

Congregation's Christmas wish

Damaged Hague church being repaired
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Rookie of the Year

It's unanimous: New York Yankees' Aaron Judge receives honor **SPORTS, PAGE B1**

Agriculture secretary visits

Local farming issues discussed **PAGE A2**



PARTLY CLOUDY 40 • 25 FORECAST, A6 | **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2017** | poststar.com | 2009 Pulitzer Prize winner

Lawyer: Dismiss murder charges

A lack of admissible evidence claimed in Fort Ann death case

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FORT EDWARD — The lawyer for the Fort Ann man who has been charged with killing his grandmother has asked a judge to dismiss the charges in the case, claiming the indictment against his client is flawed and there isn't enough evidence to charge him with murder.

Kevin L. Gonyea will be in Washington County Court on

Friday to argue that the charges against him should not stand for the July 9 death of 95-year-old Leona Twiss in her West Fort Ann home.

Teresi filed a 60-page pre-trial motion recently, seeking a variety of rulings on behalf of his client to either dismiss the charges or limit the evidence against him.

The case stems from Twiss' death in her Twiss Road home, which was initially billed as being from natural causes. But forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Sikirica found that she had injuries consistent with being strangled, and Gonyea was charged with murder two days later.

Much of the criminal case is based on the statement of his wife, Melissa Gonyea, who told police that her husband killed his grandmother, then had her dispose of the towel that was allegedly used to choke Ms. Twiss.

"He killed her," Mrs. Gonyea could be heard telling her lawyer during a court appearance, Washington County sheriff's officers reported in court records.

Teresi claimed that the only evidence against his client was "inadmissible hearsay" from Gonyea's wife. There are no indications Mr. Gonyea made any

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COURTESY WNYT-NEWSCHANNEL 13

Kevin Gonyea listens in court during his murder arraignment on Sept. 15 before Washington County Judge Kelly McKeighan. Gonyea pleaded not guilty to seven charges, which included second-degree murder.



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Brian and Stacey LaValley speak with an insurance adjuster Monday in front of their burned home on John Street in Hudson Falls.

Size of town's surplus criticized

Queensbury budget approved amid urges for deeper tax cut

KATHLEEN MOORE
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QUEENSBURY — The Town Board approved the 2018 budget with an 8.8 percent tax cut last week, but not before getting a scolding from resident Travis Whitehead.

The town is saving too much money instead of cutting taxes further, he said.

"It would take a total disaster to wipe you out," he added when board members defended the need to rebuild savings after a short-lived attempt to eliminate town taxes a decade ago.

In a series of spreadsheets,

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'No idea how we all got out'

Family recalls racing out of burning house, kindness of neighbors

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HUDSON FALLS — Stacey LaValley was sound asleep early Friday, dreaming a dream about seeing

family members, when she awoke around 4 a.m. to the smell of smoke.

"I yelled loudly, 'Something's burning!'" she recalled.

She and her husband, Brian LaValley, opened the door to their second-floor bedroom to a wall of smoke so thick they couldn't see their daughter's bedroom across the hall. They grabbed clothes to cover their

faces, and struggled through the smoky hallway to find the stairs.

"If you put your hand in front of your face, you couldn't see it," she recalled. "I have no idea how we all got out."

They were able to awaken their 20-year-old daughter, Megan, but they were met with flames in the first-floor living room, near the front door. They charged

through to the front porch, where neighbors were starting to gather.

A friend of the family who was living with them, Logan Barcomb, was able to escape through the back door.

Three of the four wound up with burns or singed hair, with Brian LaValley suffering the

Please see **FIRE**, Page A5

Budget at a glance

Townwide general operations

- **2018:** \$19,060,553
- **2017:** \$18,991,090

Tax rate per \$1,000 assessed property

- **2018:** \$0.539
- **2017:** \$0.591

Total to be raised by taxes

- **2018:** \$7,183,206
- **2017:** \$7,357,352

Source: 2018 budget

Trump choosing mostly white men as judges

Such a homogenous group of nominees not seen in decades

CATHERINE LUCEY AND MEGHAN HOYER
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is nominating white men to America's federal

courts at a rate not seen in nearly 30 years, threatening to reverse a slow transformation toward a judiciary that reflects the nation's diversity.

So far, 91 percent of Trump's nominees are white, and 81 percent are male, an Associated Press analysis has found. Three of every four are white men, with few African-Americans and Hispanics

in the mix. The last president to nominate a similarly homogenous group was George H.W. Bush.

The shift could prove to be one of Trump's most enduring legacies. These are lifetime appointments, and Trump has inherited both an unusually high number of vacancies and an aging population of judges. That puts him in position to significantly reshape the

courts that decide thousands of civil rights, environmental, criminal justice and other disputes across the country. The White House has been upfront about its plans to quickly fill the seats with conservatives and has made clear that judicial shirking tops any concerns about shrinking racial or gender diversity.

Trump is anything but shy

about his plans, calling his imprint on the courts an "untold story" of his presidency.

"Nobody wants to talk about it," he says. "But when you think of it ... that has consequences 40 years out." He predicted at a recent Cabinet meeting, "A big percentage of the court will be

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