

Howell gets 'malled' and learns a couple lessons

Don't get me wrong, I used to love going to "The Mall."

As a kid the family would drive in from Holland with great expectations for the long-awaited trip to the shopping mecca — 28th and the Beltline. Sure, our black caps, plaid shirts, and wooden shoes would prompt stares, but the thrill of The Mall would kill the small-town insecurities. The kaleidoscope of crowds, commotion, and commerce was intoxicating.

However, that was then; this is now. It has been at least 15 years since a visit to The Mall had been for observing and taking in the environment. Dinner and a stroll. Harmless, right?

An evening drive from Heritage Hill to The Mall is always fun, and the 30 minutes spent crawling along 28th was made even interesting by counting the inane "Baby on Board" stickers.

Parking the usual 200 yards away, the jaunt to the temple doors was quickened by the falling rain and sadistic bumper-car parkers.



Sometimes He's Funny

by John Howell

Since I consider buttering toast cooking, a visit to a fine dining establishment topped the list. A gourmet restaurant was in order — one where you leave the tray after eating. The waiter chewed gum, had a nasty case of acne, and possessed the personality of a speed bump.

Passing up the beautiful vegetable plate (he might have arranged it with his hands) I enjoyed a sandwich and Coke. Unfortunately, the nearest libations were outside, through the rain and across 200 yards of dangerous mental illness. Even if my meal was less than perfect, it's important to remember that schizophrenia beats dining alone.

Why is it all three bookstores have the same books on the bargain table? WWII bombers, wild geese of Cleveland, and the complete unabridged works of John Calvin.

Clothing stores are the most abundant at The Mall, and I'm sure that the styles and colors are the latest. But since I base my fashion taste on what doesn't cause a rash, not much time or cash passed.

There were speciality shops for specialties I didn't

know existed, entire florist stores made out of plastic, and compact disc outlets where a record album is considered positively barbaric.

The gift registry at a very highbrow department store featured a self-serve computer to aid you in difficult (and expensive) choices. The clerks were less than impressed that I thought gift giving just wasn't the same since "Spencer's" closed. I figure newlyweds deserve a whoopie cushion.

It's fascinating to watch the kids at The Mall. Parents struggling to cope — must be like having a bowling alley in your head. I learned to never raise your hand to a child. It leaves the mid-section unprotected.

Walking back to the car, through the rain, and dodging sadistic drivers, I realized two things: You can't relive childhood thrills, and don't leave your lights on.

John Howell hosts the morning show on WGRD-FM.

Veterans Day dinner scheduled in Byron Center

A Veteran's Day dinner is being planned for area vets on Wednesday, Nov. 11, in Byron Center.

Last year, which was the first year for the annual event, more than 50 veterans from three families were

together," he said. "There are a lot of veterans around Byron Center and Grand Rapids and they should be remembered for their patriotism and heroism."

"I met a lot of people in the service," he added.