

points of view

Vintage Romney talk rekindles the spirit

THE FLAME is still there. The fire that ignited the Michigan political scene for that short time in the 1960s burns just as bright — just as intense.

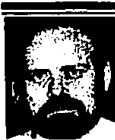
Earlier this week, at the Beverly Hills Bar and Grill over on Southfield Road, a group of business folks gathered to listen to former governor, George Romney. And they weren't disappointed.

His message was just as clear, just as full of determination and more important, as crucial as ever. For those of us who share his dream, who lived through that time, we walked away feeling a little better about ourselves.

You see, a morning dose of George Romney, the citizen-soldier of American politics, reawakens your commitment to society.

While commitment is passe in popular crowds today, when Romney talks about it, you know better. For those of you who may have missed the Romney era, we're not talking about some starry-eyed idealist.

Oh no. We're talking about a pragmatist with a dream, a man so full of determination that he rose from humble beginnings to become a leader in the auto industry, Michigan's governor, the secretary of Housing and Urban Development and a



Steve Barnaby

sneezes away from becoming president of the United States.

But for the Bloomfield Hills resident, those accomplishments pale next to his work in his church, where he is a national leader, his dedication to his family and his commitment to making the American public realize that they have a role in collectively working together to make the American democratic process work for them.

TODAY he heads a national volunteer organization that he is bound and determined to see transcend the special interest "PAC democracy" that dominates today's political landscape.

When you see George Romney, it's difficult to believe you're listening to a man in his 80s.

With jaw set, Romney goes on the attack, always on the attack. As has

always been his style, he jams his finger into the air, piercing it here with an idea and then there with another.

Not everyone has always loved this messenger, but they listen to the message. More often than not, business and union leaders will under Romney's wrath — much to the delight of white collar workers and rank and file alike.

His eyes blaze and he implores his audience to action while shaming business, civic and political leaders for being too timid about theirs.

Vintage Romney, some call it.

Not everyone has always loved the messenger, but they listen to his message. Romney believes that America will only stay strong if all of us become involved in the decision-making process. If we let special interests dominate the power structure we have only ourselves to blame.

If we want our problems solved, really solved, we must dedicate the time.

George Romney has dedicated his life to solving problems. And you and I are better off for that dedication.

Frankly, today's national leaders pale next to the likes of George Romney. In this case, we can easily answer: "Where's George?"

He's out there seeing to it that we take care of business.

A lesson from Barb offered to merchants

IT WAS 10 years ago when I first wrote about my youngest sister, Barb.

As a rather independent 11-year-old, she encountered some nasty business from a clerk at a shopping mall, and I expounded on the unfairness of it all. Young people should be treated as human beings, I said. That shopkeeper should have understood it was future business she was snubbing.

Merchants in the small town where I worked were infuriated — mostly at me for my nasty slap at the merchant but also at the situation. "Tell her to come and shop in our town," they said. "We won't snub her."

Besides, I was a recent college graduate then. Still a "younger" myself, I got a lot of flack about my age.

Today, the tables have turned. It's 10 years later and Barb is working her way through college and is, very definitely, part of that consumer society that snubbed her as a pre-teen.

My theory still stands: today's snub can equal tomorrow's lost business.

DOES ANYONE recall incidents from their childhood, and adulthood, which color the way they lead their



Casey Hans

Consumers are looking for a fair shake, quality products and a reasonable price.

lives, make their purchases, or conduct business?

Barb's experiences have led her to be more assertive, and to get what she wants as a consumer. If she doesn't get what she wants, she lets the right people know.

I wouldn't call her a frugal shopper, but at least she's a satisfied one.

She's come into bloom just at the right time. Living in this age of "consumerism," many businesses find they're in a constant spotlight as customers make more demands and are less willing to accept the status quo.

That's how it should be. The merchants from my small town 10 years ago probably had the right idea. Competing with the ever-popular malls, they had to work to keep customers satisfied, or lose them. A good businessperson can tell you that's always been the case.

EVEN IN the largest, most established, successful companies, the customer is always king. If that crown is removed, customers will eventually wander away to a place where they are serviced properly, thanked for their business and put back on the throne. An unsuccessful, larger company might be able to keep afloat longer than a smaller one, but the end result will always be the same.

What about the specialty store that offers something different at a reasonable price? Most people will go out of their way to patronize it.

Most people, like our Barb, don't ask for much. They're looking for a fair shake, quality products and a reasonable price. They expect to be treated politely and with respect. They expect a combination of these things, blended just right so they want to come back again and again.

It's a tricky mix. But businesspeople who have been successful over the years will tell you it is the secret recipe to their success.

Nursing home volunteers share love, kindness

WE FIGHT to prolong life, but we often drop the ball when providing quality living for the people who make it.

The thought struck hard when I read a letter to the editor earlier this month in the Farmington Observer.

"It's spotless and I get wonderful care," said Margaret McClain, an 80-year-old Williamsburg Convalescent Center resident. "It's just that it's so lonely. I believe there are 112 patients; few have visitors other than at Christmas time.

"Does anyone out there care?" asked McClain who has clocked 60 years of volunteer service work. Even now that McClain is in a wheelchair and "can hardly see," on



Diane Gale

Sunday afternoons she plays records for fellow patients.

About a week after her letter ran, McClain received 10 letters, three people called to volunteer time and a Girl Scout troop plans to visit on a regular basis.

"We could always use more people — perhaps to entertain or just to sit

and talk," said Sandy Chadek, Williamsburg activities director.

McCLAIN'S STORY is a happy one. But there are thousands of Margaret McClains in other nursing homes, and statistics show the numbers will be even higher in the future.

By the year 2025, one in five Americans will be at least 65. The fastest growing population group is people 85 and older. One in four people 65 and older will enter a nursing home, the U.S. Census Bureau reports.

Nursing home deficiencies must be addressed now.

The average daily payment for

each skilled and basic care nursing home resident covered by Medicaid is \$49.21. That figure doesn't include physician care, physical therapy, pharmacy costs and other miscellaneous services, said Dennis Madalinski, Michigan Department of Social Services director of long-term care settlement section.

In comparison, the state Department of Corrections receives about \$58 daily for each prisoner, said Gail Light, corrections spokeswoman.

A YEAR ago, I toured area prisons and was impressed by the extensive work-out areas, educational offerings and other perks.

On the other hand, many Medicaid

dependent nursing homes I've visited are less inviting. Some need more recreational opportunities and more staff to provide the extras. Too often even the essentials are forgotten.

Granted, caring for nursing home residents and policing prisoners are different games in different arenas. Prisons have far higher employee costs and security threats are far more costly.

Better care now is like an insurance policy baby boomers can cash in later.

Meanwhile, nursing homes depend on volunteers. Until answers are found volunteers must keep sharing their love and kindness.

Ask Margaret McClain about that.

We could always use more people — perhaps to entertain or just to sit and talk.

Sandy Chadek, activities director, Williamsburg Convalescent Center

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