

When Tragedy Strikes ...

On Jan. 24, 1964, a 14-year-old Birmingham girl was stabbed and killed as she was walking to school. A 15-year-old boy has admitted the killing and has been ordered committed to a state hospital.

This killing was a tragedy to the family of the slain girl, to the family of the slayer and to the community.

The parents of the girl had every reason to expect their daughter to flower into womanhood and to experience a rich, full life. Then one day, without warning and without reason, she was struck down. The family's suffering and grief must be overwhelming.

CONSIDER, TOO, the plight of the parents of the boy. First, there is the awesome realization that their son took the life of another person. This in itself is tragic enough.

Then there is the commitment to a mental institution. Even though society has done much to remove the stigma of mental illness, it is not easy to ask that your own offspring be committed. The parents must be given credit for the courage displayed in making this decision. They should find comfort in the fact that rather than being imprisoned he is to be rehabilitated, if possible, through a program of psychotherapy.

And being parents they must have an awareness and understanding of the sorrow suffered by the other parents. Undoubtedly, they share that grief.

This killing would be a tragedy for any community. But for a city like Birmingham which prides itself on the highest of community values it is even more of a tragedy. The realization that "it can happen here" is overpowering.

NOW, LET US examine the commitment of the boy to a mental hospital. The Oakland County Probate Court's intent was, as we understand it, to expose him to psychotherapy to bring about his rehabilitation and thus effect a productive usefulness of him as a member of society.

We may assume that upon accomplishing rehabilitation the boy will be released and be permitted to return as a normal person in the stream of our society.

THE PROSPECT of this return brings to our minds a statement from a report entitled "Spectrum of San Mateo (Calif.) County Mental Health Services." Under

the heading "Protection from Potentially Dangerous Mentally Ill" is the following:

"The stereotype in the public mind is the mental patient as an unpredictable, uncontrolled bundle of destructive impulses. This stereotype is far from correct, yet the infrequent threat or assault by a person formerly diagnosed as mentally ill will create public demand for protection.

"The great majority of assaults are committed by persons who have never been identified as mentally ill and often are considered 'normal' after the commission of the crime. . . .

"A study in the New York State Hospital system showed that persons released from state mental hospitals committed only 15 per cent as many felonious acts as the average for the total population.

"THE PSYCHIATRISTS can never absolutely guarantee the behaviour of any individual, any more than the courts or police can. They will exercise their judgment to the best of their ability, being correct in the vast majority of cases, but will be wrong occasionally.

"The public administrator who must inevitably bear some of the public outcry when a former mental patient commits a crime, or suicide, should recognize that the price of early release which is so beneficial to the great majority of mental patients is that an occasional patient will be released in error."

WE ARE reminded, too, that the Bloomfield Township boy who killed his mother a year ago has been permitted on occasion to return to the family scene. Indications are that we can expect his eventual return to the community following an extensive program of psychotherapy.

In the final analysis, then, we must observe that these tragedies have left their marks on the specific families and on the community. Yet, in these tragedies there lies hope.

Hope for the rehabilitation of the boy who took the life of another person; hope that he will be able to return to a useful, productive, meaningful life.

Hope that society will achieve even greater knowledge in coping with the problems of the mentally ill so that programs of prevention can be scheduled to head off "breakdown" and the resultant acts of violence.

Preparing for the Future

The Birmingham Eccentric commends the Bloomfield Hills Board of Education for its approach to the problem of increasing enrollment.

First, the board arranged for a study of the district by a survey team from Michigan State University. This group then submitted its findings to the board.

From these results, the school officials have approved a \$7,600,000 bond issue for the June 8 school election ballot.

Here again, the board exercised good judgment in dividing the proposal into two sections so that voters opposed to one would not feel that they must vote against the entire package.

The board deserves praise also for placing the swimming pool matter in a separate proposition.

NOW, LET us look at the two sections of the ballot proposal.

Most importantly, the board asks approval of a \$7,067,000 bond issue for a four-year building program. Included are plans for a new high school, a junior high, two elementary school additions, a new site, an administration building, renovations at Vaughan and Wing Lake schools and additional bus-care facilities.

The second proposition is for \$583,000 for building and equipping a swimming pool at the new high school.

Final approval for placing these on the ballot rests with the Michigan Municipal Finance Commission, which acts in all such matters.

LET'S EXAMINE the building program. Last year, the district experienced an increase of 500 new students. Indications are that there will be an even greater increase in the coming year; so that we can expect another 500 easily.

As part of its efforts to assure the best

possible education for the children of the district, the board is trying to hold to a class load of 25 students.

Every time there is an increase of 500 students there must be 20 more classrooms if the board is to adhere to this policy.

THAT THE school district is growing in population goes without question. Statistics from the various building department and the Detroit Metropolitan Planning Commission bear this out.

There is no question that some new buildings are needed to prepare for future increases in enrollment. Furthermore, there is a current need for additions to present schools—due to overcrowded conditions.

NOW, THEN, what about the swimming pool?

Passage of this section of the proposal would make possible:

- Instruction in swimming for the students.
 - An intramural program, providing for competition among the students.
 - A swimming team, permitting competition with other schools.
- Presently, there is no organized or public swimming activity in the school district. Obviously, there is need for one. A swimming pool would afford the students an opportunity to develop their swimming abilities and to engage in another competitive sport.
- The pool also would be available to the community for adult and family swimming programs.
- The Bloomfield Hills Board of Education is to be commended for its action in preparing the ballot proposition in two sections, and we believe the electors of the district should pass them both.

He's Trying to Kick the Habit



Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

APPORTIONMENT

Apportionment is the allocation of legislative districts according to some prearranged plan. The plan can be based on population, geography, tree stumps or what have you.

Apportionment applies to both the federal and state legislatures.

This year Michigan is caught in the middle on apportionment and even the most learned theories leave the state in a mess.

For the federal Congress we inherited an additional seat because of increased population in the 1960 census. Therefore we had to arrange 19 new congressional districts, which was done by the state legislature last year.

THE PLAN DEvised by the state legislature was by far the best and fairest reapportionment plan adopted by any large state.

There was only one district in the state that was not within 20 per cent of perfect "one man, one vote." This was the district comprising the entire Upper Peninsula.

There are many reasons for making the Upper Peninsula a separate district even though it would be a smaller one, because of its physical compactness, its separation by water, etc.

In what certainly can't be called a nonpartisan decision, a panel of judges threw the plan out the window last week, which means if the U.S. Supreme Court upholds them, the legislature must go back to the drawing boards and come up with a new plan.

THIS WOULDN'T BE so confusing if it wasn't for the fact that the state legislature still is being reapportioned under our new State Constitution.

Under the new constitution both the state House and Senate were to be reapportioned by an eight-man, bi-partisan (four Democrats and four Republicans) under guide lines set up in the constitution.

Unfortunately, the commission couldn't agree and the problem was turned over to the state Supreme Court to pick out the best plan.

Then last week the court announced it couldn't decide anything until the U. S. Supreme Court set guidelines and in the meantime deadlines are approaching for filing for next year's legislature.

YET, NO ONE can circulate petitions because no one knows what the districts will be.

There is a movement in the state legislature to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot and have a special election on May 19th, so that the present districts can be frozen for two more years.

This would allow an orderly election this year and give everyone time to work out new plans for the election two years hence.

Something will have to be done if we are to have a legislature next year.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Communists Capitalize On Minority Weakness

To the Editor:

According to COMMUNIST CELL ON ART: "90 per cent of Americans are near morons, sheep like, eager to conform.

"Experiments have proven that especially women will do anything to have the latest thing, just to be fashionable.

"They lap up like hungry pigs the repulsive, meaningless daubs, drips, spatters and tied junk sold as sculpture. Our aim is to create confusion, weaken the faith in capitalist institutions, destroy faith in God, destroy the beauty in arts, literature and music. Work for disintegration of capitalism. . . .

IT IS HARD to believe that 90 per cent of Americans are morons. But the Reds have been quite successful beyond their wildest hopes to subvert some snobbish women, unoccupied, extravagant looking for thrills of scandalous absurdities and imbecility to amuse themselves and their circle of friends.

There are also a few clever speculators and red dupes, who capitalize on the empty void of the minority by promoting the degenerate art through clever publicity, smear tactics and ridicule of everything and everyone that does not conform to their dictates.

The nonabstract and nonexpressionist painters are discriminated

Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO
March 13, 1914

While on a recent visit to Detroit, the attention of the "Eccentric" was drawn to a new style of toilet, designed for use in country places and towns without sewerage systems. It operates as a gravity flush system, using only one-half gallon of disinfected water at each operation. It is cleaned by the flush force system and the water is conducted from a tank that may be placed either in the same room with the toilet, or in another room of the residence. The feature of this new flush system contemplates the construction of a cess pool.

We are reliably informed that one of our School Board members will offer as a prize \$500 in gold to the best speller in a contest, to be held in the High School building, sometime soon. There should be strong sentiment for a contest of this kind and we hope to see definite arrangements made. The spelling of even some of our graduates requires some upholding before printing.

While going to school last Monday morning, the Reid girl's horse was frightened by a load of hogs and tipped them into a ditch. A few scratches and a broken jug was the result of the accident.

30 YEARS AGO
March 15, 1934
Only the most meager of clues had been discovered to aid (See HAPPENINGS, 8-B)

FOR ART'S SAKE

(MORE PEOPLE'S COLUMN
LETTERS ON 8-B)

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Presents Own Solutions To Area Road Problems

To the Editor:

Regarding your editorial of Feb. 27, 1964, I would like to make the following observations:

In 1962, after 15 years of urban environment, when our family decided to change addresses, one point of concern was where can we establish residence which will allow continuation of our visitation to the Birmingham retail center and still enjoy what we considered a healthy suburban atmosphere.

What I wanted was a place on a dead-end, one-way street. However, as sacrifice is part of today's existence, we settled for a two-way, go-nowhere type street.

LAST YEAR when Steven, our three-year-old, went out to play, he played in the street (no sidewalks) with the rest of the neighborhood. In previous years when our older children were Steven's age and went out to play we had to build a fence and close the gate or take them to the neighbor's fenced yard.

The sidewalk was the limit of their freedom and even then our eyes were constantly aware of their activities. Automobiles, which are the basis of most of our local existence, are unfortunately also the cause of most of our abrupt tragedies.

LAST YEAR 87 per cent of the voting Beverly Hills residents voted against our contributing to a north-south, east-west system of superhighways. As of yet, no one has elaborated on what benefits would be derived to Beverly Hills by allowing Fourteen Mile Road to be a continuous superhighway through our city.

I personally believe that once the county buffaloes Beverly Hills officials into allowing the construction of the road, the pressure Franklin Village into straightening Fourteen Mile Road and work with Walled Lake to build a suspension bridge.

This would allow a savings of four miles driving from Lansing

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

The teen-agers are neither all bad nor all good. This is no brilliant observation; it is common sense. It is ridiculous to classify the teens as all good as it is to say they are all bad.

Now, in a calm, more rational way, let me explain that this was the message I tried to get across in that column which raised such a ruckus.

It was meant to be satirical, not sarcastic. And the closing comment that the column smelled was meant to convey that I knew the points I was over-stressing were ridiculous.

In essence, it was a summary statement, saying: "Don't believe all of this."

Needless to say, the comment helped bring about the desired response.

THE POINT that I'd really like to get across is that: There are enough bad seeds among our teen-agers to warrant our concern, our interest, our desire to do something to help them and to encourage them to help themselves.

Those who feel that criticism of a few implies criticism of all are unnecessarily defensive. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the misdeeds of the few help create the image of the majority. Unhappily, this is a fact of life.

To ignore those who get into trouble because they are so few would be foolish. It would accomplish nothing. Indeed, it would lead only to an increase in their number. To recognize that there is a problem and to try to initiate solutions is not only the ideal but also the practical thing to do.

Breathes there a man with heart so cold that he pays no attention to the troubled few?

ALL RIGHT, then, what can be done?

Discipline, for one thing. We can start telling our children no and mean it. When Junior wants the car, we believe he shouldn't drive it, the answer should be no.

Junior's answer that "Johnny's dad lets him drive their car" is only subterfuge and should be recognized as such. When Jane wants to date the guy who obviously has a disregard for the barber shop and the safety razor, the answer should be absolutely not.

"But, Mom, it's not how he looks; it's what is inside of him that counts" is again subterfuge. What's inside of him has considerable bearing on his appearance.

PROBABLY, we can't expect to accomplish a whole lot with the teens with this approach because it is too late in life.

But we can certainly start with the preschoolers. Instead of asking Laurie if she wants a cookie or a piece of cake for dessert, we can serve her one or the other. (See CITY BEAT, 7-B)

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