

Suburban Life

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Educating Sarah

She turned adversity of widowhood into treasury of new experience

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

EVEN WITHOUT formal book learning, Sarah Shreeman always felt educated. Life, it seemed, had taught her all she needed to know without red brick schools, notebooks and pencils. But a personal crisis drove her to formal learning and now she admits she's richer for it.

Shreeman, 79, a resident of McDonnell Towers, a winsome, petite gray-haired lady who smiles a lot, turned the adversity of her widowhood into a treasury of new experience.

When her husband, Morris, died 12 years ago, her world came crashing down around her. "It was much worse for me than when my son died suddenly at age 25."

"I was upset and insecure. I didn't know what to do with myself," she said. "I was a home lady. Taking care of my four children and Morris was my whole life. And when he died, I felt guilty that maybe I didn't take good enough care of him."

After 45 years as a homemaker, Shreeman didn't know how to "make a check."

DEPRESSED almost to desperation, she lost 30 pounds, then developed diabetes, suffered a heart attack and underwent a mastectomy.

At first, she lived by herself in a small apartment, then came to live at McDonnell Towers in Southfield. "This place is very nice and also they just take 30 percent of what you have," she said.

In apartment No. 207 Shreeman found new hope. After all, there were others to say "good morning" to, even if you didn't really mean it at first.

One day in 1978 she heard another woman talk about going to high school and she decided that though it seemed a bit scary this might be just her cup of tea.

So began the education of Sarah Shreeman.

She learned that the SEMTA bus would take her to the high school in Berkley where she earned her diploma, and developed a distinct appetite for learning. Around her, the first of her 14 grandchildren were applying to professional schools. Why not her?

So continued the education of Sarah Shreeman.

SEMTA buses again were her way to a wider understanding, to a new dimension to life. Her days started early, the apartment to straighten, children to check with, and then the long bus rides.

They took her to the Southfield, Royal Oak and Orchard Ridge campuses of Oakland Community College. She never missed classes nor did she often miss being at the top of her class. Four years after she began studying for her high school diploma, she had earned an associate's degree in liberal arts from OCC.

For the diminutive student, having attained this level of education was liberating, intoxicating and could only lead to more, a miracle considering her rough beginnings.

Shreeman came to Detroit in 1922 from Russia. "I came because of all the trouble there," she said. "In the Ukrainian town of Tomashpol, the terror

of the revolution was a grim reality. Shreeman's sister had been killed. Life was cruel and cold, and her parents feared for her.

They helped her cross the border to Romania by bribing a guard. "My mother's goal was for me to get to Boston to an aunt and uncle," she said.

A LONG ocean voyage to America was made bearable because she met a young man, also from the Ukraine, and when the boat landed, in New York, she and Morris Shreeman had an understanding.

"He said he'd send me a telegram when he worked something out," she said. "He went to Detroit because he had a brother here and I stayed in Boston, meanwhile."

When Morris became situated, he sent the telegram, went to Boston and he and his Sarah were married. They settled in Detroit, had two daughters and two sons, and he became the proprietor of his own roofing business.

Those were Sarah Shreeman's days as a "home lady" who scrubbed and cooked and took care of the house and family.

Following World War II they lost one son to a virulent type of pneumonia days after he came home from the service.

"All my children are college graduates," Shreeman said proudly.

Now, the holder of an associate's degree herself, she has completed further studies in gerontology.

'There are thousands of senior citizens who need help, and I want to see that older people are treated nicer. I was hired by the Catholic Social Services to work in a care center where people have emotional problems. I talk to them, touch them, take them for a walk.'
— Sarah Shreeman



Sarah Shreeman traveled to a lot of campuses to get her education, one of them Orchard Ridge in Farmington Hills, where she earned her associate's degree in liberal arts. Now she's 17 hours away from her bachelor's degree in gerontology.

Staff photos
by
Mindy Saunders

Entertainer opens Jewish campaign

Actor and entertainer Theodore Bikel will participate in the 1985 Allied Jewish Campaign's opening event at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 23, in Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills.

The community is invited to join with Bikel for an evening of Jewish songs, lore and legends that reflect the unity of the Jewish people.

As an added attraction, "Partners," a slide show about the many kinds of partnerships that enrich and strengthen Detroit's Jewish community, will be presented.

A veteran stage and screen personality, Bikel has performed on Broadway, in London and on television. He has appeared in some 35 films including "The Defiant Ones," for which he received an Academy Award nomination, "The African Queen" and "My Fair Lady."

Bikel appeared on stage in "The Sound of Music" and "The Threepenny Opera," and received special acclaim for his performance of Teyve in "Fiddler on the Roof." An accomplished concert artist and raconteur, Bikel has performed for audiences all over the United States and promised to return to Detroit after an appearance celebrating the success of the 1983 Allied Jewish Campaign.

The opening is one of several events marking the campaign's "Super Week" which will launch community-wide solicitation in support of human services in Detroit, in Israel and around the world.



Theodore Bikel

Reservations for the opening and further information on Super Week are available from the Jewish Welfare Federation, at 955-3929.

History gives understanding

The late George Kazanbaum, an architect, has said, "Almost everything can be better understood with a knowledge of what preceded it." With February observed as American History Month, Quakerstown Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution asks everyone to review again our exciting

"Our partners in need need you" is the message for the 1985 Allied Jewish Campaign's Super Sunday telephone appeal, set for 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27.

Detroit is one of more than 100 communities nationwide that will be keeping the phone lines busy on behalf of the campaign's 60 local and overseas beneficiaries.

Several hundred volunteers will be asking contributors to respond with their best possible gift in support of human services here at home, in Israel and around the world.

Volunteers will be briefed on the needs that must be met this year and learn how Allied Jewish Campaign funds help enrich the quality of Jewish life. Harold Dunsky and N. Brewster Broder are chairing the effort, which will reach 10,000 households in the metropolitan area.

Dunsky noted that volunteers provide a personal touch to the commu-

tywide appeal. "Often they give as much as they receive, providing information and assistance to those they call. They know they may be talking to someone who can use the services of our agencies, so while it is vital to get a pledge, it is just as important to offer help where it is needed," she said. "During this time when we are facing some critical situations, so many of our elderly are turning to the organized community for help, and large numbers of young people are reaching out for a Jewish education and a Jewish identity. Our campaign theme, 'We Are One: Partners for Life,' takes on a special meaning this Sunday, as volunteers ask people to strengthen their ties to fellow Jews in need through the campaign."

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BRODER ADDED that with inflation in Israel approaching 1,000 percent and stringent economic measures underway, the lives of the elderly, handicapped, young people and new immigrants will be most adversely affected.

Of particular concern is the resettlement of Ethiopian Jews, who reach absorption centers without any understanding of modern living conditions or any knowledge of Israeli society.

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Here in the Detroit community, there also are critical needs. Last year, for example, the Jewish Family Service and the Jewish Vocational Service served a combined total of more than 8,000 families and more are awaiting help.

Other agencies, such as the Fresh Air Society and the Jewish Community Center provided many youngsters with their single positive Jewish experience through campership assistance during the summer. The Jewish Home for

Celebrities line up to lose weight so charities can gain

Weight Watchers second Quick Start for Charity fund-raiser is under way. The format is the same as last year where celebrities pledge to lose 5-15 pounds during a three-week period. The public is invited to pledge any amount of money on the weight loss of the "loser" to be donated to the celebrity's designated charity.

Among the participants movie critic Catherine Rambeau is losing weight for Interim House and news columnist

Aged and the Jewish Federation Apartments serve hundreds of elderly at various locations, including the new buildings at Maple and Drake roads, but the waiting lists are long.

Campaign chairman Robert H. Natally and Stanley D. Frankel noted that last year, \$493,809 was raised on Super Sunday.

"In 1985," Natally said, "we must exceed that goal to meet the changing needs of the community and to create new services for those who require assistance."

George Cantor for Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

WXYZ sportscaster Mark Andrews is losing for Michigan Humane Society and Argie Uesdy for Fairlane Civilian Club.

Sister Mary Watson makes her pledge for St. Patrick's Senior Center and WKMG news director Roberta Jastna for Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

More than \$7,000, was pledged toward area charities during last year's drive.