

FLAMES LEAPING FROM SEWER TAKE KIDDIE'S LIVES

Turn Scenes of Joy on Street Into Tragedy

WATCHING A PARADE PASS.....

Blanket of fire envelopes children as they were filled with delight at Circus Parade; gas leak discovered following the disaster.

Flames leaping in a sudden swift flash from a sewer grating in a curb at Sixth and Muskogee Avenue yesterday morning wrapped the four children of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph V. Kissel, 715 South Delaware Avenue. Rose Mary, aged eight years, Betty Frances, six years old, Charlotte ALice, four years and Helen Grace, two years, in a blanket of deadly fire, consuming their clothing and searing their bodies, faces, heads and limbs with deep and serious burns. Betty Frances and Charlotte died yesterday afternoon in the city hospital as the result of burns they suffered. Authorities at the hospital late last night stated the other two girls, Rose Mary and Helen Grace were resting as comfortably as could be expected and that there had been no material change in the condition of either since morning. The condition of Rose Mary is regarded as critical.

Helen Grace the youngest of the four sisters, however, it is believed will recover.

TRAGEDY ENDS HAPPY SCENE

With faces beaming and eyes shining the four children were standing beside their mother watching with childish joy and excitement the end of the Barnes circus parade pass before them when a sheet of flame suddenly enveloped them.

Mrs. Kissel snatched her two year old baby Helen Grace away from the spot and and beat out the fire which was buring the childs clothing with her hands. The other three children ran screaming into the street with their clothing flaming. Mr. Kissel, father of the four girls who had been in a meat store across the street was returning to his family when the accident occured. A number of men in the crowd of hundreds of spectators who lined Sixth street and Muskogee Avenue watching the parade pass rushed to the aid of the children. Quickly taking off their coats, the men wrapped the garments about the children, smothering and extinguishing the flames which enveloped the children. The children were wrapped in clothing furnished by men and women in the crowd, were placed in motor cars and three of them rushed directly to Okmulgee city hospital. The fourth child was rushed in an automobile to the Okmulgee Clinic where physicians dressed the burns, giving first aid and was later removed to the hospital from the clinic.

FIRE QUICKLY EXTINGUISHED

An alarm of fire was telephoned to the fire department and two companies promptly responded. The Central station company was the first company to arrive on the scene reaching there within a minute or two after the alarm was turned in. Firemen found small flames issuing from the sewer grating and the pavement beside it and extinguished the fire with chemicals. Mr. and Mrs. Kissel were taken to the hospital in another automobile and they spent yesterday at the bedside of their children. The children were attended yesterday by several physicians and nurses.

Rose Mary, Betty Frances and Charlotte Alice each suffered severe burns about the body, limbs, face and head, which were quickly seen to be serious. Helen Grace received fewer and less serious burns than did her sisters.

Helen Grace the baby, physicians said, would probably recover and there was a chance for a recovery of Rose

Mary.

Mrs. Kissel was unable to tell much of the details of the accident. "A burst of flame came suddenly," she said, yesterday morning, "apparently from the sewer grating or near it and the children were in the midst of the flames in an instant. I snatched Helen Grace away and beat out the fire in her clothing with my hands. The fire singed and slightly burned my skirt and my hair was slightly singed."

Mrs. Kissel sustained painful but not serious burns about the hands and wrists received while she was aiding Helen Grace.

NOT CAUSED BY SEWER GAS

Just after the accident it was rumored that the fire had been caused by sewer gas being ignited in some unknown manner. Another report was that gas formed by gasoline or gasoline in the sewer had caught fire. City officials who visited the scene of the accident yesterday morning, however, declared they did not believe the fire was caused by either sewer gas or gasoline. They pointed out that the sewer grating from which the fire apparently issued was an opening in a sanitary storm sewer.

There was scarcely any chance of sewer gas forming a storm sewer which carries only water, city officials said. They also scoffed the theory that the fire might have been caused by gasoline which might have in some way been in the sewer, since gasoline would be carried away the same as water.

Fire Chief E.C. Custer stated last night that the fire department has three or four times extinguished small fires caused by some kind of gas at or near the same spot where the fire occurred yesterday. He added that he had at first thought the fires were caused by gasoline being poured in the sewer from some building nearby but learned that it was a storm sewer. The cause of fires in the past had never been definitely determined.

GAS LEAK DISCOVERED

A short time after the accident, employees of the Okmulgee Gas company broke through the main in the street at Sixth and Muskogee Avenue. According to the city official, a leak in the gas main was found by the workmen. The main was repaired.