

Decision to take months Hills cop appeals suspension ruling

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Farmington Hills Police Officer Charles Nebus is appealing a three-day, non-paid suspension recently handed down by a Police Department tribunal for "bringing the Department into disrepute, and, inattention to duty."

The appeal will be heard some time within the next several months at the American Arbitration Association's regional office in Detroit.

The disciplinary action arose from an incident involving the sale of intoxicants to two minors at a Farmington Hills 7-Eleven store Aug. 24. It came to the attention of Police Chief John Nichols when one of the minors and a 7-Eleven representative complained that Nebus' report was incorrect.

Their claim — that the young woman, and not her male companion, purchased beer — was upheld following a

closed two-day inquiry conducted by Nichols, Lt. Ernest Miller and Sgt. Peter Larian.

Nebus witnessed the incident from outside the store, in an unmarked police car, which happened to be in the area of the store, according to Inspector Richard Niemisto who characterized the incident as "an honest mistake."

Niemisto testified before the tribunal as a character witness on Nebus' behalf.

"WE FEEL a grave injustice is being done," said Gerald Radovic, bargaining agent for the Police Officers Association, representing Nebus.

"I'm confident we're going to overturn the ruling. I sat through the trial-board hearing — it was a kangaroo court. After all the evidence was presented, I felt confident that the officer was completely exonerated."

all the testimony given. To say a police

officer is never going to make an error is ludicrous."

The appeal came as no surprise to Nichols.

"We expected an appeal from the beginning," said the chief, who called the case a "no-win situation."

"Sure, we could have swept it under the carpet. Then the young person could have come to you (the Observer) and said, 'I've been victimized by a cover-up in the Police Department.'"

Nebus feels he was treated unfairly. "I'm bitter about it, but I work for myself and the people of this community. It wouldn't accomplish anything for me to let it affect my work. I'm not going to be childish," said Nebus, 28.

"Guys here have been charged with a criminal sexual misconduct and suspended with pay. I'm charged with this, and I get a non-paid suspension. They've suspended guys for not wearing their hats. Sometimes they jump off the deep end."

Nichols, however, views the case as a serious matter.

In no way is this a minor thing. At stake here are the reputations of two young people, the careers of business people trying to earn a livelihood with 7-Eleven and the image of a Police Department attempting to serve the community. 7-Eleven, originally charged with a liquor violation, has been

cleared of any wrongdoing. The action was taken because the incident as seen on 7-Eleven's security system videotape differs with Nebus' report, Nichols said.

Prosecution should proceed, regardless, said Radovic.

"From his (Nebus) observation point, the offense committed may have differed from what was shown on the store video. The fact remains a liquor violation was made by the store, and no charges are being brought against it," he said.

Nebus is confident "the kangaroo court's" findings will be reversed and that the appeal will be upheld.

"I called Niemisto, the No. 2 man in the Department, as a character witness, because I knew I had nothing to lose," Nebus said.

"I've got more citations in my file (for exemplary conduct and proficiency) than almost anyone."

Until recently, Nebus served on the SPOT special patrol team, which conducts surveillance in high crime areas. The three- and-a-half-year stint came to an end when Nebus was switched back to patrol duty.

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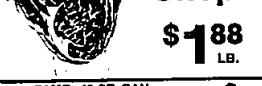
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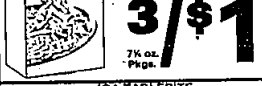
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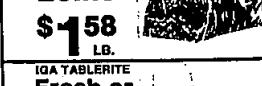
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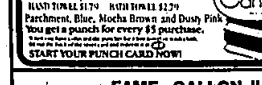
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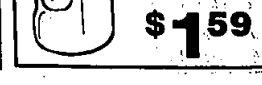
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29989 11 Mile Road, B.S. Human resources development; Mary Louise Meyers, 35190 Gary Drive, B.S. in human resources development.

Also graduated are Patricia Miner, 34550 Bridgeman, Master of Arts in teaching reading; Mark Christian Ruppel, 24456 Conifer, B.A. in psychology-liberal arts; Clifford R. Sevakis, 23231 Ashley, B.A. in journalism-liberal arts; Marsha Rochelle Siegal, 24401 Pinegrove, Master of Arts in teaching reading; Marcia Ann Slaby, 34800 Bunker Hill, B.S. in human resources development; Mary L. Smith, 24718 Madison, Master of Arts in teaching special education; Carolyn S. Smith, 35386 Fandl, master of arts in teaching early childhood; Kathleen A. Thompson, 25840 Ridgewood, bachelor of general studies; Gary D. Winkelman, 23630 Barfield Drive, bachelor of general studies.

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