Room Stuffing Prank Leads To Fire In Will Rice

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Fire gutted the main stairwell of Will Rice College Tuesday night.

The blaze started at 9:45 pm when about thirty students were sweeping wadded newspapers from room 213 WRC to the first floor trash cans by way of the stairwell.

The newspapers had been stuffed in the room of sophomore Robert Watson as a joke, but when the clean-up had begun, a student tossed a match into the pile of papers.

Defective Equipment

Defective fire-fighting equipment rendered the first attempts to extinguish the flames futile. Because of a large hole, the first floor fire hose succeeded only in flooding four rooms on that floor. The fire extinguisher had very low pressure and was also ineffective.

By the time students were able to man the second-floor hose, the flames had begun to subside. The mess left from ashes and water was being cleaned up, when at 10:10 several fire trucks came screaming into the Rice campus.

Damage Estimate

Incomplete damage estimates run into the hundreds of dollars. The main stairwell, the most damaged area, was completely black, and most of the plaster had buckled and fallen to the first floor. On the second floor the walls and doors were charred and large chunks of plaster had broken.

There were no injuries to person.

Mr. N. Blackman, the Fire Chief of the fourth district, rushed around the scene surveying the damage. He questioned Dr. Frank Hole, acting Master of Will Rice, and several of the students in an attempt...
FIRE--

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to discover the actual cause of the fire. Blackwell said that this “fire is a case of possible arson and a matter to be taken very seriously since life hazard is involved.”

Dangerous Practice

When Blackwell was informed that completely stuffing a room with newspapers is a tradition in the men’s colleges at Rice, he replied that this should be enough proof of danger to end such practices.

While the fire was burning, a frantic member of Will Rice burst into the Baker College cabinet meeting requesting the location of an available fire extinguisher. Kent Morrison, Baker president, pointed the direction, calmly directed that the cabinet minutes express Baker’s condolences to Will Rice concerning the fire, and he then called for a brief recess of the meeting.

Wednesday morning arson charges in connection with the fire were brought against Kent Kinard, Will Rice junior. Kinard is free on bond pending a hearing at an undisclosed date.