

FIRED UP BY SPRING — Hartford firefighters Jackie Gilbert, left, Fred Bannon, center, and Pedro Ramos of Engine Co. 1, Ladder 6, at 197 Main St., ham it up for a photographer while enjoying spring weather from the windows of the fire station.

COURANT PHOTO BY JUDY GRIESEDECK

Couple Fighting Transmission Tower

By **CLIFF SCHECHTMAN**
Courant Correspondent

COVENTRY — Richard Sypek returned from an Air Force radar installation on Long Island in 1958, not knowing he eventually would become blind. Now, microwave radiation — the alleged destroyer of his sight — has followed him to Coventry, where he and his wife are fighting to prevent it from towering above their home.

Richard and Patricia Sypek have marshaled a group of 50 residents opposed to the construc-

tion of a 130-foot-high microwave transmission tower just three miles from the Sypeks' home on Swamp Road. Coventry officials have approved the project, despite testimony from the Sypeks and others who see the tower as a threat to the health of the community.

"It haunts me. I've been having nightmares ever since I learned that there may be a tower in town," the 52-year-old Sypek said. His eyesight has degenerated to the point where he can differentiate only between light and dark, and doctors have told him he

eventually will lose all sight. Sypek started having vision problems at age 38 — 10 years after he spent three years at Suffolk County Air Force Base as a non-commissioned officer. His doctor, Milton Zaret of New York, diagnosed his condition as degenerative night blindness and attributed it to possible exposure to microwave radiation.

"Living the life of a blind man is hard enough. I don't think if you managed to live through a plane crash where people died, you'd want to fly again that quickly," said the Korean War veteran who,

in 1974, tried unsuccessfully to get compensation from the U.S. Veterans Administration for his blindness.

The idea that the structure would tower above the town, forever reminding Patricia Sypek of her husband's blindness, however, was not the catalyst for the local opposition she is organizing. The reason is the more than 100 children who attend North Coventry Grammar School, located within two miles of the proposed tower site on North School Road,

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Gypsy Moth Class of '82 Begins Hatching

By **STEVE GRANT**
Courant Staff Writer

Tiny, furry brown and black caterpillars began hatching in substantial numbers Friday — the gypsy moth class of '82.

For the next couple of weeks the caterpillars, about a quarter of an inch long right now — will begin to climb down trees and be blown about by the breezes. Then, as they get a bit larger, they will begin serious eating.

Last year the caterpillars completely or partly stripped half the acreage in the state. This year is

projected to be almost as bad.

Officials at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station noticed the hatch beginning Thursday as they checked egg masses deposited on tree bark by last year's moths, the station's chief entomologist, John F. Anderson, said Friday. The hatch is about a week later than it was last year and will continue for about a week.

"There was good winter survival, which doesn't surprise us. The cold doesn't do much to them," station editor Paul Gough said.

Anderson said the caterpillars will be abundant in many areas east of the Connecticut River and in some areas just to the west of the river. Parts of northwest Connecticut, Stamford, and the Hartford and New Haven areas also face heavy defoliation.

"But I expect caterpillar populations to collapse in much of southwestern and central Connecticut," Anderson said. That is due to starvation of the moths last year, a virus and predation by their natural enemies.

In about two weeks, property

owners can begin spraying to control the moths. Considerable spraying by homeowners and tree service companies is expected.

Garden shops already report that sales of insecticides and other control products are picking up. At Woodland Gardens in Manchester, John Zapadka, an owner, said he has noticed brisker sales of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, an organic, bacterial insecticide regarded as the safest and the least harmful to the environment of all the caterpillar sprays.

See Ready, Page B12

a Theater Gets Panned at the Capitol

Alison

5/5/82

DR. GLASER,

Thank you again for your
time and helpful information.

Enclosed is a copy of the
article I spoke to you about
in the Hartford Courant.

Sincerely
Jim W. Holmquist

Microwave Tower Spurs Fear

Continued from Page B1

Patricia Sypek says.

The microwave tower, proposed by a subsidiary of International Telephone & Telegraph, would be one of the final links in a telecommunications system between Houston and Boston. Other towers are supposed to be built in Wolcott and Stafford, but the public response in those communities has not reached the level it has in Coventry.

"It's not like this is a radar unit designed to protect the country from hostile invaders," Patricia Sypek said. "It's a dangerous structure from private business that will expose dozens of families and hundreds of little schoolchildren to radiation," she said. The Coventry tower would be used to transmit calls without telephone lines. The telecommunications system also would enable those with home computers to subscribe to daily newspapers, receive their mail electronically and get daily weather reports.

Citizens Against the Tower, the residents' group, has hired Coventry attorney Lawrence Bates, who plans to seek an injunction within the week to prevent construction of the tower.

Bates will present two main arguments against the tower: the health hazards of microwave radiation, which scientists and doctors have debated for decades, and the fact that the tower would be in a residential area, where country homes are tucked into the woods. "I don't see a 130-foot microwave tower sticking up above trees conforming to its surroundings," he said.

Bates rented an airplane Friday to take pictures of the site to document "that there's no way that thing will fit." Property values, Bates says, will plummet once the structure is built. To try to prove that, he is hiring an independent appraiser to determine what the property values are now and what they would be should the tower be erected.

But the potential health hazard is the issue that has residents most concerned.

The Sypeks are so convinced of the health threat that they plan to

purchase and distribute dozens of copies of "The Zapping of America," a controversial book about the dangers of microwave radiation. The Sypeks will use donations from the community to buy the books and also to buy newspaper advertisements that will alert the town to the tower.

The book, written by a staff writer for New Yorker magazine, chronicles the results of studies done around the world that have found a relationship between microwaves and cataracts, blood disorders, birth defects and problems with the central nervous system.



RICHARD SYPEK

But doctors and scientists have yet to link low doses of microwave radiation directly to physical disorders, although they do say there is a relationship. Some scientists, however, have argued that microwaves have the potential of causing irreparable harm to humans and animals.

In May 1979, the state Power Facility Evaluation Council conducted a series of hearings on telecommunications systems. Among its objectives was to explore the environmental and health effects of microwaves.

One of the leading experts at

those hearings was Dr. Zorach Glaser of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Washington, D.C. He testified as a concerned individual about the biological effects associated with microwave radiation.

Glaser said studies on animals indicate microwave radiation can cause changes in behavior and metabolism, as well as cataracts. Studies also show microwaves affect bodily immunities and the endocrine system, which regulates a number of body functions, he said.

Microwaves, which are focused into narrow beams and transmitted from one point to another, heat up individual cells or entire organisms when they come into contact with animals and humans, Glaser said.

"It is difficult to extrapolate results obtained in animals directly to humans because of the inherent differences" in the way people and animals absorb microwaves, he said. But he concluded his testimony by saying, "many, many unanswered questions remain, and much research is needed before the biological effects of microwave energy will be fully understood."

Zaret, the ophthalmologist who attributed Sypek's blindness to microwave radiation, has been studying the issue a number of years. Research papers he has written clearly label him as an opponent of microwave towers.

During the Coventry public hearings last month, U.S. Transmission Systems, the IT&T subsidiary based in New Jersey, presented Lauren Feldkamp, its manager of development engineering, and Dr. Herbet Pollack, an independent consultant hired by IT&T, to testify on the safety of microwaves.

"There is no possibility of any biological effects whatsoever," Pollack said during the hearings. Microwave radiation at the levels used in telecommunications towers, such as the one proposed, acts like visible light when it comes into contact with objects. More than 75 percent is reflected, and less than 15 percent is absorbed. That small amount is dissipated before its heat can cause tissue damage, Pollack said.

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