

School secretary transcribed warmth



By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Diane May's success as an executive secretary could be measured by the phone calls that didn't make it through to her boss.

May worked in the Farmington Public Schools Building and Student Services office, which is often a clearinghouse for complaints from disgruntled parents and residents alike.

She was a troubleshooter. Her helpful voice had a way of assuaging their anger and deflating their

distrust, said Building and Student Services director Don Cowan.

Often, when the conversation ended, callers found they didn't need to speak with the person in charge.

"She had the empathy," said Cowan, May's boss for more than a year. "She had the knowledge and understanding in her personality and speech that they trusted her."

May, a Livonia resident, died Aug. 8 from complications believed to have stemmed from a

bout with hepatitis 15 years ago. She celebrated her 53rd birthday Aug. 1.

She is survived by her husband, Gary; two daughters, Carrie, 20, and Colleen, 18; and one grandchild.

May worked with the Farmington schools for nine years, starting out as a paraprofessional at Boys Republic, a school for delinquent youths. Her husband recalls her often coming home after a rough encounter with the troubled residents, exclaiming, "Boy, what a great day!"

"She didn't overreact to their aggressive and violent nature," Alternative Education Principal William Miller said. "She was able to handle it on an even keel and with warmth. The kids respected her for that. The kids loved her."

When Boys Republic downsized staff, May took a central office position.

May helped organize the district's microfilm area and later worked in the accounting department.

May moved to Building and Student Services as a secretary. She didn't know shorthand, but took a speedwriting course and cajoled her boss into using a dictaphone.

Such self-determination was May's hallmark, a co-worker said.

"She was just a person who was always positive and had a way of

looking at a problem as one to be solved," said Libby Panetta, a computer technician. "She never placed blame on anyone."

She also became known as something of a computer whiz and served as a mentor to other secretaries at the central office, Cowan said.

Away from the office, she and her husband counseled engaged couples at various parishes in the area. She recently began golfing.

Though May had health problems, her husband said she found it difficult to phone in sick, thinking of the substitute who would have to handle the deluge of calls. Yet she found her work challenging and rewarding, Gary May said.

"She certainly ran that office," he said. "She certainly ran the office here (at home). . . ."

Diane May

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OBITUARIES

JANE GIBBELL NOOMIE
Mrs. Noomie, 75, of Farmington died Aug. 21 in William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak.

Born in Highland Park, Mrs. Noomie was employed as manager in the candy industry. She was a member of Pythian Sisters, Mirpah Temple, No. 7; Loyalty Southfield Ionic Order of Eastern Star 427; and Order of White Shrine of Jerusalem, Highland Park Chapter 25.

Survivors include her daughters, Georgia Byrd and Marlon Harris; brother, Samuel Milligan; eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Services were Aug. 25 at the Haley Funeral Directors, Southfield, with the Rev. Robert Dugan of Rice Memorial United Methodist Church officiating. Burial was in Evergreen Cemetery, Detroit.

Memorials may be made to the Michigan Heart Association.

MARY ANH PATRICIA (PENNY) MITCHELL
Mrs. Mitchell, 66, of Farmington, died Aug. 22.

Born in St. Louis, Mo., Mrs. Mitchell was a registered nurse. Survivors include her sons, Robert, Joseph and Mark; daughter, Paula Holcomb; mother, Katherine (Kitty) Schriedel; brothers, Jerry, Richard and Thomas; sister, Patricia Palonia; two grandchildren.

Mass was celebrated at St. Willam Catholic Church, Walled Lake. Memorials may be made to Make A Wish Foundation.

Arrangements were made by Lynch & Sons Funeral Home, Walled Lake.

ON THE AGENDA

Below are highlights from the agendas of meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Hills City Council
Heritage Park Visitor's Center 6:30 p.m., Monday, Aug. 29
Study Session
Agenda items include:
• Convene in Visitor's Center parking lot to begin a walking tour with residents' subcommittee concerning the Farmington Road bike path.

Farmington Hills City Council
Farmington Hills City Council Chambers
7 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 30, 1994
Study Session
Agenda items include:
• Review of Timbercrest planned unit development with developer Gary Johns and area residents (Voters' Voice).

Farmington Hills seeks paid-on-call firefighters

The Farmington Hills Fire Department is looking for men and women who want to become "paid-on-call" firefighters.

Paid-on-call personnel are city residents who respond as firefighters when a call for emergency assistance is received by the dispatch center. The fire department handles a variety of calls, including medical emergencies, structure fires and hazardous materials spills.

"Few jobs offer the opportunity to save a life, but as a paid-on-call firefighter you could be called up to do it at a moment's notice," said Hills Fire Chief Richard Marinucci. "That is why we need people with a strong desire to help others."

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age, be in good physical condition and have good employment and driving records.

The Hills Fire Department will hold an informational meeting on being a firefighter at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 13, at Fire Headquarters, 28711 Drake Road, between 12 Mile and 13 Mile roads.

CHURCH'S LUMBER Aug. 29-Sept. 4, 1994
2830311128
4 All items may not be in stock at all locations.

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