

Suburban Life

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Our Fabulous Foremothers

Women's History Month celebrated with stories and dolls

EXQUISITELY DRESSED dolls, historically accurate in face, figure, stature and dress, will be used to tell the story of "Our Fabulous Foremothers" when Dr. Gladys Holde-mann McKenny brings her collection here in observance of Women's History Month.

Whether dressed in lace or calico, in velvet or homespun cotton, while the women the dolls represent were worlds apart in time and social status, they were bound with a common goal in their struggle for women's rights. The figures depicted in the 13-doll collection run from Abigail Adams, born in 1744, to Alice Paul, who died in 1977.

The event, sponsored by Farmington Chapter Older Women's League, begins with lunch at noon Saturday, March 2, in the Farmington Hills Branch Library, 32737 12 Mile Road. Reservations, at \$15 each, are necessary and must be made on or before Feb. 25 with Jean McAllister at 628-5324.

"This is the second time Gladys McKenny will be our guest speaker for Women's History Month," said Virginia Nicoll, president of Farmington OWL. "We'd like those who haven't heard her program to hear the thoroughly researched stories she tells about these women. And many of our members who attended the program three years ago are ready to hear those stories again."

McKenny, dressed in costume for her program, acts out the stories as each doll comes into the spotlight.

McKENNY'S DOLL collection began when she was recuperating after a fall. To pass the time she made a doll for her granddaughter, and for a reason she still can't fully comprehend, she embroidered "Vote for Women" on its apron pocket.

"It must have been connected with the research for my 'Women in History' class," the former Rochester, High School teacher said. "My class was refused acceptance three separate times before I finally got it under way. The first time I proposed

teaching such a class I was laughed at."

McKenny said her collection is dedicated to all of the women she's ever met who put up societal struggles. Putting that embroidery on her granny doll was a mark of the admiration she held for all of the women who worked for Women's Suffrage.

Her first set of 13 dolls, she said, was made with love. "They showed it and they have been retired."

Her second set was made professionally with cloth heads and bodies. The third and fourth sets are made with porcelain heads and are the ones that go on traveling exhibitions. The clothing for all of the dolls remains the same, with the same close and careful attention given to every detail.

McKenny's first program was given in 1984, a program that she prepared with great care. What she wasn't prepared for was the emotional response that program got from men as well as women, who cried unashamed as they listened to her stories.

MONEY RAISED by the luncheon and program will be used to further the OWL goals. The spring event is one of two fund-raisers the chapter sponsors each year in its efforts to make life better for mid-life and older women in America.

The bulk of the work at the local level is educational, dispensing information on any concern of mid-life and older women that is offered in programs without charge to members as well as guests. The bulk of the work at the national level is done through lobbying efforts in Washington D.C.

OWL works to help older women stay in control of their lives. Its goals include pushing for a national health care system, a more equitable Social Security system, increased access to housing and housing alternatives, expanded employer-sponsored pension coverage, the elimination of discrimination in the workplace and the improvement of the image of mid-life and older women.

Membership inquiries are taken by Tina Manfredini, 626-2705.



Gladys McKenny holds a copy of the first doll in her collection that started her on her way to "Our Fabulous Foremothers" program. Behind her is the doll that is a composite of every

woman who worked for women's right to vote and the doll made in the image of Sojourner Truth.

CAMILLE MCCOY

Deliver Me

Patient and counselor team up to write about panic attacks

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

*"I'm enclosed in alabaster and I watch the world go by
Life is an illusion and the truth is but a lie
Deliver me, I do not feel, Deliver me, peruse the veil
I want to be alive again, I want to feel that I have been"*

—Helen Palazzolo

HELEN PALAZZOLO believes she has written the only first person account of its kind in her book, "Deliver Me: A Struggle With Anxiety and Panic" which chronicles 12 years of her life dominated by attacks that debilitated both her mind and body.

"I read everything I could find on the subject trying to help myself, which I honestly believe was everything that had been written — and I never found one personal account that told how it feels to go through this as it keeps getting worse with no

let up," the Farmington Hills resident said.

What Palazzolo reveals is the frustration she felt when medical doctors diagnosed her symptoms as a dozen other things other than the anxiety attacks they were; the feelings she had of being alone with no one to talk to that would understand; the fear she felt just walking from her own door to her own mailbox, the shame she was feeling for what was happening to her, the false life she led as she put on a facade of bravado to face the world every morning.

PALAZZOLO's personal story has been expanded several fold by her co-author, Margaret Cotter, counselor at the Farmington Hills branch of the Positive Living Skills program who teaches the class called "Positive Living Skills" on Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland Community College.

After each of Palazzolo's chapters, Cotter takes that material alone and writes a page or two called "The Counselor's Message." The messages explain just exactly what is happening as the attacks begin, progress, as

Palazzolo finally begins to understand her problem in the "Positive Living Skills" class, and then finds her way back to recovery.

All during this time Palazzolo was going through the everyday life- goes-on events that brought the liquidation of the company where she'd worked for 20 years, the search for another job while she was frightened of driving, surgery, and the death of a beloved relative.

After "The Counselor's Message," Cotter takes another page or two for sections called "The Counselor Talks to Helen," which are mock counseling sessions.

Readers can get an insight from these sections into one woman's formative years that were the basis for the anxiety attacks, and how Palazzolo unlearned irrational responses and learned rational responses to events that helped her work her way out of the fear rut.

Or, readers can apply the questions and their answers to themselves.

BOTH COTTER and Palazzolo believe Palazzolo's story is a classic case history of the person who is struggling with anxiety and panic.

Palazzolo wrote her story and then asked Cotter to supplement it, first because "No one should have to go through all I went through when help is available," she said. And, secondly, because of a "more recent piece of information that came to her which declared anxiety and depression as the first and second most common emotional problems in America today."

Palazzolo was raised as a "good girl." Working very hard kept her a good girl. And because she was raised in an Eastern European culture where no one belabored, much less talked about their problems, she remained a good girl.

"You just handled it. If I had shared any personal fears (with the relatives) I would have been considered very odd," she said.

To this Cotter said, "Keeping all that emotion within just compounded all the fear and all the shame and all the embarrassment, and that is big time trouble."

Trying to help herself before seeking help, the constant reading and searching, listening to tapes, searching for help, the fear of driving or going over a bridge, the dedicated attention to leading a fake life, putting on the false front to the world, leading a very limited and narrow life, being an over-achiever, are all some of the commonalities Palazzolo says she's had with other victims of anxiety attacks which make her story the classic case history.

Palazzolo's first hope came when she read Dr. Clare Weekes' "Hope and Help for Your Nerves." Her breakthrough came when she entered Cotter's Positive Living Skills class.

"All that time Margaret (Cotter) was only three miles away," she said. "And it took me all that time to find her."

COTTER BROUGHT "Positive Living Skills" to the college to put the subject into an academic setting and take it away from a medical facility.

There's still a stigma attached to any kind of emotional problem, both women believe.

"No matter what problems students bring to class they feel more comfortable in a learning place where they are getting information about the problem rather than having to identify themselves as a mental health patient," Cotter said. "Many, many, are afraid to ask for help. And many are there to learn how they can conquer fear."

Cotter created the curriculum originally for a group called Agrophobes in Motion which met in Schoolcraft College. The class at OCL is 30 hours. "This is lot of practice at home," she said.

Of her book Palazzolo says, "This is

"No one should have to go through all I went through when help is available."



very private person. Most of the time through my 12-year struggle when I felt very bad I would get some of my feelings out through poetry. Now after all that hiding telling my story to the world is like appearing in public without my clothes on.

"And besides that I drove here today, by myself so I've come a long way."

Palazzolo and Cotter will team up for a book signing session and will talk to all who want to visit them 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23 in

Little Professor's Book Store, in the shopping center at Grand River and Halsted, noon to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27 in Orchard Ridge Campus Bookstore, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 13 in Mark Pallevia's Hourly Salon, on 12 Mile Road east of Northwestern Highway, and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, April 20 in Pages & Pages bookstore on Orchard Lake Road south of 14 Mile.

The books are available by sending a check for \$10.00 to M. H. Ham-bow, P. O. Box 3252, Farmington Hills 48333.

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