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# The Birmingham Eccentric

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN,

Thursday, February 21, 1963

EDITORIAL  
SECTION B

## Look Beneath the Surface

On the surface, the Birmingham school administration's plan for revising boundaries for the elementary and secondary schools appears to be out of reason in respect to the Harlan area.

But, it must be remembered that surface appearances are sometimes deceiving.

First, let's look at the administration's plan:

Students in the Harlan attendance area will attend the new junior high school on the Valley Woods site beginning with the fall semester. For the 9th through 12th grades, they then will move on to Groves.

Harlan area youngsters now attending Derby Junior High will be transferred to the new junior high in the fall. But those now attending Seaholm will be allowed to finish at Seaholm.

ON THE surface, it appears ridiculous that students from the Harlan area should travel all the way to the Valley Woods and Groves sites.

But let's look beneath the surface. Let's view the problems.

First is that of the shape of the Birmingham School District. As evolved through annexation over the years, the district now looks much like a dachshund dog (irregular in shape, see map below).

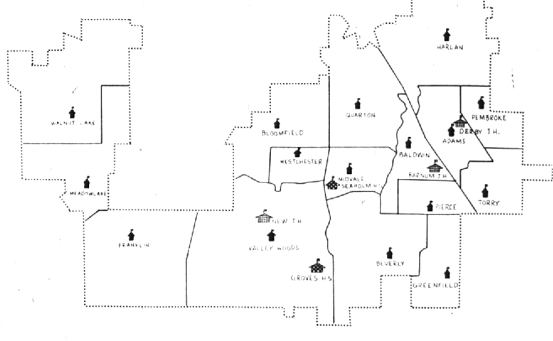
To get school enrollments derived from contiguous areas is next to impossible because of the peculiar shape of the district—with such an obvious land area gap between the head and the tail of the dog.

ADD TO this fact that when Seaholm High was built back in 1951 it was put in the center of the district. When the need arose later to build another high school, the real problem came into focus: If it were put in the north, south, east or west, the district would be lopsided. It was placed in the south-central portion of the district.

The third problem is that the high school population is not evenly distributed throughout the district. Rather, there are pockets of more students in some areas and a dearth of students in other areas.

However, projected enrollment figures indicate that the future growth in the district will fill up the low spots. Present planning, then, must take this factor into consideration.

WITH THESE problems in mind, the school administration had to decide where



## From The Eccentric's Point of View...

Recently the U.S. Congress raised the Federal debt limit to a ceiling of \$300 billions—the ninth raise in eight years. It now costs more than 10 billions annually to pay the interest alone on this staggering debt. All this is being done by the people you elect and send to Washington, D.C. Have you ever written your senator or congressman or president that you don't like having your pocket-books increasingly raided?

A professor says there is an "information explosion" in the world. But our neighbor still appears singularly ill-informed on the rights and wrongs of politics.

Perhaps one of this century's least important roles is that of being a prince, connected with some

everyone should go to school. It has devised a plan that pretty well gets students to the schools nearest them—except in the Harlan case.

The theory is that these students must be transported by bus, anyway; so why not bus them across the district and let the students near Seaholm walk.

Because the Harlan area youngsters live outside the city limits, the school district will save about \$12,000 in costs since the state will pay two-thirds of the bill.

Until another new junior high school is constructed, school officials wish they could work out a compromise to send the Harlan students to Derby—but it appears that there are just too many students living near Derby to make this possible.

SO, ALL things considered, we believe the administration's plan is the best, even though it may be unpalatable to some people.

We sympathize with the parents of the Harlan area children, but we ask their patience and indulgence until something better can be worked out.

We advise them to look again at the surface, and then to probe under the surface to seek a better understanding and appreciation of the total situation.

## The Thorson Story

Some criticism has been directed at The Birmingham Eccentric for its handling of the Robert Thorson story. We have been accused of being too soft, of glamorizing the case.

Mr. Thorson has been ACCUSED of killing his mother-in-law. Some people apparently would have us take the view that he is guilty.

This will not do. It is not for us to indict him or to declare him guilty. His innocence or guilt is for the courts to decide.

MR. THORSON is a resident of our community. We believe that as the hometown newspaper we should report news concerning him with human compassion and sympathetic understanding.

Mr. Thorson has not been tried yet, let alone judged. And in our society, in our democratic way of handling these things, he is innocent until proven guilty.

We at The Eccentric intend to keep it that way.

## Proud Heritage



## PEOPLE'S COLUMN B'ham Resident Adds Note to City's History

To the Editor:  
I have been reading with intense interest your article on the "History of the Birmingham Fire Department" and would like to add a little information which is not in it.

I have lived in Birmingham for the past 53 years, having moved here from New York, and directly from New Jersey, in 1910.

At that time there was no fire department in the town, not even volunteer. In 1911 the old National Hotel was afire, the bell rang and anyone and everyone came running from all directions.

NO ONE KNEW the first thing about fire fighting. Consequently, the roof and most of the second story was destroyed.

My father, Mr. John A. Wendorph, having been a volunteer fireman in New Jersey, organized the first volunteer fire department on Feb. 3, and William Olsen was the first chief.

From then on your article was most authentic. I even remember that every July Fourth we had a real celebration with a parade, games and such, ending with a test of water pressure between

## Yesteryear Happenings

From the Files of The Eccentric  
50 YEARS AGO  
Feb. 21, 1913

On Friday evening, February 28, the senior class of the high school will treat its friends to an evening of fun, when it will present the play, "The Elopement of Ellen" at the Family Theatre. The play is written about the elopement of Mrs. Molly Ford's maid Ellen. This maid is replaced by Miss June Haverhill, a Wesleyan graduate, who wishes to get practical experience to use in a paper on economics.

In Mexico City, Francisco I. Madero, his family and his cabinet ministers are prisoners in the national palace. Ben Victoriano Huerta is provisional president of the republic. Gen. Felix Diaz, a conqueror after ten days of civil war, is commander-in-chief of all the forces, and the revolution ended when the federal army declared for Diaz tonight.

On the evening of Lincoln's birthday, a carefully planned surprise was perpetrated upon Rev. and Mrs. W. M. Robb by the members of the Southfield Conventer congregation, who gathered en masse and invaded the premises. At a late hour the self-invited guests departed.

## Once Over Lightly

by IRMA N. DAVIS

If you're really desperately seeking a means to separate your teen-ager from the telephone, there is a way.

A long way. It has just come to our attention that there are nine places in the world where you simply cannot be called by phone. If your passports are in order, just head for the Aden Protectorate, Bhutan, Yemen, Maldiv Islands, Sikkim or the islands of Pitcairn, Nauru, Tokelau, and Gilbert and Ellice. (The last two are considered geographically as one place.)

ALL THIS delicious information resulted from a study made by the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and is based on statistics at the close of 1961.

So, if you're not in a bell-ringing mood, better hurry. The world is shrinking, you know, and there may be only seven or eight — or even fewer — places left unwired by now.

Attached to the AT&T booklet was a release from the Detroit main office of the Michigan Bell Telephone Co.

INTRIGUED, I CALLED Don Gillard, the company's general information manager, and he informed me he would switch me to a public relations assistant, Rita Walby.

"If you get cut off," he said, "she'll call you right back."

The thought of a cut-off at the source, so to speak, seemed pretty hilarious to me, but Miss Walby explained that it was all a matter of "depressing a button in for just so long."

Being a great button-pusher myself, I switched the subject and discovered there are lesser international havens where teen-agers can get a telephone—with the expenditure of some effort.

## Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

ACROSS MY DESK  
Many things cross our desks, some of unusual interest. The following two items tickled my warped sense of humor:

The first is a true story about a man who failed in business in '31.  
He was defeated for the state legislature in '32.  
He failed in business again in '33.  
He was finally elected to the legislature in '34.  
His sweetheart died in '35.  
He had a nervous breakdown in '36.  
He was defeated for the speakership in the state house in '38.  
He was defeated for presidential elector in '40.

HE WAS defeated for Congress in '43.  
He was finally elected to Congress in '46.  
But he was defeated for re-election in '48.  
He was defeated for the Senate in '55.  
He was defeated for the vice presidential nomination in '56.  
He was defeated again for the Senate in '58.  
And he was elected the 16th President of the United States in 1860. He was, of course, Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday was celebrated last week.

THE SECOND ITEM concerns economics. In considering the current and future economic situation, it should be noted that sales and income figures show an easing up of the rate at which business is easing up, which may be taken as proof that there is a slow but noticeable slowing down of the slowdown. In this regard, it should be noted that the slowing up of the slowdown is not as good as an upturn in the downturn of the downcurve, but a good deal better than either a speedup of the slowdown or a deepening of the downcurve, and it does suggest an early adjustment of the readjustment.

AS TO unemployment in the area, there is a definite decrease in the rate of increase, which clearly shows that there is a letting up of the letdown. Of course, if the slowdown would speed up, the decrease in the rate of increase of unemployment would turn into an increase in the rate of decrease of unemployment; in other words, the acceleration would decelerate.

The indications suggest a leveling off, referred to in economic circles as "bottoming out." This should be followed by a pickup of the slowdown and finally a leveling off of the peaking point.

It is rather hard to tell before the slowdown is completed whether this particular pickup is going to be slower than the slowdown. At any rate, the climate seems right for a pickup this coming spring, especially if you have a bright colorable convertible.

EDITORIAL NOTE: Does this mean to buy or sell?

## By KEN WEAVER City Beat

Two big questions remain after last Thursday's brainstorming session between the city commission and representatives from the boards of nine civic-governmental groups.

1) What should be done first in implementation of the Central Business District Plan?  
2) How could the plan be financed?  
The Birmingham City Commission had called the meeting with the idea in mind of establishing priorities in respect to various stages of the plan.

THERE WAS much soul-searching at this meeting. There were many good and lofty thoughts expressed. There was agreement that the business district should be improved to make it consistent with the high residential character of the community.

There was unanimity of thought that parking and traffic relief (via a peripheral route) are the most immediate needs.

There was a strong feeling that the expense of development should be borne by the community at large rather than just by the merchants.

But there was little said in the way of specifics and practically. When all was said and done, you had to view it as a worthwhile session from the standpoint of exchange of thoughts—but hardly productive from the standpoint of any action that might be taken soon (other than that which has already been started).

COMMISSIONER Charles Renfrew hit the nail on the head when he asked whether any thought had been given to financing the development.

Apparently none had. Nobody had any suggestions to make, other than to appoint a committee to study this aspect of the problem. Yet, financing is a major factor that must be considered before any decision is made.

Out of the meeting came agreement that another session should be held, perhaps in 30 or 60 days. Perhaps this first one was a good foreunner and perhaps the next one will be more fruitful from the standpoint of positive action. Let's hope so, anyway.

ONE SIDELIGHT to last week's event was the attendance of Robert Thorson as a member of the board of the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

It was his first week back home after his stay in jail following his arrest in the slaying of his mother-in-law. Thorson must have felt good when the many people came back to his seat with smiles on their faces and hands outstretched for a hearty handshake.

After he was introduced as a member of the Jaycee board, I checked occasionally to see whether he was a target of morbid curiosity.

I'm happy to say that the people in the audience were intent on what the speakers were saying and that I saw no one gazing at Thorson.

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