

Fire at Lady Dunn residence

Sunday, November 15, 1992, between 6:00 and 6:30 am, the fire alarm for Lady Dunn/Tibbits Hall sounds.

Through a heavy blanket of sleep, the people in the building groggily think, "Ah, man. Who pulled the alarm? This had better not be a prank" But people start stumbling out of bed and evacuating the building anyway; "just in case." Everyone in the house should be congratulated for their promptness - it took less than ten minutes to get everyone out of the residence.

"Is it a real fire? Is it a big deal?"

It didn't take very long for the crowd to realize that there was in fact a real fire. It was obvious from the flames that were shooting out of the window of Rm. 324 on the Third River wing. Yet, almost a week later, most of Fredericton still seems to be in the dark as to whether the whole thing was "a big deal". We, at Lady Dunn Hall, would like to clarify a few points about the situation for everyone.

Sometime in the early hours of Sunday, November 15th, a fire started in Rm. 324 of Lady Dunn Hall. Nobody knows yet what the cause of the fire was. We expect the report to be out sometime in the following week. So if you've heard any of a number of rumours that seem to be circulating, they are just that: rumours. At around 6:30 am Carrie Poulter who lives directly across the hall from Rm 324 walked out into the hall and heard the room fire alarm and smelled smoke. She quickly went to wake up Nicole Gamble (the

proctor of the hall). Nicole and her boyfriend Ron Manuel, a proctor at Neill, accompanied by Carrie and Todd Allison went to Rm 324, opened the door and saw flames. Nobody was in the room at the time of the fire. Todd, thinking quickly, then activated the house alarm that awoke the rest of the residents, while Nicole and the others made sure that everyone else in Third River was up and leaving the building. A few short minutes after the last person left the building, the flames could be seen through the window of the room.

Next, everyone congregated in the MacKenzie TV lounge, and watched as the fire trucks arrived. It seemed as though the firemen took some time before attempting to fight the fire. But what the people watching did not realize was that every room in the building had to be checked to make sure that everyone was out of danger. There were also complications due to backdrafts that ripped through the entire third floor.

Eventually, everyone was allowed to enter the Lady Dunn cafeteria for breakfast and wait for word on the condition of the house. Cleaners were called immediately to start the long job of getting the house back to normal. Word finally came that all of Lady Dunn Hall had to be vacated for the night, both because of the damage done by the fire, and the chemicals being used by the cleaners. The women of Lady Dunn were allowed to go to their rooms to collect the necessities for the

following few days, and were bussed to either the Fredericton Motor Inn or the Wandlyn Inn.

The best way to describe the way Third River looked on Sunday afternoon is to say that it was a dark, black, charred cave. Two rooms were completely destroyed by the blaze — the room where the fire started where luckily, residents Lynn Thibeau and Gina Schofield were away; and Nicole Gamble's room, where the force of the backdraft blew the door open. All of the other rooms on Third River suffered extensive heat, smoke, and water damage. The entire third floor is badly smoke-damaged.

First and Second River also experienced smoke and water damage. In the areas of the house where the smell of smoke does not overcome you, the smell of chemical cleaners does.

Some of us at the Dunn are starting to move back now. The Pitt, first floor, and most of the second floor have already returned. Most of third floor should be back within the next few weeks. As for Third River? It will take about two months for that wing to be ready for the women to return to their home.

Nevertheless, spirits are still high at Lady Dunn Hall. We are getting ready for our Christmas Formal which will be held next Friday as scheduled. It's easy to see that our house spirit is more than strong enough to carry us through this difficult time.

The one thing, though, that has overwhelmed us since early Sunday morning is the support that has been given to us by the entire city of Fredericton. On behalf of all of the Ladies of the Dunn, I would like to thank the many people that really did touch us with their thoughtfulness.

Thanks goes to Beaver Foods who provided us with hot chocolate while we waited at MacKenzie in the early hours of Sunday morning. Also to the Beaver Foods staff in the Lady Dunn cafeteria who came to work a few hours early so we could have some breakfast while we waited to hear about the extent of damage in the house. Thank you to the janitorial staff who also came in to start cleaning Sunday morning. We certainly can't forget the dry cleaners that have been working around the clock to see that we have clean clothes to wear. UNB Security has also been working extra around the clock. The staff at both of the hotels have been super in providing us with bedrooms and conference rooms. We really appreciate the people in the Fredericton area that offered support in whatever ways they could help (food, clothes, rooms). Thank you also to the professors that have been patient and understanding in this very emotional and hectic time.

But all of us at Lady Dunn Hall have been especially overwhelmed at the support we've received across the residence community. Each and every residence has gone out of their way to help us. They've provided us with food, clothes, rides to hotels, availability of laundry rooms, money, and assistance in moving. They've also given us a great deal of emotional support.

The residence office has been absolutely fantastic. Sandra Saunders has been working non-stop at our "control centre" in the main lobby of Lady Dunn. She's been situating us either in hotel rooms or back in the house, coordinating the return of the clothes from the dry cleaners, providing us with any information we need, and has just been there to talk.

I'm sure that none of us can begin to imagine the time and effort that Dean Mary Lou Stirling has spent in making sure that all of our needs are met. She has been prompt in assuring that we are as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to her in particular.

Here at home, the Lady Dunn House Committee should be commended in keeping our spirits high throughout the entire week. We can't forget the proctors, either, who have been there for everyone every step of the way.

ALL of the Ladies of the Dunn would especially like to thank, from the bottom of our hearts, our Don and Associate Don, Lynn Fraser and Jennifer Pazienza who have provided us with support in every possible way. We could not have survived the week without them. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Last but definitely not least, there are a few people that everyone should recognize and thank. This situation could have been a lot worse. We are all very grateful that everyone escaped the fire safely. But without the quick thinking in assessing and reacting to a potentially very dangerous situation, we may not have been so lucky. Everyone that was in Lady Dunn or Tibbits on Sunday morning owes a huge thank you to Carrie Poulter, who miraculously discovered the fire, Nicole Gamble and Ron Manuel, for assessing the situation and making sure everyone was out, and of course, Todd Allison for pulling the house alarm and signalling the danger to the rest of the people in the house.

On behalf of the Ladies of the Dunn,
Jennifer Legere



"Is it a real fire? Is it a big deal?"

Shown is the remains of the door looking out at the hallway of room 324 on the third River wing of Lady Dunn Residence.

Photo by
Kevin G. Porter