

Attorney's battle for Stevenson's life

By Adrienne Grimmett
PV Historical Society

Last week we learned about the murder of Deputy Marshal R.W. Cathey by James Stevenson. Today we will learn if justice prevailed as we follow a summary of the trial.

Judge Dickerson of the Southern District called a special session of the Grand Jury to meet November 11, 1907 in Purcell, I.T., to investigate the killing. The Grand Jury indicted Stevenson a few days before Statehood.

Judge McMillan issued a bench warrant for Jim Stevenson and had him taken to the Cleveland Co. jail in Norman.

This removed him from the Federal Courts and placed him in the hands of the District Court. Stevenson was denied bail. This action later caused a legal battle.

Hon. R. McMillan, judge of the 14th Judicial District, convened court in and for Cleveland Co. Monday, November 22, 1908.

Among the big cases to be tried was that of Jim Stevenson, charged with the murder of Marshal R.W. Cathey of Pauls Valley one year prior. The case was brought to Norman on a change of venue.

The trial promised to be a fight to the finish as a formidable array of the best legal talent in the state had been obtained by both sides.

The first step taken was to swear Judge McMillan off the bench, charging that he was prejudiced against Stevenson.

He admitted his prejudice and after much arguing from the defense who wanted to elect a judge from their bar district. McMillan called upon chief Justice Williams to send down a judge.

Judge A.H. Huston of the Guthrie district was selected to hear the case.

When court convened Tuesday morning officers were stationed at the courtroom door with instructions to search every person for weapons. This action was taken because of threats made by the defendant's friends.

No weapons were found, but there were rumors that several "pocket pistols" filled with whiskey were discovered.

Judge Huston was on the bench when court convened Tuesday.

Quoting the Norman paper: "There was no "monkeying" with Judge Huston. The attorneys for the defense and prosecution were on their good behavior, as mild as sucking doves. They made their arguments fairly and squarely with no attempt to bulldoze. They knew better than to make any such attempt."

Moman Pruiett of Pauls Valley and Oklahoma City, Ben F. Williams of Norman and Yuker E. Taylor of Pauls Valley were attorneys for the defense.

Judge W.J. Jackson and Mr. Newell of Norman and R.T. Jones of Pauls Valley were the prosecutors.

The final witnesses were heard Thursday April 15, 1909. At 7:15 p.m. Judge Huston read his instructions to the jury.

The courthouse was packed to its uttermost capacity when the arguments began.

The defense had used some untruthful, unreliable witnesses of bad character.

Moman Pruiett was famous for setting free killers.

In 2001 the Oklahoma Heritage Association published a book by Howard K. Berry titled "He Made It Safe To Murder: The Life of Moman Pruiett."

I'm sad to say, the jury acquitted Jim Stevenson.

When asked by a friend how he could win such an impossible to win case, Moman answered, "I talked 'em out of it-cold turkey."

He also acted out the shooting, but had the roles reversed and dramatically fell on the floor in front of the jury as if shot by Cathey.

Because of the Stevenson verdict, four men, the Miller Gang, arrested and jailed in Ada for the murder of A.A. Gus Bobbitt, awaiting their trial, bragged that their lawyer Moman Pruiett would soon be arriving to have them released.

Unwilling to risk their acquittal, a mob broke into the jail, dragged them to a nearby livery barn and lynched them



Moman Pruiett, right, successfully defended Jim Stevenson for the murder of Pauls Valley's Deputy Marshal R.W. Cathey, above. (Photos courtesy of the Pauls Valley Historical Society)



in April 1909.

Marshal R.W. Cathey is related to David Cathey of Pauls Valley.

David spoke at a ceremony in Oklahoma City a few years ago when R.W. Cathey's name was placed on the Oklahoma

State Law Enforcement Memorial. Officer Cathey's name is also on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington D.C.

These are memorials honoring law officers killed in the line of duty.

AREA NEWS BRIEFS

Whitehead JOM

The Whitehead JOM program will hold a meeting at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 23 at the Pauls Valley Public Library. All JOM parents and grandparents are encouraged to attend. For more information, contact Lisa Baker at 238-1536.

Softball Tournament

A softball tournament to benefit Relay For Life will be at 4 p.m. April 23 at the Lindsay Griffin Memorial Sports Complex. The deadline to enter is April 20 with a fee of \$150 per team. For more information, call the

event's sponsor, IBC Bank of Lindsay, at 405-756-4494.

Pauls Valley Kiwanis

The Pauls Valley Kiwanis Club meets at noon every Wednesday at Little Ben's Pizza. For more information, call Bruce Varner at 238-6459.

Pauls Valley Rotary

The Pauls Valley Rotary Club meets at noon every Friday at Little Ben's Pizza. For more information, call John Lantz at 238-3341.

From The Files Of The Pauls Valley Daily DEMOCRAT

1995 — 10 Years Ago News:

•Work has begun on the VFW Memorial Monument in front of the Pauls Valley courthouse. The monument is being constructed in memory of all Garvin County citizens who have died during our nation's wars. The monument, being built by Jim Campbell of C & M Construction, will consist of a plaque, flagpole, flag and lights. Brick work will be held on Memorial Day for the monument.

Sports:

•Not really favored to win their own tournaments, the Pauls Valley Lady Panthers and Panthers posted a sweep in action this weekend to win the Pauls Valley Invitational. The Lady netters eased past Elk City and favorite, Tecumseh, for a first-place finish. The Panthers followed the girls lead with a first-place finish on Saturday. The Panthers and Elk City tied for the honors as both teams scored 28 points in the tournament.

1980 — 25 Years Ago News:

•While the gas shortage and higher-than-ever gasoline prices have slowed down driving and gas consumption in the rest of the country, it would seem the fate has bypassed Pauls Valley. If you don't believe it, just try parking yourself on Grant Street near the courthouse any Friday or Saturday evening. From looking at the motorists cruising up and down the streets in the area, one might think they were in some big city at about the time everyone gets off of work.

Sports:

•Around the Big Eight, there is work to be done. Oklahoma State, Kansas and Colorado all have to establish a No. 1 quarterback, but the Oklahoma Sooners would have the biggest task of all. On paper, the biggest loss is Billy Sims, the 1978 Heisman Trophy winner and the nation's

leading scorer the past two seasons. Sims rushed for 3,268 yards and 42 touchdowns the last two years. At Oklahoma State, Jimmy Johnson inherited a desolate situation when he took over as football coach last year — a 3-8 team on probation with only eight returning starters. He molded that motley crew into a 7-4, third-place finisher to earn Big Eight Coach of the Year honors. Johnson has 17 starters this season, including the best linebacker (Ricky Young) in the league.

1955 — 50 Years Ago News:

•C.T. Loftin, Chairman of the Airport Board, was astounded, he said, Sunday afternoon when he found motorcyclists holding races on the runways at the airport. Then, to cap it off, Loftin said he discovered three drivers in cars racing on the runways Monday evening. All cyclists and car drivers were warned they will be arrested if the abuses continue.

Business:

•Dr. Pepper - The Dr. Pepper Bottling Co. announced Saturday that the price of its bottled soft drink will be increased on Monday from 5 cents to 10 cents. The company blamed increased costs for the price hike — the first major price boost in the soft drink industry.

•Royal Theatre - Today thru Sat. All New Fun! "Ma and Pa Kettle at Waikiki" starring Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride.

Sports:

•The Putnam City Pirates, one of the favorites to cop the Midland Conference baseball crown this year, will invade Pauls Valley at 2:30 p.m. Monday to battle the Panthers. Pauls Valley is tied for the top spot in the league, having won a game with Edmond Tuesday. Coach O. L. Carlton said Saturday he planned no change in his lineup for Monday's game except that Lloyd Aiken would pitch.

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