



Framing the memories

Several years ago while in college, I fell in love with a Midwestern author, Wright Morris, who spent many years as a photographer, a calling that was often reflected in the way he set up scenes in his stories. Through Morris, my classmates and I viewed people through windows, landscapes through barn doors, and life in general through doorways.

Morris' 72-year-old curmudgeon of a protagonist, Floyd Warner, was viewed more gently, more humanly through this literary technique. For most of us, Warner was just a reach through a window.

I once wrote a short story, *Saying Good-bye to Bernice*, which to this day remains my favorite attempt at fiction.

The story was inspired by my mother, who stood in her kitchen one day looking out the corner window into Bernice's yard.

"You know, I still miss Bernice," said my mom. Bernice had been dead for 10 years.

Three days later I had my story.

It went on to win first place in the now defunct *Detroit Monthly's* annual short story contest, and first prize statewide and nationally as the Michigan Press Women's entry in fiction writing.

Bernice's entire life, as sheltered as it was, came to life through a kitchen window.

The reader knew she sun-dried her hair on summer mornings, smoked cigarettes while sucking in and blowing out the words to Patsy Cline songs on her porch at night. And they knew that when a strong wind came along as Bernice was pinning her husband's work shirts on the line to dry, she wore bright pink nylon panties.

They also knew that Bernice was just too afraid to leave her back yard.

The point of this column, my last since I officially have resigned for health reasons May 30, is simply this: Take time to view life through a door frame once in a while.

First look at the contents of a room then go back and slowly scan the physical and emotional needs of terminally ill patients and their families. In addition to medical support, the organization provides volunteers, such as Fantic, to help care for the patient and aid the family.

When Fantic chose Hospice she didn't think of her role as being with the dying. Instead she considered that she was being given the opportunity to share with special people the remainder of their lives. "In the process, I have become friends with patients who share this extraordinary time with me."

See the rocker piled high with discarded clothes or... nothing. Make connections and see things you haven't seen before.

These rooms contain the essence of people who once occupied them, or perhaps still do. They tell a story. They offer a chance to frame a memory.

When I came in today, a Saturday, to collect some pictures and hunt down any errant bananas I may have left in my desk, I paused before entering the big, cavernous editorial room. It was empty... then it wasn't.

I saw the life, the laughter, the teamwork, and the occasional flaring temper I have seen for almost 10 years. I loved it.

It will be part of my life forever.

Renee Skoglund is the Observer's Community Life and Health writer.



Hospice of Michigan volunteer Roslynn Fantic has developed a special friendship with client Steve Katz.

Sharing and caring

Hospice of Michigan gives woman a new way to give

BY SANDRA DAIKA-PRYBY
CORRESPONDENT

"What should I do now?"

That's the question Roslynn Fantic pondered when her youngest child started middle school five years ago, and she realized she wasn't needed as much for school volunteer activities.

The West Bloomfield wife and mother of four found the answer, and she says it has changed her life. She joined the Oakland Team of Hospice of Michigan.

"I wanted to give back to society and make a difference," said the former special education teacher. "I wanted to have an impact on others and to be touched by their lives."

Her decision to join Hospice has done just that and so much more. "I've been blessed. I've been given the opportunity to witness special people with amazing human strength and the spirit to live."

Hospice of Michigan, based in Southfield, is a non-profit organization that provides for the physical and emotional needs of terminally ill patients and their families. In addition to medical support, the organization provides volunteers, such as Fantic, to help care for the patient and aid the family.

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A SPECIAL JOURNEY

For the last 20 months, Fantic has been on a "wondrous" journey with Steven Katz, a 49-year-old ALS patient, and his family, who live in Farmington Hills. ALS is an acronym for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

"Every patient I've been with has been special to me and each becomes a friend. Something really clicked, however, when I met Steve and his wife Joanne," said Fantic. It didn't take long for the patient and volunteer to discover that, as youngsters, they lived down the block from each other in Oak Park, went to the same elementary school and knew many of the same people.

"We had an instant bond, which over the



Roslynn Fantic assists Steve Katz in navigating around his home.

months we have built on. Steve has a sharp, brilliant mind and a great memory. We've had a joyous time going down memory lane."

According to Fantic, Katz has limited speech due to ALS, a disease of the motor nerve cells in

PLEASE SEE CARING, C7

Warner's father also made history

The Governor Warner Mansion, on the National Register of Historic Places, is Farmington's "house museum." It is most significant because it was the lifelong residence of a Michigan governor, Fred Warner.

Because of Fred M. Warner's importance to Michigan, his father, P.D. Warner, an interesting, contributing Farmington resident, is often overlooked.

When P.D. Warner died in 1910 at the age of 88, his vocation was listed as banker.

He had established a bank in a small village that had no banking facilities. As the proprietor of the local general

store, P.D. Warner helped out the local farmers. At first, he privately loaned them money. This enabled them to buy live stock and land. P.D. had also provided a safe place for people to keep their money. He put it in a Detroit bank and they received interest.

Soon he had a private bank which developed into a state bank. Before the turn of the century, Detroit was a full day's journey away.

P.D. Warner also held a long list of political offices. He was the first Farmington village president. He was a Michigan State Senator twice, a Michigan State Representative for two terms and speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives.

P.D. Warner's family were Farmington pioneers. His parent, Seth and Sally Wixom Warner came to Farmington from New York in 1825.



Seth and Sally were joining Sally's family, who had also come west. They came with three small children, William, Robert and Pascal D'Anglis, the youngest, who was only three. P.D. had been named in honor of his grandmother's first husband who was an Italian sea captain. As soon as the boy was old enough he changed his name to P. Dean Warner.

The Warner family came from New York to Detroit by cart and boat. Then

they came up to Rouge River by way of Dearborn by boat. The trip from Detroit to Farmington took three days. In 1825, Farmington was still called the Power Settlement.

Seth Warner was a lawyer. He farmed and was in business. Then he passed the Michigan Bar in 1830.

Sally Warner died in 1837 when P. Dean was only 11. Seth Warner remarried and had three more children with his second wife Emma Palmer.

The children from the first marriage were on their own. P. Dean was 14 when he went to Northville to school. Education on the Michigan frontier was very limited at the time. Often school only lasted three months a year.

P. Dean eventually got a job in retailing in Detroit. He came back to Farmington and by 1845 married

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