

# editorial opinion

## Tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

### Finding a home in a garden

During a lull in the conversation the other night, a couple of friends and I remembered that Easter was almost upon us again.

One of my friends let down the child's skirt she was sewing and leaned back in her straight backed chair still looking straight ahead.

"You know, we really ought to do something for Easter," she said after a moment, warming up to her not always totally successful but almost always fascinating plans.

We batted around ideas for having an old-fashioned dinner, visiting our families and visiting the greenhouse at Belle Isle.

At the mention of Belle Isle, a long forgotten memory came to the fore of my grandmother at Easter time looking over lilies and fussing over clearing the garden.

Watching her work over her flowers usually managed to fascinate me when I was little.

SHE would bend over each little seed with as much care as a mother giving her baby its first bath. With a trowel in hand, Busia (grandmother in Polish) would efficiently, determinedly but tenderly lay each new seed into the ground.

Every so often, the stout little figure in the rose-printed apron would stand straight, let her arms hang by her sides and, still holding the trowel, look off into the distance. It was her way of taking a rest. I can still see that slow, dignified straightening of the back in my own mother as she gets nearer and nearer to the age my grandmother was when I was a child.

From the time I was a small child, I knew how well my grandmother had earned her flower garden and how far she had traveled to find it.

And as I now share the age my grandmother was when she decided to look for her own patch of soil, I begin to identify more with that quiet dignity that she owed me when I was a child.

My grandmother was in her early 20s when she looked around her native village in what was then Austria-Hungary and decided she wasn't going to stay there. She left the rural comforts of her mother and sisters and took a job that was open to any farm girl. She cleaned the home of an administrator for the railroads.

IN RETURN for seeing that the family's sheets were starched and crisp; their floors swept free of dirt and their dishes neat in cupboards, the master of the house gave her room, board, a small salary and a railway pass.

The pass allowed her to travel anywhere in the country. In the 1900s, for a girl whose vision of the world was based on watching men work in the fields and women dry their best skirts by drawing them over barrels, a trip to anywhere in the country was a tempting treat for the weekend. Each free day, she went into the cities, looking at the tall, old buildings. Rows and rows of buildings stood so close together, it was as if they were sup-

porting each other to remain standing in their old age.

But the more she looked over the old buildings, the cities with cobblestone streets and the busy crowds trying to stay on the narrow walkways, the desire to move on grew in her. She began to save her money to come to America.

It seemed like such a logical step.

Eventually, the time came for her to leave. She had gone back home for the last time; for one final look at her family.

"Why don't you stay?" her mother asked.

PROBABLY she asked herself that same question as the days spent in travel went on. She met a family who was fortunate enough to have relatives waiting for them in New York when they arrived. They befriended her and gave her a place to stay her first night in a strange country.

Patience she trudged through customs on Ellis Island, explaining to the officials that she wasn't French. She had the dark eyes and darker hair of a gypsy.

Finally, after a day filled with the inane and the unfamiliar, she was given a chance to rest for the night on the dining room table of a crowded apartment. She left early the next morning, found a job cleaning hotel rooms, which in return gave her room and board. I don't think she ever really looked back.

When she married, it was to a boy from her village who had followed her to New York then to Chicago. She decided her family would be American, but she herself never gave up some of the customs and habits of the old country. She laughed at a few of them.

Her memory of her wedding was walking to church past rows and rows of houses, with neighbors leaning out on their fences shouting greetings, advice and best wishes. It was an old-country wedding in a new land. She always laughed at the contrast and shook her head over the fuss.

WHEN she managed to have her own plot of land to grow her garden, each season would find her outside putting around her flowers. She had earned it.

Now I have a stake in my own house with bare wood floors and a bay window that looks out onto a quiet city street. And when I first walked through it, I noted the wide windows in the kitchen with enough room for flowers, just as my grandmother kept over her sink. In the small backyard, the owner promised us a spring time whiff of hyacinths and I finally understood what my grandmother was doing by tenderly keeping her garden for so many years.

She wanted to remind herself of that nice warm feeling gardeners get on a spring day. Sometimes in books, where events happen with too much drama, the writer will give that feeling a name. Homecoming.

## Off the Walls

### Winter blahs, flu blues

The topic for today is depression. The kids and I have had variations of the flu for almost a month now. My husband has to go out of town on business, leaving me alone to fend for myself against the Ramper Room Set all day and listen to the house settle all night. And I think I've gained five pounds.

If anyone can come up with a better reason than that for cultivating a textbook case of the winter blahs, you have all my sympathy.

Right now I have this image of us, come spring, emerging from the house with white pasty faces, black circles around our eyes, squinting at the bright sunlight like bears leaving their winter caves. It's bad enough being cooped in like this, but when it's topped off by generous doses of dysentery, well, I don't mind saying this is really the pits!

It's terrible what the flu can do to one's morale in the middle of a bleak February. My moods begin to take on the complexion of the gray, gray sky. I contemplate throwing the patio doors open to the elements, even though it is five below outside, because I'm starved for fresh air. I start daydreaming about picnics and beaches and even yearn to see a mosquito.

Even though my poor little body is racked by aches and pains and a gen-



By NANCY WALLS SMITH

eral feeling of winter malaise, it's still "business as usual" for those of us who have chosen housewifery as our career. Our contracts have no allowances for sick days.

Oh, we have days when we are sick alright; it's just that no one acknowledges them.

If I could only get a doctor's certificate stating that changing one more stinky diaper could bring on terminal side effects.

Being sick used to be fun when I "worked" for a living. A simple call to

the office and the day was spent reading magazines, gazing dreamily over my box of tissues at silly game shows and vintage Bette Davis movies. The thrill of an oncoming cold is gone now that I know it only means I'll have to hold my breath whenever I'm around the kids so as not to contaminate them. Which doesn't give me a whole heck of a lot of breathing time.

Stuck in the midst of this gloomy winter, it's make the best of a bad situation, or go bonkers. Take your pick. Today I thought I'd give myself a treat and try to watch the afternoon movie on television. The boys were napping and the house was clean enough to pass general inspection (it never gets much cleaner than that). After watching about 15 minutes of "Caged," the gripping drama of a woman's prison in which Eleanor Fucker runs the gamut from a young innocent to a hard and bitter convict, I felt like running over to our picture window, pressing my face against the glass and screaming "Let me out! I promise I'll go straight! Please let me out!"

Perhaps it should be made law that only Doris Day movies are allowed to be shown in February. Or maybe we could just pass a resolution to forget February altogether, erase it off the calendar and just go right into March. Late March would be nice.

## How to get your news in the paper

When you submit information for an article in Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, keep in mind the following pointers. By heeding these recommendations, you will save delays and avoid errors.

- Be certain you give us complete information. It's better to submit too much information than too little.
- When an individual's name is to

be used in an article, be sure to give us the first and last name. For instance, you and the members of your church may know that Rev. Smith's first name is John, but our other readers may not.

- Be certain that the information is readable. Illegible information is the prime cause of errors in any newspaper.
- Be sure to include your own name

and phone number. If you have accidentally omitted information or if we cannot read your writing, we will have a means of checking.

- If you plan to submit a photograph with an article, be sure that it is a good one. A sharp black-and-white photograph is best, but even color photos will work if they are in focus and have good contrast.

## Citizens can win

### Invest in a good highchair

One of the most important purchases a family makes for their new infant is a highchair. From the time a child is about 6 months old until he is about 2 years old, this item is used several times each and every day.

Yet too often people forsake important safety and convenience features for a chair which "matches the decor."

In buying a high chair there are several things to consider: safety, comfort and price.

#### SAFETY

Make sure the chair seems sturdy to you. Check to see how well balanced the chair is and how far apart the legs are. However, even a sturdy chair can be tipped over if a child can push his feet off a wall or table.

All highchairs should have a safety belt, which will only insure a child's safety if used diligently. The most effective belt will hold a child securely around the waist so that he can not slip from under it. Some belts are more difficult to use than others. The easier the fastening process the more likely you will be to use the belt.

Look carefully to make sure the chair has no sharp edges or points that can prove dangerous to the child.

#### CONVENIENCE

When you look at highchairs imagine yourself with a baby in your arms.



By Zina Kramer

Think how you will maneuver the baby and the tray at the same time. Some trays must be removed with two hands and set aside while you put the baby in the chair. The tray which can be pulled out slightly by using one hand is more convenient.

The realities of feeding a small child also include the tremendous joy or pointing, dropping and messing with food. To help make your clean-up easier, a large wrap-around tray with a ridge around it is a wise purchase. While the wooden high chairs may be attractive, they are generally more difficult to clean, especially if the wood has cracked and food falls into the cracks.

The metal trays generally are smaller than the plastic ones, making your floor an easier target for baby's

leftovers. Metal trays may also prove to be noisier when your toddler learns the thrill of banging silverware on the tray.

#### COMFORT

Highchairs vary a great deal in the kind of padding they have. The wooden chairs may be a bit uncomfortable for your youngster, but you can purchase separately a pad to fit onto the chair.

Generally a more padded chair with a higher back should prove to be more comfortable.

Make sure you can adjust the tray in different positions. This can be a large factor in your child's comfort.

#### COST

Prices vary a great deal on highchairs. You can pick up some of the less expensive models for as little as \$10-\$12 on sale. The more sturdy, well-built chairs, with larger trays and more padding generally are in the \$20-\$40 category.

Wooden high chairs may be even more expensive. Prices on the same or similar highchairs vary from store to store, so it may be worth your while to shop around.

If you are lucky enough to find an experienced salesperson in this area, you will be still further ahead. Just make sure you ask the right questions and don't just be sold by good looks.

## from our readers

### Nuclear projects are dangerous monsters

Incredible—a recent newspaper article indicated: "Edison to resume 2 nuclear projects." Despite the inherent problems with radioactive type energy, Detroit Edison is blithely proceeding on two nuclear generating plants near Port Huron.

Port Huron, incidentally, is where the new giant intake for metropolitan Detroit's water supply is located.

Of course, the experts will tell us there is no danger of radioactive contamination or thermal pollution whatsoever, and that the probability of an accident is so astronomically small, even negligible, that it shouldn't be considered.

Well, experts also tell us that the Russian nuclear-powered satellite would burn up in the atmosphere or if it didn't, there would be no danger of radioactivity. Admiral R.L. Falls, chief of Canadian Defense Staff, said the high radiation readings of the radioactive areas "might have been the result of a malfunction in the measuring equipment. It is unlikely there is anything in the sound."

Well, the expert was wrong—and that makes me nervous.

According to the Energy Research and Development Administration, the

U.S. now has 67 nuclear plants licensed to operate, 89 additional nuclear plants being built and 76 more being planned.

Yet, no expert has been able to tell me what we can do with the radioactive waste, other than to "bury it someplace," or who would pay the cost of neutralizing radioactive waste, even if it could be accomplished. Nor has an emergency core cooling system for nuclear plants ever been adequately tested.

Continuing to build these monsters without answers to the dangerous problems they create is like a man jumping from a 100-story building, hoping someone will figure a way to save him before he lands.

And yet one little old malfunctioning nuclear satellite causes an international incident.

As I said, "incredible." WESLEY MITCHELL  
Farmington Hills

### Reader protests expensive housing

Remember your high school days?

For me they were a time of brain-burning idealism. Notions of social justice and personal rights were always in my head. I can hear my teacher now exclaiming Alexander Hamilton's principle:

"The fabric of the American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority."

Those thoughts of the rights of the people come back to me now when I contemplated the proposed senior citi-

zen high-rise. It would be a place that would look ugly, further congest traffic, and, at \$800 a month would be a place where my mother could never live.

It seems too, that the other citizens of Farmington Hills who have to live with it and look at it don't want it either.

Put the construction issue on the ballot. Let's see what the people have to say. Then let's monitor the politics of it very closely. I want to know if my high school teacher and Alexander Hamilton were lying to me.

LEN BILLINGSLEY  
Farmington Hills

## Reader criticizes Hogan column

Editor:

I'm thoroughly ashamed that your newspaper would print such a thoughtless, humiliating column as the one written by Hank Hogan about Renee Richards.

I won't begin to enumerate every gross inequity Mr. Hogan chose to heap upon Ms. Richards, but I can't ignore his hypothesis that allowing Ms. Richards to play on the women's tour would launch an epidemic of sex change operations for the sake of the lucrative profit offered by such.

Whether this remark was made as a flippant comment meant to tickle the funny bone is immaterial. There is no room for caustic remarks of this nature in a respected newspaper. But whether Mr. Hogan's intent was a sorry attempt at humor is beside the point. The point is, Mr. Hogan, you made a circus out of a very serious matter. One does not simply choose to have a sex change. If you'd done any research, instead of relying solely on your ignorance-bred-by-prejudice, you'd understand the long, distasteful, and anguished, yes, anguished, propa-

ration that precedes such an operation.

By making fun of transsexuals and advocating denial of their basic rights to be what they wish and to do what they want, you're displaying your own sickness.

Mr. Hogan, please quit trying to be

the Ringmaster and tell us how we should feel and react to the idea of transsexuals. Your cloistered views don't need public expression and, what's more, they hardly deserve center ring.

KAREN PEPPER,  
Garden City

### Student skiers still in hospital

Four Oakland University students and a traveling companion remained in satisfactory condition Friday in an eastern Nebraska hospital, six days after their chartered bus skidded and overturned on an icy, fogbound highway.

In Midland's Community Hospital in Papillion, Neb., were Terri Stepka of Orchard Lake, Kathy Watson of Clarkston, David Czerwinski of Auburn, and Roger Bick and Mary Bourne, both of Birmingham. Ms. Bourne was no longer in intensive care. All are OU students except Czer-

winski.

John Harris of New Baltimore was released from the hospital Thursday. Charles Holzman was released Wednesday. Cheryl Evans, who is not an OU student, was released Friday. The other 37 young persons involved in the accident returned to Michigan earlier.

The group was returning from a 10-day Colorado ski trip when their chartered Continental Railways bus overturned on Interstate 80, about 10 miles west of Omaha. OU was closed for winter break at the time.

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