

Words to lovelorn far from forlorn

By CAROL MAHONEY

She was in vivid color, wearing a lavender dress and matching shoes. "Dear Abby" is the woman who many believe has the last word on life and love.

It was a gray, windy day, but that didn't deter approximately 500 fans who turned out at the Troy Town Hall Series to meet and listen to syndicated columnist Abigail Van Buren, whose syndicated advice column is published in more than 1,000 newspapers in many nations.

Spotting a couple of men in her audience last week, Abby thanked them for coming and said it showed real courage.

Then she delighted her listeners by reading excerpts from some of the more memorable letters she has received in her 23 years as a columnist. It was difficult to determine which got the bigger laugh, the problems or her answers.

"In one letter, a widow, who was dating a man 'who never mentions marriage,' posed the question, 'Is he dating me for what he can get?'" Abby's reply, "I don't know. What's he getting?"

In another, a 25-year-old woman wrote to ask whether a handsome, rich, 45-year-old man was too old to be eligible. Abby responded snappily, "He's too eligible to be old."

Abby said that her letters reflect that the greatest number of problems involve sex and love. The second greatest number involve a mother-in-law.

One woman wrote to say that her husband valued his mother more than herself. When she asked him which one he would save if the three of them were in a canoe which overturned, he said he'd save his mother. Abby advised the writer to learn to swim.

WHEN TRYING to solve the problems put to her, Abby said, "I don't pretend to know all the answers." But she added, "I have friends in the clergy and the legal profession who help me out."

"Giving advice is a very serious business," she said.

Along with the many legitimate

'He's too eligible to be old.'

— Abigail Van Buren

letters she receives daily there are occasionally phonies. Abby said she can usually spot them because they tend to use a lot of "soap opera language" and always request that the letter be printed.

In private life Abby is Mrs. Morton Dillon, mother of two grown children. She and her husband have been married 40 years.

Twin to equally famous columnist Ann Landers, Abby claims to be the younger sister by 17 minutes. "When you hit the big 60, every minute counts," she said.

A polished speaker, Abby kept her audience teetering between laughter and tears. One letter from a polio victim was especially poignant.

Advice from Abby had given him the courage to ask his nurse to marry him. The happy ending was a birth announcement Abby received from the couple along with a moving letter from the happy father.

TO THOSE who ask her what kind of person would write to a newspaper for advice, she said she replies, "Any person who is smart enough to know that he has a problem and wants to do something about it. No sensitive, caring person can get through this life without problems."

"Some read my column for laughs," she said. "But I don't write it for laughs."

In addition to a stock of flip answers, the columnist said she maintains a file of service agencies to refer people to.

She stressed the importance of informing people about free counseling services which are available to them. "People must be told where to go to get help," she said.

When she wrote her first column for the San Francisco Chronicle in 1956, Abby had been a housewife for 17 years. "All my life I had been a volunteer," she said.



Twin to equally famous columnist Ann Landers, Abigail Van Buren claims to be the younger of the two by 17 minutes. She also followed her sister into the world of advice and is now syndicated in 1,000 newspapers around the world.

Talk's focus: Gifted child

The Farmington Public Schools will present a series of evening programs for parents and educators on "The Gifted Child," presented in conjunction with the Oakland Association for the Gifted and Talented.

The sessions include:
• Parenting the Gifted Child, 7:30 p.m. to 9:15 p.m., April 5; speakers include Dr. Ed Bantel, Oakland University.

psychologist; Arthur Brown, Wayne State University professor of philosophy; Thomas Buescher, professor of gifted child education at WSU; Marilyn Maynard, past president of the Oakland Association for Gifted and Talented; John Molloy, director of pupil services for Bloomfield public schools; Jim Orr, professor at Oakland Community College; and Dave Skotko, professor at WSU.

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Volunteers are being sought for screening. Contour Analysis enables taking a three-dimensional picture (called Moring photography) of the topography of the surface of the spine to detect spinal stress deviations. This analysis will be correlated with leg deficiency, patient symptomatology, and levels of spinal tenderness. An analysis of this type can reveal such things as normal and abnormal stress patterns, spinal curvature, muscle spasms, muscle imbalances, spinal distortions, and scoliosis. A consultation and report of findings will be given to all participants.

This is a public service program for participating volunteers. The doctors are contributing their time, service, and facilities for the program. Anyone wishing to be a volunteer may telephone participating doctors directly for information or an appointment.

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