

## Suburban Life

Lorraine McEllish editor/477-5450

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# Midas touch

## Homemaker turns businesswoman



ART EMANUEL/Staff photographer

When her husband died, Livonian Rose Grisa had to decide what to do with the chain of Midas muffler shops and the shopping center he owned. Although she had no prior business experience, Grisa decided to take the plunge and take over as owner of the business.

By Richard Lech  
staff writer

**R**OSE GRISA never expected to be a businesswoman.

Her husband, Mark, was the family's breadwinner, running three Midas Muffler shops and a shopping center.

Rose ran the family household and devoted her time to raising their three sons.

But 3 1/2 years ago, Mark Grisa died.

That forced his widow to make a major decision.

"I was left with the shops, so it was either sell them or get into business myself," the Livonian resident said.

She decided to do the latter, even though she had no business experience or training.

Fortunately, she said, the muffler shops were under the capable direction of general manager Rex Perrine of Westland, who had been with her husband since he got his first shop in 1969.

So it wasn't so much what she could do for the business, she said, it was what the business could do for her.

"I didn't want to just stay home and do nothing," she said. "This was an opportunity to keep myself busy."

Grisa said she is glad she decided to enter the business world. She

concedes she still has a lot to learn, but she keeps working at it.

"I certainly enjoy it," she said. GRISA is one of the few women who own Midas franchises in the United States — or around the world, for that matter, she said. But the parent company never had any problem seeing her follow in her husband's footsteps.

"I think they just look at you to see if you can run the company, then they have no problem with it," she said. "They saw it was going to operate as it was before, with our general manager, so they had no qualms about it."

In fact, she even has expanded the business. To the original three shops — in Dearborn, Detroit and Plymouth (the headquarters shop) — she's added Midas shops in Livonia and Farmington.

The latter is co-owned by Perrine, which fulfills her husband's promise to one day help his general manager get a shop of his own, Grisa said. She hopes eventually to add another Midas shop.

**MARKING THE transition** from homemaker to businesswoman was not easy for Grisa. But one of her first acts as a business owner was something she was very familiar with as a homemaker.

"I did what I've always done best — a big housecleaning," she said with

a smile. "Redoing the office, wallpapering, putting plants in all the shops."

Since then, she has learned how to do such things as picking up and delivering payrolls, paying the bills, doing the shopping, and dealing with accountants and attorneys. That frees Perrine to oversee the day-to-day operations of the shops, she said.

Perrine said Grisa has done a good job of taking over for her husband.

"She came in not knowing anything about the business, but she started right into it and did the job," Perrine said. "I think she's coming along exceptionally well. She took an interest, and she's attended a number of Midas conventions."

He noted that she has won several awards as owner. In 1984, one of her shops was Midas district sales leader in shock absorbers, while another led in coil springs sales. She also received a plaque from Midas for her involvement in Toys for Tots.

And she's organized little things on the side, like the annual Christmas party for employees," he said.

**THOSE ADDED touches** also include a company picnic and a newsletter, all of which help to maintain the morale of her 30 employees.

"I think at first they were really surprised I was going to come in," she said. "Now they have just real good

feelings toward me, and I have toward them."

The employees include her sons Frank, 27, Duran, 25, and Dale, 21. Frank is attending Northwood Institute to get a business degree so he can help run the shops, Grisa said. Duran does most of the shop maintenance, and Dale works with the computers that have so far been installed in two of the offices.

Besides attending annual Midas and Midas Dealers Association conventions, Grisa has taken other steps to improve her business acumen. She attended a women business owners class at Schoolcraft College and has joined the National Association of Women Business Owners.

She also continues to operate the shopping center that her husband left her.

**WHAT WOULD he think** if he could see her now?

"He'd probably be surprised. I don't think he'd ever imagine I'd consider doing anything like this."

But she advises other women whose husbands are starting a business to get involved on the ground floor.

"My advice would be not to wait until something happens. If your husband has a business, get involved in it. You just never know what's going to happen."

# Widows group

## targets reforms

By Mary Rodrigue  
special writer

**A**DOZEN YEARS ago Eva Baclawski was living a comfortable middle class life. She and her husband, Tony, were both working full time. Their four children were becoming independent adults. Making the monthly mortgage payment on their tidy east Dearborn home was no problem. There was even money for extras, like a trip to California to visit Eva's mother.

The American dream began to crumble when Eva left her desk job at Chrysler Corp. in 1973 for a variety of health reasons.

"In today's jargon, you'd call it job burnout," she said. "I couldn't type or type anymore. The stress was terrible."

She attributes part of the problem to her mother's death. She also suffered from chronic high blood pressure and severe arthritis that still on occasion causes her knees to fill with fluid and her feet to become so swollen that she can't walk. The Baclawskis never owned a car and bus travel became virtually impossible for Eva.

"I didn't think retirement would be so bad," she said. "Tony was still working."

The following year Tony got lung cancer. He died 14 months later.

"He worked his last 10 years for the Teamsters — not long enough to be eligible for a pension," she said. "He had no life insurance. We had less than \$10,000 in the bank when he died."

"I WAS STILL sick at that time. I went to Social Security for widow's benefits," she said with bitterness. "Because I was 56 — you had to be at least 60 — and didn't have any minor children at home, I wasn't entitled to anything."

"Here was a sick, depressed woman — no income and I couldn't work — and they told me to come back in four years. Looking back, I should have

gone on welfare. But I was too proud." Over the next two years, Baclawski drained her bank account to \$500, but she managed to hold on to her home. At 3 a.m. one sleepless night in front of the television set, she saw an ad sponsored by Social Security regarding disability payments for the sick, widowed or disabled.

"I talked back to the TV," she laughed. "I qualified on all three counts."

Unable to walk because of her swollen feet, she sent her daughter to the nearest Social Security office the following day for a disability application. After undergoing a battery of health exams by her physician, and a second doctor working for Social Security, she was put on disability for a one-year probationary period.

Subsequently she was removed from disability and reinstated after two appeals. During a five-month period before the final court hearing on reinstatement — she was eventually won — she was forced to live on welfare.

Humiliation turned to anger and that eventually turned into a desire to change the system. On April 4, 1979, Baclawski founded Widows Organization with the intent of helping other women cope with the many devastating aspects of losing a spouse.

She describes her non-profit organization as a lobby group fighting to change laws that are unfair to widows. Not surprising, Social Security reforms top the list.

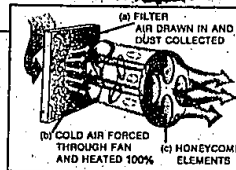
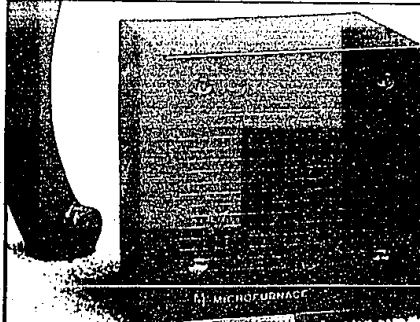
Baclawski says free job training and convincing employers to hire the older women are also priorities. Free medical assistance for needy widows "just as young people get under Social Security or welfare" is also a group objective.

The group attracts women primarily between the ages of 60 and 69, Baclawski said. She feels the group helps many women through the initial transition from couple to single.

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# Ousted Mormon attacks patriarchy,

## says only women can save society

By Susan Steinmueller  
staff writer

Dr. Sonia Johnson moaned aloud when she first was struck by man's oppression of women at a Mormon church meeting.

Her realization came as the church member told why the church opposed the Equal Rights Amendment.

"Suddenly, listening to that man, I knew what the women's movement was all about. I knew it in my bones. I thought I was going to die...the pain of that discovery," she said.

But, along with the "unbearable" pain, came a vision that "after a 5,000 year long sleep, women were rising at last to save their own life, and all life."

"I knew then that the women's movement was the greatest spiritual transformation in the history of the world," Johnson, author of "From Housewife to Heretic," a Mormon woman excommunicated from her church for supporting the ERA, spoke at the Southfield Civic Center last week in a talk sponsored by the North Oakland County Chapter National Organization for Women (NOW).

UNTIL that point, Johnson said she had been a happy housewife and mother, and feminism seemed "irrelevant." But after that meeting, she said, "I knew I'd never be the same."

Looking around, she found, "other churches, by and large, they were all the Mormon church. They were all advocating male supremacy. Then, she saw that the 'whole world was the Mormon Church.'"

She compared it to a situation where, "God and men are in this boys club together, with a man as president."

Johnson said she saw that history had been one of patriarchy, and patriarchy is based on the hatred and fear of women.

"I felt really humiliated that I hadn't recognized this," she said. She also felt rage, saying, "Rage is a very little word for what I felt, anger, and sorrow."

She vowed that, "I wouldn't be an accomplice in my own oppression a single moment longer."

JOHNSON gave up support of the major political parties, as she knew they are part of patriarchy. "I vowed I would never again give any of my precious women energy to either of those two parties," she said.

She also accepted the Citizens Party candidacy for president in 1984, saying, "There is a puzzle out there in the world right now. How are we going to just live, but live fully and joyously? That's the puzzle in front of us."

The missing piece in the center, "a very big, open space, right in the middle of the puzzle," she decided, is one

**'Women are rising because it's our time. If we don't, the world will go up in smoke.'**

— Sonia Johnson

that belongs to women.

"It's the reason you and I are on the planet at this moment," she said. "Women are rising because it's our time. If we don't, the world will go up in smoke."

Women must stop looking to men for answers, she said, because, "At this time in history, men are simply obsolete. They couldn't do it. They botched it."

PATRIARCHY she said, is an institution of war against women, with values of power alien to women.

Cultural evidence she cited includes, nationally, the rape of 4,000 women annually, by men who say they love us, "the physical battering of 50 percent of women, and sexual assault of one in three young females (half from incest), infant girls being treated for gonorrhea, the threat, and the plethora of pornography featuring abuse to women.

"It has to be an epidemic, because women are out of control in this country," she said. "Men must do it, do it, are taught to do it. They have to, or they lose privilege and power."

"The only incredible evidence is that women still love men. You don't even need to say it. We love our sons, our husbands, our fathers."

WORLDWIDE patriarchy advocates a primal thinking of power over others that precludes peace.

"We wouldn't know peace if it came strolling through the door with trumpets," she said. "We would not be able to see it."

"If we can't have peace in our kitchens, our bedrooms, how do we hope somehow miraculously to have peace?"

"The first thing that women have to do is to say the truth, and to make visible for the first time in the history of