

1951 Mystery—

Supernatural Heat Takes Life Without Burning Surroundings

(From THE NORTHER)

By GLENN M. SPARKS, JR.

Death by fire is common. We know a great deal about how fire works and what results certain amounts of heat and fire will give us.

Or at least we think we do.

Once in awhile something happens in a fire that we can't explain.

On the morning of July 2, 1951, a Monday, Mrs. P.M. Carpenter, of St. Petersburg, Florida, went to awaken one of her roomers for coffee. Mrs. Mary H. Reeser, 67, had not been seen all morning. Unusual. Western Union had tried to deliver a telegram earlier, which brought no response from Mrs. Reeser, equally unusual since she was normally a light sleeper.

Mrs. Carpenter reached out for the door knob to Mrs. Reeser's room after receiving no answer to her knocks and quickly jerked her hand back in pain. . . the knob was unbearably hot.

GRIPPED BY PANIC

Now panic gripped Mrs. Carpenter's heart. She raced outside to summon help—any help. Her screams attracted the attention of some house painters working nearby, who rushed to her aid.

They forced the door open, took one look, and called the police.

Although the windows were wide open, the room was unbearable from the heat. The charred remains of Mrs. Reeser and her armchair lay near the front window.

Mrs. Reeser, alive, weighed 170 pounds. Her blackened remains weighed less than 20—suggestive of extreme heat. Only her left foot bones, diminutive skull and assorted vertebrae escaped total consumption. The only recognizable remains of her armchair were a few springs.

PUZZLING SITUATION

If the investigators were puzzled by the extreme damage to Mrs. Reeser and her armchair, they were doubly puzzled by the lack of damage to the room itself.

The walls and curtains were not burned—only covered with a sooty compound. A mirror nearby was cracked from the extreme heat.

Two candles not far away were completely melted but their wicks were undamaged, and these effects were found above the four-foot level only.

Below this level there were only two traces of the fire. A

small burned spot in the carpet directly below the chair and the melted plastic cover to an electric outlet socket. The latter blew a fuse and stopped her electric clock at 4:20.

Mrs. Reeser had been seen alive last at 9 the previous evening when her son, Dr. Richard Reeser, a friend, and Mrs. Carpenter had bade her goodnight. She had been wearing a rayon nightgown, cloth slippers and night coat.

UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY

Officials who thoroughly investigated the fire were utterly baffled.

Had the house been completely demolished by the 2,500-plus degrees of heat required to shrink Mrs. Reeser's skull to its final size and completely consume bones and teeth, the firemen would not have given it another thought.

But to find such lack of damage surrounding the victim was just too much.

Someday we may know more about fire and its effects but for now, the death of Mrs. Reeser must remain in the realms of the "Unexplained."

Nenana Indian Lady House Chief Clerk



MRS. CONNIE PADDOCK

This past fall, Mrs. Connie Paddock was selected for the position of Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives. In a-

chieving this title, Mrs. Paddock became the first Alaskan native to hold this office.

In her office on the second floor of the State Capitol Building in Juneau, Mrs. Paddock often puts in a twelve hour day. Her duties are numerous.

"I prepare and certify the daily journal; certify, authenticate, transmit all legislative documents and records," she explains. Other responsibilities include "keeping in safe custody all documents, records and papers in the possession of the House, and undertake assignments ordered by the presiding officer of the House."

The Chief Clerk's job is not unfamiliar to Mrs. Paddock. "I started working for the Legislature in 1957 as assistant Chief Clerk. . . No one defined my job so I did a little bit of everything."

In doing that, she ended up the session with high blood pressure. After sitting out one year, Mrs. Paddock went back to work. "I applied for a job with the Legislature," she said, "but ended up in the Governor's Office where I was secretary to the Secretary of State."

Subsequently, Mrs. Paddock served as assistant Chief Clerk for the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th State Legislatures.

At the urging of Representative John Sackett, Mrs. Paddock applied for the position of Chief Clerk this past fall. When asked to comment on her attitude toward her work, she said, "I wish I had done this a long time ago. . . I really enjoy it."

Mrs. Paddock was born in Nenana. She is Athabascan. Her husband is a contractor with Cole & Paddock, Inc. of Juneau. She has one son, Tom, Jr., who recently returned from Vietnam, and two daughters, Maxine and Susan, both attending college.

A graduate of Eklutna Boarding School, Mrs. Paddock attended Haskell Institute in Kansas.

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