Farmington says goodbye to city manager

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

When it came time to bid retiring Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff adieu, more than 250 of his closest friends showed up.

Lauhoff, 51, was roasted during a special program Thursday at the Farmington Hills Manor on Orchard Lake Road. He and his wife, Vicki, head Jan. 16 to Surprise, Ariz. They will spend summers in Grand Rapids.

Pam Wright and Frank Lauhoff share a quiet word after the evening's program.

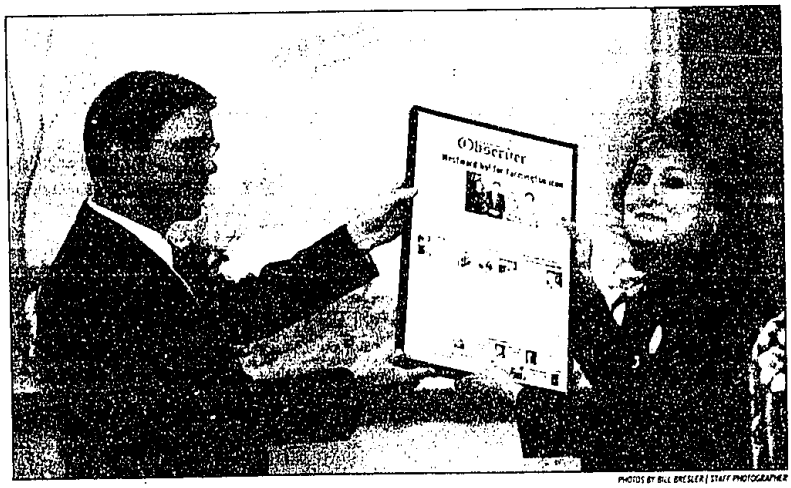
Visibly moved by the displays of appreciation for his years of service, Lauhoff said, "You folks being here tonight means just about everything to me."

He introduced members of his family who attended, including in-laws, daughter Cindy Klevenger and her husband, Dan, and his mother. Daughter Denise was unable to attend. The Klevengers' son, Drew, stayed at home with a baby sitter.

Lauhoff also asked his wife, Vicki, to stand, noting they got married when they were 19 and 20 years old.

"You don't do that anymore today but it worked then and 30 years later it is still working," he said.

He recalled receiving a letter from the Farmington Public Safety Department, after he blanketed the area with resumes and job applications in the early 1970s. When he got a letter back inviting him to apply to be a public safety officer, he tossed it, thinking the job was akin to that of a school crossing guard.



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Observer & Eccentric Executive Editor Susan Rosiek presents Lauhoff with his very own front page of the Farmington Observer.

A year later, after being notified they were testing applicants, Vicki suggested he look into the job.

"I called them and found out this is actually something I might want to do. I guess I got lucky with the rest."

Lauhoff served 18 years in the Farmington Public Safety Department where he rose to the director's position. He spent another 10 years as city manager, a career whose achievements were the focus of Thursday's program.

"Success is only achieved when good people work together toward the same goal," Lauhoff said.

Committed to the success of the Farmington Civic Theatre, he was credited with spearheading the refurbishing project for the city-owned movie house. Lauhoff's final endeavor was the sewer relining project which saved the city a lot of money.

He also worked hard to get the Main Street Grant, which will provide technical assistance to the city.

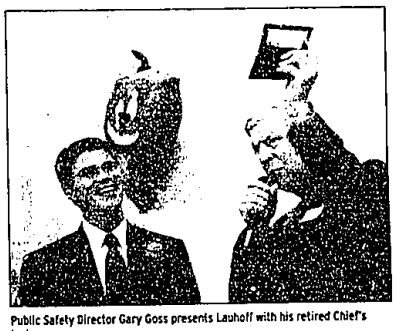
Lauhoff, always serious about his job, took his share of ribbing from guests. Presented were a video, mocked-up front page of the Farmington Observer and a special serenade from Bill Richards, his assistant city manager, and Corinne Brazill, who works in the records department.

"I don't think I have 250 friends total myself, let alone 250 who are willing to pay $28 a piece," Richards said.

Farmington Director of Public Safety Gary Goss remembered Lauhoff's philosophy, "If you think you should say it, you probably shouldn't."

Lauhoff's personality earned him respect from employees and gained the city countless friends, Goss said. "He was a master of details. He urged all of his employees to take care of the little things. He pushed us to take care of the small stuff and the big stuff will take care of itself."

Both former Mayors John and Shirley Richardson attended. "Thank you, Vicki, so much for sharing your husband for 28 years with us in the Farmington community," Shirley said. "Frank, you did a magnificent job."



Public Safety Director Gary Goss presents Lauhoff with his retired Chief's badge.

Former Farmington Mayor and Councilman Bill Hartsock has known Lauhoff for 28 years.

"You made difficult things seem easy and the impossible a reality," Hartsock said.

Ticket prices included a contribution to several gifts – a digital camera, color printer and cash to assist the Lauhoffs with settling into their new home. But his comments showed the now former city manager was touched most by the outpouring of affection and appreciation from his longtime friends and associates.

"I look at every face and there is a history behind every face," Lauhoff said.

Farmington City Council presents Lauhoff with a memento of his butterfly garden project.

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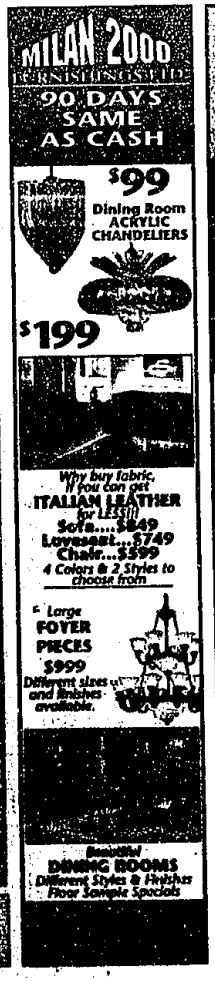
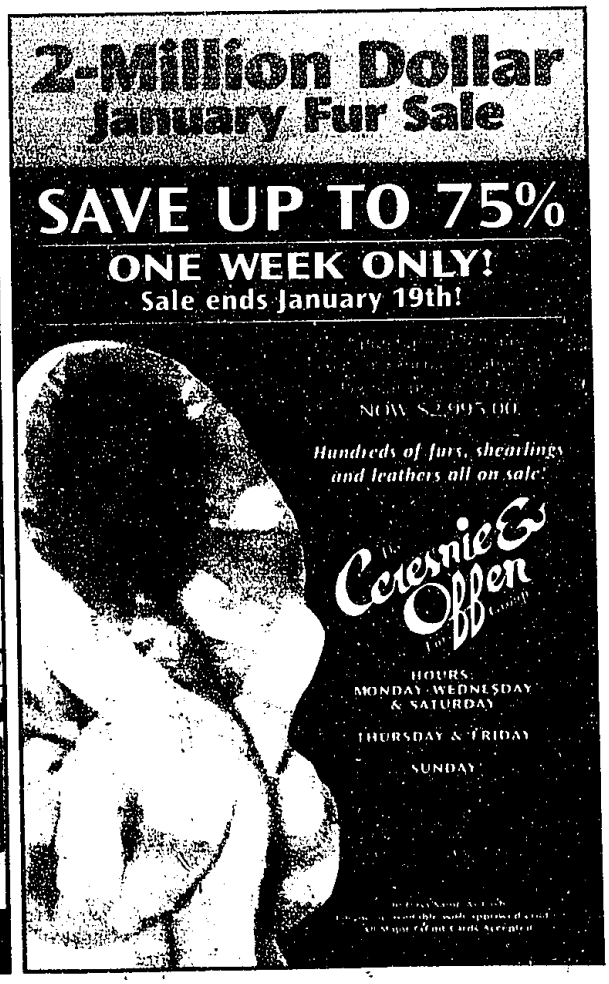
Arena hosts 'Great to Skate' clinic

The Farmington Hills Ice Arena, together with the Farmington Hills Figure Skating Club, will host the second annual "It's Great to Skate" clinic 11:30 a.m.-1:20 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18. The event is free, and skaters of all ages and skating abilities are welcome.

Ice Arena instructors will be on hand to conduct sample classes, answer questions, and enroll interested students in the Arena's Learn to Skate program. Advance registration is not required, but participation is limited to the first 200 skaters.

Drawings and games will be held throughout the two-hour event. Skaters can bring their own skates or rent a pair for $2.50.

The Farmington Hills Ice Arena is located at 35500 Eight Mile, between Gill and Halsted. For more information call Michelle Sibley at (248) 478-8800 ext. 104.