

# Blaze drives out 6 families

## Gas leak is blamed in 3-alarm Cambridge fire

By LAURA BROWN

A THREE-ALARM fire started by a leaking gas line ripped through a Cambridge triple-decker on Western Avenue yesterday morning, ruining Christmas for six families driven from their homes.

The blaze started on the third floor of 361 Western Ave. just after 10 a.m. and rapidly spread to an adjoining building at 359 Western Ave., causing an estimated \$200,000 in damage, Cambridge fire officials said. All the residents escaped safely from their apartments.

District Fire Chief Kevin Fitzgerald said leaking gas from a loose coupling on a gas heater supply line may have exploded before the fire began.

First-floor tenant Rosemarie Greene, 20, huddled in a neighbor's doorway with her 18-month-old baby, Latia, and her sister, Bernadette Leonce, 18, while firefighters battled the blaze.

The two women said the sound of an alarm — which they later realized was a smoke detector — had woken them up, but they didn't recognize the sound and fell back asleep.

"We always hear noises here," Greene said.

"But then a guy came banging on the door and told us there was a fire, so I just

grabbed my daughter and ran," she said.

The sisters escaped in their nightgowns, and were wrapped in blankets by neighbors.

The second-floor residents of the building next door to the burning house also made a quick escape when the fire spread to the floor above them.

A woman who did not want to give her name said she was washing dishes when she heard breaking glass.

"You just get all shook up and you don't know which way to go," she said.

"It's very frightening," said a family friend. "By the grace of God, you just get out with your life."

About 50 firefighters from Cambridge and Somerville fought the fire, said Cambridge Fire Capt. Gerald Reardon.

Firefighters contained the blaze to two buildings in the tightly packed row of houses near the corner of Western and Putnam avenues in Cambridgeport.

"The close proximity of the buildings always causes some problems," Reardon said.

Fitzgerald said investigators also had problems determining the cause of the fire because the residents of the apartment in which the fire began were Spanish-speaking.

"There was a language barrier, but the investigators were able to work through a translator," he added.



**FIRE FIGHT:** Cambridge firefighter, above, raises an ax to break through burning roof of a triple-decker at 361 Western Ave. during three-alarm blaze yesterday morning. The fire forced residents, at right, from their homes including (from left) Rosemarie Greene, her daughter Latia, 18 months, and Rosemarie's sister, Bernadette Leonce.

Staff photos by George Martell

# FILENE'S BASEMENT

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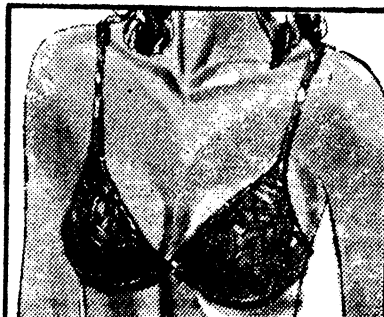
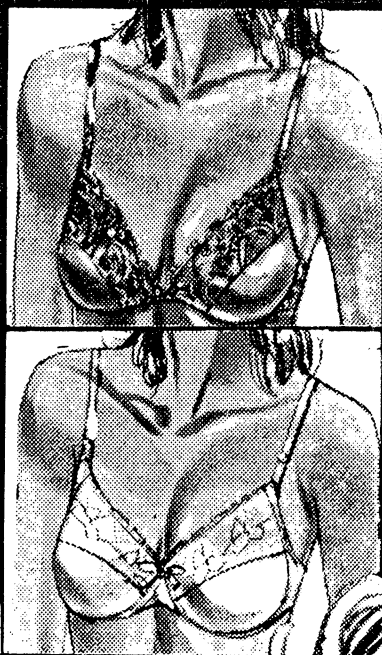
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# The Eye

Norma Nathan

## New buyer studies Dartmouth Street

**S**TREET BEAT: Bulletin, bulletin, bulletin! Dartmouth Street, one of the city's chic eateries, is on the block and about to be sold. Owners Steve Miller — who has many restaurants — and Diego Messina — hairdresser to the stars — are unloading the restaurant for an itty-bitty \$1.5 million.

The buyer is Charlie Sarkis, who owns Joe's American Bar and Grill down the street. Felix Paige, one of the big guys at Nick's, owns the building. Rent is a mere \$160,000 per year.

The issue comes before the Boston Licensing Board Jan. 18. Meanwhile, Dartmouth Street is still the street where the elite all meet.

### Bon-wit appetit

**DINNER SUIT:** More on the eat beat. Louis, the haute couture haberdasher, is adding a little something extra to his new store in the old Bonwit Teller building: a restaurant. So one can sup on soup and sandwiches while one's suit is altered. Ever so civilized.

Which leads to an odd occurrence. Owner Jerome Pearlstein, chairman of the Newton Licensing Board, has to apply for common victualers and liquor licenses from Andrea Gargiulo, chairman of the Boston Licensing Board.

He'll appear before the board Jan. 4. Dressed ever-so-appropriately in his Licensing Board suit. A conservative striped banker's grey. Of course.

**OFF AND RON:** Music has no price. Except last week at Symphony Hall where Pops musician Ron Feldman of Newton conducted an afternoon performance in a new tux.

There were some murmurs and some chuckles and the orchestra smiled en masse at the pro-tem conductor. Who thought, "Oh, well. It's the holiday season."

At intermission, the players cued him in: He had not removed the pricetag under his arm and it swung back and forth as he conducted.

Someone then thoughtfully cut it off.

When Ron was on again, he walked to the podium, tossed the pricetag into the air. The audience roared and applauded for two minutes. Nice note.

**ELECTION COUNT:** So what if Republican Joe Malone of

Legal Seafood.

Klein, here to work a Dukakis fund-raiser, invited the lithesome Sragow, out to chowder. They met a couple of months ago when both were campaigning for Dukakis and the spark was lit.

And word about the date moved fast. The day after their dinner, her old boyfriend, U.S. Sen. John Kerry, called to ask about the date.

"Yes," said Sragow, confirming the date and refusing any further chat before hanging up the phone.

File under "ex" marks the spot.

### Changing of Garde

**EN GARDE:** The adorable Maureen Garde, executive secretary of the Democratic State Committee, is engaged — to Brian Coyne, Midwest political director of the Democratic National Committee.

He's now on leave to run the campaign of party biggie Rick Weiner of Michigan who wants to be chairman of the DNC. Politics does make strange bedfellows.

Shreve's will find the cooling couple and deliver a little silver something.

**THESE ARE OUR JEWELS:** Just in case you have a little extra Christmas cash, how about a choker, earrings, and a necklace.

Maybe a braided gold choker for an itty-bitty \$14,500. Or a snake necklace with hand-pieced links. That's cheaper — only \$11,000. Or a gold necklace with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and sapphires. A mere \$22,500.

And then there was the four-strand pearl choker with an 8-carat sapphire trimmed with 3 carats of pave diamonds. Only \$46,000.

Any of these baubles can be purchased from Gioia, an Italian firm, resettled in Chestnut Hill.

**WILD ONES:** Radio station WILD-AM took the first step toward unionization when employees voted 13-1 to join the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Next step: getting owner Kendall Nash, who says he'll fight to the end, to sit down and hammer out a contract. Stay tuned.

**UPPERS AND DOWNERS:**  
● The adorable Santa, seen

#13

January 9, 1989

Councillor Walter J. Sullivan

Whereas: The Christmas Season is oftentimes marred by tragedy such as in the case of a three-alarm fire at <sup>359 and</sup> 361 Western Avenue on December 26, 1988 forcing six families from their home; and

Whereas: Through the courageous efforts of tenants and neighbors inhabitants of the Disallings were evacuated safely; and

Whereas: Cambridge firefighters along with Somerville firefighters contained the blaze to two buildings in the tightly packed row of houses near the corner of Western and Rutland avenues; and therefore be it

Resolved: That this City Council go on record thanking members of the Cambridge Fire Department for their dedication to duty in battling this three-alarm fire; and be it further

Resolved: That the City Clerk be requested to forward in suitably expressed copy of this resolution

to Chief Thomas V. Scott on behalf  
of the entire City Council.



# City of Cambridge

13.

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 9, 1989

COUNCILLOR WALTER J. SULLIVAN

WHEREAS: The Christmas Season is oftentimes marred by tragedy, such as in the case of a three-alarm fire at 359 and 361 Western Avenue on December 26, 1988, forcing six families from their home; and

WHEREAS: Through the courageous efforts of tenants and neighbors, inhabitants of the dwellings were evacuated safely; and

WHEREAS: Cambridge Firefighters, along with Somerville Firefighters, contained the blaze to two buildings in the tightly packed row of houses near the corner of Western and Putnam Avenues; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That this City Council go on record thanking members of the Cambridge Fire Department for their dedication to duty in battling this three-alarm fire; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Chief Thomas V. Scott on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council January 9, 1989.  
Adopted by the affirmative vote of 9 members.  
Attest:- Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

*Joseph E. Connarton*  
Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

Order #13

S-9

C.W.J. Sullivan re: resolutions thanking members of the Cambridge Fire Dept. for their dedication to duty in battling the December 26 3-alarm fire at 359 & 361 Western Ave.

In City Council,

January 9, 1989

1-9-89

order

Adopted