

Monday's Commentary

tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Finding the perfect gift

There's a faded bit of blue and gold wrapping paper that still remains folded over a book bought 10 years ago. The book and the wrapping paper rest on a shelf in my mother's house. On occasion, I'll pick up the book, carefully remove the wrapping paper and leaf through a pictorial history of the Thirties published by Time-Life.

I bought the book when I was 16. Now it belongs to me. But originally it was the object of one of the most concerted money raising projects I've ever entered.

Originally, the book was a Christmas present from me to my dad. It cost about \$20, a fortune to me then. That was the year I skipped on everybody else to buy my father this book.

He grew up in the Thirties and married in the Forties. The book was filled with pictures of all the characters he ever mentioned as we sat around the kitchen table drinking coffee after dinner and waiting for the hourly news on the radio.

My entire Christmas budget totaled \$25 that year—until I stumbled across the volume on a shelf of Fisk's book store at Northland. The book store was on the first floor then and it was filled with all sorts of intriguing titles. I

ought to know because my dad and I spent enough time there while my mother did something like look over drapes.

I VOWED to myself I would never, ever be interested in hanging drapes and sequestered myself in the book department with the collected works of whichever author was tops on my list at the time.

My mother would shake her head at my savings to accomplish my goal.

It was on one of these little expeditions that I noticed the Perfect Gift. Thoughts of buying my dad a tie, which he needed, fled as I leaped through this book. It even came wrapped in cellophane—a sure sign of an expensive book.

But I set my heart on buying it and skipped lunch and snacks and raided my savings to accomplish my goal.

My heart practically stopped when I handed over the \$20 to the clerk at the book department counter.

Of course such a special present needed special wrapping, so I walked up to the section with the "better" paper and spent a good 15 minutes carefully studying the designs. It had

to be Christmasy but not frilly. It had to be suited to a father's tastes.

Finally I picked out blue paper decorated with gold wreaths. It had a sort of elegant look about it, I thought.

On the bus ride home, I clutched the package to me, as if someone would want to rob me of it any minute.

BUT THE REAL FUN came in wrapping it. The corners had to be perfect. A gold bow had to be found.

Finally, on Christmas Eve, I waited for my dad to come home from work. He was employed by the post office so he usually ended up returning late on Christmas.

At 3 a.m., just as the old movie on television ended, he showed up. I managed to wait until he sat down in the kitchen before pushing the package at him.

He unwrapped the gift and carefully eased the book's stiff binding open, starting a little off the middle and slowly cracking the pages until the binding had lost its stiffness.

He looked through it for several minutes, then he gave me a lopsided grin. "I grew up with these things," he said.

He didn't have to say anymore.



Hors d'oeuvres

by Lynn Orr

Facing the cynics

Well, he got to the screen, red cape intact, and minus the crotch airbrushing of past practice.

And the PR superfluous appears to be working its magic. Hordes of fans swarming the select theatres where Superman flies on the big screen guarantee a stock rise for the promotion firm.

Unfortunately, the crowds are enduring considerable discomfort to hear an admittedly gorgeous Chris Reeves talk about "Truth, Justice and the American Way" in the face of Gene Hackman's satanic plots to destroy the system.

As one of the crazies who stood half an hour in line to purchase a ticket, only to return that evening for a nearly 45-minute endurance test in a crowd crunch before I could scramble to a seat, I'm here to protest about the unweaving and packaging of "Superman, The Movie."

Re: the technicalities—if advanced tickets must be purchased, why can't a theater offer numbered seats? I like to sit near the front, but from the fifth row the north pole fortress looks like a wad of fuzzy Kleenex.

UNFORTUNATELY, the plot is just as fuzzy. terrific special effects do not a movie make in my book, although the loud cheers and applause in the theater confirm my minority status on the issue.

About halfway through the showing, I figured out the problem—schizophrenia—not on my part but within the film.

At least three different moods give you the feeling you're watching a three-act play written by three different authors unaware of each other's intent.

A post-movie discussion with my film buff

brother confirmed my suspicions. The imprints of at least three different directors failed to reach the cutting floor, he says.

After a booming visual and auditory credits repeat that would be hard to beat as a moodsetter, the Krypton episode is dead serious with show-stopping cinematic spectaculars.

Unfortunately, although perhaps in the black humor vein, the film quickly degenerates as the babe lands on Earth. One can only assume that the film editor was on her coffee break when a particularly soppy shot of the 18-year-old Superman-to-be and his Earth mother in a clutch shot went through the movieola.

The symbolism gets as thick as the Hulk's biceps when Superman discovers his mission as the "only son" sent to save the primitive earthlings from their follies. I u

The Boasting of Lex Luthor in his underground hideout flashes out the fallen angel ready for the battle between good and evil.

When Clark Kent arrives at the Daily Planet, the film turns to high camp. By now everyone knows that the man of steel's vision passes Lois Lane's test when she asks him for the color of her underwear. The pitch heights from amusing to silly as the battle draws near.

Since I'm sure superfans will test out the film for themselves, I've no doubt the producers will see their investments safely through to "Superman II," already in the works. And because fantasy appears to be the only marketable asset in the cynical '70s, we're bound to be faced with a load of LL's in the future as Superman, lacking "The Force" but armed with his many talents, solves the world's problems with a twist of the wrist.

The Flip Side
by craig piechura

Drug ignorance is bliss

Junkies in the Detroit area are dreaming of a white Christmas just like the ones they used to know.

After almost a five-year hiatus, high-grade white Asian heroin has reared its deadly head in this area during the holiday season.

Now I'm sure many readers will never forgive me for perverting the beloved Irving Berlin song in the lead sentence of this column.

I'm not trying to be the harbinger of bad tidings in this festive holiday season. It just grieves me that people want to turn away from anything unpleasant in their hell-bent pursuit of happiness, prosperity and the American Way.

The plea reporters constantly hear is: "Print something positive for a change." We do print "positive" stories. We write of befriended stray dogs, umpteenth kindly old Santa Clauses and happy youngsters doing happy things.

That's not enough, however.

Without cuing the choir to hum "Battle Hymn of the Republic" behind these words, let me say in all seriousness that I believe a newspaper has an obligation to cover the sorry side of our community. And, although this is what is known as a "community newspaper," we have a responsibility to write about a town's flaws and its soundbells at the same time we print a calendar of community events.

THAT IS WHY it is important to let people know that two pounds of suspected uncut Asian heroin was found less than two weeks ago in a briefcase in a Southfield hotel room.

Accused was John Henry Lewis, who comes from Detroit but gave police a

Dallas address.

A month ago, another pound of white Asian heroin was discovered by Detroit police. Who knows how many pounds got through?

Aha, you say, that's Detroit. We live in the suburbs. Go ahead and call drugs a Detroit problem. Ignorance is bliss.

While many victims of heroin addiction live in the poorer areas—like Detroit—its tentacles spread out into the suburbs. Many of the area's biggest death dealers have fashionable, well-insulated homes in West Bloomfield, Troy, Southfield and Ann Arbor.

After all, pushers are upwardly mobile people, too.

And this idea that Detroit is another cosmos with no effect on the suburbs is absurd. But it persists. The economic and sociological implications of a big money crop like heroin cross all social strata and city limits.

We're not talking about sinister men with pencil-thin mustaches who wear white ties on black shirts and belong to the Mafia when we talk of the heroin kingpins. These men are often well-educated businessmen who know a good investment when they see one.

JUST HOW MUCH money they make is hard to say. But even the most conservative estimates are mind-boggling to the working stiff.

It's quite conceivable that the man at the top of the drug chain makes a quarter of a million dollars selling a briefcase full of 80 per cent pure heroin.

That's just the start. By the time

that drug has found its way into people's arms, it has been sold and resold, cut and cut again, until that original amount represents almost \$10 million in street sales.

A kilo of heroin cut down to 18-25 per cent purity runs a pusher \$35,000 at wholesale prices, according to Jim Baker, intelligence analyst for the El Paso Information Center (EPIC), a drug monitoring agency under the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

An ounce of white heroin sold at retail level would likely be 5-12 per cent pure and cost the buyer \$1,600 to \$2,200, Baker said.

A gram of the stuff at the same purity level would cost the user about \$75. And the most common heroin currency, a McDonald's coffee spoonful, costs \$12.50 and is cup to 3 of one per cent purity.

IF YOU DON'T believe police agency estimates on drug prices, maybe you should know that the current price of white heroin was quoted even higher by Bob Lemmo, news editor of High Times, a glossy magazine catering to "recreational drug users."

While I blame the merchants of death for furnishing hard drugs, we must also share the blame for becoming a sedated society. In 1978, the year of the Bee Gees, the prevailing attitude seems to be that social concerns like poverty and drug addiction can go take a hike while we dance along to "Stayin' Alive" at the local disco.

Trouble is society's ills don't go away while we disco down. Maybe I'm out of step. But I won't dance to the music being played.

Shirlee's sallies

by Shirlee Iden



Adding up the pluses

Playing the numbers game, it's obvious that 360 days of 1978 have come and almost gone, and only five remain. It's time to do some scorekeeping.

From where I sit, looking back at a full and traumatic year usually means remembering some special people. So when I add up the pluses, I think of folks who made a hit with me this year.

Creame de la creme has to be my husband, Jack. Such patience. He puts up with my non-stop clutter about current stories we're working on, who said what, and how the life page got butchered up. He reads every word I write and is an honest critic—a designation beyond rakes.

And who but Jack would smile benignly when I ask for the 99th time: "Honey, we're going to this event anyway, would you just shoot a mug shot or two for me?"

How about my mother? She gets the paper twice weekly in her home in Florida. If she had her way, I would have won a Pulitzer Prize ages ago. Dad doesn't say "masterpiece" as often as she, but I get the feeling he's got a thing for his only daughter.

My kids have resigned themselves to being careful about everything I say. "She'll quote you in a column," Tzviyah warns Bruce. And when Anwar Sadat visited Jerusalem, my proud son-in-law Alex looked everywhere for me. How could such a thing happen and Shirlee not cover it?

"I'M GRATEFUL for all the support. And I know the kids and Jack are also delighted that Mom is busy, occupied and not dwelling on her empty nest.

Speaking of dwelling, outside of fam-

ily I really give high marks to people who focus on others, not for rewards or credits, just because they care.

Top of that list is Helene Gottfried. Think of Helene and you think of a helping, caring human who does so much to reach out to others.

Whether you need a ride to the polls, a baby-sitter, warm clothing or a bed to sleep on, she'll get it for you. Her special love is the handicapped, elderly and special education students, and I am sure they know about her, as well.

What can you say about a Helene Gottfried, who's on the phone trying to get help for needy people many times each month? Well, if Southfield didn't have one, we'd have to invent her.

The other night at the 28th anniversary dinner for the City of Lathrup Village, a lot of people took part and kidded each other in a roast of the city. One of them was Marilyn Dulgarian.

Marilyn called me about doing a story a while back. She mentioned that the community room at the Municipal Building was all redecorated and paneled and now has lovely chandeliers. All this replacing the cement block walls of the past. Well, Marilyn was in charge of that refurbishing and it won an award from the state Beautification Commission.

WHEN I expressed delight at the award, she pleaded that I not mention it. "We need to talk about Lathrup's birthday, not my award," she said.

At the dinner, she was one of the roasters, and I remember her saying: "A volunteer is one who says, what can I do? And a city employee is one who says—that's not my job."

Another fun roast I attended this

year was the time they roasted Harold Bussey, long time school board member, and baseball nut. Harold is super special, simply because, along with others and more than most, he really cares about Southfield's kids. And besides, I like baseball, too.

Two Southfield people I marvel at are Rae Ann Sharfman and Jerry Rogers, who focus on helping Soviet Jews win their freedom and enjoy the human rights that we take for granted.

They work long hours, denying themselves and their families in order to take a crack at opening up the iron curtain. The task has gone on for years and appears that it will need much effort for a long time ahead. But these are folks that see beyond the headlines and the rhetoric to the fellow humans who need them.

And when I'm adding up the nice people that made 1978 memorable, and there are so many more unmentioned, how can I not list my little friend, Jeffrey Ryker Filisimos?

Photographer Gary Friedman and I were privileged to be present at the moment of his birth on Oct. 17. And that's because his parents, Carole and Jerry, are such special people.

THOSE TWO proud parents allowed us to share the most precious of times, and graciously, I've been in delivery rooms before, five times to be exact, but not like that.

Now Jeffrey is a lusty two-month-old who smiles and is aware of people. I hope he knows he has two particular friends in Gary and me who will always remember his birthday. There are grim moments sometime, but when you think about certain people—well, they add up to a big plus.

Around the edge
by Jackie Klein

Nostalgia overwhelms me

Birthdays are sentimental occasions for a city. They're not like people birthdays when we stop looking in the mirror and start lying.

Recapping the events of 1978 evoked a feeling of nostalgia. Southfield reached the age of 20 on April 28. And for night on 16 of those fleeting years, yours truly has been reporting the progress and growing pains of suburbia.

I remember when the city was 13 years old and I celebrated our 108th mortgage payment and my 48th council meeting minus vacations, holidays, elections and viruses. But I'm older now and I've lost count.

It's been an exciting, interesting 16 years and I've learned about an infinite variety of subjects. I've spent

many a Monday night in sewers (figuratively speaking) both deep and shallow while residents at council meetings praised their septic tanks to the ground.

I could almost smell the effluent gently flowing over roadside ditches while sanitarians warned homeowners, "You're sitting on a keg of dynamite filled with hepatitis."

THOSE SEWERS are always accompanied by "aperturances" which are never described in detail. It sounds as though they're tied up with festive pink ribbons.

When I first heard the expression, "spread on the rolls," I thought the city assessor was talking about oleomargarine or the high-priced spread.

Now, of course, I dig that it means spreading the assessment on the tax rolls which still means your bread and butter no matter how you slice it.

I've been through 16 annual budgets, but I still can't balance my own checkbook. The city budget contains a contingency fund plus an unappropriated surplus. My budget contains many casualties but no contingencies. If I had any plus it would be appropriated for deficit spending.

Sometimes I feel as though I've earned a law degree in those 16 years. I know all about writs of mandamus, quid pro quo, ipso facto, consent judgments and show cause hearings. I learned about them from a former city attorney who didn't want to let me in on the city's legal secrets.

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