



SCOTCH PLAINS

THE TIMES

of

Scotch Plains - Fanwood



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STRUGGLING FACILITY FACES LATEST ROUND OF COMPLAINTS

Owners of Scotch Plains Zoo Deny USDA Charges Surrounding Care of Animals

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains Zoo owners Harold and Deborah Kafka are refuting charges by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that farm animals at the popular facility are not being properly maintained. News of the allegations came on the heels of a ruling that the couple would have to transfer their exotic animals to other qualified facilities after they withdrew their appeal of a state decision not to renew their operating permits.

Joseph Murray, the Berkeley Heights attorney representing the Kafkas, said Monday that he had filed a response last Friday to a com-

plaint issued April 4 by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). It stated that his clients are denying all of the allegations, according to the attorney. While he declined to discuss specifics of the case, Mr. Murray argued that his clients had committed "no willful violations" in their operation of the zoo.

The USDA regulates the care of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats, while exotic animals such as elephants, large cats, primates and reptiles at the zoo are under the jurisdiction of the state Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife. The Scotch Plains Zoo is home to approximately 150 animals, including some rare and endangered breeds.

The complaint, based on nine APHIS inspections which occurred between December 12, 1995 and January 17, 1997, charges that the Kafkas "had failed to maintain programs of disease control and prevention, euthanasia, and adequate veterinary care under the supervision and assistance of a doctor of veterinary medicine."

It also alleges that the couple failed to adequately protect the food supply from deterioration or contamination; that the animal enclosures were not structurally sound, and that the buildings and grounds were not properly maintained. According to the complaint, the Kafkas additionally "had failed to maintain complete records showing the acquisition, disposition, and identification of animals."

Federal officials also charged that

during times when the animals were on exhibit, "a sufficient distance or barrier was not maintained between animals and the general viewing public, and an identifiable employee or attendant was not present."

Dr. Robert Willems, Supervisory Animal Care Specialist at the USDA's Eastern Region Office of Animal Care in Annapolis, Maryland, told *The Times* on Tuesday that the Kafkas would have an opportunity for a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge in a federal court, at which time they could offer a defense against the USDA complaint.

In January, the Fish, Game and Wildlife Division declined to renew the Kafkas' operating permits, also claiming the couple had failed to correct multiple violations regarding public safety and animal welfare. The Kafkas withdrew their planned appeal of the state's ruling on May 13, just before a scheduled hearing on the matter was to take place in the Office of Administrative Law in Newark.

After agreeing to accept the state's decision, the Kafkas were given 15 days in which to notify the Fish, Game and Wildlife Division of their plans for relocating approximately 60 exotic animals to other qualified facilities. Mr. Murray said last week, however, that the Kafkas intend to keep the zoo open and were exploring the possibility of having someone else apply for a permit to operate the zoo. Pending state approval, the new permit holder would serve as curator

at the zoo, with Mr. Kafka working under that person.

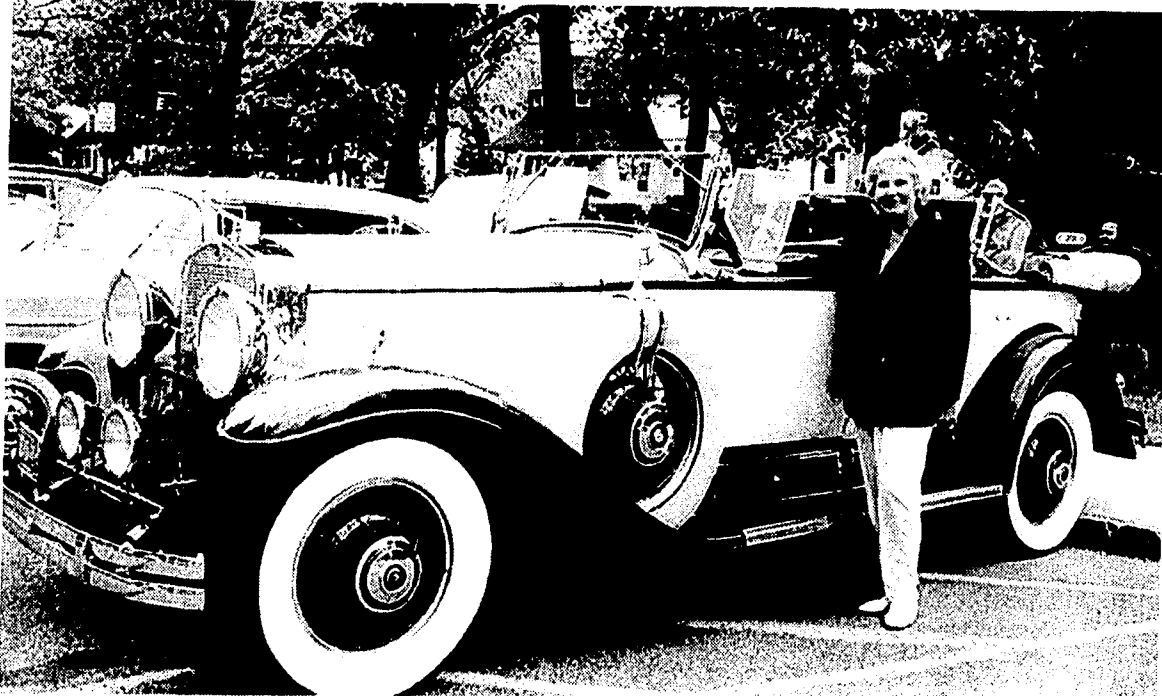
Mr. Murray, who advised the Kafkas to withdraw their appeal, said the couple faced several obstacles to getting their permits renewed. He said that although his clients had "substantially" remedied the violations which had led to non-renewal of their permits, the state was seeking additional renovations to be made to the premises. Mr. Kafka had also pleaded guilty or been found guilty of 10 violations in Scotch Plains Municipal Court, which would have prohibited him from having his permits renewed for at least two years.

Located three miles south of Route No. 22, the Scotch Plains Zoo is bordered by Raritan and Terrill Roads and Clover Lane. The Kafkas purchased the 6.5-acre zoo three years ago from Frank and Louise Terry, who operated it for more than four decades as the Terry Lou Zoo. Now living in Florida, the Terrys still hold the mortgage on the property. Mr. Kafka would still be responsible for the mortgage payments if a curator were to come on board.

Animal activists have regularly picketed the zoo to protest what they claim are unsatisfactory living conditions for the animals. The Kafkas' supporters, however, have argued that the couple has done the best they could to improve conditions in the face of mounting bills, and have cited the many times Harold Kafka has given educational talks about animals at local schools and elsewhere.



STEP BY STEP... George Gribas displays the flat head V-8 aluminum heads in his 1952 Ford Club Coupe appropriately named "Step by Step" because he built the car from scratch and improved upon it as time went by. Mr. Gribas mentioned that he did like the song of the same name sung by Johnny Maestro and the Crests in the early '60s. The car is owned by Mr. Gribas and his wife Dorrie. Mr. Gribas also provided nostalgic music from that era for all passers-by during the Fanwood Classic Car Show which took place at the northside train station in Fanwood on May 18.



RIDING IN STYLE AND GRACE... Joan Dunn shows off her yellow and blue 1930 Cadillac, Dual Cowl Phaeton, during the Fanwood Classic Car Show. The Phaeton is additionally special because of its second windshield to protect the back seat passengers from the elements. The vehicle is owned by Mrs. Dunn and her husband, Harry Dunn, of Westfield. The car show was held at the northside train station in Fanwood on May 18 and was sponsored by the Fanwood Policeman's Benevolent Association.

Fanwood Board of Adjustment Okays Three New Applications

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

The Fanwood Board of Adjustment met for an hour last Thursday to hear three new appeals for home renovations, as members mourned board Vice Chairman Edward Ryan, who died May 7. Board member James Watson presided at the meeting in the absence of Chairwoman Kathleen Rice. A new Vice Chairman is expected to be named during the board's meeting in June.

There were no objections to any of the applications from the Fanwood Police Department, Fire Department or Board of Health, according to the board. The Shade Tree Commission also gave its approval on the condition that borough trees would not be disturbed. There were also no objections from members of the public to any of the petitions.

Michael and Nilda Zidonik of Shady Lane were granted bulk variances to construct a five-foot wide, A-shaped portico over the front steps of their home. During the public hearing, Mr. Zidonik explained that the structure would only extend four feet over the entranceway and would be "virtually identical" to many others in the neighborhood.

He said that the portico would be consistent with the home's new roof and siding, adding that he felt it also would enhance the look of his residence. Mr. Zidonik said that he had not planned to add gutters onto the

portico, noting that he has not had a problem with flooding, but said he would be willing to install them if the board deemed it necessary. Officials approved the application as it was submitted.

In the second application of the evening, Jeffrey and Gail Arkin of Marian Avenue were awarded bulk variances to build a deck onto their home. The structure, according to Mrs. Arkin, will be approximately two feet off the ground and will cover an existing brick patio.

She explained that a window in the kitchen will be converted into a door to provide access to the deck from the house, and that the deck also will be accessible from the yard. The board gave its approval with the condition that latticework be added to the base of the structure, to which the couple agreed.

In the final application of the evening, Raymond and Patricia Nering of Russell Road received the board's green light to create a 15-foot addition onto their Colonial-style home. Mr. Nering explained that he and his wife, who have lived in the community for eight and a half years and have two children, need the additional living space to accommodate the needs of their family.

Mr. Nering, who brought along a poster displaying a map of their neighborhood and several color photographs, told the board he felt the proposed addition would be "an im-

provement to the property as well as the neighborhood."

Following the three public hearings, the board reviewed several items of correspondence. The first of these concerned a Quinlan Publishing Zoning Bulletin, which covers change of use, code violations and other challenges faced by municipal zoning boards.

The other pieces of correspondence announced the New Jersey Planning Officials — 1997 State Planning Conference, to be held Friday and Saturday, May 30 and May 31, at Middlesex County College, and the Union County Alliance's fourth annual breakfast meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, May 28, beginning at 8 a.m. at L'Affaire in Mountainside.

Township Council Considers Limits On Size of Public Building Signs

By JEANNE WHITNEY
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Township Council said Tuesday it wanted to change a zoning ordinance regulating the size of signs on public buildings while adding maximum size limits on signs.

At its conference meeting, the council said it would agree to the township Planning Board's recommendation to amend the sign ordinance to allow signs to cover 10 percent of the front facade of a building and 5 percent of side walls. However, the council wants to set a limit on how large signage may be in the case of a very large building.

"We should consider the intrusive nature of a sign in a residential neighborhood," Councilman Robert E. Johnston said.

Currently, a sign may be a maximum of 10 square feet in size. The new proposal would certainly allow signs much bigger than 10 square feet, the council noted. Signs that are 10 percent of the facade currently are allowed in the downtown area. No changes are proposed for commercial buildings.

Other code changes stipulate that the signs must consist of free-standing letters placed directly on the building and may not be self-illuminated

but may be lighted from above or below.

Construction Official Robert LaCosta said the proposals arose after the Jewish Community Center (JCC) questioned aspects of the present sign ordinance when it wanted to put a new sign on its building. Recently, the township's legal department questioned whether the JCC sign should be considered under the public building ordinance. Mr. LaCosta said these kinds of buildings — like the YMCA and other clubs — were all grouped in this same category. Subsequently, Township Attorney Donald T. DiFrancesco recommended the code language be more exact in this area.

In other business, the council said it would introduce a \$280,952 bond ordinance to improve the Brookside Park pond and parking lot. Another \$14,000 will be appropriated for a downpayment toward the project, officials indicated. The council approved \$10,000 in engineering fees last month for the project.

Officials said that among the improvements considered for Brookside will be dredging the pond, installing fountains in the pond, replacing the footbridge, improving the footpath and pond banks and paving the park-

ing lot and basketball courts.

Work on the park will begin this fall, officials said.

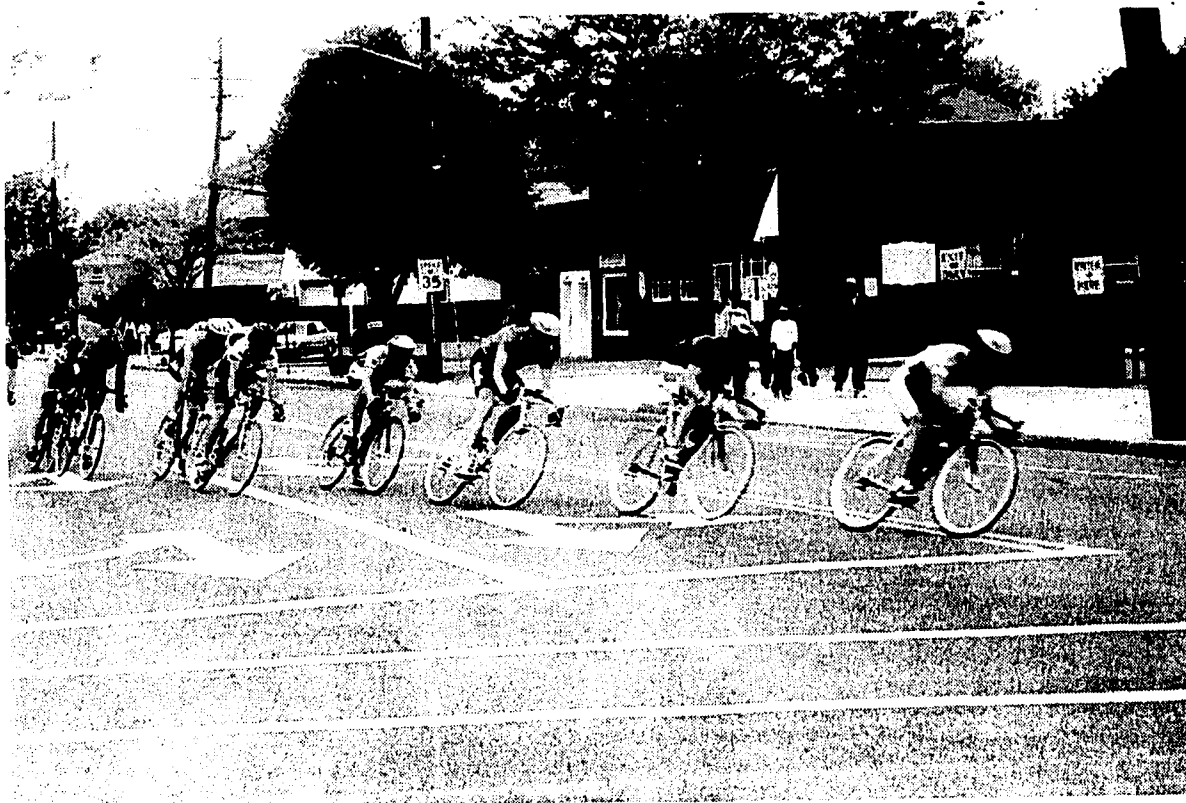
On a separate matter, the council said it would agree to prohibit left turns onto Quimby Lane from Raritan Road during morning and evening rush hours. Residents have complained that motorists "cut through" the neighborhood at excessive speeds in order to avoid the Lamberts Mill and Raritan Roads intersection. At the same time, the council said it would rescind a "no left turn" ordinance from the parking lot of a Westfield Avenue convenience store onto the adjoining side street since the measure did not appear effective.

Officials said bids would again be taken for the township's firehouse overhead doors in a third round. Council members said reasons for the rejection of the second round of bids would be made clear in closed session with the legal department. The first round of bidding resulted in prices over budget after a low bid was disqualified.

Mayor Irene T. Schmidt said the township was in danger of losing a \$136,000 grant to study the impact of traffic from Route Nos. 22 and 78 in the township. Officials indicated a lack of interest in the project by the Union County Board of Chosen Free-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Freddie Spencer Race Attracts Bicycle Enthusiasts



A TOWNSHIP TRADITION... Bicyclists head around a turn during the fifth annual running of Sunday's Freddie Spencer Memorial Bicycle Race last Sunday, May 18, in Scotch Plains. The event was sponsored by the Township of Scotch Plains and Park Avenue Cyclists. Proceeds of the race went to the Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad and the Scotch Plains Police Athletic League. Cyclists vied for \$3,000 in cash and prizes in the 15-, 25- and 35-mile races, the masters race for those persons over 35, and the women's race. The late Spencer was the father of current Scotch Plains Councilwoman Joan Papan. He was a Hall of Fame cyclist and world champion record holder. Spencer was named American Pro Sprint Champion in 1925, 1928 and 1929.

Memorial Day Service to Begin Monday at Fanwood Library

Memorial Day pays tribute to those American military personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives for their country. These fallen heroes will be honored with several events in Fanwood and Scotch Plains on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26.

Memorial Day observances will begin at 9 a.m. with the laying of wreaths at the Fanwood Memorial Library. At 10 a.m., there will be the presentation of wreaths at the Veterans Monument at Park Avenue and Front Street in Scotch Plains.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade will follow this ceremony. Starting at 10:30 a.m. from the Municipal Building in Scotch

Plains, the parade will proceed along Park Avenue, move down Marine Avenue into the center of Fanwood and end at La Grande Park in Fanwood.

The Reverend John R. Neilson has been designated Grand Marshal by the Parade Committee. He served with the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War, obtaining the rank of Sergeant. A graduate of Lycoming College and Philadelphia Divinity School, Father Neilson was ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church in 1961. He retired in early 1997 after a 36-year career in the ministry, including 26 years as rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Scotch Plains.

Deadlines Told For Submittals To The Times

Those persons preparing press releases for submission to *The Times* are reminded that copy should be E-mailed or faxed by 4 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. *The Times'* E-mail address is goleader@aol.com. The fax number is 232-0473.

Releases, pictures, and letters to the editor can also be dropped off at our office located at 50 Elm Street or through our mail slot. To ensure that submittals reach our office prior to deadline we encourage E-mail or faxed material.

Sports stories which occur prior to the weekend must be in by the Friday deadline. Weekend sports events must be submitted by noon on the Monday prior to the publication date. Obituaries will be accepted up to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays.

All copy must be typed, double-spaced, no more than 300 words in length, and include a daytime telephone number where the submitter can be reached.

For events which are planned months in advance, we encourage submission of stories as early as possible prior to the event.

Please note that in addition to making our deadlines, the publication of submittals may be delayed due to space considerations. All submittals are subject to being cut due to length, edited for style and clarity and at the discretion of the editor.