

CHAT ROOM



MARY RODRIGUE

A look back through Rosary colored glasses

I got to relive high school one day last month and it opened a floodgate of memories.

I attended Rosary High School because it was close to my westside Detroit home and I could walk there. Most of my female grade school pals were headed there. In my 13-year-old mind, those were practical reasons. Never mind the good college prep curriculum or the strong moral undercurrent of being taught by the Dominican Sisters.

In September, I attended the first ever all school reunion on the grounds of my alma mater, long ago converted to a campus for Wayne County Community College on Greenfield, south of Joy Road. It had a short life for a high school. The first Rosary class graduated in 1969, the last in 1975.

I was surprised by the emotion I felt, first at seeing my former school building bedecked in Rosary memorabilia. Then at seeing all the women, now mothers, wives and successful career people, I had known as girls. Together we had survived the turbulent teen years, the angst and court culture of the times.

Wanda, who used to sport a big Afro hairdo and have pictures of the Jackson Five in her locker, now wore attractive twin braids and spoke of her lucrative career as a technical

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Feast for the eyes boosts research

■ Eat at Mexican Town restaurant next week and the money you pay for lunch or dinner will go to U-M's Kellogg Eye Center.



BY MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

When Bob DiMattia was diagnosed with a rare genetic eye disease at age 13, his parents Frank and Colleen committed themselves to helping find a cure.

That included contacting more than 100 of Colleen's relatives south of the border in Mexico and collecting blood samples from all of them for scientists at the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center to examine. Researchers are trying to isolate the gene responsible for the disorder.

"At U-M, they call us the pioneer family," Colleen joked.

She went so far as to buy a restaurant four years ago called Mexican Town near the Ambassador Bridge just to host an annual week long benefit called "Feast for the Eyes" to raise money for research.

Feast for the Eyes is scheduled Tuesday, Oct. 14 through Sunday, Oct. 19. All proceeds from lunch and dinner next week will go directly to the U-M eye center. There are no special fees, patrons are asked simply to come in and eat. The restaurant seats 600 diners on two levels.

Retinosis, a form of macular degeneration which causes the progressive loss of central vision and destroys the ability to see detail, cannot be cured by surgery or drugs or wearing eye glasses.

Doctors from the Kellogg Eye Center have joined a handful of researchers from Europe in the search for the gene responsible for the disease which hit Bob DiMattia, now 18, and his maternal grandfather and countless others. Some women, including Bob's mother, Colleen, carry the gene but the disorder



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

Behind the cause: Bob DiMattia suffers from retinosis. His mom owns a restaurant which sponsors an annual benefit for the U-M Kellogg Eye Center which is researching a cure for the vision disorder.

der effects men, usually beginning in childhood.

"The gene provides the code that cells use to develop and function," said Dr. Paul Sieving, professor of ophthalmology and director of the Macular and Retinal Degeneration Center at U-M's Kellogg Eye Center.

"Once the gene is identified, the study will work to understand why the defect causes the disease and how it might be treated."

The DiMattias moved to Farmington Hills from Dearborn about a year ago. Frank, an architect headquartered in Dearborn, helps out in the restaurant when time permits.

"Bob was fine until the seventh grade. Before that, his vision was 20/20," said Colleen. "Then he began to have problems. We took him to an optometrist and he didn't test well. Eventually we ended up in Ann Arbor with Dr. Sieving."

Bob, now a freshman at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills, recalls the onset of retinosis.

"It was gradual," he said. "I didn't wake up one day and couldn't see. I remember I couldn't see the board well at school."

Adds Colleen: "He has adapted well."

Last June he graduated from the

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