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From the archives of Liberal's hometown newspaper since 1886.

Researched and compiled by A.J. Coleman, L&T Reporter

1963

Local lawmen deal with murder, jail breaks

"Here's the way the Police saw it," read the front-page headline of the Southwest Daily Times. A legless man holding a pistol sat in a chair while and another man lay on the floor with a bullet wound in his abdomen. Police looked through the window of a small apartment and that's what they saw.

William Jennings Barns, 26, died and an hour later. Karl Edwin Bates, 44, in whose apartment the shot was fired, was arrested and charged with murder. Bates refused to make a written

statement, but the detective on the case said that Bates had told him that he had been drinking and Barns started to turn off the lights and Bates became scared and he took out his automatic pistol and fired.

It seemed that a romantic interest might have been part of the murder. A Mrs. Beverly Cain, 28, who had an apartment in the same building, had been dating Barns. Yet when the older Bates approached her, she said, she “refused a request from Bates because of the age difference.”

“Federal judge orders real integration in Oklahoma City schools,” read the headline of the Southwest Daily Times. A federal district judge had ruled that Oklahoma City schools had “not truly integrated and ordered compete integration of both pupils and teachers in the city’s public schools starting in December.”

“Hold girls for burglary,” read the front-page headline in the Southwest Daily Times. A short drive south of the state line, two teenage girls were being held by Ottawa County officers on charges of burglarization in Miami, for stealing $125 from a club.

Closer to home, sheriff’s officers had their hands full dealing with local situations. “Stop Jail break before it happened,” read the front page headline. Sheriff’s officers had averted a possible jailbreak when they discovered that a section of bars had been sawed in the cell of a man awaiting trial for car theft.

The hacksaw work was discovered the night before in the cell of Gene Hutchinson, 26. He was awaiting trial on a car theft charge after he was discovered in a wrecked car that was stolen earlier from the Pontiac Agency of Liberal. Six and a half hacksaw blades were discovered hidden in the overhead light fixture. Officers theorized that the blades had been shunted into the jail through a window by an outside accomplice.

“Plans are underway to remedy this defect in the jail system,” the Times reported. “The ventilation system must be kept open in hot weather and presently provides an avenue for tossing something into the jail through the high ventilation windows on the south side of the building.”

In refusing to explain how he had obtained the blades, Hutchinson took full credit or blame for the hacksaw work.

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