

Ansel Murder Is Top Unsolved Mystery

No. 1 Suspect Gone 20 Years

By HALE SCARBROUGH

Has John Meek spent 20 years in hiding for a murder he did not commit?

You can get an argument either way from folk who have been around Klamath Falls for a couple of decades.

Old-timers will remember that John Meek was the prime suspect in the still officially unsolved murder of Johnny Ansel, clerk in Barney Chambers' old Gun Store. He disappeared three days after Ansel was killed and has never been located.

There was a time when almost every police bulletin board in the country held a dodger with Meek's description and picture.

But 20 years is a long time—the man wouldn't be recognized now if he walked down Main street this afternoon.

Besides, there are plenty of people who see reason to believe John Meek was absolutely innocent, although there is still a murder warrant bearing his name on file at the courthouse.

The murder of the 56-year-old bachelor Johnny Ansel was without parallel for cold-bloodedness in Klamath county.

It happened on the last day of 1927, December 31. Ansel had worked in the Gun Store—then located in the 600-block on Main next to Swansen's barber shop—for 17 years. Everybody knew him.

As was usual, that Saturday morning Ansel arrived to open the store about 6:30. At 7:25 a. m. his body was found sprawled on the floor in back of the store in front of an open safe. Ansel had been shot through the head.

Investigation showed \$630 in currency, silver and checks taken from the strongbox, another \$200 in silver untouched.

Janitor Suspected

Keith Ambrose, now fire chief, was police chief then, and Burt Hawkins, present postmaster, was sheriff. One of their first suspects was Albert Jerry Bellamy, who did the janitorial work at the Gun Store and several other places along Main street.

Bellamy's story was that he came in to mop right after Ansel opened the store, that he finished his chores and left about 7:15. He declared he saw another man in the store, a man wearing a slouch hat and red-checked mackinaw. Lawrence Dow, who worked at Pelican Bay, came in about 7 o'clock, to buy a two-bit pair of gloves and he also reported seeing a man sitting in a chair back of the store—near the safe—reading a newspaper.

Dow was in the store perhaps five minutes; Bellamy supposedly left at 7:15. Charles Newman, power company employe, came in at 7:25 and found Ansel's body on the floor.

The "man in the red mackinaw" immediately became the object of search. When it was learned that a man fitting that description in a vague way had retrieved a Chrysler automobile from the Acme garage immediately after the time of the murder, every 1927 Chrysler "50" in the county was checked. But without result. The "man in the red mackinaw," having done his confusing bit, entered the picture no more.

Because Bellamy, the janitor, couldn't keep his stories straight under questioning, he was arrested and booked for murder. But the investigation took another turn and Bellamy was released.

Old Gun Used

The new turn was toward John Meek, 26-year-old cowboy and logger, who had a small homestead on the Rocky Point road.

The lead slug which killed Ansel was identified as coming from an old 38-40 caliber revolver, a type almost obsolete, and Barney Chambers, who knew his weapons, pointed out that there were only three of them in the county. One was owned by John Meek.

It was winter time, snow made travel difficult, and officers were clutched at a straw in suspecting the inoffensive Meek. H. R. Ingling, Ashland fingerprint expert working as deputy under Hawkins, put in a phone call to the Wampler ranch at Rocky Point and talked to Meek.



WAS ONE OF THEM GUILTY?—Three persons who were under some suspicion in the mysterious gun-shot death of Johnny Ansel 20 years ago are pictured above. Most of the suspicion rested on John Meek (right), who disappeared three days after the murder and has been gone 20 years. The man in the inset, Jerry Bellamy, was the first suspect and was booked at the county jail for murder. Later he was released. Barney Chambers (left) was Ansel's employer and subsequent actions on his part, including his suicide, served to cast some doubt on whether he ever told all he could have revealed about Ansel's death.

Meek on the street in Elmira, N. Y. But when the traveler came back with a policeman the man was gone. If "closed" can ever be written to the murder of Johnny Ansel it was written Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1937. On that day Barney Chambers put a revolver to his own head and pulled the trigger. There were rumors—no one knows how true—during the 10 years between Ansel's death and Chambers' suicide that the colorful and eccentric Chambers knew more about Ansel's death than he ever told. There is still a rumor that Chambers owed the fraternal-looking Ansel several thousand dollars in accumulated pay and Ansel wanted to collect. John Meek might have been an innocent man when he left Klamath Falls, but he had little chance to prove it. He didn't wait to find out how much chance.

PROMOTED BOISE, Idaho, Feb. 20 (AP)—T. E. Roach, general manager of the Idaho Power company, now is also chairman of the board and president of the company. He was elected to the additional jobs yesterday by directors of the company. He succeeds C. J. Strike, who died February 14. Roach came to Boise from Portland, where he was vice president and general manager of Northwestern Electric company.

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The Doctor Says— Some Tumors Not Dangerous

By EDWIN P. JORDAN, M. D.
Written for NEA Service
Fibroid tumors of the uterus or womb become increasingly common after the age of 35. About one woman in every five has a nodule or tumor of this kind when she reaches this age. These tumors vary in size and may not produce any symptoms or do any harm. They are made up of muscle tissue and scar-like tissue mixed together.

Although, in many cases, fibroid tumors are so small that they do not require treatment, many of them are likely to grow gradually and eventually need care. The most common symptom is excessive or painful bleeding. Sometimes pain or discomfort in the lower part of the abdomen is the only sign of a fibroid, however. A feeling of weight or pressure often associated with constant fatigue is another common symptom. Fibroids usually cause bladder or rectal symptoms, because of the pressure which they exert.

Those fibroids which are not producing symptoms usually do not need to be treated. They should be

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Power Company Plays Cupid Role
WASHINGTON, Feb. 20 (AP)—A rural electric cooperative has played Cupid in Illinois.
A tenant farmer was engaged to be married. His bride-to-be decided to wait until electricity was installed on the farm.
The farm owner had in his application but many other requests were ahead of it.
The board of the Jo-Carroll Electric cooperative, Elizabeth, Ill., was told of the situation.
It ruled that the matter was a "hardship case" and voted to extend the service immediately.
The report to the rural electrification administration did not say whether the wedding had taken place.

Czecks Vote Communist Control Out
PRAGUE, Feb. 20 (AP)—The Czechoslovak cabinet met today after a week of pre-election tension with the cards stacked for the first time against the communist party and its program to dominate the coalition government.
The trump card was played last night by the social democratic party whose balance of power support hitherto has given the communists the margin they needed to enact steps in their long range program.
The social democrats drafted a declaration of independence from the communists last November and made their switch final last night by a decision to support the Czechoslovak national socialist party, the Catholic people's party and the Slovak democrats on broad issues where communist domination threatened.

Twelve Jews Flee Prison
JERUSALEM, Feb. 20 (AP)—Twelve young Jews, identified by police as suspected members of Irgun Zvai Leumi, tunneled to freedom from Jerusalem prison today.
One officer said he believed the men had help from outside, that the outsiders tunneled toward the prison from a manhole in a nearby street while the prisoners dug from inside.
Irgun Zvai Leumi is a Jewish underground organization.
It was the second break within a month from Central prison. Four Arabs escaped in January two others were killed in that break.
Twelve Jews, two Arabs and two British soldiers were killed yesterday in the Holy Land. The unofficial death toll since the United Nations voted November 29 to partition Palestine now stands at 1204.
Haganah, the Jewish militia, said the immigrant ship Upright, with some 700 visasless Jews aboard, had been intercepted by the British off the coast of Palestine.

Big Question
How soon retaliation would come and what form it would take was the big question as the cabinet met. Some predicted the communists would back down in their move to purge the security police of non-communist officers.
The social democrats decision was taken after President Edouard Benes had conferred with their right wing leaders and with communist Premier Klement Gottwald. It was followed by a series of new attacks on communists in the anti-communist press today.
The social democrats' switch, voted last night, provides a coalition bloc of 62 per cent in parliament against 35 per cent for the communists. Previously the communists had counted on social democratic socialist support for a 52 per cent margin.
When the switch became known last night anti-communist papers revised their front pages for violent attacks on the communists.
The socialist organ, Svobodne Slovo, assailed what it called communist plans to control the national security police force.

May Become Cancerous
Fibroids can become cancerous, which is another reason they should not be neglected. Because fibroids, and the symptoms they produce, vary so much, each patient must be considered on an individual basis.

The Doctor Answers
QUESTION: Is thiamine helpful for hearing difficulties?
ANSWER: In most forms of deafness, thiamine would not be helpful. Before using it to aid the hearing, it would be well to find out whether the hearing difficulty lies in the bone, in the nerve, or elsewhere in the hearing apparatus.

POWER ASKED
WASHINGTON, Feb. 20 (AP)—Informed that canned fish will not be included in European relief supplies, Rep. Tolleson (R-Wash.) said today he would urge that dollar credit be furnished European countries to buy such supplies in this country.

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