Commission Race Features Birmingham Election

Next Monday between 7 o'clock in the morning and 8 o'clock in the evening, Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills voters will be afforded another opportunity to indicate their preference for local commission candidates and on several ballot propositions.

Voting in both cities is expected to be light, extremely so in the Hills, where incumbent commissioners James A. Beresford and C. G. Eden and Constable Homer J. Murphy are assured of re-election in a no-contest race.

In Birmingham, however, four men are seeking one of the two three-year city commission terms. Incumbent Mayor Charles Renfrew is expected to lead the list and re-capture one vacancy. City Plan Board Member Carl F. Ingraham, and newcomers Donald K. Fill an Omar Hansen attempt to outdistance each other for the remaining position.

* * *

TRADITIONALLY, THE ECCENTRIC makes no recommendation on commission candidates, leaving that selection up to the determination of the electorate.

There are no local propositions in the Hills.

On the other hand, there are three ballot propositions in Birmingham which are of the "routine" type. One concerns amendment of the city charter, another the sale of some city property, the third the exchange of city property.

* * *

THE CHARTER AMENDMENT would revise the city employees' retirement program to permit its integration with federal social security benefits. In January, all eligible city employees themselves approved the plan, 96 to 7, in a special election before it could legally be placed up for vote by the general electorate.

Retirement costs now are divided five and eight per cent of city payroll, with employees paying the former, the city the latter. Should Monday's amendment be approved, participation would rise two per cent for both employees and city.

The federal program also calls for social security costs to rise another 2 per cent between now and 1975. So in that year, the participation in the combined local-federal program would be employees, 9 per cent, city 12 per cent.

A "Yes" vote is recommended Monday on this retirement program expansion.

* * *

TO CLEAR UP ANY possible future legal entanglements, voters will be asked to approve sale of three small city-held lots on Hunter blvd. south of Webster, and the exchange of property at the southeast end of Quarton lake (see map in connection with story on Page One Section One for actual locations of land to be swapped).

City officials point out the three lots no longer need be held because they will serve no public use. The property exchange at Quarton lake will permit squaring off of city property between Lakeside and the lake, and acquisition of land on the north side of Quarton dam, just above the present parkway north of W. Maple.

"Yes" votes also are recommended on these two measures.

One more recommendation: whichever candidates you select, whether you vote "Yes" or vote "No", just VOTE!

Local Budgetary and Assessment Procedures

A local citizen, heavily interested in the ownership and development of Birmingham properties, has suggested to us that the period between the assessment made annually, and the city's tax rate, be shortened. Indeed, he would like it to be concurrent.

Chief argument for this move is summed up: "It would seem that there is something seriously missing when a taxpayer cannot determine at the time he is apprised of his assessed valuations on property what his taxes will be.

"This works a terrible hardship on small and large businesses alike, who cannot set up a budget with any degree of accuracy. It also plays hob with the investor in rental properties, particularly commercial properties, who must give long term leases to tenants so that they may amortize over a reasonable period of time the cost of fixture installation and the cost of establishing themselves in the community."

Many other businessmen and property owners from time to time have mentioned this as a possibility. So this week we decided to learn a little more about the situation.

* * *

CONTACT WITH THE CITY HALL disclosed these facts: under state law, every tax assessor uses January 1 annually as the date for setting values on real and personal property. In Birmingham, this assessment is made during January and February, with board of review meetings within the first 10 days of March. This roll now has been completed and is in the hands of city officials.

This means that both the city and the school district know the total assessed valuation of Birmingham properties. Later, when budgets are completed, they are related to the assessed valuations and a rate per thousand established.

Beginning in late April and running into June, the city is engaged in holding budget meetings with various departments of local government. Under city charter, Birmingham's fiscal year starts July 1 annually.

"That's why we complete our annual budget requirements in late spring, so that we can know better what the current year's circumstances may require us to provide for in the next budget," said City Manager Donald C. Egbert this week.

* * *

EGBERT BELIEVES THAT the local budget and tax assessed valuations are closer together than in most communities. To change the time of budget hearings would require that the city charter be amended. Even if it were, says the city manager, the state law and the charter now determine the dates for assessing procedures.

"Our entire tax assessing and collecting bookkeeping equipment is geared to present assessment and budget dates, and it doesn't appear to me that the problem of handling lease and rental properties necessitates a radical change in the city's present methods," concludes Egbert.

As he and others have pointed out, this situation reasonably can be handled by including rates of taxation changes within the rental and lease documents themselves.

★ ★ ★

Once again, as spring issues forth from the cold tomb of winter, one can get great and joyous expectation from looking over seed catalogues. Seriously, few things bring one more pleasure than viewing the growth of early spring flowers, as they thrust themselves up into sunlight and human admiration.

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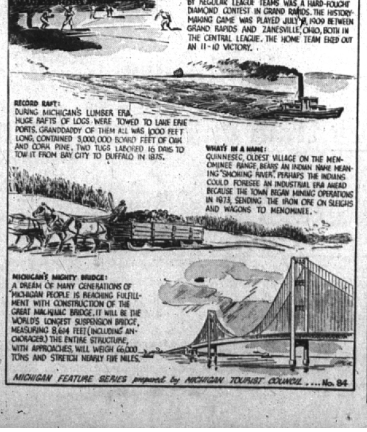

Promise for a Troubled World

NATURE NOW

Naturalist Finds Tropical Splendor

EDITOR'S NOTE: Recently returned from a visit to Puerto Rico, Mrs. Frehse is writing a series of special articles covering "Nature Now" in that area.

By LYDIA KING FREHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

The sun shone warm on the green fields of sugar cane as we followed the road to El Yunque. We were on our way to the fabled Rain Forest which lies an hour's drive southeast of San Juan.

It is a day's outing for the tourist; a mecca of tropical splendor for the visiting naturalist.

Accustomed as we are to the interrupted growth occasioned by the changing seasons of the temperate zone, it is almost impossible to imagine the wild green beauty of a tropical rain forest. Here the virgin growth stems from the combination of continued warmth and abundant rainfall amounting to 200 inches annually.

Mrs. Frehse

* * *

AS WE APPROACHED the mountain, we had a splendid view of the tree called "agrumbo hembra" which covers the lower slopes. It is a spectacular sight when the wind ruffles its enormous leaves showing their silver undersides, giving the effect of a sea of many-flowered white crowns.

As we entered the lower slopes, roadsides were a tangle of wayside plants including wild begonia, coleus, cleome and many other which we tend in northern gardens.

Clear streams ran wild and free, making spots of special beauty like Coco falls, where a slender cascade sheets over sheer rock spraying a lush and leafy frame of palm, cycad and banana.

* * *

WE COULD NOT resist the demands of small children who followed the car calling "frese, fresa". These are the vivid red fruits of a species of flowering raspberry they offered us in bright cone-shaped containers of green leaves.

We left the car to follow Big Tree trail as we entered the recreation area on the middle slopes. Here is such a varied pattern of green-growing as confrounds the botanist from the temperate zone, making him feel like an alien in a world suddenly grown excessive, bizarre and strangely unfamiliar.

However, individual plants soon began to fall into family patterns, here a figwort, there an orchid, a mint, a legume or a saxifrage.

* * *

THE WET PATHS wound through a tangle of vines swinging from trees reaching 75 to 100 feet upward. Only Tarzan was missing, and we longed for his skill to carry us across the dizzy valleys and streams below.

Here the heavily timbered slopes of virgin forest still stand, much as they did when Columbus discovered the island. Among the 300 species which have been identified are many evergreen hardwoods, including representatives of laurel and myrtle families.

In the dim forest trail we experienced an hour of wonder interrupted only by such varying sounds as the raucous call of the near-extinct Puerto Rican parrot, the booming of the big Puerto Rican bull-frog and the oft repeated call of a tree-toad whose cheery "couqui-coqui" followed us all the way back to the highway.

* * *

AT MID-LEVEL your scribe was most impressed with the bewildering array of primitive plants, liverworts, large creeping selaginellas, mosses and ferns which have colonized every available growing space, rejoicing in the moisture and warmth of a summer that never ends.

From the plant-encrusted rocks we lifted a species of tiny polybody (duale) less than an inch in height. A much-branched and beautiful species of climbing fern (trichomanes) covers large areas.

Most surprising were several species of ferns whose woody branches were covered with thorns. Most spectacular were the elegant and graceful tree ferns, of which there are more than 50 varieties, some growing 30 feet tall.

* * *

THESE HAVE PERSISTED, almost unchanged, as remnants from the early carboniferous flora of some 250 million years ago.

Palms, bananas and many varieties of broad-leaf trees grow well into the upper middle level, trunks decorated with vines and creepers and many species of air plants, including orchids and bromeliads, the latter decorated with deep scarlet and yellow blooms.

The highest levels of the forest lead through the dwarf Montane area. Due to high winds and excessive moisture, trees are short and gnarled. Some, only three inches in diameter, are estimated to be two to four thousand years old.

* * *

FROM THE BRITTON tower at the top, one can see San Juan spread out in the foreground and farther in the distance to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands.

On our descent we were content to rest awhile on the terrace of the recreation building. In the foreground the varicolored pattern of the tree tops slanted to the distant sea spread out some thousand feet below; pale blue within the reef, deepening to cobalt as it met the horizon.

Happenings of Long Ago

Bits Of News Gleaned From Old Files Of The Eccentric—The Items That Make Up The Historical Background Of The Birmingham Of Today.

50 YEARS AGO
March 30, 1906

"An impromptu wedding anni versary of the surprise variety was given to E. J. Kinnisten Monday night of this week. Good time, everybody happy."

* * *

"John L. Keyser fished all day lately in upper Long Lake, and at four o'clock p.m. got a bite, a real six pound bass bite but the fish got off—still, like Whitehead would say, it was a gallant day's sport."

* * *

"Miss Mamie Wilson of this place while visiting in Chatham was given a granite shower by Mr. and Mrs. Art Potter. The entertainment of the evening was progressive pedro, the favors being hearts engraved with cupids. A very dainty lunch was served and the bride elect was presented with a tub of granite."

30 YEARS AGO
March 26, 1926

"Within the next two months Birmingham will boast of new quarters for some of its village offices. On April 1, the village will come into possession of a double house which now stands at the southwest corner of Martin and Pierce streets and remodelling of the premises will be begun and probably completed in six weeks."

* * *

"For the purpose of revising the standard of examinations for all scout work in Birmingham, the chairman and members of the Court of Honor committee and the scout commissioners held a meeting last evening."

"As the result of a recently completed deal announced yesterday, Ralph A. Wilson of the Wilson Drug company has purchased the interests of Frank A. Wilkinson in the Birmingham concern and also in the Royal Oak store formerly operating under the name of Wilkinson and Boughner Drug company."

15 YEARS AGO
March 27, 1941

"The most novel school idea to be proposed in several years came at the Board of Education meeting Tuesday night when President Lee E. Joslyn posed this question: 'Why not make Barnum school into a city-wide junior high school, abolishing the three junior highs now in operation?'"

* * *

"Birmingham police are to learn latest police methods from one of their own group who has been selected to attend the National Police academy conducted in Washington by the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

"Wives who encourage their husbands to pursue interesting hobbies rarely have to worry about their pursuing blondes!"

ONE THING OR ANOTHER *By George Wm. Averill*

Should physicians pass upon the fitness of presidential candidates?

If this had been the case in the past, the whole course of our history might have been changed, says Leonard M. Leonard, editor of the Journal of Lifetime Living in the April issue of the magazine.

"Would doctors have okayed George Washington? It seems unlikely, for he was anything but a healthy man. He suffered at various times from smallpox, malaria, pleurisy (possibly tuberculosis) and frequent bouts with infections. Doctors all but gave up hope for him twice. Washington himself long expected an untimely end. But after surviving the trials of the Revolution, he proceeded to serve two vital terms as President.

* * *

"ANDREW JACKSON WOULD certainly have flunked almost any physical test. He had bullets in his arm and chest, plus a history of smallpox, dysentery, malaria, and lung hemmorrhages. None of these prevented him from completing two terms in the Presidency.

"Grover Cleveland underwent a secret operation for cancer shortly after becoming President for the second time. William Howard Taft was so grossly overweight that modern doctors would have labeled him a poor risk."

History seems to have given us the lesson that leadership is more than a matter of physique, declares Leonard. Great men often confute their diagnoses.

"When we are otherwise ready to trust a candidate in high office, it might be simpler if we also trusted him to evaluate his own physical fitness with such expert advice as he would naturally be inclined to seek," concludes Leonard. "Then, to protect the nation from misjudgments and accidents, let us make sure we have the right man to succeed him."

* * *

LEONARD IS SUGGESTING we return to the original purpose of our founding fathers in establishing a vice-presidency . . . to have the nation's second best presidential material supporting the top job.

As politics through the years has distorted this job, it has become a political and geographical vote-getting device.

Would General Motors or the AFL-CIO choose its second-in-command in this fashion?

Why, then, should we continue to keep the world's most important business organization on such a weak organizational plan?

* * *

Teenage boys and girls don't think about each other all the time. But when they do think, it is about each other.

* * *

Even though we voters can't easily get away from politicians and political speeches at election time, at least this year our TV politics may show some improvement.

Last week one Detroit TV station announced it is going to hold classes for candidates who will be "indoctrinated in the techniques, and some legal aspects, of televisio broadcasting."

Maybe this will uncover some real comedians.

* * *

If you have passed 50, it's pretty likely that your get up and go has got up and gone.

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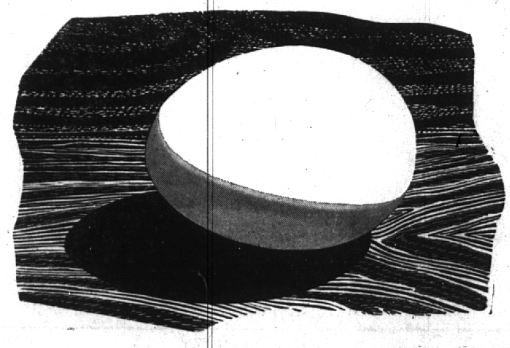

For the price of a dozen eggs you can cook twenty-four meals for a family of four on your electric range. And don't forget, only an electric range is "white-glove" clean. No wonder smart homemakers say:

"You can Live Better...Electrically"

SEE YOUR DEALER OR DETROIT EDISON