

10-11-62 Mason Cityan's death ruled accidental and due to fire

The early morning death of Lucille Elaine DeVries, 22, 607½ 3rd NE, in her burning car Wednesday was ruled accidental and due to fire.

An autopsy by Dr. J. E. Christopherson, county medical examiner, and an inch-by-inch study of the fire-gutted auto gave no evidence of foul play or of the fire having been other than accidental.

Dr. Christopherson said the cause of death was burn injuries, although asphyxia due

to smoke inhalation contributed to the death. As blood testing had indicated earlier in the day, Miss DeVries had not suffered from carbon monoxide effects to a point which alone would have caused death.

No injury or physical effect of any sort except that caused by the fire was discovered in the intensive examination, the doctor said.

Fire Chief A. Boyd Arnold said the auto examination conducted

by police, firemen and State Fire Marshal's Office men yielded no evidence to contradict the idea that fire began with a smoldering condition from a source such as a cigarette. Nothing was found to indicate that flammable liquid contributed to the fire.

Dr. Christopherson said fatigue resulting from work on two jobs could have resulted in her death. She had been employed as a secretary and also worked nights as a waitress at the Frontier Club.

He theorized that Miss DeVries discovered a fire in newspapers in the back seat of her car as she drove home from her night job. She could have been overcome by smoke and heat as she attempted to beat out the flames, he added.

Police now have accounted for Miss DeVries' movements to a point past 2 a.m. Wednesday when she was known to have been eating alone at a restaurant. The fire was discovered in the parked car at her home two hours later. Officials said it is possible that smoldering in upholstery could have been building up without detection even from the time she first entered her car at about 1:30 p.m.

Some checking still is to be done, Arnold said, but the only real questions remaining are the approximate time at which the fire started and the exact fire cause.

The report that the car was seen with a door partially open and with light inside before the major blaze could be quite accurate, Chief Arnold said. As the fire was reaching full blaze, dome light appearance would be possible from the fire, while darkness would keep smoke from being visible as such.

Funeral services will be held Friday at 1:30 p.m. at St. John's Methodist Church in Thornton. A prayer service will be held at 1 p.m. at the Wartnaby-Grarup Chapel in Thornton. Burial will be in Pleasant View Cemetery, Thornton.

Survivors include her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald DeVries; four sisters, Mrs. Rose Springer, Mrs. Mildred Jensen and Mary DeVries, all of Thornton, and Mrs. Mildred Muhlenbruck, Swaledale; and four brothers, Don, Hampton; Richard, Clear Lake, and John and Robert, both of Thornton.