



**EVIDENCE:** This is the frame and damaged metal door of the Hartford Hospital trash chute that burst and spewed flames through a portion of the ninth floor, taking the lives of 16 persons Friday. It has been confiscated as evidence in an investigation now being conducted by state and local fire and police officials. State Police Inspector Edmund Sterniak, above, shows the fire-damaged door at the investigation hearing Monday (Courant Photo by Wesley Mason).

## Survived Circus Fire

# Hospital Patient Dies, 16th Victim of Blaze

The death toll in the Hartford Hospital fire has reached 16.

Dr. Donald R. Hazen, medical examiner, said Monday that smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide poisoning caused the death Saturday of Mrs. Gladys Bargalski Kokoska. However, it was not until Monday that the fire was held responsible for her death.

Mrs. Kokoska, 75, of 20 Florence St., had been in critical condition with a brain tumor since being admitted to Hartford Hospital Nov. 26. Her room - 953 - was on the hospital's ill-fated ninth floor, scene of Friday's disaster.

In that room two persons died Friday in the fire: Mrs. Ruth LaPenta of 152 Amherst St., a patient, and Mrs. Theresa Mascaro, 55, a visitor found dead on the floor.

Mrs. Kokoska died the next day.

"Somehow they managed to get my mother out of the room and down to the sixth floor," Carl Zakrzewsky of 1186 Broad St., Mrs. Kokoska's son, said Monday.

### Visited Mother

An inspector at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in Meriden, he had visited his mother early Friday afternoon:

"We talked to her just a few minutes before the fire," he said Monday. "She opened her eyes, looked at me, brushed my arm, and that was all."

"Shortly after 1, I decided to do some shopping, then come back in the evening. I didn't hear about the fire until I got home at 4."

It was the elderly woman's second involvement in a fire disaster.

In the Hartford circus fire of 1944, which claimed the lives of 168 persons, Mrs. Kokoska was badly burned and bruised while protecting her 4½-year-old grandson from the flames.

### Circus Fire Experience

Zakrzewsky Monday recalled the experiences of his mother, a 1904 Polish immigrant to Hartford, in the 1944 circus tragedy:

"She and her grandson (Eugene A. Roy of Hartford) were there when the fire broke out.

"She covered up the boy so that he wouldn't burn and she was burned herself. And she bruised

her back protecting him from the crowd."

Funeral services will be held for Mrs. Kokoska Wednesday.

According to Associated Press, a woman died Sunday night of a heart attack in Lennoxville, Quebec Canada, on hearing her daughter, Mrs. Marion P. Winget of Bond Street, had died in the Hartford Hospital fire.

Mrs. Winget, a private duty nurse, lived in Canada with her mother, Mrs. Ella May Paige, 81, until last year, when she and her husband moved to Hartford. Mrs. Paige was a widow.