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"A woman bought that green trunk," said the secondhand dealer. When the detectives located the expressman who had called for it, he added further evidence

**T**HE NIGHT of Monday, June 20th, was uncomfortably sultry, and as J. B. Davis mopped his brow and went about his job of moving trunks at the Union Depot in Portland, Oregon, the thought occurred to him that there must certainly be some easier ways of earning a livelihood.

However, he felt a little better when he glanced at the large clock in the baggage room of the railroad station and saw that the time was now nearly eleven-thirty. Only a few minutes more and he would

be off duty. Then he could have a cool glass of beer and go home for a shower, which always soothed his tired muscles, before going to bed.

This comforting thought spurred the "baggage smasher" to renewed effort as he tackled the few remaining trunks that had to be taken to the Puget Sound train, which was due to depart at eleven-forty-five.

When Davis grasped one of them, preparatory to loading it onto his hand

truck, he found it to be extremely heavy—so heavy, in fact, that he lost his grip and the trunk fell back to the floor with a resounding thud.

"What in the deuce is in the thing?" he muttered to himself as he took hold of it again and, with a grunt, stood it on end. Then his eyes widened as he stared at it.

A trickle of crimson was issuing from one corner of the lid and was dropping onto the floor.

The trucker's first impression was that a bottle of wine or other liquid had been broken when he dropped the trunk; but when he examined the substance he came to the conclusion that it was blood. He lost no time in summoning the baggage master and showing him the stains.

The latter, after only one look, hurried into the main lobby and hunted up the

policeman stationed there. When the officer satisfied himself that it was indeed blood, he instructed the employees to break open the trunk, which was securely locked.

After setting it in its proper position, they used a crowbar to force open the lid. What they saw inside caused the three onlookers to draw in their breath sharply. It was the doubled-up body of a man whose head had been crushed.

"You fellows stand guard here while I call headquarters," requested the patrolman as he started for the door. "And don't touch anything," he called out over his shoulder. "If there're any fingerprints on that trunk, we don't want them smudged."

In less than fifteen minutes, Detective Sergeant John Goltz, in charge of the night Homicide Squad, and his four

# The Green Trunk Mystery

By **JERRY WALLACE**

With one baffling murder already awaiting solution, the sergeant unhappily suggested, "There may be another trunk somewhere with two bodies in it instead of one"

ILLUSTRATED BY OZNI BROWN

aides, Fred Mallett, Louis Carpenter, John Price and Fred Graves, reached the scene.

As they were questioning the employees concerning the discovery of the body, Deputy Frank Dane, of the Multnomah County Coroner's office, arrived with two assistants.

The latter group removed the victim from the receptacle, and then Dane made a preliminary examination. He found that the man, who was dressed in olive-green trousers with black stripes, light blue flannel shirt, green socks with black stripes, and tan oxfords, had been dead from eight to twelve hours.

"I think that time range is fairly accurate," said Dane. "His skull is fractured in several places, and I'd say that a blunt instrument of some kind was used."

Because of the bloody condition of the victim's head, it was impossible to determine his features at the moment; but the deputy coroner promised to phone into police headquarters a complete description of the dead man, together with any other pertinent information, as quickly as possible.

After Dane and his subordinates had removed the remains, the homicide operatives began an inspection of the improvised coffin. As was to be expected, there were no names or other marks of identification on either the outside or inside. The only possible clue to its ownership was the standard baggage check fastened to one of the straps. The ticket, bearing the number, 485-576, carried North Puyallup, Washington, as the destination of the trunk.

"When does the train pull out for there?" Sergeant Goltz asked the baggage master, who had remained with Davis, the trucker, to assist in the investigation in every way possible.

The station official consulted his watch, then replied that the Puget Sound Express had departed ten minutes previously. It was due to arrive at the Washington town at five o'clock the following morning, he added.

"We'll have the police there watching in case anyone claims the trunk," remarked the sergeant. "But I imagine it's only wishful thinking to believe that whoever killed the fellow will call for the body."

Further questioning of the baggage master revealed the information that the person who had shipped the trunk had also purchased a passenger ticket for its destination. He explained that if such had not been true, the article would have been sent by express, instead of being routed as passenger freight, as had been done in this case.

"About the only thing I can tell you that might help," he went on, "is the name of the drayman who brought the thing here. We give out baggage checks in block lots to all the draymen, and we list the numbers each one gets."



"We're up against a well-planned job," reasoned Sergeant John Goltz (left), after search of murder room. Detective Mallett (right) learned "Johnson had \$2,000 with him"

With a feeling of encouragement, the detectives followed him to his desk, where he found the book in which the numbers were recorded. In a short time he had located the one tallying with that on the green trunk. It had been issued to William A. Shaw, whose stand was at Third and Flanders Street in the midst of the North End hotel district.

As the deliveryman's home address was not known at the depot, the officers hunted up a city directory and obtained it. While Sergeant Goltz and Price hurried to that number, the others removed the trunk to headquarters, where it would be processed in the morning for fingerprints and other possible evidence.

Deliveryman Shaw, roused from bed, declared that he had handled at least a dozen trunks that day and that several of them had been green. Queried as to whether any of the green ones were unusually heavy, he said he didn't think so.

When Goltz informed him that one of the trunks he had delivered contained the body of a murdered man, Shaw whistled excitedly. "Say, it might have something to do with that guy who had me pick up a green trunk at the Grand Central Hotel this afternoon. He acted kind of strange, and he gave me a dollar tip if I'd be sure to handle it carefully."

The drayman related that the patron, a dark-complexioned fellow of about forty, wearing a stylish and rather gaudy suit and a straw hat, had come to his stand and instructed him to go into the hotel, which was located less than half a block away, and get a trunk from the rear of the second floor hallway.

"He said he was going down to the depot to get a ticket and would take care of the trunk there," the informant continued. "So I just gave him the stub of the baggage check. After he paid me, he started off in the direction of the railroad station, and that's the last I saw of him."

Shaw had enlisted the aid of John Long, porter at the Grand Central, in carrying the trunk to his truck, and when he delivered it to the depot, a "baggage smasher" had helped him take it off the vehicle. Consequently, if the trunk had been uncommonly heavy, he hadn't

had much chance to notice it.

Pressed for additional details of the transaction, he recalled that the flashily dressed stranger had approached him at approximately five o'clock. Although he hadn't seemed in the least bit nervous, he had given many rather peculiar instructions, including one to be certain to take the trunk out the back door.

"As I said before," the expressman reiterated, "he told me to be careful not to jar the thing or to tip it upside down. He mentioned that several times, and made me promise to get the baggage boys at the depot to be careful with it, too."

Shaw asserted, in response to Goltz's question, that he would recognize the man if he should see him again, although he was unable to give more than a general description of him.

After thanking the delivery agent, the detectives left the house and entered the squad car. The sergeant started out for the Grand Central Hotel, but changed his mind and drove toward headquarters.

"We wouldn't get very far trying to identify the victim on what little we know about him," he explained to his companion. "I'll check with the morgue if they haven't reported in yet."

When they reached the station, they learned that Deputy Coroner Dane had telephoned in a preliminary report. It stated that the dead man was about

forty-five years old, five feet, nine inches in height, weighed one hundred and seventy-four pounds, and had blue eyes and reddish-brown hair receding at the temples.

The notation also revealed that he had been wearing a belt whose buckle was inscribed with the initials, "W. A. J."

Sergeant Goltz nodded after reading the report. "That ought to give us something to work with at the hotel," he remarked. "But, before we go over there, I'd better get in touch with North Puyallup."

Over the long-distance wire he contacted the chief of police at the western Washington city, approximately 150 miles north of Portland. After hearing all the details, the latter official promised to detail a man to watch the baggage room in case someone should turn up with a claim check bearing the number, 485-576.

Goltz and Price then proceeded to the Grand Central Hotel at Third and Flanders Streets. The night clerk's eyebrows lifted when they displayed their shields. "There's been no trouble here, officers," he declared. "You must be in the wrong place."

When they explained their mission, he examined the register to see whether any of the guests had the initials, "W.A.J." After a few minutes, he pointed to an entry recorded on Sunday. It read: "Mr. and Mrs. William A. Johnson and son, Spokane, Washington."

Price asked the clerk whether he had ever seen Johnson, and he nodded. "Yes, I worked the morning shift on Sunday

and I remember those people now. Quite a few came in at the same time. I guess they were all off the Spokane train."

He added that he had seen Johnson on several occasions, and his description of the guest fitted that of the victim. The register revealed that the family was still listed as occupying Room 119, which was on the second floor.

At Goltz's request the employee led them there and unlocked the door with a passkey. First glance showed no signs of violence; but there was plenty of evidence of a hurried departure. Empty cardboard boxes and pieces of wrapping paper littered the floor, and on the table were a child's nightdress, a doll and some fruit. There were no bloodstains on the carpet or furniture, nor were the investigators able to locate a weapon or any evidence of a struggle.

The bed was in perfect order, and there were no bloodstains on the blankets or sheets. But when they turned over



Grand Central Hotel (later named the American). "There's been no trouble here," declared the night clerk

the mattress, they found the bottom side to be soaked with blood.

A thorough search of the room and closets yielded no bludgeon or any other item that seemingly was connected with the slaying. Although the victim had not been wearing a coat or a hat, neither of these was found on the premises.

"I think we're up against a mighty well-planned job," Sergeant Goltz remarked to his assistant. "The

only slip-up so far is that the trunk started to drip blood before it got on the train."

Even though there could be little doubt that the dead man was the William A. Johnson who had rented the room, the investigators were leaving nothing to chance. At their insistence, the night clerk made arrangements for a bell-boy to replace him while he went to the morgue to view the remains.

"That's Mr. Johnson, all right," he stated a short time later after looking at the body.

Taken to the coroner's office, he was questioned regarding the victim's wife and son. The woman, he said, appeared to be in her early forties, was dark-complexioned, smartly dressed, and attractive of face and figure. The youngster, he estimated, was six or seven years old.

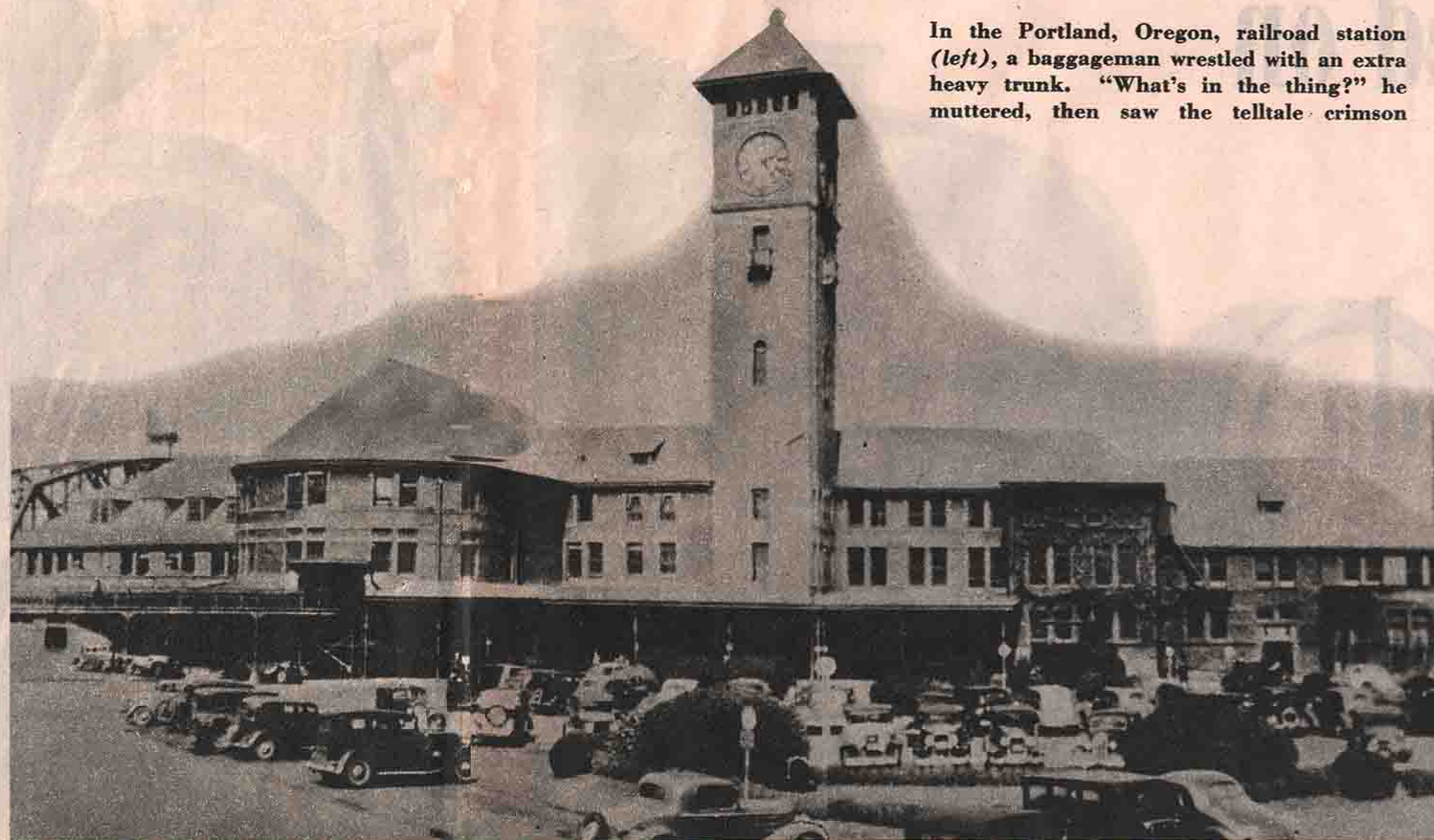
After dismissing the clerk with their thanks, the detectives returned to headquarters, where Goltz put in a long-distance call to Spokane, some 300 miles north and east of Portland. When he explained the situation to the night inspector of detectives, he was promptly assured that all efforts would be made to learn something concerning William A. Johnson and family, who had given the Washington city as their home.

The Portland sergeant then contacted the chief at North Puyallup again, this time relaying the descriptions of the victim's wife and child and requesting that they be detained if they left the train there.

"That's about all we can do until later in the morning," Goltz told Price as he replaced the receiver. "We'll want to do some more checking at the hotel, of course, and then there'll be other leg work that can't be done at night."

Before leaving, the sergeant instructed the other members of his Homicide Squad to go to their homes for a few hours of sleep and to be back at 8 A.M.

When Goltz entered the station shortly before that (Continued on page 79)



In the Portland, Oregon, railroad station (left), a baggageman wrestled with an extra heavy trunk. "What's in the thing?" he muttered, then saw the telltale crimson

# The Green Trunk Mystery

(Continued from page 47) time, the desk sergeant informed him that Chief A. M. Cox wanted to see him immediately. In the latter's office, the sergeant recounted what little he had learned about the trunk murder.

"It looks to me," the chief remarked, "as though Mrs. Johnson had a lover and the two of them had decided to get the husband out of the way."

The other officer nodded. "There doesn't seem to be any other reasonable explanation right now. But we don't want to overlook the possibility—and I'll admit it's pretty far-fetched—that whoever killed Johnson might have done away with the woman and the boy, too. There may be another trunk somewhere with two bodies in it instead of one."

After receiving his superior's instructions to continue in full charge of the investigation and to call on the entire bureau, if



Having seen the rancher's bankroll, he struck up a conversation

necessary, to solve the case, Goltz went to his desk to see whether any reports had come in during his absence.

There were two, both negative. The chief at North Puyallup had called back to say that Mrs. Johnson and the youngster had not been on the early morning train, nor had anyone appeared, as yet, with the trunk claim-check. The other message, from the Spokane police, stated that they had been unable to find any trace of a William A. Johnson. However, they promised to continue the search.

Goltz then rounded up his squad and gave out assignments. Mallett was to check the Union Depot in an effort to determine whether the missing wife, possibly in company with the man who had arranged for removal of the trunk from the hotel, had bought tickets on the previous day. He also was to contact the agents to see whether any of them remembered selling a ticket to North Puyallup to either the woman or her suspected accomplice.

Carpenter and Graves drew the task of contacting cab stands near the Grand Central Hotel, on the chance that Mrs. Johnson and her son, either with or without the unknown man, had left there in a taxi.

The sergeant and Price then went to the hostelry and conferred with George Karll, the regular day clerk. He recalled seeing Mrs. Johnson and the child leave by the front door at approximately five-thirty the previous afternoon. They hadn't returned by the time he went off duty at 8 P.M.

"Did you happen to notice whether anyone met them outside?" Goltz wanted to know. The clerk shook his head.

"When did you see Johnson last?"

"About one o'clock yesterday afternoon. He went into the barbershop and half an hour or so later he came out with another fellow and they went upstairs together." Karll didn't get a good look at the other man, he said, because Johnson blocked the view.

The detectives went into the barbershop and questioned the employees. One of them

remembered shaving a customer answering Johnson's description sometime near one o'clock. "He had quite a load aboard," he recalled. "I wouldn't say he was drunk, but he was on the way."

Asked about the man who had left the shop with him, the barber prodded his memory for a few minutes, then replied that he remembered someone meeting him at the door, but he hadn't paid any attention to the other person. Business was brisk at the time, he explained, and he was getting another patron into the chair when his previous customer departed.

Returning to the desk, the investigators requested the clerk to summon the housekeeper, Mrs. A. M. Tilley. She related that, around 3:30 P.M., she had knocked at No. 119 to see whether it was all right to clean up there.

"Mrs. Johnson opened the door a little way," she said, "and told me not to come in. 'My husband is very sick,' she told me, 'and I don't want him to be disturbed.'"

The maid added that she had been cleaning in No. 118, next to the Johnson room, for the previous half-hour and hadn't heard any unusual noise. Voices of a man and a woman reached her ears during that period; but she was unable to make out any of the words.

After dismissing the housekeeper, the officers had the clerk call the porter. The latter, John Long, when queried about the green trunk, shrugged and declared he could tell them little. Shaw, the expressman, had contacted him around 5 P.M. and said there was a trunk on the second floor to be taken to the depot. The two had carried it down the back stairs and, at the delivery agent's insistence, had hauled it out the rear door.

The porter could not say to whom the trunk belonged. It couldn't have been the property of the Johnsons, he declared, because they had arrived with only a pair of suitcases, and no trunks had been delivered to them since then.

After quizzing other employees as well as all the guests on the second floor, without learning anything of importance, the investigators went back to headquarters.

Detective Mallett met them with the announcement that he had gathered considerable information at the Union Depot.



"I was given the \$2,000," she declared, "to buy a rooming house"

While Goltz and Price listened with keen interest, he reported that he had run into a bit of good fortune when he reached there, discovering that the Spokane train was being readied for its return trip to the eastern Washington city. It was the same train on which the Johnsons must have traveled to Portland.

"I figured that the conductor or someone else in the crew might know something, so I went aboard and did some questioning," he continued. "W. J. Plover, the Pullman conductor, checked with his record book and found that the Johnsons and their son had berths on one of his cars. He remembered them well, and he also remembered that another passenger in the same

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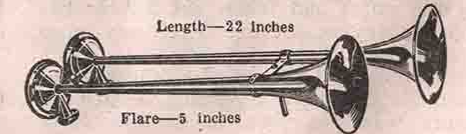
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car seemed quite friendly with the family and left the train with them when it got here."

The conductor, Mallett related, also declared that the other man had insisted on having a berth in the same car as the Johnsons. He said he was a swarthy fellow of forty or so and wore a straw hat, a flashy suit, and a purple necktie. Plover had judged him to be of medium height and weight. He had given the name of A. C. Powers when purchasing the berth.

"Then I talked to the porters, and I ran into one named Sim Reddy," the detective said. "He told me that Johnson, whom he remembered because of his attractive wife and cute youngster, had been pretty drunk by the time the train reached Portland."

"When he got ready to tip the porter, he drew out a roll of bills big enough to choke an ox and said, 'You guess how much I've got here and you'll get five dollars.' Reddy estimated the amount to be at least a thousand dollars. Johnson laughed and retorted, 'You're about half right, so I'll give you two-fifty.'"

Goltz's brow furrowed into a frown as he digested these facts. "If he had around \$2,000 in cash with him, it could be the reason he was killed," he commented. "But why would his wife be mixed up in the robbery of her own husband?"

Mallett shook his head. "The set-up doesn't make much sense so far. But here's something else I dug up at the depot. E. E. Stewart, one of the ticket sellers, remembered selling passage to North Puyallup yesterday to a fellow who fits the description of our mystery man Powers, right down to the purple tie."

"Stewart says he recalls the transaction because the guy first asked for a ticket to Olympia, and when he found out that all the space had been sold on that train, he bought one for North Puyallup. Stewart couldn't remember ever running into a deal like that before."

As to the possibility that Mrs. Johnson, her boy and Powers had taken another train out of town after the slaying, Mallett reported that he had been unable to find any ticket agent, porter or other station employee who had seen them.

Goltz said, "The Johnsons didn't have a trunk when they registered at the hotel, so maybe the wife or Powers bought one to ship the body away in. Fred, you and John had better scout around the secondhand stores near the Grand Central and see what you can find."

AFTER the aides had left, the sergeant telephoned the hostelry and talked with the day clerk. The latter reported that an A. C. Powers, giving Nome, Alaska, as his address, had checked in Sunday morning a few minutes after the Johnsons had, and was still occupying No. 109, directly across the hall from the murder site, so far as the records showed. However, the clerk had not seen him that day.

Goltz followed up the phone call with another visit to the Grand Central. Upon being let into Powers' room, he discovered that the guest had taken out all his belongings, leaving nothing to tell any more about him.

Returning to the lobby, the officer questioned the day clerk regarding the tenant. Powers was described as, around forty years of age, quite dark in complexion, medium in build, and dapper of dress. The sergeant was satisfied that he was the same person who had engaged the expressman to take the trunk to the station and had purchased the ticket to North Puyallup.

The fact that he had had no trunk when he registered strengthened the investigator's theory that the green one had been purchased solely for the purpose of get-

ting rid of all evidence of the crime. Unable to find out anything more about the guest from the other employees, the sergeant returned to headquarters, where he learned that the Spokane detective division had been attempting to contact him by long distance telephone. A few minutes later he was talking to one of the men there.

"We finally got a line on Johnson," the Washington official began. "He owned a



### HORSE SENSE

For fifteen years Gorondel, an American performing horse, was a faithful trouper. With his owner, Gorondel toured Europe and played to packed houses. The act consisted of the animal leaping from a platform forty-five feet high into a tank of water ten feet deep.

Performing before 20,000 spectators at a Stockholm amusement park, Gorondel balked for the first time in his theatrical career. After mounting the platform, the horse refused to jump. No amount of coaxing by his owner would persuade him to make the leap. The horse finally won the sympathy of the crowd and the ensuing uproar of protest necessitated calling in the police.

After a hasty conference between police and veterinarians, it was decided that there was only one way to get Gorondel down from the platform—he had to jump. And—after five hours of coaxing—the horse finally did jump. The act was subsequently banned in Sweden as "cruelty to animals."

Comment of Gorondel's owner: "My Gorondel, who has jumped faithfully for fifteen years, has failed me for the first time."

Comment of the Stockholm newspaper, "Aftonbladet."

"If it is true that the horse has supported its owner for so long a time and in such a dreadful way, it would seem fair if the horse were allowed to retire and the owner did the jumping to support the horse."—Walter Barnes.

farm near here, sold it a couple of months ago for \$2,000, and moved into town. He stayed at the Vincent Hotel until last Saturday, when he left for Portland. The proprietor told us that he went down there to get married."

Goltz interrupted. "You must be talking about a different fellow," he declared. "The Johnson we're interested in already has a wife and a seven- or eight-year-old son."

"That woman isn't his wife—or wasn't

when he left here," the Spokane detective went on. "The hotel owner said her name is Mrs. Carrie Kersh and that the youngster is hers. They all lived at the Vincent, and that's how he got acquainted with her."

Goltz began to see the light. It now was apparent to him that the woman had lured Johnson to Portland so that she and Powers could get the \$2,000 he had obtained from his property.

The sergeant told the Washington officer about the suspected accomplice and requested that an effort be made to learn whether he was known in the northern city. Since he had taken the train from there, it seemed logical to suppose that he actually had resided in that town rather than in Nome, which he had given as his residence when he registered at the Grand Central, Goltz pointed out.

AFTER being promised that no pains would be spared in an attempt to back-track on Powers, the sergeant hung up the receiver. Before he could make another move, Detectives Carpenter and Graves entered the office. With them was a young man dressed in a taxi-driver's uniform.

"This fellow picked up a couple and a young boy near the Grand Central late yesterday afternoon," Graves reported. "I don't think there's any doubt that they're the ones we're looking for."

As the cabby described his fares, it was obvious that they were indeed the much sought trio. But Goltz's hopes that they could be quickly traced were thwarted when the driver declared that he had led them out on the corner of Sixth and Stark Streets, as the man had directed, instead of taking them to a specific address.

"Did they have any luggage with them?" the sergeant inquired.

"Yep, three suitcases."

"They probably hunted up a hotel around there and figure to lie low until they can skip out of town," Carpenter theorized.

Goltz nodded. "We're not going to give them a chance, though," he asserted with determination. "We'll find them if we have to take that district apart building by building."

Backing up this vow, he dispatched Graves, Carpenter and ten other operatives to fine-comb the area, which contained numerous hotels and rooming houses.

While the search was being pressed, Detectives Price and Mallett returned with significant news. They had located a secondhand store where a woman answering the description of "Mrs. Johnson" had purchased a green trunk at approximately three o'clock the previous afternoon.

"We took the proprietor, David Stine, to the property room downstairs," Price reported, "and he swears it was the same trunk. He told us that an expressman named Albert Link took it over to the Grand Central. We haven't located him yet; but we'll keep on until we do."

The two investigators departed again, leaving Sergeant Goltz alone with his thoughts while he waited impatiently for the next development in the case. After what seemed like hours, his telephone rang and he reached eagerly for the receiver.

Detective Carpenter was on the other end of the line, and he made no attempt to curb his enthusiasm. "Graves and I are at the Willamette Hotel near Sixth and Stark Streets, and we think we've finally located the couple and the youngster, who are registered here under the name of Roberts. They took a room shortly before six o'clock yesterday evening, and the clerk's descriptions fit the ones we want. They are not in now; but when they left an hour or so ago, they didn't have their luggage."

"Good," the sergeant responded. "I'll be over there in five minutes. I wouldn't want to miss this welcoming party."

When Goltz arrived at the hotel, he instructed the clerk to signal him when the wanted persons came in. The officers then stationed themselves at strategic positions in the lobby where they could watch the entrance as well as the desk.

At the end of an hour of tense vigil, they spotted a fashionably dressed woman and a dudish-looking fellow wearing a straw hat and a purple tie coming through the front door accompanied by a young boy in a sailor suit. Even before the clerk gave his signal, the detectives closed in. Goltz showed his badge and informed the couple they were under arrest.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded the swarthy man in an angry tone. "If this is some kind of a joke, I'd say it is in poor taste."

"It's no joke, I can assure you," the sergeant replied as he quickly frisked him and found him to be unarmed.

"You must be mistaken," declared the woman, who displayed no sign of nervousness. "You couldn't possibly want to talk to us about anything."

Goltz said, "I think we can find something to talk about. We'll go up to your room and start the chat there."

In Room 23 the officers found only two suitcases. When Powers (or Roberts) was asked if that was all the luggage they had, he answered in the affirmative. Without bothering to refute that statement, the detectives searched the valises, and found a huge roll of currency in the lining of one of them.

A rapid count of the greenbacks showed the total to be slightly more than \$1,900.

"This is the first thing we can talk about," the sergeant remarked to the couple. "Which one of you would like to do the honors?"

The dark-haired woman spoke up without hesitation. "That is my money. A friend gave it to me so I could buy a rooming house. Is there anything illegal about that?"

"Not if your friend bears you out."

"He's in Spokane," she countered.

Goltz motioned to his assistants and they gathered up the two suitcases and other belongings of the couple. The trio were then escorted to headquarters, where the child was turned over to the juvenile matron and the man and woman were taken to Chief Cox's office.

At first the pair claimed to be Mr. and Mrs. Fred Roberts; but under incessant grilling they admitted they were A. C. Powers and Mrs. Carrie Kersh. The latter identified the youngster as her seven-year-old son, Willie, and said that her husband, Bert, lived in Seattle, Washington. She had left him the previous August, she added.

"Now tell us about the fellow who gave

you the \$1,900," Sergeant Goltz suggested.

She declared that, after separating from her husband, she had gone to Spokane, where she had met a widower named William Johnson. He fell in love with her and proposed, offering her \$2,000 with which to buy a rooming house.

She accepted and they left for Portland on Saturday. En route, they became acquainted with Powers, and when the train arrived at its destination Sunday morning, Johnson suggested that the other man join them at the same hotel.

"Will did a lot of drinking," she went on, "and on Monday he got awfully drunk. He accused Mr. Powers of showing too much attention to me, and that made me mad. I told him I didn't want to marry a person with such a jealous temper, and he ordered us out. When we left, Will said he was going back to Spokane that night."

Powers verified the story, explaining that they had registered as man and wife under assumed names at the Willamette Hotel to prevent Johnson from trailing them and causing trouble. He claimed that he had slept on a cot while the woman and her son occupied the bed.

When Chief Cox informed them that the rancher's body had been found in a trunk at the Union Depot on the previous night, they asserted that they knew nothing about it and that Johnson was alive when they left the Grand Central between three and four o'clock.

IN an effort to break their story, the chief sent for all the witnesses who had given conflicting testimony and had them repeat their statements before the prisoners.

The Grand Central Hotel housekeeper told how she had attempted to enter the Johnson room at three-thirty and had been told by the victim's supposed wife that he was too ill to be disturbed.

The expressman who had delivered the green trunk to the depot unhesitatingly identified Powers as the one who had hired him. The railroad station ticket agent was just as positive that the swarthy dude was the person who had purchased passage to North Puyallup after failing to obtain a ticket to Olympia.

The secondhand store owner asserted that Mrs. Kersh had bought the green trunk from him. The taxi-driver who had picked up the couple and the child near the Grand Central stated that this had occurred at 5:30 P.M.

And, as if all this were not enough to shatter the pair's claims of innocence, Detectives Price and Mallett came in with Albert Link, another expressman, who said that Mrs. Kersh had engaged him to deliver the green trunk from the store to the Grand Central.

"She doubled my fee for promising to take it in the back way and leave it at the end of the second-floor hall," he added.

There was nothing for the overwhelmed couple to do but admit they had withheld part of the truth. They then stated that Johnson had not only accused Powers of being too familiar with the woman, but had whipped out a blackjack from his hip pocket and attempted to strike him.

"I took it away from him," the prisoner related, "and when he started hitting me with his fists, I slugged him a couple of times with the weapon. It was purely in self-defense."

Then finding that the farmer was dead, the couple became panicky, Powers continued, and decided to get rid of the body. Remembering a recent case in which a trunk had been used for a similar purpose, he sent the woman out to buy one. After having it removed to the depot, they took the bloody sheets from the bed and

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put on clean ones which Mrs. Kersh obtained from the hotel's linen closet. They turned the mattress over to keep the chambermaid from discovering the crime.

The stained sheets, together with the blackjack and Johnson's coat and hat, were placed in one of the woman's suitcases, which she threw in the near-by Willamette River later that night. This evidence, incidentally, was never recovered, although the Harbor Patrol dragged for it for more than two days.

**A**FTER the accused man and woman had been booked as material witnesses and lodged in the City Jail, Chief Cox conferred with Sergeant Goltz. The former admitted that there actually was no evidence to dispute the prisoners' claims that the slaying had not been premeditated.

"If the woman really had the \$2,000 in her possession before the killing," he pointed out, "no jury would convict either of them for murder. Chances are they would go scot-free."

"Well, I'd bet anything they deliberately brought Johnson to Portland to rob him," the sergeant persisted. "I'm not going to let them get away with it, if I can help it."

The chief beamed. "I knew you'd say that, John, and I want you to handle this in your own way."

Goltz attacked the problem by contacting the Spokane police again and requesting that efforts be made to find out something concerning Powers. He then called the authorities in Seattle and asked for all possible information on Mrs. Kersh.

On the following morning the Spokane department reported its failure to locate any trace of an A. C. Powers or anyone with the same last name who fitted the description of the man in custody.

Seattle, however, phoned in some encouraging news. Mrs. Kersh's estranged husband had said that his wife and a newspaper printer named Jesse Webb had gone away together the previous August, taking the Kersh child with them. The husband's description of Webb, whom he had known for several years, jibed with that of Powers.

Goltz relayed this data to Chief Cox, adding, "Unless I'm off my trolley, Webb and Powers are the same person. I'd like to take a little trip to see whether I'm right. If I am, I ought to dig up something we can convict that pair with."

The chief gave his consent and sent the determined investigator on his way with

wishes for a successful journey. Armed with a "mug" photo of Powers, the traveler reached Seattle next morning and went at once to police headquarters.

There he obtained the home address of Bert Kersh, husband of the imprisoned woman. At the house, he learned from a relative that the man, an electrician, was working on a job in the suburbs. An hour later the officer located his quarry and showed him the picture of Powers.

"That's Jesse Webb, all right," was the instant response. "So he and Carrie are mixed up in a murder, eh?" he commented with a trace of irony. "Well, I can't say that I'm sorry they're in such a mess, the way they treated me."

He declared that he had known the other man for several years, as Webb and his family had been neighbors of theirs and the two couples had been the closest of friends.

"I even gave the fellow money so he could go to Alaska to get a job when the printing business was bad here a couple of years ago," he related. "He stayed there a year and then came back with a broken leg. My wife is a practical nurse and she took care of him."

"That was when they started to carry on. When Webb got well, he and Carrie skipped out with my son. Of course, it was a shabby trick to play on me, but it was worse on Webb's family. He's got a fine wife and two fine daughters, and they haven't had an easy time getting along."

Goltz thanked him for the important information and hurried back to the railroad station, arriving only ten minutes before the train to Spokane was due to depart. He hurriedly purchased a ticket and climbed aboard. Late that night he arrived at the bustling eastern Washington metropolis and took rooms at a downtown hotel. After a night of refreshing sleep and a hearty breakfast, he went to the police station.

When he explained the situation to the detective chief, the latter assigned one of his men to assist in tracing Webb's activities there. The searchers first went to the headquarters of the Typographical Union, where it was learned that their quarry had been employed at the *Spokesman-Review*, a daily newspaper.

The composing room foreman of the publication told them that Webb had worked there from the middle of May until the previous Saturday, when he suddenly announced he was going to Portland to get a

better job. As a matter of routine, the foreman identified the photo of "Powers" as that of his erstwhile employee.

As they left the newspaper plant, Goltz remarked to the Spokane detective, "I still haven't got all I came here for. I won't be satisfied until I find proof that Webb and the woman plotted the robbery and killed Johnson to carry it out."

"You might run onto something at the place where she met Johnson," suggested the other officer.

The sergeant nodded, and they drove to the Vincent Hotel on Howard Street. The owner, however, was unable to supply any additional information concerning Mrs. Kersh, Webb or the victim. He directed them to the Elite Bar in the same building, saying that the retired farmer had spent a great deal of his time there.

L. H. O'Neill, proprietor of the resort, nodded when Goltz displayed the picture of Webb. "Sure, I know the fellow. He used to come in here often—usually with Mrs. Kersh, who lived upstairs."

Feeling that he was about to hit pay dirt, the Portlander enthusiastically sought more details of the trio and learned that Webb had introduced the woman to the victim. "I heard him tell Johnson she was a widow who had known the Webb family for years," the informant recalled.

**H**E also remembered that a day or two before this incident, the printer had been there alone when the farmer paid for a drink from a well-filled wallet. "Webb remarked to me, 'That fellow is pretty well-heeled, isn't he?'" O'Neill stated. "He wanted to know his name and I told him. Then Webb struck up a conversation with him and they had a couple of drinks together."

Further questioning of the barkeeper revealed that the slain man's brother, Walter, lived somewhere in town. The investigators consulted a Spokane directory and found the relative's address. Hurrying there, they discovered he was on a business trip to Twin Falls, Idaho.

His wife was taken aback by news of the murder. When she learned the particulars, she asserted, "Will was killed for his money, all right. He was shrewd about business matters. He never would have given \$2,000 to Mrs. Kersh or to any other woman for any reason. She knew he had this sum, though, because she went to the Traders' National Bank with him last Friday to withdraw it. The fact that he would not give her the money must have led her and this Webb person to plot the murder."

"Will never drank until after the death of his wife two years ago last February. He was married to her for five years, and they were very much in love. When she died, he began drinking and finally sold his farm and moved to town."

"We knew of his attachment to the Kersh woman and tried to break it up. We felt bad when he told us Friday night they were going to Portland to get married."

She promised to notify her husband to go to the Oregon city at once to take charge of the body. The detectives then left her and returned to headquarters, where Goltz contacted Chief Cox by long distance phone and assured him that he had all the evidence he had set out to get.

"You've done a fine job, John," his commander told him. "Come on back and we'll get busy with the clean-up details."

Goltz found, on his return the following day, that the Portland newspapers had been given the story of the arrests and had splashed it over their front pages, together with photographs of the prisoners. The publicity soon brought volunteers to the police station to add to the incriminating evidence already unearthed by the hard-driving sergeant.

First to appear was Irene Trumbull, an attractive young woman employed as a hairdresser in a prominent downtown beauty salon. She stated that, on the night of the murder, she and a male companion had been dining and dancing at the Cliff House, a suburban resort, where they became acquainted with a couple who introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Roberts.

"I've just seen their pictures in the paper in connection with the trunk murder," she said. "The man told us they were celebrating, and later he suggested that we go to a more lively place. He promised to foot all the bills."

The quartet then went to the Seven Mile House, a swank establishment east of Portland, where they drank champagne and danced until nearly 3 a.m.

"This man danced with me several times," related the hairdresser, "and told me he had given his wife \$2,000 that day, so they were celebrating. I asked him what the occasion was and he said he had put over a very profitable business deal."

To make certain that the prisoners were the ones to whom she referred, she was given a glimpse of them in their cells. She made positive identification.

A little later, Frank C. Pozzi, proprietor of the Wood Drug Company, and his clerk, A. S. Rodda, came to headquarters and declared that they had some facts which they felt they should tell. Taken to Goltz's office, they reported that a man had come into their establishment on Third Street, between Everett and Davis—a block and a half south of the Grand Central Hotel—and had attempted to buy some chloroform early Monday afternoon.

"He said he'd been bothered with insomnia," the clerk recounted, "and wanted to put a little of the stuff on a handkerchief to help him get to sleep. I told him I couldn't sell him any unless he had a doctor's prescription. He kept insisting that it would be all right, so I went to the back shop and explained the situation to Mr. Pozzi."

"He came out and talked with this man, telling him that no chloroform could be sold without a physician's order. Mr. Pozzi suggested that he try a tablet sedative instead; but the fellow stormed out like he was mad."

The proprietor nodded, adding, "We saw the newspaper pictures of the murder suspects, and we're sure Webb is the man." They, too, instantly recognized the 45-year-old printer when they viewed him in his cell.

**O**N THE strength of all the damaging evidence against Jesse Webb and Carrie Kersh, the Multnomah County Grand Jury, on June 24th, 1910, indicted them for first degree murder, contending that they "killed William A. Johnson deliberately with premeditated malice by striking, beating, cutting and wounding him on the head with a club, blackjack, or other instrument not known to this jury."

They were arraigned before Circuit Judge Robert G. Morrow on July 5th, entered pleas of not guilty and, through their attorneys, Seneca Fouts and John C. McCue, asked for separate trials. The judge granted this, setting the man's for October 10th.

Before capacity crowds, the court battle waged bitterly for eleven days, with Prosecutors J. J. Fitzgerald and H. E. Collier spinning a web of evidence around the dapper printer which the able defense lawyers were unable to break. The jury, after deliberating less than five hours, returned a verdict of "guilty as charged, with no recommendation of mercy."

Judge Morrow sentenced the convicted killer to be hanged December 15th at the State Penitentiary; but at the request of the defense counsel he ordered that the pris-

oner remain in the county jail until after Mrs. Kersh's trial.

It began October 24th, with the same judge presiding. The courtroom was jammed during every minute of the proceedings, and it must be said that the attractive defendant made a favorable impression on most of the spectators. Wearing a simple black dress, her dark wavy hair combed straight back, she hardly appeared to be what the State branded her: a cold-blooded schemer who lured her prey to his death without even showing any remorse.

Taking the stand, she asserted in a calm manner that Johnson had been killed because he attacked Webb in a fit of jealousy. She repeated her statement that the retired farmer had given her the \$2,000 on the night before he was slain, telling her to find a suitable rooming house to purchase.

Webb, testifying in her behalf, supported these claims. "She had absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Johnson's death," he declared emphatically. "It is not fair for her to be tortured with a trial."

**P**ROSECUTORS Fitzgerald and Collier presented all the witnesses whose evidence to the contrary has already been recorded here, and the case went to the jury at 11:45 a.m. on November 5th. For forty-seven hours the group deliberated, and then Foreman E. J. Alstock reported to the Court that an agreement was impossible, seven of the jurors favoring conviction and five holding out for acquittal. Judge Morrow dismissed them and set the retrial for December 8th. In order that Webb could testify the judge stayed his execution.

The second jury began deliberations at 5 p.m. December 17th, and after seventy-three hours, returned a verdict of "guilty of manslaughter." It was revealed that eleven of the body had favored a first-degree murder decision, but had yielded to the twelfth to avoid a third trial.

Judge Morrow sentenced the woman to the maximum term of fifteen years in the State Prison at Salem, and also ordered Webb to be taken there. However, a new date for his execution was not set, as the defense attorneys gave notice that both verdicts would be appealed to the State Supreme Court. When the appeals were denied the following August, the doomed man was sentenced to die September 5th.

One of the two daughters that Webb had deserted when he ran away with Carrie Kersh was eighteen-year-old Verna, and she was convinced that her father was innocent of the crime for which he would hang.

Alone, and with only a few dollars in her purse, she journeyed from Seattle to Salem and pleaded with Governor Oswald West to spare his life. Although touched by her loyalty, he explained that he could not interfere with the Court's decision.

Desperate, Verna remained in the Oregon capital, calling at the Governor's offices several times each day in an effort to see him again and attempt to change his mind. When this failed, she visited his residence at night, but was told there was no hope.

However, the persistent girl succeeded in making friends with the executive's young daughter and winning her sympathy. On the morning of the scheduled hanging, the Governor's daughter went to him and pleaded tearfully for Webb's life.

At eleven-thirty, one hour before Webb was to be led to the gallows, West commuted the sentence to life imprisonment, on the condition that the killer would never seek further clemency.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Photograph of Jesse Webb at left on page 79; that of Mrs. Carrie Kersh at right on the same page.

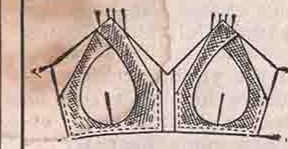
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