

# Investigation Continues In Death of Ashlander

By JOE COWLEY  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

One sunny March day last spring, an Ashland rancher's wife was just putting a roast into the oven when the doorbell rang. She talked to a stranger for awhile then returned to her work in the kitchen. Later her bullet-punctured body was found stretched out by the front door.

Jackson county sheriff's officers think she was running to the front door to escape an assailant when she fell under a hail of nine .22 caliber bullets.

When officers arrived the back door was wide open indicating the unknown murderer might have entered that way. A roast was slid part way into the oven, indicating the victim had been preparing dinner.

Eight months later, Jackson county sheriff's officers and state police continue to sift through scanty clues and follow-up leads.

**700-Page Report**

Since the March 15 murder of Mrs. Marian Stella Hamilton, Sheriff's Deputy Lee Rice, in charge of the investigation from the sheriff's office, has compiled a 700-page report, and after using the state crime laboratory in Salem extensively has added the broad resources of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

have been distributed, and sheriff's deputies have corresponded with over 50 law enforcement agencies who thought they had suspects.

This search for suspects has carried Sheriff Joe Walsh and his men through Oregon, California, Colorado and Washington.

The bulletin contains a composite drawing of a suspect. Descriptions of a man seen near the scene shortly before Mrs. Hamilton was murdered were pieced together to form the artist's drawing.

**Still Seek Man**

Deputies and state police are still looking for this man. Sixty-five men have been eliminated as suspects so far, from as far away as Florida.

These are the clues: An unidentified man observed at the ranch house on 2700 East Main rd., Ashland, about two miles southeast of the city, about noon, told a witness he was out of the service recently and was looking for the Otis family. No Otis family can be located in the area.

A car near the scene later that day was described as cream over medium blue, about four years old, make unknown. It could have been a coupe or sedan. The license number also unknown.

**Federally Made**

Heel prints found leaving the back door of the victim's residence confirmed the report of the witness. They are thought to belong to the stranger Mrs. Hamilton reportedly talked to prior to her death.

From the heel prints, deputies learned they are from a shoe of the type manufactured in Leavenworth penitentiary, and put on shoes issued to Air Force personnel (including reserves), Army, Navy, veterans administration and men discharged from federal prisons. So the murderer could be either an ex-serviceman or an ex-convict. The heel prints are described in detail in the bulletin.

Items missing from the victim's residence, and still sought, include a man's brown dress hat, size 6 7/8 or 7; clamp-on earrings of sterling silver beetle design, a woman's thin green wallet with gold design and broken snap, personal papers, driver's license and social security card.

Other items thought missing at first have since been located.

Shavings of lead on the carpet by the front door indicated five of the bullets fired were from a .22 caliber revolver having a poor cylinder alignment.

**Laboratory Examination**

Laboratory examination of bullets from the victim's body showed the other four shots were fired from a .22 caliber gun with six lands and grooves of equal width, with a right twist. (A gun leaves its "fingerprints" as surely as a barehanded criminal.)

The husband, Lester G. Hamilton, logger and rancher, had been working in a field some distance from the house. He told officers he did not hear a shot. It was he who discovered the body stretched out by the blood-spattered door and adjoining wall shortly before dinnertime.

Within minutes after the report, a sheriff's car with siren screaming sped down the South Pacific highway to the ranch house. State police, Ashland police and deputies combed the grounds, found the heel prints, examined the victim's clothing, checked all firearms in the house and carefully examined all personal articles.

**Asked for Tests**

In the next few days, nine people were asked to take a polygraph (lie-detector) test. There people took advantage of their legal rights and refused.

Next, officers fanned out over the area, questioned neighbors, pinpointed times of observations of the stranger, and checked thoroughly into the past of Mrs. Hamilton. This investigation revealed nobody with any motive for murder, except the nine people asked to take the lie-detector test.

The investigation centered for a while on these nine suspects. Officers also questioned a total of 130 people in the

city of Ashland and surrounding area.

Robbery had been ruled out quickly. Nothing valuable had been taken. A detailed check of Mrs. Hamilton's finances revealed no evidence of blackmail.

**Help Sought**

On June 6, a citizen informed the sheriff's office that he had hired a man to do some work for him near the Hamilton residence on March 14, a day prior to the crime. The FBI's Washington, D.C., headquarters was asked to help identify this suspect from clues given.

On June 30 the information went out over the teletype. The suspect was later located in the Seattle, Wash., area. A record check showed this man had been arrested on July 16, 1959, on charges of carrying a concealed weapon.

Sheriff Joe Walsh and Chief Deputy Paul Bettiol hopped a plane to Seattle. An all-night grilling and lie-detector test revealed the man had no knowledge of the crime and was near the California state line at the time of Mrs. Hamilton's death. However, he had worked in a field some short distance from the Hamilton ranch the day before the murder.

**Receive Information**

In September the sheriff's office received information from FBI agents in Spokane, Wash., of a man who had in custody who was in possession of a weapon similar in type to that which killed Mrs. Hamilton. Other of his possessions also indicated he might be implicated.

Sheriff Walsh and Deputy Rice questioned him in Spokane and after a lie-detector test found he also had no knowledge of the crime. However, he had stolen the .22 caliber weapon in northern California near the time of the crime.

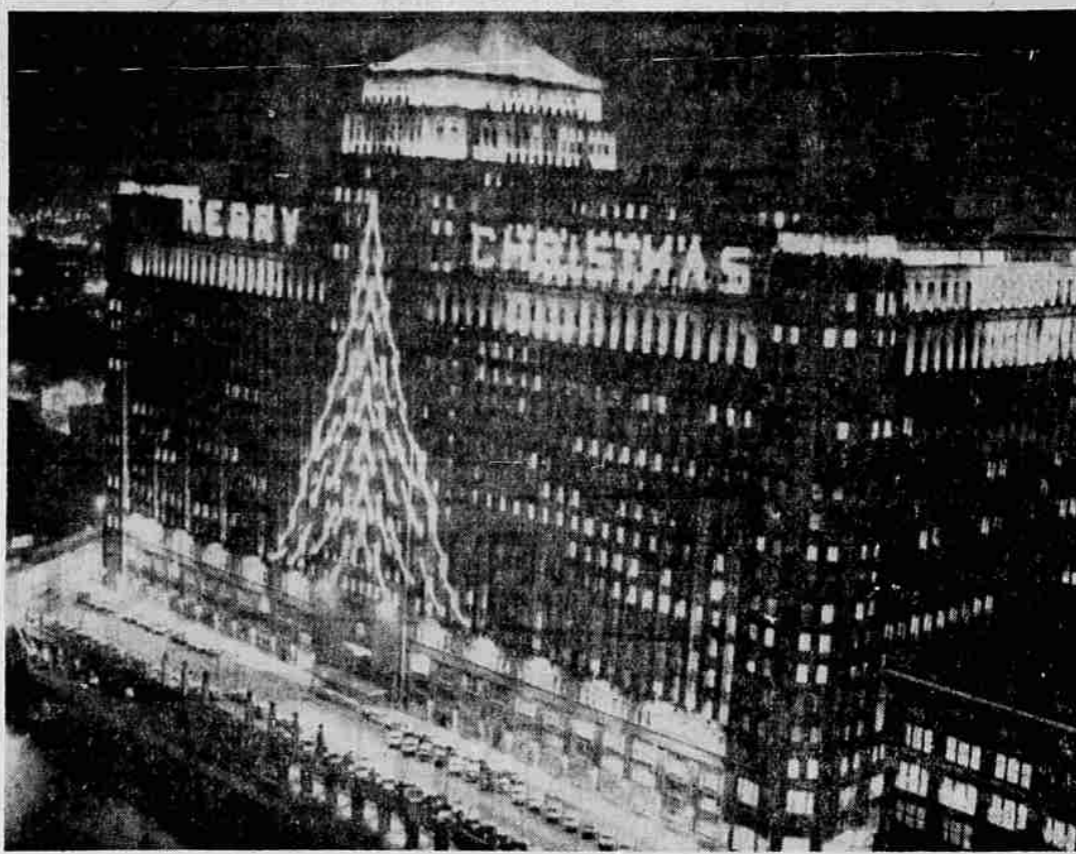
The investigation continues. More answers come in from the bulletin mailed out, more information on suspects continues to be compiled, and the suspects eliminated.

Will this be a case similar to the d'Auremont train robbery and murder case, also near Ashland, when only an intensive national and international search finally turned up the guilty persons after several years? Only time will tell.

**Coast Guard Recruiter Plans Medford Visit**

BTI Lonnie K. Johnson, Eugene, Coast Guard recruiter for this district, will be in Medford Tuesday, Dec. 13.

He will be at the Navy recruiting office in the Medford post office building all day.



**CHRISTMAS CARD**—The world's largest Christmas card was lighted on the face of the Merchandise Mart building in Chicago Friday. More than 8,000 lights were used in making the 17-story tree and Merry Christmas sign. (UPI Telephone)

## Firm To Establish Plant in Portland

Portland—(UPI)—The Oregon Department of Planning and Development said today the Arabol Manufacturing Co., a nationwide manufacturer of industrial adhesives, would establish a manufacturing plant with next March 1 as the target date for start of production.

The firm, with headquarters in New York, has plants in eight other cities across the country.

The announcement said the firm had purchased a 12,000 square foot building in the St. Johns district. Initial investment will be about \$250,000.

The firm has maintained sales offices here for some 20 years.

## Kennedy Offers Job To MIT Man

Washington—(UPI)—Dr. Walt W. Rostow of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology indicated today after a conference with President-elect John F. Kennedy that he had been offered a post in the new administration.

Rostow gave no hint of what Kennedy might have in mind but he has been reported under consideration for a top foreign economic job.

## ASC Committee To Be Named at Dec. 20 Election

Members of the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation committee will be elected during the annual ASC convention scheduled for the Jackson county courthouse Dec. 20, Chairman Albert Straus, Sams Valley, announced Saturday.

Committee members will be elected by convention delegates chosen earlier by mail in various county communities, Straus said. The elected chairman of each community ASC committee is the community's delegate to the county convention with other members as alternates.

"Convention delegates will elect committee members for a one-year term. The person receiving the highest number of votes will be county chairman, followed in order by the vice chairman, third member, and first and second alternate," the chairman explained.

The committeemen elected must be bona fide farmers who are taking part in one or more of the programs administered by the county ASC office, which include price support, acreage allotments and marketing quotas, wool and sugar programs, farm storage facility loans, the agricultural conservation program and the conservation reserve," Straus said.

**Voice of Farmers**

"While the county office staff conducts day-to-day activities of these programs, the county committee provides a

## Bids for Lake County Road Work Opened

The Oregon Highway commission Friday opened bids totaling nearly \$7 million on 20 projects, including three that ran \$1 million or more.

Among the bids opened were those pertaining to the Lake county section of the Winnemucca-to-the-sea route. This covers the west unit, Adel-Blizzard gap section of the Adel-Nevada state line road. It consists of 9.03 miles of grading, and structures.

Stanley Wilt, Corvallis, at \$212,379 was low bidder.

## Firm Withdraws Application to PUC

Salem—Morgan Drive-Away Inc. of Elkhart, Ind., Friday withdrew its application to the Public Utility Commissioner for a common carrier permit authorizing irregular route service for the transportation of trailer houses in 11 southwest Oregon counties.

The trailer hauling firm had on two previous occasions postponed hearings scheduled by the PUC.

No reason was given for the withdrawal.

## BANK PRESIDENT DIES

Montreal—(UPI)—M. M. Walter, chairman and president of the Royal Bank of Canada, died Friday. He was 63.

Yakima—(UPI)—A fruit warehouse five miles west of here was destroyed early today in a \$100,000 fire.

## 20 Influenza Cases Reported in County

Twenty cases of influenza, 10 of them in Central Point, were reported to the Jackson county health department last week, according to Dr. A. Erin Merkel, public health physician.

Other influenza cases were reported in Shady Cove, 7; Medford, 1; and Trail, 2.

Nine other communicable diseases were reported to the department last week. They included German measles, Medford, 1; chicken pox, Medford and Ashland, 1 each; mumps, Medford and Phoenix, 1 each; pneumonia, Medford and Central Point, 1 each; rheumatic fever, Gold Hill, 1; and scarlet fever, Applegate, 1.

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## Toastmasters Set Second Contest

The second in a series of elimination contests to select the best speaker will be held by the Jackson Toastmasters club at 6:30 a.m. Monday, in the Jackson hotel.

At last week's first contest, Bruce Nelson, dean of boys at Hedrick Junior High school, presented the winning talk on "Presence of Mine Enemies."

His talk centered on the fact that parents should show love for their children, and he cited several case histories in which the children would have not been delinquents if their parents had shown love toward them.

Runners up in the contest were Wilson Edinger, Bill Butler, and Dick Schwab.

Dale Farley directed the topic session. The Rev. Robert F. Dowrey and Dale Howard were guests, and Don Johnson of Medford became a new member.

## Agent Transferred To Seattle Office

Wert W. Schooley, on the staff at United Air Lines, Medford, for the past 14 years, has been promoted to supervisor of ramp service for the company at Seattle.

Schooley joined United Air Lines as a station agent in Medford in 1947, and subsequently became a senior agent.

He has been active in Toastmaster's club where he was recently elected president. He was also active in Cub Scout work in Eagle Point.

Schooley is married and has three children. He and his family have been residing in Central Point.

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