

POINTS OF VIEW

This Sanders melts away after Valentine's Day

The voice over the phone Wednesday was high-pitched, excited. The words came tumbling out, one over the other. "I had to call. My Sanders is closing."

The caller was Bonnie Rattner, normally an only slightly excitable playwright who lives in Franklin Village. She had, she said, taken her niece to the Sanders at Maple and Telegraph in Bloomfield Township that very day. There she was, sitting at a Sanders counter, as she has dozens of times in a lifetime of growing up in metro Detroit, when she heard that Tuesday, the day after Valentine's Day, it would be closing.

"This is unholy," Rattner said. "It was like one of the last places where you can go and sit at a counter with your niece, your kid. I grew up with Sanders. What is left of the human element of our lives?"

Rattner, as a dramatist, might recognize the scenario. It has happened to more than 40 metro-area Sanders as the organization, built on mouth-watering confections — as succumbed to state business practices.

But that was then, insists Jim Brasier, president of Sanders Systems Inc., that now operates 10 corporate stores and oversees two franchise stores in Detroit and its suburbs — and says he's looking to expand.

Brasier says "a rather dramatic increase" in his rent is forcing him to relocate.

However, the story from Bloomfield Plaza shopping strip manager Marie Prinz sounds more like a re-run. She says complaints about Sanders service forced her to renew his lease.

Whatever. The bottom line is that some employees will be out of a job and many customers will be unhappy. The



JUDITH DONER BERNE  
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most senior employees will be re-deployed, others laid off, Brasier hopes temporarily. "The loyalty of our employees is equal to that of our customers," Brasier said.

"The customers are very upset," explains one of those employees, store co-manager Phyllis Borchering, who's been with Sanders for 23 years.

A small survey showed she was correct.

"Oh no," Dorothy Wells kept saying. "Oh no. I came in to get a French bread. My heart is broken."

Wells had already weathered the closing of that Birmingham Sanders. She had forged a new route to include the Bloomfield store as she drove home to Pontiac from her job at Ford Motor in Plymouth.

Pam Durston of Bloomfield Township also used to frequent the down-

town Birmingham Sanders. "I think it's sad."

She counts on sending Sanders hot fudge as gifts to out-of-town relatives and friends. "I will miss having some place that's available. It would be nice if they would go back to Birmingham."

"That's too bad," echoed Arthur Apkarian of Bloomfield Hills. "I remember going to the Sanders on Woodward and Davison. They had a big counter. People would line up behind your stool waiting for a seat."

Apkarian was selecting candy for Valentine's Day — bittersweet chocolate I suspect.

Judith Doner Berne is managing editor of the Eccentric Newspapers. She had her own Sanders experiences at the now-closed downtown Royal Oak shop that she passed each day on her way home from junior high. You can reach her at 901-2563.

Graduates ought to have broad knowledge base

Question: What will be the impact of the new high school proficiency test students have to pass in 1996 in order to graduate? I can't see how one test, after 12 years in school, can be the criteria that determines if my son graduates. Do you believe the proficiency test is good or bad for Michigan education?

Answer: First off, your son will graduate whether or not he passes the Michigan proficiency test (which presently is the MEAP test), providing he accumulates the required high school course credits for the next three years. It is this year's freshman class who may have to pass a to-be-developed proficiency test to receive a diploma in '97.

Those who pass the present proficiency test, the MEAP, receive a State of Michigan endorsed diploma. Those who don't pass the MEAP, but who

met their high school course requirements, receive what is called an unendorsed diploma. That means the adolescent put out little effort in school and was given a "goodbye" and good luck piece of paper.

Indeed, the unendorsed diploma means he/she put in four years in high school and is leaving a warm, social environment without even a grasp of basic ninth grade material. The 10th grade MEAP is really only a reflection of what a "student" should have mastered in the middle school and the ninth grade. And those students who don't pass it in the 10th grade can retake the test (a different version) in the 11th and 12th grades.

This endorsed diploma concept is not new. Years ago some large, major city school districts awarded a high school diploma to those who passed a district-developed minimum com-



DOC DOYLE  
petency test. Others received a Certificate of Attendance who couldn't pass the test but who, at least, "kept a seat warm" for four years.

You ask if I believe a proficiency test is good for education. I do! And I would recommend the test be revised each

year, expanding the subject areas addressed and increasing the test item difficulty. What I am saying is that a state proficiency test should be a reflection of knowledge a senior high school student should have, not just a mastery of ninth grade math and reading.

A graduation proficiency test should go beyond reading, math and basic science. By state law, government is required for graduation and most districts have a local American history requirement for graduation.

My point is that graduation competency test requirements have focused entirely on math, reading and science (see the MEAP for a sample). Should not a graduating senior have at least a conversational knowledge of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, a talking

knowledge of the Civil War, i.e., who and what were Lee, Grant, McClellan, Bull Run, blacks in the Civil War? We may make great bombs with increased math and science knowledge, but decisions are made by governments and history is what one must draw upon to survive.

Aside from the exceptions: the learning disabled, the emotionally impaired, those with an attention deficit; young adults will recognize there is a new game in town and most will rise to the occasion. I have that much confidence in our youth.

I am a believer in the high expectation theory; that is, the level of expectation one sets determines the heights one achieves.

A diploma should stop being a gift for attendance.

Tiger Stadium issue calls up privatization pitfalls

If you're baffled by the Detroit Tiger Stadium funding mess, these thoughts may help.

Pretend you're a mortgage banker. A businessman asks for a loan to buy a \$225,000 house. You ask him how much profit he earns. He says \$5,000 a year. You laugh him out the door.

Next day he's back. You ask if there are any changes. He says he has hired a maid for \$7,000 and is going in the red at the rate of \$2,000 a year.

Understandably, you are disinclined to loan him anything.

Tack three zeroes onto those numbers, and you have a fair approximation of Tiger economics.

A new stadium is estimated at \$225 million to construct. The Tigers' gross revenues (tickets, concessions, etc.) are \$50 million in a good year. Net earnings are \$5 million in a really good year like 1984.

A company earning \$5 million can't possibly handle the debt service on a

\$225-million stadium. Politicians are reluctant to use tax dollars, however, to build a new stadium for rich guys like Tom Monaghan or Mike Ilitch.

Meanwhile, Tiger owners have signed Cecil Fielder to a multiyear contract for \$7 million a year. A profit too minuscule to service debt on a new stadium has turned into red ink.

The foregoing numbers are based on published reports in the Detroit papers, particularly the recent interview with new Mayor Dennis Archer and Ilitch.

We now understand why, when Bo Schembechler was president of the Tigers, he insisted on a fortress style stadium: all parking controlled by the Tigers, all food service, all peanuts. There's no way in the world the Tigers could have a sufficient revenue base unless the club monopolized everything that might draw a nickel. And with Ilitch at the helm, one shudders to think what he would gouge us for parking or a watery beer.



TIM RICHARD  
There's no way in the world the Tigers could have a sufficient revenue base unless the club monopolized everything that might draw a nickel. And with Mike Ilitch at the helm, one shudders to think what he would gouge us for parking or a watery beer.

Let's get this business in perspective. A revenue base of \$50 million is the equivalent of an average Michigan school district with an enrollment of 8,333 spending \$6,000 per pupil. This isn't big business.

Wayne County Exec Ed McNamara envisioned a rejuvenated economy around the stadium, where a community would share in the largesse of big spending by baseball fans. Nice idea but impractical.

The idea of a privately financed stadium is totally incompatible with the idea of a stadium that is part of a local economy. And even if the Schembechler fortress idea were adopted, there's still no guarantee the Detroit Baseball Co. alone could pay for the stadium without a governmental partner.

Let us ponder the contract of Cecil Fielder, a family man who is entitled to charge what the traffic will bear. Yet he's making more than those who invested tens of millions to buy the company.

You and I own no stock in Ilitch's company and have nothing to say about how much they pay Fielder. The dilemma is that the powers that be still are talking about publicly funding a stadium.

Some tentative conclusions suggest themselves:

- If there's no new stadium, the Tigers — a Detroit fixture for more than a century — may move elsewhere.
- No way will we build a stadium without a governmental investment.
- If government capital is required, government ought to have something to say about how much the Cecil Fielders of this game are paid.
- The next time the right-wing ideologues at the Mackinac Center rave how "privatization" is so much more efficient than government, let us shout back two words, "Tom Monaghan," followed by two more, "Mike Ilitch."

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events. You can reach him by Touch-Tone phone at (313) 963-2047, mailbox 1881.

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