

POINTS OF VIEW

Crusty pie judges have a most ful(filling) job

Let them eat cake, Marie Antoinette said of the French peasants a couple of hundred years ago. Well, times changes and so do diets.

Last week, the good ladies of Farmington's First United Methodist Church issued another gastronomic edict: Let 'em eat pie — and judge it for the annual Farmington Founders Festival Pie Baking Contest.

And eat it we did. The contest judges, myself and some heavies from the local political and undertaking scenes, stuffed ourselves silly with crusts and fillings and toppings of various hues and textures and degrees of sweetness.

You might say we had a real forkful on our hands (and in our mouths) the evening of July 15.

As the 29th-annual Founders Festival raged around us in downtown Farmington, we sat in the basement of the Methodist Church and tasted pie. And tasted pie. And then we tasted a little more pie.

"Thirty-two pies . . . holy smokes!" said an incredulous Kevin McCabe, of the McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills, as he surveyed the long table loaded down with pies to be judged. "We'll never keep our svelte figures."

You made two excellent points, Kevin, but you were right on only one of them. Actually, there were *thirty-three* pies to taste. One was sneaked in just before deadline.

That total of 33 is up from a paltry 17 last year, noted Farmington mayor pro-tem Arnie Campbell, a judge this year and last. But Arnie was up to it. We all were, really.

We picked up our plastic forks and did what needed to be done. We did it for our community. We did it for our Festival.

Now, there are a couple of things you have to understand about judging a pie contest, at least one with this many entries.



TOM BAER

■ We picked up our plastic forks and we did what needed to be done.

First, accept the fact that you're going to get sticky. The pie filling will eventually coat your fingers that will touch your trousers and other articles of clothing. Your score sheet will stick

to the bottom of the paper plates. You become one with the pies.

It's a sticky situation for the server, as well as for the taster.

"I'm so sticky," said Harriet Peramp, a contest official who kept the pie coming and coming to the judges, "I could just fall into the tub."

And when you consider the various fillings descending into your cement mixer of a belly . . . well, maybe you'll want to think of something else — in a hurry.

Toward the end of the contest, Arnie Campbell thought it might be nice to taste "a piece of air pie." And Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates longed for "a chili dog with lots of onions."

But, really, we were only kidding . . . in a blotted, belching sort of way. We took our jobs seriously. We looked at the whole pie. We tasted crust. We tasted filling. And we evaluated.

Look . . . taste . . . swallow . . . evaluate. We had a real professional assembly line going. It had to be that way with 33 to taste.

The first-place pies — a strawberry cheese by Rosemary Worosz in the senior division, and an apple by Kristin Horton in the junior — were served to us rather late in the affair.

Nobody can say that our taste mechanisms were wasted toward the end, or that the latter-tasted pies got short-shifted. I just had to mention that because I know how important this is to those who bake the pies.

So, the contest finally ended. The last forkful was hoisted. The last mouthful was swallowed. So how did they reward us poor overfatful judges? Why, with the offer of a piece of pie and a scoop of ice cream, of course.

Tom Baer is the editor of the Farmington Observer. To leave a message for him, call 477-5450.

Local educators are 'compromising the basics'

BY DEBORAH SANDOVAL

I enjoyed Tom Baer's editorial regarding the "Basic Battle?" as well as the recent stories written by Larry O'Connor in the July 5 Observer.

I have two children who attend Hillside Elementary School and I think the basics are being compromised.

According to Judy White, by the end of first or second grade teachers work on accurate spelling. This was not the case in either of my child's second or third grade classes.

My child's journal and other papers were seldom checked for spelling. I asked the principal about this and I was told that this is because the teacher didn't have time.

He said the spelling would be checked in the fourth grade. I have been told three different stories.

Also, very little math is done in the classroom. Supposedly, math is one of those subjects in which the child may advance to the next level when ready because the program is developmental.

GUEST COLUMN

However, the teachers almost never knew what my child's abilities were so I taught her math at home which she learned very quickly. The teacher would send letters to the parents to drill the children because there wouldn't be time for it with all of the other activities.

For sometime, I wondered what all of the other activities entailed until the enclosed report landed on my doorstep — "Senate Select Committee to Study the Michigan Health Education" (December 1992).

The report is easy to read and informs the reader almost immediately of the arrogance on the part of school officials.

In fact, on page 10, the Senate Committee recommends the elimination of the State Board of Education.

Perhaps, you could investigate and

report on the Michigan Model and how it is interfering with teaching the basics.

Steve Barnaby's column in the July 8 Observer rang a familiar note regarding the arrogant attitudes of some local educators.

One of the findings, detailed on page 6, indicates that the Michigan Department of Education and Public Health organized a campaign to discredit parents.

"Any parent or teacher who got in the way of implementing the Michigan Model at a local school district was labeled right wing, Christian fanatic."

It further stated that "Government should never become a force for this kind of educational tyranny."

The Senate Committee recommended that the Attorney General and the U.S. Justice Department investigate to determine if the Michigan Model Steering Committee and coordinators violated state law with its campaign to discredit parents concerned about the Michigan Model.

Based upon this report, and my own experiences, I have strong doubts that the local administrators want parents to understand the curriculum.

I had encountered much the same kind of opposition when a group of parents from local administrators want parents to understand the curriculum.

I had encountered much the same kind of opposition when a group of parents from Hillside tried to establish a Parent Advisory Group this past semester.

The principal attempted to discredit this group and resisted its formation unlike other principals in the area.

It seems that getting a complete picture of what is being taught in the classrooms and what is expected is very disconcerting. The outcomes are lower standards.

The report card was composed to ensure a child's self-esteem so as not to fail him. However, at best the report card promotes mediocrity and allows

little incentive to become a high achiever.

Of course, there are no under achievers. But wasn't it when you received the C or D back in the '50s that motivated you to try harder until you achieved an A or B?

I disagree with Judy White's comment, "In some ways, it's interesting that our attempt to give parents more information than they have ever had led to some accusations they weren't getting enough."

Perhaps parents don't understand the new concepts because the information is deceptive. Besides, some arrogant school officials no longer believe in the democratic process, but rather educational tyranny and state-run schools where parents have little to say about what or how their child is being taught.

Deborah Sandoval is a homemaker from Farmington Hills. She and her husband, Christian, are the parents of three children.

Readers want to limit violence on television

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote a column on what all the violence on television shows does to our kids. It tends to make them violent, maybe criminal in turn.

After various huffings and puffings, our vigilant representatives in Congress got the industry to adopt the mildest possible measure — a self-policed warning at the beginning of some shows: "Due to some violent content, parental discretion is advised."

OK. Now tell me how this is going to affect:

a) The kids of working parents who are left to watch TV unsupervised?

b) The 50 percent of kids between six and 17 who own their own bedroom sets? (I hope my 11-year-old son Nathan doesn't read this. He doesn't have a set in his bedroom, and he won't.)

c) The kids who are channel surfing and who find the advisories a convenient guide to the good stuff?

d) The promotions for shows (unaffected by the warnings) usually feature the most violent part?

This column brought the biggest reader response of anything I've written in the past year. Here are samples:

"I totally agree with you. I have an 11-year-old son also, and I'm appalled by the level of violence exhibited by kids and the amount of violence they watch on TV. I do believe that TV has to answer for it. I believe they are responsible for a lot of the crime that occurs in society by glamorizing it."

A Westland mother pointed out that "in our family, we found the best solution is to restrict TV to the point where there is absolutely no television allowed on school nights, and the end result has been improved behavior at home and better grades in school."

An article in last week's Newsweek magazine reported two striking studies:

One showed children's programming for the 1991-92 TV season actually contained far more violence than prime time shows.

The other collected the body count between 6 a.m. and midnight on April 2, 1992, for programs on ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, Turner, USA, MTV and HBO combined:



PHIL POWER

- Serious assaults without guns, 399 scenes, 20 percent of total.
- Gunplay, 362 scenes, 18 percent.
- Isolated punches, 273 scenes, 14 percent.
- Pushing, dragging, 272 scenes, 14 percent.
- Menacing threat with a weapon, 226 scenes, 11 percent.
- Slaps, 128 scenes, 11 percent.
- Deliberate destruction of property, 95 scenes, 5 percent.
- Simple assault, 73 scenes, 4 percent.
- All other types, 28 scenes, 1 percent.

Fortunately, there is something people can do about the very violent TV poisons our kids' minds: Call the National Coalition on Television Violence, one of the oldest and most respected organizations in the country. It has an office in Farmington Hills at (313) 489-3177.

Marilyn Droz, who runs the office, points out something useful: "We're doing work to prove that children would really rather watch action and NOT violence."

There is also a lobbying organization called Americans for Responsible Television, founded by a Bloomfield Hills woman, Terry Rakolta, at (313) 636-2428.

I'm still not sure there is a perfect solution to this problem. Governmental rules probably will always be licksplittle and ineffective. The TV industry never will regulate itself. And the First Amendment absolutists in my industry surely will attack anything that looks like censorship.

But if you think it's bad now, just wait a few years until we have cable TV with 600 channels.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His touch-tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047 ext. 1880.

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