

Over 100 left jobless by fire at Hills plaza

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facted to inquire about employment for staff members.

"These are key people in our business. They are professionals who were trained by us," said McDonald, a Farmington Hills resident.

"We realize they will probably find a home somewhere else and that is very hard for us. But from a humanitarian standpoint, we had to try to place them and offer them certain options they would need to know about."

At least three employees will move to Mr. Joe's in Southfield. Others will work at the Raddison Plaza Hotel in Southfield, Clam Diggers in Farmington Hills, Lafrey's Steak House in Detroit, Chartley's Nowl, Buddy's Pizzeria in Farmington Hills and Shield's Pizzeria in Southfield.

"THIS GAVE us a chance to offer them some security after the shock," McDonald said.

Information about unemployment also was presented at the meeting.

There were "a lot of tears, hugging and holding, exchanging of phone numbers and promises to keep in touch," McDonald said Tuesday. "We really were a family."

Risko agreed that the meeting was very emotional. Many Roman Terrace employees had worked there for more than 10 years, the Farmington Hills resident said.

The old staff plans to reunite in six months to be informed of the business goals for Roman Terrace and McJoe's.

"It's like the passing of a good friend, especially since it was so unexpected," Risko said. "Everything was going so well with the new owners, and business was on an upswing."

"We're not just worried about the employees, though, we're worried about our customers, too," Risko said.

"We have an 80-year-old gentleman who comes in for lunch on a daily basis. His wife has been in the hospital, but everyday he still puts



'I would like to (re-open). It's really premature. I've got to check with my partners and assess our future.'

— Bob McDonald
co-owner, Roman Terrace

on his suit and comes to the restaurant. We're worried about him, we're worried about what he's going to do for lunch everyday."

"It's really a sad thing because a lot of people don't have a home anymore. They don't have that spot where they can go to enjoy themselves with the kind of camaraderie that is established in a business that has been there so long," McDonald said.

ROMAN TERRACE and McJoe's last year underwent \$75,000 in remodeling after the change in partnership. McJoe's, changed from a singles saloon, was scheduled to begin serving food on Monday.

McDonald estimated his fire damage to be "well over" \$1 million, including the loss of a baby grand piano, a disco sound system, kitchen equipment and office computers.

He rented the Roman Terrace building from owners Louis Bosco Jr. and his brother, Donald.

If the city allows the building to be rebuilt with the same land use, McDonald said he may consider re-opening at the same location. But it's too soon to decide, he said.

For the moment, McDonald is looking for kitchen space to continue

the Roman Terrace catering business.

ABE AON, owner of Aon's Men's Hair Styles, is looking for temporary space to reopen a shop in Farmington Hills. He employs four hairstylists.

He'll work out of his home until then.

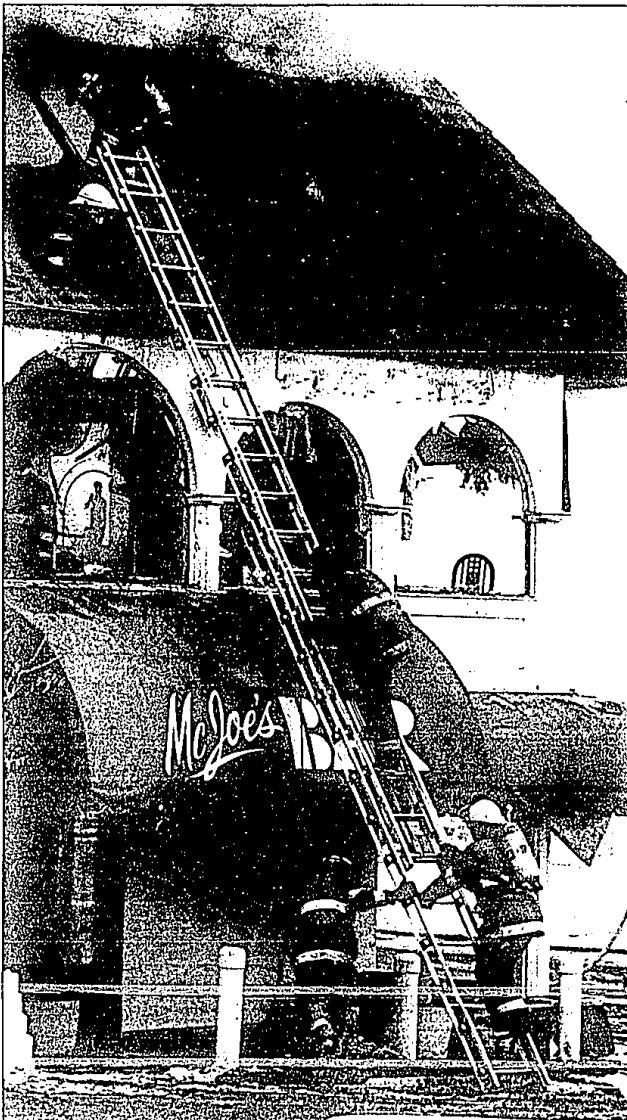
"It's a sad story. A beautiful building it was," the Farmington Hills resident said.

"One day, you're working and you think you will be working all your life, and the next day, you're not working at all," he added. "It's not easy to get over it. It's going to take time."

Aon, who worked from the building since it was built, couldn't estimate his fire damage. He hopes to move back there one day.

Nabil Naimou, owner of Group One Inc., said he would consider opening temporary quarters in the area if the building is rebuilt in a timely manner. The Farmington Hills resident has no fire insurance and estimated \$70,000 in damage to furnishings and equipment.

Many of the businesses lost irreplaceable business papers and client records.



At the southern end of the building, Farmington Hills firefighters Sunday worked on a stubborn area of the fire immediately above the Roman Terrace restaurant.

60 percent of building saved

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the general business zone. If rebuilt, Bosco would have to conform with new zoning requirements for its setbacks, parking lot, landscaping and covered dumpsters, Bilzman added.

Don Bosco praised firefighters for their efforts Sunday.

"We're fortunate the fire occurred when it did. We very much appreciate the effort put out by the Farmington Hills firefighters. The effort they did and their attitudes . . . it was an incredible job."

CITY BUILDING officials were expected to survey the building Wednesday or Thursday to determine "what's left and look at the structural repairs," said John Wade, city building supervisor.

At the south end of the building, Baldwin said, firefighters were able

to save files and records from the offices. That wasn't possible in the north end of the building, he added.

The fire appears to have swept through the ceiling that ran the length of the building. Usually, ceilings have joists that run the short width of the building. But by running lengthwise, "the roof system provided an easy travel for the fire in the attic space," Baldwin said.

"Most of the ceiling burned through and went into the office suites," he continued.

The roof collapsed at the back of the middle of the building, just north of the main entryway.

The 58 firefighters at the scene worked until about 1 p.m. to extinguish the fire. Their work was hampered by the wind, smoke and the damaged structure.

"A lot of the smoke the building generated obscured the building. At

times, you couldn't see the front door," Baldwin said.

TWO FIREFIGHTERS were treated at the scene Sunday for minor injuries — one for a cut, the other a burn. Both returned to duty immediately.

Lou Bosco was on the way to church Sunday morning when his 85-year-old father, Louis, heard of the fire on the radio and called him.

Lou Bosco and his family also lost personal items in the fire, including an expensive painting and trophies.

Daughters, Bridget, 25, and Mimi, 24, lost a family heirloom and other furniture they were storing there until the new home they're building is finished.

Staff writers Casey Hans and Bob Sklar contributed to this report.



Michigan State Police fire investigator Vern Erikson is on the balcony of the Roman Terrace restaurant the day after the fire. He assisted the Farmington Hills Fire Department in searching for the fire's cause.



AT LEFT: Farmington Hills fire investigator Al Eilla, (right) discusses the fire Sunday with building co-owner Louis Bosco Jr. and other Bosco family members.

GHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Photos by
Randy Borst

Farmington Hills firefighter Al Eilla was part of the team investigating the cause of the fire on the day after. Here, he is shown on the east side of the building Monday.