

TIGERS WIN HOME OPENER, 10-9

## A FULL REBIRTH

*Even Sparky sees something is sprouting*

The old desk was gone. It was a dark wooden thing, with coffee stains, scratches and a drawer that didn't work. If you pulled that drawer out, it fell in your lap. Never failed. Finally, after many years, Sparky Anderson unscrewed the handle. I guess he got tired of bruises on his knees.

Still, year after year, that desk was there, in the manager's office of the Tiger Stadium clubhouse. It held Anderson's coffee cup, his lineup cards, his plate of spaghetti after the games, the ashtray for his

pipe — which, if you ask me, is how the desk got so scratched up, Sparky banging his pipe on it all the time.

But on Tuesday morning, the first home game of the 1996 season, the old desk was gone. So

was the wood paneling that made Sparky's office feel like a card room in the back of a pool hall. Gone, too, was a needlepoint portrait that hung on the wall, and the sign that read "Leave me alone, I'm having a crisis."

And gone was Sparky. There was a new man in his place — a younger, blond-haired, former major league star, who had redecorated the room into something from the '90s, clean white walls and a black metal desk with a gray-flecked Formica top.

Things change.

"Is today the opener? That's right, it is," Anderson said, sounding like a grandfather, when reached early Tuesday at his home in Thousand Oaks, Calif. "I forgot. I'll tell you what, the sun is shining out here, I got a big glass of fresh

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**MITCH ALBOM**



On his fifth birthday, Angelo-Paul Walker rides father Carl's shoulders to his first Detroit Tigers game Tuesday. The home team won, 10-9, on a day that saw snow flurries.

DAVID P. GILKEY/Detroit Free Press

### Thanks, big guy!

Cecil Fielder hits a grand slam and Charlie Vincent welcomes him back. Page 1D.

### Quite a game

John Lowe reports on all the action and how the Tigers held on. Page 1D.

### Photostory

Fans give the Tigers a warm reception and swarm for autographs. Page 6F.

## Women tell of attacks at Mitsubishi

### U.S. sues over sex charges

BY MIKE ROBINSON  
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Federal officials on Tuesday accused a Japanese automaker of allowing sexual harassment on an "outrageous scale" at an Illinois assembly plant.

The lawsuit contends as many as 700 women were subjected to groping and sexual remarks, creating a "hostile and abusive work environment" that went unchecked for years at the Normal, Ill., plant of Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing of America Inc.

The lawsuit, filed under the 1991 Civil Rights Act, seeks millions of dollars in compensatory and punitive damages. It could provide hundreds of current and former Mitsubishi workers with up to \$300,000 each if the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission proves in court that a pattern of sexual harassment existed.

Such damages as well as the number of women involved could make it the largest sexual harassment suit ever filed by the panel, EEOC officials said.

They said the next largest was last year's \$1.85-million settlement in a suit against Del Laboratories of Farmingdale, N.Y., in which the company's chief executive was accused of engaging in lewd and abusive behavior for years. Del Laboratories denied wrongdoing.

The Mitsubishi suit said the breasts, buttocks and genital areas of female assembly line workers were groped and fondled, obscene remarks were made and sexual graffiti covered walls.

EEOC officials said an air hose was fired between the legs of one worker. They said it was unclear if she was injured.

Commission officials said some women resigned in the face of such humiliating conditions and, thus, were effectively fired.

"This case should ... send the strong message that sexual harassment

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## 4 Catholic parishes plan a new school

BY JACQUELYNN BOYLE  
Free Press Staff Writer

When their daughter Elizabeth was born four years ago, Kathryn Kristoff and her husband, Mike Mitchell, knew they wanted her to attend a Catholic school, just as they had.

But their parish, St. Kenneth in Canton Township, had no school.

Kristoff figured they'd have to pay out-of-parish rates at a nearby school. But then she heard through a neighbor that all Catholic schools were jam-packed and had long waiting lists.

Now, Kristoff and Mitchell, along with several other Catholic families, hope they can launch the first Catholic school to be built in metropolitan Detroit in 30 years. The school they are proposing initially would serve four township parishes.

"It's never had anything to do with the quality of public schools. We live in a very good area as far as schools go. It's definitely the religious part of it. I want religion on a daily basis at home as well as school," Kristoff said, adding that most of the 62 families who have expressed interest in the proposed school feel the same way.

Under the plan developed with the Archdiocese of Detroit, the school would serve kindergarten through eighth grades. It would be built at Resurrection parish, on Warren Road just west of Beck Road, but the school would be regional, run by St. Kenneth, Resurrection, St. John Neumann and St. Thomas a'Becket.

The most unusual aspect of the

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## Man living in poverty had millions

BY JEFF MARTIN  
Free Press Staff Writer

The man in the stained and well-worn coat kept boxes full of clothes piled dashboard-high in his 1975 Cadillac.

He spent his final days at Southfield's Red Roof Inn, his \$30-a-day room filled with more junk than his car. Irvin Abramson looked like a bum.

But when he died of a heart attack on his 82nd birthday last Wednesday, his secret emerged: He was a millionaire whose holdings have yet to be counted.

Hotel employees, who at first thought his torn and tattered belongings should be pitched into a nearby trash bin, were scratching their heads Tuesday.

And police for the first time confirmed the rumors: They did indeed find piles of stock wealth, which could be worth as much as \$20 million, in Abramson's room.

Police and Oakland County Probate Court officials fielded calls from several people claiming to be relatives. A few of the callers may be legitimate relatives, though very distant, said Southfield Officer Autumn

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■ **AUTO EXEC'S PAY** rose only modestly for 1995.

Although General Motors and Ford made billions last year, their boards restrained raises and bonuses. Full profit targets were not met. 1E.

■ **NEWSPAPER** bargaining resumes with a Teamster reduction in demands. 1E.

Age of criminals keeps dropping; where will they be in 10 years?

## Experts try to defuse juvenile crime bomb

BY LORI MONTGOMERY  
Free Press Washington Staff

WASHINGTON — Robert's criminal career began on a summer afternoon in 1994 when he set fire to a neighbor's garage. As the flames leaped to nearby buildings, witnesses saw him racing away, a cigarette lighter in his hand.

Since then, Robert has tangled twice with police, once for burglarizing a neighbor's home and most recently for stealing a \$150 CD player from a store shelf.

It's an awfully long record, given that Robert is only 7.

"Kinda scary, isn't it?" said Minneapolis prosecutor Janet Wiig, who discovered Robert (not his real name) while conducting a groundbreaking study of more than 100 children as young as 4 who have been referred to her office by police.

Robert was among an estimated 110,000 children under 13 arrested in 1994 for acts considered felonies. Of those, an estimated 11,700 were picked up for crimes against people — including 39 murders — a rate of violence that's been rising for more than two decades.



Betty Poole, a teacher's aide at Whaley Children's Center, talks with a child. The Flint staff tries to give kids as much attention as possible.

Traditionally, criminologists have ignored very young offenders — who represent a tiny fraction of all arrests — focusing instead on children 14 to 17.

But since 1985, the number of children under 10 in the United States has skyrocketed. Over the next decade, this baby boomlet will hit its crime-prone teens. With teen crime in the United States increasingly widespread and brutal, experts say these children represent a tick-

ing crime bomb that could bring an unprecedented wave of violence.

Even more frightening is the growing number of kids like Robert, who aren't waiting until they become teens to start their criminal careers.

"We're experiencing not only an increase in the numbers of children in the juvenile justice system, but they're young-

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### AT ISSUE

Violent crime by children under the age of 13 is increasing. The young offenders are part of a mini baby boom that will hit its crime-prone teen years within the next decade.

But child welfare experts say there are ways to prevent the anticipated wave of teen criminals, as well as characteristics that can help predict who is likely to become an offender. The keys: identifying problem kids at their first arrest and intervening to help them and their families.