

Unanswered questions

Religious groups blast Fieger

BY PAT MURPHY
STACY WATERS

The questions that defense attorneys want to ask prospective jurors in the trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian are more than an invasion of privacy, according to the Birmingham-based Michigan Christian Coalition.

"They're anti-Christian," said Glenn M. Clark, executive director of the state branch of the Christian Coalition, which claims 200,000 members and supporters in Michigan.

Jury selection in the trial of Kevorkian was delayed Tuesday for the second day as the Michigan Court of Appeals continued to review a challenge from Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson.

The court of appeals put the trial on hold until it can decide whether questions defense attorney Geoffrey N. Fieger wants to ask prospective jurors do create an unconstitutional invasion of their privacy, as claimed by the prosecutor.

Fieger said he intends to question jurors about possible religious prejudices regardless of Thompson or the court of appeals.

"I have a right to ask prospec-

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...tive jurors about their beliefs," he said Tuesday. "Prosecutors do the same thing, especially in cases involving Catholic priests."

"We (the defense) have a right to know the religious beliefs of jurors the same as we have the right to know their political leanings," said Fieger, who has sometimes referred to religious people — especially those opposed to Kevorkian — as "religious nuts."

Fieger said his questions — that he had hoped to ask in his questioning — known as the voir dire — were designed to counter the prosecutor's attempt to "stack the jury (with religious fundamentalists) against a fair trial."

He said the questions were

similar to those he asked of prospective jurors when Kevorkian was on trial in Detroit for the assisted suicide of Novi resident Thomas Hyde. The flamboyant attorney said they were designed to detect religious bias on the part of Jews, Muslims or Christians.

But that's not the way the Michigan Christian Coalition views them, said Clark, who noted the questions specifically refer to "them again," or "reburn" Christians.

"If the questions were specifically aimed at Jews or Muslims," said Clark, "there'd be an uproar. But because they're aimed at Christians, nobody says anything."

Clark said he agrees with prosecutor Thompson that asking such questions would have caused some prospective jurors to withdraw from consideration rather than disclose intimate details of their religious convictions.

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The group's spokesperson,



JERRY ZOLYNSKI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Center of Controversy: Defense Geoffrey Fieger was the focal point of media attention in Oakland Circuit Court this week where Dr. Jack Kevorkian was scheduled to go on trial.

Rabbi Elimelech Silberberg of Congregation Bala Chabad in West Bloomfield, was quoted as saying that people who commit or help with suicide are not "bad or vicious, but simply misguided."

Oakland Circuit Judge Jessica R. Cooper, Tuesday declined to comment on the upcoming trial or the controversy swirling around jury questions.

"I have issued an order instructing the prosecutor's office and defense attorneys to refrain from commenting on the case," she said. "I intend to abide by that order as well."

Kevorkian is facing two four-year felony charges for the 1993 deaths of Marian Frederick, 72, of Ann Arbor, and Dr. Ali Khalili, 61, of suburban Chicago. They are two of 27 people known

to have taken their own lives after consulting with Kevorkian, a retired pathologist who has become an international figure because of his advocacy of physician-assisted suicide.

Frederick died Oct. 22 and Khalili died Nov. 22, both in the apartment of Kevorkian, who at that time lived in Royal Oak. The retired physician has since moved to West Bloomfield.

Hills ice arena profits, dry-floor activities still in plans

BY BILL COUTANT
STACY WATERS

The Farmington Hills Ice Arena is showing a profit, much to the relief of city officials.

A report from City Manager Bill Cusick presented at Monday's regular meeting clarified proposed guidelines for the coming year, but also brought out some philosophical differences between the city council and some members of the Ice Arena Advisory Committee that the council appointed.

"We want to make sure that every kid that wants to play hockey in Farmington Hills will have a place to play," said Councilman Terry Saver, who met with Councilwoman Cheryl Oliverio, Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, Cusick, Assistant City Manager Dave Call, Ice Arena Manager Jerry Nelson and members of the Farmington Hills Hockey Association Feb. 7 to discuss the guidelines.

Those guidelines provide that all Hills residents who apply by Aug. 1 to play house league hockey will be included

in the program. Non-residents and residents who apply after will be considered on a first-come basis, with residents getting priority.

The new guidelines also address team requirements, providing that 50 percent of each team's players be residents. That had been a sore point early in the 1995-96 season.

The guidelines also provide that one of the arena's two ice surfaces will be melted this summer for dry-floor activities. That is where Dennis Fitzgerald,

chairman of the now defunct advisory committee, took exception.

Fitzgerald, a former chairman of the city's Parks and Recreation Commission and member of the original committee that studied the feasibility of an arena, said the arena has covered debt service and costs ahead of schedule because of the demand for ice. Not using that ice during the summer would not make business sense.

"I'm dismayed," he said. "The demand (for ice) could carry through the

summer."

Ken Fortier, who has also been involved with the ice arena since the study stage, agreed with Fitzgerald that the arena should be run like a business, adding that two weeks of proceeds for ice time would be lost if it was used for dry-floor activities.

The council unanimously accepted the report and directed Nelson to begin work on finding appropriate dry-floor activities, such as in-line skating, basketball, craft shows and exhibitions.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Wanted: ballot checkers

The city of Farmington is looking for a few good... election workers.

They'll be needed to handle precincts for the upcoming Presidential primary, and August and November elections. Elections inspectors put in a full day, checking voter registrations, helping at voter machines and filling out statement sheets. Inspectors are paid for the 12- to 14-hour work day.

"I'm looking for quite a few applicants because many of our workers are retiring," said Janice Schmidt, who works in the clerk's office.

Elections inspectors have to be registered voters in the city. Application forms are available at Farmington City Hall. For information, call 474-5500.

Tax help, seniors?

Members of the Farmington Hills Chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), with special training from the IRS, will help Farmington-area senior citizens prepare their tax returns free of charge.

The AARP volunteers will be at the Farmington Hills Activity Center on 11 Mile east of Middlebelt from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on the following Mondays: Feb. 19, 26; March 4, 11, 18 and 25; April 1, 8, 16.

For more information or to register, call 473-1830.

Applause for him

Gene Williams has been named Botaford Continuing Health Center's "Applause! Applause!" winner for February.

Williams, a maintenance assistant at the Farmington Hills senior citizen residence, juggles many responsibilities including plumbing and electrical repairs, carpentry projects, painting and replacing

floor tiles. He also maintains houses in the Botaford Commons retirement community.

Williams was nominated for the "Applause! Applause!" award by his colleagues. He lives in Detroit with his wife, Bernice.

'Casual Classics' coming

Janial Dickran Atamian will be the featured performer at the Farmington Area Philharmonic's annual "Casual Classics" program 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, in the Cliney Auditorium of Mercy High School, 11 Mile and Middlebelt roads, Farmington Hills.

Works of Brahams, Prokofiev and Stravinsky will be performed. Tickets at \$20, \$15 and \$10, are available at all Metrobank locations, or through the mail: Farmington Area Philharmonic, P.O. Box 443, Farmington 48332.

Tickets are discounted for students and senior citizens and discounts are available through an annual Fund Membership. Call 478-2075 for more information.

Irish Cooking School

The fifth-annual Irish Cooking School will be held Saturday, March 2, in the ballroom of the Botaford Inn, 28000 Grand River, Farmington Hills.

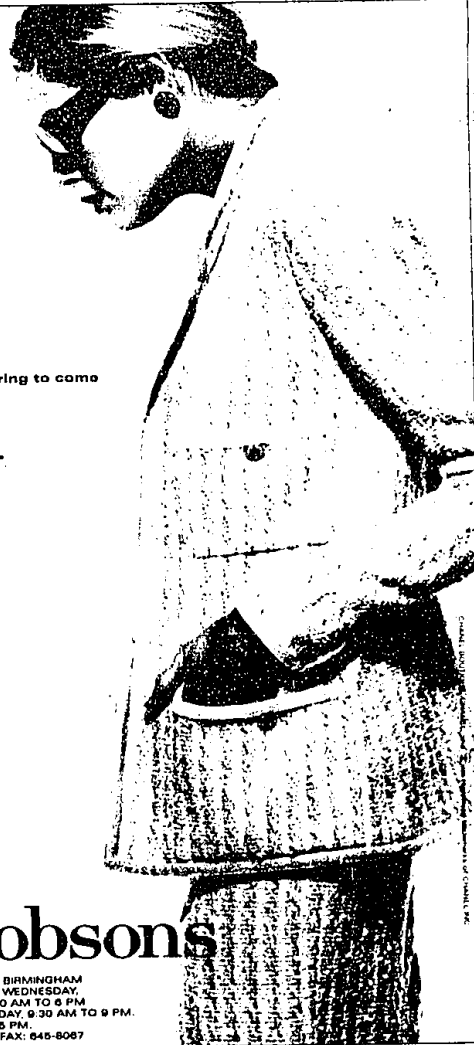
The theme for this year's school is "Irish Country House Breakfast and Pub Grub." A \$15 donation, which includes a buffet lunch and a book of Irish recipes, is asked.

For more information, call 540-6687.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-9722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is: packy@oeonline.com.

the shape of spring to come

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Students get Knollenberg's nod

Five Farmington-area students have been nominated for U.S. service academies by U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, a Republican whose 11th Congressional District includes Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Maura Duggan, Brian Rajdl, Thomas Mondous, George Adams and Marc Plotkin were nominated. Each student must now apply to the respective academies. Each academy will determine final approval.

Duggan, Adams, Mondous and Rajdl were nominated for the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Duggan and Adams, both 1996 graduates of Farmington High School, each spent the last

year at the Naval Academy Prep School, a one-year school for Naval Academy candidates.

Duggan has excelled at the NAPS while participating on the women's basketball team. An excellent student, Adams was also a member of the track and cross country teams.

Mondous, currently number one in his class at Farmington High School, has been involved in varsity athletics since his freshman year. He also has served as a member of the PHS Student Council.

Rajdl, who is in the top third of his class at North Farmington, has also excelled in varsity athletics, as well as participating in a

number of school activities.

Plotkin was nominated for admission to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. A resident of Farmington Hills, Plotkin is a senior at North Farmington High School.

"These are excellent young men and women who are great all around students," Knollenberg said. "I am pleased to nominate them to our academies. If accepted, I know they will make Farmington, Farmington Hills and Michigan proud."

Overall Knollenberg nominated 23 students from the 11th District, which includes southern Oakland County as well as portions of Livonia and Redford Township.