

SCOTIA

Police retiree thought killed in fire

BY JUSTIN MASON *Gazette Reporter*

Fire investigators are searching for the cause of a mid-morning blaze that gutted a Deerfield Place residence and is believed to have killed a well-known retired Scotia police investigator.

A body that authorities believe to be that of Richard W. "Dick" Fyvie, 65, was found by firefighters in the badly charred kitchen of his two-story home Sunday.

State fire investigators and Schenectady County Assistant District Attorney Dean Riggi were on scene throughout the morning and into the afternoon.

There were no immediate indications of foul play, however.

Village police Chief John Pytlovany said his department is taking statements with regard to the fire, but that it is still too soon to tell if a criminal investigation will result.

"Every fire is a police investigation until we have all the answers," he said.

Scotia police said Sunday night that the body had been removed earlier that evening and an autopsy performed at Ellis Hospital. Cause of death was attributed to smoke inhalation.

Because the body was so badly burned, police said that a positive identification will be made once more tests are performed.

"We feel we know who it is, but we just have to have a positive ID," Scotia police Sgt. Thomas Rush said.

Investigators are scheduled to return to the scene of the fire this morning to continue their investigation.

Firefighters were first dispatched to the scene at 9:38 a.m., after receiving numerous calls from neighbors. When they arrived on scene about five minutes later, Scotia Fire Chief Richard Kasko said there was heavy fire visible from the front door of the home, which was locked.

"They had to force entry into the house," he said.

Once inside, Kasko said firefighters had to fight a fire that was extremely hot and located primarily towards the south end of the residence.

"It was intense," he said of the fire.

Even after extinguishing the blaze about 40 minutes later, Kasko said firefighters were unable to reach the body because part of the floor had collapsed and the structure had become unstable. Late into the afternoon, fire crews continued to erect makeshift supports to stabilize the home.

Fire investigators said Fyvie's dog escaped the fire, but a cat perished.

Kasko said the investigation revealed that the fire's origin was determined to be in the vicinity of the home's dining room.

Fyvie's wife died in 2001. He has a stepson, a son who is out of state and a daughter in Burnt Hills, according to the obituary for Fyvie's wife.

His stepson, Mark Stanish, who was at the scene of the fire Sunday, said he does not live in the house any longer. He declined to comment further about his stepfather.

The discovery of what police believe to be Fyvie's body shocked residents and police in the small village, where the veteran sergeant of 32 years was fondly regarded.

"He was somebody who was very active in the community," said Pytlovany, who worked with the deceased man for 16 years.

Prior to joining the police, Fyvie served a stint in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he was a motor transport operations director between 1958 and 1962. He served his entire law enforcement career in Scotia before retiring as the department's lead investigator 10 years ago.

Fyvie was also active within the community, serving on the Tri-city Investigation Council, the Scotia-Glenville Jaycees and was the cofounder of "Operation Handshake," which brought area youth and police officers together.

Marge and Chris Almy, Fyvie's neighbors from down the street, remembered the former police

sergeant fondly as someone who coached Babe Ruth baseball and enjoyed bowling.

"He was a swell guy," Chris Almy said of his neighbor. Pytlovany recalled how young teens would seek out Fyvie for advice, having grown to trust him through his service as a coach.

"Everybody in the village of Scotia knew Dick Fyvie," he said. "He was a true hometown police officer."



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Mark Stanish, left, stepson of retired Scotia Police Sgt. Richard Fyvie, is comforted by a friend at the scene of a fire at Fyvie's home. Fyvie is believed to have died in the blaze.



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Firefighters work to put out a fire at the home of retired Scotia Police Sgt. Richard Fyvie Sunday morning at 9 Deerfield Place. A body believed to be Fyvie's was found in the kitchen of the home.