

In a Word: Cooperation

A newspaper is looked upon in different light by the many people who come in contact with it.

To most it is a source of news and information. Many readers meet the mailman at the door on Thursday mornings to see what has happened in our fair community the previous week.

To many, because this is a bedroom community, it is their only way of keeping up with the local happenings.

A newspaper to a politician is the nourishment on which his job feeds. If he is to represent the people, he must know what the feelings of the people are.

A newspaper to a news source on occasion looks like a monster intent on devouring everything in sight. To such people reporters represent an invasion of privacy. In many cases they would just as soon not have the people know all that is going on.

BUT FREEDOM of the press is also an awesome responsibility.

In return for the right of being free from governmental interference, we have the solemn duty of reporting to our readers everything that in some way affects them.

If we failed to tell the people that a tiger is loose in the streets, even though this might cause discomfiture in many a household, then the people might never know—except by rumor, which might not be in any way based on facts—that they should lock their doors?

We have been criticized in the last year for some of our news-gathering techniques and accused of sensationalizing some news once gathered.

IN THE PAST year we have been cited as the No. 1 weekly news-coverser in our state.

We are not a sensational-type newspaper. All you have to do is look at our front page to determine this.

By the same token if something happens that affects the whole community, we will not suppress it or play it down, either. To do either would be a disservice to the community.

Another Community Tradition?

For years The Community House has been the traditional meeting place in Birmingham. It has gained distinction as a symbol of our community spirit.

Now, Birmingham has an opportunity to create a work of art that undoubtedly would achieve that same distinction. Indeed, it will take a community effort to establish it.

We are, of course, thinking of the swan sculpture proposed for the central area—the "heart"—of the city. The city commission last week authorized a contribution of \$25,000 by the city government to this project provided that a like amount be raised through public participation.

The Birmingham Eccentric lends its full support to the efforts to obtain this sculpture, as a remembrance of the city's observance of its 100th anniversary of incorporation as a village.

BELIEVING THAT it is fitting and proper that the City share in the cost, we commend the city commissioners for their action in making matching funds available. We are pleased to note that they recognize the need for a community feature of such aesthetic value.

The people have a right to know and we have the responsibility to furnish that knowledge to the best of our ability.

A case in point is the recent slaying of a girl on our city streets.

Shortly after it happened, the police were saying very little until they completed their investigation.

A BOY WAS taken into custody but neither Probate office nor his attorneys would permit an interview or release information.

Under these circumstances the public has a right to know the facts. They knew something terrible had happened in our community and with the many rumors floating around town, how could they separate the wheat from the chaff?

We interviewed the boy's school counselor and he refused to divulge any information, but he did take the time to take a swing at us in the school paper for trying to get the facts.

Even without this potential news source we were able to piece together facts to come up with a picture which the Birmingham police later said was the most objective report of the incident.

IF NEWS SOURCES were more willing to share with us their knowledge, they would be assured that our stories would be factually fair as far as the information the source has provided is concerned.

Again, we repeat that we have an awesome responsibility to furnish to our readers all the information for which they have a right to know.

True, we may upset a few people in gathering this information, but if it were not done we might as well forget about publishing a newspaper and let the people be tossed about on the sea of rumor and misinformation.

If there is a tiger in the street, we will try to tell our readers where he is and how to protect themselves from him.

With a good newspaper they will not be forced to wander around that street and see for themselves.

Local sculptor Marshall Fredericks, who long ago offered to contribute his work on the sculpture as a gift to the city, deserves great commendation. We are proud of this man of national and international repute who holds such affectionate regard for his home town.

MRS. G. HOWARD Willett, Jr. who has served her community in so many different ways—including eight years as a city commissioner, and three of those as mayor—has consistently pressed for community action on this project through the years. We are heartened that this latest effort is reaching fruition. It testifies, again, to her abilities as well as to her dedication. She, too, deserves public commendation.

THE BIRMINGHAM Eccentric believes this swan sculpture would add immeasurably to the aesthetic values of our city. We see it as another example of the high qualities and characteristics the citizens endeavor in their community.

We are sure that in time to come it will, like The Community House, be regarded as part of our community pride and rich heritage.

Coming Right at Ya!



People's Column Letters

One Voice Was Raised About Homes

To the Editor:
In Ken Weaver's column of April 2, he draws attention to a problem which has long existed in Birmingham: the rundown condition of certain homes in a portion of our city.

Mr. Weaver asked what the proponents of "keep Birmingham residential" would do about these houses. He says, "Why are their voices never raised about these homes?"

THE MINUTES of the Birmingham City Commission meeting of Feb. 3, 1944, read as follows: The Commissioner Breck referred to a discussion at the last joint meeting of the planning board and the city commission concerning certain areas of the city which appear to be run down due to lack of care of the property on the part of the owners. He spoke particularly of an area two (2) blocks either side of Lincoln, east of Adams, and the area south of Lincoln, West of Woodward, and east of Grant. He spoke of conservation programs which have been conducted in other cities and asked the administration to examine the problem and submit a recommendation as to what can be done to encourage the people to save their property, or perhaps submit a recommendation concerning assistance the city might give.

The Eccentric has devoted much coverage to the problems of the central business district. I hope that it will now also assist the commission in efforts to rehabilitate these residential areas.

DAVID F. BRECK

Commuters Well-Qualified For City Posts

To the Editor:
With respect to the election for the Birmingham City Commission, I read your March 29 editorial of recommendation with a great deal of interest.

Your patronizing attitude toward Charles Clippert, and by implication, toward anyone else who might be in the same position, was, to say the least, disturbing.

THE IMPLICATION that three years of residency in the community is insufficient is at least debatable. However, this is dwarfed by the ramifications of the further suggestion that working outside the area is disadvantageous for a candidate.

I suspect that it comes as a shock to persons who work outside the area and their families, who, after all, comprise a majority of the electorate, to learn that they are not as well equipped to serve as those who work in the area.

DAVID M. PRESTON
621 Gravelfield Court
Birmingham

Letters from readers always are welcome. But they MUST be signed, although identities will not be divulged if the writer so requests.

(MORE PEOPLE'S COLUMN LETTERS ON 5-B)

Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO
April 10, 1914

Among the many busy places about this vicinity just at present is Roseland Park Cemetery which as spring approaches one notices from day to day the many improvements carried out which has been contemplated during the winter months. Many large and costly evergreens have been planted during the winter making a very marked improvement to the already beautiful landscape effects.

It will be of interest to the general public to know that a lecture course has been determined upon for Birmingham under the auspices of the Baptist Young People to be put on next fall and winter. The readiness shown in subscribing for season tickets in a particular canvass made of the town, and the encouragement given by the Citizens League and Ladies Literary Club is evidence that such a course is desired by the best citizens of the community.

Don't miss seeing the "Battle of Gettysburg" at the Family Theater, Monday, (April 13). There will be a special matinee beginning at 3:30 p.m., the price same as usual, 5 and 10 cents. Evening show will open at 8:30 p.m., second at 8:15 p.m. The admission is 10 cents for every one.

30 YEARS AGO
April 12, 1914

All persons holding major city offices, with the exception of that of city manager, were re-appointed unanimously Monday night by the City Commission. Harry Allen, who was re-elected mayor, ex-

(See HAPPENINGS, 5-B)

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

When the weather got cold and snowy during Holy Week I decided it was time to do some research. As you know, a good newspaper thrives on funds; so I consulted with management about research; my study.

They didn't feel that my area of interest should be included in their research budget, so I called the Ford Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation and a couple of others and found no takers to finance a trip to Florida to study beach people.

Fortunately, the tax cut arrived in time and I felt that I would do my share to bolster the economy of the nation by spending some money.

THAT WAS ONLY the beginning of my problems, because apparently everybody in the world and his brother were trying to boost the economy by flying South at Easter time.

Nevertheless, I got to the sunny Southland in time for a couple of days of torrential rains. Undaunted, I headed for the beach and began my study.

The first thing I noticed was that women's bathing suits have changed a little this year. They've gotten littler.

When I finally got my mind back to work, I began putting beach people in categories. I realized very quickly that anyone who thinks all men were created equal need only put his sunglasses on to see that The Framers of the Declaration of Independence must not have meant physically.

PROBABLY, THE greatest equalizer in our society would be to make bankers wear bathing suits while negotiating loans.

The categories I found most recurring were the trancers, the trotters, the pacers, the architects and builders, the explorers, the readers, the picnickers, the lovers and, finally, the swimmers.

Beach people are like no other. They are friendly in the main; that is, most of them.

The exception is the "trancer." This person encases herself in brown oil, then spreads herself bodily across the beach on a multicolored towel, closes her eyes and ignores the outside world.

THE TROTTERS and pacers are easy to spot, as they hike up and down the beach. My study shows that age has a lot to do with whether you are a trotter or pacer. The younger you are, the faster the pace.

The architects and builders spend their day knee-deep in sand. The imagination of some of them make Frank Lloyd Wright look like a production home designer.

The explorer spends most of his time bending over. This looks better on some explorers than others. They usually pick up shells or rocks, but secretly wish for buried treasure.

THE BEACH READER probably consumes more mysteries than any other literary group. If you are looking for a retirement business, this would bear further investigation.

The picnickers, the lovers and the swimmers usually fall into one of the other groups. Of all of the categories, the swimmer is probably the smallest.

My research could probably go further, but I notice that it is time for me to return to the cold North.

I wonder if there is some foundation that would like to know why friendly beach people turn into their old grouchy selves when they leave the South.

For the price of transportation back, I'm available.

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

Score one for Dave Breck.

In a letter to the editor in this issue, he has caught me in a blooper. As he says, he has already spoken out on the condition of some homes in the southwest area of Birmingham.

Back in February, Commissioner Breck asked for a study of this problem by the city administration and for recommendations on what could be done.

Knowing how thorough and conscientious the city administration is, I am confident that the city fathers will meet their responsibility.

IN THE meantime, I am sure that something could be done without necessitating official City action or the expenditure of taxpayers' money.

Again, I challenge the people who are so intent on "keeping Birmingham residential" to take the initiative. Seems to me they could organize a program of assistance to the people of the area under discussion.

First of all, why not conduct an informational campaign designed to encourage the renters and owners of the rundown houses to better maintain their properties?

Perhaps they could go even further and arrange to obtain supplies and equipment needed in such an improvement campaign, then line up volunteers to help the renters and owners paint up and fix up their houses.

THE PROJECT would have to be well organized, of course, with details worked out as to scheduling of workers at the various locations and according to the convenience of all concerned.

In the case of rentals, the landlords could certainly be expected to help meet expenses involved in their own properties.

This project would be a tremendous undertaking, no question of that. But it seems to me that it could be done in a spirit of neighborliness and overall community benefit.

And what better time for it than in the spring?

From The Eccentric's Point of View ...

A fashion expert says that if men understood the psychology of clothing they'd but more flamboyant clothes. Maybe so—if their wives would quit buying flamboyant clothes long enough for husbands to afford to.

He was pictured recently wearing a fire chief's hat. He'd wear it all the time if he thought it would help him put out the GOP's internal party fires.

A poll of GOP county chairmen puts Nixon in the lead as the man they think will be nominated.

That shows what "not running" hard enough will do for a fellow.

Johnson thinks Congress will act this year on medicare financed through Social Security. Besides making war on poverty, he's making war on pessimism.

A professor says university students are becoming ulcerous and neurotic. The more they learn the more they realize what a mess they're in.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Decision on Apartments Astonishes Hills Resident

To the Editor:

I am still utterly astonished that after the hearings and the surveys, the 4-to-1 majority of the Bloomfield Hills City Commission not only disregarded what seems to be a clear expression by the electorate (expressed in an 82 per cent vote in the informal postcard referendum) but went immediately ahead and voted the opposite way on the issue of two-story vs. three-story apartments.

The majority's rationalization was unusual, to state it charitably. The majority's view was that its function is to do as it saw fit—not to do what the electorate wants.

Perhaps that arrogant expression stuck in someone's throat, for the majority qualified its action by saying

that their opponents did not understand what they were doing in deciding as they did.

BY WHAT quality of intuition did the majority know what was in my mind—or in the minds of the others of the 82 per cent? It would seem that the majority, in its profound wisdom, took the view that those who failed to see the issue as they did were so pathetically ignorant that a knowledgeable oligarchy could much better make their decisions for them.

To justify the making of this decision, the majority pointed out that less acreage is now available for three-story buildings than heretofore—and then went on to say that such liberalizations (so called) make legal de-

ference easier against unsoning. Even someone who doesn't understand the problem can see a large fallacy there.

THE MAJORITY said the changes were intended to improve the appearance of new apartments, then remarked that the city "cannot legally force" any builder to do what he may not want to do about the appearance of his construction. Another contradiction!

The majority added some numbo-jumbo about basements and ground levels, and the relative beauties of differing setbacks, and other factors. These are plausibly enough that they read like a silly quality as red herrings on the trail.

(See DECISION, 5-B)

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