

points of view

School race shaping up to be ho-hum

I expected prospective candidates to be lined up, from the Farmington school offices down to the park, itching to serve this year on the local school board.

It didn't happen. I figured people would be eager for a chance to change the status quo. They all stayed home.

With the educational issues confronting Farmington-area residents this year, and new programs and school buildings being proposed in the months to come, I thought this would be the year when more than one person would challenge for a

school board seat. Only 37-year-old Bruce Jacob took the challenge this year. He was the only newcomer interested enough to take out a petition and challenge two incumbents, Jim Abernethy and Helen Prutow.

NOTHING PERSONAL people, but it looks like another "ho-hum" race.

This election seems to follow the trend of the past two years: one challenger takes on one or more incumbents. Not since 1985 has there been a truly multiple-candidate election that could really be considered a "race."



Casey Hans

This year could have been different.

Hundreds of parents filled a high school auditorium to discuss elementary school boundaries and alternative programs two months ago.

Another group continued their interest in early childhood education. They tracked the district's optional Central Kindergarten program, which started last fall, to be sure school officials didn't make it permanent for all children.

AND, OVERLOOKING the controversy, there are the new things:

- Watch the district's gifted staff as they prepare a new, alternative education program scheduled for this fall.
- Plans are under way, at a frantic pace, to build a new elementary school so it can be ready in 1990.
- A two-year-old administration

has turned the district upside down, making changes in curriculum, staff development and just basically changing the way things are done. It seems no one is interested. Perhaps this criticism is misguided. Perhaps the School/Community Forum — the parent group formed this year with the help of community relations director Pam O'Malley — has truly received support and parent attention.

I KNOW there are many people involved with the school system, day-to-day, who feel they can do more at a building level, working with building administrators, teachers and children.

But there's nothing like serving on the governing board that sets policy for a \$66 million business, especially one that represents taxpayers. Serving on a local board doesn't have to be political. It can simply be "doing your part" for family and community.

Whatever the lifestyle, whether doctor or professor, homemaker or business person, parent or non-parent, each can add his or her special views of education and leave an impact on everyone's future.

Today is a challenging time in education, in Farmington and across the country. It's a disappointment more of us can't look past the "issue of the day," and at the big picture.

Don't ignore OCC race

IT'S AMAZING that Oakland Community College does so well, given the scant attention most folks pay to it.

I hope we won't see a repetition of the 1986 college board campaign — or lack of campaign — this year. No group spent as much as an hour listening to the candidates.

If you haven't noticed, there's an election this June 13 for two seats on the board of trustees. Filing deadline is April 29.

IT WOULD be a nifty thing if some public-spirited group — the League of Women Voters and the Jaycees leap to mind — would sponsor a public forum for OCC candidates, the way they do for local school board candidates.

It wouldn't even have to be a non-partisan group. One year a Republican women's group trotted in the OCC candidates. I was delighted at how objective the GOP women were in asking questions and how some of them intended to vote for candidates who weren't even Republicans.

The OCC faculty union used to sponsor a public forum. But then they diluted it to the status of an open house with one-on-one handshaking, eliminating public presentations and audience questions. Too bad.

A newspaper can always interview candidates itself, but that's one of my least-favorite methods of screening. News people tend to ask news people's questions. I would rather report on questions raised by

taxpayers and students and the great unwashed public.

Even when you see me on TV panel programs, I usually prepare by going to my neighbors and soliciting questions from them.

ED PAPPAS isn't seeking re-election to the OCC board, and he will be hard to replace.

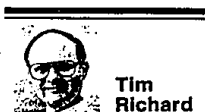
A Bloomfield Hills lawyer and son of a college president, Pappas is an objective thinker who is supportive of the administration without being a rubber stamp. He asks good questions, and he's not out to get anybody.

Pappas has the great ability to understand what a board should do and what it should stay out of. A lot of folks are hoping he will change his mind and seek a full term.

David Hackett, a veteran of 20-some years, is the board's resident environmentalist and watchdog over equality of opportunity. The Rochester Hills resident is a bigger women's libber than most women's libbers. If an administration fails to present balanced personnel recommendations, it knows Hackett will ask some pointed questions — publicly.

OCC ELECTION campaigns tend to be like those of a rustic village — word-of-mouth endorsements. Teachers' unions kinda spread the word.

One year, a candidate who appeared at no functions and bought no ads was elected. He belongs to a large church and simply got out the



Tim Richard

word to other members of the flock that he was on the ballot.

He turned out to be a good trustee, but one has to shudder at that methodology of being elected.

A **COMMUNITY** college sounds unexciting if you've been to a place like Ann Arbor, but to my mind, the two-year schools are where the action is.

The last two governors have given them favored budget treatment. The current regime has made them the delivery instrument for job retraining and business services in Michigan's reindustrialization.

Community colleges serve not only the traditional 18-year-olds but also scads of older women seeking to re-enter the job market. They enroll more holders of four-year college degrees than all the graduate schools in the country.

OCC serves 27,000 students on five campuses to the tune of \$40 million a year. It is spending megabucks on new computers and high-tech equipment.

Please, please, won't somebody hold a candidates' night for those solid citizens seeking election to the board?

We must fight system

IT'S A CROSS we all have to bear — watching a friend die.

Most of you have gone through it and will go through it again. I've been through my share and expect more to come.

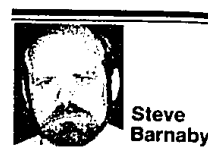
Sometimes it seems like the right thing. You know, the person is older, lived a full life. Sure, we're sad. But everybody has their time.

Other times it just makes us angry. This is one of those times. And I'm angry. Not just because one heck of a guy died this week but because this country's medical system is so torn between the politics of private medical interests and government bureaucracy that patients suffer needlessly.

And no matter your politics, neither private enterprise nor government regulation has made it any easier. As a matter of fact, they've made it difficult as hell.

I got to thinking about this the a few weeks ago while driving back from the University of Michigan Hospital. A few colleagues and I had ventured out to visit a friend whose doctors recently told him he was dying. Cancer.

MOST OF you probably never met Ralph. He died of cancer, of course, you were lucky enough to have him as your account representative. Now that's a strange thing for an editor to say. Usually, editors have little or nothing good to say about the folks in the advertising side of the business. But Ralph, well, Ralph was differ-



Steve Barnaby

ent. He was quiet, unassuming, with an understated sense of humor. Not much bravado at all.

But after joining the Observer & Eccentric, he consistently was one of its top salespersons. Even in some of the months when he was fighting the all-consuming disease, he was named top salesperson.

He did his job with ease but with underlying vigor. In many ways, the 39 year-old ad rep. was how many of us would like to be. Two kids, a great, supportive wife, a house in the suburbs. Not an enemy in the world and a man who loved his golf.

Not a great golfer, mind you. But he loved to play the links. Standing around on the greens with Ralph was just always, well, just kind of fun.

Ralph fought his toughest battle these last few months. For days he was in a coma. But he was a fighter.

Ralph, conscious or unconscious, had other ideas. He vowed to fight to the end and he did just that. And at the office, many of us found ourselves fighting along with

him — over coffee, at the copy machine, sometimes alone at our desks. The question managed to surface. "How's Ralph?"

IN THE meantime, the medical world and government officials wage their war of regulation and power maintenance.

Recently, I stepped down as the chairman of the Hospice of Southeastern Michigan after two years service. It was an honor but one fraught with much pain and frustration.

Hospice is a movement that endorses the concept that a person should be able to die in comfort, dignity and peace.

With proper medical attention, all three are possible.

But political bickering, antiquated attitudes and ridiculous regulation have hampered the hospice movement in this country.

The majority of Americans, including many physicians, just don't comprehend the concept. They're reluctant to refer patients to hospice care.

Legislators are just as unfamiliar and impose regulations more attuned to hospitals. Something like comparing apples and oranges.

Meanwhile hospices around the country struggle to survive while thousands like Ralph suffer needlessly every year.

Do yourself a favor. Find out about this movement and take part in educating your family doctor about it.

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