



Standing among trees in his orchard, Paul Button proudly maintains what has become a famous landmark in the area, as well as a family heirloom. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)

Legend retires to his orchard

Paul Button, taciturn owner of Button's Orchard in Farmington Hills, stood next to his rambling farm house on 12 Mile and watched the steady stream of mid-morning traffic.

"It was quiet before the road came in. When somebody went down the road you waved because you knew everyone," he said.

Button's family, the orchard and the century-old farm house were in the area long before the subdivisions which now surround it.

The orchard, longtime an area landmark, was, until recently, the site of Farmington Hills' Fire Station Four. The barn, which once housed some of the city's fire engines, was turned back

into a storage area for flats of flowers and vegetables when the department opened a new station on 12 Mile and Drake this year.

Button, the station's captain, last week ended his 20-year stint as a volunteer firefighter. The trucks are gone from the property. Flowers spill out into the driveway and Button admits he'll miss the camaraderie of the station.

"Most of all, I'll miss the people," said Button, 65.

TWENTY YEARS ago, when the subdivisions first began to encroach upon the Button property, the residents decided that they needed more fire protection.

The closest station was on 14 Mile and Northwestern Highway.

"I had the building. They rented the barn from me," said Button with a nod toward the weathered structure.

"It was a volunteer deal. You were paid by the hour for every run."

The first year the barn served as a station, there were less than 100 fire runs for the entire city. Now Button estimates there are about 2,000 runs in a year.

The farm's service time to the fire department is only a small part of its 156-year history.

The farm was bought in 1824 by Button's great-grandfather. The family still has the deed signed by John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States.

"There was a log cabin here, then," said Button, gesturing toward a place beside the apple barn.

His family built and added to the rambling farm house which can be seen from 12 Mile.

Button, who was born in the house, grew up there and 38 years ago brought his wife, Alberta, to live in the family homestead. They raised two daughters, Marilyn and Linda, and a son, Charles, there.

CHARLES is a city manager in Iowa now and the Button daughters are married with families of their own near Traverse City.

Tending to the flowers which he sells has always been a pleasure for Button.



Having retired from his duties with the Farmington Hills fire department, Button will have more time to climb aboard his tractor and tend to the orchard.

Humanities debate

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gued that such a mandate would give borderline students more opportunity for failure.

Barber and Harrison foreign language teacher Maria Schneider said they would be willing to teach basic courses geared to student ability in their disciplines.

Dick Curp, vice president of the Farmington Education Association, and several teachers who work with co-op students, spoke in opposition to the humanities mandate.

"There isn't enough time to fill with

practical skills and as long as the economic situation remains the same every student should have one salable skill when they graduate," said June Kilmer, co-op coordinator who represents 67 vocational teachers in the district.

Some board members seemed favorable to a one-year combination fine arts/practical arts mandate. Practical arts include business, home economics and industrial arts classes.

Principals from the three district high schools have been meeting for a year with Nutter to discuss requirement revision.

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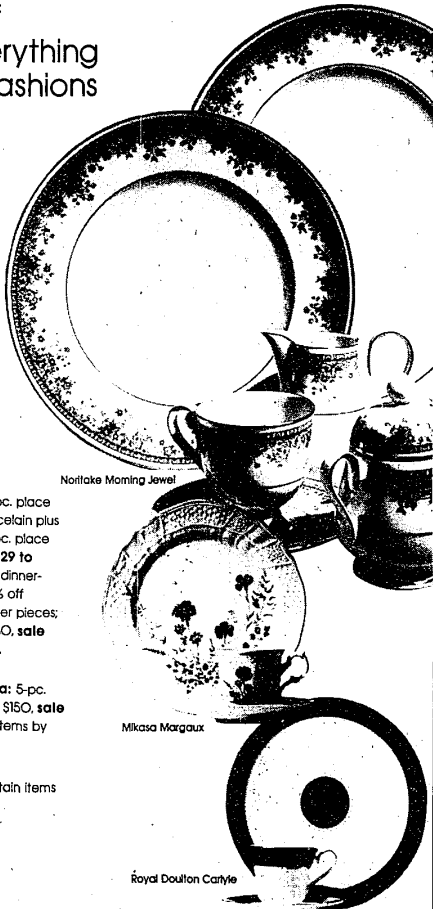
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