

FIRE!

Explosion ignites fear at University

By RICK GEORGE
Jambar Editor

A gas leak Wednesday morning caused a major fire at the corner of Lincoln and Wick Avenues.

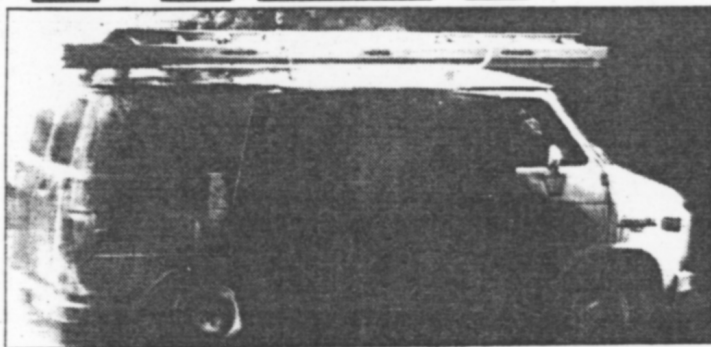
No injuries were reported, but the gas leak caused the University to temporarily close down six buildings including Jones Hall, which was closed for the remainder for the day.

Businesses in the area were also forced to shut down after the explosion, which occurred at approximately 10:30 a.m., due to a lack of power to the businesses.

A spokesperson for the Youngstown City Fire Department said three East Ohio Gas Company vehicles were damaged in the fire. The spokesperson also said the cause of the fire is still under investigation.

City of Youngstown traffic coordinator, Carmen Conglose, said the Miller Cable Co. was under contract from the Ohio Highway Department to install underground conduit to upgrade the traffic signals when they struck a

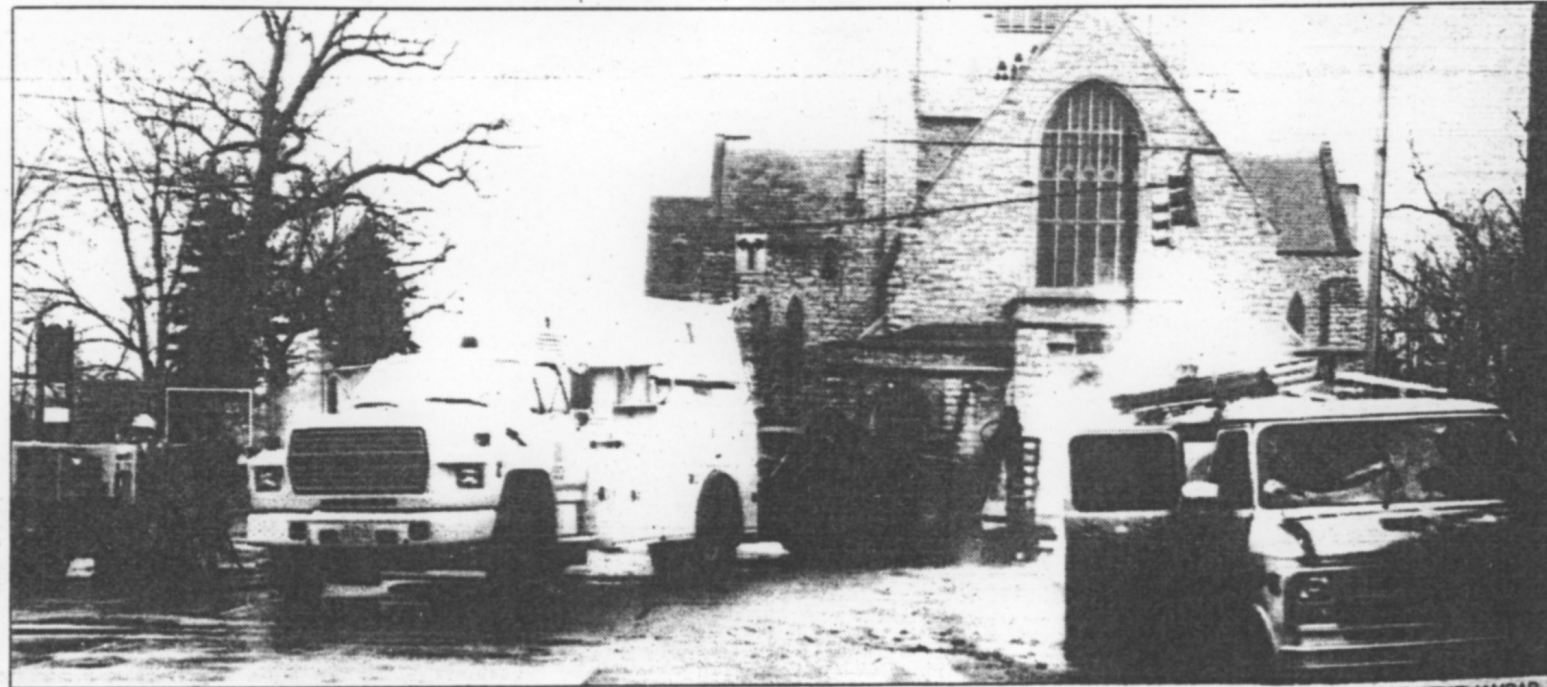
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Fire

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gas line.

Ray Walters, who works for the Miller Cable Co., said employees from the Miller Co. noticed the gas leak and called the East Ohio Gas Company to fix the line.

"The gas was leaking for about a half an hour before the gas company came," said Walters. "When the truck (gas company) stopped on top of the

leak, it ignited the gas line somehow."

"If it wasn't for the truck, there would have been no fire," said Walters.

Walters said it was fortunate that no injuries occurred as a result of the blast.

The East Ohio Gas Company was contacted for comment, but did not return telephone calls made to their office by *The Jambar*.

J.P. O'Block, from Campus Book and Supply, said he was also a witness to the fire.

"It (fire) came out from under a vehicle," said O'Block, who was watching the workers at the time. "The workers tried to move as many vehicles as they could when the it started."

O'Block said the flames never reached 100 feet as had been reported.

"The flames were probably as high as the telephone post," he said.

Denise Dobson, admissions, said she was talking on the telephone and looking out the window when she noticed the

blaze.

"I was watching the guys work when a big huge flame of fire appeared," said Dobson.

"Immediately the street caught on fire and the flames were as high as the second floor of Jones Hall," said Dobson. "The fire caused the windows to become hot immediately."

Leonard Perry, public health, said he was pleased with how well the situation was handled.

"There was potential for real damage," said Perry. "But everyone was great, from the

campus police's quick action to the students cooperation."

Perry also said the weather conditions may have been a help in containing the fire.

Within the next two to three weeks, Perry said all parties involved with the fire will meet to see how they could have better handled the situation. "We can always learn to get better in case there is a next time," said Perry.

Rocco Mediate, director of facilities, said the University opened all the buildings, except Jones, at 12:30 p.m.