

Mother-son duo bids an emotional farewell

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — Gracen and Barbara Porreca will never again experience a wave of emotion quite like this.

For 18 years they've been the only constants in each other's life. A single mother and her son moving to various towns and experiencing life to its fullest. She is a nurse by day and entertainer by night; he is an adept student, championship wrestler and entertainer as well.

Gracen is now preparing to begin college. To acknowledge this climactic period, Barbara delivered a touching send-off before an intimate gathering of about 100 people on June 6 at St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave.

Carly Simon's song, *Love of My Life*, was performed by Barbara as one of the final numbers in *A Night Out*, a light evening of music performed by the Porreca and a handful of Barbara's entertainer friends.

The performance also served as a fundraiser for BUS — Birth Parents, Adoptees, Adopted Parents United in Support. Through this organization, Barbara, who was adopted, tracked down her birth mother last year. On the day of the show, Barbara's birth mother, Margaret Dantine of Hudson, Fla., and her adoptive mother, Dolores Porreca of Beacon, N.Y., met for the first time and attended the performance.

Barbara sat Gracen on a stool in the middle of the stage as she sang *Love of My Life*. It wasn't too long into the tune before tears started coming down Gracen's face.

"I knew I wasn't going to make it," he said later.

Barbara's powerful voice, reminiscent of Liza Minnelli, was cracking a few seconds later. The two locked in an embrace as the song ended.

"This is a very difficult relationship to talk about because it's not something you read about," Barbara said.

"The relationship is very unique," she added. "I think it has always been consistent among all the other inconsistencies in our lives. I think I let (Gracen) know that there wasn't anywhere else he had to go to be loved. A lot of people are jealous of the relationship we have."

Barbara, 42, gave birth to Gracen, 18, in Buffalo. They soon moved to Cortland, Tompkins County, where they lived for six years. The Porreca came to Rochester in 1982, and lived in Ithaca and Cortland again for brief periods before settling back in Rochester in 1984.

The bags have been packed again, though, and for the first time mother and son are taking separate routes. Barbara moved earlier this week to Denver, Colo., and Gracen will also head out that way in August to begin college at the University of Northern Colorado — about 100 miles from Denver.

Gracen graduated from Bishop Kearney High School earlier this month. An 89-average student, he also made his mark as one of the finest wrestlers in school history. His four-year record was 103-15-1, and he won the Section 5 Class B championship this past winter. In 1990 he was a gold medalist at the Empire State Games.



The Porreca, who have been performing together since Gracen was 4, sang *Me and My Shadow*.



Barbara Porreca delivers a touching send-off for her son, Gracen, during a June 6 performance at St. John Fisher College. The song, *Love of My Life* by Carly Simon, brought tears to the Kearney senior's face.

Along the way Gracen has appeared in at least 20 plays, and his mother has been involved in more than 50 productions amid her duties as a nurse at Monroe Community Hospital. However, the farewell performance at St. John Fisher was only the third time the Porreca have appeared together.

Gracen, who has been acting since he was 4, noted that while his mother has influenced many of his decisions — she even encouraged him to try wrestling — he still gets to voice his own opinions.

"I don't think any parental situation is without disagreements. But we're so close that we know how to talk things out," he said.

Gracen plans on majoring in education and minoring in theater at Northern Colorado, where he'll also try out for the wrestling team. He had originally considered going to New York University, but decided that

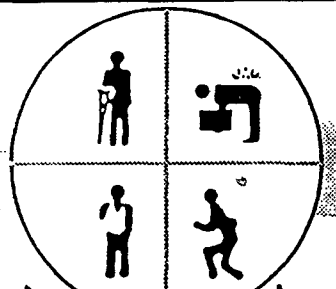
suddenly being so far apart from his mother was something he wasn't quite ready for.

"With (Barbara) moving to Denver, I wanted to go (to Northern Colorado) because it's always been the two of us," he explained.

As for Barbara, she's considering a full-time entertainment career — "I'd like to make a living at it someday" — that she's dreamed about since she was a child. She decided to move to Denver because "I had looked at which city had the most sunny days and the best theater."

"I had always wanted to be famous and to be a mom, and the mom part came along first," she said. "I feel I've made the right decision, as opposed to being among 4,000 entertainers starving to death in New York (City). And it's easy to be a single parent when you have a wonderful kid. I feel I've given up nothing."

SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY AND SPORTS REHABILITATION



Feel the Difference!

SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN RELIEVING:

- Tendinitis/Bursitis
- Knee problems
- Neck and shoulder pain
- Low back symptoms

880 Westfall Road, Suite D

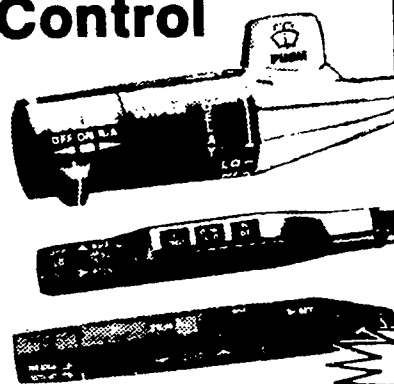
CALL FOR INFORMATION
(716) 271-3380



Automatic Speed Control

These custom control modules duplicate the factory controls incorporating set speed, resume, accel, decl, or coast.

NATIONWIDE WARRANTY



TEMSTAD

THE FINEST IN AUTOMOTIVE ACCESSORIES

One of these days, You'll wish you had invested in a Code-Alarm

With auto theft at record levels, you deserve the best protection available. CODE-ALARM systems provide total security and are easy to use.

CODE-ALARM

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE

Lifetime Warranty

- REAR WINDOW DEFOGGERS
- CELLULAR TELEPHONES
- POWER DOOR LOCKS
- AIR CONDITIONING
- CRUISE CONTROL
- SOUND SYSTEMS
- AUTOMATIC HEADLIGHT SYSTEMS
- ALARM SYSTEMS
- DELAY WIPERS

777 MONROE AVE. • 461-0050
CONVENIENTLY LOCATED OFF 490, MONROE AVENUE EXIT