

Victim's 2 children share \$1 million settlement

MANSFIELD - A settlement of more than \$1 million has been approved by Probate Court Judge Richard Christiansen for two children whose mother died in an accident at her mobile home in October 1980.

The settlement, which stemmed from a civil lawsuit, provides for an immediate payment of \$135,000. Of that total, more than \$120,000 will go for the fees and expenses of attorney James Calhoun, who represented the children's grandmother, Janice Gibson, who filed the suit. Mrs. Gibson, 488 King St., will receive the remainder of the initial payment.

Mrs. Gibson, the administrator for the estate of her daughter, and her husband, Denver, are guardians for the children.

The children's mother, Debra Lee Hesselden, died of either gas inhalation or carbon monoxide poisoning after the furnace in her mobile home at Fairhaven Village trailer park was hooked up and turned on. Her death came about two months after her husband died of an apparent heart attack suffered while mowing the yard. Mrs. Hesselden moved to the trailer park after her husband's death.

The children are Eric James Hesselden, who was 5 this week and Jessica Marie Hesselden, only a few weeks old when her mother died, now 3.

Each child will get a sum of \$730 a month until they die or for the next 30 years, whichever period is longer.

The 30-year's worth of payments would total about \$263,000 per child.

The \$260,000 figure represents the minimum total of the month payment for each child. The \$730 a month will continue for the lifetime of each child beyond the 30-year limit.

Each of the children also will receive four deferred payments of \$10,000 and three other payments of \$25,000, \$50,000 and \$75,000, for a total of \$190,000. The boy will get the money in the years 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2008 and 2018. The girl will get her payments two years later.

The total package, including immediate payment, adds up to about \$1,040,600 over 30 years. The present value of the monthly and deferred payments was put at about \$200,000.

Christiansen denied a request from Calhoun to seal the records of the settlement.

Defendants in the \$6.5 million-plus suit were Rich-Morrow Realty Co. Inc. of 1322 Paddock Drive, Mansfield, which sold the mobile home to Mrs. Hesselden; Hallmark Homes Inc. of Hagens, Pa. which manufactured the trailer; Lear Siegler of Holland, Mich., manufacturer of the furnace, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc., which provided the gas to the furnace, and J.M. Wise of 958 Lexbrook Trail, who hooked up the furnace's gas pipelines.