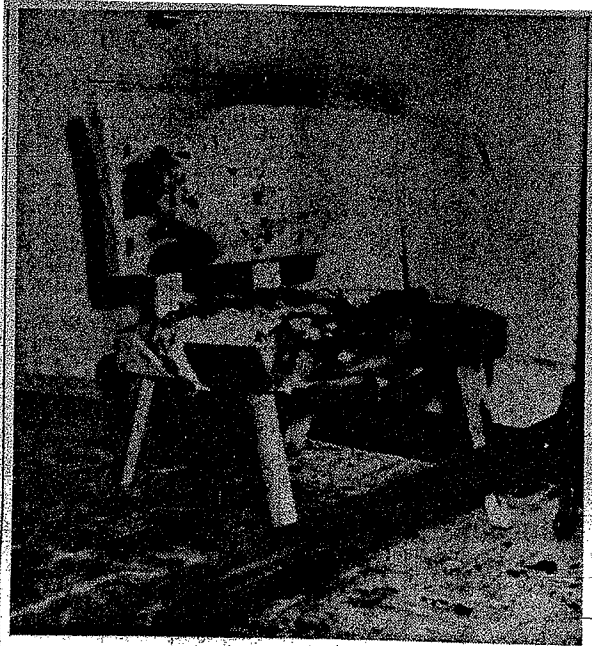


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Flames from blast of exploding gas heater destroyed this chair in motel where Mr. and Mrs. Donald Abbott of Ashland, Mass., received serious burns Sunday.

Condition Serious

## Mass. Couple Burned in Moretown As Motel Room Heater Explodes

MORETOWN — An Ashland, Mass., couple were badly burned Sunday morning when a gas heater exploded in their room at the Caravan Motel on Middlesex Rd. here. They were taken to Heaton Hospital.

Injured were Mr. and Mrs. Donald Abbott of 170 Prospect St., Ashland, who were described by officials as in their early 30s.

At the hospital, Dr. Henri Pache said their condition was serious but not critical, although they suffered extensive surface burns over their entire bodies.

The Abbotts were treated at the scene by Dr. Charles E. Harwood of Waterbury, regional medical examiner.

Waterbury firemen extinguished the blaze, which burned out two rooms of the motel. Force of the blast blew out the rear wall of the unit and furnishings were destroyed by the flames.

Mr. and Mrs. William Jorgensen own the motel.

Jorgensen said Abbott told him he had turned on the heater and then had forgotten to light it.

Mrs. Abbott reportedly struck a match to light a cigarette and apparently the room burst into flames. It happened at 8:30 a.m.

The couple checked in at about 10 p.m. Saturday. Jorgensen said that when he first heard the blast, he thought nothing of it because there had been considerable blasting for the new highway.

But soon he heard screams and people shouting.

The couple, their clothing burn-

ed from their bodies, dashed from the building and jumped into their car.

Jorgensen covered them with clean sheets while awaiting a doctor and ambulances.

An official said that "had there been a pilot light on the heater," there would have been no explosion.

The incident is being investigated by the state fire marshal, Chester M. Kirby.

State police reported that the Abbotts were en route to Winooski to pick up their two daughters, Laurie, 11, and Linda, 5, who were visiting the Reginald Allens of 11 George St.

A member of the Allen family said the two girls probably will remain with them until their parents are released from the hospital.