

THE SLOT MAN

Corinna Viglacci

This is more a story than a column. But it is a true story concerning the continuing education of newspaper editor.

It began with the story in a recent Democrat and Chronicle revealing that the Geneva School Board had defeated a proposal to make Martin Luther King's birthday on Jan. 15 a school holiday. This despite apparently strong support for the idea from the school superintendent, League of Women Voters, and a petition signed by 318 persons.

The story quoted the school board president as saying, "I think we can provide a better educational experience for all children by having assemblies and planned activities within the school, rather than simply give these kids an excuse to have a day off."

Now I think Martin Luther King's birthday should be a holiday. He stood up for proper rights for a segment of our population; he resisted violence during violent times; he was martyred for a cause.

Furthermore, I think he is a hero for both blacks and whites and a holiday for all would be appropriate. I didn't like to hear that instead of a day off, kids should have assemblies on the subject of the man and his deeds. After all, schools have Washington's birthday off and there is still plenty of time for appropriate programs.

I immediately planned an editorial on the subject. Luckily 20 years in this business has taught me the worth of caution when getting into heated issues.

I knew that public and Catholic schools in the city of Rochester have the day off. I thus assumed that probably all other cities in the diocese did likewise. I checked. Ithaca public schools have the holiday. No holiday in Auburn. Elmira public schools have the holiday, but not the Catholic schools.

It began to surface that the Geneva decision was by no means an isolated one.

I checked with our diocesan superintendent of schools, Father Daniel Brent, for background. He explained that school boards have problems indeed with holidays. That public schools must put in a certain amount of

days a year to get state aid. And that with our unpredictable weather this is a hard nut.

True, but what about Washington's birthday (this now had become a passion)?

Father Brent noted that it is legally a holiday so schools have no choice. He also explained that it is not a bad idea to have programs in school on such illustrious men instead of holidays, and that Catholic schools were shifting to this approach concerning Feast Days.

All along, I know that I could write nothing without talking with Sam Passalacqua, the Geneva school board president.

"Was the story in the D and C correct? Were you quoted accurately?"

Yes.

But as the conversation continued, I realized that Passalacqua had many more thoughts than the one that appeared in a too-brief story.

He, too, believes that Martin Luther King is a hero for both whites and blacks and should be so honored. He feels that a day off from school does not accomplish this but that the kids just scatter, and the white children would merely see it as a holiday for the blacks' hero. Passalacqua feels that the whites would benefit more from the assembly program in school approach.

Next came my Washington question.

If Martin Luther King Day were declared a national holiday we'd have no choice on that either, he said. Furthermore if Washington's Birthday was taken off the holiday list, the school board would consider the same way of honoring the first president.

Passalacqua went on to say that he has urged that more black studies be included in school curriculum and that such things should be done on a day-to-day basis rather than just once a year.

So there, Mr. Ready to Fly Off the Handle! Take that! You and your inflammatory editorial!

But I am stubborn. I still think Jan. 15 should be a holiday — and a national one.

Y-O-W Pilgrimage Set in Geneva

Geneva — Twenty-two Catholic parishes, from Yates, Ontario and Wayne counties will participate in a Holy Year Pilgrimage in Geneva on Tuesday, Oct. 22. A public procession of faith will form at St. Stephen's Church on Elmwood Avenue at 7 p.m. and proceed on foot to St. Francis de Sales Church on Exchange Street for a celebration of the Liturgy by Auxiliary Bishop Dennis Hickey at 8 p.m.

Pope Paul VI has designated 1975 as Holy Year and has requested that 1974 be a year of preparation for this spiritual event which occurs only once every 25 years. The Holy Year theme of "Reconciliation" with God, our neighbor and society at large, will be used by Bishop Hickey in the Eucharistic celebration.

Several hundred people are expected to take part in the procession which will leave St. Stephen's Church at 7:15 p.m. Many priests from the participating parishes, dressed in their liturgical robes, will lead their parishioners. The St. Mary's

School Band from Canandaigua will provide music.

The route of the procession will be east on Milton and Castle streets, north on Genesee Street and east on State Street to St. Francis de Sales Church.

The combined choirs of St. Stephen's and St. Francis de Sales Church's will perform during the concelebrated Liturgy.

EUTHANASIA PROGRAM

The Human development Committee of St. John the Evangelist, Greece, will present a program on euthanasia, Oct. 20, at 8 p.m. in St. John's school hall, 2400 Ridge Rd.

The audience will participate in panel discussions on the aspects of euthanasia after watching a 30-minute play, "You Didn't Know My Father" by Barbara Kay Davidson performed by the Rochester Community Players.

Right to Life Week Noted in Newark

Newark — A candlelight procession to St. Michael's Church highlighted the opening of Right to Life week in the area. The procession ended in an ecumenical prayer service presided over by Father Joseph

McDonnell, pastor of St. Michael's, and Weldon Jensen, elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), Palmyra.

and thoughts on the theme of Respect for Human Life. The service included singing and Scripture reading.

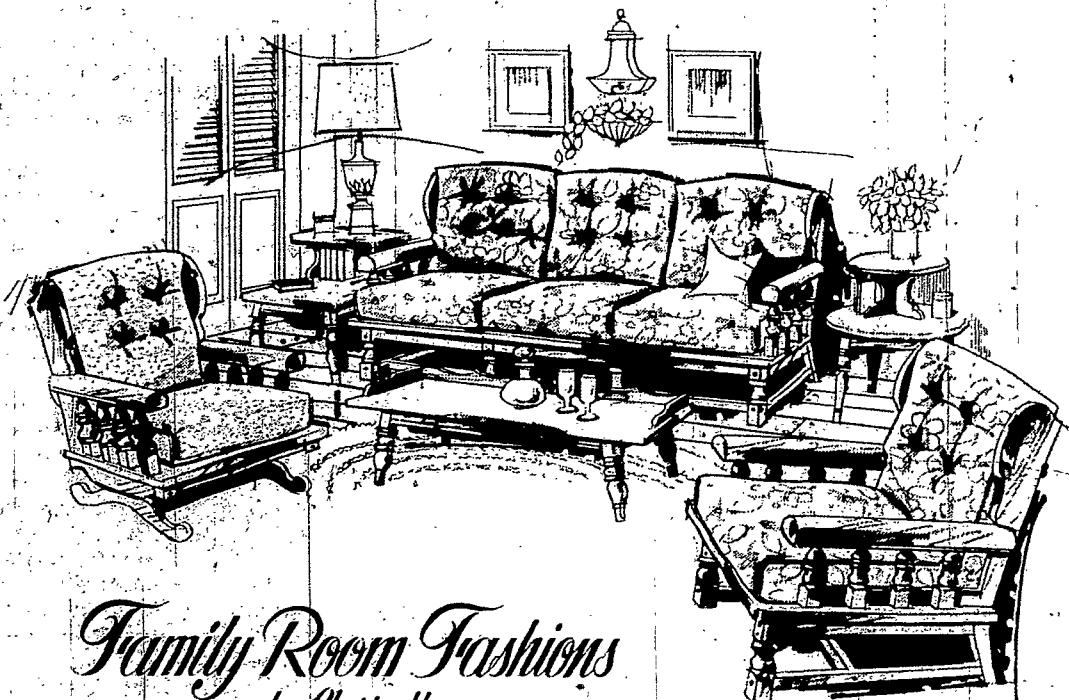
The clergymen offered prayers

The ceremony concluded with a blessing of young children.

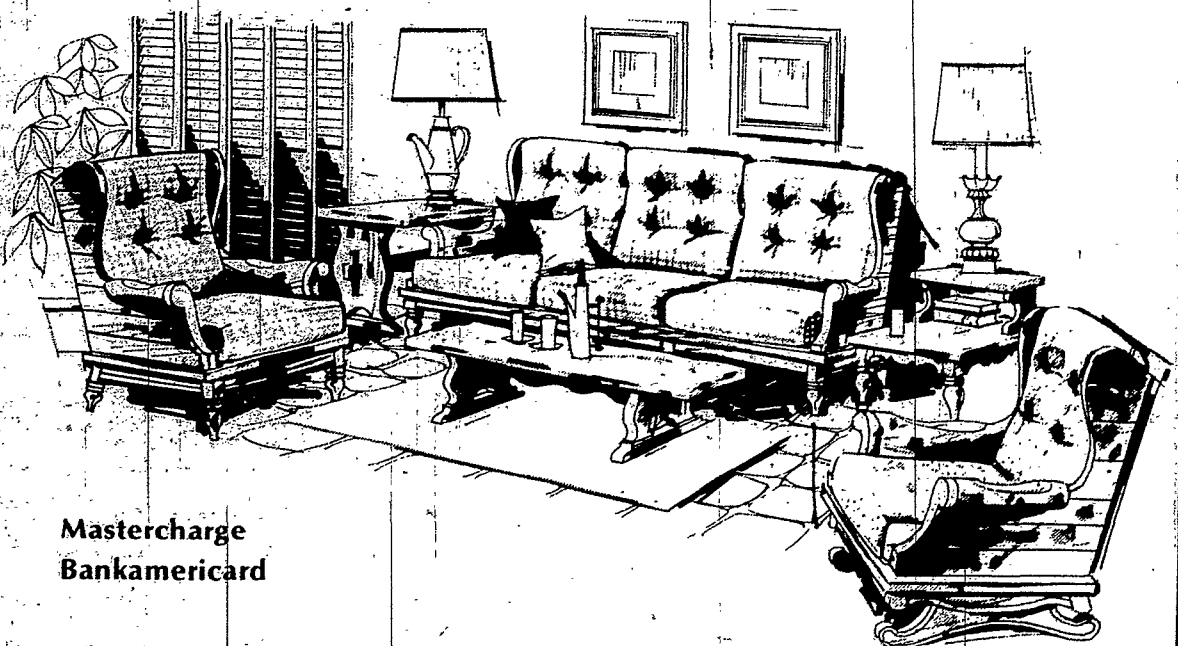
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