

Renewed spirit

Hills couple says old values will return American pride

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"Bring Back America. Buy USA." For Henry Pietilla, the sign neatly placed on his front lawn says it all.

"I feel this is the only way we can keep the economy going. I'm hoping to wake the people up," said the retired carpenter and longtime Kirby Street resident. "I feel very sorry for the younger generation. They think they'll have the same things their parents had."

Times have changed. It wasn't too long ago the Farmington Hills resident could support his wife, Helen, and two sons, on his carpenter's income. Today, two incomes are increasingly necessary to pay the bills. America has changed.

"I think our country is definitely going downhill. Why are there so many homeless people? Why are there so many people lined up to apply for one job? Something is wrong when people can't get a job," said Helen Pietilla, who used to work as a beautician.

Pietilla remembers the days following World War II when a factory worker could buy a car, a nice house and raise a family comfortably. He also remembers earning \$2 an hour and having a mortgage payment of \$10 a month.

"Pietilla's sign — made with the help of neighbor Bob Hillis — went up at Thanksgiving 1991, long before the recent announcement of General Motors layoffs and plant closings."

IT'S NOT JUST American cars Pietilla wants consumers to buy. Pietilla will tell you straight. It's not just the auto industry that's in a mess. That's one of many industries. And what the American consumer buys has a lot to do with getting the economy pumped up, Pietilla said.

"If I can't find things made in America, I don't buy it," Pietilla said. "If you demand it, you'll find it. The customer is the most important thing. If you want it, you can bet your bottom dollar, they'll find it for you."

Buy American isn't a new concept for Pietilla. He recalls taking his oldest son — now an adult — into the Federal's department store at 6 Mile and Schoenherr, and telling the salesperson, "Here's an American-made jacket and I'll buy it."

Buying American isn't the only thing that will pull the economy out of the slump. The problem, Pietilla said, is a bit deeper than that. Along with the lost jobs, America has lost

know your neighbor

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something else: the values that made the country an industrial giant, as well as a good place to live and raise a family.

"Attitudes need to change," Helen Pietilla said. "People just don't matter anymore."

The old values, Pietilla said, are what America needs. When he went to work, he knew he had to produce to hold onto his job. And his work had to be good. And he was proud of his work and that he had a job.

And honesty and loyalty? Where has that gone in America, Pietilla asked. Love of country is something else Pietilla says is missing. And that includes voting and getting involved in America and making your voice heard. And he wants to know when politicians are going to stop slinging mud and start slinging some honest-to-goodness solutions to problems.

BUT THERE'S more. Henry and Helen Pietilla look to Washington D.C. as the first source of trouble for the American economy. "It starts in Washington. I mean with the captain of the ship — Bush and Congress," Henry Pietilla said.

Helen Pietilla believes in free trade and each American's right to buy what he or she wants. "Free trade is all right. But it has to be on an equal basis with other countries. Our work is going out of the country. Companies are moving elsewhere for cheaper labor. We have to have our own manufacturing base."

Henry Pietilla has no hard feelings against foreign countries' products. But he believes over time, America stops giving away its money to other countries and starts putting it

to work in America. "Let's pull in our horns and feed America."

Pietilla also remembers the life and death necessity of bringing unions into factories to protect workers and provide them with a piece of the pie. Despite higher wages today, Pietilla says he can't see changing those wages because prices remain too high.

"Can we afford to buy a home, a car, on minimum wages? Wages mean nothing because the costs of products are too high," Pietilla added.

But he'll gladly tell you whose wages are too high. The CEO's of companies — particularly the auto companies. They are paid too much. "They shouldn't keep getting increases if their companies are doing badly. They are in the stockholders' pockets."

Pietilla also believes the gas tax should be increased. Twenty-five cents wouldn't be bad to improve the nation's roadways. And he is dead set against the ever-increasing federal deficit. That's got to be reduced before there's any silver lining in America's clouds.

He knows a lot of the younger generation use credit cards as a means of buying today what they hope they can afford later. It's got to stop, Pietilla said. Pay off the credit cards and cut the interest.

And finally, Pietilla says it's time Bush and Congress stopped putting money in programs, such as defense. Companies that should be used to re-establish an industrial base and an industrial policy for the nation.

"It was the greedy years of the 1980s that did it. There were so many company buy-outs and mergers. They (business leaders) all looked out for themselves."



Photos by SHARON LEMUEUX/staff photographer

Henry Pietilla of Farmington Hills says he hopes the colorful sign on his front lawn will inspire people to do just that — buy American. Good, old-fashioned values are something else Pietilla believes will again awaken the Sleeping Giant.



Like her husband, Helen Pietilla wants to know what's happened to America, with its homeless and unemployed. "We can't keep going on this way," she says.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

MAN ARRESTED

A 23-year-old man faces felony charges in connection with the robbery and assault of a 29-year-old Dearborn Heights woman near Eight Mile and Tuck roads.

Brian Spencer of Farmington Hills was apprehended in Traverse City Friday night, returned to Farmington Hills Saturday, and charged with one count of unarmed robbery and one count of attempt to commit criminal sexual conduct in the second degree.

Spencer stood mute to the charges at his arraignment Sunday before Magistrate Maria Parker of the 47th District Court, Farmington. Not guilty pleas were entered on his behalf. He remains in the Oakland County Jail after failing to post a \$50,000 cash bond. A preliminary examination on the charges is scheduled for March 16.

The woman told police that a man, reportedly a friend of her boyfriend, arrived at her house asking for a ride to his brother's apartment near Eight Mile and Tuck roads. She drove him there and as she turned northbound on Tuck from Eight Mile, he reached over and put the car into park.

The man reportedly asked for sex, which she declined. The woman told police he then punched her in the right side of her face several times and pushed her out of the car. As he drove away with her car, he drove over her leg.

A witness told police he saw the woman assaulted and run over. The witness picked up the woman and took her to safety where police were called.

The woman was treated at Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills.

ASSAULT CHARGED

A Farmington Hills man was charged with three felonies and a misdemeanor this week after a March 7 incident at a Farmington restaurant in which an employee

was threatened with a gun.

Robert Emerton Briggs, 52, of Farmington Hills was arraigned in 47th District Court on one count of felonious assault, two counts of carrying a concealed weapon, and a misdemeanor count of possessing a firearm while under the influence of alcohol, according to Det. Daniel Potter. Bond was set at 10 percent of \$10,000 and Briggs remains incarcerated in the Oakland County Jail.

Maximum jail penalties for the charges include four years for the felonious assault, five years each for concealed weapons charges, and 90 days for the misdemeanor.

Briggs, who told police he was a former Hills officer, was an auxiliary officer some years ago but was never a sworn officer, Potter said. He faces a preliminary examination in 47th District Court on March 18.

According to police reports, a man entered the Dig Boy restaurant, 20788 Farmington Road at about 8:30 a.m. Saturday morning and sat at the counter. When an employee asked him if he wanted coffee, the man pulled a nickel-plated revolver and pointed it at the employee and said, "Give me coffee."

He put the gun in the small of his back, and the employee informed a manager who approached the man, told him to put his hands on the counter and warned him.

Police arrived and arrested the man. Confiscated were an unloaded Smith & Wesson revolver, two packages of ammunition, a knife and an ankle holster for a semi-automatic.

THEFTS REPORTED

Cabinets valued at \$600 were reported stolen from the Freedom West Apartments on Freedom Road, March 1-2.

A 1992 Dodge valued at \$12,000 was reported stolen from the Vincent-Sarah Fisher Center, 27400 12 Mile, March 5.

A Mercury boat motor valued at \$4,000 was reported stolen from a garage on Bunker Hill, March 5-6.

Tools valued at \$1,500 were reported stolen from a house on Oxford, Jan. 15-20.

A splatter pistol, two camera lenses, a camera bag and bicycle valued at \$270 were reported stolen from a storage shed on Adams Court in the Independence Green Apartment complex at Halsied and Grand River, Feb. 29-March 6.

A 1987 Buick valued at \$9,500 was reported stolen from the Cordoba Apartments on 12 Mile, March 6-7.

Two amplifiers, stereo, equalizer and speakers valued at \$2,300 were reported stolen from a 1991 Honda on Snye Drive, March 7.

Jewelry and two suits valued at more than \$10,000 were reported stolen from a unit of the Cordoba Apartments on 12 Mile, March 7.

A video recorder valued at \$250 was reported stolen from the First United Methodist Church, 33112 Grand River March 4-6.

DAMAGE REPORTED

Damage was estimated at \$800 when someone poured black paint on the roof, windshield, hood and driver's door of a 1986 Ford on Silken Glen, March 6-7.

Damage was estimated at \$800 when someone slashed the tires of a 1981 Chevrolet parked at the Farmington Nursing Home, 30403 Folsom, March 8.

A vehicle parked in the parking lot of the Farmer Jack store, 22128 Farmington Road, was keyed March 6, causing some \$200 in damage.

Novl man was damaged after an incident on a Farmington street where the man was shoved and the pager fell to the ground.

According to a Farmington Department of Public Safety report, the man was walking across Farmington Road near Oakland Street on a March 7 when another man approached him, striking him on the right shoulder. The victim's pager fell to the pavement, and the other man kicked it causing \$100 in damage.

Upon confrontation, the subject

took off running. The victim was not injured.

SUSAN BRISTOL SPRING CARDIGAN



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