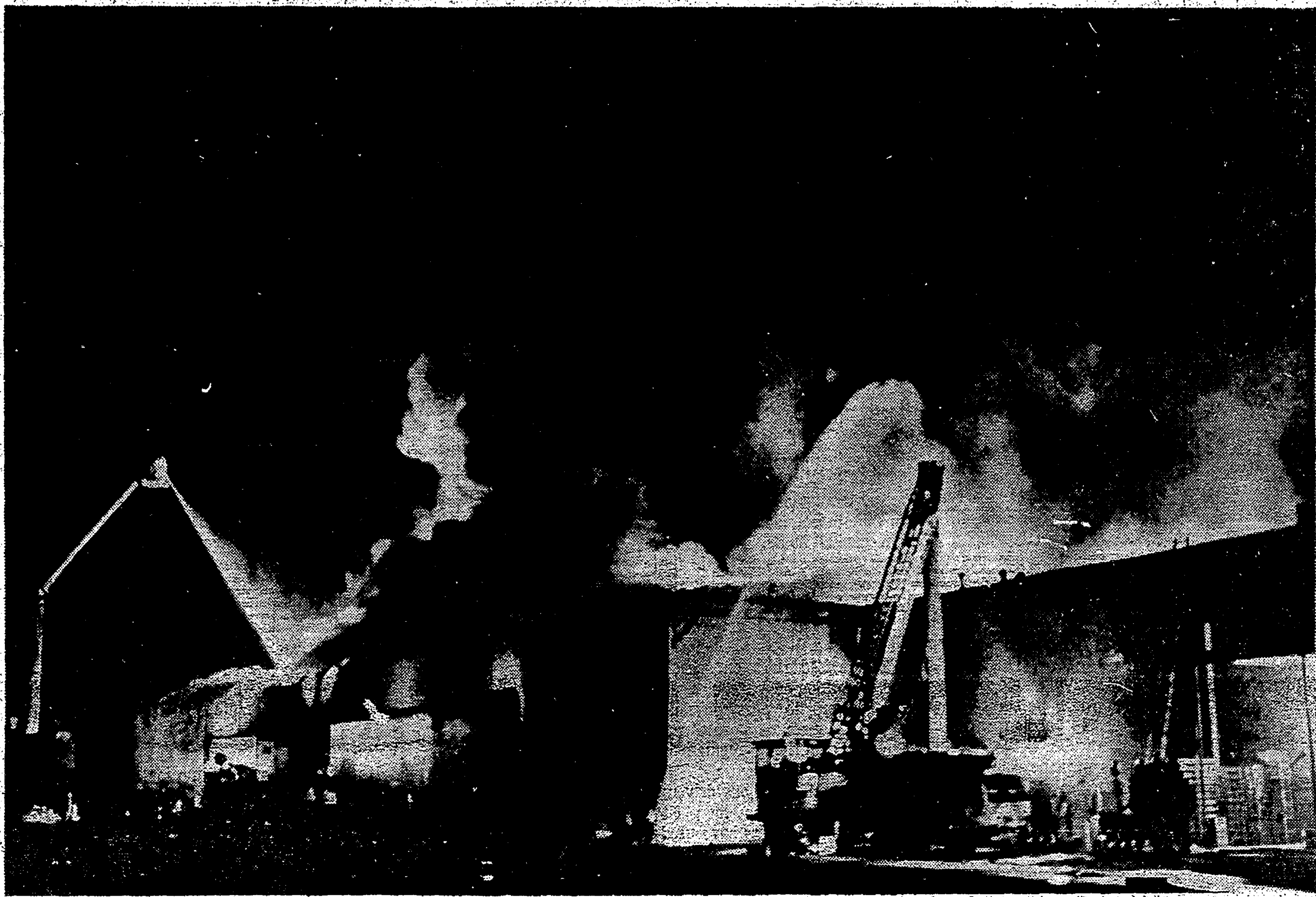


# Englewood K Mart Burns; Damage Set at \$2½ Million



FIREMEN AT THE REAR OF K MART DISCOUNT STORE BATTLE FLAMES THAT RAGE OUT OF CONTROL

Denver Post Photo by Ernie Leyba

The fire, estimated to have caused \$2½ million in damages, began when a bottle of propane fell to floor, exploded and ignited several cans of fuel.

## Propane Fuel Blast Blamed; No One Hurt

By JIM KIRKSEY  
Denver Post Staff Writer

ENGLEWOOD — Six departments fought a fire that raged out of control for four hours Tuesday night and early Wednesday at the K Mart discount store at 200 W. Belleview Ave. Damage was estimated by company officials at \$2½ million.

Temperatures dropped below 20 degrees as 60 to 70 firemen battled flames that skipped from one section of the 80,000-square-foot building to another.

No injuries were reported.

### Still Burning at Noon

Piles of debris still were burning at noon Wednesday, and three fire trucks and 12 Englewood policemen still were at the scene.

The fire was reported to the Englewood Fire Department at 10:07 p.m. Tuesday, with an automatic second alarm, according to fire dispatchers. The third alarm was sounded at 10:11 p.m., "and after that we just started calling in help," they said.

At 2:20 a.m. Wednesday, with flames still visible above the northeast corner of the building and thick, dark smoke pouring from the store, Fire Chief William A. Hamilton said the fire was "pretty well under control."

The smoke drifted north toward Denver. The flames cast an orange glow that was visible for miles.

### 90 Per Cent Loss

Deputy Fire Chief Donald J. McLellan said the store probably would be a 90 per cent loss.

Police Chief Jack Clasby said three or four employees were in the store when the fire started, shortly after the store closed at 10 p.m.

According to a witness, Clasby said, the blaze began in the sporting goods department when a bottle of propane fell to the floor, exploded and shot into a display of several cans of fuel used in camp stoves, lanterns and heaters. The fuel ignited.

Clasby said the fire quickly spread through the department, fed by sleeping bags and ammunition.

Besides the Englewood Fire Department, Clasby said, units from the Denver, Littleton, Cherry Hills, Bancroft and Sheridan Fire Departments and Englewood volunteer firemen fought the blaze.

### Help From Police

He said Englewood police received help from the Littleton and Sheridan Police Departments, the Arapahoe County sheriff's office and Englewood auxiliary police in securing the area.

Clasby reported no problems with the hundreds of spectators who turned out. No major traffic problems occurred, although hoses were laid across W. Belleview Ave. and S. Broadway.

B. M. Fauber, K Mart regional manager stationed in Los Angeles, Calif., made the damage estimate of \$2½ million but said it wasn't an exact figure.

K Mart leases its buildings from various owners and doesn't have exact figures on

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Other photos, page 52.

## 'NO CRIMINAL INTENT'

# Loans From Court Funds Revealed

By JOAN WHITE  
Denver Post Staff Writer

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The clerk's office of Denver District Court has loaned and advanced money from state court funds to employees.

Colorado Supreme Court and District Court officials acknowledged the fact Tuesday after The Denver Post pressed an investigation of the practice.

The money was repaid in short periods of time, and the practice was halted by order of Chief Justice Edward Pringle when he learned of it, according to the court officials.

Pringle said Tuesday that there wasn't "any criminal intent" involved because the money "was loaned and paid back."

### 'Not in Loan Business'

However, he said he halted the practice in mid-May because "the state isn't in the business of loaning money."

Pringle said that the funds loaned or advanced to employees—apparently in three instances—were from the court's registry bank account, which holds money from court fees, payment for types of support, and other sources. He said appropriated funds, as far as he knew, weren't involved in the incidents.

The Colorado Constitution prohibits spending of appropriated funds for purposes other than those for which they are earmarked.

Pringle said there was "no question of

anybody getting away with any money."

An investigation into the incidents was conducted several months ago by Presiding Judge Neil Horan of the Denver District Court, Horan confirmed Tuesday, and he "came up with no wrongdoing."

### 'Need' Cases Cited

According to Horan and Alvin Short, District Court administrator and clerk who acknowledged he authorized the payments, the instances involved employees who were in need.

Short said that one case involved a \$750 loan Sept. 30, 1971, to court reporter Harmon Downs, who had had the tips of his fingers on one hand cut off in an accident and whose sick leave and other pay had expired.

Short said the other two cases were advances to employees who, because they were hired a few days after the state's monthly payroll cutoff date, presumably wouldn't have received checks for six or seven weeks after they began working.

Short said \$150 was advanced to Court Clerk Daniel Kessler in March 1972, and \$140 to Court Clerk Margo Ann Fuller May 2, 1972.

In Downs' case, the money was in the form of a check signed by Short. In the other instances, the money was advanced in cash, secured by IOUs signed by the employees.

Short said he had "complete control"

over the loans or advances because as soon as the employees' payroll checks—which come to his office—arrived, they repaid the money.

He said the advances to the two clerks were computed on the basis of money they had already earned, but which they couldn't receive because of the monthly system of payment.

Horan's investigation included taking of sworn testimony from both Short and Short's assistant, Robert Betteridge, who acknowledged Tuesday he had been

approached by the employees seeking assistance.

Horan refused to allow a Denver Post reporter to examine the results of his investigation, including the transcript of the testimony, unless the reporter agreed not to quote from it. "If you wouldn't publish (the information), I'll let you see the file and that everything is on the up and up," he said. The reporter refused.

Asked for verification that the money had been repaid, Horan directed Short

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## Clear Skies and Warmup In Offing for Holiday

Generally clear skies and higher temperatures in the Denver metropolitan area and throughout most of the state are predicted for Thanksgiving Day, according to the National Weather Service.

A warming trend is expected to send temperatures in the Denver area into the low 50s Thursday, with only a 5 per cent chance of precipitation. The overnight low is expected to be near 25.

In the rest of the state, a few snow showers are possible in the mountains, but clear skies are expected at lower

elevations. The highs Thursday are expected to be in the low 50s at lower elevations and in the 30s in the mountains.

A trace of precipitation was recorded at the Weather Service station at Stapleton International Airport during the 24-hour period ended at 5 a.m. Wednesday. The high for the same period was 37 at 3:06 p.m. Tuesday.

The overnight low at 3:30 a.m. Wednesday was 17.

### THE PASSES

Loveland—Snowpacked.  
Vail—icy and snowpacked.  
Monarch—icy in spots.  
Wolf Creek—icy in spots.