

Reporter Probes Background of Girls Charged With Killing of Matron in Escape at Ohio Detention Home

Editor's note: The killing of a matron at an Akron, O., detention school in the escape of five young girls is another shocking manifestation of the extremes of what is called juvenile delinquency. The Akron Beacon Journal assigned reporter Robert Kotschauer to find out what in the background of these girls could have led them to homicide. The following dispatch is an adaptation of the story Kotschauer wrote for his paper.

Acron, O. — (U.P.) — What in brief span of 15 or 16 years could condition a girl to take a human life?

What callousness or driving urge could bring girls barely in their teens to stuff an ammonia soaked rag in the mouth of a bound and helpless woman and leave her to suffocate?

Here are reports from probation office records on the five girls who escaped Sunday night from the detention home here and left the matron they had overpowered, Mrs. Eula Bonham, 59, to die.

Zelda De Cost, 16. One of nine children, she was married two years ago to a boy wanted for rape. Their honeymoon lasted 26 days until he was arrested by West Virginia police, convicted and sent to a prison farm. He escaped and Zelda went to Cleveland in what police think was a search for him. This month she came to Akron for a "visit" with a boy named "Smitt Collins." Authorities picked her up Friday in a cabin, believing she was an escapee from some institution.

Shirley Shinger, 15. Already on probation as a juvenile delinquent, Shirley ran away from home last month. She came back a week later and told her parents she had been visiting friends in Medina, O. Under questioning by a probation officer, it was discovered Shirley had been staying at the home of man in Wayne county. The man's wife is in a mental hospital. The probation officer said boys also had been going to the cabin every night for drinking and sex parties.

Ruth Beichler, 16. Her juvenile delinquency record dates back to the time when she was about 10. She had been held in the Delaware Girls' Industrial School until last Wednesday when she was brought to Akron to testify at a trial against three men charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors. She had run away from the Delaware school several times before.

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Mirl Cain, 15. Last month she and another girl came to police with a story that an older man had raped them. Subsequent investigation brought to light an entirely different story, according to probation officer Joyce Spencer. She said Mirl and the other girl had been drinking with an older man. The man had a knife and, after leaving the bar, Mirl seized it and held it against the man's throat, ordering him to give them his wallet. The man escaped. The girls concocted the rape story, fearing they would be arrested for attempted robbery.

Margaret Nicholson, 15. She is what authorities called a "very disturbed girl." She had been in the detention home three times before for running away from home. She met her boy friend right after escaping and, along with Mirl Cain, was persuaded to give herself up after hearing of the matron's death.

Said probation officer Miss Spencer: "All these girls were badly damaged girls and had little chance for rehabilitation."



MAKING BREAK FOR LIBERTY, five teen-age girl inmates of Akron, O., detention home strangled Matron Eula Bonham, 59, (above). Four were recaptured in few hours. (International)

Preliminary Surveys For Dams Completed

Preliminary surveys for construction of four irrigation reservoirs were completed recently by the Soil Conservation Service, 33 North Riverside ave.

Conservation service officers also gave technical assistance for leveling 38 acres of land for irrigation and construction of a small dam recently.

Surveys for construction of dams were made on the farms of Bob Humphrey, Eagle Point; Lester James, Sams Valley; W. E. Hammel, Eagle Point; and Earl Harris, Eagle Point. Each of the dams, which will be constructed next year, will furnish water for irrigation of between 10 to 15 acres.

Thirty acres of land was leveled for irrigation on the Howard Todd farm, Eagle Point; six acres on the John Walch farm, Lake Creek; and two acres on property owned by Sams Valley orchard.

Union Pacific Tests Lightweight Trains

Portland — (U.P.) — Union Pacific President A. E. Stoddard said here yesterday that speedy, lightweight transcontinental trains will be bought from General Motors and put in service out of Portland if tests of prototypes prove satisfactory.

Stoddard, on an inspection trip here, said one of the trains would be brought to Portland next year. "Funds already have been allocated for purchase of the equipment," he said, "and the order to buy hinges on test results."

He said the new equipment should reduce operating costs and permit special fares for vacationers as well as lower cross-country rates.

Stenographic Errors Increase With Heat

Chicago — (U.P.) — A survey during an August heat wave here showed that stenographic errors increased 1,000 per cent when the temperature rose from 78 to 96 degrees. Among typists, errors went up from 11 per hour to more than 95.

According to medical research, there's a simple explanation for the reasons behind these figures. The heart rate increases as the temperature and humidity go up, and fatigue and lowered output result.

Mill Worker Killed In Corvallis Accident

Corvallis — (U.P.) — A 48-year-old mill worker was killed almost instantly at 5 p.m. yesterday when a circular saw flew off its shaft and struck him. County Coroner Don Durdan said the victim was William Riley, Lebanon.

France Sells Jet Licenses To Germany

Paris — (U.P.) — French manufacturers have sold West Germany licenses to build a French jet training plane for the new German air force, air sources disclosed today.

Negotiations are being held on contracts for two piston-engine planes, the sources said.

A contract already signed with the German Messerschmitt company gives it permission to build the twin-jet "Fouga Magister" training plane, the sources said.

BEAUTY TREATMENT

Bukit Mertamam, Malaya — (U.P.) — Two women members of Communist terror bands surrendered to police Tuesday and asked for government amnesty. They went straight from the police station to a beauty parlor for permanent waves.

SNAKE GETS JOLT

Angola, La. — (U.P.) — A rattlesnake practically knocked itself out in striking the leg of a Louisiana State Penitentiary convict and other inmates easily killed the reptile, the prison newspaper reported. The convict's leg was a wooden one.

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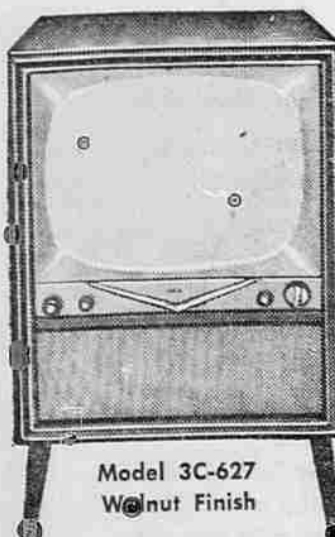
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