

Student designs scary effects

By Karen Hermes Smith
staff writer

RICH POLLISH's business card says he's an engineer — an ordinary title — but what he engineers is far from ordinary.

The West Bloomfield resident designs and manufactures special effects for horror movies — things like slit throats, burned arms and cleavers in the eye.

Pollish operates his business, "Fantasy Engineers," out of a basement workshop stocked with face and arm

molds; rubber, fiberglass and plaster for making masks; and creams, powders and paints for making the effects look their goriest.

A senior majoring in telecommunications at Michigan State University, Pollish became interested in special effects while watching horror and

"back and slash" movies as a kid.

He was intrigued by how the monsters were assembled and characters were made to look so gory.

"ANYTHING OFF the wall, I like," he said. "... When I saw a movie, I wanted to look like the people in it." When he first started making special effects, Pollish used toilet paper and latex to make masks, a tip he learned from a drummer in a rock band.

He asked his orthodontist for the impressions of his teeth so he could use them in molding "fangs and stuff" and for enough rubber orthodontia material to fill up a hockey mask so he could make a mold of his face for manufacturing masks.

Pollish has gradually refined his process for making special effects by reading books on how movies like "Dawn of the Dead" were made and experimenting, experimenting, experimenting.

Support has come from members of his family who ignore the foul smell of rubber masks baking in the kiln and plaster tracked through the house. Support also has come from friend Mark Shaw, also of West Bloomfield, who, as Pollish's "guinea pig," sits for hours with straw up his nostrils while plaster is caked on his face.

Pollish, once he has his degree in hand, hopes to land a job with a production company directing films. But he wants to have enough time to continue making special effects on the side.

"I LIKE to be a part of entertainment," he said. "But I like to be behind the scenes."

Pollish wants to shift, though, from horror to science fiction movies, making alien creatures instead of slashed-up bodies. "Gore," he explained, "is about the easiest to get into. You don't have to be a good filmmaker to turn people's heads."

Pollish already has been commissioned to make alien creatures, in addition to gory special effects. He made two full-size E.T. costumes for the haunted house, sponsored last Halloween by Oakland Community College.

His other projects have included doing the makeup for an amateur vi-



Rich Pollish, a senior at Michigan State University, applies cream to smooth off rough edges between the mask and flesh.



photos by GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Rich Pollish of West Bloomfield poses with his "subjects," which are featured in many area films and productions.

deo titled "Through the Tunnels of My Mind" and producing 19 zombies for a campus reproduction of Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

In addition, Pollish sells the plans for a full-size suit of armor out of posterboard that he designed as a project for a sculpture class.

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.

JAN. 11, 1945 —

AT THE CLOSE of business on Dec. 30, 1944, the total assets of the Farmington State Bank were listed at \$4,555,753.88. Bank officers, elected at the annual meeting of the board of directors, were Howard M. Warner, chairman of the board; Howard C. Knickerbocker, president; Floyd H. Nichols and Emory O. Hutton, vice presidents; Byron E. Lapham, cashier; Harold W. Avery, Atwater Tipper and Dorothy M. Smith, assistant cashiers.

"THE BATTLE THAT seems to center around Farmington these days concerns neither the Japs nor the Nazis, but rather the snow plows," noted an item in the Around the Block column on the front page of the Farmington Enterprise. "The city works away and just manages to get the city streets cleared off, and the intersections along Grand River cleared away, when along comes the state plow, and there you have it — the intersections are all filled in with snow again. And so the battle rages. The winner? That depends on whether you find the intersections cleared or not."

"A FURIOUSLY FUNNY column by Bob Hope, famous comedian of stage, screen and radio," was advertised in the Farmington Enterprise. Hope's column appeared daily in the Detroit Times.

SHORT ITEM: "The 1944 epidemic of infantile paralysis officially became the second worst in the recorded history of the disease in the United States."

ANOTHER SHORT ITEM: "The famous song 'Down by the Old Mill Stream' refers to the Blanchard River running through Fremont, Ohio. It was written by Tell Taylor, who was born on a farm near Fremont in 1876 and lived there until his death in 1937."

FARMINGTON HIGH lost a high school basketball game to Redford Union, 21-19.

JAN. 6, 1955 —

A SHEET OF ICE topped with a light covering of snow prompted Farmington officials to close Farmington Road between Shilawasee and 10 Mile Road — known locally as McGee Hill — to auto traffic. Once closed, the hill became popular with young sledders.

ACCORDING TO JUSTICE Court records, Lech Slupczynski of Dearborn was fined \$5 for running a red light at U.S. 16 (Grand River) and M-102 (Eight Mile).

SHORT ITEM: "He who spends all his life in sport is like one who wears nothing but fringes, and eats nothing but saucers."

Mile Road between U.S. 16 and Haggerty Road was suspended because of cold weather, according to the state Highway Department.

A TOTAL OF 25 persons, all Republicans, filed nominating petitions as candidates in the biennial Farmington Township primary election, which was to have been held Feb. 21, a Monday. The field was the largest in township history.

CLASSIFIED AD: "REFINED GENTLEMAN wants sleeping room, close in, kitchen privileges preferred. Phone Farm. 1509-J to 6 p.m."

ATTRACTIONS AT THE Civic Theatre in downtown Farmington were "Francis Joins the WACS" with Donald O'Connor and Julia Adams, and "The Black Shield of Falworth" with Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh.

JAN. 6, 1965 —

THE 12-CANDIDATE FIELD in the race for the vacant 14th District state Senate seat included four local residents. They were Farmington Republicans Allen C. Ingle and Fitzhugh Prescott, and Democrats John H. Burke of Farmington and Leo Meagher of Farmington Township. The seat fell vacant when Senator-elect Paul M. Chandler, publisher of the Observer newspapers, died in December, 1964. The special primary was to have been held Feb. 15.

A FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP resident, Richard D. Hunsfeld, was burned to death in his home in the LeBlanc Trailer Park, 21421 Hamilton. Authorities said the fire was caused by careless smoking.

WILLIAM PATTERSON, a Dearborn resident who managed the Kendallwood branch of the National Bank of Detroit, took office as president of the Kendallwood Kiwanis Club on Jan. 1.

ADVERTISED BY KROGER supermarkets was Modex, super or regular, 99 cents for a 48-count box. Kroger also advertised Ivory liquid for 80 cents for a quart bottle.

JAN. 9, 1975 —

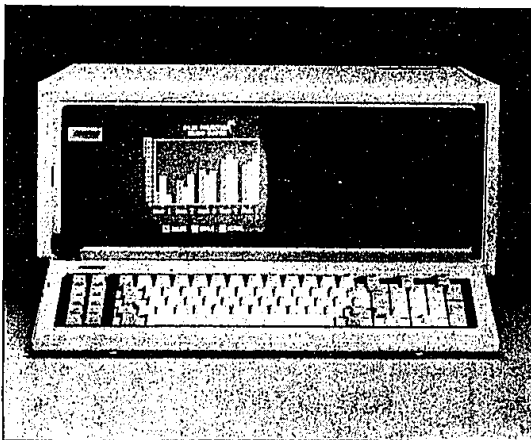
ROGER ALLEN, executive director of the Farmington Education Association, announced that he would leave his position to take an administrative post with the Flint School District. "If I had been offered the same position in a school district the size of Farmington, I wouldn't have been interested," he said.

THE "NO FIELD trips" policy set by the Farmington Board of Education was to continue, the board announced, the board set the policy because of several recent millage failures.

THE FARMINGTON AREA Jaycees donated \$1,000 to the city of Farmington to pay for a new fence to be placed around a ball park in City Park. Jaycee President Norb Keller and Board Chairman John Spry presented the city with the funds, which were part of the proceeds from the 1974 Farmington Jaycee fund-raiser.

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