

Cab driver used in bomb hoax Cafe

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Michigan State Police, FBI and Farmington Hills police were called on a bizarre bomb hoax in the Botsford Inn parking lot Saturday.

The suspicious package — a cardboard box wrapped in duct tape with silver wires sprouting from it — ended up in the east parking lot of the inn after making the rounds Saturday.

At 10 a.m., Hills police were called to Mayberry's restaurant on Grand River after a cab driver and staff were arguing over the package.

A courier for A-Abbey Transportation/Oakland County Airport Transportation told police he was sent to the restaurant to pick up the package, which was inside a plastic shopping bag.

A man named "John" appeared from the restaurant's rear door, placed the bag with the package in the passenger seat and told the driver to take it to Huntington Bank on Grand River in Redford. The man instructed the driver to give the parcel to a woman named "Sherry," who would give him a package in exchange. Then, the driver was to return with the bank's package to the rear of the restaurant and sound the horn so he could meet him.

When the driver took the package to the bank, personnel there refused to accept it. They told him no one by the name of "Sherry" worked there.

After the driver left the bank with the package, a man called the bank saying it was a bomb.

"I don't see how robbery would've been a motive based on what transpired," said Sgt. Tim Swanson, Farmington Hills police. "It seems to be more of a scare tactic."

The driver returned to the restaurant, but the man he'd met earlier wasn't there. Mayberry's owner and staff said no one worked there or seen anyone matching that man's description.

Restaurant employees looked in the bag and, fearing it was a bomb, placed the package in the Botsford Inn east parking lot.

Police cordoned off the area and evacuated the east portion of the inn. State police bomb disposal technicians arrived at 1:30 p.m. They X-rayed the package and found the box contained newspapers and wires.

Police spoke to the courier service's dispatcher, who said the original call showed up as "unknown" on caller ID. The driver described the man he met as Chaldean or Middle Eastern, 28-30 in age, 5 feet 9 inches tall with short dark hair and a medium complexion. He was wearing dark tan pants and a light-colored short-sleeved shirt. He spoke with a Middle Eastern accent, the driver said.

"I don't think the driver knew what he had until they looked inside the bag back at the restaurant," Swanson said.



Play on: Becky Mansilla (left) plays checkers with Lorrin Harris while as music plays. Center is Neil Mansilla; facing the stage are Jack Roush and Jude Mansilla.

Cafe
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at The Studio Cafe is worth digging. The music helps. "They play all kinds," she said. "Earlier, Dusty was playing the banjo. Just things you don't hear every day."

Cool favorites

During the Mansilla brothers' duet, Dusty played the bongos to help set the beat.

"This is a community college," Rhodes said, shortly after the last song of the night ended. "But we want to build a place where people from the community can come in and meet the students, staff and faculty. We have people hanging out here all day long. But we'd love people from the community to come here too. We're open to everyone."

If they'd come, they'd see Rhodes and assistant Alexander Gershow, pouring coffee, joking with the audience ... and performing.

Getting up on stage is a Thursday night option that Jack Roush took advantage of. He performed some pop songs, such as "House of the Rising Sun," and even a classical piano piece he wrote.

"This is my second time here," Roush said. "I heard about it through Jude (Mansilla). The reason why I came is, I'm a musician. I wanted a place to practice and perform. This is a neat place and I want to come back."

OCC student and Southfield resident Sergei Davydov, from Azerbaijan, was among those listening to Roush and the Mansilla brothers.

"It's a good way to unwind after class," said Davydov. "I like the atmosphere, to talk to friends and listen to good music. This is my favorite place."

The fact that people from all backgrounds enjoy the OCC-owned cafe warms Dusty, who also is a regular performer on Friday-Saturday nights at Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills.

"It exposes them to a lot of different kinds of people," Rhodes said. "We have a lot of foreign students that come here (OCC) and they meet at The Studio Cafe."

Captain Dusty

When they do, it's never rowdy or raucous, just the way Dusty likes it. "I'm like the captain of the ship, I try to guide it."

Typically, the usually youthful audience — whether on open mike night or other times of the week — gets to sample as much musical variety as there are different flavors of coffee.

"Sometimes, it gets pretty loud," Rhodes said, sipping a mug of honey-and-tea to nurse a cold. "And also experimental. I'm very pleased that ... they respect a lot of kinds of music. I think today's youth is very eclectic in their taste."

Jude Mansilla, who first caught Dusty's act at Botsford Inn while having dinner with Becky, definitely prefers The Studio Cafe to comparable gathering spots.

"I totally dig it," Jude said, "because it's an atmosphere for musicians. We've been to other open mikes where the music is almost a sidebar. Where here, it's really the focus."

Of course, it doesn't hurt that The Studio Cafe adds a little visual oomph to the good music and good coffee. Instruments line the walls around the tiny stage as do empty burlap coffee bags. Converted theater lights make sure the room isn't harshly illuminated.

"This was a TV studio that went belly up six or seven years ago," explained Rhodes. "A friend of mine said 'I have this room that I think would make a great coffeehouse.' So, we got some old theater lights and boom, instant atmosphere!"

The Studio Cafe hasn't been an instant business success. Rhodes remains confident that will happen.

"That (small crowds) doesn't particularly bother me because persistence is what counts," he said. "Keep doing what's right, people will find out about it and it'll grow. Besides, I'd play for myself if I had to."

The Studio Cafe, located in the basement of Building J at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge, is open from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday. The open microphone sessions are 7-10 p.m. Thursdays. OCC is located south of I-696, between Farmington Orchard Lake roads.

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CAMPUS PIPELINE

SPRING INTERN

Albion College junior Elizabeth Graham, a participant in the College's Carl A. Gerstaecker Liberal Arts Program in Professional Management, is spending the spring interning with Ideation in Ann Arbor in the marketing department.

Graham is the daughter of Douglas and Jennine Graham of Farmington Hills and a graduate of Harrison High School.

TOP NOTICE

The following Farmington area residents were named to the Dean's List during the past term at Madonna University:

Stacey Blackford, Harmony Guilford, Mary Anne Holloway, Kelly Ottowell, Carol Baron, Julie Skwiercz, Peter Abo, Susan Bartley, Chao Routhchian, Jeanne Dean, Stephen Delack, Dominique Gambino-Gorslin, Julie Ging, Nicole Gratzky, Susan Hall, David Jamison, Leslie Barbara, Toni Lucas, Michelle Ober, Shankar Pathak, Cheryl Pozniak, Tanya Proctor, Ayesha Rasvi, Debick Schneider, Jennifer Sheldahl, Jennifer Soane, Brian Sogowski, Joanna Tolton, Stacy Turner, Anthony Wentworth, Anna Wolack, Lisa Anastasio, Mary Barnes, Trisha Bechó, Christoph Bouschot, Rebecca Culver, Christie Dagunanno, Savio Fernandes, Mary Anne Heathfield, Lynn Hoag, Bridget Koslowski, Douglas Landefeld, Jodi McCarty, Todd Miller, Derek Nelson, Jessica Plett, Carrie Rejo, Thomas Seremet, Stephanie St. Louis, Monica Stevens, Samantha Tunstall and Dina Zamczyk.