

Police Arrest 'Mad Hatter' Suspect In Maplewood After 18th Heist

By ALLISON GIBBONS
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

UNION — A man matching the description of the "Mad Hatter," a robber who struck 18 different banks in New Jersey and accumulated more than \$60,000, was apprehended Monday after a bank robbery on Sunday in Union Township.

Eileen Walsh, assistant prosecutor for Union County, confirmed that the suspect, James Madison, 50, of Maplewood, was arrested Monday after allegedly robbing a Bank of America inside a shopping center on Route 22, West in Union Township.

Detectives from the Union County Prosecutor's Office, Union Township Police, the Morris County Prosecutor's Office and agents from the FBI went to a Valley Street residence in Maplewood at about 10:30 p.m. Sunday night and found the car parked in the rear of the building, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

They performed surveillance on the car until about 6 a.m. Monday when an individual, later identified as Madison, walked up to the car and began to get in, authorities said. Madison was detained for questioning and came voluntarily to FBI headquarters in Newark, authorities said.

Mayor Marks: HS Parking Solution 'Nearly Complete'

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Martin Marks said on Tuesday that officials from Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the Board of Education were "on the precipice of having something really good in place" to alleviate the student parking problem at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

At the township council's regular meeting and earlier at its conference meeting, the mayor revealed some of the details under which a limited number of students will be able to secure permits to park on certain streets in both communities. With an additional 60 parking spots to be available at the high school and 50 more spots to be available on Cedar Street and at Green Forest Park, 46 additional parking spaces will be needed on neighborhood streets, the mayor said. About two-thirds of those spots will be in Scotch Plains, and the other third will be in Fanwood.

FW Redevelopment Agency to Reconvene

By LIZA KATZ
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr and the Fanwood Borough Council met Wednesday night, July 18 and opened their doors for the public to voice questions and concerns about the redevelopment in progress in downtown Fanwood.

When no residents attended the meeting, the mayor and council adjourned the public session and went into executive session.

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 15 at 7 p.m. in the Fanwood Borough Hall.

the FBI building, FBI Special Agent Sean Quinn said.

"We suspect him of the other robberies that we have generally attributed to the 'Hat Bandit' or 'the Mad



HATS OFF...Union County and Morris County detectives and FBI agents apprehended James Madison, the alleged "hat bandit" bank robber, at his Maplewood home on Monday morning. Surveillance photos above show the "mad hatter" robbing various banks during a robbery spree that spanned 11 months.

Hatter," Mr. Quinn told *The Westfield Leader*.

The U.S. Attorney's Office brought the charges against Madison. "He has been charged with [the Union] robbery," Ms. Walsh said.

At a press conference on Monday

in Newark, Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow said, "There were hundreds and hundreds of man hours, possibly thousands, that were devoted to this investigation."

Madison was captured after a bank employee saw the car leaving the scene of the Sunday robbery and took down the license plate number, Mr. Romankow said.

Mr. Romankow said the car was registered to a woman who listed her address as Elizabeth, but that address was found to be outdated. Police later found that the woman lives in Maplewood.

Madison was working as a machinist in a shop in Maplewood, authorities said.

Since September 2006, the Mad Hatter has hit 18 banks up and down Route 124, spanning Morris to Union Counties. Police were baffled by his ability to hide in plain sight, with only grainy images of the suspect captured on security cameras.

While he robbed more than nine banks in Union County, including ones in Springfield and Union, the Mad Hatter never struck in Westfield, Cranford or Fanwood, where Commerce has bank branches. Madison has an estranged son in Westfield, who declined to be identified.

Thirteen of the robberies occurred at Commerce Banks in Springfield (two branches), Union Township (two branches), Summit, Berkeley Heights, Roselle, Morris Township, Cedar Knolls, Livingston, Montclair, Metuchen, and Woodbridge. Other banks robbed included Chase Bank, Washington Mutual Bank, Hudson City Savings Bank, HSBC and Bank of America.

In two previous robberies in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



MIDNIGHT MUGGLE MADNESS...Employees at the Borders bookstore in Watchung stack copies of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" at Borders' wizarding spelling bee and a costume contest to celebrate the release of the seventh and final novel in the "Harry Potter" series. The book sold more than 8.3 million copies in the United States on its day of release.

Tpk. Authority OKs Pacts to Redesign Parkway Exit 135

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CLARK — The New Jersey Turnpike Authority took action Monday on redesigning the traffic circle at the Clark/Westfield exit of the Garden State Parkway, exit 135, by approving construction and construction management contracts in excess of \$4.7 million. Construction is scheduled for completion in May of 2008.

Turnpike Executive Director Michael Lapolla, a Westfield resident, said pre-construction will begin by September.

"I think it's (the project) about 30 years overdue. (Exit) 135 is probably the most problematic interchange on the parkway," Mr. Lapolla said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

Tilcon New York Inc. of West Nyack, NY was awarded the nearly \$4.3 million contract for the installation of four traffic signals and two connector roads. The project includes lighting improvements and the milling and resurfacing of the existing roadways within the interchange. The authority awarded Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc. a \$424,000 construc-



SCOTCH PLAINS JR. POLICE ACADEMY 2007 GRADUATES...Boys and girls received weeklong hands-on police and law enforcement training at the John H. Stamler Academy in Scotch Plains, culminating in a graduation on July 24. The program gives youths information about the various careers in law enforcement, hands-on tactical defense, demonstrations, fire training, field trips and practical exercises.

Ex-Fanwood Police Chief Parenti To Run for Borough Council Seat

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Republican Committee has named former borough police chief Anthony Parenti one of its two candidates for borough council this fall. He replaces Janek Skutnik, who withdrew his candidacy last week.

Mr. Parenti joined the borough's police force in 1957 and became its chief in 1975. He retired after 22 years as police chief and 40 years with the Fanwood Police Department. In 1997, he was named director of the

John H. Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains.

"I'm really not going to run on the issues but on what I can do for the town," Mr. Parenti said when reached for comment Friday. He said he wants to "improve the quality of life" for residents in the borough.

He said Mayor Mahr is "doing a pretty good job" but is "not getting the help she needs." He said the slogan for his campaign is "Let's make it better."

Mr. Parenti said government should "be more involved with the parents." He also wants to return to neighborhood meetings to discuss safety issues, as he said was done when he was police chief.

A native of Plainfield, Mr. Parenti served in the United States Air Force during the Korean Conflict.

Fanwood GOP Chairman Ted Trumpp said Mr. Parenti "has a vast knowledge of traffic and public safety. He spent his entire [career] in it. Fifty years."

"I think almost anyone who has lived here for 10 years knows Tony Parenti," Mr. Trumpp said.

Mr. Parenti will join GOP mayoral candidate Patricia Lindsey and borough council candidate Joel Stroz against Democrats Mayor Mahr and incumbent council members Katherine Mitchell and Joseph Higgins.



Anthony Parenti

Southside Park Residents Express Concerns About Plans

By MARIA WOHR
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Residents who live near Southside Park expressed concern about the Scotch Plains Recreation Commission's proposed renovations to the park at the commission's meeting Monday night.

The original commission proposal includes the construction of a soccer complex with a turf field to prevent injury and allow more games and practices, lighting for additional games and practices, extending parking to 50 parking spots and building restrooms, a storage area and a playground.

Recreation Director Ray Poerio said the project is estimated to run between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million.

Residents were concerned with the

addition of lights, the number of parking spaces, installation of a playground and buildings for bathrooms, storage and concessions.

"It just kills you. The soccer association is a strong entity, but I play with my kids in the park every day. We want to be able to use that park too," resident David Heath said.

Frank and Joan Kylish said the lighting would affect the value of their property.

"This will mean our property value will go down," Ms. Kylish said.

"Do you have any documentation?" asked commission chairman Ed Zazzali.

"No, I do not, but you have to figure it will make our property value less," she said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



SOUTHSIDE PARK CONCERNS...Scotch Plains residents David Heath and Russ Francisco go over a map of proposed renovations to Southside Park with members of the township's recreation commission at Monday night's commission meeting.



Christina Hinkle for *The Westfield Leader*

NO SENIOR FEES...The Cranford Township Committee meet on July 17 to discuss waiving fees for seniors at the Cranford Community Center. Pictured, clockwise from the top, are: Mayor Michael Plick, Commissioner George McDonough, Commissioner George Jora, Clerk Tara Rowley, Administrator Marlina Schmid, Commissioner David Robinson and Deputy Mayor Robert Puhak. See story on page 3.

PAGE INDEX

Regional	2-3	Sports	9-13	Classifieds	14
Editorial	4	Real Estate	9-15	Obituary	16
Community ...	6-7	Education	14-16	A&E	19-20