

State's Toughest Convict Wins Parole To Escape Threat Of Prison Murder

By PAUL W. HARVEY JR
 SALEM, Feb. 28 — (AP) — The Oregon State Penitentiary's toughest and most troublesome convict has been paroled so the other convicts can't kill him.

He is John Edward Ralph, 31, a confirmed and hardened criminal who suddenly had a change of heart. He exposed an escape plot, and that's why it was made to let him remain with the other prisoners.

So, at the request of Warden Virgil O'Malley, Ralph was transferred last week to Folsom, Calif., Prison where he was wanted as a parole violator to finish a five-year term for auto theft.

During his four years at the Oregon prison, Ralph was involved in just about all the trouble the prison had.

He entered Dec. 4, 1947, to serve 12 years for beating a man up in La Grande and robbing him of \$100.

Ralph was mixed up in the big 1948 escape attempt, when some convicts set fire to the prison fax mill. He was chairman of the convict committee that led the prison hunger strike last summer. Ralph tried many other times to conceal weapons for attempted breaks.

Last October 31, he was one of the 10 convicts who locked their guards in their cells and tried to get out. They didn't get out, though, because they hadn't figured a way to get out the main prison gate.

For this last attempt, Ralph got another 30 days in isolation. After that, he was transferred, along with the other escape artists, to segregation cells.

When Ralph was sent to isolation that last time, he said "I wish they would put me in the gas chamber." He added that his chief ambition was to kill guards.

On November 28, from his isolation cell, Ralph sent this letter to the warden:

"I'm in a living hell, prepared to die. . . I believe a dead man has the best go anyway—no worries, no troubles. Let's come to an understanding or I'll give you the chance to carry me out in a box."

But only two weeks later, this man, so bitter at society in general and the prison management in particular, reversed his field.

A guard slipped a gun, dagger, ammunition and dynamite to the desperate men in segregation. And Ralph told the other guards about it, thus blocking an escape plot in which somebody might have been killed.

Warden O'Malley wanted to keep it secret how Ralph exposed the plot. But a newspaper told about it briefly, and all the convicts soon knew about it.

"From then on, Ralph's life wasn't worth two cents around here," the warden said.

The warden got him his parole and rushed him off to the Multnomah County Jail. The California officers picked him up there a few days ago.

Ralph has a long record of 24 arrests for vagrancy, burglary, robbery and auto theft. He left home at the age of 12, started his criminal career at 16, and was in the reformatory a year later.

He has a deformed hand, and the psychiatrist says that makes him bitter. Ralph is a psychopath, meaning he is morally defective, not knowing the meaning of honesty, truth and decency. Most veteran criminals are psychopaths.

Another reason Ralph was sent to Folsom is that it has better facilities for giving psychiatric treatment.

At Folsom, Ralph might get rid of his delusions of persecution, his suspicion and his vindictiveness.

Council May Be Formed

Representatives of two committees, one appointed by the Inter-Agency Council, the second by the PTA County Council met Tuesday at the home of Mrs. V. E. O'Neill to explore the possibility of forming an adult community council with emphasis on family and youth.

Discussed were the positive achievements and present facilities and resources of the community and basin; the organization and purposes of Youth Councils and Community Councils; Big Brother and Big Sister programs; the need for encouragement of legislative actions dealing with youth problems and counseling services; the necessity for well-rounded programs, including recreation, in youth phase only and interest in youth problems in the community which have been greatly fostered by KFLW broadcasts.

It was decided to call a community-wide meeting in the hope that all interested organizations will cooperate. The first meeting will be mainly to determine need for an organization to cope with suggestions.

Present were Mrs. Dale Baxter, Mrs. S. R. Baliger, Mrs. Hagan Moore, Mrs. R. W. Stearns, Mrs. Karl Urquhart, Mrs. Earl Sheridan, Mrs. P. S. Hitchcock, Mrs. V. E. O'Neill and Mrs. Richard Smith. Members of committees unable to attend were Mrs. E. A. Geary, Wallace Myers and Rev. D. L. Proett.

"B" Spuds Get Shipping OK

Shipments of "B" size potatoes can begin as of March 1, Asst. Agr. Sec. Bill Huse of the Potato Marketing Control Committee has announced.

The announcement came late Tuesday after the Secretary of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., gave approval to the committee's recommendation that the "B's" be taken off the ban list.

Meanwhile, OPS Administrator Carl C. Donough, Portland, reported today that OPS regulations allow a 10-cent premium on No. 1 potatoes only if they are of two-inch minimum.

He said there had been some question as to whether or not one and seven-eighths inch potatoes were eligible for the premium, too.

Donough said the potato price rollback will have saved Oregon housewives alone about \$400,000 by June 1. There are about 400,000 housewives in the state, according to estimates made here. That means each family in the state will have saved about one dollar in five months.

Meanwhile, Ross Aubrey, head of the local inspection service of the state department of agriculture reported that actual losses of income to Klamath growers, as near as can be figured on paper from going prices at the time of the OPS rollback, will show about \$1,600,000.

That is about \$500,000 less than original estimates, Aubrey points out, mostly because early guesses of total potato stocks here were a little too high. However, the prices may have gone even higher than the going price of \$5 per 100 pounds at the time of the rollback when the same spuds were ordered priced at \$3.65 as a base.

Local grocers have reported that local potato prices have been marked down on the retail market only about one-half a cent per pound in conformance with OPS's rollback.

However, Californians are reportedly paying even more now than before, mostly because East Coast potatoes are being shipped in and freight costs are higher, forcing retail prices upwards.

Joseph White Death Learned

FT. KLAMATH — News was received here Monday, Feb. 25th, of the death of Joseph White, former Ft. Klamath resident and employee of the U. S. Forest Service. Death came to Mr. White at the Veterans' Hospital in Portland on Feb. 23 following a lingering illness. He is survived by his wife, Billie, who was with him to the last.

Since leaving here several years ago, Mr. and Mrs. White made their home at Merritt Point, where final rites were held on February 20th for the late Mr. White. Pallbearers at the funeral service included several of his associates of the Forest Service.


Deepest sympathy is extended Mrs. White in the loss of her husband by old friends in Fort Klamath. He was well-known throughout the Klamath Basin as well as here.

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