



On June 24, 1973 an arsonist doused the stairs to the UpStairs Lounge in lighter fluid and set it on fire. The doorbell to the gay bar rang and when someone opened the door, the fire burst into the room. In less than twenty minutes, thirty-two people were killed. At the time, it was the largest number of fatalities by a fire in New Orleans. In a time of anti-gay stigma, the event went unmentioned by politicians and jokes about the event were told on the radio.

"Where do you bury the ashes?"  
"In the fruit jar."

"Did you hear about the weenie roast?"

No one was charged with the attack. Parents of the deceased refused to pick up the remains of their children and publicly denounced them. Many survivors recall having to deny their connections to the attack because they could have lost their jobs or homes.



UpStairs Lounge  
June 24, 1973

"...absence means  
something and  
signifies as much as  
presence."

*-Stuart Hall*

*absence*  
historical (in)significance