

LOUISE BOUVIER

There were six in the party journeying from Southbridge, Mass. for an evening of fun and merriment in the "big city". Louise was escorted by Steve Casavant. Steve's sister Rita and her husband Hiram Bellows together with Ray Martell and his wife Ruth completed the group. They entered the Cocoanut Grove through the Piedmont street revolving door and in spite of having no reservations, were seated for dinner in the main dining room. Louise remembers the club being "very crowded, mobbed, mobbed".

Having ordered dinner Steve and Louise joined many other revellers on the dance floor. When the orchestra finished playing and, as they were returning to their table she saw from the direction of the Caricature bar "just a flash, a black curtain" and then, as she breathed felt "hot, gassy air". She fell, unconcious, to the floor.

How long the young girl's still form remained senseless while fire and smoke roared around and above can only be guessed but as conciousness returned to her she found herself trapped under "a pile of people" and she heard herself hollering. Through her pain and panic she could hear a voice in the distance saying "there's one in here and she's screaming her head off. Help me move this table". Having been doused with water from fire hoses Louise was soaking wet when brought outside into the chill

night. Someone draped a fur coat over the shoulders of the shaking girl and, through her pain she said, "I don't know you"!! The next memory she had was a rapid ride to the Boston City Hospital in the back of a police wagon.

Louise's friend, Ruth Martell, was subjected to virtually the same experience later regaining consciousness on the emergency floor of the Boston City Hospital. Several weeks later, on the day before Christmas, Ruth would leave the hospital to return to Southbridge and her infant child, as a widow. For her husband Ray, together with Louise's escort Steve and the Bellows couple had succumbed to the poisonous smoke and their charred bodies were later recovered by firefighters where they had fallen.