

Suburban statistics reveal

Changing expectations boost divorce rate

By YVONNE B. DEVLIN

Divorce is on the increase and the times change so do our expectations and needs of our marriages, says Dr. Charles Meredith, a Farmington Hills counselor.

But of every four marriage licenses applied for in Oakland County in 1975, three divorces were either granted or filed for, according to census statistics. There were 4,673 marriages, 1,443 divorces and 4,811 filings.

"Divorce in our times is a symptom of changing expectations and the perception of current needs," says Meredith. The picture for 1976 doesn't look much different as 1,544 new divorces have been filed with the courts in the period from Jan. 1 to March 1. At the end of this quarter there are 17,477 divorce cases pending, are awaiting in court, according to the Oakland County Legal Department.

Divorce is meeting the needs that aren't met by one or the other, according to Meredith.

One person is trying to fulfill all the needs of the spouse and that is asking a whole lot, says Dr. Robert O'Neill, a Farmington Hills psychologist. The spouse is a companion, lover, best pal and buddy.

EVERY COUPLE DEFINES MARRIAGE differently and in a divorce the expectations of the marriage have either never been met or have diverged, he says. I can't speak for our grandfathers, but these were as unspoken as we are. But I know they didn't expect as much, says Meredith.

Divorce is easily obtained and almost approved by the courts, says O'Neill. The couple who's getting married knows that divorce is always possible and this can have an effect on the initial commitment.

"People don't get married with the attitude of a long-term relationship. Marriage is a less serious commitment," says John Messana, a Farmington Hills psychiatrist.

The changing economic structure, shifting roles, progressive disintegration of the family's structure and people decreasingly needing each other, are all contributing factors of the rising divorce rate, he says.

Divorced persons are also more acceptable as potential partners in a marriage, says Messana.

Women are now more capable of supporting themselves and pursuing careers, he says. They are less likely to remain

dependent on a dysfunctional marriage situation.

Mass media is supporting divorce and this becomes a pressure, says Gloria Stenewski, a Farmington Hills social worker. It has almost become a style or fad, she is going to do.

No fault law has made it easier to get a divorce because the problem doesn't have to be identified, she commented.

Over the last ten years marriage counseling has increased from 15-20 percent of his practice to 50-60 percent, says O'Neill.

It used to be that the wife would drag in her husband but now the wife as the instigator is declining, he says.

More than half of Meredith's patients have marital or family problems.

Blue Cross has accepted marital maladjustment as a legitimate category for payment in counseling services, he says.

For a long time no insurance company would pay for marital counseling and now Blue Cross is responding to the public need.

We used to get persons coming in one step from divorce for marriage counseling, but this is changing, says O'Neill. Younger couples are coming in with their marriages more intact and may only require six to eight sessions.

The number of persons going into marriage counseling pushes towards some clarification of the happy state of things and they really don't want it, he says.

About 25 percent of Messana's clients are there for marriage counseling.

MOST OF THE TIME, PEOPLE COME to us because they don't want a divorce, he says. After counseling some have decided to remain married and some continue plans for divorce.

We can't tell the people what to do, he says. We help them find meaning and reach some conclusions based on self-awareness and insight.

It is very difficult to come to the clinic at a late date for working out problems, says Drucilla Fletcher, a psychiatric social worker in Farmington Hills. The problems are deep and difficult to solve.

They have tried various ways to work things out on their own and have only worsened the problem by the time they get to a professional.

I cannot recommend divorce, she says. I just mirror the problem.

Sadly divorce is designed to solve the problem with the individual, says Ms. Stenewski. But after the divorce the problem still exists and continues into the next relationship.

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Divorce is the answer for some persons but only a small proportion, says O'Neill. Only when it was a mistake from the beginning.

Sometimes we do counsel a couple toward divorce if they have a destructive relationship, says Messana. But many marriages are relatively good and can be pulled together.

Going through divorce is like going through death, says Ms. Stenewski. There is a mourning process since it is the death of a relationship.

There is also anger, rejection, fear and blame, she says.

Where did I go wrong? And why did it happen to me? are the questions frequently asked, she says.

A woman may feel that if a husband has rejected her, will another man find her attractive, says Ms. Stenewski.

Women tend to put more personal identity into a marriage than men, she says. Men identify more with jobs and careers.

Some people drift apart without seeing the signs, says O'Neill. The children grow up and the nest empties, they are no longer professional parents.

They realize they haven't had an adult-to-adult conversation without external stimuli for 20 years, he says. The whole marriage may grind to a halt at this point.

Persons who legally divorce separate themselves emotionally long before the legal separation exists, according to Messana. The emotional break starts a whole variety of activities long before the actual verbal credence is established.

Sometimes the marriage lasts in a state of deterioration for a long period, he says.

There are many different ways persons may compensate to avoid divorce, says Meredith.

The man will invest more time in his

work perceiving rewards like an increase in pay or a promotion, he says. The question is, whether in the long run it is productive.

There are also extra-curricular activities ranging from barbershop singing to taking on a mistress, says Meredith.

Many men will spend more time with their children. This is very satisfying and immediately rewarding, says Meredith.

WOMEN COMPENSATE IN SOME OF THE WAYS men do. If she isn't working outside the home she may go back to work or school, he says.

There exists a plethora of good community type activities in the suburbs—from boy scouts to friends of the zoo, he says.

A woman who is primarily a homemaker is increasingly turning to the recreational community service type of thing.

Then there is compensatory behavior that is self-destructive, says Meredith. This includes using drugs, alcohol and shopping.

An increase in the usage of prescribed depressants—tranquilizers—in the culture for the past 10 years is part of this compensatory pattern.

After I divorced, I went through a series of syndromes, says Nancy Platt of Women Helping Women Inc. There was the initial shock and panic. Then relative readjustment and finally one year after the divorce I hit rock bottom.

People are surprised that these feelings are normal reactions, says Ms. Stenewski. They try to keep these feelings under control, but what they're thinking and feeling is perfectly okay.

It's good to work through the pain and find the layer of strength.

After the divorce, one must accept the reality of the finality of the broken relationship, says Ms. Fletcher.

Some people are so angry or bitter that

they're unable to accept the finality and move on to a healthy readjustment, she says.

To cope with divorce one must look at his own fears and deal with the grief, says Messana. Everyone has their own way of coping with loss.

Women don't know what to do during the divorce, says divorcee Jackie Steyer of Farmington. They paint a bleak picture. The courts and attorneys are there to make sure there is something for the children.

It's lack of information, adds Ms. Platt. I would've gotten divorced before I did but I was worried about living in the street.

The last advice I can give someone who's going through a divorce is to take it one step at a time, she says. Don't look at the overwhelming future because it's too burdensome and difficult to cope with.

Think about today, says Ms. Steyer. If you sit back and look at the whole thing it'll knock you down.

If the pressure becomes too much, Ms. Platt urges the person not to shy away from psychological counseling.

There are walk-in crisis centers at both Providence and Mt. Sinai Hospital where the fees are adjusted on a sliding scale.



Nine Farmington Hills volunteer firemen washed out the gas tank of a 1973 Ford Mustang last Thursday evening after two cars were involved in a rear-end collision at Orchard Lake north of Twelve Mile. Fire officials reported the passengers were uninjured and the gasoline didn't ignite. (Staff photo by Craig Newman)

Shaw tackles problems of waste

By HY SHENOMAN

Talking with Robert Shaw, DPW supervisor for Farmington Hills, one learns how wasteful people are and how poor handling of their waste can affect health.

When Shaw started his job two years ago, he found a real challenge in trying to make DPW improvements with insufficient equipment.

Farmington Hills residents were taxed \$4.40 per month and still some residents didn't have their refuse collected.

But Shaw managed to solve the problem. The first thing I did was organize a solid waste program, Shaw explains.

Like the cities of Livonia, Westland and Southfield, I decided to take bids from private companies.

My first assignment was to accept the best bid. Five good, solid bids ranged from \$5.40 to \$8.30 per resident. Our contractor has seven pickup trucks where garbage and trash is crushed. Each truck is manned by two workers, he continues.

The contract provides Farmington Hills with a regular pickup truck equipped with a radio that is connected with the city-based transmitter.

THE CITY GETS about four collection complaints daily and, in turn, the city sends the refuse company, requesting them to follow up on the problem.

The most common complaint brought has to do with the curb too late for the pickup, but the city also gets complaints that scrap isn't picked up promptly.

There is only one scrap truck available to do the job for the entire community as scrap iron truck picks up on cans.

swing sets, old refrigerators and stoves. The real slow down comes during snow storms when traffic gets paralyzed, he says while explaining the reason for the delay.

We still pick up old newspapers for recycling reasons. Scrap dealers paid about \$80 per ton, but now it has dwindled to \$2 per ton. So few want to bother with it, he continues.

We still are recycling glass and aluminum cans as part of the ecology program. With 36 square miles to provide rubbish collection for, Farmington Hills residents wanted better service that they didn't receive as a township prior to 1973.

So when Shaw took over the DPW reins, when Farmington Hills became a city, he made sure the Hills organized a good refuse pickup service.

A VETERAN in the DPW maintenance field for 14 years, Shaw has worked for Livonia, Inkster and Novi, gaining experience that has helped him cope with problems in Farmington Hills.

He looks forward to the day when there is a major breakthrough in the methods of disposing rubbish.

An incinerator costs three times as much as a landfill to dispose the same amount of material. So incinerators aren't the answer, he says.

The answer, he says, "is difficult to find. If I had the answer, I'd be a millionaire. Let me tell you about Europe where material is a real scarcity. The Swedes operate a type of incinerator which heats the whole house like central heating.

The work is done in the streets and it even melts the snow," he adds.

Describing other plants, Shaw says that a lot of money was put into a Florida plant which salvages paper, cans, mugs, glass and grinds it all up into bag groups. It adds treated sugar and farmers are using the rubbish grounds as fertilizer.

We Americans are very wasteful, he concludes. We use wood pellets and throw them away. We bury in cans metal and are wasting newspapers, cardboard

Conference deals with single parents

A conference for Single Parents and their children will be at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., July 10.

Parents will have a chance to exchange ideas, solve problems, attend workshops and obtain information about community service agencies.

Parents are encouraged to bring their children. A program for children of all ages is planned. It will include art projects, a presentation of stories by the Orchard Ridge Touring and Chamber Theater for Children and supervised indoor and outdoor recreation.

A special workshop for children to share their own experiences as family and community members is planned for the afternoon.

The all day event is especially for single parents but all parents and children are welcome. Participants are encouraged to bring their own picnic lunch. The program is free.

and all kinds of sheet metal. This amounts to bag money and what a shame to waste it.

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Fixing up

Work on downtown Farmington's former eyesore on Grand River nears completion as brick layers construct a new front for the old

Medallion Pool building which will become the new Village Outlet mini-mall containing five specialty shops. (Staff photo by Cyd Abett)

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