

# Wanted:

## Food, furniture, clothing, rides, help

Fish, the two-year-old volunteer group meeting emergencies in the Southfield and Farmington areas of any and every kind, is responding to 150-200 calls a month.

The Fish name, and the symbol, is as old as Christianity, used for recognition and passwords when Christians were considered the enemy of the state.

The motto is "Love thy neighbor," and members from 30 churches in the two communities are doing that by responding to appeals for everything from babysitting to cutting through

the red tape to reach an agency. A mass meeting held in St. Gerald Catholic Church in Farmington this spring, called for a re-evaluation of the program, ended up with an appeal for help.

MARIBEL CHALMERS, 27200 Berwynwood Lane, Farmington, asked for new members saying, "Join us in any capacity you think you can work in, and name your time. It is a very flexible program and a volunteer is happiest when functioning within her own framework of energy and time."

High on the list of requests is emer-

gency food, children's clothing, furniture, rides to hospitals and clinics, and requests from nursing homes who do not have the wherewithal to fill all of their needs.

"And more food requests are coming in," Ms. Chalmers said. "We're asking for contributions of canned goods, non-perishables, through the churches, or call us through the Fish answering service, 352-5470."

"If anyone has furniture in good working order, or appliances, and is willing to hang on to it for just a short time, Fish always has requests com-

ing in and can usually coordinate the transfer within a week or two."

MOST OF THE men in the group, Ms. Chalmers said, work in the transportation area, and "they could use some assistance, too. Fish has responded so willingly to its constituents now it is asking for reinforcements from them."

Fish is all voluntary, non-professional, and non-profit providing a direct people-to-people expression, of Christian concern. It is open 24 hours a day, seven

days a week, and although it is a Christian organization, its services are available to everyone. You need not be a Christian, or a member of any given church or group to ask for whatever help is needed nor is this required to be a member of Fish.

Of its members, Ms. Chalmers said, "Fish is simply a group of people who need to express themselves through helping others and demonstrating their care and concern to their fellow man."

"THEY ARE ordinary, untrained

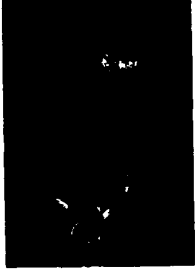
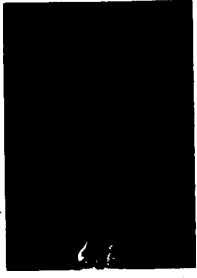
people who are reaching out to others and hope that others will join with them to keep it alive and functioning as well as it has up to now."

There are about 100 chapters of Fish active in the United States. Fish began in the Anglican Church in England and moved to America in 1964.

Needs in Southfield or Farmington aren't as dramatic, maybe, as in areas like Detroit or Pontiac, but there are emergencies to be met, and the feeling of the local chapter is that if you have these needs in your own back yard everyone should be concerned enough to help.

## Observer & Eccentric SUBURBAN LIFE

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## Erma Bombeck

### My life and hard times in the utility room

By LORRAINE McCLISH

Erma Bombeck, the syndicated columnist who says she thinks she's doing for marriage what Jane Fonda did for the VFW, put the finishing touch to a festive day at Shady Zede when the sisterhood staged its ninth "Women's World" for 850 persons who filled the Southfield synagogue.

The big question put to Mrs. Bombeck was how does she manage to consistently turn out high quality humor in three columns a week, three books in as many years, and until recently, a column for the Ladies Home Journal.

Her answer was that a person would have to be "under heavy sedation

not to be aware of all the changes that are taking place constantly" and that there is humor in everything if you look for it, "except possibly kids."

THOUGH 24 hour banks and poison prevention medical vans and the department of motor vehicles have all been spoofed by her wit, her column is still aimed at the harassed and overburdened housewife. Or in her words, "My life and hard times in the utility room."

She claims she is not the average woman "because I never smelled my laundry from one week to the next." But insists she is old fashioned because she still takes out the garbage, does her own laundry and cooking be-

cause she enjoys doing it and does it by preference.

She says this in spite of a beautiful cologne, a stunning suit, and "not being able to tie a scarf so it doesn't look like my neck is bleeding."

SHE TALKS informally with as much humor as she writes, about everyday things and poking fun at most of them, but says "My kids haven't laughed in 20 years."

Although she now lives in Arizona, she says she thinks like a midwesterner and writes as though she were still living in Ohio, "because that is where the American family is" and changes and facts and the housewife's woes are the same from coast to coast.

She covered dozens of these common woes:

• Husband and wife communication: "I asked for an after five dress for Christmas and got a flannel nightgown."

• My husband: "A kilowatt freak. He figured out we could save eight cents a year by putting incandescent strips around the toilet seat."

• Volunteering: "I gave that up when I volunteered to work at a day nursery where my cleaning woman left her kids so she could clean my house while I was volunteering."

• Vocabulary: "It's reduced now to four phrases. Close the door. Mustard or catsup? Have you got any money? And, You should have gone before you left home."

• Children: "A punishment from God."

• BARBIE DOLLS: "Don't think of it as just supporting a doll. Think of it as your contribution to stabilizing the economy."

• Child proof aspirin bottles: "I don't plan on having any headaches after the children are grown and gone."

• Love goddesses: "I have never identified with a lady who can cross her legs in hot weather."

• Dr. Stillman's diet: "It's great if you are a lawn."

• Her philosophy: "I believe in God, motherhood, the flag, and a little playing around with Paul Newman if you get the chance."

• Her sons: "Cain and Abel."

• Daughter off to college: "The reason the place seems so lonely and desolate and empty is that she took the linen, the dishes, the appliances and the furniture."

• Her antiseptic mother: "She believes that God will never strike down a woman with a clean oven."

• Grandmothers: "Someone who puts a sweater on you when she is cold."

MRS. BOMBECK was the guest of Southfielder Mrs. Peter Martin during her stay in the area.

Mrs. Robert Brody is president of the sisterhood, and Mrs. Carl Bayer, president-elect, was chairman of this year's Women's World.

## She's 1975 'Mom of the Year'

By LYNNE JARVIS

Smiles come easily to silver-haired Trudy Gromer as Michigan's Mother of the Year recalls a lifetime of service to family, church and community with obvious enjoyment.

Mrs. Gromer of Grand Rapids prevailed over 200 contestants throughout the state to become Mother of the Year at a special Awards Luncheon held recently at Northland's Community Auditorium in Southfield.

The contest is sponsored each year by the American Mothers Committee, Inc., whose primary objective is to "develop and strengthen the moral and spiritual foundations of the American home."

"I always tried to keep busy," she said, packing a list of credentials that prove it. Besides being wife and aide to husband Julian, part owner of a travelogue firm, she helped raise sons John, 25, and Gary, 24, both successful engineers with the 3M company.

The family shares deep religious ties. All are members of the Griggs Street United Methodist Church whose Women's Group is headed by Mrs. Gromer. She is also president of Church Women United in Michigan, the group which nominated her for Mother of the Year; is a member of the group's National Board of Managers and of its Intercontinental Mission Committee centered in New York.

She admitted that there were sometimes discipline problems—though not serious ones—with the boys since her husband often traveled.

"We were lucky," she said, and quickly added that the family's religious ties influenced the boys' behavior and helped her from over "reaching the end of my rope."

SHE GRINNED a bit as she remembered the biggest problem she and her husband ever had—youngest son Gary's high school escapade of painting a nearby water tower.

"He sneaked out with some friends and I didn't even know he was gone until his friend's mother called looking for her own boy. Gary came home very meek and mild. He really disciplined himself," she said.

Church work has always been a part of Mrs. Gromer's life since formative years spent on her father's farm in Lewiston, Minnesota. There they were members of the Church of the Brethren.

After graduation from Manchester College in 1923 she was invited to stay on as a faculty member teaching commercial arts.

Two years later she decided to practice some of the things she taught and found employment during the next six years as secretary for the Church of the Brethren Mission Board Office in

Elgin, Illinois. It was here that she met and married her husband.

The Gromers share common interests in photography and the outdoors, stemming from Julian's work making travel films the world over.

Trips to South America, Hawaii, Europe, Africa and Israel have made them aware of the problem of hunger, said Mrs. Gromer, to the point where they all fast and contribute their savings to help others less fortunate.

Motherhood and children are a common bond all over the world, she said, advising mothers to enjoy their children at every age.

"THINGS WERE a little easier, I think, when I raised my children" and she is thankful there were never any alcohol, drug or delinquency problems in their home. Neither she nor her husband drink or smoke. As an incentive to their sons, the Gromers promised a new Thunderbird car to each one who reached his 25th birthday without taking a drink or a cigarette.

Mrs. Gromer says proudly that John is now driving his new car and Gary has a picture of the Thunderbird he's waiting for hanging on his wall at home.

Both sons are active church members and successful engineers. Mrs. Gromer, a working mother herself for a time with her husband's film business, has nothing against working

mothers in general "as long as small children are well taken care of."

She holds no single contemporary woman "on a pedestal" but said she admires rather the people she meets and works with on a day-to-day basis. Co-workers in Church Women United are "the cream of the crop" to her.

Besides time spent with the women's group, she also serves as a volunteer driver of the sick and the elderly for the Center of Voluntary Action in Grand Rapids.

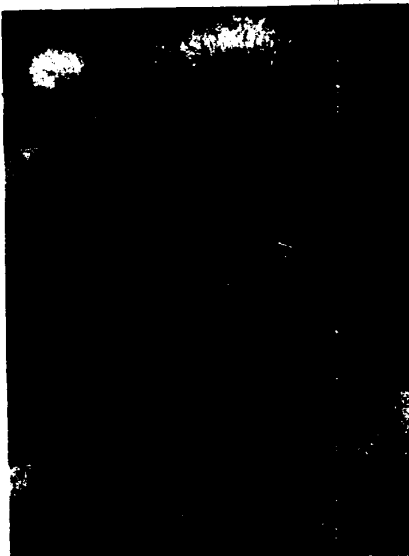
Her interests include knitting, flower arranging, cooking ("a creative outlet for me") and her favorite pastime, reading inspirational, autobiographical and poetical books such as Dag Hammarskjöld's "Markings."

SHE FEELS young people "want and have a right to honesty" from adults told in lieu of Watergate and other political events.

She advises modern parents to keep faith in their children and "give them a good foundation." Above all, "remember that each age has its own interest. Enjoy."

Mrs. Gromer said her only fear in becoming older is that she will burden her children. She said she admires the Oriental culture where elders are respected and taken care of, but hopes to be productive the rest of her life.

"I want to be good," she said. "That's why I'm here on earth."



TRUDY GROMER