

Suburban Life

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Monday, January 16, 1984 O&E

(F3B)

A sometimes lonely battle

7-year lawsuit ends with a victory for working women's rights

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Mary Lou Butcher will collect \$22,000 this month after a longstanding lawsuit which charged the Detroit News with sex discrimination in employment practices.

The Farmington Hills resident described the sometimes lonely battle as one that took a big chunk of her life, time and energy and one that she entered into naively.

"I wouldn't even want to contemplate what I would have done if I had known that (the lawsuit) would take seven years and something like \$20,000 in attorneys' fees," Butcher said.

"I believe in basic fairness. I believed that you could go into court and get a solution to your problem and that would be that. As it turned out, it is better that I didn't know then all that would be involved."

As it also turned out, Butcher's risk in time, energy and money constitutes an important victory for working women in every field, but most immediately in her chosen profession of journalism.

THREE OTHER female journalists who joined her in the suit in 1981 will be compensated through a ruling by Federal Judge Avern Cohn; plus another 90 women journalists who joined later in class action.

The specific cause for Butcher's complaint filed in 1976 was that her request for weekends off, after 11 years with the paper, resulted in a punitive transfer which allowed for no hard-

news assignments or bylines.

"There were no good assignments for me, no weekends off and no promotion in sight. The discrimination had clearly been going on for a long time, but subtly," she said.

At the time the paper had no women reporters in the business news department, the Lansing bureau, the Washington bureau, the sports department, editorial writing or photography. Everything written was being filtered from a male dominated point of view.

"Now, seven years later, women are in every one of those departments and make up about 30 percent of the news room, so it was well worth the trouble. Readers are getting another viewpoint and women's concerns, across the board, are being taken more seriously."

"I MADE a big dent in getting balanced views in the news."

Butcher realized early on in her one-woman lawsuit that there would be no turning back once she made the commitment to the equal rights fight.

She left the metropolitan paper to join the public relations firm of Carl Byoir and Associates, "where I was allowed to succeed," she said. And she succeeded in becoming a vice president and the company's first woman regional manager.

She also succeeded in "somehow finding the strength to carry on," she said, as the lawsuit droned on with peculiar twists and turns.

"Even when I was very tired I had faith," she said. "I had faith in the principle. Faith that it was right and that

somebody had to be in the vanguard. Paying the lawyers' fees was always a pressure. We were constantly looking for funds. We tried to keep up as we went along with fund-raisers or just out-and-out solicitations."

The "we" she speaks of was a small group behind her who ultimately spread the word of the lawsuit in order to reach people who came forward with financial aid, and some of these from unexpected places.

IN HER BATTLE Butcher got help from the Detroit Newspaper Guild, the American Civil Liberties Union, the United Auto Workers' Women's Committee, the National Organization for Women and Women in Communications.

"But I also got help from individuals, some men, some women, that I didn't even know who were in a variety of professions: nurses, teachers, government workers, people who told me that they just wanted to see this come to a happy ending," she said.

The turning point in her lawsuit came when the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) joined the suit as an intervenor.

"That meant we had some government funds to work with and that was a big relief. That was in 1981. The EEOC took care of some very costly research and statistical compilations, and without that help the whole business could have taken forever," she said.

"Somehow allies appeared along the way, and somehow you can find resources as you go along, as long as you know what you are doing is worth it."

Butcher was born and raised in Michigan. She grew up in Lincoln Park and graduated from University of Michigan. She is now employed as an account supervisor with MG and Casey in Southfield.



With the seven year struggle behind her, Mary Lou Butcher looks to the future in her new job as an account supervisor for MG and Casey in the firm's new offices in Southfield.

Musicaire premieres latest work of Slabey-Rado collaboration

The Farmington Musicaire will present an entire program of new works by Farmington Hills composer Charlene Slabey at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, in Farmington Community Library, 33737 12 Mile Road.

Written specifically for this occasion, which recognizes the Parade of American Music sponsored by the National and Michigan Federations of Music Clubs, the premiere will feature five Farmington Musicaire members, all of whom have been heard extensively in the Detroit area.

The centerpiece of the day will be a major work, the song cycle "House Outside of the City: 3000 A.D." To be performed by Mary Sue Ewing, soprano, Fern Barber, clarinet, and Mary Behan, piano, the dramatic composition provides glimpses into the minds of four survivors of a cataclysm.

The song cycle is the latest in a 19-year collaboration between composer Slabey and lyricist June Rado, pianist and past president of Farmington Musicaire.

COMMENCING WITH 30 art songs, the two women have written the musicals, "Machina!" commissioned by the musicaire in 1972, and "The Power Of It All," commissioned by Farmington Community Center in 1974.

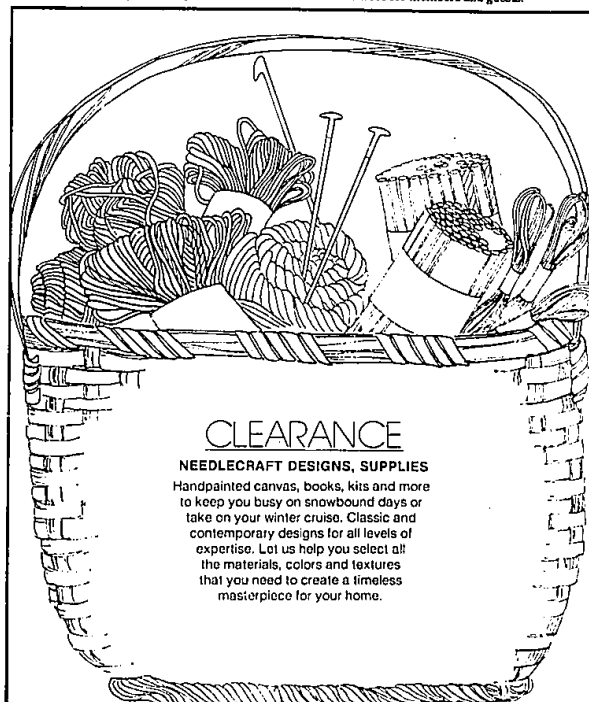
Ensuing major works of their collaboration include a Christmas cantata, "A Star Out Of Jacob"; a chance opera, "Lydia," and "Earth Psalms," a symphonic song cycle for four-part women's chorus and chamber orchestra, commissioned by the Madrigal Club of Detroit.

The February program, to which the public is invited, will include "Two Lyric Etudes for Voice" to be performed by Mary Sue Ewing and Mary Behan, a set of pieces for two clarinets called "Blue Barley" and "Pink Oatmeal" with Lois Swanson and Fern Barber, clarinetists; and a four-movement suite for piano, "Dialogues on a Theme in Raroque Style" to be premiered by Eleanor Peets.

THE MOST recently performed work by Slabey is a choral anthem, presented last fall by the choir of North Congregational Church, Southfield, under the direction of Harry Langford, with soloist Beverly Stieff, soprano. The work was written in memory of Shirleyann Strey, concert pianist and member of Farmington Musicaire.

NAMED 1981 Artist-in-Residence by Farmington Area Arts Commission, Slabey has a master's degree in composition and is a long-time teacher of piano and composition.

Baby-sitting for the February program is available for a fee for members and guests.



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Charlene Slabey, the Farmington Hills composer who was named Artist-in-Residence in 1981, has written her most recent work specifically for the Parade of American Music, sponsored by the National and Michigan Federations of Music Clubs. She has collaborated with lyricist June Rado for the past 19 years.

Local churches join to sponsor film series

"Focus on the Family" is the title of the series of films which will be co-sponsored by two local churches, Hope Lutheran, 39200 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, and Spirit of Christ Lutheran, 40700 10 Mile, Novi. The family life program, featuring seven films, will be shown at 8:30 p.m. on consecutive Sunday evenings, starting Jan. 22.

Dr. James C. Dobson, associate clinical professor of pediatrics at University of Southern California, developed the film series which covers a wide range of topics, including authority, discipline, spanking, TV, spiritual training of children and marital harmony.

"Shaping the Will Without Breaking the Child" is the topic for Jan. 22 in Hope Church.

"Christian Fathering" is scheduled

for Jan. 29 in Spirit of Christ Church.

"Preparing for Adolescence: Origins of Self-Doubt," on Feb. 5; "Preparing for Adolescence: Peer Pressure and Sexuality" on Feb. 12; and "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women: The Lonely Housewife" on Feb. 19 will all be shown in Hope Church.

The series concludes with "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women: Money, Sex and Children," Feb. 26 in Spirit of Christ Church.

Each film is complete within itself. Area residents are invited to attend any or all of the sessions, without charge.

Baby-sitting will be provided at both churches.

Jaycee Week celebrated

January 15-21 is national Jaycee Week, proclaimed to recognize and promote the activities of the organization which offers leadership training through community development projects to its members.

Membership is limited to men between the ages of 18-35.

To highlight Jaycee Week here, the local chapter is sponsoring its 17th annual Community Leadership Prayer Breakfast and its annual Wild Game Membership Dinner, both on the same day, Thursday, Jan. 19.

The breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. in Glen Oaks Country Club. Reservations are necessary and can be made through Bob Coleman, at 33409 Grand River.

The dinner, open to all men wishing to learn about the organization, begins at 7:30 p.m. in Salem Church, 33024 Oakland. There is no charge for the dinner, but reservations are asked, by calling the Farmington Area Jaycees, 477-JCJC.

This year's president of the chapter is Dr. David Carroon, who is associated with Plaza Veterinary Hospital.