Nation's Worst Fire Disaster in 40 Years Kills Almost 500 People In Boston Night Club

Boston—A silly prank caused the nation's worst fire catastrophe in nearly 40 years when the Cocoanut Grove Night club burned down Saturday night, klling at least 484 persons and critically injuring nearly 200. The blaze, smoke, and stampeding panic.

A thousand week-end merry-makers were jammed into the one-half story drinking spot Saturday night; things were livelier than usual because Holy Cross, in a starting football upset, had defeated powerful Boston College that day by 55-12.

A playful patron loosened a light bulb in the Melody Lounge in the basement of the club, under the main dance floor. A 16-year-old bus boy, Stanley T. Tomaszewski, stood facing a chair trying to flatten his back in place, lighting a match to see what he was doing. The match set fire to a paper palm tree, and the fire snaked along the properties and other furnishing with incredible speed. Instantly the lighted scene changed to one of blind panic, with men and women screaming and clawing each other, packed together in a desperate, fighting mass as they rushed out and buried themselves under the glass revolving door leading into Piedmont.

The door wouldn't move because the crowd was trying to push it into opposite directions. An unidentified naval lieutenant gave his life trying to clear the doors. It was found dead with his back against the revolving door, his arms out-stretched as though imploring the crowd to hold back. His uniform had been torn from his body. In front of him bodies of crushed and suffocated celebrators were packed to the roof.

Some people ran out of other small exits with their clothes even their hair on fire. Others, including eight nearly nude chorus girls, escaped by jumping from the roof. Billy Payne, singer at the club, saved ten patrons by leading them into a large icebox in the basement, where they waited in safety until the fire had been put out an hour later.

Among the dead was Buck Jones, the cowboy film star visiting Boston as a War Bond salesman. It was the greatest disaster of its kind since the Iroquois Theater fire in Chicago in 1903, which claimed 602 lives.

Damage was estimated at $250,000. Only two weeks previous the Cocoanut Grove, together with all other Boston nightclubs, had been inspected by fire officials, following an East Boston fire in which six firemen were killed. Nevertheless, one of the doors which had been equipped with a panic lock that would open under pressure was found to be secured by another lock.

Farm Income Hits Peak, Henderson Tells Congress

WASHINGTON——Level of net farm income is the highest in history,” Leon Henderson, Federal Price administrator, reported to Congress this week. “It exceeds by a full billion the income of the crop year in the fabulous year of 1919, and every dollar of this income buys vastly more than it did in that year.”

The lowest percentage increase in net income between 1939 and 1942 was given by Mr. Henderson as 90.1 per cent for two-mile farms, and the highest at 204.5 per cent for winter wheat farms.

People

Back Home —

ARKANSAS

El Dorado and Hot Springs went tie for conference lead as Ft. Smith topped the list. Ft. Smith top- end of Camp Atterbury; 200 fire fighters and a big rainstorm put it out. Other fires unthin two miles.

Lodge at Blue Ridge near Asheville, N. C., reported to Congress.

Mary Hoffman, 19, was chosen as “Miss Victory” by war workers in Chicago.
NEW ENGLAND

At Taunton, Mass., a three-day week­ly strike by employees of the World War II recruiting station was ended under the direction of A. E. Pontell, ranger, later chief of the Taunton sheriff's department. After a long struggle, the workers agreed to return to work for a wage of $7 per week, instead of the original $7.50. The agreement was reached after a 10-day strike, during which time the station was closed.

NORTH CAROLINA

In annual session in High Point the Bankers' Convention adopted resolu­tions calling on the North Carolina legislature to increase the number of parking meters in the city to 1,000. The convention, which has 1,000 members, also urged the state to increase its appropriation to the University of North Carolina to $300,000.

OHIO

The Cincinnati Post solved its prob­lem of finding a newspaper home by converting one of its main offices into a newspaper office. The newspaper, which has 500,000 subscribers, has been forced to reduce its staff by more than 100. The new office is located at 145 W. Main St., and will be open for business on Monday.
In training for smash landing operations, these Navy Seabees jump off the side of a landing boat, somewhere in Eastern U.S. They're ready to build or battle.

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OPENING. Shortly after dedication of Alcan Highway, first army truck convoy carries war supplies to Fairbanks, Alaska.

SCOREBOARD. Crew of light cruiser Boise point with pride. Silhouettes represent six Jap warships she sent to the bottom.

Fashion. Actress Grace McDonald introduces the new Chute Suit.

COURTESY. At Camp Lee, Va., WA officers Margaret Fullert and Ruby Herman return G.i. higgbu

Landing. Jap torpedo was headed for an American ship. Good manuevering let Guadacanal beach take it.

Painter. T-5 Dick Howard, of Philadelphia, brushes on a little more cold to a shivering Yank, part of mural he's painting in Ireland. Mrs. F.D.R. gave it a big O.K. when she saw it.