

points of view

Dancing brown eyes still see hope for life

SHE LAY in bed, dressed in a white ruffled blouse, talking about life with her family in Farmington Hills, and a new life in a suburban nursing home.

At age 50, she feels somewhat helpless, but not hopeless.

Multiple sclerosis has left her partially paralyzed, in some pain, and she is quickly losing her vision. She has lived here since last June, leaving a house mechanically equipped to handle her, and her condition. Now her doctor prefers she get 24-hour care.

But her situation hasn't dulled those dancing, brown eyes.

She lives in a community of the aging and the elderly — a young woman by her standards.

"Things around here aren't that terrific," she says, "even though you're not alone. You ring the bell and hope someone comes."

The home appears to be short-staffed, she said, and has its own problems — apparently not uncommon in the nursing home industry.

"Me and my big mouth — telling you all," she adds.

LYING IN bed all day gives this slim fireball of a woman a chance to think about the past and dream about the future.

She hopes for an electric bed, which would allow her to be more independent and mobile. And she talks about how much she loves cookies — a plastic-covered can



Casey Hans

Although she is able to go home with her family sometimes, she spends many of her days now alone and in bed.

with treats is within easy reach, as are the telephone for easy dialing and the radio, which rests on her pillow. Her days are filled with radio talk shows and soap operas, and visits from her family.

Like all of us, this woman has a story to tell, but asked that her name not be used. The story of her life is as interesting as anyone's, even though she is not happy with the hand that life most recently dealt her.

She grew up in Detroit where her mother — her "best friend" — worked as a nurse and her father bottled beer. A music teacher by

profession, she worked for 11 years in Detroit Public Schools and retired at age 37, after her condition was diagnosed. She's just as happy to be out of the public schools, she said, although her love of teaching still shines through.

"One day I got chased with a baseball bat," she explained.

THE "ONLY Protestant" in her class at Marygrove College, she carried a double major, which included music, plus English and Speech, and she also holds a master's degree.

Her disease was diagnosed by a spinal tap in the early 1970s after she began experiencing dizzy spells.

Although she is able to go home with her family sometimes, she spends many of her days now alone and in bed.

"My doctor prefers 24-hour care — he has seen me fall out of my wheelchair too many times," she said. Her electric wheelchair sits next to her bed, charged and ready to go. "If I could somehow get the money for the care at home, I would prefer that."

An occasional soap opera, and friends on talk radio now occupy the days of this vibrant, brown-eyed woman.

Here is a lesson in living. To take each day one at a time, and to learn to accept life's hills and valleys gracefully.

Casey Hans is a Farmington Observer staff writer.

Top gun: columnist off mark

To the editor:

I am a full-time police officer and police firearms instructor in a local suburban department and I am writing in response to Steve Barnaby's recent column (Points of View, Feb. 2). "New super weapons will endanger innocents."

Mr. Barnaby offers the opinion that the 9mm semiautomatic pistol that many area departments are switching over to is an unnecessary weapon for police officers to have in order to provide protection for the public or themselves and that these weapons create some sort of danger to everyone involved.

He cites faulty logic on the part of officers who recently have been requesting these weapons more and more just because the drug dealers and addicts have them. Apparently Mr. Barnaby has neglected to consider some of the following:

- There has been an alarming increase in criminals using semiautomatic and automatic weapons. The type, caliber and quality of weapon that police officers face nowadays has changed from what officers faced 35 years ago.

- The semiautomatic pistol is more accurate and is easier and quicker to fire than the traditional revolver, significantly increasing the probability of an officer being able to hit the intended target.

- Many armed criminals that are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or that are otherwise very determined in their actions often cannot be stopped by "one well placed shot," especially one from a handgun. In addition to this, there has been a significant increase in criminals wearing protective body armor, also known as bulletproof vests, that can require an officer to fire additional rounds at alternate body locations in order to effectively stop an armed attacker.

- The increased cartridge capacity of these new semiautomatic pistols allows officers to keep firing longer, if necessary, without having to divert their attention from an armed attacker in order to reload. The reloading process of the revolver is slow and awkward and could be potentially hazardous, especially when having to be done under the stress of defending oneself from an armed attack.

While many incidents requiring police officers to use their weapons are resolved with the officers firing less than the six shots contained in their revolvers, this may not always be so.

If Mr. Barnaby had the responsibility of having to possibly defend himself or those around him every day he went to work, what value might be placed upon the quick availability of a seventh or more

cartridge within his personal defensive weapon?

Even if additional ammunition was never needed or used, having it allows for a certain "peace of mind" that can go a long way in allowing officers to perform their duties safely and effectively.

- Almost one half of all armed encounters that police officers deal with are with multiple armed adversaries.

- Virtually every area department that is issuing the 9mm semiautomatic pistol to their officers is only doing so after providing each officer with substantial training in the carrying and use of these weapons.

As has always been true, officers must account for every shot they fire. While unlikely, any officer "spraying 16 rounds in the general area of a target" would be doing so contrary to training and would certainly be held liable for any misplaced or unnecessary shots fired.

Let's give our police officers every advantage we can in dealing with armed and dangerous criminals. While weapons are certainly secondary to an officer's overall job, when the worst can happen at any moment, we should make sure our officers have the best weapons available and that they are equipped second to none.

Michael J. Patton, Farmington Hills

To the editor:

How Al Capone was ultimately brought to justice bothers Steve Barnaby more than it does any of my colleagues.

As a law enforcement officer, I always appreciate the assistance of other agencies and the citizenry — accountants and managing editors alike. In fact, in many instances, the apprehension of perpetrators would be nearly impossible without the help of a watchful citizen (i.e. Neighborhood Watch).

I found Mr. Barnaby's article (Points of View, Feb. 2) on the "ultra-lethal, semiautomatic handguns" both lacking facts and misleading to the public. The facts are that the .38-caliber and the .357-caliber police service revolvers are outdated and inferior to what the criminal is carrying in 1989. From my experience, the 9mm, 16-round, semiautomatic handgun is more accurate and easier to handle (load and unload) than

today's conventional police sidearm.

Mr. Barnaby mentioned five communities that are concerned for the safety of their officers and have outfitted them with the semiautomatic handgun. He failed to mention many more, including the Michigan State Police.

Mr. Barnaby believes that by the police purchasing the 16-round weapon, the weapons race on the street will escalate. Open your eyes, Steve, the handguns and other weapons on the street today far surpass anything that the local communities would approve for their officers to carry on the hip. We're just asking for parity in most shooting situations.

I think Mr. Barnaby has been watching too much television. To even mention "Dirty Harry" movies in conjunction with such an important law enforcement issue shows his immaturity and lack of public concern.

His comment that "Spraying 16 rounds in the general area of a target will only serve to maim or kill some innocent bystander" is both irresponsible and a slap-in-the-face to law enforcement officers and law enforcement officials everywhere.

Police officers are not trained in this "spraying" technique as Barnaby espouses. Any handgun in the hands of an untrained individual, regardless if he or she is a citizen or a police officer, is a dangerous situation.

Weapons are not secondary to the job, as Barnaby believes. They are primary tools necessary to assist the modern law enforcement officer. Just like the accountant who has access to state-of-the-art equipment, I want to trade in my abacus for a computer.

Michael Wiggins, Farmington

keeping up with government

Looking for information about state government? The League of Women Voters has a toll-free telephone service (1-800-292-5823) that may be helpful.

Center in Lansing offers to help people find out about such things as pending legislation, the state constitution, election laws, voting regulations or tax information.

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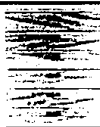
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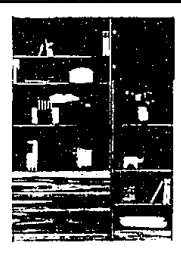
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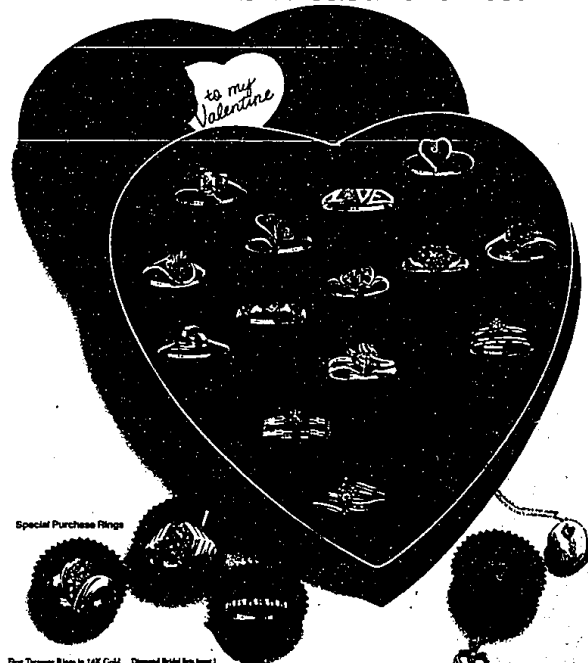
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