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Sells Fanning

Killer sets limits on how much he admits

Inmate is still mum on St. Louis deaths

BY BETH HUNSDORFER
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Diane Fanning doesn't look like a friend to one of the country's most notorious serial killers.

But the mother and housewife has visited thrill-killer Tommy Lynn Sells on Texas' death row more than 40 times and continues to write every week to the man who may have killed more than 50 people.

In the time true-crime writer Fanning has spent with Sells over the years, he confessed to 50 murders and then said the list was only 70 percent complete.

But Sells won't embarrass his family.

He refuses to discuss any murders he may have committed in the St. Louis area — including the murder of an unidentified woman whose body was found Sept. 6, 1986, near Summerfield in the metro-east — because his mother and wife live here.

At the time, Sells, who was a proficient mechanic, was working for a St. Louis towing company. "He's a lethal good ole' boy," Fanning said. "He can fix your car one day and kill your daughter the next. Damn good mechanic, from what I hear."

When St. Louis homicide detective Jeff Stone went to talk to Sells, he flatly refused to discuss the St. Louis crimes.

Stone, who is St. Clair County Coroner Rick Stone's son, wanted to ask whether Sells was responsible for murdering the unidentified woman found in a cornfield near Summerfield, then sexually mutilating her.

Near the body, police found a small, point-toed boot print. Sells, who is about 5 feet 7 inches

Please see **KILLER, A2**

O CANADA! THE HOME OF CHEAPER DRUGS



STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

Collinsville pharmacist Todd Evers said people cannot get around the fact drug imports from Canada are illegal.

Senior citizens turn north to save on prescriptions

BY PATRICK J. POWERS
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When 72-year-old Ed Wilson started searching for a cheaper place to find prescription drugs, he didn't turn to another metro-east pharmacy.

He simply did what more than a million Americans already have done: He turned to Canada.

"I save a lot by doing that, about \$300 a month," said Wilson, of Belleville. "It's no different than what I was getting here."

Through a pharmacy in Calgary, Alberta, Wilson pays \$198 a month for cancer drugs that cost him \$400 a month at his local CVS Pharmacy. He pays \$51 a month for blood clot medication that cost him \$153 in Illinois.

"Within 10 days, I have my medicine," Wilson said. "I

don't even have to leave my house."

The practice of importing drugs from Canada is a growing trend throughout the United States, but that doesn't change the fact it's still a violation of federal law. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has criticized the practice as illegal, potentially dangerous and harmful to business.

"We don't know anything about these drugs, that's our biggest concern," said Tom McGinnis, FDA director of pharmacy affairs. "They may work, they may not work. It's not worth risking your health."

Federal law bans anyone other than a drug manufacturer from importing drugs to the United States. There is no exemption for personal-use medications.

Please see **CANADA, A9**

Canadian drugs are inexpensive, eh?

More and more Americans are filling their medical prescriptions in Canada, where prices on average are 38 percent lower. The cholesterol drug Lipitor will cost \$70 to \$75 in Canada for 30 pills of 80 mg. vs. \$100 in the United States. Looking to buy in Canada? Here's how it can be done and what you need to know:

Importing prescription drugs, even for personal use, is illegal. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said it doesn't focus its enforcement against individuals, but companies who import the drugs wholesale.

Although drugs imported from another country may look the same and be the same, they aren't approved or inspected by the FDA.

Make sure you know who you are contacting and whether they are licensed pharmacists.

To check whether a pharmacy is licensed by the Canadian government, call the Health Products and Food Branch Inspectorate at (613) 954-6790 or ask for the pharmacy's licensing number.

Ready to break the law? Senior citizens and senior service agencies often have information about Canadian drug sources. Here are some options for Canadian pharmaceuticals:

Deal Direct Rx Corp., 2001 N. 17th St., Belleville, 239-3705 or (800) 905-0723.

Universal Drugstore, Winnipeg, Manitoba, (866) 456-2456 or www.universaldrugstore.com.

Canadian Prescription Drugs Inc., Belleville, Ontario, (877) 966-0567 or www.canpd.com.

Canada Pharmacy, (800) 891-0844 or www.canadapharmacy.com.

Bownes ready for sentence

Some victims hope for the maximum

BY MIKE FITZGERALD
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EAST ST. LOUIS — Marvins "Swamp Dog" Bownes can't start his new life in prison soon enough, at least as far as Rosie Stringer is concerned.

Stringer, 54, bought her crumbling house at 817 N. 42nd St. from Bownes more than three years ago for \$55,000 — or more than a dozen times its fair market value.

For Bownes, the sale to Stringer meant a windfall. Just three months before, he had bought the house and two others in East St. Louis for a total of \$18,800.

But for Stringer the house has become an ongoing nightmare. Not only is it falling apart, with its roof leaking every time it rains, but the high-interest mortgage loan Bownes lined up for her came with hidden strings that keep her teetering on the

Please see **BOWNES, A2**

Lawyer: Granite's sale illegal

Price should be based on appraisal

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK
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GRANITE CITY — A veteran municipal lawyer said that surplus municipal property cannot legally be sold for less than 80 percent of the certified appraised value.

That would mean that Granite City's \$1 sale three years ago of a warehouse and a half acre of land to Fire Chief Ed Hagnauer and several of his friends should have been based on an unlikely appraisal of \$1.25.

"I have never heard of such a thing," said Pat McMeen, a former city attorney whose practice is based in Herrin.

When it was sold for \$1, county assessors valued the warehouse on State at 18th streets at more than \$50,000.

And Granite City's practice of selling real estate contract-for-deed with no down payment and accepting monthly payments also circumvents the state law provision for surplus property, McMeen said.

"I don't know of any underlying authority for it," she said of the contract-for-deed sale.

An investigation of the \$1

Please see **GRANITE, A2**

FOCUS: If you look hard enough, you can find out how businesses sneak into your wallet.

"I don't mind paying for things. If they're upfront with me, that's all I can ask."

BY DAVID VAN DEN BERG
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When Dale Theis needed a front wheel alignment on his truck last fall, he called several repair shops to get price quotes for the work.

Dobbs Tire & Auto Center in Swansea gave him a price \$5 cheaper than anyone else, so Theis, of Millstadt, took his 1992 GMC truck there.

When the work was finished, Theis got his bill and noticed the shop had added a \$6.80 "environmental fee." The charge, which Theis said he was not told about in

advance, was for using sprays like WD-40, rags and paper towels. Theis said he was told.

"It's my pet peeve — it's been driving me crazy since then," Theis said. "It's one of those hidden costs that's never revealed to you until it's time to pay your bill."

Dobbs employees are instructed to tell customers about the fee when they request a telephone or written estimate, said Darrell Schelp, the company's vice president of sales and marketing. He also said the fee is a miscellaneous shop and environmental fee charged on all invoices and based

on a percentage of total sales.

The fee covers products and services including estimate forms, environmental inspections and hazardous waste services, Schelp said.

"In the last survey that we did, the fees that we charge cover approximately 50 percent of the total cost to our company for those products and services," he said. "In essence, what we're saying is we're going to share with the consumer a portion of that cost — we annually make a survey of competitors to see where we're at in relationship to their charges for these same items, and so far, we have found

ourselves to be, if not the lowest, one of the lowest in the cost to the consumer."

This year, Theis said his wife's car needed similar work. He took it to another business. While he said Dobbs did good work in repairing his truck, Theis said he will never again return to Dobbs because of the fee they did not tell him about until he had to pay the bill.

"I don't mind paying for things," Theis said. "If they're upfront with me, that's all I can ask."

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LOTTERY FOR ILLINOIS

- Pick Three-Midday: 9-7-7
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- Pick Four-Midday: 4-0-0-5
- Pick Four-Evening: 5-8-2-0
- Lotto: 03, 04, 16, 27, 31, 50
- Jackpot: \$4.5 million

FOR MISSOURI

- Daily Pick 3: 8-1-7
- Daily Pick 4: 4-6-3-1
- Show Me 5: 3-4-8-14-17
- Lotto: 11-16-18-30-37-40

E REAL ESTATE CLASSIFIED

POWERBALL: 6-17-45-47-48 Powerball: 4 Jackpot: \$190.9 million

Power Play: 3

