We didn’t call it festival seating. We called it animal seating because when they came in, they came in like a herd of cattle.

—A RIVERFRONT COLISEUM EMPLOYEE

BY CHET FLIPPO
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At about 7:15 on the evening of December 3rd, 1979, Larry Magid sat down to dinner with Frank Wood in the luxurious Beehive Club, a private club in the upper reaches of Cincinnati’s Riverfront Coliseum. Wood, who is general manager of the city’s premier rock station, WEBN-FM, remarked to Magid, who is head of Electric Factory of Philadelphia (one of the country’s leading rock promoters), that the crowd streaming onto the coliseum floor far below them for that evening’s Electric Factory-promoted Who concert seemed to be quite orderly. A “happy crowd,” he said, not at all like the rabble that had disrupted previous “chain-saw concerts” there, like the Outlaws’ fighting crowd and Led Zeppelin’s mob. The crowd below them was sprinting to get as close as possible to the stage, in the grand tradition of “festival” or unreserved seating. By agreement of the coliseum management (the coliseum is privately owned), Electric Factory and the Who, mostly general-admission tickets had been sold: supposedly 3578 reserved seats in the loges at eleven dollars each and 14,770 general-admission tickets at ten dollars each.

A few of those thousands of young people—the youngest known was four years old—had blood on their shoes as they ran happily down the concrete steps into the “pit,” the seatless area in front of the stage where the true fanatics stand throughout the show. But no one noticed. Some of the people who paused—dazed—(Continued on page 10)
BODY COUNT AFTER SHOW (UPPER LEFT); SHOES AND CLOTHING LOST IN THE CRUSH (CENTER); MEMORIAL FOR VICTIM (RIGHT)

At seven p.m., the Who left the stage. No one inside the coliseum knew that while they ate dinner and conducted business as usual and waited until the appointed time to admit the "animals," just outside those front doors the horror had already begun, a horror under a full moon, a horror of chilling magnitude that will probably forever be fully explained.

ON JUNE 28TH, 1976, A young man named Richard Klop sat down to his typewriter in his apartment on Auburn Avenue in Cincinnati. He was slow to anger but he was angry. That morning he had gone out bright and early to buy tickets to see Neil Young and Stephen Stills at the coliseum. He got to Ticketron an hour ahead of time because he wanted good seats, only to find that tickets were sold out because they had gone on sale three days before the date advertised by Electric Factory. Klop was already unhappy about the last two Electric Factory shows he'd been to, so he just said, "By God! I'll send them a concerned citizen letter"—and just to be sure they didn't just blow him off as some rock druggie, he decided to send carbon copies to the city council, WEBIN,

Tickerton and to the Cincinnati public-safety director.

He wrote: "The two concerts that I have attended (the Who and Paul McCartney) were both sold out on a 'festival seating' or general-admission basis. What this means for the promoter is more money; for the concertgoer... this means that he'll probably have to sit in the aisles or on the floor... jeopardizing his safety and the safety of others. If a fire or general panic were to break out, many, many people would be trampled to death... Because civil people like to avoid these kinds of configurations, many concertgoers make a point of arriving at the coliseum two, three, and even four hours before the doors are 'scheduled' to open. At the Paul McCartney concert, for example, I arrived at 5:30, two hours before the doors were to open. After a span of two hours, several thousand people had congregated on the plaza in front of the doors. When they were finally opened (a half-hour late) the mass of people pressed forward, literally crushing those by the doors... This is what happens when tickets are sold on a 'festival seating' basis, and it is no festival."

On the night of De... [Cont. on 12]
ELEVEN DIED IN CINCINNATI
Larry Magid: a promoter under fire

LESS THAN TWO years ago, Peter Wertimer, a former employee of promoter Larry Magid’s Electric Factory Concerts, warned of the possibility of just such a tragedy as the one that occurred before the Who concert in Cincinnati. Wertimer testified in a deposition for an antitrust suit brought by a rival promoter, the Midnite Sun Company, for whom he also had worked. He recalled that at some general-admission Electric Factory shows at Philadelphia’s Spectrum, “there was no attempt to form any lines other than the ones that the people formed initially themselves. But as the doors would open, there would be a huge crush forward into those doors. They’re large glass or see-through doors that get pushed out into the crowd, and with the crush of the people into those doors, you have a situation where people could get pushed through the doors and, if not anything extreme, just a severe crush right at the point of contact between the crowd and where those doors were opening.”

Magid responds to allegations of such past problems by saying, “I really don’t want to comment on that—you’d have to speak to the lawyer about that. Whether I’m aware of it or not remains to be seen.” As to responsibility for security at concerts, Magid says, “We [promoters] are not anything but tenants. We are not owners of the building. I’m not pointing fingers at anybody. I hear this idea that it [Cincinnati] happened because the promoter didn’t have his shit together. You hear people saying, ’It couldn’t happen here in Providence,’ or whatever. Bullshit! It’s a symptom of a society, and it could have happened anywhere. In fact, it has happened at soccer games in other countries. I just think it goes a lot deeper, where the responsibility lies and who to blame, no matter who didn’t do what. After all, we didn’t trample anyone to death, and we didn’t step on anyone, and we didn’t push anyone.”

The tragedy December 3rd in Cincinnati was not the first time that Larry Magid has come under fire for the way he runs his business. Within the last three years, Magid, one of the country’s largest promoters, has been the target of at least six antitrust suits filed by rival promoters. One of those suits was recently settled out of court and four are still pending. In addition, Magid was the subject of a yearlong grand jury investigation initiated by the Justice Department’s antitrust division. (The grand jury adjourned without bringing any indictments.)

And there have been other problems. In two successive years, 1977 and 1978, members of Aerosmith were seriously injured on stage by flying objects during concerts at Philadelphia’s Spectrum, where Magid books many of his concerts. Both concerts were sold on a general-admission and reserved-seat basis.

As for the future of festival (general-admission) seating, Magid says, “An awful lot of attractions want to play festival seating... and an awful lot of the audience want it, too. I think we’re probably not going to see festival seating in bigger places anymore. I think there’ll probably be legislation against it now. I may not wait until legislation comes out.”

People were climbing on other people’s shoulders. Some people went berserk and started swinging their elbows.

The policeman said, “Well, we can’t do anything.” Klopp finally got inside and found his wife.

A few feet away, Mark Helmken was pleading with a policeman to do something. He said to the cop, “Here, take my ID and bust me for false information if you don’t believe me.” He said the policeman told him to move along.

A day later, Helmken was still furious. “I was greatly disturbed by WCPO-TV’s depiction of us as drug-crazed mob. There were too many people and just two doors open. It was an incredible bideonkey; it was a slow squeeze, not a stampede. I was stuck in it for forty-five minutes. I went down twice and wasn’t sure that I would make it. I saw guys with blue lips—they couldn’t get oxygen. I saw, I think, four ticket takers after I walked over all the shoes to get in. I couldn’t keep my feet on the ground the whole time. I kept my arms in front of my chest to keep from getting crushed. People were climbing up on other people’s shoulders. Some people went berserk and started swinging their elbows. That was the only blood. There was no group panic. After I saw the dead people, it sunk in. Dead. Just dead. It pissed me off to see Uncle Walter Cronkite blaming us for this.”

The doors were officially opened at 7:00; according to eyewitnesses, four doors out of the six were open, and two of those were closed and blocked at times by guards with billy clubs. From where he was in the crowd, Phil Sheridan saw only one door open. “It looked like they attempted to open more but the crowd was so tightly packed, it was useless. I was maybe fifteen rows of people back, staring at this door, and it hung like about six inches open and they finally sprung it open and that’s all I remember till I got inside. I could see people smashed up against the doors that weren’t open. I had an armful of my girlfriend and my buddy grabbed me by the shoulders and I took him by the hand and we started to make our way through the turnstiles. Well, in that ten or fifteen seconds it took us to get our act together, we were inside the building and the turnstiles and the door was a frenzy and they’re still trying to take tickets! God, it was insane!”
ROCK n ROLL TRAGEDY

BRIEF LIVES: THE STORY OF THREE VICTIMS

BY CHARLES M. YOUNG

STEPHAN PRESTON first encountered death at the age of fourteen when his aging cat Mecika passed on. The lack of dignity in the event did not quite register until a couple of days later. Another of the family cats took ill and Stephan accompanied his mother to the veterinarian. Never one to sit still, Stephan took a walk around the building while his mother read magazines in the waiting room. When he returned, his face was soiled with blood. Apparently pitched out a rear window until the janitor had time to bury it. Mecika's black, furry corpse lay in the weeds. Stephan, a walking catastrophe for his and his family's material possessions, learned that day to respect one nonliving thing: a small blue box in which he kept his mementos of Mecika. No one but he was allowed to touch it.

Stephan Preston second encountered death at the Cincinnati Who concert. He was nineteen, and the death was his own. His friends called him Pips, after the children's story character Pippi Longstocking, with whom he shared long, flyaway hair and a free spirit, both of which were beyond mortal (certainly his mom's) control. Impulse, you could say, was the dominant theme of his life. There was that time he went camping with his buddies and decided to cross a train trestle over a deep gorge. He was three quarters to the other side when a fast freight came charging at him and he almost didn't make it back. His family still shudders to think of all the time he went camping with them and took a "trust walk" (blindfolded) along a rugged cliff. And finally, after waiting six hours to see The Who, he saw two girls he knew from his home in Finneytown collapse into the pile of bodies. He clawed his way over to help and got trampled himself.

FRIENDS OF VICTIMS PIPS, JACKIE AND KAREN; PIPS' KITCHEN CALENDAR
After his death, nobody could remember exactly how big Pips was. All that hair made it hard to tell. A reasonable guess is no taller than five feet seven, no heavier than 120 pounds. The girls’ minds tried to save, Jackie Eckler and Karen Morrison, were fifteen years old. Jackie was about five feet tall and under ninety pounds. Karen was about five five and just over a hundred pounds. The force that crushed the air out of their lungs bent a tubular steel guardrail at the door four inches off center.

S IN THE REST OF THE industrial Midwest, they take music seriously in Finneytown, an upper-middle-class suburb north of Cincinnati and south of Mt. Healthy (so named because it was a refuge from the cholera epidemic in 1850). Given the options of corrupt politicians, lothario evangelists and rock & roll, kids don’t agonize much about what’s worth believing in. They take their faith loud and orthodox. The administration at Finneytown High has set up a wheel in the cafeteria that the students spin to determine which radio station will come over the loudspeakers during lunch. If the kids hear any disco or punk, they spin the wheel against their will. Then there’s the “Party,” or Stones or Who — hardly any group that hasn’t been playing since before they were born. They are of a generation without its own music, but they love what they inherited no less than their Woodstock forebears. Probably more.

Even among the faithful, Jackie Eckler was considered saintly. Eric Clapton was her patron saint. She talked of him endlessly, and she argued with anyone that those weird noises at the end of “Layla,” her favorite song, were birds tweeting. She wrote Clapton’s name in big letters on all her notebooks — that and school sucks to the MAX.

“Shr really hated biology,” says her best friend, Tina Ellipolos, 15, sitting in the living room of Anne and David Votaw, mother and stepfather of Pips Preston. “The teacher would ask her questions and she would say, ‘Those words don’t mean anything to me.’ She skipped it last year and sat in the nurse’s office because she was so excited about the Who. I was going to sell my ticket, but she talked me into going by saying they were almost as good as Eric Clapton.”

About twenty-five teenagers have come over to the Votaw’s to reminisce about Pips, Jackie and Karen. It is four days after the deaths. They still burst into tears occasionally during the conversation, but the tragedy is far enough away now that they can also laugh over their fondest memories.

“Jackie and I used to go into department stores and act like yuppies and speak strange foreign languages,” continues Tina. “But she was really shy around strangers. She’d turn bright red if you gave her a complement.”

“What about Jackie’s school activities?” I ask.

“We did gymnastics together,” says Tina. “The coach didn’t like us because we stuck up for ourselves. We had this tradition of getting obtuse every Friday at practice — you know, refusing to do our warm-ups, carrying on. As loud as possible. It was a weekly thing, but it sorta had become daily.”

“Any other personal details?” I ask.

“She never wore a bikini in the summer because she was so skinny that her bikini didn’t look right,” says Tina. “She was taking fat pills from the health-food store.”

“She really didn’t care that she’d gone from seventy-eight to eighty-three pounds in the last few months.”

“What about Karen?” I ask.

“She would go to a party and sit and watch everybody,” says Mark Perchmann. “But she never said anything. She just stood there and smiled.”

“I took her out once,” says Tracy Caudill. “She never talked unless she was spoken to.”

The girls, however, say Karen could talk forever once she got to know you, and was a real hand with her animal crackers in a food fight. When she moved to Finneytown three years ago, she spent a lot of time hanging out next door at the Fairbanks’, where they had ten kids to bring her out of her shell.

“The first year she lived here, she didn’t do anything,” says Kathy Fairbanks. “She was so quiet that you could leave the house and forget she was visiting.”

“She gave me the shirt off her back once, literally,” says Jamie Fairbanks. “She’d do anything you asked her. It was just in the last couple of months that she worked up the courage to say no to me for the first time. I hugged her when she did.”

“She would never hit back,” says Beth Fairbanks. “If she had fought hard at the Who concert, she might have gotten away, but Karen was too gentle.”

“Is it true the Who was her first concert?” I ask.

“That’s what the newspapers said,” replies Beth. “But she stuck to Eric Clapton with Jack before.”

Everyone laughs at the mere mention of Pips. He could get away with anything, and often did, they agree, because of his smile. He could make you say a word or a phrase on the spot to make an opening out of any situation. Like when somebody got upset, he would command, “Alleviate yourself from hysterical discomfort,” only real fast so you could hardly understand what he was saying. Or when something got in his way, he would call it an “uncool reality.”

“He used to call me an uncool reality,” says Mrs. Votaw, who wears wire-rim glasses and appears much younger than her forty years. “He was very frustrating to be the mother of. He was always inviting twenty of his friends over when I needed to work. He was quite stubborn.”

“David and Anne Votaw with Pips at Age Nine, Holding His Cat, Macska

I think you were both stubborn,” pronounces his little sister, Ellen.

“Did he have any idea what he wanted to do with his life?” I ask.

“He was talking about going to truck-driver school,” says Bob Eckler.

“He didn’t want to go to regular college,” says Mrs. Votaw. “I think he felt he had too much education at home. His father is a linguistics professor. His stepfather is going back to school for another master’s, and he teaches reading and writing. But I think he would have become interested in something eventually.”

The kids drift off around ten and Mrs. Votaw gives me a tour of the house. At the end of the living room is a case once full of his collection that was recently decimated by burglars. She points to a small sculpture of a hot-air balloon suspended from the ceiling. “You know what that is?” she asks, leaving me stump.

“It’s a toilet ball,” she says. “One day the toilet wouldn’t flush, I checked the mechanism, and sure enough, the bulb was gone. I asked Stephan what had happened, and he said he was using it to make my Christmas present. I asked, ‘Why didn’t you buy another bulb?’ and he said he didn’t have any money, so I ended up paying for a new one.”

“He was quite a talented sculptor, actually. Art was the only subject he liked in school. In everything else, he did the absolute minimum to pass. He would say, ‘I know I’m smart and I don’t have to prove it to anyone.’”

She takes me to Pips’ bedroom with some trepidation. The bed is an old mattress on the floor, well below the waterline from the flood of moldy sweat socks, street signs, rumpled posters and dogeared magazines on the floor. Facing paisley bedspreads hang from the ceiling. A collage of dope pictures dominates the wall.

“I want you to know why you’re here,” she says, standing in the middle of the wreckage. “Some of the broadcast media have behaved like vultures through this, sending film crews in trucks to cover the funerals, always sticking microphones in our faces. Every time we did a simple news update, they would show a parade of people on someone’s ceiling. I decided to let you in on why, because Rolling Stone was Pips’ favorite magazine.”

For neither the first nor the last time on this story, my eyes fill up with tears.

“My husband said Pips was smiling when he identified the body at the morgue,” she says. “I think he died peacefully, because he was helping those girls. I think he lived a pleasant life. Ellen opened the little blue box before the funeral. She picked the best picture of Macska and put it in the casket.”

Mrs. Votaw rearranges some rubble on Pips’ dresser and continues. “I never understood his music. When I grew up, I was interested in ballet and theater. But I’ll have to learn about rock & roll now. I won’t allow his death to be in vain. Someone else’s greed killed him, and it must not happen again.”

“We turn to leave, stopping short when I see a photograph of Hell’s Angels bearing a man to death with pool cues.”

“My God,” I think. “He taped a picture of Altamont over his desk. He couldn’t have been more than nine.”

“Altamont?” asks Pips’ mother. “What’s that?”

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE SMITH
CINCINNATI

DeWitt Jr., all great sports fans, were the guiding forces behind the coliseum. In the early Seventies, Brian—who’s great-grandfather formed the Heilken Can Company, which was the family’s fortune and its entire Irving Cincinnati's relatively small business and social elite—had tried to buy the Kentucky Colonel's of the American Basketball Association and bring them to Cincinnati; he lost out to now-Kentucky Governor John Y Brown. But Heilken really wanted and sought a National Hockey League team. When Cincinnati began talking about a renewal project for the riverfront arena, Heilken popped up in the idea of a big indoor sports arena there. He Sports Inc., that another $4 million was forthcoming from the city, state and federal funds, and that a final $1 million would come from leasing the arena's space to skiers by wealthy patrons. Heilken's newly formed Cincinnati Coliseum Corporation bought four acres of land next to Riverfront Stadium from the city for $200,000. The McNulty Company of Minneapolis drew up the plans, the Universal Contracting Corporation of Norwood, Ohio, was contracted to build it. The city ended up using state highway funds and federal funds to build the elaborate sky bridges that connect the coliseum complex to street level. Thus, all the concrete right outside NCAA decided to reject the coliseum's bid for basketball finals there, although the NCAA claims the decision had nothing to do with the tragedy. Promoters canceled the two remaining rock shows of 1979 after the Who show. Local journalists said the coliseum's future was not bright. Big events there the past year have been a tractor-pulling contest and a Jehovah's Witnesses convention.

The coliseum's first fatality came on October 4th, 1973, when seventeen-year-old Thomas Lamb, pursuing a police who said he had cursed them, jumped or fell to his death from the plaza level to the street below. Security problems have been

THE TWENTY-FIVE-MAN police force outside downtown finally found the first body at 7:54 p.m. After the ambulances and the fire department and the fire chief and the mayor and the city safety director and the Flying Squad from the Academy of Medicine and additional police and the TV crews and everyone else got there, they finally understood that this was serious. Cincinnati proper put on its serious face. TV crews were asking onlookers if they had or had not been caught in "the stampede." Mayor Ken Blackwell—this was his first day on the job—was summoned from his dinner with House Speaker Tip O'Neill and said it looked to him like this was another tragedy caused by "fearful seating." It was his decision to continue the concert, lest the many thousands inside riot if the show were stopped.

DeWitt Jr. was at the rally at the Who concert where the police had been called, and DeWitt Jr. then learned of the trouble at 10:45 from a coliseum employee and went backstage to tell the Who's manager, Bill Curleth, that there were four dead, "two ODs and two crushed." According to Curleth, fire marshals arrived and told them there was a mass overcongestion. He wanted to stop the concert; then he learned that the deaths were due to asphyxiation and that people were still being treated on the plaza level.

Curleth told him it would be senseless to stop the concert, that there could be a riot and people might stampede back across the plaza. The fire marshall said, "I agree with you totally.

By the time the show was over, Curleth knew of eleven deaths. He told the Who that something serious had happened and they should hurry their encore. After the encore, he took them into the dressing room and told them of the deaths. They were devastated.

"Initially, we felt stoned, our heads were empty," said Roger Dalrey three days after the concert. "We felt we couldn't go on. But you gotta. There's no point in stopping."

Lieutenant Melmahan said sixteen doors were open and the Who's crew echoed that; Electric Factory attorney Donald Gould said nine to eleven doors were open and Roger Dalrey said three were open. Dozens of eyewitnesses told Rolling Stone that during the trouble, the crowd was more than four doors open and that only two were open most of the time. The coliseum management still refuses to say how many tickets were sold, though many guards were on duty, how many ticket takers or ushers there were or anything else. Curleth said Electric Factory paid $7800 to the coliseum for tickets, ushers, interior security, cleanup.

Including the emergency exits, there are sixteen doors (although John Taffaro, spokesman for the coliseum, would not confirm or deny this number); why at times only one at the main entrance was open is a point of speculation for Rolling Stone.

When Riverfront Coliseum first opened on September 9th, 1970, with a concert by the Allman Brothers, an usher on duty named David Fox said that the coliseum had too many outside doors and that gates rather than glass doors should be installed at the main entrance on the plaza. His was the first of many warnings that were ignored. Riverfront Coliseum was trouble waiting to happen.

RIVERFRONT COLISEUM exists because a man named Brian Heilken wanted a hockey team in Cincinnati and therefore needed an arena. Heilken and his brother, Troy, and their friend William initially wanted the city to build it and lease it to his Cincinnati Hockey Club (later changed to Cincinnati Sports Inc.). The city came close to financing and building such an arena. Heilken tried and failed to get local banks to finance an $18 million arena. Heilken was offering the city an NHL team, the ABA Colonels and a World Team Tennis franchise. After it seemed to him that the city was not going to help him, Heilken decided to build his arena in the suburbs. All of a sudden he got what he called "unbelievable" pressure from local businessperson to build at the waterfront. And all of a sudden he began getting local support. The chamber of commerce got behind the idea, the governor offered to help with state revenue bonds, and then, before anyone knew what was happening, the chamber of commerce was called in to press conference on August 8th, 1973, to announce that a sports arena would be built at the riverfront, that local banks and savings and loan associations would put up $10 million in state industrial revenue bonds, that $4 million would come from Heilken's Cincinnati
Cincinnati city councilman Springer said publicly that festival seating caused a "climate of disrepute." Brian Hecken disagreed, saying that Springer was not qualified to comment on people's behavior at concerts and that kids liked festival seating. Hecken also said he wouldn't mind talking with city officials about the problem of people urinating outside the coliseum.

Also on August 5th, Brian Hecken, coliseum operations director Richard Morgan and security director James Madgett were each charged with one count of failure to comply with ten lawful orders of the fire chief regarding building-code violations at the coliseum. Their report, issued August 24th, 1976, said in many words that in the future, everything would be fine and dandy at the coliseum. Section Three of the report, regarding festival seating, said:

The matter of "Festival Seating" (nonreserved seating) was briefly discussed; however, no recommenda- tion is made at this time to further study that would eventually result in the revised fire safety policies and methods before taking a firm position on seating arrangements. It would seem that if fire prevention Code requirements and security needs are fully met, the method of seating may become a second- ary concern.

A week earlier, on August 13th, 1976, Mayor Bobbie Sterne asked a study of seat sales at rock shows and recommended that all seats be reserved.

Before that, on August 6th, 1976, fire chief Bert Lagun- nani sent a memo to a city council member in which he said there were numerous fire-code violations at the coliseum and that the number of toilets and open exits was insufficient. The chief also addressed himself to the matter of festival seating:

"Selling a concert on a general-admission basis (festival seating) allows for sale of a ticket for each fixed seat and each guaranteed standing area (i.e., 15,000 seats; 1800 people permitted on the arena floor). Placement of the stage prohibits viewing the concert from approximately 4,000 of the seats sold. Those persons have no recourse other than to congregate in the exit way if they desire to watch the performers. It has been recommended that the concert be sold on a reserved-seat basis. It was felt by the responsible individuals that this would create an economic hardship."

Nothing was done. A second city safety report produced a similar nonrecommendation:

"Cincinnati as a city," said one member of the local "rock & roll establishment," who preferred not to be identified, "expects rock fans to be like Reds fans — who are actually worse. It's like you're supposed to be going to church. It was only a year ago that the Bengal business was started at the stadium. Maybe this happened because rock fans were regarded as lower than sports fans, who can do anything they want. Maybe this is a city that wants to be cosmopolitan without regarding rock fans as such."

The coliseum was built as a sports arena, but rock & roll kept it afloat. The coliseum refused to comment about this.

Then, in 1980, so many crisis flags went up before that were ignored, Fleetwood Mac played the coliseum a month. [Cont. on 24]
[Cont. from 27] before the Who, and even though seating for the Mac show was completely reserved, there was a bottleneck at the entrance because, according to an eyewitness, not enough doors were open.

The night of the Who concert, business continued as usual until eleven people died. Some blamed the victims for their own deaths, even though it has been proved the spark of death — like David Heck, who got out of the crush and went back in to try to help others — died while trying to stop the madness even as police ignored them.

CINCINNATI moved quickly to blame "festive seating" for the tragedy, although no one explained why festive seating had been permitted for so long at the coliseum when previous concerts had proved it dangerous. No one explained why, even though Ticketron claimed ticket sales were limited to eight per person, scalpers were spotted leaving outlets with stacks of tickets. In the week after the concert, Cincinnati Enquirer entertainment editor Jerry Springer said there should have been someone at the show with the authority to open the doors when there was obviously a disaster in the offing. No one said who could have had the authority. It had been business as usual for everyone concerned.

In Cincinnati, Rolling Stone told Rolling Stone that they had been treated like so many sheep to be herded through so many doors. The Cincinnati Enquirer's banner headline of December 7th read: "ALL DENY BLAME FOR CINCINNATI" and the coliseum, where it will stand. After the show, Pete Townshend said he felt partly responsible because, "It's a rock & roll event that has created this, and we feel deeply a part of rock & roll." Loewy was quoted as saying he didn't think the addition of playlists and alcohol was the reason for the alleged "stampede."

A team of Rolling Stone reporters visited the coliseum and got as many "no comment" as it would use for ten years.

Electric Factory's Cal Ley did agree to talk. Ley, who actually was the show's promoter-Magic had come in just to see the Who — was visibly shaken. He contended he had had no control over the opening of doors or the number of guards.

He paced his attorney's office in the twenty-sixth floor of Carew Tower in downtown Cincinnati, smoking a cigarette. "I'm no Bill Graham, okay? I just think that when all the facts are known, all the reports are completed, that it will show that there was a combination of things that brought about an uncontrollable situation on that plaza.

"All the procedures used Monday night were the procedures that were implemented on all the previous shows where nothing ever went wrong."

Could he have had the authority to order those front doors opened when it became apparent they should be opened?

"No. Our only responsibility is to get the group onstage, to pay for staffing at the coliseum" (although he said he had no responsibility for the size of the staff). He said Electric Factory had provided "seat security" (i.e., young people who are not in uniform) for the floor-level general-admission area and had arranged to have paramedics and ambulances ready.

Electric Factory's attorney, Tom Gould, said he thought that everybody concerned had a zone of responsibility and that everybody dischaged "what they thought was the best interest and was the right thing to do." Ley and Gould both said that maybe no one was at fault; perhaps it was a natural disaster.

Ley was quick to point out that Electric Factory had promoted Cincinnati's first outdoor rock show, the Eagles, at Riverfront Stadium. "We had 32,000 kids, general admission and the same parties involved in the planning." Dale Menenhaus and I worked extensively on the security. And nothing happened. But what I think we faced with here is unusual circumstances that all merged at one time and in one place. Maybe there were enough doors; were they open early enough? Was there a high level of drugs or intoxication? The music from the inside.

But, he reminded, things had gone wrong before. Some earlier shows had been violent.

"I can't deny that there are problems at shows; it happens everywhere in the country, right? Nobody could predict it; and I don't feel anybody could have controlled it."

Soon thereafter came the first of what will undoubtedly be an unending series of lawsuits. Todd Volkman, a person who was allegedly injured, filed a $12.2-million class-action suit (which can be expanded to recover tens of millions) against the promoter, the coliseum and the Who. Not the city of Cincinnati, on whose property he was allegedly injured. A second, filed by Betty Snyder, mother of the late Phillip Snyder, does name the city as well. At $10.72-million suit, the city is accused of negligence in its failure to follow the advice from its own Human Relations Commission to ban festival seating. It also alleges that police were negligent in failing to enforce drug and liquor laws. (The police reported twenty-eight arrests for drugs and disorderly conduct on the plaza the night of the concert.)

One local lawyer said gleefully that there isn't enough liability insurance in the world to cover the potential lawsuits that could come out of the Who show. Under Ohio law, parties who feel injured physically or emotionally (a hot line was immediately set up for the emotionally warped) have two years to file suit.

The city of Cincinnati registered immediate civic outrage. No more festive seating, probably, said the city government. A task force was set up to find out what was wrong. Frank Wood of WERB-FM was named to it. He said that he was not sure what the task force could do, all he knew was that he had read in the morning paper that "I'm not allowed to point a finger at anyone, and I think that's a shame." The task force has no subpoena power but was widely viewed in Cincinnati as window dressing.

The coroner's office said the dead apparently died from "suffocation by asphyxiation due to compression" and "suffocation due to intoxication." The Miami Beacon reported that toxicology tests for drug or alcohol residues in the victims were forthcoming.

An editorial in the Cincinnati Post was headlined, "Cincinnati: Slight in a Nation's Civic Pride."

Mark Heliskamp called home to tell his folks he was okay and he got a pot lecture. The victims were blamed.

Promoters across the country blamed festival seating, Larry Magid said that he felt terrible and that he personally didn't like festival seating, but that's what the kids wanted. A kid in Cincinnati pointed up a few things that read I SURVIVED THE WHO CONCERT.

Roger Daltrey, weary and shulked, said, "It was really a freak; it's not a nightly occurrence, you know."

The mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, canceled the Who show there, saying that after two performances, the Who was averaging 5.5 fatalities per show. Angry kids marched in Cincinnati and there was a request from the mayor that rock & roll should not be automatically blamed. They got little support.