

The beach scene.
Suits to suit you, 1D



Swimming
results, 1C

Ambulance rerouting
'best for patients,' 3A

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Farmington FOCUS

To write the Observer: 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. To call: news line, 477-5450; sports line, 591-2312; home delivery, 591-0509; classified ads, 591-0960; display ads, 591-2300.

COMPLAINTS about the U.S. Postal Service's Saturday closings can be made by filling out consumer service cards.

The cards are available at both the Farmington branch, 33200 Slocum, and the Farmington Hills branch, 32455 12 Mile.

Patrons may also send their comments to U.S. Rep. William Broomfield, R-Birmingham, whose district includes the Farmington area, at 2305 Rayburn Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.

SHE'S a winner. Mary Birchman of Farmington Hills won a certificate of merit ribbon for her honorable mention entry in the first Michigan Humane Society animal photography contest.

Entries were judged on quality, composition, and how successfully the photo captured the animal's nature, personality or beauty, or its relationship with a person.

Judges included photographer Art Emanuele of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

All winners will be featured in a special Be Kind to Animals Week display at the Fisher Building in Detroit's New Center May 1-14.

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — Chatham Hills residents are being asked to pay the majority of a \$1.2 million major subdivision street improvement project approved by the Farmington City Council. The balance, about 33 percent, will be paid by the city.

what's inside

Business briefs . . . 3A
Classifieds . . . C,E,F
Index . . . 8E
Auto . . . Sections C,F
Real estate . . . 1E
Employment . . . 8E
Creative living . . . XX
Crossword puzzle . . . 2E
Entertainment . . . 5D
On the agenda . . . 2A
Police/fire calls . . . 4A
Sports . . . Section C
Street scene . . . Section D
Taste . . . Section B

HOMES
of the finest
distinction
**CREATIVE
LIVING**
REAL ESTATE SECTION

NOW IN EVERY MONDAY
AND THURSDAY ISSUE

Ex-Hills man guilty of killing wife

By Casey Hans
staff writer

A former Farmington Hills resident was found guilty last week of murdering his wife and setting fire to his Meadowbrook Hills house to cover up the death.

After two days of deliberations, an Oakland County jury returned Thursday to find James Arnold Edwards, 56, guilty of second degree murder and arson. The 11-man and one-woman jury did not find him guilty of first degree murder, where premeditation must be proved.

Edwards sat motionless in Oakland County Circuit Judge Francis X. O'Brien's courtroom as the verdict was read.

The badly burned body of Marlene Edwards, 50, was found Oct. 14, 1985, following a house fire at the family home on Rhonwood in the southwest sector of Farmington Hills. Her husband was charged with her murder in January 1986; his trial lasted five weeks.

Judge O'Brien scheduled sentencing for Wednesday. Edwards faces

**'This was justice.
Marlene Edwards
finally had her day in
court.'**

— Detective Darnel Krause

up to life in prison for the murder conviction, although the lesser second degree makes him eligible for parole. He faces an additional sentence of up to 20 years in prison for the arson conviction.

EDWARDS' CASH bond of \$5,000 was revoked by O'Brien Thursday, and he was taken into custody by Oakland County Sheriff's deputies.

He had been free on bond during the past 2½ years awaiting trial, living in Farmington Hills, Lakeport and, most recently, in West Bloomfield Township. He is retired from computer graphics work at Ford Motor Co.

Thomas Wilhelm, who filed in for absent, defense attorney Nicholas

Smith of Southfield, said the verdict would "definitely be appealed" and that attempts would be made to have Edwards released on bond pending appeal.

Both Darnel Krause, Farmington Hills detective in charge of the case, and Oakland County assistant prosecutor Joyce Todd called the verdict fair.

"This was justice," Krause said. "Marlene Edwards finally had her day in court."

Krause attributed the guilty verdict not only to testimony presented, but said Todd had done a good job prosecuting the case and that the jury had remained attentive throughout the trial.

"I THINK that it's a fair verdict under the circumstances," Todd said. "It was clearly an arson, but the homicide was in question. It would be ridiculous to set fire to a house after a natural death."

"She was either stabbed or strangled, I can't tell you (which). But I'm

Please turn to Page 2

Case highlights

Key dates in the case that led to James Arnold Edwards' conviction of murdering his wife and setting his house on fire:

• Oct. 14, 1985 — Marlene Edwards' body is found in the family home on Rhonwood in southwest Farmington Hills after a late-afternoon fire that caused some \$100,000 in property loss.

• January 1986 — James Arnold Edwards, her husband, is charged with murder in his wife's death.

• March 1986 — Preliminary examination testimony is given in 47th District Court in Farmington. Edwards is ordered to stand trial on murder charges; Judge Margaret Schaeffer adds one count of arson.

• July 1986 — Marlene Edwards' body is exhumed by the prosecution for a second autopsy.

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• May 1987 — Oakland County Circuit Judge David Breck remands the case to 47th District Court for additional medical testimony.

• August 1987 — James Arnold Edwards is again bound over by District Judge Margaret Schaeffer for trial in Oakland County Circuit Court.

• January 1988 — James Arnold Edwards' trial begins in Circuit Judge Steven Andrews' courtroom.

• Feb. 25, 1988 — The jury finds the defendant guilty of second degree murder and arson. The defense says it will appeal the verdict.

• March 2, 1988 — Judge Andrews is scheduled to sentence the defendant.

Sanders store was downtown gathering spot

By Loraine McCallish
staff writer

Sanders, a landmark and gathering spot for 27 years in the Downtown Farmington Center, closed up shop Saturday night.

The Fred Sanders confectionery store, boasting an old-fashioned soda bar and stools, was one of the first tenants in the center and it was the first shop to open each morning.

"There were always a few who were waiting for me to open the door when I got here every morning," store manager Robin White, said Thursday.

"Within 15 minutes, every stool and chair was filled. They became my family. One of the regulars would come by every night when I

closed the store to walk me to my car. They poured themselves their own second cup of coffee when we were very busy because they felt at home here."

And the regulars were ready to start a telephone campaign, a letter writing campaign or even picket. White said, when she told them the lease was not to be renewed.

"By the time I found out we were closing, the ink on the lease for the new tenant had already dried," she said. "Nobody was happy about it, but at that point, there was nothing we could do."

NO EMPLOYEES will lose their jobs. "We've all gotten our new as-

Please turn to Page 6



JOHN STORMAZAND/staff photographer

Robin White, manager of Sanders in the Downtown Farmington Center, is headed to the Sanders at Oakland Mall, Troy.

Major sewer projects to start this year

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Long-awaited \$44.5 million improvements to the deteriorating Evergreen-Farmington Interceptor sewer are expected to begin later this year.

"We are coming to the expenditure of 1988 funds. The (state) Department of Natural Resources is going to have to approve the project. We're looking for approval by spring," said Tom Biswell, Farmington Hills public services director.

Southfield and Farmington Hills officials will meet tonight in the Farmington Hills council chambers, 31555 11 Mile, to hear an

update on the project.

The councils also will learn the status of Oakland County's application for a \$24.5 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to help pay for the project. The state DNR certifies the project grant application.

THE PROPOSED improvements will add capacity and stop sewage overflow spilling into residents' basements and the Rouge River.

Improvements are needed for an expected boom in development in the northwest section of Southfield, along the Farmington Hills border at 11 Mile and Inkster.

The Evergreen-Farmington Interceptor sewer is one of three projects that the DNR is ex-

pected to approve. The project ranks first in priority, followed by the North Huron-Rouge Valley Wastewater Control System and the First Hamilton relief line, Biswell said.

"There's enough money to handle all the projects," he added.

The EPA's interest in the project and willingness to provide financing has been sparked by environmental damage caused to the Rouge River by overflowing sewage from suburban communities.

THOUGH 16 communities are involved in the Evergreen-Farmington system, Farmington Hills and Southfield have had the greatest sewage problems and will pay the greatest local share to improve the system.

Tentatively, Farmington Hills is expected to pay more than an estimated \$10 million, Southfield an estimated \$12.5 million.

The basic problem in the system is overloaded sewage lines. Because there has been nowhere to put the overflow, diluted sewage has seeped into homeowners' basements, back yards and eventually into the Rouge.

PROPERTIES in the rapidly developing 11 Mile-Inkster-Franklin roads area are currently hooked up to existing sewers. When the interceptor is constructed, it will serve the area, Roger Smith, Southfield public services director said.

Please turn to Page 4

A real fighter He's working to rebuild his life

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Ron Elkin makes it all look so easy. It wasn't always that way for the 18-year-old North Farmington High School graduate. He spent 10½ months in the hospital, fighting to recover from a 1985 automobile accident that broke his back and left him wheelchair-bound.

For three months, his family didn't even know if Ron would live. He was given only a 5 percent chance of recovery.

But this middle child in a family of three sons "rolls with the punches," according to his mom, Nancy, and has worked hard to rebuild his life.

Today, the Farmington Hills resident is able to drive a car and live his life independently. He completed graduation requirements at North Farmington in January and is now looking forward to attending Michigan

people

State this fall.

He hasn't yet selected a major. "I don't know what I'll major in — that's why I'm going," he said.

So far, Ron's education has taken him through Forest Elementary and Warner Middle School before he attended North.

THIS TERM, you may find him wheeling around the Oakland Community College campus as he takes a refresher math course in preparation for his freshman year.

Please turn to Page 8



JOHN STORMAZAND/staff photographer

Ron Elkin was able to continue his job at the Farmington Community Library following a 1985 accident that left him wheelchair-bound. "They just redefined my duties," he said. He's shown at work in the Farmington Hills branch Monday night.