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In Sweet Valley

Seven die in boarding home blaze

By JOHN F. KILDUFF
Staff Writer

Seven boarding house residents were killed and 12 others narrowly escaped death early Tuesday morning when a general alarm fire ripped through Thomas' Guest Home on Main Street in Sweet Valley at approximately 4 a.m.

Pronounced dead at the scene by Luzerne County Coroners' Officer officials were the following boarding home residents:

Lucy Delregno, 73; Agnes Scanlon, 72; Nicholas Demko, 69; Stephen Haberly, 90 Emmett Dempsey, 64; Grace Sorber, 75; and 19 year-old Rhonda Raddler.

The seven dead were transferred to the Kniffen Funeral Home at 465 S. Main St., Wilkes-Barre where a temporary morgue was set up, awaiting the arrival of Luzerne County Coroner Dr. George Hudak, who was expected to identify the bodies and the cause of death sometime late Tuesday afternoon.

Also injured in the blaze were the owners of the guest home, Ronald and Patricia Thomas, and their 21-year-old daughter, Leslie.

Ronald Thomas was treated for second degree burns on his face,

back and hands at Wilkes-Barre Mercy Hospital and was later airlifted to Lehigh Valley Burn Center in Allentown. Mercy spokespersons say Ronald Thomas suffered second degree burns over 10 percent of his body.

Thomas's wife, Patricia, and daughter Leslie, were treated at Mercy for smoke inhalation and were later released.

Others injured in the blaze were Clara Hess, age 74, and Mary Perry, age 77, who were both admitted to Nesbitt Memorial Hospital, Kingston for first and second degree burns to the face and smoke inhalation.

Three other residents were also treated at Nesbitt. One was later transferred to Lehigh Valley Burn Center and two others were sent to Geisinger Medical Center, Danville. Hospital officials did not have the names for release, said Public Relations Officer Jo Stearn.

Also hospitalized at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital were 60 year-old Leonard Ostapovicz, a resident of the guest home, for second and third degree burns to the face and shoulders and 67 year-old Ruth Lowescher, also a resident, for smoke inhalation. Both were listed in critical. (See FIRE, page 10)



Fire ruins

Fire officials observe what remains of the Thomas Guest Home in Sweet Valley following a major early-morning fire Tuesday.

Seven people perished and 12 others were injured in the blaze.

Dallas Post/Ed Campbell

Future of Gate of Heaven School determined to be solid

Student enrollment, the key parameter in determining the financial stability of most Catholic schools, is remaining steady at the Gate of Heaven Elementary school in Dallas, Sister Davida Morgan, principal of the facility said this past week.

"Our enrollment has remained steady for the past four to five years," said Morgan. "And the community support for our school is terrific. It (community support) could not be any better at this school."

(See GATE, page 10)



Dallas Post/Ed Campbell

Avoiding the tag

Susie Slocum of the Back Mountain National League All-Stars attempts to hurl herself out of the way of American League catcher Lori Bartleson in a play at home plate during the title tilt between the two Back Mountain teams Saturday evening. Slocum was called out at the plate, but the National League Stars went on to take a 7-2 victory for the District 16 title. (Story, additional photo, page 11)



Clean-up boat

This boat is the one used by Ecoscience, Inc. to dump copper sulfate in Harveys Lake in an attempt to clean up the algae that had turned the lake water green.

Dallas Post/John F. Kilduff

DER lifts Harveys Lake ban

By JOHN F. KILDUFF
Staff Writer

The Department of Environmental Resources officially lifted the swimming advisory at Harveys Lake Monday morning, one week after the lake was treated with copper sulfate, the anabaena algae killer.

Water sampling personnel from the Wilkes-Barre DER agency tested for anabaena algae counts early Monday morning and found that the levels were far below the 500 parts per millileter, which DER says constitutes a swimming advisory.

Anabaena algae levels at four locations at Harveys Lake were recorded as follows. Alderson Section - 205; Sandy Bottom Beach - 115; Warden Place - 155 and Hanson's - 130.

On July 2, the day DER issued the swimming advisory at Harveys Lake, anabaena algae levels were well above the 500 parts per millileter threshold.

For example, the Alderson section on July 2 registered a very high 950 algae count. Sandy Bottom tested at 875 and Warden Place was at 450. Algae counts this high, DER said,

could cause skin rashes for swimmers and nausea if the lake water was swallowed.

"Harveys lake looks good for swimming," DER community relations coordinator Mark Carmon said Monday. "We (DER) contacted Harveys Lake borough officials and told them of the lifting of the swimming advisory," Carmon continued. "We also advised them (Harveys Lake officials) to go ahead with plans to set up their water quality advisory committee in order to do testing on a weekly basis."

Carmon said that the Wilkes-Barre DER agency "doesn't have the luxury to use the many man-hours needed to do further testing at the lake."

According to Carmon, the best solution is for borough officials to study the lake on a weekly basis and to keep a watch out for recurring algae levels.

"DER," said Carmon last week, "is about to close the loop off," in terms of testing at Harveys Lake. DER, however, has notified borough officials that it will be available for future consultation if needed.

Harveys Lake councilman Raymond Jones told The Dallas Post that there will be a "special adver-

tised meeting" tonight at the borough building assembled to appoint a seven-member Environmental Advisory Council (EAC).

The EAC, Jones said, will be commissioned to do periodic water sampling of Harveys Lake and to determine possible solutions for any water quality problems. The seven-

(See DER, page 10)

Inside The Post

Calendar	14,15
Classified	16,17,18
Commentary	6
Cookbook	7
Crossword	2
Dear Aunt Patty	9
District Court	3
Obituaries	2
People	8,9
Police Blotter	3
School	13
Sports	11,12