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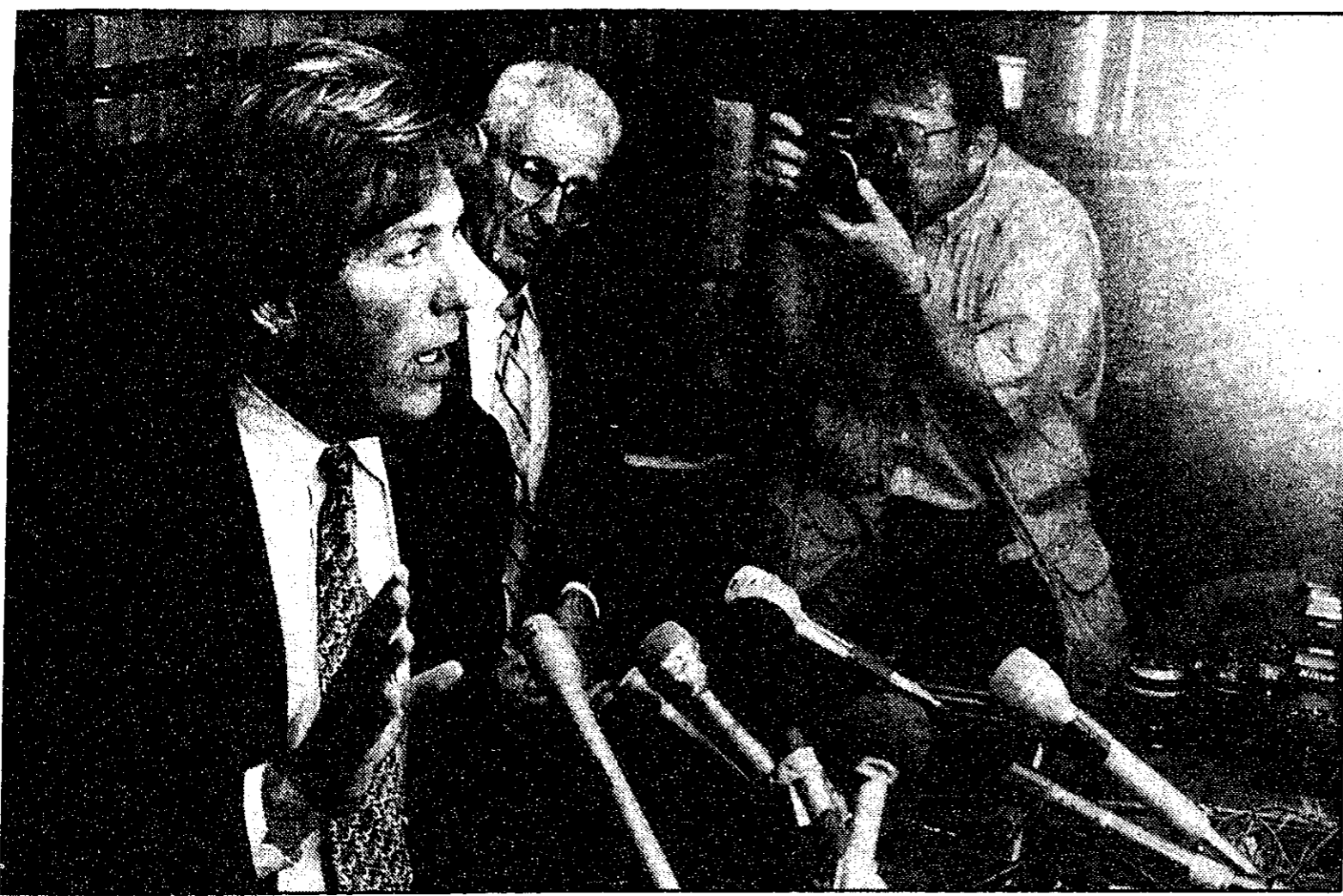
Volume 38
Number 29
One Section
12 Pages plus Supplements

NOVI NEWS

Opinions ALL COUNCIL NEEDS IS ONE MORE THING TO DO / 4A

Dining SPIRITS ADD FLAVOR WITH LITTLE EXTRA COST / 5A

Update NOVI YOUTH INJURED WHEN HIT BY TRAIN / 3A



Attorney Geoffrey Fieger and Dr. Jack Kevorkian face the national and local media Thursday in Fieger's Southfield law offices.

Photo by TIM M. WATSON

With weeks to live, Tom Hyde chose suicide

By JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

Although television news cameras were rolling when Dr. Jack Kevorkian explained how he helped 30-year-old Thomas Hyde Jr. end his life, it could take several weeks before the Wayne County Medical Examiner's office rules on the Novi man's cause of death.

Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Bader Cassim said Thursday he will not provide an opinion on Hyde's demise to Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair until the entire analysis is complete.

"We learned our lesson a couple of months ago in the Malice Green case," Cassim explained.

Assisted suicide has been a felony in Michigan since April, but the law's constitutionality has been challenged.

Hyde, who was in the last stages of the fatal Lou Gehrig's disease, died early Aug. 4 on Belle Isle in the back of Kevorkian's van. Kevorkian said he provided a carbon monoxide device and placed the gas mask over Hyde's face.

Hyde then pulled a string to activate the gas cannisters, Kevorkian said.

Hyde's physician, Dr. Louis Rentz, said Friday that his death from the condition was probably imminent.

He was stricken with the fatal illness, a form of Muscular Dystrophy known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), over a year ago and began deteriorating rapidly. The average patient with Lou Gehrig's disease lives five years, but some survive as long as 20.

The condition, which is unusual in a man as young as 30, causes a deterioration of the muscles controlling movement while the victim remains mentally aware.

"If he didn't elect to have a feeding tube and a respirator, he would have died within a matter of weeks.

"If he (Thomas Hyde) didn't elect to have a feeding tube and a respirator, he would have died within a matter of weeks. He wasn't in physical pain, but he wasn't able to move anything or do anything," Rentz said.

Dr. Louis Rentz
Hyde's physician

He wasn't in physical pain, but he wasn't able to move anything or do anything," Rentz said.

"He could barely communicate verbally. He couldn't even swallow his own saliva. He couldn't move his arms or head to any extent. He couldn't pick up his arm at the end."

"It was a very, very sad case. His daughter would sit in his lap and he couldn't even hug her. He was very, very discouraged. I would say depressed."

He last saw Hyde, who was a resident of The Springs apartment complex on Pontiac Trail, six weeks ago.

In one of life's cruel ironies, Rentz said a recent medical breakthrough may provide relief — but not an actual cure — to victims of Lou Gehrig's disease. It has been discovered that a defect in an enzyme apparently causes the disease and Rentz is now treating his patients with anti-oxidant vitamins such as beta-carotene to combat this defect.

"If you know what's wrong, at

Continued on 2

Doc admits he assisted suicide

By JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

Saying Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair was "between a rock and a hard place" in attempting to charge him with the felony of assisted suicide, Dr. Jack Kevorkian made the job easier last week by outlining in detail his role in the Aug. 4 death of Novi resident Thomas Hyde Jr. on Belle Isle.

Kevorkian explained that he was contacted by Hyde, 30, slightly over two months ago.

Hyde, who was in the late stages of Lou Gehrig's disease, could not speak intelligibly and his common-law wife, Heidi Fernandez, translated his words in several telephone conversations and personal contacts, Kevorkian said in a press conference Thursday at his attorney's Southfield office.

"He could just make sounds and grunts. I

couldn't make sense of them. I made sure his decision was irrevocable and solid. I made sure there was no waivering at all and there never was," he added.

"Every time I brought the idea up, he was aware of what he was going to do, he always reacted with a sense of relief, so I decided to proceed when things were deteriorating rapidly."

Kevorkian said he understood that Hyde was soon to be fitted with a food tube and that he did not want the device. Hyde could not swallow and the tube would have been inserted through his belly directly into his stomach to provide nutrition.

"I supplied the van, which was my personal van, and at no time was there anybody else in the van but me and Mr. Hyde. I drove him to Belle Isle. I supplied the (carbon monoxide) gas. I supplied the tubing and the mask and all the necessary equipment," Kevorkian continued.

"I connected the tubing to the tank. I put the clip on the tubing. I put the mask over Mr. Hyde's face because he could not move that much. He could clearly move his left hand, his left forearm, and he could not even extend his fingers. His fingers were almost in a fixed position."

"I turned on the gas by the main valve in the tank and nothing happened because of the clip on the tube. I asked him one more time if he was sure of what he was doing."

"Again, I couldn't get an intelligible reply but there was a small smile you could see crack his lips and he looked up with sort of a pleasant face, pleasant eyes and a moan or two which I thought I heard him say 'I'm fine.' That was the best I could make of it and then I decided to go ahead."

"I instructed him if he was sure, all he had to do was move his left forearm a bit and pull the

Continued on 2

Swan family chased by another jet-skier

By RANDY COBLE
Staff Writer

Novi police are keeping an eye peeled for another swan stalker on Walled Lake.

A South Lake Drive resident told police on Aug. 3 that she witnessed a male in his 20s harassing a family of swans on the lake while driving a multi-colored watercraft.

The man made several passes at the family, the witness said, which was composed of two adults and seven young swans. The incident took place about 100 yards out from the

shore, reports indicate. The adults defended the young, the witness said, but the watercraft rider evaded their moves.

After about five minutes, according to the report, the man took off heading north on the lake. Police cruised the lake area to see if anyone matching the description could be spotted, but found nothing. They have no further information at this time.

The incident is one of several in past months concerning wildlife harassment on the lake.



Photo by BRYAN MITCHELL

Havin' a ball

She's having a ball... or trying to, at least. It's hard to make those highlight-film shoestring catches when the water's splashing in your eyes. Still, Danielle Anuna, 3, gives it the old

college try. The youngster was spotted at Lakeshore Beach on a recent summer afternoon.

Council will see all new site plans

By RANDY COBLE
Staff Writer

The law should be solid enough to serve as the foundation of an ordered society, yet flexible enough to change when circumstances call for it, most people would agree. It would appear that such circumstances have arisen in Novi.

The Novi Planning Commission at its Aug. 4 meeting voted to recommend that the City Council approve a change in ordinances governing development in the city's RC (regional center) district. That district includes the major retail centers located in Novi: Twelve Oaks, West Oaks I and II and the Novi Town Center.

The proposed change would give council members the final say over site plans for businesses in the RC district and for special land use permit requests as well, after review and recommendation by the commission. Current law gives site plan and special land use permit approval to the commission.

The council at its May 24 meeting requested the change, and asked the commission to hold the required public hearing on the matter. Assistant City Attorney Dennis Watson told commissioners that the council wanted to keep a closer hand in the development of the RC district because of its special circumstances.

It is expected that the council will now approve preliminary site plans for new businesses in the RC dis-

Continued on 2

inside

CALENDAR 2A
CLASSIFIEDS 9A
COLUMNS 4A
DINING 5A
EDITORIALS 4A
NOVI BRIEFS 3A
POLICE NEWS 3A
REFRIGERATOR DOOR ... 6A

NEWS/SPORTS 349-1700
ADVERTISING 349-1700
FAX 349-1050
CLASSIFIEDS 348-3024
HOME DELIVERY 349-3627

WHAT'S INSIDE?



