

CHAT ROOM



Upcoming arts festival needs support of all

Last week, I got a call from a man named Leo who wanted some information about a story that ran in the paper a few years ago. The story profiled a prolific, talented painter who was named Farmington's Artist in Residence that year. This man was obviously a fan of the artist. But he lamented the fact that the artist was still struggling, still trying to "make it" professionally despite his obvious and abundant talent. How well that hit home with me, having just returned from the glitz of a gallery opening in New York City's SoHo district which is home to dozens and dozens of art galleries. The Louis K. Meisel Gallery on Prince Street is typical of those galleries - huge picture windows, gleaming hardwood floors, wide open spaces and off-white walls offering the perfect backdrop to display works of art. This show featured recent works by two Photorealist painters, my brother, Robert Gniwiew, and Don Juet of San Francisco. The works looked stunning, wine flowed freely, sophisticated gallery hoppers gushed at each canvas. But the cash register wasn't exactly ringing off the desk. While the economy is booming by all accounts, with the stock market reaching record highs, new housing starts up, and consumer spending on a roll, original works of art don't seem to be a part of that commercial band-

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Memory Lane

Councilman recalls a very different Farmington

BY RUTH MOEHLMAN
SPECIAL WRITER

The Grant family's home was in the West Bloomfield portion of the Franklin Knolls subdivision, but it seemed to young Jon Grant that they were living in Farmington Township. The children attended Farmington schools and their mail was delivered to a Farmington address.



Hills Councilman Jon Grant recently shared some oral history as he recalled growing up in the area during the 1950s, '60s and '70s. The Grant family moved to the suburbs in 1952. At that time, Jon's father, Jim Grant, was a salesman at Hudson's. His mother, Judith Grant, ahead of her time career-wise, was a photographic stylist for Ford Motor Co. She worked on the first advertising campaign for the Mustang. Jim Grant eventually had his own business, specializing in baby products. The Grant brothers, Dave, Rob and Jon, were cared for by live-in help. The brothers were three years apart in age. Oldest brother Dave attended the one-room country schoolhouse Fraction District No. 1 on Middlebelt for a short time. By the time Rob and Jon Grant were ready for school, Eagle School was built on the corner of Middlebelt and 14 Mile. Technically in West Bloomfield, it is a Farmington district school. The large subdivision gave the Grant children lots of room to roam. Earl Teeples, who later became Farmington Township supervisor, had a farm that abutted the subdivision on the south side of 14 Mile. Jon Grant recalls that his older brothers often got into mischief on the Teeples property, causing Earl Teeples to chase the children.



President: Jon Grant is president of his own company today. Growing up in the 1950s in Farmington Hills was more rural than today, with no freeways and plenty of farmland.

By 1952, the telephone and gas companies had large properties nearby, bringing utilities to the area.

Different era

When the Grants moved to the suburbs, the freeways weren't constructed yet. Jon Grant recalls the long trips to his grandmother's house in Highland Park. The family gathered there every Sunday.

Along Northwestern Highway between 12 Mile and 14 Mile was much shopping. Gravins was on 13 Mile with much farm produce. Another place sold propane gas for the grill. Near 12 Mile was McInerney's restaurant, which specialized in chicken dinners. There was a small store north of 14 Mile on Orchard Lake that the boys could get

to. There was also a bowling alley on Northwestern Highway.

At 14 Mile and Middlebelt was a drugstore and supermarket, probably a Food Fair. When Jon Grant was 9 or 10, the Grant family moved to a gray house on Farmington Road in Kendallwood Subdivision No. 1. From there, he attended O.E. Dunkel Junior High and then North Farmington High School.

While attending high school, Grant was a co-op student - working part time while going to school to gain hands-on experience. He sold women's shoes at the Hair Shoe Shop at the Tel-Twelve Mall. It was the age of the miniskirts, he recalled.

He commented that in those days if the students had dressed for school the way his children do today, they would have been sent home.

Grant remembers the tree in the middle of the road at Farmington and 13 Mile. They had to drive around it. Twelve Mile and 13 Mile were dirt west of Farmington Road. There was horseback riding at Chrystal Farms on Halsted. Grant and his friends often walked over.

On the corner of 12 Mile and Farmington roads there was a shopping center featuring Food Fair, Arnold Drugs, Demery's Department Store, Gabe Shoes, Ben Franklin and Sanders. On Orchard Lake, there was a little market called Silors between the off and on ramps of 596.

Grant married his high school sweetheart in 1971.

"We were babies," he said. It didn't work out and she left. He became single father to a 6-month-old baby girl. He remembers taking her to day care, with the baby on one hip and the diaper bag on the other and away they went. He worked as an office manager and attended college.

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