

Farmington Observer

Volume 94 Number 25

Thursday, January 8, 1983

Farmington, Michigan

52 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Body shop owner says he's ready to give up ship

By M.E. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Joe Coppola was only 13 when he found his first love in a garage, and time has proven he was smitten with more than just puppy love.

Repairing automobiles blossomed from a childhood hobby into a career in the collision business that until recently kept Coppola, now 45, reasonably satisfied and successful.

The owner of Coppola's Collision Center in Farmington Hills says it's becoming so difficult to do business that he and his wife, Theresa, reluctantly are considering uprooting their family and moving west.

Small bump shop owners are being forced out of business, charges Coppola, by auto parts manufacturers whose prices relentlessly climb and insurance companies that are willing to pay less and less for repairs.

"We're getting the squeeze from two giants," says the father of four who estimates auto-part prices jump 25-30 percent every three months.

"I CAN see why I get the squeeze.

I'm the little guy, and the easiest to squeeze."

"I love my job, but it's getting very discouraging and so frustrating every day that I almost don't want to come to work."

For 10 years, Coppola has operated his 5,000-square-foot shop on Eight Mile east of Farmington Road, servicing customers such as the Farmington Hills Police Department and Hewlett-Packard. The Novi resident carried as many as nine employees in 1977, but now employs just four.

Because a paid office manager is a luxury he can't afford, Theresa Coppola has donated her time to run the office since 1978.

"I'M NOT trying to do a rip job on insurance companies, because their hands are tied too," said Coppola who last year took home only "as much as an average body man — about \$30,000."

"It's the parts manufacturers that people should be going after. It's nothing today to pay \$500 for a bumper. Three years ago it would have cost

\$350 — and it goes up from month to month. Eventually it's going to kill us," said Coppola. He said financial burdens imposed by Michigan's single business tax, workmen's and unemployment compensation make doing business in Arizona an increasingly appealing proposition.

As examples, Coppola picked up some written estimates from his wife's desk and cited a few recent repairs. All of them included computerized insurance company estimates that price labor at \$18 an hour — as opposed to the \$18 rate Coppola charges — and minimal flat rates that "force my body men to really fly through a job," Coppola said.

"I'm an old timer and I can tell you I never saw this 10-15 years ago. I was a businessman no longer have any say so on what I'm going to charge."

Replacing a left tail lamp on a 1979 model came to \$173 — \$155 for parts and \$18 for labor and installation. One El Dorado bumper guard cost Coppola \$147. "It's worth maybe \$20," he said. The cost of a 7-foot chrome molding

Please turn to Page 4



Joe Coppola, owner of Coppola's Collision Center and insurance companies that he's tempted to squeeze so badly from auto parts manufacturers

Apartment dwellers charged extra for cable

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

Apartment tenants and condominium owners have a legal right to receive cable television in their living rooms, according to an amendment to a tri-city cable-franchise ordinance govern-

ing Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi.

The amendment prevents any apartment or condominium-complex owner from building what is called a Small Master Antenna Television (SMATV) system unless cable also is available to tenants.

Free food available for needy families

The food distribution center at Farmington Hills City Hall has begun operations, keeping with former Gov. William Milliken's emergency food directive.

Donations of non-perishable canned and boxed goods are being accepted by

the Department of Special Services.

Needy families in the Farmington area are asked to call City Hall at 474-6115, ext. 277, before coming to pick up food. While supplies last, families will receive bags containing enough food to furnish meals for four to five persons.

The ordinance allows apartment or condominium-complex owners to charge MetroVision Cable Television Co. a "fair market value" fee for space needed to lay cable in apartment buildings.

MetroVision may, in turn, charge apartment or condo tenants an additional fee to offset the charge it pays the landlord. But the additional charge won't be shared by the entire community or be included in the computation of franchise fees that MetroVision must pay to the city annually.

Under the agreement MetroVision made with officials of the three cities in May, 3 percent of the company's total revenues will be paid to the municipalities. The amount each municipality receives depends on how many residents subscribe. Further, under the franchise, MetroVision pledged to donate another 2 percent of its reve-

nues to fund public-access television equipment and production.

METROVISION representative Tom Bjorklund said his company requested the ordinance change to avoid problems over cable access to apartments and condos that have cropped up in surrounding cities.

"It's been a big problem in Southfield," Bjorklund said. "We've seen some evidence of possible future problems in Novi and, obviously, that's part of our franchise so we're concerned."

"It's a move to head off a problem before it becomes one," Bjorklund said of the amendment.

Ed Krivewski, city manager in Novi, said the only SMATV operator in the three cities is one at Chateau Estates, a mobile-home park on 13 Mile, west of Meadowbrook.

Cable-company representatives ex-

pressed concern over the possibility that the Beznos Management Co., which operates units in Mulwood, Fairmont and Kensington Manor in Farmington and Farmington Hills, might attempt to build an SMATV system that excluded cable for tenants.

Bjorklund said in settling rates for cable television, his company "depended upon the right of access being there for all residents." If large chunks of apartment and condominium areas are excluded, Bjorklund said, it would mean that MetroVision couldn't reach its expected goal of getting 60 percent of all residents receiving at least the basic cable service.

"CUSTOMERS ON-LINE would have to pay substantially more," Bjorklund said in the event that SMATV operators are able to overturn the ordinance and legally prohibit cable from entering their complexes.

Jerry Beznos, of the Beznos Management Co., referred all inquiries to the company's property manager, Harold Stobinsky.

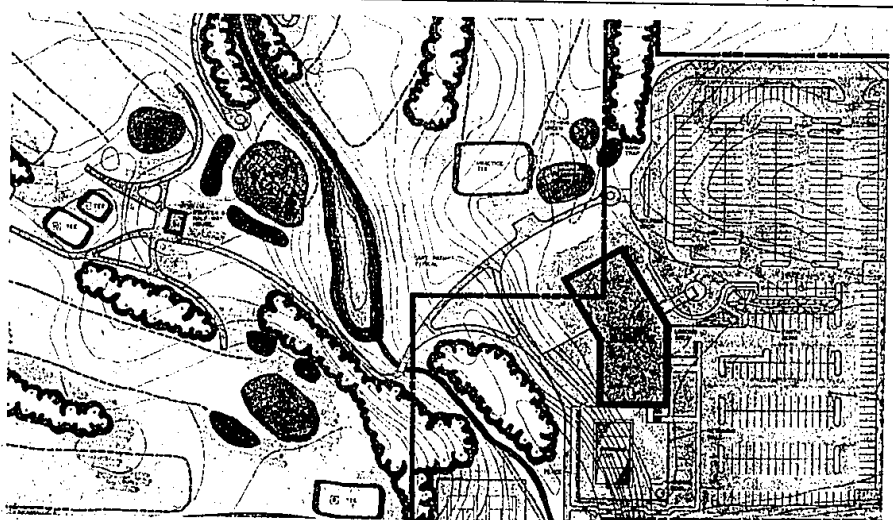
Stobinsky said the Beznos Co. is considering several options in providing entertainment programming to persons who rent apartments or reside in condos managed by the firm.

He said he was unfamiliar with the new amendment and wished to study it before commenting on whether the firm would try to prevent units from being wired for cable.

"We'd like to offer our tenants the best value in entertainment," Stobinsky said.

"Before we make a decision we'll evaluate the city's own system and the means of doing it on our own. It behooves ourselves to educate ourselves."

Please turn to Page 9



In a master plan that involves the sale of property along 12 Mile and Haggerty, Farmington Hills Country Club will construct a new clubhouse, swimming pool, driving range and tennis courts on the southeast portion of the 16-hole golf course. A bit of Farmington Hills history will go along with the sale. The club's existing clubhouse stands on a former farm and incorporates part of a 125-year-old barn. Still imbedded in the stone walls of the grill room are brass rings once used to restrain cattle. The site plan was drawn up by architect Ferruccio P. De Conti, an FHCC member.

Country Club gets facelift

Farmington Hills Country Club (FHCC) has escaped unscathed from the ever-crooping urban development that threatened to gobble up its parking lot, possibly forcing the club's liquidation.

Established in 1955 on the grounds of a one-time farm, the family-oriented club features golf, swimming and dining facilities.

FHCC's 345 members have been painfully aware that the eventual widening of 12 Mile and Haggerty roads which front the parking lot, clubhouse and swimming pool presented a major problem with three possible solutions.

The alternatives included sacrificing the driving range for a new parking lot; selling their land and buying elsewhere; or buying and exchanging adjoining property.

The third option was realized recently when the City of Farmington Hills agreed to a land exchange.

Coupled with the acquisition of other adjoining parcels from private and cor-

porate property owners, the land swap will enable the private club to redesign its facility.

A TWO-STORY CLUBHOUSE, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, tennis courts, driving range and parking lot are to be built on the expanded southeast portion of the FHCC property.

Financing the construction will become feasible when a buyer is found for nine acres of prime property bordering 12 Mile and Haggerty roads (site of the existing clubhouse), valued at approximately \$2 million.

Another source of funding became available when the members last fall agreed to a \$1,300 refundable assessment.

"IT WAS NO SECRET that we had a problem," said FHCC's Daniel Sheehan Jr., vice president of newspaper representatives Sawyer, Ferguson, Walker and Company Inc., Southfield.

"At first, it was just a matter of put-

Please turn to Page 4

what's inside

Club Circuit . . . 2B
Community Calendar . . . 3B
Editorials . . . 16A
Farmington Flashback . . . 6A
Obituaries . . . 2A
Oral Quarrel . . . 9A
Police Pulse . . . 10A
Recreation News . . . 8A
Sports . . . Section C
Suburban Life . . . Section B
YMCA Highlights . . . 8A

"ALWAYS HAS GOOD LUCK!"

"First call at 6:40 a.m.; sold the day the paper came out. Always has good luck with our ads!" E. Burger was pleased with the results of the Observer & Eccentric "JEEPS/A WHEEL DRIVE" classified ad he placed.

Remember...

One call does it all!



591-0900

Use your MasterCard or Visa

Man drowns after boating accident

A 24-year-old Farmington Hills man is missing and presumed to have drowned in Walled Lake after a 12-foot aluminum boat in which he was fishing capsized New Year's Day.

Divers called off an extensive search for the body of Richard Henslee, 24, of 28777 Ramothburn Tuesday due to unstable ice conditions, according to Det. Charles Brown of the Novi Police Department.

Brown said Henslee's brother-in-law and fishing companion, Gerard Foley,

was rescued by Kenneth Rosenboom, 35, of Walled Lake about 7 p.m. January 1.

Foley, 33, had been clinging to the overturned hull for about an hour and a half when Rosenboom heard his calls for help, launched his own aluminum boat and traveled towards Foley.

Other residents who heard the men's distress calls notified police, but before help arrived, Henslee had lost grip of the boat and disappeared into the dark-

ness. No life preservers were aboard the boat, Brown said.

An awaiting ambulance transported Foley to Rotch General Hospital. He was treated for exposure and released after several hours.

Hampering the men's ability to swim was the 40-degree water temperature, darkness and burdensome snowmobile suits and boots in which the two were dressed, Brown said.

They'd been fishing for pike since about 1:30 p.m.

"They were avid sportsmen and fished on the lake all the time," added Brown, who remembers only one other drowning in the last 10 years in Walled Lake.

"Like (someone) might think of going golfing, they'd go out fishing on Walled Lake," said Foley's mother.

"It was such a nice day New Year's Day that they decided in the afternoon to go out fishing. It was like a lark for them. Then the bottom fell out of the world."