

Rabbit Tracks

By John Haire

(And anyone else he can get to help)

The annual election of members to the Cass City School Board is not until June 9 but the time to think about seeking one of the two vacancies on the board is now.

The deadline for filing petitions is April 7 at 4 p.m. Petitions are available at the superintendent's office.

Twenty valid signatures are needed before a name can be placed on the ballot. This year the terms of Dr. E. Paul Lockwood and Art Severance are expiring.

Frank Butler called to report seeing a Redwing Blackbird Tuesday. Since it wasn't a robin, the traditional harbinger of spring, the staff wondered just what was especially significant about seeing it.

Just wanted to call, Frank said, to cheer you up in case the big snowstorm predicted for tonight (Tuesday) hits. (It would take more than a blackbird.)

If we had to goof up an ad it was better us than them. The Chronicle ran an ad two weeks ago saying that subscription prices would rise March 1.

Last week we corrected that and said April 1, the date we wanted to advertise in the first place.

How many of you noticed, there is no way of knowing. That one of you did is unquestioned. That one is Leveret Barnes who, with his wife, came in and called us to account about it.

But all's well that ends well. After we explained, Leveret renewed for two more years. (My kind of people.)

Tom Herron can usually be found hustling away promoting this or that, sometimes for himself, sometimes for the community.

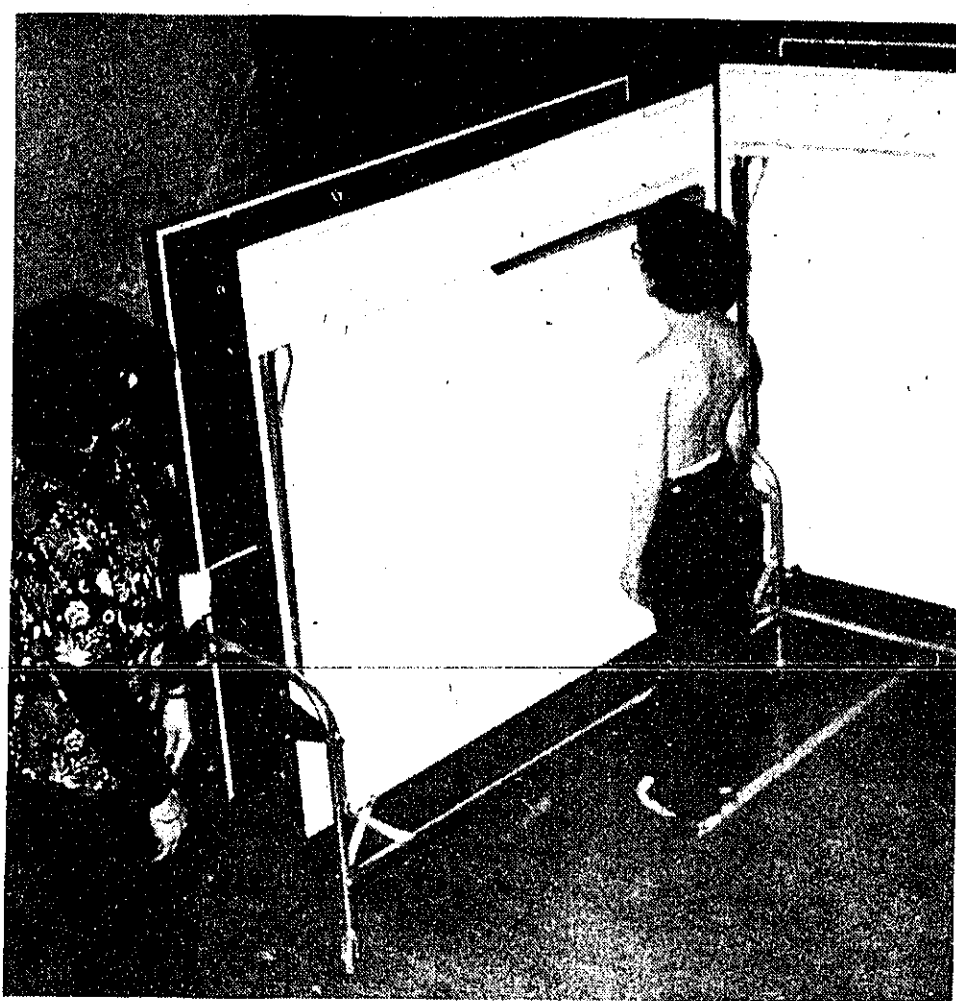
Monday he was out digging away for the community. His concern this week is the upcoming Chamber of Commerce banquet, March 22.

Tell the people that the proceeds for the event will be used to help defray expenses for the 4th of July celebration and that anybody can go.

Tickets are \$10 for the dinner and everybody is welcome. Tickets are at Krizmans, Konrads, both Cass City drug stores and Albee's.

The odds are great, very great against it, but it's conceivable that Cass City could be playing in the state finals of the basketball tournament that same night.

If that should happen I'd bet a cookie that the dinner would be postponed. I'd bet another cookie that Marv Winter, who owns the Colony House where the event is scheduled, would be one of the first in line to get a ticket to the game.



SPINAL CHECK -- School nurse Lynn Babich checks a Cass City Intermediate student for possible scoliosis, lateral curvature of the spine. She and the other school nurse, Janet Bixler, will complete screening of more than 800 4th-8th graders by the end of next week. At about the two-thirds mark, fewer than 20 had been referred to doctors for further examination. Scoliosis can be treated without surgery if detected at an early age.

Rita Tyrrell now a volunteer in Kenya

Rita Tyrrell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Tyrrell of Huron Line Road, Uby, returned home from Belize, Central America, Feb. 17, to spend a week with her parents.

Rita worked in Belmopan, Belize for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer with the 4-H programs. She acted

as assistant national 4-H supervisor working with the Ministry of Social Service under Elaine Middleton, social development officer.

Rita helped to supervise seven staff members and worked closely with Belizean staff at the National 4-H Training Center helping Belizean youth to gain more

knowledge in agriculture and leadership skills.

Her experience proved to be exceptionally worthwhile, both professionally and personally.

Rita left Tri-City Airport Feb. 25 for Philadelphia and went by bus from Philadelphia to New York. She left New York Feb. 28 and arrived in London, England, on the 29th. She departed March 1 for Nairobi, Kenya, Africa.

Rita will be attending a 3½ month intensive training program in cross cultural, language and technical skills, after which she will begin working with the rural women's extension program in Kenya. She will be in that country as a Peace Corps volunteer for two years.

Rita will be teaching gardening, nutrition and other general home economic skills.

Rita is a 1971 graduate of Uby High School. She attended Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, graduating in December, 1976 with a degree in home economics and sociology.

The
Haire
Net



"If It Fitz. . ." Ralph would understand

By Jim Fitzgerald

I should take my friend Ralph to lunch. He would understand that I am a patriotic American even though I didn't see one minute of the Winter Olympics on TV and didn't know the United States beat the Russians at hockey until almost two days after the game. (Is it true that, as a result of the defeat, Russia has recalled all of its hockey players from Afghanistan?)

It is time for a confession. Often I have written about my friend Ralph as though he were one person. Actually, since 1977 there have been two Ralphs. One of them was really a man I'd never met, Franklin Donegan of Bloomfield Hills.

Donegan had some thoughts he wanted to see in print, but he didn't want any personal publicity. So he mailed the thoughts to me and suggested that, if I used them in a column, I could pin them on my old friend Ralph. Why not? The original Ralph would never know the difference because he never reads newspapers. He just sits in saloons and tells everyone what is wrong with the world. I often sit next to him, which is how we became friends. He knows I work for a newspaper, but he thinks I deliver it.

So, the Ralph who would understand about my not watching the Olympics on TV is Franklyn Donegan. During the past three years he sent me dozens of letters from which I quoted many erudite thoughts. His last letter complained about the changes in our life-style caused by television. He was also upset by typewriters and electronic calculators.

"I admit it's a lot easier for a kid to sink into his coccyx, flip to a channel by remote control and drowse through a sitcom than it is to hike to the library or bookstore, make a literary decision and turn the pages of a heavy book," Donegan wrote.

"I'll also concede that the use of a typewriting machine (electric, of course) makes communications more legible if less personal. The only need for penmanship today is to endorse checks and sign your Visa receipt. Never mind if Messrs. Spencer and Palmer are rotating in their crypts.

"And electronic calculators make the multiplication tables and long division unnecessary, let alone algebra, fractions and calculus. They also come in pocket size, so you can take them to restaurants to check checks or to racetracks to total totes.

"Far be it for me to stand

in the way of progress, but I can't help feeling something valuable is being lost in the enjoyment of fine prose and poetry, the beauty of fine handwriting and the satisfaction of balancing your checkbook manually."

Obviously, Franklyn Donegan wouldn't think I'm a communist for not watching the United States hockey team win the gold medal. He would understand how a person might prefer something else to watching a game on TV. A person might prefer making a literary decision. A person might even prefer writing a poem explaining why it helps the cause of world peace to play games with Russia in the winter but not in the summer. Myself, I preferred going to a movie.

As I said, I should take Donegan to lunch, meet him face-to-face for the first time, and seek conversation from someone who won't accuse me of being disloyal to Kate Smith. In fact, I should have taken my friend Franklyn to lunch many months ago to thank him for sending me good ideas to pin on my friend Ralph. But I never did.

The other day, a phone caller told me several things I hadn't known about my friend Franklyn. He was retired, in his '70s, and very sick for the past few months. And on Feb. 6, he died.

The phone caller said Franklyn Donegan had enjoyed it when I quoted him and called him my friend Ralph. It made me feel good to hear that. But I'd feel a lot better if I had invited him to lunch at least once. I know I should have. I'll always know that.

The next time I sit next to the original Ralph in a saloon, I'll tell him what's

wrong with the world is there's no Olympic event that awards a gold medal for being kind to someone before it's too late. Ralph will tell me to go peddle my papers.

OUT OF TOUCH

Nine times out of ten the person who is blind to his faults can't hear his conscience either.

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Did you read the story that broke Monday about the lawyer that was paid \$100 for each of three trips he took to Southeastern Michigan Prison in Jackson to visit clients who were never jailed there? He was assigned to the case as a public defender, paid for by tax dollars.

That was a front page story of great interest to any reader.

It compares to stories coming out during war years. Stories that detailed the heroic efforts of one or a small group of soldiers.

You can relate to that. But what any small group does has no practical effect on what happens in the war. But big battles are too remote, too impersonal to make really good stories.

It's the same way with the story about the public defender. What he did was small potatoes in the larger picture.

In our system anyone can sue. Lawyers take cases on a contingency basis. If the client collects, they collect. If they don't, the lawyer works for nothing.

On the surface that appears fair to all concerned. The lawyer gambles his time against a possible substantial reward.

What many never stop to think about is that while the lawyer with the plaintiff gets paid only if he wins, the lawyer with the defendant gets paid, period.

In practically all auto

injury claims and many other types of civil actions that means that cost is paid by insurance companies. And guess who pays the insurance companies.

So even if you win, you lose. The court can assess costs on the plaintiff, providing the party has anything to assess.

There's no way that it won't take days and days of the time of all parties concerned, regardless of the merits of the case. No one pays for that.

Certainly everyone is entitled to a day in court. Few of us would change that.

What's needed is a way to eliminate "stab in the back" cases where a suit is filed in the hopes that a modest settlement would be cheaper for the defendant than going to court.

It goes without saying that this is easier to say than do.

There's one way that might be effective. That's to make the attorney share the expense of a civil damage suit if he loses the case and is directed to do so by the judge or the jury hearing it.

That would effectively deter nuisance cases that clog the courts and up the cost of insurance. It would do what "no-fault" insurance was designed to do and didn't.

It might just help hold the line a little in the hike of premium payments that are becoming more and more of a burden to the motoring public.

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