

POINTS OF VIEW

Info revolution forum signals our place in high-tech race

For years the debate has raged, fierce but hidden, in the upper reaches of Michigan's business community: How come we can't duplicate the high-tech boom that's bringing growth and prosperity to Silicon Valley, Calif., or Route 128 around Boston?

The entrepreneurs — there are plenty in Michigan, and good ones, too — claim the problem is lack of venture capital here to jump-start the new companies. They go on to charge that the local business infrastructure so essential to facilitate start-ups — lawyers, accountants, bankers — is slim and mostly inexperienced.

Nonsense, reply the venture capitalists, arguing the good deals worth tracking in Michigan are few and far between. It makes sense to hunt where the ducks are, they say, and that's mostly in places like California or Seattle.

Of course, the argument is circu-

lar. Good deals attract lots of venture capital, and venture capital attracts lots of good deals.

Recently, however, there are signs this ancient and unhelpful logjam is breaking up. Some straws in the wind:

■ Prosperity and change in the auto industry are feeding countless entrepreneurs who are starting little companies in garages up and down Oakland County's "automation alley."

■ Venture capital firms are sprouting all over. For example, Rick Snyder, a University of Michigan grad who wound up as president and COO of Gateway Computer, has set up shop in Ann Arbor as Avalon Investments with a reputed \$100 million to invest.

■ The June Issue of Inc. magazine will rank the Ann Arbor area fourth in the country in new business growth in 1997.

That's why a symposium being held this weekend in Ann Arbor is so



PHILIP POWER

symptomatic and so interesting. Titled "The Information Revolution: The View from Mid-Stream," the gathering takes place Friday and Saturday on the U-M campus.

The opening speeches Friday afternoon work like a pair of bookends. Dr. Vinton Cerf, the guy who co-invented the Internet, will speak on "The Internet in Our Future." Dr. Douglas Van-Houwelling, who is president and CEO of Internet 2, will talk about

how his organization is designing the next version of the Web that is already revolutionizing our society.

Saturday panels are equally dazzling.

U-M President Lee C. Bollinger, himself a world authority on the First Amendment, will chair a group considering the legal and regulatory challenges of the Information Revolution. Joining him will be Harvard Law School professor Larry Lessig, recently selected the technical "master" in one of the anti-trust cases the government is mounting against Microsoft.

A panel on media and popular culture will be chaired by Tony Ridder, president and CEO of Knight-Ridder News, the company that owns the Detroit Free Press. Also appearing will be Esther Dyson, noted author of "Release 2.0: A Design for Living in the Digital Age."

The group discussing economic activity and entrepreneurial conse-

quences of the information revolution includes John P. McTague, vice president for technical affairs at Ford, and a number of experienced entrepreneurs and heavy venture capitalists.

I've got a vested interest in the success of the symposium; I'm one of the organizers. But the symposium will bring to Michigan for 36 hours the world's greatest concentration of experts in the Information Revolution. It's one more piece of evidence Michigan is gaining ground in the race for the high-tech future.

Admission to the symposium is free and open to the public. More information is available on the World Wide Web at www.st.umich.edu/marshall

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LETTERS

Jaske: For children's sake

I have known Melody Jaske for 13 years and she has been involved in too many church and school activities to mention. But she has focused on children through teaching Sunday School, directing the after-school program at the church through her PTA involvement. She has always had the best interest of the children at heart and strives to help them reach their fullest potential. Her concern and fortitude for all children in the community would greatly enhance the quality of the Farmington Public School district. For children's sake, vote for Melody Jaske on June 8.

Harold Westfall
Farmington

Supporting Webb, Inch

The Farmington community has been well served by two dedicated board of education members who are running for reelection this June, Jack Inch and Cathleen Webb. Having served with distinction over the years, Jack and Cathy will continue their positive impact on education in our community by having the opportunity to serve another term.

Jack's tenure as a board member allows him to bring a healthy perspective to the board's deliberations. Having experienced various periods of downsizing or growth in our district over the years, Jack is the board member who brings the historical perspective to the board's decisions. His insights and commentary hit the mark and provide the impetus for productive decision making. Jack keeps the best interest of our children at the forefront, and he is willing to stand for his convictions as necessary to promote our children's welfare.

Cathy has brought energy, enthusiasm and fresh insights to the board. She has gained the respect of our community by being a good listener, and a motivated, hard-working board mem-

ber. Her careful preparations for board meetings are well recognized as she asks thoughtful, reflective questions and adds appropriate, insightful commentary. Cathy, too, is child oriented; her actions and voting record show her interest in our children.

The strength of a community relies heavily on the reputation and credibility of the school district. We heartily urge our community to continue to move Farmington Public Schools forward into this next century by voting for incumbents Jack Inch and Cathleen Webb on June 8.

John and Barbara Novatis
Farmington Hills

Track record wins for Webb

I would like to personally express my gratitude in Cathy Webb's announcement of running a third term for Farmington Public School Board of Education Trustee.

Cathy Webb has been a wonderful asset to our community, and support of our children's educational growth. Cathy is a "roll up your sleeves" individual. Her keen sense of our community needs in education is evident, formulating new goals, to constantly improving current projects that our school board works on. Completing eight years on the board only adds to growth and awareness for school board.

Cathy's past experience, and successful track record of her accomplishments is proven time and again. These are important credentials when selecting people to represent our school board. I feel, along with many others in our community, Cathy Webb holds all these attributes and more.

Holly Owen
Farmington

Webb: 'Children first'

On Tuesday, June 8, the elections for the Farmington School Board will be held. If

you want someone who has proven to be a winner, re-elect Cathy Webb. Her involvement in the community goes back many years. From being a PTA president to her current position on the school board, Cathy is always working on behalf of our children. I can sum up one of her main attributes in two words: "Children First." When you go to the polls on June 8 vote for Cathy Webb. Keeping Cathy's knowledge of the school system is important in helping the school board achieve its goals.

A vote for Webb is a vote for our children's future.

Fred Nassar
Farmington

TV colors candidates

The TV perception of the presidential nominee determines the success or failure of the party's other candidates.

Debonair JFK was recognized as a PT boat hero. Dour Richard Nixon needed a shave. Actor Ronald Reagan exuded confidence. President Jimmy Carter appeared uncomfortable.

Draft-dodger Clinton popularized immorality. World War II veterans Bush and Dole lost as "family values" became synonymous with right-wing conspiracy.

New leaders must be chosen from freshmen, because yesterday's seniors will not be elected by today's voters. Attractive, qualified people are campaigning at the grass roots level. Some are excellent debaters with talk show experience. Virtually unfunded, their future in politics may be short-lived as term limits force them into a more secure line of work.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Inch committed, concerned

We would like to endorse Jack Inch for reelection to the Farmington school board on June 8.

We have known Jack for many years and have always appreciated his efforts to ensure that our children receive the finest education possible.

Although his own children have long since graduated from the Farmington school system, Jack's commitment and concern for the students of our community remains steadfast.

We are fortunate that he has chosen to again run for the school board. He merits your support when you go to the polls in June.

Marjorie and Fred Sayles
Farmington Hills

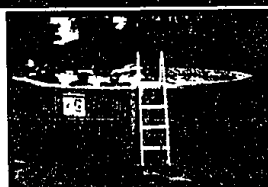
Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity and brevity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a daytime contact telephone number. No anonymous letters will be published.

The week prior to an election, this newspaper will not publish letters that discuss new issues, since last-minute attacks don't allow a chance for rebuttal. Responses to already published issues will be accepted.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; faxed to (248) 477-9722; or e-mailed... with your name, city of residence and phone number to dvarga@oc.homecomm.net

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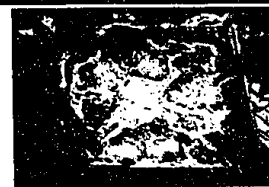
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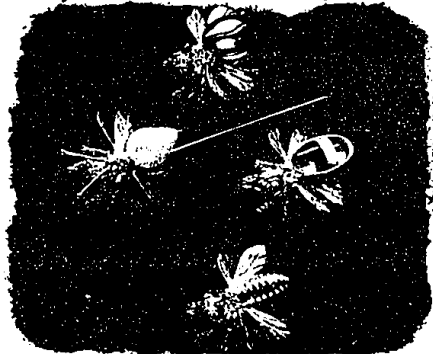
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