

Cries Of Injured, Dying Heard Above Roaring Fire

By ROBERT E. BROWN
United Press Staff Correspondent
TEXAS CITY, Tex., April 16.—(AP)—I flew over the Texas City disaster area today—over waves of black smoke which hid all but five huge clusters of licking flame.

A rectangle roughly a mile long and a half mile wide along the waterfront was a mass of twisted steel structures and charred debris. Clouds of smoke erased the sun. Fires were burning at the ruined Monsanto Chemical company plant and in two oil refineries. Every few minutes another explosion spewed more flame and smoke into the sky.

Wading through the destruction area were doctors and nurses—grimy, sweaty with blood on them. Priests were there and scores of volunteers. Some donned gas masks rushed in from Fort Crockett at Galveston as they neared the docks where chemical fumes were heavy. Calls of the injured and dying could be heard faintly through the roar of flames.

Twisted bodies lay everywhere. Rescuers stepped over the bodies as they hunted for the injured. Along a street of small cafes and residences were scattered fragments of the ship which blew up to start this holocaust. There were also pieces of metal that once were part of the multi-million-dollar Monsanto Chemical plant.

Roads leading into the center of the death area are closed. Some 1,500 law enforcement officers and soldiers are here and only authorized persons can come in. It's hard to walk in Texas City. All the plate glass is gone, scattered in the streets. Bloody trails made by the injured are everywhere.

Chief Deputy Sheriff Jake Colca

is in charge of identifying bodies. He said 69 bodies were at the McGar garage and eight more at the Empken Funeral home. W. H. Otto of Lamar, who had been helping on a truck carrying out the dead, said he counted 200 bodies.

Like Barrage
Mayor J. C. Tramm of Texas City, an army veteran, said the series of blasts sounded like an artillery barrage. He was in the city garage, two miles from the Monsanto plant, and he said the building "just disintegrated around me."

The dead at the McGar garage were covered with blankets. They lay on tar paper. A team of local men were trying to identify them. Some bodies were mutilated. State Highway Patrolman J. Crouch said when he first looked out of city hall after the blast "you could see birds falling out of the air into the streets—killed by concussion."

Mrs. Adeline Plankin, who was working in the Texas City Terminal office, said she went under a desk when she heard the explosion. "I crawled back out to find the whole place down around me."

WRIGHT GIVES PAPER ON HALL

Tribute Paid To Thalian Hall In Article At Kiwanis Meeting

When the Kiwanis club was discussing restoration of Thalian hall at its meeting yesterday, Thomas H. Wright was given the floor to read a tribute to the historical value of the hall. Mr. Wright explained the brief article had been prepared for him by a friend who insisted on anonymity.

The article reads: "Naturally, it is hard to place a value on municipal buildings and associations of historical interest. A city that possesses old buildings that were used and revered in former years by persons of note or for cultural purposes has in them assets which cannot be valued in money.

"They appeal to something in our nature that stirs within us some of our finest sentiments. For this reason the old Thalian Hall should not be destroyed. It would be unjust to our historic past to do so. Although time has worn the old structure and made it unsafe for present use as a hall for dramatics or popular meetings, still its attractive features can be preserved and it can be made safe for future gatherings.

"Witness our City Hall, which continues to be the pride of Wilmington and an attraction which holds the eye of visitors passing through the city. The time was when we almost lost it, as many of us well remember; but better judgment prevailed, and we still look with much satisfaction upon our stately city government building.

"Not only has its outer beauty been preserved, but its offices within have been made perfectly safe and comfortable. Of course there is need for additional office space, but this should be provided in some kind of construction that would not affect that honored old Thalian Hall. As to preserving the latter, steel and concrete can work wonders in making it safe and desirable as they did in restoring the City Hall.

"When the city authorities accepted the gift of the land on which the old Innes Academy stood, and the funds donated by the Thalian society, back in the eighties, they went with them a moral responsibility for maintaining the structure for the purposes the donors had in mind. In sentimental things, at least, this responsibility lasts indefinitely, and we have yet the old opera house.

"The Thalian society has a life going back to revolutionary days and before. (In this connection, we recall Thomas Godfrey, the first American dramatist, and his 'A Prince of Parthis'.) Through the many decades the amateur dramatic talent in Wilmington has often been displayed—first in the Innes Academy building and then in Thalian Hall.

"Through the years, also, great actors and actresses and famous speakers have appeared on the stage of the opera house to the entertainment and appreciation of Wilmington audiences.

"The great Massachusetts orator Edward Everett spoke to a large audience in the hall in 1859 on the 'Character of Washington'; and other national orators followed from time to time, including William G. McAdoo, secretary of the treasury under President Wilson. Honorable George Davis, the eminent orator of Wilmington, spoke in the hall several times before and after the War Between the States. The great Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage and other noted religious leaders have graced its stage; and on numerous occasions religious and civic gatherings have discussed important public matters.

"Among the famous actors who appeared in Thalian Hall were Joseph Jefferson, Richard Nonsfield, Frederick Ward and other well remember dramatists; and there were many vocalists in operas of high national standing.

"All these details add up in the desire of many Wilmington people to preserve the historic old opera house, which has been praised by many famous performers for its beauty and excellent acoustic properties. By all means, let us not make the mistake, as has been done in the past, of destroying what might be preserved as a distinctive and useful relic of our interesting municipal life. Rather, let us restore it for our own and future generations."

Half of the children born in the United States come from farming areas where slightly more than 30 per cent of the national adult population lives.

MAJOR BLAST DISASTERS IN LAST 30 YEARS

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Major explosion disasters in the last 30 years include:
Dec. 6, 1917—1,500 persons killed in collision between a munitions ship and relief ship off Halifax, Canada, destroying two and one-half square miles of the city, injuring 4,000 and making 20,000 homeless.

May 8, 1918—More than 200 killed at Aetna Chemical co. plant near Pittsburgh, Pa.
July 2, 1918—49 killed in TNT plant explosion at Split Rock, near Syracuse, N.Y.
Oct. 5, 1918—Nearly 100 killed at Gillespie Loading co. plant, Morgan, N.J.

July 10, 1926—21 killed when lightning struck naval ammunition depot at Lake Denmark, N. J.; damage \$50,000,000.
May 15, 1929—100 killed in Cleveland, O., hospital clinic when X-ray film exploded, filling building with gas.

March 18, 1937—294 children and teachers killed in gas blast in New London, Tex., schoolhouse.
Sept. 12, 1940—50 killed and more than 100 injured in Hercules Powder plant explosion, Kenil, N.J.
March 26, 1942—More than 200 killed near Easton, Pa., when 20 tons of dynamite at limestone quarry exploded.

June 5, 1942—48 killed in blast at Elwood Ordnance shell loading plant, Joliet, Ill.
Sept. 17, 1944—More than 25 killed in ammunition explosion at Norfolk, Va., air station.

Jan. 3, 1944—More than 100 killed in explosion of Destroyer Turner in New York bay.
July 17, 1944—22 killed in Navy munitions depot explosion at Port Chicago, Calif.
Oct. 21, 1944—At least 15 persons killed in explosion and fire in East Ohio Gas company storage plant at Cleveland.

Feb. 20, 1947—15 killed in O'Connor Electro-Plating plant blast, Los Angeles. 158 injured; damage \$1,500,000.
March 25, 1947—111 killed in Centralia, Ill., mine.
Hundreds of others have died in other mine explosions in the last 30 years.

SHIPPING NEWS

IN PORT
Liberty Ships
S. S. Calvin Coolidge from the Lay-up basin being refitted. Heide agent.
S. S. Felipe de Neva, from the lay-up basin. Heide, agent.
S. S. David R. LaCrow, from the lay-up basin. Heide, agent.
S. S. Joe C. S. Blackburn, from the lay-up basin. Heide, agent.

INWARD BOUND
Freighter
S. S. Oregon Fir, from Texas ports, with cargo of fertilizer materials. Heide, agent.
Tanker
S. S. Black River, from Texas ports, with cargo of petroleum products. Heide and Company, agents.

CLEARED AND SAILED
S. S. O. M. Bernuth, bound for Jacksonville, Fla., after unloading cresote oil at Taylor-Colquitt terminal. C. D. Maffitt, agent.

DAVIS RENAMED ACL PRESIDENT

Officers Of Railroad Company Relected During Meet At Richmond

C. McD. Davis has now entered upon his sixth year as president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad company, the organization with which he has been associated for the past 54 years.

Mr. Davis along with the other officers of the company were re-elected during a meeting of the directors in Richmond, Va., on Tuesday.

Other Wilmingtonians renamed by the board were R. J. Doss, W. D. McCall, all vice presidents; L. F. Ormond, controller; and P. Nichols, treasurer.

During the directors meeting a dividend of \$2 per share for preferred stock and \$1 per share for common stock was declared.

Operating revenue for 1946 as reflected in a financial statement showed a drop of approximately \$29,556,000 as compared with the previous year.

ANNULMENT SOUGHT AWARDED IN COURT

Ann Holdford Phillips was awarded an annulment of her marriage to George Baldwin Phillips at Conway, S. C., on Dec. 3, 1944 and was also authorized to adopt her maiden name during yesterday's session of Superior Court here.

The annulment was granted on the grounds that the defendant, George Baldwin Phillips, had a living spouse to whom he was legally married at the time of the plaintiff's marriage to the defendant.

With Judge Clawson L. Williams, of Sanford, presiding the jury returned late yesterday afternoon with answers to 15 issues involved in the case of James Howard, of Hampstead, vs Henry Green, of Scotts Hill. Howard was seeking a lien on the crop, tractor and peanut picking machine of the defendant. The attorneys for the two parties will now draw up a judgment which will be presented to the court for settlement.

When court recessed for the day, the case of W. E. Sisson et al vs Royster Oil Co., Inc., et al was in progress and will be continued at today's session of the civil term.

BRIEF NEWS NOTES FROM BLAST AREAS TELL OF DISASTER

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
All schools were closed in Galveston today following the explosion in Texas City, 11 miles away. Windows in the school buildings were shattered and plaster on the walls cracked and in some instances fell.

Before going home, the children went through a fire drill. Two ambulances from Houston, en route to Texas City, collided near Ellington field. Traffic was held up for several minutes until the ambulances were dragged off the road. No one was injured.

A plane from Ellington field said smoke billowed 4,000 feet above Texas City, and was visible 30 miles away.

Police Inspector W. P. Haley of Houston issued a call for all automobile wreckers available. They were rushed to Texas City to help remove debris and wreckage.

The explosion rattled windows at Pelly, 27 miles away, and one man there said the sound was so sharp "it hurt my eardrums." J. K. Poage, engineer for a Cedar Bayou radio station, also 27 miles away, said he saw flames shoot hundreds of feet into the air.

The smoke billowing over Texas City was described as much like that of an atomic bomb.

The Palestine, Tex., Herald, located 10 miles from the explosion, said there was no doubt the explosion was felt and heard there. It said telephone calls poured in long before news of the explosion was made known.

W. H. Sandberg, vice president of the Texas City Terminal Railway company, who missed death aboard the Grand Camp by five minutes, said later that the concussion "was simply terrible." He had left the ship just five minutes before it blew up, hurling steel beams for miles. He said the explosions came in "one-two-three order."

Fred Pool, the La Porte Chamber of Commerce manager, said the explosion damaged that city. "It blew windows out of every home in town, blew in ceilings in business buildings, and cracked new buildings from end to end."

Smoke mushroomed over Galveston. Observers said the smoke looked like pictures of the atomic bomb explosion. The city was obscured from the sun for hours by the black smoke.

Certain racial groups which served in the United States Army during World War II are: Enlisted men from July 1, 1940, to June 30, 1948, Negroes, 1,049,617; Chinese, 16,515; Japanese, 29,848; Filipinos, 18,660.

AUTO LOANS

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One of the forty rail-road cars transporting the Endy Bros. Shows and Thrill Circus, now showing at Bellamy Park 18th. and Dawson Streets for the benefit of the Wilmington Police Recreation Fund.

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In this case, your real trouble is not in the stomach at all. But in the intestinal tract where 80% of your food is digested. And when the lower part gets blocked food may fail to digest properly.

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