

Poppies: The flowers and the hopes remain unfaded

Twenty-seven years ago, I sold my first bunch of veteran poppies.

It may be that the veteran who made those poppies in the Battle Creek Veteran's Hospital made the ones offered for sale this year as well.

Thousands of those veterans — male and female — have no hope of ever leaving the VA hospitals. For the disabled veteran who works from a wheelchair or his bed, whose agony is physical or mental, poppies are a symbol of hope that doesn't fade with time.

Most of us buy poppies without really understanding why we do it or what we accomplish with our annual donation.

Following World War I, the poppy idea blossomed for two reasons.

The poppy as a symbol came from the wild, red poppies pushing through the soil of a European battlefield.

Bright crimson blossoms opened among the stark white crosses and Stars of David that marked the graves of thousands of young men killed in the second battle of Ypres in Belgium.

Inspired by the sight, a battle-weary soldier wrote a poem that began: "In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, between the crosses row on row . . ."

IT WAS April 1915 when he wrote those lines. Before the war ended in 1918, the Canadian Colonel, John

McCrae, had died in action. But his vision of poppies as a hopeful symbol lived.

To you from falling hands we throw the torch," he wrote. "Be yours to hold it high."

The torch was taken up. The very first artificial poppies were sold by units of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1921 to raise funds for French war orphans.

On Poppy Day 1980, which is this Thursday, every veteran's group in this area will be out on the street corners, in the malls, and even going door-to-door selling the familiar paper flowers with the little tags.

I'm not sure what the cost of a poppy was back in 1953 when I got mine from the Robert J. Rafelson Auxiliary of Jewish War Veterans, but I guess about four or five cents. Today, it costs almost 15 cents when the poets and auxiliaries buy those similar poppies and put them up for sale.

Think about that when you reach down in your pocket for your annual donation.

AND THINK about this: When the poppy sellers get your donations and put them all together, those proceeds can only go for the rehabilitation of veterans. A permit from each municipality must be applied for and received.

The stipulation is that the funds can only be used for rehabilitation.

One recent year, the American Legion Auxiliary spent



Shirlee Iden

just over \$5,000 at Battle Creek Hospital alone. The funds were proceeds from their annual poppy sale.

At Allen Park VA Hospital, the closest one to Oakland County, some 700 patients are housed at any given time. About 15 percent of them are veterans of the Vietnam War, hospital personnel said.

Many of these young veterans survived their wounds only because of advances in battlefield care and the use of helicopters for evacuation and rescue operations.

Bingo games, live entertainment, gifts and holiday parties may not sound like much, but to many veterans, young and old, it's all they have to look forward to.

"Poppy proceeds can mean the difference between a veteran or his son or daughter going to college," said Mrs. Ruth Weiss, auxiliary president of Michigan's Jewish War Veterans.

Madlock suspension outrageous



Mike Brudenell

Pittsburgh Pirate third baseman Bill Madlock shouldn't have been suspended for 15 days for using some muscle on a home plate umpire last week.

And the \$5,000 fine he incurred is outrageous, too.

Busting Billy, count your lucky stars; if you had been a professional athlete playing sport anywhere else in the world, this season would be over — maybe seasons '81, '82, '83.

Umpires, referees, judges — they all make mistakes at crucial points of a game. Some even take delight in penalizing certain players whom they have come to dislike over the years.

Off the field, there are umpires who wouldn't rate a 3 out of 10 as individuals. But that doesn't give players the right to even the score whenever they lose their tempers.

A couple of years ago, I witnessed what may have been one of the sickest incidents ever in sport.

Rioting fans had brought a soccer match to an abrupt end midway through the second half of the game. As the fans spilled onto the field, some of them made a dash for one of the referees. Before

police could get to the ref, a brawny young man cold-cocked him from behind.

The official lay convulsing on the ground — his jaw was broken — as his assailant sprinted off towards the clubhouse. The cowardly sniper was one of the players.

A league investigation followed and ultimately the guilty party was suspended for life and jailed for three months.

An extreme case, but an example of what happens when respect for umpires and referees is lost.

Last week a champion Australian football player I know personally was summoned before a league tribunal on charges of head-butting a lineman. He was found guilty and suspended for 22 games — the entire season.

I reckon he got off light.

Bill Madlock didn't break anyone's jaw. He probably didn't do much more than bruise an umpire's ego. However, he demonstrated that he thought he had the right to do more than argue verbally over a call.



Craig Piechura

Winner's circles reflection

You're expected to say: "Wow, I've never won anything before in my life" when you win a contest.

After winning a \$300 award last week from the Detroit Press Club Foundation, I'd like to say the same, but it wouldn't be true. And, like Jimmy Carter, reporters must always tell the truth.

This is the first award I received as a professional journalist, but it's the first time I've won prizes connected with newspapers.

First was that brand new red Huffly bicycle I won back in the 1960s in a newspaper carrier promotion. For every new customer you signed up, you got to peel a numbered sticker off a prize board. Underneath the sticker it told you what prize you won.

Most of the prizes were pretty chintzy, like a rubber-coated hardball or a combination magnifying glass-compass that you could always use to fry ants if you got lost coming home from the paper station.

There were kids at the paper station who signed up 20 new customers, receiving only cheap pen and pencil sets and rubber-coated hardballs for their efforts.

The one new customer I brought in was my parents. But the sticker I peeled off the prize board had "Huffy bike" printed on the back.

So, while I'd like to believe in karma, that people are rewarded for their honest efforts, I know such is not always the case with contests.

I REMEMBER appearing with the Cub Scout pack on a local kiddie's show called "Poppy and His Pals." Part of the show was a segment called "Musical Camera" where the camera would pan the studio audience while a popular record played. When we were there, the tune they played was "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens.

Whoever the camera was on when the stagehand picked the needle off the record won the record and a case of Bosco chocolate syrup.

I wanted that record badly. I already knew the falsetto "woo, ooo, ooo woo," part, not to mention the "Weemo-way" chorus. So, I strained my neck to get my face on camera as much as possible.

But, as tough luck would have it, the camera stopped on the Cub Scout next to me, Robert Miller. As they panned in for a close-up of him, I stuck my face in camera range to congratulate him.

Now I know Robert Miller didn't appreciate that record as much as I would have. Before his good fortune, I remember seeing him throwing his parents' old 78 rpm phonograph records up in the air in a field and shattering the shellac with a high-powered BB gun.

Funds raised from poppy sales allow her group to award several monetary grants to Michigan students for college studies. The grants are made at each June convention following the May poppy sale.

BATTLE CREEK Hospital houses some 1,200 psychiatric patients. It is also the only place in Michigan where poppies are manufactured.

Each paper flower is hand-crafted by a disabled veteran as part of his personal rehabilitation program. And because they are paid per flower, the poppy project has helped many men and women to support themselves and gain self-respect.

More than 400,000 poppies are put together each year at Battle Creek. Some veterans also are allowed to continue their production after leaving the hospital.

Those active in veteran groups get to follow their funds into the veteran's hospitals and other institutions. There's nothing like speaking with the hospitalized men and women to impress on one the importance of this program.

Most people won't visit a veteran's hospital in their entire lifetime. Thousands of unfortunates will never leave them.

Try to remember that when someone shows a poppy canister and a bunch of red flowers at you on Thursday.

What's in a number?

The most overused word around these days isn't even a word — it's a number.

"Ten" is the title of a movie as well as the rating of its main character. The title role was filled by a woman named Bo Derek. It has not been clarified whether the 10 rating was justified by her looks or her IQ.

Derek in real life is probably a relatively inoffensive person who just happens not to have to leave the house with a bag over her head.

But her one movie role has managed to spawn further neurosis in the hearts of females.

It's not enough to be a good provider, a good mother, a corporate whiz, a fantastic cook or whatever else women are doing. Now they have to fit (one

goes by the fashion mag credo) assign a number to themselves.

And should the ghastly truth prevail and a woman finds herself to be only a six or, god forbid, a three, she can refer to said fashion magazines for advice on how to work her way up the scale. It is assumed that a one is beyond hope.

The problem with these magazines is that a woman who wants to inch her way toward 10-dom must take such drastic steps as (a) lose weight, (b) contemplate major cosmetic surgery, (c) put on makeup with a putty knife and/or (d) discover a fountain of youth.

We have compiled a far simpler approach to the 10 look.

For starters, find a has-been actor who likes to take nude pictures of his wives and marry him. Make sure the



Caroline Price

hubby is the type who wishes to totally take over your life and will decide when you may or may not eat a candy bar.

You must next invest a few hundred bucks in an intricate braided hairstyle so that people will believe you are truly sincere about the 10 look.

It is advisable to cultivate friends who live by a beach so that you can practice rising magnificently out of the surf.

Have a poster made of yourself in a wet T-shirt.

The whole idea is to go about informing the world that you consider yourself a 10. Others will probably entertain entirely different (and lower) ratings of you, but few would have the guts to actually say so.

Walking 16 miles makes a guy's feet hurt

One bit of advice would have prevented eight blisters' in Saturday's Olympic Marathon Walk to Fight Muscular Dystrophy.

"Put some Vaseline on your feet," advised a friendly sage from the Observer circulation department.

Pam Mahakian, from our advertising copy layout staff, who also walked Saturday, heeded the advice. I didn't.

The result: She had one blister and I had eight.

Such are some of the realities of a 25-kilometer (16 miles) walk. Yet, I did finish in better physical condition than last year. Running on the beach in Florida during my vacation helped. There was less soreness than last year.

Matt Eineman walked again this year. This time, however, he wore two pairs of sweat socks instead of one pair of thin nylon socks. Consequently, he was still able to walk at the finish.

It was another beautiful day again this year. In fact, it was almost too hot. Halfway through the walk I wished I had worn

shorts and T-shirt instead of a jogging outfit.

AN ITEM for the believe-it-or-not books is that I cut three hours off my time this year.

Just so no one thinks I'm the Rosie Ruiz of walk-a-thons, I have a card punched at every checkpoint along the route, proving I didn't cheat. In addition, Ms. Mahakian and Eineman walked with me through the entire route.

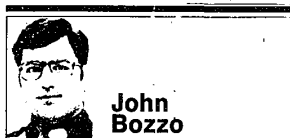
At the finish line, each person who completes the route also gets a medal and certificate congratulating them of the feat.

A total of 537 people and one dog walked. This is an increase of one dog and a decrease of 63 people from last year.

The dog had two pledge sheets, went the whole route, got a medal and everything," said Paul Daniel.

Daniel ran the whole 25-kilometer course in two hours and six minutes. It was a little slower than his time last year, but Saturday was a much hotter day.

Besides fewer people, there were also



John Bozzo

fewer pledges, \$18,000 compared to \$26,000 last year.

SMALLER NUMBERS are disappointing. Redford's Jaycees worked hard to stage the event. It was well organized. Muscular Dystrophy is a worthwhile cause.

Perhaps people decided to enjoy the wonderful hot weather rather than participate.

Maybe the low participation is just a sign of the tough economic times. Money is tight. When people cut expenses, charities like the Muscular Dystrophy Association are the first to suffer.

Whatever the reason for the low participation, those 538 walkers (including the dog) and all the Jaycees and Jayettes who organized the event can feel justly proud of their accomplishment.

Eighteen thousand dollars is a good sum of money.

Most of the walkers were grade school, junior high and high school students. But it also seems like there were more older participants than last year.

If everyone could see those young kids walking their hearts out all day under the hot sun, then they would understand why I walked again.

Because many people work hard to benefit others, I consider the MD walk Redford's most important community event.

Sure it was rough work. I talk about aching muscles and blisters. But afterwards I feel good about it. Besides, I can watch the Labor Day Telethon without feeling guilty.

Thanks if you participated by pledging or walking. Do it again next year and bring along a friend.