

Our Girl Friday

She reveals her colorful past

By CORINNE ARATT

There's a surprise around every corner and that came true again when the staff of the Southfield Farmington Observer & Eccentric discovered something new about receptionist Helen Cey.

Helen is smiling, broadly face behind the frost dust, the pleasant, concerned voice over the phone.

Helen started her career with the paper after her five children were grown. Before they were even born, she was a familiar face to many Detroiters as a fashion model for Hudson's.

Helen's story of her discovery is a bit like the Lana Turner drug store myth. She was a model for a fashion show at her alma mater, Fordham High School and a Detroit Times reporter caught the show.

He told her to contact him if she ever wanted a job. It was 1944—Roosevelt, the New Deal, WPA, big bands and dust bowls.

Helen says, "In those days when you graduated from high school, you either went to college or you went to work. Mostly it was the latter and Helen took him up on his offer."

"He sent me to Hudson's and I started modeling and I did it," she says recalling Madelyn Cox, now fashion coordinator, as another on the fulltime modeling staff.

WITH DARK HAIR to her shoulders, a slim, five-foot-seven, 115-pound figure and pleasing features and bone structure, she was hired on the spot at what was considered a very good salary, \$18 a week.

One of the young five-leaves photographers she worked with was Joe Clark of Farmington.

Fashion photography was different then. Helen says everything was posed. They didn't do candid.

She adds, "When Joe worked with us then, he was the same guy he is today, outgoing, warm, kind of an earthy guy who made you relax. We had the other kind too, but he wasn't one of them."

She smiles as she recalls some of the differences between modeling then and now. "We did our own makeup, mascara, powder and ruby red lipstick—pure, dark red. Nail polish was the same ruby red. I used to make apt curls in a hurry using Fels Naptha soap. We'd make a curl with our fingers, hold it in place and smack on the lather."

"When it dried, we'd shake out the soap. Lately, I never had a date to go swimming afterwards. I had my hair with a marcel iron heated on the stove. I can remember the hissing sound it made when it hit your hair and was a little too hot."

As a conditioning was yet to come so those who modeled for coats for the August sales had to sweat it out. Helen recalls feeling faint from the heat as she walked the runways in a full-length emme

when the mercury was hovering around 90 degrees.

And under those furs? Well, for starters there were silk stockings hitched to garter belts or girdles, standard wear winter and summer.

Though it may sound a little grim to today's young free-wheeling young women, Helen says the clothes she modeled were truly beautiful, maybe even more so than present fashions.

They were very feminine, very soft. We wore wood-blot sets and lots of silk—spike heels, veils on our hats and under-armor. People were lots of yards and the chemises? They were so beautiful, one piece of lace or satin with a bra attached.

She remembers bathing suits with less enthusiasm saying, "They were ugly, one piece, often wool."

She took the street car to work each day down Joseph Corcoran through Hamtramck, often wearing the clothes she would be modeling that day. There were occasional nervous moments on the street car wondering if the little old ladies carrying live chickens would be able to keep them in their own laps.

MARRIED TO Lincoln Cey when she was 19, Helen says they met at a high school dance.

I danced with him once and that was it. We danced together for the next 20 years.

After work and her weekend in the pre- television days, there were lots of plans to dance and good male with the big bands.

Helen, like the husband, the 1940's and the Jefferson Beach ballroom had a tradition, such as the Whiteman, Sammie Kaye, Dan Barrett, the James Brother and under the Stars (Lily, Hazel, Kaye, Frank, Barbara and Helen) to come to a monthly dance.

There were great teams. Helen says, "The dance team I was on was the best. I was doing it all the time and I was doing it all the time and I was doing it all the time."

And only last week of the 1940's, she says, a former model that she met to go to work in the Hudson's. Helen says she was 30, she had been married and was planning for the required dresses and night gowns she wore with her first husband.



Our own Helen Cey reminisces over her days as a fashion model. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

SPEAK OUT

Here's your chance to tell it like it is

Here's your chance to tell us what you think. In order to provide the best possible newspaper for the readers of Farmington and Farmington Hills, we need your help. This survey is your opportunity to help us design a newspaper that meets the need of you, our reader. Mail your questionnaire and additional comments to the Farmington Observer & Eccentric, Box 69, Southfield, 48075. Results will be printed in an upcoming edition so you can compare your opinions with those of your neighbor.

- lines Around the Edges Observation Point Eccentricities
- What changes would you like to see?
 - More news More analysis of local current events
 - More family-oriented stories More home articles
 - More stories about local persons More stories on local business More sports
- What do you think about the balance between pictures and reading material?
 - Just fine Needs more pictures Less pictures
- What do you think about the balance of stories between the City of Farmington and Farmington Hills?
 - Fine Need more Farmington news Need more Hills news

- YOUR READING HABITS**
- How often do you read the Farmington Observer & Eccentric?
- Each issue Monday Thursday
 - I don't get the paper?
 - Subscribe Newsstand Borrow it
 - Which sections of the paper do you read?
 - All News stories Human interest Sports
 - Suburban life Editorial page Business
 - Other: (please name)
 - Which columns do you read?
 - One by One Crackerbarrel Debate Between the

- YOUR VITAL STATISTICS**
- Sex Male Female
- Age?
- In which quadrant of the area do you live?
- Northwest Northeast Central Southwest
 - Southeast
- Please feel free to attach a note to your survey explaining your feelings about the newspaper. All names will be kept confidential.



Striking a Lauren Bacall type pose is Farmington-Southfield Observer & Eccentric receptionist Helen Cey when she was a fashion model in the 1930s.



Help the editor, sure. But here's your chance to get even for all those times you didn't like his editorials. If you wish, take the above cartoon and throw darts at it. Even better, fix up his mustache. You can even color the picture. But whatever you do, answer the questionnaire.

Musical set at C'ville April 9-11

"The Sound of Music," a popular Broadway musical and motion picture, will be produced by the Clarenceville High School drama department April 9-11 in the Louis Schmidt auditorium, on Middle Belt north of Seven Mile. Curtain time for the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical will be 8 p.m. for the three performances, to be directed by Bob Gregory. Tickets are \$2 and available at the school. In the cast are Nancy Parshall as Maria, Harold Smith as Von Trapp, Linda Godman as Sister Berthe, Sue Mark as Sister Margretta, Karen Dretze as Sister Sophia, Debbie Estler as Frau Schmidt, Mary Morrison as Liesel, Kevin Watson as Kurt, Carol Brown as Brigitta, Kathy Il-

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