

Bee Editorial

Prevent fires this holiday season

While many folks celebrate the holidays with Christmas trees, Hanukkah bushes and other decorative foliage, it is important to note that trees sometimes cause home fires resulting in injury or death, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

NFPA statistics show that, on average, live and artificial Christmas trees are the ignition sources of 300 reported U.S. home structure fires each year, resulting in 14 fatalities, 21 injuries and \$16.8 million in property damage.

By following simple safety measures such as making sure your tree is well-watered, and keeping open flames, such as burning candles, away from the tree, you can help keep your family and home safe.

In addition, 44 percent of Christmas tree fires are caused by an electrical problem or malfunction. Decorators should make sure that

any electrical cords they use are in good working order.

If electrical cords and light strings are damaged or have frayed wires, consider buying new ones. Inspect light strings for cracked sockets and frayed, bare or loose wires.

Look for the holographic Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) mark on light strings and electrical decorations. The UL mark means that UL engineers have tested samples of the product for safety hazards. The not-for-profit safety testing organization also certifies lights for indoor or outdoor use.

Lights intended for indoor-only use have green holographic UL marks. Light strings intended for indoor and outdoor use have red holographic UL marks.

House fires and electrical shocks aren't the only preventable accidents that injure people and damage or destroy property. Each year

12,500 people are treated in emergency rooms for injuries related to holiday decoration mishaps, according to the Consumer Products Safety Commission.

People are often injured by falling off ladders while decorating, and many house fires are started by candles this time of year.

The most common causes of candle fires are candles burning too close to combustible materials, such as mattresses or bedding, furniture, curtains or walls or candles left unattended.

Candles should be kept away from combustible materials and away from spots where they could be knocked over by people or pets.

For more holiday decorating tips regarding tree fire prevention and electrical, ladder and candle safety, visit www.nfpa.org or www.ul.com/newsroom/opdec/video.html.

Spindle items



DAVID F. SHERMAN

Managing Editor

• **JACK SHARPE** — No one dominated the office of Amherst town supervisor like Jack Sharpe did. You could look back over the names of the men and women who have run the town since its inception and none would have the authority, determination and nerve that he did.

Jack, who died in Florida last week, was able to climb aboard a massive wave of prosperity and change when he first tested the waters of Amherst town government. This was the "perfect storm" that ultimately resulted in Amherst becoming the most popular residential community in Western New

York. A decorated World War II veteran, he made a smooth transition into the helicopter industry, then became the Buffalo area's first "traffic cop" reporter. These experiences would later serve him well.

Not everything Jack did was favorable to everyone. Many people were opposed to his generous stance toward single family housing developments, strip malls and tax breaks to big businesses.

On the other hand, consider the following: Everyone knew the "golden triangle" at Maple and Millersport was going to be the preferred site for a major hotel. The University at Buffalo, which is not under the jurisdiction of the town, was an attractive lure. Yet when ground was finally broken for the Buffalo Niagara Marriott, Jack was there, grinning beneath the straw cowboy hat that he was given for the occasion.

The same concept applies to the current Amherst Police Headquarters, Sewage Treatment Plant and Town Courthouse. These buildings would have come to reality one way or another, but each became a special project to Jack,

not so that he could take any of the credit, but rather so that nothing would go wrong and embarrass his town.

But you know what? Jack officiated at a lot of other events, too.

He joined Sabres coach Marcel Pronovost at center ice at the old Audubon Arena to drop the puck at a national-level hockey tournament. He threw out ceremonial first pitches and was a leader in the annual Amherst Avenue of Athletes program, as well as a day for Amherst business leaders and citizens to show their support for UB football.

No one talks about that when they criticize his stance on rezoning.

Jack felt an obligation to be the Amherst town supervisor 24 hours a day and seven days a week. He kept a police scanner in his office and, as a tribute to his old days as a reporter, would often throw on his coat and go to a fire or serious emergency call — of his own free will. It was like having George Patton show up at a skirmish along the Rhine, not to second-guess anyone but because he was deeply interested.

He and his wife, Gloria, were part of the annual installation banquet circuit for years. No one knows how many engraved coffee mugs and wine glasses that added up to. But one of his most prized gifts was kept on the wall in the conference room just a few steps from his office in the Municipal Building. It was a mounted life ring, presented by the residents of one town neighborhood for his dogged determination in securing federal money for Ellicott Creek flood control.

An avid fisherman, Jack was also the only person I have ever known who had a marlin mounted on his wall.

His real calling card was his booming voice. Telephone calls from his office often began with the words, "This is Sharpe" and then remained a one-way conversation. But if he was angry about something, Jack would skip the appetizer and smack you right in the face with the main course. It's cliché, but you always knew right where you stood with him. Jack Sharpe was a major education in my career.

Plus, he showed me the secret exit from his office.

Out of the Past

125 Years Ago Dec. 15, 1881

We really must economize somewhere! Yes, indeed, we must! But I'm sure we are neither of us extravagant. We must eat, we must drink and we must live.

Probably nothing tires one as much as feeling hurried. When in the early afternoon the day's affairs press on one's attention beforehand, and there comes the wonder how in the world everything is to be accomplished, when every interruption is received impatiently, and the clock is watched in distress as its moments flit past, then the mind tires the body.

Only \$6 a pair, ma'am. Dirt cheap. It's positively giving 'em away at that price. (A pair of dark blue vases.)

The spot where Stonewall Jackson fell is marked by a rough block of white flint, quarried in the Wilderness. It stands 3 feet 8 inches high and is 2 feet 10 inches in breadth.

The passion for feasting increased so much in England in the fourteenth century that when Lionel, son of Edward III, was married, there were thirty courses, and the fragments of the table fed 1,000 people.

No room was ever made large enough to hold both a fat man and a mosquito.

The girl who dropped a basket of eggs while flirting made a mash.

100 Years Ago Dec. 13, 1906

The Mejah Pedro Club enjoyed a wagon trip to Bowmansville where they were entertained by Miss Kathryn Meyer.

Miss Kathryn Tracy of Clarence is holding an exhibit of burnt wood and painting.

75 Years Ago Dec. 17, 1931

Williamsville this year surpassed any previous year in responding to the annual Red Cross roll call. This year residents in the village subscribed \$580.25 for that purpose, exceeding last year's amount by \$35.35, and that of 1929 by \$101.25.

Lee E. Wittlinger was named treasurer of the Amherst school district (Williamsville High school), at a meeting of the board of education Tuesday evening. Mr. Wittlinger, succeeds the late S. A. Westland, who was treasurer for over forty years.

50 Years Ago Dec. 13, 1956

The New York Telephone Co. will open a new business office at 13 South Cayuga Road in Williamsville on Monday, Dec. 17. A. H. Wendin,

Company Manager, announced today. The new office will occupy 3,500 square feet of space on the first floor of a newly-constructed brick building. The increased space was needed because of the continuing growth of telephone business in the area.

As a convenience for shoppers, most of the retail stores in the Village of Williamsville will be open until 9 p.m. nightly until Christmas. The action was taken at a meeting of the newly-formed Williamsville Chamber of Commerce.

Joseph P. Kelly, chairman of the New York State Traffic Commission, announced that the existing 35 miles per hour speed restriction on Union Road (Route 18 B) between the northerly Williamsville Village Line and Sheridan Drive has been extended an additional 1,374 ft. northerly.

25 Years Ago Dec. 16, 1981

With the western New York economy still wallowing in troubled waters, Christmas trees are apparently something for which citizens are still willing to shell out good money. Dave Lee, general manager of the Stedman Old Farm Nurseries, located at 9300 Transit Road in East Amherst, said prices for Christmas trees are about a dollar higher than the previous year.

Eileen McCarthy resigned as editor of The Clarence Bee and James B. Fink of Amherst was named her successor.