

She urges swimmers take dip for charity

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

Judy Tappert, temporarily of West Bloomfield, is one of the movers and shakers.

But she has to shake things up quickly, before it's time to move.

Married to a General Electric executive, she, three children, and dog Rommel, move approximately every two years, responding to George Tappert's climb up the corporate ladder.

"It's always been my philosophy, uprooting the kids and ourselves so often, that if you don't get really involved in a community, then you leave without ever being a part of it," Tappert said.

"I've done all kinds of different things — depending on what stage I'm in."

West Bloomfield, in fact, is the only spot to which they've moved, left and returned. Two years in the township, 1 1/2 years in London, England, then back to West Bloomfield for another two years.

HER LOCAL LEGACY is twofold: an annual swimathon for SCAMP, a county-wide summer program for handicapped students run by the Bloomfield Hills School District; and the addition of two tennis courts for the Orchard Valley Swim Club, West Bloomfield.

Two years ago, Orchard Valley swimmers collected \$2,300 for SCAMP; last year, it was \$3,500 with club members, pre-school to 60-year-olds, participating.

Another swim club, Bloomfield Surf

in Bloomfield Hills, took up the idea last year. This summer, she hopes to convince their entire Northwest Suburban Swim League to swim for SCAMP. "She's been one of our most valuable supporters," said Jean Walker, SCAMP coordinator.

"I like the idea that kids who have a wonderful happy summer, who are strong and healthy, share that with kids who may be a little less fortunate," Tappert said.

"I think this could be a dependable source of funding."

ELECTED THE first woman president of Orchard Valley, which includes members from West Bloomfield, Farmington Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield Township and Bloomfield Hills, Tappert was a driving force in winning neighborhood and township support for two added tennis courts, turned down one year before.

Tappert discounts her contribution, saying, "I came into it when most of the work was done. It depended on finding a site that would suit our club and wouldn't offend our neighbors."

Living in New Jersey, she went through her "political activist phase and League of Women Voters years."

In Gainesville, Fla., the Mount Holyoke College graduate was appalled that students, grades one through three, got out at 1:30 p.m.

"They put their heads on their desks, recess and lunch," she recalls. "They had everything except education. When you come from the north, it was appalling."

"My project there was to get the school year extended. I got another hour. You have to keep chipping away at these things slowly."

SHE BEGGED off their year in Washington, D.C., where George was part of a presidential executive exchange program between government and industry.

Spouses were included in the educational exchange, and they were feted by both Pat Nixon and Betty Ford.

"I was a tourist. I just tried to hit the Smithsonian once a week and cart the kids around," she laughed.

The year and a half in England had her exploring English neighborhoods, finding homes for transferred American executives.

"It was a good experience for all of us," she said. "I think we came home with a new perspective."

Now it's time to leave West Bloomfield for Fairfield County, Conn., General Electric's corporate headquarters

where George is staff executive for strategic planning and development operations.

Sheri, 18, a Bloomfield Hills Andover High School senior, will be least affected, since she's headed for Amherst College in Massachusetts (her dad's alma mater) this fall.

Good schools and good swim teams for Stephen, 15, an Andover sophomore, and Katie, 12, a West Hills eighth grader, are top priorities, Tappert said.

"WE LOVE Michigan," she said. With all the moving we've done, it's the first time we've ever come back. "I have the best friends here I've ever had. That's what makes it so difficult."

But she's excited that her children will experience New England, where her roots are. She grew up on a Massachusetts island, called Chagoga-gogmanchaugagoggchaubunagungamung, which in Mohican means, "You fish on your side, and I'll fish on my side, and no one will fish in the mid-

die." (Containing 13 G's, the name is listed in Ripley's "Believe It or Not.")

For short, it's called Webster Lake.

The family of seven children left for school in small boats two by two. Sometimes, it was so foggy they couldn't find the school bus and had to walk the five miles into town, Tappert said.

"I don't miss it (New England), when I'm not there," she said. "Then I go back and see stone walls, and I know something is missing."

She foresees Connecticut as another two-year assignment that will get Stephen through high school and Katie into it.

As for herself, "I'll do something," she promised.

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Helen Smith passed away in 1973. Bayard Tupper, although no longer with the company, continues to be an active Farmington businessman and keeping with his original thinking of serving the community is a member of the Farmington City Council and in the past has served on many other committees and boards in the local area.

Robert VanEvery, nephew of the founders, current owner and president of H.A. Smith Lumber has been with the company since 1946. Bob is a life-long resident of Farmington. He graduated from Farmington High School in 1945, served in the Navy in WWII. He is a member of the Farmington Elks, Kiwanis, Exchange Club, American Legion, Chamber of Commerce and served as president of the world-wide fraternal order of lumbermen. Bob and his wife, Marilyn, reside in the City of Farmington. Both give generously of their time and efforts in community projects.

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