

today's hot line

what's inside

Little Al Acted

Al Cobo may have been small of stature but he was large on vision. The secret behind Cobo's success in rebuilding the Detroit riverfront should be used to redevelop downtown Farmington. The Stroller remembers Little Al and tells why Farmington could use a man just like him.

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Inherited Ignorance

The opposition to sex instruction in the public schools may be due to improper definition, says a Farmington clergyman. Concerted efforts must be taken to add this instruction, he said, or one generation's misunderstandings and ignorance will be inherited by the next.

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Movies? Who Cares

Films are being rated for their suitability for children, but are movie managers enforcing it? And do parents really care? And how many really "adult" flicks are the suburbs getting anyway? Sue Shaughnessy got the local story that the other papers missed.

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It's Showtime

The curtains are going up on community theater productions and today's paper gives you the information on two local groups and a neighboring organization.

Page 4B

Get A Dictionary

You almost had to have a specialized dictionary to understand the white suburbanite and outstate residents, and the black inner city residents, who discussed recreation problems last week. But our Dennis Pajot made sense out of the maze of words and ideas.

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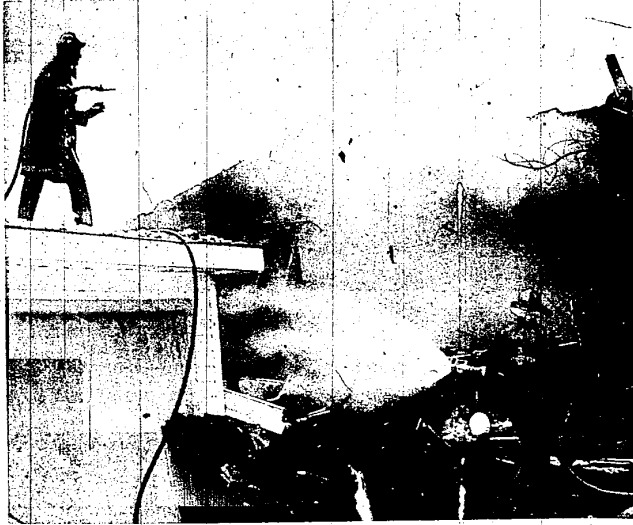
'Civic Paranoia'

That's what a regional leader said of some Detroit and suburban politicians the other day. And he called for a level of statesmanship that many local politicians may not like. Tim Richard covered the story and got the reaction.

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Five Homes Evacuated, One Fire After Gas Leak Found



THE LOSS -- Farmington Township firefighters arrived on the scene quickly but the fire had already engulfed much of the home which was completely gutted inside and a total loss. A gas leak from a main break a few blocks away is believed to have been responsible. (Photos by Ralph Evert)



Gas Shut Off For 16 Homes

By EMORY DANIELS

A leak in a gas main is believed to be the cause of a fire which completely destroyed the home of Merle Lester, 29, of 2843 Independence, Farmington Township.

The fire, which was reported at 1 p.m. Jan. 27, completely gutted the home and destroyed all contents. No one was in the house when the fire started and there were no injuries.

A NEIGHBOR of the Lesters, Bill Zink, entered the home during the fire and saw flames coming from the area of the gas dryer according to Farmington Township police.

Volunteer fire fighters from the Wheeler Fire Hall and another station responded to the call. Officials from Consumers Power and Detroit Edison were already at the scene of the fire when township patrolmen William Hoelt and Thomas Godwin arrived.

Lester's wife, Patricia, was the last one to leave the home at 7:30 a.m. She did not notice any smell of gas at that time but there was a strong odor of gas in the area when police and firemen arrived.

WENDALL MASON, assistant manager of Consumers Power's West Wayne Division, said investigators from the gas company are still in doubt whether an explosion took place.

A neighbor had called in a gas leak report and Consumers Power crews were in the neighborhood before the fire occurred, explained Mason.

"We knew gas was present and was in the process of locating the leak when the house on Independence burned."

MASON EXPLAINED the leak came from a break in a two-inch gas main which served the area. The break was in mid-block near 21511 Hancock, north of Independence.

Apparently the gas entered the sewer system from the break, explained Mason, and followed the sewer into the Lester home.

There was some evidence of sewer excavation work near the area of the break, observed Mason, but Consumers has not yet determined the exact cause of the break and is still investigating the incident.

When the leak was discovered, residents of five homes in the immediate vicinity of the break were evacuated and service was cut off for about 16 homes as precautionary measures. Service was restored and residents returned by 6 p.m.

Mason told the Farmington Enterprise & Observer that Consumers appreciated the good cooperation received from residents and police.

The Lester home is appraised at \$17,500 but the monetary loss of the contents is unknown at this point.

The Lesters are presently living with friends until they can find another home.

EARLIER THAT MORNING at 5:50, another home a few blocks away from the Lesters was completely destroyed by fire. The second fire, however, was not related to the gas leak.

The fire which destroyed the home of John Ardito at 21425 Ontago, Farmington Township, is believed to have started at the space heater in the living room.

Mrs. Ardito woke up and discovered the fire in the living room and front porch. The Arditos and their five children vacated the home and escaped injury.

Until March 4

Ziem Delays Annexation Ruling

by WYLIE GERDES

Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Fredrick Ziem Wednesday delayed until March 4 arguments of Farmington Township's attempt to stall proceedings leading to an annexation election in the city and part of the township.

Farmington Township Attorney Joseph T. Brennan recently asked the court for an injunction to prevent the Oakland County Board of Supervisors from performing their administrative duties concerning an annexation election. The supervisors are responsible for all annexation proceedings in the county.

RESIDENTS OF Farmington City petitioned the county to set an election to decide if a large portion of the township should become part of the City of Farmington.

The area to be annexed, most of the territory south of 10 Mile on the east side of

Quaker town and south of 11 Mile on the west side of Quaker town, includes most of the township's industrial tax base. Also pending is a lawsuit asking for an election to form a new city by combining Quaker town, Wood Creek Farms and Farmington Township. The township wants Ziem to overrule the State Boundary Commission which denied for technical reasons an election to combine the three governments.

"I think I want to see a little law on this first," Judge Ziem said in asking for briefs from attorneys for the city and township.

THE ATTORNEY FOR Oakland County bowed out early in Wednesday's proceedings saying the county has no interest in the outcome of the matter other than administrative procedure.

Attorneys for the city are to submit written arguments by Feb. 11 and the township is to

answer in writing by Feb. 20. Oral arguments were scheduled for March 4 at 1:30 p.m. The opposing sides had little discussion before the judge Wednesday. Burton Shifman, representing the city, and Brennan, township attorney, argued about the township's interest in the case.

SHIFMAN QUESTIONED the township's right to ask a revision of the Boundary Commission action.

Named To Campaign

Gene C. McMurphy was named chairman of the Insurance Industry Division of the 1970 Development Campaign for the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County, announced General Campaign Chairman Martin J. Caserio, General Motors vice president and general manager of GMC truck and coach division. McMurphy, president of MultiWest Funding Corporation,

The township was not the petitioner in proceedings before the State Boundary Commission. The party whose petitions were dismissed or rejected ought to be requesting a review," Shifman said.

Brennan disputed Shifman's reasoning. He said the law allows any aggrieved party to file a suit. The matter is not being considered by the court anyway, he added.

In addition, the City of

Southfield, is spearheading the campaign towards a goal of \$4,000 among those firms throughout Oakland County in the insurance field. The campaign is scheduled to run through March. The funds will be used to advance the accident prevention programs of TIA so as to reduce the Oakland County traffic toll which last year claimed 200 lives.

Farmington is a party to the suit because of an agreement with Farmington Township, Brennan said.

"If we are not in the lawsuit, they are not in the lawsuit," the township attorney said.

If the city would like to enter the suit on its own, Brennan commented, he would raise "nitty gritty, picky" objections.

ZIEM SEEMED inclined to grant the injunction which would prevent procedures leading to an annexation election while the township's case against the State Boundary Commission is decided.

He asked Brennan how long the case between the township and the state would take, and Brennan estimated three to four months.

"Wouldn't we be better off to get this thing moving?" Ziem said.

SHIFMAN SPOKE for a few

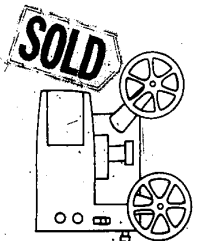
minutes on his reasons why the injunction should not be granted. He said one series of cases shows a county board of supervisors was permitted to start the administration of annexation election while another series showed an injunction was granted halting the procedure.

In the latter cases, he commented, the supervisors lacked jurisdiction in the matters.

He noted the law as a general rule prefers to allow government to continue its business unless there is good reason for an injunction.

The rights of the petitioners and the township would not be infringed if the annexation process were to continue, he said because the whole matter will rest on the outcome of the township's lawsuit against the State Boundary Commission.

The "final determination" of that lawsuit would govern the annexation proceedings, Shifman said.



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