

## MISS FARMINGTON



TRACEY FINLAYSON

## Springtime musings from Miss Farmington

**M**arch comes in like a lion and out like a lamb. And so it goes, not only with this Michigan weather of ours, but also with human life. I saw a dear friend of mine pass away this week from pancreatic cancer. He only battled it for one month. He came into this human life like a lion, and went out like a lamb.

In representing Oakland County as Miss Farmington/Oakland County, I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of unique people who find joy in their own work, and in so doing make this world a better place because of it.

For example, on Feb. 23, the Team Farmington Special Olympics Bowl-a-thon took place at Drakeshire Lanes in Farmington to raise money for Team Farmington, the Special Olympics athletic team. It was great to see members of Team Farmington whom I had not seen since high school, working hard for their organization to make it grow and increase awareness of Special Olympics.

Every day on my job I am talking to doctors to encourage their proactive diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease so that people can be treated early with medication to prevent a rapid decline.

Unfortunately, there exists a social stigma around the disease and many people choose to ignore the signs and symptoms their loved ones might show, thinking that memory loss is a normal process associated with aging. It is not!

In the past there has been an increased public awareness of depression and anxiety. As a result, most people seek treatment from medical professionals and overcome their illnesses. Likewise, my goal is for Alzheimer's Disease to become more of a household name so that caregivers and patients alike seek medical attention as soon as possible.

My (Miss Farmington) platform, "Nurture with Nature," refers to how we can nurture our elderly with Alzheimer's Disease by human nature (providing public awareness and taking care of our elderly) and environmental nature (providing patients with the chance to participate in simple outdoor activities to help keep them active.)

### Speaking of environmental nature

I am planning a tree-planting day for schoolchildren to be held in conjunction with Earth Day.

Adn Takens is my contact with the Department of Natural Resources in Rosecommon, and she mentioned the idea of national publicity for this tree-planting day, so we shall see. The National Tree Trust from Washington D.C. will be coming out to publicize various community events. Also, be on the lookout for a "Parks in the Hills" show I will be doing with Farmington Hills City Naturalist Joe Derek.

### Mayor's Youth Council

I must say I am duly impressed with the young adults I have met from the Mayor's Youth Council. They are proactively making a positive change not only in their community, but also in the lives of their classmates by coming up with creative ideas for their peers to do after school.

The seventh annual chili cook-off took place March 3 to raise money for the Mayor's Youth Council and the Miss Farmington/Oakland County scholarship program. It was a huge success and the winning chili filled the tummies of many hungry participants. Congratulations to the Mayor's Youth Council for making the winning chili! Another upcoming fundraiser for Madonna College, that I am participating in, is a fashion

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# Civil War

## Letters tell a personal tale

BY RENEE SKOGLUND  
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**D**on Lussenden of Livonia, a World War II survivor of a German POW camp, knows just how his great-grandfather, Lorenzo Gantz, and his great-uncles felt as common field soldiers during the Civil War: hungry and lonesome.

He has several of the 70 letters Lorenzo and his brothers, Samuel and John, wrote to their parents, Joseph and Elizabeth, back home in Farmland, Indiana, mostly between 1861 and 1864. The three young brothers served with the Indiana Volunteers as part of the Union's Western Army, which fought in battles in Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia.

"You're always hungry and you're always lonesome for home," said Don.

The letters, in safekeeping among many family members, depict the day-to-day life in camp or on the march. They are written in the ordinary language, full of phonetic spellings, poor grammar, and archaic terms. They talk about battles and death, bouts of "typhoid" fever, requests for "bailed ham and a peace of Drude beef" from home, and about a wife so sweet the sun shone on none fairer.

They are in the language of farm boys who felt compelled to do their duty.

Don's wife, Lucille, a former executive's assistant at the Ford Motor Co., spent two years collecting and documenting the letters. The final result was 110-page book, *Civil War Letters of the Gantz Family*, that includes historical and geographical information, maps and anecdotal explanations after each letter. Lucille had it published in 200 hardbound copies and distributed it to libraries and historical museums, as well as to high schools in Livonia. The endeavor has been an act of love.

"I said I have to type these letters so everybody could read them, being a secretary all my life. It was a mission I had. When you read the letters you really get to know the people. It's been a gift. I'm just now reading my own book for pleasure," she said.

Deciphering letters written more than 140 years ago under adverse conditions was no easy task, said Lucille. The writing tools and paper varied, and

the content was often difficult to translate.

"Sometimes it would take two or three people looking at the letter to figure out the words."

When asked if he felt a connection to his great-grandfather and great-uncles while compiling the letters, Don said, "Oh, yes, but Lucy especially did. She was the one who researched."

Both Lucille and Don know the Gantz brothers often slept on the ground, stole food from farmers, and helped close the eyes of dying companions. They know that Samuel traveled barefoot over the Cumberland Mountains on his way to battle, and that John carried a lock of hair from his daughter, Sarah Elizabeth. They know that many a long-awaited parcel of food

from home was never received.

"Their rations were by and large hard crackers and a little chunk of fat meat," said Don.

"They got a lot of coffee. They even wrote to their parents saying they wished they (the parents) could get coffee," said Lucille.

Don, who often survived on a thin bowl of soup while a prisoner of war in Poland, also knows that writing a letter home is a shared pastime for any soldier in any war. "When you're lying around the camp, this is what you do. You boil a little water and shoot a little breeze."

**The legacy**  
The letters offer an intimate look into the toll the Civil War extracted from one American family that wanted simply to farm its land and raise its children.

Elizabeth Gantz started the following letter to her son Samuel, Lorenzo's twin, on March 4, 1864. She had already lost one son, John, who died in at Stones River, Tenn., on Dec. 31, 1862:

"Dear son with pleasure I sit down this evening to drop you a few lines in answer to yours that came to hand on the 2 of this month.... I was glad to learn through your letter that you and the boys was all well but was sorry to hear that you had to take up the line of march for the battle field again...."

"well it is now saturday the 5 and there is rite smart of snow on the ground. we are making some sugar on Howells land. we have about forty trees tapped. just what the children can tend...."

"so I must bring my letter to a close hoping that this wicked rebellion will soon be put down and that you and the



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBEL

**Creating a legacy: Don Lussenden (left) and his wife, Lucille, never tire of reading the letters of Don's great grandfather and great uncles, who fought in the Civil War.**

rest of the boys may return home crowned with honor and that you may see happy days in the land and when we are all done with the sorrows of this world that we may enter into that rest where there is no more tears shed for our friends that falls in battle...."

Samuel, who was married and had an infant daughter, was wounded in the Battle of Nashville on Dec. 16, 1864. He died of infection from that wound on Dec. 29. Surely he dreamed of tasting his mother's maple syrup and lying once again across the arm of his wife, Martha Jane.

Lorenzo survived the war, returning home mid-September 1864. He married Sarah E. McCamish the next March, and together they raised 10 children on the farm he left behind in Randolph County, Indiana. He died in 1923. He had suffered severe intestinal problems during the war - most likely caused by parasites in the drinking water - that plagued him for the rest of his life.

**For sale**  
*Civil War Letters of the Gantz Family* is available for sale to the public at \$20 a copy if purchased directly from Lucille Lussenden or \$24 if mailed.

While Lucille would like to recoup part of her \$5,000 investment, her main goal was to create a tangible family legacy. Even though the book has been published, Lucille has no intention of ending her research. A family history has no boundaries.

"Heck no, I'm not finished," she said. "There is no end to it. This book is finished, but we're still doing family genealogy."

To purchase the book, contact Lucille Lussenden, 16413 Alpine Drive, Livonia, MI 48154; phone: (734) 591-1738.



**Civil War vets: Lorenzo Gantz (back row, center), whose two brothers were killed during the war, poses with members of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Union Army veterans group formed after the Civil War. This picture was taken in 1890.**

## Excerpts of letters paint grim picture

John and Lorenzo Gantz joined the Indiana Volunteers for a three-year enlistment in August 1861 and were assigned to the 36th Regiment. Samuel Gantz, Lorenzo's twin, signed up in August 1862 and was assigned to the 34th Regiment. The letters in *Civil War Letters of the Gantz Family* appear as they were written. Deletions in content were done by this reporter and are marked by ellipsis (...).

**Nov. 5, 1861 - Clark County, Ind.**  
"I Am well satisfide in the army so fare but there is A general hatred Against the officers. they Dont respect there men more than if they were hags. i dont like the Officers very well...but we will meet them in the field Of battle some those days and then they will have to look sharp for there is boys in here that will shoot theme the first ones."

**Dec. 19, 1861 - Camp Wrick Wickly: Larus Co., Kentucky**  
"We have moved from New haven to camp Wrick Wickly. We have joined Brig i Dier general Nelsons Brigade. There is about nineteen thousand troops in this vicinity. We heard that goner Bowal had croased green river with his 40,000 men.... i dont know how soon we will attack Buckner. things look like there will Bee something Dun Soon...."

as this is Sunday night it makes me think about home aright smart although i am not thinking about the little hot girls. Frank says he would rather See his hot noora than his mother. foolish youth. What Does he think about When the Best friend he has is the last in his thoughts.... I know that mother is the best friend that i have

Lorenzo Gantz, to his parents

and i shall respect hur as such."

John Gantz, to his sister Elizabeth

Feb. 11, 1862 - Larus County, Kentucky (Camp Wickliff)

"it is the opinion here that Melelon (McClellan) will make a forward movement in this month on menases and richmond and all the other points and it may be that they have moved from nashville by this time.... there is about 500 soldiers here at this time and i dont think that out of the 500 there is more than 150 that will Ever bee Able for Duty. There is Every kind of complaints in the cistem that one could think of reumatism liver complaint and all other such complaints...."

"All the boys in our room sent home for A ben of provisions.... there was one box that had A build ham in it thnt

and i shall respect hur as such."

John Gantz, to his sister Elizabeth

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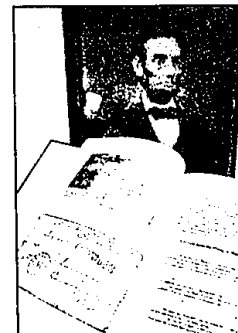
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