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Witness says he aided Hills' arson suspect

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Following testimony from a witness who says he helped tear sheets and carry gas cans to a Farmington Hills residence slated to become a group home for mentally retarded adults, William Ricks Jr. was bound over for trial on charges of arson and burning insured property.

The key testimony in a two-hour preliminary exam in Farmington 4th District Court Tuesday was given by Michael Marcinek, a former employee of Group Home Services Inc.

Ricks, executive director of that organization, hired Marcinek to be assistant house manager of the ill-fated home at 30356 Glenmuer in September 1980.

Fire destroyed the residence on Nov. 3, 1980, while Ricks' license application to operate the group home was still pending before the state Department of Social Services.

Marcinek testified that Ricks believed Social Services would deny his application.

"He said he was afraid the house wouldn't open, so it would have to be burned down," Marcinek said.

Two days prior to the fire, Marcinek said he helped Ricks remove towels, linen, a stereo and color television set from the \$95,000 home that Group Home Services was renting for \$1,400 a month.

MARCINAK, WHO HAS BEEN granted immunity from prosecution, told the court he was promised money and a new car for his part in the scheme.

On Sunday, Nov. 2, Marcinek testified that he and Ricks filled four gas cans at a Detroit gas station and took them to the Glenmuer home, where

they were stored in a bedroom closet while a carpenter finished minor construction work to bring the house up to code for state certification.

After the carpenter left, Marcinek testified that he and Ricks tore sheets and trilled them through the four-bedroom ranch.

"After the sheets were strung, we took his (Ricks') car and left," Marcinek said. "The gas was still in the bedroom closet."

"We went to his house in Detroit. I went to work for him at 11 p.m. at a group home in Clarkston because he said he wanted to come back and finish what was started."

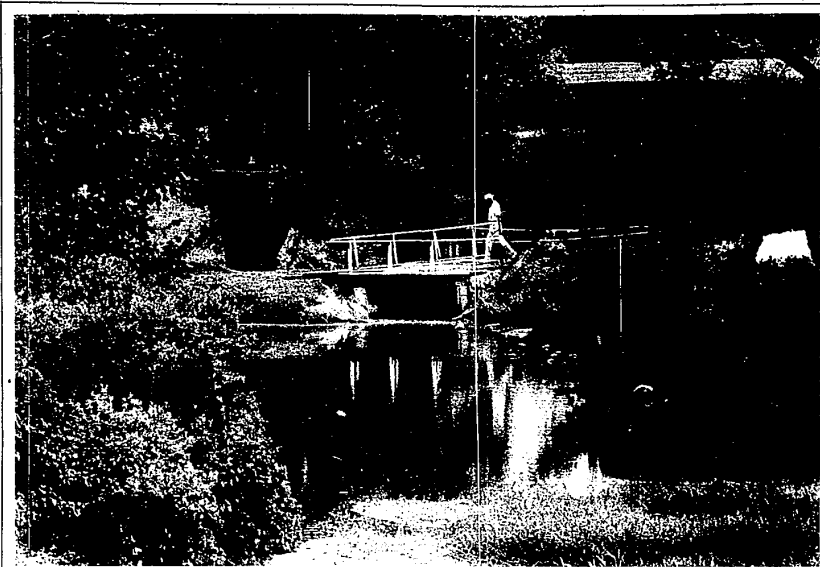
Marcinek, who occasionally substituted for Ricks as a shift worker at the Clarkston group home for the mentally retarded, said he got a "signal" call from Ricks at 3:30 a.m. signifying the task was completed.

IN OTHER testimony, a spokeswoman for the Meadowbrook Insurance Agency of Southfield presented an insurance policy Ricks had taken out on the Glenmuer home for \$264,000.

Steven Rabinovitz, an attorney and co-owner of the home, testified that there was also a \$76,000 homeowner's policy in effect at the time of the fire. That amount was the remainder of cash owed for the house, which was purchased on a land contract in July 1980.

Larry Henderson, a Farmington Hills fire inspector, told the court a sampling of carpet taken from the house during the fire showed that gasoline was present when the piece was analyzed at a Northville crime lab.

Ricks will be arraigned on both charges in Oakland County Circuit Court on May 15 at 1 p.m. before Judge Gene Schmelz.



Spring st. ill

A lone golfer crosses a bridge at Glen Oaks Golf Course in Farmington Hills. Sure as the buds are back on the trees, the golfers have been dotting the city course again.

Council reviews study

EMS could cost \$1.5 million

By Steve Barnaby
editor

A full-time city-run emergency medical service (EMS) would cost Farmington Hills taxpayers as much as \$1.5 million, according to a preliminary study made by city hall officials.

Although the study has been made, City Manager Larry Savage refused to set a date to report back publicly on

cost figures for the full-time EMS service requested by Mayor Donn Wolf.

Savage told Wolf at this week's council session that other city matters, such as labor contract negotiations and the sidewalk study, would have to be cleared up before he responded to the EMS cost request.

Wolf agreed. The city manager's reply came after the West Bloomfield-Farmington

League of Women Voters presented the results of a nine-month study it made of EMS.

Savage volunteered to do the study, an update of a study made in 1975-76, after the City Council received more than 1,000 petition signatures requesting a ballot question be put before the voters on the desirability of a full-time EMS service.

Although the question never was put

on the ballot, the council agreed to have the issue studied. But council members are reluctant to make a decision before Savage makes a recommendation.

Savage says he is still studying the matter.

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Nader calls for GM boycott over Poletown issue

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Consumers should boycott General Motors products because of the corporation's noncompromising stance with the residents of Poletown, Nader said Monday.

Consumer advocate Nader, addressing a press conference in Farmington Hills at the same time site grading

work began on the proposed \$600 million GM plant in Detroit and Hamtramck, said the controversy over the demolition of the Poletown neighborhood to make way for a Cadillac assembly plant isn't over yet.

"We have entered into it because no one from this area is helping (the neighborhood)," he said. "We need full-time citizen action."

"The GM plant could be built without

nearly the destruction (planned). If they think the Poletown issue is over with, they are sadly mistaken," he said.

He condemned the Michigan Supreme Court ruling that allowed the city of Detroit to use its power of "eminent domain" to acquire the privately owned land for use by GM.

"The recent extension of the doctrine of eminent domain is further abuse of power," he said.

"Your private property can always go down to a bulldozer if they think they have a better use for the land. Today, Poletown. Tomorrow, the rest of the country?"

NADER CLAIMS GM has refused to look at the alternatives.

"They could build the factory on 70 acres, but they're taking 465 acres of surrounding territory. They're going to build a parking lot where there are 300 homes and 10 churches.

"People are misinformed if they think this is a jobs vs. neighborhood issue. The plant and community could co-exist."

Nader predicts that GM will lose \$1 billion in sales over the next few years "because of the tragedy inflicted on Poletown residents."

"Any company that can control a

city, can control the United Auto Workers and other groups that should know better, deserves to have its cars boycotted."

Nader also faulted the city of Detroit for not using competitive bidding procedures for awarding demolition and construction contracts.

"This sole source award to Turner Construction Co. resulted in several interested and qualified Detroit-based firms being denied an opportunity to bid on the contract," he said.

"These firms could have had their bids on the mayor's desk within 24 hours."

Nader made his comments to the

press at Adat Shalom Synagogue before addressing a fund-raiser there.

The crusading attorney says he has asked Chairman Roger Smith, UAW President Douglas Fraser and Detroit Mayor Coleman Young to meet with the Poletown Neighborhood Council and mediators.

Nader said an appeal to a federal court "depends on what happens now."

"If the judges don't give a stay and demolition starts immediately in the area, we won't give an appeal. For a federal case, we have 60 days to appeal."

Five Nader staff members are working on the Poletown issue, according to an aide.

Consumer activist sees food crisis

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

The current fuel crisis will give way to a food crisis in less than a decade, consumer activist Ralph Nader told an audience at Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills Monday.

"Each year, development takes over three million acres of land," Nader said. "Billions of tons of top soil are being dumped."

"The crunch is going to come. Some economists predict that a loaf of bread will cost \$7.80 by 1990."

Nader, the crusading attorney responsible for at least six federal consumer protection laws, weaved his speech around a myriad of consumer topics.

About 500 members of the synagogue heard his remarks at the annual spring fundraiser for the temple.

He charged General Motors Corporation with social neglect for its recent abandonment of automatic air bags as a safety feature in cars.

"GM says its too expensive an option, but it costs less than \$150. How expensive is it to save lives?"

"It deals with the most basic values of society. But no one will lobby for it," he said.

"THE GREATEST sources of dis-

ease and death come in institutional ways," he continued. "All to some extent are caused by negligence and greed."

Nader, a gadfly forever buzzing in the ear of bureaucracy, talked about slackening water and air pollution standards, drug industry recklessness and the rise of computerized invasion of privacy.

"Not 1 percent of the people in this country are active in consumer health and safety problems," he said. "Recovery isn't going to happen."

"People must bring their conscience to work or everything will be melted into a few organizational forces."

He said anonymous heads of corporations destroy the concept of moral accountability.

"It takes millions of people out of commission, makes them feel not responsible. There's less applying of conscience."

Neglect of consumer activism will cause greater effects than in the past, Nader warned.

He slammed the Reagan administration for dismantling legal service for the poor, revoking auto safety standards, weakening water safety and cutting the conservation budget by 70 percent while wasting billions of dollars in the military budget and in tax loop-

holes for mammoth corporations like Exxon.

"I'm not here just to document abuse, I want to do something. I want you to become assertive," he told the assemblage.

"WE HAVE to make finding a reso-

lution a priority.

"We have youth under age 20 without purpose in a world of causes. We have older persons who can become the premier active citizens."

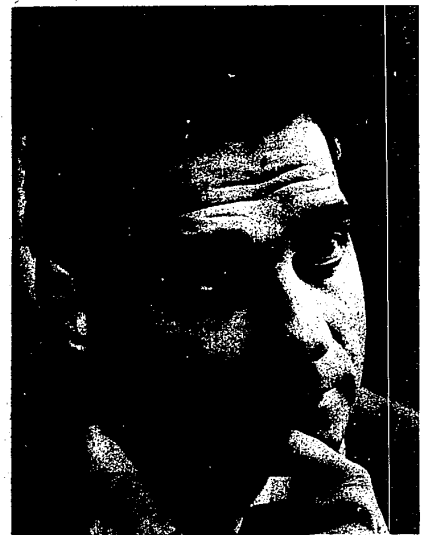
"The economy will change by intelligent feedback of consumers."

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Ralph Nader, in town this week to speak at a fundraiser at Adat Shalom Synagogue, called for a boycott of GM products.