

points of view

Glitz masks folk singer's subtle sounds

WHO KNOWS where the time

That was a line from a song made popular by a prodigy of the folk culture era — Judy Collins — whose "Judy Blue Eyes" of Steven Stilla fame were featured prominently displayed this week in a national magazine.

It is also a relevant question today as we review Collins' life and her many musical contributions.

Her eyes are still bright and her throat still emits golden notes. Bits of gray touch her still softly curled, shoulder-length hair. Collins will

turn 50 in less than a month. She shows the graceful aging of a generation that sang for human rights and peace.

Today, she is a grandmother who is putting her name to a line of cosmetics — including an anti-wrinkle cream — and is an independent woman who is starting to look back on her life and its rollercoaster adventures.

I'VE SAT through Collins concerts at indoor music halls, college auditoriums and outdoor concerts, including one at Meadow Brook Music Theatre.



Casey Hans

My father, who plays piano and accordion by ear and pittered with guitar during the 1950s, turned me onto Collins in grade school. That was also an era in our house for the Kingston Trio, the Chad Mitchell Trio, Saturday night musical shows

and other fun.

The Judy Collins albums he first bought are now in my collection (sorry, Dad) and are well-worn from years of playing and numerous household moves.

"The songs were written for you, for us," she said on an early album I pulled from the collection this week.

"They are part of that creative expressive genius that is found always in music and sometimes in men."

I always felt she was writing or singing her songs just for me. Her classical piano background and both sing-a-long and hard-strumming gui-

tar set me, and two of my siblings, to strumming as well.

WHETHER IT was a rendition of a Leonard Cohen tune, a mournful Joni Mitchell ballad, or the simple message of a Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie song, Collins always made it her own.

The last Collins concert I attended will likely be the last, because I am disappointed with her inevitable change in style. Her voice is the same, but her style grew with the times, as I know it must. She now produces a more modern, gritty stage production with full orchestra-

tion. No, I prefer the subtle sounds of a solo piano, or the clear notes of a 12-string guitar. The only change to my Judy Collins music might be to update old albums on compact disc.

... Sad, deserted shore, your little friends are leaving. Ah, but now you know, it's time for them to go. ... Who knows where the time goes?

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

Dedicate some time for hometown needs

AFTER HEARING that only 3 percent of registered voters cast ballots in the recent Birmingham election, I could only think of Catherine Walker and the recent conversation we engaged in at our newspaper office on Bowers.

Catherine is a feisty woman who enjoys getting about town and shaking the bushes. It doesn't matter what side of an issue you're on — hers or the other side — she will get your attention.

Last Friday she caught mine. "Say, there you are, Mr. Barnaby. Well I recognize you by your picture," said a voice from the lobby.

"Now before, Friday I had never met Catherine Walker, but when I turned around, I instantly knew that I was facing a determined and charming woman. Now, I've always enjoyed that mixture of determination and charm that one rarely finds in combination, so I was ready to listen."

Of course, being recognized from my column picture did nothing to bruise the ego, either.

"Catherine, a lady somewhere in her 70s, was concerned that younger persons in the community were less than ardent in exercising their franchise. With paper in hand she was strongly recommending that we run the voting precinct locations in the front of the newspaper rather than just in a legal advertisement in the sports section."



Steve Barnaby

We speculated for a while on how this could best be accomplished in upcoming elections and she continued on from there.

"You know, I get concerned that some of the newer people in Birmingham just aren't paying enough attention. They need to participate more. I know this election isn't a big thing. But getting out to vote is a way to show you care."

SHE NOTED that reading a local newspaper was another important way to stay updated on community happenings "even when you always don't agree with how the newspaper stands on an issue," she said, throwing a mischievous grin my way.

She continued by saying that she was urging one of her friends to renew her subscription to the newspaper, even though she didn't agree with some of our editorial stances.

Admittedly, I felt good after talking with Catherine Walker. She's the type of person that makes a community solid.

She grew up and has lived her life in Birmingham. She knows it like few others ever will.

Every community needs a Catherine Walker. Most have them. But we need more. You very well might be that kind of person, or have the potential to be one.

Unfortunately, in today's world, many have become "too busy" to care about their community. Working, hustling the kids to school, hanging out at the right spots, going to the health club and driving that Mercedes has put a strain on the cohesiveness of one of America's traditional strengths — the community.

Recently, a news report outlined how, in one eastern bloc country, a plan has been devised wherein entire villages are being bulldozed and replaced by cities of multi-story apartments. Workers are being forced to leave towns which have seen generations of their families grow and prosper, where traditions have been built, rituals ingrained.

Fretful drastic stuff, likely to never happen here. But think about that for a second. We may not be tearing down entire towns. But if we don't care enough to participate in the process, aid our communities to grow and prosper, we might as well bring in the bulldozers.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

We need property tax relief

The writer, John M. Soper, is a Farmington Hills resident.

THE SUBJECT is property taxes. My family's own property taxes were increased by 23 percent for 1989. The bottom line is that our new tax bill will amount to over 10 percent of our gross earnings in 1989.

This, in itself, is an absurdity, but the reality is that we are literally being forced from our neighborhood because of the inability to pay soaring tax bills. Let alone being able to put aside a few dollars for ours and our children's, future.

I know, I should be happy because of the appreciation in home values. Maybe, and frankly I don't have an objection to the level at which our home is assessed. It is probably right on the money.

But for single wage earners (not to mention people with fixed/retirement income) in a neighborhood of high appreciation, there should be a mechanism, by law, that recognizes the disproportionate tax burden that these people, including my family, suffer. Let me offer some suggestions:

guest column

• Since, in general, more tax money is being generated due to rapid appreciation (it must be a windfall this year) in home values, possibly the law requiring assessments at 50 percent of market value should be changed to a decreased percentage, such as 40-45 percent.

• A Proposition 13 type law, such as California employed, could also provide relief to Michigan residents. This law, the way I understand it, lets the property owner know, going in, what his property taxes will be. When a residence is purchased, those property taxes in effect at that time will not be adjusted up or down, until that residence is sold. This lets the new owner then decide if he is capable of handling the adjusted tax burden. Residents are not subjected to the uncertainty of the market, with respect to their property tax bill. Since there is good turnover in

home sales in Michigan, this should not impact significantly, tax revenue requirements.

• Finally, I suggest that we amend the Michigan circuit breaker. That circuit breaker, of course, is supposed to be the Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit. It helps, but frankly it doesn't go far enough because of the current credit cap of \$1,200. Isn't this an obsolete cap? It is for families like mine. Those that can afford to pay high property taxes are recognized by not being able to receive a credit under the form criteria. However, those that cannot afford to pay have a cap on their ability to receive credit. Why is this? I suggest that the cap either be raised or eliminated to help ease the tax burden of affected Michigan residents. Economies can easily be run to determine the impact, again, on budgetary requirements.

I don't think my family is alone in this concern over property taxes, and certainly we are not opponents of the services, in general, that these monies help provide. However, we need fresh ideas and action to help relieve an ever increasing burden on our personal resources.

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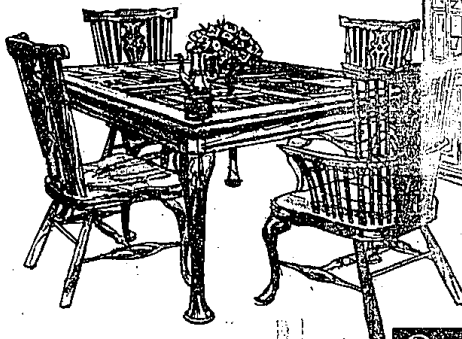
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