

Take time out for the arts

This is another lesson on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for ten years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 16338 Middlebelt, Livonia, 522-6311, 2616 N. Main Street, Plymouth, 455-1222. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, MI 48024.

By David Messing
special writer

The quietness was so loud it woke me up. I could hear the wind in the trees. There was soft music playing in the family room, and by the light in our bedroom, I guessed it was about 9 a.m.

I rose — no make that crawled — out of bed and everything seemed so peaceful. Too, peaceful. In this blissful state of solitude and quietness I quickly slapped my cheek to be sure I hadn't crossed over that "great divide" in my sleep. "Yep!" I was very much alive, and "no!" I wasn't in heaven. But, as I meandered toward the kitchen table I really began to wonder, "where is everybody?"

There was bread in the box, there were no empty cereal boxes on the counter tops and there was milk in the refrigerator. Normally I awake to whatever program is on the Disney channel and on the crunching of my three (eating machines) boys. Hey, these guys make sharks look like picky eaters. But as I was saying, there was food in the house, the TV was off, the house was clean and I was thinking maybe I woke up in a "Better Homes" magazine.

I looked outside and there wasn't even

artifacts

any bicycles in the driveway. Then I saw Sandy's note: "Honey, everyone has gone to school . . . Adam too?" "Adam too?" I gasped aloud. "Whose gonna watch cartoons with me?" What about the Beverly Hillsbites? That hit me as I further awoke. . . my babies are all gone. For 16 years there has always been a little one around here. I always knew that someday all three of my boys would be in school but I likewise rejected the revelation or pushed it out of my mind with a quick game with one of them. Here I am and there they are and . . . woe is me.

GEE, IS this house ever quiet. I'm desperately bored but I'm the one who is home. Could this possibly be what mother's talk about as "normal?" You know, when they say, "I can't wait till the kids are back in school and everything is back to normal again." This is the first time in the 2 1/2 years of writing the Artifacts Column that I have ever written in the day light. . . . Might as well, it's too quiet around here anyway. Of course everyone isn't facing the trauma of having their last little guy walk out the door to school. The term "normal" in this reference usually means routine, and to accomplish any thing a normal routine is a must.

Now in establishing a routine one very important word comes into operation: "priority." I use Adam's Fred Flinstone dictionary because if the word isn't in there, I have no business using it. Well, Fred defines priorities as "things you do in order of importance." So getting back to "normal" is merely getting things in order according to importance. The question I would like to ask you today is — where is art in your list of priorities?

Unfortunately art with all its values, gets pushed to the end of most priority lists and

sometimes off the list completely. With working men and women it is their job and family that somehow separates them from fulfillment that art affords. To the housewife, "art-time" is almost "no-time."

No matter how solemn your decision to take time out for art, it soon slips down the priority list from "once a week" to "sometimes" and finally "never." If you are serious about your expression through art then you must make a commitment. Don't say you are too busy. Some of my students are doctors, owners of their own businesses, lots of working mothers and hundreds are teenagers whose schedules boggle the mind. A few of my students are working professional artists, so why do they come? Partially to learn new techniques, but primarily just to set aside their own time to do their own art, with no deadlines or commercial requirements. Probably in scheduling your priorities the worst mistake is the false concept of "finding the time." Which as you probably know does not work.

In this day and age, you don't "find" time, you must "take" time. Only God gives time, all you can do is schedule it. So schedule yourself some "art time" this year. Enroll in an art class even if you think you know it all. At least you will be using your abilities and you never know when, where or from whom you will learn something new.

Of course as you may know art instruction is a major function at both art stores. There are, however, several alternatives to private instruction. If you are craft minded most craft stores offer classes. Night classes in local high schools offer a great variety of art instruction. Colleges often allow you to audit art classes but you may find them to move a little slow as college courses are set up in a four year program.

It is not uncommon to spend 15 weeks drawing still life in charcoal. Wherever, with whatever, or whatever you do, get into your art and you'll wonder why you waited so long . . . speaking of waiting a long time. Let's see it's twelve, one two, three . . . just 3 1/2 hours and everything will be back to "normal" again.

Exhibit spotlights Philippine project

A program which improved the quality of life for many in the Philippines, directly involving Cranbrook Academy of Art, is on permanent record in the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

It is a detailed report, written by Irene Murphy of Birmingham, describing the cottage industry which she organized for the Philippines 1951-53.

The goal of the program, established by the United Nations, was to help as advisor to develop sources of income for the rural people of the Philippines. Although there was a history of successful cottage industry in the islands, all the skills were lost in the years between 1936-1946.

It was the freedom in the philosophy of the Cranbrook Academy of Art which attracted her attention as she began to set up the program. She liked the avant garde ap-

proach — the pursuit of new, untried answers to old problems — teaching by creative approach rather than imitation.

The Cranbrook group who came up with the answer in the Philippines included Lybeth Wallace, textile designer; John H. Risely, sculptor and furniture designer; his wife, Mary Kring, ceramist; Marianne Strengell, textile designer; and her husband, Olaf Hammarskjöld, furniture designer.

Before they came up with their recommendations for products, they researched the labor market and the skills, facilities, equipment and the wood, fibers and clay available locally.

Murphy said, "They followed the old Cranbrook idea — we're all going to do our own thing and try to find customers." She paused and added, "Any woodworking they had done until we started was figures of

saints for churches and doors for churches."

It was Risely who came up with the wooden fish tray — the popular picnic and buffet plate. Also developed were mats and rugs of local materials and dyes and ceramics from local clay.

Murphy's 63-page report is an in-depth study of the Philippine economy at a crucial time.

It was Glen Leet, co-director of the Trickle-Up Program, Inc., who wrote to Javier Perez de Cuellar, secretary general of the United Nations, earlier this year about Murphy's report.

In describing it in his letter, he said, "As the program grew, it became a joint program sponsored by both the United Nations and the United States government. It may have been the first such joint program undertaken by the two."

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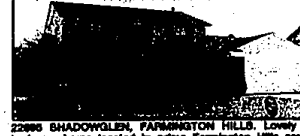
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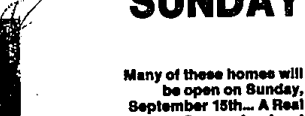
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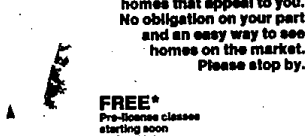
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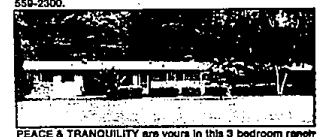
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