

Woman dies in blaze

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A house fire early Saturday morning at 731 W. Boulevard claimed the life of the 61-year-old woman who lived alone there.

Mary A. Ellers died of smoke inhalation in the blaze, which was reported to Kokomo Fire Department units at 3:53 a.m.

The fire apparently started on the ground floor of the two-story structure, according to Ellers' neighbors, Ronald L. and Frances J. Smeltzer of 729 W. Boulevard.

The Smeltzers said they heard a knock at their front door early Saturday morning. When they opened the door, they said, they saw a car drive away. That was when they noticed flames coming from Ellers' house next door to the west.

James Doak, a fire department fire investigator, said Frances Smeltzer reported the fire. He said she tried to telephone Ellers but the fire had apparently rendered the phone inoperable. Doak also said Ronald Smeltzer went next door to Ellers' home and beat on the doors, but the woman didn't answer.

The doors to the house were locked and secure when firefighters arrived, Doak said.

Fire and smoke traveled up the walls in the house and went into the ceiling, the investigator said, and the structure was described as a near-total loss. Most of the damage was to the bottom part of the house, he added.

Four fire trucks, an ambulance and a chief's car were summoned in the first call, which had units out until 11:57 a.m. Only one engine was summoned when the fire rekindled at 12:29 p.m. and was there 11 minutes. Also on the scene was Lt. Ralph Stroup of the Kokomo Police Department.

Doak said Ellers was in the house alone with her dog, and firefighters found her and her dog upstairs in a bathroom doorway.

"It looked like she had walked into the bathroom and saw she couldn't get out there and then collapsed in the doorway," he said.

Another neighbor, Darrel Hodson, 803 W. Boulevard, said he didn't learn of the fire until shortly before 7 a.m. He said he came downstairs and saw the lights of the fire trucks.

"I couldn't tell if there were flames, but you could see lots of smoke after daylight," Hodson said. "There was smoke everywhere."

When asked if arson was suspected, Doak said a full report will be released Monday. Hodson, who also knew Ellers as a landlady, drew a long breath and summed up the situation.

"It's a tragic thing," he said.



City firefighters prepare equipment



Units were there more than eight hours

(Tribune photos by Ed Hubbard)

Mimi Ellers

M.A. "Mimi" Ellers, 61, 721 W. Boulevard, died at her home early Saturday morning, Jan. 26, 1985. Arrangements are pending at Ellers Mortuary.

Ellers services

Services for Mary A. "Mimi" Ellers, 61, 731 W. Boulevard, will be at 8 p.m. Tuesday in First Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Walter Ungerer will officiate. Private entombment will be in Sunset Memory Gardens Mausoleum.

Friends may call from 5 p.m. until time for the services at the church Tuesday. Memorials may be made to St. Joseph Memorial Hospital Foundation Fund.



Mary A. Ellers

Ellers died early Saturday, Jan. 26, 1985, at her home. She was born in Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 4, 1923, the daughter of John B. and Marie Litton (Howe) Ransom Jr.

Nov. 9, 1945, she married Gale W. Ellers, who died Dec. 3, 1982.

She had served as president of Ellers Mortuary Inc. for the past two years. She had taught kindergarten and was a swim instructor for many years in Kokomo. Ellers had taught swimming at YMCA, YWCA, Kokomo High School and Kokomo Swim Club.

A volunteer at St. Joseph Memorial Hospital, Ellers had attended the University of Mississippi. She was a member of First Presbyterian Church, Kokomo Country Club, Kokomo Greek Club, Delta Delta Delta Sorority and Junior League of Nashville.

Surviving are a daughter, Dr. Mary "Beth" Ellers of Rehoboth, Mass.; her mother, Marie Howe of Shawnee, Tenn.; two brothers, Harry Ransom of Nashville, Tenn., and John B. Ransom III of Shawnee.