

Bibby's Inn

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
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Blaze Ruins Restaurant

By WALLY TRABING

A furious blanket of flame ruined Bibby's Inn, the former Facelli's Restaurant, early Saturday morning.

The fire won against the Santa Cruz Fire Department, which arrived at 330 Natural Bridges Drive shortly after 3:30 a.m., to find the building roof ready to burst in total involvement.

Eight city firemen, with the help of several Santa Cruz police officers, fought a losing battle. Three other off-duty firemen arrived after about a half hour, but the roof collapsed and carried the fire down into the dining room, bars and ballroom.

Battalion Chief Bill Schuette said the damage is estimated to be between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

He said the fire probably started in the kitchen, but that it will take investigation when the debris is cleared to be sure.

The Inn is owned by Robert and Elsie Bibby, who purchased the restaurant from Louis Facelli in 1972.

They had remodeled it and Saturday the very haggared and saddened owner said that business was booming with many bookings ahead.

Friday night, he said the place was booming. A local band, The Artichokes, was on the bandstand and played until 1:30 a.m. Most took their instruments home, but Michael Johnson left his full drum set on the stage. The fire melted the cymbals and consumed the drums and the band's sound equipment.

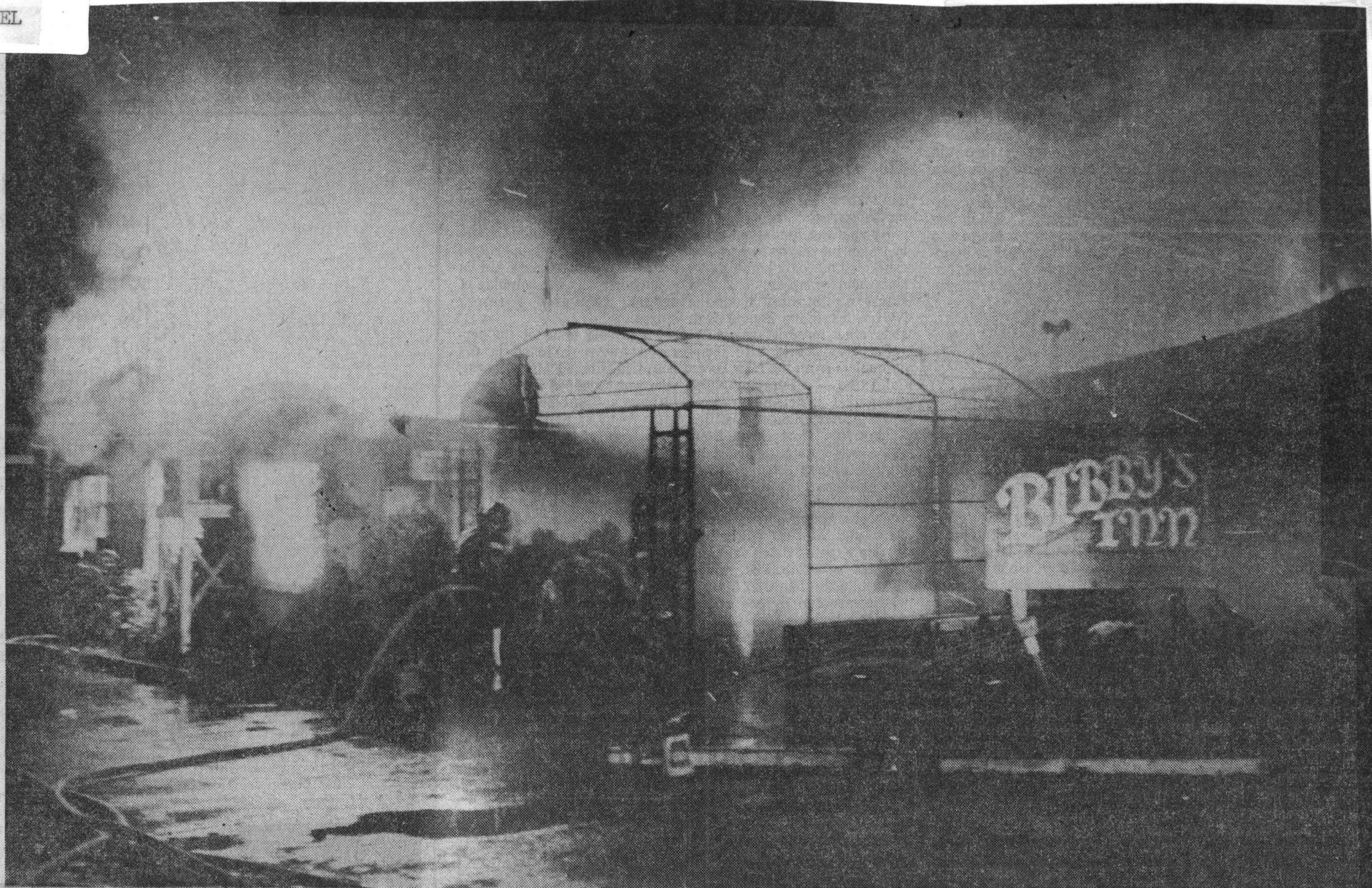
Bibby said, "We've put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into that place, and a lot of love, too. We just don't know what we're going to do."

The fire was reported by a William J. Wrigley Jr. Co. night watchman and by William Plankerman, a watchman at the DeAnza Mobile Home Estates on Delaware.

Fireman D.J. Chontos said the building was completely gutted. Tons of water were poured into the place for about an hour-and-a-half.

"We just didn't have enough men to do the job," he said.

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At the height of the fire, too few to fight so much.

Photo by Sentinel Chief Photographer Pete Amos