

Nun jailed in demonstration 'lived in void'

By Susan Duck
staff writer

Sister Elizabeth La Forest, the 73-year-old former communications director for the Sisters of Mercy in Farmington Hills, said she spent nine days in the Oakland County Jail living in a void, never really knowing what time it was.

La Forest, who was released from jail Friday, was sentenced last month for blocking traffic in an anti-nuclear demonstration last August at Williams International, a missile engine manufacturer in Walled Lake.

Making constructive use of her jail time was a difficult task that was compounded by a feeling of

timelessness, she said.

"There were no clocks and you weren't allowed to keep your watch," said La Forest in a phone interview Monday. "You lost part of your identity."

Fellow inmates, she said, estimated the time of day for her by checking which soap opera was on TV, she said.

"It's so sad. Some of these people have nothing to do all day but watch cartoons and soaps. Some were there for 90 days. Some for six months. I never asked anybody why they were there. But they all said they're never going to go back there again."

THE NUN'S sentence carried a \$105 fine and 10 days in the Oakland County Jail or 50 hours of communit-

ty service. She surprised District Judge Michael Butchik of Walled Lake when she opted for jail over community service.

La Forest told the judge she preferred to conserve her energy for teaching Arab students enrolled in her English as a second language class in the Hamtramck Public Schools' adult education program.

"I was in the new part of the jail, the new addition," she said. "There were no bars as such. It was in a double-bunk cell. It was very clean."

La Forest said she spent the first five days of her sentence with Marlene Sciole Zenger, a fellow Williams protester. "The other inmates realized that we were both a little different."

When Zenger went home, La Forest was alone in the cell.

"We were locked in all night. There was room for 33 people but only 17 were there. I retired early, but I could still hear the TV laugh track. The TV was on all day," she said.

ALTHOUGH THERE were some magazines, like Good Housekeeping and Parents, La Forest found no newspapers.

This particularly distressed her. The woman who was in the news likes to keep up on the news.

So La Forest led the group in prayer. "We would gather around. They all had Bibles. Unfortunately, they were the King James version

and the woman didn't understand all the "thees" and "thous." The Good News version, which is more in the vernacular, would have been better," she said.

La Forest made a few collect calls and enjoyed receiving an abundance of mail, which came from places as far away as Toledo and Milwaukee as well as from the local area.

"I think my name is now a household word," La Forest said. "I didn't expect any publicity."

Will she return as a protester? Of course.

"Our country is going to rot," said La Forest. "We're spending billions on national security. Pretty soon, we'll have nothing left to secure."



Sister Elizabeth La Forest - 'a household word'

Hills eyes trade of state land for park

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"We're doing two things. We no longer support the interchange there and we are requesting that the state convey the land to the city," Mayor Terry Seaver said.

In a resolution adopted last week, the city council asked the state to cease efforts for an interchange near

Drake and asked that the 45 acres "be prepared for disposition, sale, grant, donation or transfer" to the city.

The city council also agreed to designate the acreage, if sold or given to the city, for recreation purposes.

"I want to stress the purpose of acquiring the property is for recreation and open space," Seaver said.

In its resolution, the city council continued support of Michigan Department of Transportation plans for a new I-496 interchange west of Haggerty in Novi and one just east of Inkster in Southfield, as well as a boulevard on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

sources guidelines say the city should have 10 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents, which would mean approximately 880 acres for Farmington Hills. The city, however, has 235 acres — primarily the 211-acre Heritage Park on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile.

Parks and recreation officials in February confirmed the need for a wetland park to meet the fast-growing need to provide four more baseball fields, two soccer fields, restrooms and concession stands.

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None hurt in home fire

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was hurt. Two other children, Rickie, 14, and Vicki, 11, weren't yet home from school.

"I couldn't believe I was seeing what I was seeing," said Bonnie, whose brother died in a house fire in Redford Township 23 years ago.

THE FIRE, which appeared to be caused by an electrical overload, gutted the bedroom that spanned the upstairs, said Al Ellis, Farmington Hills fire investigator.

Among what was lost in the fire

were clothing, Christmas ornaments, stereo equipment, things of sentimental value and many of Kim's possessions.

Brushing away tears while watching the firefighters Monday, Bonnie said she wasn't sure when she'd go to going back inside. "The best part," she said, "is that everybody is well."

Firefighter Larry Henderson said "yellowish, white smoke" was visible from the front upstairs window when he arrived. Firefighters extin-

guished the fire within 10 minutes.

Heat damage was limited to the upstairs. There was smoke damage throughout the four-bedroom house. No dollar estimate was available. The Blitlicks weren't sure Monday to what extent the house is insured.

The house had no smoke detectors, but the family said they would install them now.

The Blitlicks have lived on Jacksonville for 11 years. Their only previous fire involved a boat parked in the yard 8 years ago.

AS A prelude to buying additional acreage for more parks and recreation needs in the community, the council also authorized city administrators to apply for help through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

City officials will apply for a matching grant to buy approximately 65 acres for a cost of up to \$7.5 million. If the city is awarded the grant, the state would pay for 75 percent of the total project cost and the city the remaining 25 percent.

Seaver said he has been working this year to find and possibly acquire additional land in the city for parks and recreation. Possible land acquisition has been discussed in the council's closed sessions since the beginning of the year. Though no property has yet been bought, discussions continue on several parcels, Seaver said.

State Department of Natural Re-

creation officials in February confirmed the need for a wetland park to meet the fast-growing need to provide four more baseball fields, two soccer fields, restrooms and concession stands.

IN ADDITION to eyeing the MDOT acreage south of I-496, city officials have been discussing expansion of the nine-hole San Marino Golf Course on Halsted. Another 20-30 acres would be needed to add nine holes.

Key acreage to accommodate the expansion is school-owned property at the corner of Halsted and 11 Mile.

"They (school officials) have indicated a willingness to swap this if we can find comparable property on the west side of the city," special services director Dan Potter said in February.

City officials also are in negotiations to buy acreage in the city's south end for a youth athletic park similar to Pioneer Park at 13 Mile and Farmington Road.

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