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**BLAST KILLS SCIENTIST**  
**IN PASADENA MYSTERY**



**Mother of Dead Scientist Kills Herself.**  
**Family dog guards body of Mrs. Ruth V. Parsons.**

Investigators poked today in the wreckage of a home laboratory for the cause of a mysterious blast in which a noted Pasadena rocket scientist was killed.

Fatally injured by the explosion was John W. Parsons, 37, a pioneer in rocket and jet propulsion development who was engaged until last week on a secret Army-Navy rocket propellant project.

His violent death late yesterday had a tragic aftermath a few hours later in the suicide of his grief-stricken mother, Mrs. Ruth Virginia Parsons, 58.

Overwhelmed and distraught, she swallowed 50 sleeping pills at 424 Arroyo Terrace, where she was staying during the absence of the owners in Europe.

Police believed the explosion on the grounds of the old Cruickshank estate at 1071 S. Orange Grove Ave., Pasadena, may have resulted from a last-minute experiment with dangerous chemicals before Parsons' scheduled departure for Mexico.

He had been transferring his supplies from the place for the last two weeks since moving to the other residence on Arroyo Terrace.

### **Letter Causes Inquiry**

Police recalled from their records that Parsons was investigated in September, 1942, following receipt of a letter from San Antonio, Tex., signed "A Real Soldier."

It charged a cult practicing perversion and black magic had moved from Hollywood to an address on Orange Grove Ave.

At that location the occupant, Parsons, said the place was headquarters for a society dedicated to philosophy, religion and personal freedom.

He denied the organization was subversive, as charged in the letter. And told police he was engaged in government work as a member of the Caltech staff.

Again in October, 1944, after another anonymous tip of similar nature, police went to the address when a small fire occurred. They found pamphlets indicating the house was the meeting place for a group called the Church of Thelema.

Charges of strange cultism were not substantiated.

The explosion scene was littered with fragments of Parsons' memoranda, including a list of explosion disasters.

One note apparently in his handwriting, read:

"Let me know the misery totally. And spare not and be not spared sacraments and crucifixion. O my passion and shame, dark body of the unattainable. O most beloved, most utterly lost—mother, sisters . . ."

The explosives expert, one of the founders of Caltech's Arroyo Seco jet propulsion laboratory, had no college degree and was known to have declined offers of honorary degrees,

He had been packing for a trip to San Miguel, Mexico, shortly before the blast.

While he was working in the laboratory in a onetime carriage house converted into living quarters fashionable "Millionaire's Row," an explosion occurred and was followed immediately by a larger one which touched off explosive chemicals stored in the room.

The blasts blew out one wall, shattered and bulged another and ripped part of the ceiling under the upstairs living unit.

A heavy, double laundry tub was knocked over and Parsons was hurled to the floor under it.

Still conscious, the scientist was taken to Huntington Memorial Hospital where he died within an hour. Officers said he attempted unsuccessfully to tell them how the explosion occurred.

### **Mother Dazed by News**

His wife, Mrs. Marjorie Cameron Parsons, 30, an artist, and her brother, Robert E. Cameron, of 1254 N. Raymond Ave., were present when Parsons died.

The bodies of both Parsons and his mother were taken to Turner and Stevens Mortuary, Pasadena.

Investigators were mystified by the nature of Parsons' activity in the laboratory just before the explosion.

He and his wife were to have left at 10 a.m. today, towing a small trailer behind their car, for the trip to Mexico.

There was some speculation that Parsons, who was last employed by the Burmite Powder Co. in Saugus, was going on a secret assignment to conduct explosives experiments.

However, Mrs. Parsons insisted they were just going to Mexico for a rest. The trailer, packed and covered with a tarpaulin, contained only artist's supplies, archery equipment, fencing foils, a bed and a trunk.

A short time before the explosion Jo Anne Price, 21, blond artist's model who lives in the converted carriage house next to the laboratory, saw Parsons at work.

She said he told her he was conducting an experiment with some "very expensive" chemicals and was "in a hurry" to finish it.

Miss Price, went up an outside stairway to the living quarters of Martin Foshaug, his mother, Mrs. Alta Foshaug, and Sal Ganzi, all artists. They talked about 15 minutes before the blast rocked the building. They were uninjured, although the explosion buckled the floor, upset a refrigerator and broke a leg of a grand piano.

Police and Army ordnance experts from Ft. MacArthur found shattered bottles labeled "Explosives!" on the debris-littered floor of the laboratory.

They were searching the premises and also the Arroyo Terrace home today for any further stores of explosive materials which Parsons may have possessed.

His brother-in-law, Cameron, said he had been very closed-mouthed about the nature of what he was going to do in Mexico. Cameron had the impression that it concerned Parsons' work with explosives.

J. H. Arnold, treasurer of the Burmite Powder Co., said Parsons had worked there for a year and quit last week, saying he was going to work on pyrotechnics and special effects for movies in Mexico.

### **Dubbed as Eccentric**

Parsons had been engaged in research and development of highly secret rocket propellants for the Army and Navy, Arnold said.

The official said he understood Parsons was the inventor and held the basic patent on jet-assisted takeoff for aircraft.

The scientist was employed in the mid-30s by the Hercules Powder Co. and Halifax Explosives Co., after attending SC for two years.

In 1938, while acting as an explosives consultant for the District Attorney, he testified at the Earl Kynette bombing trial.

Going to Caltech in 1939, he was one of the original engineers assigned to the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory, and later worked at the Aerojet plant in Azusa.

Parsons was credited with having assisted in the development of the first rocket at the Arroyo Seco laboratory and much of the development work of rockets manufactured by Aerojet.