

## Do we check politicians or turn voyeur?

"THEY DON'T ask if you're effective or efficient. They don't ask if you're accomplished or productive. They ask if you're horny and if you drink. It's crazy. We've become a nation of voyeurs."

Peter Secchia, a Grand Rapids businessman and Republican national committeeman, reportedly said this after being forced to open his personal life to examination by the FBI. President George Bush is presenting Secchia's name to Congress for appointment as ambassador to Italy.

The background checks for political appointees have become so extensive that filling out forms, detailing all work experience, naming all work supervisors, listing birth dates of all relatives, living and dead, as well as divulging personal finances, can keep, as in Secchia's experience, a lawyer busy for weeks.

Some people insist that this detail of personal life will discourage many qualified people from serving in public office. Beyond the sheer effort required to gather information from all features of one's past, there is also the reluctance to open up one's whole life for public review and judgment.

THE DISTINCTION between public and personal is not fixed. In the political arena, one person's justification for action might well be the reason for another's condemnation.

Others insist that this attention to public and personal character will establish a climate for public responsibility. What cannot stand the test of public review, they say, should never be allowed to represent it.

The current attention to personal character and life in public office should not surprise us. Both effected

and appointed public officials have been charged with ethical misconduct in recent years and trust in public administration has been seriously threatened.

WHAT MIGHT be far more important than the investigation of personal and public responsibility and the attendant issues of privacy and propriety is the extended public interest in matters of impropriety.

Secchia said "we have become a nation of voyeurs." Impropriety receives more attention that propriety and the explanation is always the same . . . It is more interesting to the public.

The story of the law enforcement officer who went to see "Oh, Calcutta" nine times before he could make a judgment about its violation of public laws is surely apocryphal, but it does carry a message. Our preoccupation with matters inappropriate says as much about ourselves as it says of others.

YEARS AGO, Dr. Dudley White, personal physician to President Dwight Eisenhower, said "the best way to stop malpractice lawsuits is to stop malpractice."

Background checks on political appointees will have a salutary effect on political appointments. The formation and development of public conduct committed to the affirmation of propriety will not be so easily effected.

Spotting flaws in other people is easy. It's recognizing them in our own lives that has been more difficult.

The Rev. Lloyd Buss is pastor of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Rochester Hills.

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### FRIDAY, MARCH 31st

- 11:00am - Jazzercise aerobic demonstration
- 1:00pm - Ted Knight's Association financial planning seminar
- 4:00pm - Windham Hill artist, Scott Cossu
- 6:30pm - Working Woman editor Kate Rand-Lloyd "Career Choices into the 90's"
- 7:00pm - Spring Fashion Show

### SATURDAY, APRIL 1st

- 10:00am - Jazzercise aerobic demonstration
- 2:00pm - Spring Fashion Show
- 4:00pm - Spring Fashion Show
- 7:00pm - Windham Hill artist, Scott Cossu

### SUNDAY, APRIL 2nd

- 12:00 noon - Jazzercise aerobic demonstration
- 1:00pm - St. John's Hospital guest speaker
- 2:00pm - Ted Knight's Association financial planning seminar
- 3:00pm - Goodyear Auto Clinic

For a complete schedule of events, just stop by the Twelve Oaks Information Center.

## twelve oaks.

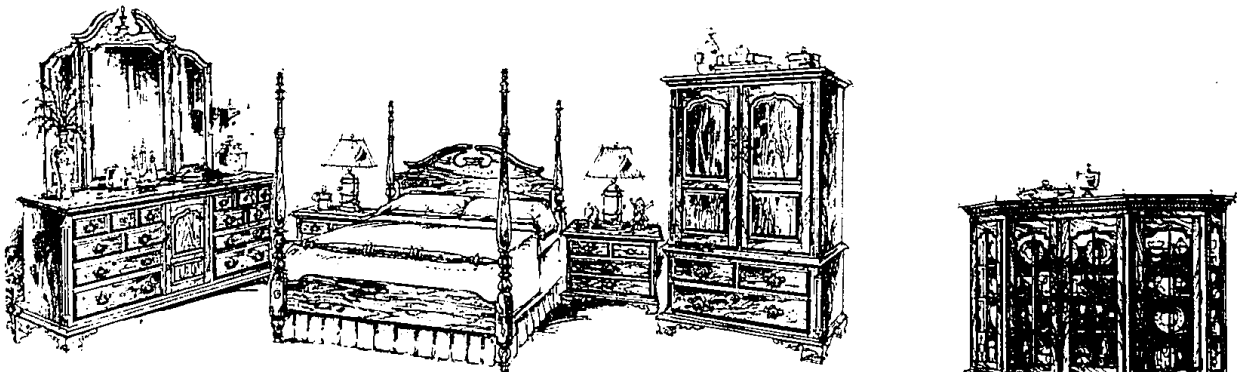
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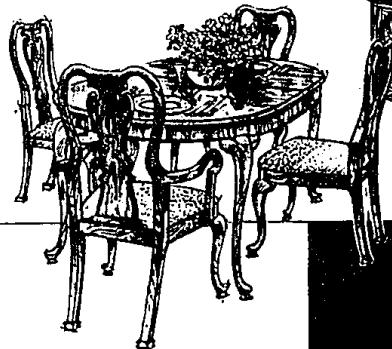
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