

INSIDE

- Mini Page, 3B, 4B
- Comics, 6B
- Entertainment, 7B

IOWA TODAY



CEDAR RAPIDS

EAST IOWA JOURNAL

NEWS ROUNDUP

FAYETTE COUNTY

Driving lesson a disaster

Two juveniles out for a do-it-yourself driving lesson on Fayette County roads learned how to ditch an illegal car instead.

A citizen spotted an abandoned car in a ditch in front of a house in Maynard at 11:47 p.m. Friday and called law officers.

Two 14-year-olds were found by a Fayette County sheriff's deputy a short time later when they were walking up a city street. Under questioning, they told the deputy their joy ride started when one of them removed a license plate from one of his family's cars, and placed it on an unregistered car.

Afterward, the teen drove into Maynard, picking up the other boy and possibly another teen-age friend. One of the boys, trying to learn to drive, drove over a lawn and into the ditch.

The last driver was charged with driving without a valid driver's license and failure to maintain control of a vehicle. The other teen was charged with unlicensed driving, driving without the owner's consent and operating an unregistered vehicle.

Each was released to a parent and will appear before juvenile authorities. It is unknown how much damage was done to the lawn.

CEDAR RAPIDS

Robber flees with deposits

A gun-wielding robber grabbed a moneybag and ran last night in a holdup at Lindale Mall.

Cedar Rapids police report a female employee of Kay-Bee Toys was attempting to deposit money in a bank deposit box shortly before 8 p.m. A man came up to her, showed a gun and took the moneybag before fleeing the mall.

An undetermined amount of cash was taken. The police were investigating leads last night.

Police officers honored

Cedar Rapids police honored their own Saturday at the annual Breakfast of Thanksgiving at Trinity United Methodist Church. Assistant Chief Michael Klappholz presented 32 awards to force members.

The top award went to Doug Larison, who won the Chief's Award for his work on the narcotics unit, where he generated more than 60 arrests for distribution of crack cocaine.

Recruit of the Year awards went to Phillip Hansen and David Dostal. The award goes to the most successful recruit in each new class of officers.

James White was given the Reserve Officer of the Year award in recognition for efforts to fill the park patrol every Friday night and his efforts in recruiting reserve officers.

Six officers received awards for their service in an Aug. 13 confrontation with a man wielding a shotgun. After threatening Ronald Faas, the man eventually dropped his weapon and was arrested. Faas and Mark Risse were awarded a Commendation of Heroism. Thomas Jonker received a Commendation of Merit. Stephen Keiller, John Eadie and Thomas Baker and radio operator Mary Reeves won Letters of Commendation.

Officer Steve Valley won a Commendation of Merit for identifying a suspect who had kidnapped and sexually assaulted a 7-year-old girl. The suspect was arrested May 31.

A Commendation of Merit was awarded to officer Glenn Kieler for his role in saving a suicidal man on an I-380 overpass Nov. 12. David McDill and Joseph Hanrahan received Lifesaving Awards for assisting with the subject.

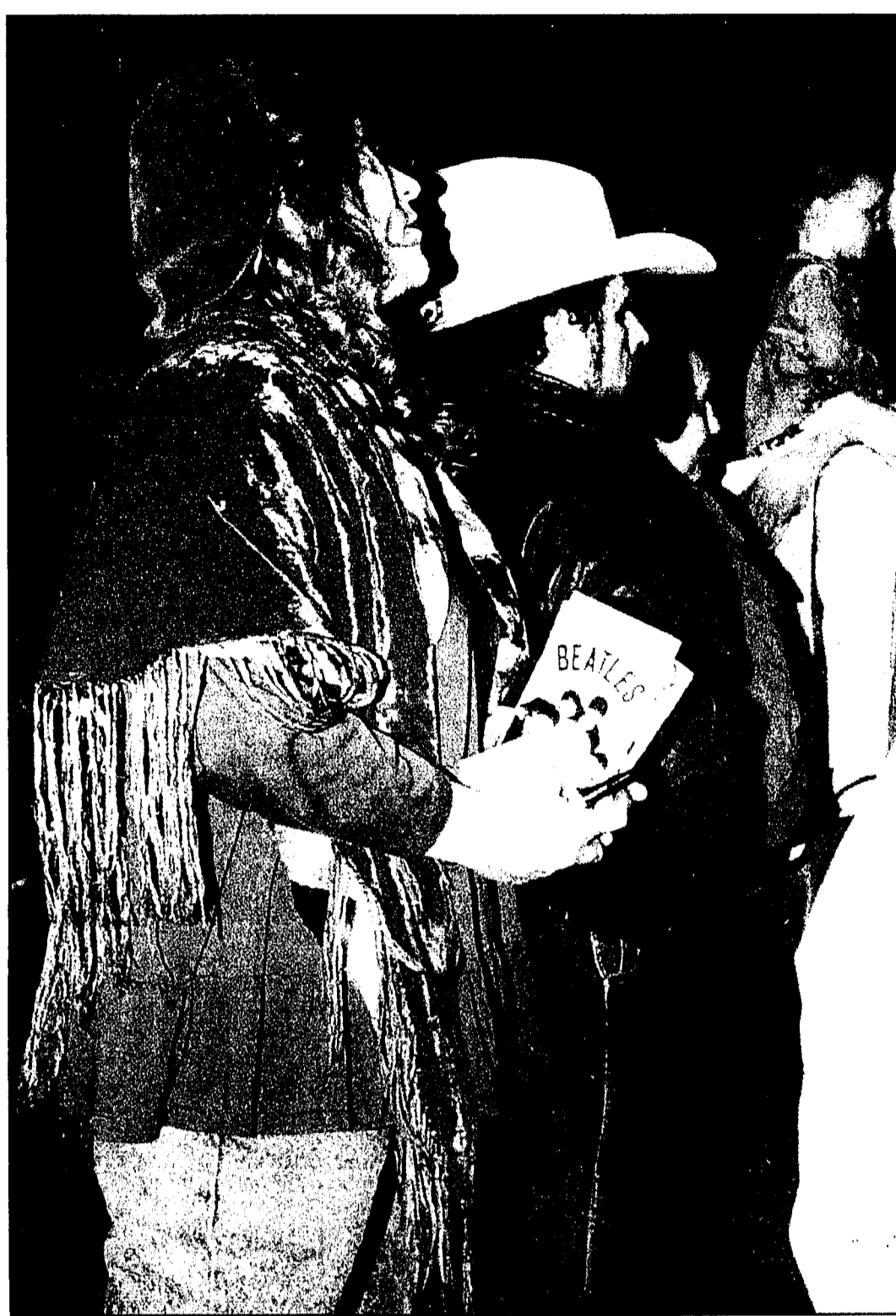
Others receiving Lifesaving Awards: Daniel Byerly, David Goodwin, John McDaniel, Scott Sverson and Conrad VandeZandschulp. Letters of Commendation also were awarded to Donnie Atchison Jr., Christopher Barnum, Michael Brokaw, Jerold Chapman, Timothy Daily, Timothy Dolan, David Dostal, David Goodwin, Peter Hegarty II, Michael Martens, Gene Mollenhauer and Robert Murphy.

NEW HAMPTON

Reward climbs in slaying

Eight northeast Iowa banks have pledged \$7,500 in rewards for information leading to an arrest in the Labor Day slaying of a New Hampton convenience store clerk.

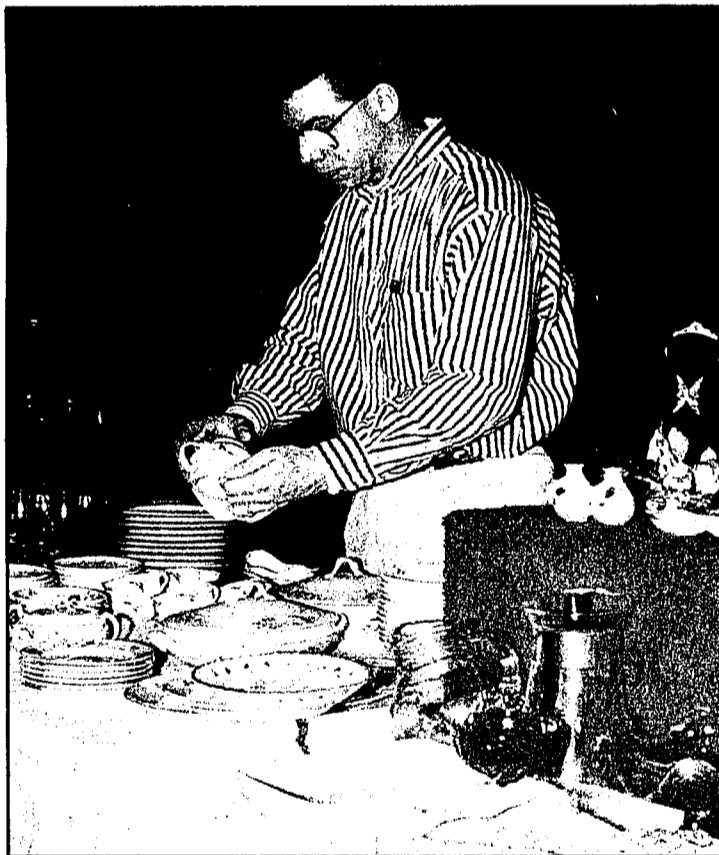
Individuals have chipped in another \$1,500 in reward money in hopes of discovering who killed Rhonda Knutson, 22, of Tripoli. The woman was found in a back room of the store on the morning of Sept. 7. She died of blows to the head.



ABOVE: Ginger Flachs of Rock Island, Ill., holds books that she says remind her of her youth. She regularly attends the Wednesday night auction at Sharpless Auctions to buy collectibles and antiques for her store, Ruby Tuesday.

TOP RIGHT: Lisa Sharpless, wife of Mark Sharpless, records sales by number as auctioneer Jim Wells watches for nods and waves from bidders.

RIGHT: Mark Sharpless, owner of Sharpless Auctions, looks over some of the housewares to be sold at the auction house.



Gazette photos by Marlene Lucas

"I come here because I'm God's instrument of recycling on this planet. . . . I buy anything that can make people smile and remember their youth."

Ginger Flachs



Auction action

Buying bargains, swapping stories on sale night

By Marlene Lucas

The auctioneer ended his chant abruptly and pointed at a woman standing against a table covered with kitchenware.

"I sold that for \$7," he called out in a melody that dipped low on the sold.

The woman held up her computer punch card to show the auctioneer her bidder's number scrawled across the back. Then the chant began again as the ring man held up another item for the bidders.

Beyond the press of the buyers, sometimes crowded three deep around the sales tables, sat the watchers who had lined up chairs from the furniture that is the last to go every Wednesday night at Sharpless Auctions.

Four years ago, Mark Sharpless built the 25,000-square-foot facility on Hoover Highway, just north of Interstate 80, and moved the family business from smaller quarters in Iowa City.

Even on winter nights when the dirt parking lot is hard with ice, the die-hards turn out.

"I come every time," said James Hicks, 45, of Iowa City. He began collecting black Americana 2½ years ago.

"The first week I came, I bought a whiskey sign for \$175. It's worth \$700."

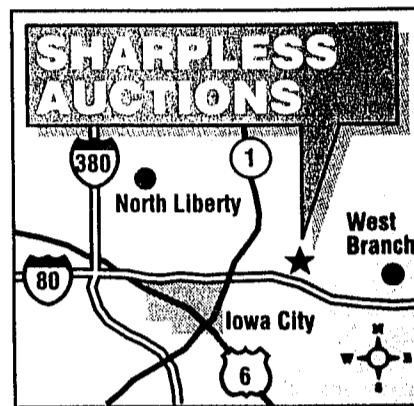
Hicks was pleased with the past week's offerings and was planning to bid on three pieces — two turn-of-the-century portraits, one of a black woman and one of a black child, and an African carving of a slave.

"It's rare to find black items here. Not that many black people lived here. But you find novelty items. It's like a treasure hunt. It's very fun," he said.

Sixty percent of the buyers are regulars, Sharpless said. His staff assigns 250 to 450 bidder numbers each Wednesday night, many to dealers who later resell their purchases.

Clutching her latest buy — three paperbacks about the Beatles — Ginger Flachs of Rock Island, Ill., is one of those dealers. She buys for Ruby Tuesday and usually leaves the auction house with her van full.

"I come here because I'm God's instrument of recycling on this planet," she said, laughing at herself. "I buy for my antiques store in Rock Island and for a



Gazette map

clothing store in Iowa City. And then there's stuff I just want for me. I buy anything that can make people smile and remember their youth."

At the fringes of the crowd sat the Tamerius family from Iowa City. Donald, 28, usually brings his mother, Gloria, 69, in their car, while his father, Andrew, 74, drives to the auction in a pickup, just in case they need to carry something home.

"We just come and look around. Sometimes we buy, sometimes we don't," Gloria said.

"We come and visit with friends," Donald said. If he didn't come to the auction, he would "just be sitting home watching TV."

"It's fun because you see people and get out in the open."

Mary Hoke of Mount Vernon attends regularly with her husband, Bob, to shop but mostly to visit. She described surgeries she and Bob have had and then added: "See? You can talk to strangers. I can't tell that to my friends. People are stressed today. When you're among strangers, you tell them everything, and they say, 'Join the crowd. We're just like you.'"

The auction begins at 5:30 and stretches to 10:30 p.m., depending on the number of items for sale. Smaller sales offer 750 items; larger sales offer more than 1,200, said Lisa Sharpless, Mark's wife.

Auctions include household items, collectibles, antiques, farm tools and building supplies. Items come from estates and individuals. Surpluses from institutions are brought in on consignment.

There's no bidding — prices are firm — at the food counter operated by Duane and Julia Sharpless, Mark's parents and founders of the auction house.

Seats in the dining area are claimed early and are often occupied long after the eating has stopped.

Finally, community center dream nears reality

Oelwein facility set to open in January

By Val Swinton

OELWEIN — After years of planning and several months of construction, the Oelwein Community Center is nearing completion.

A grand opening is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 16, said Walt Manchester, executive director of the Oelwein Area Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber spearheaded the effort to build a community center and will move its office into the center when it is complete.

Although a community center had been discussed for years, the project kicked into high gear when an anonymous donor purchased the old Fareway Grocery store and gave it to the city.

A fund drive to raise \$330,000 to renovate the building, which had been vacant for several years, is nearing completion with \$327,000 donated, Manchester said.

"The people of Oelwein have been more than generous," Manchester said. The center will be opened to young



Gazette photo by Val Swinton

Larry Vsetecka, an employee of Mick Gage Plumbing and Heating in Oelwein, installs a roof vent on the Oelwein Community Center. The facility is set to open next month.

and old, Manchester said. A senior citizens' meal site, now feeding the elderly at the American Legion Hall, will seat 125 people and include cooking facilities at the center. The center also will be available for teen dances, Manchester said. It can also be used for meetings and banquets.

The center has two boards of governors. One is made up of adults, and the other of junior and senior high school students, Manchester said.

NEWS TIPS

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