

Know yourself, please yourself is Polly's advice

By NANCY AUSTIN

Polly Bergen wasn't there to describe the plastic Hollywood scene. Nor did she speak about turtle oil face cream or her now defunct cosmetic line.

She didn't even tell about her acting days, her singing career or the numerous television appearances she has made.

What was on her mind when she came to Livonia Town Hall last week was her own struggle to find herself, her efforts to establish self-confidence and the process she used to come to terms with herself in order to relate to others.

"Do you like the outfit I have on today?" she began in a Loretta Young-type entrance.

The audience applauded, of course.

"Well, I really don't care if you like it or not," was Miss Bergen's response.

"And the truth is I want you to leave

here today not caring whether the lady next to you likes your outfit. It's whether you like it or not that's important."

SEE USED this example to illustrate the fact that each woman goes through her entire life looking for approval. "Yes votes," she called them.

These votes, she added, come from a support system which includes husbands, lovers ("If this is your life style"), children, bosses and others. But then the speaker noted that, statistically, some day most women end up alone.

"It's a scary, terrifying thought," she said. "And most of us who find ourselves alone are ill-prepared to deal with it. We have lived our lives being as good as others have told us that we are."

Then, she added, when the time of aloneness comes, "we are stuck with

our own opinion of ourselves, and how we see ourselves."

"Sometimes we haven't even yet formed an opinion of ourselves," Miss Bergen said. It was after she was divorced at age 41 that she first found herself alone with herself.

She said she was terrified when she realized she had not grown emotionally since she was age 11 and that she had to overcome the terror of loneliness.

"AT AGE 11," she said, "I was 140 pounds, 5 feet 6 inches and had a 40-inch bust. I had an image of myself as an elephant-graffe." She explained that this image contributed to her feeling like an outsider among her friends.

"At age 17," she went on, "I still had the image of the elephant-graffe, and it didn't help that by now my first show business friend was tiny Jane Powell. And Elizabeth Taylor was so beautiful, you wanted to stab her in the chest with a fork."

By this time, Miss Bergen explained, she had begun to make a name for herself in show business and began to cover up who she really was.

"I lived with the fear that some day someone would discover who I really was," she said. "I was very lonely."

But she said that today she realizes that it's what inside that counts. She used Barbara Streisand to illustrate her point.

"When Barbara started out in show business, she wore hand-me-downs from resale shops," explained Miss Bergen. "Her hair covered her eyes, and she used her long, slender hands to draw attention away from her face. When she became successful, it wasn't long before the hair was swept back, and eventually her nose, which evidently didn't bother her, was used to her advantage. Suddenly, Ms. Streisand, made it OK to have a big nose."

LAUNCHING INTO a description of

her campaign to get her act together, she advised the guests in the audience to take notes on her advice.

"Stand in front of a full length mirror (with or without a friend)," she advised, "and remove all your clothing. At this point certain things become evident."

A weight gain was the first thing that became evident to Polly Bergen.

"My body had gone to seed (flesh is more like it)," she added.

The next step was to get out a pad and pencil. "I listed my likes about myself and my dislikes," she stated. From this list she learned to look at the things she could not change and deal with them psychologically one by one.

"For example, I always hated my legs," she said. "They are short and stumpy. But I decided to deal with it. I could conceal them in various ways. And I decided (other people's) opinions of my legs didn't matter. My opinion did."

DISCUSSING how heavy people can deal with losing weight, she reminded her listeners that almost everyone in the room has enough common sense to know what is fattening and what is the basic method for reducing.

"We are all looking for the magic wand," she noted. "That magic wand is in your head. It's commonsense, discipline and caring about yourself. The secret to good dieting is to keep your mouth shut."

She said people must realize that they cannot hide from themselves. "Know who you are," she said. "Make an effort to accept what you cannot change. Change what matters if you can. If you like yourself, you'll trust your own judgment. Listen to your own common sense."

Miss Bergen advised development of positive traits.

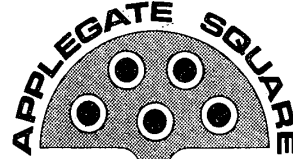
"Learn to love people," she said.

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