

POINTS OF VIEW

May Hills never become an 'in-the-way' town

Hey, where did those big golf umbrellas come from? Somebody said Dan Potter had something to do with supplying them.

Anyway, everybody who needed an umbrella got one to keep off the nagging drizzle as Farmington Hills turned 20 July 1 in a parking lot east of City Hall.

The 20th anniversary of Farmington Hills' cityhood was celebrated that evening by a crowd of more than 350, a few too many for the long, narrow tent they set up in the parking lot.

It rained that Thursday. It also rained 20 years ago, we were told, on the day that Farmington Township officially became the city of Farmington Hills.

On July 1, 1993, there were speeches, more speeches and still more speeches, as community leaders past and present praised Farmington Hills. And there must have been a speech or two on the agenda on the big day 20 years ago.

The Community Band, directed by Paul Barber, played for the assembled multitude Thursday. Twenty years ago, at cityhood ceremonies, the same men led a similar band.

Sure, there are a few things that haven't changed over 20 years in Farmington Hills. Surprisingly, a lot of the people present at the birth of the city are still hale and hearty, making speeches and contributing to the community.

But Farmington Hills has changed greatly over the past two decades — and mostly it's been change for the better.

In 1973, it was simply a chunk of geography that was in the way to a lot of people. It was a place to get lost in as you bumped along some unpaved road on a dark night on your way to some place else.

Now, at age 20, Farmington Hills is a maintenance town that seems to have survived the onslaught of commercial



TOM BAER

and residential development that has swept north and west through Oakland County.

Farmington Hills has weathered well (despite an occasional rainy day) over the past two decades, and so have a lot of the elected and appointed officials who have served it.

Let's be honest about it: A lot of suburbs in the first tier of Oakland and Macomb and western Wayne counties

haven't fared as well.

But Farmington Hills was the right town in the right place at the right time when it became a city back in 1973.

People — middle-class folks who work hard and pay their bills and cut their lawns and support their schools — were moving north and west in droves back then.

People were on the way. There were houses to build, roads to pave, fire trucks to buy, a school system to develop.

Oh, folks are still headed up and out, but now it just might be to some subdivision off 32 Mile Road, or maybe to a spot somewhere in the 517 area code. A few years ago southern Genesee County (County seat: Flint) was being advertised as a great place to live for people who worked in the Detroit area.

Where does that never-ending "up-and-out" attitude leave the city of Farmington Hills in 1993?

The real challenge for community

leaders these days is to keep Farmington Hills from going back to being that chunk of geography that's just in the way to people who are in a hurry to get someplace else.

There have to be a multitude of very good reasons for people to come to not go through — this community.

The leaders have to make it a good place to live, work, and spend money. That's what running a so-called maintenance town is all about.

And that's harder than it may sound. Just ask them in Southfield or Warren, or Redford or a lot of other in-the-way places that were sort of left behind as development sprawled toward One-Hundred and Something Mile Road.

Well, happy 20th, Farmington Hills. Here's hoping there'll be good reason to celebrate your 40th anniversary as a city in the year 2013.

Tom Baer is the editor of the Farmington Observer. To leave a message for him, call 477-6450.

Times alter perceptions of school-related problems

QUESTION: As one of your former high school students who graduated in the late '60s, I enjoyed having you for classes. But as I look at what is going on in schools today, it makes me wonder. What are the major differences in school from when we were a small town to now with our exploding population growth?

ANSWER: I've pulled out a list of teacher-perceived problems from a high school principal/teachers meeting. The list of major problems discussed at that meeting in 1957 included students: 1. throwing paper in the waste basket; 2. running in the halls; 3. not bringing books to class; 4. chewing gum in class; 5. being late for class; 6. having an unexcused absence; 7. talking back to the teacher; 8. team teaching; and 9. taking field trips.

Following are some of the issues presently discussed at teacher/principal meetings in our enlightened, modern culture: 1. guns in school; 2. how to



DOC DOYLE

detect students on LSD and cocaine; 3. gangs and their goals; 4. should we teach the use of condoms and should we hand them out; 5. the importance of having an open door policy and a witness if you meet alone with a student; 6. what constitutes sexual harassment, i.e. a third grade girl lifting a girl's shirt on the playground, telling a peer female teacher an off-color joke; 7. how to deal with an angry student cursing you; and 8. how to deal with a physical attack on you.

Yes, times have changed. Back in the late '60s, when you were a student, my colleagues and I, as young teachers, said and did things that would have put us in front of a judge, if not in jail, today.

For instance, I remember two expelled 17-year-olds (one killed in Jackson, the other shot and killed) crashed a school dance and began intimidating young freshmen and sophomores. I walked them out to the hallway and asked them to leave. They refused. I sent a student to get the football coach, a huge man. One of the expelled gate crashers got behind me with an empty Coke bottle and was ready to split my head open.

The football coach arrived in time, picked up the one behind me (with the Coke bottle), dragged him to the door (which I opened) and threw him head first into a six-foot snow bank.

As a young teacher, I taught science, math and some gym classes in the junior high. I had a big, tough (for that

era) junior high kid — about 165 pounds — in gym class who would knock eye glasses off smaller boys in the locker room and step on them. I didn't warn him; I caught him. He said nasty words. I turned him around and hit him with an open hand in the kisser hard enough that if he had been on Roller Blades, he would still be rolling. A few years later, he ended in jail.

I was not proud of this action, nor was I a young, macho man. I just blew a fuse! I'm sorry he ended in jail and I visited him on occasion. But I know this: He didn't pick on any smaller kids in my class. My classroom was a safe environment. After the incident, he and I got along fine.

He was the only kid I ever struck. Even as a 25-year-old, I instinctively knew this was not the way to handle such situations.

Today, that football coach who threw the punk (excuse me, socially maladjusted child) into a snow bank would be in court. I can hear it now, "How do

you know he was going to strike Mr. Doyle with the Coke bottle?" Answer: . . . No!

Yes, the football coach and I lose in today's society — possibly lose our jobs and face a heavy lawsuit. Times have changed, some say for the better.

Today I would never slap nor grab a kid, never have a conference with a female student without witnesses nearby, never hug a 13-year-old middle school student — male or female, and if a kid cursed me, I'd tell him to go to the office. There we would work out his inhibitions and rationalize how evil society has been to him, how outdated respect is, how rules and regulations can be made up as we go along.

Times have changed, I guess for the good. What do you think?

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm.

Arrogant attitudes are unfair to school district taxpayers

Local educational leaders are having a tough time living with the democratic process.

After getting walloped a couple of times last month with the defeat of Proposal A, and a few weeks later with millage defeats, they find themselves faced with following through on their own threats.

This is the season of which Michigan taxpayers are most weary.

The melnstrom is upon us with promises of washing out the most sacred of cows: sports, band, academically talented programs, after school activities, new textbooks, busing and — horrors of horrors — cutting back classes by one hour.

The latter is paraded out, of course, to scare parents into believing they will have to face the choice of either letting

their children wander the streets alone or a parent giving up a job and having to sell the suburban dream home.

Lower tactics have yet to be imagined by Lucifer, himself. But voters are fed up with the educational blackmail, the exploitation of their children all for the sake of school bureaucrats maintaining their petty fiefdoms.

Tough words, true. But taxpayers are tired of the charade. Looking through the local editions of the Observer & Eccentric, letters abound from those who rattle at the arrogance.

Dan Holton exemplifies this disgust. The Plymouth Township resident wonders why, after voters turned down a millage increase in June, the school board arrogantly comes back with a millage election in August.



STEVE BARNABY

"We don't get to repeat the election for governor or president do we?" he queries.

School leaders in Michigan too often act like spoiled children coming back time and again, nagging and whining until they get what they want.

Arrogance comes in different hues. In the Rochester Community Schools the school administration froze raises of hourly, non-union employees, laid off 14 teachers and then turned around and accepted for themselves, as did their secretaries, 3 percent raises.

As they say on "Saturday Night Live," that's sassy.

And it's that kind of attitude, that hauteur, which continues to keep our educational system from progressing. Livonia's Anthony Breher puts it best as he addresses why Proposal A was defeated.

"Until such time when every legislator realizes that arrogance, greed, deceit and self-indulgence are not acceptable actions will we see changes. Until such time when enough good citizens stand up for their due right and end this power hold will we see such changes take place."

Michigan residents have had a history of supporting sound educational programs. They will in the future. But their only weapon to combat the educational elite's bloated bureaucracy and arrogance is the ballot box.

Only after this battle is won will the public once again genuinely put their hearts and pocket books behind public education.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave a message for him, dial 953-2100.

Be wary of linking an apparent cause, effect

Many Americans agree: The early 1960s opened a dreadful era.

The Amy Foundation, a Lansing fund that pays people to quote the Bible in commercial papers, awarded \$1,000 to Rev. Jerry Paradise for an article tracing all current evils to 1962 and the U.S. Supreme Court's school prayer decision.

"Our national SAT scores verify this," wrote Paradise, an assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia. Violent crime, up 654 percent. Sexually transmitted diseases, up 226 percent. The divorce rate, teen pregnancies, the unwed birth rate, sexual abuse of children — all began rising in 1963.

Reason: "We made it unconstitutional to ask God for help in our schools, and tragically, it looks like He honored our request."

Pat Robertson, the TV evangelist, is using that line in his current fund-raising campaign.

They exaggerate, of course. The Supreme Court said the New York State Board of Regents, "a governmental agency," couldn't establish a government prayer in public schools. The court never said we couldn't pray for the schools. (Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421.)

A far different view comes from Forbes Magazine's June 7 article on the National Education Association. A graph shows teacher unionization starting at zero in 1961 and rising to 80 percent currently; SAT verbal scores dropped from 490 to 423 in the same period.

Forbes hopes you will connect the two and conclude that unionization caused pupil scores to fall. It never offers a shred of evidence of a cause and effect relationship.

Ditto with the religious right's connection between the school prayer decision and a Pandora's box of social ills. No one shows how ending governmental prayers actually caused the increase in ills. You're supposed to jump to the unproven conclusion yourself.

If there were a connection, how would they explain falling SAT scores and rising illegitimacy rates in Michigan and states which never had governmental prayer in public schools? What happens when you isolate the sins and



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crimes among graduates of parochial schools where prayer, presumably, did occur?

You see the pitfall of taking two events that occur about the same time and assuming there's a link.

In days of yore, specialists studied the link between the stars at the time of your birth and events in people's lives, using them to predict a customer's future. Today astrologers are shunned by theologians and laughed at by academics. But Forbes and the religious right continue a similar line of ratiocination.

Quite a number of things happened in the early 1960s.

The Pill came on the market. It prevented conceptions, but it sure didn't stop venereal disease and AIDS.

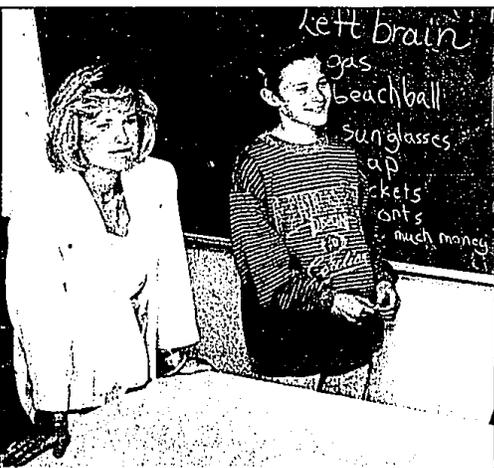
The first batch of kids raised entirely on mind-rotting television graduated from our high schools. Visual imagery and ad slogans replaced paragraphs and statistics as tools of thought.

The United States got sucked into an Asian land war it couldn't win. Veterans felt they had fought in vain and weren't appreciated. All authority found itself challenged.

Some economic conservatives blame the Great Society welfare state, which paid women for raising babies without male help. There's a clear connection: between a fatherless kid, poor school scores and prison populations.

In Levin found his own explanation. In "Rosemary's Baby," the horned son of Satan is born at New York City on June 25, 1965. Levin's book is fiction, but some days one suspects he was closest to the truth.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events. His office phone is (313) 349-1700.



School finances: A real brain teaser for area school districts is how to stay within their budget, and some have resorted to millage proposals, threatening to cut the students' school day as an inducement.