

# Woman fights freeway noise

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Written in brightly colored tape, the sign reads: 1924-34 Historic Preservation? Why FWY (freeway) protection I-696-Inkster and not here?

Barber's kitchen isn't much different. Newspapers clippings about noise pollution, noise berms along infamous freeways and articles about autos and their contributions to modern problems sit on the kitchen table.

**ON THE REFRIGERATOR** — in view through the main door entry — are signs pleading for relief from the rumble of traffic. "Father than crying — which I've done a lot of — I put up these signs. At least they can look through the window and see them," Barber said.

She has argued, begged and pleaded. Farmington Hills officials have sent letters on her behalf asking for noise barriers to protect the Barber family from the roar of the wheels and engines along the freeway.

But the state's answer has always been "no."

"We recognize it's a problem," said Leo DeFralne, supervisor of the Michigan Department of Transportation's materials and technology division. "The value of the amount the state would have to pay to protect one home is not reasonable."

To build a wall for noise protection along Barber's frontage on the freeway, as well as just a bit south of Nine Mile, and across a nearby

bridge over Nine Mile, would now cost at least \$225,000, DeFralne said.

Barber will say it wouldn't have cost that much if the state had put a barrier in when the freeway was completed. Newer neighborhoods along I-275, including a mobile home park in Canton, have noise barriers.

MDOT also has a rule that a minimum of four homes must benefit from a noise barrier. Barber's house is the only residence in that area affected by I-275. And costs cannot exceed about \$15,000 per house.

**BARBER SAYS** she knows all that. And she says she's heard every reason and criteria transportation officials have for not helping her even though her house was there when meadows preceded miles of concrete. She admits that the state offered to buy or move the house within the Farmington area. But only the house, not the out buildings (sheds, barn) — Barber said.

But she isn't interested in that. The Barber house — originally owned by relatives of Barber's husband, Bob — is a family heirloom. Built in 1924, the house has remained — except for a brief time during the Depression — in the Barber family. To move it is to change its significance, Barber said.

Barber admits she and her hus-



Photo by SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Traffic on I-275 is close to Joan Barber's historic house in Farmington Hills, north of Nine Mile. Twice trucks have run off the pavement and into her yard. She's also had three yard fires, the latest in 1988 when she suspects someone tossed a cigarette through a car window.

band sold the state some property for the freeway. When the freeway was planned in the 1960s, Barber admits she didn't really involve herself a lot. "What did I know, a little girl from New York?"

Once the ball started rolling on the eight-lane thoroughfare, she began to realize there would be some problems. "Oh, Mrs. Barber, there won't be any noise," Barber recalls state officials telling her about I-275.

State officials checked out her complaints. Her second-story bedroom is level with the freeway, which when the noise level was checked registered 72 decibels. "You go out in my backyard and

you can look right under the those trucks," she said.

**BARBER HELD** out hope that because her house is a historic structure the state would help her. That, too, was to no avail. Now she's hoping that with a change in the state administration some might happen.

There's a good chance one thing might happen. The noise hasn't been the only problem. Two trucks have gone off the freeway. One landed in her front yard and another in her backyard. And there's the time someone must have thrown a cigarette out of their car window. Her yard caught fire.

# Hills man prefers tax for recycling

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generated by increased property tax assessments rises by a greater percentage than the U.S. Consumer Price Index. The CPI reflects the nation's inflation rate.

In the proposed Farmington Hills 1991-92 \$21.7 million budget, \$2.2 million has been budgeted for the collection and disposal of solid waste. The city has always included trash pickup and disposal in the budget and as part of the tax rate.

City manager William Costick says paying for recycling as part of the tax rate was considered. "But everybody is complaining about property taxes."

There's a dilemma, however. Refuse collection and disposal costs have increased dramatically in the past decade. If costs continue to increase and recycling is included in the tax rate, taxes will in turn increase, Costick said.

Many communities, he continued, have elected to charge a fee because their tax rate are at their charter limits. Farmington Hills is already close to the 10-mill city charter limit.

"More and more people are going to fees because no one knows what is happening to taxes," Costick said. "I can't argue with what Mr. Perrin is saying. But it seems to run counter to what we hear at city hall."

**PERRIN WANTS** the Farmington Hills city council to at least publicly discuss the issue. He plans to attend the council meeting tonight.

"I place a tremendous value on recycling," Perrin said. "The city does other things that are not as important as recycling. They could cut those other things and if they have to, let them go to the residents for a tax increase."

Perrin's ideas have caught the attention of councilman Ben Marks. "I think it's a good idea," Marks said. "We don't have money in the general fund for recycling. But I can see in the future a separate tax."

Like Costick, Marks said taxpayers could go to the polls and vote on a recycling tax just as they have for the recent half-mill parks and recreation levy.

"It's a thought so obvious, no one thought about it," Marks said.

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