

A remembrance of those lost; a tribute to those who responded

Today is the one-month anniversary of the Station nightclub fire in West Warwick. A little after 11 p.m. Feb. 20, a fire started as the band Great White began its show with fireworks. More than 300 people were in the club: 99 died, about 190 were injured, nearly 100 seriously enough to be hospitalized. An unknown number escaped without serious injury.

To remember those who died and pay tribute to those who helped, many of Rhode Island's media have marked today with special coverage.

The Providence Journal offers this 20-page section that includes profiles of the deceased victims and the names of rescue and hospital workers.

During the past month, Journal reporters talked with rela-

tives and friends of the dead to write individual profiles. They were printed on many different days following the fire. Today, the profiles are all brought together in this publication. Many have been rewritten to include new information.

The Journal also tried to determine the names of all the rescue and medical people who responded on the night of the fire. We were mostly successful. In this section, you will find the names of about 2,000 persons who were there to help on that night.

WJAR Channel 10 is planning to feature a CALL10 panel that will answer viewer questions about donations, blood drives and ways to help victims and their families. The panel is scheduled for the noon, 5, 5:30 and 6 p.m. news broadcasts. Also at 6 p.m., a conversation with Kent County

Memorial Hospital staff members is planned. At 11 p.m., photographs of the 99 men and women who died will be shown, and a live broadcast from the site is planned.

WPRI Channel 12 has prepared a nine-minute tribute to the victims that it plans to air on the 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. news.

WLNE Channel 6 will broadcast a tribute to the fire victims on its 6 and 11 news tonight.

Broadcasters caution that war news may change their programming.

The Westerly Sun newspaper plans a full-page tribute.

On radio, WADK 99.3 FM will feature a reading of the names of the dead beginning at 11 tonight.

—Joel Rawson, Executive Editor



Louis Alves, 33 Loved music, socializing

Louis S. Alves had three main hobbies, his mother, Maria Alves, says: "Music, music, music."

Music provided a way for Lou to unleash his passion for life. He played the piano, and had played the accordion when he was younger. At every party, he brought his own compact disks — Metallica, Jimi Hendrix, Megadeth, The Doors — and insisted on playing them.

Lou, 33, loved to sing karaoke. His favorite performance number was Billy Joel's "You May Be Right."

He spent two years searching for the perfect new stereo for his home, debating various systems and dragging friends along to Circuit City.

Another of Lou's passions was his family. The house he bought in Lincoln seven years ago is less than half a mile from the house where he grew up, and where his parents still live. One winter while Lou was in high school, he got a job playing Santa Claus at a local mall to earn extra money to buy his family presents, but didn't tell them until years later.

Lou had a mischievous side. In one photograph, he offers a goofy smile to the camera; on a plate in front of him is a lobster, its claw clasped on the neck of a Sam Adams beer bottle.

"He always made a joke out of everything," said his sister, Carla. "It's so difficult, now, to just be somber."

As a senior designer for Poly-Flex Circuits in Cranston, Lou helped develop medical products including a device used to detect carpal-tunnel syndrome and a sensor that measures brain activity during surgery, to ensure that patients who are too sedated to move or speak are not still able to feel pain from the procedures they are undergoing.

Lou was a perfectionist in his work, said Robert Conley, a quality engineer for Poly-Flex and close friend. When Conley inspected Lou's designs, Lou wouldn't let him mark any negative comments on the checklist. Instead, Lou would immediately go back and fix the problem, saying, "Let me reprint it."

Though he took his work seriously, Lou let his personality shine through at the office as well. Many employees listen to music while they work, but Lou's "was a bit louder than everyone else's," Conley said.

Lou encouraged employees to socialize in their free time, organizing group outings that included trips to see the Providence Bruins and the Pawtucket Red Sox. He was constantly asking people to go out for "just one beer," his supervisor, Michael Jordan, remembers. "He would hood you until you said yes."

After the fire, Jordan compiled memories that employees e-mailed to him. One of Lou's coworkers, Karline Smith, wrote:

"Lou treated life as one big party, and I know for sure that wherever he is, the music will never stop."

—Elizabeth Gudrais



Kevin Anderson, 37 '80s connoisseur

Kevin Anderson was a guy happily stuck in the 1980s.

He collected hundreds of CDs of his favorite bands from that era, including Metallica, Def Leppard and Great White.

"We used to go to the pawn shops and Wal-Mart and buy them," says

Dave Penny, one of Kevin's many "best friends."

Kevin, 37, was so into the 1980s that he dressed from that period and wore long hair.

"My kids called him 'Uncle Dude,' says his sister Sue Sylvia.

"One night he was in a club and a guy came up to him and said, 'You ought to get out of the '80s,'" she says.

Lori Lacques, a former girlfriend, explains Kevin's fascination with the era: "It was his teenage years."

Kevin also loved his white Chevrolet Corsica. "You could eat off the inside of that car," his sister says.

As a child, she says, Kevin liked bicycles — "He was always fixing them up."

Kevin was on a crew that cleaned air ducts in restaurants, but he had to leave that work because of a heart ailment. "He got tired because of his heart problem," Dave Penny says.

He and Kevin grew up together in Warwick, where they attended Pilgrim High School. "I loved the guy like a brother," he says.

Kevin had an 11-year-old son, Kevin Gage. The boy's mother, whom he never married, calls him "an awesome guy."

"We had our differences, but he was my best friend," Melissa Bloomington says. "When I needed a friend to talk to, he was always the one I called."

Just two weeks before the fire, Kevin moved into a new apartment on Pilgrim Drive that he was fixing up so he and his son could get together to listen to music and play video games. That weekend was supposed to be the first time they would be at the apartment together.

—Bob Jagolinzer



Stacie Angers, 29 'A lot of best friends'

Stacie J. Angers was always surrounded by friends, drawn to her joyful personality.

Lisa Cooper met Stacie through a mutual friend when they were in high school. More than a decade later, they still talked on the phone often. During their conversations — always long — Lisa would hear the clicks of call-waiting as Stacie's other friends beeped in.

"I considered her my best friend," Lisa says. "I think Stacie had a lot of best friends."

Nicole Lovett met Stacie one day at lunch, in the high school cafeteria in Auburn, Mass. They were sitting at the same table, and Stacie asked Nicole for some of her French fries. That brief encounter blossomed into a friendship that lasted more than 15 years.

"She had a way of making the simplest things extraordinary," Nicole says.

At Stacie's wake, a thousand people showed up.

"Every person she ever came in contact with, she managed to keep in touch with," Nicole said.

Great White was one of Stacie's favorite bands. She'd seen them in concert several times.

Stacie, 29, was always running late. When her family heard there'd been a fire at The Station, they prayed Stacie had come late and had been listening from the back of the room, near the door. Then they saw the video footage. Stacie was in the front row.

In the collages of photographs that fill her parents' living room, Stacie is pictured most often with her fiancé, Michael Wunschel. "They just had this strong, strong love for one another," said Stacie's father, Leonard Angers.

Stacie and Mike had been dating for eight years, and engaged for three. They were going to be married Aug. 14, 2004.

A childhood love of Charlie's Angels and mystery novels had turned into a career as a private investigator, and Stacie had spent

seven years working for Insight Investigations in Worcester, where she lived.

It was a demanding career, but Stacie still found time to maintain literally hundreds of friendships, and to help those she didn't know. She had volunteered at a soup kitchen, walked to raise money for cancer research, tutored children at a juvenile detention center, and served as a mentor in the Big Sisters program. And she made sure to come home for dinner with her parents once a week.

"She was very busy," her friend Lisa said. "But she was always there when you needed her."

—Elizabeth Gudrais



Chris Arruda, 30 'Always wanted to help'

It was Christopher G. Arruda's dream to drive a truck.

Ever since Chris was a little boy, he had loved cars and trucks. He collected model cars, hoarded stacks of car magazines and worked in the pit crew for friends racing at Seekonk Speedway.

In the backyard of the house on Blackrock Road in Coventry where he lived with his mother and grandmother, he kept a white Ford Ranger that he equipped with big monster-truck tires. His "baby" was an old ugly brown Pontiac that he got as a 16-year-old and only sold last year.

And about seven years ago, Chris got a job as a truck driver for D&N Equipment, of Johnston. "That really made him happy," says his mother, Patricia Arruda.

Keith Danna, of Coventry, met Chris at the old Bess Eaton doughnut shop on Tiogue Avenue, where "car guys" used to hang out. Chris was known for his "bumblebee car" — a yellow-and-black Dodge Aspen.

"He's great with kids and dogs," Danna said. "He was just a good guy. Not too many people don't know him. He's got more friends than you can believe."

Chris, 30, was talkative and generous. He was strong, too. He once broke his ankle getting out of his truck and kept walking, even showing up for work the next day when others told him to take it easy.

"He'd see people broken down on the side of the road and he'd stop," Patricia Arruda said. "I told him, 'You're crazy in this day and age to stop.' He'd say, 'Ma, don't worry about it.' He always wanted to help."

Even on the night he died, Chris thought of others. Patricia Arruda said she heard from people who were at The Station that her son made it out of the club, but went back inside to help people escape.

Chris's other passion was music. His favorite was Pink Floyd, and he also liked '80s rock bands. He was a regular at The Station and was friendly with an AC/DC tribute band that played there.

"He had a sad side, too," Patricia Arruda said. "Besides driving the truck, I don't think he really ever found the happiness he wanted. He had gone through a bad time and was just starting to act like himself."

—Meaghan Wims



Gino Avilez, 21 Rock 'n' roll his passion

Eugene Avilez had big dreams, and was trying to make all of them come true. A full-time student, Gino still found time to take guitar lessons,

hold a job, attend a lot of concerts, mow the lawn regularly, and repair his mom's roof.

Gino, 21, was reserved, yet he dreamed of becoming a rock star and traveling the globe.

"The last time he was here, he was playing his guitar. I was really impressed," says his dad, Higinio.

"He would ask me, 'Do you remember that song?' and then play a bit of it, and it would sound right." He was taking electric-guitar lessons because he was intent on starting his own band.

Gino brought the same dedication to his studies. He graduated from Burlington (Mass.) High School in 1999. At graduation, classmate and close friend Derek Gray told Higinio that Gino was the force keeping him in school, motivating him to get his diploma.

For the past year, Gino had continued his studies at RETS Technical Center in Boston. "He was a quiet and very hard-working student, very dedicated," says Don Harris, the school's director. Gino was slated to complete the program in July as a certified electronics technician, prepared for a job repairing equipment for nearly any industry.

He balanced school with work at Starbucks in Woburn. During high school, he worked as an attendant at a Texaco station in Burlington, and as a clerk at Dale Pharmacy in Burlington. His supervisor at the pharmacy described him as a "very outwardly nice young man."

When he finished at RETS in July, he planned to take a trip with his father to his dad's native country of Belize. "He wanted to go back there and visit everybody and just trace his roots," Higinio said.

He had other plans, too: he was supposed to be the best man in Derek Gray's Sept. 24 wedding.

The pair were "like night and day, but they were still best friends," says their friend Lauren DiPierri. They were united in part by their shared passion for rock 'n' roll. They attended concerts nearly every week and went to hear Great White at The Station together. Neither Gino nor Derek escaped the fire.

—Jessica Resnick-Ault



Tina Ayer, 33 Loved — and lived — rock

She was known as Mrs. T.

It was because of all the gold jewelry Tina M. Ayer would wear every day — crosses and pendants hanging around her neck and a ring on each finger, just like Mr. T, the TV star from the '80s.

Did she have any favorites? "They were all her favorites," says her 15-year-old daughter, Kayla Marie D. Abbenante Ayer.

With the jewelry and the blond highlights in her black hair, the diminutive Ms. Ayer, 33, was hard to miss. And impossible to ignore.

"She loved to talk," said Kayla, as she, her aunt, Desiree Phillips, and a friend recounted stories. "She was so outgoing."

Born and raised in Warwick, Tina lived with her daughter in the Oakland Beach section of the city. She also had an 8-year-old son, Daniel N. White.

Kayla and Tina were more like friends than mother and daughter.

Kayla remembers when she got her tongue pierced last year. Her mother came with her and even joked that she'd get hers pierced too.

"But she looked through the window watching me get it done, and she was crying she was so scared," said Kayla.

She was generous and com-

passionate, but it was her goofiness that was so endearing, said Phillips.

Tina loved rock 'n' roll, especially those '80s "hair bands" and metal groups. She'd often go to karaoke bars to sing her songs and even sang at her brother's wedding.

She loved that rock star image, too. When she wasn't at her job at the Fairfield Inn, in Warwick, she'd put on a pair of Levi's and a leather jacket and ride Harley-Davidsons with her friends. She dreamed of buying her own bike one day.

"She was definitely a Harley babe," said Phillips.

Kayla fidgeted with the rings on her fingers as she listened. Some were her mother's.

Tina was wearing most of her jewelry the night of the fire. Her father, Steven W. Ayer, has it now.

Kayla says when she gets it back, she'll take off all her own jewelry and wear her mother's.

"And then she'll be Mrs. T junior," said Phillips.

—Alex Kuffner



Karla Bagtaz, 41 Caring and adventurous

Karla Jean Bagtaz appreciated things that were big and noisy. Things like rock concerts. And monster trucks — those pickups with ridiculously oversized wheels, splashy paint schemes and nicknames like "BigFoot."

"Anything that was large and loud," said Ms. Bagtaz's close friend Natalia Vargas, of Stoughton, Mass. "She liked people and things that were larger than life."

People remember Ms. Bagtaz, 41, of Brockton, as a caring, warm woman who liked spending time with the children of her friends and family.

She had a talent for lifting someone up on a bad day.

"When she sees someone is at their lowest low, she is right there, picking them up," said Vargas, who met Ms. Bagtaz in first grade.

Ms. Bagtaz had a distinctive laugh and a rascally nature.

Last summer, she gave Vargas's son \$100 on his birthday. But she made him work for it.

Each of the dollar bills was folded up inside a tiny capsule, the same sort of plastic container used in vending machines for children's toys.

"She was always up to something," Vargas said.

Ms. Bagtaz lived most of her life in Stoughton. She graduated from Stoughton High School in 1980. In recent years, she worked as a legal assistant for a lawyer in Randolph, Michael Maniscalco. In recent weeks, she had started a new job for Miracle Mortgage in Dedham.

Meanwhile, she sold Avon fragrances and other products, and she spent several nights a week waiting tables at Latoria Italian Bar and Grill in Stoughton.

"Everybody liked her," said the restaurant's assistant manager, Mickey Latoria.

When she was off the clock, Ms. Bagtaz liked to escape.

"She had an adventurous side to her, without a doubt," Vargas recalled.

Ms. Bagtaz often had concert tickets to hand out.

Late one Sunday night in January, Vargas found herself at The Living Room in Providence. And she didn't like the music much. It was her friend's thought that counted.

"I did it for her — she loved it," Vargas said.

"I know if there is a heaven, she made it there with a bunch of people who have the same interests as her."

—Mark Reynolds

DIGITAL EXTRA: Post remembrances to fire victims, visit an online memorial, view photos and find continuing coverage of the fire, at:

<http://projournal.com/extra/2003/stationfire/>