

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1992

# SUBURBAN LIFE

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## SOCIAL EYES



DENISE LUCAS

## Diamonds glitter at Discovery Ball

This week's guest columnist is Betty Jean Rivkin of Birmingham, a freelance writer.

A kiss on the hand may be quite continental — but diamonds are a girl's best friend, because when you are wearing them you just feel so beautiful and so glamorous.

The faded glittering jewels were presented "for the evening" to Discovery Ball committee members by the Laurence Krashes of Hay Winston Jewellers, New York. Ball honorary chairman Mrs. Donald E. Petersen, was regally outfitted in a long and elegant black lace gown for the recent event at the Ritz-Carlton, Dearborn.

Blonde dynamo Kathryn Breech-Raft moved swiftly through the crowd wearing a multi-colored, art-deco-print, sequined dress that clung to her perfect figure. Her excitement was contagious. She was thrilled that the event was such a success and that both her mother, Mrs. Harry Neiderlander, and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Connie Raft, would be present.

Individual committee members wearing assorted jewelry valued at millions of dollars were Patricia Coddige Coulson, Ruth Musak Johnston, Leale Petersen Price, Susan Foley, and Missy Christie Musser wearing a short gold strapless gown and emeralds so blue-green that no one could believe they were real.

Harriet and Ralph Brumer of West Bloomfield recalled their honeymoon cruise 35 years ago, during which Ralph purchased a tiger eye ring. "Fine gems are always a good investment," agreed Sybell and Douglas Schabot of Franklin, who have attended every Discovery Ball. Sybell looked elegant in a black and white Carolina Herrera outfit, accessorized with a diamond necklace, earrings and brooch. Douglas was wearing a car pin with invisibly set rubies in his formal black and white polka dot tie.

Two hundred and sixty six guests dined on roast loin of veal and sautéed fillet of salmon. Dancing to the Rare Revue continued until midnight. At the evening's end, \$27,000 was donated to the Leukemia Society of America.

## IVC 20th anniversary/bid time story

At the 20th anniversary dinner dance at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham, guests dined, danced and did their duty, bidding merrily on items as varied as a handmade contemporary pin table or a three-legged floral vase from artist Stan Medgill or a membership in the wine-of-the-month club, donated by Southfield's Merchant of Vinu, Ed Jonna.

All for the good of the International Visitors Council of Metropolitan Detroit, more than 200 guests came to honor the founders of the Metro Detroit Office of the International Citizen Diplomacy Program.

"The efforts of this very important program are directed toward building long-term, successful relationships with future world leaders... in the political sphere, commerce, the sciences and the arts," noted IVC president Dick Jones.

Co-chairwomen of the International Dinner Dance were Judie Sherman and Susan Lancicuit. Susan donated several items to the auction, including a Jasper and brass cuff bracelet. Cheryl Hall, fashion director at Saks Fifth Avenue, attended with her husband David Lindsay.

The Lindseys of West Bloomfield are expecting a baby in just a few months. Nevertheless, Cheryl was one of the most glamorous women at the party, wearing a black sequined dress. Pat and Carol Palmer of Farmington Hills enjoyed the evening with their friends Jack and Paulette Hodge of Ann Arbor. The guests danced late into the night to the music of White Lane.

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Musical Ball: Diane Varisto (left) of Southfield chats with Saul and Marjorie Saulson.

# Romance knows no age limit

■ Being in a retirement home doesn't mean life has to be dull. For one widow and one widower, they found love adds sparkle.

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER



Is it love? When Lorraine Roby, 64, looks over wistfully from her wheelchair to Vito Balsamo, 93, the question becomes as pointless as putting tinsel around a dozen roses.

"You can say, yes, we are," says Balsamo, returning an affectionate glance from his TV chair.

Their romance should come as no surprise, really. They share many interests.

Both like watching Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune and the Tigers on TV. Both play bridge three times a week and eat together every day.

"He's kind," Roby says. "He pushes me in my wheelchair down to dinner." "She thinks I'm good looking for being 94," he says, a widower after 66 years of marriage.

Most of all, they have each other in a time often beset with loneliness for people their age, and in a setting where life is thought to be only endured and not enjoyed.

Both widowed, their paths crossed a year ago at American House in Farmington Hills, an assisted living residence for seniors. Relationships such as Lorraine and Vito's, though, appear to be the exception.

Several nursing homes and assisted living centers in the area said they haven't blossomed all that often at their facilities. One simple reason is the disproportionate amount of women to men at such places.

## They're the exception

At Windmere Nursing Home in West Bloomfield, for example, a number of men are married or recently widowed.

"The ones that are single don't have the desire for any kind of relationship," said Leale Dopke, a social worker at the facility. "We don't discourage it. It just hasn't come about in awhile."

Carol Hamilton, activities director at American House Farmington Hills, agrees. Starting a relationship in their golden years doesn't appear to be on the agenda of many residents there.

If anything, Hamilton said the courtship of Lorraine and Vito has sparked a bit of jealousy from others.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LAMARCA

Senior romance: Lorraine Roby, 64, met Vito Balsamo, 93, at American House in Farmington Hills nearly a year ago and the relationship soon blossomed into love.



Watching TV: Lorraine and Vito spend a lot of time together in front of the television set watching "Wheel of Fortune," "Jeopardy" and the Detroit Tigers.

One resident went as far as to complain to Hamilton that Lorraine was making "a spectacle of herself" after the two were seen holding hands. Hamilton dismisses it with a laugh, having initiated the meeting between the two last fall.

Hamilton urged Roby to introduce herself to him after five residents had died in a short span, including a guy who would sit with Balsamo at dinner. He was alone at the table when Roby introduced herself at Hamilton's urging.

"The first time we met, we didn't talk," says Roby, who is widowed and has two grown children. "He said he was eating."

"They brought her over because I was a Lonesome Luke," adds Balsamo.

In ensuing conversations, they realized they had common interests. For one, both are originally from the East Coast, she from New York and he from Brooklyn, N.Y.

"She's from Forty Third Street," he says with a laugh, mimicking her Eastern accent.

## Families approve

Things have progressed from there. Their respective families appear to approve of the relationship. Roby's son and daughter-in-law, Terry and Susan Dunham of Farmington Hills, had them over for dinner.

For the most part, other residents view them with curiosity and perhaps envy.

"There's nice women here... and there's so few men," Roby says. "They're always hugging and kissing him, but I don't mind."

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# New columnist is game for bridge

By ETHEL SIMMONS  
STAFF WRITER

A new column begins this week in the Suburban Life section, "The Bridge Crowd" — about local bridge games and players — by Woodruff Boyd Crouse of Bloomfield Township, a teacher and writer on this popular game.

Crouse writes under the pen name of his first and middle names, as Woody Boyd.

"The beehive for bridge in the Detroit area is right here in Oakland County," he said, in a recent interview at the Birmingham office of the Observer & Eccles County. "There are 23 (public) bridge clubs in Oakland County. They run afternoon and evening bridge games almost every day."

Crouse is a gregarious guy with a big voice to match his size. He said, "I have been playing bridge since my mother taught me in 1935, and I've been playing seriously for the last 15 years."

At various times, Crouse has written bridge columns for the Oakland Press, Royal Oak Daily Tribune, Grosse Pointe News and the Macomb Daily. In his column for the O&E, he will concentrate on local players, talking primarily about games he has played with them.

## Teaches bridge classes

Besides writing about bridge, Crouse teaches classes for beginner, basic, intermediate and advanced players throughout the year at the West Bloomfield Community Education Department. He has been teaching there for the last three years. Crouse spends three days a week teaching bridge, not only for community education but also privately, usually to groups of up to eight people.

Now working to be a life master, bridge's highest category of expertise, Crouse is active on the area bridge circuit. He said, "I play club tournaments and then go off to regionals two or three times a year."

He said he had never played a lot of duplicate bridge but because he decided to teach and write about bridge, he wanted to become a life master. "The master rating is a very important factor in bridge," he acknowledged.

Originally from Grosse Pointe, Crouse returned to the Detroit area in 1945 after spending three years with the U.S. Army — two and a half of those years serving with the 1st Infantry Regiment in the Pacific. In the advertising business, he worked more than five years at Campbell-Ewald and 18 years at BBD&O, where he produced TV commercials for major network shows.

Then, he was part-owner of a radio station in Port Huron before returning to metropolitan Detroit to work for Capital Cities-ABC for 20 years as a newspaper sales manager before retiring in 1988. "I spent my life in advertising in the Detroit market. My background is Grosse Pointe, but I've been here (in Bloomfield Township) 20 years," he said.

## Joined top bridge club

During his working years, he traveled a lot on his job, especially to New York. "I joined the Regency Whist Club in New York City in 1959," he said. "It was 'the' bridge club — the premiere bridge club in the world. I got to know a lot of the great players and played with them."

To Crouse, greats of the bridge world such as the late Oswald Jacoby and the late Charles Goren are "Ozzie" and "Charlie." "Ozzie took me aside and really taught me how to play the game of bridge," he said. "Purposes of his new column are threefold: 'To have fun, to teach bridge and to relate to good players who play the game. Two-thirds of the columns are personalized, to just your readership players.'"

According to Crouse, there are 35 million active bridge players in North America. Although bridge clubs are growing, 75 percent of bridge players play at home with friends, neighbors and family.

What is it about bridge that fascinates players? "It



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMARCA

New columnist: Woodruff Boyd Crouse (Woody Boyd) is an expert on bridge.

is the greatest intellectual challenge in the world of games," Crouse responded. "The number of complex decisions that must be made far exceeds chess. Some of the chess grand masters gave up chess to play bridge."

## Card table conduct

Because people are so intense about the game, everyone has heard or witnessed horror stories about difficult players. "I don't care whether you're playing tennis or golf, every game has its stinkers," he said.

"The American Contract Bridge Game has been very rigid regarding conduct at the card table. The director of the tournament warns them, 'If you misbehave we won't have you back.' Any time competition is involved, your temper is challenged."

To all those who play or want to play the game, Crouse reminds, "Bridge is supposed to be a fun experience."