

## Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/644-1100



(F1E)

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## cultural cues

## ARTS FESTIVAL MOVES

Livonia Arts and Craft Festival will be held in a new location this year. Instead of its usual site on the grounds of the Livonia City Hall, the two-day event has been moved to the city's historic park, Greenmead, at the corner of Newburgh and Eight Mile roads. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, June 21 and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, June 22, visitors can roam the picturesque setting looking and buying from over 200 artists who will be participating. There is no admission charge and plenty of free parking. For more information, call the Livonia Arts Hotline, 425-2327.

## HERITAGE FAIR

Greenmead will also be the scene of the annual Heritage Fair, sponsored by the Livonia Historical Society from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 1. There is no admission charge and free parking is available off Newburgh Road. Highlights will be a country store, crafts, flea market, food and museum and historic village tours. Proceeds are earmarked for the re-location of the Alexander Blue House, from its Middlebelt Road home to the Greenmead historical village where it will be restored to its 1841-vintage look.

## MADONNA EXHIBIT

Artistic works by Juan Munoz will be exhibited throughout June in the Exhibit Gallery at Madonna College, Livonia. The gallery will be open Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; and Saturdays and Sundays, 1-4 p.m. Exhibited works include watercolors, oil paintings and drawings. Items may be purchased. Admission is free. For more information, call 591-5167. Madonna is located at I-96 and Levan Road.

## ARTISTS SOUGHT

Artist and craft persons are being sought to participate in an established juried craft fair with a country flair. Called the Scarborough Fair, the event will be held in the Cambridge Adult and Community Education Center in Garden City from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 13. Entry fee is \$20. For more information, call Donna Ellis, 422-7198.

## STITCHERY WORKSHOP

Farmington Hills Embroiders Guild of America will hold a workshop on how to prepare your stitched piece for framing. The session, open to the public, will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday, June 4, at Faith Covenant Church, at 14 Mile and Drake roads. For more information, call 348-0068.

## DANCE RECITAL

Students of tap, jazz and ballet dance classes at Farmington Community Center will hold their 15th annual dance recital 3 p.m. Sunday, June 1, at Mercy High School, Farmington Hills. Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children under 12. Mercy is located at Eleven and Middlebelt roads.

# St. Ignatius

## Noted art instructor 'shifting gears' again

By Victoria Diaz  
special writer

THERE'S A rumor that St. Mary Ignatius, long-time art teacher at the Mercy High School complex in Farmington Hills, is retiring.

Don't believe it. Seven years ago, when she "retired" from her teaching duties at the high school, she simply entered a different phase of her career, moved over to Mercy Center, and began teaching art to adult students days and evenings.

Now that she's actually concluding her 62-year-long teaching career, she's not really retiring, according to her. Maybe "shifting gears" a bit, but not retiring.

"I DON'T use the word, 'retire,'" she said. Talking recently at her large, light-filled studio in Mercy Center, the 79-year-old artist told how she slowed down a bit since suffering two serious heart attacks a year ago — but only a little.

"A dear lady gave me that television," the loquacious artist said, referring to a TV set in a small room off the studio. "But I never watch it."

"I just don't have the time. And that beautiful maple rocking chair over there — the girls gave that to me when I left the high school."

"I've never sat in it — don't have time. No, take that back. I did sit in it once, to have my picture taken."

"It's beautiful to look at, though, isn't it? And all my guests can sit in it."

"And when I get old, I'm going to sit in it, maybe."

AS FOR NOW, she's mostly wrapped up with the extensive month-long exhibit of 201 student works on display in the hallways of Mercy Center. Taking a visitor through the exhibit one recent afternoon, she remarked not only about many of the works in detail, but also about the backgrounds of each artist-student who had created them.

"I fell in love with every student I ever taught. And I have dearly loved teaching." Born in Owosso, she grew up on a farm near Pineson and entered the novitiate in 1922 at Grand Rapids Mount Mercy. Though she's been teaching art now for almost 40 years, she began her long career as a teacher in the elementary grades, where she worked for 16 years.

"Finally, I was sent to teach art for the first time in Grand Rapids (at Mount Mercy Academy)

*'I have enough (Venetian glass) to make 15 good-sized mosaics and I plan to spend all my energies in that area, when I'm no longer teaching.'*

—Sr. Ignatius  
beloved Mercy  
Center instructor

in 1942, after some senior nuns had retired. You have to remember that, in those days, there were not nearly so many art departments in the schools as there are now.

"IN THE MEANTIME, though, the Sisters of Mercy were preparing me to become an art teacher because every aptitude test I took pointed toward an ability in that area."

She ended up at Mercy High School in 1949, set up the art department at the newly built school in Farmington Hills in 1965, then began teaching art to adult students in a studio in Mercy Center in 1979.

Since 1979, she says she's taught students ranging in age from 17 to almost 80, but she sees no real difference in high school art students and those of any age in adult education, she said.

"There's this continuing thread running through all 'art people.' They have this creative urge to do something."

"THEY'RE DRIVEN" to do it, and they don't really think of it as work. It's something they've elected to do, and there's this enthusiasm, no matter that their age."

"When I left the high school, I'd been teaching younger students 55 years. I felt that teaching at that level for 55 years was a wonderful experience, but that teaching adults would be nice, too, and by doing so, I could help those people who had so longed to take the classes."

Barbara Blatz of West Bloomfield, who began with a basic pencil, pen-and-ink drawing class five years ago, and is now working watercolor, was one of the earlier students. She signed up for her first art class at Mercy Center shortly after seeing an exhibit of student work from St. Ignatius' classes.

"I was so impressed with the work of her students that I couldn't get there (to sign up) fast enough," Blatz said. Blatz had never taken an art class before. "She insists on perfection — but with a very gentle hand, and her



Allice Hoch of Farmington Hills and St. Ignatius chuckle over an incident in the adult art class taught by Sr. Ignatius.

biggest delight is always when a student's work gets better."

"MY REGRET is that I didn't meet her sooner," said 59-year-old Allice Hoch of Farmington Hills, who has been a student of Sister Ignatius' for the past two years.

"I think she's just an absolutely wonderful teacher. She expects a lot from students, so you find you do your best in her classes, Hoch said.

"Sometimes, since she expects so much, you'd think she'd be maybe staid, or a little humorless, but she has this fantastic sense of humor and freedom of spirit, and she's not at all judgmental. She's been, really, an inspiration."

Although many students' drawings and paintings are on display in the studio, the only evidence of Sister Ignatius' art work is a circular, multi-colored mosaic wall hanging.

"ALTHOUGH she came to mosaics relatively late in her career, the medium has come to be a favorite, she said. She looks forward to working mainly with mosaics in her post-teaching career.

She executes mosaics as movable hangings (and not as tiles affixed permanently in wet plaster on a wall).

Sister Ignatius first worked with the Venetian glass creations when the new high school and chapel were built at 11 Mile Road and Middlebelt in 1965.

AT THAT TIME, she put together the 15-by-14-foot mosaic design behind the crucifix in the main chapel and, later, she executed more than 20 wall hangings for the high school.

The tiles were obtained from the late Andrew Maglia, a Detroit mosaic designer, who executed mosaics for churches across the United States and was a principal source for Venetian glass in this country.

"Mr. Maglia proved to be a wonderful benefactor and friend. I paid for (the original mosaic tile), but he only charged me a very nominal price."

Later, on his death, a substantial amount of the valuable glass was donated to St. Ignatius.

"I have enough to make 15 good-sized mosaics. And I plan to spend all my energies in that area, when I'm no longer teaching."

FIRST, THOUGH, there's a luncheon in her honor, given by a large number of students — young and old — on June 5.

Then, maybe just a short trip to visit with family in Bay City. But soon it'll be time to start work again. ("Actually, my work is my vacation.")

There's a mosaic to do for a new church in Livonia, plus all the others she wants to put together for the Mercy Center.

Between times, she'll be helping former students with their work, or guiding them or giving them assignments to complete, or helping them complete the assignments.

Oh, and yes, she wants to get back to doing more paintings. And then there's . . .

In the meantime, that rocking chair will make a nice object d'art and won't really be gathering all that much dust.

There'll be plenty of friends dropping by the studio, and it'll be a comfy spot for them to sit in, while reminiscing about old time, maybe having a cup of tea — and hearing about all the latest projects Sister Ignatius has planned.

# Novelist 'nurses' unfinished story to completion

By Carmina Brooks  
special writer

A NOVEL THAT lay untouched on a shelf for four years will hit area bookstores in June.

"Sweet Possession" written under the pseudonym Elizabeth Turner is a historical romance set in southern Indiana in the 1850s against a background of political unrest, intrigue, danger and the legendary underground railroad. The widowed heroine lives a secret life helping runaway slaves escape to safety.

"This is the first time I have been published and the first time I have been interviewed," said author Gail Oust recently in her West Bloomfield Township home.

Oust will make a personal appearance at Tales and Tapes in Garden City 3-4 p.m. on Saturday, June 7, to introduce her book during City's spring festival.

"I almost quit writing completely. Then I went to a writers' conference and showed a one page summary to an editor and she liked it. She said, 'Send me 100 pages,'" Oust recalled.

But getting published wasn't that easy, Oust was to learn.

Following up on the encouragement from Linda Marrow of Pocket Books in New York City whom she met at the Romance Writers National Conference held in Washington, D.C., in 1983, Oust mailed her three chapters. And the waiting began. Three months went by and nothing happened.

IT WAS AGONY, OUST REMEMBERED the first rejection of her novel by an agent she had queried four years earlier who had told her "it sounds good." When it was later rejected, Oust set the novel aside and went back to work as a full-time nurse.

"I thought I was going to be rich and famous," she laughed. "I was making plans to be on the Phil Donahue Show."

"Writing is a craft," she continued. "You must have a natural talent, a flair for the dramatic, but you must develop that story. My characters were there, but rather muted.

*'The kids were growing up too fast. They would come home and say, 'What's to eat?' or 'I'm going to a friend's house.' I was discouraged with my life. I began to write for the challenge.'*

— Author Gail Oust

"That was when I put my book on the shelf. Historicals were flooding the market place then and seemed to have bottomed out," she said.

On her second time around, Oust didn't wait long to learn her novel's fate. She phoned an agent, Joyce Flaherty in St. Louis whom she had met at the same writers' conference.

"Joyce said she would look into it for me, and she discovered that they had mislaid the manuscript," said Oust. Just before Labor Day in 1984, Oust did a revised synopsis for a longer book and Flaherty resubmitted it to the publisher. In April, 1985, Oust received a phone call from Flaherty informing her that Tapestry Division of Pocket Books "really liked it and will make an offer with a deadline of five months."

HER PUBLISHER DID, HOWEVER, change the title from "Sweet Wicked Witch" to "Sweet Possession."

Gail Oust, 43, nee Gail Bolleau, grew up in Marine City. She attended Providence Hospital School of Nursing. She has been married for 20 years to Robert Oust and they have two children, Elizabeth, 16, and Greg, 14.

She is employed by Vascular Studies Inc. of Garden City as a vascular technologist working out of a mobile office and laboratory. Oust does imaging of carotid arteries to detect a stroke victim in the making. She often drives as far north as Flint and south to Toledo to serve doctors' offices, clinics and nursing homes.

For years the budding author daydreamed over the ironing board or while baking cookies.

"The kids were growing up so fast. They would come home and say, 'What's to eat?' or 'I'm going to a friend's house.' I was discouraged with my life. I began to write for the challenge," Oust said.

She is already at work on her second novel which she calls "a riches to rags story" ("In reverse, but it is more fun that way," she said). Oust's heroine in the prologue of this story is born into English nobility. In chapter one, she becomes an indentured servant in bondage.

INDIANA WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE the state was a crossover point between the north and south on the underground railroad route to freedom. Oust created a fictitious town, Oak Ridge, located south of Indianapolis for her novel "Sweet Possession."

"I came up with a situation, find a character and setting and look for a situation where somebody could assume a person's motives and make a faulty assumption. I base the story line on that," she said.

"A lot happened politically in 1850. There was a fugitive slave law which made my heroine guilty of a federal offense," she continued.

Oust chose her grandmother's name, Elizabeth Turner, for her pen name. "There are advantages and disadvantages to a pseudonym. My friends don't connect me to the author. I could have used my maiden name, Bolleau, but nobody could pronounce it or remember it," she said.

Oust is a fast learner and the next time around will be easier, she believes.

"Right now it feels good. It's a wonderful feeling of accomplishment," she said.



Gail Oust  
now romance writer

**Oust will make a personal appearance at Tales and Tapes in Garden City Saturday, June 7, to introduce her book during Garden City's Spring Festival.**