

# Fire leaves one dead; investigators look for cause

by Dennis Buckley  
...news editor

**WESTPHALIA** - The cause and origin of a fire that claimed the life of Russell Paul Kloewer remained undetermined Thursday.

Kloewer, 25, resided at a farm house that was destroyed by fire Tuesday morning. The home, owned by Ray Anastasi, was located about a half-mile east of Westphalia.



**Russell Paul  
Kloewer  
...perished in  
fire Tuesday**

A report filed by Mark Hervey, chief deputy for the Shelby County Sheriff's Dept., reported Kloewer's body was located at 12:05 p.m. Tuesday in the northwest corner of the basement of the home.

Ron Evilsizer of Denison, an agent with the Iowa State Fire Marshal's Office, told the Harlan Newspapers the fire apparently started between 5:30 and 6:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Kloewer died of smoke inhalation,

according to State Medical Examiner Dr. Thomas Bennett, who performed an autopsy in Des Moines.

Shelby County Medical Examiner Dr. David Stilley had examined the body at the scene. The body was burned beyond recognition.

A search for dental records was conducted by Shelby County Sheriff Gene Cavanaugh. The records were located and taken to Des Moines for comparison purposes during the autopsy.

The State Fire Marshal's Office telephoned the Shelby County Sheriff's Department on Wednesday and reported a positive identification was obtained with the dental records as those of Kloewer.

"Further investigation is needed at the scene," said Evilsizer, who planned to return on Friday (March 25).

## FULLY ENGULFED

Volunteer firemen from the Westphalia, Harlan and Earling departments fought the blaze. Records show the fire call was placed to the Shelby County Communication Center at 7:05 a.m. Tuesday by Joe Wehr, who lives on the east edge of Westphalia.

Firefighters were unable to salvage any of the home's contents.

Westphalia Fire Chief Ray

Schechinger told Chief Deputy Sheriff Hervey that Westphalia firemen arrived to find the structure fully engulfed in flames. Several firemen had placed a ladder on the north side of the residence and discovered the home's second floor had already burned and fallen to the first floor.

Based on reports from several of Kloewer's friends, Kloewer had been at a Harlan residence earlier in the evening and returned home with several friends at 2 a.m. He was last seen in his home at 5:30 a.m., Tuesday.

## SHERIFF PRAISES FIREMEN

Sheriff Cavanaugh said Thursday the three communities' volunteer firefighters are to be commended for their efforts.

"Considering the situation they faced, their performance at the scene was exceptional," said Cavanaugh.

"It wasn't an easy fire to go to, and they did a heck of a job, especially the Westphalia firemen, for having to be at the scene for as long as they were."

Cavanaugh estimated the Westphalia Fire Department remained at the scene until 1 or 2 p.m. Westphalia placed mutual-aid calls to the Harlan and Earling departments.

## HAD RECENTLY MOVED

Informed sources said Kloewer had recently moved from Harlan to the farm home near Westphalia.

He was born July 23, 1962, in Denison and attended school in Manilla before moving to Harlan, where he spent the last three years of his high school career. He was a 1980 graduate of Harlan Community High School.

He had worked in Oakland and most recently was employed at Dubuque Packing Co., Denison.

## SERVICES WERE FRIDAY

Services for Kloewer were held at 2 p.m. Friday (March 25) at the Sacred Heart Church, Manilla, with burial at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Manilla.

Surviving are his father, Mike Kloewer, and stepmother, Marlys, of Manilla; his mother, Catherine Kloewer of Omaha, NE.; two sisters, Shirley Joens and Debra Kloewer, both of Manilla; one brother, Andrew Kloewer of Omaha; three stepbrothers, Jeff Vennink of Arkansas, John Vennink of Manilla, and James Vennink of Schleswig; and his grandmother, Geraldine Brich of Neola.

Rosary was Thursday evening at the Ohde Funeral Home in Manilla.