

# Suspected drug deal unveils intrigue

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what they were here for," Nebus said. "They offered no explanation for the suspicious activity. What the information they did provide was conflicting or it was disputed by what our surveillance had indicated."

"Yet we had no reason to arrest anyone,"

Police turned over the seized property to the FBI "for further analysis," Nebus said. "We're still waiting for a claim of ownership and a request to have the property returned."

"No silencers, no scopes and no guns were found in the men's possession — only a knife with a four-inch blade," Nebus said.

Police didn't have enough evidence to charge anyone with carrying a concealed weapon.

"All gave little information as to

ON NEW Year's eve, police were alerted to three men sitting in a car for 30 minutes outside the Clarion Hotel, at 12 Mile and Orchard Lake. Investigation revealed that one man was staying at the Clarion Hotel and two men were staying across Orchard Lake Road, at the Dillon Inn.

"Because so much drug trafficking takes place around hotels and motels, we decided to watch them periodically for the next four days, including a 24-hour period the fourth day," Nebus said.

"All of their activity was consistent with what looked like drug trafficking — clandestine meetings, suspicious activity, looking into car trunks. One of them even flew out of this area and flew back the next day while the other two stayed behind."

The two men at the Dillon Inn parked at a nearby shopping center, not in the hotel lot. And the man at the Clarion inn made several long calls from a lobby pay phone, Nebus said.

At 9:30 a.m. Jan. 4, police saw one of the men from the Dillon Inn, driving a rental car, follow a motor home west on 12 Mile, then south on Farmington Road. The motor home, with California plates, had been parked in the hotel lot for about a week.

At Shiloh, the vehicles split.

POLICE STOPPED the rental car at Nine Mile and Farmington Road. "What looked like a combination mobile phone-radio believed to be used to talk back and back over special frequencies was found in the

car," Nebus said. "It was something we'd never seen."

Police stopped the motor home, driven by a 36-year-old Westwood, Calif., man, at Grand River and Power. "The driver was cooperative, and he produced a valid driver's license and paperwork," Nebus said. "We don't know if he knew the others. So he was released."

At 9:50 a.m., police stopped a man in a car, with California plates, outside the Clarion Hotel. Inside the car, registered to one of the men at the Dillon Inn, police found electronic tracking devices, including a receiver and two transmitters (which attach to mobile objects like cars). They also found a stolen built into the grille, a red oscillating light, a blue flashing light and other surveillance equipment. The car was impounded,

but the 39-year-old Tarzana, Calif., man was released after posting \$150 bond for driving with a suspended operator's license.

At 10:30 a.m., police questioned the third man who had been under surveillance. He was found in his room at the Dillon Inn. Police seized from his room a second combination mobile phone-radio.

"The reason we stopped them when we did is that we had information leading us to believe they were all departing from the area," Nebus said.

Police aren't sure they have the proper identity of two of the men. Nor are they sure those two are U.S. citizens. "But they had forms of identification, they hadn't broken any laws and we had no reason to hold them," Nebus said.

## Bond vote is Jan. 31

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Friends of Farmington Schools, a political action committee comprised largely of Farmington-area parents, has been promoting the election with a series of public meetings and letters to other parents and businesses.

"We believe this new school will be good for children and good for area businesses," chairwoman Tina Jensen said.

In yet another letter, Jensen wrote: "Twenty-seven percent of our students live west of Drake Road, but we don't have any elementary schools there. It costs

## Planner won't seek new term

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how he fit into that," Sever said. "We came to an understanding he would not seek reappointment to the planning commission."

BUT AT least one planning commissioner, who declined to be quoted or named, maintains that Valvona was asked to leave the planning commission because of controversy over his involvement with Carrington Place and residents' perception of conflict.

Sever, however, said he did want Valvona to continue serving on the building authority. "I think he is a very good asset for the city," Sever said.

The mayor recommended to board and commission members that "if it's a gray area, don't vote. I know that's going to the extreme, but until

we get people to understand we're doing a good job . . ."

Sever said the public has to understand that board and commission members "are not benefiting from being on this [boards and commissions]. For some reason, they [the public] think it's them and us."

Valvona came under scrutiny in November after complaints from at least two southeast Farmington Hills residents about changes in zoning for senior citizen apartments and questions about possible conflicts of interest involving Valvona.

The city attorney's report, prepared by Donald C. Harms of Larson, Harms & Wright of Farmington Hills, also addresses the sale of the 5 1/2 acres originally donated to the city by Ronald and John Hanaway and sold to Detroit Baptist Manor. Farmington Hills-based Detroit

Baptist Manor later sold it to Liberty Construction Co., Livonia.

VALVONA is one of three partners in Carrington Limited Dividend Housing Association, formed to apply for financing for Carrington Place through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Valvona's utility contracting company often does work for Liberty Construction, whose president also is a partner in Carrington Place.

The attorney's report said that no one, including Valvona, personally benefited or gained from the planning commission's actions on the property, though events occurring after the fact "could give rise to the appearance of a conflict of interest."


During rezoning and site plan reviews (when Detroit Baptist Manor owned the property) in 1986 and late 1987, Valvona said he never "was

contemplating" becoming financially involved with the project.

After he became a partner in summer 1988, Valvona said he informed the planning commission and did not vote on the project's landscaping plan. The final site plan was approved in February 1988.

"Me being on the planning commission didn't change what was going to be built," Valvona said in December. "The project itself got no special treatment from me or anyone in the city."

The attorney's report confirms Valvona's contention. " . . . I am convinced that there were no plans whatsoever to form such a partnership in late 1987 when Mr. Valvona voted on the change in the zoning and Mr. Valvona could not have been voting in anticipation of personal gain," Harms wrote.



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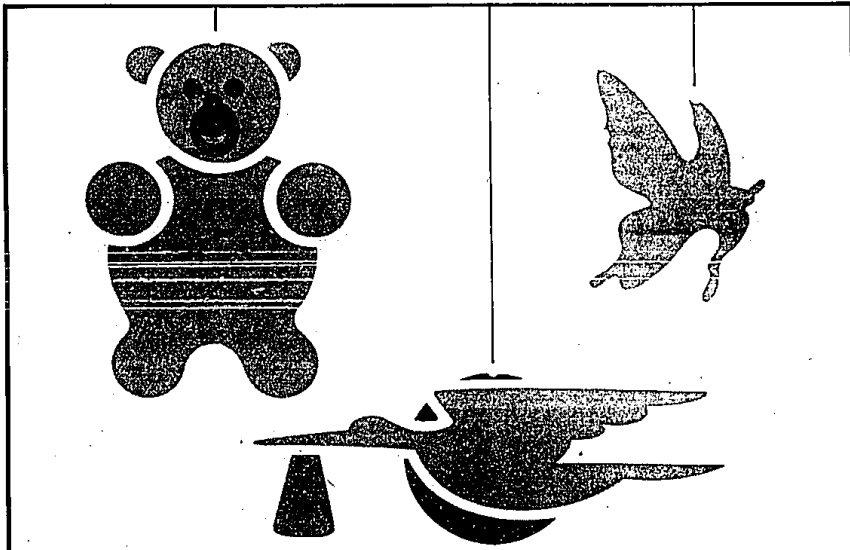
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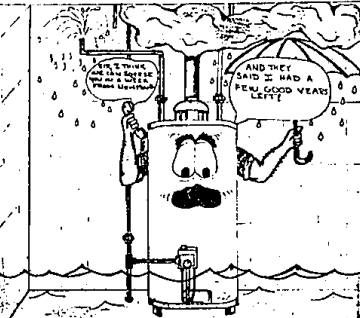
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