

## Just visiting

Jail no place  
you want to beBy Craig Piechura  
staff writer

If you have the misfortune of spending a night in jail in the city of Farmington you'll get a hamburger from Greene's to munch on but no mattress.

Commit an infraction in Farmington Hills that causes you to be incarcerated and you'll find a thin mattress and a Greene's hamburger waiting for you if you spend the night.

Greene's is the burger for burglary suspects and others arrested in town. Both municipalities have a contract with the all-night restaurant.

"It's cruel and unusual punishment if you don't give prisoners something to eat," joked Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols. "Some would say it's cruel and unusual punishment if we do feed them."

Neither Nichols or Farmington Farmington Public Safety Director G. Robert Selfert are laughing about a set of proposed rules issued this month by the Michigan Department of Corrections.

ations. The rules are causing officials to evaluate their short-term detention facilities to guard against possible lawsuits by prisoners, said Selfert.

The 67-page document primarily pertains to rules regarding lockups and jails — defined as facilities where prisoners are held longer than 24 hours — not the temporary holding centers found in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Persons arrested locally who are unable to post bond are transported to Oakland County Jail and brought back to district court for arraignment or preliminary exams.

**THE MAJORITY** of persons arrested are back on the street within an hour or two. They're released on all but major crimes after posting cash bond or being released on personal bond by signing a statement pledging to return to court or lose bond money.

Selfert said he can't say no one is ever held longer than 12 hours in the department's holding center, "but, routinely, people are not held for any period even approaching 12 hours."

"By (Department of Corrections) definition we are not operating a lock-up, which is the lowest category of facility they're attempting to regulate," said Selfert. "Because we don't hold people here for trial. We bring people in and hold them only long enough to transport them to county jail."

Under the new rules detention in a holding center is limited to "not more than 24 hours." Police officials in both cities said there have been rare instances where prisoners have been held longer than 24 hours in the holding center. Both department heads said they could easily comply with the new directive limiting a prisoner's stay in a holding center to 24 hours.

Proposed rules restate the existing requirement that all prisoners who spend a night in any cell be provided a fire-resistant mattress.

**"AT THIS TIME** we don't provide them (mattresses)," said Farmington Lt. Frank Laskoff, deputy director of the department.

Prisoners who must spend the night in one of two cells are provided with a thick, scratchy blanket and can lie on a wide wooden bench.



The scene outside the two holding cells in Farmington Hills looks no more inviting than the view from behind the bars. Lt. George Meier swings the door shut.

RANDY DORST/staff photographer



Prisoners who spend the night in the city of Farmington's two holding cells get a blanket but no mattress.

Prisoners in Farmington and Farmington Hills are monitored by a video camera mounted in front of the cells. By law a check of the cell must be made at least once an hour by an officer on duty to safeguard against suicides and serious illness going undetected.

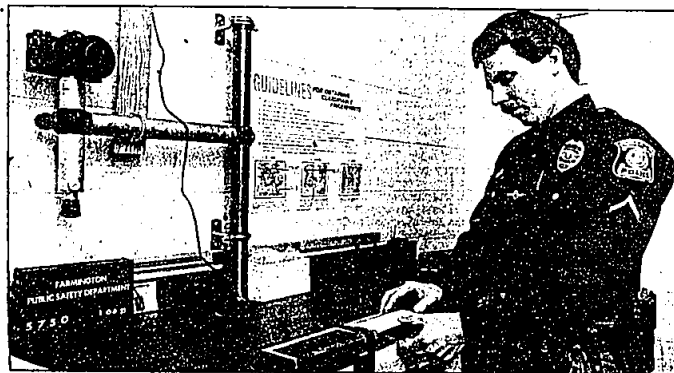
Holding centers in both cities appear freshly painted, with a minimum of graffiti on walls and ceilings.

A prisoner in the Farmington cell recently burned the initials "KGB" in the ceiling with a butane lighter, an item that is supposed to be prohibited.

In the Hills, Nichols said the freshly painted cells don't always look so good.

"The last time we took common council (sic) through here the place looked like Tom Sawyer's cave," Nichols said.

The bench that serves as a bed for prisoners in the Hills facility was recently lowered to guard against lawsuits filed by a prisoner who might fall. Both departments already comply with proposed criteria mandating:



Processing of prisoners, including fingerprinting and mug shots, takes place in front of the two cells in Farmington and in an adjacent room in Farmington Hills. Officer Tom Cox prepares a sheet for fingerprint impressions.

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A sordid suburban story  
about bottles, beatings

This is a story of alcoholism and wife abuse. It parallels the scores of similar accounts documented on police logs across the country. The names used are fictitious. The article is the result of an extensive interview with a battered wife.

By Mary Lou Callaway  
special writer

Her physical hurts have healed. The emotional scars, the grief and bitterness will take longer.

Janice tells her story, she says, to warn other women. Janice is not her name. The anonymity is to protect her children and her standing in the community.

She and her former husband, George, are known in the West Bloomfield area. They appeared to be a model family. Both with master's degrees, working and raising two children.

But her story is an ugly recital of open infidelity, verbal and physical abuse, alcoholism, threats on her life ending in divorce and what she calls an unfair property settlement.

Her marriage lasted 24 years, until she was terrified he was going to kill her.

"I married after graduating from college. I'd known him since I was 15. I put him through college. Now he's ordered to pay child support and he won't pay it. I've paid about \$6,000 in attorney fees and I owe about \$4,000 more at 12 percent interest. The only way I can get it is to go back to court. I can't afford to," says Janice.

**"IT'S SORDID.** Not only were other women involved," she adds, "he threatened to kill me. He had his hand on my throat and was choking me, smashed my glasses, pulled the hair out of my head. I was black and blue all over. He has an aggressive temper. Some men are like that, I guess. I felt ashamed and guilty. He began drinking more and more heavily."

She and her children found half-empty liquor bottles in the car and the bedroom. There were loaded guns in the house.

Janice had no experience with alcoholism and didn't recognize it.

"I was naive. At first I thought it was just social drinking. Then he began to have seizures. He lost his driver's license after an accident but got it back."

"I thought an alcoholic was someone who went on roaring drunks or was found lying in a gutter. I didn't know how insidious it was," she says, describing George's loss of weight and memory and hand tremors.

Pride kept her from confiding her problems to anyone.

George bragged about affairs with other women, she says.

The final beating caused one of her children to call the police. She charged him with assault and battery. "He was out on bond before I was out of the hospital."

**ASKED WHY** she suffered the abuses for so many years, she quietly answers, "because I really loved him."

"It's still a man's world, even for a working woman," Janice says.

Convinced her lawyers and George's lawyers took advantage of her naivety, she even found the female judge unsympathetic.

"Maybe you think I'm gutless, but I wanted to hold on to my marriage. Marriage counseling didn't work out because he wouldn't go," she explains. "I was desperate and frightened. I finally went to Al-Anon."

Under the terms of the divorce settlement, Janice is to pay George for half of the appraised value of their house in West Bloomfield at 6 percent interest until it's paid off.

When the judge asked Janice at the settlement hearing if the property disposition was "fair and equitable" to her, Janice, according to the court record, said "No, I don't."

"I guess I can live with anything except the 6 percent I have to pay," said Janice.

"That's about the lowest that has ever come out of this court," said the judge.

**JANICE, TELLING** the court she has worked all her married life was interrupted by the judge, who said, "Well, you might as well join the ranks. We all know working women get it in the neck. Anyway, we're all working women in the room right now."

Janice's former attorney, a woman, added, "We're all working."

Behind on the car and mortgage payments, her expenses are running \$1,000 a month beyond her income, Janice testifies. She sought no alimony and did not charge George with adultery in seeking the divorce.

Her advice to other women facing similar marital problems is "Don't be intimidated by attorneys. Don't be afraid of the judge."

Now trying to put her life together for herself and her children, Janice is still jumpy at the unexpected ring of the doorbell or a late night telephone call.

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