

Court Experiment a Good One

Since the Birmingham Municipal Court has required all drivers ticketed for alleged motor vehicle violations to personally appear in court, there has been some wailing and gnashing of teeth, particularly by local residents who are absent from the city during the day.

The municipal judges, John and Edward Emery, undertook this experiment knowing that some people would be inconvenienced, but with the hope that if traffic violators had to do more than just mail in their tickets, they might be more careful in the future.

THERE HAS been much criticism throughout the ages that our system of justice falls down in the lowest courts.

It has been felt that it was a waste of time to defend against a traffic violation in a justice of the peace type court, because you were guilty when you walked in.

This arose in part from the feeling that the justices of the peace relied on the police officers for business and if they went against them, the police would take their business to another court. Hence, the justices' income would be lessened.

People then got into the habit of pleading guilty by mail and paying their fine, all the while building up a distrust for the courts and a dislike for the officers in blue.

THE EXPERIMENT in the Birmingham courts has had some healthy effects.

First of all, the driver is forced into court where he can tell his side of the story, which relieves inner hostility.

Secondly, the police officer is especially careful in writing tickets knowing that he will have to defend himself in court.

Thirdly, the driver finds out that the court isn't going to "throw the book at him" if his driving record is good and the offense is not serious. In some cases the court has dismissed tickets of first offenders on these grounds.

Fourthly, the drivers who visit the court aren't in a hurry to come back.

WHILE THE EXPERIMENT does inconvenience some residents, the overall effect on drivers is well worth to the community the time it takes for both violator and judge.

Our judges are paid a salary so this extra time is their own time, and it seems to us profitable time for Birmingham.

Others, too, apparently agree with us. The American Bar Association has cited the court for its "outstanding practices and procedures."

This type of activity by the court will go a long way in changing the image of a local court.

Property Owners Get Relief

Property owners in many special assessment districts will benefit from some future projects that involve the Birmingham School District.

The board of education has formalized a policy stating that the district will voluntarily participate in special assessments where there is an obvious benefit to the educational needs of the community, provided that the budget makes the necessary funds available.

Under the state law, school districts cannot be assessed. But, the Birmingham board is accepting a share of the responsibility in cases where it is quite clear that there is a benefit to the school district.

Without school participation in the costs of improvement projects, the burden for all but the municipality's share would fall on the property owners in the assessment district.

Thus, the Birmingham school board's

decision to voluntarily participate provides for a more equitable assessment.

THIS ATTITUDE by the schools is an encouraging one. It is this kind of cooperation that makes high-level progress possible in this area.

In Bloomfield Township, roads have been built on a matching funds basis—with the schools paying one-fourth, the township one-fourth and the county one-half. With these contributions coming from the school districts, all but one school in the township are now situated on paved roads.

Certainly, this makes for greater safety for school children.

The schools deserve a vote of confidence from citizens for the schools' willingness to share in a responsibility where it would be so easy to avoid it by claiming a prerogative as prescribed by law.

The benefits, in the long run, will accrue to all of us.

Farrell First Rate Novelist

Literary fashions are about as unaccountable, and sometimes as odd, as fashions in women's clothing. The eclipse and revival of literary reputations is a recurrent phenomenon.

Various important figures in American creative writing—Henry James, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, even Mark Twain—have sunk into relative obscurity, both popular and critical, and then been catapulted to esteem again.

This happens to some extent, also, with contemporary writers. Some are elevated—often with the help of Madison Avenue techniques—to heights that approach adulation; others of equal or greater merit may find themselves shunted aside, scorned or virtually forgotten.

A STRIKING example of a writer falling out of fashion is provided by James T. Farrell. Though Farrell has never been a popular figure as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner were, in their different ways, he has made a monumental contribution to 20th century American literature.

His body of work—beginning with the somewhat shocking yet also deeply perceptive "Studs Lonigan" trilogy, and continuing to the very present—may come to occupy a place at least as great as the work of Hemingway and Faulkner in the literature of our time, though perhaps for different reasons.

THE CRITICS keep finding, to their surprise, that Farrell still writes with passion and insight three decades after his first appearance as a novelist.

He goes over much the same ground as of yore in his latest novel, "The Silence of History" but what he reveals, in painstaking though rarely brilliant fashion, is taking to the bone of human experience.

That is something a lot of flashier writers never approach. Farrell has proved again that he is a novelist of the first rank.

From The Eccentric's Point of View . . .

The federal Constitution guarantees no one a job. It does guarantee equal opportunity to all citizens. This includes equal opportunity to seek, obtain and hold a job without discrimination because of race, creed or color. There are other discriminations not subject to constitutional restriction. An employer may discriminate between applicants for employment because one is better qualified to fill the job than the other. Unless such decision is left to the employer his rights likewise might be abridged. Regardless of his race, creed or color, a man must compete for his job. The Negro rightly complains that the cards are stacked against him in such competition, but he is not the only one who feels that way. Many unemployable whites believe that, in one way or another, they are the victims of discrimination. The half million American Indians on reservations are disheartened over lack of opportunity for educational and economic advancement. Along our southern border many citizens of Mexican extraction are sensitive, and have a right to be, about their underdog role. None of this is intended to minimize the Negro's problem. It is said by way of perspective. The fight is not alone against the denial of equal rights to Negroes. The fitting goal for Americans is that no one shall for any reason be forced into second class citizenship.

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Fun for Everyone



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

End Leaf-Burning, Clear the Air

To the Editor: We noted with interest an article in Mark Baltzer's column in the Detroit Free Press. He quoted the Detroit health commissioner, Dr. C. P. Anderson, concerning the fall mania for leaf burning. Dr. Anderson is against burning leaves because they add to the problem of air pollution. Last week there was a report of an auto accident caused by the smoke from burning leaves.

Now is the time for The Eccentric to stir up some interest and action in the community to cut down the smoke from burning leaves. The pride and respect we have for our city and surrounding subdivisions will be much higher. We'll be happier and healthier with the lack of leaf smoke.

MRS. ROBERT GRINDLEY
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STRICTLY FRESH

Never have so many people lived so well so far behind before.

A good turn is something that will get the blankets back on your side of the bed.



The modern world is best summed up by the man who drives a mortgaged car over a bond-financed highway with gas bought on a credit card.

One hundred per cent of all accidents are caused by people.

Yesteryear Happenings

30 YEARS AGO
Oct. 31, 1933

The Beau Monde Fashion Shop at 412 Woodward avenue Detroit wants the ladies of Birmingham and vicinity to call at their store when you are in Detroit and see the latest and most fashionable styles of corsets. They have expected the ladies engaged whose business it is to measure and fit their patrons. The Berely Corset is so well known throughout the United States and Europe that their name alone signifies the best in corsets.

Those seats around and about Babcock Memorial Library are the subject of discussion and the Board will soon be petitioned to remove them. We think it would be a great mistake to do so. During the past summer we never saw a public utility so thoroughly enjoyed as those very seats. They made a very social gathering place for our best people who certainly did enjoy the convenience.

15 YEARS AGO
Oct. 28, 1948

If current residential building continues at the same pace for the next three or four years, the City of Birmingham will reach a population of 20,000 by 1955. This prediction was made by City Manager Donald C. Egbert, who asked city commissioners to keep this in mind while planning revision and extension of city services. Egbert figures that Birmingham's present population is close to 14,500.

Governor Sigler will arrive in Birmingham this Saturday morning in his campaign for re-election as the state's chief executive. According to Dr. John P. Wood, 1181 Lyonsburg, member of the Republican State Central Committee, the Governor will arrive in Birmingham at 11 a.m. to speak to the public. Pierce street, between Maple and Martin, will be roped off for the Governor's talk, Wood stated. The Governor will be introduced to his Birmingham audience by Mayor Milton P. Mallender. Sigler will leave for Devon Gables for luncheon which is open to the public.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

A good and conscientious husband comes forward with a new plan to pass his money on to his wife and children when he dies.

"I have life insurance with several companies," he says, "and when I pass on, the money will be frozen and left with the companies. However, Mama can write to any or all of the companies and request that they start sending her a check each month for up to \$50 a month.

In addition, should she desire, she may write any or all of the companies and request an additional check each year of up to \$600 a year.

"IT IS understood between the insurance companies and me (not Mama and me) that if anything is left when Mama passes away the balance will be divided among our four children.

vided among our three surviving children.

"This plan takes Mama off the spot. What I leave behind is for Mama and me. She has enough to live as she sees fit. But if someone comes to Mama asking her to refinance their mortgage, or loan them a couple of thousand, Mama is off the spot because she can explain she just can't get that kind of money.

"MANY MAMAS have had a lot of cash dumped in their laps and have been talked out of a comfortable living by a fast-talking friend or relative . . .

And many Papas have been talked out of fortunes by slow-talking dolls over a cocktail.

This husband's plan, which in most quarters would be regarded as a fine and thoughtful one, points up well the four ways good husbands innocently make second-class citizens out of their widows . . .

1. Asking ownership of the money that has been made during

the marriage, and assuming they have the authority to dispose of it according to their personal desires.

2. Exercising a conceit—which is quite a profound one—that THEY know what is best for their widows after they are six feet down in the cemetery.

3. Failing to trust their widows to do right by the children. Most husbands let their conceit show, again, when they set up their wills so that THEY are leaving money to their children.

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

We must restore a little dishonesty in advertising. We, the general public, used to be fooled. But with the Federal Trade Commission's crackdown on truth in advertising all the sport of buying an advertised product is gone.

Take those new stainless steel razor blades. I saw an ad showing 15 barbers standing in a row with the caption underneath saying, "We all shaved with one stainless steel blade."

I knew this couldn't be so. It was sure it was impossible to get more than three or four legitimate shaves from a blade.

I knew the barbers were really actors posing, who if they had used the same blade, were clean shaven before they started, and all cut up when they finished.

BEING A SPORTING MAN I bought a couple of the new blades and started shaving. I got through 14 days without a hitch when the blade was appropriated by my spouse redesign a pair of legs.

Being a skeptic I still wasn't convinced. I must have gotten an exceptional blade.

Some thing happened to me with toothpaste. I knew that it was an advertising stunt to show that a group of kids using one brand had 21 per cent fewer cavities.

I tried that brand and haven't had a cavity in a year. Of course, I'm not convinced. If I haven't had a cavity for a year how can I prove I've had 21 per cent fewer cavities?

I KEEP WAITING to be fooled. It's like the man upstairs who only drops one shoe and you wait for hours for him to drop the other one.

For the first time in my life I feel really clean.

I use two dabs of that hair tonic, and while the gala aren't all over me, I'm accepted in places I never used to be.

I can rely on prices in newspaper ads and not be afraid the item isn't stocked by a store.

It's really not fair to us cynics.

Let's go back to the time of "caveat emptor" or buyer beware. Let's put a little sport in shopping.

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

A number of people agree with me that a drag strip is not the answer to the problem of young people speeding and racing on area roads.

Said one policeman: "Giving the kids a drag strip is not the total solution. When they get out and race, it builds up their competitiveness. This certainly doesn't keep them off the highways."

A father called to say: "Many youngsters won't spend \$4 to drag; they'll just go out on U.S. 10 (Hunter) for free."

I PARTICULARLY appreciated this comment from a local grocer who, as he spoke, had his eyes on a young mother trying to keep her two children from dashing through the aisles:

"The total answer is in the parents teaching their children to accept responsibility in the first place, to instill in them the sense of responsibility to themselves and to society."

In one column on this subject, I wrote that the only effective method parents could take would be to deprive their youngsters of the privilege to drive when they disobey the law.

Children must be given to understand, I said, in no uncertain terms that racing and speeding simply are not to be condoned. The devil with trying to get them to understand why—just let them know that these offenses will not be tolerated!

"Those are my exact sentiments," said a Birmingham police officer.

WHO SHOULD provide the civic leadership needed to make driving safer and to reduce accidents?

Women, says Byron J. Nichols, general manager of the Dodge Division of Chrysler Corp.

Believing that women have always been the proper guardians of our safety—inside and outside the home—Nichols challenges the fairer sex to "accept the leadership that will improve the highway and byway safety in your own community."

He says women have "greater ambition and have had more time to devote to solving some of the problems of society before they occur, or at least before they become."

Women, he insists, should take the initiative in campaigns to teach people how to drive.

"Let's get rid of the superstitions and deal with facts," he declares. "Instead of making jokes about women drivers, let's point out that they are involved in less than half as many fatal accidents as men drivers."

ONE THING we know, more and more women are driving our cars.

All we have to do is stand on the corner of Hunter and Maple and count the number of women behind the steering wheels as the autos zoom by.

Maybe they can teach us men something. You suppose?

Hoffa wants all truckers under a nationwide contract but promises no nationwide strike. "Just put your head in my mouth," said the lion.

Madam Nhu's remarks have been in such bad taste that even those puns about What's Nhu in the news, and so on, don't taste very good any more.

The air is like wine in the fall—and before long the wine is chilled.

Goldwater calls Kennedy a "would-be king." The Arizona senator is hoping he'll be dealt the ace.