

points of view

City infrastructure — routine but vital

ONE MIGHT think the biggest news in Farmington is all the building and renovation surrounding the downtown.

Colorful seasonal banners, facade improvements and new buildings are an obvious sign of the good times. But what about the things we don't see so readily?

Who ever wonders where their next glass of water will come from? Or the final destination for sump pump water from basements? Or what happens to that bag of garbage once it leaves your curbside?

A sinking thought, but a necessary one nonetheless.

One of the routines in covering city government for a newspaper is looking at a city's infrastructure — the roads, sewers and some of the routine things that we take for granted. Who cares about all those things that run underground? As long as the tap water runs clear and strong, the garbage hauler stops weekly, and the toilets don't back up, it isn't a cause for major concern. Until now.

SOME OF these have become rather smelly problems — big ones that Farmington and other communities will face this year and in the



Casey Hans

future.

We're being forced to care, as federal and state agencies look to clean up the rivers, as landfill space becomes more expensive and scarce, and as we watch all the plastics and other manmade materials clog our world. Just pay attention and you'll

see how hard it is to make a difference.

How many grocery stores now use plastic bags instead of biodegradable paper? At restaurants, how many use foam containers for take-out orders, which will take years to disintegrate? How many garbage haulers insist that refuse be handled in large plastic bags that will sit in landfills for hundreds of years?

We are one step ahead, according to Farmington city manager Bob Deadman. Michigan and other states have a "bottle law" that helps to recycle glass and aluminum. He believes that incineration, constraint in

packaging, recycling other materials, and community compost piles will all be part of changing the way America looks at its garbage.

BUT WE'LL be in the thick of things. We won't be able to just put our garbage in a bag and leave it at the curb, conveniently. We'll be separating some of it for pick-up, and doing our part.

Years ago, when individuals could burn rubbish, there was little to leave for the garbage man. There were many basic paper items that could be burned.

It isn't as simple today. Burning

some of these items sends harmful gases into the air, which our clean air standards will not allow and which could damage our health.

So our lifestyles have led us into a fast-paced world that includes mountains of garbage that won't go away. The problem has peaked, and now we need to find alternative ways to handle what comes from our garbage cans.

We'll all watch, with interest, to see what our past mistakes will cost us in the near future.

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

Respect can age fast; so can the new year

THE YEAR began on a good note. I saw a glimmer of respect, perhaps even awe, in the eyes of the teenager who baby sits for our 2-year-old.

Moments earlier the look in her eyes was more skeptical upon hearing that singer George Michael's latest was among the compact disc selections in our limited musical library.

"Give me a break," she all but said. George Michael? No way. She might have thought I meant George Jones if she were old enough to know who that is, but in her humble opinion, George Michael was out of my league.

This is the same young woman who late last year grimaced when told that my wife and I were off to see "Everybody's All-American" at the movies. She would have opted for "Child's Play," which I gather features a character who would be a perfect blind date for Freddie of Elm Street nightmare fame. Or is he in Halloween?

YOU SEE, I not only can't tell those two sequel-happy scare-flicks apart, but I've never seen any of them, which comes as no surprise to my baby sitter who already has me pegged as an old fogey who certainly doesn't have any George Michael music hanging around.

George Michael, to my brethren in the Old Fogey Before Your Time club, is an English singer whose hits include "Kissing a Fool," "Father Figure" and "I Want Your Sex," which is sort of a sequel to "I Want



Rich Perlberg

George Michael, to my brethren in the Old Fogey Before Your Time club, is an English singer whose hits include "Kissing a Fool," "Father Figure" and "I Want Your Sex," which is sort of a sequel to "I Want to Hold Your Hand."

to Hold Your Hand." When I told that to my baby sitter she gave me the screwy look she reserves for the times I say the dumb things that she doesn't want to comment on since, after all, I am the person who determines her tip.

MY BABY SITTER's unspoken but very apparent critiques of my musical and theatrical tastes have demolished my fraudulent belief

that since my son is only 2, I must not be any older than the typical parent of a 2-year-old. I cultured that canard carefully (How about that? A carefully cultured canard), even to the point of not reading the youth music page in our own newspaper's Street Scene. I don't read it because I don't want to be faced with the fact that I don't recognize any of the featured recording artists.

But the ruse began cracking when I told Rachel, the baby sitter, that my favorite heavy metal performers were the guys who mined iron ore in the Upper Peninsula.

AFTER THAT, I could tell that my status as a "cool" adult was withering. But then I purchased a George Michael recording, which impressed her to no end and which, in turn, sent me off to the movies in a great mood about how wonderful 1989 was and how trivial things like parental responsibility, mortgage payments, home repairs and the like should never prematurely age you.

"You are as young as you feel," I said to my wife as we returned from the show. "You have a leak in your living room ceiling," my baby sitter said, after pocketing her night's pay. "I put your George Jones albums under it."

Rich Perlberg is the assistant managing editor in charge of Oakland County editions at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Picking schools

Having a choice can ease conflicts

Q: What is meant by open enrollment?

Open enrollment, in general, means that parents have the right to pick the school they wish their child to go to within their own school district.

Originally I did not believe in this concept but, after having worked in two school districts with open enrollment I am convinced that it is the appropriate way to address certain issues. For instance, if a parent can't stand a particular principal, teacher or program in a certain elementary building they have the right to move that child to another elementary building. Conversely, it can be a break for the building principal and or teacher who could be very competent but for some reason there exists such a personality conflict between the parent and principal or teacher it rubs off negatively on the child.

In an extreme case, I knew of one child who was an emotional basket case in the third grade in one elementary, having been labeled a "wimp" by his peers. This child was moved to another elementary school where his reputation was not known and where he blossomed into a well-



Doc Doyle

adjusted, bright child with a healthy self image. The change can't be totally attributed to a school change, but I believe it played a major role.

Caution needs to be considered in districts with two or more high schools. If one high school has a "great" high school football team or outstanding marching band and the other high school does not, subtle recruiting could occur. Recruiting commitment needs to be made by teachers, coaches or band leaders at

the outset. Open enrollment usually has some restrictions.

In most cases, the parent must furnish the transportation for the child to the other school. Open enrollment is not a cure all but it does resolve some situations to the benefit of all parties. The percent of parents who take the option is usually less than 1 percent. This is because most children and young adults don't want to leave their neighborhood or classroom friends for football, band or for whatever reason.

Dr. James Doyle is an associate superintendent in the Troy School District. The answers provided here are the opinions of Dr. Doyle and not the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Men, if you're about to turn 18, it's time to register with Selective Service at any U.S. Post Office.

It's quick. It's easy. And it's the law.



The Ultimate

MCM



The Roman numeral 1000 symbolizes the 20th century, the era of mobility.

Small Admiral Travel Bag

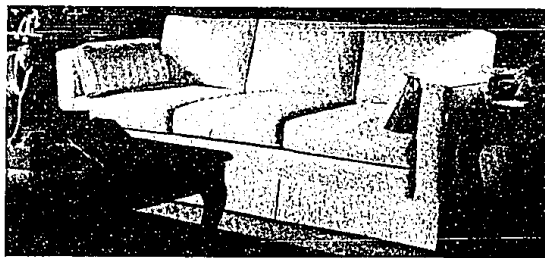
Tennis Racquet Cover - 2 Racquets

Beauty Case

Striped Polo

Handcrafted perfection. Designed by Michael Cromer.

Fairlane Town Center
Dearborn • 441-1670



Choose Your Sofa



Choose Your Fabric

During Pierson Interiors Winter Sale, you'll find unbelievable savings on everything in our store. Right now, choose from either of these beautiful Henredon Custom Folio sofas and pay ONLY \$995.00! (Loveseats, not pictured, only \$895.00) And to celebrate our big winter sale, we're giving you your choice of fabric! Come take advantage of this offer now — it's only good for a limited time during our winter sale.

Pierson Interiors
home furnishings

4110 Telegraph Rd., • (Just S. of Long Lake) • Bloomfield Hills • 642-0070

Monday, Thursday, & Friday 9:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Tuesday, Wednesday, & Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.