

Farmington Observer

Volume 93 Number 51

Thursday, April 8, 1982

Farmington, Michigan

56 Pages

Twenty-five cents

1982 Seiberth Communications Corporation. All Rights Reserved

Storm ambushes hopes for a sunny week

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

A winter storm blasted into the Farmington area for a belated curtain call this week, replete with six inches of snow and an Oakland County red alert Monday and Tuesday.

Under a red alert, motorists are urged to travel only in case of a dire emergency.

Farmington Hills road crews were called in at 6 p.m. Monday and worked throughout the night, plowing and salting the last of the city's major roads Tuesday afternoon before tackling subdivision streets.

Winds clocked at 50 mph set the stage for the storm last weekend, downing power lines, toppling trees and twisting street signs.

The unseasonal snowfall notched 1982 into the National Weather Service record books with a third-place entry of 7.7 inches of snow for April. April 1986 remains in first place with 25 inches, seconded by April of 1926 with nine inches of snow.

Total snowfall for 1981-82 climbed to 72.7 inches, making this the Detroit area's snowiest winter since 1925-6, when 78.6 inches descended on Detroit.

UNWELCOME WEATHER also etched a couple of records for the Detroit Tigers.

It was the first time since 1979 and the second time in Tiger officials' memory that inclement weather forced two postponements of Opening Day.

The Tigers' date with the Toronto Blue Jays was postponed from Tuesday to Wednesday and later to Thursday, April 15.

In the Farmington area Tuesday, the spring surprise forced the closing of all public and private schools, including Oakland Community College and William Tyndale College. Ice- and snow-covered roads slowed traffic to a treacherous crawl.

Close to 1,000 Farmington-area Edison customers lost electrical power for up to six hours Sunday as sections of wire along Nine Mile, Farmington and Orchard Lake roads succumbed to strong winds.

Traffic signals snarled traffic in several intersections as a result of the power failure. Michigan Bell received many complaints from the Farmington area about interrupted phone service.

An emergency road crew was called out at 11 a.m. Saturday to remove a huge uprooted tree that blocked Quaker Valley Street and held residents hostage in the Quaker Valley subdivision near Farmington and Eleven Mile roads.

Another toppled tree crushed a carport and three cars at the Williamsburg Townhouses in Farmington Hills at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

Extensive damage was done to Williamsburg resident Sue Sarkesian's AMC Spirit.

"Sue said she heard what she thought was a clap of thunder when the tree fell," said Sarkesian's sister and roommate, Diane Sarkesian. "We're fortunate the whole tree didn't come down. It easily could have hit our building."

The wind leveled a third tree, which crashed onto an abandoned house at 14 Mile and Haggerty roads.

At about 7 p.m. Saturday, strong winds shattered the \$300 8-by-10-foot storefront window of Ken's Quality Meats, 29590 Orchard Lake Road. Police guarded the store until manager Rick Bannister arrived.

"My store was like a wind tunnel. Dirt and glass were everywhere, and everything that was loose was blown to the back of the store," said Bannister. "Luckily it was after hours. If it had happened one hour earlier, hundreds of dollars worth of meat would have been up on the counter, and it would have gotten loaded with glass."

"Other than that, there wasn't much



CRAG PICHURA/staff photographer

Saturday's strong winds toppled this tree at the Williamsburg Townhouses in Farmington Hills, crushing a carport and three cars beneath it. For more on our revengeful April, see Page 3A.

else, amazingly enough. We were very fortunate," said Walter Karolak,

Farmington Hills public works superintendent.

Farmington fared about the same, escaping heavy damage aside from

some blown-out windows, according to Lt. Frank Lauhoff.

Death cheats couple out of happy future

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

A tragic auto accident early Sunday claimed the lives of a Farmington Hills couple who had planned to be married in two years following their college graduation.

Lynne Elizabeth Hamlett, 19, of 30407 Gloucester Circle, and Alan E. Disner, 20, of 20949 Bycroft were west-bound on 12 Mile Road just west of Orchard Lake Road about 12:30 a.m. when their vehicle was struck head-on by a vehicle driven by Michael Martinez, 16, of West Bloomfield.

Martinez' eastbound vehicle was over the center line in the westbound right lane at the time of collision.

Hamlett was pronounced dead on ar-

rival at Botsford General Hospital. Disner died at 3:15 a.m. at Southfield's Providence Hospital.

As of Tuesday afternoon, Martinez was in serious condition in the intensive care unit at Botsford.

The couple was returning to the Hamlett home after eating at a nearby restaurant at the time of the accident. They had taken the Hamlett family's dog, Casper, along with them. The dog died Tuesday of injuries suffered in the accident.

HAMLETT EARNED enough credits to graduate from North Farmington High School in June 1980 after her junior year and had entered a fashion and retail management degree program at Ferris State University in Big Rapids.

Disner, a 1979 graduate of North Farmington, was studying landscape architecture at Northern Michigan University in Marquette.

Hamlett is survived by her parents, Bruce and Diane; sisters Dr. Jacqueline Capp and Sharon Kuzma; brothers Kevin and Randy, and grandparents Mr. and Mrs. John DePrutti. She was buried Tuesday following a service at St. Fabian Catholic Church in Farmington Hills.

Disner is survived by his parents, Norman and Carolyn; sisters Gayle and Caroline; brothers Norman and Greg, and his grandmother, Mrs. Joseph Disner.

He was buried Wednesday following

Please turn to Page 12A



Alan Edward Disner



Enthusiasm for life and love of her family set Lynne Elizabeth Hamlett, 19, of Farmington Hills apart.

POW pilot relives days of the 'Great Escape'

By Teri Banas
staff writer

Livonia resident Hal (Harold) Erickson was a flyer with the U.S. Army Air Corps and 19 years old when he was shot down over Germany in 1943. For the next two years he lived a life of duplicity and intrigue in a German Prisoner of War Camp.

The camp was a world dominated by "Kriegies" and "Penguins" escaping and planning escapes and "ferrets" trying to thwart the escapes.

Each character had a role to play in Stalag Luft III. The 10,000-prisoner camp was located near a town called Sagan about 100 miles from Berlin, Germany.

A young Detroit at the time, Erickson was shot down on his third mission. He became a member of the intelligence squad for the X Committee, a group of RAF and American flyers which planned all escapes.

Now, retired Ford Motor Co., Erickson recalls those days of internal espionage behind barbed wire as if they happened yesterday.

ON THE surface the prisoners passed the days by playing cards, showing up for roll call, and participating in sporting events, including football, baseball and ice skating, Erickson said. The Red Cross and the YMCA in Amer-



Harold Erickson remembers war

ica supplied the equipment for games and athletics.

But under the surface, below ground, the POWs worked on many escape tunnels which they hoped would lead them out of captivity.

Stalag Luft III gained notoriety after World War II as the site of the "Great Escape," since popularized in the movie starring the late actor Steve McQueen. More than 500 men planned

the escape; only 76 made it out. Nearly all were captured within a short time, and some 50 of those were executed.

Erickson was 18 when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in March 1942. A 1941 graduate of Northwestern High School in Detroit, Erickson's pre-war plans had included entering college to study law.

Instead, he was trained in the operation of the B-17, a 10-member-crew four-engine bomber. Two years after his high school graduation, he flew to England, to begin bombing missions over Germany.

ON ONE of those raids — the target was an airplane factory — he was shot down near Minden, Germany. His B-17 plane was on fire and only one engine was working. The date was July 28, 1943. On Aug. 4, Erickson's father, Harold Sr., received a telegram informing him that his son was missing in action. It wasn't until one month later that the older Erickson learned that his son was a POW.

"In that one month, his hair turned from blonde to white," recalled Erickson.

Erickson was 400 miles inside the German border when he was captured by a group of armed farmers. The other nine crew members also parachuted to safety and were captured upon landing. They all survived the war, said Erickson.

Unable to communicate with the German farmers, Erickson was soon "interrogated" by two young boys, who he suspected were members of a Nazi youth group.

"People were very well-organized in Germany at that time," Erickson recalled. "Everyone had a role to play." They were just like little adults," says Erickson of the boys. "They were very disgusted when I wouldn't tell them anything and said, 'for a lieutenant in the U.S. Air Corps, you certainly don't know much of anything.'"

AFTER SEVERAL days, Erickson was reunited with eight of his crew members and they eventually were moved to an interrogation camp, where he spent two weeks. What followed was a three day-train trip in cattle cars to Stalag Luft III.

Luft III, run by German airmen for Allied airmen, was a compound made up of five separate camps, designated by location. Erickson became a member of the South Camp. The inmates soon called themselves "Kriegies," the German word for POW. As more Americans arrived, the camps were divided into two sections for the British and three for the Americans. As the war progressed, the six-man barracks were outfitted for 16. Two-tier bunks became three-tier bunks. Mattresses were filled with straw.

Despite the many planned activities, the men were lonely and frustrated, said Erickson. To relieve the boredom, they built a theater and church, two libraries (a technical and a reading library) and an ice rink. The camp even included a concert and dance band.

The meager rations supplied by the captors were supplemented by the Red Cross. On occasion, a crudely-fashioned still was used to make raisin wine.

THE POWs displayed their inventiveness in other more serious ways. "We received updates (on the war's progress) from arriving prisoners and from our daily BBC (British Broadcasting Co.) broadcasts," said Erickson. "We had illegal radio sets, which we smuggled in or (built from) bribing the guards."

Please turn to Page 12A

what's inside

Club circuit	4b
Community calendar	3B
Editorials	18A
Inside angles	18A
Letter	3A
Obituaries	13A
Recreation news	6A
Sports	Section C
Suburban life	1B
YMCA highlights	2A

LOOK FOR — HOME AND GARDEN SECTION

Coming Next Thurs.

