

Her vision of Brenda Starr altered the future

As one who makes it a habit to forget holidays, it might be odd that notice of Grandparents' Day coming up on Sept. 7 should catch my attention. But there's usually something particularly special about the relationships between grandchildren and grandparents and the part they play in each other's lives.

An immigrant who never mastered writing in English although she read and spoke the language, my grandmother was fascinated by written communication and determined that her granddaughter would be a reporter.

At a time when girls were supposed to be preparing to love, honor and obey, she inspired me to contemplate the life of a globe-trotting Brenda Starr. Her visions of a reporter's life were far more glamorous than the reality of deadlines, but most jobs were more glamorous than that of a laundress.

By the age of 11, a friend and I were publishing a monthly "newspaper" for the subdivision. Later I joined the staff of the high school weekly paper. Then, the journalism dream faded when college beckoned. Somehow succumbing to the typical coed track, the plans exchanged a journalism degree for a teaching certificate to "fall back on" if anything happened to me as yet non-existent spouse.

My grandmother was probably disappointed, but

she never questioned me about that decision, although she couldn't hide some of her disappointment when I dropped out of college to get married.

IT'S NOT that she thought marriage and children constituted a second-class career — she just was a little ahead of her time. She wanted me to be self-reliant and independent. Living through the depression may have had something to do with that.

When her husband couldn't get a job, she supported the family, including six children, by cleaning homes and washing clothes for other households. At home, in a strong Germanic tradition, she scrubbed every house the family rented. After wallpapering, painting and generally fixing up a fairly ratty duplex, my mother recalls how it hurt when the landlord immediately sold the home and the new owners moved into "their" spruced-up side of the building.

For such a bright and strong-spirited woman, my grandmother's life was never easy. She was orphaned at the age of 4. When her grandchildren complained about being forced to clean their rooms, she reminded them of life in the "Old Country" where children worked long hours on the farm. Most vividly, she recalled her uncle throwing clods of dirt at her back to keep her awake in the early



hours when she rode the mule leading the plow. At age 17, she ran away from home the night she was coerced into marrying an older widower. Her uncle came after her, telling her he hadn't realized how much she didn't want to marry. He offered to send her to America, where one of his cousins lived.

Months later, she arrived in Ohio, without job skills and lacking any knowledge of English. She worked until she met my grandfather, then helped him run his small store. Shortly after her sixth child was born, the depression hit. The family moved to Detroit to scrape together a living, which they continued to do for the next three decades. The family never owned a home, despite my grandparents' struggles to do so.

SHE CONTINUED to work until age 65 and spent the next 24 years of her life in the homes of her

children. She wasn't destitute, but all she had to call her own was a room and even that was shared with grandchildren much of the time.

So her dreams concentrated on us, making things better for us. In a time when young girls seldom were encouraged to map out a future beyond a white wedding, she noticed our efforts in school and talked about college.

It would be nice to write that my grandmother rejoiced in her granddaughter's first byline. But that didn't happen until after her death and partly because of her death. After some years as a homemaker, breaking into journalism wasn't easy, and my efforts at getting a job were fairly feeble.

It was easier to moan about how nobody wanted to hire me than getting out and doing the hard job of knocking on doors and pestering potential employers. The terrific sting of my grandmother's death somehow dislodged that self-pity.

If she could cross the ocean and make her way in a new land, surely I could extend my quota of courage beyond standing up to snooty salespersons. I wish that I'd done it earlier, and I wish we could celebrate Grandparents' Day together.

Writing about her helps to ease that regret — but not nearly enough.



Tisch turns to image firm to sell tax

Robert Tisch, proponent of a property tax cut plan that bears his name, is getting a slicker image, thanks to a Troy public relations firm he has hired.

The firm is McMaster Associates, the outfit that handled PR for the 1978 Headlee tax limitation amendment.

A farmer and Shiawassee County drain commissioner, Tisch sprinkles his live speeches with four-letter words. On a mild day, he calls Gov. William G. Milliken "a damn liar" and says of state officials, "Kick 'em inna rump."

UNDER McMASTER'S guidance, the latest Tisch news release describes the man as a "straight-talking 60-year-old grandfather from Laingsburg" who "serves" as Shiawassee County drain commissioner.

There's only one "hell" in the two-page release. No longer are entire sentences printed in capital letters; gone, too, are the long strings of exclamation points.

McMaster even has Tisch using statistics. "Proposals A and C are tax shifts and tax increases," the release has him saying, a reference to the so-called Coalition and Smith-Buller plans.

"New reports that there are three tax cut plans on the ballot are incorrect," it goes on.

"Incorrect?" The real life Tisch would have used a more agricultural term.

THE McMASTER handout quotes Tisch: "The Tisch tax cut amendment will stop government from overtaxing us. People in Michigan are mad as hell and are going to vote themselves a tax cut with Proposal D on Nov. 4."

"When Gov. Milk-in-em tells a news conference that passage of the Tisch tax cut amendment will be disastrous to the state of Michigan because our Proposal D will cut property taxes by 50 percent while guaranteeing existing state financing to local units of government, he should also tell voters that that translates to only about a 14 percent cut in state spending."

"Since we filed 420,000 petition signatures putting the tax cut amendment on the ballot last month, the governor has already called for a 10 percent cut in state spending while guaranteeing the people there will be no reduction in state services."

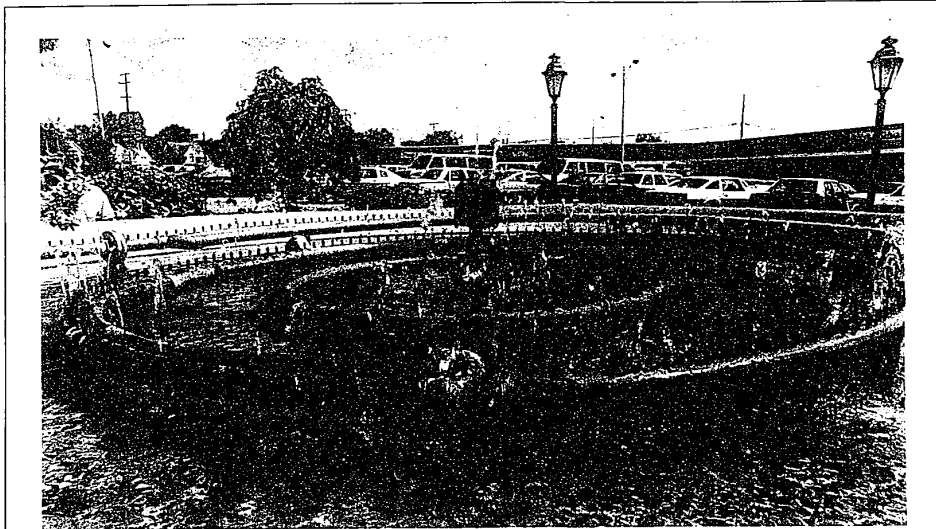
"The governor has also hired a \$31,000 a year full-time PR man in Lansing complete with fringe benefits with our tax money to try to help him convince the voters that the Tisch tax cut will be the disaster the governor asserts."

"I believe the 10 percent across-the-board reduction in state spending confirms what I've been saying all along. There is fat in Michigan's budget. The governor obviously agrees if he can cut 10 percent without cutting services."

WELL, BOB TISCH doesn't really sound that firm. His hayseed approach is entertaining for about three minutes. Then his boorishness begins to get on one's nerves.

If you get a chance, listen to him and make up your own mind. Schoolcraft College is planning a series of community services forums, as it did in 1978. Perhaps they can book Tisch again.

You have to hear and see Bob Tisch to disbelieve him.



Isn't this pitiful?

That's what a lot of folks around town say when they stroll by the fountain in downtown Farmington. Hardly a soul can remember when the fountain really worked and it sure would spruce up the old parking lot if someone, anyone, would chip in the money to see that the fountain once

again did what it was supposed to do. Now, we're not asking for the Dodge Fountain. All we're asking is that the one we've got gets fixed. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Postman delivers a lurid story

News desks traditionally are buried under a mountain of junk mail.

We get hot tips on everything from how to build a compost heap in Tallahassee to successful ways of growing alfalfa sprouts in Iowa. Some make so-so fillers, and others are filled under "W" for wastebasket — the burial place for non-local yanners and groaners.

All that glitters is not gold, and all that doesn't is not necessarily junk. What the postman bringseth, it pays to readeth because he can cometh up with some hot stuff.

When a reporter gets a press release about a mail-order minister suspected of selling an estimated 50,000 pounds of marijuana, no way does this writer toss it in the "W" file or list it in the religion calendar.

In this case, the story originated in Grand Rapids. But it may be of more than passing interest, to readers here. The item, included in a public service press release from State Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley, happened to cross my desk.

MICHAEL ANDREWS of Grand Rapids — who got his minister status through the mail from the Universal Life Church in California — is blocking the efforts of Kelley and State Treasurer Loren Monroe to collect nearly \$650,000 in state taxes. That works out to \$13 per pound.

The tax bonanza, according to Kelley, is assessed against Andrew's allegedly illegal sale of 30,000 pounds of grass. But Andrews filed an appeal with the State Board of Tax Appeals to keep Kelley and Monroe from collecting.

In legalese, Andrews is contesting a jeopardy tax assessment for \$650,000 filed against his assets,



This assessment is a civil action sought by Kelley and Monroe to collect state taxes on the alleged sale of an illegal substance.

Independent of any criminal action, the jeopardy tax assessment doesn't deal with legal or ethical questions of marijuana possession. It merely treats the activity as any other business subject to pay taxes.

Within the last year, Kelley and Monroe have used the assessment procedure to collect more than \$1 million from narcotics dealers, prostitutes and others with questionable ways of earning their daily bread.

GETTING BACK to the minister who allegedly plied his pot-selling trade from June 1979 through May 1980, authorities estimated the volume of Andrew's transactions and tax liability in a strange way.

Here the plot thickens and begins to read like a cheap murder mystery with drugs thrown in to embellish the lurid details.

Authorities learned about Andrew's alleged dealings in records found at the scene of a murder last May.

Detectives investigating the murder of Anthony Holst 27, on May 23 found notebooks and other re-

cords indicating that the victim and Andrews sold large amounts of marijuana, according to Kelley.

Holtz had been shot to death. Among items found at the death scene were a big chunk of cash and 30 pounds of marijuana.

Kelley and Monroe seized the money and other evidence as part of a separate jeopardy tax assessment filed against Holst's estate. That action has also been appealed to the State Board of Tax Appeals.

While investigation into Holst's murder continues, Kelley and state treasury agents are taking legal steps to collect the tax liability from Andrews.

COMPLICATING these efforts is Andrew's status as a minister of the Soldiers of Christ Church — an affiliate of the Universal Life Church of California, which features mail-order ordinations.

Andrews has a doctorate of divinity diploma signed by Kirby Hensley, founder of the Universal Life Church.

The Soldiers of Christ Church, according to Kelley, own a \$200,000 estate in Grand Rapids. Authorities didn't put a tax lien on that property. But they slapped a lien on an estimated \$25,000 worth of equipment and household items found at the location. The stuff was scheduled to go on public sale this month.

Kelley and Monroe have placed other tax liens on property owned by Andrews in Mecosta and Montcalm counties. A hearing on the minister's tax appeal is expected in 60 days.

The moral of today's column is never try to cheat the government, beware of ministers who got their divinity degree from a matchbook cover, but welcome postmen bearing "junk mail."