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Researched and compiled by Amira Coleman, L&T Reporter



1963

Farmhand accused of murdering boss

Union activity is not common in this part of Kansas, but 50 years ago, Liberal experienced a bona fide strike called by the Teamsters Union at Tradewind Industries at 7 a.m. on Nov. 12, 1963.

Protestors were there bright and early from Local 795 to show their opposition to the conditions union members were forced to work in. The president of the local branch of the union told the Times very explicitly that the company was not willing to meet with the workers and discuss the issues they were having.

The union claimed that the company was putting off the upcoming meeting, so the Teamsters had taken a secret ballot to strike if the meeting was delayed anymore. When the meeting was put off once more, 35 men took up their stations to picket.

Bobby Lee Montgomery, a 26 year-old farmhand from Sublette was accused of murdering his boss: Richard E. Rodgers.

Montgomery was being held in the Seward County Jail since the Sunday previous, and was scheduled to take a polygraph test the following Tuesday.

Rogers was killed at around 5 p.m., Sunday, at the Montgomery home by a shotgun blast that hit him in the stomach and passed through his body. The county attorney stated that the suspect did admit to shooting the deceased, but maintains that it was accidental.

Montgomery is reported to have told the officers that he had his finger on the trigger of the shotgun when Rogers jerked on the barrel.

Two men pleaded guilty to felony acts, including larceny and assault, in District Court, the week of Nov. 11, 1963, and were being transferred to the state penitentiary at Lansing to begin serving their sentences.

Donald Monday, who pleaded guilty to a grand larceny charge was set to serve a sentence of not less than one year, and not more than five.

Max Mefferd, originally charged with forcible rape, pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of assault with intent to commit a felony and drew a one- to 10-year sentence. The charge, in connection to a 14-year-old girl, was brought down in light of new evidence that had not been given during the first hearing.

The Liberal City Recreation Committee approved a proposed \$15,850 budget for 1964 on Nov. 13, and listened to the feasibility of adopting a "workreation" program for youth.

The commission, which was tax-supported, planned to carry out about the same program that they had carried out the previous year. The proposed budget and income was only approximately \$500 higher than the previous year. The improvements that were hoped to be carried out included:

- A tennis court at Fifth and Grant
- Rebuilt softball field dugouts and backstops
- Repair benches and build 16 more for Little League baseball diamonds
- Add two rows of bleachers under the press box and one additional section of bleachers at each end of the present bleachers and, possibly,
- Build two shuffle boards at Light Park.

Although many people are involved in 4-H in 2013, Liberal citizens were more enthusiastic back in 1963, with attendance more than seven times larger then, compared to today.

More than 350 Four-H club members, along with their parents and friends, attended 26th annual awards banquet sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in the Ag building Nov 14.

Dale Apel, extension specialist in Kansas 4-H work, challenged Seward County to build up its membership to 1500 in the 1970s; a goal that was actually quite feasible, considering their high attendance rate.

Every club was recognized at the banquet and participated in preparations for the banquet. Every club in the county was presented with a purple seal for outstanding overall achievement.

