

The Pensacola Journal

Cloudy, Showers

Partly cloudy with scattered showers. High 85; low 70. (More weather on Page 2A)

Johnson Signs Bill to End Crisis

Congress Bans U.S. Rail Walkout

37 Died in 'Vendetta'

Three Convicts Blamed in Fire

By BILL TAYLOR
Journal Staff Writer

MILTON — Prisoners who survived a fire that took the lives of 37 of 51 inmates at Berrydale State Prison Camp Sunday night testified at an inquest Monday that three prisoners plotted in advance to "tear the place apart." Newspaper and toilet paper were used to start fires in either end of the building.

Their testimony came while the charred bodies of the victims of the state's worst prison fire were undergoing autopsies in an effort to establish identification. They said the three died in the fire.

A state inspection report dated June 6, 1967, had said the wooden building and equipment were in good shape.

The convicts testified that it was approximately six minutes before a guard unlocked the door after the fire started. They said the plot was hatched jointly by two white convicts and a Negro.

Officials said previously the building was destroyed in eight minutes.

The inquest was held before County Judge Mahlon McCall in the county seat of Santa Rosa County just 20 miles from the community of Jay near where the prison camp tragedy occurred.

Joseph C. Lewis, 30, an inmate who said he saved himself by ducking under a bunk and crawling to safety once the prison's exit was unlocked, testified: "I heard they were going to put the building out of commission."

Convict Henry W. Lambert, a cook at the camp, said, "I saw somebody turn the television off and then smash it. Then they were whacking at the fluorescent lights making them pop."

Gary Allen Powell, 19, said, "the ruckus started in the back. Someone jumped on the

bed and started beating the lights out. The guard told us to put out the fire. He said he didn't have the key."

The convicts were brought into court in their prison pants, blue with a white stripe down the side, and T-shirts charred by ashes and smoke. Some of

the prisoners had no shirts and one was bandaged.

Meanwhile, Gov. Claude Kirk Monday ordered a full scale investigation into the fire that swept through the wooden barracks at the prison camp about 9:30 p.m., trapping all but 14

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Courts Ready To Take Action Moving Trains

WASHINGTON (UPI)—Congress approved and President Johnson signed Monday night an order for railroad workers to return to work immediately, ending the nation's first general rail strike since 1946.

Management said trains could be rolling again Tuesday morning. Union officials protested a feature of the new law calling for a compulsory settlement of their contract dispute failing voluntary agreement within 90 days, and there was talk by one of a possible delay in manning the trains.

But the Justice Department was ready to seek a back-to-work court injunction at the first sign of foot dragging. The law made it clear the strikers had no legal choice but to obey promptly.

Johnson signed the bill, containing the formula he had proposed 75 days ago for a final solution to the dispute, about the time he had predicted earlier that the entire rail system would be totally paralyzed. He had appealed for swift congressional action to cope with "a national crisis."

The Senate passed the bill, 69 to 20. Three hours later, the House swallowed its earlier objections and gave final congressional approval, 244 to 148.

The President's formula, endorsed as the first general rail strike in 21 years neared the end of its second day, would prohibit any strikes or walkouts until Jan. 1, 1969. It would impose a compulsory settlement failing voluntary agreement by the railroads and six shoperaft unions in the first 90 days.

It was the compulsory feature of Johnson's plan that the House rejected June 15 and which opponents protested Monday.

"Compulsory arbitration — compulsory labor—is foreign to our land," declared Rep. Harley O. Staggers, D-W.Va., chairman of the House Commerce Committee. "If we take this road there is no turning back."

He urged the House to reject

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Strike Halts Trains Here

No trains arrived or departed Pensacola Sunday or Monday.

A 5 p.m. Frisco freight, due to pass through Pensacola en route to Memphis, Tenn., and St. Louis, Mo., didn't arrive, according to Tom Norvell, train master and general agent here.

C. B. Mathews, assistant superintendent for the Louisville and Nashville lines here, said no L & N trains have moved through Pensacola since the strike began at midnight Saturday.

The L & N normally has two freight trains passing through Pensacola between Jacksonville and New Orleans daily, one traveling each way between Pensacola and Mobile, one going each way between Pensacola and Chattanooga.

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Adult Answer

When four-year-old Martin Green went fishing with his father and got tangled in the line he had an adult answer. "How will you get out of it?" asked his father.

Martin pondered a moment, then: "Well, I'll just worry about it."

—ARTHUR COBB



The Cage Where Convicts Died in Fire

(See pictures, Page 6A)

(Pensacola Journal photo by Bill Taylor)

All Went Wild

'This Is It!' And Hell Broke

News-Journal Bureau

MILTON — "One of them yelled, 'This is it!' and began tearing down light fixtures.

"A guy went down to the end and started a fire and another one went to the other end and started a fire there."

So testified Joseph C. Lewis, 30, Monday at an inquest into the flash fire at the state prison camp at Berrydale Sunday night that snuffed out the lives of 37 of 51 convicts in less than eight minutes.

"Three of them wanted to put the building out of commission," Lewis told a coroner's jury. He identified the three as Joseph Earl Waynder, Negro, and Thomas Ard and Earl Hoffman, both white.

Lewis was one of eight survivors who Monday linked the three with starting the fire with toilet paper and newspapers. They also said the three smashed fluorescent lighting fixtures.

Wayne Lambert, 20, who arrived at the camp just six days ago, named the same three as starting the disaster. He said he had agreed to help them, but didn't.

Lambert said the principal reason for the disturbance was that a book had been taken from Ard by one of the guards earlier in the day.

Robert Lee Coleman, 32, said the same three were instrumental in the ruckus and said they wanted "to get Griffin or Wainwright down here." They are two of the top officials

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Bombers Pound Prime Targets In North Vietnam

SAIGON (AP) — American bombers pounded key targets in North Vietnam on Monday while in the ground war in South Vietnam U.S. forces encountered only scattered opposition as they hunted Communist troops from the demilitarized zone to the swampy Mekong delta.

Carrier-based Navy fliers attacked an oil depot 13 miles northwest of Haiphong and pilots reported two secondary explosions, with smoke rising 2,000 feet. In simultaneous raids, Air Force bombers from Thailand bases attacked the Kep rail yard 38 miles northeast of Hanoi, with pilots claiming damage.

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Ex-Pensacola Preacher Dies In Car Crash

The Rev. Arrie D. (Shorty) Morris, 66, former Pensacola minister of East Gadsden Street Pentecostal Church, was killed Monday when his car skidded on U.S. 98 two miles west of the Okaloosa County line.

Highway Patrol Trooper Steven Davis said Mrs. Morris was treated and released at Port Walton Beach Hospital. Both had been thrown from the car when it flipped on the wet highway. Mr. Morris, a lifelong Escambia resident who also had been a barber, had moved to Leesburg a year ago. He and Mrs.

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Today's Chuckle

Most husbands are like eggs — hard-boiled outside, yellow inside, and cracked on top.



Eddie Barker

I'M SITTING here thinking that in a number of ways it is great to live in a city this size.

Sure, we talk about each other but we seldom fight. We gossip over the fence but it is always behind-the-back talk and we always smile and speak when we meet on the street.

And, really, we don't mean half the hard things we say and we really couldn't care less about some of the things we gossip about. Maybe we're just naturally nosy, like the folks in the big cities try to make out.

But to tell you the truth, we aren't any more curious than the big city folks. We just know more people. And because we have less to interest us, we talk about people instead of things.

* * *

FOR INSTANCE, we keep a pretty close check on the hospital news. When someone is sick we sure like to know what's the matter but we will do what we can and we always offer. "Let me know if there's anything we can do," we say. We mean it, too.

We know more about our neighbors than city folks, that's for sure. The reason being we're a lot more interested.

We know that just last month they bought a new television set and haven't even paid off the old one. We know that they trade cars the same way, but we can't say much because we're thinking of doing the same thing. But we really need to trade, honest, because our car has 20,000 miles and is a year old. We don't think they could afford to trade, that's true, but be sure and tell them it's a pretty car if you see it. And I'm sure they'll bring it over, never worry about that.

I'm afraid we will yell at your dog if he gets in our flower bed or scratches up the grass seed.

* * *

WE TALK about each other's children but deep down we love them all and know that our own are probably just as bad. We're not even sure it wasn't our oldest who broke the living room lamp and not the visitors' kids at all. We think our baby is pretty smart even if everyone else is wondering if she is ever going to start talking. So what if our baby can't talk, we say. You can't understand a thing they say anyway.

In a town like this we know all the girls who are going steady in our sections and we know where they sit each night at the movies and where they go to park after the show. Of course, that's your girl. Our girl doesn't park, you know. She comes right on home.

We know the boys who are bad, but we laugh and don't consider it very bad, because we've always said that boys will be boys.

* * *

WE KEEP the back issues of the paper and check on wedding dates if we need to in a few months. We hear of the fights among politicians and of the payoffs but we vote for the one who comes and asks us in the most sincere manner.

Sometimes we get fed up with it all and go off but in a few weeks we are dying to come back, be in our own home, among our own people.

Yes, like I said, we're lucky to be living in a town this size but you're even luckier if you know it.