

FIRE

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Associate Chief Medical Examiner Thomas B. Clark III said all five deaths were a result of carbon monoxide poisoning from the fire's smoke. No other injuries were found. Four of the victims had positive alcohol results above the legal driving limit of 0.08 percent on the breathalyzer scale. "Each of the positive alcohol results was significantly greater than this limit," Clark wrote.

Howell had no blood alcohol content. In breathalyzer equivalents, Strickland had a 0.14 percent BAC, Woodruff had a 0.2 percent BAC, Weaver had a 0.17 percent BAC and Smith had a 0.18 percent BAC.

The victims were probably awake and trying to escape, according to the report. They were overcome by the smoke.

"People underestimate the amount of smoke that's generated. They have no concept of the smoke that's generated from a room contents fire," Jones said. He said most people had only experienced campfire smoke, "which is almost pleasant."

The smoke may have contributed to the students being unable to escape. Carbon monoxide, which causes people to lose the ability to act rationally, is taken into the bloodstream at a faster rate than oxygen, Jones said.

"As soon as you get even a small percentage of carbon monoxide in the bloodstream, it is assimilated in seconds," he said. "Their ability to escape may be impaired."

The five students who died in the fire are Joanna Howell, a junior from Cary; Benjamin Woodruff, a sophomore from Raleigh; and three juniors from Rocky Mount: Anne McBride Smith, Mark Strickland and Robert Joshua Weaver. Woodruff, Strickland and Weaver were members of Phi Gamma Delta. Smith's friends had last seen her with Strickland, and Howell had stayed with another fraternity member.

Firefighters found the five victims on the second floor of the fraternity house in four bedroom areas. In one bedroom, a victim was face-down over a couch. In another room, a victim was trying to crawl under the bed, and another victim was lying on a cot. One victim was found in a bedroom doorway and a victim was found flung over a bike.

"One was partially burnt," Johnson said. "All appeared to have some effect of heat." "The parents don't want us exposing their condition," he said.

The three who escaped by jumping out of the second-floor window are:

■ Adam Jones, 21, of Atlanta, who was released from UNC Hospitals Monday about 12:30 p.m. The rising senior is a Phi

Gamma Delta member and former treasurer of the Inter-Fraternity Council.

■ Ben Eubanks, 21, of New Bern, who was upgraded to fair condition Wednesday. Eubanks, a rising senior, is a former Phi Gamma Delta president.

■ Anne Glenn, 21, of Charlotte, who remained in critical condition at UNC Hospitals on Wednesday. Glenn had not been enrolled this past semester, but was pre-registered for second summer session, according to the University Registrar.

A Rude Awakening

A Carolina Inn employee called Orange County 911 at 6:07 a.m. He reported a fire at 108 West Cameron Ave.—the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house, just across the street from the Inn.

"The fire was well-involved when the first units arrived," Jones said. Because of the blaze's intensity, fire fighters were unable to enter the building.

"You could see the fire at Granville (Towers)," said Bruce Toy, father of two graduating seniors. He and his wife Joan were staying at Granville Towers.

Joan Toy said, "I was looking out the window at 5:54 a.m. and by that time the flames were well above the trees."

The fire fighting units had a three minute response time, Jones said. Jones reported a heavy volume of fire on the first and second floors of the fraternity house.

Chancellor Michael Hooker, who went to the scene of the fire as soon as commencement ceremonies ended, said local officials had responded admirably.

As she watched firefighters combatting the blaze, Joan Toy said she felt horror. "(The hose) wasn't putting a dent in the fire," she said. "I thought, 'My God, nothing is happening.'"

Director of Greek Affairs Ron Binder heard about the fire soon after the fire fighting units had reached the scene. "I got called at 6:30 a.m. I got four phone calls—they were very thorough," he said.

Alumni of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity arrived on the scene at about 7 a.m., Binder said.

"They were helpful with the layout of the house," Binder said. "The police department was very grateful to hear about the little nuances that they and the current brothers knew from living in the house."

The alumni were there with the members when they were told about the fatalities. "We had to deliver bad news to the brothers," Binder said.

Many people noted the amount of smoke issuing from the house. Carolina Inn residents thought that the hotel was on fire after being awakened by the smell.

Tragic Irony

Many people commented on the obvious irony of the tragedy's bad timing. "What should have been the happiest

day is found out to be the saddest," Chancellor Michael Hooker said at a Sunday afternoon press conference after he learned of the deaths.

Student Body President Aaron Nelson said he was at a loss for words.

"It's kind of hard to put it in words and not make it sound trite," he said. "I just can't believe on a day that was to be so wonderful, tragedy can just strike without warning, without any warning whatsoever."

Graduating Senior Marissa Wuldung, thought about the possibility that one of the as-yet nameless victims should have been at the frat house. "It's horrible. It's sad to think that they might have graduated and were getting ready to start their lives," she said.

Binder said that he had never experienced a similar event elsewhere. "I've been a Greek adviser for 11 years on different campuses and this is probably the biggest tragedy I've ever had to deal with," he said.

Johnson, the assistant fire marshal, said that the last fire inspection at the fraternity was Dec. 11, 1995. The Phi Gamma Delta House had eight violations, which he said was typical for a fraternity house.

The fire escape windows were screwed shut, and there was trash blocking the escape. Members had stuffed a third floor closet with too much trash. The basement ceilings showed signs of disrepair and needed to be patched. A simple kitchen lock needed to be changed. And the house had too much garbage in the hallways.

"They had fully complied by January," Johnson said.

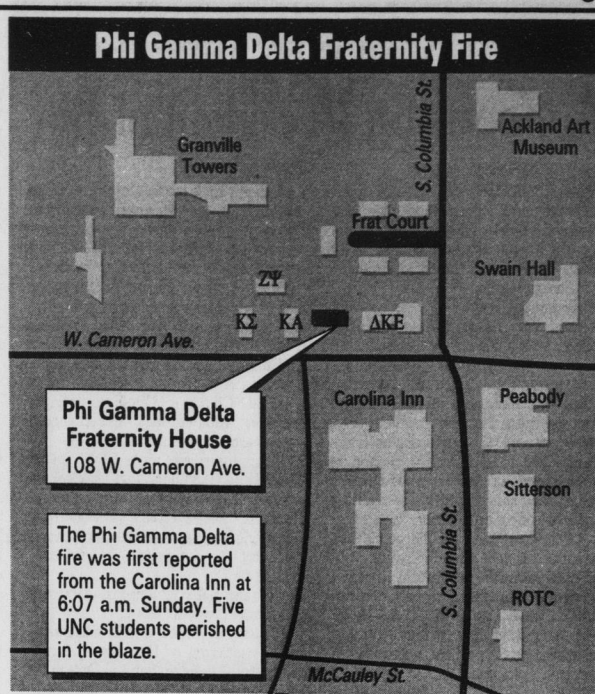
Johnson said it was not easy to check the fire safety of fraternities. "It's a constant battle when you look at fire reports and inspections," he said. Those who live in the house claim that non-residents used up fire extinguishers, immobilized their alarms and caused other safety hazards, he said. "Eighteen to 20, 21-year olds have a limited concept of possible risk and hazard," he said.

Jones said most college students probably had not even determined the best way to escape a building in case of a fire. "By not anticipating how to escape, they are put at a higher risk," he said.

Binder said that he worked cooperatively with the fire department to make sure that the 34 Greek houses toe the line. If a fraternity did not correct its violations after a month, the fire marshal contacted Binder. Binder said he was never contacted about the Phi Gamma Delta house not meeting the standards.

He said that he was hampered by the fact that the University does not own any of the property and therefore could not make decisions for the property owners—typically alumni of the organizations.

"I certainly will do anything I can to convince them that it's in their best interest



DTH/CHRIS KIRKMAN



DTH/ KATHLEEN OEHLEK

Firefighters prepare to combat the fire at 108 West Cameron Ave. early Sunday morning.

to bring the house back up to code," Binder said.

While the Office of Greek Affairs cannot make organizations go beyond the fire regulations, some students have decided to approach the subject differently.

Student Body President Aaron Nelson said that the safety and security committee of student government was creating a presentation on fire safety to present at all Greek houses at the start of the year to help them think about what they would do if their house caught fire.

He said student government was also discussing holding a fund raiser to benefit an appropriate charity such as the burn center.

Pulling Together

Many people noted the compassion that was shown in the time of crisis.

"The way that the University community and the Greek community pulled together has made it very much something that we can deal with, Binder said. "I'm not sure that we could have dealt with it if people had not pulled together."

The Carolina Inn received kudos from several sources. Their employees reported the fire, and the managers responded quickly to the crisis. The hotel set up an information hotline, an investigation room

and a counseling room.

The University is still providing counseling services through Student Psychological Services and the University Counseling Center.

The Office of Student Affairs is planning to provide the three Greek organizations who lost members with special counseling services. Alpha Delta Pi sorority, of which Howell was a member, and Phi Gamma Delta have already utilized this service.

Binder said the University was not limiting the services to those three groups.

Other organizations also reached out to those affected by the tragedy. A coalition of campus ministers assembled at the Carolina Inn on Sunday to help those afflicted.

Soon after news of the fire spread, Phi Kappa Sigma and Pi Kappa Phi fraternities offered rooms to anyone who might have lost their place for the summer. The Phi Gamma Delta house typically closed for the duration of summer break, unlike other fraternity houses which stay open and rent out rooms to members and non-members. Binder said the house was going to be closed for this summer soon after members left town.

"Normally they close the house. That's why there weren't very many people there," he said.

STUDENTS

FROM PAGE 1

roles: swimmer and swim coach, fraternity pledge of the year, student body president of his high school and Shaken Not Stirred band member.

"I've never met anyone who was more energetic, had more enthusiasm for life," said Jason Hughes, Weaver's freshman year roommate. "He was exciting to be around, exciting to be with."

Many others also spoke of the Rocky Mount junior as full of life.

Libba Weaver searched for the right word and said her son had always been "very effervescent."

"No matter what he was doing, he approached it with a lot of enthusiasm," she said. "He was happy almost all the time."

Weaver was able to keep a close watch on her son since teaching him in the second grade at Rocky Mount Academy. Smith and Strickland were in her class as well.

Others monitored his progress at the academy.

Paul Proctor, Assistant Headmaster for Rocky Mount Academy, said, "Josh had good ideas, he asked thought provoking questions. He challenged you, especially through his application of knowledge."

Weaver and five or six of his classmates formed a band in high school, Shaken Not Stirred, that played around town.

"He had a great love of music," Proctor said.

That love of music continued at UNC where Josh played in another band, The Willets. He played venues in Wilmington, Durham and at a bar in Chapel Hill.

Weaver swam competitively for 10 years throughout high school. Once he came to UNC, he returned to coaching. Libba Weaver said he really loved the work and he had planned on coaching a team again this summer.

Some of the boys he had coached presented his mother with a T-Shirt signed by the team as a token of their sorrow.

"Josh had a deep sensitivity for young children. He was involved in swimming and was a lifeguard. I think his attachment to children filled a gap in his life since he was an only child," Proctor said.

Weaver joined Phi Gamma Delta his freshman year, receiving the pledge of the year award. He also served as the fraternity's recording secretary.

Libba Weaver said, "He loved that fraternity, as we do. We think that's just a wonderful group of guys. We know almost all of them."

Some friends may find solace in the multitude of Weaver's accomplishments.

Hughes said, "I'm saddened by the fact that he won't be able to graduate like we did Sunday. But he doesn't need a piece of paper a degree to show that off as proof of his education. He accomplished a lot."

Weaver graduated from Rocky Mount Academy in 1993. He is survived by his parents Libba and Gary.

Mark Strickland

Where Mark Strickland walked with his good friend Josh Weaver, the younger children at Rocky Mount Academy would follow.

"They were sort of like pied pipers while

they were here. All the little kids gathered around them," Proctor said. "They were good role models for the little guys."

Friends and family describe Mark as a personable, affable man who always had a smile on his face.

"He was a very sensitive young man, and he didn't like to step on anyone's toes," said Hank Strickland, Mark's father.

Jason Harrell, 21, met Strickland eight years ago. They played on the same basketball team in high school. "He was the perfect gentleman, the perfect citizen—nobody ever said a bad word against him," Harrell said.

In high school, Strickland participated in National Honor Society, served as senior class president and participated in sports.

"He was very good at basketball, soccer and tennis, all of which he played," Proctor said.

Strickland spent a lot of time on athletics, but he still maintained close family ties.

"Mark was very sensitive to his younger brothers. They were very strongly bonded together," Proctor said. Strickland started a lawn service in high school, and he got his brothers to help him.

Strickland's father said he shared a similar bond with his friends.

Hank Strickland said, "We always teased him—as soon as he came home he had 20 calls from friends wanting to talk to him."

Harrell said, "We really are going to miss him."

Strickland said that even through the family's grief, they recognized all that his son has accomplished.

"He had 21 good years of quality. He was cut short on quantity," he said. "We wish he was going to be here longer."

Strickland graduated from Rocky Mount Academy in 1993. He is survived by his parents, Rita and Hank; and brothers, Jeff, David and Steven.

Anne McBride Smith

Anne McBride Smith grew up with Josh Weaver and Mark Strickland in the tightly-knit community of Rocky Mount. She and Weaver became fast friends as toddlers after the Weavers first moved to town.

The friendships continued throughout the years, according to family and friends.

"She enjoyed knowing the boys at the Phi Gam house. She always said she really liked the eastern North Carolina boys," said Anne's mother, Mary Sue Smith. "Mark Strickland, whom she died with, was like her brother, and Josh Weaver, too. They had been just the best of friends since kindergarten."

Smith led an active high school life. She was captain of the tennis team, editor of her yearbook and an honor student, but she still found time to maintain these friendships throughout high school and into college.

Even after she joined Pi Beta Phi sorority, Smith visited her Rocky Mount friends at Phi Gamma Delta.

Smith, Strickland and Weaver had been home for a while since final exams and had left Rocky Mount Saturday afternoon to come back to Chapel Hill for graduation

weekend parties. They planned on returning by lunch Sunday for Mother's Day, a long-time friend of the family said.

This effort to spend time with family and friends characterized Smith, said those who knew her well.

"To describe Anne is to describe someone whose life was her friends and her family," Mary Sue Smith said. "Her dad and I feel so blessed that she knows that she was so cherished. And we know that she cherished us."

Pat Mauldin, a long-time friend of the Smith family who has daughters close to Anne McBride Smith's age, described Smith as "one of those people everyone loved."

"She was always 'Annie' here," she said. "She was very petite. She was just a cute, lively person—had dark brown hair, big eyes, always had a smile."

Mary Sue Smith said that her daughter had had a very satisfying semester studying English with professors that she admired. She also greatly enjoyed time spent in her sorority.

Her mother said that Anne Smith told her that her sorority sisters often came to sit in her room and talk.

"She just had that way of making other people so good about themselves that they really sought out her company," she said. "When she came in, it seemed as though the room would light up and everyone was happier."

"Everyone was just drawn to her," Mauldin said.

A sorority sister said, "She was just always smiling, always really friendly. She was a great girl. Everyone liked Anne. We'll all miss her because she brought a lot to everybody."

"There's so much you can say about Anne I wouldn't know where to begin," she said.

Smith graduated from Northern Nash High School in 1993. She is survived by parents Mary Sue and Timothy; two sisters, Catherine and Rebecca; and brother Tim.

Joanna Howell

"She was born late, she walked and talked and teethered early," said Dan Howell, Joanna Howell's father. "She read books with her mother from Dr Seuss to all the current romances."

"She could recite (Lewis Carroll's) 'Jabberwocky' from memory from age 4 on."

This emphasis on language continued during Howell's life as she worked her way from reporting for her high school paper to becoming the Spring 1995 assistant editorial page editor for The Daily Tar Heel.

Her journalism professors noted her tenacity and intelligence.

Beth Koehler, a journalism graduate student who worked closely with Howell, said, "As a teacher, I think she was the best kind of student you could have. Not only did she have a lot of potential, she was very smart. But you also saw a lot of realized growth, because she worked so hard."

Associate Professor of Journalism and Mass Communications Cathy Packer said, "It hurts to lose any student, but it really hurts to lose a student like that—a student with endless potential."

One of Howell's friends said that she had really worked hard for her grade in Packer's class and had been very excited last week when she found out her grade.

Family and friends said Howell did well in all fields.

"She was our daughter and we loved her very much. She seemed to have a bright future ahead of her," her father said. "She was excited about things and energetic."

Chris Yates, who worked with Howell on the Spring 1996 DTH editorial board, said, "My first impression, and the impression I would still claim, was she was very outgoing, very interested in you—in people."

She joined Alpha Delta Pi sorority her freshman year, and her father said that she enjoyed the social outlets that it provided.

Howell also followed a rigorous physical training schedule, and many people regularly spotted her jogging through campus or in town.

"I'm going to miss seeing her on Franklin Street. I used to see her running on Franklin Street all the time," Koehler said.

Her brothers share her love for running. Howell spent Saturday, May 11 with her parents watching her younger brother compete in a track meet before returning to Chapel Hill and eventually attending the fateful Phi Gamma Delta pre-graduation party.

Friends admitted that Howell's strength could cow people.

"Joanna was one of those people that if you didn't know her, she intimidated you," said Julie Gasperini, student body treasurer. "But once you got to know her, really know her—and she never opened herself to many people—then you'd love her."

Howell was in the process of moving next door to Gasperini.

"I'm not the most religious person—and neither was she—but there has to be a reason," Gasperini said. "She had so

much to share with people."

Howell graduated from Apex High school in 1993, where she was a cheerleader, ran track and was in the National Honor Society.

Howell survived by her parents, Daniel and Jan; and her brothers, Robbie, Tommy and Michael.

Ben Woodruff

Randy Worth lives two doors down from the Woodruffs, and went to school with Leon and Bonnie, the parents of Ben Woodruff.

"We've been neighbors for about 10 years, but we've been in the same neighborhood for longer, about 20 years."

Worth had seen Ben Woodruff since he was six years old. "He always had an infectious smile, but was a well-mannered, pleasant kid," he said. "He always had a twinkle in his eye. He was a busy little boy, always into things."

The Raleigh neighborhood of about eight houses on a cul-de-sac holds an annual Christmas party. "I remember him sitting on Santa's lap as a very young boy," he said. "As he got older, he was a helper for Santa."

"As we took gifts around to people on the streets, he always delivered them for his family."

Worth often saw Ben mowing the lawn for his father, and getting ready for soccer games.

"Some of the time I'd take a walk and see him in his soccer clothes. He was a good soccer player, on a good team," he said. "I remember a few years ago, I had a good conversation with him about soccer."

"He was just a pleasant kid with a real nice pleasant smile—a real pretty little boy and a handsome young man," Worth said.

Charles Riddle, rector at St. Michael's Episcopal, said Woodruff had served as an acolyte and also attended the church's kindergarten. "Ben was a very likeable

person. He was a big old friendly guy," he said.

"He's been a part of this parish here his entire life," Riddle said. "It's a loss for their family and for our entire church community."

"This world is a transitory situation, even if you live to be 80. Ben only lived a fourth of that, but you have to believe that something outside earth will be better."

"We are people of hope, but that doesn't mean we don't grieve," Riddle said.

Woodruff graduated from Broughton High School in 1993. He is survived by his parents, Leon and Bonnie, and a sister Molly Elizabeth.

Real World Pain

Five young people will no longer be a part of the University community. Five students will not share in the thrill that their peers felt by donning a Carolina blue graduation gown and walking triumphantly down the aisles of Kenan Stadium.

Funerals for the five students took place in their hometowns on Tuesday and Wednesday. Student and University leaders have planned a ceremony of remembrance at 7 p.m. Monday in the Carolina Inn's Presidential Ballroom.

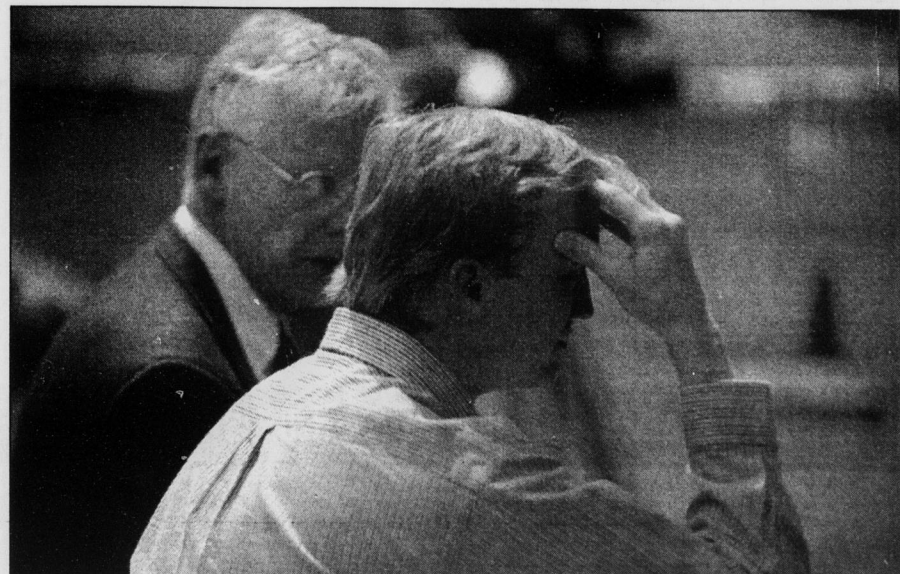
But no matter how many services are held, the pain lives on.

"This is the type of situation no student body president can solve and no chancellor can keep from happening. It's just a human tragedy that's a part of life. Now we feel the rawest part of life," Chris Yates said.

"They say we're not in the real world, but this is real pain, real tragedy."

The pain has become all too real to five North Carolina families.

Mary Sue Smith has no explanation for the fire that took her daughter's life. "I'm just so sorry that their lives have been cut short," she said. "We just wanted these young people to achieve happiness."



DTH/ KATHLEEN OEHLEK

Dean of Students Fred Schroeder comforts a grieving student across the street from the Phi Gamma Delta house.