



Classic car conflagration: Thirteen departments respond to massive fire at Staunton car dealer

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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STAUNTON - A beloved roadside attraction for motorists traveling on Interstate 55 has lost its largest building after a massive fire Tuesday nig

Staunton Fire Chief Rick Haase said more than 40 passersby called the dispatcher around 8:10 p.m. Tuesday in regards to the gigantic blaze at Country Classic Cars at Old Route 66 and East Frontage Road in Staunton, which could easily be seen from the roadside. The cause and origin point of the blaze has not been determined at this time, but Haase said he believes the fire started in the middle of the main building. No injuries were reported from the incident, and 13 departments were called to the scene.

"There was heavy fire involvement in about a third of the building upon our arrival," Haase said. "The building is about 510 feet long by 50 feet wide. We have not located the exact location of the fire's origin, but initial reports show it initiated in the center of the building."

The cause of the blaze is currently under investigation by the Staunton Fire Department, the Illinois Fire Marshal, the Macoupin County Sheriff's Office and the building owner's insurance company.

Haase said the building involved was the largest of around a half dozen buildings in the complex, and contained as many as 150 cars, which are all heavily damaged, if not completely destroyed. He said those cars were in various states of conditions - from fully restored to desperately in need of restoration.

Because so many vehicles were involved, many reported hearing explosions. Haase said many small explosions caused by things related to the vehicles, such as fuel, did occur, but no large explosions with "big balls of fire" occurred.

The building was located in an area with no hydrants, so all of the water used had to be trucked to the scene.

Most of the fire was under control by 10:30 p.m., Haase said, but crews were on the scene until as late as 3:30 a.m. to ensure all parts of the fire had been extinguished. Haase said heavy equipment was brought to the scene to remove the roof after it had collapsed and inspect for more hot spots.

Thirteen departments from three counties responded to the mutual aid request.

