

6 Injured, 2 Critically In Fire Explosion Here Sat.

Routine Fire Alarm Turns Into Tragedy For Local Firemen

Six of the community's "finest" citizens, five volunteer firemen and a city councilman and assistant Civil Defense director, were injured in a freak fire explosion accident while answering what appeared to be a routine fire alarm Saturday but turned out to be a nightmare. The incident is the "worst ever" on record in the long and illustrious career of the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department.

At 11:00 a.m. Saturday, the fire department received a call of a fire in a small barn at the rear of the Bobby Joe Semora home at the corner of McCarty and Waverly Streets (near the airport). Exact cause of the fire is still being investigated.

Firemen responded promptly and the first firemen on the scene began applying water and heard some "hissing and popping", unaware that steel cylinders containing acetylene, oxygen and butane were stored in the building. Members of the family were not home at the time of the fire (a son had left to call his parents); hence the firemen had no notice of the

impending danger of possible explosion of the steel cylinders.

Tremendous Explosion
A few moments later, a tremendous explosion and intense heat from the exploding cylinder of acetylene (used in welding purposes) virtually lifted those persons nearest to the explosion and tossed them backward several feet. The steel cylinder was hurled through the air, against a tree, and the nearby house but miraculously missing persons in the area.

As a result, two volunteer firemen, Tim C. Luedcke, 23, and Lane Voelcker, 22, were critically burned; two others, Wilfred Luedcke, 47, and Monroe Briscoe, 49, were seriously burned; another fireman, Gary Glaiser, suffered heat prostration; city councilman and assistant Civil Defense director Alvin W. Kohleffel also received injuries.

All six were rushed to Eagle Lake Community Hospital by Eagle Lake Ambulance Corps and Fire Department vehicles. Meanwhile other firemen arriving at the scene extinguished the fire without further damage.

Local physicians and hospital personnel administered aid to the injured and a

decision was made to send Tim Luedcke and Voelcker (who became a fireman only Monday night before the accident) to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. Both had severe second degree burns over a large part of their bodies. A helicopter with a medical team from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio came to Eagle Lake to take the victims to Brooke Hospital.

Wilfred Luedcke, father and business partner of Tim, Briscoe, Kohleffel and Glaiser were hospitalized in Eagle Lake Community Hospital.

Word was received early this week that Tim Luedcke has second degree burns over 42% of his body with some spot burns of third degree intensity which probably will require some skin grafting later. He also reportedly has some "air" damage. His condition Monday was considered stable and he remained in intensive care in critical condition. He and his father own a construction business here.

Lane Voelcker, local Cable TV manager and service technician, is reported to have second degree burns over 25% of his body. He also was in stable condition in intensive care in the Brooke



Eagle Lake Community Hospital personnel, members of the Eagle Lake Ambulance Corps and the medical team from Brooke Army Medical Center of San Antonio are shown transporting two critically burned Eagle Lake firemen, Tim Luedcke and Lane Voelcker, from the hospital to the helicopter where they were placed aboard a

helicopter from Fort Sam Houston to be taken to the Brooke Hospital for treatment of the burns received in a fire explosion here shortly after 11 a.m. last Saturday. They were two of six persons injured when a steel cylinder containing acetylene gas exploded shortly after firemen arrived at the scene of a routine fire alarm at the Bobby J. Semora home on McCarty Street.

Army Hospital and doing as well as can be expected. Wilfred Luedcke has severe burns on both arms and other parts of his body

and is reported to be improving but will probably have to remain in the hospital for some time. Monroe Briscoe, a Central

Power and Light Company crewman and equipment operator, has burns on both arms and is expected to be dismissed from the hospital.

soon. Gary Glaiser, employed with Eagle Lake Implement Co., was released from the hospital later Saturday after being treated for heat prostration.

The sixth victim, Councilman Alvin W. Kohleffel, is a local businessman and rice grower and an ardent supporter and helper to the fire department. He was shaken by the explosion but escaped burns. He was hospitalized for a severe case of high blood pressure and was expected to be released from the hospital on Tuesday.

Explosion Felt Over City
Citizens in many areas of the city reported hearing and feeling effects of the explosion. The explosion caused some damage to windows in the nearby Semora home and a piece of flying timber went through the undercoating of the mobile home. Otherwise, damage was "miraculously light".

City fire officials continue investigation of the unfortunate explosion. Firemen, as usual, used fullest safety measures possible in answering the alarm, especially in light of the fact that they had no information

(Continued on Last Page)

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Eagle Lake Headlight

VOLUME 77.

P.O. BOX 67

EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1980

AG 713 234-2783

NUMBER 12.

July 4th Celebration Here Promises Fun For All!

BBQ Dinner 11-1;
Other Entertainment At
6 P.M. at Comm. Center

A wide variety of events in Eagle Lake's observance of the 204th anniversary of the independence of the United States of America, sponsored by the Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce this Friday, July 4th, is expected to draw another large crowd to the community. Activities start at 11 a.m. with the serving of the barbecued chicken dinners at the Community Center and conclude with the street dance at 12 midnight.

All events will be held at the air-conditioned Eagle Lake Community Center and the pavilion on Walnut Street in front of the Community Center, instead of on the east side of the downtown city square as in past years.

* Dawn to dusk, U. S. Flags will be displayed by V.F.W. in front of local businesses.

* 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. the
(Continued on Last Page)

Field Day At Rice Exp. Sta. Today, Wed.

The annual Field Day and Tour will be held today, Wednesday afternoon, July 2nd at the Eagle Lake Rice Experiment Station, northwest of Eagle Lake and over 500 farmers and agriculturists from over the rice belt area are invited to attend.

Dr. James W. Stansel, Scientist-in-Charge of the Western Area Project, says many activities are scheduled for the "Show and Tell" function.

Tours of the research plots will begin at 5:00 p.m., followed by a barbecue meal at 6:30 p.m. After the meal, there will be a short program which will include Dr. Art Gerlow, extension rice economist who will discuss the Rice Market Outlook for the 1980 rice crop.

RHS Drum Major Michele Sibley Wins "Outstanding" Award



Michele Sibley, Rice High School Raider Band's new Drum Major for the 1980-81 year, attended a Drum Major's camp at Blinn Junior College in Brenham June 22-23 and was named the camp's "Outstanding Drum Major" and received the beautiful trophy which she is shown holding above. Michele also won a first place medal in a Conducting Contest held Tuesday of last week; and also won a first place in Oral Commands and Whistle Routines on Wednesday and received the outstanding award at a ceremony last Wednesday night. She is the daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Melburn Sibley of Eagle Lake.

City Nears End Of Funds For Housing Rehabilitation

Total Of 16 Homes
Now Included, Funds
For About 3 More

Eagle Lake city council last week approved contracts for four housing rehabilitation projects in the "Flat area" of the city to bring to sixteen the number of houses being improved in the program

funded by part of a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) \$700,000.00 grant. A total of \$157,500 was set aside in the grant for the rehabilitation of housing and with the approval of the four contracts last week, the funds expended are nearing the amount available.

If you live in the
(Continued on page 3)

Firemen's Relief Fund Started For EL Firemen

A Firemen's Injury, Relief and Endowment Fund (FIRE Fund) has been started at The First National Bank of Eagle Lake for aid to local firemen who were injured in last Saturday's fire explosion and other firemen who might be injured in the future in the line of duty.

The local V.F.W. Post, James G. Cash, commander, initiated the fund with a \$1,000 contribution. Initial contributions were made by First Baptist Church, \$500; and First National Bank, \$100.

Anyone who would like to contribute to the fund to aid the firemen and their families is invited to leave a contribution at the bank or to mail the contribution to the First National Bank, Box 215, or to the City of Eagle Lake, Box 35, or present the check to any local fireman.

Your contributions to aid the firemen, and their families, injured in the line of duty will be greatly appreciated.

An ice cream social and benefit is being planned in the Community Center at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, July 11th for benefit of the fund. See details in another story in this issue on page 14.

Local rancher Gayle Thomas reported late Tuesday that he will be contacting farmers and ranchers for contributions of a calf, or equivalent, to the FIRE Fund. Meanwhile he invites them to join in this worthy project in support of injured firemen and their families by contributing to the fund by sending donations to the fire department or to the bank.

"Tiny Tots" Day Care Center Open

Tammy Allen announces the opening of Tiny Tots Day Care Center at the former Lollipop Land location at 400 W. Prairie in Eagle Lake.

New hours for the day care center will be Monday through Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with all ages welcome, said the new director.

M. J. Barron New Pastor At Presby. Ch.

The Rev. Michael John (Mike) Barron is the new pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Eagle Lake. He began his duties here Sunday morning, June 29. He and Mrs. Barron (Kathy) are residing in the Presbyterian manse on Willow Lane in the Meadowbrook Addition.

The Rev. Mr. Barron attended and earned a B.A. degree in 1975 from Austin College and Austin Presbyterian Seminary in 1979. He has served as a youth director at Crestview United Methodist Church, chaplain at St. Luke's, Texas Children's and Texas Heart Institute Hospitals in Houston from September of 1977 through May of 1978; as chaplain in Austin State Hospital during the summer of 1977. He has also been engaged in numerous projects at Hyde Park Presby-

(Continued on Last Page)

Entry Made At Nada Store

Colorado County sheriff's department received a call at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, June 29th from Vic Ryek, owner of the Appliance Sales and Service Center at the Nada Grocery on Highway 71 in Nada, that the Nada store had been broken into. It was found that entry to the building was gained by forcing the lock off the front door.

Reported as missing were: two RCA 13-inch color television sets, one Mr. Coffee Coffeemaker, one Proctor Silex Iron, one G.E. Iron, one G.E. portable mixer, and approximately \$5.00 in change.

The sheriff's department reports that it has a suspect in the entry and the suspect was being checked out at press time. Meanwhile the investigation of the entry continues.

Two other vehicles which were passing under the train overpass when the train came to a stop had some damage from debris falling from the overpass. Vehicles included a 1977 Ford Pinto driven by Robert Paul Cammer of Texas City and a 1978 Chevrolet Caprice driven by Gertrude V. Boraki of Industry.

Engineer of the S.P.

Action On City Annexation, Rate Ordinances Due Tues.

2 Killed, 2 Hurt When Train Hits Van Sunday

Two persons were killed and two others injured, one seriously, when a westbound Southern Pacific Railroad Co. freight train hit a 1976 Ford Van at the Austin street intersection in the city limits of Columbus at 2:30 p.m. Sunday. The train shoved the van some 450 feet west on the track to a point near the Highway 71 overpass. At that point, Frank Zapata, 17, of Austin, driver of the van, reportedly fell from the overpass beside Highway 71. He later died of injuries received in the accident.

Also killed in the collision of the train engine and the van was Jose Ramos, 20, of Columbus, who was pronounced dead at the scene. Other passengers in the van who were injured were Marcus Arredondo, 22, and Gonzalo Franko, 24, both of Columbus. Arredondo was treated and released at Columbus Hospital; and Franko was treated at Columbus Hospital and later transferred to John Sealy Hospital in Galveston with serious injuries.

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Engineer of the S.P.

Garwood Library To Sponsor Needle Point Class

The Veteran Memorial Library in Garwood will sponsor a two-day needlepoint and quiltpoint class on Tuesday, July 8 and Thursday, July 10, starting at 2 p.m.

All interested persons are invited to come, said Elaine Mae Williams, librarian.

freight train was J. E. Punch of Spring, Texas and he reported seeing the van beside the railroad tracks but then the van crossed in front of the train and it was unable to avoid collision.

Columbus city patrolman James Brooks headed the investigation of the accident.

Special Closings Are Listed For July 4-5

Eagle Lake business firms will be closed all day on Friday, July 4th for the annual Independence Day observance.

Some business firms plan to extend the holiday period through Saturday, July 5th. Those listed with the Headlight are:

All departments of Lake Motors, Inc. in Eagle Lake will be closed all day on Friday, July 4th, announces Joe S. Reed, owner. The parts and service departments will also be closed Sat., July 5th, however the sales department will be open as usual until noon Saturday.

Wilcox Closed July 4th
Owners of Wilcox Minimex, Bob Wilcox and Buck Swords, ask your cooperation in the closing of the store Friday, July 4th.

The supplement insert of the store's weekly specials erroneously states the store will be open.

Due to illness among some of the staff and the need for a short mid-summer vacation, the Headlight office will be closed Thursday through Sunday, July 3rd through 6th for the short vacation. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Eagle Lake Insurance and Brickland Insurance Agencies will be closed all day Friday

(Continued on Last Page)

Council Expects Action On Three Ordinances On Single Readings

Eagle Lake city council will have a busy agenda at its next meeting Tuesday night, July 8th (beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the council room of the municipal building) with two major items being the annexation of 13.63 acres adjacent to the southeastern edge of the city; and adoption of two ordinances increasing water and sewer rates and also rates for waste disposal (or garbage) service.

Mayor Elmer Struss has said that the annexation order and the two rate ordinances will be adopted on single readings of the council instead of the customary three readings. Hence, he extended an invitation to all persons who might wish to comment on the issues to be present for next Tuesday's session.

If passed Tuesday, as expected, the annexation of the properties of Eagle Lake Implement Co., Inc. and the Louis Grigars would become effective immediately and would enable the city to provide services to the new John Deere facilities and the Grigar home and business. Farmers Insurance Group, in the immediate future. All property owners involved in the annexation requested that the city take such action.

The mayor noted that by passing the rate ordinances increasing water and sewer and garbage rates on the single reading will put the rates into effect for July services and head off deficit operations due to inflationary costs, as soon as possible.

Proposed Rate Increases
A committee comprised of councilmen Ralph Truly and Mike Duarte and city manager T. J. Smith and city manager-elect Bob Klockman, has been making a study of the rate ordinances now in effect and made recommendations to the council on Tuesday night of last week that increases be made to provide additional revenue that is needed to keep the

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