

A dozen injured, over 60 homeless following three-alarm fire in Newark

By KINGA BORONDY

Firefighters plucked several residents of a Newark apartment building from ledges, while three people jumped from upper-story windows to escape a three-alarm blaze that erupted yesterday, injuring at least a dozen people and leaving more than 60 homeless.

When firefighters arrived at the blazing building at 9:14 a.m., they rescued at least four people from the third-floor roofs of bay windows at 119 and 121 Oliver St., said Larry Krieger, a department spokesman.

Fire officials said the blaze originated in a closet area on the first floor of 121 Oliver St. The fire raced around the E-shaped building, roaring through the connecting hallways and along the common roof to 117, 119 and 123 Oliver St., Krieger said.

One resident who jumped from an upper story was hospitalized for a broken leg. Winfield Washington was in fair condition at St. James Hospital in Newark last night, according to a spokeswoman.

Francesca Soares, 28, her one-month-old son Tony and Paule Incarnacao were all treated for smoke inhalation at St. James Hospital, the spokeswoman said.

Robert Wilson of 121 Oliver St. said he heard a "bang," opened the door to investigate and saw "the fire was coming toward me." He grabbed his five-year-old daughter Robin and tried to escape the flames.

When the third-floor resident tried the back door, he found it blocked by smoke and was forced to climb out onto the roof of the second-floor bay window, clutching his daughter.

"I was going to jump onto the roof of the van, but the people on the street told me not to," Wilson said, pointing to a black van parked next to the building.

Wilson heeded the advice, and stood on the ledge until firefighters arrived.

Battalion Chief Joe Miller steadied the ladder while his son Joe, also a firefighter, and chief's aid Andy Marcell climbed. The younger Miller pulled the girl from her father's arms, and Marcell helped the 30-year-old man down the ladder.

"I don't know how the guy stood there with the flames and smoke behind him, holding his daughter in his arms without jumping," Battalion Chief Miller said. "It took a lot of courage to do what he did."

A woman and another child were rescued from the neighboring bay window roof by Deputy Chief John Griggs and Capt. William Formisano of Engine 27, and firefighter Charles Bishop of Engine 14.

While firefighters were battling the blaze, staff and teachers from the Oliver Street School aided the fire victims, leading them into the warm building and offering them food, drink, clothing and a shoulder to lean on.

Wilson praised Sylvester Dobson, who reassured him while he stood on the ledge with his daughter and comforted him after the harrowing experience.

Anthony Savoca, school principal, added his own praise for his staff and teachers, including Salvatore Ferrugia, who went and banged on doors when he saw the blaze, in an effort to rouse the residents.

"I'm proud of them all; they did a fine job," Savoca said, adding the students are already planning a bake sale Tuesday to raise money for the displaced families. Some of the eight children who lived in the blackened building will be staying with their teachers from the school.

Savoca also commended eighth-grade student Luis Gonzalez, who pulled the fire alarm outside the building.

Gonzalez was one of three people who alerted the fire department. A passing garbage truck reported the incident to Engine 14, the company stationed about a block away, as did teachers from the school.

Jeannine Esteves, a teacher at the school and a resident of 119 Oliver St., was preparing her eighth-grade class to salute the flag when she looked out the window and noticed the fire.

Esteves said she entrusted her class to another teacher and ran out after Angel Knight, one of her students, who lived at 123 Oliver St.

Knight said he ran downstairs to help his mother, who was home when the fire broke out. "My granddad was



Firemen rescue tenants from a burning apartment building on Oliver Street in Newark

telling my mother to go out the back door," he said.

His grandfather, Joe Knight, was sitting at a table in his first-floor apartment when he heard an explosion in the apartment next door.

Injuries ranged from broken bones to bumps and bruises. Two firefighters were injured.

Donald Alexander was struck in the head by falling debris and was being treated at United Hospitals last night. A second firefighter, Anthony Giorgio, suffered injuries to his hip and elbow when he fell on the stairs. He was treated and released from University Hospital.

Treated at St. Michael's Hospital were: Ann Weldon, 30, for smoke inhalation, Michelle Washington for back and neck injuries suffered when she jumped out of a second-floor

window, and Lendell Tucker, 31, for a bruised shoulder and cuts suffered when he jumped out of his first-floor window.

United Hospitals treated Sharrie Travelee, 27, for hip injuries and bruises, and her one-year-old daughter Tara for head injuries. The mother was released, while her daughter was admitted for observation.

The American Red Cross assisted 15 families, said Tom Ostapiej, a spokesman. Most of the families were relocated with relatives, but the 40 adults and 23 children will be relying on the organization for help with finding rental units and buying clothing, food and furniture needed to set up housekeeping.

"We're using generous donations from the American public," Ostapiej said, adding donations can be earmarked for the Oliver Street fire victims.

4 teen troublemakers arrested in wild chase

By MICHAEL A. WATTKIS

Four teenagers, all with "extensive" juvenile records, have been arrested in Newark following a chase in which they attempted to elude police in a stolen vehicle driven on three wheels for about five miles through three towns, Orange police said.

The juveniles, 14, 15 and two of them 16 and all of Newark, were arrested at 10:48 p.m. Wednesday near Bergen Street and Shephard Avenue by Newark police following the chase which began on Reynolds Terrace in Orange, according to Orange Police Director Charles Cobbett.

The juveniles, whose names were not released, were slapped with a total of 16 charges, including possession of a stolen vehicle, eluding police, possession of burglary tools and having a fake pistol, Cobbett said.

He said the toy gun and an assortment of burglary tools were recovered from the vehicle, which had been reported stolen in Irvington on Tuesday.

"If one of these four juveniles had pulled that fake pistol and pointed it at the police officers, we could be looking at a different story today," Cobbett said, alluding to a potential shooting.

Three of the youngsters were re-

leased in the custody of their parents, while the fourth was lodged in the Essex County Youth House in Newark.

Cobbett said the incident began when a resident called police to report someone trying to steal a car in a lot of an apartment building on Reynolds Terrace.

When Detective Lt. Joseph Pagano and Officer Darryl Butler responded, they saw the vehicle with the four boys driving at a high rate of speed across the front lawn of the building, then onto South Center Street toward South Orange, the director said.

The officers began a pursuit and unsuccessfully attempted to pull the car over, Cobbett said. The left front wheel fell off the stolen car while it was traveling at about 30 mph. The 15-year-old suspect nevertheless kept driving and turned onto South Orange Avenue in South Orange and headed toward Newark.

The Orange police officers called Newark police for backup and continued trailing the stolen car. The juveniles abandoned the vehicle at a roadblock at Bergen Street and Shephard Avenue, Cobbett said.

They were arrested after a brief chase on foot and turned over to Orange police.

Newark gets approval to raze housing units

By FREDERICK W. BYRD

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) yesterday gave final approvals to contracts for the demolition of the Columbus Homes public housing complex in Newark.

A spokesman for the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) said contractors will be given notice by Monday to begin preparing the buildings for demolition, and "implosion of the five vacant buildings should take place in a maximum of 10 weeks."

The spokesman, Benjamin Quattlebaum, continued, "There are three occupied buildings there and a final decision on when they will be demolished has not been made."

Meanwhile, Councilman Donald Tucker said the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing plans to file suit to stop the entire demolition.

According to Quattlebaum, NHA submitted contracts for asbestos removal, demolition and debris removal to HUD in November. The contracts call for \$3,410,728 in expenditures.

He said, "NHA has received formal commitment from HUD for funding to replace all 1,506 units at Colum-

bus Homes with new units of construction over the next five years.

"One hundred and ninety-four units have been approved for funding between April 1 and March 31 next year, and the remainder will be phased in over the following four years," he added.

Quattlebaum noted, "NHA has completed 390 townhouse units and occupied them over the last three years." He added that 101 units are currently under construction at the former site of Scudder Homes, at Court and Lincoln streets.

"NHA has received site approval for 124 townhouses on Irvine Turner Boulevard and is awaiting site approval for an additional 147," he said.

In a master plan approved some five years ago, NHA said it plans to demolish virtually all high-rise public housing for families and replace it with low-rise structures or townhouses.

Several public interest groups have condemned the plan, saying it would further diminish the already low stock of low-income housing in Newark.

Tucker yesterday said he could not give specifics of the lawsuit until it is filed.

Woman arrested in fatal stabbing

Newark police arrested a city woman on homicide charges after her live-in boyfriend died of stab wounds in a city hospital, police said yesterday.

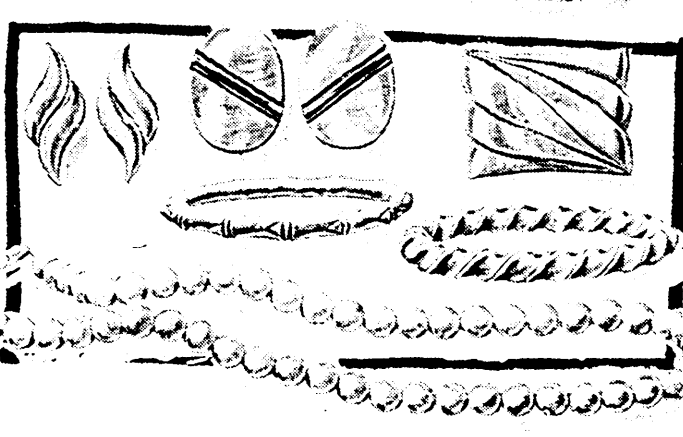
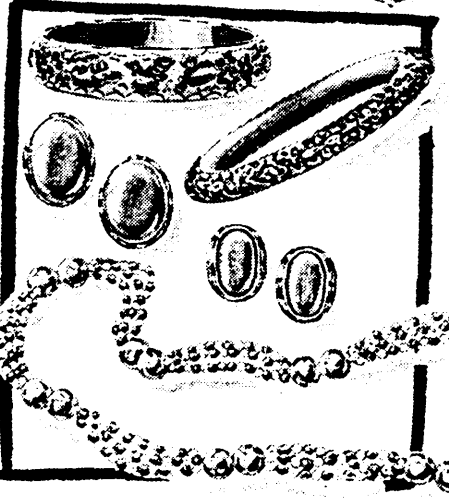
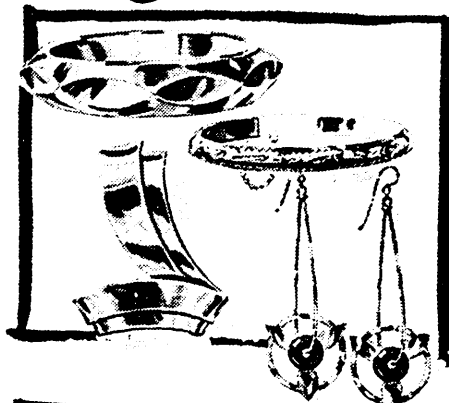
Hank Dillon, an investigator from the prosecutor's office, was at University Hospital on Wednesday checking an unrelated incident when a nurse told him a stabbing victim had just died in the emergency room, said Lt. John Reid, a police spokesman.

The victim, Jefferson Curry, 57, of 204 North 9th St., was pronounced dead at 10:20 p.m. Wednesday, police said.

Homicide Detectives James Fultz and Carmine DeMaio went to the victim's home and interviewed his live-in girlfriend, other residents of the apartment and the neighbors before arresting the woman, Gwendolyn Motley, 38, on homicide charges, Reid said.

The woman had told police Curry was involved in a fight before coming home and said he went straight to the bedroom, sat down and fell asleep, Reid said. Motley told the detectives she called for help when she heard he was having difficulty breathing.

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