

Peace Officer Assassinated

Buddy Moorhead Slain by Prisoner

Copyright The Daily Ardmoreite

Ardmore, Oklahoma

Friday, January 23, 1931

Buddy Moorhead, Ardmore city detective, was killed late this afternoon by an unidentified man. The tragedy occurred near the viaduct on highway 70 east of Ardmore. Few details are known concerning the case except that Moorhead was called to the vicinity to make an arrest. The officer got the man into his car and started to the police station. Persons nearby heard a shot and Moorhead's body was thrown from the car. His slayer drove away in the officer's car.

Killer's Car is Found Near Ardmore

Copyright The Daily Ardmoreite

Ardmore, Oklahoma

Sunday, January 25, 1931

Car Is Abandoned On Blind Road Near Chickasaw Lake

Buddie Moorhead's Killing Climaxed Career of Hijacking of O'Day,

His Confessed Companion Tells Ardmore Officers.

Discovery last night of the green Buick car used by Pat O'Day, 35, slayer of Elmer (Buddie) Moorhead, Ardmore city detective, has intensified the search for the man sought by three states to face hijacking charges. The bandit car was found by Byrd Pruitt, Morgan township constable, on a blind road near the Chickasaw lake and not far from Pruitt's home.

Police, who at first believed the slayer fled southeast out of Ardmore, were conducting an intensive search in the vicinity of Ardmore, in belief the man may be hiding here.

The machine was found near a densely thicketed pasture, and officers said the slayer probably hid in the pasture last night. The car was not out of gas.

Officers in north Texas and Oklahoma have been informed of the new development.

Carter county and Ardmore city officers are eagerly pursuing every clue in a determined effort to run down the slayer of their brother officer, who was apparently killed in cold blood and his body thrown from a rapidly moving car.

Meantime, preparations for Moorhead's funeral were being completed Saturday. The services are to be held Monday afternoon - the hour has not been determined - from the home of his mother, Mrs. J.D. Moorhead, 330 C street northwest. Harvey Brothers are in charge of the arrangements. The American Legion, of which Moorhead was one of the local post's most active and enthusiastic members, will take an active part in the funeral. Legionnaires have been particularly active in volunteer posses organized to wage a search for the slayer.

Wife and Infant Son Survive

Moorhead is survived by his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Moorhead, her infant son, Jack Spencer, his mother and four brothers, Will, Jim, Harry, and Leo, all of Ardmore; three sisters, Mrs. A.B. Sample, Medville, Pa.; Mrs. Addie Dodson, Ardmore, and Mrs. Emma Harris, Parco, Wyo. Pallbearers are as follows: Frank Jennings, L.E. Longino, Willis Tennyson, Howard Whitson, Elmer Byrd and Bill Guess.

Killing Stirs Citizens

The slaying of Moorhead was one of the most cold-blooded crimes in many months in this section. It aroused deep resentment in all parts of the city and state newspapers have given it widespread mention.

Moorhead left the city police station late Friday afternoon to take a set of second-hand tires to a family of campers who had camped on the property just east of the underpass on the Santa Fe on highway no. 70. The family, destitute, had promised to move on if they were provided with the casings. Someone provided the tires and Moorhead took them to the scene.

Was on Errand of Mercy

At the site of the camp he found a number of squatters. Slightly to one side of the other tents and wagons was a 1929 Buick green sedan. Two men were in the car. One sat in the front seat and the other in the back. The car had no license plates. His suspicions aroused, Moorhead approached and began to query the men. He received brief answers.

He looked into the car and saw a revolver on the cushion beside the man in the front seat. He reached in, picked up the gun and thrust it in his belt.

He then ordered the two men to leave the car. The one in the front seat responded readily. He was a young man around 18, later arrested and identified as Roy Wilson, Kerrville, Texas. He is being held in the county jail. He has made a detailed statement to county and city officers regarding the case and nearly a score of filling station holdups which he says O'Day directed.

Got Drop on Officer

O'Day was slower to leave the car. When he did reach the ground, he held a drawn gun in his hand. He thrust the weapon forward and demanded that Moorhead raise his arms. O'Day

disarmed the officer and handed the two guns taken from the detective to Wilson. Wilson laid the weapons in a wagon. Later he took them out and laid them on the ground.

O'Day seems to have ordered Moorhead to enter the Buick sedan. The outlaw climbed into the car under the wheel. Driving with his right hand, he held the muzzle of the revolver in his left hand pressed against Moorhead's ribs.

The car proceeded West to the point where the road turns off to the refinery district. Making a wide loop, O'Day turned the car and headed east again.

As the car approached the underpass, it was moving at slow speed. Suddenly a shot rang out. The car increased speed and as it passed the place where Wilson stood, the door was suddenly pushed open and the body of the officer tumbled to the pavement. The car roared away toward Madill along the highway.

Died Without Speaking

Moorhead, shot through the body just under the ribs, staggered to his feet. He reeled a few feet along the pavement and slumped on the ground. He died without saying a word.

Apparently, officers assert, the bandit shot Moorhead because he could not figure out what other disposition to make of the kidnaped detective.

Passersby loaded the body into a car and brought it to town. Officers immediately began phoning towns in all directions. Poses left on all roads. An airplane, piloted by Arthur Oakley, was sent out in an effort to locate the car.

Meantime, Wilson had left the scene on foot. He walked along the railroad and out to highway No. 77. By that time it was getting dusk and he decided to return to town to stay over night. Enroute he was apprehended and when questioned readily admitted that he had been at the place and was the companion of the slayer of Moorhead.

Companion Tells of Crimes

He tells a detailed story of the activities of O'Day and himself since soon after Christmas. According to his story he was an employe of O'Day's step-father in Kerrville, Texas where both men are said to live. O'Day suggested sometime about Jan. 1 that "we go and find work." Wilson agreed.

The two men drove from town to town for several days. Then one night according to his story to the county attorney, Marvin Schilling, O'Day drove his car into a filling station. "You stay right here," O'Day admonished him.

O'Day entered the station and thrust a gun into the face of the startled proprietor. Wilson said he saw the man hand the hijacker money. O'Day came to the car and drove away. This was repeated several times in Texas, several other times in Oklahoma and in Arkansas.

It was in this state, he said that they picked up a third man identified only as Jack Riley. Somewhere out near Texarkana, the trio held up a toll bridge operator and took \$32. Later they returned to Texas where Riley left them.

Afraid to Leave, Youth Says

They reached Ardmore at around 10 o'clock Friday. They stopped at the camp site and, as had been the practice, O'Day order Wilson to prepare coffee. O'Day had refused, Wilson related, to let him leave and return to Kerrville.

"I stayed with him because I was afraid that he would kill me if I left," Wilson declared.

Wilson is being held in jail and Shilling declared that he would be charged with murder.

Moorhead's death was the second to be recorded against outlaws in recent weeks in which peace officers were victims. Con Keirse, deputy sheriff, was shot to death about a month ago under somewhat similar circumstances.

Moorhead was a popular officer. He had been an efficient member of the department since Aug 1, 1929. According to reports, his services had been exceptionally efficient and his death caused much resentment among fellow officers and citizens.

Hundreds Visit Scene

The scene of the slaying was visited by throngs of curious spectators all afternoon and evening Friday and the crowd resumed its visits Saturday. The police station was thronged practically all night with friends and well-wishers anxious for word of the capture of the slayer.

Officers in charge of the work declared that the search would continue without abatement. Several clues had been found, they say, which are to be completely run to earth.

Practically the entire force of police and sheriff's office worked all night and all day Saturday. Forced by sheer physical exhaustion, they left the task only long enough to refresh themselves and return to the case.

BILL GUESS KILLS MOORHEAD'S SLAYER

KILLER IS SHOT TO DEATH WHILE TRYING TO FLEE

Copyright The Daily Ardmoreite

Friday, January 30, 1931

Ardmore, Oklahoma

Elbert Hart, Arrested at Estelline, Texas, Killed by Carter

County Deputy As He Tried to Escape.

STORY OF LONG PURSUIT TOLD

Hart Was in Lone Grove Last Saturday and Ringling Monday,

It is Revealed.

Elbert Hart, alias Pat O'Day, identified as the slayer of Buddie Moorhead, city detective, came to the end of his trail at 9 o'clock Thursday night in Estelline, Texas, when he was shot to death by Bill Guess, deputy sheriff. Hart attempted to escape after he had been arrested and Guess shot him three times with a .44 caliber revolver. Hart died instantly.

Guess, in company with Bennett Wallace, special officer, had been trailing Hart for three days.

Positive identification of Hart was made Friday by relatives and also by Roy Wilson, companion of the slain bandit, who was taken from the Carter county jail to Memphis, Texas, Thursday night by Elmer Byrd, sheriff, and Marvin Schilling, county attorney. It was Wilson who gave the officers their initial identification of the man who shot Moorhead to death and then threw his body from a speeding car on highway No. 70, near the city limits.

Hale Dunn and Wade Peterson, city mounted policeman, also are in Memphis to join in the identification work and to wind up unfinished clues in the case.

Guess' Bond Guaranteed

Freeman Galt, of the American Bank and Trust company of Ardmore, wired Memphis banks authority to guarantee a \$2500 appearance bond for Guess subject to his appearance for a trial on Feb. 9. Guess requested that he be charged and given trial as a matter of clearing the record.

"We are glad to have the honor of guaranteeing the bond of Guess," said Galt. "We are always more than willing to help our enforcement officers in their warfare on crime."

Bill Guess, a close personal friend of Moorhead, and his partner in city detective work up to last Jan. 7, when Guess resigned to become a deputy sheriff, told his version of the capture and killing by telephone Friday.

In Lone Grove Saturday

"Hart was in Lone Grove on Saturday afternoon," Guess said. "He worked several hours at a filling station digging a hole and putting in concrete for the operator. His appearance aroused suspicion and word was sent to officers.

"We immediately got on the trail, We followed him closely. He was in Ringling on Sunday morning and on Sunday night he had reached Quanah, Texas. On Monday he was in Estelline where he has a brother, W.T. Hart, who operated a combination grocery and filling station on the edge of town.

"We reached this part of the country late Wednesday night and continued work until Thursday when we spotted him at the station.

"At 9 o'clock Thursday night, Bennett and myself, with Sheriff Alexander of Hall county, Chief of Police W.C. Huddleston of Memphis, Constable J.W. Snow and Constable Williams of Estelline, went to the filling station.

Greeted by Wallace

"Hart was there. We walked into the place, 'Why, hello Pat,' Bennett said to the man. He turned pale as a paper. We told him to come along with us. When we were at the car, he turned, jerked lose and ran away in the dark.

"I drew my gun and fired three times. Two of the bullets struck him in the chest and one in the head. He was about 30 feet away when I fired my last shot."

The body was taken to a morgue at Memphis and Guess reported the matter to Byrd. The sheriff with the county attorney immediately left for Texas, taking Wilson with them to positively identify Hart as Moorhead's slayer and to clear up matters so that the Carter county officers could return to their homes.

Apparently Guess is entitled to the reward posted by the governor for the capture of the slayer of the Ardmore detective. W.H. Batis, Ardmore businessman, who has been working up a private fund to reward the officer making the capture, announced that he has \$105 in the fund and that it will be added to that offered by the governor.

County and city officers are highly pleased with news of the termination of the search for the slayer of their fellow.

Crime Has Tough Sledding

It was pointed out that crime has had "tough sledding" in Carter county in the last few months. The present wave of major events began, it is explained with the holdup some months ago of the State bank of Wirt. Out of that case come the arrest and conviction of one of the robbers and the death, in Oklahoma City, a few weeks later of his companion. A short time after that Con Keirse, deputy sheriff, was shot to death and Vernon Cason, undersheriff, wounded in a battle with Colquitt Davis and his brother at Wirt. Out of that crime came the death of Colquitt. Then came the Moorhead murder, described as one of the most deliberate and cold-blooded killings in many years, and as its aftermath the slaying of Hart in Estelline Thursday night.

Meantime some speculation is being heard as to what disposition will be made of Wilson. The youth apparently had no direct part in the killing of Moorhead. He is wanted, however in Hope, Ark., for highway robbery with firearms - a capital crime - and also for participation in a number of filling station hold-ups.

The car in which Moorhead was shot to death and which Hart and Wilson were driving, later found abandoned near Ardmore, has been turned over to its owner from Sonora, Texas. It was stolen from there some weeks ago.

It is reported that Hart has a wife and family at Sonora but this has not been confirmed.

Texas Sheriff Was Here

The sheriff of Sonora was in Ardmore Thursday conferring with officers on disposition of the car and aiding in description of the wanted man.

Meantime Freeman Galt, trustee of a memorial fund planned for Moorhead and to have been presented to his widow and her young child, declared that only \$43 has been donated. An urgent appeal to all citizens to contribute to this worth cause was sounded.