

'His eye is on the sparrow'

It wasn't a sweet song. The bird sitting in the tree outside my door was shrieking. High shrill notes pierced the morning air.

The summer sun was beginning to roast the day. Usually birds would be inspired to warble songs of thanksgiving. Not this strange sparrow.

Watching from my window, I noticed not only was the bird's song peculiar, his behavior was bizarre. The small, brown feathered bird ran back and forth across the lowest tree limb, much like a sandpiper.

Then I saw it. Lying on the grass, close to the tree trunk, was a bird. A tiny, dark sparrow.

I waited, hoping to see it flutter in response to the noise above. No movement.

Cautiously, I opened the screen door. Perhaps the bird was injured. As I approached the motionless creature, the reason was obvious. Life had ended.

MY PRESENCE didn't intimidate the shrieking bird. More persistent, louder, it ran



Jocelyn Krieger

from side to side above my head. Nothing would stop its frightened cry.

I lined a small shoe box with grass and leaves. Gently, I lifted my unfortunate feathered friend, placing the lifeless body inside the box.

Still the other bird screamed.

Nearby was a garden bursting with purple bachelor buttons, cotton-candy pink snapdragons, fluffy white petunias. Slicing deeply into the earth, I set aside a portion of flowers. My shoveling didn't disturb the seemingly hysterical bird in the tree.

Suddenly, a fluttering of wings flapped above my head. I jumped, startled. The disturbed sparrow continued its cry, landing on the bush beside me.

With slow movements, I lowered the box into the garden grave. Shovel by shovel, I replaced the loose earth. The sparrow watched.

NOW THE SHRIEK changed. A fast chirping mellowed into a song. Carefully, I patted the soil around the flowers. Ruffled petunias would serve as a fitting monument.

Quiet. The sparrow sitting in the bush became silent. I also remained motionless as the brown bird paid its final tribute to its fallen mate.

Seconds later, the sparrow surged into the morning sky. Is it any wonder the Bible says, "His eye is on the sparrow?"

Jocelyn Krieger is a Southfield resident, freelance writer, music teacher and actress in broadcast commercials.

Housing shortage, price hikes ahead

The current deep recession in the house buying market could lead to an acute housing shortage and sharp escalation of prices when the state of the economy improves, according to the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors (WWOCBR).

"The present pace of home building has declined to an annual level of about one million units which, considering loss of older housing, means only a few hundred thousand units will be added to our housing stock," said John J. Halser, board president.

"With the growth of population and changing life styles, we need some two

million new units a year to meet the need created by new household formations. Obviously, we are going to fall far short in meeting this need this year and will have to start playing catch-up."

If general economic conditions improve as expected later in the year and mortgage interest rates continue to decline, the pent-up housing demand will make itself felt in a hurry, Halser said.

"THIS WILL translate into strong competition for both new and existing homes on the market and prices, which have remained relatively stable in re-

cent months, will climb," he added.

"While we hope the pace of price increases can be slowed from that experienced from 1977 through 1979, we know they must continue to be substantial," he said.

WWOCBR statistics on existing home sales showed the average sales price within its 1,600 square mile territory rose from \$36,815 in 1977 to \$52,340 last year — a 43 percent increase.

"Costs for land, its development, materials and labor can be expected to rise commensurate with the rate of inflation and this will force the price of new homes higher," Halser said. "The price of good existing home stock will follow as dictated by demand."

HE ALSO LOOKS for continued tightening of the rental market as landlord costs continue up, more apartments are converted to condominiums and fewer privately financed apartment houses are built.

"Caught in a price squeeze, we think

a greater share of buyers, particularly those in the market for the first time and those in retirement, will look to condominiums to answer their housing needs," he said.

"The lower unit building costs possible in condominium construction should bring a strong response from builders assured of a growing market. So, we look for condominium sales to become an increasingly important part of the average realtor's business."

He said recent drops in mortgage interest rates will enable many potential buyers to enter the market. However, he said local economic conditions will delay a boom in home sales that would be expected under more favorable circumstances.

"Buyers in position to move into the market rapidly enough may be able to enjoy lowered interest rates and bargain home prices, he said. "Those forced to delay buying or those who await a further drop in interest rates undoubtedly will be caught in a rising price spiral."

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