SHELBY COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

JULY 21, 1968

William N. Morris Jr.
Sheriff
Shelby County
Tennessee

Dear Sir,

At approximately 6:30 P.M. this date as the undersigned entered the front office of the jail, I was informed there was a mattress fire on the third floor.

The undersigned went immediately to the elevator to procede to the third floor. While waiting for the elevator to get to the ground floor some of the Memphis Fire Department equipment had arrived. Three of the firemen rode the elevator to the third floor with the undersigned. The three fireman with the undersigned proceded to "D" Tank where the fire had been. The firemen immediately started pumping water from an extinguisher that they had brought with then from the truck. We were in "D" Tank approximately five minutes when the firemen wrapped the burnt mattress in a wet blanket. They then brought the wet mattress down stairs and placed it in a garbage drum and soaked it with more water.

In the meantime the undersigned had checked with the security officer in Lieutenant Smith's office to make sure that everything was all right in "A" Tank. After the undersigned had cleared the floor, I went into Lieutenant Smith's office and checked with Patrolman Steve Scott who stated that what little smoke that had gotten in "A" Block was clearing.

Lieutenant Crossnine of the Memphis Fire Department stated that if we could find who set the mattress afire that they would place an arson charge against him.

Assistant H. L. Parker was notified of this incident and he ordered the undersigned to strip the cell block and put the men on "deadlock" and to place them on bread and water until further notice. The undersigned was in the process of doing this when Chief Parker arrived on the third floor. No one would admit setting the fire or knowing who started it.

The federal doctor was called to examine his med and when he arrived he examined James Green, M/W. The other men said that they were all right and did not need to see the doctor.

The key to the floor were sent down stairs at approximately 8:45 P.M.

A copy of the report of Patrolman C. E. Nichols, a patrolman working the third floor at the time of the incident will be attached to this report.

Respectfully submitted,
Vernon F. Key
Lieutenant Vernon F. Key
Assistant Jailor

STATE OF TENNESSEE
COUNTY OF SHELBY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

FROM

MEMO TO Chief Parker: Date JULY 21, 1968

At 6:27 P.M. this date while making my rounds on the west end of the third floor I noticed smoke coming from "D" Cell Block. Fire and smoke were coming from a mattress on the floor in front of the shower. I immediately closed the windows and doors to keep the fire from spreading and notified Patrolman H. D. Davis to contact the front office that a mattress was on fire and that two fire marshalls were needed.

The undersigned then carried two buckets of water and threw on the burning mattress. At this time the fire marshalls arrived and extinguished the flame.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl E. Nichols
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