

Expressing Faith Through Calligraphy

By Terrance J. Brennan

Ida Strobino of Seneca Parkway in Rochester began training in ornamental writing in 1965 under Frances Hill, who was the foundress of the Rochester Penmanship Club. "I'd always admired this type of writing," she said.



Ida Strobino at work in her home.

"When I saw Fran's picture and her writing in the paper (an article in the Gannett daily newspaper), I called her up and asked if she would teach me," Mrs. Strobino continued. "But Fran wasn't sure if she could until she met with me and looked at my natural writing style."

Since that time, Mrs. Strobino, 64, has succeeded with her undertaking to the point that she now has involved herself in a number of calligraphic activities, including writing invitations for weddings, cocktail parties, anniversaries, and bar mitzvahs, and the Courier-Journal even enticed her to scroll the headline for this story in her own hand.

Her most recent task has been doing the nearly 1,500 invitations for this year's Seton Ball and Mrs. Strobino personally addressed each envelope, a chore she has tackled every year since 1975.

"I usually start them in June and finish in September," Mrs. Strobino said.

"This year I finished on Sept. 12." She says she usually does 20 to 25 envelopes per hour, but this year's duties were a bit more difficult because the envelopes had an inner lining which made keeping straight lines almost impossible.

As with any artist, she is extremely critical of her own work. "Sometimes you look at what you've done and just hate them. But you soon realize that you are really improving as time goes along."

As far as how long it takes to learn how to write in the ornamental fashion, Mrs. Strobino states that it is really no different than any other

activity. "If you truly have the interest, then you're going to do a lot of the work on your own."

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of her involvements is that she never accepts money for her work. Instead, she asks that donations be made to the customer's favorite charity or to one very close to her and her family — Most Precious Blood parish and Father Sebastian Contegiaco.

The relationship with Father Contegiaco began in 1930, after one of his parishioners sent her family a Mass card upon the death of her father. The family became close friends of Father

Contegiaco and paid him a visit at his parish shortly after the new church was constructed in 1970.

Although she and her husband, Dr. E. Edward Strobino, are members of Sacred Heart Cathedral, they have always been frequent

visitors to his parish. On this occasion, however, Mrs. Strobino asked Father Contegiaco what they could do to help out.

"He jokingly pointed to four stained glass windows

that needed to be paid for," Mrs. Strobino explained, "and they cost \$1,000 apiece! I joked back and told him that maybe I could buy one for him. I don't know, but maybe the money I've given so far has paid for one."

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Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side

Backlash Vs. Pope

Q — How do we cope with the modern changes, and how do we explain to our children? They are as confused as we adults. Look, for example, at priests going against the pope, priests saying the old ways of the Church are out of date.

A — This question was posed at a recent retreat for Auburn women at Stella Maris Retreat House in Skaneateles. Such priests are a small minority, the most publicized internationally being Hans Kueng. There is a theological tussle within the Church between those who are the Magisterium of the Church and those who advocate a dual Magisterium.

Q — What do you mean?

A — The Magisterium is the Catholic Church teaching a consistent, developing doctrine, consonant with the command and promise of Christ. "Teach what I have commanded you. Behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world." The dual Magisterium group are certain influential theologians and their disciples who hold the traditional Magisterium is all right for those who want it, but there is another side, a

pluralistic theology, which accepts and rejects the teachings of the Church ad libitum. One can choose to accept or reject magisterial teaching, the permanence of marriage, the infallibility of the pope, the virginity of Mary, and especially certain sexual activities — and still be Catholics. I suppose the field of sex is the most violent battleground.

Q — Well, what do you think?

A — With Aristotle, who taught that two contradictories cannot both be true at the same time and under the same aspect. A man from Hornell and a woman from Florida each sent me the same newspaper column, entitled: "Backlash vs the Pope." It was written by Andy Rooney, a non-Catholic syndicated columnist and commentator for CBS 60 Minutes. He wrote:

"There seems to be a backlash against the pope, even among Catholics who originally were his most ardent supporters. They don't like what he is telling them. The trouble with Catholics is they want their cake and religion, too, and the pope says they can't. I'm for him. Whether they're Catholic or they're not, and if they are, they have to be willing to accept some of the discomforts of orthodoxy. In recent years Catholics have allowed themselves almost

any freedom they wished to take with their religion for the peace of mind they get from their faith. The pope says this will inevitably lead away from their faith, and I don't see how Catholics can argue with that."

Q — Why did Pope John Paul say a man can commit adultery in his heart even toward his wife?

A — For 13 months the pope has unfolded a constant development on marriage at his weekly General Audiences. His style and text is academic, better understood by scholars than the ordinary public, who doesn't care much about what he is saying as long as it can look at him and be with him. The pope's style is not the simple, rhetorical, didactic style of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who was a popularist. The pope seems clear when he said: "Man can commit adultery in his heart with regard to his own wife, if he treats her only as an object to satisfy instinct." Simply put, it means that a man's attitude toward his wife must not be like that toward a prostitute: merely self-satisfaction. Rochesterian Arlene O'Connor put it succinctly: "I am rejoicing in the latest pronouncement by our beautiful Polish pope who has bowled us all over with his awesome defense of women. He said that a woman, even within marriage, is a whole person worthy of consideration and respect and must not be used merely as an object to gratify any man's selfish passions, even her husband's. How any feminist can call that anti-feminist completely escapes me."

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