



AUGUST 10 — Opening of the completed Baldock Freeway to Portland was major highway news locally of 1956. The four-lane route cuts driving time to Portland by several minutes. Freeway opening headed news of giant Federal-state highway construction program which will provide new roadways throughout the state.



NOVEMBER 7 — Democrats provided the biggest news on the political front during 1956. Robert D. Holmes, above, Astoria radio station manager, swept into the governor's chair on a tide of Democratic votes that saw the state house of representatives also go Democratic. Sen. Wayne Morse won a thumping victory over Doug McKay in the hotly-contested senatorial campaign.



NOVEMBER 21 — Gas explosion that demolished Dennis Howarth home in east Salem provided the year's biggest fire-explosion news in Salem. Howarth, his wife and daughter Deann were seriously burned in the blast but are now recovering. Home was inspected by Mayor's committee to determine blast cause.

# Death of Patterson Rated Year's Biggest Local Story

## Politics, Industry, Weather, Sex Figured In Year's Top Stories

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When the wiry old man with the scythe slips off into history at midnight Tuesday, he will leave behind him one of the biggest news years in Salem's history. Politics, industry, weather, death, violence and sex all figured in the top stories of the year as adjudged by a vote of the Capital Journal news staff. More than one of them figured in some stories and many stories often fitted in more than one category. The biggest story of the year was unanimously accorded to be the sudden, surprising death of Gov. Paul Patterson—with all the political ramifications it brought.

**Divergence of Opinion**  
There was a divergence of opinion on the other nine of the top ten stories of the year but ranking of the stories according to the preference given by each newsmen gave a composite view for the staff. Voting on the stories was based on the local impact of the story alone. Thus some political stories were not considered as they occurred on the state level, although, of course, they were of considerable importance here in the state capital as well as in the rest of the state. When Gov. Patterson suddenly succumbed to a heart attack on that night of Jan. 31, politics was running a comparatively normal news course on the Salem and Oregon scene.

### Top Ten Stories

1. Death of Patterson
2. Woodburn Air Base
3. Howarth Home Blast
4. Industrial Expansion
5. Street and Highway Construction
6. Weather
7. Education
8. Gas outage and natural gas
9. Diphtheria deaths and immunizations
10. New water main

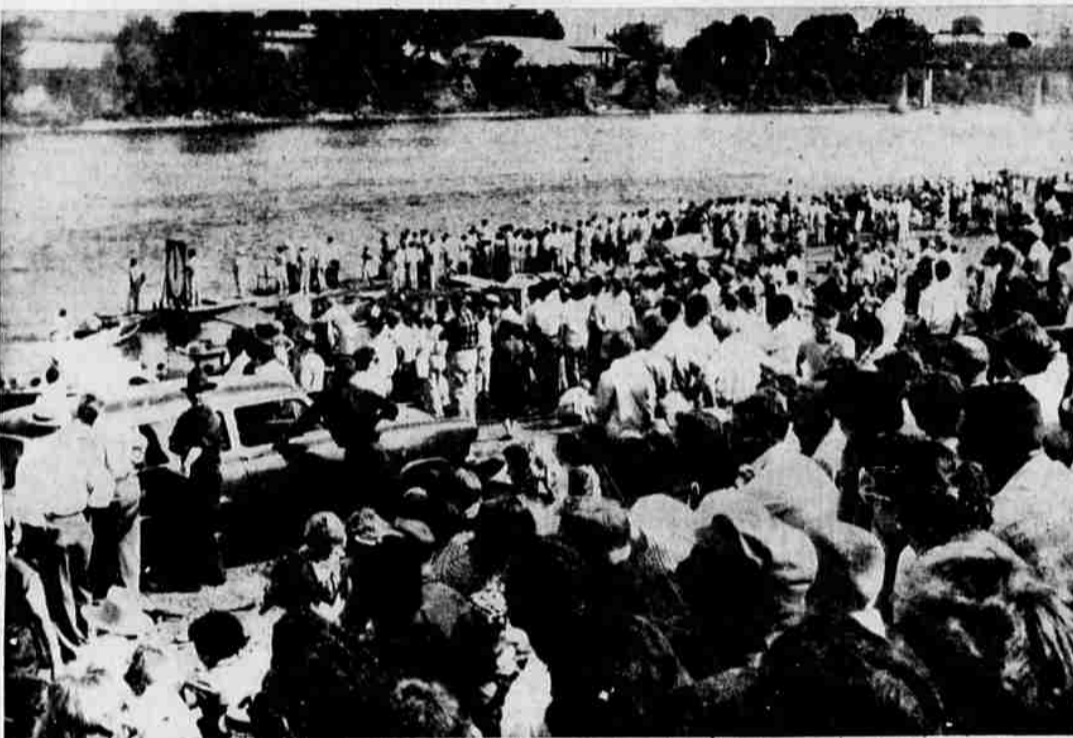
recommended new procedures in installing and connecting gas appliances. In the Howarth blast, the cause was believed to be gas leaking from an ancient gas line that had not been used for several years prior to the installation of a new furnace the day before the explosion.

### Industry Tied Together

A series of related incidents were tied together under the title of industrial and business expansion to become the No. 4 story of interest during the year, newsmen felt.

In the industrial and business package were such events as the opening of the new American Can Co. plant to supply the second largest food processing area in the nation with the containers for holding its products; the opening of the Dutch Maid oleomargarine plant; purchase of land for new building and expansion by such firms as Curley's dairy, Credit Bureaus Inc. and Western Paper Converting Co.; the announcement of such new firms coming to Salem to build new plants as State Farm Mutual Insurance Co. and the Plymouth Cordage Co.; the building of the new \$270,000 Cherry City housing plant by local interests; the announced \$1 million expansion of the Marion hotel.

Heavy expansion of facilities by the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Co. and Portland Gas and Coke Co., the latter coupled with the bringing of natural gas to the Willamette valley, added to the story. The city and state joined in the story with the announcement of completion of such projects as a \$30,000 trunk sewer for east Salem, location of the \$4.8 million intermediate prison on Cottage farm land, the \$13 million mental hospital at Wilsonville and a \$335,000 medium security building at MacLaren school at Woodburn.



JULY 4 — Huge crowds lined the river banks for Salem's first big Independence Day celebration in years, Willamette River Days. Flashy speedboats, pretty girls and fireworks drew thousands of people to the Willamette river banks to view the event. Selection of a queen and her court were highlights of the celebration.

And The Rains Came  
Weather, particularly including a rain-soaked winter and its accompanying problems, was story No. 6.

When New Year's day arrived, old Jupe Pluvius had already poured 29 inches of liquid onto the valley and he continued mercilessly during January with another 12 1/2 inches as compared to a normal 5 1/2 for the month. By January 19, rainfall from September 1 had already exceeded the normal rainfall for the entire year. It stacked up somewhat after that with only about 2 1/2 inches falling during the remainder of the month.

The heavy rain posed many problems. Streets often were flooded when storm drains couldn't carry away the water. Homes that had had no problem before suddenly found themselves with flooded basements. The heavily built-up suburban areas suddenly found that the water-soaked ground could not carry off the drainage from their septic tanks. Some wells became contaminated and fears of possible epidemics were heard.

Street Projects Voted  
Trying in closely in reader interest, the newsmen voted, was the street and highway projects completed or announced. The widening of 12th street, with its new railroad barriers and signals and the protective curbs along the tracks; the widening and resurfacing of Market street and Fairgrounds road; plans for similarly improving D street; replacement of four principal street bridges in the city; the closing, finishing and reopening of the Salem-Portland freeway; Highway 99 improvements south of the city, including the announced freeway to Eugene; the Hickreall-Dolph Corner cut-off on the highway to the coast; and a number of county road projects, including a cut-off near Silverton on the proposed new Cascade route — all were part of story No. 5.

Junior Highs Approved  
Hot, dry weather in September resulted in a tinder-dry condition that blew up in a series of brush fires in the Eagle Crest and Brush College area of Polk county

and grass and farm fires in Marion county. Several hundred acres of brush and a similar amount of farm land including a number of buildings were burned over in the first week of the month.

Education, and particularly the voter-approved construction of two new junior high schools, was named No. 7 among the year's stories. Sites were selected north and south for the two schools, plans were drawn and the voters approved the \$2,000,000 bond issue with the hope that the schools would be in operation by next fall. Too high bids that necessitated paring down size and costs of the schools set construction back several months and school officials began making plans to stagger classes to accommodate all students in present facilities next year.

Resignation of Dr. Walter Snyder as superintendent of Salem schools was regrettably accepted by school officials in March and

appointment of his assistant Charles Schmidt was another part of the school news.

**Gas Makes News**  
Gas — manufactured and natural — made news during the year. Enough news to be voted No. 8 in the balloting.

Thousands of Willamette valley residents shivered at home or were visiting during the week starting February 25 when fire destroyed the gas generators at the Portland Gas and Coke plant in Portland, shutting off all piped gas to the valley. The generators were restored within a few days and hundreds of workers imported from other areas went door to door to purge gas lines and restore service to customers.

Natural gas got into the local news when a new line from Colorado brought it to this area. Crews laid new mains and lines over the valley area as residents became more gas-conscious and sales of gas appliances jumped.

Illness and death and fear of an epidemic claimed top headlines last February to be named No. 9 in the poll.

Mrs. Violet Fry, a housemother at the Oregon blind school, died in Portland of diphtheria. Two days later Christine Artiano, 7, a student at the school died here of the same disease. Health officers quickly began plans to combat any further spread of the dread disease and immunization serum was flown in.

**Plenty of Water**  
Hundreds of persons flocked to public health agencies and to private doctors to get immunization shots, but when no further cases of the fatal illness appeared, the demand quickly died down and the incident became history.

Approval of the voters for the construction of a new water main from Stayton island to Salem to double the amount of water available here was voted No. 10 in the list of top stories for 1956. There was considerable interest in the story as it grew through the placing on the ballot by the city council, approval by the voters, planning and engineering for the \$3,750,000 project, on which construction will start in 1957.

**You, Too, Can Choose**  
There were many other top stories during the year that easily could have been named in the top ten by many — the selection depending on whether one's taste in news ran to the sudden, violent sensational or to stories that in the long run more directly involved the average individual.

Below is a list of stories that were considered in the balloting. The reader is invited to judge for himself and select his own choice of top ten stories of the year. His choice is as good as that of anyone else.

A proposed city of Salem He'his in the suburban area south of Salem aroused considerable interest recently and the flames have not yet completely died out.

The escape of four desperate convicts from the Linn county jail on September 7 after overpowering the jailer and his family and stealing a car made headlines for many days. The body of one was later pulled from the Willamette river near Salem while one was captured on the Oregon coast and one in Los Angeles two months later. One is still at large.

Grand jury investigations into graft charges in state institutions, teen-age drinking and sex parties in Silverton and obscene literature on county newsstands made interesting reading. Indictments for several persons were returned in the latter two hearings.

**Some Die Violently**  
A Navy reserve facility plane that crashed amidst several south Salem homes after it caught fire and the pilot bailed out occurred on August 18.

A two-car crash on the Salem by-pass killed and burned a Central Point woman and fatally injured a Lebanon man April 7. It was one of several multiple-fatality accidents in its area during the year.

A Dallas husband was sentenced to life in prison after murdering his wife and a Lebanon mother was committed to the state prison after brutally killing her two young daughters.

Big news for the children were the construction of a new youth wing on the YMCA, the annual Salem Soap Box Derby (which saw Kent Lindon crowned champion) and a parade of huge balloon animals that drew the biggest parade crowd in Salem history.

The first annual Willamette River Days saw Xeva, Scots crowned queen amid a variety of activities from boat races and a buffalo barbecue to a picnic and games.

The Buell grange won \$5,000 second prize in a national community service contest for its work on a local park. There were other stories recorded for the readers in the issues of the 1956 Capital Journal. After this quick rehash of the top ones by the staff, it turns its collective efforts towards an even better year in 1957 in complete, comprehensive coverage of all the news for its thousands of loyal readers.

### Politics in Turnout

He had only three days earlier announced that he would run for the U.S. Senator's position against incumbent Wayne Morse and political prognosticators were predicting a spirited campaign between one of Oregon's best-loved governors and the year's either-for-him-or-against-him senator.

His death threw the political situation into a turmoil. Not only was there to be a fall battle for the senatorship but, as it turned out, there was to be a ding-dong battle for the Republican senatorial nomination in the primary. In addition the chair vacated by death needed to be filled by election.

### McKay Stepped In

Douglas McKay, former governor and at that time secretary of the interior, stepped into the breach apparently with a genuine nudge from President Eisenhower and announced that he would run for Morse's post. But not before former state senator Phil Hitchcock had announced he would run for the nomination. Other hopefuls withdrew and let the two vie for the nomination, which McKay won only to lose to Morse in the general election.

Other ramifications of the death were the filing of U.S. Rep. Walter Norblad for the governorship and his last-moment change of mind to run again for his old office. Gov. Elmo Smith, in office by virtue of his presidency of the senate putting him first in line of succession, was given a clear field for the Republican nomination. He lost in the general election to a comparatively unknown radio station operator and state senator from Gearhart, Robert D. Holmes.

Also of strong local interest was the election of Hattie Brazzel as Marion county's first woman district attorney and the election of the county's first democratic representative to the state legislature for more than 20 years.

### Woodburn Race Second

Second in voting for the big stories of 1956 was the announcement that the air force would build a new air base near Woodburn north of Salem. The story started with an announcement that Woodburn was one of a number of sites being considered in the northwest for a new base. Then the number of sites considered was narrowed down to two or three and in May, the final selection was announced.

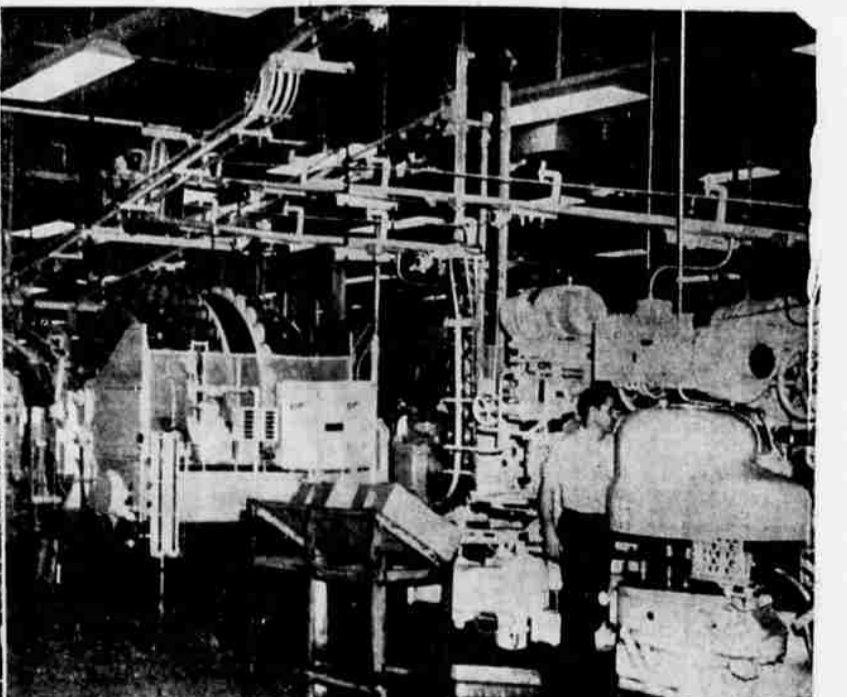
The story continued with the opposition of farmers and others in the area to giving up their land and the difficulties in congress of appropriating the money for construction. It will be a con-



JANUARY 31 — Last picture taken of Gov. Paul Patterson, taken at Lebanon Jaycee annual awards banquet, Jan. 30, 1956, by Mike Forbes, Capital Journal Valley Editor. On right previous Gov. Elmo Smith, center William H. Olds, Lebanon Key Man for 1956 and on left William H. Olds, Lebanon Key Man for 1955.



JULY 15 — One of the big local stories of 1956 was news of the proposed 40 million dollar air base near Woodburn. Mrs. B. D. Anderson of Fairfield, whose farm will apparently become part of the base, is seen in foreground. The base will be built on 1,000 acres of land near Woodburn.



SEPTEMBER 15 — Million dollar American Can company plant north of Salem was major industrial development for Salem in 1956. Plant started construction in May, after 2,500 acres of land was cleared.