

CHAT ROOM

KATHIE O'DONOHUE

World of sports needs to slow down for kids

Better get that 2-year-old potty trained: the travel hockey team wants him! OK, maybe that's a slight exaggeration, but it often seems things in the world of sports are heading in that direction.

Whatever happened to the good old days when you simply corralled the nearest most available kids in the neighborhood for baseball, street hockey, football, Red Rover, tag or whatever game you had a hankering for at the time?

Back then, there were no complicated registration processes or tryouts, no outrageous fees or practice schedules that basically take over your life. There wasn't a sense of pleasure to be the best by the time you reached kindergarten, and kids didn't burn out by their 12th birthdays. A kid could easily venture from sport to sport, learning the essentials of the game and developing some skill, but most of all he could have some plain old fun.

Semi-pro kids

Nowadays, if your child isn't semi-pro by the time she is 8, you can just forget about playing on many teams.

Don't get me wrong. I enjoy sports. I came from a family of seven children, all of whom played sports. My mom was a football widow every fall, and my dad had a playing history and reputation well beyond that of the average armchair quarterback.

But I think things have gotten ridiculous.

A couple we know had to take out a home equity loan to afford their son's travel hockey tournaments, equipment and injuries. Another mom returned to work to provide a second income necessary to finance her children's sports appetites. Other friends have a son whose sports achievements were near legendary. Under major recruiting surveillance for several years, they were literally banking on this child's success, but he burned out at 16 and no longer wanted to play.

Maybe I lucked out. Though I can't predict the future, I would guess none of my kids are destined for sports superstardom. If providing diversion on the court or playing field were a highly sought after asset, however, I am certain at least a couple of my children would become instant athletic scholarship recipients.

I recall one of my sons developing "right field boredom" during a baseball game. As the inning dragged on without much action, he wore his mitt on top of his head while he checked out the local insect population.

Like a duck

Another son once set out on a mission to determine the exact dimensions and parameters of his basketball uniform: while on the court, he squatted down, pulled his jersey over his knees and "kidded around like a duck. Though I felt embarrassed and even a little miffed, I now look back at the antics of a curious 7-year-old who didn't feel like a miniature Michael Jordan at the moment. What the heck was I expecting? Isn't playing a sport supposed to be fun?

Yet another of my budding basketball star offspring, while being given pointers in guarding technique, was told to move his arms up and down quickly in front of his opponent. Ours was the only child who violently flapped his arms like wings and looked as though he'd go airborne any second. If that's not a diversion, I don't know what is. He also perfected a technique for covering his head with both arms when the ball was passed to him, or to put it in his terms, aimed at him.

Then there was the game of gutterball. Here's how it goes: you're bowling, you're not good, so you decide to change the traditionally accepted rules of the game and instead aim for the gutter every time. Believe it or not, it is a catchy game, and before long others decide to play gutterball along with you. By the rules, no. Creative, definitely.

Within any given family or group of kids, the variation of skill is amazing.

Please see CHAT ROOM, C7

60 years

Military theme weaves through lifetime memories

■ Bob Yackley, eldest of five brothers who all served in the military, was drafted three days after he married Betty Lynch and just before Pearl Harbor was bombed.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
mrodrique@oe.homecomm.net

Bob Yackley married Betty Lynch on Nov. 18, 1941 — then promptly got drafted into the army.

Four years of active military service and later many years of involvement with the Groves Walker American Legion Post weave a strong bond around this Farmington couple, who will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary this fall.

"I was drafted two weeks before Pearl Harbor was bombed," recalled Bob in a recent interview in the home he has shared with Betty since 1947.

Bob, who turns 81 this month, was the oldest of five brothers who served in the military. The next brother, drafted 18 months after Bob, was Raymond. He was killed in action a month shy of his nineteenth birthday on March 25, 1944 in Anzio.

"I heard he got killed when I was serving in the South Pacific," said Bob, who was a first sergeant of an anti-aircraft battery and served in New Guinea and the Philippines.

The third brother was Ralph who was part of the army of occupation in Munich, Germany after World War Two. Later, brothers Edward and William served during the Korean War.

Three generations in service

Bob's parents were charter members of Our Lady of Sorrows church, where the couple was married. He also has a sister, Virginia, whose son Thomas Conroy was a helicopter pilot with the Marines during the Vietnam war. Bob's dad and uncle were veterans of World War One.

During the war, before he was shipped overseas, Betty followed Bob around to several military bases state-



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

Six decades: Betty and Bob Yackley married three days before he was drafted in November 1941. The Farmington couple are still active in the local American Legion post.

side. It was in Fort Bliss, Texas that he trained on 90 mm anti-aircraft guns. When he shipped out with the 607th anti-aircraft artillery division in July, 1943, Betty came home to Farmington.

Among her many jobs, she worked in a bomber plant in Ypsilanti during the war. It was Betty's brother, Roland Lynch, who introduced the couple. Roland also served in the South Pacific in World War Two.

Bob claims the most harrowing part

of his military service was the trip home on a small troop ship.

"We went the northern route from the Philippines and hit a storm that almost killed us," he said. "At one point, we were given orders to abandon ship. I remember being on deck and having to look way up to see the top of the waves. Three other ships went down that night."

The soldiers did make it safely back to northern California just before

Christmas 1945.

A surprise

"Betty didn't know when I was coming home. It was a surprise," he said. But his wife had a surprise waiting for him, too.

"I had been living with my brother and his wife and working," she recalled. "I bought a piece of land and built a little garage house. I wanted to

Please see 60 YEARS, C7

Corridor series features sculptor's works



Exhibit: This work by Kegham Tazian will be shown as part of the Art in the Corridor series at both city halls through March 30.

Kegham Tazian will be the next artist to display his work in the series "Art in The Corridor," an exhibition of a local prominent artist's works, held concurrently at the city halls of both Farmington Hills and Farmington. The exhibit runs now through March 30 at both locations.

Born to Armenian parents in Beirut, Lebanon, Tazian has resided in the United States since 1960. Tazian's heritage has a large influence on his imagination, which fuels the imagery of most of his works. Utilizing a variety of media, from sandblasted clay and bronze to metal drippings, Styrofoam and, more recently, computer-created media, Tazian does sculpting, painting and drawings.

"If I just did paintings and drawings without the sculptures, I would feel as though one of my arms was cut off," he said.

Well rounded artist

Tazian is a well-rounded artist, with public commissions including the 125th Anniversary Sculpture for the city of Farmington, situated outside the entrance to City Hall; the TRW Corporation regional headquarters in Ster-

ling Heights; the St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Dearborn; and the Siemens Automotive Corporation in Troy. Tazian's artwork was also exhibited at the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, in Washington, D.C.

In 1967 Tazian completed his master of fine arts degree from Wayne State University, and has been a professional artist and professor of art at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills for more than 30 years. He is the current director of the Smith Theater Art Gallery, and served as art department chairman for six years. In addition to teaching, Tazian has juried several art exhibitions and has given numerous lectures throughout the state of Michigan.

Over the past 15 years, Tazian's creativity and talent have received much notoriety and distinction. He has been honored with several distinguished awards, including the Michigan Educational Association Award; the International Artists in Watercolor Award, from London, England; the Michigan Academy of Arts and Letters Award; and the 1995 Artist-in-Residence Award, given by the Farmington Area Art Commission.

Longacre winter classes cover much ground

From Middle Eastern Dance to Psychic Readings, the Longacre House of Farmington Hills offers a wide array of winter classes. For more information or to register, call 477-8404. Here's a look at just a few of the offerings.

Chinese Yoga and Qi Gong
These new methods from the far east promote relaxation and health exercises. Techniques taught in this class include the basics of relaxation and stress reduction, loosening the body, meditation, Qigong and more. Comfortable loose clothing should be worn. Bring a mat or a large towel. Class is taught at beginner level. It can be adjusted to the individual's level of ability. Instructor Rick Tarracks has many years of experience teaching these skills learned around the world. Ten sessions, Tuesdays through March 20, 7-8:30 p.m. \$78.

Beginning Tai Chi
For ages 16 and up. Regenerate your vascular system, strengthen your mus-

cles, rebuild your body image, and replenish your soul through this ancient art. Rick Tarracks and Lisa Samson have helped hundreds learn these gentle maneuvers. Easy on the muscles; invigorating for the mind. Mondays from 7-8 p.m. through March 19, \$98.

Healing Kung Fu
Similar to Tai Chi in its forms, but slightly more invigorating. Relieves stress and rebuilds the body through focused, meditative movements. It uses full internal power in winding, wrapping curves of whole body movement. Instructor Victor Chao is a national speaker. He has taught all over the country, including guest instructor at the Tang Shou Tao Convention in Denver. Tuesdays through Feb. 27, 8:15-9:15 p.m. \$75.

Aerobic Kickboxing
Basic boxing moves with aerobic dance help burn calories faster and in a fun way. Class is designed for all levels of fitness, from seniors to young people. The workout is often completed with a

body awareness relaxation technique or basic Tai Chi. Bring hand weights, 1 to 3 1/2 pounds, to class, coaching mitts and hand wraps are optional. Debbie Lim-Arena is the producer and guest instructor (certified) of the aerobic cable TV show Fitness Motivators and part time aerobic kickboxing instructor at Oakland Community College. Wednesdays through March 14, (except Feb. 21), \$54.

Strength Training for Women
Instructor Ingrid Laan is a personal trainer, the personal fitness program director and a strength training instructor for a national fitness organization. Improve your overall health, well being, and achieve your fitness goals. Bring to every class: free weights, resistance bands, a towel and water. Wear workout clothes with athletic shoes. Course meets Tuesdays and Thursdays through March 16 from 6-7 p.m. (except Feb. 20 and 22), \$169.

Fiction Writing
Angela Patrick Wynn, author of the national bestseller *Everything She*

Wants, has a bachelor's degree in journalism, and a master's of education degree in instructional technology. This series is being offered again due to overwhelming response to the fall series.

Getting published in the new millennium Identify the roles of agents, editors and publishers. Determine the proper formatting style, tone and paragraph strengths of a query letter.

Your story idea Identify the five critical story components. Determine where and how to begin your story. Define your audience.

Characterization Learn the requirements of creating believable and compelling characters.

Scene and sequel Identify the components of a scene and sequel, and determine when and how to use them. Class fee is \$50 each or \$175 for all four Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 p.m. through March 21. Materials fee of \$15 paid to instructor on first night of each two week session.

Please see LONGACRE CLASSES, C7