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A born storyteller shares her talents

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

If there is a category of dramatic book reviewers, as there is dramatic singers and actresses, then Perle Briggs is at the top of the list.

The Farmington Hills resident will bring her special brand of literary drama to the Farmington Community Center when she reviews "Bubbles" as part of the center's Fabulous Fridays Series on Feb. 10.

Mrs. Briggs is a veteran world traveler and avid reader and she's chosen one of her favorite women, Beverly Sills, to talk about in the morning session. She has never met the world-famous diva, but she has an intimate knowledge of her life which has been touched by tragedy as well as fame.

She recalls, for example, the night Ms. Sills opened at the Metropolitan Opera. The audience rose to their feet

in wild acclaim. In a box, overlooking this great moment, was her husband and the couple's 13-year-old daughter, Muffy.

MUFFY, deaf from birth, watched the actions of the audience and leaned over to her father and said quietly, "Mommy was good, eh?"

The daughter of one of the world's greatest sopranos will never hear her mother's voice. A second child, a son, who is autistic, is hardly aware of his mother's talent either.

Mrs. Briggs tells this story with a particular flair. Her preparation is to first read the book she is about to review for pleasure, then go back and carefully outline each chapter and then, she said, "I go through and do the juicy parts and string them together."

It obviously isn't as casual as it

sounds. She has been involved in theater for many years and she knows how to use her voice, her eyes and her hands to good advantage.

Last fall she directed the Farmington Players production of "The Bat," feeling that possibly time has passed her by for leading lady and ingenue roles.

She drifted into book reviewing and her slide travel programs by an unusual route.

"YEARS AGO," she said, "I used to tell stories to the girls I sewed cancer pads with. It got so they didn't care whether I sewed or not as long as I could come and tell my stories."

Because she had no children, she had time to read so she would tell the other busy mothers about all the books. Gradually, the invitations began to come in for her to do programs for clubs and schools.

The travel programs she does now evolved because she volunteered to show school classes her slides and tell them about the many countries she has visited. She has been around the world three times and to some far areas off the regular tourists' beats.

"Bubbles" is an autobiography.

The subjects of autobiographies or biographies which interest her most are of those people who have, she said, "persistence and devotion to the thing they know they're meant for."

She added, "I very seldom do novels, and I very seldom do best sellers."

THE FABULOUS Fridays Series begins with a continental breakfast at 9:30 a.m.

Tickets are \$2.50 and are on sale now in the center. Tickets will be held by calling the center at 477-8404.

The series continues with "There's a Man in the Kitchen" on Feb. 17 with Fred Gracyk, owner of the Vineyards Restaurant.

Gracyk is followed by Betty Schwehr who gives a "Bride Brunch" for the player with some experience on Feb. 24.

"Japanese making" is set for March 3, with Yakari Sugano, who is a former teacher in Japan and now teaches and exhibits her fascinating costumed dolls throughout Michigan.

Pat Lindheim winds up the series on March 10 with "The Fine Art of Picture Framing."



PERLE BRIGGS

Successful TV actress turns to dinner theater comedy

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

The woman who says "Jonathan can not come out to play today. He's practicing the piano" for the current Highland Appliance commercial on television, is now appearing in Somerset Dinner Theatre's "Here Lies Jeremy Troy."

A Southfield resident, Sandi Goldsmith said, "I once had four TV commercials running at the same time, and no one would ever have known it was the same model in all four."

Her ability to take on different characteristics launched her on her first professional acting role in dinner theatre, which is the tenth Pierre Turgeon and Jimmy Launce production.

Turgeon is a Farmington Hills resident and a long-time member of The Farmington Players. Launce is a disc jockey for WJL.

Ms. Goldsmith takes the role of Kathryn in the five-member cast comedy that she says "really has no star. Our roles are pretty balanced. We all get to show our best thing."

SHE DESCRIBES the play as "Cute and fun. Full of sight gags and schtick. We had a good audience Saturday (opening) night. They all left smiling and that's what it's all about."

It is the first dinner theatre that the Turgeon-Launce team have produced that does not carry a "name" star.

"The show can carry itself," Ms. Goldsmith said. "Then too, I think the producers have proved themselves with past productions so people are coming to dinner theatre to see a good show; they don't have to see a personality to be lured there."

Ms. Goldsmith is a native Californian who got her theatrical training in improvisational comedy in Los Angeles.

"We'd be given a situation, like a Martian and an immigrant who meet in Central Park, and were told to just go from there. It is incredible training and puts you very much at ease for a good performance. It was perfect,

for me because I love to make people laugh," she said.

The training she continued, made her feel comfortable in auditions and she has since been equipped to handle unknown situations.

"You are freed of your inhibitions. It's OK to make yourself look foolish once in a while. Others open up to you and they feel comfortable," she said.

LOCAL THEATRE goes may remember Ms. Goldsmith's performance in the Jewish Community Center's production of "Play It Again Sam."

From there she turned professional "Because you have to work harder for a longer period of time to keep keeping the whole performance fresh for the next audience. That's part of the discipline. It's an element of challenge. Working against the odds."

She lauds dinner theatre, she said, "Because it is not meaty stuff, but we are exposing a great many people to the immediacy and excitement of live theatre. I think that it's a stepping

stone to raising a level of awareness."

She said Turgeon and Launce are talking about doing a musical comedy for their next production, and if that comes about, it will be the next step for her. "When they call the audition for that," she said, "I'll be there."

Meanwhile, her six year old daughter, Rebecca, has just completed a television commercial for Jewish Welfare Federation having to do with battered wives and abused children.

MS. GOLDSMITH's co-stars in "Here Lies Jeremy Troy" are Robert Jordan, Mary Whiting, Eric Jones and Ted Rogers.

"We play ensemble," Ms. Goldsmith says. "Each gives a virtuoso performance. It is everyone's show."

The comedy follows a gourmet buffet prepared by Alfred's Restaurant which is served at 7:30 p.m., every Friday and Saturday.

Reservations, at \$14.50 per person, are taken by calling Somerset Dinner Theatre, at 643-8865.



SANDI GOLDSMITH



Lincoln's son, Robert, said John Rogers' sculpture was the best likeness of his father. The piece is from the collection of Weldon Petz now on display in the Plymouth Historical Museum. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

Lincoln authority furnishes museum month-long show

By ELINOR GRAHAM

It will be cherry pie for George Washington's birthday Feb. 20. But what about Feb. 12? What is the traditional dish for Abraham Lincoln's birthday?

The question arose at the Plymouth

Historical Museum where the mood has been Lincolnian. What does one serve at a Lincoln luncheon? What were his favorite foods?

Barbara Saunders, museum director, went to her source, Weldon Petz, Lincoln expert.

Petz said Lincoln had no favorites. In fact, he wasn't much interested in food. He often didn't realize he was missing a meal and had to be reminded to eat. With his thoughts on other matters, he paid little attention to what he was served.

Mrs. Saunders and her committee did resurrect a recipe for a "Mary Todd Lincoln cake." They ad libbed the rest of the menu.

LINCOLN WAS a coffee drinker, said Petz. Among the more than 1,000 artifacts from Petz's collection now on loan to the museum, is a replica of the 18th president's coffee mug.

The Lincoln exhibit will be in the museum throughout the month of February. The main lobby, the Victorian rooms and the Street of Shops have been transformed to a visual history of Lincoln and his times.

One section is dedicated to his early life—the log cabin where he was born, the earliest photographs of a "gawky youth who also felt gawky."

There are campaign materials—envelopes, song books and post cards. His slogan was "Rail splitter in 1830. Giant killer in 1860."

The gazebo in the main lobby has several busts of Lincoln and the Council of War, a statue of the president with William Stanton and General Ulysses Grant. Robert Lincoln said this was the best likeness of his father.

The Lincoln memorabilia continues in the museum's street of shops. The hotel window displays articles

relating to the president's last night in the Ford Theatre. The harness shop window is devoted to Carl Sandburg items. The law office has an original letter, written in longhand, that goes back to Lincoln's circuit riding days as a young lawyer.

The apothecary shop has a pressed and dried poison snake root. Thomas Lincoln's cows ate snake root and one of them got the "trembles." Two weeks later, Oct. 5, 1818, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died of "the milk sickness." It wasn't until 1929 that chemists discovered the flowers of the weed were poisonous.

THE EXHIBIT includes Lincoln bottles, banks, cigars, plates, spoons, busts, daguerotypes, wood carvings, and calling cards.

There are pipes with heads of Lincoln on the bowls, pictures of a Lincoln taken while in Alaska, wood engravings and steel engravings.

The dressmakers shop is devoted to Mary Todd Lincoln. She is depicted at an inaugural ball, and again in mourning.

There is a photograph of Lincoln's dog, Fido, who was killed in an accident the day of his master's assassination. There is a copy of his day of humiliation, fasting and prayer proclamation.

Weldon Petz, a resident of West Bloomfield and principal of Flanders Elementary School in Farmington, is a nationally recognized authority on Lincoln. The artifacts on loan to the museum are rarely available for public viewing.

The Plymouth Historical Museum, 155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, is open Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 1-4 p.m.

A companion exhibit of Civil War items is on the lower level of the museum.

Camp Fire Girls pass along some new recipes

The Camp Fire Girls Detroit Area Council has passed along recipes that use the candy products being sold by more than 4,500 girls.

The council's goal is to sell 125,000 boxes of candy during the Feb. 10-24 sale.

Three choices will be offered: Heath Mint Truffles, Heath Toffee, Mini-Mint and Suckley's Peanut Crunch. All candy is \$1.50 per box.

The annual candy sale is the largest fund-raising effort of the Detroit council. Proceeds from the sale provide 38 per cent of the council's yearly oper-

ating budget, and help support Camp Wathana, a 380 acre resident facility near Holly.

CAMP WATHANA is open year round for non-members as well as Camp Fire members. Camping opportunities range from a summer resident camp program for girls age 6-17, to group and family camping outings in the fall, winter and spring.

Camp Fire Girls Council is a Torch Drive agency serving Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties.

Candy can be purchased by calling the Detroit area council office at 833-2670.

Among the recipes is one for mint truffles ice cream cake roll.

"The secret (to making the cake roll)," said Medelode Dubois, of the council, "is right from the oven, turn the cake on to a towel and roll it up in the towel. As it cools, the cake takes a roll shape, so when you unroll it and"

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