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Third Major Fire In Four Months Takes Two Lives In Fanwood

The mile-square community of Fanwood seems to be plagued these days with a succession of severe and tragic fires. Since Halloween, October 31, 1972, three very serious house fires have occurred, with a total loss of five lives. Steven and Paul Bevins, two sons of Mrs. Patricia Bevins of 343 LaGrande Avenue, were the latest victims. The two died in a fire at their home in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Three other lives were lost on Halloween when a fire at the Hooper home, 145 LaGrande, not far from the Bevins home, claimed the lives of Mrs. Christine Hooper and her two youngsters. In January, a fire gutted the interior of the Robert Geers' home on Burns Way, causing extensive damage but no personal injury.

According to Fanwood Fire Chief Henry Piekarski, the fire at the Bevins home apparently started in a couch in the living room. The alarm was turned in at 1:47 a.m. and, according to Piekarski, once firemen arrived at the scene, they did a "tremendous job" and had the fire out within about five minutes. Damage was confined to the living room primarily, he said, and was mainly due to smoke and water.

Steven Bevins, 16, and Paul Bevins, 4, apparently died of smoke inhalation. They were taken to Muhlenberg Hospital. Their mother, Patricia Bevins, was also taken to Muhlenberg and was in intensive care unit initially. She has since been released from intensive care.

There is absolutely no connection between the two fires according to the fire chief. It is an unfortunate coincidence that they have occurred within such a short time, but arson has been ruled out in each of the three cases, Piekarski said.

Although there was little damage from fire, the smoke was heavy and firemen used air packs

when they entered the home. Mrs. Bevins and Paul were in a first floor bedroom and Steven was in a rear first floor bedroom. Another occupant of the house, John B. Case, a 21-year old boarder, was able to exit from the home from an upstairs window. He had smelled smoke, exited by the window, went down a tree and ran to a neighboring home to summon help.

Just shortly before the fire alarm was turned in for the Bevins fire, the Fanwood police and Rescue Squad had been summoned to assist at the scene of a traffic accident at Martine and Midway Avenues, where 22-month old Alissa Sinha was killed. Therefore, the Scotch Plains police and Rescue Squad units were called for backup help and aided the Fanwood forces at the scene of the house fire and in taking victims to the hospital.

Steven Bevins was a sophomore at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. In earlier years he had been a student at LaGrande School and Park Junior High School, and was once a member of Boy Scout Troop 33.

The children are survived by their mother, and by their father, Bruce Bevins of Long Branch, and by a sister, Cindy Lee Bevins, who recently moved to Baltimore. They are also survived by their paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. D.C. Bevins of Florida.

The boys' parents were separated.

Day Care Center To Open Here Next Month

Quality day care has been a long-time goal of a small group of local citizens, who have been working quietly toward the realization of that goal in the form of a day care center for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood community. Their dream comes true with the opening of such a facility here next month.

St. John the Baptist Church on Morse Avenue in Scotch Plains will be the site of the day care operation, which is planned to accommodate an ultimate enrollment of 20 children. The accommodations have been offered by St. John's, while the day care committee will pay for utilities.

The children who attend the day care center will come primarily from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood community. Local applications will receive priority. Children will be provided with a full day, nursery school type of operation with a professional staff assisted by local volunteers.

Since the center will receive federal funding under Title 4A, Social Security administration, a certain percentage of the children must come from families with a total income below \$9,800 per year, or \$820 per month.

What is day care and how does it differ from regular nursery

school? Roberta Semer, Vice President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Day Care Center, Inc., detailed a typical day at the center, which will be open five days a week, 50 weeks a year.

Children will begin to arrive around 7:30 a.m. daily, and those who have not yet had breakfast at home will be given breakfast at the center. A period of free time will occupy the children until around 9 a.m., when the nursery program begins. The morning hours will include time for arts and crafts projects, story time, a musical program, a break for toileting and snacks, a short rest period and outdoor play in moderate weather.

A hot, nourishing lunch will be served daily, Mrs. Semer pointed out. It will be followed by a sleeping time, more stories, outdoor play with emphasis on nature studies and nature walks, afternoon toileting and snack time,

School Budget Loses, Voter Turnout Light

Labasi, Mason, Schwiering Win School Board Seats

The voters of Scotch Plains and Fanwood turned out in sparse numbers to record a sound defeat of the proposed \$12 million 1973-73 school budget. The current expense portion of the budget was defeated by a two-to-one vote, 1897 opposed, 917 in favor, while the capital outlay was downed by 1771 to 1056. Less than 20 percent of the registered voters voted - with only 3,076 of a total of 17,150 going to the polls.

The electorate defeated two incumbents, Walter Siff from Scotch Plains and Richard Bard from Fanwood, electing Mrs. Robbie Mason and Phillip Labasi to Scotch Plains seats and Henry Schwiering to Fanwood. Schwiering has served two terms and as board president in the past term.

For the first time in several years, the budget had incorporated some areas of improvement in program as well as the customary annual jumps for continuance of the existing maintenance level. However, the current expense portion was not approved in a single one of the 24 voting districts in the two communities, while capital outlay



ROBBIE MASON

passed in only three Scotch Plains districts.

In contrast, voters approved the budget last year both in Scotch Plains and Fanwood. Last year the budget was presented at a six percent increase, whereas the budget defeated on Tuesday represented a 10 percent jump. The budget now is presented to the governing bodies of Scotch Plains and Fanwood for their consideration. They have 30 days to consider it, and at the end of this time period they must elect either to keep it at the level proposed by the Board of Education or suggest a figure for operation of schools. The Board of Education has a further option - either to accept the recommendations of the governing bodies or, if the figure set by the governments is considered too low for effective operation of schools, the case may be referred to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education for a decision.



HENRY SCHWIERING

Although Scotch Plains and Fanwood have not been in agreement in recent years, opinion on the budget was entirely similar this time around. Fanwood voters cast 639 negative votes, 345 positive for current expense, and 584 negative, 405 positive for capital outlay. In Scotch Plains, there were 1258



PHILIP LABASI

Mr. Schwiering trounced Bard by a two-to-one margin -- 621 to 319. The third contender in Fanwood was a high school senior, Thomas Glenn, who turned out 97 voters in his favor.

Funds Set For Homeless Families

Two funds have been established, one to aid the Schelhorn family, another for the Patterson family who were left homeless when fire gutted their Park Avenue apartments last week. Donations can be made at the Franklin State Bank, 366 Park Avenue, by contacting Mr. Richard Flitz or Miss DelConte.

Bd. Of Ed. Questionnaire In Mails

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education has mailed a 69-question survey to every home within the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district. According to the introductory information which accompanies the survey, results of the questionnaire will be used in guiding attitudes and actions of the board in the many areas covered.

The questionnaire is broad in scope, covering quite a wide range of subjects connected with education here - from a yes or no on birth control instruction in sex ed. courses to opinions on teacher salaries, from the role of high school students in determining their course content to the general quality of education now offered in the district, from student publications to year-round schooling.

In a few cases, some questionnaires have been found to be misprinted, and instead of the 69 questions, there are instances of duplication of printing on two sides of a page. Any person who receives such a misprinted questionnaire is asked to telephone the Board of Education offices, 322-5500, and request the mailing of a duplicate.

The Board would appreciate every effort to return forms immediately so that information may be tabulated.

and preparation to be picked up to go home.

The hours of operation are tentative - with a suggested closing hour of 5 p.m. However, an attitude of flexibility to accommodate the needs of the day care parents will be the rule in the center's functioning.

The funding will require \$6,000 from the local community, which will be matched by \$18,000 in federal funds, distributed through the United Way of Union County. Some of the local \$6,000 has been contributed already, but the committee is seeking further local assistance. To date, several organizations and religious groups

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