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Youth death probe continues at East

Authorities refused comment this week on the progress of the continuing probe into the electrocution last Friday of an eighth grade East Junior High School student.

Robert Kourjian, a 13-year-old Farmington Hills youth, died Jan. 9 while operating an electric metal buffer in a shop class. Doctors at Botsford General Hospital reported Kourjian's death 1 1/2 hours after he collapsed near the machine.

An investigator from the state's Occupational Safety Standards Commission (OSSC) is conducting an independent probe into the youth's death. The investigator is reviewing the shop area and checking for possible violations of the state's occupational safety act.

Authorities said that the investigator cannot reveal any of his findings until he receives permission from his superiors at the State Department of Labor, of which OSSC is a division.

Farmington Hills police, crime lab, fire marshall and electrical inspectors are also conducting inspections of the school's shop area. Authorities said when their reports are finalized, the reasons for the electrocution and condition of the shop will be made public.

THE OAKLAND County medical examiner, confirmed Saturday, Jan. 10 that the East student died of electrocution. According to an autopsy performed by the medical examiner, the youth suffered severe burns on his hands. The coroner's office was unable to determine how much electricity went through the boy's body. Hills police sealed off the shop area immediately after the electrocution.

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--Lewis Schulman

was reported at 11 a.m. last Friday. It will remain closed until all investigations are completed.

An extension cord, the 40-pound metal buffer and other shop equipment were confiscated by police. The buffer did not have an on-off switch, and the cord apparently was cracked in at least one place.

"We have not received any official reports from state or city inspectors, and until we do, we are not sure what actually happened," said Lewis Schulman, assistant superintendent of secondary schools in the Farmington school district.

"There are a lot of theories flying around, but the investigations are still on. Until they are completed, we are not sure where we stand in relation to what happened."

"After the city and state complete their investigations, the district's next step will be to call in an independent engineering contractor to certify the East shop area," Schulman continued. "And until the shop area is inspected and certified safe by that firm and the city, the classroom will remain closed."

EAST PRINCIPAL Gilbert Henderson said that there has never been a problem with the shop's machines before and that there were no reported defects in any of the machines.

Henderson said that the shop is inspected on a daily basis by school personnel, and any defects or repair needs would be reported to him for immediate attention.

Schulman said the inspection of the district's shop machinery is the total responsibility of everyone in the district. The shops are inspected periodically by district maintenance men, and the individual schools report needed repairs whenever they occur.

Funeral services for Kourjian were held Monday afternoon. Burial was in the Glen Eden Cemetery in Livonia.

The youth's father, Wallace, is an engineer for Fisher Body. His mother, Nancy, is active in civic and school activities. She is director of Earth Alive, a Farmington organization that collects newspapers and bottles.

He is also survived by his four brothers, Dean, Bill, Doug, and Chuck, three sisters, Kathy, Kris and Dawn, and a grandmother, Mrs. Akaby Kourjian.



Farmington Hills fire department personnel fight a fire which caused \$20,000 damage at the San Marino Golf Club on Haledale Road. The blaze occurred on Saturday at 11:05 a.m. Officials say the fire was caused by an over-heated furnace on the first floor of the clubhouse. (Photo by Jim Achtenberg)

Hills auxiliary force gets nod for expansion

In a move to expand the Farmington Hills auxiliary police unit, the city council has authorized spending \$5,000 for that purpose.

The unit is being expanded at the request of Hills Public Safety Director Ronald Holko, who says the 18-man unit has been a valuable source in supplementing the fulltime police unit. The city hopes to eventually increase the force to a 50-man unit. The added auxiliary officers will be used to patrol subdivisions during night hours. The Hills is one of the suburban communities which has been plagued by juvenile vandalism.

Councilmember Jan Dolan, who introduced the proposal at a previous meeting, says an expanded auxiliary police force will give subdivision residents a feeling of confidence.

"We do have a problem with nuisance calls. Our response time has been slow. Come spring and this type of activity will again pick up," she said.

"This expansion will act as a backup system in the residential areas where people are looking for the police," she said.

PRESENTLY, AUXILIARY officers are required to attend training classes once a month for four hours and ride for a minimum of eight hours a month, according to Holko.

Mrs. Dolan had suggested that auxiliary officers be used as a second officer in a two-man car, but Holko said this would be in violation of the Police Officers' Association's contract.

In 1974 auxiliary officers were used for details totaling 1,041 hours. Church

details took 537 1/2 hours, while special details compiled 226 1/2 hours and patrol took up 277 1/2 hours.

The auxiliaries, when called in for special details, are paid \$3.58 an hour. They are used to supplement patrol units on holidays and special occasions. They are also used to patrol subdivisions, making patrol cars visible during the evening.

The church detail is paid for by the churches involved. Councilman Fred Lichtman, while approving the increased volunteer force, lent a word of caution, saying the hours a volunteer worked should be restricted to 20.

"We should have a tight rein on the volunteers' affiliation with the regular police department. I hope we aren't creating an addition which would result in being subject to collective bargaining," he said.

CITY MANAGER George Majors praised the auxiliary police efforts. "This is a program well worth expanding. This will be a preventative patrol which will mean more eyes on the street," said Majors. "These men are doing this because they wish to serve the community and not because they want to make money."

'Mr. Music' tells tales of working with stars

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

His students call him Mr. Music. His credits include the Mike Douglas Show, a Judy Garland performance, the Scandinavian Symphony, Motown and the Grace Elementary School Band.

Ovin Ross, 32, a music teacher at Grace and Middle Bek elementary schools, leads a hectic double life as a teacher and a musician.

He became interested in making music after watching Benny Goodman perform on stage. Ross turned to his

parents with an eight-year-old's determination and announced he wanted to take music lessons. "Times were hard," he remembers, "but my parents got me a horn."

UNLIKE THE WHIMS of most children, the ambition stuck, and Ross graduated from Wayne State University with a music-education degree.

"I enjoy children, and I'm greatly pleased with seeing the results of my teaching," Ross says. "But there's just not enough time to work with children to get what I want out of them."

After working with children during the day, he plays with different groups of musicians during the evening.

"I like to play the music of the times. You have to go with the trends," he says. Yet he believes that most professional entertainers are temperamental and difficult to work with.

"A singer who hits a wrong note is more apt to blame the band than himself. It's always the band's fault," he says ruefully.

Mike Douglas is one of the finest people I've ever worked with. He's a real gentleman, one of the most remarkable of all performers. He knows he's not a great musician, and he'll admit it," says Ross.

He contrasts Douglas with a woman impressionist with whom he worked who was too vain to wear her glasses on stage.

"She couldn't see anything I had to lead her to the stage. She was a 'typer' lady," says Ross.

Most of the time, Ross explains, the band will rehearse without the performer before the show. Shortly before the show the entertainer will have a short rehearsal with the band. Ross singles out Mike Douglas as one performer who stayed around long enough to talk to the people.

ROSS WOULD LIKE to play for Sammy Davis Jr. and Jerry Lewis. He believes Lewis is concerned with children. If he got a chance to work for Lewis' muscular dystrophy show, he'd take it, he said.

"If I had to take out my whole saving account to get there, I'd do it," he added.

After seeing Sammy Davis at the old Elwood Casino about five years ago, Ross decided he would like to work with him.

"He's a dynamic, articulate person," says Ross. "Ostinians, not musicians, are his best friends, he says. He says that while a principal may be supportive of a teacher, it is the custodians who will give a helping hand.

"They'll help you set up the stage and find the tools you need," says Ross.

Headlee appointed as Oakland trustee

Gov. Milliken has appointed Richard H. Headlee of Farmington Hills to serve on the Oakland University Board of Trustees.

Headlee, 45, is president and chief executive officer of Hamilton International Corp. and Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America.

He will serve the remainder of the unexpired term of Otis M. Smith, charter trustee emeritus, who resigned Sept. 24. The term runs through Aug. 11. Headlee's appointment is subject to senate confirmation.

"Richard Headlee has made significant contributions to our business and civic communities," said OU President Donald D. O'Dowd. "I know he will make equally important contributions to Oakland University in his new role as a trustee."

Headlee is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, a director of West Oakland Bank and a director of Project Concern Inc.

In 1963, he was president of the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce. He was named outstanding alumnus by Utah University in 1964.



Ovin Ross, music director for the Farmington elementary schools, reviews the music his band class will learn. Ross plays for many well-known performers before coming to the school system. (Staff photo by Harry Mauhe)

Hills man is killed by county deputy

A 36-year-old Farmington Hills man was fatally shot at 12:52 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13, after failing to stop for police while fleeing the scene of a reported break-in in Commerce Township, reported the Oakland County Sheriff's Department.

Larry Gale Lower of 21401 Jefferson St. in Farmington Hills, was shot and killed early Tuesday morning by Deputy Richard Johnson after Lower failed to heed a warning from Johnson. Lower was shot in the neck and died on the scene, said a department spokesman.

According to sheriff's reports, Lower and another unidentified man were seen running from a house at 1740 Oakley Park in Commerce Township.

Wolverine Lake Police first responded to the suspected break-in and saw the men running away from the house. After identifying themselves as police officers, the report said they fired one or two warning shots into the air and the suspects failed to stop. Moments later, Johnson arrived on the scene and joined the chase. As the

suspects fled across Commerce Lake, Johnson fired a warning shot into the air and once again the two men failed to heed the warning, the spokesman said.

Johnson said he chased Lower across the lake into a swampy area, where he soon lost sight of the suspects. Johnson said he saw Lower again in the swamp and called for him to halt, but he continued running. Johnson then fired one shot which struck Lower in the back of the neck. The deputy attempted to apply immediate first aid, but Lower died at the scene.

The suspect's car was impounded near the house and is being held by the Oakland County Sheriff's Department for possible clues linking a second suspect to the attempted break-in.

Police also reported the car's license plates were in the name of another Farmington Hills man and the car was registered in a third person's name.

The alleged break-in and shooting are still under investigation by the sheriff's department.

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