

Couple wins \$2.07 million in suit

By M.B. Dillon
Staff writer

A Plymouth Township couple whose son suffered brain damage at birth has been awarded \$2.07 million in an out-of-court settlement reached Feb. 26 with three physicians and St. Mary's Hospital.

Todd Boonstra, born in September 1973, is severely mentally and physically impaired as a result of collective malpractice and negligence, said Beverly Hires, Southfield attorney who represented Richard and Judy Boonstra, Todd's parents.

Named in the suit were Drs. Harry Tarpinian, Harvey Stein and William Rubinoff, Tarpinian, who formerly practiced in Farmington, no longer is on staff at St. Mary's.

Stein and Rubinoff still work at the Livonia hospital. They have offices in Farmington and Farmington Hills, respectively.

A JURY TRIAL was to have begun in April before Wayne Circuit Judge Charles Farmer.

"A series of inexcusable commissions and omissions demonstrated that standard medical procedures were not followed during and after Todd's birth," said Hires, who also is a registered nurse.

The case involved a "tragedy of errors which began when Mrs. Boonstra's pregnancy was allowed to continue two and a half weeks past her due date."

"Doctors were negligent in failing to evaluate the baby's large size, which precluded a safe vaginal delivery," said Hires.

Instead of performing a

Caesarean section, doctors induced labor and used forceps to deliver the baby.

"Hospital records indicate that there was a hemorrhagic rash and swelling on Todd's face and head at birth," said Hires.

Now a 10th grader in Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, Boonstra has undergone nine brain operations. He functions at the mental level of a second grader, Hires said.

A trust fund is being established for the youth, to be used to provide counseling, education and cover medical costs.

A HOSPITAL spokesman confirmed that Todd Boonstra was born there in September 1973 but declined to comment further.

"As far as a statement, I don't know what we can say. It was 14 years ago," said Julie Sprout, director of community relations for the hospital.

"Todd Boonstra was born here, that's a fact. But we really can't comment further because this was settled out of court."

The Boonstras also have declined comment.

Beware of cleaners

Because windshield washer solvent is inexpensive, some people substitute it for household window cleaner.

Dr. Regine Aronow, director of the Polson Control Center at Children's Hospital of Michigan, warns, "This is a very dangerous practice. Windshield washer solvent contains methanol. Even small amounts can cause illness or death. Methanol is absorbed through the skin and doesn't need to be swallowed to cause damage."

The Polson Control Center received 57,000 telephone calls in 1987. More than 60 percent of the calls regarding exposure of people involved children under the age of 6. Medicines of all sorts and personal

care products were involved.

Aronow cautions older members of the family to "childproof their homes" and to "hang their purses when they hang up their coats." Young children who find candy and special treats in grandma's purse often find grandma's medicine too.

March 20-26 is National Poison Prevention Week. Two free pamphlets, "Guide to Poison Prevention" and "What About Flare?" plus stickers with the Polson Control Center phone number are available by sending a business-size stamped, self-addressed envelope to Polson Control Center, Children's Hospital of Michigan, 3901 Beaubien Blvd., Detroit 48201.

Suspect held in lieu of bond

Continued from Page 1

returned to his car and drove away," Dwyer said.

Whether he was arrested because of descriptions of him and his car matched those of the robber and the getaway car in several recent inn robberies, his 29-year-old companion was released Sunday, pending continued investigation and issuance of a warrant. A woman was seen in the getaway car used by the man who robbed the Quality Inn, Dwyer said.

Police in Hazel Park, Southfield, Monroe, Bloomfield Township, Romulus, Warren and Canton Township are among those interested in questioning Wheeler. They'll probably ask their victims to attend a police lineup at the Oakland County Jail, Dwyer said.

Before Saturday, the most recent robberies were March 2, at a Holl-

day Inn in Warren and a Sheraton Hotel at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The day before in Southfield, the Michigan Inn reported a robbery attempt by a lone gunman. Ten minutes later, a man who implied he had a gun robbed the nearby Raddison Town Hotel of \$92.

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DWYER LAUDED the coordinating efforts of Sgts. Al Haver and Chuck Nebus, who head the Farmington Hills Police Department's surveillance and detective bureaus, respectively. They worked through the night to compile investigative findings. Sunday morning, the Oakland County prosecutor recommended the arrest warrant that Judge Schaeffer later signed.

Wheeler's arrest culminated a weeklong department pursuit that included stakeouts by uniformed and undercover officers at several Farmington Hills inns.

"We also sent a copy synopsis of our robberies to other police agencies and distributed bulletins describing the robber and his method of operation to all hotels and motels in the city," Dwyer said.

Eight of the 20 recent inn robberies in metro Detroit have been on weekends. Stickups have been reported from 9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

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