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Fears of mercury illness may be exaggerated

By RONALD BARTIZEK
Post Staff

DALLAS - Fears about damage to the health of Dallas High School students exposed to mercury spilled in the school may be overblown, according to environmental scientists familiar with the substance.

Initial reports said up to 10 lbs. of liquid mercury were missing from a classroom. Superintendent of schools Gerald Wycallis said Monday that officials from

the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) later estimated only about two lbs. were missing from a container in Mr. Ron Ryback's freshman science room. Approximately that amount had been recovered by Nov. 8 from the school and the home of the student who has acknowledged taking the mercury.

"I think they have it all out," Wycallis said Monday. He said mercury had been recovered from floors and drains in the science room and lab, and from the typing room, where a small amount had

"Everybody's being extremely cautious, and I can understand that."

Gerald Wycallis
Dallas superintendent of schools

apparently leaked from the student's backpack. Even the carpeting in the principal's office has been removed because the student put his backpack down

while talking with principal Frank Galicki.

"Everybody's being extremely cautious, and I can understand that," Wycallis said. But he has been frustrated by a lack of information from DEP and other agencies that have monitored the building for signs of contamination. "We're not getting any information," he said.

Claims by at least one person of health problems are probably coincidental, said Dr. J. Michael Case, PhD, Shavertown, professor of geoenvironmental science and engineering at Wilkes University. While

inhaling mercury vapor can cause shortness of breath, chest pains and coughing. "It takes long-term, repeated exposure for any of these symptoms to appear," at low contamination levels, Case said.

Liquid, inorganic mercury poses risks mainly when its vapor is taken into the lungs. Short-term contact with the skin, or even ingestion, presents very little if any hazard. Harm caused by eating fish or other foods containing mercury has no

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BLAM!

Christina Brown took aim on the jumping frog game at the Gate of Heaven School children's bazaar last week. Children played

a variety of inexpensive games of skill and chance. More photos on page 5.

POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Distrust rules at school meeting

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER
Post Staff

DALLAS - Distrust, misinformation, rumors, cover up theory? All those elements were evident at the Nov. 11 meeting of the Dallas School Board, where the mercury spill at the high school was the main topic.

The mercury is believed to have been stolen on Oct. 28 by a student who then tracked it through the school. The board invited experts from the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Health, and DATOM Products, a hazardous materials specialist, to answer specific questions about the incident.

A little over 100 parents and

"I am calling for the resignations of those involved."

Ted Krohn
Dallas

taxpayers concerned about the incident were in the audience in the auditorium of the Dallas Middle School. Many questioned the chronology of events, especially the five-day period between the first knowledge of the missing mercury and the day the school was closed. Some were calling for superintendent Gerald Wycallis's resignation.

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Unanimous board turns away zone change plea

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER
Post Staff

Dallas - If anyone was expecting an undignified brawl at the Dallas Zoning Board meeting Nov. 7, they were certainly disappointed. Both parties displayed their cases politely before the board.

Approximately 100 people turned out at the Gate of Heaven School auditorium to discuss the recent application to the zoning board by the FPC Financial Corporation to expand a special exception on the former Dallas Family Practice building, located at the corner of Machell and Sterling avenues, from "professional offices" to "offices, including commercial, professional and business."

FPC is a financial consulting company to small and medium-sized businesses. After taking testimony from each side, the three

"I'm very happy with the decision. We'd like to see it go back to residential."

Louise France
Machell Ave.

member board unanimously voted down the corporation's request to change the status of the property. Attorney Charles Shea, who represented FPC, said Monday that his client doesn't plan to appeal.

Attorney Charles McCormick represented the Sterling Avenue Association. He brought up many questions to Milton Lutsey, the Dallas Borough Zoning officer who was sworn in to give testimony. McCormick asked particular questions to confirm exactly what

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13 Lake-Lehman teachers cited by former students

By JENNIFER JUDGE
Post Correspondent

LEHMAN - Every year, students who are academically eligible are selected to become part of a national publication called *Who's Who Among American High School Students*. Those students are then given the opportunity to honor the teachers who have inspired and challenged them the most.

In the 1996 edition of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*, 120,000 teachers were selected from across the nation. Thirteen were chosen from the Lake-Lehman School District by their former students.

Mary Anne Agustini has taught at Lehman for 29 years. Before coming to Lake-Lehman, she taught for one year in Maryland. Agustini, a 1967 graduate of College Misericordia, teaches kinder-

garten at Lehman-Jackson Elementary. Agustini says that she enjoys seeing "how boys and girls change from September to June," noting the rapid development that takes place in kindergarten. One aspect of teaching that frustrates Agustini is seeing, "some of the kids come in with so much baggage." She notes that teachers "have to work with what we have. We can't change them." This is the second time Agustini has been

nominated for *Who's Who*.

Scott Kerkowski has taught general and accelerated chemistry at the high school for four years. He is also the assistant football coach and runs the weightlifting program in winter and spring. Kerkowski says, "I just love being around kids and I love the sciences, so I decided to put them together. Chemistry is

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Ruby Elston takes century mark in stride

By JACK HILSHER
Post Correspondent

HUNTSVILLE - One hundred years ago from Nov. 16, Ruby Elston of Overbrook Road in Dallas was born. It was 1896, the year William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan for the presidency.

Ruby didn't vote then, but she hasn't missed an election since she became of age and does not intend to miss the next one. Straight Republican, of course. She says of our incumbent and his wife simply, "They're a little top young and don't know what they are doing."

Which goes to prove Ruby Elston has all her marbles, even if, as she says, "I'm slowing up a bit." Ninety-nine of those years weren't much of a problem, but she explains, "This last one just seemed to catch up to me. I've got a walker now. It's a great help. Never thought much of them be-

"They're a little too young and don't know what they are doing."

Ruby Elston
On the President and First Lady

fore. And they've put a bed on the ground floor for me because steps aren't so easy anymore."

Otherwise an observer would never guess at her full century. She might not be able to hear a pin drop, or read all the fine print, but the Elston face is surprisingly wrinkle-free, it sports a sudden flashing smile on occasion and the Elston mind, as daughter Nancy Schimmel says, "...is unbelievably sharp. I marvel at the detail she can relate in stories I've never heard before. I just sit and listen in awe."

Ruby is the fourth daughter of Frank and Ellen Bullford. She is

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Ruby (Bulford) Elston, in 1923, one year before she married Clarence Elston. He died in 1986 at age 90.

■ **Strike up the bands** Lake-Lehman and Dallas wind up marching season on high notes. Pg 3.

■ **Golden teacher** Olympic gold medalist Kurt Angle will help out at local wrestling clinic. Pg 11.

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