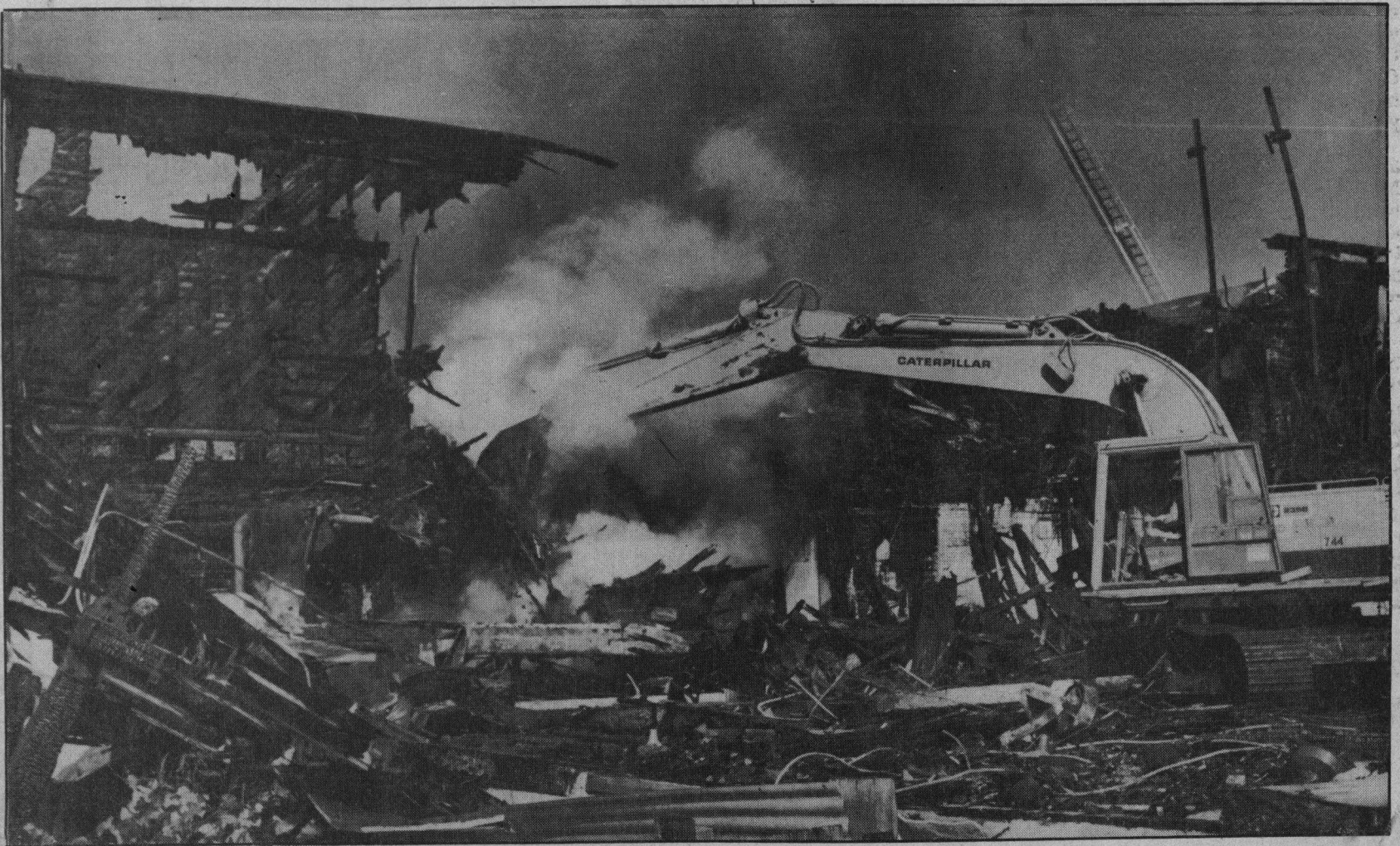


✓CF FIRES + FIRE PROTECTION 11/23/87



Chip Scheuer

Heavy equipment was brought in Saturday to demolish smoldering ruins of building damaged in Friday blaze.

One firefighter on guard at site of blaze

By NANCY BARR
STAFF WRITER

A lone firefighter remains on the scene today of the huge fire that destroyed half the Union Ice plant at Chestnut and Laurel streets in Santa Cruz.

The fire that broke out late Friday afternoon was fully extinguished by 8 p.m. Saturday, said Santa Cruz Fire Chief Ed Ekers, but several tiny fires have rekindled in the piles of rubbish. That's why someone is standing guard.

Ekers called four alarms on the fire Friday, bringing in firefighters from every department in the county. Those who were first to respond remained on duty through much of the night.

"Some were committed for as long as 10 and 12 hours," Ekers said, although there was a "constant turnover of relief crews."

Ekers said he was very pleased with how well the fire personnel from different departments worked together. He also thinks they did a great job, considering there was a row of houses on Myrtle Street, immediately behind the plant.

Firefighters were working to contain the fire to the warehouse, Ekers said, "with the knowledge of residences only eight feet away from a raging inferno."

"With that being our number one priority, I would consider this fire extremely successful," Ekers said. "We could have very easily lost a neighborhood."

"We believe the fire originated in a stack of wooden pallets," he said. "That's what caused the fire to spread so rapidly."

Ekers said about half of the building, valued at \$2 million, was destroyed by the fire.