

# Chimney sweep Irene Ferguson

## New career began with chimney fire

If Irene Ferguson ever had a lofty goal in life, she has obtained it.

She is a chimney sweep, complete with top hat and tails.

The Pigeon resident, a mother of four, is in her third year in the dirty but necessary business.

Recent customers were Lloyd and Mary Frederick, whose house is on Leslie Road, Evergreen township.

It was a fire in their fireplace chimney, about a month earlier, that led to their hiring Mrs. Ferguson.

She and her husband, Morris, got into the business because of a chimney fire at their own home.

Morris soon backed out, his wife joked, because, "He didn't like heights so I got the job."

The frequently jovial Mrs. Ferguson also felt her husband didn't have the proper attitude for sweeping chimneys. "He wouldn't wear top hat and tails."

The real reason he stopped, however, was because his full-time job, then at an Elkton meat market and now with a drainage tile company, didn't leave him much time for cleaning chimneys.

His wife averages about five chimneys a week, a job which usually takes 1-2 hours per chimney. Her longest job took six.

The two months of the year she won't work are July and August, because it gets too hot up on the roofs. She worked right through this past winter, it being a mild one and roofs weren't usually snow covered and slippery. Her busiest time is in the fall.

The chimney sweep, 36, has never had the other kind of fall, which she attributes mainly to being careful. She will never use a ladder without a hook on the end, which hooks over the peak of the roof.

It isn't always necessary to climb up on the roofs. If the chimney is straight, it sometimes can be cleaned from the bottom.

The first step in cleaning a chimney, of course, is running a spiral wire brush up and down it. Once that is done, the soot, fly ash and creosote that has fallen to the bottom is removed with a powerful vacuum.

IT IS THE CREOSOTE, an oily or tarlike substance produced as wood burns, that causes the problems. Creosote is carried into the chimney as a vapor along with the smoke. When it comes in contact with a cool flue lining, it condenses on the walls and becomes extremely hard.

The creosote reduces wood stoves' efficiency. According to August West Systems, a manufacturer of chimney sweeping equipment, wood stove manufacturers estimate that as little as 1 millimeter of creosote lining the chimney can reduce the stove's efficiency by as much as 15 percent. If not cleaned off, the creosote continues to build up and can eventually completely block the flue.

BEFORE THAT HAPPENS, however, something much more serious is likely to happen. Creosote is very flammable and burning a slightly larger or hotter fire than usual, or a flaming piece of paper, can start a chimney fire.

Chimney fires burn very hot, over 3,000 degrees. At that temperature, mortar melts. Homeowners who have a chimney fire may be lucky and the fire will soon burn itself out; they may have a ruined chimney, or they may lose their house.

Mrs. Ferguson has seen a lot of cracked chimneys because of the heat. She has also seen creosote built up

around fallen bricks, branches and even dead birds inside chimneys.

Curves in chimneys, in addition to making them harder to clean, also are places where creosote builds up.

A bad practice she sometimes sees is use of 8-inch flues. They are too small to let the smoke, etc., escape efficiently. Ten inches is the recommended minimum size.

THE TWO BIG REASONS for excessive creosote build-up, she said, are burning of green wood and, surprisingly, use of too-efficient stoves.

Some of the modern stoves, Mrs. Ferguson explained, hold in a lot of heat. The result is there isn't enough heat going up the chimney to make the smoke rise fast enough to carry out the creosote.

She recommends that chimneys be inspected at least once a year. Homeowners can do it themselves by using a strong light and a mirror to look up the flue from the bottom, or they can have a chimney sweep do it. (According to the August West brochure, "If the bricks still look pink, you're okay; if they're black or kind of furry-looking, it's time for a sweeping.")

Stoves that are used every day in season, she said, need to have the chimney cleaned every year.

AS MENTIONED, MRS. Ferguson is the mother of four children, ages 17, 15, 9 and 8. What do they think of having a chimney sweep for a mother?

"I came home one night at 9 or 9:30 (after cleaning a chimney) and I was a mess," she responded.

Daughter Jill, 8, still wanted her good-night kiss, no matter what her mother looked like, and got it.

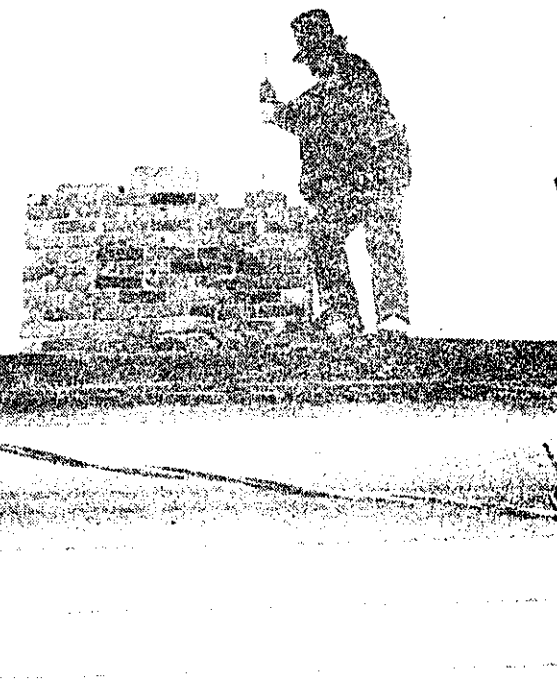
Then, her daughter said, "I'm the only one tonight who kissed a chimney sweep for a mother."

## Crooked chimneys led to top hat and tails

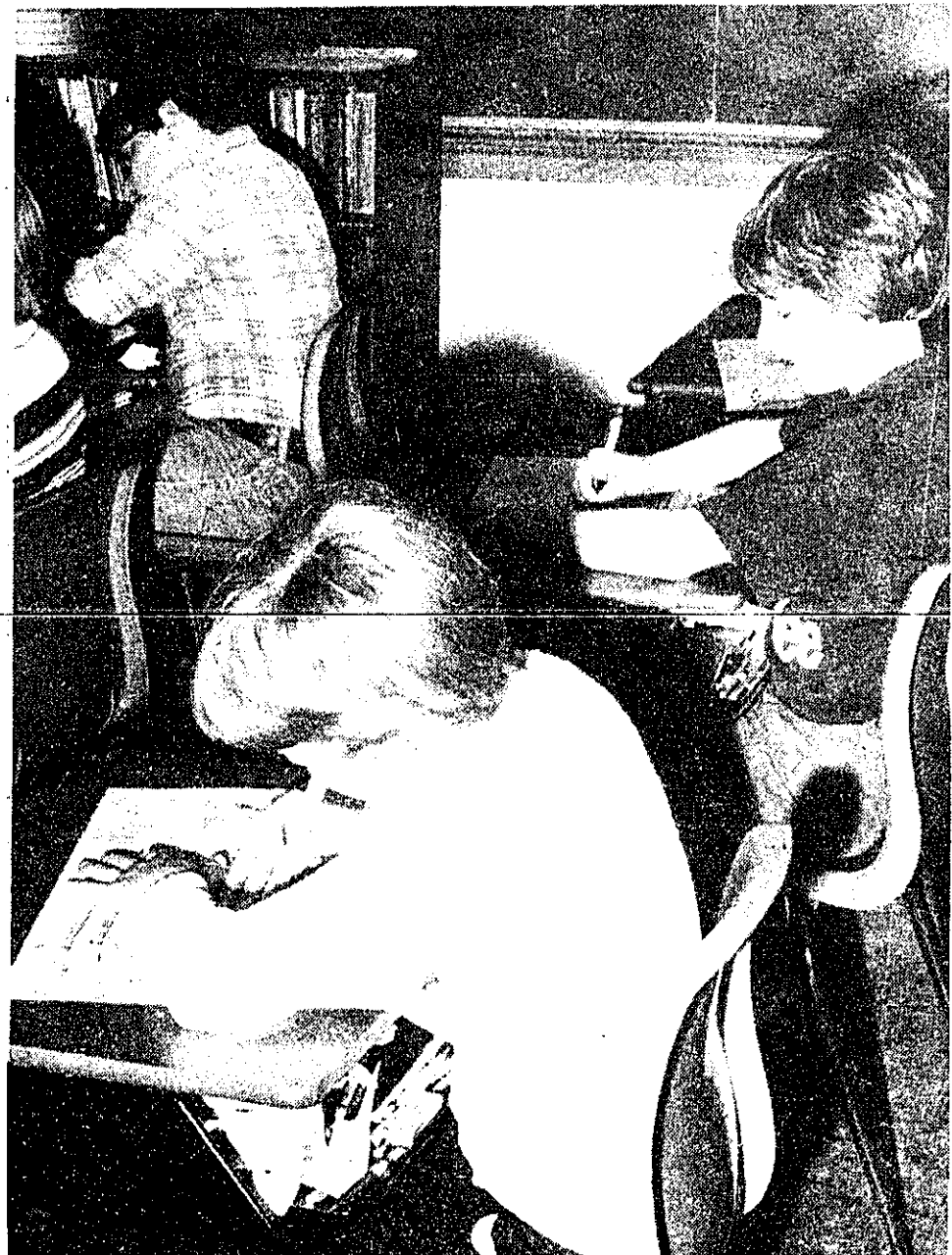
Europe, chimney sweeps in England were at the very bottom of the social ladder. Apparently to help compensate for their lowly position, the master sweeps started wearing top hats and tails, scrounged from undertakers after hired mourners wore them out.

Over the years, the outfit became the standard one for chimney sweeps as the master sweeps passed them on to their boys.

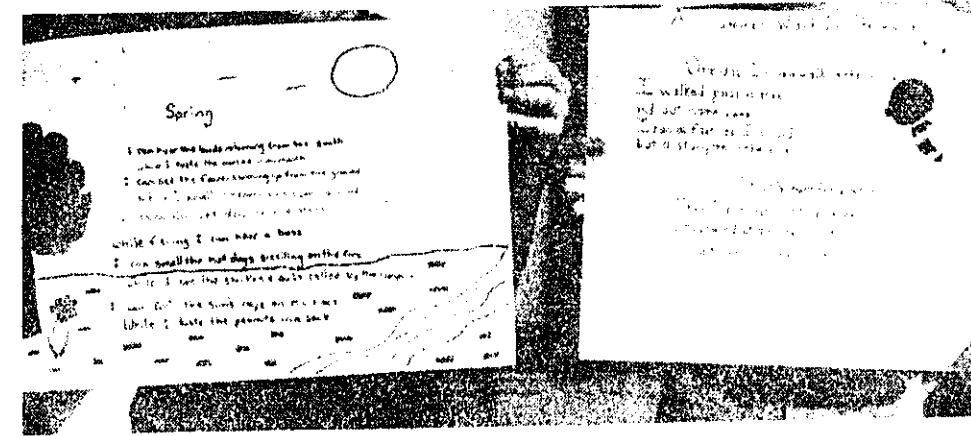
(Information taken from "For Whatever Soots You," pamphlet published by August West Systems, Inc., Westport, Conn.)



UP ON THE ROOF of the Evergreen township home of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Frederick is chimney sweep Irene Ferguson of Pigeon.



POETIC PLACEMATS -- Members of Peggy Flynn's fifth grade class at Cass City Intermediate School were busy last Friday making some of the placemats for the May 10 Young Authors' Conference for youngsters in grades 5-8 from 12 upper Thumb school districts. The students wrote the poems, which they then transferred onto colored paper and decorated, which were later laminated. Two samples of their handiwork are shown below. The top 10 authors selected from each school will receive a meal, at which the placemats will be used.



## Accidents

Continued from page one

Wednesday, April 23, Richard J. Majeski, 22, of Filion, was eastbound on M-81, southwest of Green Road, when his car struck a deer.

Thomas F. Hawkins, 65, of Cass City, was still reported in critical condition Tuesday at St. Mary's Hospital, Saginaw, where he has been since being struck by a motorcycle in Caro April 9.

Hawkins, who lived at the Cass City Hotel, was walking in the middle of a traffic lane on State Street when he was struck by the cycle.

# Most merchants satisfied with local trucking service

Local merchants are generally satisfied with the trucking service they receive, but do feel there is potential for improvement.

That was the finding of a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) study team which interviewed various merchants in Cass City, Deford and Kingston.

The three and other communities have been studied in order to determine the degree to which small town shippers and receivers are satisfied with the present truck transportation system and how beneficial is the regulation of the trucking industry by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC).

Studies have been conducted so far in Alabama, Arizona, Kansas, Kentucky, New Mexico and Michigan.

In addition to the three towns mentioned, the DOT researchers also visited Armada, Romeo and Escanaba in Michigan.

Interviews with merchants were conducted in February and early March of this year.

Interviews were conducted in Cass City with the owners of the Ben Franklin Store, Bigelow Hardware, Cass City Sports, Federated Store, Marshall Distributing, Old Wood Drug, Ryland and Gue plumbers, Schneeburger Furniture, Clothes Closet and one merchant who requested his name not be used.

The owner of the Deford Country Grocery was interviewed and in Kingston, Barden Hardware, Ed's Plumbing and Heating and Zorn's IGA.

The researchers found a high degree of satisfaction with service provided by United Parcel Service. It would be used even more if the weight (100 pounds) and size limitations, imposed by the ICC, were eased.

THERE WAS LESS SATISFACTION with ICC-regulated truck freight delivery service.

The major complaint regarding regulated carriers stemmed from the lack of direct interstate service to this area. What that means is that freight shipments coming from other states must be unloaded in Michigan, then hauled here by other trucking firms.

In addition to resulting higher costs, it causes other problems.

"For example," according to the report, "if Ed's Plumbing and Heating orders a furnace from Milwaukee, the general freight carrier will take the furnace to Detroit, a one-day trip, and hold it there until it has enough freight for Kingston and the surrounding area. It can thus take up to 10 days for the furnace to be shipped to Kingston."

Clarence (Bud) Schneeburger said "that it often takes more than two weeks to get a shipment from Georgia (of carpet), and it is not uncommon for carpet shipments to be detained in Detroit for more than 10 days."

Most of the store's furniture shipments are brought there by the manufacturers' own trucks, which reduces costs and shipping damage. One regulated carrier, which specializes in transporting furniture, is sometimes used.

MARSHALL DISTRIBUTING, a wholesale distributor of snowmobile and motorcycle parts, has a unique problem.

Many of its outgoing shipments go to small towns which are served only by intrastate carriers. The firm has customers in all 50 states.

It makes extensive use of UPS. When that's not possible, "All shipments moving by general freight carriers are handled by two interstate carriers; these carriers interline shipments with other carriers for long-distance interstate movements."

When the shipment is destined for a community in another state served only by an intrastate carrier, "three different carriers must often

handle a shipment. This causes time and payment problems."

According to Ben Franklin store owner Gerald Prieskorn, direct freight service would "lower transportation costs, shorten transit times, lead to fewer shipment delays and reduce the amount of lost and damaged freight."

FREIGHT COSTS ARE substantial. The merchants questioned said shipping costs, depending on the product, accounted for 4-30 percent of the cost paid by consumers.

Although some merchants expressed satisfaction about the trucking service they receive from the regulated carriers, a few mentioned being "periodically forced to contact the ICC to help settle long overdue loss and damage claims."

One said "it was simpler and less costly to forget about the problem than it was to get reimbursed by the truckers," accordingly has never lodged a formal complaint with the ICC or state regulator agency.

As for the rates the trucking firms charge, comments expressed ranged from "pretty fair" to "believed to be rising faster than the general rate of inflation" to "would like to see rate decreases."

Although some merchants didn't see a need for more trucking service here, some did. (Two truck lines serve Cass City and Deford; one provides service to Kingston.) Schneeburger told the interviewees "more competition would solve the problems." He faces competition daily "so why couldn't the truckers?"

AS FOR WHAT HAPPENS now that the DOT study is completed, all it does is make some recommendations.

One is that, "Easing entry standards for carriers offering to provide service to small communities would help small town service."

"Small town service can be further improved by expanding the weight limits for small package specialists and relaxing route, com-

modity and intermediate stop restrictions.

The interviews conducted in Michigan show that trucking service to small communities is adequate under the present system... due to the resourcefulness of individuals in these communities, not due to the ICC regulated system.

"The service currently provided to these towns would not be adversely affected by regulator reform," the report concludes, "and changes in trucking regulation can be expected to lead to improved trucking service in small towns."

## No word available on road pact vote

It was unknown publicly as of Wednesday morning whether hourly employees of the Tuscola County Road Commission approved a new contract with the agency.

Tentative agreement on a new contract was reached April 22.

Members of Local 21-M of the Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO met in Akron Tuesday evening to vote on the new pact. Afterward, local President Arthur (Jim) Saeger declined to say what the outcome was until he met with the Road Commission. The union represents 44 laborers equipment operators and mechanics.

A special meeting of the Road Commission board was tentatively scheduled Wednesday. As of deadline time its clerk, Jim Miklovic told the Chronicle he was still waiting to hear from Saeger whether the meeting should be called.

The union members have been working without a contract since the old one expired Dec. 31.

## Huron horse team places 1st in state

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The Huron County 4-H Senior Horse Bowl team won the state finals Saturday in East Lansing and will represent Michigan in national 4-H competition in Pennsylvania later this year.

The four-member team of

Cami Gaskill, Owendale, Colleen McIntyre and Kevin Cubitt, both of Bad Axe, and Tina Farver, Elkton, earned the top spot during contests at the Horse Jamboree at Michigan State University.

The team is coached by Dennis Gaskill, Owendale, assisted by Mary McIntyre, Bad Axe.

Huron Extension director Robert Johnson said team members are interviewed one at a time and questioned on any aspect of horse science. Questions include care and feeding, genetics and breeding, and current events related to the horse industry.

The team will compete Oct. 4 at the National 4-H Horse Bowl Contests at Harrisburg, Pa.

They qualified for the nationals by beating six regional winners.

The Huron team placed second at regional competition at Harrison in February to qualify for the state contests. At regionals around the state, there were 47 counties represented.

Miss Gaskill and Miss Farver belong to the Lucky Horseshoe 4-H Club, Miss McIntyre is a member of the Thundering Hoofs 4-H Club, and Cubitt is a member of the Equus 4-H Club.

## Armbruster home from hospital

State Rep. Loren Armbruster, R-Caro, returned home Monday after three weeks at St. Mary's Hospital, Saginaw, where he had surgery on the carotid artery in his neck.

He was in the hospital one week prior to surgery and for two weeks' recuperation afterwards, according to his wife, Edna.

It is expected he will have to be home for 2-3 more weeks of recuperation before he can return to work. Armbruster, first elected to the legislature in November, 1972, hasn't decided yet whether to seek re-election, his wife said.

## Little tips for babies

When traveling with a baby, it's often a good idea to bring along a couple of plastic tablecloths for covering beds and carpets on which the baby may sleep, crawl, sit or be changed.

Parents should not compare their children's development to that of others the same age. Perfectly normal babies vary greatly in their rate of development. Some walk without help at eight months, others, not for four years.

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