

Sunday, December 7, 1980

## DNR, chemical firm clean up waste in secret

By Thomas J. Hagerty

Journal Environmental Reporter

Hazardous chemicals dumped on a Washington County dairy farm 22 years ago by the Freeman Chemical Corp. have been stealthily removed by the company, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, with no word to the public about the cleanup.

A department employe found the waste last summer but submitted no written report on the find or on the subsequent cleanup to agency headquarters in Madison.

The department and Freeman Chemical officials decided, in cooperation, to clean up the waste but keep the operation se-

cret for fear of causing undue public alarm, according to James Reyburn, DNR area hazardous waste specialist.

After the discovery, Freeman Chemical conducted tests on the waste. The tests, not certified by the DNR or any outside laboratory, indicated that the contaminants posed no risk, Reyburn said.

Thick vegetation around the disposal area also showed that there was no lingering chemical poisoning, he said.

According to Reyburn, about 80 rusty drums — broken and whole, and some bearing the Freeman label — were discovered July 22 during an inspection of a dump in the Town of Wayne by David Edwards, solid waste specialist for the DNR.

Two days later, Reyburn says, he contacted the company. A 10-day cleanup was begun Nov. 12.

Eight truckloads of rusted scrap and jellied resins and 30 cubic yards of dirt scraped from a crusted-over pond containing liquid waste were buried at the licensed Waste Management landfill in Germantown, he says.

Freeman's hauling and disposal cost will be about \$3,000, not including several days' wages for two Freeman employes who collapsed barrels for transport, said Russell Cerk, manufacturing director at Freeman Chemical's plant in Saukville.

The drums were found on land belong-  
*Turn to Dump, Page 22*

## His economic prescription will be tough to swallow

By Terry Kirkpatrick

Cambridge, Mass. — AP — Into this interim of waiting and hoping between election and inauguration an economist intrudes himself with a disquieting premonition.

To community and campus audiences that summon him in order to hear the bad news firsthand, Lester Thurow, economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has

This vision of the '80s puts Thurow at odds with those who believe that economic growth will quickly follow a return to conservative nostrums, as well as with those who desire a no-growth future. His prescription for economic health is pain. To his surprise, it plays well in Peoria.

"When I talk about needing to reduce



# Chemical waste quietly removed

From Page 1

ing to Lloyd Martin, 8181 Highway W. His property is adjacent to the town dump, west of West Bend and about 400 yards from a small, unnamed creek. Martin was paid \$150 by an unidentified Freeman hauler.

Reyburn said he accepted the chemical company's tests on samples from the Martin site because of the company's good reputation. Freeman's chemist Gerald L. Schwabke is a member of a state task force on hazardous wastes.

### No independent samples

No independent samples were ordered because money to pay for them was quite limited, there was "no imminent hazard" and Freeman had volunteered to clean up its own mess, said Jack Thorsen, director of the DNR's hazardous waste section.

"Our tests and our people — we've got Ph.D.s — are better than theirs," Freeman's Clerk said.

The flammable waste was hazardous by today's standards when it was dumped in 1958, he said.

The tests determined that the waste was polyesters left over from manufacture of glass fiber for boat hulls, he said. Most of it is thought to have burned in a three-day fire about five months after the barrels were put there.

"The fire probably was set," Rey-

burn said. "It was so hot it scared Martin."

The area never was posted to warn of flammable substances, Martin said.

### Substance turned jellylike

In the heat of the fire, some of the waste in the barrels turned jellylike. Further exposure over the years solidified some of it. What remained in a liquid state drained from the drums and formed a pool at the base of the hill where the drums were placed. It became a nonflammable, glycerine-like mixture of polyols, according to Clerk.

Reyburn and Clerk were asked why the public was not told the DNR was taking Freeman Chemical's word.

They said they released no information because they were afraid the press would report it inaccurately, cause public alarm and interfere with the cleanup.

### "No Hooker Chemical"

"We figured we should get it out of there before we got some bad publicity," Clerk said. "Had I not removed them, no one would ever have known. How the hell are you going to educate people on hazardous waste? Most people don't know anything about it. A little learning is worse than none."

"We're no Hooker Chemical [the company that had dumped toxic

wastes in the Love Canal area of Niagara Falls, N.Y.]. Even the DNR says, 'If you want less trouble, take the word chemical out of your name.'"

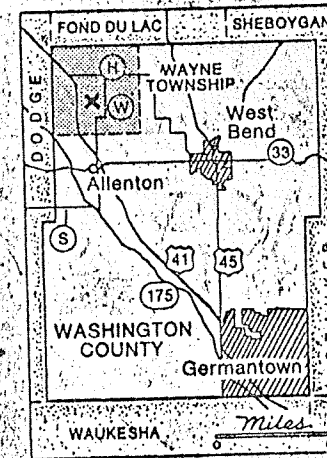
Letting the public know about the Town of Wayne mess and the steps DNR and Freeman Chemical planned to take would have hampered the cleanup, Thorsen said. Martin and Town Chairman Carl Hohlweck said it never occurred to them that residents should know about the cleanup.

"I knew they were being dug up," Hohlweck said of the chemical drums. "I knew they were paint barrels. Burning was always the way of getting rid of the stuff."

No DNR enforcement action is planned against Martin or Freeman Chemical. The first federal rules on disposal of hazardous wastes, still

## Silver stolen from Italian church

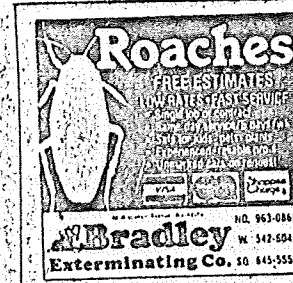
Prato, Italy — AP — A gang of thieves who hid inside the 14th century St. Stephen's Cathedral at closing time stole silver objects worth an estimated \$1.8 million, police reported Saturday.



"X" locates dump site

incomplete, became effective Nov. 19. None existed when Freeman dumped its polyesters.

Wisconsin does not expect to have rules on disposing toxic wastes until next spring.

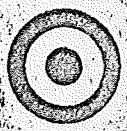


Athens, Greece — A ranking Greek and Turkish ministry officials concluded talks here Saturday with

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## 1958 Teen refugees resettled

Special to The Journal

Prairie du Chien, Wis. — The five remaining Cuban juveniles at the refugee center in Wyalusing State Park left Saturday, a state official said.

David C. Mills, a State Department of Health and Social Services

Mills said crews will begin cleaning up this week, and will "put the camp back in order."

A total of 84 juveniles were moved to the park on Nov. 3 after the refugee resettlement center at Fort Mc-

