



**JIM FITZGERALD**

## Open spaces testify to state's true richness

**A**s I was writing a check for my 1992 state income tax, I looked out my living room window to admire how wealthy I am. As a Michigan taxpayer, I'm so rich I can afford to own a large truck for no other purpose than to park it diagonally.

Ironically, I was looking at the closed Lafayette Clinic building, half a block from my home on the east edge of downtown Detroit. It's ironic because the clinic used to treat mental patients, and looking at it makes me crazy.

Gov. John Engler closed the state's only psychiatric research facility in October to save money. At the time, I admitted having gained no special expertise concerning the 127-bed clinic's value while walking my regular shortcut through its driveway on my way to work and back. I was willing to consider Engler's economic arguments for moving the patient and research capabilities elsewhere.

My protest was aimed at the state's crowbar methods. Some evicted patients were treated more like freight than people. One of them said she and about 30 others "almost felt like hostages . . . going to Iran." There was surely a better way to get the job done, and Engler should have found it.

### Making the best of a sad situation

Anyway, the clinic is now just one more abandoned, boarded-up building in a city full of them; a useless monument to thrift — and to paradox. The life has gone out of my shortcut.

For a while, however, I could see one good result of the closure.

Previously, the clinic's parking lots had been overcrowded with the cars of employees and visitors. Some cars were parked on the sidewalk, despite signs prohibiting it. Other signs forbid parking in the best spots unless you were Dr. Important. The designated fire lane usually was clogged in defiance of posted restrictions.

But now there was no one inside, and all those free empty parking spaces outside. Workers in the nearby Wayne State University pharmacy building and Blue Cross & Blue Shield headquarters noticed. I've often seen them drive around and around several blocks, waiting for a free, no-limit space to open up at the curb. Now there was room for around 200 of them at the clinic, and they were quick to move in.

That's great, I thought. Those parking spaces belong to the taxpayers, the parkers are taxpayers, so why shouldn't they get their money's worth out of the clinic lots, rather than let them remain as useless as the clinic.

No, no, that would be too fair and economical, ruled some unknown state bureaucrat. After a few

# GAYS MARCH TO BAN BIAS



A couple embraces as others watch the march. Some partners embraced or touched in an



# Parcells celebrating musical success

**F**red Parcells skipped his graduation ceremony from Grosse Pointe South high school; he let them mail him his diploma instead. The way he saw it, the school had never been supportive of his ambitions.

"They didn't take too kindly to me wanting to be a musician," says Parcells, now 38 and playing trombone and tin whistle in the New York-based band Black 47. "You go to a high school counselor and tell them that, and they're shocked: 'You mean you're not going to be a doctor or a lawyer?'"

Parcells is having the last laugh. Black 47, formed in 1989 by Irish songwriter **Larry Kirwan**, has a big MTV hit with "Black Celi" and is getting write-ups from Rolling Stone to Time. Kirwan's

songs are provocative, political and wry, dealing with topics such as the Irish potato famine and class warfare. The musical fare is equally startling, ranging from raps to reels.

A long residency at the New York club Paddy Reilly's earned

the group a well-heeled following — "**Bill Murray** was a great guy," Parcells says — but with a major label contract, Black 47 is taking its sonic stew worldwide, including a show at 8 tonight at Industry in Pontiac.

"I've been playing horn for 20 years, and I'm not used to getting tons of

attention," says Parcells, who still comes home to visit his family. "It is weird sometimes, but I'm happy just working on my music and doing my job."

By Gary Graff



**Parcells: Lukewarm memories of Grosse Pointe South.**