

# THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

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A GANNETT NEWSPAPER

## Stampede Kills 11 Persons At Coliseum Rock Concert

Eleven people were killed and eight seriously injured at Riverfront Coliseum Monday night in a human stampede through the arena's doors before the start of The Who rock group concert.

The Hamilton County Coroner's office said the dead included seven men and four women. A coroner's spokesman said the ages of the victims ranged from 18 to the early 30s.

A team of clergymen accompanied parents of victims through the Hamilton County morgue late Monday night, mostly at the victims' request to be released somewhere today.

The total number injured had not been determined late Monday.

At a press conference at District One police headquarters, Lt. Dale Menchaca said two few doors were opened too late to handle the selbst crowd.

"We needed to get the doors open much earlier," Menchaca said.

RAY SCHUBMAN, an usher at the main gate, said the trouble appeared to start when someone threw a bottle at the gate and broke the door's glass.

"The kids kept breaking the gate more and more. I just couldn't stop them. They rushed the gate."

Mark Stoner, general manager of Cincinnati Theater, would not disclose how many tickets were sold

for the concert, citing those figures would have to come from Coliseum officials. "We weren't over capacity or anything like that," said Stoner.

Coliseum officials would not comment on which doors were opened and when.

The concert promoters, Electric Factory Concerts, based in Philadelphia, declined comment. A spokesman for The Who said the group has a booking in Buffalo today.

Police Officer Dave Grasse said the rash occurred between 1:30-4 p.m. Seats at the concert were both reserved and open, police and concertgoers said. The crowd began growing at 1 p.m., police said, nearly

four hours before the gates were opened. The Coliseum holds 10,000 for concert events.

"The crowd must have jammed the people up so tightly in front that they just passed out. They didn't even fall down. They must have jammed up so tight that they didn't get any air and just died."

CINCINNATI SAFETY Director Richard Castellini, who responded to the coliseum, said "apparently there was such a large swell in the crowd that there were some young people who got caught up in the swell and were suffocated or got trampled."

Castellini said he considered

cancelling the concert because he thought the problem was inside as well as outside the coliseum; however, he decided against that when he learned the problem was outside.

Concertgoers inside apparently were unaware of the tragedy that had unfolded just outside the main gates, where 15th entrance was struck with broken glass, hats, gloves, coats and beer cans.

The doors are located on the west side of the coliseum on the pink level.

A witness, Ty D'Agostino, a Dayton, Ohio, owner, said, "For some odd reason people were compressed completely (near the coliseum doors). Some made it, some didn't."

Several died within two or three minutes. The whole occurrence took no more than 40 minutes. It's a real sad way to go."

POLICE OFFICER Walter Brown, who was at the coliseum, said the victims "were probably stepped on and fell down; people just fell down. I don't know if they had been moved from where they fell, but most were away from the door."

Brown said he saw several bodies. He said the bodies were probably found only after the crowd passed over them.

(Continued on Page A-8)

### Tuesday Dec. 4, 1979



**TODAY** Mostly sunny with the high to reach 40 and 30 and low tonight about 30. Partly cloudy tonight.

**TOMORROW** Wednesday with a high in the middle or upper 50s. Chance of precipitation today and tonight near 0. Weather map and details on Page A-4.

**smile**

Notice how many toys run on electricity nowadays. Look for the biggest fireworks of the year on Christmas morning.

**metro**

Delays are sought for Beverly Hills Supper Club fire trial as jurors are seated. Page D-5.

Is a CBS fall return to books and study at Cincinnati schools sought. Page D-4-B.

**suburban**

Overdue paychecks are promised Norwood employees today but without some promised benefits. Page D-2.

**nation**

The FTC charges cigarette industry advertisements are softening the effect of health warnings on cigarette packages. Page A-31.

**business**

General Electric and rival Pratt & Whitney bid to sell French aircraft engine contracts. Page C-8.

**people today**

Neighbors have definite feelings. And they go with the territory. Page D-1.

**in our opinion**

It appears to be open season on the United States for the Soviets. Editorial, Page A-10.

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POLICEMEN PREPARE to carry away the bodies of two of the 11 victims killed in the stampede before The Who rock concert at Riverfront Coliseum.

Enquirer photo BY ED REINE

## Deaths Shocked Some, But Others Didn't Care

"Tragic" and "unbelievable" were among the adjectives used by some to describe the deaths of 11 concertgoers killed at Riverfront Coliseum Monday night.

Others interviewed during and after the concert appeared unconcerned.

"People couldn't care less," intimated Peggy Mathew, 21, of Norwood, who was in line when the massive crowd of youths apparently attempted to break through a glass-level coliseum door.

"There were broken bottles all over the place," Mathew said. "People were kicking and shoving. They would rather see The Who than help someone who's dying."

"They'd better not have another concert there," Mathew said.

CRAG BELATNICK, 22, Columbus, Ohio, said, "I don't think many people know what happened."

**on the inside**

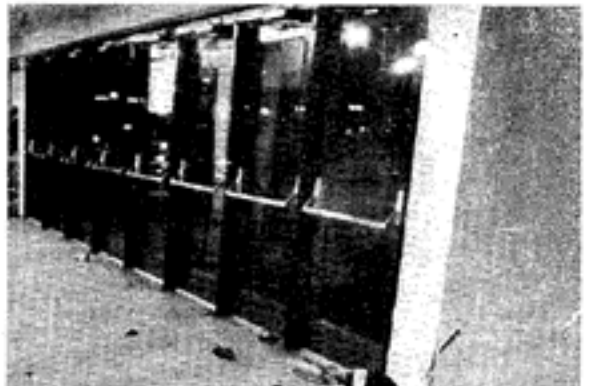
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- Coliseum's history of concert troubles, Page D-6.

lying on the ground. No one did anything. No one cared."

"There was a dead body lying on the table with guys hanging out," said another man who left the concert. "It was gross."

As the door burst and the crowd surged through the coliseum gates toward the tent-like, Michael and Barbara Street of Walnut Hills were separated.

"The crowd out on the other side seemed wilder," Mathew, 22, recalled. "I could see



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... Monday appeared apathetic when told of the 11 deaths. Others refused to believe the news.

Many uninjured concertgoers blamed the deaths and injury crowd on the general admission seating (in addition to reserved seating, in which fans must vie for the best seats).

"We were all squished," Cellatnick said in describing the crowd awaiting admission to the concert. "We were practically falling over."

"Everybody wanted to get in (to the coliseum). They were getting ready," said Jim Camden, 46, Columbus, who was standing with a friend when the rush began.

Camden, sitting later in the emergency room at General Hospital, waiting for word on his friend, remembered the concert crowd began shifting forward and backward in an attempt to break down a coliseum door.

"IT WAS CRAZY," Camden said. "It happens all the time. You just don't want to get in front (of the line) at a concert."

Camden said his companion fell to the ground and was trampled by others anxious to enter the concert facility. "He was just

them climbing over gates or something. There were kids up and over everything. There was a lot of screaming and yelling."

When Barbara reached the carnage, the lone officer began shouting, "Back up, everybody back up," she said. "I tried to back up but most of the people kept pushing."

FINALLY, THE STEFFS, 252 Alpine Place, reached each other and tried to retreat. "We could see bodies, at least four of them on the floor. They had their shirts off and were giving them mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to try to revive them."

Doggedly, the Steffs tore up their reserved-seat tickets and began to leave.

"Some kids came running by with this person in their arms. We saw another one on a table. They had his shirt off, trying to bring him around."

Barbara said many officers they encountered on the coliseum plaza were not aware of the fatalities.

Michael, 36, said he noted a clock as they retreated from the maelstrom. It was 8 a.m.

"People were angry," he said of the crowd they encountered when they arrived after 1:30. "The crowd had been building up. Barbara saw at least one bottle thrown."



Enquirer photo BY GERRY WOLTER

TENNIS SHOES, SHIRTS, jackets and other personal belongings, trampled in the stampede at the arena doors, were swept into a pile inside the empty coliseum lobby.