

They Take the Helm

"A community is like a ship; every one ought to be prepared to take the helm." — Henrik Ibsen, "An Enemy of the People," Act I.

The problem is that while every one may be preparing, few stand up and take the responsibility.

Three exceptions are gentlemen who appeared in the news last week. As you will see from their record of accomplishments, they have appeared on our pages many times and probably will continue to appear as long as community leadership is needed.

SINCE THEY STAND OUT we feel that the residents ought to give them some recognition and, more important, thanks.

By seniority we salute retiring Community House President Robert A. Thom.

Few would expect a professional painter to have the drive, foresight and community responsibility which Mr. Thom has exhibited in moving The Community House through its period of transition.

The decisions of what direction The Community House would take as part of this community and how this would be accomplished were made with him at the helm.

Mr. Thom was the first president of BAA and with his stewardship gave it stability. He also was instrumental in establishing the Birmingham Arts Festival and helped make it a strong community effort.

TRYING TO FILL THOM'S shoes as new Community House President is Edward H. Lerchen. Practically a life-long resident of the area, Mr. Lerchen has made "elephant-like" contributions to the community.

He was vice president of The Community House, is a trustee of the Cranbrook Foundation, a senior warden at Christ Church Cranbrook and a director of Camp

Oakland and the Citizens Action Committee.

He has worked with the Boy Scouts, was on the board of William Beaumont Hospital and the Bloomfield Art Association.

He also serves the community as a vice president of the Detroit Bank and Trust Co.

SUPPORTING HIM IN The Community House will be new Vice President Robert L. Kilpatrick. Interestingly enough, Mr. Kilpatrick appeared twice on our front page last week.

At the same time as he was elected an officer of The Community House, he was elected chairman of the Citizens Action Committee, a hard working group devoted to the total development of our community.

A 12-year resident, Mr. Kilpatrick serves as a director of the chamber of commerce, a member of the board of management for the YMCA and is vice president of the Birmingham Rotary Club.

HE WAS BIRMINGHAM Michigan Week chairman last year and deputy Oakland County chairman this year.

He works for the Boy Scouts, is a volunteer fireman in Bloomfield Village and was a judge in the Suburban Homemakers contest this year.

He is also the local manager for Michigan Bell telephone Co, a post he has held since 1962.

Looking at the combined contributions of these three men, it is no wonder that Birmingham is on the upside of a development curve.

Our community is fortunate to have the likes of Robert Thom, Edward Lerchen and Robert Kilpatrick at the helm.

'Now Go Ahead, Show Us'

The response of the residents to the school districts' requests for additional millage last week can be best summed up in the words of Dr. John Blackhall Smith, Birmingham's superintendent.

Immediately after learning that Birmingham voters had approved the school board package by over a 2 to 1 majority, he said, "This is the kind of vote that says 'now go ahead and show us.'"

The challenge is now in the hands of the school authorities. In both Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills the voters have given the boards what they asked for and the boards in turn have inherited the responsibility of providing school systems "second to none" for our area.

WITH BIRMINGHAM'S new operational millage the residents were promised enrichment in the curriculum offered. The sum of money left after hiring staff for projected new schools, will be the key to the quality reputation of the school district.

In Bloomfield the voters were not as expansive in supporting the millage for physical education facilities, as they were for regular school construction; yet this is a

key to the type of education offered. The question of how far should the school district go in providing a full education for children including the physical side, was answered, maybe weakly by the voters, "all the way."

Dr. Charles Bowers, the president of the Bloomfield Hills school board, said: "... the election results affirm our belief that patrons in the district want good educations for their children."

WHILE WE are on the subject of school elections, we recognize that it is possible that fewer people were expected at the polls than actually appeared. This was not the largest turnout we have seen for a school election; yet we observed that residents had to wait in lines to vote in some precincts more than an hour.

This is the type of thing that discourages people to turn out and vote in the future.

Certainly, more machines are available and the school board should check into this before the next election.

But the voters did turn out and say, "Now go ahead and show us" and it's up to the school boards now.

Why Chief Scott Was Popular

The high regard of George S. Scott as Birmingham's fire chief is attested to by his popularity among the men in the ranks of his department.

They liked him. They respected him. They worked hard for him.

Chief Scott was killed, along with two other men in the crash of a twin-engine plane in Troy on June 7. He was engaged in a transitional instruction flight at the time.

Scott was the type of leader who expected much from his men but who remembered that they have the same wants, needs and ambitions that all people experience. He was considerate of their feelings and their wishes.

Because of his interest in and his concern for the men, he made their tasks as firefighters enjoyable rather than burdensome.

IN FACT, these men thought so much of their chief that they wrote a tribute to him, which was published on Page 1-A in last week's Eccentric.

Their words probably best describe what kind of person he was. They wrote, in part: "The friends that he acquired over these

47 years were many. Everyone that knew him had nothing but good words for him.

"As fire marshal . . . he imposed regulations on existing businesses and new ones coming into our city. Each one of these was designed to make our community a better and safer place to live.

"THESE PEOPLE who had to abide by the restrictions always came forward at a later date and thanked him for his personal interest in their business.

"It has been a most rewarding experience to have worked with George for many years and to have worked for him the last year and four months (as chief). In this short time, he instilled in the men a stronger devotion to duty. We can still hear the words 'if it's for the good of the department let's do it.'"

YES, THE chief is gone, but the men who worked for him will long remember what kind of leader he was. They have this memory to cherish—and a challenge to always try to live up to the standards he expected of them.

What finer tribute could there be to a fallen chief?

"Just Don't Notice Him!"



PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Suggestions Offered For Clean-Up Drive

To the Editor:

I have been reading Ken Weaver's "City Beat" column for some time now, with both "amusement" and "amazement." I am amused to see what a predicament he is in now with some indignant Birmingham residents and amazed at why these people are so indignant when he is trying to push a "clean-up, fix-up project" in the older section of Birmingham.

I agree with the last article that this is not a "slum" area in the strict sense of the word, but also believe that there are several areas that should be renovated even if it were nothing more than a coat of paint.

MANY OF the people in this area are probably unable to afford the purchase of paint, much less hire the work done. I am sure no one expects these "retired-pensioners" and people of low incomes to spend their life savings on fixing up an old dwelling that will probably fall down or be torn down in future years to come; however, I think that many worthwhile organizations here in Birmingham could start a project to help clean up these homes by rais-

ing money to hire the work to be done.

Another way would be by teenagers to volunteer to visit, mow and paint these older homes, and then reward them by giving them free tickets and passes to ball games and swim clubs.

The merchants and many organizations in Birmingham could all help towards paying these teenagers and encourage them to take pride in their community.

WHY DON'T YOU send out an "S.O.S." to all organizations and merchants for donations and your paper can then make known the need for the teen-ager's services.

This "Community Clean-up" campaign which you suggested (and was misinterpreted by many) would not only beautify and better the community, but give our teenagers and citizens of Birmingham a great feeling of accomplishment by helping those who really need it and in turn make their homeowners feel we are trying to help them, not condemn them.

People of Birmingham, let's have some action now that Mr. Weaver has started the ball rolling!

AN INTERESTED CITIZEN

Yesteryear Happenings

50 YEARS AGO
June 19, 1914

Some very worthy improvements are being made around the drive-by south of the DUR station. With the space well-tended, cement curbing in front of some very pretty shrubbery and an iron railing to keep hurrying teams and careless men from driving over the grass, the DUR will soon have a very pretty spot.

Water-works hill on West Maple avenue was the scene of two serious accidents this week. Mrs. Bert Bird was thrown from a buggy Tuesday afternoon and seriously injured. A machine driven by the son of Cal Edwards accidentally ran into the carriage, turning it over. Mrs. Bird was badly injured about the head and shoulders. Wednesday morning Sam Groves and his wife were driving down the same hill when a piece of harness broke loose, causing the horse to run away. Both Mr. and Mrs. Groves were badly shaken.

Last Thursday noon residents of Brown and Pierce streets had the time of their lives as efficient Deputy Sheriff Webster Bray went "hot-footing" by. His quick hike was caused by a hurry-call from the residence of Pierce street who had discovered a woman who was forcing a delinquent boarder out the front yard at the point of a huge butcher knife. Deputy Sheriff locked both participants in the jail but was obliged to release them in the afternoon.

30 YEARS AGO
June 21, 1934

The police department today was prepared to "crack down"—but in a mild way only—on speeders, especially in the residential district. The special object of their attention will be young drivers in their teens—both boys and girls. The campaign against speeders will necessarily be a mild one. Chief John P. Hackett said, because of the limited size of his force, but it will nonetheless be sincere in its purpose.

The Board of Education will be able to levy from \$16,000 to \$23,000 more in school taxes on the Birmingham district this year than last, on the basis of tentative rates allocated to it Monday under the new 11 mill limitation by the Oakland County Tax Allocation Commission. The new basic rate for the assessed valuation. Because of the comparatively high rates allocated to Troy and Bloomfield Townships, this is the limit that can be assessed on property in that portion of the district which lies within (See HAPPENINGS, 8-B)

Urges Leadership In Clean-Up Job

To the Editor:

In stating that "some" homes in the area west of Woodward—south of Lincoln—east of Grant qualify for inclusion in the term "slum areas," Mr. Weaver has thrown a serious insult at all of the residents of the area, for "some" is a broad term and not specific in any way.

It is a prima facie case of poor journalism when a writer has to explain, later, what he was getting at and what he had hoped to accomplish. A reader doesn't expect that the managing editor of an "Award Winning" newspaper should have to apologize for his efforts as being "awkward."

IT IS VERY easy to point out the problems in our community and then expect someone else to take up the bandwagon. Mr. Weaver fails to realize that people resent being pushed but will readily follow a leader.

Since Mr. Weaver is so concerned with this problem why doesn't he, in his influential position as managing editor of The

Eccentric, follow up what he has started and take the lead in a Birmingham clean-up, fix-up, paint-up campaign?

PERHAPS A forthcoming special section of The Eccentric could feature remodeling advice, special sales of clean-up, fix-up, paint-up items by Birmingham merchants and local banks could offer fix-up loans with the special needs of lower income families in mind.

The Eccentric has done an excellent job in bringing about public action on many of Birmingham's problems—perhaps it could provide the leadership here.

AN INTERESTED READER

STRICTLY FRESH

As a father handed his teen-ager daughter the telephone he said, "Congratulations! It's a boy!"

A sign of family tension is when a man says he has changed his will for the tenth time.

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN



When I was a youngster my family lived in the East. Just before we moved West my mother bundled up the family and took us to see the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty, because she didn't want us to have to say even though we were born in New York we had never seen the local sights.

A similar situation happened to me the other day. Here in our own area, up in Rochester is the home of Leader Dogs. They are the second largest organization in the world supplying dogs to sightless people and all knew about them is that they were on Rochester Road and my Lions Club gave them money each year.

I HAPPENED TO RUN across Harold Pocklington, the executive director, the other day and he invited me up for graduation exercises.

Not knowing what this entailed, I travelled north and arrived in time for lunch. The graduating class was made up of 10 "students" and 10 dogs.

The dogs had arrived in Rochester some three months before the students and had been rigorously trained by nine trainers.

All the dogs used by the Leader Dogs are donated by outsiders. They can be almost any breed, but should be large and between the age of 1 and 2 years.

AFTER THE THREE MONTHS training of the dogs, the students arrive for a four-week course in getting to know their dogs and how to use them.

The students actually come from all over this hemisphere. One of the graduates was from Argentina.

The sightless students live on the premises in quarters that resemble the finest motels in the country.

They are selected from the many applicants in terms of need for a dog. There is no charge for either their four-week stay or for the dog.

How then is this institution financed?

IT IS A NONPROFIT, non-governmental agency that receives less than 1/6th of its budget from the United Fund. The remainder comes from local Lions clubs and individual contributions.

Its existence is based on this latter support. The question of whether it is a worthwhile project was brought home to me in the comments of the students as they were departing for home.

For the first time in their sightless lives they had at the same time a companion and independence—indeed so they could go where they wanted when they wanted.

Independence so they could be part of society instead of a burden to it.

I hope more of our residents can see our local Empire State Building and Statue of Liberty combined. It's only a couple of miles outside of Birmingham.

Should Birmingham allow the serving of liquor by the glass?

This question must be answered when plans are made for the city's future development. Indeed, the Civic Design Committee's proposals already call for an inn in the civic center.

If liquor is to be served in restaurants, there will have to be a change in the local laws to serve liquor.

Though many people have indicated they favor such a change, no one has committed himself officially. It will be a crucial decision when it comes.

PERSONALLY, I think I would oppose drinking in Birmingham. We have several fine restaurants that offer excellent food and good service and which appear to be financially secure.

And besides, there are liquor establishments in adjacent communities; indeed, a couple of them are almost on our doorstep.

One of the most frequent complaints now is that organizations must have their banquet affairs outside of Birmingham if they wish to serve liquor.

So what? Wouldn't many of them do this, anyway?

THOSE WHO insist that we must plan now for a better Birmingham tomorrow advocate retaining the quality, the character and flavor, the rich heritage that we possess today.

I see it is to be progress, there must be change. This, we all have to realize. But this doesn't mean that everything has to change.

To me, it would be deviating too severely from tradition to allow the serving of liquor by the glass in Birmingham.

I see it also as a question of morals. Our country, our society is generally accused of being a decadent one today. The deterioration of moral standards is cited quite frequently in the papers, in magazines, in books.

I say, let's do what we can in Birmingham to uplift—not lower—moral standards.

AND SPEAKING of planning for Birmingham's future, I should like to see an opportunity created for a public explanation of the Civic Design Committee's development proposals.

Couldn't we have a mass public rally in Shain Park or Seaholm's field or Eton Park, where the CDC could detail its concepts and ideas as it has in small meetings for various groups?

If this is not feasible, perhaps an outdoor theater could be rented, to make use of the large screen for the showing of the CDC's illustrations and of the public address system.

There could be a question-and-answer period, where the public could raise questions on implementation, financing and this business of liquor by the glass.

WHO WOULD turn out for such a rally? Who knows? Perhaps no one. Perhaps only a few. (See CITY BEAT, 8-B)



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