

SUBURBAN LIFE

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THE SCENE



GRETCHEN HITCH

16-day fest marks wedding in Greece

Gretchen Hitch's column *The Scene* alternates with Denise Lucas' column *Social Eyes*. To leave a message for Hitch, from a touch-tone phone, call 953-2047, Ext. 1885. Material for *The Scene* may be mailed to Hitch at 646 Kimberly, Birmingham 48009, or you may call her at 646-6277.

The *Odyssey* is a Greek epic poem written in 700 B.C. recounting the adventures of Ulysses. But his adventures in traveling the ancient world pale when compared with a Bloomfield Hills couple's wedding celebration lasting 16 days, ending in November.

Attorneys Susie Vestevich and Patrick Crocker were feted for 16 days in Greece arranged by the mother of the bride, international travel agent Anne Vestevich, also of Bloomfield Hills. And what intricate preparations, involving more than seven months of planning by attorney father Peter Vestevich and Anne, Susie, only one-quarter Greek, told her parents she dreamed of being married in Athens. Patrick agreed enthusiastically to the Greek Orthodox service, and having the wedding in Athens sounded great.

More than 90 relatives and friends traveled from the Birmingham-Bloomfield area and across the USA to Athens. Wedding guests numbered 130, including localites Effie Weinberg and George and Zoe Kerora, who were vacationing at their Athenian villas. All enjoyed the wedding feast in Dionysos, a restaurant overlooking the Acropolis and Parthenon — lit up at 9 p.m. in honor of the bride and groom.

The mother of the bride is one part Lithuanian, so relatives made a wedding cake in Lithuania. Two cousins brought it with them to Athens strapped in its own plane seat. Peter, the father of the bride, is Macedonian by descent, and he says that Alexander the Great was Macedonian. Former and soon-to-be-again Bloomfield Hills resident Dr. Bob Vestevich, uncle of the bride, came from LaLolla. The bride's attorney brother Bill, 29, was best man or assistant for the Greek Orthodox ceremony in a tiny 1,000-year-old Byzantine church across from the Acropolis. The legendary church held 30 people standing. The rest of us gathered in the marble cobblestone courtyard nestled in a pine grove, peering through the entrance.

The bride and groom circled the altar three times and first became betrothed before exchanging vows and crowns in being married by Greek Orthodox ceremony. Wedding guests tramped down the narrow marble path to the open-air terraced Dionysos restaurant for the wedding feast on a delightful 75-degree evening.

After many toasts, the Greek wedding dance was performed by the newlywed couple and many of the guests. Greek circling dancing, with knee bends and kicks, followed on the open terrace, with the Acropolis as a backdrop.

Banker John Cannis, uncle of the bride, looks professional in execution of Greek dancing moves. Banker Lou Allen also is adept at the deep knee bends, as is Birmingham attorney Bertie Washoff. Hills businessman George Strumbos, Jim Terry and Rick Bayokian. Dance lessons at Oakland Hills prior to the trip proved to be beneficial. Many were attorneys, as are the bride and groom, their brothers, fathers and uncles and friends.

"Classical Tour"

But back to the beginning of this odyssey. The first four-day segment involved the "Classical Tour" by bus from Athens to Olympia, where the guests viewed the sanctuary of Zeus, one of the wonders of the ancient world. On another day the group traveled to Delphi, thought to be the center of the ancient world, and Nauplion, first capital of independent Greece with its scenic harbor, the Lion Gate and the Tomb of Agamemnon.

The bus driver was a mountain road expert. Many times it seemed he was driving a road that dropped off in awesome cliffs on each side. Laura Kantigas couldn't sit by the window, it was so scary when shoulders of the road disappeared on both sides of the bus. Laughter and gaily abound.

See THE SCENE, 2H



Double crown: During the Greek Orthodox ceremony, the couple — Susie Vestevich and Patrick Crocker — both were crowned, and then the crowns exchanged.



Coping WITH 'the change'

At menopause, a woman may need answers to questions about how the change of life is affecting her. Does she need estrogen replacement therapy or other hormones? And what about how the loss of estrogen in her system could lead to bone thinning and osteoporosis?

STORIES BY STAFF WRITER ETHEL SIMMONS

A support group where women can share information and get knowledge about their problems with menopause is led by an area doctor who calls himself a menopauseologist.

Dr. Jerry L. Nosanchuk of Franklin, whose offices are in Farmington Hills, said of his medical practice specializing in menopausal women, "I'm the only guy in Michigan who does this exclusively."

Nosanchuk said the support group, which meets monthly, is open to all interested women. A hotline that leads into his office takes calls pertaining to the support group, but is not tied into his practice.

Carol Kormiski, the doctor's office manager, answers the hotline (737-6076) and answers basic questions for women callers, but also immediately refers them to one of several members of the support group who have volunteered to give more information. For calls made to the hotline outside office hours, there is a 24-hour recorded message.

Nosanchuk founded the group five years ago for menopausal women with problems both after hysterectomy and natural menopause.

At the meetings, Nosanchuk answers questions to help them gain knowledge about their own situations and to improve communications with their physicians. However, concerned women seeking help often want immediate answers.

"When they call the hotline, they're so frantic they never even wait for the meeting," he said. Next joint meeting of the Menopause Support Group and the Life After Hysterectomy Support Group will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Essex Room of the Ramada Inn, across from the Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield.

While the support group is ongoing, women in attendance are constantly changing. "They end up going only two or three times," Nosanchuk explained. "They don't have to make it a life's pursuit to come back."

Nosanchuk pointed out that while there is an educational process in place at the time of puberty, at menopause — the opposite of puberty — no such process is available. "Their physicians are often too busy to discuss these matters. I personally find this offensive. That's why I started this group," he said.

Nosanchuk doesn't believe a woman should be "a passive recipient of unilateral, physician health-care directives," but rather should have the knowledge that will enable her to be part of the decision-making process.

Among his patients who have been part of the support group is "Jane," a Farmington Hills resident who underwent a hysterectomy in her late 20s. She attended several of the support group meetings, a few years ago, and is still grateful for the help she received from the other women.

"Just the idea that I wasn't crazy" was beneficial, said "Jane," who works as a legal secretary. "Some of the symptoms that I had weren't just mine."

Before becoming a patient of Nosanchuk, she had described her symptoms to several doctors, who told her it was all in her head. "I seemed to have almost total lack of sexual desire, at age 26, and was even referred to a sex therapist." She

said neither the doctor or sex therapist checked her hormonal level.

Her sex drive returned swiftly after she began a treatment with Nosanchuk, who prescribed hormone implants that give her estrogen and testosterone. "I feel normal again," she said. "After I got the help, I noticed other things. I had more energy and zest for life."

Two other women who attended the support group after undergoing hysterectomies are Janet Badgero of Union Lake, a registered nurse who does insurance work, and Peggy Levy of Birmingham, an elementary school teacher. Both have helped out with the hotline by taking calls referred to them.

Badgero said of one caller, "A woman sat on the phone and cried with me. She couldn't believe there was any help." Levy offered to talk to callers from the hotline after she heard about and attended the support group and also became a patient of Nosanchuk.

"If someone is in really bad shape, they call me," she said, explaining that she answers callers' questions but "nothing medical."

Another woman, "Nancy," a student who lives in Troy, had a hysterectomy four years ago but didn't learn about the support group until recently. "My husband basically found it," she said. "I don't feel there's much out there."

Her husband made a half dozen calls before he located the group. She has attended one meeting so far. "I listened to the other people. I had never been to a support group. It was definitely the answer to a lot of things," she said.

Until visiting the group, "Nancy" felt very isolated. Now, she wants to get involved, both to help herself and other women. "Issues of hysterectomy have not been addressed," she said. "There are women out there who have no idea there is some consolation and help and answers. There's got to be thousands of women out there."

Bone scan is important early step

Osteoporosis — you may not know you have it until it's too late to reverse the disease process.

That's why women, who are its main victims, are being urged to have a bone scan to see if the bone thinning that osteoporosis signifies is not excessive, in their case.

At the Osteoporosis Testing Center Inc., at the Franklin Medical Building in Southfield, women at risk can have the bone scan done in about a half hour. I underwent the procedure myself, to see how it's done, and found it's easier than a mammogram. The X-ray has one-30th the amount of radiation of a mammogram, according to Art Hurvitz of OTC.

Three separate bone scans, of the forearm, the lumbar spine and the femur (the hip) take about a half-hour, for the machine using the DEXA (Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry) technique to record data. The patient wears loose clothing, and the machine scans with a bar that doesn't touch the body.

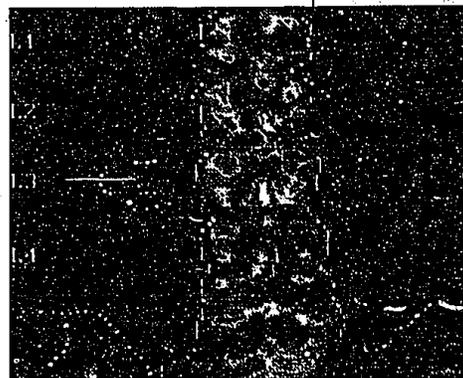
After tests are printed out, an endocrinologist evaluates the results, which are mailed to the patient's medical doctor for further analysis.

Ground-breaker enterprise

"This is an entrepreneurial and ground-breaking enterprise," said Dr. Gary W. Edelson, who is medical advisor to OTC. He said OTC is "the first non-physician-owned osteoporosis testing center in Michigan." OTC does bone scans only on referral from a physician.

Hurvitz said some physicians have similar equipment in their offices but only do bone scans for their own patients. Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak and Ford Hospital in Detroit also do bone density evaluation, he said.

See SCAN, 3H



Picture this: Color printout shows lumbar spine, in one of three scans used for bone density evaluation.