

Death Penalty Administered 54 Times at Oregon Prison

By BEN MAXWELL

Since legal executions in Oregon became the business of the state penitentiary 48 years ago, 54 men, including Wayne LeRoy Long who paid for the murder of Walter Rucker in the gas chamber Friday morning, have died for their crimes behind the grim walls that enclose the state prison.

Before the passage of a legislative act requiring all hanging be done within the enclosure of the penitentiary, the business of execution was the troublesome duty of the county sheriff.

Some were inexperienced, others lacked finesse in the accomplishment of that onerous duty. Others, in early days, made the business of hanging a Roman holiday: Come one, come all and bring a lunch for the family.

The Capital Journal for February 13, 1903 reports the passage of a legislative act making all executions the duty of the penitentiary superintendent. After 90 days the law became effective. Before the expiration of that interval the last known county execution in the history of Oregon was accomplished in Lane county.

Ellis or Elliott Lyons, charged with horse stealing, shot and mortally wounded Sheriff W. W. Withers. Withers lived long enough to testify that he was held by Lyons' wife, mother and father while Lyons shot the sheriff in cold blood. Lyons had once been a deputy sheriff. Embezzlement of school funds had been his downfall and he had only recently been released from the penitentiary for that thievery.

Lyons was hanged in the jail yard at Eugene at 9:20 in the morning of April 23, 1903. That hanging, a press dispatch relates, "went without the slightest accident." Lyons walked bravely to the gallows and therefrom attributed his crime to stubbornness. He died within 14 minutes after the trap was sprung.

Thus ended in Oregon executions by the high sheriff, a custom originating in Medieval England.

With Harry D. Egbert, that beady-eyed fop who curled his mustache, the procedure was different but the technique of hanging remained the same. Egbert killed John G. Saxton, an attorney, and Jack West, deputy sheriff, in a raging gun fight staged in Wild Horse valley near the Nevada line. His historical distinction was to be the first murderer hanged in Oregon State penitentiary; January 29, 1904 at 12:30 p.m.

Again the Capital Journal tells the story.

Egbert, then 28—the age of Wayne LeRoy Long who died in the gas chamber some hours ago—had a high school education, an attainment of some distinction in those distant days.

In his teens he had been a blind pigger in dry Iowa and from that lowly position in crime drifted to Oregon to become a thief of some attainment. Saxton and West were seeking his arrest on a charge of robbery committed in Douglas county.

Those who pursued him died in a blazing frontier gun battle shot out in the dwelling occupied by the "lovely" woman Egbert could not resist. He escaped momentarily but a party of grim, determined Mormons overtook and captured him in Nevada not far from Elko.

Egbert was brave until he reached the gallows and then he wavered. He told the 70 who gathered to witness his execution that "running about the ... has been his downfall." More particularly "women were the cause of this greatest of all his misfortunes."

Oldtimers will recall that two story brick structure erected within penitentiary walls for the execution of Egbert and a suc-

ceeding generation of murderers.

The 26 by 40 foot execution chamber was provided with two traps, the fall was nine and a half feet, a lever attached to a rope motivated a spring that tripped the fatal traps. For days before an execution an inch rope of finest quality weighted with a sandbag stretched that rope into fine hanging fettle.

Egbert died in nine minutes and 18 seconds. But that was not the end of Harry D. Egbert whose true name happened to be John H. Frost. As the Capital Journal remarked on April 9, 1904, there is a line that defines the difference between investigation and desecration even with a red-handed murderer.

Egbert's skin, the paper declared in an exclusive story, had been tanned and was now being hawked about for sale.

This was the story: Egbert's body had been obtained for anatomical studies by a medical school of distinction then located in these parts—a school, if you please, quite well known in Oregon.

Here an enterprising but conscienceless student had skinned the cadaver and given the cuticle to one located in Salem and experienced in the business of tanning. Now it was available as a pliable and velvety leather.

Word had passed along that strips would be for sale and demand had already almost exhausted the supply. Women as well as men were making requests for bits of the macabre relic.

In its revelatory story the Capital Journal commented: "Egbert's soul reckons not with time. But his cuticle serves to satisfy the morbid taste of mortal man."

Capital punishment was abolished in Oregon by vote of the people in 1914.

After a series of unspeakable crimes it was restored at a special election held in May of 1920. But the margin was not large ... 81,756 for restoration, 64,589 against.

Over that interval of 48 years, between 1904 and today, 54 men have been executed at the Oregon penitentiary. Forty were hanged.

Beginning with LeRoy Hershel McCarthy, who died January 20, 1939, the rest were executed in the gas chamber. Three of this total number were convictions attained in Marion county: C. Y. Timmons for the murder of his wife and Ellsworth Kelley and James Willos who killed a penitentiary guard in a prison break with the notorious "Oregon" Jones.

Reservations for the dinner should be made by Sunday and the meeting will dismiss in time for attendance at the city-wide gospel crusade.

The Christian and Professional Women will hold their monthly dinner meeting at the Marion hotel at 6:15 Tuesday night, August 12.

The Billy Graham film, "Mr. Texas," shown several times in Salem, will constitute the major portion of the evening's program.

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Latvian Tenor Sings Sunday

The famous Latvian tenor, Artur Cavara, will present a program of operatic selections and Latvian songs in their original languages at 7 p.m. Sunday, August 10, in the Masonic temple at 1119 S. W. Park avenue, Portland.

Cavara studied voice in Latvia by Prof. Bachner in Berlin, and in 1947-48 by the famous Metropolitan opera singer Prof. De Luca in New York. He sang the leading tenor parts in many world known opera houses such as the Latvian National Opera in Riga, State and City Opera Houses in Berlin, State Opera House in Vienna, City Opera House in Zurich, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires and has been very highly prized by his appearances on stage and radio in the U. S. and Canada.

Cavara is at present a professor of voice and in charge of the annual opera production at Gustavus Adolphus college at St. Peter, Minn. This will be Cavara's only appearance in Oregon.

Advance Ticket Sale Is Heavy

Advance sale of tickets for the races, night review and rodeo for the 1952 Oregon State Fair had passed the \$2,000 mark after the mail was opened Thursday afternoon.

Tickets for these State Fair events were not placed on sale until Monday of this week, but already 20 box seats for the entire week at the races have been sold. Joe Simeral, who is in charge of the tickets reported.

In making that report Simeral stated that one firm in Salem had purchased \$192.60 worth of tickets, this including tickets for the races, rodeo and night review, another firm had purchased \$146 worth of tickets and still another tickets amounting to \$143.

"I haven't a good box left for Monday's races," Simeral commented.

Feature of this year that will keep the public informed of the events to come at the fair is the publication of a program of events slated for the week. This program will be given away free at the gates to any person asking for it.

It is believed that the first locomotive used for heavy hauling was built in England in 1801.

Again the Capital Journal tells the story.

Christian Women Meet Tuesday

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No Harm in Giving Blood in Hot Weather; Vets Need It Now

By HARMAN W. NICHOLS

Washington, (AP)—The temperature was pushing 90 when the Red Cross nurse pushed the needle into my arm.

She took a pint of blood, and it didn't bother me a bit. One reason I did this was because it seems that a lot of folks think that giving blood in hot weather does them in.

The Red Cross needs blood for the lads in Korea and for the folks at home, and the blood bank is running dangerously low.

The blood people have been making a survey and have discovered why you are a little lax in the blood-letting field. Some say folks are lazy and also a little scared in hot weather. There's no need to be lazy or scared.

A Red Cross official said the organization gets these excuses. Farmers are tired from working in the field all day. Some folks have to take long rides to the nearest blood center. Hot weather adds to fatigue. Golf courses beckon the "tired" business man, and people take off for the resorts.

And, this official said, there always the rumor that there is an armistice in the offing in Korea.

The Red Cross has a continuing operation, come war, peace or fire or high water.

People take to the highways and accidents will happen. Farm machinery chars up a sizable number of serious accidents, many of them with a loss of human blood.

Kids, out of school, get into mischief. They start fires, get burned or get their feet cut badly and need blood.

The Red Cross would like you to know that giving blood in hot time is as easy and as safe as in cold time.

Assyrian pictures dated about 880 B.C. show soldiers using an overarm stroke in swimming.

Real Rockets Found in Home

A Salem sailor home on leave recently took another look at some rocket-like objects he had found on the Oregon coast near Fort Stevens several years ago and decided they looked too much like real rockets after he noticed a younger brother tossing one of the objects around.

Army ordnance men from Fort Lewis verified the fact that they were real rockets, all filled with explosive and one complete with fuse. They took the rockets away with them after removing the fuse from the one.

The sailor, James Dayton, along with other members of the family, had played with the rockets on numerous occasions since first finding them and they had been moved about and displayed to friends and relatives. Dayton is the son of Mrs. Bertha Maddux, 497 South 18th street.

The Oregon civil defense agency issued another warning to civilians after hearing of the incident. Any type of explosives or ammunition found, whether a "dud" or not should immediately be reported to police or other officials. High explosive materials retain their potency for periods of many years and many persons—both adults and children—have been injured or killed when playing with or examining war souvenirs and other types of ordnance.

Many animals move themselves by reaching out, taking hold of something and pulling themselves toward it.

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Capital Journal, Salem, Ore., Friday, August 8, 1952—3



Renounces Red Party — Dr. Bella V. Dodd (above), one-time ranking woman communist in America, announced in New York she has renounced the Red Party and turned to the Roman Catholic church. She was baptized a Catholic on April 8. (UP Telephoto)

197 Battle Casualties — The Defense Department Friday identified 197 additional casualties of the Korean war. The list (No. 623) included 19 dead, 160 wounded, 13 injured and five missing.

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Ceilings Placed On Refuse Wood

Washington (AP)—Dollars and cents ceilings for refuse mill wood produced in the Columbia River district of Washington and Oregon were announced by the Office of Price Stabilization Thursday.

The agency said effective Aug. 13 the ceilings f.o.b. mill will be \$4.35 per cord for fir and \$5.215 for hemlock.

Included are sawmill slabs, edgings, trimmings and blocks suitable for making pulpwood chips.

The ceilings apply in five Washington counties and 12 Oregon counties, all in the Columbia River district.

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