

Minister's attempt to do good deed nets \$4,483 bill

By JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Staff Writer

The charred remains of a frame house once stood across the road from St. John Apostle Church on 1131 E. 21st St.

"It was an eyesore in the community," said the Rev. Harry Millner. He and his wife, Jeanette, bought the house and the land from its owner for \$1,300 in June 1985.

Later that month, Millner had the house, which was destroyed by fire in 1984, demolished.

"I wanted to remove that eyesore from the community," Millner said. A private contractor hired by the city demolished the house and, two days later, another house that stood next to the church on land that was donated by a local realtor.

The destruction of the homes is part of an effort to clean up the neighborhood of Liberty Heights, Millner said. "We want the people here to take pride in their neighborhood."

The demolition, however, created a financial burden for the church when Millner received a \$4,483 bill from the city to pay for the demolition.

"We were not told that we had to pay for the demolition," Millner said at a recent meeting of the Board of Aldermen. "However, we have every inten-

tion of paying the assessment." The board approved assessments for other property owners in the city on May 19, but didn't take action on Millner's assessment until city officials studied the matter.

Assistant City Manager Alexander R. Beaty said Tuesday that Millner's assessment would be submitted to the board for action in October, giving the church time to raise the money.

Millner said that the church planned to raise the money in its annual fund-raising drive, beginning in August.

"We can't guarantee that we will be able to raise the money," Millner said. "We have a small congregation."

"Everything was cleared and leveled," Millner said, but when he began taking bids from contractors to have gravel spread over the lot, another problem developed.

After the homes were destroyed, city officials told Millner that a sewer line that runs under a storm drainage pipe was blocked, he said. City workers removed about 50 feet of a storm drainage pipe to repair the sewer line, he added.

"They took up everything and left this big hole in the ground," Millner said. A 3-foot-deep hole with a pool of water was created, and the pipe was not replaced.

"The city officials told me they were not going to fix the hole because they did not cause the damage," Millner said. "They left me holding the bag."

Larry V. Upshaw, assistant to the public works director, said the storm drainage pipe was damaged by a private contractor that Millner had hired to remove a dead tree from the land.

"That work was not done by the city," Upshaw said.

Millner said that city sewer workers removed the pipe. Tom Woods, the supervisor in the wastewater maintenance department, said that city workers did repair the sewer line, but that they did not remove or damage the drainage pipe.

The pipe was broken before city workers repaired the sewer line, Woods said.

Northeast Ward Alderman Vivian H. Burke praised the Millners for the work. "It is a very run-down neighborhood," Mrs. Burke said during the board meeting. "We appreciate what you have done."

Mrs. Millner said the church will sponsor a cleanup drive in the community in June or July. "Our church is leading the way to keep this community clean," she said.

Millner came to the church in 1982. The church is owned by the Apostle Church of Christ in God. "I don't have any regrets of our work we have done here," Millner said. "It has been worth the effort."

In a related story, city officials have ordered Westminster Co. to raise, move or tear down a house in the Quail Ridge subdivision because it was built below the level required by the city's flood-plain ordinance.

Westminster has until July 5 to bring the home within the guidelines, said Ronald B. Grubbs, a city-county planner. "The house was built too low," he said.

The Petrees, a black couple

who live in the home, would not comment on the matter.

The one-story brick home was built in 1984 at 2633 Woodcreek Road in the flood plain of Minorcas Creek, Grubbs said.

The city ordinance requires developers to construct houses 1 foot above the 100-year flood level, Grubbs said. "This elevation will protect from flooding as a result of freak flooding."

Grubbs said Westminster did not follow the city building permit and built the home at flood level, which is 1 foot below the city requirements.

"We put the exact specifications on the building permit," Grubbs said. "We assumed that they would be followed. We are protecting the homebuyers."

Grubbs said that the Petrees have lived in the home for free since 1985.

James Hayes Jr., the couple's attorney, said that Westminster told the Petrees about the house's elevation the night before closing, according to the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

Hayes said last Friday that Westminster and the Petrees reached an agreement about the home, but he declined to reveal the details of the pact.

J. Joseph Treacy, attorney for Westminster, confirmed that an agreement had been reached, but he declined to reveal the details. He did say that the company was considering which one of the options to follow.

Northwest Ward Alderman Martha S. Wood criticized Westminster for failing to follow city requirements. "The company has tried to do everything but obey the law," she said.

Westminster has suggested many alternatives, Grubbs said, including building a dike around the home.

The city has finally told the company to raise the home a foot, move it to a location that complies with the flood-plain ordinance or tear it down, he said.

Primary run-offs From Page A1

But Rep. H.M. "Mickey" Michaux, D-Durham, said he still expected help from the leadership once the legislation is introduced.

"We had a commitment from the leadership to go through with this this year and round up the necessary votes," he said. "That's basically what we agreed on."

Michaux has said that if action is not taken in the June short session, blacks would probably file a lawsuit claiming the system violates the federal Voting Rights Act.

The run-off primary has been a point of discontent among blacks, who charge that the system keeps them from gaining office. A run-off can be held when the leading candidate fails to get one vote over 50 percent of all ballots cast.

Opposition in the state House appears to stem from some eastern legislators who are concerned the change could topple

white U.S. Rep. Tim Valentine, D-N.C., and give the impression the state Democratic Party is caving in to blacks.

In 1982, Michaux led the field in the 2nd Congressional District primary with 44 percent of the vote. Valentine, who finished second, defeated Michaux in a run-off and went on to be elected to his first term. Valentine was re-elected in 1984.

Michaux said inaction on the issue would prompt many blacks "to lose faith in the party. This should be a party effort. The party needs every vote it can get in November. If they want to keep that 20-percent (black) vote, I expect them to hustle and get the votes to pass this. They can get the votes for anything else."

House Speaker Liston Ramsey, however, noted that there won't be another primary until 1988, providing plenty of time to make changes in the 1987 session.

Johnson From Page A2

"They were looking for someone who could program, someone who could work with community groups and someone with good administrative capabilities and management skills," Johnson said. "They found that in me." Johnson completed a management program and leadership courses while in Boston.

He said that he was selected

from a pool of more than 60 applicants for the job of director.

With all the work he's doing, Johnson does not have time for much else.

"If there is ever any spare time, I would like to get involved in community affairs," he said. "I was very active with the NAACP and the Urban League in Boston."



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