

editorial opinion

Drop us a note

Your letters are history

Letter writing is becoming a lost art.

Up until 40 or 50 years ago, a lot of history was recorded through correspondence. The telephone has done its bit to discourage folks from writing. TV and radio have rendered the final blow.

That's too bad. I feel sorry for future historians who will have to settle for raspy sounding tape recordings, with accompanying deletions, for their primary sources. Man has a way of showing the human and personal side of history through his writing.

A FRIEND OF mine, working on his PhD in history, appends a great deal of time shuffling through old newspapers finding out what was on the minds of persons during various periods. His master's thesis was based almost entirely on such letters.

The letters were from just ordinary persons expressing their concern about society. Most of his research revolved around letters from small community publications.

In case you hadn't noticed, letters to the editor in the Farmington Observer & Eccentric are few.

That's too bad for Farmington and those folks who want to keep tabs on how their ancestors felt. But for some reason, many people are afraid, or just too lazy, to sit down and write a letter.

I don't know how many times I've received phone calls from residents protesting one thing or another that has appeared in their publication.

"That doesn't tell the whole story," they protest.

Crackerbarrel DEBATE

By STEVE BARNABY



"All we ever hear is what the politicians have to say," say others. They're right.

But trying to convince these same people to write a letter is a heck of a task. Some will call, protest and then refuse to give even their name. That's ridiculous.

MORE THAN ANYTHING else, we want to hear from you, the reader. Without knowing how you feel, a distorted sense of history is being recorded. Believe it or not, someday a person will stroll into a library and ask to see the Farmington Observer & Eccentric.

If you doubt it, drop in at Wayne State University Library. The Farmington Observer & Eccentric is waiting.

A mistake that early historians

made was bypassing what the general public thought. Emphasis was placed on major figures—generals, prime ministers and kings. Modern historians have taken a different view. They realize the importance of what the people thought and think. The feelings of middle America often have shaped the destiny of this nation.

The Farmington community has a great sense of history. Many persons have worked hard to preserve historical landmarks. But landmarks don't speak. People do.

During this bicentennial year, we will be looking back to see what our ancestors had to say. There is a vast amount of written source material on which to depend.

In another 200 years, will our offspring have the same opportunity? It's up to you.

Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



When reform isn't reform

Suppose you are one of the many citizens who is unhappy with the direction in which government is heading and decide the only way you can possibly effect change is by running for public office yourself.

Suppose, also, that you really don't know a lot about how political parties work because you have never had any experience in getting someone elected to public office and restricts the amount of a contribution that any individual can make for that campaign.

The fact is, the new campaign-reform law makes it more difficult for an ordinary citizen to slip into politics and helps perpetuate those already in office.

YOU SAY YOU don't believe it?

The new campaign reform law restricts the amount of money that can be spent formally by a candidate for public office and restricts the amount of a contribution that any individual can make for that campaign.

The concerned citizen can't even use his own money to completely finance his campaign because the law restricts how much money an individual or a relative can contribute to his own campaign.

Consequently, the only people who can afford to run for public office are those who are involved in a broad-based organization that can solicit limited amounts of money from a large number of people.

An incumbent legislator in Michigan can call upon lobbyists and their friends to fill his coffers very quickly.

ON TOP OF that, the new law requires full financial disclosure.

Now, if you don't have anything, full financial disclosure is not a problem. But a man who has accomplished something in the business world and has demonstrated the ability to get things done is now in a position where he has to bare his soul.

You might say, "Well, that's the price a person must pay to be in politics." But it very possibly might be the price the people will pay in losing affluent and capable candidates.

In addition, there are several people who won't run for public office, feeling that disclosure of their financial resources will make them targets for robbery and kidnapping. If you don't think this is a real concern, why has Jack Nicklaus decided not to play golf in Thailand? He has frankly stated that, because he has been successful in the golf world, he could be the target of a kidnapping or assassination attempt by people who are trying to attain a political end.

WE ALL BELIEVE that good government will be achieved only when good candidates are elected. Most of us also believe that candidates elected by special interest groups will serve those special interests and not the people in general. Limiting contributions and providing full financial disclosure seems to achieve these ends.

The problem is that in order for the reformers to get the bill past a cynical professional legislative body, something had to be put in that aided those already entrenched in office.

Under the guise of flowing banners and marching bands and the liberal use of the word "reform," Michigan has passed a piece of legislation that promotes perpetuation of party hacks in political office.

Women voters deserving of thanks for well done job

The Farmington-West Bloomfield unit of the League of Women Voters has taken advantage of the craze for T-shirts and is now selling its message, "Vote" in blue letters printed on a white background, to be sported by anyone who wears T-shirts and supports the philosophy.

The members have been selling the same message, one way or another, for better than 50 years, but the local league is now selling it via the T-shirt, in a literal sense.

THE LEAGUE is FIRST and foremost a study group, with chapters across the nation studying continuously on local, state and national issues. This can be difficult enough for women who more than likely have homes, children or outside jobs without being diverted from the business at hand with hustling for funds.

Further, members don't take summer vacations. Voters' guides are published and available for the asking, no matter what month an election is called. Study groups continue on an issue until

reports, are complete, no matter what the weather.

All this leads to seeing that whoever wishes is informed and that the citizen exercises his vote.

The league is being honored Sept. 15-18 with a national "League of Women Voters Week" but the local LWV isn't doing that much celebrating.

A few members of the group displayed the new T-shirt to the general membership to get a fall fund-raising project under way. Another group is anxious to solicit more members to move a little faster on some current projects. There is a consensus to be taken on the latest study reports. There are more study groups to be formed.

Three local mayors and the governor turned out proclamations for the occasion. But we didn't see any flags raised here or any big hubaloboo, and we doubt if any of the members sat around this week congratulating one another.

It was business as usual and the message was the same. Vote.

LORAINE MCCLISH

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



Calm down, Mr. Prosecutor

In recent months, Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson has become something of a folk hero around these parts.

He has turned this trick partially by circumstances surrounding his election and partially by flair for spotting targets of opportunity.

Patterson's predecessor, Thomas Plunkett, was criticized for being unresponsive in pursuing the duties of his office. In particular, he was attacked for laxity in enforcement of anti-gambling laws, for excessive plea bargaining in drug cases, and for reluctance to prosecute vigorously in bad-check passing cases. Whether such charges were entirely true or not, they obviously were on the minds of the voters when they elected Patterson in 1972.

Since coming to office, Patterson has gained recognition by his aggressiveness in pursuing areas supposedly neglected by Plunkett, as well as demonstrating a real knack for finding politically attractive issues. His views on what he considers to be widely shared by others in public office, for example, but he has been more successful than most in dramatizing them in the news media.

BUT NOW the time has come to ask if Patterson's frantic antics in the case of the X-rated film in Ferndale suggest that his aggressiveness in enforcing the law has been overwhelmed by his passion for political benefit.

Patterson has ordered numerous raids on the Studio North Theater to confiscate a supposedly pornographic film—"Naked Came The Stranger"—being shown there. Last week, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled that the film has not been proven to be obscene and could be shown. Patterson then went through seven judges before he found a sympathetic eighth who would let him

raid the theater again, which he did over the weekend. At last, U.S. District Judge John Feikens signed an order restraining Patterson from any more raids until a judicial hearing could be held.

The question here is not whether this particular film is obscene nor, indeed, whether the public at large is damaged by obscene materials being shown or sold.

The question is why Patterson has chosen to ignore established legal procedures which are already in place, for determining whether a film is obscene and for preventing its exhibition if it is.

OBVIOUSLY, the majority of voters are against obscenity and will look kindly at any prosecutor trying to stop it. Equally obviously, neighbors of the theater in question do not like their neighborhood being used for pornographic exhibitions, and will look kindly on anybody trying to prevent it.

So the political benefits are evident for an ambitious and aggressive politician like Patterson. But are the political benefits on balance outweighed by an blatant attempt to exploit the issue by plain and simple harassment of the theater owner, with clear disregard for due process of law? I think not.

I have heard several of Mr. Patterson's speeches, and they are good ones, stressing the idea that that government is best which governs least. But by his opportunistic and over-reactive harassment in this case, Patterson is not only violating his own principles but also those of most sensible people.

If, in fact, Patterson is ambitious for higher office, he would be well-advised to moderate his opportunism before he is forever tagged with that image.

From our readers

Reader lauds fire, rescue service

Editor:

I am writing you this letter because it's about time someone reads good things about our Farmington Hills police department and Farmington Hills ambulance service in your paper.

I would like public recognition of this accident that could have been fatal to one young man 19 years old if it wasn't for the cooperation and excellent training of Officer Lynch of the Farmington Hills police, and secondly to the continued knowledge of John Quisenberry, Tim Sullivan and Bob Lovitt of the ambulance service.

On Sept. 6, 1975, at 3 p.m. at the residence of John Gere of Farmington Hills, Dan Kelbert and Mike Fabian were roofing Mr. Gere's two story home.

While checking the straightness of

the roof, Fabian fell off backwards, falling 15 stories to the frozen cement patio on his head and shoulders.

He was found in a pool of blood a few seconds later by Kelbert who called Farmington Hills police for assistance.

Five minutes later, Officer Lynch arrived and immediately checked Fabian's vital signs, saw he was in trouble and proceeded to aid him with a respirator.

Meanwhile, the ambulance service arrived with Quisenberry, Sullivan and Lovitt. According to the attendants, Fabian was in cardiac arrest with a very shallow pulse.

John, Tim and Bob then worked on Mike until they got his vital signs stable enough to transport him to Botford Hospital. About 30 minutes later, they got Mike into the ambulance

and pitched into Botford radio for further assistance and to tell the hospital to get ready for Mike. Farmington Hills police stopped traffic on Grand River and Middle Belt for the ambulance.

The ambulance attendants did not stop there. They have been calling the hospital every day about Mike's progress. Quisenberry called Dan Kelbert's home to say if it wasn't for Officer Lynch's quick action and his assistance in helping Mike breathe, he would not be alive now because it would have been too late by the time the ambulance got there.

Mike's family and friends would appreciate it very much if you would print this story and tell everyone what a grand job the police department and ambulance service do.

DAN KELBERT
Farmington Hills

Oakland awards Tope memorial award

Oakland University will be the disbursing agency for money collected by the Warren Tope Memorial Fund. It was decided last week by the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and the executive committee of Tope's estate.

The memorial fund was established by Donald R. Tope following his son's death July 5 in an accident at the Pontiac Wide Track II race. The SCCA, although not involved in the race, was asked to be the holder of the money until details of its use were established.

"Mrs. Tope and I feel the perpetual emergency fund at Oakland University, where Warren graduated, is an excellent and useful tribute," Tope said.

The university loan fund is only for those students who need immediate financial assistance to continue their education at Oakland University. The loans carry no interest and are repayable when the students are financially able to do so.

All contributions made to the War-

ren Tope Memorial Fund are tax exempt. Contributions already received by SCCA have amounted to more than \$11,000.

Additional contributions can be sent directly to Oakland University, Financial Aid Office, Rochester, 48069. They should be marked to the attention of Mrs. Gladys Rapoport.

Tope was SCCA's 1974 'A' sports racing national champion and 1971 'A' sedan national champion. He began racing in 1960, and later owned his own racing enterprise in Troy.

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

DIVISION OF SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

STEVE BARNABY, Editor
352-5400

HENRY M. HOGAN, JR., Co-Publisher

PHILIP H. POWER, Co-Publisher

JOHN REDDY, Executive Editor

THOMAS REYNOLDS, Retail Advertising Manager

ARTHUR LANGER, Classified Advertising Manager

Member of

MICHIGAN PRESS ASSOCIATION

SUBURBAN NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Your ecology calendar

Ecology-minded persons who wish to save cans, bottles or newspapers for recycling may use these facilities.

To prepare glass, thoroughly wash the containers, remove all metal caps and rings from the glass and separate the glass by color.

To prepare cans, clean only. Paper need not be removed.

Newspapers should be tied in bundles

with heavy string or rope or secured in heavy paper bags.

•PONTIAC—Oakland County Recycling Center, 800 S. Telegraph, 5 a.m.-4 p.m. every Saturday. Groups bringing in more than 800 lbs. of glass will receive \$10 per ton for glass.

•ROCHESTER—Bottles are collected at Jayco Recycling Center 1811 Street, under the bridge, the first and

third Saturdays, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Separate colors into brown, green and white—no plate glass or light bulbs.

•BIRMINGHAM—Daily newspaper pickup with regular trash. Newspapers must be bundled separately.

•LATHROP VILLAGE—At the Public Services Building, 19101 Twelve Mile Road.