

## Dental work not only item affected

# Gold and silver prices put bite on consumer

By Mike Eliasohn

Brush your teeth three times a day and don't eat sweets.

Don't get married or settle for a cheaper ring.

Don't use your camera.

Those are a few ways to avoid being victims of the skyrocketing cost of gold and silver.

Most of the television news reports of late dealing with the rapidly rising (and falling) price of the two precious metals have focused on the commodity exchanges, where the precious metals are bought and sold.

However, the price for gold and silver also has an effect on the goods and services persons buy, such as for dental work, wedding rings and other jewelry and for film.

Kodak, for instance, recently announced a 15-20 percent increase for camera film. Silver is a prime ingredient.

The problem was illustrated by Dr. Paul Chappel, DDS, who pulled a box of silver alloy fillings from a cabinet shelf.

Four to six months ago, the 10 oz. box sold for \$120-150. Now the price is

\$1,000, for what is probably a two to three month supply. (Other than the immediate supply, which is locked up at night, Chappel keeps the rest at the bank.)

That doesn't necessarily mean the price of dental work has skyrocketed, for as Dr. Edwin C. Fritz pointed out, the major cost in dental fees is still for labor. The higher price for gold and silver has affected dental fees "but not to the extent one might think. I don't think it will get outlandish."

Based on the fairly standard fee schedule set by dentists for dental insurance

purposes, Chappel said, the fee for a simple silver filling was \$15 per side a year ago, is now \$18 and soon will go up to \$20.

Seven years ago when he started his practice in Cass City, the price of a gold filling was \$90-100 per tooth. It's now at the \$200-210 mark and if the price of gold stabilizes at \$800 per ounce, he predicts the cost per tooth will be about \$250.

Dentists use three types of "filler" for cavities. Plastic is used for front teeth, which do the biting and don't bear as much stress. The plastic blends into the natural color

of the teeth.

The back teeth do the grinding and chewing and need a stronger material. Silver is used for small cavity fillings. Gold is used when a large part of the tooth is decayed.

Silver is the metal used most, according to Dr. D.E. Rawson. Although research has been done on plastic substitutes, he said, no one yet has come up with an alternative for gold and silver.

The consolation, of sorts, according to the two dentists to whom the question was asked, is that most patients

now have dental insurance.

The increasing cost of dental care, of course, isn't a consolation to those who don't have insurance. It will also eventually mean an increase in premiums for those who have insurance (or their employers, if they are the ones who pay it).

### JEWELRY

People are still buying jewelry, but with some differences, according to Cass City jewelry and gift shop owner Keith McConkey.

Prices of items using gold and silver have gone up

sharply of late. He recalled a couple who were looking for a set of rings to purchase. They could have afforded the price of 3-4 months ago, but not the current price. "This is where it bites," he commented.

He didn't want to mention specific prices, but said a 14 carat wedding band costs four times what it did 2-3 years ago. Diamonds have increased in value almost as much as gold.

For those to whom the cost of such items is prohibitive, there are alternatives using less expensive materials, McConkey pointed out.

Sometimes there are no alternatives. Two firms which did replating of silverware continually raised their prices until the cost of silver became prohibitive. They have notified the jeweler they are no longer offering the service.

Although the increased cost of various items has deterred some buyers, McConkey said, he is selling more high priced items than ever, to persons who view it as "a hedge or investment." He does not deal in buying and resale of used jewelry.

Please turn to page 16.

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Springport-Brimley  
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PAGES

## Five from Cass City

# Two accidents send 6 women to hospitals

Two area accidents sent six young women to the hospital, all but one from Cass City. One accident was Sunday; the other Monday.

Most seriously injured was Laverne Lee Summers, 20, of 6400 Severance Road, who was reported in serious but stable condition in the intensive care unit at St. Luke's Hospital, Saginaw, Wednesday morning.

She was a passenger in a pickup truck driven by Tammy Walter, 19, of 3295 Huron Line Road, which slammed into a tree after going off the road Monday. Mrs. Walter was reported in fair condition Tuesday afternoon at Hills and Dales General Hospital.

The sheriff's department reported their pickup was northbound on Schweigler Road, south of Milligan, at a high rate of speed when Mrs. Walter lost control after braking to avoid hitting a car about to pull onto the road from a driveway.

The vehicle swerved from one side of the road to the other before going off the west side sideways. The passenger side hit a tree broadside, the impact spinning the truck half-way around before it came to a halt.

Cass City police assisted at the scene. Officers measured 495 feet of skid marks from where the driver first applied her brakes.

The car emerging from the driveway was occupied by Harold and Isabel Benkelman of 4947 Schweigler Road. Their auto was not yet in the roadway when Mrs. Walter applied her brakes.

The truck she was driving was owned by her father-in-law, Harvey Walter.

Elkland township firemen stood by while the victims were given emergency first aid because of the possibility of leaking gasoline catching fire.

An ambulance had to come all the way from Caro as the Cass City ambulance was on a transfer run to Saginaw when the accident occurred.

### FOUR HURT

Most seriously injured in an accident at 9:17 p.m. Sunday was the driver of one of the cars involved, Susan Marie Langenburg, 17, of Kneptgen Road, who was reported in fair condition Tuesday afternoon at St. Mary's Hospital, Saginaw.

The other three persons injured were passengers in her car: Wendy Kelly, 17, of 6632 Houghton Street, was still at Caro Community Hospital Tuesday afternoon, but the hospital wouldn't reveal her condition, at her request. Treated and released from there were Deborah Barker, 17, of 6316 Pine Street, and Tammy Kish, 17, of E. Dayton Road, Caro.

Caro state police reported Melanie Sue White, 18, of Caro, northbound on Cleaver Road, had braked in order to turn left onto Deckerville Road, when her car hit a patch of ice and started to slide.

The Langenburg auto, which was right behind the other car, also hit ice and slid into the White car.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the Sunday and Monday accidents were still under investigation by police. None of the six victims, according to the accident reports, was wearing safety belts.

### OTHER ACCIDENTS

A Caro area man was treated and released from Caro Community Hospital Monday after he was struck by a car driven by a Deford woman.

Caro police reported Deborah Gilliam, 20, of 312 Froede Road, headed southwest on State Street, turned left onto Frank Street and her car struck Harry Brown, 66, of Deckerville Road, who was crossing the street. The mishap took place at 10:30 a.m.

She told officers the sun was in her eyes and she didn't see the man until it was too late. As of Wednesday morning, the accident remained under investigation.

Craig O'Harris, 19, of Hadley Road, was cited by Cass City police on a charge of leaving the scene of a property damage accident after a mishap in the Charnont parking lot at 10:40 p.m. Sunday.

Officers reported that he was northbound on the east side of the lot when his pickup struck the parked car of Jean Comment, pushing it into the parked car of Clare Comment, which was parked alongside. The Comments are owners of the Charnont.

O'Harris then left, but witnesses' description of the vehicle involved, plus the fact O'Harris had been ticketed 15 minutes earlier on a charge of careless driving, led officers to him at an address on Main Street.

Kenneth L. Hall, 24, of 5825 Main Street, Deford, was ticketed by sheriff's deputies on a charge of careless driving after an accident at 3 a.m. Tuesday.

Officers said he was eastbound on Deckerville Road, east of Murray Road, when his vehicle went off the south side of the road and struck a mailbox. He told deputies he had swerved to avoid hitting a deer.

At 4:20 p.m. Jan. 29, Cass City police reported, Timothy Willis, 19, of 6789 E. Main Street, was northbound on Nestle Street and struck the parked car of Lawrence Smith of Cass City when he swerved to go around it. The car was parked by the east curb.

Village officers said that at 3:50 p.m. Monday, Dawn S. Kritzman, 19, of 6798 Houghton Street, was backing from a parking place in the Cass City High School lot and backed into a car parked by the sidewalk in an area marked "no parking."

Driver in the parked car was Jacqueline Hoag, 38, of 4137 Vulcan Street.

### CAR-DEER

At 9:45 a.m. Sunday, Arthur L. Brinkman, 32, of 301 S. Crawford Road, Deford, was westbound on Mushroom Road, east of Kingston Road, when a deer coming from the south jumped onto the hood of his pickup, breaking the windshield.

At 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Beverly Ann Maxson, 19, of Shay Lake Road, Kingston, was southbound on Plain Road, south of M-46, when her car struck a deer.

Barbara J. Walkiewicz, 21, of 6115 Chapin Road, Kingston, was eastbound on M-46, east of Plain Road, at 2:10 a.m. Monday when her vehicle collided with a deer. Sheriff's deputies investigated all three mishaps.



**ACCIDENT AFTERMATH** - It was this side of the truck driven by Tammy Walter that slammed into a tree Monday, resulting in severe injuries to her and her passenger, Laverne Lee Summers. The vehicle came to rest in the position seen here.

## \$17,000 over budget

# Kent negotiates contract, but will county pay?

The next round in the match between Probate Judge W. Wallace Kent Jr. and the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners takes place in the commissioners' ring in the courthouse next Wednesday.

The judge has negotiated a two-year contract with his department's six employees, which he has submitted to the commissioners to consider at their Feb. 13 meeting.

The contract, signed by both sides in late January, would grant his employees a total of about \$17,000 more than commissioners gave them in the contract that went into effect Jan. 1.

The county board has filed a complaint with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) against the union that represents courthouse employees, charging that the contract it negotiated for all courthouse employees included those in the probate court.

Kent has requested that commissioners implement the proposal by Feb. 19. If no action is taken or commissioners reject the contract, he said he will ask the regional state court administrator in Flint to order the county board to do so. "I don't mean to imply a threat," he told the Chronicle. "If they don't take positive action by the 19th, then we're stuck on dead center" (if no appeal were made to the court administrator).

**HIS UNDERSTANDING** of the procedure is that the administrator would then appoint a panel consisting of a county official and a judge from another county, plus

someone from the administrator's office, to sit down with the two sides and try to reach a settlement. Kent described it as an "arbitration type of situation."

The panel presumably could accept some portions of the contract negotiated by Kent, accept all of it or reject all of it.

Their recommendation goes to the court administrator, who would then issue an order.

The judge has sent to the regional court administrator and to the state court administrator's personnel office in Lansing a copy of the contract he has negotiated and a summary of what has transpired between him and the union and him and the county board.

According to Commissioner Kenneth Kennedy of Millington, acting chairman of the board's personnel committee while the chairman is on vacation, the county board has requested its labor consultant, Charles Minner and Associates, and a private attorney specializing in labor matters to prepare a response to submit to the court administrator.

That of course, assumes the county board will reject the probate court contract. **KENNEDY DIDN'T** wish to speak for his fellow commissioners, but did say, "The feeling of the board is to pursue this all the way."

County commissioners aren't contesting Kent's right to negotiate his own contract.

Their complaint filed with the MERC contends that the union, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 2697, made no effort during contract negotiations in December to have the probate court employees recognized as a separate bargaining

unit. The county contract includes, at the union's request, reclassification of one probate court employee to a higher pay grade level.

An amendment to the original complaint will charge that the union's business agent, Rick Kloor, said during the negotiations that he would not negotiate a separate pact with Judge Kent.

MERC has scheduled a hearing on the county's complaint March 24 at the courthouse in Caro.

Kent did most of the negotiating of the probate court contract with Kloor, with members of his staff's bargaining committee sitting in on some sessions.

According to the judge,

there was some give and take, that the union did not get everything it asked for.

His contention has been that his staff was underpaid in comparison to what some other courthouse employees are paid.

Asked whether he thought commissioners would approve the contract he negotiated, he replied with what he admitted was a diplomatic response, "I have no knowledge of what the county board will do."

**ASSUMING COMMISSIONERS** reject the pact and then lose before the state court administrator, their avenue of appeal is to circuit court.

The question the courts Please turn to page 17.

## Damage minor in house fires

Damage was estimated at least \$1,000 from a fire at the Steve Papp residence Monday night.

Elkland township firemen were called to the home on M-53, south of Shabbona Road, at 11:28 p.m. They were there about one hour.

Fire department Lieutenant Dave McNaughton said a fire had been burning in the fireplace for three days and the built-up heat somehow got through the brick into the wall behind it, which started the studding to burn.

There was resulting damage to some studding, sheeting and drywall.

The Papp family was home when the fire broke out. Damage was minor enough that the house was

still habitable once the fire was out.

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Damage was described as minor resulting from a chimney fire at the home of Kay Mallory on Bruce Street in Deford last Wednesday.

Occupants of the house had the fire out by the time Elkland township firemen arrived. They received the call just after 1 p.m.

Fire Chief Jack Hartwick said the fire in the wood burning stove ignited creosote inside the brick chimney. The fire then burned through the chimney and damaged a false ceiling panel in the living room.

There was apparently some smoke damage in an upstairs bedroom.



**HOLD ON** - Actually, Jackie Davis didn't need any help from her children in staying upright, even though Sunday was the first time she had been on skates since high school. With her at the Cass City Recreation Park rink were daughter Jennifer, 10, (left) and son Tim, 11.

The Cass City State Bank

will be open on Lincoln's Birthday, Feb. 12.