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(page 2)

Blast Kills Pasadena Rocket Man



JOHN W. PARSONS
Death drives mother to suicide



MARJORIE PARSONS
Her husband died violently

Bodies of a rocket scientist and his mother lay in a Pasadena mortuary today following an explosion on famed old "Millionaires' Row" that took the experimenter's life and so grieved his mother that she committed suicide.

Dead were John W. Parsons, 37, jet propulsion wizard and one of the founders of Caltech's jet propulsion lab in Arroyo Seco, and his mother, Mrs. Ruth Virginia Parsons, 58, of 21 West Glenarm street, Pasadena.

Mrs. Parsons gulped a bottle of sedatives after the news of her son's death had been broken to her. She died a few hours later.

Explosives experts and police promptly began an investigation into the cause of the blast that made a shambles of the laboratory on the grounds of the old J. G. Cruickshank estate at 1071 South Orange Grove avenue.

The lab was in the rear of a four-car garage structure with an apartment above which had been the servant's quarters.

When the explosion occurred, Mrs. Marjorie Cameron Parsons, 30, the scientist's wife, ran into the lab and dug frantically for her husband, buried under the debris.

One of his arms had been torn from his body. His shoes were in a three-foot hole ripped out by the blast. Clothing was blown off his body.

Parsons was still alive and conscious, however, when he was rushed to Huntington Memorial hospital, but police said he didn't talk.

A brother-in-law, Robert Cameron, said he believes "Jack" had decided to complete an experiment he was working on although the scientist was in a hurry to pack the trailer for a trip to San Miguel, an art colony near Mexico City.

Parsons and his wife, a painter, were planning to leave last night. He was believed to be packing chemicals to take along with him in order to continue his experimentation there.

After the scientist's death at the hospital, Cameron went to 424 Arroyo terrace, where Parson's mother was staying while the owners are away in Europe, to break the news.

Also in the house, he said, were Mrs. Nadia Kilbort and Mrs. Helen Rowan, friends of Mrs. Parsons.

After Cameron had gone, Mrs. Parsons became hysterical, said Mrs. Rowan, and cried, "I can't live without him. I've got a gun upstairs. . . ."

Mrs. Rowan said she was unable to stop the woman swallowing an entire bottle of sedatives. A nurse and friend of Mrs. Parsons, Nellie Smith, of 453 North Hudson avenue, was summoned.

When she arrived, the nurse saw that Mrs. Parsons was beyond her help. She called a physician, who pronounced Mrs. Parsons dead.

The young scientist's wife had just made arrangements with the Turner and Stevens mortuary to take her husband's body when she walked into the home on Arroyo terrace where they had been staying with Mrs. Parsons—only to learn she had died, too.

The explosion occurred about 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Parsons was pronounced dead at 8:30 p.m.

The scientist had served as an instructor at Caltech and had worked for North American Aviation Co. He had served as an explosion expert witness in the famous trial of Earl Kynette in 1938.

He and his wife had moved two weeks ago and were gradually moving out their belongings.

One wall of the 50-year-old building was blasted out. The new tenants, Martin Foshaug, Alta Foshaug, Sal Ganzi and Jom Anne Price were upstairs when the blast occurred but were un-

injured.

Army ordnance men from Ft. MacArthur were called to investigate and to remove chemicals still in the laboratory. Many were labeled, "Explosive—Danger."

Although Parsons did not have a college degree, his genius was so widely recognized, said Cameron, that many colleges had offered to confer honorary degrees upon him, all of which he refused.