

Fire does heavy damage to IU fraternity house

By DAVE ASHENFELTER
Courier-Tribune Staff Writer

Fire caused heavy damage late this morning to the Chi Phi Fraternity house at 1400 N. Jordan.

The blaze started in a sleeping room on the southwest corner of the masonry building, according to several witnesses who were in the house at the time.

Bloomington Fire Chief Ed Miller reported the fire had a good head start by the time his men arrived at the scene.

No injuries had been reported at press time.

Miller said most of the outer structure could be saved but that the top floor would be destroyed.

Extensive smoke and heat damage was reported throughout. The fire appeared to be under control at noon.

The room in which the fire started measures 25 feet square and provides

sleeping quarters for six members.

Jerry Hicks and Jeremy Jones, both members of the fraternity, said they discovered the fire shortly after 11 a.m. "When I got there," Jones said, "all the beds were on fire."

He said the heat was so intense he could not enter the room. He said he and Hicks used four fire extinguishers trying to extinguish the fire, "but we ran out of extinguishers."

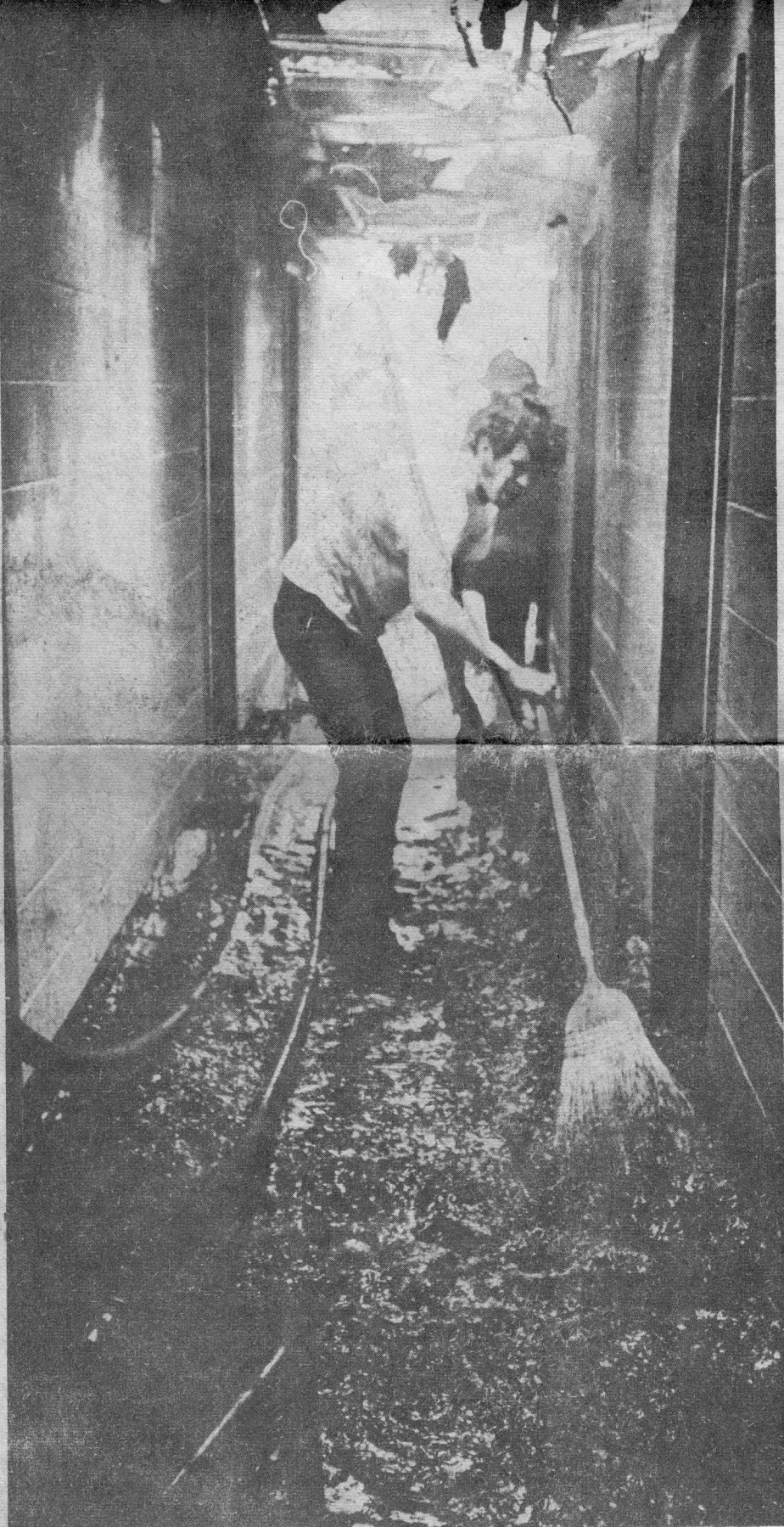
Jones said when the fire was discovered the entire room was involved and the ceiling was starting to fall.

This was the second major fraternity house fire at Indiana University in the last 18 months.

The Sigma Alpha Epsilon house was destroyed by fire Nov. 7, 1969, when a hot plate was left plugged into a wall socket. Flames spread from the President's suite on the second floor, travelled south through the hallway and burned up.

"Everything I had was in that room"
—Don Johnston, Chi Phi member





Mopping up

ids/Brian Horton

THE FIRE is over. Now the members of Chi Phi fraternity have to come back and try to pick up the pieces. This member sweeps some of the charred water-soaked debris out of the hall—to make the passage more accessible.

Damage heavy in C

By Terry English
ids Editor-in-Chief

Estimates of damage to the Chi Phi fraternity house ran "well over \$100,000" in the wake of a fire Monday that destroyed much of the structure's top floor and left members without a chapter house.

The fire began just an hour and 15 minutes after University officials had rechecked the building for fire hazards. The house is located at 17th and North Jordan.

No one was injured seriously in the blaze, although one fireman was treated for a superficial face cut.

The fire started sometime around 11:15 a.m. in an upstairs dormitory. Several house members tried unsuccessfully to put out the blaze with two small hand extinguishers. The cause of the fire was not immediately

determined. Bloomington Fire Department investigators said an electric blanket was probably at fault.

Fire inspectors return

Fire inspectors routinely checked the Chi Phi house March 23, and found only minor infractions of the fire code.

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They returned Monday morning to make sure the faults had been corrected. Satisfied with the measures the fraternity had taken to correct the problems, the inspectors left about 10 a.m.

Smoke began to seep under the door of the dormitory about 11:10 a.m. "We were playing cards," recalls one member of the fraternity, "and then we smelled smoke. We opened the door and

the whole thing was in flames."

A passing Safety Division patrolman alerted the Bloomington Fire Department at 11:23. A few minutes later, six trucks with 30 firemen answered the alarm, moving to the house in heavy traffic. Once there, the fire-fighting units were a little slow in getting at the fire because of sight-seers, heavy smoke, a ruptured hose, and because the fire hydrant was situated, for all practical purposes, too close to the house, fire officials said.

Wind fans flames

It looked as though the firemen were going to be able to confine the fire to the southeast portion of the house, but the wind continued to fan the fire. In a short time the gray clouds of smoke turned black and long arches of flames shot into the air. The windows

Chi Phi fraternity fire

along the north side began to light up with fire—one by one.

"We lost the top floor and most of the roof," Chief Ed Miller said. "The fire burned through the ceiling and into the attic. Since there are no dividers in the attic it burned right through."

A snorkel truck began pumping thousands of gallons of water into the building through the roof on the east end. Four firemen manned hoses on the other side of the house and shot water almost straight up into the dormitory section. Other firemen were standing on solid sections of the roof trying to spray water down into the blaze. The smoke got so thick at times that few people could see what was going on.

Although the blaze was apparently under control shortly after noon, half the roof collapsed into the third-floor dormitory section about 12:10 p.m.

The eastern half of the third floor

is used for dormitories; the other half of the third floor contains individual rooms. The second floor, which contains individual rooms, was not damaged by the fire but suffered severe water damage.

Eleven students who lived on the third floor lost nearly all of their belongings. Most of their things were insured, however.

Structural damage \$80,000

The Chi Phi house, without the furniture, is worth \$216,000, according to James Dawson of the I.U. Fire and Safety Division. He estimated the damage to the house structure alone at \$80,000.

This is the second fire in the Chi Phi house in the past year and the second major fraternity fire on the I.U. campus in the past 18 months. The Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house

was destroyed by fire in mid-November 1969.

The 32 members of the fraternity will move into Briscoe Quad—at least temporarily.

"We'll make this space available to them and make whatever plans we can to help them out," said Byrum E. Carter, Bloomington chancellor.

Student volunteers helped the Chi Phis carry out water-soaked clothes, scorched hi-fi component sets and coats of arms from the living-room walls.

In the midst of the salvage operation, one Chi Phi who was carrying a small suitcase, a camera case and a shave kit yelled out, "Anybody got a cigarette for an orphan?" People fumbled through their pockets. When he got a cigarette from one obliging student, he put his things down and opened up his camera bag, then went to take some pictures of the damage.

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