

Families remain despite dangers

United Press International

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. - Their dreams are shattered. Their neighbors have gone. Their lives are in danger, yet they stay because they have nowhere else to go.

Nearly nine months ago, New York State ordered the evacuation of 243 families from two streets bordering the Love Canal in the southeast corner of America's honeymoon capital.

Now, four families remain. They live on 99th Street in what now is a ghost town surrounded by an 8-foot-high, green metal fence. All the other homes on 97th and 99th streets are boarded up, lawns and hedges are unkempt and there is evidence everywhere of the state's \$10 million chemical cleanup effort. Health dangers caused by leaching chemicals from the former Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corp. landfill on the Love Canal site forced the state to relocate residents and buy the homes.

For those who remain — they have lived there from 18 to 30 years — the state offered too little money for them to re-establish themselves elsewhere.

"My husband will not be getting a pension from his job," said Gertrude Mason, who has lived beside Love Canal since 1949, shortly after she and her husband, Alfred, married.

"We planned to use the house as income property. It has three full bathrooms and three kitchens," she said. "We could rent at least one apartment and maybe two."

Mason, 56, has skin cancer and a nervous disorder that qualifies her for a federal disability pension. She said the state offered \$42,000 for her pre-Civil War era home.

"It's a unique home," she said. "We spent four months looking for a comparable home and couldn't find one. A builder told us it would take at least \$100,000 to duplicate it."

In back of the house is the state's remedial construction project. "I don't like the fence," she said. "I feel like a caged animal. I can't entertain anymore. My friends and relatives fear contamination. It's ruining my life."

Mason thinks her skin cancer is related to the chemicals stored in the dump site Hooker abandoned in 1953.

"I never laid out in the sun. I don't like the sun," she said. "No one in my family ever had skin cancer. I think it came from handling the chemicals."

Like the Masons, the Peter Urbans, have lived there for more than 25 years.

"Since my husband is retiring this year from Union Carbide, I don't think we will be able to get another mortgage," Urban said. She wants to move, but her husband doesn't.

"When we moved in, there was nothing here. We were among the first residents in this housing development."

When Hooker abandoned the dump site, it turned the land over to the city of Niagara Falls. The housing development and a school were built.

"I want to move," Urban, mother of five, said. "I don't think it's fair for our 16-year-old daughter, Laurie. She doesn't have any friends here anymore. She has taken a lot of harassment from kids outside the fence."

Urban isn't sure if her bronchial asthma — or her children's ailments that include deformed knees, an eye that never matured, and nervousness — are related to the chemicals.

The state offered \$36,000 for the Urban house. Her neighbor, Barbara Jakobi, is moving in June. She also had her tires slashed and a padlock on her back fence gate broken.

"The state didn't offer us enough money," said Jakobi, who lives with her four children, a German shepherd and two dachshunds. "They offered us \$31,000. Other houses like ours go for about \$40,000. I didn't have any choice with all these chemicals."

Jakobi has had breast surgery and has been hospitalized twice for nerves. A daughter, Jackie, 21, was hospitalized for nerves, and another daughter, Connie, 15, is anemic and needs blood transfusions for the condition.

"I've lived in this house for 18 years. It's been hard," she said. "I'm the only one that works. I have no money in the bank. But we finally found another house."

Federal, state regulations differ

Contraceptive laws cause problems

United Press International

AUSTIN — Staff members at health clinics are caught between federal law — allowing them to dispense contraceptives and perform abortions on teen-age girls without parental consent — and state law, which forbids such actions.

Rep. Hugo Berlanga, D-Corpus Christi, said Tuesday the clinics were within federal laws and guidelines but not within state statutes.

Berlanga said Supreme Court rulings and federal guidelines require clinics that receive federal funds to perform abortions, dispense contraceptives and treat venereal diseases of minors without requiring the clinic to obtain the consent of the minors' parents.

Under current Texas law, however, parents must be informed and give their consent for children who are 17 years old or younger to obtain an abortion or contraceptives. Minors can be treated for venereal disease under Texas law without parental consent.

Berlanga said the difference in state and federal law is causing problems for some clinics and many physicians who are unsure of their legal defense if they respond to a minor's request for aid with some forms of family planning. His bill would change the state law to allow minors to receive contraceptives without parental permission.

"It's really absurd," Berlanga said of the current state law. "We're treating kids after the fact."

"It's absurd to say that after a teen-ager becomes pregnant the clinics can give her prenatal care and tell her what to do about the baby, but after she has that baby they can't give her contraceptives to keep it from happening again."

Berlanga said he personally opposes abortion and believes the bill would not only help doctors and teen-agers, but would drastically reduce the number of abortions in Texas by preventing pregnancies.

The Corpus Christi legislator emphasized the bill would prevent minors from obtaining an abortion or sterilization without their parents' knowledge and agreement.

"We're not cutting into the family structure. I have great faith in the family structure," Berlanga said. "But as witnesses at the subcommittee hearing said, if a family doesn't have control over their children by the time they are 14 or 14 — if they haven't accepted their values by then — then what makes them think they can in the next two years?"

He said most objections to the bill came from people who were concerned about particular contracep-

tive products that might be dispensed.

"I'm not interested in the products — that's up to the doctors to decide," he said, adding the bill was supported by the Texas Medical Association, school counselors, parents and teen-agers, themselves.

The young legislator said he introduced the bill after a Planned Parenthood clinic in Corpus Christi told

him of growing numbers of teen-age pregnancies and the difficulties in trying to control them without giving minors the opportunity to use contraceptives.

Dr. Susan Holck of the Texas Department of Health told a House subcommittee that studied the bill that 45,595 babies were born to Texas teen-agers in 1977 with 1,074

of them born to girls 14 years old or younger.

She said statistics show approximately one of every nine girls in Texas, between 15 and 19 years old, becomes pregnant each year.

Holck said while the total number of births to teen-agers has decreased since 1971, the number of births to girls younger than 15 has increased 85 percent since 1966.

"In Texas, there are currently an estimated 119,000 sexually-active unmarried teen-age girls not using contraception regularly and at high risk for becoming pregnant," Holck said.

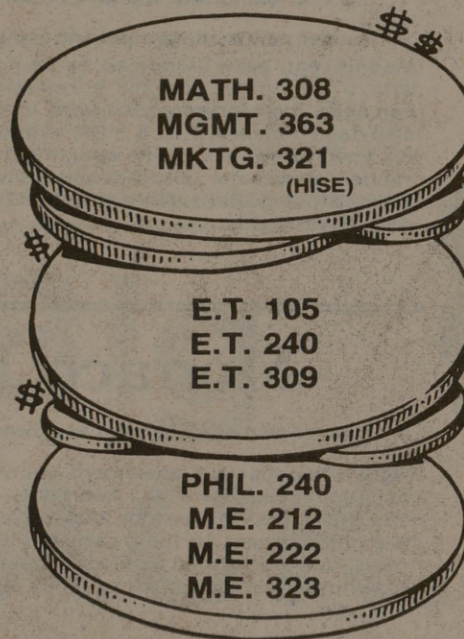
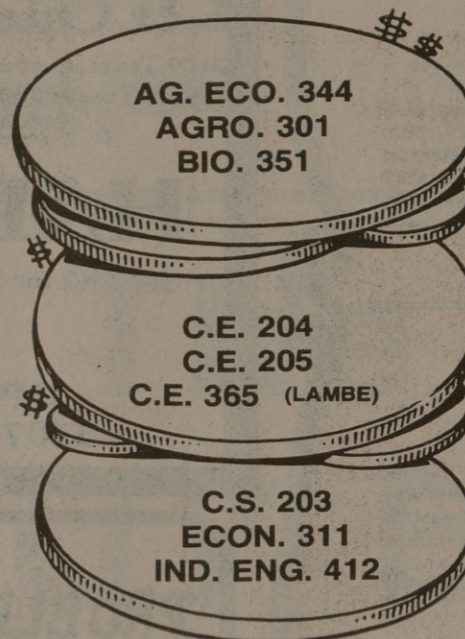
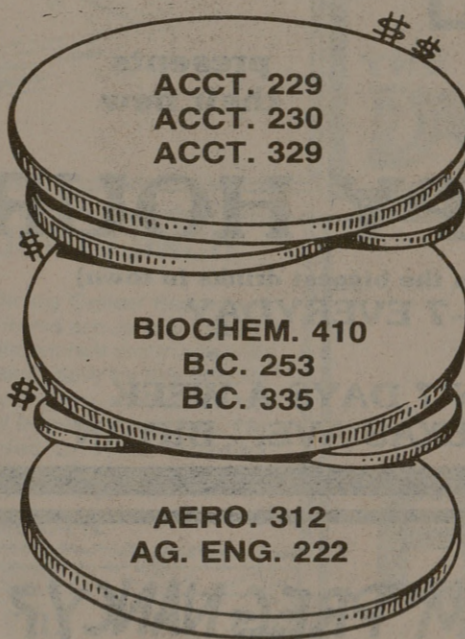
Berlanga said the bill, which is still in committee, would easily pass the House because "the statistics speak for themselves."

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