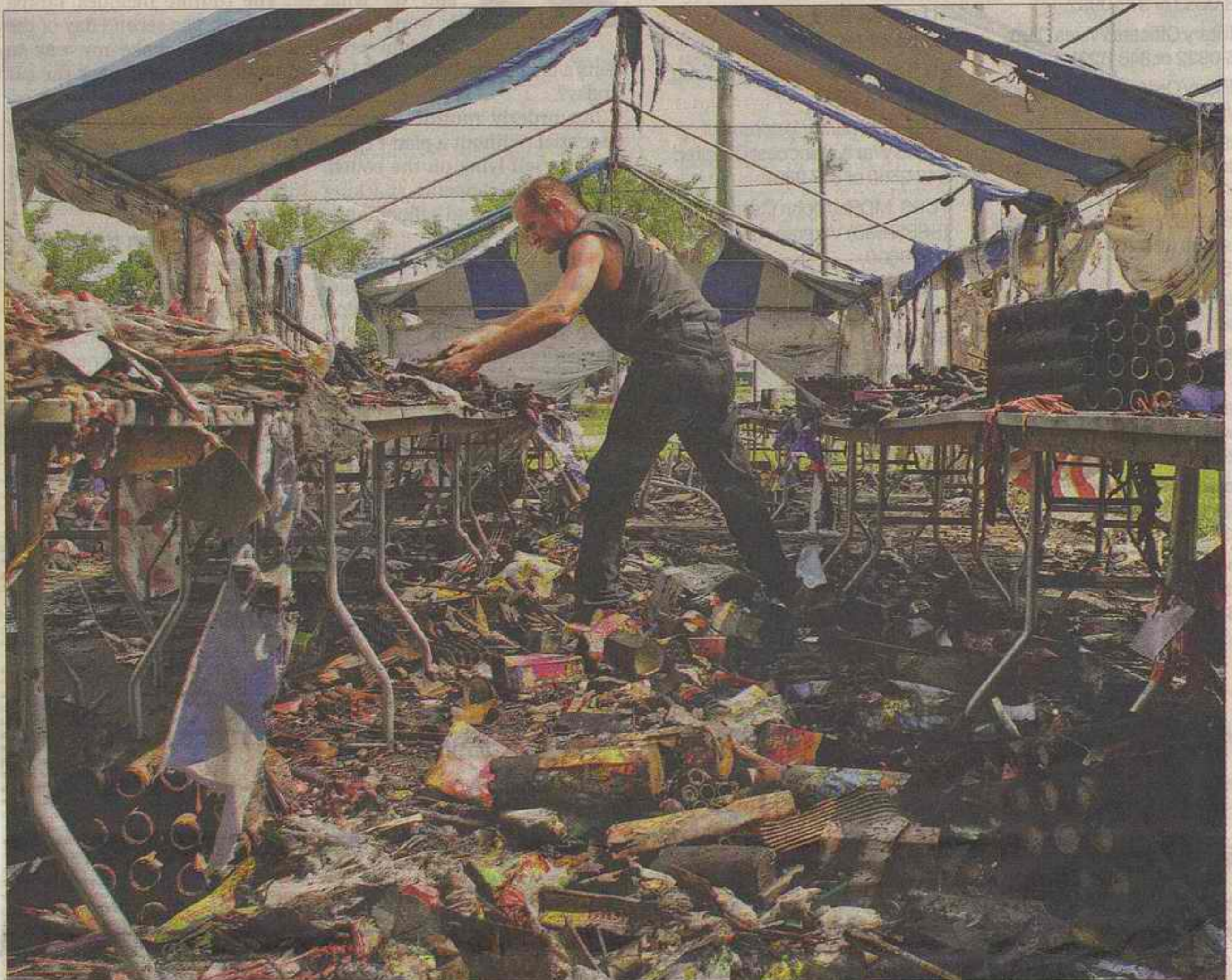


# Fireworks explosion injures two people

Someone lit a firework inside the tent, causing a chain reaction.



BRENDAN FITTERER | Times

Jerry St. Pierre sifts through the charred remains of a Galaxy Fireworks tent in Port Richey Thursday. Someone lit a firework inside the structure Wednesday night, causing an explosion that totaled the tent and its estimated \$70,000 worth of contents.





RON THOMPSON | Times

**With gauze covering their wounds Thursday, Andrea Berkman of Bayonet Point shows reporters where her 5-year-old son, Griffin, was burned in the explosion.**

**BY THOMAS LAKE**  
*Times Staff Writer*

PORT RICHEY — The High and Mighty took off at 10:47 p.m. Wednesday, rising toward the night in a ball of pink flame.

The High and Mighty sells for \$130. It consists of four mortar-style fireworks that detonate with a single fuse.

Someone lit that fuse on Wednesday night, which ordinarily would have surprised no one, given that it was the Fourth of July, except that the High and Mighty was still in the fireworks tent.

And so, when the High and Mighty fired, it did not go so high.

It bounced.

The unscheduled fireworks display that followed may have been the most spectacular seen in west Pasco County on Independence Day.

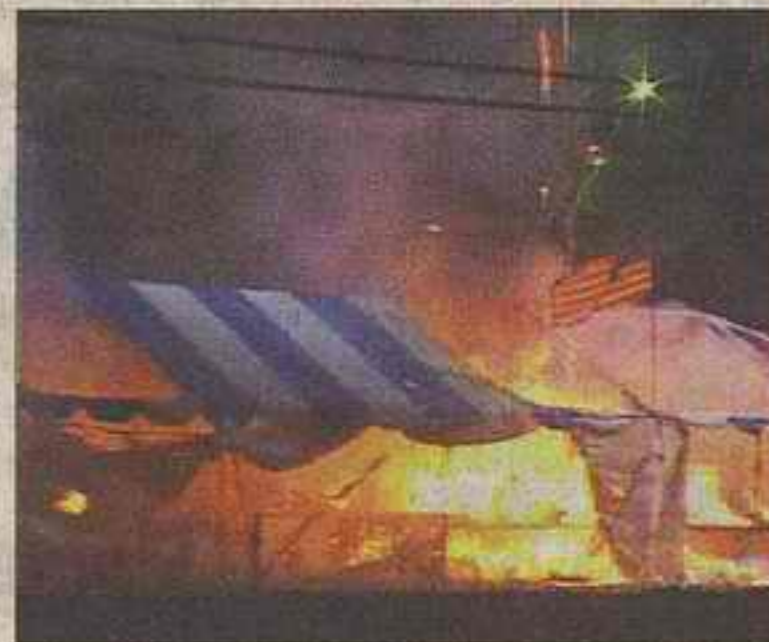
But the people in the tent could not enjoy the show.

They were too busy running for their lives.

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Here's how it unfolded, according to eyewitnesses and sheriff's reports:

The blue-and-white tent stands next to U.S. 19, a short drive south of State Road 52. It is owned by Galaxy Fireworks, a private, Tampa-based firm that runs nearly 80 such stands across Florida. It offers everything from Saturn Missile Batteries to Whistling Moons to White Glittering Willows.



BRIAN FARROW | Special to the Times

**Rockets shoot through the roof of the Galaxy Fireworks tent Wednesday.**

## Mobile home fire

A 51-year-old man is killed in a blaze at his girlfriend's mobile home. **Page 6**

Business was tapering off late Wednesday night when three men walked into the tent. One was actually there to buy fireworks; the other two, one of whom carried a bottle of Bud Light, browsed near the back.

Reko Rivera, a 21-year-old clerk who lives in Oldsmar, was ringing up the first man's purchase when he looked up and saw the two other men scurrying away.

Shoplifters, he thought.

Then came the sparks.

It seems that before they left, one of the two men had set off the High and Mighty.

» See **FIREWORKS, 5**