

# Suzanne Somers from page B1



STYL PHOTO BY DAN BERKE

**Introduction: Suzanne Somers listens to the host as she introduces her at the Women's Allied Jewish Campaign Choices event.**

room as she tried on the dress. She remembers her father walking past the door, beer and cigarette in hand.

"I fell asleep dreaming of the next night, the dress hanging up beside my bed. At 3 a.m., the door bangs open and it's my

father. He was coming at me as I lay terrified with nowhere to hide."

The object of his wrath that night was not his daughter, but the dress hanging next to her bed, which he promptly ripped apart. Her mother entered the room and was quickly struck down by her father. Filled with sheer rage, Somers picked up a tennis racket from under her bed and hit her father over the head with all her might. She knocked him unconscious, blood spilling everywhere.

He suffered a concussion and stitches.

"When my mother took him to the emergency room, I scrubbed the blood off the floor, the stairway, even the driveway. Everything always looked perfect on the outside."

Somers got pregnant at 17, married a man she wasn't in love with, promptly had a scandalous affair with an older man and then lost town with her infant son. Seraping by on a model's sporadic wages, she suffered another crisis when her son was hit by a car at age 3 and almost died. In the aftermath of that event, Somers started to get mental health therapy and for the first time, addressing the issues of her early life.

Although she had been the star of all her high school plays and in fact had earned a music scholarship to college, Somers had

such low self-esteem, she couldn't give her therapist even one good quality about herself in those early sessions. Her list of negatives were overflowing, however.

"With my son's birth, I felt pure unconditional love," she said. "I went from this child to keep me alive. I would look at him and know I had a promise to keep."

She met her husband when she was hired (and fired the same day) as a model for a TV show called "The Anniversary Game."

"I was a bad prize model, but the host asked me out to dinner."

Even that relationship began with lies. Somers reasoned her suitor would never be interested in her if he knew her true background. When the truth came out two years later, "he accepted me. I learned I could be lovable and accepted."

"When I see children act up, shoot other children with guns, I know those children are not coming from a happy home. They were born in a state, in a healthy home, you know you are loved."

"I know that people can change. Everyone is thrown a curve in life. We can choose to be a victim or we can learn from it. I've grown from my experience. I keep doing what I need to do to be the best I can be."

"If you can't say that you're happy, fix it by facing yourself. It's traumatic to look at all the wars, but it is worth it."

## Some tips for smart TV viewing

The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences offers parents tips for helping children be discerning TV viewers.

Here are some ways to help kids get the most out of what they watch on television.

**Play a TV game** - "What are they saying?" "What are they doing?" or "Where are they?" Watch without the sound on, and listen without watching the picture. It's fun to talk about how much you knew and anticipated with only half the information. If you have a VCR, tape the show while you're playing the game and then watch it back. How significant is each piece in putting the whole picture together?

**Have guidelines for selecting programs** - Check channel

listings and look for different points of view in the programs, and discuss values such as honesty or respect and themes, such as divorce or death, you think are important for your children to know and discover.

**Plan your TV viewing** - Turn on your TV to watch specific shows, rather than always seeing "what's on."

**Make watching TV a family event** - Use storylines to talk about things which can be difficult to discuss, like family relationships, feelings, appropriate sexual behavior.

**Use TV to talk to your kids** - Let your children hear your values and beliefs during TV programs by "thinking out loud" and encourage them to say

what's on their mind.

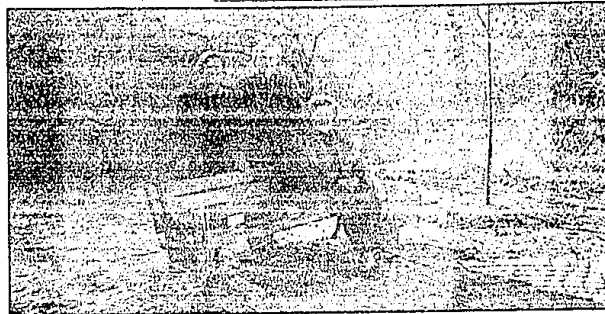
**Talk back to your TV** - Express your opinion by talking directly to the TV - for instance, challenge commercials and the way they try to sell not only products, but attitudes and lifestyles.

**Let TV expand your world** - Take a field trip to the library to find related books, articles, videos, and CD-ROMs based on ideas you've seen on TV.

**Throw a TV party** - Invite friends of your children to watch special programs at your home. Encourage discussion of how they liked it and why.

**Go online** - Visit Web sites of television networks and media literacy groups.

## Peace and serenity



Serenity garden: Members of the Farmington Garden Club donated this bench to the Serenity Memorial Garden in Farmington Hills recently. Pictured are Jan Hunt, garden club president, Rita Roberts, vice president, and Marian Hickey, seated.

## Miracle Mission heads to Israel

From Farmington Hills to Huntington Woods, from Birmingham to Detroit, 625 metro residents will learn about their Jewish heritage in April as members of Michigan Miracle Mission III to Israel.

The mission, scheduled April 18-28, is the largest community mission to Israel from any U.S. Jewish community in 1999.

It is the Jewish community's third community mission to Israel, sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

The 10-day trip will include a tree-planting, celebration with Israeli citizens on Israel Independence Day, visits to archeological digs, museums, religious and historic sites and absorption centers to meet Israel's newest citizens. A Sabbath observance at the Western Wall also is scheduled.

Participants will meet their Israeli partners in the Central Galilee when 1,000 mission members and residents of Kibbutz Ein Dor gather for an Israel Independence Day barbecue on

April 20. They will be joined by 43 Detroit teens who will be concluding their own mission - The March of the Living - to Poland and Israel.

The Central Galilee is Michigan's Partnership 2000 sister region in Israel. Partnership 2000 fosters people to people relationships in the fields of business, medicine, education, social services, culture and leadership development.

Top Israeli government leaders have been invited to address the group.

## Chat room from page B1

ble when they come to the dinner table.

In 12 years, a boy has never sneaked up behind me without my awareness, yet my poor little daughter has almost been trampled just by my turning around to find her firmly planted at my heels.

None of my four sons is capable of sniffling down a stairway. No matter how many times I have bellowed at them, it still seems like they pit themselves in continual contest against the stairway to see how fast one can descend and how hard one can land at the bottom. In my home, there are no rooms with wallpaper completely intact or floor moldings without gouges.

### No sensitivity

If I am dog sick and vomiting, you will still approach me for a meal or a ride to a friend's house, while at the first hint of Mom turning green my daughter will busy herself elsewhere. Perhaps she senses the need for self-preservation. This child will spend hours drawing and coloring, both were not more than 10-minute long activities for the boys.

Maybe it's all the time she spends with crayons that has carried over into her uncanny ability to match clothes, but there have been rare instances since she has begun to dress herself that she has worn clashing shirts and pants. My sons, on the

other hand, frequently don't match and always don't care. Just yesterday, I voiced my observation to one that his green plaid pants didn't quite go with that purple and blue striped shirt. An hour later, I noticed he was still wearing the same outfit while outside playing with the neighbor boys. Appearing deliriously content, it didn't seem to matter to him or his buddies. Of course his friends were color-coded, but their mom is obsessed and compulsive about buying complete outfits that match. In our house, we're lucky to find a pair of socks that sort of match, and a clean pair of underwear in one's size and, on a good day, gender.

While on the topic of color, not one of my sons like pink. Thinking I was advancing scientific knowledge to high art. One recent evening, my 12-year-old burped so loudly the floors quaked. Interpreted as a challenge, the three other boys frantically tried

to rustle up whatever obnoxious noises they could. I was mad and let them know. Gave them the old lecture about certain things not being appropriate at the table, and how the older boys should be setting a better example for the younger ones who naturally imitate them. A few minutes later, my husband arrived home late from work, belched and commented on how dinner smelled great.

All my painstaking work, attempting to instill the mere semblance of manners, destroyed in a reckless moment. (That's nature, they argue.)

If I had the energy - and part of me hates to admit I am without it - I would give my daughter a bath every night. But I am too tired, so she has to settle for a few a week. The point is, she would be willing. She seems to have grasped the simple concepts of bodily dirt and the cleansing qualities of water. (That's nature, I counter.)

### Shower a day

Not only do the boys actively avoid showers, even when an edict is declared - "You need to shower daily!" - they conveniently forget it. The other morning one presented himself for breakfast, in dirty clothes, of course, and hair that could easily be mistaken for an oil spill with drastic potential for the environment. He not only got angry at me when I suggested he take a shower, he proceeded to spend 20 minutes when we were crunched for time - just to pay me back.

Other times they emerge from the shower with dry hair and still-dirty faces or legs. I am fascinated by the very concept: how does one shower for 10 minutes and still emerge with any dirty body parts?

It has occurred to me more than once that my daughter may have been switched at birth, but she too closely resembles two of the boys in particular, and all in general. I have simply come to accept there are definite gender and personality differences in each tiny individual at birth. Undoubtedly, the nurture vs. nature debate will continue, at least at my house.

Kathie O'Donohue is the nurturing mother of five children residing in Farmington Hills.

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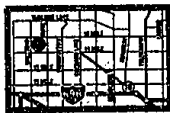
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