

Arson Determined In Fatal Manorhaven Fire

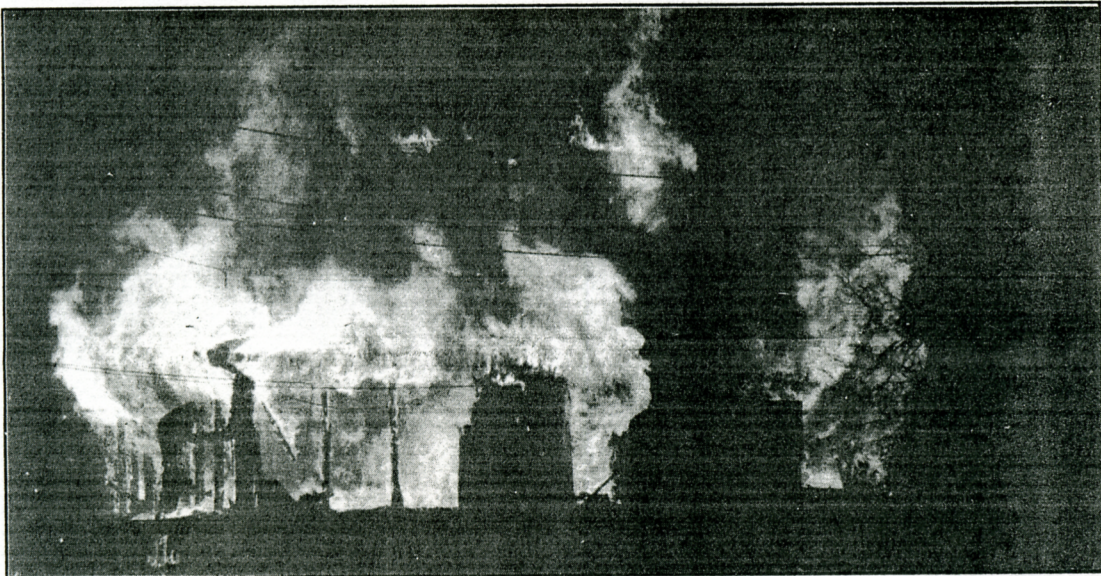
BY ALICE M. PECKELIS

A rapidly spreading fire that engulfed a Manorhaven home during the early morning hours of August 12th and claimed the life of its owner has been ruled arson. Four other occupants escaped with minor injuries after climbing out a second story window and jumping from the front porch roof to the ground.

Neil Capobianco, 51, was found dead in his bed in a rear bedroom of the single-family house on the first floor at 60 Edgewood Road. Preliminary cause of death pending an autopsy is smoke inhalation. According to Nassau County Fire Marshall Stephen Wenk, the fire has been ruled incendiary which means it was intentionally set. Investigations have been continuing by the Fire Marshall's office and the Nassau County Arson Squad which have been at the site on a daily basis since the fire. It is now under the jurisdiction of the Nassau County Police Homicide Squad. No arrests have been made as of press time.

Port Washington Fire Department Chief Geoffrey Cole said they arrived on the scene at 2:38 a.m. It took seventy-five firefighters using eight pieces of equipment to bring the blaze under control at 3:44 a.m. Three firefighters, John Eaton, Dan Salerno, and Jim D'Ello Iacono were treated on the scene for leg injuries and released. Occupants of the houses on either side of the fire were evacuated.

The fire, believed to have started on the first floor, possibly in the living



Billowing flames engulf a Manorhaven home at 60 Edgewood Road which claimed the life of Nell Capobianco. Four other occupants of the house escaped with minor injuries.

room, shot flames high into the night air and singed the leaves of tall trees surrounding the house. Firefighters attempted to reach Capobianco but were driven back by the flames. The fire completely gutted the house.

Solange Ramirez, 22, who lived in a room on the second floor with her boyfriend, Raul Alberto, 17, said she could hear Capobianco calling for help but they were unable to return to the house after they escaped. They had just

gone to bed when another tenant, Melvin Cruz, 21 yelled "fire." They were forced to escape through the second story window when flames blocked the stairs. A visitor, Juan Hernandez, 16, also escaped from the second floor.

Neighbors said there had been a heated argument in the house sometime prior to the fire and one neighbor said he heard "popping" noises that sounded like gunshots. Nassau County police are investigating the report but it is unknown

who was involved in the dispute or what it was about.

Capobianco, who was known for harboring youths in need of a place to stay, had owned the Manorhaven Delicatessen on Manorhaven Boulevard until about a year ago. He was currently operating a food service in Queens. This is the second tragedy to occur at the house. In October, 1993 Michael Chaviola, 24, who lived in the basement, committed suicide there.