

Sight is a precious gift for once blind woman

By CORINNE ABATT

Miracles is a word most of us know rather lightly. But Jean Brindley, Farmington Hills psychiatric social worker, uses the same word reverently as she tells the story of an unusual life.

She has experienced many miracles in her 46 years, and her story evokes a combination of chill and awe.

Mrs. Brindley was born Jean Sullivan in Minneapolis. Until the age of 18 she was a happy, quiet child with an older sister, lots of playmates and a warm family life.

Then she was struck by an undiagnosed illness that left her with chronic blindness, varying from long periods of legal blindness to partial (10 per cent) sight of light, dark and some shadowed images.

After a third corneal transplant in 1972 (two previous ones had failed), Mrs. Brindley sat on her bed in a New York City hospital.

The bandages had just been removed. The doctors made no promises. There was little or no pain. Mrs. Brindley was visiting with a Mrs. Daniels "who was a secretary at a hospital where I was a student, while working on my master's degree in social work at Columbia."

She recalls the moment. "I was talking and I turned my head toward her, and it was like a television coming into focus. Suddenly I saw her face and I said 'Danny, I can see you.' That was just the greatest thing. She is a beautiful, black woman and I don't think I could have had a better face to look at."

NOW WORKING for Anderson Counseling Associates of Farmington Hills, Mrs. Brindley will probably accept her \$6,400 vision as anything less than a miracle. "I had forgotten how water glasses and that the world is so shiny."

She saw the face of her son, Jimmy, who will be five this summer, after the 1972 operation and remembers telling him: "You know Mommy can see you now."

He coped easily with the miracle. "A child's whole world is miracles. In one day he dropped all of his behavior related to my blindness."

She smiles, saying it took longer for her husband, Tom, a portrait artist, to drop habits. He still occasionally looks for her arm to steer her through a crowd or remind her there are stairs ahead.

Live corneal transplants were used in the first two operations. In the third, a "plastic mushroom" was implanted in her eye.

Because of damage to her eye after the second operation, apart from operation, Mrs. Brindley began attending services at a monastery on Mt. Elliot in Detroit where healing miracles have been reported.

"I started going down there and praying," she says. "We'd always prayed, feel



JEAN BRINDLEY

ing doctors and prayer were the two most important things.

"The whole cornea healed over."

The way she met her husband and the birth of a beautiful, first child at age 41, Mrs. Brindley puts in the close-to-miracle realm.

Thomas Brindley carried a newspaper picture of his future wife and her guide dog, Jamie, for a year before he finally got around to calling her. He wanted to do a portrait of the dog.

When he did call the owner, a marriage counselor for Wayne County Circuit Court, a secretary liked the sound of his voice and put the call from the stranger through. He did a portrait of the dog from photographs and the oil is one of the couple's prized possessions in their home adjoining Wolverine Lake.

A second guide dog, Serra, is still with them and Mrs. Brindley reports he "finally accepted retirement very well."

There were many surprises when Serra was no longer needed.

"I expected to look just as I did 16 or 18 years ago when I looked in the mirror. But I didn't and that was a shock."

Her husband's face was less of a surprise.

"After all, if you love someone you are not all that dependent on how they look. But I would have known immediately who he was if he had walked into a room."

Seeing Detroit for the first time since the 1951 days of partial sight was an unforgettable, but depressing experience.

DURING THE riots Mrs. Brindley had an apartment in the city. She says she could see the fires in the distance as she stood on the roof of her building with friends. She could sense trouble all around her as she took her dog for an evening walk.

"You will never be able to look at downtown Detroit as I do. It's completely different from the '30s. Nobody in Detroit smiles anymore. There are winners and losers in

the streets and people sleeping in the doorways.

An incredible 16 days after her 1972 surgery, Jean Brindley was back at work. She says she had to because of the financial demands from the medical bills and trips to New York City for checkups and examinations.

She speaks of the dark years without rancor—from the day at 17 she was told she was at a sixth grade level to her undergraduate years at the University of Pennsylvania to graduate school at Columbia and her return to Detroit.

Many times she lived alone. Always she held responsible positions in the social work field. The harrowing experiences are related one after another—from mistaking the edge of a freeway for a sidewalk to being accosted on the streets.

She doesn't trust her story out for her clients unless there is a valid reason, but before she leaves it she says, "I know what anxiety is. I know what fear is. And another thing that nobody ever had to teach me is not to minimize someone's feelings."

More than anything else, Mrs. Brindley is a professional who is also a wife and mother. She speaks of her husband, his interests, career and how he designed their home on the lake. Then she talks of her son, his friends, his abilities and the happy incidents of their lives.

At Mercy High Archeological tricks treat students

By CORINNE ABATT

It isn't your usual type of athletic competition that takes place annually behind Mercy High School, Farmington Hills.

But there is a matching of wits and it does take some physical skills. The occasion is an archeological dig and the teams were made up of Latin students from Mercy High and Detroit Catholic Central.

This sophisticated intellectual game was dreamed up a couple of years back by Sister Marjorie of the Mercy High Latin department.

Each team invents a civilization—culture, religion, government, language and domestic life—makes artifacts and later buries the remnants in a large pit in the open ground behind the school.

LAST WEEK Mercy girls dug up the treasures buried by Detroit Catholic Central and vice versa.



Digging their way through the archeological competition are these Mercy High School students (from left) Mary Beth King, Patty Hackett and Marisa Petrella. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Even though burial was recent Sister Marjorie says, "There is still something very exciting about finding things."

As games go this is one that takes analytical and documenting skills, as well as digging muscles.

Sister Marjorie, relaxing after three hours in the field, smiled as she thought of the problems ahead for the Catholic Central students.

"They were digging on three levels but their great problem will be language. It is not English and it is not really interpreted. There is a bilingual diary that should supply them with major words so they can read the text they find."

Mercy students began to assemble their civilization last fall and called their make-believe people Ergs. They invented a language, Ergish, complete with grammar and a dictionary.

"You get a more credible culture if you have time to think about it," Sister Marjorie, an experienced archeologist, says. "We have to ask ourselves if the clothing fits with the moral and ethical values of our people. For instance, when we evaluate our findings we have to figure out the

basic tenets of the culture."

Even before the Mercy students had completed their dig, Sister Marjorie in true archeologist form was speculating on their finds. Their "archeological" finds had to be completely evaluated before any official conclusion was forthcoming.

The lower level finds were older than the first.

The older level things appear to have been damaged by fire. We found a sun cross, some dice (two bullet casing) and some documents.

The upper level contained some documents in English, a cassette tape, a horseshoe which would have been raised around a post and glass and pottery fragments.

She is less sure about the pottery and glass, which may be just rubbish that was already out there.

OFF THE TIP of her shovel, Sister Marjorie is guessing she and her students will be dealing with American plantation life circa 1872. A tornado that destroyed life is another educated guess.

Sister smiled, saying there was a large

pit and the Catholic Central students may have dug a smaller one. To take us out of the smaller one.

But that's part of the fun and the fun is in finding something. It's a big saw puzzle, thing. We know there's something about a boat—there's a boat involved but we aren't sure how yet.

Sister had hoped to take a group of students to Big Rapids this summer to dig at the site of Mercy Hospital, which burned in the latter part of the 18th century. Because of difficulties in finding housing for the students, the project was postponed but not indefinitely. She hopes to apply for a grant to dig it in the summer of 1977.

"I know the floor plan of the hospital, the site and the dimensions. I would like to explore the area of the steeple and the cemetery has never been looted and I would like to find that and the box inside."

These, she says, would belong to the local events, but certainly she would be allowed to have copies of the materials. The thought of such a project intrigues her. Just as in the dig last week it is the challenge of the puzzle that starts her going out the door, shovel in hand.



It's only temporary

Traffic in downtown Farmington came to a sudden halt for more than six hours Friday afternoon as construction workers laid a new surface on Grand River between Farmington and Drake roads. Rain threatened the com-

pany's project early in the day, but at last report later in the afternoon, "all systems were go" for the asphalt to be laid. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Water battle rages again

By MICHAEL CHARLES

Suburban officials will go to court Monday in an effort to roll back a 30 per cent increase in water rates imposed by Detroit Common Council six days ago.

"The plan is, we will probably initiate a legal action Monday, the 17th of May," said Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara last week.

"I'm very disappointed in the actions of the city council in Detroit," McNamara added. "We were almost confident it (the rate increase) would not pass."

Detroit attorney Bert Jargenke confirmed by has been retained by an ad hoc committee of 13 suburban city officials to consider possible legal action against the City of Detroit and the Detroit Metro Water Department, which proposed the rate boost in December.

THE COMMITTEE, will file suit in 19th and County Circuit Court naming the city, the common council and the DMRW as defendants, McNamara said.

It would be filed on behalf of the City of Pontiac, which asked the court to restrain the defendants from collecting the higher water rates, which were made retroactive to May 1 last week.

Committee members favor a legal remedy "which would support a rate increase which would be reasonable or fair. The increase isn't reasonable or fair," said Richard L. Graham, Troy's director of public works and a committee member.

A number of suburban governments have voted to tax themselves five cents per capita to pay for any legal action taken on their behalf.

McNAMARA, who has strongly opposed

any unilateral increase in Detroit water rates in the past, joined from the steering committee at a special meeting in Livonia three months ago.

In voting 6-3 in favor of the new rates last week, the Detroit council ignored the advice of its own director of research and analysis who supported a 30 per cent rate increase.

As adopted, the new rate will provide the DMRW with nearly \$18 million in additional water system revenues next year for capital improvements.

Detroit officials plan to spend more than \$100 million over the next five years to expand and update water transmission and pumping stations, to build a new water treatment plant and to replace obsolete facilities in the system, said Charles Scalen, director of the Detroit Board of Water Commissioners.

HIGH SCHOOL POSTER EXHIBIT AND CONTEST

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