

From the archives of Liberal's hometown newspaper since 1886. Researched and compiled by A.J. Coleman, L&T Reporter

1963 **Bad news from the present and the past**

Most of the time, the local news features stories about city council meetings, athletic events and the simple things that go on in a small town. Once a while, shocking stories grabbed the Southwest Daily Times front page, and that was true the first week of June 1963. "Divorced couple found dead in home they shared," read the front page headline of the Times. In Garden City, a divorced couple was found dead in a home that they shared, the story recounted. Officials on the scene said that the case was that of suicide and murder.

Dead were Harley S. Kelley, 60 years old, and Dorothy F. Kelley, 41, a waitress at the Garden City Cafe. Authorities said that the couple had divorced in December, but they continued to live at the same address, with Mrs. Kelley occupying the basement of the home and Mr. Kelley the rest.

The killing occurred in Mr. Kelley's portion of the home. Mr. Kelley shot his ex-wife twice under the chin with a .22-caliber automatic pistol and then went into the bathroom, washed his hands, went back to where his ex-wife lay dying and shot himself through the head.

Equally messy but not as disturbing was the news east of Liberal. "50 cars of RI freight train derailed in Meade," read the front-page headline of the Southwest Daily Times.

Debates about how schools could or could not support Christian values continued in 1963. Several cases had already removed prayer from schools, but the issue continued to pop up in courts around the country and many schools still required students to begin the day by reciting The Lord's Prayer.

In a front-page story, the Times announced the 1963 Supreme Court ruling that Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer could not be required of public-school students before the beginning of the school day, was in clash with the Constitution. The court upheld attacks on such school opening activities in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Then in a brief order it set aside a Florida State Supreme Court decision which had upheld the practice in Miami schools.

There were other changes made to how schools were doing things. Physical exercise regulations were made lighter and less straining to the students.

With a large hay-bale fire in Moscow, and the fire that destroyed the old flour mill in Liberal this week, people in 2013 might feel the bad news comes too often. The terrible tornado in Moore, Okla., has shaken people even more, as new stories tell of what people lost.

The newspaper in 1963 memorialized a similar tragedy. Thirty years before, May 23, 1933, a devastating tornado had struck Liberal, and the newspaper published old photographs of the aftereffects. John Prewett shared his snapshots from the day after. They included wreckage on Second Street, in which two men lost their lives; the broom corn warehouse near Light Grain and Milling, which recently burned down; east Eighth Street, where a vehicle was smashed behind the music store. Prewett had lived at 708 N. Washington at the time.