

History buff named distinguished citizen

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

History is not just words in a book or old buildings. History is our link to the past and our underpinning and the foundation on which we build our society.

History is important to Dick Carvell, Farmington Historical Commission museum committee chairman and museum curator, chosen by the Farmington Area Jaycees last week as the Distinguished Citizen of the Year.

Carvell's service to the museum, historical society and Farmington community is legendary, said Jaycees president Matt Ratliff.

"The reason we give these awards is the Jaycees are a leadership organization. People who receive this award go way beyond what the community asks."

In addition to donating his time to the historical museum and commission, Carvell, 66, is involved with Meals on Wheels and FOCUS: Hope, and is active at First United Methodist Church in Farmington.

But it is his work with the Farmington Historical Museum that Carvell is most closely associated with.

Supervising the museum, holding drives to recruit docents, gardeners and maintenance volunteers, getting involved in day-to-day, down-in-the-trenches work, planning events, acquiring museum exhibits — all this despite two quadruple bypass heart surgeries.

CARVELL IS honored the Jaycees considered him for the award, but it has been a humbling experience. "I'm not a glory seeker or anything like that, so you have to feel good when people recognize what you're doing."

"Sometimes, you do things because you like to do them, and then you wake up and see other people think there's value in what you do. That's a good feeling."

But what's more important to him is not how he feels, but that people appreciate the museum itself, Carvell said. "I love what I'm doing and I feel it's important, but it's gratifying to know others think it's important."

Down deep, people do appreciate and recognize the museum, Carvell

said. And that makes all the work worthwhile to him, he added.

Carvell has been associated with the historical museum, in one way or another, since retiring from Michigan Bell in 1981, first as a member of the Farmington Historical Commission Museum Committee, which helped acquire the 124-year-old, former home of turn-of-the-century Michigan governor Fred J. Warner, and for the last five years as museum committee chairman.

The job of museum committee chairman has evolved into museum curator, Carvell explained.

FELLOW HISTORICAL commission member Nancy Leonard said Carvell is tireless in his service to the commission and the museum. "It is certainly a well-deserved award."

But behind all the work he does at the museum and for society, people should remember the person behind the work, Leonard said. "He's an extremely humble man, that's one his most endearing qualities."

"Despite all the work he does for the museum and the community, Dick has never been known to boast or build himself up," Leonard said. "Instead, he points to those around him and praises their work."

Leonard doesn't know what the Farmington Historical Museum would be like without Carvell ("I shudder to think about it"), but she does know it wouldn't be nearly what it is.

Carvell prefers to point to the work of others: "Hey, I'm just chairman of the museum committee."

Over the years, there have been hundreds of people who've worked, contributed gifts and time or helped during tours. His own contribution ranges from five hours a week, during off months when the museum is closed, to 20-30 hours a week during busy festival times.

"You become a kind of executive director after a while," he said.

THE MUSEUM requires the contributions of a tremendous amount of people, all of whom should receive credit for what the city, historical commission and interested groups have built.

"Most places don't have something like this (a historic home with a significant past)," Carvell said. "This is



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Farmington Historical Museum curator Dick Carvell stands on the stairway leading to the second floor of the Gov. Warner

Mansion. In the background is the piano room of the 124-year-old historic site in downtown Farmington.

about roots, where we came from. I believe that people ought to learn from history what with what's going on in the world today.

"With people being so mobile today, history helps to create a foundation," he said. "It gives them a sense of beginning. Things have changed so much that you can't see where you came from anymore."

The historical museum is significant not only for its architectural appeal — turn of the century Italianate/Victorian homes are not found on every street — but also for its im-

portance in the community.

Continued restoration of the home has spurred an interest in historical preservation all along Grand River. "We're fortunate our historical homes are confined in a district," Carvell said.

"Now we have something to hold on to and keep for the future," he said. "I think it's important that we keep track of our heritage."

ONE OF the more enjoyable things about being part of the museum is meeting with people, especially children. "You can show them a

lifestyle that is pre-television, pre-throwaway toys," Carvell said.

Children and young people are important to the museum, not only because it's important to respect histo-

ry, but because young people are the museum's future.

Most younger people find value in preserving the past, but they don't perceive the need for volunteers.

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Wildlife commands photographer's eye

The work of professional wildlife photographer Rick Denome is on exhibit in the Livonia City Hall lobby through Feb. 19.

The Northville resident works with his wife, Connie, to produce pictures of birds and animals, which, he says, "are so important in our lives and the world around us."

A Michigan native, Denome is self-taught. His home library of more than 100 photographic books enables him to develop his own style and technique.

The Denomes do all the processing, mounting and matting in their home lab.

Although the variety of wildlife

makes southern Michigan their favorite place for wildlife photography, the Denomes travel across North America to photograph specific species of birds and animals. Alaska for grizzly bears, Maine for puffins, California for sea otter, Florida for eagles and Yellowstone for elk and bison.

Denome has displayed and sold more than 250 images of his work in more than 30 Midwest arts and crafts shows.

At this time, the Denomes are on a whale watch.

The Livonia City Hall is on Farmington Road, just south of Five Mile.

The serenity of this lone water lily is captured twice in the mirror effect of the water. The water lily's petals form a sphere of lines that radiate outward from the central point of interest.



Tracking Garden City's downtown heritage

Continued from Page 1

to become self-sustaining retained a small separate area for local industry.

American architect, planners and developers began planning communities after Howard's "Garden City," from New York and New Jersey, to New Mexico.

By October 28, 1933, Garden City, Mich., was incorporated as "a

home rule city." In October 1951, the first strip of concrete pavement was laid.

Incorporated as a village in 1927, its population was estimated at 900. By 1960, the population had grown to 35,000. With Garden City's growth came the rise of modern commercial architecture.

IN MARCH 1962, Kmart Corp.

opened the nation's first Kmart store in Garden City, Mich., according to Kmart public communications manager, Mary L. Lorenz.

"The basic structure is a very contemporary building derived from the international style," Seydler-Sweet said. "The style evolved because there was lots of land on which to spread out the architecture. You could call the

style 'strip suburban.'"

The international style, based on modern structural materials, used concrete, glass and steel. It rejected nonessential decoration. Bands and strips of windows were a major design feature of the style, creating a horizontal feeling.

According to Seydler-Sweet, the Garden City Kmart is "very (Ludwig) Mies van der Rohe."

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