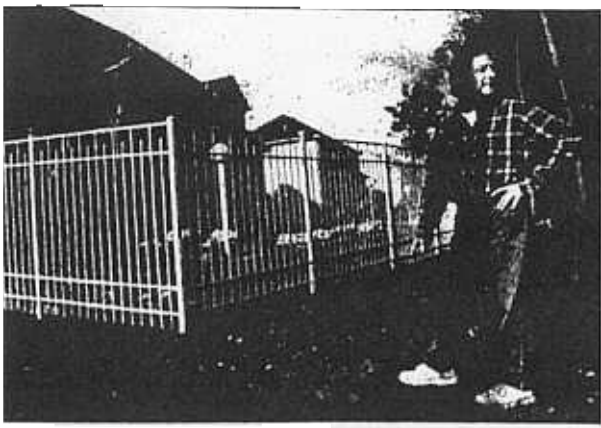


SAME DEVELOPER

Danger rains from the sky

Blasting site debris hits home



STAFF PHOTOS BY CARMINE GALASSO
Rock shards from blasting at a building site damaged the deck of this Riverdale home, right and above. At top, neighbor Dan Edwards outside the house, about 1,000 feet from the construction site.

By DOUGLASS CROUSE
STAFF WRITER

RIVERDALE — The blast rang out first, followed by a wave of ground tremors — the sort of construction-related disturbances that have become part of life on Degraw Road.

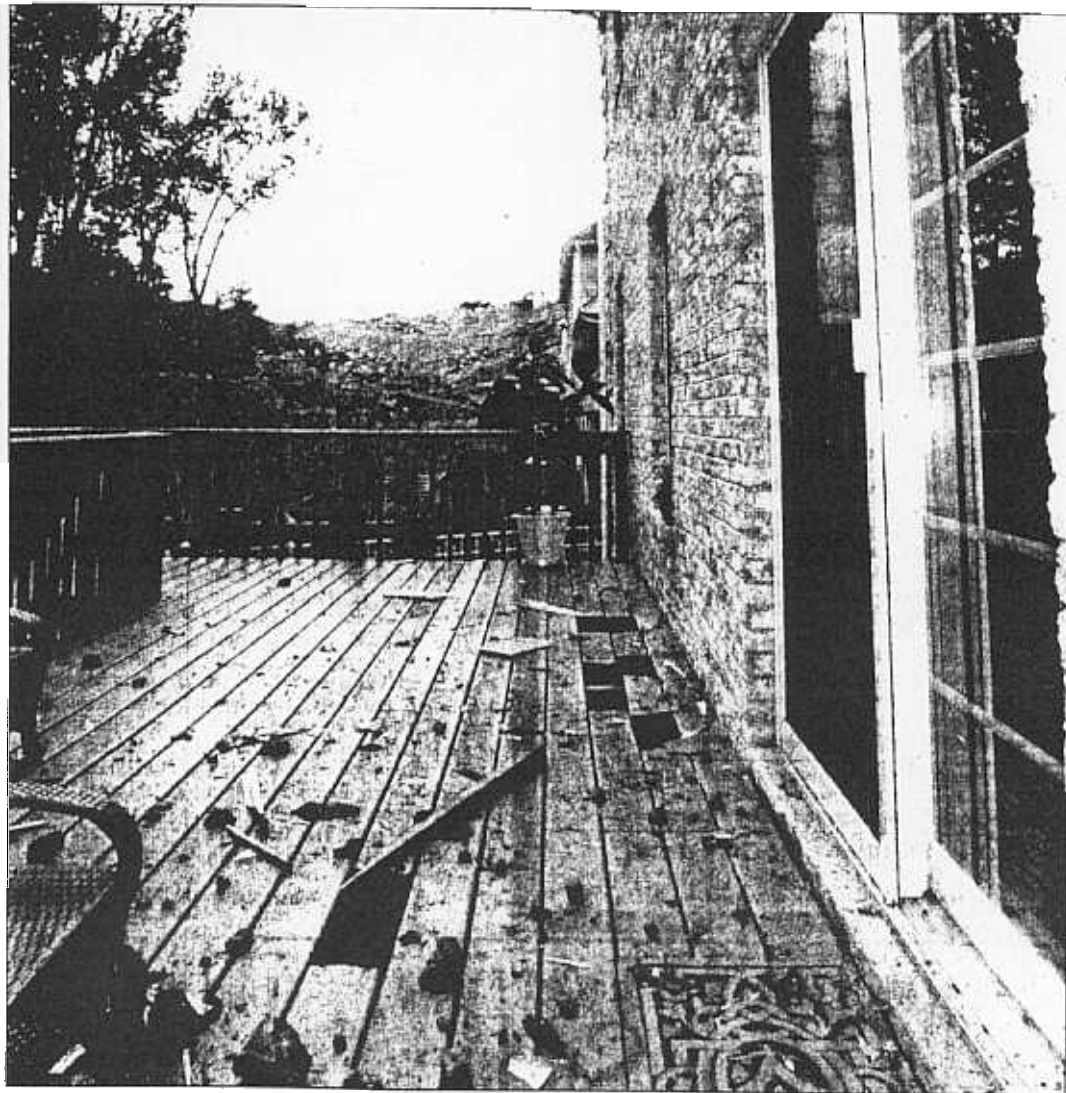
What happened next Friday morning took Dan Edwards a moment to comprehend. But when he heard the crash and saw the rock shards littering his neighbor's terrace, his reaction was swift and horrified: Where, he thought, were the boys?

It turned out his wife and children were safe, having just left on an errand. An elderly woman and caregiver who were in the home next door at the time the rocks struck also escaped harm. But for hours after the construction blast sent rocks raining onto Kristina Wesolowski's home, residents all along Degraw Road pondered a litany of what-ifs.

"This could have killed my kid," Edwards said, pointing to a jagged rock embedded in the soil near his property line. "I didn't move here to be in the middle of a war zone."

Construction crews have been clearing the hillsides surrounding the neighborhood for the past several months, paving the way for a condominium complex. The Arlington, Texas-based developer, D.R. Horton, contracted one company to clear the land, which subcontracted with another to do the blasting, borough officials said.

In-state representatives of D.R. Horton



could not be reached, and a co-owner of West End Drilling and Blasting in Brodheadsville, Pa., did not return messages left on his cellphone.

The 11 a.m. blast sent rocks flying over treetops and plummeting to earth more than 1,000 feet away, borough officials estimated. Mayor William Budesheim said he felt tremors a mile away at Borough Hall, and said they seemed stronger than others in the past.

There has been prior blasting to clear the construction site. The damage to the 2½-story stone-face house at 13 Degraw Road marked the first time rocks have reached a home, residents said.

Falling nearly vertically, the barrage ripped the rear gutter from Wesolowski's home, punched holes in her deck's pressurized-wood planks, tore into the roof, cracked an interior wall and shattered a glass lamp. At the time, her elderly mother and a caregiver were at home. Both were unharmed, Wesolowski said.

"She was so scared. She called me and said the roof almost came down," Wesolowski said. "I spoke to the guy from the company. He said, 'I'll pay.' I said, 'This isn't about paying.'"

Residents said after they made requests, company employees began calling to alert them to impending blasts. But Edwards

said Friday's blast came 15 minutes before the time he had been told, and the women next door said they never got a call.

"There should be a warning signal of some kind just before the blast," Edwards said. "We're not always in the house to hear the phone."

Borough officials said they plan to meet with representatives of the companies Monday, but ordered them to halt all blasting in the meantime.

"The developer told us they would respond in any way they have to," Budesheim said.

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