

# Rock and Roll's 'First Lady' works hard to stay on top



When Ray Russell is not in his store presiding over his collection of books, he might be found at a Michigan Regimental Round Table, with his Civil War buff friends who meet in Farmington Hills. Here he holds up his favorite volume, "Bolt Action Rifle with Telescopic Sight," an outsized book of arms blueprints.

## War tales live on in book collection

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

When the Civil War was over, veterans from both sides of the conflict returned home, carrying their memories with them.

As time went by, stories about the war were told to the town youngsters. Ray Russell, 66, remembers the gruesome tales of prison life the old-timers told him as he was growing up in Rochester.

They regaled him with tales of life in Andersonville, one of the most notorious Civil War prisons. One Rochester veteran remembered he saved the bones from the meat he was fed and fashioned rings and Masonic emblems from them. He traded the rings and emblems for potatoes and other food-stuffs, hoping to avoid contracting scurvy.

Russell listened to the stories while sitting in the general store on Main Street.

Today the general store is occupied by the Mole Hole and all of the old men with those intriguing stories are dead.

But Russell carries their memory and the knowledge of the time the North and South were at war.

His store, Ray Russell Books on Fourth Street, is almost exclusively devoted to volumes on war, especially the Civil War.

In RUSSELL'S view of the war, there aren't any hot-shot heroes or real moments of glamor.

"Fighting the Civil War was the biggest mistake the country ever made," he said.

"There was a tremendous loss of life. There were more men killed in the Civil War than in the rest of the wars put together until the World War II.

"There was no reason for it. It hasn't answered any real purpose. The slavery question would have straightened out much the same as it did in England.

"Morals wouldn't allow people to keep slaves much longer. England abolished slavery without bloodshed.

"Sherman fought against slavery, but he was pro-slavery. It was an incidental thing which would have righted itself anyway."

The war created more problems than it solved, said Russell.



The plaque on this brick reads "Brick from the Mac Lean House at Appomattox Court House where General Lee surrendered to General Grant. The brick is from the original foundation."

"There was the question of state's rights, but I don't know if that's been settled yet or not."

Instead, it cause more damage to the country. People are still feeling the aftereffects of the war, today Russell said.

Damaging as it may have been to the country, as a historical event, the Civil War holds a certain fascination for Russell.

"IT WAS the last of the old wars and the first of the modern wars. It had a certain uniqueness about it.

"It was the first time the railroad was used for military purposes. It was the first war in which the rifle cannon was used. Balloons were used. Submarines and torpedoes were used for the first time. And the military telegraph came into use."

Russell compiled his knowledge after his interest was sparked by the tales told in the old general store. His grandfather was in the war.

And his first piece of Civil War memorabilia was a sword and pistol belonging to his great-uncle.

After spending 25 years on the Rochester Police force, Russell retired and opened his book store about six years ago.

Instead of stacks of old paperbacks and fiction books, Russell stocks his store with old volumes on war, especially the Civil War.

Letters of inquiry from around the country come to him containing requests for specific volumes on the Civil War.

And the proper library can be crucial for the serious student of that time. After acquiring what Russell believes is the basic book for any student, "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," the collector is let loose on a field of literature devoted to that era.

AFTER READING what the officers and men of the time say about their experiences in "Battles and Leaders" the student can search out a set of regimental histories.

A set of these thin volumes which tell of the fates of the men in each company and regiment rests in a cardboard box in a corner of the shop.

The books were originally offered in 1902 to members of each company. They were free to those who wanted them.

At that time, Civil War veterans were a powerful political force. Government-issued volumes, especially for them, certainly wouldn't hurt at the polls, Russell admitted.

Today, an industrious collector who manages to gather an entire company's worth of regimental histories can ask about \$900 for them.

A series of leather bound volumes of the histories were offered to Senators and dignitaries. The name of the person gifted with the book was imprinted in the leather spine of the volume.

When he's not in his store presiding over his collection of books, Russell can sometimes be found at meetings of the Michigan Regimental Round Table, a group of Civil War buffs who meet in Farmington Hills.

Ten years ago, Russell even had a chance to take part in a re-enactment of a few Civil War battles.

At WRIF, they call her "Detroit's First Lady of Rock and Roll."

Karen Savelly, the station's new 6-10 p.m. disc jockey, who's quickly gaining center stage in radio and record circles, is originally from Farmington, where she lived with her family there until she was 16 and was a veteran fan from the earliest days of Detroit rock music.

And, she is the first of her FM personality colleagues to have graduated from WWWW to WABX to WRIF.

"I always felt I'd like to work at WRIF someday," she says, though, with a voice that implies surprise that it came so soon.

Yet, she continues by saying, "I try my darndest to stay on top of all the new music and try to play it, and I work like crazy to be able to mix the kind of music program I enjoy. The kind the audience enjoys."

"I get a lot of satisfaction out of that. What could be better?"

She is respected by former colleagues at all three stations as someone who knows the music, knows the audience, and knows how to put it all together.

But then, she has been a part of the rock and roll culture in Detroit from its beginnings.

"I KNEW ALL the disc jockeys, what time they were on and what kind of music they played," she said of her growing-up years. But Savelly never thought of music for a career until she was forced into a speech class at Wayne State University.

"It was a required course. Speech. I hated it. I was scared to death, until I got into the class. Then I ended up loving it," she said.

Not only loving it, but unlike all but a few of the other students in her class, pursuing a career in it.

It was unusual for a woman to be on radio, even in 1972, when Ms. Savelly landed her first professional job on WWWW Radio. She started out on the night shift and handled some programs on weekends. In 1976, by the time she moved to WABX, she was hosting a prime-time music shift and was established as one of the leading FM personalities in Detroit.

Today, at WRIF, she continues to use her prime-time music program to break new music, play the music of up and coming artists and deliver the music her listeners have come to expect from her.

"ROCK AND ROLL has been good to me," she says. "I've met the people whose music I grew up with, and I'm still meeting more."

If ratings are any reliable indication, Ms. Savelly can't help but continue to meet more.

Ruth Whitmore, director of advertising and promotion at WRIF said, "More than 257,000 persons have listened to her program during the last ratings period. By comparison with other stations, this is a lot of popularity. Couple that with the mail and phone calls and media interest she's generated in the short time she's been here."

"She started out as Detroit's first female voice on FM radio and became successful with her audience almost immediately."



Karen Savelly, now with WRIF, has been one of Detroit's top-rated FM disc jockeys ever since a very short time after she got her first on-air job.

## Tots classes start at Fairview Center

Fairview Early Childhood Center resumes classes for preschoolers which runs for 14 weeks beginning in September sponsored by Farmington Public Schools.

The center is located in the former Fairview Elementary School.

Three-to-five-year-olds are offered a complete kindergarten readiness program in either 2 or 2½ hour sessions, with openings available either in the morning or afternoon programs.

Fees are \$60 or \$100. A children's dance hour is also offered, beginning Monday, Sept. 17.

The staff at the school is now in the final stage of its "Child Find" project which aims to locate all handicapped children, from infancy to five years, for special classes to prepare them for public school. This includes mentally retarded, physically handicapped or otherwise impaired youngsters.

All inquiries will be taken by calling the center, 626-8335.

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## KNOWLEDGE WIN



As in this detail from a World War I poster, Americans preferred to see their fighting men as noble, handsome and resourceful.