

MURDER CASE PICKED AS 1954's TOP LOCAL SPOT NEWS STORY

Talent Project OK 'Most Significant' In Newsmen's View

The brutal murder of Mrs. Fern Hile last April 24, the capture of her slayers, and their subsequent trial and sentencing, was the top "spot news" story of 1954, in the judgment of Mail Tribune newsmen staff members.

The "most significant" story of the year was the progress of the Talent division irrigation and reclamation project from a plan to a project authorized by Congress, with preliminary work already started.

Choice Unanimous

The eight members of the news staff were unanimous in their selections of the Hile case as the top spot story. They were less so in their choice for second place.

Four of them chose the efforts to obtain the release of Newsman Dick Applegate and his subsequent return home as the second ranking spot story of the year. Two others chose the political activity of 1954—the primary and general election—as the second story; one chose the Talent story, and one chose the series of spectacular fires, the Edmonds mill, the Pinnacle packing plant, and an Ashland mill fire.

Others Chosen

Two staff members did not choose the Talent story as the most significant. One chose the May 1 freeze which damaged or destroyed much of the fruit crop in the valley, and the other thought that construction in and around Medford, under way and proposed, was most significant. Such construction includes two new schools in Medford and a number elsewhere throughout the county, two new bank buildings, sanitary and water district development, lumber mill expansion, the courthouse annex, and announced plans for a new shopping district, two new plywood mills, a new armory and a new hospital.

Choices varied widely in voting for second-ranking "most significant" story. Three chose the construction activity; two the general election; two the Talent project, and one the freeze of the fruit crop.

Only Ones Picked

The seven stories mentioned were the only ones nominated for top rank in either category—a smaller number than is usually suggested during a year-end roundup of the news.

Here is a month-by-month summary of Jackson county news, picked from front page stories appearing in The Mail Tribune.

JANUARY

Mayor D. L. Flynn urges stricter traffic fine system for city. Five-year-old Patricia Ann Shilts Talent, dies of incurable illness; friends and neighbors provided "one last Christmas" for child in 1953. Voters approve addition of 800,000 acres to Sams Valley-Beagle Soil Conservation district. Official of Oregon State Employment service forecasts "no record level of unemployment" in Rogue valley in near future. Officials of Dewey school district announce plans for legal test of state law involving consolidation of school districts. Board of health estimates Jackson county population at 63,000. Eight Jackson county officials, including Circuit Judge H. K. Hanna and Sheriff Howard Gault, subpoenaed in hearing for Convict Gerald T. Macomber. Medford Police Chief Charles Champlin calls for crackdown on bad driving. John Dellenback named to receive 1954 Junior Citizen award. Judge David Vandenberg denies Gerald T. Macomber's petition for writ of habeas corpus. Ben Hur

Lampman, poet laureate of Oregon and onetime Jackson county newspaperman, dies after lengthy illness. George R. Carter, Jackson county clerk for many years, dies here. Jackson county stockmen support plan to use surplus seed for range improvement. Medford and Jackson county officials meet with National Guard officers to discuss plans for new Medford armory. Lewis Bright, Medford High school student, named outstanding boy in Northwest Forensic tournament at Spokane.

FEBRUARY

Hooded gunman gets \$2,100 in robbery at Medford Piggly Wiggly market. Earl Miller named chairman of Medford city council for 1954. New Medford Ground Observers Corps post dedicated. Department of Interior grants patents on 23 mining claims in Union Creek district. Harry Skerry Jr., Ashland, elected president of Jackson county Lincoln club. Medford scheduled to get "recovery base" at municipal airport as a part of jet base scheduled for construction at Klamath Falls. Mrs. Christine Godderson, 101, Medford, oldest resident of Jackson county, dies. Donald Forbes and Arlene Forbes, both of Medford, killed in four-car crash on Highway 99 near Gold Hill. State Sen. Richard Neuberger charges Interior Secretary Douglas McKay with "giveaway" on patenting of Al Serena mining claims near Union Creek. Dennis D. (Denny) Edge, well known Medford businessman and sports figure, dies unexpectedly. Rogue River Valley Traffic association announces plans for new type of hail suppression program.

MARCH

County clerk reports there are only 84 candidates for 380 Jackson county precinct jobs. State water resources committee holds hearings in Medford. Medford city council orders temporary fire hall for east side. Rep. Harris Ellsworth calls for expanded medical facilities at Camp White. Ernest R. Gilstrap, longtime west coast newspaperman and business manager of The Mail Tribune for 21 years, dies. Mrs. Sarah Blevins Wing, Ashland, celebrates 101st birthday.

Sen. Guy Cordon and Rep. Harris Ellsworth announce they will submit multipurpose reclamation and power project for Rogue valley to congress. Suits seeking restraining order to prevent construction of proposed east Medford fire hall at Valley View and Ruhl Way started in circuit court. Mayor D. L. Flynn asks officials of 10 southern Oregon cities to aid in campaign to secure release of Dick Applegate, Medford newsmen imprisoned by Chinese Communists. Residents of Brownsboro area fail in efforts to keep post office there in operation; petitions signed by 123. R. W. Price, Portland, sells lodge at Crater Lake National park to Harry C. Smith and Harry W. Smith, Spokane. Richard Johnson, 17-year-old Medford High school student, wins \$600 scholarship in Elks lodge state "most valuable student" contest. Brownsboro post office goes out of operation, after 70 years of service.

APRIL

Jacksonville voters approve \$150,000 bond issue for construction of new primary school



MRS. FERN HILE
Her Brutal Murder—Top Spot News Story

building. National Guard officials announce that funds have been earmarked for construction of new Medford armory building. More than 1,400 persons attend closing session of Jehovah's Witnesses circuit assembly in Medford. Bureau of Reclamation report on the \$19,984,000 Talent division Rogue River basin project submitted to state and federal agencies. Talent voters approve \$150,000 bond issue for construction of new high school and athletic ground. Anonymous donation allows United Medford Crusade to top \$101,000 goal in first year of operation. Gov. Paul Patterson expresses confidence that Talent project will receive approval. Dick Neuberger opens his campaign for the United States senate in Medford. Voters approve incorporation of Kings Highway water district by margin of 133 to 72. Linda May Van Volkenburgh, 13, Medford, dies of accidental gunshot wound suffered during picnic at TouVelle park. Communist source discloses that Medford newsmen Dick Applegate is held in Red prison at Peiping. County budget committee pledges \$60,000 in county funds for use in new Medford armory building. James Norman Jensen and Donald Chesley arrested and charged with brutal murder of Mrs. Fern Hile in her west Medford home. Total of 30,098 registered to vote in May primary election. District Attorney Walter Nunley declares he will ask death penalty for suspects in Hile murder case. Chinese Communists sentence Medford newsmen Dick Applegate to five years in prison for "espionage." Jackson county grand jury returns first degree murder indictments against James Norman Jensen and Donald Chesley, suspects in Hile murder case.

MAY

Voters approve addition of more than 300,000 acres to Rogue Soil Conservation district. Orchard surveys indicate that damage to fruit from freezing temperatures was the most severe in more than 30 years; loss may reach 100 percent in some orchards. Robert Davis, Roseburg, named to serve as special prosecutor for Hile murder trial. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Applegate appeal to Communist representative at Geneva, Switzerland, in attempt to gain freedom for their son, newsmen Dick Applegate, held in Communist China prison. Jackson county orchardists ask

JULY

Eugene Thorndike, Medford banker for 30 years, retires as vice-president of First National Bank of Portland. Red Blanket Lumber company mills at Eagle Point, closed since June 21 by strike, resumes operations. County budget committee approves use of county funds to hire second deputy district attorney. Medford school board awards contracts totalling \$315,790 for construction of new grade school on Garfield st. location. Medford city council adopts comprehensive new plan for classification of city employees. Three small children die in series of home accidents in Medford area. Talent division irrigation project bill approved by senate committee. Conditions under which new Medford armory building will be constructed receive approval. Fire destroys main sawmill of Lithia Lumber company at Ashland. House of representatives interior committee recommends passage of Talent division irrigation project bill. Circuit judge rules that city of Medford must condemn property rights in order to construct proposed east side fire station at Valley View and Ruhl Way. F. Corning Kenly, 81, longtime resident of Medford, dies. County mosquito control program gets under way. House of representatives approves Jackson county sponsored measure calling for use of surplus seeds to improve range lands. National Guard officials say Medford armory should be ready for occupancy by August 1955. Lumber strike ends at two local mills. Governors of 30 states assure Mr. and Mrs. Frank Applegate they will work to secure release of Applegate's son, Dick Applegate, Medford



DICK APPLEGATE
Noted Newsmen Returns, Home

newsmen held prisoner by Chinese Communists. First State Bank of Eagle Point announces plans to move to Medford. 17-year-old Dale Balderston admits setting fire in which his mother was critically burned. Sheriff Howard Gault says Donald Chesley, suspect in Hile murder case, will be charged with arson as result of fire in jail.

AUGUST

Largest crowd in history sees opening performances of 12th annual Rogue River Roundup. 18 young people arrested in liquor violation raid at local dance hall. Opening ceremonies held for 1954 season of Oregon Shakespearean festival in Ashland. James V. McGowan elected chairman of executive board of Jackson county juvenile advisory committee. County's assessed valuation listed at \$61,751,085. James Main appointed to serve as city judge. City of Medford abandons proposed site for east side fire station at Valley View dr. and Ruhl Way. Pat Rector elected queen of annual Jacksonville Gold Rush jubilee. Goal of \$102,000 set for 1954 United Medford Crusade. Medford's Mayor D. L. Flynn announces he will not seek reelection. Ground broken for new Medford grade school on Garfield st. site. Oregon Shakespearean festival in Ashland has largest opening week attendance in its history. United States Senate gives approval to bill authorizing construction of Talent division irrigation and reclamation project. Fred T. Johnston, superintendent of Crater Lake National park, transferred; to be succeeded by Tom Williams, assistant superintendent of Olympic National park. August Zattlin sells Grand hotel to Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Serruys. Dimes Emergency March of Dimes drive conducted in Jackson county. Frank J. Van Dyke, Medford, named to board of gov-



PINNACLE PACKING PLANT FIRE
Major Blaze Makes News During Year in County

ern representatives. City council authorizes sewer connections for South Bear Creek, Table Rock, and Berrydale sanitary districts. President Eisenhower signs Talent project into law. Contract awarded for construction of new Medford junior high school on east side. City council votes to put city manager plan on ballot in fall election. Victory celebration held in Ashland for approval of Talent project. \$84,500 allocated for Talent project surveys and planning.

SEPTEMBER

State Highway commission outlined comprehensive plan for Medford street planning and development, including freeway through city. Plans announced for starting new interdenominational school, known as Southern Oregon Christian school, in Medford. Medford city council approves ordinance for privately-financed meat inspection. County tax levy for 1954-1955 fiscal year announced as 5.9 mills, a 2 increase from 1953-1954. Chinese Communists announce release of Dick Applegate, Medford newsmen held prisoner for 18 months. Enrollment at Medford city schools up 3.1 percent from opening day in 1953. State forestry officials investigate series of 20 forest fires set in Applegate region. Jackson county share of federal O&C money scheduled to be \$1,220,000. Field office to facilitate advance planning for Talent division irrigation project opens in Medford. Special census shows Medford population to be 19,044. U.S. Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee speaks in Medford in behalf of Democratic candidates. Old Medford armory property and building sold to Otto J. Frohnmayer for \$27,500, clearing way for construction of new armory building. Sale of Central Point Mutual Telephone company to Pacific Telephone and Telegraph company approved by Federal Communications commission. Dick Applegate, prisoner of Chinese Communists for 18 months, arrives home in Medford.

OCTOBER

More than 1,000 members of Seventh Day Adventist church attend regional service in Medford. Top political figures including Secretary of Interior Douglas McKay, Senator Guy Cordon, and Congressional Candidate Charles Porter, speak in Medford. Democratic candidates attack patenting of Al Serena Mining company claims in northeastern Jackson county. Richard Neuberger, Democratic candidate for U.S. senator, and his wife, campaign in Jackson county. School board decides new Medford elementary school will be named Jefferson school. Miss Mollie Britt, 89, daughter of Jackson county pioneer, dies. James Norman Jensen found guilty of murdering Mrs. Fern Hile; sentenced to die in state gas chamber. Gov. Paul Patterson speaks in Jackson county in campaign for reelection. A. Lausmann, Medford, elected president of Oregon Republican clubs. Two men killed, woman injured, when log loaded falls on passenger car on Crater Lake highway at Cascade Gorge. 100 delegates attend sixth annual convention of Oregon Association of Soil Conservation Districts, held in Medford. Senator Wayne Morse and Representative Harris Ellsworth speak in Medford. Defense Attorney Edward Kelly file motion seeking new trial for James Norman Jensen, convicted of April 24 murder of Mrs. Fern Hile. Republican Senator Edward



NEW COURTHOUSE ANNEX
Construction Started, Progressing

Thye of Minnesota arrives in Medford to speak in behalf of Senator Guy Cordon. Joseph Carson, Democratic candidate for governor, campaigns in Medford.

NOVEMBER

Total of 21,433 persons cast ballots in Jackson county in general election; Earl Miller elected mayor of Medford; county voters back all Republican candidates. Errors found in millage rates for nine Jackson county school districts. Damages estimated at between \$250,000 and \$300,000 as spectacular fire destroys L. E. Edmonds sawmill south of Medford. Two persons killed in automobile crash south of Ashland. Otto Shultz, Portland apartment house owner, purchases Grand hotel from E. B. and Hazel D. Serruys. Oregon Farm Bureau federation holds 23rd annual meeting in Medford. Members of Jackson County Milk Producers league decide to continue selling Grade A Milk to distributors at unchanged prices. Medford's Mayor D. L. Flynn elected president of League of Oregon Cities. Mercy Flights, Inc., local nonprofit air ambulance service, carries 300th patient. "Air lifting" of three cent mail starts from Medford. Plans for construction of new \$60,000 building for Girls Community club discussed. California Oregon Power company announces \$10,000,000 construction program for 1955. Russell DeForest appointed to serve as deputy district attorney for Jackson county. First of two permanent chest x-ray centers in Medford goes into operation at Community hospital. Highway Lifesavers Committee of Jackson County Citizens, Inc., organized.

DECEMBER

Arrest of Marion Franklin Piening first development in more than 5½ years in Margaret Ann Cornell murder case. Parrot type birds quarantined in county as health department warns of psittacosis danger. School census shows Medford school-age population up three percent from 1953. Fire destroys Pinnacle Packing plant in Medford. Preliminary work started on new shopping district south of Medford. Renovation of Savage Rapids dam on Rogue river completed. Preliminary plans for new hospital to serve southern Oregon revealed. New company tells plans for half-million dollar plywood mill near Medford. Articles of incorporation filed for Rogue Valley Physicians Service to provide local nonprofit medical insurance. Special census lists population of Central Point at 1,909. John H. Pleisch elected president of Jackson County Chamber of Commerce. Medford area feels slight tremor when sharp earthquake hits Eureka, Calif. Cancellation of letters reaches new alltime one-day high of 80,000 at Medford post office. Jackson county school census shows total of 18,422 school-age children in county. Retiring Mayor D. L. Flynn honored by 50 Medford city employees. Frank J. Newman, former Jackson county district attorney, dies at age of 80. Triplett sons born to Mr. and Mrs. James W. Rolls of Medford. Plans announced for construction of \$300,000 plywood sheathing plant in Medford area. Fred J. McPherson, Medford lumberman, killed in automobile accident.



MORE POWER
Copco Project Progresses



EDMONDS MILL MAKES SPECTACULAR BLAZE SOUTH OF CITY
Thousands of Spectators Saw Early-Evening Fire



JUDGES H. K. HANNA, J. R. KEATING
New County Official Swears in By Circuit Judge