A private eye's view — tracking down Jackson

By Sharon "Scoop" Dargay
staff writer

The newsroom was hoppin' last week.

My partner was cracking a big story about a murder case. The boys at the copy desk were sniffing out typos like bloodhounds on a fox hunt.

I was tapping out a story about suburban cowboys when in walked my boss. She wanted a story bout Michael Jackson, and she wanted it fast.

I got on the horn to the Troy Hilton, pronto. If anyone had a clue about the kid's whereabouts, it'd be Denis ("with one n") Frey. He knew every twist and turn of every hallway in the place and could recite room numbers like a chaperone on the senior class trip. I hated to grill an unsuspecting hotel manager like Frey — but it's my job.

I dialed the number, took a bite out of my Snickers bar and talked with more receptionists and switchboard operators than Jackson has gold records. If any of them knew about the Indiana wonder, they weren't about to squeal.

"We talked with the Jackson people, and they booked 80 rooms for the crew," said Frey, when he came on the line. "We talked about booking the family here, but it was a joint decision that because of the design of the hotel, they wouldn't come here."

Frey had to make good on a commitment to General Motors anyway. The auto bigwigs reserved part of the hotel for weekend meetings.

I told him I wanted to snoop around the joint for fans. He laughed the laugh of a man who had a 50-pound sack of fan mail in his office but no rubber-necklers in the lobby. Maybe a few groupies booked rooms in the hotel, hoping for a $59 per-weekend-night glimpse of their heartthrob?

"Could be. The hotel is full this weekend and it usually isn't," Frey admitted. "The Jacksons wanted to stay here, but they didn't like the closeness to the Silverdome. They had changed concert dates so often," he added, "and we're in the business of selling rooms."

MORE STARS had traipsed through the Troy Hilton than the Milky Way. The Cincinnati Bengals touched down at the place a few years ago at Super Bowl time. Warblers from Pine Knob music theater frequently bead south to catch a few Zs at Stephenson Highway and Maple roads.

"We provide privacy too. That's why they keep coming back."

Frey obviously wasn't going to spill the beans. He invited me to look at the 50-pound mail sack, but later told my photographer to amscray.

"Thanks," I muttered. "I'll call you."

I looked at my notes, thinking that I'd need someone with an eye for Egyptian hieroglyphics to decipher what looked like an EKG readout.

I took a swig from my bottle of Pepsi and wondered if the kid leaves a trail of glitter like Hansel and Gretel gone Hollywood. I thumbed through the yellow pages for sequin suppliers but didn't get much past "Dentists" when I remembered Beverly Debski. The Troy private eye has done more stakeouts than Boy Scouts on a tenting trip. She's like the Royal Canadian mounties without a horse — always getting her man.

I glanced at my watch. Quarter after nine. Would the owner of Spies Unlimited be off on some Charlie's Angels-style assignment?

"PRETTY EARLY in the morning for a pop-quiz," Debski read my mind, after letting the telephone ring a few times.

"This is nothing like television. It's persistence and hard work. One of the hardest things is to follow someone by car. It takes a lot of luck and prayer.

"I wouldn't follow Michael Jackson. He could change cars several times."

Follow him? How about finding him? Debski had me heading for the finish line when I hadn't even left the starting block.

"It's harder to find where some ex-husband is meeting his girlfriend," she said, almost snickering.

That's her specialty — surveillance and private investigation, bad check writers, ex-spouses, you-name-it.

Debski told me to call in my markers and pump contacts for information.

"Unless they've joined the CIA, no one ever gives up all of their contacts with the world," she said.

"Find out which hotels have entire floors that you can't go on," she added. "Of course it's easy to rent a house in Grosse Pointe. He may not be staying in a hotel."

One of her pals said the Motown Angel might make like the J. Geils Band did, rent a few rooms at the Westin downtown, but go undercover at the Somerset Inn in Troy. Another lady private eye, who used to bodyguard for the kid, remembered how Jackson took a shine to a record producer in Detroit.

I hung around the Birmingham Bookstore one lunch hour reading Jackson biographies for clues, but Debski told me not to waste my time.

"He's only here for three days. You don't need to find out everything about a person like Michael Jackson. Of course, he could surprise you and go to the Holiday Inn," she laughed.

on the agenda

City of Farmington Hills
City Council Agenda
Regular Public Hearing
August 20 — 7:30 p.m.

Public Hearing:

● Consideration of cluster housing site plan. Section 24 NE, cluster housing in RA-3 zoning, southwest corner of Ruth and Folsom.

● Consideration of cluster housing site plan, west side of Orchard Lake Road, south of Pimlico Road.

Unfinished Business:

● Consideration of resolution setting hearing date for Neyer, Tiseo and Hindo Ltd., project. Economic development corporation standard resolution.

● Consideration of resolution establishing project district and setting hearing date for Orchard Place Development, a Michigan Co-partnership project.

● Consideration of resolution setting hearing date for H. & J. Industrial Center Project.

● Consideration of resolution setting hearing date for Greater Detroit Otologic Group P.C. project.

● Consideration of adoption of resolution approving charter amendment proposal to appear on Nov. 6 ballot for 1.5 mill, for 20 years to expire June 30, 2005.

New Business:

● Consideration of joint meeting with city council and planning commission for Aug. 30 to review proposed revisions in zoning ordinance.

● Consideration of adoption of procedure for adding unpublished items to city council agenda. (requested by Joan Dudley, postponed from meeting of 8-13-84).

● Consideration of request for preconference approval for Michigan Municipal League Convention.

● Consideration of reappointment of delegate and alternate for Michigan Municipal League Convention.

● Consideration of request for executive session to review labor negotiations and pending litigation.

City Manager Report:

● Submission of annual Fire Department report for 1983.

Chili cookoff planned

The 1984 Michigan Chili Cookoff will pepper the palates of about 500 people expected to attend the sixth annual competition Sunday, Sept. 9 at The Lark Restaurant in West Bloomfield.

"It's best not to argue the origin of chili," said Jim Lark, who claims a researcher believes chili was the entree at the sumptuous feasts of the Camelot Knights of the Round Table.

Whatever the origin, the $25 tickets for this year's event, benefitting the Michigan Chili Cookoff Scholarship Fund, are almost gone, according to Pat Wilhite. "I could still register a few cooks. We have a limit of 40," she added.

"Chili heads, start your stoves," will be Lark's kickoff at the 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. event featuring music, prizes, food and beverages.

The winning cook gets a trophy and a paid trip to California to compete for the $25,000 international prize on Oct. 21.

MEDIA TYPES are the judges who will gulp quantities of ice water between tasting scorching entries.

Chief judge is Bob Talbert. Others are Len Barnes, AAA Michigan Living Editor; Mary Lou Callaway, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers; Bill Flynn, WJBK vice president and general manager; Julie Greenwalt, People magazine; Arthur Jefferson, Detroit public schools superintendent; Eddie Jona, Merchant of Vino; David Lum, Rikshaw Inn proprietor; Jim Northrup, Detroit Tiger great; Jane Rayburn, Metropolitan Detroit editor; Mary Solomon Smyka, Monthly Detroit editor; Talbert, Detroit Free Press columnist; Nerissa Williams, WDIV-TV 4; Andrea Wojak, Detroit News food writer; and David Wojak, freelance food writer.

For information, call 661-4466.

Local firm buys property

Valley Property Group of Farmington announced that it has completed negotiations for the purchase of Westshore Estate Mobile Home Community at 3201 South Euclid in Bay City, Mich.

Westshore Estate Mobile Home Community is a 150-site mobile home village, rated as one of the top parks in the Bay County area.

The Valley Group is headed by two Farmington attorneys, Rodney W. Sabourin and Brace K. Case.

The concern controls commercial properties in Farmington, Lansing, Ann Arbor, and near the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. This repesents their first venture into mobile home parks.

The Valley Group currently controls properties with an estimated value in excess of $10 million dollars.

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DR. WEISS

CHOOSING CRUTCHES OR A WALKER

Previously I discussed the use of a cane in treating arthritic conditions. Today's column will consider when it is appropriate to employ crutches or a walker.

If you can't bear weight on a leg, or both legs are weak, then crutches may be in order. If you lack hand and arm strength or you have poor balance, then you would benefit from a walker.

There are two types of crutches: axillary and non-axillary. The axillary type are pressed against the side of your chest wall about two inches below the arm pit. Non-axillary crutches use the forearm to distribute the weight of the body, and for many people, are more comfortable than axillary crutches. In both types you should have pads at the areas of contact between the crutch and the body.

In walkers, look for one that is light weight, adjustable in height, has a wide base, and can be folded for transport in a car.

If you have arthritis, wheelchairs should be avoided. Too often their use leads to knees that are frozen in the flexed position. As a result walking becomes impossible, and usual corrective surgical procedures are precluded.

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