



**WHERE THERE'S SMOKE --** Fireman Don Finkbeiner (left) turns his head away to get it away from the smoke coming from the Melvin Johnson home Saturday night. At right, he and Fire Chief Jack Hartwick (in the lead) climbed up on the roof, where the latter used his department's gasoline engine rotary saw for the first time to cut a hole in the roof, to let smoke and hot air escape.

## Heavy damage in Novesta fire; blaze destroys Argyle home

Damage was estimated at at least \$20,000 in a fire that heavily damaged the Milton (Mel) Johnson home in Novesta township Saturday night.

Elkland Township Fire Chief Jack Hartwick said the cause was traced to a faulty electrical outlet in an upstairs bedroom which somehow shorted out.

The fire was reported at 9:10 p.m. The home is on Shabbona Road, about 1 1/2 miles east of Cemetery Road.

The fire, which began in the west end of the home, spread throughout the entire upstairs. That level was gutted, Hartwick said. There was primarily water damage downstairs. The home is repairable.

Assistant Fire Chief Jerome Root Jr. said an estimated 3,600 gallons of water were used. The Caro Fire Department assisted by bringing two tanker loads of water to the blaze.

## Gifts galore await first baby of 1981

First babies of the year born in Hills and Dales General Hospital have come from all over the Thumb and have received a galaxy of prizes in the annual Chronicle First Baby Contest.

1981 will be no exception. Waiting for the first arrival are 14 different prizes given by area merchants.

The youngster will be getting off to a right start with \$25 deposited in his name in a silver key account at the Cass City office of Thumb National Bank and Trust Co. The cost to mom and dad will decrease when they pick up \$10 worth of baby products from Quaker Maid Dairy Store and Erla's Food Center. Baby will have the choice of baby food or merchandise worth \$12.50 from IGA Foodliner. Cass City Gambles has \$10 in merchandise for the winner and Mutual Savings and

Loan Association has \$10 to deposit in a prestige account. \$5 worth of baked goods are available from Konrad's Bakery and Sommers' Bakery. Hobart's Family Shoes will give \$5 towards a new pair of baby shoes and the parents can read all about it with their free subscription to the Chronicle.

Finally there is a vaporizer given by Old Wood Drug and \$10 towards any prescription from Coach Light Pharmacy.

## Owendale woman dies in crash; Lori Schuette reported critical

Hannah McQueen, 68, of Owendale, was killed Saturday night when she was thrown from the pickup she was riding in when it rolled over.

Driver of the pickup was her husband, David, 73. According to the Huron County Sheriff's Department, their pickup was northbound on Elkton Road, a quarter-mile north of McAlpin Road, when it went off the west side of the road, rolled over once into a field and came to rest on its wheels.

Both occupants were thrown from the vehicle. McQueen was thrown clear but his wife was found lying partially under the truck. Neither was wearing a safety belt.

Mrs. McQueen was pronounced dead at the scene by medical examiner Dr. E.C. Holdship. Her husband was taken to Hills and Dales General Hospital, where he was reported in fair condition Monday afternoon.

The 6 p.m. accident remains under investigation. The McQueens lived on S. Elkton Road. Mrs. McQueen was born Oct. 12, 1912, in Evergreen township, the daughter of Neil and Nina (Grace) McLarty.



**TRAFFIC FATALITY --** Hannah McQueen was killed Saturday night when this pickup in which she was a passenger rolled over once. She was thrown from the vehicle.

## Employees get 9% raise Village water, sewer rate going up 20%

Cass City home and building owners will be paying an approximately 20 percent increase in water and sewer rates in 1981, the village council decided Monday evening.

with the three-month period ending Jan. 31, are as follows (old rate in parentheses): 0-5,000 gallons, \$21.12 (\$17.60); 5,001-15,000, \$1.98 per thousand gallons, \$1.65; 15,001-25,000, \$1.716 per thousand (\$1.43); 25,001-200,000, \$1.952 per thousand (\$1.21); over 200,000, \$1.128 per thousand (94 cents).

Outside of the village, building owners will pay double, plus \$10 per quarter, the same as before. The rate of Huntsville Trailer Park, which has sewage treatment only (it has its own water well) will be \$3.75 per unit per month, up from \$2.75. The charge is billed to the park owner.

For a family of four using 30,000 gallons of water a month, which is about average, the quarterly rate will go up from \$54 to \$65 (\$21.12 for 5,000 gallons, \$1.98 per thousand for 10,000 gallons, \$1.716 per thousand for 15,000, plus \$1.952 per thousand for the final 5,000 gallons).

Council members, before approving the 1981 budget, also okayed a 9 percent pay raise for village employees. The water and sewer rate increase, Village President Lambert Althaver explained after the meeting, was needed because of the increasing cost of running the old sewage treatment plant, such as for chemicals, and the beginning of increased costs for running the new plant, now under construction.

A major chunk of the new expense will be the \$21,000 salary for the new wastewater plant supervisor. The hiring of Rick Mohr of Saginaw, who starts Monday, means expansion of the workforce at the treatment plant from two to three, needed for the new plant, part of which goes into operation late next year.

The new rates, effective year), full retirement at 62 (65 now) and paid Blue Cross from 62-65. "We just felt the way the budget is, that's as far as we can go," explained Richard Hampshire of the council's personnel committee.

With the increases, the three highest paid employees will be village Superintendent Lou LaPonsie, \$27,350 annually; Police Chief Gene Wilson, \$21,717, and Mohr, \$21,000. The three village police officers (not including Wilson) were not included in the new pay and benefits package because they recently joined the Fraternal Order of Police, which will negotiate in their behalf concerning pay and benefits. The union has yet to contact the village concerning the start of negotiations, Althaver said.

The budget was approved with minor changes from what was first presented Dec. 1.

No one showed up at the scheduled public hearing Monday, prior to passage of the financial plan.

General fund expenditures are projected at \$500,000, up from \$437,880 spent this year, which will require taking \$48,000 from savings.

Big increases in expenditures include salaries increase, \$16,673, not including police; new tennis courts, \$30,000, to be defrayed by public donations; street lighting (electricity), up from \$24,500 this year to \$30,000, and insurance and bonds, up \$5,000 to \$35,000.

Eleven village employees will receive a 9 percent pay increase in 1981, the council decided, versus the 12 1/2 percent they had requested. They will also receive dental insurance and retirees will be able to carry hospitalization insurance through the village at their own expense. That will allow them to get the insurance at a lower rate.

Employees also sought but didn't get longevity pay, an additional personal leave day. Blue Cross hospitalization college rider (covering children in college), sick day accumulation to 150 days (it's now 120 at 12 days per

With gasoline tax and license plate fee revenue from the state declining and no more county bridge mon-

Various state revenue is projected at \$103,700, a decline from \$114,750 the village got this year. Federal revenue sharing is projected at \$39,400, up from \$32,250.

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## Tuscola board tries for '81 property tax freeze

Enough is enough, said the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners last week when they voted to try to freeze 1981 property valuations at their 1980 level.

Such action would mean no increase in property taxes if millage rates remained the same.

The board voted Tuesday, Dec. 23, not to accept the equalization report presented by Equalization Director Donald Graf, which increased agricultural assessments an average of 6.31 percent countywide; resi-

dential property, 8.06 percent, and timber cutover, .63 percent. The average for the three together is 6.93 percent. The figures are derived from the department study of property sales.

The department is still preparing its study of commercial and industrial valuations.

"We just didn't like the increases," said Commissioner Royce Russell of Elmwood township, chairman of the board's equalization committee. "Where are you going to stop it?"

There is precedent for what the county board is attempting to do. The last time they tried it, they lost.

In 1978, the board first tried to freeze assessments

at the 1977 level, then decided the STC would never approve it, so okayed a state equalized valuation of the county midway between the 1977 figure and the level determined by the equalization department.

The STC rejected the board's arguments and imposed the equalization department totals, which meant an average 15.02 percent increase in the valuation of agricultural property and a 5.53 percent boost in

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# HAPPY NEW YEAR