



# Farmington Observer

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## Youthful theft ring probed

By Diane Gale  
staff writer

An organized crime ring, made up of youths 16-20 years old from at least seven communities, is largely responsible for a recent surge in radar detector thefts, according to area police.

Officers in several communities are trying to curb the problem by tracking the young criminals. "The (radar detector thefts) has grown to an extent where we are beginning to put more resources and time into this," according to Tom Nelson, West Bloomfield youth officer.

At least 34 youngsters — from West Bloomfield Township, Southfield, Farmington Hills, Birmingham,

Bloomfield Township, Franklin Village and Novi — are suspected of being involved in the group, according to Ben David, Franklin Village detective who compiled many of the names.

Police are trying to obtain evidence against these youngsters in connection with the radar-detector thefts.

"We've been lucky in three different cases where we (officers) were on surveillance, and caught them in the act," David said.

Eight youngsters were arrested in connection with these three cases, David said.

"The kids that are caught will be arrested," David said.

POLICE ALSO HAVE linked eight

vehicles that often are driven to the crime sites.

"We have their names and addresses, and we're watching these people as often as we can," Nelson said. "We originally thought these people were only involved in radar-detector thefts, but we're receiving information that they may also be involved in other breaking and entering cases."

"A lot (radar detectors) are sold at the schools or through connections made at the schools," Nelson added.

West Bloomfield High School, Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills, Groves in Birmingham, Southfield/Lathrup, Harrison in Farmington Hills and Oakland University were cited by Nelson as key places for the youngsters

to make selling connections.

In another case, a 16-year-old West Bloomfield boy who was arrested by police last Monday for stealing a radar detector, may face a stiffer penalty than he thought.

He was charged with receiving and concealing more than \$100 worth of goods Nelson has requested the Oakland County prosecutor's office try the 16-year-old as an adult.

"People will come out of a restaurant to find their window smashed, and their property stolen," Nelson said. "I think this is very serious."

WITNESSES SAY the West Bloomfield youngster broke the window of a 1984 Corvette and stole a radar detector

in the Maple-Orchard Lake Road area. The suspect was driving with a passenger, who was dropped off before the police caught up with the car.

"The passenger's name has come up before, but the driver's name hasn't," Nelson said. He added that investigation still continues into the passenger's involvement in the crime.

"We're hoping to make other arrests," Nelson said referring to the other 34 police suspects.

In another incident, John Mayer of Bloomfield Township had his radar detector stolen from his car in a shopping mall on Long Lake Road and Telegraph, March 12.

"I've talked to 10 or 12 friends who have had their detectors stolen within

the past six or 10 weeks, but they didn't report it to the police, because they were either embarrassed, or their insurance didn't cover it," Mayer said.

"RADAR DETECTORS are used to avoid receiving speeding tickets. The devices can spot police officers who are monitoring speed with radar. The detectors are legal in Michigan.

The detectors are being sold for \$100 apiece or more. Thieves opt for Escort detectors, because they are the most expensive, Nelson said.

"There's more money in this (stealing radar detectors) than in selling drugs," he said. "With drugs you have to buy first, and with these (detectors) you just steal and sell."

## Tower boosters see rejection for height bid

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

In their second unsuccessful bid in six years, amateur radio operators were given thumbs down in their push to change the city's height restrictions for antenna towers.

Following a public hearing last Thursday, planning commissioners voted 5-1 to recommend denial of a request to add antenna towers to the zoning ordinance's list of height exceptions.

Commission chairman Edgar Raedte opposed the recommended denial. Commissioners Tom Duke Jr. and Robert Pratt abstained.

Although failing to win the planning commission's approving nod, radio operators still have an opportunity to convince Farmington Hills officials to overturn the planning commission's recommendation.

THE CITY council is expected to consider the issue at a public hearing April 16, said Hal Rowe, director of zoning.

If the council overturns the planning commission's recommendation, radio operators would be allowed to build antennas to a maximum 75 feet. Currently, ham operator towers are restricted to 25 feet.

In the past several years, however, the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) has granted at least seven variances to extend antenna towers beyond 25 feet.

"The planning commission felt the ZBA has been handling it (requests to increase tower height) properly," Rowe said, referring to the commission's recommendation last week. "That way the neighbors are notified of the hearings."

In keeping their promise to oppose

the radio operators' request, representatives from most of the city's subdivisions turned out for the public hearing Thursday, Rowe said.

"The place was packed," Rowe said. "Almost every subdivision was present and spoke."

Subdivision residents argued that the current ZBA variance procedure is the best thing for neighbors.

"We at least receive notification so we can object to or support (an issue)," said Vicki Harshorn, Old Farm Colony Subdivision Association president, who led opposition among the city's neighborhoods.

Changing the ordinance, Harshorn said, would allow radio operators to put up antennas without benefit of neighbor's input.

But radio operators have argued that even though variances have been granted, "there exists no uniformly applied standard by which applications for variances are judged."

Subdivision residents also argued against extending the height of radio antennas without a variance because of aesthetics, the negative impact on surrounding property values and safety.

After the ham radio operators' initial request for an ordinance change was nixed by planning commissioners in 1979, they again raised the issue this past January by presenting the city council with a petition boasting 24 signatures.

Council members voted to refer the request, without recommendation, to the planning commission.

The council's referral allowed the petitioners to bypass the planning commission's \$400 fee that pays the administrative costs for considering and framing an ordinance amendment.



Former astronaut Jim Irwin presents North Farmington Student Council President Maria Fomin with a color photograph of himself.

Irwin is shown saluting the American flag on the moon.

## Astronaut Irwin talks about glory and excitement of walk on the moon

By Tom Baer  
staff writer

Maybe you've been wondering . . . just how astronauts take care of their, ah, biological functions when they're out on a space mission.

Well, nobody asked him, but former astronaut Jim Irwin, who walked on the moon 12 years ago as a member of the Apollo 16 crew, had the answer last Thursday morning when he addressed an assembly of more than 700 North Farmington High School students.

It was very simple, really, and no high-tech solution was needed. The

Apollo 16 astronauts wore diapers under those space suits.

"They gave us diapers, but of course they didn't give us enough of them," said Irwin, causing a few chuckles in the auditorium.

That space-age tidbit was one of many that Irwin, now the head of a quasi-religious motivational group called High Flight, dished up in his three appearances in the Farmington area last week.

The retired Air Force colonel spoke at Nardin Park Methodist Church, which sponsored his visit, before facing assemblies at North Farmington and

Farmington Harrison high schools.

Following his talk at North Farmington, Irwin presented Student Council President Maria Fomin with a color photograph of a space-suited Irwin saluting an American flag with the moon-cape and the Apollo 16 space craft in the background.

Cloth in a specially-designed "flight suit" complete with Apollo 16 patches on the shoulders and silver braid on the bill of the cap, Irwin described his air career from his days as a student pilot on a Naval Academy biplane called The Yellow Peril to his Apollo 16 moon walk on July 26, 1971.

He told how his career almost ended when the Taylor Craft plane he was testing crashed, resulting in two broken legs and a loss of memory.

"The doctors told me I might never walk right again, let alone fly aircraft," said Irwin, who turned 54 last Saturday.

BUT IRWIN recovered and somehow convinced the Air Force to give him another chance to fly — this time with the emerging space program. "That

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### The winners

Whatever the weekend's caucus outcome, the Oral Quarrel voters had their own opinion on this season's political feast. They chose Gary Hart and Ronald Reagan as their favorite candidates. Walter Mondale received only one vote. To see what our Quarrelers had to say, turn to page 6A.

## Bootleggers' fate decided tonight

Farmington City Council is expected to decide the fate of Bootleggers bar at 7:30 p.m. tonight.

Based on testimony taken at two public hearings held in early March, the council will decide whether the bar's Class C liquor license should be renewed.

Bootleggers, 32305 Grand River, has been facing the threat of liquor license revocation since a report was publicized in February listing approximately 100 police-related incidents in one year.

Among the complaints are alleged incidents of fistfights, urinating in the parking lot, trespassing, patrons shout-

ing obscenities, squealing tires and honking horns.

But attorney Norman Farhat of Southfield, who represents Bootleggers' owner, Joe Asclone, said two weeks ago that "from the facts there's no justification to take his license away, and if they do I'll tip my hat to them for their guts." Farhat added that a city ordinance regulating bar operations is unreasonable.

If the council denies Asclone's request to renew the bar's liquor license, Farhat said he will opt for a hearing by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission and subsequently take the case to circuit court.

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