

# Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 98

Monday, September 17, 1984

Farmington, Michigan

38 Pages

Twenty-five cents

## 5 teachers echo claims of court suit

By Marie Chestney  
staff writer

The recent filing of a lawsuit by a fired teacher against Catholic Central High School has led to charges of rights violations by other former teachers of the Redford Township parochial school.

Raymond Owen, an 11-year teacher at the school, recently filed a lawsuit in Wayne County Circuit Court charging that he was fired in May because he told the school's principal, Rev. Philip Acquaro, details of his personal life and that he had a divorce pending.

Owen said the firing violated his rights under a state law prohibiting discrimination based on marital status.

His charges against the school principal were echoed by five former Catholic Central teachers who generally claimed that Acquaro dismissed teachers for personal reasons.

A teacher now at the school, who has taught for 27 years under six different principals, described as "incredible" the number of teachers fired in the last four years under Acquaro.

According to a former employee, 21 teachers (20 lay teachers and one priest) either voluntarily have left or been fired in that time.

**CATHOLIC CENTRAL** is a well-known all-male high school which moved in recent years from the west side of Detroit to Redford Township. The school, operated by the Basilian Fathers, has 1,100 students with 45 lay

*'The fewer the phone calls (from parents), the less flak you got. He should support teachers when parents come in. He should tell Johnnie to work harder so that the (school's) standards don't go down. What they've got there now is grade inflation.'*

Gordon Marquette,  
former teacher

teachers and 10 priests on the teaching staff.

Acquaro declined to discuss the firings, Owen's lawsuit or charges or complaints of the former teachers.

Patrick McDonald, a Birmingham-based attorney representing the school in the lawsuit, said the case was "no truth to the allegations" in Owen's lawsuit.

McDonald said that because the matter was in litigation he did not want to discuss the case. But he said: "When tried, the allegations will not be supported. Catholic Central has an excellent staff and few turnovers when compared to other schools. Acquaro is a fair administrator."

Acquaro's staunchest defender among the teaching staff may be Thomas Nesbitt, a 16-year teacher and head of the fine arts department. Nesbitt said Acquaro is the best administrator the school has had in recent years and a caring and understanding priest.

**THE COMPLAINTS** against Acquaro, former head of the school's science department, fall into the following main categories:

- "Unjust, arbitrary and capricious" firings of teachers which have led to an atmosphere of "fear, paranoia and anxiety" among the school's lay staff members.

- Teachers fear being fired, reassigned or put on probation for reasons unrelated to their performance in the classroom. These range from getting on the "bad side" of Acquaro to personality clashes between principal and teacher to lifestyle or having beliefs which clash with Acquaro's.

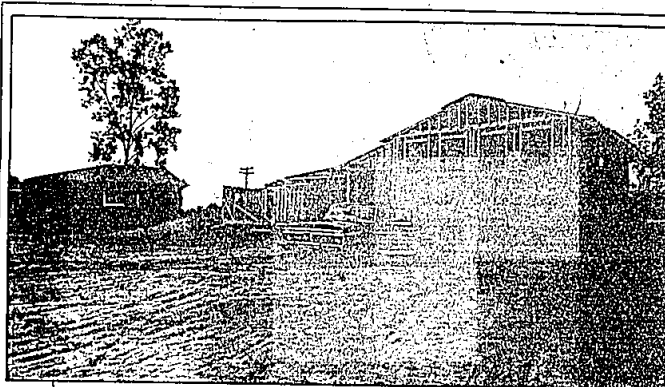
- A lack of support from the principal when parents complain about their student's failing grade.

- No union or contract protection or security for teachers when a personality or belief clash does occur.

- Feelings of insecurity and powerlessness brought on by a contract which allows either side to terminate it without explanation. The contract demands only that the termination decision be made in good faith.

McDonald advised Acquaro not to discuss comments made by the former teachers.

Gordon Marquette, who taught 16 years in the school's English department and who voluntarily left the school for a job with a pharmaceutical firm in 1982, called Acquaro "a good



## Recycled homes

The house pictured above is one of Henry Balcerzak's recycled homes under construction on the corner of Farmington Road and Glen Orchard Drive. A resident of Farmington Hills for 32 years, Balcerzak, right, learned his building skills from his father and has been in the business for 60 years.



RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

## Builder makes big move to his corner of world

By Jean Adamczak  
staff writer

There are mobile homes, new homes, prefabricated homes, homes under construction and recycled homes.

Recycled homes? That's what Farmington Hills builder Henry Balcerzak calls them, and he is making recycled homes his latest construction project.

A 60-year veteran of the construction business, Balcerzak recently bought three homes in various locations around Farmington and had them moved to their present location on the corner of Farmington Road and Glen Orchard Drive.

"I call them recycled houses," says the 72-year-old Balcerzak. "A recycled house is as good or better than new."

Balcerzak purchased the corner property in 1978 because it was a "reasonable price." The first home he bought was relocated from Franklin Road where it had to be moved due to construction.

The home was moved in November 1983 and was occupied in May, 1984.

The second home, the one he is currently working on, used to be an attorney's office on Maple Road, west of Orchard.

"This will be quite a house when we're done with it," says Balcerzak proudly. He plans to add a "mother-in-law suite" on the house that will be a room with its own bath, separate from the main house and connected by a side porch.

"That's so when the grandchildren get on the mother-in-law's nerves she can have somewhere to get away," he jokes.

**THE HOUSE** will be on the market for about \$125,000 he says, adding that if it were a new home the cost would be more than \$250,000.

Balcerzak says that a recycled home offers prospective buyers an alternative to buying a brand new home, and that recycled homes are built just as

well, if not better, as new homes on the market.

Structural damage to recycled homes during a move is minimal, says Balcerzak, and depends on the house-mover.

"When I'm through with this house, I'll defy anyone to find one crack in this house," he says. "All the floor and wall tiles in the bathroom are even intact after the move."

Another advantage to recycled homes is that older houses are built better and can withstand the move.

"I can't buy wood like the stuff used when this house was built," he says, indicating the solid, 30-year-old roof beams.

Moving a house is a costly project. It costs from \$5,000-\$8,000 to move the structure and then another \$3,000-\$5,000 for all the utilities to maintain their lines during the move.

"MetroVision, Ma Bell, Edison and

Please turn to Page 9

## Tech lags behind promises

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Although a proposed amendment to the tri-city cable TV franchise would allow the MetroVision cable firm to delay promised technological services, subscribers won't be the losers.

"No one is taking anything away," said Lark Samouelian, executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC).

Instead, MetroVision would be able to delay providing services such as banking, security and meter-reading until they are technologically available and cost-effective to provide, Samouelian said.

What has happened, says Samouelian, is that cable firm officials promised more than they could provide.

"Services are not available for them to sell," Samouelian said.

**IN MAKING** their proposals to cities, cable firms figured portions of their revenue would come from many of the sophisticated services.

But as it turned out, the cable firms overestimated potential profits and underestimated costs.

In recognizing the problems of the cable industry, SWOCC last week recommended the approval of amendments to the original cable franchise agreement between MetroVision and the cities of Novi, Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The proposed amendments, including MetroVision's requested rate increase, must go before each of the three councils for approval.

The proposed amendments, which reflect changes in the entire cable industry include:

- Allowing the services and facilities originally agreed upon to be modified by mutual agreement between MetroVision and SWOCC.

- Allowing MetroVision to ask for a rate increase at any time, provided they don't make the request more than once in a twelve-month period.

- Changing the construction plan to incorporate changes, such as an additional 60 miles of wiring in Farmington Hills and Novi.

**WHILE SOPHISTICATED** services won't be on tap until they are available and can be provided at a reasonable cost to both MetroVision and the subscriber, all is not lost, Samouelian said.

That's because cable firms which have invested high up-front costs in building a system must look to the sophisticated services eventually for a profitable rate of return.

After the services are technologically available, the next big question is whether a franchise user is ready for such services.

There is little purpose in MetroVision providing the meter-reading service unless each household is wired for cable. Also, a service like banking can only be economical when a majority of residents subscribe to the service.

Before these types of services are provided, however, the public and institutions such as the cities, schools and utility companies, should understand how to use the services.

Samouelian is developing a survey for tri-city residents to find out what they want from the cable system and

Please turn to Page 9

## Cities ponder 'Choice'

The complexity of the proposed Voter's Choice amendment on the Nov. 6 election ballot makes it difficult for local officials to accurately pinpoint how city coffers would be affected.

"Due to the complexities and vagueness in the proposed constitutional amendment, it is difficult to provide a definitive analysis with any degree of accuracy since many areas of various interpretations exist," said Charles Rosch, Farmington Hills finance director, in a memo to City Manager William Costick.

The memo, which discusses the potential impact of the Voter's Choice Amendment, was included in council member's packet of information for tonight's meeting. It is not, however, scheduled for discussion tonight.

While interpretations of the impact of the proposed amendment about Rosch estimated that the city stands to lose about \$970,000 in revenues (6.3 percent of the city's current \$15 million budget).

**ROSCH BROKE** down the estimated

Please turn to Page 9

## Watercolor history comes alive

By Jean Adamczak  
staff writer

Colorful pieces of Farmington history are about to come out of the attic and take their places in published annals thanks to the efforts of the Farmington Historical Commission.

Scheduled to be published in mid-fall, the book will contain 10 watercolor paintings by Lillian Drake Avery, plus description and text of farm life in early Farmington Township.

The idea for the book came about by "pure accident," says Jean Fox, publication chair for the Hills' Historical Commission.

While researching, Fox ran across an old, hand-tooled leather scrapbook of

Avery's in the attic of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society in Pontiac.

"To me, Lillian Drake Avery was the name of a person who had connections with Farmington in a lot of ways," said Fox who is vice chair of the Hills' Historical Commission.

"We didn't know she was an artist, we just thought she was an interesting local character," adds Fox.

Imagine Fox's surprise when she opened up the scrapbook, which was carefully wrapped in gray chambray cloth, and found 10 watercolors, (some dated 1890), photos, memoirs and an early map of Farmington, all done by Avery.

"We (historical commission mem-

bers) thought it would be interesting to get her (Avery) out of the attic and into public domain," Fox said of the decision to publish Avery's work.

**THE ORIGINAL** watercolors range in size from 4 1/2 x 11 inches, to 11 x 14 inches, and will be reproduced "in a large format" (around 11 x 14 inches) in the book says Fox.

"The main thing is to have the watercolors reproduced as beautifully as possible and make them quality pictures," Fox said.

Included in the book will be an evaluation of Avery as a newly discovered Michigan artist and local historian together with her unpublished paper on the underground railroad as it per-

tained to Farmington Township.

The paintings depict such scenes around Farmington as an old mill pond with a bridge, (now Farmington City Park), the Drake homestead on Power Road, an octagonal home, homes and barns on hillides and a springtime stream.

"The feeling is late 19th century, rural and we think most of the scenes are from around the Farmington area," Fox said.

Born in a farmhouse in Farmington Township in 1854, Avery moved to Pontiac after marrying Aaron Avery.

Her list of accomplishments includes

Please turn to Page 9

## what's inside

Community Calendar . . .	6B
Editorials . . . . .	8A
Inside Angles . . . . .	5A
MM Minutes . . . . .	6B
Obituaries . . . . .	2A
Shopping Cart . . . . .	Section B
Sports . . . . .	Section C
Suburban Life . . . . .	Section B



**RECRUITMENT  
HELP WANTED**  
Classified Advertising  
Begins in SECTION C  
of today's paper.