Worker badly burned in gym fire; cigar lights concession explosion

By S. C. FOX

An explosion and fire in the Rice gymnasium Tuesday afternoon brought two fire trucks, two ambulances, and two news-cars to the scene, and seriously burned an employee of the Martin Catering Company.

Injured was George Leslie, aged about 60, who was preparing the concession stands on the second floor of the gym for the Tuesday evening basketball game. He was last reported in critical condition.

The fire started when one of the stoves used in the concession stand exploded, spraying burning fuel over Leslie and the surroundings. Hearing the explosion, several people rushed up and found Leslie engulfed in flames.

They tried to beat out the fire with shirts until a blanket and fire extinguishers arrived. By that time Leslie had received third degree burns over most of his body.

After a long wait for the ambulance, which had to come all the way from across the street, Leslie was rushed to the Methodist Hospital with the same haste. The hospital refused to disclose any information about Leslie since last night.

The stoves used in the concession stands for warming coffee and hot dogs are at least 15 years old, burning some sort of liquid fuel. The fuel is contained in a tank immediately below the burner. It was inside one of these tanks that the explosion occurred, ripping the of the tank open.

City fire ordinances prohibit the presence of highly flammable liquids in public facilities.