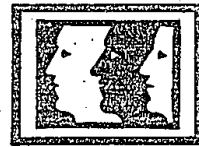


# Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



O.E. Monday, May 21, 1984

4(BF)

## Barbie's 'mom'

### Fighting spirit formed new firm

By Louise Okrusky  
staff writer

Ruth Handler squarely faced adversity and emerged victorious.

Nearly 14 years ago, Handler sought to cope with the aftermath of a mastectomy which took her left breast, lymph nodes, part of her chest wall and underarm. Her personal struggle was matched by a professional one as she slowly slipped from her position as president of Mattel Inc.

Gradually she overcame both problems through the creation of a new company in 1977, Nearly Me, devoted to designing and marketing a lightweight breast prosthesis which gives the wearer as natural an appearance as manmade materials would allow.

She will be showing prostheses designed for swimwear and evening wear and lines suitable for daywear and athletics today at Bonwit Teller, Somerset Mall, Troy. Representatives of the firm will be there on Friday, according to Handler. For information, call the store at 843-8700.

"In this business, I have finally found (a) niche," Handler, 67, said. "You can say I have a sense of mission. I think much in life is made up of many patterns which develop to take you to some place where you're supposed to be. I've seen too many people make even small changes in their lives and suddenly a whole new way of living is opened up to them."

Her self-imposed mission, to help other mastectomy patients approach living with as much confidence as possible, really began after she left Mattel.

But her approach to the problem has its roots in the 30 years she spent as a toy manufacturer.

IN THE 1950s Handler put the toy company she founded in 1945 with her husband, Elliot, on top of the heap by creating Barbie, a doll with adult features which she named after her daughter.

ter. Soon she added the first of a host of Barbie's friends, a doll named Ken, after her son.

Much like she was to do in designing breast prostheses, she culled her ideas for the dolls from observing the people around her. She noticed cutouts with adult figures appealed most to her daughter.

"The early ones aren't as pretty as they later became. I didn't want Barbie to be that pretty. I wanted every little girl to be able to play out her dreams through the doll. No matter what that little girl looked like. I wanted them to be able to play out their ordinary dreams as well as pretending to be a doctor or an aviator," Handler said.

Although the dolls continued to be enormously popular, the company faced a number of business reversals about the same time as Handler was dealing with her mastectomy.

"When I went back to Mattel (after surgery) it seemed everything I touched went wrong. Those four years after the mastectomy and as president of Mattel were awful years. We ran into a lot of business problems and I wasn't capable of rising to the need. Prior to that I had a tremendous amount of self assurance. After the mastectomy I didn't feel good about myself. They ran roughshod over me," she said.

In 1974, she and her husband sold their stock in Mattel and retired. For Handler, that wasn't a solution. Teaching in the graduate school of business at UCLA and USC didn't fill the gap.

"I HAD to go back to work. I needed to do something meaningful for the rest of my life," she said.

Her own despair at finding a false breast that wasn't an oval job inspired her in 1975 to call together people she had worked with at Mattel who were no longer with the company. Handler knew what she wanted, a design that would follow the natural configurations of a woman's body. That meant manu-

facturing prostheses for the right and left sides when other firms were selling false breasts which were interchangeable.

It was simpler to decide upon the materials than the design. Almost from the start, the design team agreed to make the prostheses from a polyurethane outer skin which covered an inner core of foam. The design itself is still changing to meet the needs of the firm's clientele. The original form, Nearly Me 1, is slowly being phased out. Its flat buckling prevented the form from lying flat when worn by women whose mastectomies had left some fleshy mass around the breast. Nearly Me 2 features a contoured, hollowed-out interior which suits both these patients and women who've had radical mastectomies. Another line, the Rest Breast, is lighter and designed for wearing when a woman is resting.

Because she couldn't find an attractive bathing suit for herself, Handler has designed a line of swimwear for mastectomy patients. These include two-piece suits as well as tank suits.

"I used to buy a blouse and a swim bottom and wear that. People looked at me as if I was crazy," she recalled.

In the early days of promoting her product, Handler admits she was sometimes overzealous.

"I had a lot of anger. One way to get rid of it is to get it out into the open and talk about it. I've found in my personal appearances that you're better off if you're out talking about it."

During a television talk show in Atlanta, Ga. she admitted to the host she had forgotten her line of samples. Then she calmly (and discreetly, she emphasizes) removed her own prosthesis on camera. The talk show host's jaw dropped. Newspapers printed the story.

Handler caused a stir but even today she isn't entirely repentant. "I think it's good for women to talk about it. I really want to bring mastectomies out of the closet and into a better situation relating to their own self esteem," she said.



Lounging in her California home, Ruth Handler models one of the swimsuits from last year's line. The suits are specially designed for mastectomy patients.

*"I think it's good for women to talk about it. I really want to bring mastectomies out of the closet and into a better situation relating to their own self esteem."*

— Ruth Handler



## Miss Farmington Pageant under way

The 11th annual Scholarship Pageant is open to women 17-26 years of age who have been residents of Farmington Hills since January 1, 1984 and have never been married. One of the most popular events of the annual Founders Festival, the winner of the Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant will advance to the 1985 Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant, and possibly even go on to compete in the Miss America Pageant.

Contestants will be judged on person-

ality, poise, talent, swimsuit and evening gown presentations by a panel of qualified judges.

The women entering the contest will participate in special workshops and seminars before pageant competition, receiving instruction in personal grooming, talent presentations and modeling and interviewing techniques.

Several former Miss Farmingtons and Miss Michigans will be on hand to offer tips and personal advice based on their own experiences in the scholar-

ship pageant.

"AND NOTE the emphasis on scholarship," says pageant director Pat Fallon.

"Miss Farmington 1984 will receive scholarship money and wardrobe allowance, as well as an assortment of other fine gifts. The first and second runners-up also will receive cash prizes and gifts."

Miss Farmington 1983, Lisa Varty, who was selected during last year's festival, will be competing in the Miss

Michigan Scholarship Pageant, June 16 in Muskegon. The Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant is an official franchise of the Miss Michigan and Miss America Scholarship Pageants.

Entry forms for the 1984 Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant, which is set for Wednesday, July 18 in Vlieland, are available from the Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce, 33501 Grand River Ave., east of Farmington Road. The deadline for entering is Friday, June 1.

## Young musicians called to audition

Metropolitan Youth Symphony will be holding auditions for the 1984-85 season Saturday, June 2. Students in grades 5-12 who are looking for additional orchestral experience in a youth organization may reserve an audition time by calling Martha Stefanko, 591-1408.

Membership is based on auditions held in the spring and fall of each concert season.

Three orchestras catering to three levels of accomplishment are specifically designed to complement a stu-

dent's school music program: a string orchestra (grades 5 and up), a full concert orchestra (grades 6 and up) and a full symphony orchestra (grades 10-12).

According to Sharon Zamczyk, public-relations director, Metropolitan Youth Symphony offers young musicians "an opportunity to broaden their symphonic repertoire, sectional work, three formal concerts, participation in community events such as National Music Week, a mid-year scholarship competition and nominal tuition fees."

See also that all instrumentalists are

invited to audition: oboe, string basses, English horns, drums, tubas, clarinets, bassoons, violas, violins and flutes.

Three conductors chosen for their expertise in working with young people handle baton duties.

THE THREE orchestras rehearse Saturday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., September through May in Southfield Lathrup High School on 12 Mile Road.

This season the organization was composed of more than 200 musicians

gathered from 40 area communities. The students perform with their school orchestras as well as study privately.

Many attend the National Music Camp Interlochen or Blue Lake Music Camp.

Metropolitan Youth Symphony was represented by its members in many local community music competitions as well as statewide events. Participants brought home numerous cash awards and blue ribbons.

For information, contact Zamczyk at 477-2894.

## Sweet, Adelines join for best of barbershop

Farmington Hills chapter of Sweet Adelines is one of 81 Michigan and Ontario "women's barbershop choruses" sponsoring a barbershop extravaganza, "Solid Gold Barbershop," set for Saturday, June 9 in Ford Auditorium. Show time is at 8 p.m. and again at 10 p.m.

"Solid Gold Barbershop" will bring together two internationally acclaimed championship quartets and an international championship chorus in an enter-

tainment package for the entire family.

The men's quartet, "Gentlemen's Agreement," is the 1974 Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America's champions. Representing Sweet Adelines is the "Fourth Edition," which won its title in 1973.

Both quartets have been in demand all over the U.S. and Canada since win-

ning their titles. Both have taken some time off from traveling and singing, but their popularity with audiences has brought them back to the stage.

Flying in to share star billing will be 90 women of Ramapo Valley Chapter, Sweet Adelines, under the direction of Renee Graig, a former Detroit musical performer now making barbershop magic along the east coast.

Graig is known in the barbershop community for her modern arrangements and high-stepping routines with a Las Vegas-type format all done barbershop musical style.

"DONNA WALKER, chapter president for the local Sweet Adelines, has appointed Karen Moran to coordinate ticket sales to the show for this area.

"This is a golden opportunity for Farmington Hills chorus members, our friends and families to enjoy the best in our musical style of four-part harmony," Moran said.

"People will be coming from all over Michigan and Ontario to be part of it. So far ticket orders bear postmarks from nine states, Canada and the United Kingdom."

Members of the local chorus are organizing groups from this area to attend the show. Those interested in going with a group are invited to call Jo Gray, at 363-1181.

Tickets for both the matinee and evening performance are \$10 sold at all CTC outlets.

For additional information, call the Ford Auditorium's hotline, 224-1070.

## ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY TWO DAY AUCTION

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FURNITURE: Fine Danish Rosewood Office Ensemble, Louis XV style carved mahogany leather inlaid ladies writing desk, exotic wood inlaid game table, mahogany Victorian Captain's desk, English Chippendale style mahogany chairs, 9 P.C. Co. 1930 mixed wood dining room suite, Chitra, Curio cabinets, settees, screens, occasional tables, etc.

ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC AUTOMOBILES: Model 50 - 1937 Cadillac LaSalle, 1941 Model 62 Cadillac, 1963 Pink T-Bird Hard Top.

LARGE ORIENTAL COLLECTION: Satsuma, Imani, Kutani, Pr. Palace size Chinese Blue and White Jandierens on stands, Antique Chinese Bronze vases, Large Satsuma "Parade" Bowl, Ivories, Netsukes. Large collection of fine Chinese Peking Cloisonne including an unusual mythological Foo Lion, sacred dragon, vases, tea pots, etc.

ORIENTAL RUGS: Bokharas, Dhurries, Indo Tabriz, Chinese, Kilim, etc. in large and small sizes.

PAINTINGS BY OR ATTRIBUTED TO: Otto Dix, Corot, Mora, Wallegruber, Wiegand, etc.

ENGLISH AND CONTINENTAL PORCELAINS: Wedgwood Fairy Lustre, Meitlach, Royal Doulton Flame, Carltonware, Royal Copenhagen, Ridgeway, Limoges, French Blauque Figure Group, etc.

SILVER AND CRYSTAL: Stearns, vases, bowls, decanters, trays, tea sets, Candelabra, goblets, pitchers, etc.

MISC. AND COLLECTOR'S ITEMS: Royal Doulton Figures and Toby Mugs, desk sets, clocks, Persian Manuscript leaves, Art Deco Copper Coal Box, brass accessories, linens, Pewter, Art Glass, Art Nouveau style lamps, etc.

EXHIBITION: Wed., Thurs. & Friday, May 23, 24, & 25 - 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Men, May 28 and Tues. May 29 - 6 P.M. to 8 P.M. by mail.

TERMS: Cash, Check, American Express, Visa, MasterCard (10% Buyers Premium on all lots).

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## Co-op accepts enrollments

Mayfair Co-op Nursery will continue to accept registration for the 1984-85 school year through the month of May. The nursery is located at 19445 Farmington Road.

The enrollment program for children from 4-5 years of age, tuition ranges from \$25 to \$30 monthly. Child Enrollments will also register at \$25-30.