

Women's historical center stirs fond, old memories

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Liz Homer Giese of the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame remembers well the first time she voted in a presidential election. The year was 1964, and she voted for Lyndon B. Johnson.

"I think I took it for granted," she said. She hadn't seen much in her schoolbooks on women's voting or women's history.

Farmington Hills resident Sharon Hough remembers casting her first presidential ballot in 1968 for Hubert Humphrey. "It's been a long time," said Hough, an English as a second language

teacher in the Avondale schools. "I think everyone takes voting rights for granted," she said. "Unfortunately, too many people fail to vote."

They were among those at a Saturday, Aug. 20, celebration of women's voting and other rights at the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame in Lansing. Hough's daughter, Beth, 15, a ninth-grader at North Farmington High School, was also there. She's already off to a good start in understanding American government and politics, having worked on the Michael Dukakis campaign in 1988 and the Bill Clinton campaign in 1992.

The day included a panel discussion of speakers from labor unions and related organizations, held in honor of the opening of an exhibit on "Women at Work," which will continue through January 1996. The exhibit is on loan from the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, represented by Leslie Hough, Ph.D., director, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Hough is the husband of Sharon Hough.

He credited two women at Wayne State with inspiring the exhibit. Longtime UAW leader Mildred Jeffrey, who served on the WSU Board of Governors, was one. "It was really Millie's idea,"

Leslie Hough said, also crediting Jonna Condino, head of marketing and communications at WSU. The state of Michigan didn't fund the celebration, said Giese, education director at the Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame. "Here at the Hall of Fame we tried to pick up some of the slack," the Lansing resident said.

A booklet on women's suffrage was produced by the Michigan Political History Society and the Michigan Women's Studies Association. There's a tent at the State Fair, set up just as suffragists did in the early days at state and county fairs to encourage support for women's voting rights.

"It wasn't just a phenomenon of Grand Rapids and Detroit. It was a statewide thing," Giese said.

Giese said some states had commissions in operation for more than a year, and were able to increase awareness of the 76th anniversary of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Michigan group has had several traveling exhibits on women's suffrage for use in state hospitality centers. There's one for schools, and an exhibit was done in cooperation with the League of Women Voters, which is also celebrating its 75th anniversary this year.

Each fall, women are inducted into the Hall of Fame in Lansing. This October's inductees will include the late Lucretia Grimes, a suffragist to be included among the historical honorees.

A book, "Michigan Women: First and Founders," vol. 2, is being published as well. Organizers are pushing for schools to do more on women's history, and are disappointed the State Board of Education hasn't included a standard requiring teaching of such history.

For more information, call the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame at (517) 372-3772.

Thoughts on a beloved woods and effect of development

Being naive, I thought the woods behind my house (now the Timbercrest site) would last forever. I thought the land that I loved so much was invincible.

In the sky: I looked down where it was and found it snared in the yellow claws of a machine. The entire spectacle brought tears to my eyes and filled me with disgust.

I have lived in Farmington Hills since I was 2 years old. Growing up within the last decade I have been able to witness a great deal of building and construction. Being naive, I thought the woods behind my house (now the Timbercrest site) would last forever. I thought the land that I loved so much was invincible.

And then about a year and a half ago, I began to hear that it wasn't invincible, and it broke my heart. I began to hear and see proposals for a subdivision and a plaza.

It isn't just the fact that another 80 acres will be mowed down and replaced by sterile tract hous-

ing that sickens me; nor is the promise of increased traffic or the inevitable death of animals my main source of anguish.

Selfishly, it is this: Those woods hold many memories and rites of passage for me. When the land is demolished, the landmarks will exist only in my mind.

My earliest memory of the woods is getting lost back there when I was 4. My parents searched for me frantically, but I wasn't scared. The paths and field were merely an extension of my back yard in my mind.

My family would often go sledding on the hills in the winter time, and on walks with our dogs at other times of the year. Often my dad would take my brother and myself on journeys, showing us fox and deer prints, bones and animal habitats.

One magical time he showed us the place where a group of deer had lain the night before. The grass was long and flat and smooth.

In my early teen years I spent a lot of time in the woods. Some of the most exhilarating moments were spent on my junky moped, flying over sand paths and fox hills. Few things make your adrenaline pump more than hanging on to handlebars with your body flying behind you at 35 mph!

I wasn't the only one back there rode their mopeds back there, and made little forts and bridges out of lumber.

Most of my time back there was spent alone or with a friend or two, walking, picking flowers, and laughing. In the summertime, it was filled with Queen Anne's

lace, tall grasses and weeds. We would pick flowers and put them in our hair. But my best memories are of the fall, when the air was cool and crisp and the trees adorned with regal colors.

Now, in my mind's eye, I can see those beautiful woods so clearly — their stillness under the heat of the afternoon, their grace in the mellow hours of evening as the sun rested, just above the trees. Everything was green and gold and sparkled with life. As the wind blew, the trees would speak. "Shhhhh," is what they said.

My mind's eye will not do the job, though. Months or years later I will want to be there again; smell it again. All I will have will be memories, and even those alter with time. Robert Frost said, "nothing will stay so gold." He was right.

The woods were never mine. I made the foolish mistake of thinking they were, simply because they were behind my house. I may as well get used to the idea that nothing will be around forever, because suburban sprawl is poisoning even rural areas now.

However, I fear that our heritage — the wilderness — will be wiped out so that parks are our only refuge from the concrete.

Basically, it boils down to this: "Wilderness is worth saving for what it can mean to itself as part of the conservation ethic; that the saving is imperative to civilization and all mankind, whether or not all men yet know it." - Robinson Jeffers

Elizabeth Borghi is a Farmington Hills resident and a senior at Harrison High School.

Program helps young people deal with the death of a loved one

The Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute Hospice has established a new support group to help children cope with the loss of a loved one.

Kidspcak is a seven-week forum for youngsters 7 to 17 years old. It provides a chance for young people to share their feelings,

thoughts and ideas about grief and loss.

The program is free. It is for children who have experienced the death of a loved one by any cause, not only cancer.

The sessions will be held 6-7 p.m. Mondays, beginning Oct. 2 at the Institute's Frankel Center,

18831 W. 12 Mile, between Southfield and Evergreen roads in Lathrup Village.

"The death of a family member or close friend is hard enough on adults, but it's even harder on children," according to Cathy Dominici, Karmanos hospice bereavement coordinator.

"While Kidspcak can't replace a loved one, we hope we can help children understand and move beyond their loss," she said.

The Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute is one of 25 lead-

ing, nationally-recognized cancer research, treatment, education and outreach centers with some 1,600 cancer-related employees and 3,300 volunteers based at 35 offices and locations.

For more information, or to register for Kidspcak, contact the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute's hospice program at 443-5825.

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