



The aftermath of the roof collapse which killed three in Pittsburgh

## Daughter: Miracle only three died

By Sharon Santus

TRIBUNE REVIEW

A woman whose father and brother were killed Friday when the roof collapsed on the Pittsburgh printing company where they worked said it's miraculous anyone survived.

"It was total devastation," said Patricia Ann Konesky. "I can't even begin to describe what I saw. It looked like the whole building exploded."

Killed in the 3 p.m. collapse at the Raff Printing Co. in the city's Allentown section were Konesky's father, Richard Wuenschell Sr., 60, of Mt. Oliver, her brother, Richard Jr., 36, of Brentwood, and Wilbert A. Platt, 35, of Allentown.

An estimated 75 other workers escaped without serious injury.

Platt and Wuenschell Jr. died of asphyxiation due to compression

of the neck and chest, while the elder Wuenschell died of multiple blunt-force trauma, according to the Allegheny County Coroner's

### Roundup/A10

Office.

A Pittsburgh Police Department spokesman said the cause of the collapse is being investigated, but heavy buildup of snow on the structure's flat roof is suspected.

When the roof caved in, a wall on the three-story portion of the building collapsed on the structure's single-story portion where all three victims had been working.

The bodies of Platt and the elder Wuenschell were found about 90 minutes after the collapse, while the younger Wuenschell was not found until 2:30

a.m. Saturday.

Konesky, 34, said an employee's sister telephoned her after the cave in.

"I live about three minutes from the plant so I went over right away," said Konesky, whose husband, Tim, also was in the building when it collapsed.

"It was total confusion. You couldn't get near the place. People were trying to find out about family members."

Konesky said she learned almost immediately that her husband had been taken to Mercy Hospital and did not appear to be badly injured. Her father and brother, however, were missing.

"You try not to lose hope, but the building was so badly demolished, I couldn't imagine they were still alive," said Konesky who waited hours at the scene with her mother and several relatives. "Gas was leaking, the fumes

were terrible. It's a miracle everyone inside wasn't killed."

Konesky said that, several minutes later, company owner Fred Aheimer approached with grim news. He had spotted her father and Platt in the ruins and both were dead. The search continued for Richard Jr.

"Every relative we have and every employee of the print shop waited with us," Konesky said. "No one left. The company is more like a family than a business. People really care about each other."

She said that, during the vigil, a false report circulated that her brother had been seen alive after the collapse, but it was soon discounted.

Konesky said doors were opened at a nearby bank to give the crowd relief from the cold.

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## Daughter: Miracle only three perished

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Later, they took refuge a few doors away at St. George Catholic Church rectory.

"Everything's in the same block and we were walking back and forth all night," she said. "The Salvation Army gave us food and hot drinks. It wasn't until 2:30 in the morning that they found my brother's body."

Konesky said her husband was standing a few feet from the three victims when the roof collapsed.

"He said he was talking with Mr. Platt when he heard a sound he couldn't describe," she said. "My husband operates a folder and he thought his machine exploded. He was knocked unconscious. When he came to, he was calling for help and he couldn't understand why no one was responding."

Konesky said her husband spotted a small passageway and crawled to daylight.

"He was the last survivor out of the building," she said. "He crawled out from under the garage door about 20 minutes after everyone else got out and when the crowd saw him, they started to cheer."

Konesky said her family has been rocked by the tragedy, but are thankful her husband's life was spared.

"It's unbelievable that he ever got out of that building," she said. "He thinks he must have been shoved under the folder when the wall collapsed. That must've saved him."

Konesky said employees were stunned by the devastation because the entire building had been renovated several months ago.

In addition to his daughter, Wuenschell Sr. is survived by his wife, Kathryn, and son, Donald. Wuenschell Jr.'s survivors include his wife, Jodie, and children, Kelly Ann and Benjamin. A funeral mass will be celebrated at St. Henry Catholic Church on Arlington Avenue Wednesday at 10 a.m. Interment will be in St. Michael Cemetery, Mt. Oliver.

Platt's survivors include his wife, Denise, and children Ashley, Willie and Kayla. A funeral mass will be celebrated Tuesday at 10 a.m. in St. George Catholic Church in Allentown. Interment will be in Calvary Cemetery, Hazelwood.