

Clarence Johnson Free Man, and He's Made Good

By PAUL W. HARVEY, JR.

(Associated Press Correspondent)
Clarence Johnson, who was one of the meanest prisoners in the Oregon state prison's long history, is out of debt to society.

This man, who tried to kill one woman and who then brutally murdered another, is the subject of a fascinating story about how the worst type of criminal can make good.

Now a completely free man for the first time since 1916, he owes his freedom to ex-Gov. Charles A. Sprague. And Johnson never caused Sprague to regret it.

Now 66 years old, Johnson is working in a Portland businessmen's club, and is a free citizen 34 years after murdering the little white-haired lady who had befriended him.

Gov. Paul L. Patterson has given him a full commutation of sentence, meaning he's paid his debt in full.

I've known Johnson for 16 years. I saw how he became a responsible citizen, and how he did it with his own resources. He wasn't reformed. He reformed himself.

Let's go back to the beginning of his story.

Working in a San Francisco florist's shop, Johnson had a common-law wife.

On Dec. 23, 1918, he found her with another man, so he shot her in the neck. Off to San Quentin he went to serve five years for assault with in-

tent to kill.

The little white-haired Portland lady, who was active in the prisoners welfare association, was Mrs. Eunice Freeman, 57. Mrs. Freeman got Johnson a parole, and he came to Portland to live in her home.

Johnson soon started running around with a woman of shady character, or of virtually no character at all.

Mrs. Freeman objected. Johnson, fearing Mrs. Freeman would have him returned to San Quentin as a parole violator, bludgeoned Mrs. Freeman with a piece of gas pipe on Aug. 15, 1919. The result was a life sentence for murder.

During his first two years in prison, Johnson spent most of his time in the bull pen for repeated violations of prison rules. He threatened to kill the warden.

The prison record says Johnson "was one of the toughest men ever received here."

Suddenly, in 1921, Johnson changed. He decided to be a good boy. He never misbehaved after that.

There was a riot in 1925. Johnson, by then a trusty caring for the prison lawn, seized the prison arsenal, thus denying guns to the rioters. Prison officials said that it hadn't been for Johnson's brave act, the riot would have turned into a blood bath with many killed.

As a trusty, Johnson, at var-

ious times, ran the bakery, operated the prison store, ran the greenhouse, and was general assistant around the administration building.

On July 1, 1940, despite the doubts of many skeptics, ex-Gov. Sprague released him with a conditional pardon. Johnson would have to report to the parole board regularly. He had to go back to San Quentin for three months to clear up the old sentence.

Then he went to work at Portland steel company, which was beginning to build navy ships. Soon he was foreman of a large department.

He came to see Sprague and often, proudly showing us two books—his savings account book, and the book listing his war bond purchases.

By the end of the war, he had several thousand dollars. Since the war, he has worked mostly for clubs.

Two years ago, Johnson told me it was his big wish to get a full pardon or commutation, so he could die a free man. He said he'd like it for Christmas.

I wrote a column about him then, but it was too late for the governor to act in time for that Christmas.

But this Christmas, he'll be a free man.

When his application for a full commutation of sentence went to Gov. Patterson, it was supported by Sprague and the parole board.

Home Rebekah Lodge Election

Woodburn — Mrs. E. C. Peyton was elected noble grand of Home Rebekah lodge at the annual election of officers held Tuesday night at the regular meeting. Mrs. Frank Wagenveld was elected vice grand and officers re-elected were Mrs. Addie Doud, secretary for the 12th year; Mrs. Myrtle Hall, treasurer; and Mrs. Joyce Engle, financial secretary. Installation will be held the first meeting in January.

Visitors were present from Monitor, Hubbard, Prineville and Butteville.

During the program hour films were shown by Charles Cornwell and there were talks by a number of visitors.

Reports on the recent visit to Silverton were given by Mrs. Wagenveld, Mrs. Peyton and Mrs. Leota Porter, and on the square dance at Monitor by Mrs. Arthur Burt. Plans were discussed for a Christmas program. One application for membership was received.

Pot-luck refreshments were served after the meeting with Mrs. Elizabeth Rall, Mrs. Alice

Sprague, writing that Johnson "has proven himself fully," said:

"I have noted with great satisfaction his successful adjustment in society. He has held steady jobs, has saved his money and has kept out of trouble."

Johnson worships Sprague, proud that he never let Sprague down. And Sprague is proud of Johnson, too, for proving the skeptics were wrong.

WSCS Meeting At Woodburn

Woodburn — Mrs. Leota Porter was hostess for the regular meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service of the Methodist church at her home Tuesday with Mrs. Frank Covey assisting.

The all-day meeting opened at 10:30 a.m. with Mrs. Clifford Applegate presiding. Plans were made to serve hamburgers and coffee at the auction sale which the men of the church are holding at the Woodburn armory tonight (Thursday). Mrs. James Livesay and Mrs. Philip LaBarr will be in charge.

A sack lunch was served at noon with dessert and coffee furnished by the hostesses.

The afternoon program was in charge of Mrs. Lowell Moore and Mrs. Mabel Hatch on Thanksgiving and a worship center was built with the assistance of several members.

The next meeting, Dec. 15, will be at the home of Mrs. Harold Livesay and members are asked to bring two or three dozen cookies for a cookie exchange.

Water pressure of about 65 pounds to the square inch is near the limit of human endurance.

Decorations for Woodburn Sts.

Woodburn — A work meeting was held Tuesday night by the Woodburn Jaycees at the North Marion Co. fruit warehouse and strings of cedar boughs were made for the Christmas street decorations. There was a large attendance of members and the work was quickly accomplished.

A business meeting at the warehouse followed with L. H. Hildebrandt presiding. Nominations were opened for new officers to be elected at the next meeting, Dec. 1.

Members were urged to attend the district meeting to be held at Springfield, Ore., Nov. 29.

Lynn Simon asked that toys be repaired by the boys at the MacLaren school for needy children on Christmas, should be in by the last of this week in order to give time for the repair work. Collections depots are at the two Woodburn banks and the fire hall.

After the meeting, refreshments were served by Vernon Eaden.

Guidance Group To Meet Thursday

Silverton — A 6:30 o'clock dinner this evening (Thursday), furnished by the home

Call Sounded For Stewards

The Oregon State Penitentiary has immediate vacancies for stewards. Starting pay for the jobs will be in the range of \$250-\$284 a month, depending upon an applicant's experience. Qualifications for the work include three years of experience in a large scale institutional cooking operation involving supervisory activities. Military experience in the cooking field would be acceptable.

There are frequent vacancies at the penitentiary for correctional officers. Applicants for this work must be between 21 and 45 years of age, of good physical health, and possess at least eight years of schooling. The starting pay is \$250 a month and applicants must take a civil service examination.

Two Sons Become Bishops in Month

Houston, Tex. (AP)—Within a month's time Mrs. C. G. Marmion has seen her long hopes realized: her two sons are to become bishops.

At Roanoke, Va., yesterday the Rev. William Henry Marmion, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal church in Wilmington, Del., was named bishop elect of the Episcopal diocese of southwestern Virginia.

Last month Mrs. Marmion's other son, the Rev. Charles Gresham Marmion, Jr., rector of the Church of the Incarnation in Dallas, was named bishop elect of Kentucky.

An Andean Condor once collided with a plane at 20,000 feet.

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Four miles down in the ocean the pressure is 4 1/2 tons to the square inch.

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