

Keirsey is Killed

Cason is Wounded

Officers Spread Net for

Two Assailants of Carter County Men

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Ardmore, Oklahoma

Thursday, December 11, 1930

Southern Oklahoma and North Texas Combed for Participants of Gun Battle in House of Wirt; Two Women Companions of Slayers Are Jailed Here.

Con Keirsey, 36, for the last 10 years a colorful and widely known figure in the annals of crime investigation in Oklahoma, died at 3 o'clock, Thursday morning of gunshot wounds received at 5:30 o'clock Wednesday afternoon when he and Vernon D. Cason, undersheriff, attempted to investigate the reported theft of a car at Wirt. Cason, shot through the abdomen, is at the Hardy sanitarium in a serious, although not critical, condition. He was shot at the same time Keirsey was mortally wounded.

Meantime, a vast net has been thrown over all Oklahoma and north Texas in an effort to apprehend D.I Davis, 25, and Colquitt Davis, 23, alleged bank robbers and hijackers, who slew Keirsey and wounded Cason. The fugitives are believed to be traveling in Keirsey's red Chrysler sedan, 1929 model. They were last heard of at 6:30 o'clock Wednesday evening in Ringling.

There, they visited the office of Dr. S.M. Edwards, pioneer physician, and demanded that he give the older man surgical attention. Edwards did so, dressing a flesh wound in both of Davis's arms. He had been shot by Cason after the officer had fallen to the floor.

Friends Pass Bier

Meantime, a steady stream of friends and acquaintances have been solemnly passing beside the bier on which Keirsey's body rests at the Harvey Brothers establishment. He is said to have had scores of friends in all parts of Oklahoma and inquiries have been received from many cities as word of the tragedy spread as to the facts in the case and arrangements for the funeral.

County and city officers, red eyed from a sleepless night of work, steadfastly carried on their systematic search for the slayers of their fellow officer Thursday morning.

Word from Oklahoma City early Thursday said that Governor W.J. Holloway had posted rewards of \$500 each for the information leading to arrest and conviction of the two brothers.

Two Women Jailed Here

Two women, alleged companions of the pair, are being held in the county jail. They are said to have provided officers with the identity of the two bandits. Their names are given as Marie and Katherine Fox and they are reported sisters. Their home is in the panhandle district of Texas and they are reported to have accompanied the Davis brothers to Wirt from that district some weeks ago.

They are said to be relatives of the Jones family in whose humble home the fatal gun battle was staged late Wednesday afternoon.

Consideration for the safety of women in the house may have been responsible for Keirse's death, it was believed at the sheriff's office Thursday. Keirse said before he died that he did not resist the gun play of the Davis pair at first because he did not want to risk the lives of the several women and children in the crowded room. Had he done so, friends feel that perhaps he might have come out of the tragic situation safely.

According to the best available reports of the affair, Keirse and Cason were called to Wirt late Wednesday to investigate a report that a stolen car was in the vicinity. The suspected car was seen parked in front of a three room shack in the town of Wirt. Finding the front door locked, the two officers went around the house to the rear. Two back doors - opening into different rooms - were revealed. Keirse knocked on one of these and an elderly woman came to the door. She admitted the officer.

Found Himself Covered

Inside, Keirse found a number of women, several children and one young man who was walking nervously to and fro across the room.

"Whose car is that?" the officer asked.

"It's mine," said the young man.

Keirse sat down and began to question the youth. Suddenly a second man rose from under the cover on the tumbled bed in one corner.

"Who wants to know about that car?" he snarled.

Keirse turned to find himself facing two guns. As he turned back the other man had also drawn a gun.

Keirse was ordered to give up his own revolver. "I'll lay it on the floor," the officer said. "It might go off and hurt someone."

"Is that so?" said one of the armed men, "well, damn you, mine's going off right now and it's going to kill you, you _____!"

Cason Shot Down

Meantime, Cason, at the other door, hearing the loud talk, ran into the room. As he did so, one of the men, believed to have been Crockett, turned and fired pointblank at the advancing undersheriff. The bullet struck Cason full in the stomach but ranged sharply downward and into the hip. He fell to the floor, firing as he fell. He shot four times, two of the bullets taking effect in the arms of D.I. Davis.

Keirsey grappled with the other brother and was shot in the chin, the bullet plowing through the neck, severing the windpipe, cutting the nerve which operates the respiratory system and slashing through the left lung and almost through the skin at the back of the shoulder blade.

Girl Saves Cason's Life

The two Davis brothers then took Cason's gun and left the room. They returned a few seconds later and declared that they intended to kill Cason as he lay on the floor. Apparently they did fire two shots at him, as there is a flesh wound on either side of this throat - just close enough to sear the flesh. The girls pleaded with the bandits not to slay the wounded man and the pair yielded. After leaving the house, they took Keirsey's car and drove rapidly away.

Keirsey was able, it is said, to drag himself a few doors away and call for help. The wounded men were hastened to Healdton, where Dr. D.E. Cantrell gave them emergency treatment and then had an ambulance bring both to the Hardy Sanitarium.

Attending physicians declared, on investigation, that Keirsey's case was hopeless and it was only his tremendous stamina that kept him alive through the fore part of the night and on into the morning.

Jess Mason, deputy sheriff, summoned to Wirt, made a thorough investigation into the case and arrested the two women who said they had come to Wirt some two weeks previously to see their sister, Mrs. Jones, at whose place the shooting occurred.

Description Broadcast

Description of the two young men was broadcast from several radio stations Thursday. They are said to be about average height and weigh around 135 pounds. Both have curly hair, but one is a blond and the other a brunette.

Keirsey Funeral Friday

Funeral services for Keirsey are to be held at 3 o'clock Friday afternoon from the First Baptist church, it was said Wednesday. All details have not been worked out.

Coincidentally, Keirsey's older brother, James former chief of police of Seminole, was shot to death by a desperado whom he sought to arrest on Nov. 7, 1929 - just a little over a year ago.

However, in that case, the slayer was slain by a fellow officer. This incident took place at Seminole.

Cliff Keirse, another brother, resigned from the Wichita Falls, Texas police force and succeeded his slain brother as police chief of Seminole - a position he now holds. He arrived in Ardmore last night just before Keirse died.

Con Keirse had been a peace officer in Carter county for nearly 12 years. He became a deputy sheriff at the time Ewing London became sheriff and served throughout that administration. He then became a member of the force of Walter Colbert, incumbent sheriff, and worked vigorously since that appointment.

Keirse was regarded as one of the most valuable and active peace officers in the state. He had natural bent for police work and had been associated in the investigation of many cases.

His latest and most spectacular job was the running to earth of H.L. Darr, bank robber, who with companions as yet unapprehended, held up the Wirt State bank several weeks ago. Keirse worked on the investigation of that holdup- the first and only bank robbery in this county- ceaselessly for weeks. Eventually he arrested Darr, the defendant was found guilty and is under sentence of 20 years for the crime. He was still working on the other men in the job at the time of his death.

Keirse had wide acquaintance in Oklahoma. He had a remarkable memory and it was said by fellow officers that one he "spotted" a man that he never forgot what the man looked like. He could give details and descriptions of men he had arrested and had seen arrested years after the incident- a valuable asset in the pursuit of criminals.

Wife, Six Children Survive

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Bella E. Keirse of 1202 McLish avenue; five children, W.D. Keirse, 17; Georgia Lou, 15; Carlene, 8; Vella Key, 4; and Con Jr., six months; his mother, Mrs. M.J. Trott, of Mead; four brothers, Cliff of Seminole; Milton and George of Mead, and Ben at Durant; three sisters, Mrs. Yarborough, of Keirse; Mrs. Vivian Franklin and Mrs. Juanita Allen of Mead.

Meantime, Cason is believed to be responding to treatment in satisfactory fashion. His condition is such that visitors are not being admitted but it is regarded by physicians that his recovery is certain providing complications do not arise. He has served as undersheriff since the opening of Colbert's administration.

Two Men Wanted for Texas Murder

Police Chief Cain of Amarillo, Texas, arrived in Ardmore just about 10 hours too late to capture the men he wanted and thereby preventing perhaps the killing of Con Keirse and the wounding of Vernon Cason.

Cain reached Ardmore early Thursday morning hot on the trail of D.I. Davis and Colquitt Davis whom he wanted for the murder of a groceryman in Amarillo, last Saturday night. The men were reported in this district and Cain was on this way to get them.

"If I had arrived earlier," he told John L. Hodge, county attorney, I could have warned your officers what they were up against and maybe we could have prevented the tragedy. The Davis boys are bad men and I had little hope of arresting them alive.

Cain said he knows both of the men well and that they are killers.

RINGLING DOCTOR TREATS WOUNDS

Dr. S. M. Edwards Forces Armed Man to

Withdraw While He Dresses Wounds.

RINGLING, Dec 11.- (Special) - Two desperate men, one wounded in both arms and the other bearing two revolvers, called at the home of Dr. S. M. Edwards, pioneer physician of this city at 6:30 o'clock last night.

"We want you to fix this wound up for us," said one of the men.

"No," said Dr. Edwards, "I'd rather not meddle with it. Go back to town, there are doctors there. They'll take care of you."

"We were up town," said one of the men, "and they sent us to you".

Dr. Edwards, fearing trouble, agreed to look at the wounds. He led the way into his office. The wounded man sat down in the operating chair. The other man sat down nearby and drew two revolvers.

Dr. Edwards turned to him.

"You put those guns up and get out of my office," he ordered. "I won't touch your friend until you do."

The armed man hesitated a bit and then suddenly withdrew from the room and returned to the car in which the pair had driven to the Edward's home.

The men have been identified as D.I. Davis and Colquitt Davis, slayers of Con Keirse, Carter county deputy sheriff, less than two hours before the time that they reached Ringling. In turn, one of the pair was wounded by Vernon Cason, undersheriff of Carter county.

MAN HUNT WIDENS OVER THREE STATES

FORMAL CHARGES OF MURDER FILED AGAINST SLAYERS

Southwest Aroused by Slaying of Deputy Keirsey

and Wounding Deputy Cason, Seeks Killers

FINAL TRIBUTE IS PAID KEIRSEY

Impressive Funeral Service for Dead Peace Officer

Held at First Baptist Church

Copyright The Daily Ardmoreite

Ardmore, Oklahoma

Friday, December 12, 1930

A man hunt that now covers three southwestern states and steadily expanding into other territory, Friday had failed to reveal the whereabouts of Colquitt Davis and D.I. Davis, youthful outlaws, who Wednesday afternoon shot their way to freedom in a tiny residence at Wirt. Out of this gun battle came the death of Con Keirsey, veteran Southern Oklahoma peace officer, who despite his youth had more than 15 years of experience back of him as a pursuer of crime and criminals. At the Hardy sanitarium, Vernon Cason, undersheriff, lies painfully wounded - one of the bandit's bullets having struck him in the abdomen. His condition is regarded as increasingly favorable, it is stated.

No trace of the two bandits, wanted in Amarillo, Texas, for murder as well as in Ardmore, has been had since they passed Ringling, only a matter of minutes after the termination of the gun battle. Meantime, formal charges of murder have been filed against both men by County Attorney John L. Hodge.

Driving Keirsey's car, the two slayers, one of whom is wounded in both arms, are believed to be hiding somewhere in some isolated section of Southern Oklahoma or northern Texas.

Keirsey Funeral Held

Arrangements for the funeral of Keirsey were completed late Thursday. Services were held Friday at 3 o'clock from the First Baptist church. Dr. W. Lee Rector, paster of the church, will officiate. Harvey Bros. are in charge of the arrangements. Interment is to be in Rose Hill cemetery.

The body was taken from the chapel to the Keirsey home at 1202 McLish late Thursday. Hundreds and hundreds of friends of the slain officer have visited the funeral parlors for a last sight of the dead officer.

Pallbearers for the services were R. S. Hayden, Walter Colbert, Jess F. Dunn, Elmer Byrd, T. M. Byrd and Ollie Anderton - fellow officers with whom Keirsej has served for many years in Carter county.

Telegrams expressing sympathy and assuring the officers here of full hearted cooperation in efforts to apprehend the murders have been received from police and sheriff departments of many southwestern towns.

Two Girls Still Held

Meantime, Katherine and Marie Fox, girl companions of the Davis brothers, are held in the county jail. Hugo Alexander, 45, and Henry Fox, 56, who are said to have been near the premises of the Jones home at Wirt where the shooting took place, have been arrested and are being held for material witnesses. They were arrested at Moore, near Oklahoma City. Jess Mason, deputy sheriff, will bring the men to Ardmore Friday night.

Photographs of Colquitt Davis, received from the Oklahoma City bureau, show the younger of the brothers to be a youth of only 18 or 19 years. He has a typically criminal face, with a sharply defined scar across his right cheek. He is believed to be the actual slayer of Keirsej. At the time the photograph was made he was 17 years old and was arrested in Oklahoma City for vagrancy. He is now around 19 and has a criminal record which covers a score of cities and as many crimes, it is said.

Keirsej was the third member of his family to meet death at the hands of gunmen, according to Cliff Keirsej, a brother, who is chief of police at Seminole. An uncle was waylaid and slain several years ago in Bryan county. Thirteen months ago Keirsej's older brother, James, was buried at Seminole following his slaying in an oil field cafe when he attempted to arrest a desperate bank robber. Many of the Keirsej family have served as peace officers - four of the six brothers having held commissions in recent years.

Honorary Pallbearers

Honorary pallbearers for the services announced Friday were J. Berry King, Jess Mason, Hale Dunn, Bill Guess, Bill Townsend, Monroe Gunter, Les Wilkinson, Walter Thompson, Carl Holden, Cecil Crosby, R. H. Brett, Red Erwin, Tom Wilkes, Marvin Shilling, John B. Ogden, H. H. Brown, Fount Duston, Ed Chancellor, George Smith, Alvin Bruce, J. A. Bass, J. M. Hodge, E. E. Schenk, J. B. Champion and Thomas W. Champion.

One Killer Is Slain By Police Officers

D.I. DAVIS SHOT IN GUN BATTLE WITH OFFICERS

His Brother, Colquitt Davis, and "Cherokee Joe," a Companion

Desert Dying Man to Escape.

DETECTIVE IS OVERPOWERED

Three Make Dash for Liberty After Physician

Had Called Wichita Police Officers.

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Ardmore, Oklahoma

Sunday, December 14, 1996

WICHITA, Kan., Dec. 13 - Police tonight were without definite clues to aid them in their search for two prisoners who fled, leaving a companion wounded fatally after a gun battle late yesterday in which two bystanders were wounded, and which threw the business district of Wichita into an uproar.

Deputy sheriffs at Newkirk, Okla., who this morning reported they believed they had the men cornered, this afternoon had found no trace of them after searching suspected hiding places.

The officers believed the pair, Colquitt Davis, and "Cherokee Joe" alias Chief Bonner, both of Amarillo, Texas, were the men who late last night abandoned a truck near Newkirk; they said they believed the men abandoned a car in which they fled from Wichita and entered the truck soon after leaving here. No trace of the car was found.

Davis Refused to Talk

D.I. Davis, 21, Amarillo, brother of Colquitt, who was wounded fatally by police, resisted all efforts of officers to obtain information from him before his death which might aid in the tracing the escaped pair.

His only response to questions was, "You guys know I won't say anything."

The Davis brothers were wanted at Ardmore, Okla., in connection with the fatal shooting at Wirt, Okla., of Con Keirse, deputy sheriff and the wounding of Vernon Cason, undersheriff. They also were wanted at Amarillo in connection with the slaying of Harold McCarrick, a grocer.

The shooting here resulted when police attempted to arrest the men when they sought medical attention for D.I. Davis, who was suffering from a bullet wound, believed to have been inflicted in the fight with Oklahoma officers.

Dr. H. C. Curtis, from whom they sought aid, became suspicious when they told conflicting stories as to how the wound was inflicted. Under pretense of getting bandages from the next room he called police.

Overpowered Detective

The trio overpowered Glenn Davis, a city detective, took his gun and forced him to lead the way downstairs. The detective bolted through an open door of an office on the fifth floor of the building and called aid from the police station, only a few feet away. He pointed out the men to brother officers on the street from the office window as the men left the building.

The men fled to a nearby garage, took a motor car and fled, returning police fire. D.I. Davis was deserted after being shot by an officer. More than 50 shots were exchanged.

Dr. A. J. Bowman, Salt Lake City, attached to the United States Veterans bureau here, and Elenore Abelmbrough, 15, where shot in the leg. Neither was wounded seriously.

D.I. Davis is said by police to have served a term in Texas penitentiary for theft.

Stopped in Gainesville

GAINESVILLE, TEXAS, Dec. 13. - (Special) - Colquitt Davis, who fled after a gun battle with Wichita, Kan., officers Friday night, and D.I. Davis, who was fatally wounded in the same battle, were in Gainesville Tuesday, it developed today.

The Gainesville Register posted a picture of D.I. Davis in one of it's windows today and a Negro porter in the Robert Walker's barbershop identified the picture as that of a man who got a hair cut and shave in the barber shop Tuesday. The identification was verified by two barbers.

The man kept his coat on and told the barber that the fastest way he could do the work would be too slow.

A companion remained in the car while D.I. Davis was in the barber shop. When he returned his companion went into Webb's cafe to eat. Mr. and Mrs. Webb today identified a picture of Colquitt Davis as their customer. The Davis brothers are believed to have been on their way to Wirt when they stopped in Gainesville.

COLQUITT DAVIS MAY BE BROUGHT HERE

CARTER COUNTY OFFICERS GO TO TEXAS FOR MAN

Sheriff Walter Colbert Heads Party Seeking to

Return Young Man to Face Trial in Killing Keirsey.

AMARILLO IS TO SURRENDER MAN

Young Desperado, However, Has Indicated

He Will Fight Extradition to Oklahoma.

Copyright The Daily Ardmoreite

Ardmore, Oklahoma

Tuesday, December 16, 1930

AMARILLO, Texas, Dec. 16. - Subdued, cowed and trembling from both fright and exposure, Colquitt Davis, 19, wanted in connection with two murders and numerous robbery and theft charges, today asked officers to let him sign an extradition waiver and return to Oklahoma for trial in connection with the slaying of Con Keirse, deputy sheriff, last Wednesday.

District Attorney Edward W. Thomerson and local officers had not decided what disposition will be made of Davis. Oklahoma officers had asked for his return to that state. The Potter county grand jury was investigating his escapades in this vicinity, but no charges had been filed.

It was believed, however, the youthful bandit would be released to Oklahoma.

Colquitt Davis, 20 year old desperado, wanted in Ardmore for participation in the slaying of Con Keirse and the wounding of Vernon Cason, deputy sheriffs, may be returned to Ardmore to stand trial, it was announce Tuesday from Amarillo, Texas, where the youth is being held in the Potter county jail.

Davis was arrested late Monday afternoon near Hereford, Texas, about 40 miles from Amarillo. He was taken into custody by a Hereford city policeman, who encountered the fugitive walking across a field near the city limits. Davis, weary from the prolonged vigil he was forced to maintain since he and his brother, D.I. Davis, now in a morgue in Wichita, Kan., shot Keirse and Cason at Wirt last Wednesday evening, gave himself up without a struggle. He quietly responded to the officer's order to put up his hands. A gun fell to the ground. Another was taken from his person by the officer.

He was taken to Amarillo, where he faces charges of murder in connection with the death of Harold McCarrick, a grocer. McCarrick was slain several days prior to the Wirt episode. The youth also is wanted in connection with a number of other charges, including a number of robberies with firearms in the Panhandle district.

Officers Go to Amarillo

Walter Colbert, sheriff; Monroe Gunter, deputy sheriff, and Dwight Bell, special officer, left immediately in a motor car for Amarillo on receipt of word that Davis had been arrested.

The Carter county officers arrived in Amarillo shortly afternoon today and anticipated no trouble in securing the return of Davis, the sheriff's office was informed.

The sheriff's office communicated with Amarillo by telephone Tuesday morning and the Potter county officials declared they were willing to turn Davis to Carter county for prosecution, since the case against him in this county is materially stronger than the one in Potter county. However,

Davis prefers to stand trial for his misdeeds in Texas and has declined to sign waivers to extradition. This, officials believe, will make little difference - only a matter of delay. It is felt that the Texas governor would not stand in the way of justice by refusing to issue the proper papers entitling the Oklahoma officers to remove the prisoner to Ardmore.

Denies Shooting Keirse

Davis, when arrested, denied that he had shot Keirse. He also denied the Amarillo slaying. He said that D.I. Davis, the brother slain by officers in Wichita, Kan., had fired the shot which ended the Ardmore officer's life. This seems to be borne out by the evidence. At the time that Keirse received his fatal wound, according to officers, he was seated on top of Colquitt Davis. D.I. Davis had just shot Cason down. Apparently Keirse turned to see what had happened to Cason just in time to receive a bullet from his own gun, removed from his person earlier, in the chin and neck.

Davis explained the shooting only by saying that D.I. Davis did not like officers and wanted to evade arrest. D.I. Davis was wounded in both arms by Cason as the latter lay wounded on the floor. It was when he applied to a Kansas physician for medical attention that he was shot to death by an officer notified by the surgeon of the suspicious circumstances surrounding his patient's wounds.

When the Davis brothers left Wirt they took Keirse's car with them. Apparently they drove first to Amarillo. There they disposed of the car - no trace of it having yet been found - and took another car. This was the car Colquitt drove to Wichita and later back to Canyon City, near Amarillo.

Car Betrays Him

Weary with long hours of constant driving and almost exhausted from lack of sleep and food, Colquitt had planned to abandon the car at this point and take a train. Somehow, possibly because of his fear of apprehension, he missed the train. His car, the motor still warm, was found by officers. It was recognized and a search of the district began.

Afoot, Davis started along the railway track. Cold weather, only such as can exist in the bleak and treeless plains country of west Texas, swept down upon him. He spent a chill and bitter night at a switch called Dawn. With the coming daylight he started on foot again.

Crossing a field near Hereford he was seen by a policeman - part of the network of possemen on his trail.

The officer demanded his surrender, and the youth meekly complied, thus bringing to an end a search that had covered three states. His surrender was not anticipated since it was generally believed that the bandit would shoot it out with officers when cornered.

Indian Not Located

The Indian youth, variously identified as William Daily, William Mann and other aliases, supposed to have been with Colquitt Davis at Wichita, has not been located and was not with Davis when the latter was taken into custody.

Meantime, machinery was already been set in motion to clear the legal obstacles to bringing the prisoner to Ardmore. His sweetheart, Marie Fox, her sister, Katharine, her father, Henry Fox, and her sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Alexander, all of whom were in the vicinity of the oil field shanty in which the fatal gun duel was staged, are being held as material witnesses.

Note: William Con Keirse and his wife Vella are buried in Rose Hill Cemetery, Ardmore, Oklahoma, in Block 49. Their markers are located just a few feet west of the Main entrance gate (west of the caretaker's building) next to the north fence.