500 Facts About the Cocoanut Grove

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This summary of 500 facts of the Cocoanut Grove fire has been meticulously compiled by Cocoanut Grove historian David W. Blaney, a founding member of the Memorial Committee, from numerous public and private sources in a decades-long process to identify and honor each fire casualty.

1. First and foremost, the number of persons killed in the 1942 Cocoanut Grove fire disaster in Boston was 490, not the 492, or 498 (or any other count) so often reported in retrospectives.

2. The origin of the much-repeated erroneous casualty counts can be traced to the earliest death lists compiled by news organizations in the confusion of the first days following the fire, which contained both omissions and duplicate listings.

3. From the start the Associated Press wire service reported the final number of Grove dead as 492, while the competing United Press recognized the casualty count (correctly) at 490.

4. But, in February 1945 the UP subsequently added to its list of Grove dead the name of fire survivor Helen Gross, who died of unrelated causes (and who had never fully recovered), for a new total of 491, while the AP left its count unchanged at 492.

5. Since that time, the numbers 490, 491, and 492 have been reported almost interchangeably, resulting in the misconception that the actual number of Grove casualties was never ascertained.

6. The official final Boston Committee on Public Safety list of Grove fire casualties, published in November 1943, correctly stated a count of 490 dead in the heading, but the unnumbered list included only 489 victim names.

7. The one victim name omitted from the final official master list of casualties was that of Wilbur Meserve, age 25, Washington, DC (formerly of Winchester, MA); he appeared on the annotated working draft of the same list (which still exists).

8. Of the 489 victims actually present on the final Boston Committee on Public Safety master list of Cocoanut Grove casualties, no less than 30 surnames of deceased were misspelled.

9. The surname spellings of 13 hospitalized were also spelled incorrectly.

10. Two victim surnames on the official master list of casualties were completely incorrect: Vera Ann Cedrone, age 34, Boston, was shown as Vera A. DeCosta (a former married surname, misspelled), and Howard A. Guy, age 37, New York, NY, was shown as Guy A. Howard (a corruption of his stage name "Guy Howard").

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11. Henry "Hank" Minott, New England News Manager for the United Press wire service, in mid-1944 launched a campaign to correct the (often erroneous) reported Grove casualty count to 490.

12. In a letter dated August 10, 1944, Mr. Minott wrote to the National Fire Protection Association: "Gentleman: I note that reports issued by your organization continue to list the death toll of the Cocoanut Grove holocaust as 492."

13. Also: "Several months ago the...Public Safety Committee discovered two duplications in the original death list, and this whittled the toll down to 490...So the death toll is being officially recorded as 490" (he was correct).

14. The total number of identified persons who were inside the club proper at the moment the fire began stood at 938 (as of the 2023 dedication of the Grove fire memorial at Statler Park, Boston); doubtless there were others who never made their presence known.

15. There were - in addition - four building occupants who were not inside the club proper but who escaped the flames from a loft apartment: resident maintenance man James "Leslie" Tracey, Sr., age 27, his wife Margaret "Irene," age 28, and infant sons James "Leslie," Jr., age 2½, and George "Dickie" Tracey, age 1½.

16. Thus, the total number of known individuals located within the entire plant - whether inside the club proper or not - stands at 942.

17. Of the 938 identified persons inside the club itself when the fire began, 488 (52.0%) died, 148 (15.8%) were hospitalized, and 302 (32.2%) escaped and were not admitted to hospitals.

18. Among those 938 identified persons inside the club when the fire broke, 818 were patrons, while the remaining 120 were club employees, entertainers, or others present in some capacity.

19. Among the 818 known patrons present when the fire broke, 437 (53.4%) were men, and 381 (46.6%) were women.

20. Among the 437 male patrons known present, 237 (54.2%) died, and 200 (45.8%) survived.

21. Among the 381 known female patrons present, 227 (59.6%) died, and 154 (40.4%) survived.

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22. Of the 237 male patrons killed, 107 were single, 101 were married, 20 were engaged, 5 were divorced, and 4 were widowers.

23. Of the 227 female patrons killed, 116 were single, 93 were married, 14 were engaged, 4 were divorced, and none were widows.

24. Among the 818 known patrons present when the fire broke, there were 126 married couples (252 individuals) within the crowd.

25. Of those 126 married patron couples known present, 41 (32.5%) emerged intact, 29 (23.0%) lost one spouse each, and 56 (44.4%) were completely wiped out (includes the Gatturnas of Roslindale, MA; wife Grace died at the scene, husband Francis killed himself on January 9, 1943).

26. In addition, two married employee couples were known present: club cashier William Warren (Boguska), age 24, Boston (dead), and his wife, chorus line dancer Constance "Connie" Warren, age 23 (escaped); also the above Grove live-in maintenance man James "Leslie" Tracey, Sr., and wife Margaret "Irene" (both safely escaped with two infant sons from their loft apartment).

27. All three visiting husband-and-wife entertainment acts present survived intact: new Broadway Lounge musician Carlos Campos (Garcia), age 28, with singer wife Melisa, age 24, Washington, DC; dance partners Edward "Eddie" Pierce, age 27, with wife Dorothy Pierce (Roland), age 24, Queens Village, NY; and relief rhumba band leader Juan Pineda, age 38, with singer wife Rina "Rinita," age 33, Miami, FL.

28. There were an additional 103 married patrons known present but without their spouses in attendance; 54 (52.4%) of these were fatalities while 49 (47.6%) survived.

29. Thus, a total of 54 married individuals who were NOT in attendance at the club lost their spouses in the fiery inferno.

30. Among all 818 known patrons known present when the fire broke, 464 (56.7%) died, and 354 (43.3%) survived.

31. The median age of male patron victims was 28 years, while the median age of female patron victims was 26 years.

32. In addition to the 464 patrons who perished, the fire claimed 26 persons who were not paying guests at the club.

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33. Of the 26 non-patrons dead, 17 were club employees, 6 were visiting entertainers, 2 were passing rescue workers (not counted above among those 938 persons within the club), and one (Laura "Libby" Cohen, age 25, Dorchester, MA) was a non-club-employee volunteer War Bonds salesgirl stationed in the main foyer.

34. Of the 72 known club employees present when the fire broke, 17 (23.6%) died, and 55 (76.4%) survived.

35. For waiter Mario Marzano, age 26, Boston, one of the 17 Grove hires to lose their lives: "It was the youth's first night on the job, having reported for work in the afternoon." (Boston Italian News, December 4, 1942).

36. The two passing rescue workers who perished were Harold Hawkins, age 46, of Boston, an assistant steward at the nearby Hotel Statler, and Seaman Stanley Viator, age 25, U.S. Naval Reserve, of Gloucester, MA, who roomed in Boston when on service duty.

37. In addition to the two rescue workers killed, another 21 rescuers were hospitalized for their efforts.

38. Among the 21 known hospitalized rescue workers, 8 were attached to the U.S. Coast Guard, 7 were Boston firefighters, 5 were attached to the U.S. Navy or Naval Reserve, and one (patrolman Edward Mitchell, age 28, Dorchester, MA) was a Boston policeman.

39. Of the 490 persons overall killed in the disaster (including the 2 passing rescue workers) 256 (52.2%) were male and 234 (47.8%) were female.

40. Of those 490 total persons deceased, 82 (16.7%) were officially recorded as having died after the actual fire date of November 28.

41. Of those 82 lingering fire victims, 20 lived to see the start of December 1942, and 3 survived into 1943 (Francis Gatturna, age 31, Roslindale, MA; William "Bubbles" Shea, age 34, South Boston, MA; and Phyllis Atkins, age 22, Dorchester, MA).

42. While 234 Grove-victim death certificates show burns as the primary cause of death, another 234 death certificates record carbon monoxide poisoning as the primary killer.

43. Other primary causes of death reported on Grove-victim death certificates were: suffocation (6 victims), bronchiopneumonia (4 victims), inhalation of smoke, toxemia, and suicide (1 victim each).

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44. Nine death certificates (mostly for those who were pronounced dead across the Charles River in Cambridge, MA) state no specific cause of death, just "trapped in a burning building" (7 victims), or "burned in a conflagration" (2 victims).

45. Grove casualties were distributed over a total of nine different civilian hospitals, plus three military institutions.

46. The only female victim of the fire to die in a military hospital was patron Mrs. Eva Healy, age 41, Allston, MA, who succumbed at the U.S. Marine Hospital, Brighton, MA, on December 1.

47. Three area hospitals hosted exactly one Grove death each: Malden Hospital, Malden, MA (Kathleen McLaughlin, age 23, Charlestown, MA), Massachusetts Memorial Hospital, Boston (Eleanor Chiampa, age 15, Newton, MA), and St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, MA (Jerome Estes, age 27, U.S. Coast Guard, Green Bay, WI).

48. Known club patrons present when the fire broke hailed from a total of 35 different states, plus the District of Columbia, and two foreign countries.

49. The 13 states NOT represented by known Grove patrons were: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee (only state located east of the Mississippi River), Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

50. The disaster actually claimed victims from 23 different states, plus the District of Columbia, and one foreign country.

51. The lone fire victim from the District of Columbia was patron Wilbur Meserve, age 25 (the same individual omitted from the published version of the official casualty list).

52. Five states lost exactly one resident each in the inferno: Florida (Lieut. John Hey, age 25, U.S. Army, Foley, FL), Iowa (Lieut. Eugene Goss, age 22, U.S. Army, Blairstown, IA), Minnesota (Lieut. Kenneth Simpson, age 31, U.S. Navy, Minneapolis, MN), Missouri (Lawrence Eckerle, age 31, Kansas City, MO), and New Jersey (Stéphane Oppenheim, age 26, Newark, NJ).

53. After Massachusetts (406 dead), the states that were home to the most fire victims were New York (15), New Hampshire (9), Alabama and Pennsylvania (7 each), and Maryland and Rhode Island (5 each).

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54. Among the 406 Massachusetts fire casualties 147 resided in Boston; more of those hailed from Dorchester (38) than any other Hub neighborhood, followed by Brighton (19), and Roxbury (15).

55. Bay State communities outside Boston to suffer the most fire losses were: Quincy (24 victims), Cambridge and Worcester (19 victims each), Brookline (18), Newton (14), and Somerville and Winchester (8 each).

56. Five known male non-U.S. citizens were present when the fire broke (based on era WWII draft registrations): John Billings, age 19, São Paulo, Brazil (citizen of Brazil); F. Frederick A. Bruck, age 21, Cambridge, MA (citizen of Germany); David Hillman, age 17, New York, NY (citizen of South Africa); Stéphane Oppenheim, age 26, Newark, NJ (citizen of Belgium); and Isaac Walles, age 29, Wilmington, DE (citizen of British Palestine); there were possibly others.

57. Of the five male foreign nationals known present three perished: Mr. Billings, Mr. Hillman, and Mr. Oppenheim, all university students.

58. The above John Billings, of São Paulo, Brazil, was the only Grove victim with a permanent residence outside the U.S. (born to American parents who lived overseas, his father was a reservoir engineer).

59. The disaster cost the lives of 57 active U.S. military personnel.

60. Of those 57 service individuals killed, 31 were attached to the U.S. Navy or U.S. Naval Reserve (including two WAVES), 18 were with the U.S. Army, 5 were with the U.S. Coast Guard, and 3 were in the U.S. Marine Corps.

61. The Cocoanut Grove blaze claimed the first two victims ever of the newlyorganized WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) program of the U.S. Naval Reserve, patrons Helen Virginia Brooks, age 26, Winthrop, MA (died at the scene), and her club companion Grace Evelyn Brown, age 25, Waltham, MA (died two days later).

62. Nine institutions of higher education suffered civilian (non-military) student casualties: Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (5 dead each), Wellesley College (4 dead), Emerson College and Radcliffe College (2 dead each), Emmanuel College (2 dead, one to transfer to Boston University in January), Brown University, Columbia University, and University of Pennsylvania (1 dead each).

63. The fire took four expecting mothers (and their unborns): married patrons Mrs. Gladys Charles, age 29, Winchester, MA, Mrs. Louise Hubert, age 30, Wellesley,

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MA, Mrs. Marion Steensen, age 23, Jamaica Plain, MA, and Mrs. Pauline "Polly" Wyner, age 24, Brighton, MA.

64. Two expecting mothers survived: patron Mrs. Helen Cavanagh, age 23, Dorchester, MA (gave birth to a son on February 22, 1943), and entertainer Melisa Campos, age 24, Washington, DC (gave birth to a son on April 20, 1943).

65. Counted among the victims of the fire was Francis Gatturna, age 31, Roslindale, MA, lone survivor in a party of six including his wife Grace, age 28, who jumped to his death from a closed third-floor Massachusetts General Hospital window on January 9, 1943.

66. Four Grove fire victims met death on their own birthdays: patrons Margaret McDonagh, Dorchester, MA (who turned age 21), Josephine Powell, Cambridge, MA (who turned age 29), Doris Rosenbaum, Revere, MA (who turned age 19), and Lieut. Kenneth Simpson, U.S. Naval Reserve, Minneapolis, MN (who turned age 31).

67. The three unrelated fire victims named McLaughlin were each buried in three different cemeteries named "Calvary:" Arthur McLaughlin, age 35, Newton, MA (burial at Calvary Cemetery, Waltham, MA), Virginia McLaughlin, age 19, Stoneham, MA (burial at Calvary Cemetery, Woburn, MA), and Kathleen McLaughlin, age 23, Charlestown, MA (burial at New Calvary Cemetery, West Roxbury, MA).

68. The total number of teens killed in the disaster was 46 (37 other teens known present survived).

69. Of the 46 teens killed, all were patrons except one, part-time club busboy Joseph Tranfaglia, Jr., age 16, Dorchester, MA.

70. Nine known fire survivors later died in non-Grove-related accidents: Raymond Lyons, age 43, of Boston (fire escape plunge in 1946); Norman "Tom" Walsh, age 37, Quincy, MA (hotel bedroom fall in 1946); Ensign Eugene Jessup, age 27, U.S. Navy, Atlanta, GA (hunting accident in 1956); Seaman Clifford Johnson, age 21, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Sumner, MO (truck rollover and fire in 1956); cashier Jennie "Jeanette" Lanzoni, age 20, Somerville, MA (slip under moving train in 1958); Francis Coffin, age 37, Somerville (fall on railroad tracks in 1962); Corp. Paul Alweis, age 26, U.S. Army, Bozeman, MT (automobile accident in 1965); Lieut. Lawrence Russell, age 36, U.S. Naval Reserve, Newton, MA (automobile accident in 1973); and singer Gorizia "Goody Goodelle" Maclone, age 25, Dorchester, MA (automobile accident in 1998).

71. Three known fire survivors later met non-accidental unnatural deaths: Donald Graham, age 33, Canton, MA (killed in war action in 1945); John Rembold, age 31,

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Owensboro, KY (fatally shot in 1952); and Louis Price, age 35, Somerville, MA (suicide in 1966).

72. Ironically, included among Grove fire survivors was attorney John Walsh, age 50, Jamaica Plain, MA, director of the Committee on Public Safety, City of Boston, who was responsible for compiling the official list of Grove dead and injured (on which he did not appear because he was not hurt).

73. Of the 20 cases chosen by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as representative Grove manslaughter victims in the trials of spring 1943, only 19 were successfully tried and proven.

74. The one manslaughter case that was dismissed was that of patron Madeline Wennerstrand, age 26, Roslindale, MA, because no evidence was produced about her death due to the suicide of survivor and intended witness Francis Gatturna (The Boston Globe, April 9, 1943: "The government was unable to prove she was actually in the night club at the time of the fire, although her mother testified...that her daughter telephoned to her that night and was never heard from again").

75. Two casualties of the fire gave police statements concerning the blaze prior to their passing, musician Bernardo "Bernie" Fazioli, age 45, and patron Priscilla White, age 27, Brookline, MA (both from Boston City Hospital, both died later).

76. The final score of the historic Saturday afternoon collegiate football upset at Fenway Park was College of the Holy Cross 55, nationally top-ranked Boston College 12.

77. The uniform numbers of the two Boston College gridiron stars displayed on the cover of the Fenway Park scorebook for that big game were (prophetically) "55" and "12."

78. The historic rout of B.C. by 28-point underdog Holy Cross was considered the greatest football upset in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) history to that time, as measured in over/under point spread versus actual final outcome.

79. When 35-point underdog University of Missouri (which lost to Nebraska the week before, 62-to-0) surprised undefeated Notre Dame, 30-to-26, on October 21, 1972, the 1942 Holy Cross romp over B.C. was referenced as the greatest standing collegiate football upset.

80. When 45-point underdog Howard University, of Washington, DC, toppled favorite UNLV 43-to-40 in Las Vegas, NV, on September 2, 2017, the 48-point differential between pre-game spread and outcome was called, "by point-spread standards...perhaps the biggest upset in college football history." (abcnews.go.com).

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81. Holy Cross bettered its minus-28 pre-game point odds spread against Boston College at Fenway Park by a whopping 71 points.

82. Three alumni of Boston College lost their lives in the disaster: the above Francis Gatturna, also Donald MacMillan, age 30, Quincy, MA, and John McCann, age 43, Newton, MA.

83. The fire claimed two alumni of the College of the Holy Cross: Joseph Boratyn, age 22, Whitinsville, MA, and Timothy Feeny, age 34, Medford, MA.

84. Boston College equipment manager and assistant trainer Lawrence "Larry" Kenney, age 38, Dorchester, MA, who died with his wife Marie, age 33, was the only fire death directly connected on-field to the afternoon B.C./Holy Cross football game at Fenway Park.

85. The incredible afternoon football outcome actually pushed Grove disaster coverage from top billing in some early Sunday editions of Hub newspapers.

86. Despite the big afternoon football match at Fenway Park between polltopping Boston College and mediocre Holy Cross, no undergraduates from either school were killed nor injured at the Grove.

87. Though popularly known to the public as a "night club," Cocoanut Grove (like other similar venues) was not licensed as such, but rather as a restaurant (because night clubs were banned in Boston).

88. Lady luck shined on those with their names emblazoned in lights: all seven entertainers promoted on the Piedmont Street marquee at the time of the blaze (and still darkly displayed for months thereafter) escaped unscathed.

89. No less than 14 unwed (and not yet engaged) Grove survivors later married their companions.

90. At least two Grove fire victims were adopted as children: Helen Virginia Brooks, age 26, Winthrop, MA (born as Helen Virginia Adams), and Evelyn Richardson, age 24, Boston (born as Evelyn Edes).

91. A national radio broadcast of bandleader Mickey Alpert's orchestra from the club was scheduled to air locally over station WNAC Boston at 11:15 p.m. Saturday evening.

92. "But this night, instead of broadcasting the show from the nightclub, the station was playing recorded music..." (journalist and Hub historian William Buchanan, The Boston Globe, November 27, 1987).

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93. Live national orchestra radio programs originating from the Grove were a regular feature throughout the entire 15-year career of the club.

94. Observed: "Most of Boston's stations did an alert and well-rounded job of public service in covering the Cocoanut Grove fire Saturday..." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

95. "WBZ, the Westinghouse outlet, was the first to apprise listeners of the tragedy through a flash bulletin at 10:30 p.m., only 15 minutes after the fire started." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

96. "WEEI organized a crew of 25 employees to answer questions from listeners about the disaster...since other public agencies were not similarly equipped." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

97. "WCOP, WHDH and WORL...had men on the scene to relay accounts for broadcast." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

98. Radio station WNAC remained on the air all through Saturday night broadcasting from the scene and from hospitals, after other local signals shut down at their usual times.

99. "Network advertisers relinquished their time on Boston outlets in many cases so as to allow the latter to carry on their public service job." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

100. Hub radio station WBZ was warned early on Sunday by U.S. naval officials regarding its listing of Grove dead, "...to stop using ship names." (Report to District Intelligence Officer, First U.S. Naval District, November 29, 1942).

101. "Station WNAC was among the radio stations that announced the list of victims and addresses...But the station management ought to be fined for putting on an announcer who couldn't pronounce correctly most of our cities and towns." (The Italian News, Boston, MA, December 4, 1942).

102. "We hasten to apologize to the management of Station WNAC for criticising [sic] one of its announcers in last week's issue. Evidence showed that it was the announcer of another station." (The Italian News, Boston, MA, December 11, 1942).

103. Grove tenor William "Billy" Payne declined to go on Boston station WMEX Monday afternoon for his regular "Funny Money Man" role: "He explained that he was too exhausted and in no mood for the task." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

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104. Despite an abundance of news film footage, scores of photographs, and even a Paramount newsreel short, no radio recording of Grove disaster coverage is known to exist.

105. Mr. Kapell Welansky, father of future Grove owner Barnett Welansky, died on October 23, 1927, just four days before "Renard Cocoanut Grove" (as it was originally known) first opened its doors.

106. An older brother of Barnett Welansky, David "Duff" Welansky (Williams), age 54, Brookline, MA, died of a heart attack exactly one week after the club owner was sentenced on 19 charges of manslaughter: "...fully clothed and seated in a chair at his home..." (Boston Evening American, April 17, 1943).

107. The last person to enter the club as disaster struck was would-be patron Charles Beldotti, age 35, Somerville, MA, who became trapped halfway into the entrance side of the Piedmont Street revolving door when it jammed, then broke free when the glass panels were smashed down.

108. The last victim identified in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Co. fire in New York, NY, which took 146 lives, was a worker surnamed Dashefsky; the last Grove victim to be positively identified at Northern Mortuary was a union waiter named Alexander Dashevsky, age 29, Boston, no relation.

109. The remains of the above Mr. Dashevsky (a.k.a. "Dashev"), were identified on December 2, by the landlady of the Boston room where he boarded for 19 months: "Keys found on the body proved to be door keys of the Milford street house." (The Boston Post, December 3, 1942).

110. The last female Grove fire victim to be identified was Teresa Gina Caradonna, age 42, Quincy, MA, located at Southern Mortuary on December 3, by means of a four-tooth dental bridge.

111. The last Grove fire victim overall to be identified was Ensign John Bauer, age 27, U.S. Naval Reserve, Pittsburgh, PA, whose identity was confirmed on December 4 at Southern Mortuary, after the Navy had tagged but failed to remove his unidentified remains from a Boston funeral home.

112. The remains of the above Ensign Bauer were confirmed by the Navy through military dental charts, and: "...the initials 'J.B.B.'...on a piece of underwear which was on the body..." (First Naval District inquest transcript, December 7, 1942).

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113. The last Grove fire victim to remain in a Hub mortuary was rescuer Harold Hawkins, age 46, of Boston, but a native of Newfoundland, Canada, claimed at Southern Mortuary after December 15 once a local relative was located.

114. The last Grove victim (of 490) to die was patron Phyllis Atkins, age 22, Dorchester, MA, who succumbed to burns and multiple decubitis (death certificate) at Boston City Hospital, on May 5, 1943.

115. The last Grove survivor to remain hospitalized was Seaman Clifford Johnson, age 21, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Sumner, MO, released for a threeweek leave from Boston City Hospital on November 26, 1943, then fully discharged from the same institution on April 12, 1944.

116. Seaman Johnson subsequently returned to Boston for further treatment, and was dismissed "completely cured" from Boston City Hospital on September 17, 1946, after, "...three years, seven months, 19 days of treatment." (The Boston Globe, September 17, 1946).

117. Over nearly four years of hospitalization, Seaman Johnson underwent 24 surgical operations, 18 skin grafts, and exactly 100 blood transfusions.

118. The last living Grove bartender (of ten) on duty when the fire struck was John Capuana, age 35, East Boston, MA, who died on July 8, 1982, at age 74.

119. The last known living Grove relief rhumba band musician present was trumpeter Abraham "Ariel" Duchesne, age 20, New York, NY, who died on March 7, 2008, at age 85.

120. The last known living Grove fire survivor to lose a wife in the disaster was patron A. Robert Bean, age 19, Somerville, MA, who died on September 15, 2009, at age 86 (his recent bride Rose, age 18, failed to escape).

121. The last living member of Milton "Mickey" Alpert's Cocoanut Grove band present (of ten) was trumpeter Paul Maged, age 26, Everett, MA, who died on August 1, 2010, at age 93.

122. The last known living spouse of a Grove fire victim was Mrs. Esther McLean, wife of casualty William McLean, age 34, Plymouth, MA, who died on July 6, 2012, at age 99 (she was not present at the club).

123. The last known living fireman to battle the blaze was Boston ladderman Patrick "Joe" Connolly, age 23, South Boston, MA, who died on June 4, 2014, at age 94.

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124. The last living fire rescue worker (of 21) to appear on the official list of Grove hospitalized was Samuel "Seymour" Sukenik, age 18, U.S. Navy, Chicago, IL, who died on November 30, 2014, at age 90.

125. The last living Grove employee (non-entertainer) to safely escape the blaze was waiter John Rizzo, age 22, Revere, MA, who died on September 20, 2016, at age 96.

126. The last living participant (of 39 cases) in the landmark Massachusetts General Hospital Grove burns study was Case #6, Anna Marie Clark, age 16, Keene, NH, who died (as Ann Marie Gallagher) on May 24, 2017, at age 90.

127. The last living chorus line girl (of eight) present at the blaze was Eleanor Giglio (Gale), age 19, Quincy, MA, who died (as Eleanor Keirstead) on November 5, 2017, at age 94.

128. The last known living new Broadway Lounge survivor was patron Ensign Donald Peterson, age 21, U.S. Naval Reserve, Chicago, IL, who died on May 9, 2018, at age 97 (he earned the honor of last living upon the April 2016 death of his own Grove companion, Ensign Nick Pagonis, age 21, U.S. Naval Reserve, Oakland, CA, at age 95).

129. The last living of the 148 known club occupants hospitalized by the disaster was patron Louise Bouvier, age 20, Southbridge, MA, who died (as Louise Pontbriand) on November 8, 2019, at age 97.

130. The last living entertainer to escape the fire was tap dancer Marshall Cole, age 17, South Boston, MA, who died on June 28, 2020, at age 94 (he was not hospitalized).

131. The last known living person (non-hospitalized) to assist in Grove rescues was Ensign Richard Joslyn, age 22, U.S. Naval Reserve, Pasadena, CA, who died on September 25, 2020, at age 100.

132. The last known living person ever employed at Cocoanut Grove was busboy John Zuccaro, age 18, East Boston, MA (who left to take a better job two months before the fire), who died on July 14, 2021, at age 96.

133. When each of the last two known living Grove fire survivors, patrons Joyce (Spector) Mekelburg, and Robert Shumway, lived through 2022 (both at age 98), it marked the first full calendar year with no Grove fire survivor deaths since 1960.

134. The Boston Sunday Globe, November 29: "The first identified fatality was a Coast Guardsman, Jerome Estes, address unknown, whose body was brought to St.

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Margaret's Hospital in Dorchester..." (refers to victim Jerome Estes, age 27, U.S. Coast Guard, Green Bay, WI).

135. The first Grove fire victim (of 490) to be buried was Pvt. Lester Gould (Goldenberg), age 21, U.S. Army, Roxbury, MA, who was interred on Monday, November 30, at Mount Lebanon (American Friendship Lodge) Cemetery, West Roxbury, MA.

136. The first post-fire calendar date without at least one death resulting from the disaster was December 6.

137. The first post-fire calendar month without at least one death resulting from the disaster was March 1943.

138. The first known fire survivor to die of causes unrelated to the disaster was patron Helen Watson, age 28, Cohasset, MA, on November 17, 1943, from complications related to child birth (her 9-pound baby boy lived, and was still living in Methuen, MA, at age 81, as of 2024).

139. Patron Helen Gross, age 39, Brookline, MA, sometimes misreported as the 491st victim of the Grove catastrophe when she died on February 4, 1945, actually succumbed of natural causes, breast cancer with cerebral metastases (death certificate).

140. The charred remains of fire victim Francis Gale, Sr., age 29, Dorchester, MA, were identified by a scar left from an appendectomy co-performed one month prior by a victim in a separate party, Dr. Gordon Bennett, age 27, Swampscott, MA.

141. Fire victim Ensign John Paikos, age 21, U.S. Naval Reserve, Haverhill, MA, was a former pupil of a survivor in another party, Haverhill High School Latin teacher Anna Kerrigan, age 53, also of Haverhill.

142. There were two patrons named "John F. Doyle" present when the fire broke out: John F. Doyle, age 25, Cambridge, MA, a fire victim, and John F. Doyle, age 39, Lewiston, ME, a survivor.

143. There were two patrons present named "Mary Duggan:" Mary Hildegarde Duggan, age 39, Quincy, MA, a victim, and Mary J. Duggan, age 24, Waltham, MA, also a victim.

144. There were two patrons present named "John Edwards" (both known as "Jack"): Ensign John W. "Jack" Edwards, U.S. Naval Reserve, age 23, Richmond, MI, a victim, and Lieut. John Kip "Jack" Edwards, Jr., U.S. Navy, age 33, of Boston, a survivor.

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145. There were two patrons present named "Henry Fitzgerald:" Henry E. Fitzgerald, age 39, Dorchester, MA, a survivor, and Pvt. Henry T. Fitzgerald, age 30, U.S. Army, Wilmington, MA, a victim.

146. There were two patrons present named "Michael Fitzgerald:" Michael A. Fitzgerald, age 60, Allston, MA, a survivor, and Michael J. Fitzgerald, age 51, Quincy, MA, a victim.

147. There were two patrons present named "John Griffin:" John R. Griffin, age 35, Haverhill, MA, a survivor, and John W. Griffin, age 34, Milton, MA, a victim.

148. There were two patrons present named "Bernard Levin:" Bernard "Ben" Levin, age 40, Newton Centre, MA, a survivor, and Lieut. Bernard N. "Bucky" Levin, age 30, U.S. Army, Brookline, MA, also a survivor.

149. There were two patrons present named "Catherine Murphy:" Catherine L. "Kay" Murphy, age 23, Dorchester, MA, a victim, and Catherine M. Murphy, age 33, Quincy, MA, also a victim.

150. There were two patrons present named "John Murphy:" John E. Murphy, age 25, Framingham, MA, a victim, and John J. Murphy, age 68, Natick, MA, a survivor.

151. There were two patrons present named "Helen Welch:" Helen M. Welch, age 21, Winchester, MA, a victim, and Norine Helen Welch - more popularly known by her middle name - age 16, Port Washington, NY, also a victim.

152. Also present were Lieut. Eugene L. Goss, age 22, U.S. Army Signal Corps, Blairstown, IA, and near-namesake Eugene J. Gross, age 41, Brookline, MA, both fire victims.

153. Remarkably, not one of the above eleven patron name pairings was in any way connected with the other beyond common or similar names.

154. The oldest Grove fire fatality (of 490) was service cashier Katherine "Kate" Swett, Malden, MA (born on March 16, 1875), age 67 years, 8 months.

155. The above Miss Swett was also the oldest club employee fatality, and lone individual continuously employed at the Grove since its 1927 opening.

156. The oldest employee survivor present at the blaze (and second oldest employee known present after the above Katherine Swett) was waiter Theodore Brown, of Boston (born on November 12, 1878), age 64 years, ½ month.

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157. The oldest person overall confirmed present at the club and oldest fire survivor was patron John J. Murphy, Natick, MA (born on February 20, 1874), age 68 years, 9 months.

158. The oldest couple known present when the blaze broke were Mr. and Mrs. Herman (age 58, survived) and Pauline (age 56, dead) Rifkin, of Newton, MA, a combined 114 years of age.

159. The oldest couples present in which both parties perished were Mr. and Mrs. Isaac (age 61) and Minnie (age 41) Gordon, of Dorchester, MA, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles (age 56) and Anna (age 46) Stern, of Brighton, MA, each pair a combined 102 years of age.

160. The oldest Grove patron fire fatality was the above Mr. Gordon (born on June 15, 1881), age 61 years, 5 months.

161. The oldest female patron known present and oldest female patron fatality was the above Mrs. Rifkin (born on June 6, 1886), age 56 years, 5 months.

162. The youngest person present within the club proper when the fire broke was Grove busboy Anthony "Tony" Marra, Everett, MA (born on June 6, 1927), age 15 years, 6 months.

163. The above Anthony "Tony" Marra was also the youngest employee present and youngest club fire survivor overall (excludes resident Tracey family children, ages 1½ and 2½ years, who were inside the burning building but not within the actual club).

164. The youngest Grove fire fatality overall (of 490) was patron Eleanor Chiampa, Newton, MA (born on March 10, 1927), age 15 years, 8 months.

165. The youngest male patron known present and youngest male victim of the blaze was Charles Sheehan, Milton, MA (born in January 1927), age 15 years, 10 months.

166. The youngest known patron to survive the blaze was Anna Marie Clark, Keene, NH (born on July 23, 1926), age 16 years, 4 months.

167. The youngest Grove employee fire fatality was busboy Joseph Tranfaglia, Dorchester, MA (born on July 11, 1926), age 16 years, 4½ months.

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168. The youngest known (reported) patron to escape non-hospitalized was Ruth Unwin, Ridgefield, CT (born on April 6, 1926), age 16 years, 7½ months (her presence was not observed until decades later).

169. The youngest Grove entertainer present at the blaze and youngest to escape was tap dancer Marshall Cole, South Boston, MA (born on September 15, 1925), age 17 years, 2 months.

170. The youngest patron couple known present and also the youngest in which both parties perished were Robert Noyes, age 17, West Bridgewater, MA, and his girlfriend Lorraine Carlson, age 16, Brockton, MA, a combined 33 years of age.

171. The youngest fire survivor overall was infant George "Dickie" Tracey, age 1 year, 8 months, who resided with his parents, maintenance man James "Leslie" Tracey, Sr., age 27, and wife Margaret "Irene," age 28, and an older brother, in a third-story apartment over the club proper.

172. The tallest male casualty of the disaster (among those with WWII draft registrations, which included almost all men present except those already in the military at the time of U.S. draft registration or over age 65) was patron John Ducey, age 32, North Weymouth, MA, who stood at 6' 4."

173. The shortest male fire casualty (among those men with known WWII draft registrations) was patron Max Gorvine, age 44, Revere, MA, a modest 4' 9½" (WWII draft registration, February '42: "Obvious physical characteristics: hunchback").

174. The heaviest male fire victim (among those men with known WWII draft registrations) was new Broadway Lounge bartender William "Bubbles" Shea, age 34, South Boston, MA, shown as 320 lbs. on his October 1940 draft registration card, but likely closer to his recorded hospital weight of 385 lbs.

175. The lightest male casualty of the disaster (among those men with known WWII draft registrations) was new Broadway Lounge bar waiter Harold Snyderman, age 32, Brighton, MA, who tipped the scales at a mere 125 lbs.

176. Because the Grove was licensed as a restaurant and not as a night club or bar, there were no laws against minors (then under age 21) attending.

177. More Grove victims (30) were buried in Calvary Cemetery, Boston, than at any other single location, followed by St. Joseph's Cemetery (24), and Mount Lebanon Cemetery (23), both in the Hub neighborhood of West Roxbury, MA.

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178. The location outside of Boston that received the most Grove victims (18) was Fuller Street Cemetery, Everett, MA.

179. Outside of Massachusetts, the final resting grounds for the most Grove casualties was Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA (5 victims).

180. The only Grove casualty to be buried outside U.S. soil was patron Gray Miller, Jr., age 26, Southbridge, MA, a U.S. citizen but with parents living in Canada, interred at Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal, P.Q., Canada.

181. The ashes of cowboy actor Charles "Buck" Jones, age 50, Van Nuys, CA, were spread over the Pacific Ocean (near Santa Catalina Island).

182. Details of death that might otherwise be filtered out in more peaceful times were subject to public scrutiny in the war-stained news coverage of the era.

183. Edna Cameron, age 30, Malden, MA, was identified by her mother at Southern Mortuary through a platinum wrist watch, a diamond ring gifted by her father, "...and a part of the dress...she had been wearing." (Malden Evening News, November 30, 1942).

184. Mrs. Teresa Gina Caradonna, age 42, Quincy, MA, was identified at Southern Mortuary on December 2: "...through means of a four-tooth bridge...placed in dental work for the woman..." (The Boston Post, December 3, 1942).

185. Also: Identification of Mrs. Caradonna, "...had been delayed by the condition of the body..." (Quincy Patriot Ledger, December 3, 1942).

186. Anne "Anna" Kaplinsky, age 31, Holyoke, MA: "...had been badly burned but identification was made possible thru a class ring...a wrist watch and part of a beaver coat." (Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram, Holyoke, MA, November 30, 1942).

187. Jane Peavey, age 20, Fort Devens (Ayer), MA, was identified either by: "...a ring on her finger and a remnant of the dress she wore" (Worcester Evening Gazette, Worcester, MA, December 1, 1942), or: "...her teeth and a scar." (Bangor Daily News, Bangor, ME, December 2, 1942).

188. William Ramsay, age 36, Walpole, NH, commercial poultry farmer, was identified: "...through the means of fingerprints and with the aid of a dental chart." (Manchester Union, Manchester, NH, December 2, 1942).

189. Stephania Sviokla, age 22, Brockton, MA, was identified either by: "...red earrings, red beads and red bracelet" (Boston Evening Globe, November 30, 1942), or, "...an

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unusual ring worn on the third finger of her right hand." (Brockton Daily Enterprise, December 1, 1942).

190. Mrs. Jeanette "Jennie" Zall, age 35, Plymouth, MA, was identified by her husband (not present) on Sunday at Waterman's Funeral Home: "...by means of clothing she wore...The body was badly burned." (Brockton Daily Enterprise, Brockton, MA, November 30, 1942).

191. Of victim Shirley "Bunny" Leslie, age 20, Boston, "pretty, brown-eyed" club cigarette girl: "A tiny friendship ring set with a diamond in a circle of black stones was the only means of positive identification." (The Boston Globe, December 1, 1942).

192. Of victim Catherine L. "Kay" Murphy, age 23, Dorchester, MA, staff librarian at Mass Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA: "Only her Simmons Class of 1940 ring was left to identify her." (The Boston Post, November 30, 1942).

193. Of victim Marilen Playdon, age 19, Rockville (Vernon), CT: "Though the girl was said to have been burned beyond recognition, a Rockville high school class ring and a piece of a dress served as identification." (Springfield Daily News, Springfield, MA, November 30, 1942).

194. Of victim Mrs. Pauline "Polly" Wyner, age 24, Brighton, MA, expecting wife of victim Max Wyner, age 26, who was located at Northern Mortuary: "...Her body was so charred that immediate identification was impossible." (The Boston Post, December 1, 1942).

195. Victim Pauline Hyman, age 18, Revere, MA, a salesgirl for Filene's, Boston: "...had a pretty party dress made...But her pretty party dress was untouched by the flames." (Boston Daily Record, November 30, 1942).

196. Harold Hawkins, age 46, of Newfoundland, Canada. a hotel steward and passing rescue worker, was identified at Northern Mortuary: "...by focussing ultraviolet rays on a charred envelope found in his burned clothing." (The Boston Herald, December 2, 1942).

197. Lieut. Harry Martin, age 31, U.S. Army, Newport, RI: "...died...about 5:30 Monday afternoon with his parents at his bedside...He was able to speak...when they were with him Sunday, but later went into a coma." (Newport Mercury, Newport, RI, December 4, 1942).

198. Of the four Wellesley College coeds who perished: "Two of the students' bodies showed no signs of burns and it is believed that they died quickly of asphyxiation." (The Townsman, Wellesley, MA, December 3, 1942).

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199. Also: "The other two girls' bodies were terribly burned and mutilated and it was extremely difficult for college authorities and members of the families to identify them." (The Townsman, Wellesley, MA, December 3, 1942).

200. Sadly, there were incidents of valuables reported stolen or missing from the bodies of victims in the days following the disaster.

201. Relatives of Francis "Frank" Melvin, Jr., age 26, Cambridge, MA, watch repairman for Jordan Marsh Co., Boston, to have entered the U.S. Army the following Tuesday: "...were sure this victim...had more than the $10 found in his wallet." (The Boston Herald, December 5, 1942).

202. The body of victim Roberta Jennie Russell, age 29, Everett, MA, was relieved of a bracelet, money and two rings: "Her finger, police said, looked as though it had been injured by someone tearing off the ring." (The Boston Herald, December 5, 1942).

203. A wallet taken from within the purse of victim Doris Rosenbaum, age 19, Revere, MA, contained her identification, social security card, pictures of friends, and birthday money.

204. The mother of Miss Rosenbaum bitterly wrote: "Who had the time to extract her wallet...and leave all her other belongings intact? It was some scavenger who was worse than the devil himself." (The Boston Traveler, December 18, 1942).

205. Among the strangest of potential looting stories involved a casket salesman and a waitress who may or may not have been connected prior to the tragedy.

206. The corpse of casket salesman James Slattery, age 41, Cambridge, MA, was reported stripped of a $3,800 diamond ring, $1,000 in cash, "...and three watches on his person, a pocket watch, wrist timepiece, and a miniature watch carried in his wallet." (The Boston Post, December 5, 1942).

207. Boston police collected from the brother (not present) of another Grove victim, Vera Ann Cedrone, age 34, Boston, a hotel waitress, a gold wrist watch belonging to Mr. Slattery, said to be included in property turned over by authorities to Miss Cedrone's relatives.

208. "Last night detectives were checking a large roll of bills, wrapped in an elastic band, found in the Back Bay apartment of a waitress...on the chance that it might be the missing bankroll of one of the fire victims..." (The Boston Post, December 12, 1942).

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209. Although no follow-up of the odd story was reported in Hub papers: "...the automobile of the victim of the alleged looting [Mr. Slattery] was found parked behind the apartment house where the...watch and roll of money were found." (The Boston Post, December 12, 1942).

210. Not all reports of alleged rifling of corpses ended on negative notes.

211. Thirty-five dollars reported missing from the body of S/Sergt. Anthony Marotta, age 23, Lynn, MA (lodging in Watertown, NY), was recovered by officials on January 5, 1943, still inside the pocket of his uniform which had been sent to a Lynn dry cleaner.

212. A 21-jewel watch believed absent from the remains of patron Monty Shanker, age 27, Dorchester, MA: "...was found to have been in a repair shop, not in possession of the owner..." (The Boston Herald, January 5, 1943).

213. A check for $209, $162 in cash, keys, papers, a watch and a wallet belonging to victim Charles Stern, age 56, Brighton, MA, were returned to police after the items, "...had been given to the wrong claimant by error." (The Boston Herald, January 5, 1943).

214. Several witnesses reported seeing a "200-pound man" blocking the new Cocoanut Grove Lounge exit to Broadway at the height of the fire.

215. Cab driver and witness Samuel Myers, age 51, Mattapan, MA (quote): "He was facing the crowd which was stampeding to get out...But he was hysterical; he had gone mad; he wouldn't let them out." (INS wire article, November 30, 1942).

216. Mr. Myers (to a reporter): "A sailor with a girl on his arm socked the man in the jaw, knocking him through the glass. The crowd swept over him to safety." (Boston Evening American, November 30, 1942).

217. Also: "...I saw him running around after that, shouting: 'Edith, Edith, where are you?'" (INS wire article, November 30, 1942).

218. Rescuer John "Rusty" Campbell, age 19, U.S. Navy, Minneapolis, MN, with an unnamed sailor and their dates, saw the Broadway entrance "clogged" by "a big fellow" yelling he was going back inside (quote): "My buddy got in close to that big guy and knocked him cold." (Minneapolis Morning Tribune, December 2, 1942).

219. The identity of the "big man" was never established (but note similarity to victim Dr. Gordon Bennett, age 27 - a large-framed ex-college-football tackle (WWII draft registration: 195 lbs.) - present with fiancée and survivor Edith Leadbetter, age 26, both of Swampscott, MA.

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220. A parade of employees testified to failed attempts in persuading veteran Grove service food checker and cashier Katherine "Kate" Swett, age 67, Malden, MA, to leave her cellar post.

221. Waiter Henry Bimler, age 53, Boston: "I was going to help the old cashier along. I said, 'Katherine, give me your cash box.' She said, 'No, I can't leave my cash.'" (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, November 30, 1942).

222. Waiter Morrill Guerin, age 25, Brookline, MA: "...I...asked her to go out and she refused to go out on account of the money...I knew she was a stubborn sort of person. I had no reason to argue with her because I knew it was foolish." (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, December 12, 1942).

223. Waiter John Rizzo, age 22, Revere, MA, decades later: "I saw a heavy lady, Mrs. Swett, the cashier. I said, 'Take the money, let's go,' but she said, 'I can't leave the money.'" (Boston Sunday Globe, November 22, 1992).

224. Malden Evening News, November 30, 1942 (of Mrs. Swett): "She was found at her desk, overcome by smoke and gas, and passed away in an ambulance on the way to Cambridge hospital."

225. Of the ten men indicted in December 1942 by a state grand jury on criminal charges as a result of the Grove disaster, only two, club owner Barnett Welansky, age 45, Brighton, MA, and contractor Samuel Rudnick, age 61, Worcester, MA, were ever incarcerated.

226. The first deceased of the ten men above indicted on criminal charges was club owner Barnett Welansky, who died of heart failure on January 27, 1947, at age 49.

227. The last living of the ten men indicted was new Broadway Lounge construction foreman David Gilbert (Goldberg), age 49, Allston, MA, who died on December 20, 1989, at age 96.

228. At least seven known fire survivors kept the same address as at the time of the fire five decades later into the 1990s: patron Kathleen Andrews, age 29, Lawrence, MA, waiter Leo Givonetti, age 32, Medford, MA, patron John R. Griffin, age 35, Haverhill, MA, patron Merlin "Bud" Jensen, age 30, Minneapolis, MN, chorus dancer Jessie "Jacqueline MacGregor" Maver, age 25, Cambridge, MA, patron Virginia Rich, Medford, MA, and patron Marie Rucky, age 24, Quincy, MA.

229. All seven of the above either moved or died by the start of the year 2000.

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230. Reputed gangster and pre-fire Grove owner Charles "King" Solomon lived at 193 Fuller Street, Brookline, MA; Grove lead-prosecuting State Attorney General Robert Bushnell also resided at 193 Fuller Street, but in West Newton, MA (known as "Braeburn Farm").

231. The largest single patron group present when fire broke was the Charles "Buck" Jones film industry party on the main dining room rear terrace, hosted by Monogram Pictures district manager Herman Rifkin and his wife Pauline, ages 58 and 56, respectively, of Newton, MA.

232. Sixteen of the 29 members of the Buck Jones main dining room party failed to escape.

233. The lone member of the Buck Jones party of 29 neither killed nor hospitalized was theatre chain owner Frederick Lieberman, age 41, Brookline, MA, who suffered severe burns and an eyeball lacerated by broken glasses (his wife, Naomi, age 45, was hospitalized).

234. Buck Jones' last public showing was an interview made with local publicist and fire survivor Martin Sheridan, age 28, Allston, MA, over radio station WCOP Boston, earlier on Saturday, starting at 4:35 p.m.

235. Boston marked the final stop of a national two-week, eight-city film and War Bonds promotion tour by Buck Jones with his producer Scott Dunlap, age 50, Van Nuys, CA, who was seriously injured.

236. The wife and adult daughter of Buck Jones flew east from California as far as Cheyenne, WY, before turning back upon learning the news of his death on Monday.

237. A false rumor circulated - especially among school children - that the famed cowboy actor was identified only through recognition of his expensive westernstyle leather boots.

238. The last living member of the Buck Jones dining room party of 29 was the above Martin Sheridan, who died on December 31, 2003, at age 89.

239. A narrow, partially-boarded opening above a cellar service bar through which several persons escaped came to be known by the press and later historians as "Disbrow's Window," for the patron who smashed it through, Charles Disbrow, Jr., age 37, Brookline, MA.

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240. The above Mr. Disbrow, once safely outside, wryly observed of the club cellar furnace in good working order while flames raged above as, "...a fire within a fire." (The Boston Herald, November 30, 1942).

241. Advance news: "Edward P. Fitch...officer aboard a lake freighter, tonight will be told by his wife that a brother, Hubert Fitch...was one of the victims of the Cocoanut Grove holocaust..." (The Sandusky Register Star-News, Sandusky, OH, November 30, 1942).

242. The death certificate for the above Hubert Fitch, age 26, Lakewood, OH (residing in Worcester, MA), was the first of eventual 490 Grove fatalities to be archived with the Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics (apparently by chance).

243. The initial reaction to the appearance of flames in the main dining room was described by several survivors...

244. Mrs. Monica Files, age 18, Allston, MA, survivor with husband George, age 22 (quote): "At first there was no panic at all because everybody was so stunned...It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop." (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, December 2, 1942).

245. Juan Pineda, age 38, Miami, FL, relief rhumba band leader, who watched a young woman run from the lobby past diners hair and dress aflame, screaming "Fire" (quote): "Some people thought for a moment it was part of the show." (Boston Sunday Post, November 29, 1942).

246. Morris "Moe" Solomon, age 28, Dorchester, MA, Grove band pianist standing on stage waiting to start his performance (quote): "Some of the patrons...called 'Quiet.' Then someone cried, 'It's a fire'..." (The Boston Herald, November 29, 1942).

247. John Walsh, age 50, Jamaica Plain, MA, survivor and also director of the Boston Committee on Public Safety, upon noting an overhead "flash" (quote): "...Some people kept right on dancing. Suddenly even the dancers realized what was happening..." (The Boston Herald, November 29, 1942).

248. One narrative claimed visiting new Broadway Lounge singer and pianist Grace McDermott (Vaughn), age 24, New York, NY: "...died as a result of suffocation, and was found slumped near the piano without any fire having touched her." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

249. Another source stated an older brother of Miss McDermott flew from New York: "...found her, a smile on her pretty lips, in an improvised morgue set up in the Massachusetts General Hospital." (Boston Daily Record, November 30, 1942).

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250. More likely account: "Her brother...did not recognize her until she was identified by articles she had carried. She appeared twice as old as...she actually was." (The Greenville News, Greenville, SC, December 9, 1942).

251. The reason imitation palm leaves may not have burned when allegedly flame-tested by a Boston Fire Dept. inspector eight days before the blaze was offered at city inquests by a Harvard Professor of Meteorology.

252. Meteorologist Charles Brooks, age 51, Milton, MA, testified: "The amount of moisture in the air on the evening of the fire was only one-fifth as great as on the day of the inspection." (Boston Traveler, December 7, 1942).

253. The reason the second main dining room floor show was running late was explained to city investigators by chorus girl Eleanor Giglio (Gayle), age 19, Wollaston (Quincy), MA: "A few of the girls were playing cards and...wanted to finish the game, and we did not realize what time it was." (Boston Police statement, December 8, 1942).

254. The reason one victim, James Watson, age 32, U.S. Naval Reserve, Brighton, MA (lodging in Rocky Hill, CT), appeared on early casualty lists under the incorrect name "C.H. Watson" was explained by the Hartford Courant, November 29, 1942: "Watson was first identified as his brother, Charles H. Watson...as he was wearing the latter's watch" (older brother was not present).

255. The reason the Piedmont Street revolving door froze was revealed by fleeing patron George Hayes, age 44, Quincy, MA, who testified it caught the calf of a companion, Wilfred Beaudry, Sr., age 57, of Holyoke, MA.

256. Mr. Hayes (quote): "...Mr. Beaudry has a very bad leg where it was jammed in the door...When he left, it was swollen about three times its normal size." (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, December 2, 1942).

257. The above Mr. Beaudry two months later requested (and was granted) a city building permit for his Beaudry Cafe (tavern) in Holyoke, MA: "...to change the exit doors to swing outward." (Springfield Republican, January 21, 1943).

258. The engagement of Grove chorus girl and survivor Dorothy "Dottie Christie" Christensen, age 21, Boston, was publicly announced by columnist George W. Clarke on the very day the fire broke (Boston Daily Record, November 28, 1942: "...It is just as well to tell here of...one of the town's most beautiful show-girls...").

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259. Visiting new Broadway Lounge singer/pianist (and victim) Maxine Coleman, age 37, North Hollywood, CA, was the spotlight of Hub columnist Joseph F. Dinneen exactly one day prior to the disaster (The Boston Globe, November 27, 1942: "Her hair is purple...She wears a bright red feather curled like a clock spring...").

260. A framed portrait resting oddly intact on the floor of an otherwise scorched new Broadway Lounge coatroom shows a smiling Miss Coleman in a widelypublished post-fire police photo.

261. A small wooden desk seen tipped on its side in post-fire police photos of the burned main foyer was used by salesgirls as a temporary War Bonds stand and was not the headwaiter's desk as claimed in some sources (the latter was located just within the main dining room).

262. The family of Radcliff College junior and victim Sydney McKenna, age 19, Latrobe, PA, learned of the tragedy indirectly from a college dean: "The McKennas have no telephone and the call came to the home of...a neighbor." (The Latrobe Bulletin, November 30, 1942).

263. When the mother of visiting singer (and survivor) Melisa Campos, age 24, Washington, DC, attempted to call her daughter at midnight on Sunday to wish a happy 25th birthday: "...The operator merely told her that the phone was out of order." (The Evening Star, Washington, DC, November 30, 1942).

264. The only known incorrect death date recorded on a Grove-victim death certificate was that of entertainer Ethel Bauer, age 32, of New York, NY (erroneously listed as "Eleanor B. Powerell" in early reports), who succumbed at Boston City Hospital at 12:25 a.m. on December 1, but was shown as having died on November 28.

265. Of the eleven fire extinguishers located in the club ruins, seven were found to be "partly used or tipped over;" the other four were not used but in functioning order.

266. No fire extinguishers were kept in Melody Lounge where the fire started, but one was located on a nearby support column in the adjacent cellar kitchen and another along the concrete pantry stairway leading from the kitchen up to the main dining room.

267. All club fire extinguishers (with still-legible red tags) were properly marked with September 1942 dates of approval.

268. The Boston Post, December 4, 1942: "Out of all the employees who have testified only one to date has testified to actually fighting the fire with a fire extinguisher. This

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was Reno Masciocchi..." (refers to waiter Reno Masciocchi, age 36, Dorchester, MA).

269. Cocoanut Grove had a total of seven exits opening to street level.

270. Three exits opened south to Piedmont Street: the main revolving door, a rarely-used office door (covered by a coat rack at night), and an emergency exit atop the stairs leading down to the cellar Melody Lounge.

271. Three exits opened north to Shawmut Street: a double-door emergency exit midway along the main dining room (behind a folding screen door), a kitchen delivery door known as 6 Shawmut Street, and a furnace maintenance access known as 4 Shawmut Street (the latter two not directly accessible from the club proper).

272. A lone exit opening east to Broadway was the vestibuled swinging-door public entrance to the new Broadway Lounge (licensed name: "Cocoanut Grove Lounge").

273. No exits faced west (towards Church Street) because of the presence of connected buildings.

274. Of the seven street-level exits above, four were designated for emergency use: the Piedmont Street revolving door, the Piedmont Street door at the head of the Melody Lounge stairs, the dining room double-doors to Shawmut Street, and the New Lounge entrance facing Broadway.

275. Contrary to persistent legend, of the four accredited emergency exits, only one was locked when the fire broke: the fire door atop the Melody Lounge stairs, operated by a panic bar rendered useless by a built-in tongue lock which was engaged.

276. According to Grove wine steward and acting manager Jacob "Jack" Goldfine, age 47, Roxbury, MA, the above door had been opened as recently as: "...Two months ago. We had to take some liquor in, and we had to make it easy for the truckmen." (undated State Police interview transcript).

277. A club day porter, John Sechowicz, age 51, of Boston, testified at the spring 1943 manslaughter trials that he had slammed the above door shut on three different occasions after he found it swinging open.

288. Mr. Sechowicz also stated that although he had searched a cigar box in the club office for the key (quote): "I never found one that would fit the Melody Lounge door." (Boston Sunday Advertiser, March 28, 1943).

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289. When Mr. Sechowicz died on May 4, 1953, at age 62, it was the result of a bleeding gastric ulcer (death certificate).

290. Later trial testimony by club owner Barnett Welansky suggested the key in question may have, in fact, been stashed in an office desk drawer.

291. In addition to the seven street-level exits described above, there was also a cellar portal - partly blocked by a water pipe - which led from a storage hallway behind Melody Lounge into a depressed blind alley.

292. "Nobody thought of that damn door behind the lounge. All you had to do was take a bolt out and open it..." (bartender John Bradley, age 33, West Roxbury, MA).

293. A doorway once leading from the Caricature Bar area to a former Grove outdoor dining garden aside Piedmont Street was bricked up years earlier, after complaints from abutters about loitering employees.

294. An emergency exit called for on approved autumn 1942 plans for the new Broadway Lounge out to Shawmut Street was - inexplicably - never constructed, replaced instead by a coatroom.

295. According to the club entertainment pay ledger (which survived the fire), the highest-paid visiting performers for the final week were the New York-based acrobatic comedy trio of Carr Bros., who received $265.

286. The highest-paid individual entertainer was visiting new Cocoanut Grove Lounge singer and pianist (and victim) Grace McDermott (Vaughn), age 24, New York, NY, at $150.

287. Fate of the last Saturday cash payroll was revealed by E. Albert Taxier, age 44, Jamaica Plain, MA, manager of the nearby Rio Casino night club, to Hub newspaper entertainment columnist George W. Clarke.

288. The funds had been made up and put into envelopes under a bar: "...and that's where they were found - a little scorched, but the money was untouched." (column "Man About Boston," Boston Daily Record, December 2, 1942).

289. Longtime Grove bookkeeper Rose Gnecco, age 47, Somerville, MA, testified that as of December 7 eleven (now former) employees had collected final pay.

290. These included: John Bradley, John and Margaret Burton, Vera Daniels, Samuel Goldberg, Harry Kirker, Joseph Levine, Leonard Mounce, Frank Pontes, William

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"Bubbles" Shea (new Broadway Lounge bartender who later died), and Procopis "Marco" Sperdalis.

291. Miss Gnecco (quote): "Those are people I paid since the fire." (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, December 7, 1942).

292. The above Miss Gnecco, club bookkeeper since the Charles "King" Solomon era, was famously the divorced former wife of (now deported) financial racketeer Charles Ponzi for whom the phrase "Ponzi Scheme" is named.

293. Despite being granted the legal right in 1936 to resume her maiden name of Rose Marie Gnecco, the press insisted (incorrectly) on continuously calling her "Rose Ponzi Gnecco."

294. On bookkeeper Gnecco's Grove entertainment pay ledger for the week of April 5, 1941, "Elsie The Cow" was paid $144 (and again the following week, no further explanation).

295. Miss Gnecco died (as Mrs. Rose Ebner) on October 31, 1993, at age 98; her bookkeeping assistant, Edna Carli, age 28, also of Somerville, died on December 26, 2011, at a mere 97 years of age (neither was present at the blaze).

296. Cast members of "This Is the Army," the traveling Irving Berlin musical, missed tragedy at Cocoanut Grove by only two hours: "...25 soldiers from the show had free dinner at the Grove, leaving at 8 p.m. to go to the Boston Opera House." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942).

297. The future classic movie "Casablanca" made its world premiere in New York City on November 26, 1942 (Thanksgiving), two days before the Grove holocaust.

298. The Number One song in the nation the week of the disaster was "White Christmas," from the movie "Holiday Inn," written by Irving Berlin and recorded by Bing Crosby.

299. Notable persons born on November 28, 1942, include former NFL/WFL football wide receiver Paul Warfield, and Spanish shoe designer Manolo Blahnik.

300. Singer and organist Felix Cavaliere of Joey Dee & The Starliters and later of the Young Rascals was born the next day, on November 29, 1942.

301. Among the undocumented survivors of the fire were the two club cats, a female tabby rescued from a new Broadway Lounge window ledge (and photographed in era newspapers), and another feline not found and presumed safely escaped.

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302. When newsmen called Sunday on the Winchester, MA, home of missing Grove patrons (and victims) Lee Saunders, Jr., age 27, and wife Pauline, age 28: "Only the barking of a dog was heard within the house..." (Woburn Daily Times, Woburn, MA, November 30, 1942).

303. The only full-page Grove-coverage photo in any era Boston newspaper - on page 20 of the December 1 edition of the Boston Evening American - may have actually been of a hoax.

304. It showed a man calling himself William Miller, age 30, of Hartford, CT, who claimed to lose his wife named "Kay" in the fire, being consoled by a Hub official at Southern Mortuary.

305. No such casualty named "Kay Miller" existed and the lack of matching or similar names in area street listings was observed by Hartford newspapers.

306. Cocoanut Grove had but a single violation on record with the Boston Licensing Board at the time of the catastrophe.

307. An archived letter dated November 19, 1936, read in part: "It has come to our attention that you are advertising as a club or night club, and this is against the law. We would like to have one of the management appear before this board immediately."

308. Four of the 454 known Grove survivors would go on to celebrate 100th birthdays: patrons Catherine Fallon, age 43, of Quincy, MA (who turned age 100 on May 29, 1999); Alice Pennock, age 40, of Melrose, MA (who reached the century mark on June 12, 2002); Robert "Bob" Shumway, age 18, of Amherst, MA (turned age 100 on February 20, 2024); and Joyce Spector, age 18, of Boston (reached triple-digits on April 16, 2024).

309. The above Alice Pennock lived longer than any other known fire survivor, 104 years, 4 months.

310. Exactly one pre-fire photograph of an intact new Broadway Lounge is known to exist, a promotional glossy showing bartender and victim William "Bubbles" Shea, age 34, South Boston, MA, with two real customers, taken opening night on November 17.

311. The lone known "critique" of the New Lounge during its brief 11-day career came in the testimony of patron and survivor Joseph Kelly, age 36, Arlington, MA: "We didn't like the room itself. I mean, someone said it was a little too blue, perhaps." (Boston Fire Dept. inquest, December 3, 1942).

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312. Prior to the November 17 launch of the new Broadway Lounge, the space at 59 Broadway was home to local landmark Eddie's Lunch, which closed in late 1941 (owned by Edward Land, of Boston, retired for health reasons).

313. Although the tragedy claimed no Hub firefighters, less than two weeks earlier on November 15, 1942, six perished when a brick wall of Lyceum Hall collapsed following a fire at Luongo's Tap restaurant in Maverick Square, East Boston, MA.

314. The first Boston policeman on the scene, patrolman Walter Jones, Jr., age 41, Dorchester, MA, had to borrow a nickel from the headwaiter at the nearby Club Mayfair in order to call Police Headquarters.

315. Fire survivor and teen singer Dorothy "Dotty Myles" Metzger, age 17, Manhattan, NY, later charted a minor hit single, "You Can't Fool Around with Love," on Back Bay Records, then nationally issued on Columbia Records, in 1950.

316. New Broadway Lounge pianist Gorizia "Goody Goodelle" Maclone, age 25, Dorchester, MA, released a four-record 78-rpm set for sale at her shows, Goody Goodelle, Her Piano and Intimate Songs, on ART Records of Miami Beach, FL, in 1951.

317. Patron and fire survivor Jennie "Jean" Termine, age 16, of Boston, later a blues backup singer under the professional name Judy Tremaine, reached #28 on the U.S. music charts with the single, "Too Much," on Coral Records in 1954.

318. "As a result of the omnipresent color bar...of the approximately 500 whose lives were snuffed out at the Cocoanut Grove fire...only one Negro, Shadracke [sic] E. 'Shady' Plenty, wash-room attendant and one-time minstrel man, lost his life." (American Negro Press wire article, December 12, 1942).

319. "Unlike the nearby Tic-Toc which encourages Negro business...the policy of the Cocoanut Grove was not to employ colored entertainers or bands and to frown on Negro patronage." (American Negro Press wire article, December 12, 1942).

320. The lone hospitalized person of color was foyer ladies lounge attendant Vera Daniels, age 30, Roxbury, MA: "She was horribly burned in the club's fire and for weeks her life appeared to hang in the balance..." (June 1943 Red Cross report).

321. All eight Grove chorus line girls present at the time of the blaze were still living at the start of 1990.

322. All ten bartenders on duty when the fire broke were deceased at the start of 1990 (five died in the catastrophe).

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323. The acceptance notice from the American Medical Society to physician and club patron Dr. Gordon Bennett, age 27, Swampscott, MA, arrived at his home by mail on Monday, November 30, the same day he died of his burns.

324. While returning from funeral services and side-by-side burials of her four victim sons, a close friend of bereaved mother and widow Mrs. Mary Fitzgerald, age 71, of Wilmington, MA - Mrs. Florence Callahan, age 73, of Malden, MA - collapsed and died.

325. The total count of offspring known to lose at least one parent in the Cocoanut Grove disaster was 167, of which 144 were minors (then under age 21) and 23 were adults.

326. Of the 144 known minor children (under age 21) who lost parents in the catastrophe, 101 lost one parent each, while 43 lost both parents.

327. In addition to the above counts, three adult children and one minor perished alongside at least one parent in the disaster.

328. The only fire victim under age 21 to be joined in death by a parent was Frederick Sharby, Jr., age 19, who died with his father Fred Sharby, Sr., age 43, both of Keene, NH.

329. The youngest child to lose any parents in the disaster was Ellen Marie Nash, age 6 weeks (born on October 10, 1942), of Quincy, MA, who lost both her mother and father.

330. The youngest male to lose parents in the holocaust was Richard MacMillan, of Quincy, MA, just three days older than the above Ellen Marie Nash (born on October 7, 1942), who also lost both parents in the same foursome.

331. The above Ellen Marie Nash (as Mrs. Ellen Goggin, of Wethersfield, CT), interviewed by the Associated Press in November 1992, at age 50, revealed she was later raised by a maternal aunt, and that she never met son Richard of the MacMillans born three days earlier.

332. The oldest individual to lose a parent in the disaster was Maurice Gordon, age 36, Brookline, MA, who lost his estranged father Isaac Gordon, age 61, and stepmother Minnie, age 41, Dorchester, MA, then tried unsuccessfully with a younger brother to break his father's will.

333. Adult sisters Mrs. Mildred (Murray) Whitmarsh, age 28, and Mrs. Margaret (Murray) Lewis, age 26, both of Dorchester, MA, both married, were the only two fire victims

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to perish along with both parents, Mr. and Mrs. John and Alice Murray, ages 52 and 48, respectively, of Dorchester.

334. The lone known individual to lose an entire immediate family (including parents and also siblings) was not even present at the blaze: Charles Murray, age 21, U.S. Army, Dorchester, MA, lost both parents in addition to the above two married sisters, his only siblings.

335. Paul Penardi, age 3, son of Angelo Penardi, Stoughton, MA, was the only child to lose a grandparent in the fire (Dominic Penardi, age 59, of Stoughton) but no parents (the latter were not present at the club).

336. Grove chorus dancer Claudia Boyle, age 26, Brighton, MA, escaped the blaze, but lost a future son when Matthew Brown, Jr., was struck and killed by a drunk driver while crossing Appleton Street in Boston in January 1967, at age 16.

337. Club cigarette girl and victim Shirley "Bunny" Leslie, age 20, of Boston, was - with her mother, "...ironically...burned out of their home two weeks ago, and had been living in a hotel near the Grove." (Boston Daily Record, November 30, 1942).

338. Mrs. Helen Mikalonis, bereaved widow of Grove bartender and victim Paul Mikalonis, age 27, arrived home on December 17, 1942, to find her second-floor tenement in Revere, MA, ravaged by flames, started in the kitchen of the unit below.

339. After two of his movie theatres had burned with loss of life, Fred Sharby, Sr., age 43, Keene, NH, in 1939 erected a model fireproof home of metal and stucco, only to die in the flames of the Grove nightmare three years later with his son, Frederick, Jr., age 19.

340. "The dwelling that Sharby designed...is a fire prevention specialist's dream house." (The Boston Globe, June 26, 1999).

341. "One of the strange coincidences of the tragic Boston fire was the fact that Max Gorvine... who was killed, has a brother, Maury Gorvine...who lives in the same house occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald W. Downer who were also killed." (Beverly Evening Times, Beverly, MA, November 30, 1942).

342. The above Max Gorvine, age 44, and Pauline Hyman, age 18, both of Revere, MA, patron victims in separate parties, lived in adjacent houses (on cornering streets).

343. By pure irony, patron and victim Caroline Saphar, age 19, Newton, MA, was the granddaughter of Clarence E. Beach, inventor of the widely-employed Gamewell fire alarm system.

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344. Fire survivor Louise Bouvier, age 20, lost her fiancé, Steven Casavant, age 21, both of Southbridge, MA, in the blaze, then reportedly lost a second fiancé in World War II action.

345. Fire survivor Pauline Sharby, age 21, Keene, NH, not only lost her father Fred, Sr., age 43, and younger brother Frederick, Jr., age 19, but then lost a fiancé "somewhere in South Pacific" as a Japanese prisoner of war in 1943.

346. "By a strange twist of fate, Harry Asher...when he owned the New England franchise on Paramount pictures, built the structure which 25 years later was to take the lives of hundreds of persons as well as his own." (Variety magazine, December 2, 1942, refers to victim Harry Asher, age 57, Boston).

347. Patron Irma Wilding, age 19, Quincy, MA, who died in the fire disaster, and future journalist Paul Benzaquin, age 20 (in 1942), who later wrote about it, were two of seven photographed posing together on the cheerleading squad for Quincy High School in the Quincy Patriot Ledger, October 1, 1940.

348. A $7,500 fire in an artificial palm tree at the nearby Rio Casino club on July 29, 1942, four months before the Grove calamity (without injuries), provided mild humor: "Although unfamiliar with fighting cocoanut [sic] tree fires, Boston firemen quickly put out the blaze..." (The Boston Post, July 30, 1942).

349. A minor cushion fire in an old sedan owned by Philip Shir, age 20, Brookline, MA, parked at nearby Stuart and Carver Streets which brought firemen to the scene even before the first alarms were sounded was deemed by some as "divine intervention."

350. Advertising executive Ernest Goulston, age 59, Boston, made headlines when he produced a "friendly" letter dated January 27, 1939, to, "...a person of importance connected with the club" (never further identified), warning: "...Your exits are very bad. You have a tinderbox construction."

351. At least one life may have been spared by the fire, that of hospitalized patron Corp. Harry Engel, Jr., age 26, U.S. Army, New York, NY, who was to ship out on the military transport vessel U.S.S. Dorchester, torpedoed three months later with loss of most of those on board.

352. Tobacco may have also played a role in saving lives: Israel "Pete" Frutman, age 40, and Lieut. Bernard N. "Bucky" Levin, age 30, U.S. Army, both of Brookline, MA, stepped out into the night together for a smoke just as flames claimed the remaining six in their Melody Lounge party.

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353. Patron Sigmond Cohen, age 36, Brighton, MA, may have been similarly blessed (quote): "I...had just bought a package of cigarettes from the cigarette girl...I said...'I think I'll go outside for a few minutes and get a breath of fresh air.'" (The Boston Herald, November 29, 1942).

354. Dancing may have claimed one young couple: while their waiting companions fled to safety from the lobby, Conrad Schorling, age 26, Springfield, MA, and Mary Rose O'Sullivan, age 25, Holyoke, MA: "...danced with death when they swung into a few final turns on the dance floor..." (Springfield Daily News, November 30, 1942).

355. But shagging may have aided another: Raymond "Nick" Carter, age 26, U.S. Coast Guard, South Boston, MA, and date Georgia Canelias, age 20, Brockton, MA, safely escaped after a spin in the main dining room, while a second couple died waiting below in Melody Lounge.

356. Pauline Sharby, age 21, Keene, NH, Regis College senior, left her main dining room gathering of seven to study at the nearby Hotel Statler only minutes before her father, a younger brother, his girlfriend and the latter's parents all perished.

357. Among the scores of mourners photographed seeking lost loved ones Sunday morning was a mystery "Old Lady in Shawl," searching for a missing son, "Sammy."

358. The "old lady" was subject of two nationally published wire photos by Hub cameraman James "Jimmy" Jones, one standing alone in light rain outside Northern Mortuary, another requesting assistance from a Boston police guard.

359. Comment by a reader on the latter image: "...There is one story, one picture that has struck deeper than all the others put together...That picture is a masterpiece of news photography..." (The Boston Post, December 3, 1942).

360. The elderly immigrant widow, identified as Mrs. Bertha Feinstein, age 72, of Boston, cried joyfully on Tuesday: "Yesterday I find my boy!" (adult son was away in New York at the time and could not call because his mother had no phone; his mother lived another 14 years).

361. Patron Mildred Lane, age 31, Newton, MA, made news when she testified of witnessing a small child carried from the scene (quote): "...There on the sidewalk a man was holding a baby...The child looked ghastly. It wasn't making any noise." (Boston Daily Record, December 3, 1942).

362. The "mystery" youth - at first subject of wild rumors including being an infant of an unwed entertainer - was soon confirmed as George "Dickie" Tracey, age 1½, son of

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Grove resident handyman James "Leslie," Sr., age 27, and wife Margaret "Irene" Tracey, age 28, Boston (all survived).

363. The above Mrs. Tracey (to reporters): "Daddy held Dickie up high so he'd be out of harm's way, and I guess that's the child that one girl reported seeing." (The Boston Herald, December 3, 1942)

364. A Grove sign contractor, Henry Weene, age 39, Malden, MA, touched off a firestorm of controversy when he testified on December 8 that club owner Barnett Welansky claimed electrical licensing protocol was not necessary because, "Mayor Tobin and I fit." (Boston Daily Record, December 9, 1943).

365. Boston mayor Maurice Tobin, age 41, Jamaica Plain, MA, immediately issued a public response: "Whether or not Mr. Welansky ever made this statement, I don't know, but certainly if he did, he had no right to make it..." (Boston Daily Record, December 9, 1943).

366. Mr. Weene later complained that city employees were "...sneaking and snooping around..." his business, and informed the press: "It was a $1,000 job and I haven't got paid for it yet." (The Boston Globe, December 29, 1942).

367. An assistant assessor for the City of Boston, Richard Pierce, age 47, Dorchester, MA, narrowly cheated fate in July 1941 when he: "...was rescued from drowning in the Charles River after his car plunged over an embankment and landed in 25 feet of water near Western avenue." (The Boston Herald, July 17, 1941).

368. But chance revenged the father of four at Cocoanut Grove: "Now the children are fatherless and probably motherless as well, for Mrs. Pierce is among the missing and Richard Pierce is among the dead." (Boston Daily Record, November 30, 1942).

369. Mrs. Katherine "Kitty" Scales, age 34, her husband Thomas, age 44, and unmarried younger sister Claire Krohn, age 25, all of Arlington, MA, skirted death when a truck in front of their car carrying dynamite exploded in Ellsworth, ME, in 1939, killing occupants of the vehicle behind them.

370. The trio averted death-filled harm again when they escaped the burning main dining room without injury.

371. Headlines flared on December 4 when an "attractive, stylishly clad young girl..." was observed wandering dazed on Melville Avenue, Dorchester, MA, mumbling she had seen, "...a lot of dead bodies." (The Boston Traveler, December 4, 1942).

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372. Unable to give a name nor address, the "...pretty blonde, 5' 4," weighing about 115 pounds..." (Boston Traveler, December 4, 1942) was at first believed a possible Grove fire survivor.

373. A name in her pocketbook provided identification as Lucille Whalen, age 17, of Dorchester, a city high school student and nurse's aid trainee at Massachusetts General Hospital.

374. Although not present at the tragedy, she may have witnessed disaster aftermath at the above medical facility (not confirmed).

375. Fire victims Lieut. John Noyes, age 39, U.S. Naval Reserve, and his wife Dorothea, age 39, Lake Forest, IL, owned a 39½-acre residence (Chicago Daily Tribune, August 14, 1938: "It has fourteen rooms and six baths..."); also a 25-room seasonal mansion on Lake Michigan, later added to the list of National Historic Places.

376. The late father of Mrs. Noyes above was inventor of the Comptometer (computing device) and Comptograph (printing adding machine), and co-founder of Felt & Tarrant Manufacturing Co., of Chicago, IL, which built them.

377. The father of victim Mary Ellen "Mae" McCormack, age 20, South Boston, MA, Edward "Knocko" McCormack, local political power, allegedly punched Boston mayor (and rival) Maurice Tobin twice at her services for allowing dangerous club conditions to exist (oft-repeated story never confirmed nor discredited).

378. The father of victim Mrs. Betty Lee Winslow, age 25, Springfield, MA, believing her missing remains were still under debris, on Sunday requested a new probe of the ruins: "Firemen who had made many careful searches considered this unlikely but cheerfully went to work again." (The Boston Herald, December 1, 1942).

379. Mrs. Winslow was already deceased upon arrival early Sunday morning at Mass General Hospital, but was misidentified under another name.

380. Club headwaiter Frank Balzarini, age 37, Natick, MA, made posthumous news when a military sibling stationed at a far North American base: "...received a Christmas package from his brother...mailed before the latter died in the Cocoanut Grove..." (The Boston Globe, January 29, 1943).

381. Joseph Sullivan, age 27, Charlestown, MA, made posthumous news when his mother won a $1,660 verdict in Suffolk Superior Court against a Somerville, MA, dentist in June 1944, for allowing a piece of a tooth to lodge in her Grove victim son's lung in the course of extracting 15 teeth.

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382. Victim Bernice Sussman, age 20, Philadelphia, PA, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, PA, made posthumous news (twice)...

383. "The diploma she was to have received will be awarded...today to Bernice F. Sussman...who was burned to death in the Boston night club fire last November." (Philadelphia Inquirer, February 6, 1943).

384. Also: "Campers of Highland Nature Camp, Naples, Me....sent gifts to the Portland Chapter American Red Cross...in memory of Bernice Sussman, a former camper...Miss Sussman was a victim of the Cocoanut Grove fire..." (Philadelphia Inquirer, September 26, 1946).

385. The Circle Lounge and Grille, Brighton, MA, owned by James Welansky, age 46, Brookline, MA, older brother of Grove owner Barnett Welansky, was destroyed on January 6, 1961, by a fire started in a kitchen grease flue (this time with no loss of life).

386. Reported Grove survivor Francis Coffin, age 37, of Somerville, MA, later a railroad engineer, died when he tripped and fell into the path of his own train at North Station, Boston, on November 28, 1962, the exact 20th anniversary of the fire.

387. Grove chorus girl Eleanor Giglio (Gayle), age 19, Quincy, MA, would later marry on November 28, 1962, the exact 20th anniversary of the fire.

388. Fire survivors Marion Bizzozero, age 40, and Francis "Frank" Duggan, age 46, both of Quincy, MA, who both lost their spouses in the same party, remained close for years after and were officially engaged at the time of the latter's April 1978 death, at age 81.

389. The newspaper ad announcing the November 17 opening of the Cocoanut Grove Lounge facing Broadway chose the most unfortunate of phrases to promote the new annex: "breath-taking" (truth in advertising).

390. Roving Grove photographer Doris "Lynne" Andrews, age 24, Brighton, MA, spared possible death when she left to develop a print of newlyweds who died waiting for the photo, was herself dead less than three years later at age 27, of pulmonary tuberculosis.

391. Two fire victims were survived by as many as five minor children (under age 21): patrons Michael J. Fitzgerald, age 51, Quincy, MA (father of Ruth, age 19, Phyllis, age 18, Robert, age 16, Richard, age 14, and Barbara, age 11), and James Slattery, age 41, Cambridge, MA (father of James, Jr., age 20, John, age 16, Mary, age 15, Patricia, age 13, and William, age 9).

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392. Fire victim John W. Griffin, age 34, Milton, MA, was survived by four minor children (June, age 10, Jean, age 8, John W. "Jackie," Jr., age 6, and Joyce, age 3), with a fifth on the way (daughter Jerie, born on January 1, 1943).

393. Among all club fatalities only Mrs. Margaret Sullivan, age 56, of Ansonia, CT, was parent to more than five children overall: five adults (fire victim Raymond, age 34, also George, Jr., age 33, William, age 25, Margaret, age 22, and Marion, age 21), plus two minors (Daniel, age 18, and Louise, age 15).

394. Two families lost four immediate members in the disaster: the Fitzgeralds of Wilmington, MA (adult brothers John, age 41; James, age 38; Wilfred, age 32; and Henry, age 30, latter a private, U.S. Army Air Corps), and the Murrays of Dorchester, MA (Mr. and Mrs. John and Alice Murray, ages 52 and 48, respectively, and married daughters Mildred Whitmarsh, age 28, and Margaret Lewis, age 24).

395. Of the nine club employees who were working in the cellar Melody Lounge where the fire started only one perished, bartender Paul Mikalonis, age 27, Revere, MA.

396. Of the eight club employees who successfully fled the flaming Melody Lounge, only one - bar waiter Herbert Schein, age 25, Ozone Park, NY - made his getaway up the front Piedmont Street stairway (the others went out through the adjoining rear kitchen).

397. The first employee to notice anything wrong in the Melody Lounge was bartender Emilio Soracco, age 55, Dorchester, MA, who testified at the city inquests: "Somebody put out a light in a corner and I said...'Look at the corner.' It had got dark there..." (The Boston Herald, December 4, 1942).

398. Melody Lounge cashier Daniel Weiss, age 25, Dorchester, MA, trapped by the fire, waited out the flames on the bar floor with a wet towel over his nose and mouth: "His only injuries were a sore throat and tiny burns..." (Boston Evening Globe, December 3, 1942).

399. The typed court exhibit transcript of the November 20 Cocoanut Grove safety inspection by Boston Fire Department Lieut. Francis Linney, age 59, Dorchester, MA, - which found conditions "good" eight days before the blaze - was accidentally misdated November 30, 1942, two days AFTER the fire occurred.

400. Despite extreme attempts to recover all personal effects from the fireravaged site including raking inches of muddy residue into bins for drying and sifting, lost mementos continued to surface for months.

401. The Boston Globe, June 10, 1943: "State Detective William Killen uncovered ... yesterday while searching through the ruins of the Cocoanut Grove ... a charge

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account plate in the name of Mrs. Frank Ruboy ... Pearl st., Charlestown." (not present, but younger sister Myrna "Minnie" Rubin, age 24, Chelsea, MA, perished).

402. Also retrieved by Detective Killen: "...a wallet containing $51 in partly burned bills and a tag..." (The Boston Globe, June 10, 1943), identified as the property of victim Lieut. Edward Boylan, age 25, U.S. Army, Newport, RI.

403. "After three months...the wrist watch of Ensign Carl Benson Russell was mailed today by Boston police to his mother...Firemen found the watch in the fireswept Melody lounge of the night club..." (The Dayton Herald, Dayton, OH, March 9, 1943).

404. Also: "Police investigation revealed the watch had been...a high school graduation gift for Russell." (victim Ensign Carl Russell, age 21, U.S. Navy, Dayton, OH).

405. The blackened club remains made news in January 1945 when two small fires erupted, one inside the main entrance and one on the bandstand: "District Fire Chief William J. Mahoney said boys had ripped away boarding from the gutted structure to gain entrance." (AP wire article, January 14, 1945).

406. Property of New Cocoanut Grove, Inc. (land and buildings) was sold at public auction on May 21, 1945, for $15,000 to Film Exchange Transfer Co., Inc., of Boston, the same business that owned it before becoming a night club in 1927.

407. Headlines were made during June 1945 razing preparations when a partially hidden cellar wall safe under the stairs to the Melody Lounge was found to be freshly rifled.

408. Rumors swirled the strongbox contained illicit assets dating to the dry era when the Grove was owned by late racketeer Charles "King" Solomon, and that his associates returned for its contents.

409. Club owner Barnett Welansky declared (from prison) that although he was aware of the safe, it was always kept "open and empty" until walled over during a remodel.

410. The mystery of who drilled open the lockbox or if valuables were discovered was never solved.

411. Boston Evening Globe, August 2, 1945: "Workmen...tearing down the ruins of the Cocoanut Grove...today recovered...a wallet which bore the name of Rita M. Duffley...It contained charge account cards and an accident insurance card." (victim Rita Duffley, age 28, Jamaica Plain, MA).

412. Also located was a rusty inscribed time piece (Boston Evening Globe, August 2, 1945): "The watch...has been identified as being the property of Charles M. Fauci...It

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had been a birthday gift to Fauci from his aunt..." (victim Charles M. Fauci, Jr., age 21. Wellesley Hills, MA).

413. A new one-story structure erected on the same footprint in 1947 kept the original steel framework and retained some exterior brick walls.

414. The similar-looking building that replaced the Grove ended its career as the home of Turnpike Auto Body, an automobile parts supplier.

415. The above edifice was demolished in early 1969 to make way for a high-rise hotel complex.

416. Only one previous fire was on record as having occurred at the club, on November 2, 1931, with no loss of property nor life reported, nor any injuries.

417. A $100,000 blaze on August 27, 1954, at 12-20 Piedmont Street, directly across the street from the site of the former night spot, injured eight firemen.

418. The large liquor stock of Cocoanut Grove proved of greater monetary value than all other assets of New Cocoanut Grove, Inc., combined, including the physical club and property owned on which it operated.

419. The undamaged liquor, sold at auction to the Parker House, of Boston, in April 1943, for $171,000, "...included 50 cases of cognac, 600 to 700 cases of Scotch, 500 cases of Canadian whisky, several hundred cases of rum and...large quantities of most of the varieties known to Boston drinkers." (Boston Evening Globe, April 26, 1943).

420. Beer brands offered on the final Grove beverage menu were (in the order originally listed): Budweiser, Schlitz, Ruppert, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Heineken, and Klaver Holland Brew (the latter two imported).

421. Ales available from that last selection of libations were: Dawson's, Ballantine, Pickwick (brewed by Boston's own Haffenreffer), and Bass (imported).

422. In addition, a guest could also order an imported Guinness Stout.

423. For mixers and the less adventurous, the ginger ale roster included Canada Dry, Pureoxia (produced in Boston by Moxie), Clicquot Club, and Schweppes, while optioned mineral waters came from White Rock, Apollinaris, Vichy Célestins, Perrier, and Poland.

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424. If a Grove victim happened to follow Boston sports, the last Red Sox baseball game he or she would have known was a 7-to-6 victory at Fenway Park over the New York Yankees to finish the 1942 American League season.

425. If that baseball fan dared follow the lowly cross-town Boston Braves ("Bees" through 1940), his club broke a long losing streak with a 9-to-0 forfeit win over the Giants at the Polo Grounds (earned when New York fans covered the field with debris), then were rained out twice to end their 1942 schedule.

426. The fourth-place Boston Bruins (in the old six-team National Hockey League) were defeating the fifth-place Montreal Canadians 6-to-2 on the same night the fire raged, but the contest was held over 300 miles away on the ice of the Montreal Forum.

427. The body of one fire victim, William Robert Norton, age 20, Mobile, AL, was identified by former Boston Red Sox outfield star George "Duffy" Lewis, now traveling secretary for the Boston Braves and close friend of the father of the deceased.

428. Among those safely escaped was Braves' minor league shortstop James "Jimmy" Coughlin, age 24, Worcester, MA, with his wife Helen, age 22: "This fellow was one of the survivors of the Cocoanut Grove disaster." (Boston Sunday Globe, July 21, 1946; never played in majors).

429. "The Star Spangled Banner" was rendered at the first major league baseball night game ever played in Boston by former Grove tenor William "Billy" Payne (a Braves' 5-to-1 loss to the above Giants) at Braves Field, on May 11, 1946.

430. In June 1944 the mother of married fire victim Mrs. Alice Ducey, age 30, North Weymouth, MA, sought odd permission to unearth the coffin of her estranged late daughter to collect fire-scorched valuables for resale.

431. In response Norfolk County Probate justice James F. Reynolds sternly proclaimed: "I will not order the body of this girl exhumed for the purpose of taking the jewelry from the casket." (Quincy Patriot Ledger, Quincy, MA, June 7, 1944).

432. Among the peculiar post-fire turns is that the widowed husband of Grove victim Mrs. Marie Mason, age 33, Cleverdale (Queensbury), NY, in July 1945 married the younger sister (not present) of Grove victim Corp. Arthur Mead, Jr., age 31, U.S. Army, Glens Falls, NY.

433. Survivor Richard Williams, age 26, who lost his wife Ethel Mae, age 26, in a party with victim John Murphy, age 25, all of Framingham, MA, married a younger sister (not present) of Mr. Murphy in September 1945 (Framingham News, November 30, 1942: "A sister of Mr. Murphy was to have joined them later...").

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434. Victim Stasia "Jessie Carlson" Cichocki, age 21, Salem, MA, was a graduate of St. John the Baptist School (girls' private school), in Peabody, MA, site of an October 1915 fire that killed 21 female students ages 7 to 17.

435. The idea of a Hub night spot was conceived by traveling California-based stock promoter Jacob "Jack" Berman, during a chance spring 1927 meeting with Boston orchestra leader Jacob "Jacques Renard" Stavisky, who was playing at Dixville Notch, NH.

436. The above Mr. Berman returned to Boston after the blaze with a cryptic message (never explained): "I'll be back...and soon, to retrieve something - not in money, but in satisfaction - something that I lost, but never should have lost." (Boston Sunday Advertiser, January 3, 1943).

437. The one-and-one-half-story brick and stucco structure that housed Cocoanut Grove was originally constructed as a truck garage and warehouse in 1916.

438. It was remodeled into stucco-faced movie distribution offices in 1924, then modified again as a night club in 1927.

439. Cocoanut Grove officially opened (as "Renard Cocoanut Grove") on Thursday, October 27, 1927, and unofficially closed on Saturday, November 28, 1942, just after 10:15 p.m.

440. The "Renard" prefix (for first bandleader Jacob "Jacques Renard" Stavisky) was dropped from the name in early 1928.

441. The club address throughout its career was 17 Piedmont Street, Boston, MA, while the main phone number was always LIBerty 3256.

442. Cocoanut Grove's famous "rolling roof" opened up to the stars for the first time on Friday, June 8, 1934.

443. The innovative main dining room "disappearing stage" on wheels made its debut in October 1939.

444. Perhaps the crowning moment of the Grove's pre-fire 15-year career was the feting of beloved New England racehorse "Brass Monkey" with a highly publicized live appearance on Tuesday, May 28, 1940.

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445. "This unprecedented affair was broadcast coast to coast. The club was filled and loud speakers carried the proceedings to a crowd in the street." (columnist Alan Frazer, Boston Evening American, October 19, 1953).

446. An encore showing on Thursday, June 19, 1941, proved less successful when a mock starting call was announced: "The old warrior, fire in his eyes...whammed into a table full of race writers..." (columnist George W. Clarke, Boston Daily Record, July 30, 1952).

447. The definite article (prefix) "The" was rarely used in front of "Cocoanut Grove" in its own era, instead the club was often referred to simply as "Cocoanut Grove" (as in, "Let's all meet at Cocoanut Grove").

448. The class action settlement payout to each of the estates of the nearly 500 fire victims, finalized in November 1947 after lengthy adjudication, averaged $160.

449. By contrast, the combined gross payoff among the 100 killed and roughly 200 injured in The Station night club fire on February 20, 2003, in West Warwick, RI, was a reported $176 million.

450. State Fire Marshal Stephen C. Garrity, age 50, Lowell, MA, concluded in the official Grove investigation dated November 19, 1943: "After exhaustive study and careful consideration of all the evidence...I am unable to find precisely and exactly the immediate cause of this fire."

451. A second investigation of the blaze reopened under continued public pressure by Boston Fire Commissioner James H. Kelly arrived at the same verdict in November 1970: "cause undetermined."

452. John Rose, age 27, Jamaica Plain, MA, hoseman, Engine 22 (Warren Avenue), Boston Fire Department, injured while responding to the Grove, later battled the tragic June 1972 Hotel Vendome blaze in Boston's Back Bay which killed nine firefighters when a section collapsed.

453. Adolph "Chico" Cecchini, age 45, Somerville, MA, at 13 years the longest tenured Grove waiter known present, was still active 40 years later as host of Schroeder's restaurant in Boston: "...At 85, probably the oldest maître d' in town." (Boston Herald-American, September 22, 1982).

454. When fire survivor Mrs. Naomi Lieberman, age 45, Brookline, MA, died on September 28, 1990, at age 93, it meant as many Grove survivors were deceased as were still living (219 each), among those with known dates of death.

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455. More known survivors of Cocoanut Grove would later die in 2003 (16) than in any other single year.

456. Mrs. Anna Welansky, age 41, Brighton, MA, wife of Grove owner Barnett Welansky, talked publicly of the tragedy for the first time in a November 1992 newspaper interview (at age 91) during 50th anniversary observations.

457. Mrs. Welansky (quote): "The Cocoanut Grove was my husband's life and I used to love to go there...Barnett was never the same after the fire." (Boston Sunday Herald, November 22, 1992).

458. The long-unmarked grave of fire victim Mary DeMoura (Travers), age 30, Dorchester, MA, at St. Joseph's Cemetery, Taunton, MA, gained a substantial headstone from her descendants nearly 75 years later in early 2017.

459. At least two Grove victims rested in unmarked graves as of 2023: Evelyn Richardson, age 24, Boston (at Woodlawn Cemetery, Wellesley, MA), and Susan "Susie Ann" Wright, age 44, Boston (at Cedar Grove Cemetery, Dorchester, MA).

460. The official recorded temperature in Boston at the hour the blaze began was 28.1 degrees Fahrenheit.

461. The last tune played by Mickey Alpert's house orchestra prior to the disaster was "Happy Birthday to You," to 11-year-old patron James "Jimmy" Todd, of Milton, MA, at the request of his patron father, to conclude a set ending at 10:00 p.m.

462. The final song ever heard in the main dining room was "Prisoner of the Sea," performed by rhumba relief band Juan Pineda and His Latin Americans, and sung by his wife Rina "Rinita."

463. In the Melody Lounge pianist Gorizia "Goody Goodelle" Maclone was nearing the finish of the popular melody "Bell Bottom Trousers" when the fire flared up.

464. In the New Lounge on Broadway accounts vary, but one survivor reported that singer Maxine Coleman had just taken a jocular request for the Holy Cross victory song.

465. Recalled 25 years later by Melody Lounge survivor Sophie Urban, age 23, Dorchester, MA: "The one thing that has stuck in my mind...was the memory of the piano player banging out 'Bell Bottom Trousers'...It sends a chill through me." (The Boston Herald , November 28, 1967).

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466. The first song NOT to be played because of the fire was "The Star Spangled Banner," which Milton "Mickey" Alpert's band had opened each floor show with since the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

467. The only building fire in U.S. history resulting in greater loss of life than Cocoanut Grove was the Iroquois Theatre disaster in Chicago, IL, on December 30, 1903, which tallied 602 casualties, many women and children.

468. Of the 513 Iroquois Theatre victims whose ages were immediately published, 301 were adults (age 21+) and 201 were minors (under age 21).

469. Among the 490 casualties of the Grove fire 429 were adults (age 21+) and 61 were minors (under age 21).

470. More adults died at Cocoanut Grove than in any other building blaze in U.S. history.

471. More blood plasma was used to treat victims of Cocoanut Grove than for American servicemen wounded in the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

472. More individuals died at Cocoanut Grove than died within the city of San Francisco, CA, during the great 1906 earthquake.

473. The calamity resulted in five fire box alarms sounded: at 10:15 p.m. (for a nearby automobile fire); at 10:20 p.m. (by an unknown patron or passerby); also at 10:23 p.m., at 10:24 p.m., and at 11:02 p.m. (the latter three ordered by fire officials at the scene to summons manpower).

474. "The all-out signal for the Cocoanut Grove night club disaster came in at 3:34 this morning." (Boston Sunday Post, November 29, 1942).

475. According to recorded death certificate findings, no Grove victim drowned as a result of water used in fire department rescue efforts, despite rumors to the contrary.

476. Contrary to circulating stories otherwise, the Piedmont Street revolving door lacked any secret mechanism that could remotely freeze its operation.

477. Rumored alcoholic fumes played no significant role in the rapid spread of the flames throughout the premises (not nearly concentrated enough, according to chemical experts who studied club conditions).

478. Other debunked theories ruled out in the fast movement of the fire included celluloid film fragments left by prior building tenants (none were found), and flammable wartime refrigerant gasses (incorrect high burn patterns).

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479. Despite early reports to the contrary, the dance floor did not cave in with scores dancing upon it.

480. No official victory celebration for the Boston College football squad was ever planned at Cocoanut Grove.

481. Instead, a "Victory Dance" - heavily-promoted - was to be held at the Imperial Ballroom of the nearby Hotel Statler.

482. Some members of the defeated Boston College football squad had discussed attending Cocoanut Grove on their own.

483. Another urban legend claims The Three Stooges appeared at the Grove the night before the disaster; this misbelief appears to trace to an "Ask The Globe" Boston newspaper column dating from the 1980s.

484. Counter to persistent myth club owner Barnett Welansky not only never "boasted of mob connections," but disdained the underworld enough to push its pre-Repeal patronage elsewhere with cleaned up dress and conduct codes for visiting acts.

485. When a woman named Mrs. Amelia D. Desrochers, of Green Bay, WI, turned age 100 in June 1966, she was declared one of the last two living survivors of (and last able to recall) the great Peshtigo, WI, forest fire of October 1871, considered the deadliest conflagration in U.S. history with over 2,000 casualties.

486. Green Bay Press-Gazette, June 24, 1966: "But for Mrs. Desrochers there was a...grim coincidence: one of her grandsons, Jerome Estes, perished in the Coconut [sic] Grove fire in Boston in 1942" (Jerome Estes, age 27, Green Bay, WI).

487. In perhaps the ultimate of ironies, the above Jerome Estes, age 27, with wife Olga, age 25, of Green Bay, WI, victims of the worst night club fire ever, were buried almost 1,200 miles away in Peshtigo, WI, site of the deadliest wildfire in Western Hemisphere history.

488. "The search for missing heirs...was not without complications or incidents of grim humor. In one case, a marmink coat was identified by a loophole mended with bits of twisted shoe-lacing and twine. The wrap belonged to Mrs. Jerome Estes..." (INS wire article, May 23, 1943).

489. The Cocoanut Grove disaster marked the first U.S. civilian use of the newly discovered British wonder drug "penicillin" (applied topically, and later learned in doses far too small to be effective).

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490. When Fire Commissioner W. Arthur Reilly lost decisively to James Michael Curley in the 1945 Boston mayoral contest one newspaper editorial asked: "...Does the Cocoanut Grove horror account in part for his meager total?" (The Boston Herald, November 8, 1945).

491. Included among better-known Grove survivors: patron Garrett Byrne, age 44, Roxbury, MA (longtime future Suffolk County District Attorney), Grove musician Jacob "Jack" Lesberg, age 22, Roxbury, MA (jazz bassist, member of Benny Goodman's last band in 1985), and horse jockey George Seabo, age 31, Brighton, MA (winner of the 1939 Preakness Stakes and runner-up in the '39 Kentucky Derby).

492. Melody Lounge patron F. Frederick "Fred" Bruck, age 21, Cambridge, MA, who was seriously disfigured in the blaze, became a noted architect with a portfolio including the Bulfinch Office Center at Government Center, Boston.

493. A giant protective tarp covering a condominium building regrettably erected decades later on the partial footprint of Cocoanut Grove - visible during repairs as the Grove Memorial at Boston's Statler Park was dedicated in November 2023 - carried an ironic repeating message: "This material is fireproof."

494. At least two known Grove fire survivors later joined that 21st-century social media phenomenon known as "Facebook," entertainer Enriqueta "Quita" Brazil (as Quita Brazil Foster), age 20, Roxbury, MA, and patron Joyce Spector (as Joyce Mekelburg), age 18, Boston.

495. Two Grove survivors shared their stories from their beds on Paramount newsreel: John Gill, age 33, Arlington, MA, and the above Joyce Spector, the latter from her home.

496. Two survivors spoke at the 75th anniversary Grove fire observations held in Boston in November 2017: tap dancer Marshall Cole (at age 92), of South Boston, MA, and the above former Miss Spector (now as Joyce Mekelburg, at age 93).

497. For Mrs. Mekelburg it was her first return to the disaster site since the night of the tragedy.

498. Ironically, both featured speakers in 2017 received mention by name in contemporary 1942 national news magazine accounts of their escapes from the catastrophe, Mr. Cole in Newsweek, and Miss Spector in Time.

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499. When Mrs. Mekelburg died on April 18, 2024, two days after celebrating her 100th birthday, Robert "Bob" Shumway, Amherst, MA, two months' her elder, became the last known living survivor of Boston's greatest disaster.

500. If other survivors were still alive years after the blaze their presence at the disaster was never made publicly known - either at the time of the catastrophe or in the decades to follow.

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