

Arson

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tric warehouse last weekend," Miers said. "We're calling this one attempted arson."

The June 6 incident occurred less than 1/4 mile from the scene of a fire, which police have ruled as arson, which damaged a warehouse owned by J&J Electric, the former feed mill at Fern Brook, early Wednesday morning, June 2.

According to Trooper Sylvester Myers of the Pennsylvania State Police fire marshal's office, the warehouse's owner, Gerald Schulz, was remodeling the structure, which he had been using as a warehouse since December, 1992.

Myers said that the fire, which caused approximately \$500 damage to one corner and a section of one wall, was arson. None of the contents were damaged, Myers said.

"Based on the pattern of the burns, I believe that an accelerant was used," he continued. "Fortunately the fire was detected in its early stages and the fire company came very quickly."

Dallas Fire Chief Robert Bessecker said that apparently someone driving by the building saw the fire and flagged down a passing police cruiser to report it.

The call came in at 1 a.m., Bessecker said.

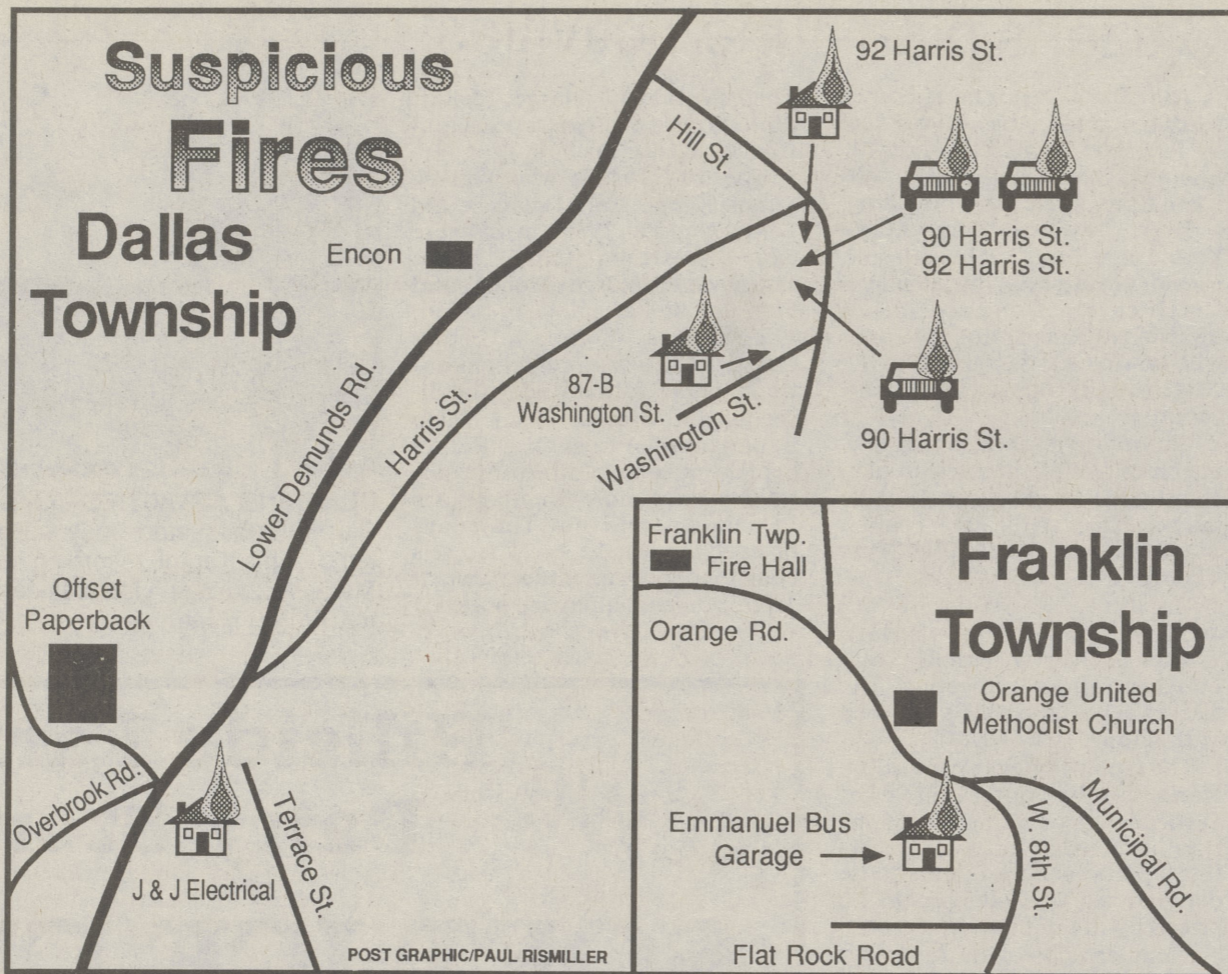
Thirty firefighters from the Dallas and Shavertown fire companies reported to the scene, Bessecker said.

"We were able to stop it quickly or we would have lost the building," Bessecker said.

Dallas Police Chief Carl Miers, who is assisting Dallas Township patrolman Robert Jolley and Trooper Myers in the investigation of a cluster of five other fires in Dallas Township, said that the June 2 fire had no connection with the others, which all occurred on Harris and Washington Streets in Roushey Plot, a mile from Fern Brook.

"The suspect in the Roushey Plot fires was in jail at the time of the June 2 fire," he said.

Arrests are pending in the most recent Roushey Plot fire, May 22



Timeline of suspicious fires

A string of suspicious fires, three ruled definitely as arson by the State Police fire marshal, have plagued portions of the Back Mountain for eight months.

The latest incidents were a May 31 fire in the eastern end of Franklin Township, and a June 2 fire and June 6 arson attempt, within 1/4 mile of each other in the Fern Brook section of Dallas Township.

Five others were clustered in a neighborhood in the Roushey Plot section of Dallas Township, approximately a mile from Fern Brook.

The fires were:

- **November 28, 1992:** A late night fire destroyed a car at 90 Harris Street, Roushey Plot.
- **December, 1992:** Two more cars, parked in adjoining lots at 92 and 90 Harris Street, Roushey Plot, were destroyed by nighttime fires within 24 hours of one another.
- **March 28, 1993:** A nighttime fire destroyed a vacant home at 87-B Washington St., Roushey Plot, and damaged a nearby garage.
- **May 22, 1993:** A fire later ruled as arson gutted the second story of a home at 92 Harris Street, Roushey Plot.
- **May 31, 1993:** An early morning fire, later ruled as arson, destroyed the vacant Emanuel bus garage on West Eighth Street near Municipal Road in Franklin Twp.
- **September, 1992:** A fire in that building had been ruled by the State Police fire marshal as accidental electrical.
- **June 2, 1993:** An early morning fire later ruled as arson at the old Fern Brook feed mill, now owned by J&J Electrical, damaged a corner of the building and a portion of one wall.
- **June 6, 1993:** Someone attempted to set a fire at a detached garage at RR 6 Box 54, Shaver Ave., in Dallas Township sometime between Saturday night, June 5, and Sunday morning, June 6. Police are calling the incident, in which gasoline was poured alongside the building but not ignited, attempted arson.

by Grace R. Dove

Arson a tough crime to crack

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Sifting through a fire scene with a magnifying glass layer by layer, arson investigators face many challenges in finding enough clues to come up with a suspect.

Arsonists know exactly what they're doing - what type of materials to use and where to place them, according to Franklin Township Fire Chief Ron Witkowski. Everything is well-planned.

And a good arsonist is tough to catch - if he does his job properly, all the evidence will have been burned up in the fire.

"You don't need a lot of sophisticated items to start a fire. You can use simple things commonly found around the house, like matches," Witkowski said.

"You can find out how to set a fire from television. I saw a movie on TV that showed in detail how to make and set a firebomb activated by the ring from the home's telephone," he continued.

Arsonists often like to go back to the fire scene to watch the

building burn or see the firefighters in action, Witkowski said. "It's kind of a high for them, like drugs."

Witkowski said that he has read books on the subject and still can't figure out what motivates arsonists.

No one knows for sure why people like to set fires, Witkowski said. They just like to see things burn.

In the fires that he has fought in the Back Mountain, the arsonists seemed seldom to be bent on revenge for a perceived slight or "instant lightning," to collect on a building's fire insurance.

Many of the vacant buildings or barns destroyed in the Back Mountain were largely not covered by fire insurance, Witkowski said.

And unless the arsonist makes a mistake, it's difficult to catch them.

"Unless we actually catch the person in the act of lighting a fire, it's tough to pin it on a specific suspect," Witkowski said. "You need lots of evidence and lots of investigation."

Parsons graduates from Meredith College

Jennifer Leigh Parsons, daughter of James and Betty Parsons of Richard Drive, Dallas, received a BA Sociology degree during graduation ceremonies at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Miller graduates from Clarion

Jason Ross Miller of Shavertown, received a Bachelor's degree from Clarion University during graduation ceremonies May 8.

Kingston Twp. lawns must be cut

The residents of Kingston Township are reminded that the Township's Vegetation Nuisance Ordinance requires that all grass or weeds on occupied properties are to be kept trimmed to a maximum height of six inches. All grass or weeds growing in excess of six inches in height may be declared to be a nuisance and subject to a fine. Additional information may be obtained from the Zoning Officer at 696-3809.

Irem Women to meet June 17

Irem Women's Auxiliary will have the first of the summer luncheons, open to members and friends on Thursday, June 17, to be held at Irem Temple Country Club. Seating at noon - serving at 12:30 p.m. Reservations to be made by Tuesday, June 15, at noon with the following: Mrs. Fred Oliver, Mrs. John Jones, Mrs. Robert Edwards.

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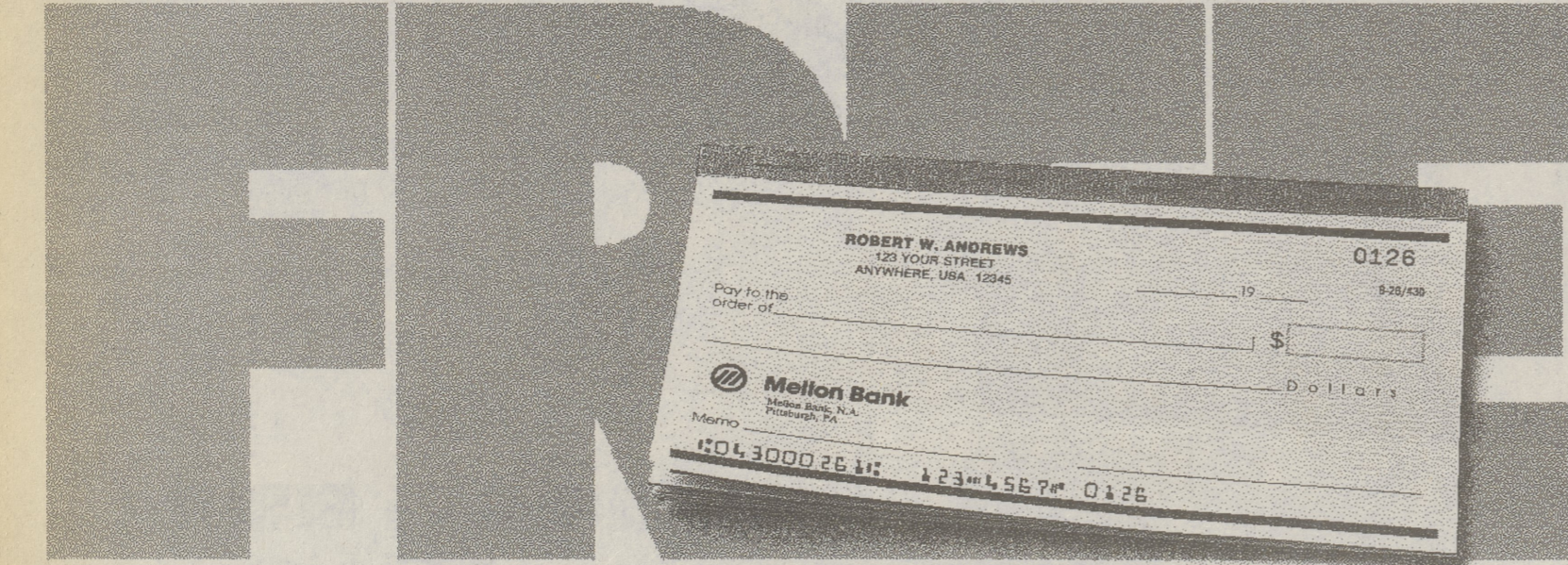
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