

Thanksgiving Parade to be 'maiden' voyage

BY CAROLYN WALKER
STAFF WRITER

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
how does your garden grow?

Mary, Mary may not have the answer to that question, but Jocelyn "Jocie" Rogers of Independence Township does.

The English Gardens store manager—who has a degree from Michigan State University and a background in merchandising management—knows of what she speaks when it comes to flowers and tropical plants. Mary, Mary's garden grows, Rogers says, with "something better than astro-turf or grass to cover it. And artificial flowers. And with a mechanical butterfly."

Slated to be a "maiden" along-

side Mary, Mary's float in America's Thanksgiving Parade in Detroit on Thanksgiving Day, Rogers is counting her blessings that she won't have to go in disguise as a flower, even as she extols the wonders of her lengthy, floral, maiden's gown complete with a big white apron. "It's kind of exciting," she says, well aware of the potential for teasing but happy as a bee in nectar, nonetheless.

Rogers, who is married but has no children, jumped on the parade wagon, so to speak, when it was announced in September that English Gardens would be sponsoring its first Thanksgiving float this year. Rogers is manager of the company's West Bloomfield store.

Volunteers were solicited from among employees and about 30

people applied for the 18 positions available, she says. She and the others were selected at random by the marketing manager. Other Mary, Mary floatists will come from English Gardens full-service flower shops throughout lower Michigan.

"I wanted to do it from the get-go. Just to have fun. I told the other two, 'We're in. We're in,'" Rogers recalls of the day she and her two assistant managers learned they would be representing the store in the parade. (She slips out of modern-day, women's-lib protocol and calls the other two "girls.")

"I'm totally excited," she says, adding her own whimsical sense of the ironic. "There's two other girls and we're talking about getting turtle-necks and having them monogrammed 'maiden.'"

She continues, winding her fingers around her head in a halo gesture: "They've got these little headbands we have to wear. We were having so much fun trying this stuff on."

A childhood lover of dress up and fantasy and a television viewer of the 71-year-old Thanksgiving Day parade, Rogers, now 30, says this will be her first experience as a participant in any kind of parade and even the pre-parade preparations have reduced her and her friends to awe.

Recently, she and her partners-in-pleasure went to the Parade Company's construction house in Detroit where they were fitted with their costumes and treated to a visit of the floats in progress.

She describes the experience

thus, as wide-eyed with wonder as she must have been when young: "It's a big warehouse-type building with zero parking. You go in there and they have this place where all the floats are being worked on. And boxes—costumes in something like a circus train all hitched together."

The hitched boxes, full of float loot, will be hauled to Cobo Hall, where parade participants are expected to appear at 6:30 a.m. Thanksgiving morning. Rogers says the English Gardens float will be about number 16 a line of 70 exhibits and the maidens and flowers will be walking alongside Mary, Mary—not riding beside her.

"We meet down there and they have our costumes all ready for us. They send us to makeup," Rogers says, pausing for an

afterthought: "That's going to be scary."

"We... get pretty flowery dresses with white aprons. We were there first and they only had so many dresses so we said, 'That's okay. I didn't want to be a flower. They wear a jumpsuit and a big papier-mache headpiece. Most of the guys are flowers, obviously. They aren't going to be maidens.'"

She figures she'll be complementing her outfit with a pair of warm socks and boots in anticipation of cool weather.

"We're going to have so much fun," Rogers says. And then she notes: Mary, Mary, herself, will be the large, papier-mache woman on the float. The one with what some are calling, "the Olive Oyl hairdo."

Benefit auction to assist Leader Dogs and HAVEN

The Business and Professional Women's Club of the Greater Rochester Area will hold its fifth annual benefit auction Monday, Dec. 8, at the DoubleTree Guest Suites Hotel in Troy.

Tickets are \$35 for the evening, which includes dinner, a silent auction and a live auc-

tion. Proceeds will be donated to the local PBW scholarship. Rochester-based Leader Dogs for the Blind and HAVEN in Pontiac.

More than 100 items have been donated to the auction by individuals and local businesses. Donations range from airline

tickets to golf packages to sports tickets to jewelry, clothes and holiday gift baskets.

The silent auction begins at 6 p.m., dinner is at 7 and the live auction is at 7:45. Persons wishing to donate items or purchase tickets for the event may call Joanne Stange or Judy Loeser at

(248) 651-9011. Reservations for dinner are required.

"Our goal is to net more than \$10,000," says auction chairwoman Vickie Tollzien, assistant vice president of Huntington Banks in Rochester.

"We've done it before so I'm confident we can do it again." In

1995, BPW was able to donate \$4,500 each to HAVEN and Leader Dogs as a result of the auction.

BPW offers annual scholarships to women who are reentering the work force or otherwise trying to better themselves through education.

Leader Dogs trains dogs to lead the blind and matches dogs to hundreds of blind people each year.

HAVEN is Oakland County's only center for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault.

CHRISTMAS TREE GUIDE

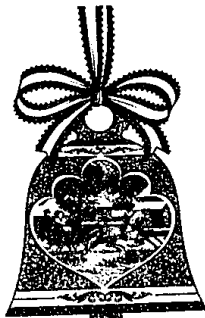
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