

POINTS OF VIEW

Thanks to them, Operation Turnoff is a go!

Great Zenith's ghost... what have I gone and written myself into?

On April 15 in this space I said I'd go cold turkey with television — that's right, I said I'd give up the boob tube for seven days in May.

On April 15 I just said it. Tough talk, Spiny boy. Now, thanks to some challenged readers, I have to do it. And Sunday, May 16, is the big sign off. Oh well, a promise is a promise.

You may remember: Fed up with the yucky stuff that seems to be clogging the airwaves and the choking the cable these days, I wrote in the Farmington Observer that I'd had it with TV and that I'd be willing to try life without the tube for seven whole days.

But, snickering and smirking wise guy that I am, I left myself a way out, or so I thought. I said I'd drop TV like the bad habit it is if... if a reader to try would go along for the ride and

drop TV for that period, too. That's one enormous if.

Not to worry, I told myself, this is suburbia and suburbanites love their TV. Everybody loves TV. Show me a home without a TV. Show me a room in those homes without a TV.

We're wired, so to speak. We're also hooked. Not many of us could avert our eyes from those flickering images on the screen for one hour, let alone one week.

No, I thought, no one'll take up that challenge, and I'll be flopped on the couch ogling Vanna, secured in the knowledge that I am a weaking — like just about everyone else out here in televisionary land.

But I didn't figure on readers like Bev and Tom Cornell and David and Urmila Staudacher — folks with their antennae up for a challenge — coming along to make an honest columnist out of me.



TOM BAER

Yes, they said, we'll dump TV for a week, if you do. We'll all expell it from our systems like so much rancid food we've mistakenly ingested. And we'll be there for each other, making sure fingers stay shoved down throats so that the purging may go on and on.

Well, uh, thanks for calling, guys. Um... OK... yeah. I asked for support and support I got, so let's do it!

Let's give up watching TV for seven days, beginning May 16!

Actually, my partners in Operation Turnoff (well, I had to call it something) seem much more resolute than I.

The Staudachers are Southfield residents. David Staudacher designs software for Computers in Farmington Hills. He and wife Urmila are the parents to two children, Salome, 13, and Christopher, 2, who will also participate in Operation Turnoff.

"I'm going to give my TV away for that time period so I won't be tempted," David Staudacher said. "I recommend shortwave radio as a substitute. It can be very interesting."

Bev Cornell, well known in the Farmington area as the woman who rehabilitates wild animals, should have plenty to keep her busy during the Turnoff. She's also active in the

Masters Swimming program.

Husband Tom is a senior design engineer at the new Nissan facility in Farmington Hills. Son Kirk, a 22-year-old candidate for an advanced anthropology degree at Wayne State University, will also switch off for the week.

So there you have the cast of characters for our little drama. I'm sure we'll all be taking bows at midnight on the morning of May 23 as brighter, better people for our experience.

Uh, there's just one thing. Won't somebody please tape "The Simpsons" for me at 8 p.m. on the Thursday of Turnoff week?

Tom Baer is the editor of The Farmington Observer. Recently, he purchased the "Manager's Special" — a brand-new Zenith TV with a 25-inch screen — at an ABC Warehouse. He can be criticized by calling 477-6460.

Reconsider pros, cons of homosexual rights

What consenting adults do in the privacy of their own home is their own business.

That statement applies to politics, religion and sex.

The operative words are *consenting* and *adults*. Forcing someone to do something they'd rather not do, or involving children in illegal or immoral activities, is simply unacceptable.

Having said so, I have reached my limit on articles about gay people.

If you regularly read newspapers and magazines, you'll notice it's been impossible to go for more than 24 hours without reading a story about gay people.

Gay men living together. Lesbians raising children. Awareness of homosexuality. Sexuality classes in schools. Groups that condemn gay lifestyles. Senators who condemn gay soldiers. Companies that offer employee benefits to same-sex partners. Publicly gay men who drag privately gay men into

the public spotlight. Gay corporate executives who live in fear of having their lifestyles exposed. Companies that discriminate against employees suspected of being gay. Restaurants that announce they will not hire gay help.

That's not all. I haven't even gotten into the religious arguments yet — gay priests welcomed by their congregations, gay priests kicked out of their churches, heterosexual priests presiding at gay marriages.

Enough. The pro- and anti-gay forces are doing themselves more harm than good. Both groups need to retreat, regroup and review the message they're sending out.

First, the anti-gay forces: No one believes for a moment that you lead the prim, squeaky-clean lifestyles you would force on others.

It's great to turn on CNN and watch U.S. senators and "experts" rail against gay soldiers, in particular, and gay lifestyles in general, as though they



PHILIP SHERMAN

are a blight on society and a rip in America's moral fabric.

These are the same hypocrites who cheat on their spouses and make a mess of it in public, ruin themselves and their careers, drag their families down with them and, just for good measure, embezzle a little tax money on their way out of town. Fine examples all of upstanding American behavior.

And let's not forget the Tailhook

convention — an outstanding example of responsible heterosexual behavior on the part of 140 high-ranking Navy and Marine officers. Those officers were representatives of the same military groups that think homosexuals in their ranks will cause all kinds of gender problems.

Second, the pro-gay forces are no better. Apparently it isn't enough to tolerate their lifestyles — they require approval as well.

It doesn't say anything about approval in the Constitution when religion or politics is discussed. It says they must and will be tolerated.

One's sexual orientation is no more or less important than religion or politics. When, for example, the religious fanatics rear up, they get slapped down by a public that says we aren't interested — do as you wish, but do not require my participation.

Pro-gay forces are absolutely correct to insist on equal standing in this

country. They should not have to hide or live in fear. They should not be outlawed. They should enjoy the same rights anyone else does.

That does not mean they should expect anyone to go beyond tolerance and celebrate their lifestyles. Tolerance, on equal footing with the numerous religious and political groups in America, should be enough for anyone.

Overall, both sides need to remember something: We're talking about sex. It doesn't deserve a 10th of the discussion it has generated, and, in fact, is cheapened the more it's discussed.

Besides, no one should be so ignorant as to stop up and define what is "normal" in this realm.

Normal is defined by the participants.

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It's back to future for jobs with Guv's revisionist plan

America's — and Michigan's — difficulties in adjusting to a global competitive economy have provoked a sea change in attitude. For the first time in a generation, there now exists a consensus ranging from business leaders to government bureaucrats, from labor leaders to educators, from Republicans to Democrats:

- Much of America's competitiveness problems comes from the lack of skills in the workforce.
- American school leaders and workers have fewer work-related skills than our foreign competitors.
- Jobs requiring low skills can be exported anywhere around the world. Conversely, if Americans are no more productive than Mexican workers, the best wages we can expect are at the Mexican level.
- We need to attack the skills deficit both for school leavers and for workers who are at risk of being displaced because they possess obsolete skills.
- Because the skills deficit exists throughout the entire economy, the appropriate remedy is universal and should not be targeted at subgroups such as the poor or minorities.

Recently political history bears out the consensus.

Jim Blanchard, as governor, recognized the skills need when he consolidated management for the maze of job training programs that existed in Michigan. Keyed around the Michigan Opportunity Card, the system sought to offer job training to anybody who needed it, with a minimum of bureaucratic fuss.

The program excited a lot of national attention. It formed the basis for George Bush's Job Training 2000 proposal during the last year of his presidency, and it triggered much of President Bill Clinton's campaign rhetoric last year.

Interestingly, one of John Engler's first acts after becoming governor in 1991 was to tear apart the entire system erected by Blanchard. I criticized this at the time, arguing the program wasn't worthless merely because it wasn't invented by the Engler Administration.

And so nobody was surprised when Engler earlier this year signed a package of executive orders that, in effect, re-established the inte-



PHILIP POWER

grated system pioneered by Blanchard. A Michigan Jobs Commission will oversee both economic expansion and workforce development. A Governor's Workforce Commission replaces the old Michigan Job Training Coordinating Council but does largely the same thing.

The phraseology in the press release was striking: "A single user-friendly system that will replace the confusing and wasteful maze of bureaucratic job training programs."

Republican Engler even praised Democrat Clinton's hopes of creating a "new unified job training system." I remember writing stuff like that when I was trying to get the same idea off the ground back in the late 1980s.

Engler has made a sensible appointment to head the Workforce Commission: Juanita Pierman, director of governmental affairs for Kelly Services. She works for a corporation that assesses the skills and then trains more people than any organization in America except the armed services.

The consensus on workforce skills is solid. Whether Blanchard or Engler, Bush or Clinton, the public policy thrust is the same. The real question is whether government can find enough tough-minded results-oriented people to convert public policy prescription into reality.

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MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH

- POLISH DAY AT THE DIA
Saturday, May 1
Galeria Talk and Ceto Recital
- CINCO DE MAYO
Sunday, May 2
Tours in Spanish, Craft Display, Music, Lecture
- DIA SHOP AND SHUTTLE
May 5, 12, 19, 26
From Twelve Oaks Mall, the Somerset Collection or Eastland to the DIA
- ART FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART
Thursday, May 6
For seniors!
- EXHIBITION OPENING
Saturday, May 8
Dole Chutney; Installations 1964-1992
- MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH
Sunday, May 9
- FAMILY DAY AT THE DIA
Sunday, May 16
Free Admission Today!
Tours, Treasure Hunt, Puppets, Music, Artist Demonstrations — and lots more!
- CAP & BRUNCH
Sunday, May 23
For you and your graduate!

MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH at the DIA.
For information about any event call (313) 633-7971.

HOURS: Wednesday - Sunday
11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (open weekends until 5 p.m. beginning May 8)

RECOMMENDED ADMISSION:
\$4 adults, \$1 children; Members FREE. FREE Admission on May 16.

JOIN the DIA Founders Society at any event in May and receive a FREE DIA POSTER.

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