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106TH YEAR, NO. 7

TEXAS' OLDEST
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CALVESTON, TEXAS, THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 1947

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NEW BLASTS HIT CITY

THE DEAD AND DESTRUCTION



Close by where the St. Grand Camp was tied up, these bodies were discovered in the remains of a Monsanto warehouse. The body just to the rear of the man holding a sheet is still in a sitting position. The man in the immediate foreground apparently was hurled on top of the oil lines from the blast.



This Monsanto warehouse was next to the dock in which the St. Grand Camp was moored before it blew up. The twisted and burned mass of steel still holds many bodies, but rescuers were unable to search it due to the heat still remaining in the beams. The automobile in the foreground is a twisted mass of rubbish similar to hundreds of other employes cars which were parked close by.

400 Known Death Toll Rising

Flying Steel Shows Area Struck Again

Reporter Returning To Devastated Scene Sees New Blast

BY ROY E. HANNA
Another blast ripped the Texas City area Thursday morning at 1:07 a. m.
I was driving along highway No. 146 and had reached the Republic Refining Corporation, when I stopped to ask permission of a state highway patrolman to interview Red Cross officials in the Texas City auditorium.
Suddenly, I looked up and noticed what appeared to be a floating rainbow rising gently into the black, smoke-filled skies above.
At first I thought it was a butane tank at Monsanto, but after an investigation found it to be another ship.
Capt. N. Farr, skipper of the Lykes tug, J. R. Duyton, said he was approximately one-half mile from the docks when the Lykes ship, Highflyer, blew up. It was docked at slip No. 4 close by the Texas City Terminal.
Capt. Duyton said he received minor cuts about the face and a piece of metal had lodged in his eye.
After I saw what was happening, I jumped out of my jeep, left it running down the road and hit the dirt in a ditch to seek protection. The ditch was full of gas and stagnant water, and I crawled into a drainage pipe to avoid the falling fragments of steel that whistled through the air like heavy artillery and showered the area for a mile or more.
Highway patrolmen and volunteer workers scattered immediately. Flames followed the blast and rose approximately 2000 feet in the air. Smoke and flames intensified similar to the earlier blasts there Wednesday morning.
There were fire fighters within the area, and I passed emergency fire fighters and ambulances streaming along the highway from Galveston to Texas City when I returned.
Four fire departments were reported at the docks fighting the fire when the two additional explosions came. Some reports indicated there were several hundred persons in the area, and I wonder how any could have survived.
Automobiles of what may have been eight seats turned around in the middle of the highway and headed back toward Galveston at 50 and 70 miles per hour.
A cafe owner at the Wye stated that he thought the blast was worse than the ones Wednesday morning as it broke out windows and doors that had not been broken previously.

Casualty List

The Dead

The death toll at Texas City had risen to an official count of 312 late last night, according to an on-the-scene News reporter.
A temporary morgue, set up in McGar's garage, the following dead had been identified: George F. Deboer, C. E. Wells, H. E. Welch, Carl Clinton, Jesse Jones, Andy Edwards, Lee Rivers, M. Aita, F. J. Lissaso, Alfred D. Comb, Hugh Diales, E. J. Katzmark, and T. H. Westerbrook, Gladewater.
Other dead, identified, at the Emken funeral home, Texas City, included: F. I. Littleman, Mrs. Pearl Davis, Anuro Torres, Thomas A. Womack, Charles Knight Filmasse, Charles W. Filabael, Constable E. E. May.
The bodies of ten victims were reported at J. Levy & Bro. funeral home late Wednesday night as follows: Henry Crawford Saylor, 2nd north, Texas City; A. J. Johnson, 308 Texas Avenue, Texas City; J. C. LaBlue, Route No. 2, Conroe; R. J. Rangel; J. R. Holladay, Standard Dredge Co.; R. H. Garza; W. J. Valigura; Jose Canales; Justo Nieto, and N. Garcia, 3224 Q. Galveston.
F. H. Bina, customs inspector of Galveston on duty at Texas City, died after being taken to a Houston hospital.

2nd Ship Explodes While Being Towed

Two new explosions rocked stricken Texas City at 1:08 a. m. Thursday, causing additional dead and injured. A second ship, the Highflyer, filled with nitrate, exploded as tugs were trying to tow it to open water.

At the same time, the captain of the Lykes Bros. tug J. R. Duyton said the dock area had been cleared.

Mounting casualty lists from hospitals and aid stations showed that at least 400 persons were dead and over 700 were injured as a result of the earlier series of explosions which almost wrecked the town about 9:19 a. m. Wednesday.

Rescue workers early Thursday still were struggling to give help to the injured yet unaided and to care for the bodies of the dead.

Estimates of the total number of deaths ranged from 450 to 1200. Injuries were reported from one source at 4000. Only a small portion of the 800 Monsanto employes were reportedly located.

The series of blasts and fires started with a blaze which was discovered in the hold of the French steamship Grand Camp at pier U about 8 a. m. Wednesday. Men tried to fight the fire, but at 9:12 a. m. a terrific blast destroyed the vessel.

In less than a minute, there was a second and greater explosion at the nearby Monsanto plant, and almost immediately there followed a third blast at the Republic oil refinery. Fires at many places followed and were still burning Thursday morning.

The fire fighting and rescue teams were hampered by the lack of electricity, gas, and water and the general confusion of the disorganized life of the town. Almost every building was damaged, and many were uninhabitable. Many persons both in Texas City and elsewhere were still trying to learn the fate of relatives and friends.

A News staff member at Texas City reported about 10 p. m. that there was free gas in the southern part of Texas City, and that fear was felt that it might be ignited.

It was impossible Wednesday night to make an even approximate estimate of what the final death count will be, but the disaster may prove to have been the nation's worst in ten years. Records of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. at Washington show that at present the loss of 682 lives in the Atlantic coast hurricane of 1938 makes that tragedy the greatest one in the ten-year period.

Virtually three-fifths of the industrial might of the petroleum, chemical and sugar shipping center was obliterated. Attended by the violence of an earthquake, the combined explosions and fires left a rectangle roughly a mile long and a half mile wide along the Texas City waterfront with a mass of burned wreckage.

Steel structures near the blast scene were left a twisted mass. Frame warehouses and homes nearby were wrecked. Terrific concussions killed birds in the air and pulled two men in an airplane down to crash deaths.

More distant from the explosion area a number of buildings, including stone structures folded up. Roofs toppled in. Windows by the thousands broke into pieces. Doors were blown off in both home and business buildings.

No structure escaped damage. The world's largest tin smelter, the Tin Processing Corporation plant, three miles west of the scene of the ship explosion in what is known in Texas City as the "sugar slip," escaped with minor damage.

The giant Pan-American Refining Corporation plant, two miles west of the slip, was undamaged as was the Carbide & Carbon Corporation property, just west of Pan-American. Completely destroyed was the Monsanto Chemical Corporation plant, built by the government for wartime use at a cost of \$18,900,000.

Monsanto properties cover about 30 acres. Under construction was the company's polystyrene plant, the first major styrene plastic plant on the Texas coast.

The original explosions blew parts of the French vessel all over the city. Steel particles of the ship and other steel structures were implanted in the ground miles away.

The properties of the Texas City Terminal Railway Co., which lost two of its top officials, were virtually destroyed. Hundreds of those injured were watching the fire aboard the St. Grand Camp when the explosion came. Eyewitnesses said they saw members of the ship's crew at work on the deck of the vessel just before it was blasted to pieces and lost in a maze of orange-colored smoke.

The heroes of the catastrophe were the scores of men who braved the inferno as the waterfront and Monsanto's plant was being eaten up by explosions and fire to rescue the injured, pull the dead to safety.

They are the men who heard the calls of the injured and dying, though faint they were in the bedlam of noise. Some donned gas masks rushed in from Fort Crockett as they neared the docks where chemical fumes were heaviest.

A thousand men helped. Bodies of the dead were put to one side as moaning men were given a lift to safety and placed in ambulances and trucks for first aid or hospitalization.

Jester and Wainwright Pledge Aid to Victims

BY LILLIAN E. HERZ
"All available facilities of the great state of Texas" were offered to the stricken people of Texas City Wednesday by Gov. Beauford Jester, who arrived here by special plane at 3 p. m. and personally inspected the devastated city, viewing with horror and dismay the raging flames and towering smoke which were sucking the very lifeblood of Texas City's industrial area.
Gov. Jester conferred with Capt. Glenn Rose, chief of the highway patrol, Chief of Police W. L. Laddish, Mayor J. C. Trahan, and other officials and put his stamp of approval on the methods that are being followed in bringing order out of chaos.
He gave assurances that the state machinery is at the service of the officials in handling the situation, and that everything possible would be done to render assistance and to provide supplies in this great emergency.
Close on the heels of Gov. Jester came Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, commanding officer of the Fourth Army, with headquarters at Fort Sam Houston. Gen. Wainwright brought with him Gen. J. R. Sheets, in charge of army activi-

ties of the Fourth Army, to assist in organization under army and state command.
Gen. Wainwright declared that he had come from San Antonio to lend all possible assistance "in this dire disaster."
The general pledged full cooperation of the army in the emergency, declaring that medical personnel, supplies of all kinds, including bedding, cots, blankets, and plasma had been dispatched to Texas City.
Assurances were given Gov. Jester by Mr. Wade that the setup in Texas City is not complex and that all police assignments come out of the office of Chief of Police Laddish. The police, including detachments sent from Galveston, Port Arthur, Houston, Beaumont, and adjacent points, army personnel from Fort Crockett, and other army posts, naval detachments and highway officers are co-operating with Texas City to the fullest extent, Mr. Wade said. All precautions are being taken to prevent looting, it was declared.
Following conferences with Mr. Wade and Chief of Police Laddish at the city hall, Gov. Jester expressed himself as believing that the situation is well in hand and that martial law would not be needed. He said if the situation becomes more critical he stands ready to place all the forces of the state at the disposal of Texas City officials. He had not ordered out the national guard, he stated.
Immediately following the arrival of the special plane at the municipal airport, the official party took off for Texas City accompanied by Mayor Fraser and other officials.
Gov. Jester was accompanied to

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BLAST BRIEFS

PLANES ARRIVE

At the Galveston municipal airport, army and navy planes were arriving at the rate of about one every 15 minutes throughout Wednesday afternoon and early Wednesday night, bringing in emergency supplies. A navy plane arriving late in the afternoon brought a whole cargo of full blood. Braniff canceled its regular flights to and from Galveston Wednesday to leave the airport free to handle the emergency traffic.

NO "TIDAL WAVE"

A check with points along the Galveston ship channel revealed that no "tidal waves" or swells were reported following the ship explosion at Texas City.
A report from the coast guard lifeboat station indicated that the shock was felt there but no waves were caused in the water. The report was identical with that received from Pier 18 informants.
Della's Boat Camp reported that a small shrimp boat midway between Texas City and Galveston was jarred by the shock but no large waves were formed.

SCOUTS MOBILIZED

Dave Way, field executive of the Bay Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, has urged all scouts, qualified as first aid men, to contact the scout office immediately. Organized units, under the direction of Mr. Way, will stand by

Government Offers Surplus Property to Texas City Residents

Dallas, April 16. (AP)—Government surplus property in the war assets administration inventory of the Houston area was offered to residents of Texas City today.
"We took this action on our own, cutting red tape to give those people the immediate relief which was so urgently needed," C. E. Rucker, administrator of zone 5 of the WAA said.
Early this afternoon Rucker was advised by R. V. Shirk, acting regional director for WAA at Houston, that supplies, including first aid materials and an ambulance, already were on their way to Texas City.
Rucker said that complete records of such disposal will be maintained but "in no circumstances will shipment be delayed in order to complete paper work."

Terrific Blasts Shake Surrounding Counties

Houston, April 16. (AP)—The Texas City blast shook Brazoria County communities as far away as Freeport, Angleton, Lake Jackson, Clute, and Brazoria, Sam Licata, Houston salesman who was in that territory Wednesday morning, reported.
Licata said the explosion was distinctly felt in those towns and created momentary panic. Volunteer fire departments left for Texas City as soon as the location of the disaster was learned.

Marshall-Stalin Parley Fails to Solve Deadlocks

Moscow, April 16. (AP)—The Kremlin conference of U. S. Secretary of State Marshall and Prime Minister Stalin, was understood today to have solved no deadlocks and the foreign ministers council slated a double meeting on Austria tomorrow in an apparent drive to end the conference.
Although Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov told the council today that the Russians desired to complete and sign the Austrian treaty at this Moscow meeting, the four ministers tangled sharply and inconclusively when he demanded reparations from German coal.
In a swiftly moving session today the ministers considered 15 of the Austrian treaty's 39 clauses, agreeing on a dozen of them and even settling some relatively minor disputes their deputies had been unable to patch up.
But Molotov's reparations demand for 12 1/2 percent of all German coal mined, with another 12 1/2 percent to be exported, was a reminder that he was not yielding on the all-important soviet demand for heavy reparations.
It was understood that Stalin adopted a similar attitude last night when he and Marshall talked, for an hour and 30 minutes in their closely guarded conference, and gave no indication of yielding any position on Germany thus far set forth by Molotov in the foreign ministers meetings.
Usually responsible sources said no commitments of any kind were made last night, either by Marshall or Stalin, and no compromise suggestions were advanced.

Galveston Pilot Still Missing

Capt. Henry G. Dallehite, Galveston pilot still is reported missing since the explosion on the Texas City docks Wednesday morning. Mrs. Dallehite, who accompanied her husband to the searain docks, was thrown from the parked automobile in which she was waiting for her husband.
From information received from her home, where she is recovering from shock, Capt. Dallehite was last seen standing on the dock just before the explosion that demolished the dock. No Dallehite was reported admitted to any of the hospitals.
The Dallehite car was reportedly demolished completely.

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Board Named To Probe Blast Cause

Fire Aboard Freighter Apparently Led to Texas City Disaster

BY G. C. GRIFFIN
News Marine Editor
A fire on the French freighter Grand Camp, discovered about 8 a. m. Wednesday when longshoremen uncovered hatches of the vessel to start loading, was the apparent cause of the series of explosions and fires which destroyed much of Texas City, but details about the cause of the disaster could not be determined by authorities at this port during the day.
The coast guard headquarters at Washington named yesterday afternoon a three-man investigating board to seek the cause of the fire and ensuing blast on the ship. The members are: Rear Adm. C. T. Twilley, New Orleans, chairman; Capt. Joseph A. Kerrins, Washington, secretary of the merchant marine council, and Lt. Com. H. F. Cobb, chief marine inspection officer here. William T. Butler, chief of the hazard prevention section in the merchant marine safety office at Washington coast guard headquarters, has been named technical adviser to the board.
Lt. Com. Cobb said Wednesday night he had not heard from the other board members, but that he expected them to arrive here Thursday.
Start of the official investigation must await action by the board chairman, he said. Meanwhile, Com. Cobb said, local coast guard energies are being devoted to rescue work, and the coastguardmen have had little opportunity to make a probe of the tragedy's cause.
The fire started in No. 4 hold of the Grand Camp, Edward Westerman, manager of the local office of E. S. Binning, agent for the vessel, said that he received an emergency long distance call about 8:30 a. m. which informed him of the fire and he ordered two tugs to assist the vessel. He received no further information, he said, until he felt the explosions in his office in the United States National Bank building.
Late Wednesday, Mr. Westerman said that he had seen the Grand Camp's carpenter at a hospital, and learned of three other members of the crew being at local hospitals, but that he had been unable to locate them.

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The Weather
East Texas, including Galveston: Partly cloudy, warmer in interior Thursday; Friday partly cloudy, scattered showers extreme southern portion, warmer; moderate north to northeast winds becoming southeasterly by Friday.
Other United States weather bureau data on page 7.