

## Monday's Commentary

# This book keeps a fond memory alive

Southfield Schools called Sylvia Ellman to substitute teach in an art class last Thursday. But Mrs. Ellman chose instead to come to our office and tell us about "Talk to Me" and her youngest daughter.

Maureen Cyril Ellman at age 20 died nearly two years ago. She left a body of writings and art that show great sensitivity, the soul of the child and the insight of the artist.

"Talk to Me" is the first of that body of work to be published. A tale of a young boy who yearns to be able to speak with Skipper, his dog and companion, it is a fantasy of faith and love.

The saga of the book's publication is another love story.

Almost two years were required to put the book together and publish it, Mrs. Ellman said.

"I'm a complete novice as a publisher, but I was the layout department and the editing department; I designed the book and saw to the typesetting, printing and binding," she said.

Mrs. Ellman said each book is numbered just like an etching or a lithograph. "It was just as much labor as a work of art," she added.

"Talk to Me" was written by Maureen Ellman in her days as a student at Southfield High School. It



**Shirlee Iden**

was a school assignment and her mother recalls she debated between writing about a flying duck or a talking dog.

"MAUREEN had a beloved dog of her own so she wrote about the little boy who wished his dog could speak to him," Mrs. Ellman said.

The book's cover, Maureen's rendition of the "Magic Valley" where even dogs can talk, is a study in blues and greens, a valley lush and lovely.

"I believe she had her own magic valley," the mother said. "Her book is a moral fable and has been called a 'small jewel of an art work.'"

Producing "Talk to Me" was a family project. Each of Mrs. Ellman's children made a contribu-

tion. Ronald, an architect, did the illustrations in pen and ink. His architect brother, Howard, did the calligraphy, hand-lettering each page.

Nancy, Maureen's sister who is married to Dr. Marc Frager, prepared the cover illustrations for the rough copy that went to the Library of Congress.

As a cousin, Helen Stone of Mt. Clemens, fabricated a facsimile of Drudy, a dog in "Talk to Me."

Mrs. Ellman, who teaches every day in Detroit and Oakland County Schools, said she continued to work while "Talk to Me" was readied for publication.

She studied everything available on publishing, went to Washington to establish copyrights and presented the draft of the book for the Library of Congress.

When new facilities opened at the Southfield Public Library, Mrs. Ellman shared her experiences as a fledgling publisher at the opening meeting and reception.

PUBLISHING her daughter's story was her way of sharing.

"I wanted everyone to enjoy Maureen's wonderful

imagination and fantasy world," she said. "If I didn't believe this would enrich other people's lives, I wouldn't have published it."

"Between the lines, you can feel a tremendously sensitive girl searching for the heart in life, and you shouldn't have to search for it. It should be there."

"Maureen believed in happy endings."

In a sense, the task of seeing her daughter's works published and appreciated are Mrs. Ellman's happy endings.

Maureen Ellman left over 100 poems and short stories behind when her life ended so prematurely. Her mother is determined that some will be published, especially a long poem called "Loneliness."

"If we sell enough copies of 'Talk to Me,' it may be possible to publish the poem," Mrs. Ellman said.

To that end, she is exhibiting placards showing the story of the book's publication at the Southfield Towers Manufacturer's Bank lobby on Telegraph Road north of 12 Mile until March 28.

Mrs. Ellman will be there each weekday 2 to 4 p.m. with her exhibit, copies of the book, and floppy brown Drudys.

"It's a happy book, from a happy time in Maureen's life and I want it to be a happy thing for children to enjoy."

# The 'new' vocabulary is still the pits

"Like man, that's cool, out of sight, far out, right on, heavy, bogue, a hummer, gross. Let's hang loose and make the scene but get off my case."

That may sound like gibberish, but it's a small sample of the "way out" language spawned in the 1960s by those long-haired, blue-janned kids who called themselves "freaks" and who we called "hippies" or "flower children."

If you're a parent who sent your progeny to college to get an education, you may have despaired over the peculiar, pop-art parlance you get for your tuition money. But how many times have you found yourself uttering descriptive phrases like, "I'm so uptight" or "I'm in the pits?"

Initiation is the sincerest form of flattery. And sometimes the kids say it better than we do. Also, we tend to try to keep our cool and get with it.

Watergate bred its own stylized language, traces of which still remain. "Early on in the investigation, to see my recollection at this point in time — you have to admit that's pretty gross."

Just when we stopped gritting our teeth, a brand new dialect — much of it

pedantic — snuck into the vocabulary. To coin a phrase from the kids, it's a sad back bumper which is really off the wall. Don't ask for a translation.

IF ONE more person tells me "you know where I'm coming from" I'm going to lose my cool. How do I know where people are coming from when I don't even know where they are now?

I can't stand when somebody talks about the "space I'm into." I'm inclined to believe that weirdo is spaced out. The "space" he or she is referring to is really a mental outburst.

When introspective conversationalists are willing to "interface" about where they're coming from and the space they're into, I do my best to avoid this psychobabble. It's simply not my bag.

When the kids used to tell me they were trying to find themselves, I advised them to look in the yellow pages. But what do you tell someone who says "I'm getting my head together" or "I'm getting my act together" and variations on that theme.

"Impacting on or enhancing the quality of life" is among the most over-



**Jackie Klein**

worked jargon of government officials and civic leaders. First of all, nothing impacts on anything else but something can leave an impact like an aching wisdom tooth.

Quality of life and enhancing it have individual interpretations which fall into the category of "different strokes for different folks." Besides, when politicians talk about enhancing the quality of your life, you can bet your bottom dollar you're going to get socked with a tax hike to "upgrade" that quality.

BWARE OF folks who tell you they're going to be "up front" with you. And don't be taken in by the new lingo,

"I have something to share with you."

Being "up front" means being perfectly candid and holding nothing back. If you're naive enough to believe it, you could be built up to a big letdown. Just ask any newspaper reporter who has missed the scoop of the year by falling for that "up front" promise.

"I have something to share with you" is a phrase coined by psychologists for salespersons and other persuasive types. They make you feel included, wanted, trusted and a part of some exclusive, top secret mission. And then they sock it to you.

How about that "viable lifestyle" or "viable alternative" we hear so much

about lately. "Viable" means "living" or capable of sustaining independent life. A "living lifestyle" is redundant. And I've never seen a living alternative so I have no idea what one looks like.

Do you remember the days when city officials asked for public participation and involvement? You may not, because it didn't happen very often. Today, the phrase is "citizen input." It's what every political campaigner promises more of until he or she is elected. I still think "input" is computer language.

"Implementation" really bugs me. A speech maker can go on and on for hours until he or she finally reveals the key sentence. "The bottom line is that we need money or the project will die." That should have been the top line. The most emotional, heart-rending and idealistic rendition is frozen cold and stiff by that old "bottom line."

LET ME share with you a few of the more obscure reports which have crossed my desk and raised my hackles.

For example: "An assertive, dynamic goal-oriented communications pro-

gram is imperative. The support of and productive rapport with the electric and printed media would serve to enhance Southfield's opportunities of consistently projecting a positive image."

Dissemination of information and enlistment of public support are integral functions of any municipality or government agency. Management by objective is a concept which is successfully utilized by in-house training in which staff members are taught realistic goal-setting within local parameters.

"Implementation will manifest by promoting the enhancement of the quality of life in Southfield as a desirable place to live, work, play and raise a family. That's the bottom line."

And here's another: "A workshop format could include verbal communication skills, written communication skills, values clarification, assertiveness training, interpersonal organizational development, conflict resolution, stress management and conflict resolution."

In my objective opinion, that's the pits. And I'm being up front when I say it.

# Youth wasn't served at area watering hole

It's not easy to be an adult accepted in every segment of society except the barroom and at least one restaurant.

You're old enough to be sent to Afghanistan to fight, old enough to vote for the lesser of two evils but too young to eat dessert at a certain restaurant chain after 8 p.m.

Consider the plight of 20-year-old Gary Stone of Southfield, a sophomore attending Western Michigan University.

Home for the week, Stone and seven of his friends went out for the evening Thursday, Feb. 28. First, they went to the Comedy Castle in West Bloomfield to see Bruce Baum, local comedian made good.

Although liquor is served at the establishment, Stone and his friends, all but one under 21, drank soft drinks and enjoyed the show. This is consistent with state liquor law, which allows 18-year-olds to view entertainment in clubs where alcohol is served as long as they aren't served alcoholic beverages.

After the show, the eight decided to grab some dessert at Southfield's new T.G.I. Friday's, part of a 36-restaurant chain headquartered in Dallas, which features burgers galore and more.

THE RESTAURANT decor is heavy on old-fashioned kitsch such as Tiffany lamps, ceiling fans and reproductions of old signs and advertisements.

One of the signs at the front door informs customers that persons under the age of 21 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian after 8 p.m. So, when Stone and his seven friends entered that Thursday night, he says a hostess immediately pointed to the sign and said no one under 21 years of age

**'We were accepted very rudely. She (waitress) didn't even know we weren't 21. She didn't ask for IDs. We were with someone who was 21 and I'm 20 and will be 21 in December. The age of 18 is the age of majority so that makes you your own legal guardian.'**

—Gary Stone

would be admitted without their parent or legal guardian.

"We were accepted very rudely," Stone said. "She didn't even know we weren't 21. She didn't ask for IDs. We were with someone who was 21, and I'm 20 and will be 21 in December."

"The age of 18 is the age of majority so that makes you your own legal guardian."

But when Stone called the manager to ask about the 8 p.m. curfew for those under 21, he was told that was nationwide company policy of the Carlson Co., Inc.

That's what Nick Galanos, manager of the Southfield T.G.I. Friday's said to me when I asked about the 8 p.m. curfew for those under 21.

"The restaurant is open to everyone from 11 o'clock until 8 o'clock in the evening," Galanos said. "As long as we're not discriminating on prejudicial grounds, we're within our rights."

THE RULE is posted on a board, it's done very nicely. It's a decision the company's taken, and a decision the company stands by.

Galanos said the restaurant could get in trouble evenings — when more drinking is done than lunchtime — if

adults pass alcohol on to under-age patrons. But he wasn't able to explain why that situation wouldn't exist before 8 p.m.

Further questions were referred to corporate officers in Dallas. My call was returned by David Wright, a spokesman for T.G.I. Friday's.

"This particular policy is a matter of corporate policy," Wright said. "And, as a corporation, we don't comment on corporate policy."

Wright, like Galanos, was informed that according to three officials at the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (LCC) and the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) their corporate policy is blatantly illegal because it arbitrarily discriminates against persons on the basis of age.

Wright responded with a couple more corporate no-comments and added that the policy wouldn't be changed.

DIANE BANKS, field representative at the state civil rights commission's Detroit office, flatly said T.G.I. Friday's policy "is not lawful. He (Stone) can come in and be served food."

Phyllis McKesson, director of public information for the civil rights department, said similar complaints have

been filed and none has gone as far as the hearing stage when the businesses are informed of Public Act 453. Also known as the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Law, the state law prohibits discrimination in public accommodation on the basis of a person's age, sex, race, religion, color, national origin, marital status or handicap.

"We had a ballpark figure of about 30 complaints since Proposal D raised the drinking age," Ms. McKesson said. "It's definitely unfair to refuse entry to persons under 21 at a restaurant. But a lot of people aren't aware of the law."

Ms. McKesson said some 7-Eleven party stores tried to ban persons under the age of 21 after a certain hour and were rebuffed.



**Craig Piechura**

She and others sympathized with the plight of restaurant owners trying to keep alcohol from minors but said violating state law isn't the answer.

Stone says the next time he's back in the Detroit area, he'll go to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights Office, at 1200 Sixth Ave., Detroit, to file a formal complaint.

He won't go to Friday's for dessert afterward.

"I think they're trying to make it an exclusive place for young divorcees or whatever at night" Stone said. "We can just as well go to JoJo's or the Golden Mushroom for dessert."

from our readers

## Firefighter smoking mad about 'excesses' in Hills

Editor:

I'm mad, and I believe most of the residents of Farmington Hills are angry. Recently I received my new assessment — an 18.5 percent increase. Other residents tell me about 22, 25 and even 32 percent increases.

Hold attention down says President Carter. But I can speak with experience about part of this city administration, the fire department, of which I am a member.

In the past few years their budget has tripled. No one denies that fire and medical protection rate high priorities. But is our tax money being spent wisely?

Consider some of the excesses that I have observed over the last few years:

• A mammoth fire station capable of housing more than six trucks was built in a residential area on Drake Road. The station protecting the industrial park holds only two trucks.

• This station went over budget, still

isn't finished and has code violations.

• This station was landscaped by a nursery which most residents in this town couldn't afford. Our parks department takes care of city hall, the golf course and other municipal buildings. Why not the fire station?

• The full-time Farmington Hills firefighters were just given a fat contract, making them among the highest paid firefighters in Michigan. New trucks have been purchased from the same manufacturer. All have had problems with the controls, and are overweight.

But more are on order from the same company.

As stated, I work for this department. I love the job; helping my fellow citizens. But when I am told to hold down costs, make do with unsafe equipment and don't make waves, I get mad.

And I get madder still when I pass the station on Drake Road and see the automatic sprinkler system watering the professional landscaping. My taxes are up 18.5 percent. For this?

NAME  
WITHHELD  
Farmington Hills

from our readers

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Limit letters to 300 words.

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