

Warehouse owner says trespassers to blame for frozen corpse

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By Louis Aguilar

The Detroit News

The billionaire owner of the empty Detroit building where a frozen corpse was discovered two weeks ago blamed trespassers who broke into the dilapidated structure for allowing the tragedy to occur.

"It's terrible. Just terrible what happened. People keep breaking into my buildings no matter what we do," said Manuel "Matty" Moroun, the trucking and real estate mogul who also owns the Ambassador Bridge.

"They're trespassing and they're dedicated to it. We build fences around (the buildings) in the day time and by night people have torn it down," Moroun said. "We have security who drive around the properties, but that still doesn't deter them."

Among Moroun's holdings is the former Roosevelt warehouse, near 14th Street and Michigan Avenue, where last month a Detroit News reporter discovered a frozen body partially submerged in ice at the bottom of an elevator shaft. The person was later identified as **Johnnie Redding**, 56, whose official cause of death was cocaine overdose. It is unclear how long **Redding** lay dead in the elevator shaft or how he ended up there.

The blighted cavernous warehouse had homeless men living in the property at the time his body was discovered. The building also occasionally attracted the sub-culture of "urban explorers" who often venture into Detroit's many abandoned buildings. A group of those explorers allegedly gathered in the former warehouse to play hockey. At least one of them was aware of **Redding**'s body but did not call authorities to report the situation. Another of Moroun's properties, the Michigan Central Depot, is also a popular haunt for those explorers.

"People ask why don't I just tear down those buildings," Moroun said. "Do you really want me to tear them down? What can I do?"

"I'm not a magician."

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