



ELLEN HERSCHER

## Poem made one Decoration Day seem daunting

**M**emorial Day is a U.S. holiday set aside to pay homage to the countless men and women who bravely served their country. One might think this would be a solemn event; yet, I perceive it as a glorious celebration and remembrance of happy times, with exception of one specific day many years ago.

I vividly remember my grandmother announcing that it was Decoration Day, time to get flowers with which to decorate the graves of our loved ones. The trunk of the car was chock-full of tall colorful bunches of gladioli, carefully wrapped in wet newspaper and stacked layer upon layer. In the passenger portion of the car were buckets and canning jars filled with an abundance of flowers. Several cemeteries would be visited on that special day of commemoration.

Maybe it's because I enjoyed the flowers and sunshine that I remember all Memorial Days as clear, warm, sunny and vibrantly sunlit. For Grandma, the holiday was a serious devotional occasion. In addition to being a day of socializing with family and friends, it was also the first day we were allowed to don white clothing and wear sleeveless garments — a peculiar little unwritten rule that most of us have adhered to for fear of appearing ignorant or flagrantly conspicuous.

Wearing a Clorox-whitened blouse with a lavender gingham pinafore that Mother stitched for me, I climbed into the car with Grandma, my mother, and my aunt — our feet nestled among the flower containers. This was the last time I remember going to the cemetery with my grandmother before her death. If there are flowers in heaven, I am sure Grandma is tending the gladioli garden and benevolently handing out long stems of resplendent blossoms on Memorial Day.

### Bells called us

Across from the cemetery was a quaint white church with a tall steeple. With a melodious ring, the pealing bell called all of us through the open doors into the sanctuary. Beset by nervousness, I waited impatiently for my signal to walk up to the pulpit where I would speak to the congregation. For weeks, I had memorized and rehearsed a lengthy poem that honored the heroes of past wars. My big moment had arrived. I walked confidently up the aisle, then stood beside the podium since it was too tall for me to see over the top. The pastor introduced me with a broad smile and kind words.

Linked together like paper dolls, my family sat in the front pew holding hands and proudly looking on. Feeling quite smug, I was reciting the poem eloquently. About half way through the poem, I glanced at the smiling faces of my family and noticed the shimmer in Grandma's white hair. Then the oddest thing happened. Even though Grandma was smiling, I saw a tear upon her rusey cheek. It glistened like a diamond, distracting me to muteness. Mother's voice whispered as she tried coaching me with the poem, but I had completely lost sequence and stood quite speechless. The entire congregation now looked like a black cloud of fog that had settled heavily behind my family.

Still mesmerized by the dazzling teardrop, I fidgeted with the bow of my pinafore, twisting it until it came untied. Silence pounded in my head as I searched the depths of my brain for the long lost poem. To further my mortification, I finally uttered one word — "ummh." I began repeating "um" so many times that it sounded like a chant. At last, my mother rescued me by coming forward and handing me the written poem. In humiliation, I finished by reading the remainder of the poem I had so flawlessly memorized.

After my last word was spoken, I quickly left the church by way of an auxiliary hall close to the pulpit, then waited out front for my mother. All the people began parading outside as I hovered inconspicuously behind a bush until I saw Mother. I ran toward her. As luck would have it, the pastor crossed our path. He stopped dead in

Please see CHAT, B2

# Gardeners help this Eden grow

**■ The Warner Mansion needs volunteers to help garden the grounds one morning a week. Experience is not necessary.**

BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER  
mrodrigue@oe.homecomm.net

A critter who ate the tops off three flats of zinnias meant for planting around the Warner Mansion couldn't sag the spirits of a group of gardeners who met Monday morning to plant annuals around the city's historic museum on Grand River.

The zinnias — originally destined for planting last Friday but delayed due to bad weather — became fair game for wildlife in the area.

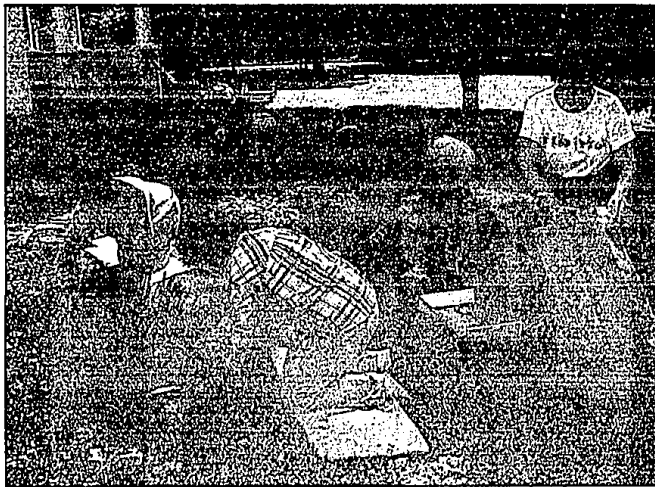
"Look for a fat, well-fed critter," joked Betti Pool, a nine-year veteran of the informal Warner Mansion volunteer gardening crew and a member of the Farmington Garden Club and Farmington Hills Beautification Commission.

"Normally we come out here Wednesday mornings from 9 (a.m.) until noon. We're starting to work more perennials into the garden. That will make for more easy care. The annuals bring the color. We need more help."

"You don't have to be a great gardener to help. It's a wonderful opportunity for master gardeners to get their hands in. In spring, we plant and then dead and weed throughout the summer. City workers do all the hard stuff. It's a good opportunity to learn more about gardening."

### Learn growth habits

"You can't have all these plants in a home garden so this is a great way to learn growth habits," Betty Beausoleil, a Farmington Beautification commissioner and a museum docent, helps when she can.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

"I usually help with the spring clean-up and planting. I re-did the herb garden for an advanced master gardener. This is an opportunity to participate in a very highly visible community area and work with some swell folks."

One new helper is Nan Suydam, who moved to Farmington just two years ago and is a member of the Farmington Garden Club.

"I have a long-term interest in gardening. I moved from a condo to a house. I have a lot to learn. I love the grounds here."

Betty Beausoleil, who lives in the Drakehire Apartments, has been planting and weeding on the Warner Mansion grounds "since the Slocums

gave the mansion to the city.

### Learn from each other

"I've always loved to garden. I come over whenever I can. I'm trying to do well with roses. We learn from each other here."

A Farmington Garden Club member, she moved to the community in 1979 and got involved with the Warner Mansion upkeep shortly thereafter.

Barbara Loughlin of Farmington Hills got involved with the gardening group through her participation with the Farmington Naturalists.

"I began in the wildflower garden here," she said. That was about 15 years ago.

"Truthfully, it's a joy being outdoors. I have a love of preserving historic places and of gardening."

She noted that many weddings are held in the gazebo on the grounds. Many prom couples and graduates also enjoy taking pictures in the lush green setting accented by flowers.

"You're helping to preserve the beauty of the city," Loughlin noted. "And also contributing to the community and getting to know many nice people. Gardeners are always nice people."

Gardening expertise is not necessary to volunteer with the Warner Mansion gardeners. To learn more about it, call Betti Pool at 442-2742 or Dick Carvill at 476-6257.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HERRMAN

All aboard: Ellen Bleher (left) and Lee Prokopp board a bus headed for the Van Gogh Exhibit at the DIA on Saturday.

## Hills' bus tours to DIA called a success

BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER

Richard and Robbi Hamann of Farmington Hills read about the Van Gogh art exhibit last year and bought tickets for friends as a Christmas present.

They were happy to be part of the city's first foray into taking bus loads of tourists to the Detroit Institute of Arts for the "Van Gogh, Face to Face" tour the past two Saturdays, May 13 and May 20.

Nancy Coumoundouros, cultural arts coordinator for Farmington Hills, saw it as an opportunity to bring more people to the world-class show in Detroit's cultural center.

For \$23 for adults, \$15 for students 18 and younger, patrons got round-trip bus transportation from the Costick Activities Center to the DIA and admission to the show, which featured 70 paintings and drawings by the famed late 19th-century Dutch painter.

And that was a good deal, according to the Hamanns.

"You don't have to mess with parking down there," said Robbi Hamann. "We like that Farmington Hills is offering more adult-based activities. We don't have children. This is an opportunity to meet other people, something cool to do."

For friends Roslyn Garfinkel, Evelyn Steiner and Eleanor Millman, it was a chance to do something fun.

"I was the first person to sign up for

this bus trip," said Garfinkel, who lives in Farmington Hills. "I read about it in the newspaper, and when I came to the Costick Center Monday morning, no one here really knew about it yet. Van Gogh is definitely an artist I'm interested in. I've read a lot about him, seen movies."

### No parking hassles

Steiner, also of Farmington Hills, liked that "the bus lets you off right by the museum. With the construction and all, we don't want to worry about parking."

"My daughter is an artist in North Carolina, and I can't wait to tell her I've been to this show."

Millman, who lives in Southfield, said she didn't like driving downtown but liked the cultural opportunity and a chance to spend the day with friends.

For Ann and Christina Krawiec of Farmington Hills, the bus trip to the DIA was a chance for a mom-and-daughter outing.

"I wanted my daughter to see this exhibit," said Ann. "She likes art very much and learned about Van Gogh at school."

Christina, 7, a first grader at Wooddale Elementary, nodded. A large Van Gogh picture book jutted out of her tote bag.

Coumoundouros said 31 people made the May 20 excursion. There were a

Please see BUS TOUR, B2

## Memorial Day is time to remember all vets

BY RUTH MORSELMAN  
SPECIAL WRITER

Memorial Day is a time to remember Farmington's soldiers and sailors. There are many heroes.



VINTAGE

A few had unusual situations or experiences.

Andrew Crosby Jr. was the first man to enlist in the Michigan infantry in the Civil War.

Born in New York, he came to Livonia with his parents when he was 4

years old. They had a farm. Eleven years later, the family moved to a Farmington farm.

After attending the local district schools, Crosby attended the State Normal College at Ypsilanti which became Eastern Michigan University.

Then Andrew Crosby went on to a business college in Detroit where he became a teacher.

When Gov. Austin Blair issued a proclamation for four Michigan regiments to save the Union, Andrew Crosby Jr. was the first to enlist in the first company of the first regiment from Michigan.

He served under Orlando B. Wilcox, a Detroit lawyer and graduate of West Point. After a brief service, Andrew

Crosby became ill and returned to his parents' farm in 1861. More casualties were suffered in the Civil War from disease than any other reason.

Crosby married Mary B. Smith of Novi. They lived in Farmington. Crosby began teaching school in Clinton County first then in Ionia County.

### Moved back to Farmington

Next the Crosby family came back to Oakland County and Andrew Crosby went into business in Pontiac. When Crosby began working for an insurance company, the family moved back to Farmington.

Crosby was active in the Masons and served on the school board. He was a prominent member of the Farmington

community and he lectured at the Grange. He died suddenly as he was walking down the street one morning in 1909.

Another Civil War hero was Edwin Parker who was a member of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry. Parker was there when the First Wisconsin Cavalry and the Michigan Fourth Cavalry captured Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy.

It has been debated by many that Jefferson Davis was dressed in women's clothes when he was captured. Some say he threw his wife's cloak over his clothes because it was cold. Others called him a coward.

Please see VINTAGE, B2