

Two children die in home fire

By MARY PICKETT
Inter Lake Staff Writer

COLUMBIA FALLS — A fire gutting the David R. Shaffer home northwest of Columbia Falls Tuesday afternoon claimed the lives of two young children trapped in an upstairs bedroom.

Candy Shaffer, 2, and Warren Peterson, 4, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Peterson, died of smoke inhalation, said Don Anderson, Columbia Falls Volunteer Department (CFVD) fire chief.

Anderson said Mrs. Shaffer was painting a door in the home and while her back was turned the Peterson child began playing with a stick in the burning fireplace.

Clothes in a nearby closet caught fire, Anderson said. When Mrs. Shaffer's attempts to put the fire out were unsuccessful, she tried calling the fire department, but found the

phone was dead, he said.

Dashing to a neighbor's home to alert the fire department, Mrs. Shaffer took the boy with her, he said.

By the time she returned, the child had wandered back into the burning two-story frame home.

"It was one of the toughest fires I've been on," said Anderson, a 15-year veteran of the department.

The fire was extremely intense and it was difficult to ventilate it, he

said. Attempts to rescue the children and combat the blaze were also hampered by dense, chemical smoke from burning synthetic fabrics and paint supplies in the home.

"We just about lost one of the firemen during the fire," he said.

As the firefighter worked his way to the top of a stair well, the fire blossomed behind him, forcing him to jump over it to the bottom of the stairs, Anderson said.

One pumper, three tankers and 20 men from the CFVD and one tanker and five men from the Bad Rock Volunteer Fire Department fought the blaze which began sometime after 4 p.m.

Firefighters remained on the scene until about 10 p.m., Anderson said, and were called back to what remained of the Shaffer residence early this morning to suppress another flare up.

He said at about 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, the department's reserve force was called to a minor fire north of the town.

About 10,000 gallons of water were poured on the Shaffer fire and at least eight air tanks were used to search for the trapped children, he said.

The Shaffer's other five children were not in the house at the time of the fire, Anderson said.



SHAFFER HOME FIRE CLAIMS TWO
The David Shaffer home on Tamarack Lane was gutted by fire Tuesday.

Photo by Hays Groesbeck

Mansfield to seek MIA facts

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Sen. Mike Mansfield and three other persons have been added to a special presidential commission which will visit Vietnam in mid-March to try to obtain an accounting of missing Americans, the State Department said Tuesday.

The department announced last Friday that the commission will be headed by United Auto Workers President Leonard Woodcock.

Spokesman Frederick Z. Brown said the other commission members include Mrs. Marian Wright Edelman, director of the Children's Defense Fund; former United Nations Ambassador Charles Yost; and Rep. G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, D-Miss., the former chairman of the House Special Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia.

Montgomery's committee issued a report several weeks ago saying there is little hope that any of the 2,550 Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia are still alive.

Of that figure, more than 1,900 are missing in Vietnam and about 500 in Laos.

Brown said the United States hopes to send a similar mission to Laos.



MIKE MANSFIELD
Off to Vietnam

There are about 80 Americans listed as missing in Cambodia but the United States has made no effort to contact Cambodian authorities because officials said prospects for cooperation with them is "not encouraging."

High court stays out of 'Somers II' case

HELENA (AP) — The Montana Supreme Court refused Wednesday to interfere with the case of the "Somers II," a group of defendants who were arrested last December in a raid on an allegedly illegal card game in Flathead County.

The 11 defendants had asked the Supreme Court to order District Court Judge James M. Salansky to explain why he shouldn't suppress evidence allegedly taken without a search warrant during the Dec. 2 raid at an upper room at the Stagecoach Inn in Somers.

The defendants also asked the Supreme Court to stop their trial which was scheduled to start Wednesday.

The requests were denied without explanation.

The defendants were charged on Dec. 9 with three counts of violating the Montana Card Games Act. In addition, one of them, Jimmy Richard Robey, was charged with operating unlicensed premises for conducting card games and for possession of illegal gambling paraphernalia.

According to official records, four Flathead County sheriff's deputies

and a patrolman stalked out and later entered a room above the Stagecoach Inn which Robey claims was his private apartment and thus exempt from the provisions of the illegal card-games law.

Records say that undercover detective Robert Soderstrom had learned, by visiting gambling establishments in Kalispell that a "floating card game" was to take place at location above the Stagecoach Inn.

He visited the inn later, offered \$300 to get into the game and was told there was no gambling there. According to the official records, he said he heard poker chips rattling and saw some drinks being taken upstairs and that convinced him the suspected game was in progress.

He and the other officers then raided Robey's room about 1:30

a.m., arrested the defendants and seized some cards, chips and a punchbowl.

Lawyers for the defendants asked the district court on Jan. 26 to suppress the evidence, claiming that while the officers had probable cause to conduct the raid, they failed to get a search warrant after a Feb. 23 hearing. Salansky denied the request to suppress evidence on Feb. 23.

Authorities said the raid, one of a series of similar actions, was the result of a two-year investigation.

Besides Robey, the defendants are Kathleen V. Peterson, David John Peterson, Bernard David Wemple, Ernesto Garcia Guerrero, Joan Smith Tate, William Clinton Pilgreen, Pat D. Casey, Leo Russell Reuben Bruce Robert Mollberg and William Spencer Carpenter.

Another priest killed

GWelo, Rhodesia (AP) — The battered and mutilated body of a Spanish-born Roman Catholic missionary priest has been found near a mission school in southeastern Rhodesia, a church spokesman said today.



weather



Even though busy traffic managers to keep that white stuff off the streets, the weatherman forecasts a white blanket for the mountains with widely scattered snow showers to be prevalent in that area through Thursday. Forecast temperatures, an extended outlook and rate of precipitation is available on page 4.

Wilderness bill draws area folks

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Timber and business interests opposing three proposed Montana wilderness areas were represented during House Interior subcommittee hearings Tuesday, according to Kalispell businessman G. George Ostrom.

The hearings were on the Endangered American Wilderness Act which would add the McGregor-Thompson area southwest of

Kalispell, the Mt. Henry area near Libby and the Welcome Creek area to the federal wilderness system.

Ostrom presented testimony seat with him by the Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce and other Flathead Valley businessmen.

Ostrom said the areas aren't qualified to be included in the wilderness system and making them wilderness would "have a tremendous effect on the economy."

A representative of the St. Regis Company said the Mt. Henry area had no wilderness value and already had roads and timber bids on it.

Another timber representative protested the decreasing amount of allowable cuts of timber, adding that the Poison mill has been shut down because a need for timber.

Making the McGregor-Thompson

area wilderness would affect jobs in the Plains and Thompson Falls mills, he said.

Supporting the bill were Sierra Club members and "other wilderness people" according to Ostrom, including entertainer John Denver who sang a song and strummed a guitar during his testimony.

Ostrom suggested during the hearings that instead of the three Mon-

tana areas being proclaimed wilderness, Denver's Colorado ranch should be condemned and compensation paid by the Sierra Club.

Then I'd write a song and come back here and sing it for you to commemorate the event," Ostrom said.

Ostrom said Western District Congressman Max Baucus desired to commit himself on the areas until he has a chance to see them.

index

Two Sections 16 Pages	
Ann Landers	A-8
Classified	A-8
Crossroads	A-9
Dr. Lamb	A-9
Editorial	A-9
Family	A-4
Legals	A-5
News	A-1
Record	A-2
Sports	A-6,7
Stocks	A-3
Weather	A-2
Bridge	A-9