

# Somerset North — fun to stroll and shop

You know how when you travel to a new city, you try to get an overview before heading for the places that interest you most. That's the theory behind reading a tourist guide before you go and taking a city tour when you first get there.

We've done the reading by means of numerous preview stories in our local papers. Starting tomorrow Somerset North, the glamorous addition to the Troy mall — in its way a small city — will be ours to experience.

It's worth noting that the 950,000 square-foot extension of the 500,000 square-foot Somerset Collection South is worth a city-style tour before heading for the places that interest you most. Besides there being a lot to buy, there's a lot to see.

As hundreds of workers strive hectically to finish as much of the new addition as possible before tomorrow's official opening, thousands of us who have watched North and its 700-foot Skywalk take shape are excited to finally get inside.

I'm looking forward to it, even though I've had a preview. That's because it was difficult to get that important sense of the overall with construction going on all about. Still, I was most impressed with the placing of all the specialty children's stores — GapKids/Baby Gap; Gymboree; an expanded FAO Schwarz, including the Barbie Store; Store of Knowledge; the Great Train Store; Jordan Marsh; Talbots Kids; Disney Store; and others — on one floor and adjacent to the food court.

Although they are on the top floor of the three-story mall, you can drive to that level of the parking deck and whisk right in. This shows respect for parents, often limited by time and strollers, and sets an example for other shopping centers to emulate.

Also of note is the architecture and design elements include those inspired by the nearby Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills. They include the Mankato



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stone, Cranbrook brick, skylight iron work, sculptures and the Peacock food court, inspired by architect Eliel Saarinen's use of that bird as a motif at Cranbrook.

And the attention to detail of the Henri Bendel store interior leaves you mindful of the handpainted details, frosted glass, wrought iron reliefs and ceiling fluting — and the subtle color changes in its signature stripe pattern as you move within the stores series of boutiques.

I was curious to know if other people are as excited as we in the media

seem to be about the opening. So I asked a few Somerset South shoppers last week if and when they were planning to check out Somerset North.

"I'll be here Friday. I can't wait," said Mario Russo. His big decision is whether to bring his small daughter since all the Disney characters will be on parade. Either way, she sees the first time as more of a viewing than a shopping experience. It'll be fun.

Her mom, Mary Lipunova of Rochester, exhibited more patience. "I'm going to want to give it a month," she said. "Let everybody go through it first. I'll go to see it, but I'll probably end up buying something."

Kathy Abram of Bloomfield Hills will wait a week or so. "I think it will be too crowded." But once there, she will definitely check out the fabled shoe department of Nordstrom. "I'll probably go and buy something — probably shoes."

I plan on going on the 16th. I don't want to miss anything, said Margaret Schubering, a Birmingham resident.

"I'm going to look first, but I'll probably also shop."

Linda December of Bloomfield Hills will wait until the second week. But she is most interested in the restaurants. "I'm going to eat and drink there." With six full-service restaurants, 10 cafes, three cappuccino bars within the entire Somerset complex, she'll not go hungry.

Everyone I talked to had high expectations for the expanded Somerset Collection. And so does Somerset for itself. Developer Nathan Forbes is hoping to establish a retail destination unrivaled between New York and Chicago.

Tomorrow we'll see for ourselves.

*Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing editor of the Eccentric Newspapers. You can give her your first impressions of Somerset North by calling (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1997, for a future column.*

*Please leave your name, your community and phone number.*

## Partisan high court ruling doesn't serve justice well

**H**arry Quinton died in 1989 in Tennessee. But his name lives on in Michigan jurisprudence where his case was decided July 30.

Quinton retired from General Motors' Pontiac Motor Division 22 years ago, in 1974. Like many UAW members, the day after he retired he filed for worker's compensation benefits, saying he had job-related silicosis and emphysema.

Employers and Republicans consider it a racket and call it "double-dipping." Unionists and Democrats say it's fair because work injuries prevent the retiree from fully enjoying the leisure of his twilight years.

I extract Quinton's lengthy story from Justice Charles Levin's lead opinion. Here are the steps.

1. Two years later, in 1976, a state hearing referee required GM to pay him disability benefits. GM didn't appeal.

2. The state Legislature amended the worker's comp law effective March 31, 1982, to require "coordination" of

pension and worker's comp benefits — that is, to halt double-dipping. GM notified Quinton his comp benefits would be reduced accordingly. Quinton disputed the decision.

3. In mid-1982, a referee directed GM to restore Quinton's full weekly benefits, saying the new law "may not be applied retroactively."

4. Later in 1982, the Workers Comp Appeal Board (WCAB) affirmed the referee's decision.

5. Someone went to the state Court of Appeals, which denied leave to appeal.

6. The state Supreme Court held the case in abeyance pending a decision in a case called Franks v. White Pine Copper Division.

7. In 1985 the Supreme Court decided the Franks case, ruling that the 1982 law was intended to apply retroactively, and GM could indeed reduce workers comp benefits after March 31, 1982.

8. The Supreme Court reversed the WCAB decision in Quinton's case,



TIM RICHARD

saying GM could "coordinate" his benefits based on the Franks ruling.

9. In May 1986, a two-member WCAB panel got around to applying the ruling, saying GM must coordinate benefits.

Complicated? The plot is only beginning to thicken.

10. In 1987 the Legislature declared the Supreme Court was full of beans in its Franks decision; the "legislative intention (was) not to coordinate payments . . ." — that is, the 1982 statute was intended to allow double-dipping.

11. Someone challenged the 1987 changes, but the Michigan Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality in a 1990 decision called Romaine vs. GM. But the Michigan court stayed enforcement of its decision because the case was going to the U.S. Supreme Court.

12. In 1992 the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the Michigan court's Romaine decision.

13. The Michigan Supreme Court stayed its stay and directed that the 1987 statute be enforced — no double-dipping.

14. Meanwhile, Quinton died in Tennessee. His lawyer in April 1992 asked GM to repay Quinton's coordinated benefits to his estate. GM declined.

15. A magistrate ordered GM to "repay with interest all past coordinated benefits." GM appealed.

16. In January 1994, the Worker's Compensation Appellate Commission reversed the magistrate.

17. The Court of Appeals denied

Quinton's lawyers leave to appeal, saying the WCAB ruling (step 4 above) was final.

18. On July 30, 1996, the state Supreme Court ruled that "Quinton is entitled to receive benefits improperly coordinated" — three years of double dip are OK.

Detroit lawyer Granner Ries, who walked me through some of this, said Quinton's estate will collect about \$16,000. Ries added the Quinton decision will affect 39 other cases, mostly at GM Saginaw.

Footnote: Four justices wrote three opinions — Levin and the three Democratic nominees — in ruling for Quinton. Two Republican justices dissented, saying benefits should be coordinated. Justice Elizabeth Weaver (R) didn't participate because she was part of the Court of Appeals panel (step 17).

Justice not only is delayed, it is fractured, and it's partisan.

Tim Richard reports on local implications of state and regional events.

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