

MAVERICKS

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releasing too fast. If you don't get an arch on it they'll hit a line drive." Garawa lets another ball fly and Fitzpatrick hits the first of a series of line drives.

Emma Boiv, 71, of Ferndale arrives late for practice. She's small, scrappy and you know she's trouble. She recently had a knee replacement.

"Watch her," says Oswalt. "She's all over the field."

As shortstop, Boiv is in perpetual motion. She patrols her space between third and second base like a panther. Several balls sail just over her reach, but she runs, swoops, swivels and sends them back to the pitcher. Then she's right back guarding her territory, hands on knees, glove ready — like a spider.

Winnie Koester, 77, travels from Davidson, Mich., for practices. She steps up to the plate and misses several pitches, saying repeatedly, "The ball was right there." Finally, she connects and sends the ball through Garawa's legs at third base.

Boiv is right there to retrieve it.

BASEBALL FOREVER

Oswalt is about to call for a break, but before Eleanor McKerson, 75, of Mulliken, Mich., gets a chance to bat, McKerson is what you'd call a "long drink of water," except she's not that tall, just lean as a chicken bone. She looks like she could whup some ... well, balls.

She does. "I grew up on a farm. There were 14 kids. I used to fight with my brothers," she says as an explanation for her batting ability.

Joan McEvoy, 74, of Milford is the last to bat. CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The women head for the benches and a slug of cold water. "Got any beer over there?" quips Fitzpatrick.

Forget the cancer, forget the diabetes, forget the aches and pains of old age, says Fitzpatrick, who also plays volleyball, basketball and golf.



Lean as a chicken bone, Eleanor McKerson, 75, of Mulliken, Mich., sends the ball flying.

"Don't be afraid to come out (and join the Mavericks)," she said. "Women should get more exposure in sports. I play cards with all these old women, and some of them could come out."

After the break, some of the women leave for jobs and other commitments. Most stay. They always need the practice.

Oswalt is itching to pitch, but her chemotherapy treatments have left her fingers numb. She recalls a game not too long ago during which she struck out 17 batters and shut the team out "in three or four innings."

She'll pitch again, she says. "When I'm done with chemo, I'll be back on the mound."

The Michigan Mavericks will head to Gallatin, Tenn., for a Senior Women USA Slow Pitch Softball tournament Sept. 13-15.

You can watch them practice at Moeller on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. However, if you want to see the "girls of summer" in action, it's best to call Kay Oswalt at (734) 421-0936 for a schedule.

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Preservation ideas highlight county's economic forum

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

Sprucing up downtown business districts without touching trees can live up communities and stimulate Oakland County's economic growth.

Ideas like this are the focus of the fifth annual Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Conference, a day-long program set for Sept. 18 on the St. Mary's Campus in Orchard Lake.

"We want to preserve our economic heritage and remind people what made Oakland County what it is today," said Susan Dorris, a conference organizer and marketing coordinator for Oakland County Planning and Economic Services.

The annual forum brings together planning and economic development experts to inform local entrepreneurs of county resources designed to strengthen business.

Former television news anchor Mort Crim and Charles Flink, president of Greenways, Inc., a preservation consulting firm, are the conference's keynote speakers. Crim will discuss teamwork's importance in community building and development. Flink will detail the economic boosts from natural preservation.

"This conference will show how buildings can be rehabbed and downtown areas can be rehabbed," Dorris said. "Using these ideas and new technol-

A new round of local cities will participate in the program, which gives civic and business leaders redevelopment resources and advice.

gy, there are new tweaks on preservation and how it can help an area's economy."

Some of these concepts have been introduced to Walled Lake, Rochester and other Oakland communities involved in the county's Main Street program. A new round of local cities will participate in the program, which gives civic and business leaders redevelopment resources and advice. County Executive L. Brooks Patterson will announce the new Main Street towns during his morning speech to kick-off the conference.

There were more than 150 people involved in last year's conference at the Cranbrook Institute in Bloomfield Hills. Those interested in participating this year have until Sept. 6 to register. The event begins at 8:30 a.m. and costs \$95 per person. For more information, or to register, call (248) 858-5437.

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CHATROOM

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bottles labeled with names I couldn't recall to save my life. I never was a very good student of chemistry.

At the far end of the room, past all the work tables and testing equipment, stood an old pipe organ. Fascinated, I

asked the decent — a soft-spoken gentleman who seemed to know a great deal about the inventor, "Why a pipe organ?"

He explained that Edison and his talented assistants were very driven and often worked long hours. At times, they'd take a break and gather around the pipe organ, which someone would play. Usually, they'd share a meal.

"Edison also took naps behind the organ," the docent said.

That's when it occurred to me. Edison had an Office Guitar.

He saw the value in taking time away from the incredibly grueling and intense work going on in his lab, where his staff worked day and night inventing the light bulb, electrical systems to support illu-

mination and the phonograph.

Biographers note Edison was a driven man, sacrificing even time with his family in devotion to his work. Even so, he recognized the value of those small ones, the places in our lives where we go to refresh ourselves and revitalize our spirits.

That's how I think of our Office Guitar. Whether it's the

soothing nature of the music itself or the comfort of memories sparked by the smooth, polished wood, there's something about playing that reminds me there is a world — a wonderful world — waiting at the end of the day.

I've got another sort of odd management philosophy that was handed down to me by my predecessor: Work should

never become your life. It should be something you do so you can have a life.

When I forget that, our Office Guitar helps me remember.

Jon Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments at 3341 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; by phone, (248) 477-5450; by FAX, (248) 477-9722; or e-mail, jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

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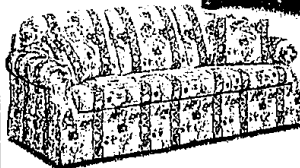
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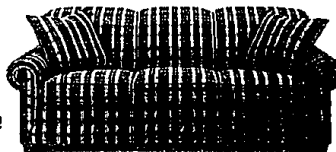
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