

FARMINGTON
NOTES

Thinking college?

Attention, seniors at the three public high schools in the Farmington District. You may be eligible for a \$500 scholarship from the American Legion Post 390. Six scholarships will be awarded.

To qualify, the high school senior must have a parent or grandparent who served honorably or is now a member of the United States armed forces. The student also must have at least a 3.0-point average in high school. Need for financial assistance will be a consideration in making the awards. Applications for the scholarships are being distributed by the counselors at the three Farmington public high schools.

For more information, call Robert Sorenson, post commander, at 626-5835.

Operation Teddy Bear

The Farmington Elks Lodge 1986 recently donated 225 stuffed teddy bears worth more than \$4,200 to the Farmington Hills Police Department for the Operation Teddy Bear program.

The teddy bears are used to console and comfort frightened children who have been involved in a serious auto accident, fire, abuse or other traumatic incident. The toys serve as a rapport enhancer between the child and the police officer.

Candidates on TV

People in the Farmington School District who want to learn more about the candidates for the board of education should check cable Channel 12 for the airing of the candidates forum.

It will be cablecast on the following schedule: Tuesday, June 1, 5 p.m.; Wednesday, June 2, 9 p.m.; Friday, June 4, 9 p.m.; Tuesday, June 8, 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.; and Friday, June 11, 8 p.m.

Seven of the nine candidates participated in the forum held May 20. The event was co-sponsored by the local chapters of the American Association of University Women and the League of Women Voters.

Funeral director reviews long career

■ He started working for an area funeral home as a teenager. Now, at 61, William J. Johns of Redford Township is retiring from directing funerals and will spend more time sailing, working in the yard and cataloging his record collection.

BY MARY LOU SONG
STAFF WRITER



William J. Johns of Redford decided to be a funeral director when he was 13 years old.

Now he's 61 and on Friday, May 28, Johns will retire after nearly 50 years in the business and 27 years as a funeral director at McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills.

Johns says that even with retirement days away, he still thinks about the funeral director who inspired him: Edward F. Wilkie.

Johns grew up in a house directly across the street from Wilkie's Funeral Home in Detroit. Almost daily, Johns would see Wilkie from a distance, lining up cars. His curiosity was piqued and he soon convinced Wilkie to let him work at the funeral home.

"I thought so much of the owner that I said when I grew up, I wanted to be like him," Johns said. "There was something about the place that fascinated me. I asked if I could help with chairs and they put up with me. They took me in as a pest."

Year's apprenticeship

After graduating from Redford High School in June of 1950, Johns began an apprenticeship under Wilkie. In the year there, he learned about mortuary law, death certifi-



SHARON LAMOREUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ends career: William Johns of Redford decided to be a funeral director at age 13 and now is retiring after 50 years in his chosen occupation, the last 17 as director of McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills.

cates, directing funerals, cemetery procedures and flower arranging.

"I can't say that anything was a turn-off," Johns said. "Even the long hours weren't a turn-off. The more I worked there, the more I wanted to do it."

Wilkie died that year. But hearing Wilkie say, "Make sure Willie gets his degree," made Johns want to work that much more.

Johns graduated from the Wisconsin Institute for Mortuary Science and earned his degree and license in 1957. Johns admits that at first his parents were baffled by his fascination with funeral directing, but they eventually warmed up to

the idea. When he called home to tell his parents that he was licensed to be a funeral director, his mother cried.

"I was thrilled. I told everybody in Lansing, 'I got my license. I got my license.' They didn't know me from Adam."

His first job was in Newberry as the county coroner and the only funeral director in the area. In 1961 he took a job with Schmalzriedt Funeral Home in Detroit, then Skene Funeral Home. Then in 1966, Johns moved to McCabe.

Tried design

In his younger years, Johns spent

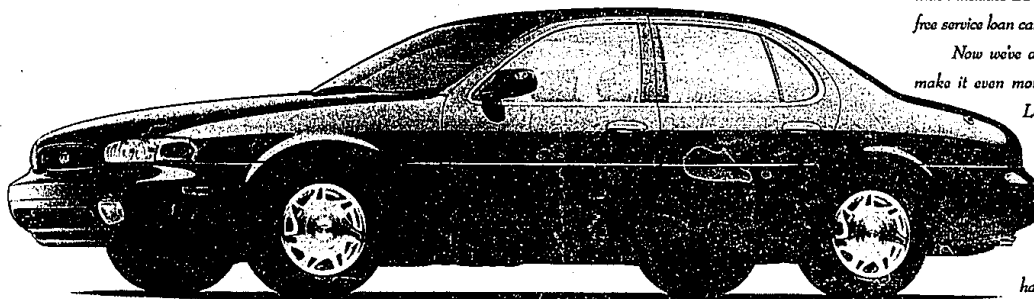
hours designing his own funeral home. But he decided to stay with McCabe Funeral Home because the McCabes were "good people to work for and we always had a good relationship."

"He was only 10 years old when he came to work," Johns said of Kevin McCabe, now chief executive officer of the home. "I used to give him paper clips to play with in my office. Now I work for him."

He chuckles when he recounts that and the first time he directed a funeral. A terrible snowstorm stranded the scheduled funeral di-

See CAREER, 17A

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