

## POINTS OF VIEW

## Proud to play: Band's more than making music

**R**egarding the Dec. 9 column written by Tina Marinucci and the editorial in the same edition about the Harrison High School band: I am a four-year member of the Harrison Marching Band. I am proud to mention that in the past four years I have had many, many enjoyable experiences with the group, emotionally, socially and most importantly, educationally.

It has been one of the most challenging, relaxing, and rewarding influences of my life. But most importantly, it has been downright fun. P.U.N.

In regard to the Observer's editorial, I believe that you missed Mrs. Marinucci's point. It was definitely not to "rip the rag," as you seemed to interpret it. In fact I strongly believe a woman such as Mrs. Marinucci hardly has the time or the desire to do just that.

However, she does believe in the achievements of her children and the education the newspaper can provide the community about these very achievements. I, in fact, personally know more than 100 sets of parents that would agree with her in a second.

I personally did not see any complaint about the two pictures taken in the fall that had no reference to the competition since it was taken in fact at a football game. Since the band wasn't even in full uniform, that would

probably date the picture back to the first couple games.

Why should the color of the picture even matter? Isn't it the information and content that matter?

## Tradition controls

We, the band, are incredibly proud of our HHS football team. The coverage it has received has been generous, and for that we thank you.

You mentioned in your article that the band "folks" have voiced opinions about the coverage the marching band received.

In regard to the Observer's coverage that we received this season, perhaps this plan was made a little late and after the fact, which is unfortunate. It seems, however, that tradition has firmly controlled the situation, a tradition that seems to be rapidly changing.

For approximately 80 years football has captivated people everywhere. It has become part of the American image, so to speak.

The Big Ten, the NFL, pros and colleges. Fall Sundays are often spent by Americans, at least in my living room, watching teams hike, pass, run and tackle their way to the first down.

It is undoubtedly tradition. Marching bands on the other hand, have been the halftime entertainment at football

## QUEST COLUMNIST



SAMANTHA A. ROWLAND

games up until 25 years ago.

Many people, when asked, would not know anything about The Blue Devils, and The Star of Indiana let alone the knowledge that they are some of the greatest Drum Corps in United States today. It is something that has not developed into a tradition in Michigan simply because competitions are now.

## History of bands

As a historical note, marching bands can be dated back to about 200 A.D. when they were originally a military organization in Greece. They then evolved into a ceremonial tradition for elected emperors later down the road. Today they seem to do all of this in addition to competition.

This is not to say that we find ourselves "above" playing at football

games, it is one of the band's favorite Saturday afternoon events.

But the band has decided to participate in the competitions, and hopefully start its own tradition that people can enjoy on weekend afternoons.

I am also a member of Harrison's newspaper staff, the publishers of the HHS Catalyst. Although it is my first year, I must say I was deeply disappointed in your editorial titled "Rip the rag." Why would you call a publication that represents you and your colleagues a "rag"?

As for the introduction, I must say it seemed out of the blue, especially since Mrs. Marinucci did not "rip" on the Observer, simply asked some well-rounded questions.

In reference to your statement about the "acres of empty seats in the Pontiac Silverdome," I was impressed that you knew where the event took place. However, if you had a reporter on the scene, you would have known that more than 6,000 were watching from those "acres of empty seats" with bated breath as the Flight Three Bands performed.

## A strenuous activity

This raises another topic of conflict that was not mentioned in your article. Marching band is a very strenuous and physical activity. One would need to be

in relatively good shape to survive the six hours of drill per day at band camp, not to mention the two- to three-hour rehearsals daily.

On the day of competitions, students put in 12-14 hour days. At the end of the season, each member receives a letter for his or her participation. This would lead one to think that marching band is, in fact, a sport. So why then would you not have assigned a sports reporter to report on the band?

But all of that is water under the bridge, so to speak. It created memories that I believe none of us will ever forget: entering the field for competition with all that adrenalin, leaving the field with that indescribable feeling of satisfaction, watching people learn, helping others grow.

The experiences we have endured have made us strong individuals as well as strong members of a team.

You are correct when you say this issue is not about newspaper articles. We have already received the recognition we desired, from our families, other members, and most of all, from ourselves.

Samantha A. Rowland, a Harrison High School senior, is a section leader and a piccolo player in the school's award-winning band.

## Nuisance suits make unnecessary work for courts

**B**efore the anti-government lobby screams for an across-the-board tax cut, I have five words of advice:

Tell it to the courts.

Gov. John Engler boasts he has squeezed \$2 billion out of state spending — turning a \$1.8 billion deficit into a \$300 million surplus. He pared or hacked at natural resources, commerce, labor, the ombudsman, social services, state police, regulators of professions

Everything but the courts.

We're getting more judges this year on the Court of Appeals, allegedly the most overworked body of its type in the republic.

Consider three true stories:

Ray and Chris set fire one night to a neighbor's barn. There was evidence they intended to rescue the horses inside to look like heroes, but numerous horses were destroyed.

Ray's parents sued Auto-Owners and

Chris' parents sued Pioneer State Mutual, their respective homeowners' insurers, for defense costs. You and I might laugh the case out of court, but not the lawyers.

The policies had similar language that excludes liability for injury or damage "expected or intended" by the insured. The lawyers hauled over whether the boys expected to hurt any livestock inside the barn.

Tuscola Circuit Judge Patrick Reed Joslyn and appellate Judges John Shephard, Gary McDonald and Janet Neff all arrived at "the only reasonable conclusion . . . both also must have expected that whatever was inside of the barn would be burned."

The courts ruled in favor of the insurance companies.

The losers are the taxpayers who pay for the courts. (Mallak v. Auto-Owners, CA 141596 and 142824 decided in October 1993).

Inez drove her pickup truck to a



TIM RICHARD

coin-operated self-serve car wash in Harrison. Walking to the change machine for coins, she slipped and fell on a patch of ice and was injured.

Her State Farm auto policy says the insurer is liable for bodily injury arising out of "ownership, operation, maintenance or use of a motor vehicle" (italics added).

Clare Circuit Judge Kurt Hansen and appellate Judges John Shephard and Donald Holbrook Jr. agreed the

term "maintenance" was to be liberally construed and that Inez was entitled to no-fault personal injury benefits because she was injured while attempting to wash her vehicle. (Gendron v. State Farm, CA 162060, decided October 1993)

Joe pleaded guilty to a drug delivery charge. For pleading guilty, he got a year in jail, five years on probation and an order to pay restitution of \$20 which the undercover cop spent on Joe's drugs. Get that: The guy pleaded guilty.

So Joe appeals with the argument that "government does not qualify as a victim to whom restitution may be ordered to be paid" under the Crime Victims Rights Act.

Appellate Judges Janet Neff, Gary McDonald and William Murphy upheld Berrien Circuit Judge Casper Cretzwohl's order of restitution, saying he "had broad discretion in imposing appropriate conditions (of probation)

under the particular circumstances of this case." (People v. Thompson, CA 161815, decided October 1993)

Losers: state taxpayers who have to pay the appellate judges and Berrien County taxpayers, whose prosecutor had to research and submit a 35-page brief.

These cases drive home the otherwise humdrum press release of the Professional Insurance Agents of Michigan. "Legal expenses are driving up the cost of auto insurance" and, I would add, homeowners insurance and appellate costs for prosecutors.

Even with reforms (cuts) in the auto insurance law due to take effect in April, I doubt we'll see a dent in the taxpayers' court costs.

Or in our overall taxes.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events. You can reach him from a touchtone phone at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1881.

## Anxious legislators muddle state diploma requirements

**T**his year's MEAP test scores are causing a big stir.

Why? This time around, they count for something.

Starting with the class of 1994, students must achieve specific levels on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test in order to receive a state-endorsed diploma when they leave high school. Up to now, the only specific content that could be validated by a graduation certificate was that a student was docile enough to have stuck it out in school for 12 years.

But beginning this year, employers can distinguish between ordinary (meaningless) diplomas and state-endorsed ones. Originally, to qualify for a state-endorsed diploma, students had to score at least 60 on the math test, at least 300 on one of two passages in the reading test, and at least reach 16 specific objectives on the 11th grade science test.

That seems tough, but fair enough, if one takes into consideration that the law offers kids multiple chances to pass the test and requires their teachers to identify deficiencies and offer additional help.

But our legislative leaders, ever anxious not to offend, have watered down even those minimal standards in a little-noticed law signed by Gov. John Engler in September.

Graduates in 1994, 1995 and 1996 who are unable to meet state requirements on all three test subjects will receive, instead of a state sticker on the diploma, one ribbon for each area of achievement. So if a student falls the MEAP standard in math but passes in reading and science, the graduate gets two ribbons attached to the state medallion sticker. Under the previous rules, the same student would not have received any diploma endorsement from the state.

Of course, our masters in Lansing can't even water down education standards without causing bureaucratic confusion.

Schools now must keep lists of each student's accomplishments in each area tested by MEAP to order the stickers and ribbons from the com-



PHILIP POWER

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pany selected by the state to supply such things.

And after 1997, the basis for the diploma endorsements will not be the MEAP (which has been around since 1970) but an entirely new test now being developed by the state Department of Education. Instead of all multiple-choice questions, the test will involve questions requiring written responses.

So the graduates of 1997 can look forward to showing prospective employers their diplomas, complete with one state endorsement medallion and up to four — count 'em, four — ribbons, one each for math, science reading and writing.

I suppose now the big question being debated in Lansing is how to make the sticker and the ribbons so they can't be counterfeited. But these days, even that counts as progress.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. You can reach him by touchtone phone at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1881.

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 2<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 3<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 4<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 5<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  |
| 6<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 7<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 8<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 9<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm  | 10<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm |
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| 26<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm | 27<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm | 28<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm | 29<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm | 30<br>THE NEW<br>CRISTAL<br>1:30pm-4:00pm |

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