

Festival time

Historical flavor is back

H EY, HEY, what do you say . . . the Founders Festival is coming our way. OK, so we didn't ace Poetry 101, but we're still excited about the big event of the Farmington-area summer — the Founders Festival.

The 1992 edition of the Farmington Founders Festival — that old standby of small-town merry-making — will be held Tuesday-Saturday, July 7-12, in the Farmington area with many of the main events scheduled for downtown Farmington.

For almost one frantic week, the festival will rage through the streets and parking lots of downtown Farmington.

From parades to pageants, from crafters to Coney dogs, the Farmington Founders Festival has just about everything a small-town shindig should have — except perhaps an excess of parking spaces.

Now, before any of our merchant or festival poobahs start making our telephones ring with complaints, let us emphasize that we don't mean to be facetious about our festival. The event was a great idea when it was inaugurated in 1964. It's still a fine idea in 1992.

The festival was — and is — an attempt to graft an economic event onto a strong sense of community.

Hopefully, the state-of-the-art cash registers

in the stores and tents will be chirping and beeping as hordes of spenders invade normally placid downtown Farmington.

It seems that the "founders" aspect of this 28th-annual festival won't be as vague as in former years.

This year's festival theme — "Farmington Celebrates 125 years of Friends, Family & Community" — dovetails nicely into this year-long celebration of Farmington's incorporation as a village a century and a quarter ago.

Floats on parade Saturday, July 11, will reflect the historical theme.

And that's the way it should be. After all, the original intent was to honor the community's storied past as Michigan's first Quaker settlement. Many would say that the historical flavor has faded in recent years.

It shouldn't be forgotten that Farmington has an excellent little museum with lots of local history. It's formally called the Gov. Warner Mansion. Guided tours will be held 1-8 p.m. Friday, July 10, and 1-6 p.m. Saturday, July 11.

We're happy to see that this year the festivities will reach beyond the downtown area. Attractions are planned at Muirwood Square to the west and at the Orchard/12 Plaza to the north.

Looks like the good old Founders Festival may have changed a bit for the better.

Gamesmanship hurts education

S hame on state legislators for waiting until the zero hour to act on the state education act. Educators never have been satisfied that they were getting their full share of the general budget, but at least in years past they knew what to expect far enough in advance to settle their own finances.

That wasn't the case this year. Like it or not, the state Senate acted promptly in April to come up with something which school districts could use in budget deliberations, and on which staff layoffs were based. However, action on the education bill stalled until the Tuesday House vote, when legislators could only vote the conference committee action up or down.

Insiders say the delay was designed to ram provisions of the bill through without thoughtful discussions by those we've elected to represent us. One wonders why legislators seem so willing to put up with those political games.

The delay also may have been an attempt to help balance the state's budget by delaying state aid payments until October, forcing districts to borrow money to begin the school year.

"We'll be perpetually behind and borrowing to stay afloat," explained Redford Union Superintendent Ken Erickson.

That's no way to run a school district; it's also no way to run the state. And voters ought to take the state Legislature to task and hold Gov. John Engler responsible for showing such a lack of leadership.

Maybe the wait would be understandable if the Legislature had come up with a really creative way to end the inequities in Michigan's educational system. But that hasn't happened.

"We are quickly reaching equity. No one has

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anything," Garden City Superintendent Michael Wilmut quipped in a March interview.

Indeed, legislators representing rich out-of-formula and poor in-formula districts from throughout Observer & Eccentric communities opposed the proposal. That ought to tell people that something wrong happened during the machinations of the joint House/Senate conference committee.

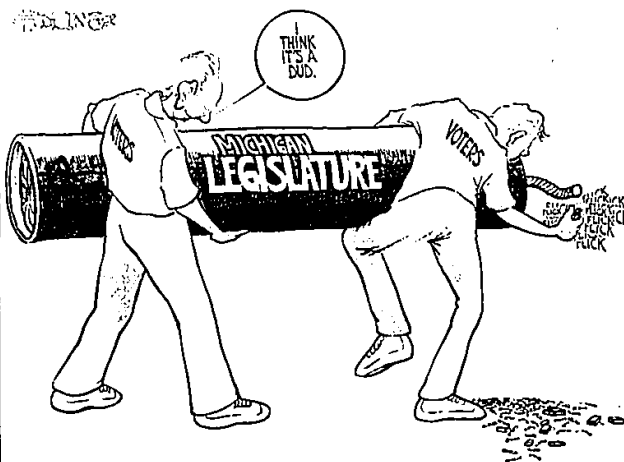
The bill, which was approved to the dismay of most suburban school districts, will limit aid for adult education programs, base Social Security payments on enrollment and suspend tax base sharing payments.

"It does not look good for us," said Rochester Schools Superintendent John Schultz. Rochester expects to lose \$3.1 million. Other Oakland County losers include Farmington with a wrenching \$7.6 million, Birmingham at \$5.4 million and Troy at \$4.8 million.

In Wayne County, Livonia and Plymouth Canton Schools are expected to be big losers — Livonia to the tune of \$3.9 million. Poorer districts, like Garden City and Westland, may gain some under the bill.

The shame of it all is that a good educational program could help take the chill off of the hard economic times Michigan has been in. It's going to be up to the voting public to educate their state legislators about that.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

Rules regulate behavior

I read with amusement Mr. Steve Barnaby's editorial (Police role needs changing, May 28, 1992), and I must compliment his consistency.

He has been spewing forth the same silly, anti-police drivel for as long as I have been reading the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

What is most unfortunate is that Mr. Barnaby and a number of his readers probably believe what he is saying.

He is right when he says Americans would be mortified if their police joined as participants in civil unrest.

And well they should. It is ludicrous to consider that the police role in an open society such as ours would parallel that of the organizations run by repressive regimes, as in China.

The historical basis of our modern police department is a cadre of civilian officers working to maintain the public peace. He certainly does not give our citizens much credit when he suggests that the best way to guarantee compliance with the law for an officer to "drive up and down the expressway."

Is that to say that citizens are all basically dishonest and can only be kept in check while under the immediate scrutiny of society's

henchmen? I don't think that's fair.

Government has established a set of rules to regulate the behavior of its people. The purpose — to ensure public peace; the police — to enforce the rules.

And government has given us a court system, in part, to interface between the rule maker and the rule breaker. The court is empowered to check abuse of the system as well as abuse by the system.

Come on, Mr. Barnaby. It is not the police role that needs changing. If we didn't need rules we wouldn't need police. If we didn't need police, we wouldn't need courts; and if we didn't need courts, we would be in Utopia.

You know where Utopia is, Mr. Barnaby? It's in the dictionary between uprising and vacant.

J. Whitcomb, Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

State protections affirmed

M ichigan's Constitution protects us better than the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution.

Greater scholars than I have commented on this phenomenon. It's a point not just of scholarship but of practical government — as we saw June 17.

The Michigan Supreme Court struck down our savage drug life law, under which we sent 30 drug "mules," mostly young, to the slammer for life-without-parole for possessing 23 ounces of cocaine.

Chief Justice Michael Cavanagh noted that the Michigan Constitution says "cruel or unusual punishments shall not be inflicted," while the Bill of Rights bars "cruel and unusual punishment." He called the difference important and deliberate on the part of the state constitution's framers.

Michigan case law calls for testing (1) the gravity of the offense with the harshness of the penalty, (2) the sentence imposed for cocaine possession compared to the sentences for other crimes and (3) a comparison to sentences in other jurisdictions, he said, concluding:

"The penalty in this case is so unduly disproportionate as to be cruel or unusual . . . comparable only to the penalty for first-degree murder . . . no other state imposes a penalty even remotely as severe."

It was a 4-3 decision, liberals Cavanagh and Charles Levin, moderate James Brickley and conservative Robert Griffin forming the majority. And so a law was struck down for violating Michigan's Constitution, although it had passed muster for not violating the U.S. Constitution.

Dissenting were Dorothy Comstock Riley, Patricia Boyle and Conrad Mallett Jr. Note: Riley and Boyle also dissented in the Millbourn case



TIM RICHARD

two years ago when the court sent back down a dozen harsh sentences that violated sentencing guidelines. Women really do seem to be tougher on crime. Further note: Riley and Mallett are up for re-election this year.

(Incidentally, in all the prosecutorial breast-basting over the drug decision, the law-and-order types neglected to notice that the court unanimously reinstated the convictions based on automobile searches. This is not a namby-pamby court.)

The high court, upholding the ban on state-funded abortions, read the Michigan Constitution again but decided the "equal benefit" phrase didn't apply to that service. Yet it's noteworthy the Court of Appeals favored state-funded abortions for state constitutional reasons.

Michigan's Declaration of Rights also protects student speech and writing, guards our right to keep and bear arms for self-defense, and limits governmental aid to churches far more clearly than the U.S. Constitution.

But more on those topics another time.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What should the Supreme Court have done about Roe vs. Wade?

We asked this question at the Farmington Community Center.



Dee Carey
Farmington Hills



Joyce Chlerash
Birmingham



Norma Bonno
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