

Missing limo leaves party goes in limbo

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

It was going to be a "bachelorette bash" before a Saturday wedding, but it ended up as a big — as in stretch limo — ripoff.

Jennifer Hellstedt, 25, of Dearborn Heights, and 10 friends rented a 1992 stretch Lincoln limousine from ACS Limousine Service in Dearborn for a night on the town beginning with a stop at the Cadillac Cafe on Grand River.

"We were going to some different clubs," Hellstedt said. "Since we were going to drink, we didn't want to drive."

So, with cameras to capture the occasion, purses and other finery left in the limo, which the driver, 29, of Detroit said would be there when they came out, the ladies went into the club.

"We were going to meet my fiancé, who was having his bachelor party, at Tremors (in Livonia) at 1 (a.m.)," she said.

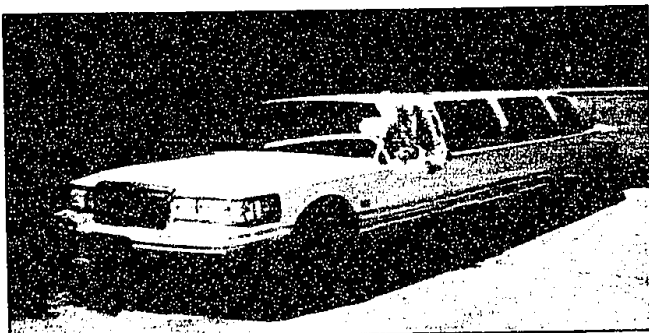
Instead, there was no limo and no driver when the women came out at 11:30 p.m.

The driver told Farmington Hills police by telephone that after dropping off the women at about 10:45 p.m. Friday at the cafe, he had gone home to change and come back.

But when he returned at 2:30 a.m., he realized he had missed the party, and instead drove the limo to a Pizza Hut in Detroit, parked it and walked home.

Hills police have not been able to contact the driver since. Efforts by the Observer to reach the owner of the limousine company were unsuccessful.

Detroit police recovered the limo Saturday evening. It had been broken into and everything



Looted limo: The driver's front window of this 1992 Lincoln stretch limousine was found broken and items worth more than \$2,000 stolen Saturday.

taken. The keys were in the ignition.

"The owner was really rude and told us it was too bad," Hellstedt said.

One of the revelers, Kelly Marie Ciesielski of Farmington Hills, said although she was surprised, there were some early warnings that all wasn't as it should be.

"The driver was an hour late," she said. "We had rented it from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. and he didn't show up until 10 (p.m.). And he was wearing a jogging suit."

Ciesielski, 22, a co-worker of the bride-to-be in Livonia, said the driver also backed into the bridesmaid's car when he came to pick her up.

"It was dark, so we couldn't tell

how much damage he'd done," she said. "But it was pretty strange."

When the driver let the party off, he said he would be right outside, Ciesielski said. There were valet attendants at the cafe, but those attendants said the man drove off and didn't return.

Hellstedt said the driver's story that he returned at 2:30 a.m. to pick up his passengers didn't make sense since they only rented the limo until 2 a.m.

For now, the limo is back at the Dearborn company, the whereabouts of the driver and the passengers' belongings are unknown.

Ciesielski said the women have retained a lawyer to pursue the

matter. Hellstedt said that in addition to the lost property, the film footage of her last singles party would have been valuable to her.

"I feel like I won't have those memories," she said.



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