

Drive-in from page A1

from her car ordered hot dogs, hamburgers, onion rings and (yes) root beer. Then, she and her boys walked over to the picnic table in front of the small eatery bought 1 1/2-years ago

by Livonia residents Tom and Sandy Khalil.

(Most in-their-car diners wait for the staff to bring them food and drink, sliding jam-packed trays onto half-opened car windows. It is



STAFF PHOTO BY DRYAN MITCHELL

Served up: Elizabeth McConaghie of Farmington Hills serves up dinner with two tall, ice cold mugs of A&W root beer.

quite the balancing act.)

Waitress Kandace Friend carried the Zatsick's order out to the table and collected \$11.94. Then, as other hungry motorists turned into the parking lot and pulled up to speaker menus, the family got down to business. Jacob scooped out the onion rings while thirty Zachary picked up a 20 oz. glass mug of root beer and proceeded to "down about half of it."

Before biting into her sandwich, Zatsick said she enjoyed the convenience and old-fashioned set-up - common place in the '60s and '70s, but unique today. She wasn't so sure she'd want to go back, however.

"I enjoy just being able to pull up and order something and have somebody bring it out," Zatsick said. "It's something different, the kids like it."

Zatsick, however, added that "I don't know if I'd do it often if they (fast food restaurants) were all this way."

Former Farmington Hills resident Thibodeau might, however. "You can't beat this," he said, adding that he's been an A&W regular for at least 20 of his 28 years.

"It's just the atmosphere," said Julie Thibodeau from the other side of the front seat, talking about why people love coming back for

more. "I think (waitresses) should still be on roller skates, though."

The Thibodeaus try to make it to the old-fashioned home of the Big Papa and Big Mama burgers about three times a month. This time, their visit was sparked by Julie's pregnant cravings, he said.

"For me, it brings back memories from when I was a kid," he said. "My mom took us here if we were good, for a root beer float."

Who knows if that cycle will be repeated after the Thibodeau baby is old enough for a burger. But the soon-to-be father was happy to hear that A&W sells 3 1/2-oz. glass root beer "Baby Mugs."

Another customer decided to walk into the bustling restaurant to place her order.

As Farmington Hills resident Donna Cook and son Bryan, 10, waited, co-owner Tom Khalil collected new orders placed over the car speakers and relayed them to the kitchen help.

"I think it's wonderful because I'm from that era," Cook said. "This is very cool."

Cook, taking Bryan out for a special treat, said she didn't even realize the A&W was a drive-in.

"I didn't even know they had these anymore," she said. "Next time, we'll go out there because we understand how the whole process works."

It was Bryan's first visit to the A&W, too. He probably will persuade his mom to bring him back. "Good root beer floats," he said.

Lightning sparked apartment blaze

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

A spark from a lightning strike is blamed for starting a fire that caused \$750,000 damage to a Farmington Hills two-story apartment building early Saturday morning.

The fire started when a spark jumped from a TV set onto a bed cover, igniting the material in the bedroom of an Echo Valley residence. Lightning hit the building during a severe electrical storm.

Hill firefighters from four stations battled the fire for nearly two hours. One condominium unit was destroyed while three others had severe smoke and water damage.

Six other units had either smoke or water damage, a property manager said.

The bolt of lightning caused extensive damage to the roof and knocked an awning off an adjacent building.

"The lightning and thunder shook the whole building," said Walter Moore, who was visiting from Wichita, Kan., and staying with sister Beverly Goffney. "It came over me and it lit up the room like there were flood lights in there."

Deborah Rector said she was in bed with the TV on when she heard lightning strike the west side of her building and then saw a spark jump from the TV set and ignite the blanket.

Rector and her 9-year-old daughter sat out of the building. Rector and another resident Nancy Turner alerted other residents of the fire.

"I woke up like a lot of people do during a storm," said Turner, who is staying with a friend after her apartment was damaged. "I went back to bed and at 6:59 I heard this great big boom and felt this jolt. I looked out the



Fire check: Farmington Hills Fire Department officials check the Echo Valley Apartments after the blaze.

window and everything seemed fine.

"Within three minutes, the Rectors were pounding on my door and I could see black smoke coming out of their apartment."

No residents were hurt; a firefighter suffered a minor injury, said Pete Baldwin, Farmington Hills deputy fire chief.

"It's been awhile since I've seen that much (lightning)," Baldwin said. "It was a pretty quick ignition."

Residents affected by the fire belong to a condominium association and are insured as result, Baldwin said. Those displaced by the fire were staying with relatives or hotels.

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Fire from page A1
police chief. "When I heard what he'd done, I was very impressed and I've been around 35 years."
Maffesoli was responding to numerous burglary alarms, which went off accidentally in the storm when the call came through.
When he entered the building, the officer kept low when and breathed through his shirt to avoid getting smoke in his lungs.
"When you get to do something like this, it does feel good," Maffesoli said. "It's nice to see somebody smile and to know you've done something good."
Skrzycki's actions came to the officials' attention after Gertrude Rector, grandmother of Deborah Rector, phoned to thank Skrzycki and the department.
The officer arrived at the scene to find displaced residents milling outside wearing pajamas in the muggy, rainy weather.
"These people were out there...for three hours," Skrzycki said. "No one was giving them any assistance."
Skrzycki found a maintenance worker and convinced him to unlock the property's clubhouse so they could make arrangements to find shelter. He also gave a teddy bear and soothed a 9-year-old girl, who was crying because all her toys and clothes were lost in the fire.

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Farmington Observer
Published every Sunday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48331-0910. Periodical postage paid at Farmington, MI 48308-0910. Postmaster: Send address changes to Observer & Eccentric, Newspapers 805 E. Maple, Farmington, MI 48308-0910. Telephone 844-1100.
SUBSCRIPTION RATES
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