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# The Birmingham Eccentric

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

Thursday, May 23, 1963

EDITORIAL  
SECTION B

## We're 85 Years Old

Eighty-five years ago this month, George H. Mitchell and Almeron Whitehead published the first issue of a "wide awake home paper."

Mitchell, besides being a founder of the paper, worked for a local druggist, while Whitehead was employed in a grocery store. The first Eccentric was written and printed in Whitehead's bedroom.

## Birmingham Week?

Perhaps it should be called Birmingham Week.

That appears to be a more appropriate designation for the local Michigan Week program. Certainly, Birmingham has more of an action-packed observance planned than most communities in the state.

For the last few years, Birmingham has gone all out in its observance of the special week. The participation, the effort put forth demonstrates a high degree of community spirit.

GENERAL CHAIRMAN Robert L. Kilpatrick and his committeemen deserve public recognition for the thoroughness and the excellence with which they have planned this year's activities. They have spent many long hours in preparation of the event.



R. L. KILPATRICK

As district manager for Michigan Bell Telephone Co., Kilpatrick is a busy executive. The fact that he has taken time to help plan the busy Michigan Week schedule testifies to the interest he and his company have in our community.

The same kind of dedication is exemplified by the volunteers working with him. Of course, no successful Michigan Week celebration could take place without the assistance and cooperation of municipal officials.

Birmingham officials have worked diligently along with the Michigan Week committee to plan the municipal participation.

YES, WE have a successful Michigan Week in our city because of the hard work, the dedication, the time and interest that all of these people put into the event.

They make it Birmingham Week as well as Michigan Week.

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

A GOP needer calls Averell Harriman a "fam-ous failure." The needer didn't know it, but this puts Harriman in some of history's most distinguished company.

Uncle Sam will pay \$9.118 because low-flying Navy jets scared 300 mink to death. That's reasonable enough, considering the price of mink coats.

Acheson says De Gaulle can't expect U.S. protection for a Europe free of U.S. influence. What's really needed is U.S. protection against De Gaulle.

Astronaut Schirra says women are not yet capable of going into space. If he keeps talking like that, he may have to go into space for self-protection.

Manager Ralph Houk thinks the Yankees will win the American League pennant again. This is not to be confused with original thinking.

Senator Humphrey says we're over-emphasizing Cuba and ignoring other Latin American areas. The Russians won't let us do anything else.

A lot of people start diets to reduce poundage but fail to stick with them. This is known as wishful thinking.

The San Jose declaration pledged to stop Castro subversion with force if necessary. Improved standards of living would be a more effective weapon.

It was not Birmingham's only paper at the time. It had to compete with the Birmingham Post.

THE FIRST ISSUE was made up of four 8 by 10 inch pages. To be distinctive from the Post, they named the new paper after a secret club, which they and seven other bachelors had formed, called "The Eccentric Club."

We are not sure of its early circulation but it sold for 2c. Whitehead and Mitchell published the paper until 1919 when it was sold to Frank E. Van Black of Highland Park. It had grown to 2,141 issues each week at that time.

IN FEBRUARY OF 1920 George R. Averill ventured out to Birmingham and took over publication.

He was joined by his brother Paul Neal Averill in the latter part of the 1920's and under this team the paper took form and saw its greatest growth.

Under GRA's tenure the paper received national recognition.

In September of 1961 GRA decided to retire and sold his interests to his brother Paul and Henry M. Hogan, Jr. The paper continued in the tradition of trying to offer this community the finest newspaper possible.

IN THE YEAR since our last birthday we have seen changes in the Eccentric. New sections and features were added. The make up was changed to make the paper more readable, but the traditions of quality and integrity, we hope, have remained.

In this last year we have been recognized as the top weekly in the state by the Michigan Press Association, as well as receiving seven other state awards.

We also were awarded the number three position in the nation by the National Editorial Association, and have been recognized by several state organizations for our contributions to our community and the state.

OUR READERS have apparently liked the changes we have made because we have gained many new friends this past year.

We sincerely hope that we can continue to make strides in this next year to give our area the best weekly newspaper in the nation.

Next week to give you a better opportunity to see us in action, we will feature a pictorial page on how we are put together each week.

We are happy that you are able to be with us to celebrate our birthday and hope you can join with us in fifteen years for our hundredth anniversary.

A federal judge absolves General Motors of charges of restraint of trade. And about this time of year there's little restraint on trade-ins, either.

Syria, Iraq and Egypt plan plebiscites on federal union. That must sound good to the people. Thus far, they've heard only military couping.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" wins the New York Drama Critics Circle award as best play of the season. It's a good play, all right, but it never does get around to answering the question.

The head of the President's advisory committee asks more foreign aid cuts. Who'd have thought a Clay knife could be so sharp?

We'd be happier about Khrushchev's admission that he can't hang on forever if we knew less about some of the fellows who might take over.

The Soviet army newspaper Red Star sees a "Caribbean NATO" in the making. Maybe. And it might be called CARIBOU! Anything to give Castro a scare.

Things are tough in the king business these days. For example, King Saud's plane doesn't have solid gold door handles; they're merely jewel-encrusted.

Werner von Braun is talking about a "Martian electric space ship." Sounds like Tom Swift all over again.

### PEOPLE'S COLUMN

## 'Give Heed to Citizens Wanting Suburban Life'

To the Editor:

In view of the fact that I have been a resident of and a taxpayer in Birmingham for over 40 years, I naturally have followed closely the growth of Birmingham and its city government during that time.

Let me state at the outset that neither I nor any member of my family own, or have owned any business property in Birmingham. My residential property is situated on a business location by two publicly dedicated parks. These facts are given so it will be clear that what follows is free from self-interest and is expressed out of my concern for the citizens of Birmingham rather than the business community, which the city commission seems overly anxious to please.

COMMISSIONERS have paid scant attention to the protests of nearby residents in the action on converting into a parking lot the blocks south of Shain Park.

They have disregarded the suggestion that adding a floor to present lots would provide much more parking space at a lower cost than by condemning the whole block south of Station Park for public parking.

Public parking for whom? For the benefit of out-of-town owners of local business property?

I SIGNED recently a petition protesting the commission's intention south of Shain Park. Perhaps you might be interested in some historical data on what has happened to a commission which chooses to fly in the face of citizenry protests.

Some years ago, Woodward was a lovely tree-lined avenue. But the present commission wanted a "Wider Woodward." So the commission chopped down acres of huge, beautiful elms, widespread Woodward a few feet and was promptly kicked out of office at the next election.

MORE RECENTLY, the commission—at the behest of the business community—began taking steps to convert Shain Park itself into a parking lot. An election intervened—and the commissioners who had favored the idea were voted out of office and a new commission promptly and efficiently gave Shain Park its present designation as such.

This election marked the entrance of Mr. beloved "Twink" WILSON into her

outstanding years of service to the citizens of Birmingham. At that election she had been an "A-ginner."

IF YOU FEEL that you are serving the community by serving the business interests, there is a shining example of what can really be.

In Detroit, the senior executives of the leading corporations all actively held the leading community activities such as United Foundation and the various medical building investment raising drives.

Here in Birmingham, they are conspicuously absent from such community activities—and I can well understand the resentment of so many citizens of the commission's persistent support of a so-called business community.

SO I CLOSE with a plea that they stop catering to outsiders who clutter up our streets with jologies and give heed to the citizens who moved out here to enjoy suburban life without the dubious trappings of a commission-created "shopping monstrosity."

W. A. P. JOHN  
566 Tooting Lane  
Birmingham

## Pembroke-Derby Safety Argument Draws Criticism

To the Editor:

At the May 6 Birmingham City Commission meeting, a rather long discussion was held regarding construction of sidewalks on Derby and Pembroke. As one of the residents of Derby opposing the sidewalks, I suppose we should be grateful for having had the opportunity of being heard before the commissioners.

I am aware that the commission has the power to order in those sidewalks without such a public hearing, as was pointed out by the mayor.

However, if it became apparent that this hearing was only a formality with little regard given to some of the significant factors

brought out in opposition to the sidewalks, it appears to me that the decisions were merely well formulated before the hearing was held.

IT IS DISTURBING to me, and others, to realize that after 95 per cent or more of the property owners affected passed this ac-

count, little or no regard for this war "Widers" and the sidewalks were ordered in based on the unfounded whims of another body of people, many of whom will not benefit in any way.

Certainly, the only significant factors given to justify these sidewalks were (1) safety of children and (2) an alleged policy of the City to have sidewalks on all streets in Birmingham.

WITH REGARD to safety, I believe I am as safety conscious as anyone, and perhaps more so than many, particularly with respect to children. Sidewalks are no solution to the "hazzard" which supposedly exists, and those who are to benefit from them (teen-ager junior high students) ought to be capable of exercising safety habits that they should have learned by this time.

It has been demonstrated in many places that this apparatus is not the case; not because safety wasn't taught but because of the belligerent and defiant attitude of many teenagers who seem to have a stronger contempt toward such

(See CRITICISM, 8-B)

When will the metropolitan papers stop using the time-worn cliché of the little guy battling city government?

I grow weary of their efforts to picture local government taking advantage of the "poor, powerless citizen"—especially when the facts do not substantiate this approach.

Take, for instance, the parking lot issue in Birmingham. In the "Jack Manning Says" column in The Detroit Free Press on May 3, John C. Manning wrote about the two homes on Townsend which he felt were "in danger of being torn down by Birmingham planner executives."

APPARENTLY, he referred to the City's city commission and plan board's plans to purchase and remove the houses in the Townsend-Bates-Merrill-Henrietta block for a municipal parking lot.

Manning apparently talked to the two homeowners—but he did not talk to anyone in the Birmingham city government.

What's this—a former newspaper editor (of the now deceased Detroit Times) writing without confirmation of the facts?

As an editor he should have been drumming into his reporters all these years the importance of the fundamental rule of getting the facts!

MANNING GAVE hero status to the two homeowners "raising heck with Birmingham Mayor (William H.) Burgum and refusing to retreat an inch."

Unflatteringly, he wrote that the "mayor keeps yelling that parking space (in that block) would be good for everybody and was allegedly needed" because the section is near the city hall, public library and Community House."

If Manning had bothered to check, he would have learned that the City has made studies of the parking facilities and needs in Birmingham and that its proposal to build this new lot was based on the facts gained through those surveys.

MANNING QUOTED the two homeowners as asking why the mayor had not mentioned that their section was planned for a parking lot before they spent much money and time in remodeling.

In the first place, there has been sufficient public notice that plans called for a lot in that section of town. There was nothing sudden about the plans; they have been on the boards, as part of the long-range parking lot development project, for several years.

AND IN THE second place, since when has the mayor been responsible to personally inform individuals of such pending action?

Wouldn't the owners have been much wiser if they had checked with the City before spending their money? Their homes are in an area zoned for multiple-dwellings—zoning which permits parking lots, too.

What Manning apparently did not know was that a newcomer on the city commission has been making a political issue of the proposed lots and the houses. He campaigned on a platform of keeping Birmingham residential and is trying to capitalize on that pledge now.

FURTHERMORE, Manning must not have known that the City has offered the owners substantial prices for their homes—prices which I understand are more than fair.

I wonder, too, if anyone has given thought to the possibility of preserving these sanctified homes by transferring them to another location. This could be feasible, and certainly not out of reason to suggest inasmuch as they are valued so highly.

MANNING concluded his column with this astounding comment:

"If those two residents fail to lick the City executives it will be a black eye for Birmingham."

I submit that it will be a black eye if they do win.

And Manning, I believe, has given our profession a black eye with his writing based on incomplete facts.

## Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

With the wedding season coming on, I've talked to our society editor about changing the format of wedding announcements in the paper. She doesn't wholeheartedly agree with me, but I think they should be something like the following to be fair to all parties concerned:

**JAMES JONES CAUGHT**  
Amid dusty old law books in our picturesque City Hall James Jones, Jr., son of the senior James Jones, of Backward Lane, was married by Judge Emery. The groom was attired in a black cutaway coat with matching striped trousers. His lapel was adorned with a sprig of bachelor buttons.

He was attended by John Smith, who was also attired in black and stripes with crimson colored eyes (he was the host at the bachelor's party).

**DURING THE CEREMONY** a solo was sung by Bertha Spring, a second cousin of the bride, who formerly sang with the Bloomfield Chorus and Marching Society. Actually, she is credited with the demise of that organization. The ceremony itself was interrupted twice, once by a local citizen who couldn't find the violations bureau. The second interruption came when the best man couldn't remove the wedding ring from his little finger.

Apparently, he placed it there so that he wouldn't lose it in his pocket.

Fortunately, Judge Emery had a bar of soap and the crisis passed.

**THE RECEPTION FOLLOWING** the ceremony was held in the garden of the bride's home, and while the rain did not help the decorations, it didn't dim the spirit of the guests, either.

The only unsociable person at the reception was the father of the bride, who was seen counting empty champagne bottles and muttering to himself.

The new couple plan to spend their honeymoon in Ferndale.

Oh, by the way, the bride, Miss Lucy Black, wore white at the ceremony.

## City Beat

By  
KEN  
WEAVER

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## Defends City On Parking Lot Question

To the Editor:

Having attended the Birmingham City Commission and Planning Board meetings for some months and after listening, with a great deal of restraint, to remarks being made by citizens concerning the management of the City and some of its future plans, I feel compelled at this time to take a personal stand in behalf of the past commission.

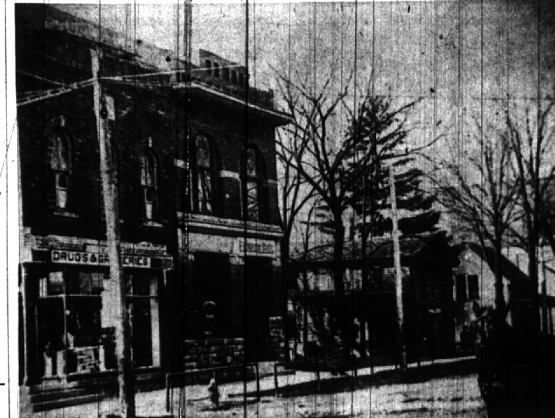
I think the first problem of any good commissioner is to subordinate his natural and personal interests to the larger community interest.

IT IS SOMETIMES difficult to know the desires of all the people. (See PARKING, 8-B)

## Early Deadlines For Next Issue

The Eccentric will publish on Wednesday, May 22, instead of Thursday, May 30, in order that our employees may observe the Memorial Day holiday.

All deadlines move up one day. Advertisers and news contributors are requested to bring their copy to our offices at 1225 E. Bowdoin, Birmingham, as early as possible.



**Do You Remember?**  
Here's another scene of old-time Birmingham. It's from the horse-and-buggy days. Remember Shain's Drug Store and the Exchange Bank on W. Maple? And the stores

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