

Teen's \$60 dilemma has story-book finish

Broke, out of a job and afraid to tell her parents about the \$60 speeding ticket staring her in the face.

That was the plight 16-year-old Marie Terlet, who decided to play a long shot. She wrote to a millionaire and made an impassioned plea for a \$60 loan.

The long shot paid off and the results were almost as happy as one of the endings on the old-time television show, "The Millionaire."

The real-life millionaire, Percy Ross, 64, a Minneapolis philanthropist who was born in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, receives more than a few letters asking for help. Marie's, for example, was one of 15,000 which he received following his appearance on a Detroit television show Aug. 6.

But it was an impressive letter, he said. He sent a \$60 check to allow Marie of Plymouth Township to pay the speeding ticket and to learn one of life's lessons about responsibility, kindness and sharing.

Contacted by the Observer, Ross said Marie's situation provided "an excellent example for teenagers." Ross thought Marie's letter "was great, a classic."

"It stood out because she was so humble about the whole matter. . . . It takes a great person to admit one's in the wrong and an even greater person to be willing to suffer the consequences. I couldn't help but help her."

THE JUNIOR at Plymouth Canton High School and millionaire Ross were almost the equivalent of two ships passing in the night.

Marie learned about Ross when she and some friends attended the Aug. 6 "Kelley and Co." TV show in Channel 7's Southfield studios.

Percy, a la Horatio Alger, was explaining how he

had gone from being a poor boy to a millionaire whose only business now was giving his money to causes that he deems worthy.

In the audience-participation part of the show, Marie even asked the philanthropist a question and enjoyed the program.

SEVERAL DAYS later Marie and some friends were driving on Edward Hines Drive, anxious to make an early morning departure of the Bob Lo boat.

Marie, unlucky, was too anxious and was stopped by a Wayne County Sheriff's deputy who ticketed her for going 15 mph over the speed limit. She and a friend discussed ways of paying the \$60 fine. Telling her parents was out, she thought, because she had just lost a job and had no way of coming up with the cash.

Marie then thought about selling her blood but the Red Cross dismissed this idea by telling her the organization does not buy blood. The friend then suggested the millionaire. Marie wrote him the following:

I just got my driver's license. I've been driving about a month. I was speeding and I got a ticket. I fully agree that I was at fault. I did deserve it. I am totally willing to take the consequences. Like the points on my driver's license. But, I called to see how much the ticket would be. I have absolutely no money. I'm trying to find a job but I won't make \$80 as fast as I need it (two weeks).

I don't know what will happen if I don't pay my ticket. My license might be taken away —

then I'll never be able to pay for it, as I will have no way to get to and from work. I'm really scared.

Mr. Ross, I will pay you back eventually when I get a job and save it up. I will never speed again. I haven't since I've gotten the ticket and I will never ever again. I've learned my lesson the hard way. It's dangerous and costly. Wish me luck in court. With luck I'll be thrown in jail.

Ross sent the check and a note. It said, in part:

You will not be going to jail, Marie, because my check for \$60 is enclosed to pay your fine. My contribution is for sharing your honest and sincere feelings with me and with others who may have the opportunity to read your letter and learn from your experience.



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