

Warped

by Scott McCullar



Apartment fire kills 18; officials blame panic

United Press International
LOS ANGELES — A pre-dawn fire raced through a Sunset Boulevard apartment building Saturday, killing at least 18 people — including nine children — who panicked and fled the safety of their rooms into smoky, dark hallway deathtraps.

The bodies of mothers with babies still in their arms were sprawled in the charred hallways while, just a few feet away, their tiny rooms were virtually untouched by searing flames.

Fire officials said at least 26 residents were injured, six of them critically. Some people jumped from windows of the

four-story, Dorothy Mae apartment hotel near downtown to escape the flames and dense smoke.

Firemen tried to keep the burned survivors — many of them children — cool by spraying water on them gently and wrapping them in water-soaked sheets before ambulances arrived and rushed them to hospitals. Scores of survivors were sheltered at a Red Cross facility.

One resident said neighbors caught babies who were thrown out the windows by terrified parents.

"I saw about five people jump from the windows," said Ed Danal, 42, a construction worker who lives across the street from the building. "The flames were so intense you couldn't go inside without getting scorched."

Officials said four infants and five juveniles were among the dead, but said it would take at least several hours to identify the charred bodies.

Mayor Tom Bradley and interim chief fire engineer Allen Evansen visited the scene in the afternoon and discounted earlier statements that the fire was probably arson and that the building violated fire and safety codes.

They blamed the large loss of life on panic.

Evansen said the cause of the fire was still under investigation but, "At this point, we're not calling it a suspicious fire."

The fire, described by officials as "extremely hot with a tremendous amount of smoke," was reported at 4:27 a.m. PDT, but may have burned for half an hour before being called in.

Nineteen engine companies and more than 80 firefighters worked about an hour to extinguish the flames, which apparently broke out in a first-floor boiler room.

Several of the initial firefighters on the scene reported smelling gasoline when they entered the burning building, but that was later discounted.

Leaders pledge to unify

Klan holds mass meeting

United Press International
STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — Ku Klux Klansmen from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line met Saturday to try to forge a united front and to rally around a burning cross on Stone Mountain, as they have done on Labor Day weekend for the past 57 years.

The Klansmen, representing at least three factions — some from as far away as Canada — gathered on property owned by James Veneble.

The hooded order's own guards, none with weapons showing, kept watch on the front gate, marked with a "No Trespassing" sign.

Veneble's land is located at the foot of Stone Mountain, where Klan leaders say the organization, founded following the Civil War, was reborn in 1915 after being on the brink of extinction.

The Klansmen chose a spot near Stone Mountain's business district for their Saturday night rally, capped by the cross-burning.

Don Black, Grand Wizard of the Knights of the KKK, said groups from Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Michigan and Canada were attending the weekend meetings to see if they could "form a united front."

Black, 29, dressed in a dark pin-striped suit, strolled in front of Veneble's red-brick Klan lodge while other Klansmen entered the grounds in late model cars and pick-up trucks.

Black said the various Klan factions were meeting separately Saturday before sitting down for the merger talks. During the meetings, applause could be heard inside the lodge but the public was not allowed to enter.

"I think there will be some degree of working cooperation that will lead to a unified movement," Black said.

2 children killed, 1 hurt as preacher drives car into group

United Press International
SAN FRANCISCO — A street preacher, taunted by a band of teenagers, got in his car and drove it into a group of pedestrians, smashing two children to death, and critically injuring another.

The driver was beaten mercilessly by witnesses of the bloody incident late Friday night. He was rescued by a nearby storekeeper who used a gun to hold off an angry crowd, and then jailed on murder charges.

Police said the mother of one of the dead youngsters, a boy about 3 or 4, had taken the other victim, a girl about the same age, to the circus with her son.

"I was just trying to do a good deed," said the sobbing woman at the scene.

The coroner's office said it was unable to identify the bodies because they had been crushed so severely when the automobile smashed the children against the wall of a building.

The boy was believed to be Lamont Metoyer, and the girl Tiffany Sommers. The injured child was identified as 18-month-old Griffin Tamaris.

Police said the Tamaris child's mother, Brenda, jumped to safety, but the infant suffered severe injuries and remained in critical condition Saturday.

Blood was spattered for several yards, and the stucco and wood wall was splintered and smeared with flesh.

The driver was identified as William Daguman, 23, of San Francisco.

"He ran them down deliberately. It was just crazy," said an elderly man who saw the incident, which occurred near the

Cow Palace after a performance of Ringling Bros. circus.

Witnesses said Daguman, a Filipino, was preaching and cajoling people on the street in the

predominantly black neighborhood about sin and drugs. Several teenagers taunted Daguman, who scuffled with them and then jumped into a white

1975 Mustang.

Police said he drove around the block, headed the car over a curb and straight into the group of people waiting for a bus.

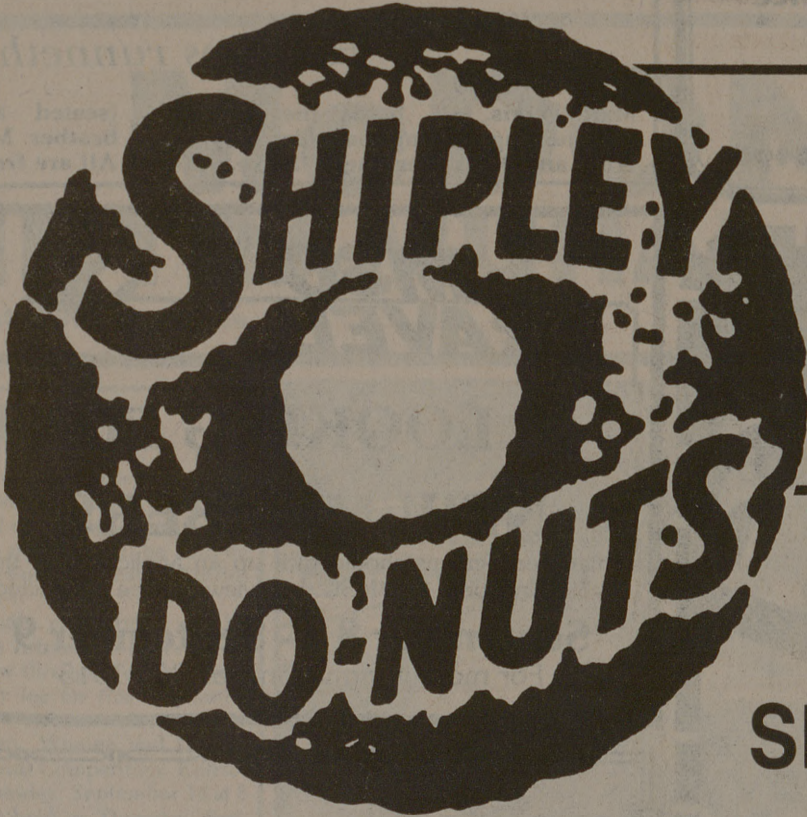


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