

# Farmington Hills family dies in crash

By WYLIE GERDES and JUDY OWEN

A Farmington Hills family, all seven of whom died in a private airplane crash Sunday, left behind impressions of an active, "totally Christian" family.

Paul Jatko was a dentist who practiced in Westland for 11 years. The family lived in a \$110,000 home on Old Homestead in Independence Commons in Farmington Hills.

The seven died when a Cessna 411-A owned and piloted by Jatko crashed in Virginia.

Dead are Jatko, 40; his wife, Marie, 28; daughters Susan, 17, Karen, 15, and Elizabeth, 8, and sons Paul 4, and Michael, 3. Susan and Karen, students at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills, were daughters by Jatko's previous marriage. His first wife died about six years ago.

**BOTH JATKOE** and his wife were licensed pilots, friends and employees said.

Robin Scott, his office manager, said Jatko's main hobbies were flying and hunting. The family took flying trips every two weeks or so, she said.

The Jatkoes left Christmas day to visit his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Jatko, in Florida. They were returning to Detroit when the light

plane crashed. Jatko had patients scheduled in his Westland office beginning at 7 a.m. Monday.

Mrs. Scott said Jatko bought the 1969 model plane which sells for about \$200,000 new, in late October.

A neighbor and friend who almost went into partnership with Jatko to purchase the plane, Larry Thompson, said Jatko and the plane should have been fully equipped to handle almost any weather, or flight problem.

**HOWEVER**, he added Jatko had only about 30 hours of flight time in the plane. Jatko was a "fully qualified pilot" who had about 900 hours of flying time, Thompson said.

Thompson, who lives less than one-quarter of a mile from Jatko's house in Farmington Hills, is a teacher at Whittier Junior High School in Westland. Thompson also is Mr. Houdini on a local children's television show.

Thompson, who owns a twin-engine plane and has about 700 hours of flying time, said the Cessna which crashed was "set up to fly in icing conditions." It had radar and a wide variety of sophisticated instruments, including one instrument which cost \$13,000.

"The plane was well equipped," Thompson said. Thompson said he and Jatko negotiated together through the month of



SUSAN JATKOE



ELIZABETH JATKOE



KAREN JATKOE

October to buy the plane, but Thompson added that when minor engine problems were discovered.

**AFTER JATKOE** looked at the Cessna, a medium twin which Thompson described as a "very classy airplane," he put the plane on hold at the time up for sale the next day.

Thompson said the mechanical problems with the plane were "not critical." An annual inspection was scheduled for next month, he said.

Weather, Thompson said, probably was the factor which contributed most to the crash. Lack of familiarity with a new plane and series of problems could have contributed to the crash, he added.

A pilot, Thompson said, can "handle two or three strikes but four or five might be the breaking point." Jatko's wife, Marie, had only a private pilot's license, Thompson said, but she could have "handled the book work" necessary to fly the large airplane.

**THOMPSON** described the family as "super people." Thompson and his wife saw Mrs. Jatko Christmas Eve at midnight in Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Farmington Hills. Jatko told them she had made new curtains for the airplane for the trip. She also invited them for a flying dinner trip

after the Jatkoes returned from the vacation, he said.

Jatko had an "extremely striking" personality, Thompson said. Mrs. Scott said Jatko was about 6 feet, 3 inches tall and weighed about 190 pounds.

He was "very athletic" and a "hand some, handsome" man, she said. Thompson said Jatko, who would have been 41 May 17, looked 30. He had a gym in his basement which he used to keep in shape.

Jatko was a "go getter" who after he made up his mind, "would let nothing stand in his way," Thompson said.

Mrs. Scott said "all the patients loved him" and he had a "tremendous practice" in Westland. During the five years Mrs. Scott worked for Jatko, he was angry only about two times, she said.

**MRS. SCOTT** added that Jatko had planned to spend time in Mexico next month treating residents of the country's interior who had never seen a dentist.

She said Jatko was "really looking forward" to the experience. Mrs. Jatko was a receptionist in her future husband's office before Jatko's first wife died, Mrs. Scott said. She was athletic and "interested in

a more reserved person than sister Karen, had a 3.7 grade point average at Mercy.

Susan was a member of the ski club. Her French teacher, Sister Mary Jo, described her as an "extremely gentle" girl who was "solid in her values."

**MRS. SCOTT**, Jatko's office manager, said both older daughters worked summers in their father's office. Both were "polite, wonderful girls."

Karen, a sophomore at Mercy, was a little crackpot, Mrs. Scott said. A Mercy biology teacher said Karen did "everything to perfection." She was a member of the ski club and a candidate for the Spanish honor society.

Students at Our Lady of Sorrows elementary school called the couple's eight-year-old daughter "Liz."

"The little girls are in kind of a shock," a Sorrows spokesman said.

Mrs. Jatko and her daughter were active in a Browne troop at the school. Mrs. Jatko was the troop's leader. Mrs. Scott said "Beth" was a bright child.

**PAUL**, the four-year-old, "looked like he was going to explode" all the time, Mrs. Scott added. Mike, the youngest child, was more reserved. However, he was interested in flying and talked about the plane as his.

Mrs. Scott said the family may have had a premonition about an accident. New walls were written in November, she said.

"In a way, maybe they knew."

Thompson said he could have been in the airplane with Jatko. "I don't know whether I'll ever get my wife up in the air again," Thompson said.

Thompson said the Cessna which crashed was privately owned by Jatko.

Thompson said the dentist put \$20,000 down on the plane and had paid payments of \$1,200 a month. Total cost of operation would be about \$20,000 a year, he estimated.

## Memorial services set

State police in Virginia are continuing investigation of the crash of a small, twin-engine plane which claimed the lives of a Farmington Hills family of seven.

Dr. and Mrs. Paul Jatko and their five children died following the crash of their plane about 10 p.m. Sunday night in a densely wooded area near Tacoma in southeast Virginia.

Driving snow and rain hampered rescue attempts.

The family was returning to Farmington Hills from a vacation in Florida.

A rosary service will be held at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16, at the Heeny-Sundquist Funeral Home, 2720 Farmington. A memorial service is set for 10:30 a.m. Thursday at

Our Lady of Mercy High School. A funeral service will be held at 10:15 a.m. Friday at the funeral home with a mass scheduled for 11 a.m. at Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 23615 Power.

Surviving the family are the couple's parents Mr. and Mrs. William Jatko of Detroit and Mr. and Mrs. Archie Webb of Farmington.

Also surviving is Mrs. Josephine Guzynski of Farmington, grandmother of two of the children, and two of Mr. Jatko's brothers, Dr. Dennis Jatko of Livonia and Chester Jatko of Livonia.

The family has asked that memorial tributes be made to Our Lady of Sorrows School or Our Lady of Mercy High School.

## School board to decide on millage attitude study

**FARMINGTON**—If you receive a telephone call, and the caller asks you how you voted in the last millage election, chances are that you are about to become a statistic in the board of education's demographic and attitudinal survey.

Although the survey is still in the planning stage with board members uncertain as to the financial feasibility of the project, first steps were taken Tuesday night when the board heard four firms present proposals in an open study session.

Vying for project approval were the University of Michigan Bureau of School Studies, Villikan-Leman & Associates, Inc., Parkins-Rogers and Associates, Inc., and Robinson Corp.

Each firm was permitted 25 minutes for their report, with a 15-minute interlude for questions from the public.

Although it was originally suggested to the board by Lelloy R. Hartman, director of personnel, that the studies be considered for information on demographic and long-range plans for present building sites, the board became interested in attitudinal surveys.

**THE MILLAGE** issue and educational priorities would be the primary focus of such surveys.

School officials hope to learn why the last millages were defeated, what the present attitude is toward millage, and what subjects residents feel they could do without, should another millage request be asked and fail.

Enrollment trends and their effect on school usage would be one of the main components of the survey research packages done by the firms

Brandon Rogers of Parkins-Rogers and Associates, Inc. said his study would focus on the dualism of growth potential together with the decline in the birth rate of the Farmington area.

"In 1948-50, there were 25 births per 1,000 people," he said. "It dropped in 1953 to 15 births per 1,000. According to the study we've done of the Farmington-Farmington Hills district, the birth rate has dropped more than 200 between 1970 and 1973."

Although the study could be projected into a 10-year period of Farmington's future needs and trends, he encouraged only a five-year focus.

"It's the next five years that we can rely on most," he said. "The children who will be attending school during that time have been already born, and

that increases our accuracy. They may not have been born in this district, but they have been born."

All the groups generally agreed upon telephone surveys and personal interviews as effective means of eliciting required information.

**VILLIKAN-LEMAN & Associates, Inc.** stressed this aspect of their proposed study, proposing a telephone survey of 200 people and a large number of personal interviews using cards and other visual aids.

"With a personal interview, we can use a variable scale with visual aids. That way we can have people relate to questions in a more complex way," said a spokesman for the group.

Tried and true methods include dealing with a deck of cards.

"You almost play a game, and it can get kind of interesting," she said.

Interviewers would be given a deck of cards of which carries an item from the school curriculum. They would then be asked to remove cards from the stack according to the order in which they would like them out from the budget.

It was one way, she said, the school district could determine what priority residents place on certain school items.

Interviewers would work on Saturday and in the evenings to insure an adequate representation of both men and women, she said.

**BRUCE ROBINSON** of Robinson Corp. emphasized that his firm is a

consumer package goods firm "interested in studying not only demographics, but psychographics."

"Psychographics," he said, included behavioral attitudes, the motivation behind them and recommendations for "strategical attitudinal change."

His information-gathering would be done through telephone calls and mailed questionnaires, with emphasis on educational priorities and the voter's attitude toward increased millage.

Costs for the proposed studies ranged from \$17,000 to \$11,000 with research lasting up to a year.

The board took no action.



The eye of the beholder

Some people go to a basketball game to play. Some go to cheer. And some, like Greg Meggas of Farmington Hills, go to the North Farmington High School games to blow bubbles. Still others prefer beating the drums. (Photographed by Craig Newman)

