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Message: FOR 1 FAMILY, NIGHTS OF FEAR ARE ROUTINE  
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Section: LOCAL  
Page: A01

Mayor Goode may have lifted the state of emergency in the Elmwood section of Southwest Philadelphia yesterday, but one is still in effect at Donald Leary's house.

It has been that way, on and off, for three years, ever since Leary and Joann Gregg, both 30 and black, moved into their house on Elmwood Avenue in a largely white area of Southwest Philadelphia. Shortly after they moved in, they say, someone broke a front window with a rock. Their oldest son has been beaten and chased by white youths. Gregg fears shopping by herself, and her 4-year-old daughter is afraid to sleep in a room alone.

Lately, things have been even more grim.

Christmas night, Leary said, someone apparently tried to pull out one of the posts that support the kitchen in the rear of the house, using a rope or chain attached to a car.

"We heard the car when it pulled off," Leary said. "It shook the whole back of the house." But the rope apparently broke, and little damage was done.

Two days later, Leary said, three white men came to the house and told the family to move - or else.

"They just came up on the steps, and they just told me, 'Look, we don't want you in this neighborhood,' " Leary said in an interview yesterday.

"I said, 'Why?' They said, 'If you don't leave, there's going to be some trouble.' I said, 'Man, I'm not going anywhere.' Then I thought I better shut up. So I shut up and walked in the house."

"That was a threat," Leary said. "They were threatening my family."

Leary said he had four children, ages 12, 10, 4, and 10 months. He said he was forced to quit his job at a South Jersey maintenance firm in August

because he was afraid to be away from his home at night, as the job often required. He is now unemployed.

"We feel the only thing they're waiting for now is just to get a chance" to cause trouble, Gregg said of the three men. "I just figure they're going to come back."

Last Saturday, police started a 24-hour watch on the house, but they lifted it Thursday. Now, the house is checked every half-hour, police said yesterday.

Leary said he wanted the police back full-time.

The couple's house is just a few doors outside the area in which Mayor Goode declared the state of emergency on Nov. 22. The original area is bounded by South 70th Street, Elmwood Avenue, South 60th Street and Lindbergh Boulevard; Goode later moved the boundary from South 70th to 68th Street.

The mayor's order came after two nights of demonstrations in the mostly white area at the homes of a black couple and an interracial couple who had recently moved there.

The black couple - Charles Williams and Marietta Bloxom, who lived in the 2500 block of South 61st Street - moved out after the demonstrations. But after they moved, their home, still containing some belongings, was torched by arsonists, and many of the belongings were destroyed.

The interracial couple - Gerald and Carol Fox, of the 6400 block of Buist Avenue - have said they will stay. Carol Fox said yesterday that things had been "all right" since the emergency was declared.

"It calmed things down for a while," she said. Now, she said, the couple

will "just wait and see what happens."

But for Leary, "It's about time for me to get out of here. We're ready to

put the house on the market."

"I've got a 4-year-old daughter still sleeping with us, scared to sleep in her own room because of all this. She hasn't slept in her own room since the day we bought this house," Leary said.

"The boys, they sleep in the back room," he said. "All somebody's got to do is throw a gas bomb back there."

Gregg said: "I don't want any trouble. I have to worry about my kids. They have to go to school every day . . . I'd rather be somewhere where I'm wanted."

As the couple talked about their dilemma in the dining room of their home, the streets a block north, where the state of emergency was being lifted, were quiet.

Christmas wreaths adorned front doors, and shrieking elementary school children made their way home along sunny sidewalks under the eyes of school crossing guards.

A few women had their toddlers out for walks, and men worked on their cars at curbside.

The only outward sign that there had been any trouble was the police outside the Fox home, and outside the charred and boarded-up former home of Williams and Bloxom.

Despite the quiet appearance, many on the street yesterday said they had been affected by the events of the preceding two months.

"All we want to do" now, said Frank Scott, 58, as he paused on the porch of his home on Buist Avenue, "is go back to being our normal section that we were. That's all."

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Page: A01

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