

Liberal

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Propane tanks blow up

11-storey-high explosion hurls debris at Hillcrest

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Liberal Reporter

Mushrooming fire clouds and several loud explosions shook a large area around Hillcrest Mall Thursday, when propane tanks blew up atop an 11-storey unfinished apartment building.

No one was injured in the \$100,000 blaze but three Richmond Hill firefighters owe their lives to a jammed fire nozzle in the building.

Fire Captain Don Gillis and firefighters Rick Lazenby and Herb Fowx had just moved aside to fix the nozzle, when one of the exploding tanks landed where they had been standing only seconds before.

Twelve 100-pound propane tanks were on the roof of the building, and they were used to heat tar pots.

One of the two tar pots had been dismantled before workers went home at 4:30 p.m.

For some reason, the tanks exploded but the cause of the explosions is still being investigated by the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Someone was seen on the roof between the time workers left and the time the explosions started about 5:30 p.m.

When the tanks exploded, pieces flew in all directions. Some landed in the Hillcrest Mall parking lot. Others landed near town houses and in the grass around them and some debris plunged to the roof of the K Mart store in the Mall.

Richmond Hill Fire Chief Bob Kennedy said, "When the tanks exploded, the pieces looked like large chunks of shrapnel."

Jeff Wakefield, who lives at 40 Castle Rock said, "It was like a mini-Hiroshima, complete with mushroom clouds and fire balls."

"The fire balls were incredible; just like a bomb going off," he said.

Lynton Friedburg also described it as 'Incredible'.

K Mart, which is the closest store to the apartment building was littered with debris.

Staff members raced to put out spot fires on the roof of the K Mart Store.

Shoppers in the store were not asked to leave the premises; they did so on their own to see what was going on.

Parents in nearby town houses were concerned for the safety of their children and could be heard screaming for them.

Parts of the exploding tanks flew through the air and landed as far as 100 feet away.

No one was injured, but several cars were struck by flying debris.

Investigations are being conducted by the Office of the Fire Marshal, the Department of



One of several explosions atop an unfinished apartment building on Baif Blvd. is caught by Liberal photographer Bruce Hogg, during Thursday's spectacular fire. Propane tanks blew up spewing debris over a wide area, including the

parking lot of Hillcrest Mall. Small fires broke out on the roof of Hillcrest's K-Mart store. Damage was estimated at \$100,000. Fire officials are still investigating the cause of the explosions.

Labor, the Construction Safety Association, and the Richmond Hill Fire Department.

Part of the already constructed building will have to be torn down

and rebuilt, because of the damages.

Richmond Hill Fire Department, in responding to one of its toughest assignments this year,

rolled all its equipment from the fire hall except a tanker truck.

Three pumps, the platform, and the rescue unit, manned by about 30 fire fighters, raced to the

scene. Construction workers believe the top floor of the apartment building will have to be torn down and rebuilt.

Regional Land Division Committee has joined the number of government bodies to turn down the application of a Richmond Hill man to sever his lot.

Silvio Tachella of 292 Rumble Avenue has been trying to split his property which faces Rumble Avenue and Emerald Isle Court, since 1972.

Mr. Tachella's house faces Rumble Avenue and he would like to build a second house facing Emerald Isle Court.

Since 1972, this application for severance has been turned down by Committee of Adjustments, Planning staff, planning committee, council and the Ontario Municipal Board.

July 9 the council in Richmond Hill approved Mr. Tachella's re-application on a close five to four vote, despite the objections of 25 of the 29 land owners in the vicinity.

Last Tuesday, local solicitor, Neil Mann, spoke on behalf of these 25 homeowners on Emerald Isle Court who would be directly affected by the severance.

Speaking to the history of the application and council's reversal of the original decision not to allow the split, Mr. Mann appealed to the Land Division Committee to deal with the issue at a planning level rather than a political one.

Mr. Mann stressed the fact neighbours felt a house on the back of Mr. Tachella's property would be incompatible with the character of the neighborhood.

In an interview Friday, Rick Preston, Chairman of the Land Division Committee said because of the controversial nature of the application, committee members went out and viewed the site Wednesday morning before handing down their decision.

The application was refused on the grounds a house built to municipal standards would not be compatible with the area and because of the number of objections to the application.

The applicant can appeal this decision to the Ontario Municipal Board, but in an interview Monday, Mr. Tachella told the Liberal he has not yet decided.

Developers pay for chief's trip to Cincinnati

Chief Bruce Crawford should have received police commission approval before accepting an Ohio trip that was paid for by the developers of a Vaughan amusement park, Regional Chairman Bob Forhan said Thursday.

In his statement to regional council on the controversy, Mr. Forhan stressed that he was not questioning Chief Crawford's integrity.

For his part, Chief Crawford insists there was nothing improper about the two-day trip to Cincinnati to inspect the security system of a large amusement park. The chief said in an interview that all members of the regional police commission were aware of his trip before he left.

The trip was paid for by Family Leisure Centres of Canada Ltd., a subsidiary of a company that developed the "theme park" in Cincinnati. The company arranged for the trip after discussions with the chief about possible security problems at the 320-acre park it is developing near Major Mackenzie Drive and Hwy. 400.

Inspector Cliff Cox accompanied the chief on the trip. They left Saturday, June 9, spent Sunday inspecting the park security, met the local sheriff Monday and returned to York Region that afternoon.

The total tab, including air fare, hotel, car rental and most of the meals, was paid by the developers.

The chief said he had some concerns about policing in connection with the theme park, which is now under construction and is due to open in 1981.

"It was a learning experience for me and a good one," Chief Crawford said. "I was impressed with it. The security system is very efficient."

He said internal security will be so efficient at the Maple park that York Regional Police will seldom be needed there except to direct traffic at peak times.

"A lot of people think I went down there to ride the roller coaster. Nothing could be further from the truth. I think it's humorous," the chief said, referring to suggestions the trip was improper.

Mr. Forhan said he is sure Chief Crawford acted "in good faith" in taking the trip. However, it should have been formally authorized by the police commission, the regional chairman said.

Richmond Hill Councillor Lou Wainright, a member of the police commission, told council that "there was no formal motion, but every member was

aware that he was taking the trip."

"He went on his own time," Councillor Wainright said. "I'm sure he's not going to be influenced by a \$300 trip."

"There was no resolution. What difference does that make?" Mr. Wainright said.

Ontario Police Commission Chairman Judge Thomas Graham said in a Toronto newspaper interview that the chief should have gone at public expense.

"It doesn't look good, there is no question about that, and I would have preferred that it hadn't happened," Judge Graham was quoted as saying.

Chief Crawford insists the matter is straightforward.

"If I was a councillor and had to decide (on the theme park), it would be a different matter," he said.

He said that councillors and the fire chief from Vaughan and members of the press had taken a trip to the Cincinnati park at the developers' expense.

Decomposed woman's body found

The body decomposed body of a woman estimated to be in her mid-thirties was found yesterday (Tuesday) morning about a mile south of Highway 7 near Warden Avenue in Markham.

York Regional Police are treating the case as a homicide and are continuing their investigation. Positive identification had not been made before The Liberal went to press yesterday afternoon.

"We have to treat these types of cases as murders until we're satisfied they're not," said Detective Sergeant Robert McCausland. "If we don't we lose a lot of time and the investigation must be started all over again — it becomes too regressive. It's the only practical way we can go about it."

A survey crew working near the area where the body was discovered came across the remains during some routine work. They notified police.

Community Pulse

Boundary balance

Tonight Richmond Hill council in committee will look at ward boundaries, hoping to come up with a way of preventing future imbalances in numbers of voters in each ward.

Mayor Dave Schiller was not optimistic about boundaries being realigned in the near future, suggesting it was a complicated procedure.

Holiday hours

In order to give staff the Civic Holiday weekend, The Liberal display, classified and business departments will be closed Monday, August 6.

Deadline for display advertising is 5 p.m. Friday, and classified is 10 a.m. Tuesday.

The editorial department will be open, Monday, August 6.

Lively concert

The concert in the park this Thursday will be a fast moving and fun affair.

Nicol Brown of Thornhill and his group will put on a musical variety show, "a dance-hall type of thing," he said.

Billy Meek, a comedian on the Pig and Whistle Show singer Irene King and Scottish tenor, Peter Glen, complete with his kilt will help Mr. Brown put on the one and one-half hour non-stop variety show at Mill Pond Park, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

School's out...again

If you listened closely Friday, you might have heard nearly 2,000 shrieks of joy as elementary students completed their last hour of school...again.

This time it was summer school wrapping up for another year. About 900 elementary, 2,000 secondary and more than 50 Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) students attended a variety of courses.

The high school group doesn't finish until August 10, but not all students enrolled are taking courses simply to make up credits.

Throughout the province, communities are regarding summer school as more than just a place for students who have failed a subject (s) during the regular school year.

The opportunity for educational enrichment is also looked upon as a more efficient way of utilizing school buildings on a 12-month basis.

At the elementary level, remedial courses were offered in mathematics, English and French.

The Area 3 schools of Kleinburg Junior Public and O. M. MacKillop Public had an enrollment of 79 students while the combined enrollment of Baythorn, Bayview Glen, Unionville and William Arm-

strong was 422.

Five other schools were used for programs at Keswick, Newmarket, Nobleton, Stouffville and Aurora.

At Baythorn in Thornhill, ESL (English as a second language) was offered for those who felt they needed such a course. Two schools in York County offered enrichment courses in drama, visual arts and future studies.

TMR students were integrated with other children in Fairmead

School in Newmarket. Keswick Public School also housed a TMR program which ran concurrently with the Grades 4-7 summer school.

The Grade 8 and high school summer program gives students an opportunity to improve their standing in particular subjects or take new courses for credits.

Enrichment courses are also given in music, driver education and ESL.

Industrial park slowly advancing

Members of Richmond Hill council had their first opportunity last week to look at the results of a study done on the cost of servicing the town's new prestige industrial park.

Beaver Creek Industrial Park, a 700-acre area zoned industrial in Richmond Hill's new official plan, is bounded by Highways 7 and 404, 16th Avenue and a point just west of Leslie Street.

Commissioner of Works, Bernie Toporowski, said the Beaver Creek Industrial Park Development Study by Proctor and Redfern Limited, Consulting Engineers, gives council a

chance to see what progress has been made planning roads, water and sewer connections and storm drainage in the area as well as costs to open this land for development.

Further meetings are to be held with the property owners in about two weeks, said Mr. Toporowski, to advise the owners of the details and allow comment to be made.

Mr. Toporowski said at that time the town will review options of financing available.

Mayor Dave Schiller said the town is hoping property owners in the area will "co-operate" in the financing of services.

Pictures show Yonge Street needs cleaning

Six pictures of unkempt areas of Yonge Street shown to Richmond Hill Civic Improvement Committee have spurred town staff into action.

Stuart Casement, a member of the committee, brought the pictures hoping to show his fellow committee members situations that needed correction in town.

Four showed the proliferation of newspaper boxes — six Globe and Mail receptacles between Arnold Crescent and Richmond Street, and two showed the run-down state of the site of the abandoned taxi office south of Arnold Crescent and next to M. L. McConaghy Public School.

Clerk of Richmond Hill, Dave Weldon, said he contacted the three major newspapers about the number of boxes on Yonge Street and all have agreed to a meeting to discuss the problem.

Mr. Weldon also said he contacted the Property Standards Officer for the town, Marsh Miller, asking him to take the necessary steps to have the owners of the property, next to the school, clean up their holdings.