

Lambertville Moves Swiftly To Assist Disaster Victims

Eighth Body Found; At Least 12 Hurt

By BARBARA GILL
Staff Writer

LAMBERTVILLE — The people of Lambertville, with eight of their neighbors dead as a result of two gas explosions and fire on York Street yesterday, are remobilizing a relief effort they initiated after a similar disaster last October.

The eighth victim, tentatively identified as Mrs. Florence Waldron, of 74 North Franklin Street, was recovered soon after 10 o'clock last night in the rubble of her house on North Franklin and York streets.

She was the only person still accounted for as rescue workers came to the end of a terrifying day for this Delaware River-side city of 4,300 persons.

At Least 12 Hurt
At least 12 persons were injured, three of them still hospitalized, and three houses the homes of four families were destroyed in the disaster that struck here early yesterday.

The dead were identified

Mrs. Nancy Crosby, 60, of York Street.

Bryan Hoagland, 12, son of Mrs. Hoagland, 12, son of Mrs. Henry Hoagland 83 York Street.

Mrs. Evelyn Trent, 54, of 16 York Street.

Mrs. Bessie Randolph, 78, of York Street. She lived in a dilapidated, corner house owned by Mrs. Waldron, who she had married in the 1920s.

Mrs. Randolph, 118, of 67 Hancock Street. Mrs.

Randolph's granddaughter, Mrs. Blanche Case, 36, of 67 Hancock Street. And Vanessa Case, 12, of 67 Hancock Street, Mrs. Case's daughter.

Of the injured being treated at Hunterdon Medical Center in Flemington:

Rowena Case, 14, of 67 Hancock Street, is listed in serious condition with burns on her legs and hands.

Mrs. Karen Waldron, 25, of 74 North Franklin Street, is being treated for multiple first and second-degree burns, and John Crosby, 67, of 73 York Street, is being treated for smoke inhalation and for foot bruises received when he jumped from the second floor of his home to escape.

At least nine others, including one fireman, were treated at the Hunterdon Medical Center, the Phillips-Barber Health Center here or at their own physicians' offices for minor injuries and shock.

All of the dead were killed

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in the second of two blasts and were in or near Mrs. Waldron's property at 75 York Street.

Probe Is Ordered

By late yesterday afternoon, Elizabethtown Gas Company crewmen rushed into the city and installed a temporary line around a cracked valve that is being blamed as of now for causing the explosions.

And today, William E. Ozard, president of New Jersey's Public Utilities Commission, ordered public hearings into the tragedy to get under way in Trenton within a month.

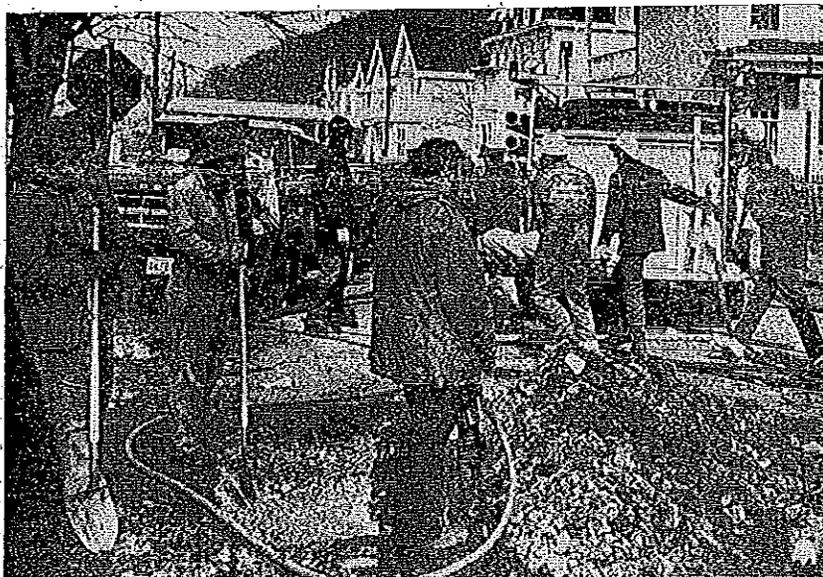
The second blast occurred at 7:55 a.m. while the Lambertville Fire Department was attempting to control a fire which resulted from a less severe explosion at 6:05 a.m. at 73 York Street, the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Crosby, and at 71 York Street, where Mrs. Emma Mack, who was recently widowed lived.



Under a dusting of snow, demolition crews tear down houses at 71 and 73 York Street. Rubble

at rear is 75 York, where seven women and children were crushed to death in explosion.

Staff Photo By Martin D'Arcy



Gas company workers pause as body of Mrs. Bessie Randolph is borne from ruins of her home.

Staff Photo By Calvin Siskind

Amid The Rubble, Lost Loved Ones

By JON SENDERLING
Staff Writer

LAMBERTVILLE — By the time Cubit Case got to the scene, there were at least 100 people standing in the intersection at York and Franklin Streets.

Case, still in his mailman's uniform, stopped on the north side of York Street, and for a long time he just stood there in the cold and stared across the street, where firemen were alternating between hosing down a house on one side of Franklin Street and clearing rubble from what was left of a house on the other. Desperation and fear sur-

rounding for signs of life, trying to keep the horror at a minimum. And there were the spectators, some of whom seemed obsessed with convincing each other that their neighborhood was big enough for tragedy.

Standing in the midst of it, staring at the tons of rubble where the house at 75 York Street used to be, Case looked, for a moment, like the loneliest man in the world.

Finally, he broke himself from the trance. He moved through the crowd to a fireman and asked him what the word was. The mailman seemed afraid of what the

one she thought might be able to help her, her eyes at times almost begging someone to say her family was still alive, that he had just seen her daughter and grandchildren at the store down the street.

"I didn't come. I don't know what to do at this point. I guess you have to just listen and wait," she said.

Later the family gathered at the Case home at 67 Hancock Street. Their worst fears had been realized. Blanche Case and Vanessa Case were both dead.

The Survivors Rowena was still in the

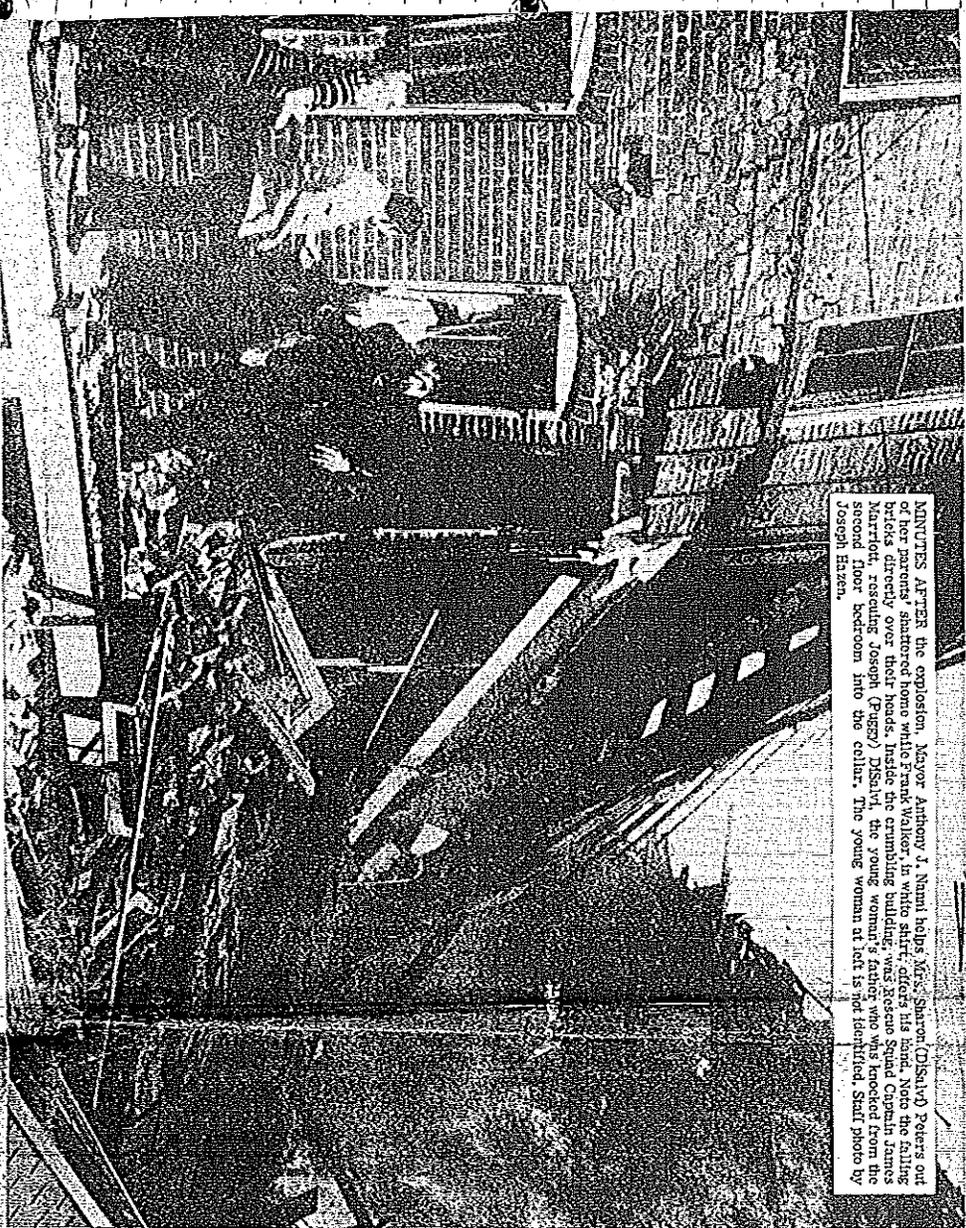
ever, had been spared. Cubit Jr., 7, had gone to school for the day, and Cynthia, 13, was at home sick.

Cubit Case was able to talk about it, though it wasn't easy. He explained that his wife and two daughters had heard of the earlier explosion-fire at 73 York Street and had gone to see if their friend, Mrs. Bessie Randolph, needed any help at her home just across Franklin Street at 75 York. His family regularly watched one of Mrs. Randolph's children, the mailman explained.

But Mrs. Case and the girls weren't able to help.

Unselfish Heroism Marks Area's Response to Disaster

Oct 8, 1970



MINUTES AFTER the explosion, Mayor Anthony J. Sarno, (left) helps Mrs. Sharon (Disability) Peters out of her parents' shattered home while Frank Walker, in white shirt, steadies his hand. Next the falling blocks directly over their heads inside the crumbling building, the young woman's father, who was knocked from the second floor bedroom into the collar. The young woman at left is not identified. Staff photo by Joseph Hazen.

Ignore Dangers of Explosions

The most outstanding thing about the disaster which hit the Lampholpe at 11:27 a. m. Monday was the total dedication of citizens to rescue workers, police, volunteers, firemen and fire and working inside the hot and foul conditions, the men worked almost superhuman effort to save the lives of people trapped in the shattered buildings along the east end of Church street. Without this immediate help, many more would have died.

Among the first on the scene were Mayor Anthony J. Sarno, James Marriott, who operates the Tempo gas station diagonally across the street and the Lampholpe Rescue Squad Captain, and Alfred Blasebe, who ran several blocks after the blast.

Other outstanding thing from the other end of Church street ignored the danger of additional explosions and fire, Mayor Sarno, who owns the New Hope Village Store, had a day off and was making minor repairs across the street and the Lampholpe house at 61 Church street. He said he had just massaged his back.

Investigators Find Small Break in Old Gas Line

A team of investigators, called together by Police Chief Frank Masterson, including gas company representatives, contractors, and a fire department inspector, removed all physical evidence from the disaster. The trench which contained the gas line was opened and at the bottom was found a hole in the gas main, which caused the explosion.

The investigators believe that Robert Krause, age 32, an employee of Hinke and McCoy, jumped into the ditch to cover with his hand a leak in a pipe which was pulled loose by the backhoe working on the trench. Other workmen ran to the nearby street to get a rubber plug to cap the hole. A spokesman for the Public Utility Commission was unavailable for comment.

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Beacon-News Reporter In on Scene

Spent 2 Minutes With Camera, Then It

BY JOSEPH HAZEN
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I was at Marriott's home when the blast occurred. I ran toward my truck, grabbed my camera and ran toward the fire, stopping on the highway to take a shot just as the man with long hair came running through the smoke. He was trying to get away from the blast and his face.

I stopped again on the grass at Franklin street and took another photograph, continuing across the street into the smoke. I saw Vile Brown lying there on the sidewalk. He was up on one elbow and seemed OK so I continued toward the blast area through the smoke.

A man was screaming. I went in that direction and two guys were begging on a pile of bricks. Not too much later the man stopped screaming.

As I reached the end of the row of homes, Jim Marriott, who had called the Squad arrived and he jumped on to the second porch. That was at the west end of the row. I jumped on to the last.

Mayor Nann and Al Blaschke also jumped on to the porch. Al went into the hall.

I went across to Skinner's corner and got a shot of Marriott helping Peggy Dissav's daughter out of the house. He passed her on to Nann.

Something in the dash down the street I handed my sport coat to a guy on the curb.

I then put the camera into Skinner's house and returned to the fire to help.

All this must have taken about two minutes.

I then went around to the back of the houses that remained standing and tried to get onto one of the roofs to see if anyone was in the rear of the houses. One other guy was with me. We tried to use a step ladder but it was too short. The aluminum roof was too smooth and the slope was too steep for us to get on.

Just then the Nalencos came around the back with Frank Myers. We started to call to anyone who might be in Ed's home. We heard a muffled cry and started to pull out the boards and debris.

Ed's wife was under the debris with a bath tub next to her. I guess that kept the fall load of the wreckage off her. She wasn't too far from the fire which was burning by now and was trying in her direction.

Bob Brown came around the house with a small fire hose. He had water. At first he tried to get the hose into the debris to cool down the heat around Ed's wife. Then, the water was shut off.

They got her out and away. A large fire hose arrived through the backyards. I picked up the thing with Louis Sivy, Sr. Still no water. We started to get excited then because the Nalencos were digging again for Mary Williamson and the fire was really getting hot around the man. Still no water.

I wasn't until the people were out of the debris that the rear of the house got water. The hoses were laid out and manned but nothing could be done.

The firemen at the front of the house had some water though. I expect down a couple times.

The odd thing about the whole blast was that there didn't seem to be any debris flying through the air. Everything seemed to go up at once and the jam appeared on the ground.

James Marriott, front pulls Green Dissav from shattered home while Mayor Nann, left, rushes to his aid. Beacon-News photo.



the fact that the house was under Marriott's (Green) development after the blast. An oil burner in the Nalencos home or a spark scattered where else. Keanue was on Arthur Cole jumped into the debris to save him, and received serious burns. He is still in the Medical Center.

"The police investigating committee," said a police spokesman, "that gas from a landing pipe followed the path of the debris. A path had been set up by firefighters; a new line has been sufficient and, apparently, the debris was in the building by a spark which had been ignited by a spark."

Investigators also removed a gas meter from the collar as were portions of a hatchman being used by workers at the time of the explosion. Elizabethtown Gas Co. applied for a permit to open the street, their application was planned that their purpose was to install a new main on Church street. The permit was issued on September 28 to Victor Brown and signed by Deputy City Clerk Mabel Moorman.

The Gas Company's contractor, Hinkle and McCoy, had just installed a new epoxy-coated gas main in that spot of Church street and had tested it for 100 pounds of pressure on Friday. Since the test was successfully terminated by 5 p.m., probably tomorrow, the gas company decided to start connections Monday.

Work on the house connections began early Monday morning and the fire officials feel that gas had leaked into the collars during that time.

Broth, Mrs. Edward Nalencos and Mrs. Mary Williamson, sisters, said they smelled gas that morning.

Mayor Nann, who lives across the street from the site of the blast, said he thought that the gas connection to his own house was to be made the same day.

Blaschke was working in the People's station at the corner of Church and Franklin streets when he saw what happened. He ran to the scene as fast as possible and he jumped into the Cleary home. Mrs. Cleary was standing there. She seemed dazed but was otherwise all right.

"I was just about to go back out into the street when the wall between Cleary's and Dissav's fell down. I dissolved in fear of collapse, dissolved in fear of Jim Marriott and Tony Nann sliding for Dissav!" Blaschke said. "I walked through the hole and helped them get Peggy out and dead. My dog is dead. Dad thought a beagle was in his arms and was not hurt."

JAMES MARRIOTT, front pulls Green Dissav from shattered home while Mayor Nann, left, rushes to his aid. Beacon-News photo.