D-Westland, introduced House Bill 4399 to declare it Constitution Day by state law. Everyone was buzzing or half-asleep last Thursday when it came before the House for second reading.

Everyone but Barns and Rep. William Bryant, R-Grosse Pointe.

Bryant offered an amendment to delete "1987" from the bill.

A bit ruffled, Barns wanted to know why he wanted to tamper with her sacred piece of legislation.

Bryant said his amendment would make Constitution Day a permanent observance inasmuch as the law would be on the books permanently. His point: Under Barns' measure, state lawbooks, a century from now, would still be carrying deadwood noting that "Sept. 17, 1987" was Constitution Day.

"This shouldn't be a statute," Bryant argued. "It should have been a resolution."

THAT RUBBED "Jay" Barns the wrong way. She said observing the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution was pretty important and deserved a law rather than a mere resolution.

Bryant didn't want her fuming at him any more, so he offered a way out of the mess. He withdrew his amendment and instead offered a "sunset" amendment. It would keep the "1987" in Barns' bill but provide that the law would "sunset" — that is, be stricken from the books — at the end of the year. That way, the law books wouldn't be cluttered for the next century.

Bryant is a lawyer, hence sensitive to the issue of cluttered books.

"A sunset amendment is acceptable," said Barns. "I respect Mr. Bryant's position."



Tim Richard

So we should observe Constitution Day — simple enough?

And so the sunset amendment was agreed to, and the bill was advanced to third reading, ready for final passage in the House.

Goodness knows what bugs the Senate will detect.

FOLLOWING THE advice of my late fellow columnist, W.W. Edgar (1897-1986), alias The Stroller, in 1985 I visited the hall in Philadelphia where the Constitution was written, remembering Eddie's columns about the early days of the century when an aunt took the kids there to see the historic sites and sights.

Like a kid, I stood four feet from the desk where my hero, Alexander Hamilton, sat — an eerie feeling.

One thing Eddie didn't write about that seems important to my generation: Behind presiding officer George Washington there was carved a half-sun. The story goes that young folks asked Ben Franklin whether it was a rising sun or a setting sun. "A rising sun," Franklin is said to have answered.

Nowadays when American marines and sailors by the scores are bombed by terrorists and Iraqi planes, some of us aren't so sure the sun is rising anymore. Maybe observing Constitution Day, 1987, will nourish our faith.

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Where did voters go?

To the editor:

I find it very strange that while several hundred parents showed up at a recent Farmington school board meeting to state their desire for more involvement in the creation of school policy, only a handful of people showed up at a recent AAUW candidates' night.

This was the perfect opportunity to find out how the two people running for the school board stand on issues of vital importance to the future of our children; voters had the opportunity to meet the candidates and ask them any questions they wished. Where was everyone?

JoAnn K. Phelps
Farmington Hills

Helping to form solid memories

To the editor:

I would like to commend Randy Borst for his excellent photos and informative advice on vacation spots across the United States, which appeared in the May 18 issue.

Pictures are something that capture time and hold on to memories forever. His advice about the maintenance of a camera and necessary precautions to taking great pictures, will be a valuable tool for summer vacationers.

Thanks for sharing advice that will make memories last longer than the summer of '87.

Jenni Bitterle,
Birmingham

Action on judge harms judiciary

To the editor:

The state Supreme Court's recent re-

usal to dismiss judicial misconduct charges against Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Alice L. Gilbert threatens to undermine the integrity of the state's judicial system.

In order for the judiciary to function properly, judges must be allowed to exercise their authority in accordance with the law, and not be subject to political pressures exerted by certain groups to advance their own interests.

The present controversy is a perfect example of coercion in judicial decision making. The charges levied against Judge Gilbert stem from her decision to reduce to present value a \$7 million medical malpractice award to a Detroit couple and their retarded son.

Although one might question whether the resulting award was too low, the appropriateness of the reduction is a matter which can certainly be resolved on appeal as a question of law.

Instead, however, Judge Gilbert has been threatened with removal from office after 26 years on the bench. She is, in effect, being persecuted for having exercised her discretion in an extremely difficult case.

Comments made after a jury has returned its verdict are routinely made by our judiciary. Rarely are they ever the source of such strident scrutiny since they have no effect on influencing the jury.

Obviously, the jury was not influenced by Judge Gilbert's pre-verdict statements or rulings since they returned a multi-million-dollar award.

In allowing misconduct charges to be maintained against Judge Gilbert, a message is being sent to state court judges that their jobs may be on the line if their decisions are not in accord with the political views of some groups.

Such a position is clearly contrary to the maintenance of a sound judicial system.

Certainly, the Supreme Court, rather than upholding the present disciplinary action against Judge Gilbert, should have dismissed the action as nothing more than a blatant attempt to manipulate and intimidate a highly respected, experienced and competent judge.

It can only be hoped that the Supreme Court will re-examine the ramifica-

tions of subjecting judges to misconduct proceedings where matters of law are involved, not ethics.

Michael J. Black, attorney
Southfield

Good students draw plaudits

To the editor:

On May 9, seven of us residents from American House Retirement Center, Farmington Hills, were picked up by bus arranged through the courtesy of North Farmington High School and taken to the Creativity Springs Alive presentation.

We thoroughly enjoyed the trip and tour through an exhibition of the talents of these young people. The vocal music and choir directed by Mr. L. La Rue was not only a musical treat but especially notable was the perfect discipline of the students.

The art display in the gymnasium was outstanding. I so enjoyed the Pottery working at their wheels molding the wet clay into beautiful shapes in a variety of sizes.

The finished products of many students were on display on shelves; they were all A plus rated.

There were exhibits of drawings using tissue paper as buds for flowers and there were balloons these students used in their drawings. A bit of just about everything was used: lima and navy beans, rice, etc.

Journalism, marketing and television were all covered subjects. I understand the TV station broadcasts are available through Cable Channel 10.

My only regret is that these old legs could not take in a full day of all this talent.

I wish to thank the drivers and all others connected with the project. They gave their time and energy to us on a Saturday instead of using the day for themselves.

Let's hear more about these good students and less about the troublemakers. We are all fed up with the present day headlines.

Celeste L. Waldsmith
Farmington Hills

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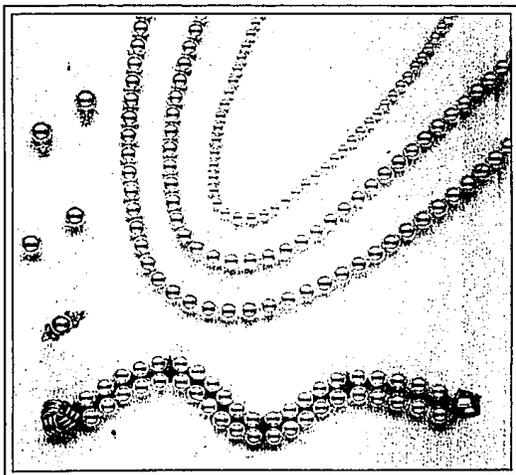
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