

# Opinion

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O&E Thursday, January 23, 1992

## Two events Breakfast, King Day linked

**Y**OU WOULD have had to do a little hunting to find much recognition in the Farmington area of Martin Luther King Jr. or his principles on his holiday.

But just one day later there was plenty of praising the Lord and Jesus Christ at the Farmington Jaycees Community Leadership (Christian) Prayer Breakfast at Glen Oaks Golf Club.

The two events — MLK Jr. Day and the Prayer Breakfast — are connected in our community, sort of.

About the King holiday: It goes over big in Detroit and Southfield and other places with sizable black populations. But the special day for King seems to be pretty much ignored in some of the mostly white suburbs of Oakland County.

This apathy persists despite the fact that King's ideas on equality — and the way to achieve it — apply to all people, not just blacks. Repeat: Not just blacks.

IN FARMINGTON, there seemed to be very little going on in the public schools and even less in the city offices to honor the black civil rights leader who was slain in 1968.

Those suburban taxpayer-supported operations were open for business, of course, except for Farmington's 47th District Court, which was closed.

If any sort of celebration was happening in the schools or at the city halls or the churches, they managed to keep it pretty quiet . . . hiding their lights under a bushel, no doubt.

While Farmington may have been quiet, things certainly were popping at a high school in another suburb to the northwest. About 100 Waterford Mott students boycotted classes to protest what they saw as a lack of recognition for the King holiday. It made quite a splash in the local newspaper up there.

Something like that shouldn't have to happen in Farmington before our educators and leaders realize that MLK Day isn't going to go away and that something should be planned and promoted.

Anyway, here's the thing about Martin Luther King Day: If everyone is expected to take it seriously, then it should be a true holiday. That means a day off for most Americans . . . another Fourth of July, Memorial Day and Labor Day.

What better way to honor a man of principle than to enjoy a day free from the cares of the workaday world.

**ABOUT THAT** Jaycee Prayer Breakfast: The eggs were firm, the bacon crisp and companionship delightful. However, the emphasis on the Christian religion and on Christian themes was a bit overwhelming, especially for a community which is supposed to be so diverse with many religions and cultures represented.

Eyebrows were raised during and comments made after the breakfast about the constant Christian theme of the program. The speaker, Tiger pitcher Frank Tanana, is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ and isn't afraid to talk about it. Even the two songs sung were Christian hymns.

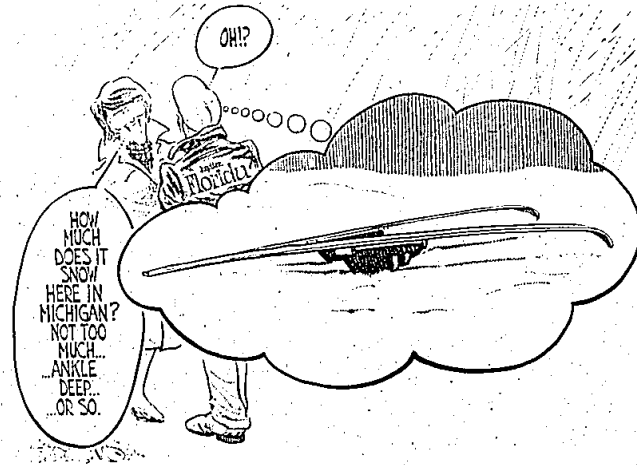
Now, we're not saying that Tanana should not speak (his talk was very interesting and worth hearing) or that the hymns should not be sung (they were delightfully performed by Jenny Roberts of Harrison High) at this event.

But, if it's going to be a religious program, they could have managed to include representatives from one of the other faiths of the area. Maybe for just one little prayer.

Perhaps the Jaycees should label the affair the Community Leadership Christian Prayer Breakfast, as we did in the second paragraph of this missive. People at least would know what they were getting in to.

We said the two events were connected. They are. People like to talk a lot about civil rights and equality and this fine multicultural community we have here.

But, too often, it's just so much lip service. Two events this week showed us that's so.



## Politics paralyzes any action on deficit growth

**HERE ARE** some simple facts that underline how badly governed we are:

- The annual national budget deficit is nearly \$400 billion.

- Our total national debt is more than \$3 trillion, the majority run up over the last 20 years. That's more than \$10,000 for every man, woman and child in this country.

- America has gone in the past 10 years from the world's largest creditor nation to the largest borrower.

- Despite window dressings like "national deficit summits" and Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction bills, absolutely no progress has been made on cutting our nation's deficit. In fact, the deficit has doubled since 1985, when Gramm-Rudman was first talked about.

- In an election year when the economy is terrible and the middle class howling, both Republicans and Democrats can confidently be expected to pander for popularity by cutting taxes . . . and driving the deficit still higher.

FOR YEARS, I have been asking members of our Michigan congressional delegation (now among the most powerful in the country) what exactly they proposed to do about this. And for years I have been getting the polite runaround. I had a chance to talk with Carl

Pursell, a GOP congressman from Plymouth, over the holidays. He had some very interesting and — for somebody who works in Washington — very unusual things to say.

The deficit will make tomorrow's generation pay for the excesses of today's spending. "How can we look our children and grandchildren in the eye knowing full well what is happening on our watch?"

Amazing! Somebody actually prepared to accept responsibility!

What would he do about it? Simple. First, get both political parties to prepare their own unified national budgets, their own statement of their political priorities. With a sitting Republican president, get the administration to buy into the GOP budget. Have the president say to Congress, in effect, "Any spending bill above the levels in this budget will be vetoed."

Then, when Democrats who control Congress offer their budgets and pass appropriations above this limit, have the president simply veto them. Force a crisis in continuation of government spending in order to rein in spending.

Amazing! Somebody actually willing to force partisan clarity and cause some conflict to get something done!

I DON'T know whether Carl Pursell's idea is good or bad, realistic or



**Philip Power**

not. But I do know that he, at least, is prepared to suggest something.

Not only that, but last year Pursell proposed in 1990 a total freeze — with no inflation adjustment — for all federal discretionary spending. Not surprisingly, that lost.

He also shooed colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee that year by requesting deletion from the spending bill of a \$3 million cleanup project for the Rouge River, much of which is in his district. That lost, too.

Some people in Washington think Pursell is naive or a grandstander or both. I can't agree.

He is deeply concerned about the deficit and alarmed at the political paralysis in our government. And he's not afraid to try to do something about it. Keep it up, Carl.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

### from our readers

#### We must be sensitive to others

To the editor:  
John Telford's article on Channel 2 and "The Little Drummer Boy" was right on the mark.

We do need to help heighten sensitivity and awareness of each other's feelings as we become a more and more diversified society.

Farmington Hills is fast becoming such a society. Our multi-lingual school programs are doing an outstanding job of welcoming families of diverse backgrounds — we need to understand them.

Arnold Michlin,  
Farmington Hills

#### Reader is angered by Nugent story

To the editor:  
If the Observer & Eccentric wants to glorify a person like Ted Nugent, let's not bother to do it with my subscription money.

Here's a mediocre guitar player who hunts over 150 days a year, who last year alone killed 18 deer. Your

writer Bill Parker in his article last week makes it seem wonderful.

You even sent a staff photographer out in the woods so we could all admire this living Neanderthal with his high-tech hunting equipment in action.

This isn't the kind of local news I buy the Observer & Eccentric for.

So I won't be subscribing anymore.

Lawrence Doyle,  
Farmington Hills

#### Chevrolet is good choice

To the editor:  
I had to respond to Judith Doner Berner's words in a recent column in favor of the American car. In the spring of 1991, I paid my last \$800 plus for repair on my 10-year-old Volvo wagon (my third) and sold it two weeks later.

I purchased a 1984 Chevrolet wagon for the ridiculous price of \$500 for the right reasons: time and money.

- 1) Insurance premium is less.
- 2) Who would want to steal it?
- 3) What friends want to borrow it?
- 4) Driving anywhere in the U.S. and Canada, there are parts for it and the mechanic can repair it.
- 5) It has the same engine as a Cadillac.
- 6) After 17 Volvo years I forgot how sturdy, comfortable and relax-

ing it is to drive the Chevy. Television commercials that show so many foreign cars wheeling through hills and dales and curves simply do not exist in abundance in our environs.

The most expensive repair bill has been for \$228 simply because I had the Goodyear repalmen change bolts, a tire, check the Freon, etc.

I am pleased with my choice and therefore cannot agree with you more.

Mark Davis,  
Birmingham

#### AAUW hosts Broomfield

To the editor:  
In a Jan. 2 editorial, the Eccentric lamented: "We wished, for, and still haven't seen, U.S. Rep. William Broomfield host any town meetings."

The Oakland Branch American Association of University Women (AAUW) is presenting Congressman Broomfield at 12:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 27, with his wide-ranging topic to be "What's Going on in Congress."

The public is invited to drop in for this free program at Royal Oak's Salvation Army Church, 3015 N. Main Street just south of 13 Mile Road. Please join us.

Lynette Brown,  
Bloomfield Township

## Physical plant Health, safety depend on tax

**O**UR ROADS, bridges and sewers must function or we all suffer in many ways. And in Michigan, we've come to a point where we have to take care of our physical plant now, or risk the loss of tourism, business and the public's health and safety for years to come.

Falling roads and sewers also will fuel continued urban sprawl.

The fuel tax is a fair tax because it is a user fee and must be increased. Those motorists who don't drive much, won't buy as much gas or pay as much tax. The state also needs a similar user fee mechanism or a bond issue earmarked for sewers and water system improvements.

Michigan has a lower gas tax than all but one Midwestern state (Indiana) at 15 cents and ranks 43rd in per capita spending on roads. The fuel tax was last raised eight years ago. And because we are driving more fuel efficient cars, we end up paying less gas tax each year. That has brought us to the point where we have less tax money to build and maintain roads and bridges than we did when construction costs were lower. Counties are also hampered by smaller budgets for road repairs.

**WHILE CUTTING** back on "big government" sounds nice, especially when it means lowering taxes, there are some legitimate functions of this massive. People at least would know what they were getting in to.

Wayne County is on the state's short list of "distressed communities" suffering from combined sewer overflows. The antiquated sewers can't handle the increased storm-and-waste streams that overflow in the lakes and streams endangering public health and lowering property values.

Add to that the list of roads and bridges that the state has on its "critical list" and the problem is plain as a pothole at rush hour on Eight Mile Road.

A state study completed in April 1985 made specific recommendations concerning sewer and other infrastructure improvements and ways to pay for them.

Gov. Engler needs to move on this now because a poor state infrastructure can only hurt the state's business climate and tourist industry. Waiting for the recession to end before tackling this issue would be penny wise and pound foolish.

## Metroparks

### Dream preserves outdoors

**T**ODAY IT couldn't be done. Southeast Michigan couldn't launch a series of 13 metroparks covering 23,000 acres. Tax fighters would battle the quarter-mill of property tax the metroparks cost. Politicians would be unable to cooperate on a multi-county basis.

Indeed, the state is shutting down campgrounds and spinning off parks rather than preserving scarce open space.

IN 1942 it was different — better. Dr. Henry S. Curtis, one-time playgrounds director from New York City, and Professor Harlow O. Whittemore, landscape designer from the University of Michigan, had a vision: a series of parks along the Huron and Clinton rivers, encircling the urban area.

Leroy C. Smith of the Wayne County Road Commission put the dream together politically, winning legislative approval of a law to incorporate the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority

and winning 2-1 approval of voters in five counties for a property tax.

This year it celebrates its 50th anniversary. We toast HCMA not just for running good parks but for keeping alive that stupendous dream in the face of political pressure, backlashes and power grabs.

**TO MOST** folks, the HCMA name doesn't ring a bell, but we all know its good works: Kensington Metropark, 4,300 acres, opened in 1948; Stony Creek Metropark, 4,500 acres, 1964; Metropolitan Beach, 770 acres on Lake St. Clair, 1950; the western Wayne four — Lower Huron, Willow, Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metropark; Indian Springs, near Clarkston, and others.

Where cities and townships are fighting to preserve open space and wetlands, HCMA did the job by starting a half-century ago.

We can thank the visionaries of the 1940s for the unspooled outdoors we enjoy today.

## Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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