

# Explosion In Roseburg Biggest Story Of Year

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
An explosion at Roseburg in the early morning darkness of Aug. 7 wiped out an important part of the business district, claimed 13 lives and immediately became the most important news story of 1959 in Oregon.

There was no other that approached it for its great immediate impact or for its continuing effect. The city is still engrossed, and will be for months and perhaps years, in reshaping itself; the courts will have before them for a long time the question of liability and damage payments, and still unanswered is the question of whether James Fred Siles, 15, will live. He was taken unconscious to a Eugene hospital after the blast and remains there, little changed, possibly the 14th victim of a truck laden with explosives that caught fire and blew up.

The great mystery with which 1958 closed was dispelled, in part, in the spring of 1959. The bodies of Susan and Virginia Martin were found on successive days early in May in the Columbia River, the former's near Camas, Wash., and Virginia's at Bonneville Dam.

This set at rest much speculation and made it reasonably certain that when Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Martin and their three children set out from Portland for a drive up the Columbia River Highway on Dec. 7, 1958, their day ended in a plunge of their car, somehow, into the Columbia River. Three bodies, possibly held in by seat belts, remain to be found but the great hunt for the family ended when the river yielded the bodies of the younger girls.

This was Oregon's Centennial Year. It brought year-long events of many kinds, ranging from Vice President Nixon's appearance at the Feb. 14 birthday party to such things as the city of Redmond dressing up in false store fronts. The 100 days of celebrating at the Centennial Exposition in Portland had many highlights and some disappointment over the size of the crowds.

But the walking grandma from

Gallipolis, Ohio, Mrs. Emma Gatewood, provided unexpected and often entertaining news as she hiked westward. And the wagon train that set out from Independence, Mo., and reached Independence, Ore., was a major news story in itself.

The year opened with political turmoil. Mark Hatfield, Republican, was taking over as governor from Robert Holmes, Democrat, and there was question whether Hatfield's appointment of Howell Appling as secretary of state was legal or whether Holmes could fill the office with his appointment. The state Supreme Court acted swiftly, decided Hatfield and Appling were on sound legal ground, and the business of state government was little interrupted.

The Legislature ran for nearly four months and produced two major pieces of legislation—a 9 per cent income tax increase and authorization for the governor to present a plan of state government reorganization to the next session. The tax increase was promptly stalled by petitions referring it to the people.

The biggest news in Oregon's biggest industry—timber—was the purchase by Georgia Pacific Corp. of the Booth-Kelly operations and timber holdings centered in Lane County. This 93-million-dollar transaction promised to provide continuing news through unfolding developments in timber sales, cutting plans and plant expansions.

Birth of Siamese twins to Mr. and Mrs. James Stubblefield of Parma, Idaho, became a major Oregon news story. They were born at a Nyssa hospital and were separated at the University of Oregon Medical School Hospital. It was the first surgical separation of twins joined so extensively, in which both lived.

The proposal of Sen. Richard L. Neuberger that a part of the Oregon dunes area be set aside as a national park was swept into great controversy, was subject of Senate and House subcommittee hearings and came to the end of the year with a questionable future.

On March 24 Richard Hunt, 27,

abducted Police Chief Ernest McPhee at Harrisburg, wounded Chief Robert Kennow at Brownsville, then fled. This touched off the state's biggest manhunt of 1959 which ended with Hunt's capture in Wyoming two months later. It was one of several stories of crime and the shooting of police officers. It stood apart as taking longer in the drama of its unfolding.

The strike of the Stereotypers Union against the Portland newspapers marked the closing weeks

of the year. The newspapers continued to publish. It was one of a number of strikes in the course of 1959. The Tillamook Cheese plant was struck early in the year. Sand and gravel companies of the Willamette Valley were also and major construction projects were shut down for a time by a strike of pile drivers. But the important lumber industry reached contract agreements that were aimed at insuring labor peace through the first part of 1961, and there were no lumber strikes of

consequence. A great train holdup of more than 35 years ago was recalled with the release from prison on Jan. 9 of Hugh D'Autremont, youngest of the brothers who engineered the holdup and killed four trainmen. D'Autremont was free only a few weeks before cancer killed him.

Death took from the state several men who had helped to shape it. Among these was Douglas McKay, former governor and former secretary of the Interior, who was

a member of the International Joint Commission on water resource problems at his death. The renowned composer, Ernest Bloch of Agate Beach, also died and so did Chief Tommy Thompson, an almost legendary Indian figure at Celilo. Dave Epps, state Democratic Party chairman, died unexpectedly in early summer.

There were scores of other happenings that helped make 1959 a year for remembering: A hot water spouting well started gushing in Lake County; a big theft ring

was uncovered at Albany; two jet planes collided at night over Mt. Hood and all four men aboard escaped; politicians began invading the state in advance of next year's elections and Sen. Wayne Morse became an almost certain candidate in Oregon's Democratic presidential primary; cranberries were condemned because of a weed-killer residue on some; Sen. Richard L. Neuberger reported he had won his fight with cancer; chlorine gas escaping at McCredie Hot Springs pool sent many to

hospitals; Portland General Electric's plans for Round Butte Dam progressed through a series of hearings; appointment of Sprague Carter as state selective service director touched off protests in some areas; the hillside at Portland's new zoo began sliding; newspaper crossword puzzle contents were rigged in a far-flung piece of trickery first exposed by the Portland newspapers; and The Dalles Dam got its formal dedication from Vice President Nixon.

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