

Mystery looms in hills; author knows whodunit

By Jean Adamczak
special writer

There's something mysterious in Farmington Hills and only Richard Larsen knows what it is.

Larsen, 56, a resident of Farmington Hills, recently won first prize in an Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine short story contest. His story will appear in the June issue of the publication.

"Writing is relaxing," Larsen said as he leaned back on his couch, "it takes your mind off of all other things and you can do it anywhere."

Larsen has been writing intermittently all his life, but only seriously for the past four years.

"I've written everything — adventure stories, love stories, baseball stories, but so far I've had the best luck with mysteries."

Mysteries are easiest for Larsen to

pen, he feels he has a writer's sense about whodunit plots. "I think and feel the same way other mystery authors do," Larsen said. He lists Agatha Christie as one of his personal favorites. "I have a whole set of Agatha's books."

LARSEN HAS also received two honorable mention awards for previous stories submitted to the Hitchcock magazine over the past two years.

"I just write because I find something interesting to write about," Larsen said. "Although winning these prizes has given me incentive to keep on trying."

Employed as a hospital representative for the pharmaceutical company Merck, Sharp and Dhome, Larsen tries to write whenever the 'mood' hits him.

"It's sort of like painting, you gotta be in the mood," Larsen said. "If you're tired, forget it."

Larsen's characters and story ideas are usually a compilation of people he knows or meets and of places he has been. He presently is working on a novel about an adventure in Acapulco based on a trip he and his wife took there on their 25th wedding anniversary.

Larsen's wife, Betty, also is writing, and, he says, she is very competitive. Her latest endeavor is being entered in a contest in Redbook magazine.

Larsen also has inspired some of his co-workers to pick up some long-forgotten hobbies like painting and stained glass design.

"Ever since I won this prize, some of my friends have started working on their hobbies again. I guess it was kind of an incentive to them," Larsen said.

Larsen's other recreational activities include golfing, bowling, traveling and visiting his two grandchildren.



Richard Larsen taps away at a mystery plot at his home in Farmington Hills. Larsen, a hospital representative for Merck, a pharmaceutical company, says writing whodunit stories relaxes him.

HANDY DORST/staff photographer

Teammates rally skills for high-speed races



HANDY DORST/staff photographer

Zachery Thompson, 20 and Kurt Kerttu, 21, have the lowest combined age of any pro rally team in the country. Thompson says he spends about 90 percent of his spare time maintaining his prized Dodge Charger 2.2 race car.

By Diane Gale
staff writer

Driving up to 110 miles an hour through narrow, winding, unpaved forest roads when it's dark is the sport that Zack Thompson says is unparalleled for excitement.

Thompson, 20, drives his Dodge Charger 2.2, which is owned by Thompson Advertising Productions Inc. in Farmington Hills, through the course with his navigator, Kurt Kerttu, 21.

The two, who work together at the advertising agency owned by Thompson's father, John, are the youngest combined age pro rally team in the country.

"Pro rally racing is an obsession with me," Thompson said. "Ninety percent of my spare time is spent working on the car."

"Now it's a hobby, but if I could do it and it would pay off professionally, I'd do it full time," Thompson said.

Pro Rally was established in the United States only 10 years ago by the Sports Car Club of America. For the past two years, Thompson and Kerttu, both Bloomfield Township residents, have been racing as a team.

THE HIGH endurance, emotion

packed sport is divided in two parts, stages and transit zones. The stage is the racing span when the driver and navigator speed through rugged forest trails. During the "transit," the team is getting to and from the stages.

"I won't drive over my head, because I'd rather lose than get killed," Thompson said. "You start to get faster with more experience that you get. Pro rally is a lot harder than people think, and I wish everyone could see how it goes."

"Each stage is connected by a transit zone, usually on public streets or highways," Thompson said. "All transits must be traveled on public streets and highways at legal speed limits or you get points taken off your end score."

The winner of the race, which is patterned after performance rallying in Europe, is the team with the least amount of points.

The lowest timed drivers take home about \$1,000, Thompson said.

However, he is more concerned with contingency fees he receives from Chrysler Corp., which pays drivers of Chrysler cars for placing first through fifth.

As co-driver, Kerttu is responsible for adding Thompson on what turns to make and what the road is like during the stages. He also explains how to

get through the transits to the next stages. A typical rally will last between 12 and 16 hours, and cover 300 to 600 miles.

"A mistake could be a potentially disastrous situation," Kerttu said. "You have to have a lot of confidence in each other."

He added that he isn't even aware of the high speed and the looming danger, because his total concentration is on the maps, instructions from a route book and an electronic navigation computer that clocks how much time they have to get to the next point.

"It takes a special person to be a co-driver," Thompson said. "Kurt's job is to keep us on route and on schedule."

The cost of maintaining the Charger is lowered by the team's sponsors which include B.F. Goodrich, Chrysler, Pyrotec, IPF (which produces rally lights) and Victory, a producer of driving products.

Thompson already has four races under his belt with his father as the key person in the service crew along with Rob Irwin, a friend.

Irwin, 20, will serve as Thompson's co-driver at the Tulip 200 Divisional, scheduled to run March 31 through April 1 in Clarenceville, Ohio.

memory lane

Memories, memories... have we got the memories. And we'd like to share them with you. Using local newspaper files, we're dishing up generous slices of life in the Farmington community from 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago.

MARCH 9, 1944 —

CLIFF STERLING scored 13 points and Rennie Bacon added 10 to lift Farmington High past Walled Lake, 40-25, in the state Class B high school basketball district championship game March 4 at Farmington. Farmington was to have played Flint Technical in regional action on March 11. In an earlier tournament game, Bacon and Hamlin scored nine and seven points, respectively, as Farmington downed Redford Union, 33-26. The three-game district drew 2,433 fans.

"THE TRUTH HURTS," said the headline over an editorial, which began: "No one can deny the shameful fact that after two years of war the civilian population of this nation has done little to deserve victory. It is sheer hypocrisy to point to our arms production as evidence of a will to win. Every gun and plane that has rolled off the assembly line was built on a strictly commercial basis. Not a rivet has been driven for love of country alone — the labor leaders and vote seekers have seen to that. Rarely has a politician made an utterance uncolored by a desire for personal advancement."

CLASSIFIED AD: "FOR SALE — Chore Boy Milking Machine. John Aland, 30400 Shilawasee, Phone 1246." Another classified: "WANTED — Cow or Chicken manure, call Farmington 1031."

SHORT ITEM: "Blue eyes are disappearing from the populations of the world, according to the Better Vision Institute."

MARCH 11, 1954 —

"IT'S PRETTY HOT south of the border, and that covers more than just the weather, too."

"At least it applies as far as the four Puerto Ricans are concerned who shot up the House of Representatives last week. According to Lilia Lebron, leader of the quartet, the whole affair was designed to aid the Puerto Rico independence movement. She added that the incident was inspired by the history of the United States independence.

"We don't know what history book Lolita has been reading, but in case anyone has the same idea, they had better go back and read again. There were plenty of heated words prior to the Declaration of Independence, but unless we have been led astray, the firearms have always been deposited in the cloak room before the battle began.

"It is an old custom... that's getting plenty of serious consideration right now."

THOMAS SCHIRBER, newly appointed Farmington Township police officer, began his duties

March 9, township officials announced. Schirber had served for three years on the Farmington police department.

BRADLEY REXALL Drugs at 33323 Grand River, advertised a "giant size" tube of Colgate Lather Shave Cream for 53 cents.

MARCH 12, 1964 —

FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP'S Board voted unanimously to draft a resolution urging Michigan lawmakers to act favorably on a bill to provide legislation which would enable local authorities to lower speed limits in school zones.

FARMINGTON'S EXCHANGE Club marked its 40th anniversary recently by honoring three of its charter members still active in the service club. The three — Treasurer Art Lamb, Harrison Johnson and Devere Fleming — were presented an inscribed barometer plaque for their service to the club over the past 40 years.

CUNNINGHAM'S Drug Store in the Farmington Plaza Shopping Center advertised "push button" permanent for \$1.77 a can, and Clearasil ointment for 59 cents a tube.

BRENNER'S FARMINGTON Hills Market at 24233 Orchard Lake Road advertised Campbell's bean and bacon soup for 10 cents a can, and a No. 2 1/2 can of sauerkraut for the same price.

MARCH 7, 1974 —

THE USE OF PINBALL machines and other coin-operated amusement devices in Farmington will be strictly controlled under a new city ordinance introduced at a recent city council meeting. Council, by a 4-0 vote, approved an ordinance prohibiting persons under 16 years of age from using the devices unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. The ordinance also requires that a person at least 21 years of age supervise the operation at all times, and that the owner of the establishment be "of good character."

In addition, the ordinance would limit the hours of operation to 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. Councilman John Allen said, "I am opposed to any kind of amusement device where money is exchanged. I think it's just a way of taking money away from kids too young to make a determination." Allen voted for the ordinance, although he said he favored much tougher restrictions.

FARMINGTON'S CITY Council approved two reappointments to local boards. Lawrence Mayer, 33718 Grand River, was reappointed to the Farmington Historical Commission for a three-year term. John Dinan, 36154 Smithfield, was reappointed to the Farmington city and township District Library Board of Trustees for a four-year term.

SEMI-ANNUAL MEN'S CLOTHING SALE 20% OFF CUSTOM TAILORING



During the Men's Clothing Sale you can save 20% on custom made clothing from Walter-Motion, one of the finest makers of top quality suits, sport coats, slacks and fur coats. We can tailor a large range of sizes: 37-52 regular, 36-46 short, 39-52 long, 42-52 extra long. So if you're interested in a wardrobe that fits correctly and comfortably, in updated styling or classic lines, custom tailoring is for you. Choose from hundreds of fabrics that you don't see everyday and won't find everyone else wearing.

Our expert tailors, Al Patchak at Northland, and John Kimpke at Eastland, will personally fit, press and finish your garment to your exact measurements. Phone 569-3232, ext. 2310 for Northland. For Eastland, call 371-3232, ext. 2310. Sale ends Sunday, March 18, in the Men's Custom Shop at Hudson's Northland and Eastland.

you can find it at hudson's