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Bill Rydner, a driver for the Farmington Hills Ambulance Co., checks over the ambulance destroyed in Monday arson which gutted three of the firm's vehicles. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Police investigate ambulance fires

By RON GARBINSKI

Farmington Hills fire and police officials are continuing their investigations this week into Monday morning's suspected arson attempt that destroyed one Farmington Hills Ambulance Co. vehicle and caused extensive damage to two other ambulances.

Fire damage estimate on the three gutted ambulances was placed at about \$27,100, said Harvey Sloan, owner of the ambulance firm which has a human rescue service contract with Farmington Hills.

Fire officials have sent debris collected at the scene to the Warren State Police Post where it will undergo special testing to determine if an accelerant actually was used to start the fire.

Our fire inspector has collected debris from around the burned ambulances and he has taken it to the state police crime lab for testing, said Hills Fire Chief John Van De Voort.

When these tests are completed, only then will we know for sure if any type of accelerant was used in the blaze," he continued. "At this time, we suspect that an accelerant was used to start the fire, but

we'll wait for the official report from the state police.

INVESTIGATORS have been checking several clues in the case, but as of Tuesday afternoon, they had no suspects in custody for the suspected arson attempt.

While the fire gutted three of our five ambulances out of service this week, we have received a lot of cooperation from everyone," Sloan said Tuesday.

We still have two of our own vehicles out on the road, and we have been working around the clock to repair the other two ambulances that were stored in the firm's garage.

This hasn't altered our human rescue service plan. We still are 100 per cent in service and haven't missed a single run on account of the fire, Sloan explained.

Fleet Ambulance Co. of Pontiac and Royal (aka) a Suburban Ambulance Co. have loaned the Farmington Hills Ambulance Co. two vehicles until its ambulances are repaired or replaced.

It's like our own mutual aid between companies," Sloan said. "When something happens to our vehicles, these other companies offer us their vehicles free of charge in order to continue around the clock service."

Fire officials believe that an accelerant was splashed across the front end of one of the ambulances parked behind the firm's headquarters at 2910 Grand River, just east of Middle Belt.

The three ambulances were parked diagonally behind the building in ready position to respond to emergency runs.

Once the equipment or supplies had been damaged, we can't get them again," Sloan said. "So we have to consider that a loss."

The company has been attempting to repair the third ambulance a 1973 Ford ambulance van a \$23,800 property, Sloan said. He hopes to have that ambulance on the road Tuesday night and the other damaged vehicle in painted and ready to go.

The 1975 Ford ambulance will take about 30 days to get back in service, Sloan explained.

At about 1 a.m. Monday a man was walking through an alley behind the ambulance main office when he saw the flames. Fire officials reported.

APPARENTLY, the man attempted to put out the fire by himself.

Realizing he couldn't he ran to the ambulance office to notify employees that the vehicles were on fire, officials said.

At that time, several ambulances personnel grabbed fire extinguishers and raced to put out the fire while another employee called the fire department.

Eleven volunteer firemen from the Warren Fire Station, just one block west, arrived within minutes.

By that time, however, the vehicles already were extensively damaged, said Van De Voort.

Van De Voort theorized that the ambulances may have been directed to the alley and then torched.

THE FIRMS three week old 1973 Ford modular ambulance was completely destroyed in the blaze, Sloan said.

The vehicle was insured for \$10,000 but it would cost \$11,900 to replace the ambulance. That doesn't count the \$4,200 worth of equipment we had inside," Sloan said.

We still are waiting to see if our insurance will cover that, too.

Damage to the company's 1973 Dodge modular ambulance was estimated at \$5,000 to the vehicle and about \$2,000 for destroyed equipment.

No one was injured in the blaze, but several employees said oxygen tanks exploded on the ambulances, making them unusable during the fire causing further destruction and possible injury.

We have three suspects who we think might be involved in this incident," Sloan said. "We gave their names to the Farmington Hills police to use in their investigation, but that is about all I can say about the arson attempt."

Van De Voort said a post-mortem of the ambulance main office building, the suspect's name might be made this week.

Patron injured

Village Inn victim of robbers

Farmington police are searching for two suspects who escaped Sunday with nearly \$500 from the Village Inn, 3333 Grand River, after locking 12 patrons in the restaurant at gunpoint.

About 8:30 p.m. two males entered the bar and ordered drinks. They sat at the bar for 30 minutes, drank their beers and left through the front door.

Twenty minutes later, the pair returned and ordered two more beers, police said.

While one of the men got up as if to go to the restroom, the other waved for the bartender.

As the bartender approached the suspect, he grabbed the bartender, pulling him into the bar, stuck a gun into his stomach and announced a holdup.

The 12 persons in the bar at the time didn't notice what was going on because they were watching television, police said.

THE GUNMAN then pulled the bartender all the way over the bar and yelled louder that a robbery was in progress.

The suspect then took all the bartender's valuables and handed him a paper bag,

telling him to fill it with the patrons' wallets and money, police reported.

Witnesses said the suspect directed his gun at each victim as the bartender emptied their valuables into the bag.

The two suspects then headed everyone over to the women's restroom and locked them inside.

The suspects then forced the bartender to unlock the office.

The two gunmen proceeded to search the office for money and other valuables, while placing the change from the office desk and the stolen money in a steel box.

They searched the office again and told the bartender to get into the restroom with everyone else, police said.

Witnesses said the gunmen ransacked the restroom's door shut with nails and left through the rear door.

The bartender heeded the robbers' command and didn't open the door until five minutes had passed.

Another patron had entered the bar during the robbery, but he thought it was a joke and pulled away as the gunmen grabbed him.

Surprise gift recalls career

By CORINNE ABATI

Betty Dimity's new quilt just has to be one of the most unusual at all the world. For sure there isn't another like it any where.

Mrs. Dimity is the coordinator of Library Technical Assistance (LTA) on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College. She is almost as unusual as the quilt her students and former students made for her surprise 50th birthday celebration.

She started in college at age 25 to make her dream of becoming a librarian come true and took her first two years at Highland Park Junior College. From there she went to Wayne State to major in library science.

My dream was always to be a librarian in a small college," she said, standing in her office in D building with the light green bookshelves and colorful squares spread on her lap.

I believe it. She looks at her assistant, Morden.

I didn't have one iota of a suspicion about this and Joan has been working on it right here in this office since February.

Mrs. Dimity's birthday was in April and last February Mrs. Morden got the idea for the surprise and contacted more than 200 of Mrs. Dimity's students and former students. She sent each a square of white material and told them to return it stitched, appliqued or designed in some other way. It was about her friend.

Mrs. Dimity continues her story. Any way, my goal was to get my bachelor's degree before I was 40 and I made it. I was and took the job at librarian at the Austin Preparatory School in Warren while she worked on her master's degree at the University of Michigan.

For more mature graduates, but that is beginning to realize that our young women, too, can handle the library's technical assistance position," Mrs. Dimity says.

Mrs. Morden, mother of five adult children, is one of the 200 who gave the surprise. She compares herself to many of the older women who have retired and are secure about returning to school for study.

Going to college opened my eyes to a whole new world. But I came back three times before I had the guts to take the placement test. Finally, my husband led me here by the hand like a little girl.

Mrs. Dimity adds, And she did so well, but her behavior was untypical.

Mrs. Dimity could see the need for LTA, so she hired Mrs. Morden to handle the placement, some of the secretarial duties and an assortment of tasks which she does.

Barbara Katreneill took over all the placement for the graduates. But she did a good job that Mrs. Dimity says. We wouldn't have enough people in our position to accept all the calls.

The calls come from as far as Florida and the far west for LTA to work in school libraries, medical libraries, libraries and a variety of other disciplines.

Mrs. Morden, keeper of file folders where all of the graduates are and what they are doing, was able to locate practically all of the former students and send them the square of cloth to designate the surprise quilt.

More than 100 squares came home and each was told a story. Mrs. Dimity says some were reminders of good times together, all were hand done with loving care.

Evelyn Irwin did a colorful applique of her cottage at Higgins Lake when Mrs. Dimity visited several times. With a blue sky marker, Evelyn Schwartz did a picture of George Bernard Shaw to remind Mrs. Dimity of the oral Shaw program they did together. Others did cats and kittens. Mrs. Dimity is a cat lover and wears globes, library symbols and even a ram. The Arnes hair sign for Mrs. Dimity.

Sunday and Sunday before the 50th surprise the loose squares out on her living room floor. Herd them with red and blue calico paper, sewed it together, stitched the quilt and put on the backing.

"I was in a state of shock," says Mrs. Dimity. "At first I thought they were giving me a sleeping bag. I couldn't believe when I opened it up. Thank goodness I have a daughter to pass it on to it is a heirloom quilt."

WITH SOME GOALS out of the way, (Continued on page 61)

Board appraises the local talent

Local school administrators are in the running for the top job in the Farmington School District, according to board President William Corliss.

The board presently is interviewing candidates for the superintendent's job being vacated by Marinus Van Ameyde at the end of the school year.

"Some local candidates have applied for the opening. I can say we are considering more than one local candidate for the position at this time," said Corliss.

ALTHOUGH THE board has agreed to keep candidates' names confidential, these local administrators most likely under consideration are Lewis Schulman and Larry Friedman. Schulman is assistant superintendent for secondary education, while Friedman is assistant superintendent for elementary education.

The board has set a deadline of April 30 for selection, but Corliss says they could run past their deadline.

"It appears the selection process might carry over into the early part of May before a final contract is offered to our new superintendent," said Corliss.

"The selection process has been moving



Betty Dimity admires the quilt made by friends and students which was a surprise birthday gift. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Hills records first fatality

Dorothy Scott, 60, of Detroit, became Farmington Hills first traffic fatality in 1976 when the car in which she was a passenger collided with another vehicle last Saturday evening, April 24.

Mrs. Scott was pinned inside the vehicle and had to be freed out by Farmington Hills volunteer firemen responding to the accident.

She was rushed to Rockford General Hospital where she died of injuries received in the crash.

At 7:30 p.m. last Saturday, a car driven by Lee Gohs of Detroit attempted to turn around a traffic median on Eight Mile just west of Inlander Road in Farmington Hills, police reported.

As Gohs tried to exit the median turn

inside Success Story

Diana Popiel received more than 30 calls when she advertised our success stories. I had a fantastic response," she said and had no trouble selling my '66 Chevrolet. Thanks again!

It's success stories like this that bring 'Observer & Eccentric' classified section again and again. Call us today if you have something to sell!

Each year since it was started, some 25 to 35 complete the program and Mrs. Dimity says her main complaint is that she doesn't have nearly enough graduates to meet the demand. About a third of the students are young women (there are always one or two men in the program) and most of the younger ones go on to complete a five-year degree in library science.

"It used to be that employers preferred

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