

Hills woman, 65, dies from car crash injuries

By GARY WORONCIAK
STAFF WRITER

A 65-year-old Farmington Hills woman died Monday night from injuries suffered in a three-car accident on Orchard Lake Road Friday morning.

Julia Rayhall was northbound on Orchard Lake approaching 14 Mile before her 1989 Mazda was struck by a southbound Chevy Blazer. Police said Rayhall was turning left into a retail parking lot at 11:40 a.m. when the accident occurred.

The impact spun Rayhall's car around, striking a stopped Chevy Geo waiting to turn out of the retail lot. No one else was injured.

Rayhall was taken to Botsford

Hospital with a head injury and later taken by helicopter to University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor where she died Monday night.

No charges are expected against the driver of the Blazer, a 48-year-old Dearborn man, according to Farmington Hills police Sgt. Dennis Green. No excessive speed was determined and all indications are that the driver of the Blazer wasn't responsible for the accident, he said.

The victim was not wearing a seat-belt, Green said.

It was Farmington Hills' second traffic fatality of the year. Eight people died in traffic accidents in the city in 1996.

Listed below are some of the Farmington area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

EMBEZZLEMENT

In Farmington Hills: A cashier at Kmart on Orchard Lake Road was arrested Sunday after a surveillance camera showed him allegedly sneaking a \$50 bill into his pocket. The store's loss prevention officer told the 17-year-old to the security office, where he was asked to empty his pockets and produced the cash in question.

Police were told the suspect's cash drawer had been short every Saturday and Sunday for four weeks, totaling losses of \$810. Surveillance videotape from the other dates was being used as evidence.

ASSAULT

In Farmington Hills: A West Bloomfield teen among

five people being escorted from a hotel room was arrested Saturday morning for slamming a door on a police officer's arm.

Officers were called to the Comfort Inn on 12 Mile near Orchard Lake Road to eject the disorderly teens from a room. A 17-year-old, the last to leave the room, allegedly slammed the door on the officer. A second officer moved to arrest the suspect, who spun around during a pat-down search in an apparent attempt to strike the second officer. Both officers subdued and handcuffed the man.

BREAK-INS

In Farmington Hills: Police from Farmington and Farmington Hills combined to arrest a 30-year-old Livonia man for trying to break into Blakely's, 28333 Grand River. Hills officers responded to an alarm at 4:30 a.m. Friday and found the suspect attempting to pry open the rear door. The suspect saw the officers and ran off, leaving a pry bar in the door. He ran across Grand River to a parking lot where two Farmington officers apprehended him.

Nearly \$3,000 worth of computer equipment was stolen over the weekend at the offices of a marketing firm on Farmington Road. The owner went to the office Sunday and found that two computers, a scanner and a printer were missing. He told police there was no sign of forced entry.

The owner of VCR Service Center on Grand River near Drake told police that on Monday he found that someone had

broken in overnight by breaking the glass on the front door. The culprit took the cash drawer from the register, netting an estimated \$100.

DRUGS

In Farmington Hills:

Police maintained surveillance for over two hours before arresting three men for the alleged possession and use of cocaine in the early morning hours Saturday.

An officer saw the trio in a 1988 Oldsmobile around Nine Mile and Middlebelt, recognizing one as possibly having a connection with drugs before. Other officers were called to assist, and they tailed the Olds into Detroit, twice to a home in a reputed drug neighborhood where they suspect transactions took place, to Redford, and eventually back to Farmington Hills.

The suspects were finally stopped in the parking lot at Greenhills Apartments. Police said residue of what was suspected to be cocaine was found in a plastic bag, on a laptop computer and beneath the nostrils of one of the suspects. The suspects, none of whom resided at Greenhills Apartments, were ages 22 and 19 from Farmington Hills, and a 21-year-old Farmington resident.

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

In Farmington Hills:

An argument between students ages 18 and 15 on a school bus Friday resulted in the older teen walking home, with a ticket in tow. The driver stopped the bus at 11 Mile and Power and told both to sit down, but the older student became verbally abusive and profane toward the driver.

The bus driver, a 40-year-old woman, separated the combatants and summoned police due to the one's abusive behavior. When police ticketed the teen for disorderly conduct, he got angry and started he would walk home. An officer invited him to do so, and directed him to a nearby pay phone.

In Farmington Hills:

Apparently throwing a tantrum because he wasn't allowed to go to his girlfriend's house, a 13-year-old boy kicked the passenger side middle window out of his mother's 1989 Plymouth van around noon on Friday. Police were called after the incident, which occurred on Middlebelt near Eight Mile.

An officer asked the teen if he had any weapons, at which point he handed over a knife and ran away. His escape was cut short when he was caught across the street by officers, with the help of a passing postal worker.

HONEST CITIZEN

In Farmington Hills:

A wallet containing \$132 cash was found Saturday morning by a 61-year-old woman on the parking lot outside her apartment on Oxford Street. Opting against taking a quick windfall, the woman turned the wallet and cash over to police. The wallet contained the ID of a Redford man.

DRUNKEN DRIVING

In Farmington:

Police made three arrests for drunken driving Feb. 15, including one involving a Detroit man, 41, who a blood alcohol level of 35 percent — three times the legal limit — at the scene. It's illegal to drive in Michigan with a level of .10 percent. The driver of a 1991 Ford Tempo was stopped by police after the vehicle was seen drifting on westbound Grand River. The driver refused to take a breathalyzer at the station.

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Church building turns 75

By DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

First United Methodist Church wasn't always just a place to sing praises to God.

As congregation members prepare to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the majestic house of worship standing guard on Grand River at Warner, church leaders are hoping folks will also remember the less reverent roles that building once played.

"It was built more or less for a church," said Dick Carvell, a church historian, "but the whole back area was built as a community center."

Back in 1922, a few years after the original First United Methodist Church building had been destroyed by a fire, the new church was erected following the trend in the Methodist Church of that time to provide such an activities center.

In those days, First United Methodist boasted the only place in town where people could watch a live theater performance by the Maskers, a forerunner of the Farmington Players. It was also the only place in Farmington to see films, like "The Perils of Pauline," Carvell said.

Later, during the war years, the church center hosted school classes and graduation exercises and blood drives. "And the church basement was an air raid shelter," Carvell added.

On April 13-14, the church building will celebrate 75 years by hosting an open house and historical program on Saturday afternoon, plus special services on Sunday. Carvell is helping to head up the event and he hopes community members will dig up and either lend or donate some old items about the building being used as a community facility.

"We really don't have anything from the graduation exercises," he noted. "We'd really like to keep some of them for our files."

The church itself, with its design by Wells Butterfield and his daughter, Emily, and its stained glass windows donated by former Gov. Fred Warner, is something that congregation members are glad to display and share with the community, Carvell said.

"You always like to have an excuse to show things off."

To offer items for the open house call Carvell at 476-6257 or the church at 474-6573.