

Fire forces evacuation

Theta Chi members were forced out into the cold night air Thursday evening while Youngstown firefighters battled a "suspicious" blaze at a vacant house next door.

The fire, at 738 Bryson, started in the attic near the chimney outlet about 8:30 p.m. and quickly engulfed the 2½-story house in flames, according to Assistant Fire Chief Joseph Quinn. One Theta Chi member reported "flames shooting out of the roof 20 feet." A Youngstown firefighter said he saw the blaze from the downtown area.

About eight Theta Chi members were in their house watching films when they smelled smoke from the fire. Theta Chi President Rick Eckman called the fire department

Quinn termed the fire "suspicious," adding that "fires don't usually start by themselves."

Theta Chi members reported that the house has been vacant "for quite some time" and that they saw "four men in Army coats" at the house about 7 or 7:30 p.m. The Youngstown Arson Squad is currently investigating the matter.

Although it took firefighters over two hours to fully extinguish the blaze, there were no injuries nor any damage to the Theta Chi house.

Firefighters were hampered in their efforts to extinguish the blaze because cars were parked along both sides of the one-way street for an event at nearby Ursuline High School.

Three pump trucks and one ladder truck were originally called in to fight the fire. Reinforcements brought the total to seven pump trucks and one ladder truck. Damages have been estimated at \$25,000.



Members of Theta Chi fraternity evacuated their house temporarily last Thursday night while Youngstown firefighters battled a blaze at this house next door. (Photo by Timothy Fitzpatrick)