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Fast photo processing spreads like flash fire

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

The very competitive photo finishing business is preparing for an attack on the metro-Detroit marketplace by K mart, which is expanding its one-hour



RANDY BORST/staff photographer
Norris Lee, lab manager for Photo Time, checks on photos in the print processor.

finishing operation.

Currently, two K mart stores, at Twelve Mile and in Warren, are equipped with newly developed Japanese photo labs, which can print 182 rolls of 12-exposure 135 film in 60 minutes. (K mart's other stores have film processed by Guardian Photo).

Store officials refuse to disclose how many K mart locations will receive the "Noritsu Quick Service Systems" — valued at \$90,000 each — or when the expansion will take place.

AFTER IT happens, Stewart Medbury, owner of Photo Time stores in Farmington Hills, Livonia and Dayton Beach, Fla., expects to see a price war and subsequent casualties in the photo finishing business.

"I'm worried they're going to blanket the field. We're already running over each other. Not everybody is going to survive," said Medbury, whose customers include the Detroit Red Wings, Shell and Mobil Oil.

With the advent of Noritsu and similar film processing systems, the business has grown phenomenally during the past two years.

Noritsu woos customers with a glossy brochure proclaiming the operation "can be run by almost anyone," is "carried out in front of your customers' eyes," and "may be installed in a limited space (600 square feet) in your shop." It guarantees "almost trouble-free operation for years to come."

GARY CONANT, K mart's Twelve photo lab manager, remembers "that in June 1981 when I started here, there was only one other guy in the business (at Dearborn's Fairlane shopping center).

Last year, nearly 15 quick photo finishing businesses started up, bringing the total in metropolitan Detroit to about 24, Conant said. Among the newcomers is Meller Thrifty Acres, which is initiating an operation similar to what K mart has proposed.

Many would-be photo finishers in the Detroit area are storing thousands of dollars worth of Japanese photo finishing equipment near California docks as they desperately search for a location, Medbury said.

THREE WEEKS AGO, Southfield's Vijay Walvekar quit his job as a marketing executive, confident he could find a spot to open a photo finishing business.

"I've looked from Monroe up to Saginaw, and from Jackson to St. Clemens. There's so much saturation here that if I don't find a location soon, I may try to sell my equipment and recover some part of my money," he said.

"Southeastern Michigan is all gone. It has reached the point where any newcomers will be struggling for business."

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer
Photo Time lab technician Lisa Wheeler matches up a customer's photo with the corresponding negative. Photo Time promises photos and enlargements in 90 minutes.

Hearth alarm posted

By Mary Klamic
staff writer

Residents of Farmington Hills are urged to make sure their fireplaces are safe, as the Farmington Hills Fire Department continues its investigation of a blaze that caused \$55,000 worth of damage to a home in the Farmington Green subdivision last month.

The preliminary investigation indicates the fire was started because of the condition of the fireplace and its hearth extension, according to Lt. Richard Marinucci of the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

"One of the problems was cracks in the mortar of the fire place," Marinucci said. "This can be from as the house settles. Homeowners should get them repaired."

The hearth extension is the part of the fireplace that reaches out to catch embers. Marinucci said that early indications are that the brick hearth extension in the house was supported by plywood.

"We theorize that the ember dropped in between the cracks," he said.

Residents of the home, located in the subdivision east of Drake and north of 12 Mile, had used the fireplace earlier in the day, according to Marinucci. He said the family was not home when the fire started and returned to find the house filled with smoke.

The blaze was similar to one that took place in the same area in October 1981, Marinucci said.

"That one had minimal damage," he said. As a result of the two fires, Marinucci said, the fire department sent out notices to 92 homes with similar floor plans and inspected those that responded. He said 64 such homes have been inspected.

"The notice said you may have a problem and we would like to come in and inspect it," Marinucci said.

He said that anyone who suspects their fireplaces may be similarly constructed should contact the fire department at 553-0740.

"People should utilize fireplaces as they were designed and be aware that they require certain maintenance," Marinucci said. "Cracks can occur and have to be repaired. There are certain good common sense practices too."

The fire department made the following recommendations:

- Burn only seasoned wood. Green wood builds up layers of creosote on flue linings.
 - Make sure the hearth opening is covered with a sturdy metal screen or heat-tempered glass door.
 - Set the fire with paper and kindling. Lighter fluid, kerosene, gasoline or other flammable liquid shouldn't be used at any time to help ignite a fire.
 - Fires should always be attended.
 - Keep an extinguisher on hand.
- In addition, residents should have an adequate number of smoke detectors and check them periodically to insure proper working condition.

Weapon-brandishing duo sought after robbery

Two armed, masked men escaped with \$1,500 from the North Farmington Mobil Gas Station at 12 Mile and Farmington roads about midnight Feb. 17.

Station employees Ron Harris, 18, and Ken Pillsbury, 19, told police a man entered the front door brandishing a two-foot wooden club, followed by a

second man with a blue steel shotgun covered by a pair of blue jeans.

Both wore nylon stockings over their heads, police said.

The employees thought they recognized the voice of the first man, who asked "Where the — is the money." They believe he is a former employee,

police said. The first robber then boomed extremely nervous and began beating both employees with the club, forcing them toward the rear office.

THE MEN grabbed two cash boxes containing \$1,500 from atop the office desk and fled.

The first man, described as 5-foot-6, 130 pounds and dark-haired, was dressed in an old green waist-length jacket and blue jeans.

Both were 18 or 19, police said. An old-model Vega, parked in the lot behind the gasoline station and noticed earlier by an employee, was observed soon after the incident.

The car was damaged and abandoned after apparently running into a guard rail in the Crowley parking lot, police said. Officers found a shotgun on the passenger seat of the car and a metal cash box lying on the floor of the car, which they later impounded.

Neither employee was seriously injured.

The blaze was similar to one that took place in the same area in October 1981, Marinucci said.

Trustee collects interest on campaign contributions

Farmington School Board trustee Michael Spiece has set up an office-holder expense fund (OEF). He is the only Oakland County school board member who has done so.

Spiece opened a savings account in 1977 at a Troy bank with \$46 when he established his OEF. With interest (and no withdrawals) the fund has increased to \$92.88.

OEF's may be used to pay for incurred "expenses incidental to holding public office."

The funds are popular among state lawmakers, but have yet to gain steam at the local level. In southeast Oakland County, only two mayors — Ferndale's Bernie Lennon and Madison Heights' George Suarez — have OEF's. No city council members have filed OEF reports with the Oakland County Clerk's office.

A major portion of OEF funds comes from campaign contributions. Money may be transferred by officeholders from campaign funds into expense fund accounts.

Public officials cannot use OEF's to further their nominations or elections to office.

A review of Farmington School Board members' records filed with the

county clerk indicated only two trustees in recent elections had collected campaign funds in excess of \$500 — Spiece and James McGlinchy.

In 1979, the Friends of Jim McGlinchy Committee collected \$1,291.91 in campaign funds. Expenditures amounted to \$88.66, including a printing bill for bookmarks, brochures and postcards for \$218.80.

Collecting less than \$500 in campaign funds were school board trustees Emma S. Makinen, Helen Durney \$60, Richard Wallace (who paid \$90 in late filing fees in 1981), R. Jack Inch,

Filing deadline set

Candidates for one seat on the Farmington Public Schools Board of Education must file nominating petitions by 4 p.m. April 11, at the Board of Education offices, 32500 Shawansee, Farmington. Candidates must have their nominating petitions signed by at least 20 registered voters.

The one four-year term is from July 1 of this year to June 30, 1987.

To be an eligible candidate one must be a registered and qualified school

and Janice Rolnick.

Contributors to Spiece's campaign have included state Rep. Sandy Broderick, R-Farmington, \$10; Farmington Hills resident Gerard Miller, \$25; Susan Campbell Remick, \$20; David Morrison, \$20; Vivian Juresek, \$15; Rita Fushman, \$10; R. Marie Spiece, \$50; and Michael Spiece, \$50.

Candidates are required to itemize contributions only when they exceed \$200. McGlinchy's records show a contribution of \$245.95 from Wayne County General Hospital's associate hospital director.

Outreach

Jewish Welfare Federation volunteers through a new outreach program are visiting regularly the 200-plus Jews who live in Detroit's inner city. Volunteers bring warmth and companionship to elderly and mentally impaired residents of nursing homes and adult care facilities.



Quartet is nabbed with burglary tools

Four Detroit residents arraigned last week on a charge of possessing burglary tools were scheduled for a preliminary exam before 47th District Court Judge Michael Hand on Tuesday.

Maximum penalty for the possession of burglary tools is 10 years' imprisonment.

Farmington Hills police arrested Ernest Lewis, 34, Ray Donnell Barclay, 23, Francis Todd, 20 and Charles Burton Wade, 26, early Feb. 15.

Alerted by Southfield police who lost a brown Chevy Nova cruising along 12 Mile apartment complexes along 12 Mile Road, undercover Farmington Hills officers began surveying Inverrary Condominiums on 12 Mile. They spotted the suspects on foot in the parking lot, "acting nervous and looking around"

and "hiding in shadows against the building."

They were scared off by someone exiting the building and drove away in a Nova without its head or taillights on, police said.

Officers discovered that the glass had been shot out of the windows of a parked 1982 Corvette and 1979 Chrysler Imperial.

The four were pulled over and arrested at Eight Mile and the Lodge Freeway by police.

About \$250 in damage was done to the cars, owned by Inverrary residents.

Hand said police recovered "a library of tools," including a keymaker's punch, GM key codes, blank keys, a punch, GM pry bar, a BB pistol, baseball bat, a pry bar, a BB pistol, screw drivers, S-shaped wires, a dummy ignition and ignition slammers.

oral quarrel

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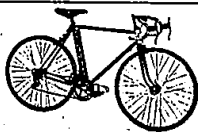
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You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to call 477-5498. You will have 30 seconds to answer the question at the sound of the buzzer. Look in Monday's Observer for your answer.

what's inside



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