

Farmington firm pleads guilty to Federal charges

A Farmington firm and its president, Frederick L. Watson, have been charged in a mail fraud and bid fixing case by the Department of Justice.

The firm, Motorama Engineering, 34300 Nine Mile Road in Farmington, will pay \$1.1 million in fines; Watson will pay \$40,000.

Both fines are part of guilty plea agreements entered into with the Justice Department. The agreements were announced Wednesday.

According to a Justice Department statement, in a two-count indictment, filed March 29, 2000, in U.S. District Court in Detroit and unsealed Wednesday, a federal grand jury charged Sauger Industries Inc., a machine tool company located in Troy, Mich., and its president, John A. Baker, with conspiring to suppress and eliminate competition by allocating contracts for tooling on automotive projects to General Motors.

Sauger Industries and Baker were also charged with conspiring to commit mail fraud and money laundering. The conspiracy took place from 1989 until at

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least April 1995.

On Aug. 31, 2000, and unsealed Wednesday, the Department charged Theodore Sawchuk, the former president of SA-GO Industries Inc., a now defunct tooling company in Fraser, with conspiring to suppress and eliminate competition by allocating contracts for tooling on automotive projects to General Motors from 1989 until at least April 1995. The Department filed a separate, but related, criminal case Wednesday against Motorama Engineering Inc. with the same charge.

The Department also separately charged Watson, with mail fraud in connection with his

participation in the conspiracy. Motorama Engineering, Watson, and Sawchuk have agreed to plead guilty to the charges against them, and have agreed to pay fines of \$1.1 million, \$40,000, and \$20,000 respectively. Watson and Sawchuk also are subject to jail terms to be determined by the Court at sentencing.

All three defendants have agreed to pay restitution to General Motors.

These conspirators denied General Motors the benefits of competition in its award of tooling contracts, said A. Douglas Melamed, acting assistant attorney general in charge of the antitrust division. "The Antitrust Division will vigorously prosecute corporations and business executives who violate the antitrust laws through such bid rigging."

According to the charges, the participants carried out the bid-rigging conspiracy by arranging for the conspirators to be the only vendors allowed to bid on certain tooling contracts, designating which conspirators would be the winning bidder, and having the conspirators that were not designated as winners submit intentionally high and noncompetitive bids. Sauger Industries and Baker were also charged with conspiring to commit mail fraud and money laundering by using the U.S. Postal Service to conduct a series of financial transactions, knowing the property involved represented proceeds of the illegal activity.

Watson was also charged with using the U.S. Postal Service to further the bid-rigging conspiracy.

The charges announced this week resulted from an ongoing investigation conducted jointly by the Antitrust Division's Cleveland field office and the Organized Crime Strike Force Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit, with assistance from the Detroit office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service, criminal investigation division.

The maximum fine for both individuals and corporations for all of the charged offenses may be increased to twice the pecuniary gain derived from the crime, or twice the pecuniary loss suffered by the victims of the crime, whichever is greatest, the Justice Department said.

A Metronet Web site listing Farmington's and Farmington Hills' largest employers reports that Motorama has about 100 workers. Calls to the company on Friday were not returned.



Proud to pose: Third-graders in the classes of William Grace Elementary School teachers Candy Marra and Fay Stone pose with their handmade robots.

Grace students shine in robot fair

William Grace Elementary School third-graders made robots of all sizes, shapes and intended uses during a recent project that integrated language arts curriculum and a science unit on inventions. The robots, some that talked and others that lit up, were displayed during a robot fair held in the William Grace gymnasium.

Students, who are in the classes of teachers Candy Marra and Fay Stone, came up with unusual creations including the "Math-O-Bot" and "Clean-O-Bot." These robots do math homework or housework, respectively.

Everything from boxes, dryer hoses and Christmas lights to rubber gloves and tubes were parlayed into their inventions.

Meanwhile, according to Marra and Stone, the students followed certain criteria to invent their robots. Their robots also had to solve a previously stated problem—such as math and housework, for example.

During the robot fair, attended by parents, students gave presentations about their creations, even augmenting those with the use of videotape.

Various school programs will honor Dr. King Monday, Tuesday

BY TIM SMITH
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High-profile celebrations such as Sunday's candlelight vigil, walk and program in Farmington Hills aren't the only ones honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

A number of schools in the Farmington district will hold activities Monday and Tuesday to honor King. Following is a partial list:

■ North Farmington High School will begin Martin Luther King Jr. Day with "Songs of My People" at 8:25 a.m. in the auditorium. The program will include dance and choral selections and appropriate readings.

Also in the North auditorium, at 9 a.m. the Wayne State University Black Theatre Troupe will perform a play, "Ida B. Wells," focusing on one of the early civil rights leaders.

Classroom discussions throughout the day at North will touch on a variety of topics, under the heading "Voicing Protest: A Teach-In."

■ A wide variety of activities have been planned at Harrison High School, based on the theme of celebrating diversity. The activities will take place from 8:50-10:35 a.m. Monday.

■ A program titled "Building Bridges" is set for 9 a.m. Monday in the gymnasium at East Middle School.

■ Warner Middle School students will listen to and interact with storyteller Miz Rosie Chapman about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott at 9 a.m. Monday in the cafeteria.

■ On Tuesday, beginning at 9:45 a.m., Farmington High School students in the REACH program will present a Martin Luther King video with discussion to follow. The video was produced by FHS students.

Today's King tribute is 4:30 p.m. at the Costick Activities Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, between Middlebelt-Inkster roads. It is hosted by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council.



The company is on Nine Mile Road in Farmington.

'Anti-Hawk' Web gossip page comes and goes quickly

BY DOUG JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

Harrison High School administrators are tracking down an unauthorized "gossip" Web site about the school that popped up within the past few days.

As of Thursday the "gossip" or "anti-Hawk" page had disappeared and links to teen help sites were being offered. Also, e-mails in favor and against the initial gossip site were posted and readable by any Internet user. Many of the e-mails were full of obscenities and criticized the gossip page contents.

School security people have contacted Yahoo/Geocities about www.harrisonsex.com, but so far have not been able to gain the service's cooperation.

According to Rande Horn, Harrison principal, Geocities would not identify the originator of the site "unless the students threatened the school" in the site's pages.

The potentially libelous gossip page purported to identify various dating and sexual encounters between individuals. Both students and staff were mentioned.

"The student or students doing this are being very vicious. But I think time is on our side. Someone will tell us something and we'll shut it down," Horn said.

Students have been blocked by firewall software from seeing the site using any of the school's computers. Parents have not called to complain but some of the students and staff mentioned in the "gossip" have been in to see Horn.

"Eventually someone will see that this has gone too far and tell us what we need to know," he said.

Horn said district technology staff members are trying to track the site's origin down. "We are still in the hunt," Horn said, noting that the administration did have some leads.

"We are biding our time. Someone will spill the beans."

According to encryption information on the Web page, it was last modified on Jan. 11, 2001.

Dealing with "cyber-amors" is difficult according to the New York Law Journal's Web site. In a 1999 article the journal detailed several steps corporations could use to fight rumors and gossip—using such tools as a rumor answer Web site and cease-and-desist court orders.

A New York Law firm, Phillips Nizer Benjamin Krim & Ballon, note in their Web site on freedom of speech and the Internet that the courts have started hearing and deciding Internet First Amendment cases such as the one where an individual provided Ford Motor internal documents over the Web. The defendant, a student, won the case and was not enjoined from publishing the documents.

Public schools have broad authority to control student behavior, however. And, in the famous 1988 Hazelwood case, the U.S. Supreme Court said high schools could reasonably censor such things as high school newspapers.

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'Challenge' event is this Saturday in schools

Destination Imagination teams from 12 schools will display "creative solutions to challenges" during Saturday's local showcase. The program is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Farmington High School.

Participating on Jan. 20 will be teams from Alameda Early Childhood Center, Beechview, Eagle, Gilt, Hillside, Highmound, Forest, Lanigan, Longacre and Wooddale elementaries, Dunckel Middle School and

private St. Fabian School.

For more information, call Farmington Public Schools' DELTA department, 248-489-3399. Farmington High School is located on Shawassee west of Orchard Lake roads.