



Shirley Ford's day

It begins the minute she enters the door of her classroom in the Detroit House of Correction. There are art supplies to be set out. The display of various class activities must be brought up to date. Each task is done lovingly, carefully by the Farmington Hills woman who believes her job is exciting, challenging and rewarding. (Staff photos by Gary Caskey)



Teacher draws her students into seeking better lives

Shirley Ford's painting classes have a way of dwindling in size. By the end of the 16-session course, the number of students usually decreases from the original 15 to about half.

But that's not all bad. Her students are inmates of the Detroit House of Correction, and the reason some of them drop out of her class is because of an early release from the institution.

Mrs. Ford likes to think the reason many of them receive an early release is because of their excellent behavior.

She has been teaching painting and drawing at the short-term prison on Five Mile Road in Plymouth Township for three years. She is there from 6-9 p.m. every Monday and Wednesday.

"I usually lose two after the first class when they decide it is not for them," she said. The others drop out at their residence at Dehoco ends.

"It's exciting, challenging and rewarding. The men come in hostile and uptight. I try to slow down the extrovert and cultivate a trusting rapport with the withdrawn. Once they're interested, they bring in a photograph of a child or relative, or find a picture in a magazine, and begin painting." Shirley is a portrait painter. Her students do portraits, landscapes, still life and seascapes.

She feels it is important to get there early to set up a display of their works and to get out the supplies.

"I WORK ON a one-to-one basis. At first, they don't talk to each other." She looks forward to the time when they start looking at each other's works, offering suggestions and making comments. Once a comfortable communication is established, they relax and begin to enjoy the class.

Written tests at the end of the course include a brief resume of the student's assessment of the classes.

"This one was 58 years old," explained Mrs. Ford, as she went through some of the test sheets.

"He was very disruptive at the first class — talked so fast, he didn't make sense. He painted six pictures the first night. Finally, with patience, his painting became slower and so did his speech. He did one or two a night and then one every two weeks.

"The time came when he sold some drawings," Mrs. Ford said. "He had developed a style. And see what he wrote!"

As the bottom of his test paper was: "I've learned how to be patient. New Life." His teacher wiped the tears from her eyes as she repeated, "New Life."

"ONE OF MY students was a young man who was a natural artist. We developed his technique — the eyes and the skin tones. Several of his paintings were sold and when he was released, he went back to school. He's still painting."

Some of the other critiques of the art classes revealed why Mrs. Ford finds it all very rewarding. Pat McAllinden, director of treatment at Dehoco, said with a smile, "She's on cloud nine when she reads some of these." He also expressed enthusiasm over the results of the classes.

The men expressed their feelings: "I learn to concentrate on objects and reproduce what I see. I find it helps my mind to create its own beauty. Learn to blend color and draw portraits and to capture still life."

"Listen to teacher, now I learned it pays to listen. Improved confidence."

"I've also gotten great enthusiasm from starting a project and completing a finished product with your help. Furthermore, it has helped me to sharpen my comprehension to the point of being able to accept constructive criticism. To distinguish between the two, constructive and destructive. So at the same time, I also found something more about myself."

"Helped me bring out something I thought that I really couldn't do and, thanks to the teacher, I'm going to take another course when I get out. Thank teach for your helping bring out something in me."

"I, (name deleted), have learned how to draw and a great deal of patience and wish the classes was not over. Miss Ford is very nice teacher."

"As sketching has always been my weakest point, I feel that having gained this knowledge and skills,

plus the reacknowledgement of my artistic gift which comes from God Almighty Jesus Christ, is the best contribution that this art class has afforded to me after Ten (10) years abstinence from art endeavors of any kind altogether."

Shirley Ford is very discreet about her students' backgrounds, maintaining a rigid attitude of disinterest in why they are in Dehoco. To her, they are individuals with undiscovered potentials.

She did say that the writer of the last class assessment had been a promising artist but hadn't touched it for 10 years. His pastel portraits of a turbaned, bearded man and beautiful young women showed this talent.

WHAT BECOMES of the prisoner's art?

Some pieces are included in art shows and sales sponsored by the Prisoners Accelerated Creative Exposure (PACE). These shows have been in churches, shopping centers, the Renaissance Center and the Roostertail Restaurant in Detroit.

The artist receives 75 percent of the sale price and PACE the other 25 percent. A show is being planned somewhere in downtown Detroit during the Republican Convention in July.

Some works are sold individually by the artists. They are always on display Sundays during visitors' hours at the prison.

"Many of them are so proud and so pleased with their works, they take them all home with them when they go," said their teacher.

THE STORY of how a Farmington housewife, mother, Brownie leader and garden clubber ended up spending six hours a week at Dehoco was explained by Shirley Ford.

Although she started out with no formal training, she has been painting and drawing all her life.

"I love to paint people, either in oils or pastels," she said. Her paintings have been sold in many parts of the United States and one of her portraits is in the Concordia Archives in St. Louis.

Eagle Scouts soar in ranks

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

Dan Joppich and John Rosowski, friends since the seventh grade, graduated from Catholic Central High School together this month and took their Eagle Scout awards together in ceremonies conducted by Troop 110 in Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church.

This fall the duo will enter the University of Michigan.

Joppich enters college with an Evan's Scholarship, given by Western Golf Association.

Rosowski enters as a National Merit finalist in the one-half percentile and as winner of the first prize in International Science Fair for designing a computer program that imitates the effects of a loud speaker.

Joppich, 18, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Joppich of Farmington Hills. Rosowski is 17 and the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rosowski of Farmington.

TROOP 110 is heavy on the camping end of scouting and both of the area's newest Eagle Scouts said the camp activities offered was the lure that brought them into the troop.

Rosowski explained his becoming an Eagle Scout as "something that happened along the way. It wasn't a primary goal for either of us because we didn't want to ignore every thing else that was offered."

"The opportunity to take leadership positions for example," Joppich added. "That's something that will help you forever in everyday life. Or just the fun of being a scout."

Both of the scouts are avid back-packers and both adept in wilderness-survival skills. And both were on the same team that won the Klondike Sled Race in last season's Winter Camporee.

They credit a good deal of the success of Troop 110 to its scoutmaster, Rick Lilley, "who makes it a totally scout-run troop," Joppich said. "He does the paper work but we do the planning. Everything we do is voted on by the scouts. The success of the troop is pretty obvious; we're one of the largest in the Clinton Valley Council."

JOPPICH'S COMMUNITY service activity, necessary to complete the Eagle Scout requirements, stemmed from visits to his late grandmother, Ann LaFrambois, who was a patron of Oakland County Library for the Blind and Handicapped, housed in Farmington Hills Community Library.

"When she took out a book," Joppich said, "she'd have to spend an hour or so getting into it to see if it was what she wanted, because there was no synopsis on it."

When Joppich uses the word 'book,' he's using it

as a synonym for a tape or record.

"Tapes or records don't come with the information on them that you get on a book jacket," he explained.

Help from Troop 110 scouts Chris Goode, Kirk Daily, Jim Surowiec, Jerry Surwiece and some library volunteers was rounded up by Joppich who organized what he describes as a never-ending job.

Taped synopses are now being taped onto every piece of material that goes out from the library "so they (the patrons) will be able to know a little bit more about what they're getting than just what's in the title," he said.

"With books constantly coming and going and new ones being added all the time, it is a long and laborious process."

ROSOWSKI, who retains friendships with his teachers from his days at Beaman Junior High School, got two suggestions from that corner for his community service project and completed both.

"Because math was one of my better subjects," he said, "I was able to work with some kids who were having trouble so they could re-take a test. They all passed."

"I never thought of myself as a teacher before," the young man said of the crash course he gave to the seventh-graders. Of the five who were tutored by Rosowski, all were having problems in different areas.

"I don't know how they did in English but they passed math," he said.

Even so, Rosowski didn't think the tutoring would fill the Eagle rank requirements, which necessitates organizing a project.

But the need of paint for the junior high school's bathroom walls did. That was completed with his organization and the help of 12 scouts over four weekends.

SUMMER DAYS for Joppich will be spent back on Oakland Hills Country Club golf course where he has caddied every school vacation since he was 12.

It was this long-term employment that led the way to his four-year scholarship through the golf association. It includes his being a resident in Evan's Scholar House while he attends the university's College of Literature, Arts and Sciences.

Rosowski begins work with Advance Computer Management in Troy where he will be writing computer programs which are customized for the firm's clientele.

Meanwhile he is thinking about patenting the design that won him international honors this spring. The suggestion came from representatives of the U.S. Patent Office who were instrumental in sponsoring the International Science Fair.

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