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Suburbanites line up for handgun permits

By MARY GNIEWEK

Profile of a typical Farmington Hills subdivision: cultivated lawns, colonial houses, cul-de-sacs — and handguns? Not yet an established suburban stereotype, yet 173 residents were fingerprinted and processed for handgun permits by Farmington Hills police the first six months of this year.

Another 95 residents applied for permits to carry concealed weapons and 100 others renewed concealed weapons

permits between January and July. Between 85-90 percent of those applicants were granted permits, according to Police Chief John Nichols, who sees every application because it crosses his desk for approval. The only applications tossed out are from persons with a history of criminal offenses or mental illness. "We're not too concerned with a bad traffic record," Nichols said.

THE REASONS WHY Farmington Hills residents purchase handguns are

about as varied as the persons who buy them. Some buy for protection of business or home. Other requests come from gun collectors or sportsmen.

One police department employee remembers a baby-toting mother who applied for a gun permit for her 18-year-old son. He was old enough to buy a gun from a hardware store but not from a dealer (you must be 21).

"We have no input in gun licensing per se. That's up to the gun licensing board," Nichols says.

"We approve applications, we don't

approve issuance of guns." A county licensing board does that. Oakland County has doled out 10,000 concealed weapons permits to residents, averaging 3,300 a year. The permits expire after three years.

A general permit allows the holder to carry a handgun anywhere at any time in the state of Michigan. A restricted permit can include various restrictions at the board's discretion.

The board doesn't require proficiency in the use of a handgun in order to obtain a permit — just an appearance before the three-member board and a \$5 fee.

"Most of the requests are approved," said David Case, a county prosecutor assigned to the board.

Case works with representatives from the county sheriff's office and the Michigan State Police.

Case thinks applicants should know how to shoot, but says there aren't many gun ranges private citizens can use. If the board sees a businessman who is a novice with guns, they issue a permit for target practice, then issue a gun permit once proficiency is proved.

"We'd like to see a program adopted where everyone would go through a refresher course," Case said.

Most of the applicants are male, but female handgun applicants have been increasing over the years. In Farmington Hills, five women applied for gun permits in June — mostly for restricted business use.

"THERE USED TO BE two unregistered guns for every registered gun," said Nichols, referring to guns confiscated during his tenure as Detroit Police Chief.

"Underworld guns filter into the system. They're brought in by theft," he said. "Registered guns are used in crimes, but not by the people who own them."

Nichols is comfortable with state law governing gun control.

"The law is extremely adequate, but sometimes it's not adequately enforced — some courts treat it lightly," he said.

"The key is enforcement. You must have a license to purchase, a license to sell, a permit to carry.

"Carrying a gun without a permit is a felony. Carrying a gun with unlawful intent is a felony."

Nichols said inexperienced gunners, eager to protect their home, are better off with shotguns, which don't require a special permit to buy.

"Just don't try to outdraw someone," the chief warned.



A winning combination

That's what happened when this team of students from Farmington High School got together and competed in the cheerleaders' camp at Northwood Institute this summer. The group came in first among 41 squads. They are: Lissa Madgwick (top); Patty Ross-

man and Melissa Sutton (middle tier, from left); Tina Bona, Vera Holdenberg and Sue Dunn (bottom tier, from left); and Lori Follmer (bottom). Also on the squad is Pam Parker. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

Cop throws hat in ring in bid for sheriff slot

By MARY GNIEWEK

Police detective James St. Louis's job is in Farmington Hills, his home is in Livonia, but his heart is 285 miles to the north in his hometown of St. Louis.

The 23-year-old police officer assigned to the Farmington Hills detective division is running full speed ahead in a race for sheriff of MacKinnac County. St. Ignace, just north of the Mackinac Bridge, is the county seat.

Edging out his nearest Republican challenger by 300 votes in the Aug. 5 primary, St. Louis will face Democrat Ben Thompson, currently a deputy sheriff, in the November general election. Both candidates are vying to replace retiring Sheriff Phillip Schaeffer.

"College and a job made me come down to Farmington Hills seven years ago," said St. Louis.

He expounded that strategy on the campaign trail. "The literature spelled out the fact that I left the area for education and experience, but I want to come home."

Almost every house in the county of 12,000 year-round residents was hit in his campaign sweep. For two weeks before the primary, he drove 700 miles from Farmington in a door-pounding journey to every square mile of the Upper Peninsula county.

St. Louis faced the same opponent this time, Charles Garries, a former sheriff and the county chairman of the Republican Party, that he lost to in his first bid for the office in 1976.

"I was really shocked I did as well as I did," he said. "It hit me hard after the primary, realizing I might be leaving (Farmington Hills). It's awfully hard to leave."

STILL THE excitement of returning home is obvious.

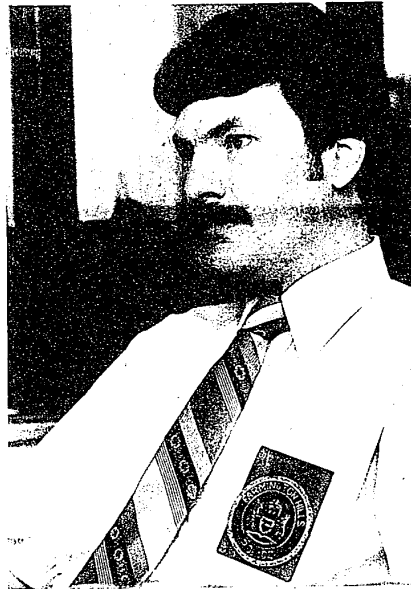
"I'm more confident with support in the primary," he said. "And MacKinnac County is 98 percent Republican."

Mackinac County also has a heavy predominance of the St. Louis clan, including the police officer's parents, six brothers and sisters, and his father's 15 brothers and sisters — many who are in politics.

"Politics is in the family," St. Louis says.

His mother is a magistrate in two counties. An uncle is the fire chief. A cousin is a retired circuit court judge. The whole family was involved in his campaign.

Mackinac County, 151 miles long and 30 miles wide, has a heavy predominance of French Canadian and Chippewa Indian settlers.



James St. Louis, of the Farmington Hills police department, has set his sights on a job in northern Michigan, where he is running for a county sheriff's post. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

"The people there are more relaxed," St. Louis says. "There's room to breathe. It's an open environment with a different set of values."

"Natural resources are highly valued. A larceny from vehicle charge might get you six months in jail here. Up north it's a small fine. But catch a fish that weighs too much and you'll get a fine and jail."

HE VIEWS the sheriff's job as a management position.

"In a small town, you know everyone personally so I think it's best to keep a low profile — leave criminal work to

the deputies," he said.

While age was a factor against him in his first bid for office, St. Louis thinks the county is ready for change. He points to neighboring Luce County, which just elected a 22-year-old sheriff.

"Attitudes are changing," he said.

"Unemployment has hit hard up there and there's more problems with young people — nuisance problems and drugs — things that just aren't tolerated."

Come November, he hopes to be able to do something about it.

"I'm confident, but I don't want to get too cocky."

Remembers interurban

Old-timer looks to the past

By MARILYN RILEY

Ask Morris Wattles about mass transit and the Detroit subway — a current political hot potato in Oakland County — and he can't help but chide.

Nearly from the time the old interurban line from Pontiac to Detroit was sited out by the newfangled machine called the automobile, public officials have been jawing about a subway, the 35-year-old lifetime Troy resident says. "As far back as I can remember, there would be all this hoop-de-do about the subway and Detroit would spend money investigating the possibility . . . and nothing would ever come of it," he recalls.

"If they built a subway when they first talked about it, it would have cost much, much less than it would cost now."

Walking into the rambling, wooden Wattles house is like journeying back in time. The white house, shaded by the spreading boughs of a maple tree, is cool and serene, with gently ticking clocks marking the hours.

better service," says Wattles, who recalls waiting for the interurban in the comfort of his home. He would signal the motorman to stop with a light rigged to the outside of the house.

Troy residents, mostly dairy farmers back around the turn of the century, could catch the interurban hourly. A trip to Detroit took about an hour. Best of all, the fare was only 19 cents, Wattles says.

Despite his age, Wattles now drives his own car when he runs errands or splurges on lunch out at some of his favorite nearby fast food restaurants.

His sister Helen Mary, who lived with him until her death last year at age 101, bought a new car when she was 90, he points out. Wattles doesn't plan to stop driving now, although he says sometimes he gets lost because most of the old landmarks have fallen.

"There's nothing familiar left," he says. "All the old houses are gone and there's a lot of vacant land."

But the former Detroit Pershing High School teacher isn't opposed to progress. "There was a time two or three years ago that I thought Troy was growing too fast, but I think I was wrong. While we're at it, we might as well keep growing."

But Wattles also is fond of the past and beautiful old things. He is a collector of antique furniture and pewter as has a whole shelf full of Victorian vas-

es. And he is active with the local historical society and has donated items to the Troy Historical Museum. He would like to see more local residents share his interest in history.

"There are a lot of people who don't care a thing about the past. They're living in the present and the future, which is OK."

Citizen of year nominees sought

If you know someone who merits the "Citizen of the Year" title, now is the time to speak out.

For the 10th year, the Farmington Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the awards dinner which will be in October. Nominations must be submitted by Oct. 1.

Nomination forms can be picked up at the chamber office at 23715 Farmington Road, the Masonic Temple building on the corner of Grand River. Completed forms should be mailed to the chamber office.

mine has given outstanding service to the Farmington community during the period from Sept. 1, 1979 to Sept. 1, 1980 above and beyond job related duties is eligible for the award.

There are no limitations on the nominee's age, sex, or residency. A man or woman in any field may be nominated and nominees aren't required to live in Farmington.

From the field of candidates, a screening committee selected by the chamber will pick the top three nominees. The winner will be chosen by the chamber's board of directors.

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MARRIAGE COMPLICATION

Unknown to one suburbanite, her marriage led to an unexpected complication for her daughter who is attending Kalamazoo College. To read more about this strange bureaucratic shuffle, turn to Page 7B.

"YOU COULDN'T HAVE asked for