

# Farmington Observer

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## Shotgun blast kills coin dealer; suspect hangs himself in lockup

By MIKE SCANLON

Eight hours after a 28-year-old Livonia coin store employee was shot-gunned to death Tuesday, a 22-year-old suspect in the case was found dead in a cell at the Dearborn Police Station.

Dead are Dale Bewersdorf, an employee at Coin Investments of 10988 Middlebelt, Livonia, and Martin Belcher of Farmington Hills.

Dearborn police reports indicate Belcher was carrying about \$30,000 worth of coins and precious metals when he was arrested fleeing the scene of a burglary at a Michigan Avenue bike shop about 11 p.m. Tuesday.

He was found hanging by a hankerchief from the bars in a Dearborn cell about 12:15 a.m. Wednesday, police said.

Gary Bewersdorf, the victim's brother and a partner in the coin store, yesterday identified the goods found on Belcher as missing from the store. Still unaccounted for is a small quantity of jewelry and a handgun, investigators said.

Police theorize the gunman may have robbed the store twice, the second time as much as a half-hour after Bewersdorf, a Garden City resident, was killed.

Police discovered Bewersdorf's body in a back office of the coin store shortly after 4 p.m. They were called to the scene by an employee in a nearby office after she saw a man flee the coin store following the last in a sporadic, 30-minute series of loud noises.

THE FRONT DOOR to the coin store, found blasted open, is barred and equipped with automatic electric locks. Police believe the gunman may have gained entry to the store posing as a customer, killed Bewersdorf in the back office with the store's own shotgun, then rifled the store and left. A "Closed" sign was left in a window near the door.

The gunman may have blown open

the front door on finding it locked when he returned, investigators theorize.

Medical examiners haven't determined the cause of Bewersdorf's death, but police reports indicate "massive" injuries to the head and lower body.

Police, who said they had had previous contact with Belcher, sought him on witness-based descriptions at the scene and at the sites of four hit-and-run accidents reported within minutes following the clerk's call to police. Each of the accidents involved a white-and-blue Oldsmobile apparently fleeing the Middlebelt-Plymouth murder scene in a northerly direction.

Police are still searching for the Oldsmobile.

Belcher registered under a different name at Dearborn motel on Telegraph, south of Michigan, about 8 p.m., the motel clerk told police. A search of the room yesterday failed to disclose any evidence.

Police still want to question a woman they believe drove Belcher from Livonia to Dearborn prior to his arrest outside Jack's Bike Shop, 23408 Michigan.

Found on Belcher, of Jefferson Street in Farmington Hills, were 79 silver dollars, 17 half-dollars, 12 Kruggerands in various denominations, five \$2.50 gold pieces, one \$20 gold piece, two \$10 gold pieces, two \$5 gold pieces, an ounce-bar of gold, two five-gram bars of gold, 12 Mexican gold coins and 65 pieces of various jewelry.

Bewersdorf, a precious metals buyer, grew up in Farmington. His family moved to Morristown, N.J., when he was in high school. He had been employed by Coin Investment Corp. since August 1979. He had worked at the Livonia store since it opened last May. He previously worked at the firm's Birmingham store.

Gary Bewersdorf said there "are usually two persons at the store for security purposes, but I had to leave for a short while on Tuesday."

Services are set for 8 p.m. tonight in



State Police Det. Lt. Harry Reed checks for finger prints on the front door of Coin Investments of Livonia where a 28-year-old employee was killed in a robbery there Tuesday evening. (Staff photo by Bill Brester)

R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Home, 15451 Farmington. Visitation begins at 2:30 today. Bewersdorf's body will be cremated.

One of seven children of Ernestine and the late Carl Bewersdorf, Dale enjoyed sports.

Survivors include children, Jacqueline and Jason Bewersdorf, 3-year-old twins in Morristown, N.J.; brothers, Gary, Kurt, Kim and Eric; sisters, Mrs. Karen Rollins and Lynn.

The family requests contributions to the Michigan Cancer Foundation.

## The Brennan stamp

### Law tradition passes to widow

By CRAIG PIECHURA

She began her law practice just seven weeks ago and already is talking like a seasoned attorney:

"Now don't put that in the paper."

Patricia A. Brennan, 51, of Farmington Hills was holding back vital information. She just didn't want to come off sounding like a feminist symbol or appear to be tooting her own horn for a bit of free legal publicity.

Brennan is the wife of the late Joseph T. (Terry) Brennan who served as attorney for Farmington Township and the city of Farmington Hills for 20 years until his death on Jan. 31, 1977. Before he died, the ailing Brennan talked to his wife about how she would support the family. She had worked as a legal secretary in his law firm and both were convinced she had the skills to become an attorney.

"The day I said yes we went down to the school (the Detroit College of Law) to get the forms and make sure the LSAT (law school admissions test) was all lined up," Mrs. Brennan said.

She's proud of her accomplishment but says she doesn't want to give the impression that women can only be fulfilled through a career.

"To be very honest — and women's libbers would say 'oh, horrors' — if (her husband's) health were perfect why would I want to be busier than he would be? Circumstances, as much as anything, propelled me into this situation."

MODESTY might prevent Mrs. Brennan from taking a bow but her friends in the community were mightily impressed.

"It is not often we see a widow go back to law school, graduate with high honors, pass the bar the first time out and then establish her office in the same spot where her husband started," says James E. Wibby, president of the Metropolitan National Bank of Farmington.

"At the same time she has continued to maintain a fine home for her children. She should certainly be an inspiration to other widows in similar circumstances."

The support of friends and family, especially Mrs. Brennan said, made possible for her to take full-time classes and still see her family for dinner.

Two daughters, Patricia Tisdale, assistant city attorney in Arvada, Colo., and Mary Frances Miller, a humanities fellow at Chicago University, had already left home. But her younger daughters, Audrey, a junior at Our Lady of Mercy High School and Jean, a freshman at the school, live at home.

"I wanted to synch my being home with the hours my girls are home," Mrs. Brennan said. "I wanted to be home when they got home. The two girls and I would pool the work. If I wrote a note, it would get done. If not it might not. But they're good little cooks and they'd help with cleaning. If I asked for help, I'd get it. It really bolstered me all the way through. I think their support was part of it."

SELF-SUFFICIENCY, more than self-fulfillment, caused Mrs. Brennan to embark on a legal career at the age of 48, she says. She had a home and family to support.

Before her husband died, Mrs. Brennan was active in Republican women's groups, was a volunteer at St. Coleman parish and the Junior Girl Scouts. She also is proud of becoming a grandmother. All her activities were outside of the professional realm, she points out.

"I was a productive, contributing person all those years," Mrs. Brennan states. "I don't resent that. By raising a family I contributed as much as my husband to our family."

"I suppose what I'm trying to say is I didn't do it because I wanted to prove something," she said. "It was a perfectly practical decision."

It was also a logical decision, said Mrs. Brennan. Her friends were in the legal community; she had served as president of the Oakland County Wives of Lawyers organization.

"Those were where my interests lie," Mrs. Brennan said. "Without my husband what other entree did I have?"

At first, she said, law school was tough going, especially the reading. Her work as legal secretary helped because she knew most of the legal vocabulary and knew how dockets were scheduled and the procedure of filing a brief.

Mrs. Brennan is presently working in general practice or, as she puts it, "I'll take any case that comes in the door."

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### Heroes' salute

Doris Kingston of Birchwood in Farmington Hills hoisted up 52 yellow ribbons to honor the safe return of the American hostages. She says two youngsters wanted to know how she reached the top of the flagpole to tie the ones on top. Mrs. Kingston works as manager of the Redford Elks Club and her husband, Fred, is the commander of the VFW post in Southfield. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Council nixes expansion plan

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor

A proposal which would have allowed wider industrial expansion has been defeated by the Farmington Hills City Council.

A motion to delete geographical restrictions from the Industrial Research Office (IRO) designation was defeated 4-3.

Voting in favor of deletion were councilmembers Jan Dolan, Earl Oppertausser and Joann Soronen. Voting to maintain geographical restrictions were Mayor Donn Wolf and councilmembers Joe Alkatech, Jack Burwell and William Lange.

The IRO designation has become a symbol of philosophical division between conservatives and moderates in the city.

Originally IRO allowed construction of industrial and office buildings up to a height of 60 feet. But that height restriction was pared back to 50 feet last year when conservatives gained control of the council.

Geographical restrictions built into the ordinance are the Farmington Golf Club on the north, Haggerty on the west, Halsted on the east and the M-102 on the south.

"Although the majority of the planning commission had recommended council delete geographical restrictions, the minority conservative faction advocated maintaining them as presently designated."

"I DON'T THINK we face any great danger of proliferation," said Mrs.

Soronen in reply to council members who feared deleting the restrictions would spread industrial growth throughout the city.

"There may be other areas more appropriate than the area which is defined," argued Oppertausser. But opponents remained firm in their opposition.

"We can avoid a lot of grief. This is the only place that I want IRO," said Alkatech.

Mrs. Dolan, one of the zoning designations' original proponents, urged her colleagues to delete the restrictions saying that in the future, if too many IRO rezoning requests come to council, it could always retreat to the original zoning boundaries.

"It's the council's prerogative to change its mind," she said.

The majority of the city already is planned for development — mostly for residential housing. A few isolated areas outside of the present IRO district could be used for industrial development.

"We are at a stage of development where there aren't that many areas left for IRO anyway," said Soronen. "Right away we are limited. Some areas are appropriate like along Eight Mile."

"I think we would get a lot more attractive buildings," she said.

OPPERTAUSSER PRESSED the argument for deletion. "This is a question of whether we say 'no' before we look at a specific piece and then say 'no,'" said Oppertausser. "I prefer the latter," he concluded.



Patricia A. Brennan began law school at the age of 48 to make a living doing something she enjoyed and not to prove a point. She's practicing law in the same office her late husband Joseph T. (Terry) Brennan used in downtown Farmington. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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Your message from Cupid will find its way to your darling's heart on our Valentine Page. Details in today's classified section.

