

Dramatic Killer-Hunt Ends

(Repeated from Thursday's Edition)

Joseph Emmett McLimans, 33, orally confessed Wednesday afternoon to the sadistic slaying of O'Neill's Police Chief Chet Calkins. The chief was killed in the early morning hours of March 7, 1952, when his body was riddled with five bullets at point-blank range.

McLimans is being held in Holt county jail after preliminary hearing in which he made his confession in the presence of County Sheriff Leo Tomjack, County Attorney William W. Griffin, Capt. H. D. Smith of the Nebraska safety patrol, and others. He admitted his guilt and said, "I killed Chet Calkins."

Larceny was McLimans' undoing. He was arrested in Norfolk following a February 16, 1953, robbery of a hardware store. Holt county authorities learned he was driving a 1948 model green Kaiser sedan. Madison authorities were asked to hold him and from that point the investigation began to unfold. Not until his foster mother, Mrs. Lillian McLimans of Norfolk, arrived Wednesday and urged him to "tell all" was the confession gained.

McLimans' verbal confession substantiated most of the evidence which had been baffling the investigators since that fateful morning when fresh snow covered the tracks and Walt Calkins, brother of Chet, found the chief's body slumped against the steering wheel of the cruiser car.

A railroad brakeman with residence at Long Pine, McLimans said he had been doing a day's work on the Bonesteel to Winner branch of the Chicago & North Western railroad and had pulled into Bonesteel from Winner for the night. He drove to Spencer "looking for a poker game." He spent an hour or two, he recounts, drinking beer in several Spencer taverns.

Still itching for a poker game—he frankly admits he likes to gamble—McLimans drove on south to O'Neill. He visited at least three O'Neill beer taverns, as he remembers.

Emerging from a tavern on South Fourth street, he went across the street to get into his own car. Another vehicle had parked in such a manner he couldn't back out immediately. He peered inside, saw the blue "D.D." suitcase, transferred it to his own car and proceeded to free his own vehicle. McLimans told how he drove out to the edge of O'Neill, took some money out of the suitcase, removed the clothes. He put the suitcase back in his car and returned to town and then he dumped the clothes on the floor of the back seat of the car from which the case was stolen.

The theft had been reported to O'Neill police shortly after it happened by Delores Dobrowsky, a telephone operator.

About 1 a.m., Chief Calkins turned west on Everett street, near the corner of Fourth and Everett (Dr. L. A. Carter's office corner), Calkins suspicioned McLimans' activities. The chief queried, "What are you doing?"

"Drinking a can of beer," replied the voice in the dark. McLimans had emerged from one of the taverns with two six-packs.

"Let me look in the trunk of your car," Calkins ordered. McLimans said he reluctantly opened the trunk.

It was at this point at least four witnesses said they saw Calkins "shaking down" a blue or green Kaiser, a late model, or some similar car. Those witnesses were Mrs. Mary Fleming of O'Neill and three Ewing youths—Richard Spittler, LeRoy Boies and Bill Sisson.

McLimans said Calkins readily spotted the "D.D." case and ordered him to get into the cruiser car and accompany him.

Calkins got into the cruiser car first, according to the testimony, and McLimans went around the car and started to get into the front seat alongside Calkins. It was at that point he pulled his .32-caliber revolver and emptied it into Calkins' right side. The first bullet is believed to have killed the chief instantly.

McLimans, who professed to be "hazy about the details" because he had had too many beers, got into his own car and drove west five blocks on Everett street.

"I got to wondering if anyone was going to find the car," he said. He left his car parked in the residential district and walked east down an alley, coming to the rear of the Shelhamer implement store. He explained, "From there I could see the police car. I stood and watched the car for 'quite awhile.' Still nobody came and investigated."

Finally he decided to break into the implement store.

He gained entrance into the building forcibly by breaking a glass in the rear door, scooped up \$10 or \$15 change from the cash register, and emerged from the building. He said he could still see the cruiser car and there was no activity.

He then walked to the scene of the slaying and peered inside the car to make certain that Calkins was dead. He then returned to his own car and drove out of town. He continued on to Bonesteel that night and spent the night in the caboose—his normal sleeping place.

McLimans, who was a gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress during World War II, avoided O'Neill after that and started a mustache. Occasionally he'd go through O'Neill with traimmen but wouldn't circulate.

On the side he indulged in plenty of gambling and, apparently, thievery. Ostensibly, Holt county authorities brought him here in connection with the breaking and entering of the Galven Motor company office in Atkinson several months ago, and now he has admitted doing the Galven job.

McLimans is a sharp-featured fellow with a pointed nose. He weighs 140 pounds, stands about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches, and normally would be considered on the light complexioned side. But the burdens of the Calkins slaying and the larceny problems were weighing heavily and aging him fast.

The bout with the Norfolk police on February 16, 1953, cost him his railroad job. He was in line to become a conductor but his nocturnal maraudings interfered with his rail career.

Griffin, Tomjack, Smith and other peace officers were visibly relieved after they had heard the confession. It meant they had reached the end of a long, seemingly endless trail, which time-after-time had bumped into a dead end.

McLimans was relieved, too. He said: "I've been electrocuted two or three times in my own mind." His light mustache would come off as quickly as he could get it off, he said. His mustache is brown, small and scraggly. While telling his confession, McLimans was wearing a GI T-shirt and overall pants.

Asked if he had any motive for killing Calkins, the confessed slayer said he knew who the chief was, but was certain the chief did not know him.

"At least he didn't recognize me when he was checking my car."

Jury Finds for Weller, Putnam

The federal court jury in session in Norfolk found for the defendants Wednesday afternoon in the cattle case brought against the Atkinson Livestock Market and L. D. Putnam, O'Neill rancher. The verdict was announced about 4 p.m., after the jury had deliberated about four hours.

Ed Fiala, who runs a one thousand acre ranch 12 miles northwest of Fulton, S.D., brought suit against E. C. Weller, Joe Kokes and Putnam because he claimed 55 head of cows he bought there in 1951 had Bang's disease. The jury case opened Monday

and Judge John W. Delehant delivered the case to the jury Wednesday noon.

Earlier, the defense attorneys, Julius D. Cronin of O'Neill and Frederick M. Deutsch of Norfolk, had asked for a directed verdict after maintaining that Fiala's attorney, Francis M. Casey of Plattsmouth, had failed to make a case. Judge Delehant declined to give a directed verdict Tuesday.

Arlen Miles, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Miles, has been promoted to airman second-class and Donald Sauser has been upped to staff sergeant at Goodfellow air force base, San Angelo, Tex.

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Van Vleck were Sunday visitors at the Henry Smith farm near Clearwater.

Drama Heard by Radio Audience

(Editor's note: The "Voice of The Frontier" went on the air at 10:15 a.m., Saturday with a 45-minute special broadcast in which the background on the murder was reviewed. A portion of the text follows):

Cal Stewart Speaking from the Studio—

In the early morning hours of March 7, 1952, O'Neill's police chief, a man who was beloved by all the kids and a man who was a friend of wayfarers, and even the wayward, Chet Calkins had been O'Neill's police chief for well over 20 years. He was a man who had been reared here in Holt county, he'd been on the athletic side as a younger man, his friends were legion.

Chet Calkins was a powerful heavy set fellow, 51-years-old.

That early morning of March 7, 1952, Chet was sadistically attacked with a death-dealing weapon that in a split-second took the life of a man who never had a chance.

An assassin, whose identity would not become known for one year, three months and 17 days, had emptied five bullets from his .32-caliber pistol into the chief's right side as the chief sat in his cruiser car. Chet Calkins died instantly that cold winter morning . . . there was light snowfall that quickly covered any evidence of the murder. In fact, for an hour or more it was believed O'Neill's likeable, affable, courteous, mild-mannered and model police officer had died from a heart attack.

That tragic murder did something to this town of more than three thousand persons. Feeling ran high for days on end and investigators sought to find the killer of O'Neill's police chief. Leads fizzled out—one after another. The search spread to other states, even to a foreign country. Still the same old story. There were dead ends. The trail grew cold . . . colder even than the fresh snow that covered the murder scene that fateful early morning hour on March 7, 1952, that wee hour when Police Chief

Chet Calkins died unmercifully in the line of duty . . . he was brutally killed while the city he loved so well slept.

Wednesday of this week, the 24th of June, 1953, the quest for the killer came to a swift and dramatic ending.

On trial this morning (Saturday) is Joseph Emmett McLimans, a 33-year-old railroad brakeman from Long Pine and Norfolk. Joseph Emmett McLimans, a 5 foot 6 inch fellow, weighing around 140 pounds, is charged with murder in the second degree. He admitted his guilt orally late Wednesday afternoon, he bared all of the details to Holt county authorities, and this morning he stands before the bar of justice, in Holt county district court.

George Hammond Speaking from Courthouse—

The "Voice of The Frontier" microphone announced to a startled world, a stunned O'Neill citizenry, that the police chief had been murdered by a strange sadist. Chet Calkins had no enemies. He'd been a police officer for years, he had encountered all types of mankind—the rough-hewn rowdies, dope addicts, gypsies, clergymen, troubled old ladies, other peace officers, travelers who were in need, kids who were off base for this reason or for that reason. He met them all . . . in many different circumstances. And they all respected him.

Chet Calkins' violent and sudden death left a big void in his family circle, a vacancy that never can be filled. His widow bore up well and she had the sympathy, spoken and silent, of every man, woman and child in the town of O'Neill . . . plus . . . uncounted thousands of others who were bitter and grieved. He left two sons and a daughter. Harold, the eldest son, is a

fine citizen, he travels on the road for wholesale tobacco company Donald, a star athlete in high school, performed on a basketball floor, in a tournament, before his dad's own eyes, on the eve of the murder.

Don now is in the navy getting specialized training. Chet's daughter, Jean, is married, is a young mother, and this week, while this momentous news was unfolding, she was enroute with her husband to New Mexico to make her home. Chet left other relatives, too, including a brother, Walt, who promptly was promoted to police chief to fill the vacancy created by a heartless, cold assassin.

The clues were meager and the columns of The Frontier were filled week-after-week with stories that filled readers with suspense and hope — yet threatened their way only into infinity. You might say a blind alley—a dead end.

Investigators were frustrated to be sure. The slow, meticulous build up of evidence on all kinds of leads and tips would suddenly explode with a dull, resounding thud. Hours of toil meant nothing, and the privacy of lives of some very good citizens was imposed upon, studied and finally, the notes and memorandums that concerned those citizens made their way to the inevitable wastebasket.

It's all over now, apparently. For Joseph Emmett McLimans has admitted his guilt and this morning a crowded courtroom looks on as the shamed, confessed slayer of O'Neill's police chief stands before justice.

In his confession, McLimans told how he had finished a day's work at Bonesteel, S.D., while working as a brakeman on the Bonesteel to Winner, S.D., branch of the North Western railroad. He customarily slept in the way car, or you might call it a caboose, in the Bonesteel railroad yards. The night of March 6 he climbed into his car, a late model, a green Kaiser, and drove to Spencer. He said he was hunting for a poker game, he visited several taverns, and then continued to O'Neill. Most of you know the story, having heard several of our special "Voice of The Frontier" broadcasts and having read it in The Frontier as well as the dailies.

He visited two or three O'Neill taverns, did some more drinking, went to his car, was annoyed because another vehicle had parked in such a manner it was awkward to free his own car. He looked inside that ill-parked machine, so the confession goes, saw a blue overnight case, took it . . . put the case in own car . . . finally pulled away and went to the edge of town. He took some money from the purse, drove back into O'Neill, restored the clothes loosely on the floor of the same car from which the case had been taken. By now it was later in the evening and he sat on Everett street, about midway between Third and Fourth streets, drinking some beer which he had purchased in a tavern. Meanwhile, Police Chief Chet Calkins had received the report of the stolen suitcase.

Chief Calkins' car came down an alley, not a stone's throw from O'Neill's main thoroughfare. He turned south on Fourth to Everett street, spotted the McLimans car and the man lingering in the dark. The chief made an inquiry by asking what he, meaning McLimans, was doing. The man responded by saying he was drinking beer. Chief Calkins asked if he could inspect the car. And in the trunk and he saw the stolen suitcase was discovered by the police officer. He ordered McLimans to get into the cruiser car and accompany him.

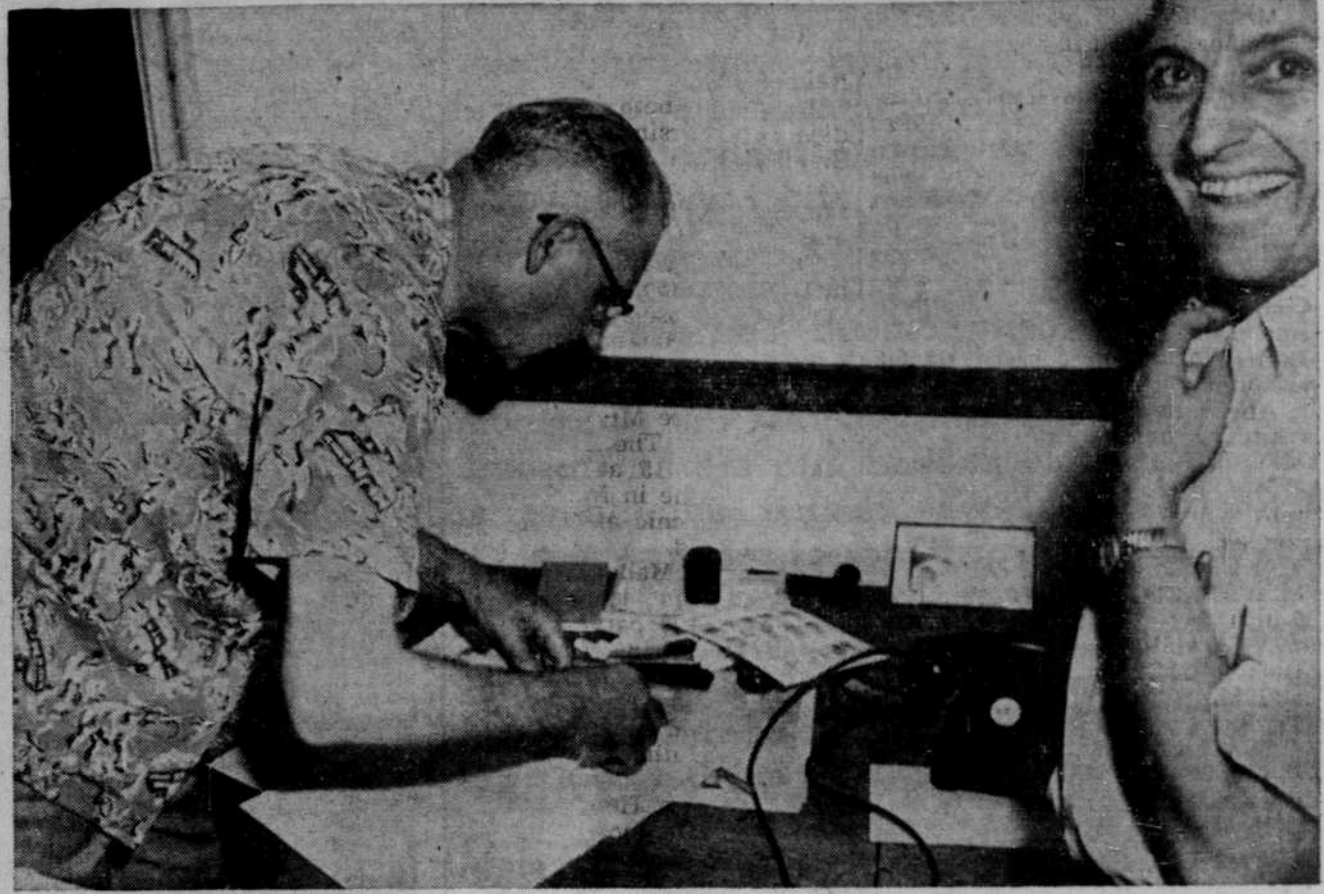
The chief, who may or may not have recognized McLimans, seated himself first. McLimans went around, began to get into the cruiser car. Instead he flashed his gun, in an instant he sent five shells into the chief's body at point-blank range. The range was so close there were powder burns on the chief's coat and arm . . . the interior of the car muffled the shots and the heinous crime had been committed. This raises a question: Why was this man carrying a loaded gun? McLimans, so his confession goes, got into his own car and drove west several blocks. He parked his car and told authorities about walking eastward down an alley—the same alley the chief's car had traveled only a few minutes before. When he got to the rear of the Shelhamer store, he could see, across the way, the dark, lifeless cruiser car. With no leaves on the trees, and with new snow on the ground, he could see there was no activity. He waited . . . and waited. Finally, he decided to enter the rear of the implement store and he did. He scooped up some change from the cash register. He emerged from the store and stared through those cold eyes across one hundred yards of freshly laid, light, fluffy snow. Still no activity. Then he became very brave, so it would seem. He walked over to the cruiser car. He saw the body slumped there, the chief's flashlight still glowing, the arm and head of his victim leaning against the steering wheel.

Then, and we're reciting from the confession, McLimans walked to his own car, several blocks away, and drove away into the night. He was an amateur, all right, and every break in the book of killers worked for Joseph Emmett McLimans. It is possible that before we



The Confessed Slayer

These are Nebraska safety patrol and police photos of Joseph Emmett McLimans, 33, the confessed slayer of O'Neill's Police Chief Chet Calkins. After the killing he raised a brown, scraggly mustache. "I had been drinking too many beers . . . it's all hazy," was about the only comment he offered. McLimans is not the talkative type.



Holt Sheriff Leo Tomjack (right) wore a wide grin after the confession suspense was over. Capt. H. D. Smith, chief of the criminal investigation bureau of the Nebraska safety patrol, assembles McLimans' file after the preliminary hearing. The slayer faced second degree murder charges.—The Frontier Photo.



The slayer's foster mother, Mrs. Lillian McLimans, tearfully explains to Holt County Attorney William Griffin: "The man in the cell is not the boy I raised." Mrs. McLimans, who lives in Norfolk, thanked Holt authorities for being considerate. "I adopted Joe when he was 24-hours old. I had my hands full after my husband died in 1932 . . . I was proud of him in the air force . . . he was in a horrible German prison camp 15 months.—The Frontier Photo.

leave the air with this special broadcast we might bring you from the courthouse the results of the trial, now in progress. We'll continue with our story following this announcement.

The man who killed Chet Calkins spent the remaining hours of that night in that red caboose in the Bonesteel railroad yards.

Next morning, the "Voice of The Frontier" came on the air. Cal Stewart was doing the announcing in a special broadcast. He told the hastily pieced-together story . . . and, I might say, I've played back that recording a number of times, and the story was quite accurately written and told. I wish time permitted us to replay that for you now.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Meyers, the depot agent and his wife at Bonesteel, invited McLimans into their apartment to hear on the radio the story of the Calkins slaying. The Meyers say he sat there, motionless and unmoved. Mr. Meyers had known Calkins over a period of years. When the broadcast was over, he said, "I hope they catch the killer."

Mrs. Meyers turned on McLimans and accused him, outright, of murdering Calkins. She said to him . . . you drive a green late model Kaiser . . . that's what they're hunting for . . . you're gone last night . . . you're the man!

Friday morning we received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Meyers. Cal Stewart and Joe Biglin, our engineer, promptly set out for Bonesteel. They stood in front of the caboose and talked with the Meyerses. Joe Biglin, the radio technician, complained about the wind beating into the microphone, but here's the story, by tape recording.

After the confession was gained from McLimans late last Wednesday afternoon, much has been written and said about him. We conducted interviews here with County Sheriff Leo Tomjack, with Captain Harold Smith, chief of the Nebraska safety patrol bureau of criminal investigation, and with Lieut. Harry Br., who is in charge of the Norfolk area office for the patrol.

er's undoing. He broke into a Norfolk implement store one evening, around 8:30. And it was in Norfolk, his home town, he was captured February 18 of this year. The main thing about McLimans that interested O'Neill investigators was the fact he owned a late model Kaiser. Then the story began to unfold, but not until after McLimans had spent about two months in the Madison county jail and had spent several weeks in the Norfolk state hospital under observation. Finally, he was brought to O'Neill and within a very few days, and under careful, prudent and fair questioning, he bared his story, he said he killed Chet Calkins.

One person's voice you haven't heard on our special events microphone either at the time of the slaying or even now, that the confession has been gained and the slayer stands before the high judge in this section of north Nobraska. I refer to the voice of County Attorney William Griffin.

Bill has spurred on Sheriff Tomjack, he has been dogged and determined with some matters pertaining to the safety patrol and other peace officers. Please understand, cooperation was always fine and everybody tried to be helpful, but somebody, some force has to be in the driver's seat. Bill Griffin never relented, and he guided the investigation through to its climax and is the prosecuting attorney in the courtroom.

McLimans' foster mother, Mrs. Lillian McLimans, the woman who took her adopted son from an orphanage at the age of 24-hours-old and reared him, repeatedly has thanked Mr. Griffin for being kind and courteous—now that the investigation is over and the confession gained.

The investigating officers have been universal in their classification of McLimans as a cold, sharp-featured fellow with devious eyes, a scraggly mustache, a lone operator and a strange fellow.

The foster mother, upon descending the courthouse steps after she had first heard the confession from her adopted son, and then urged him to tell it all, pointed to the cell upstairs and said, "That's not the boy I raised. He's changed. He's different. I raised a good boy." She blamed the war. McLimans was a gunner on a Flying Fortress.

Police officers and the prisoner's foster mother share some of the same ideas concerning McLimans, who is standing trial this morning in that crowded courtroom.

Every man is loved somewhere by someone. Let's listen to Cal Stewart again, speaking by tape-recording.

Varied Opinions of McLimans—

There you have a word picture of the man . . . you know the deed . . . you've heard how the police and his foster mother feel about him. Perhaps you heard the McLimans children . . . two of them were playing in the sandpile and the third, a tiny baby, is only one-month-old. Thursday afternoon authorities took McLimans out of the cell and they visited several points, accumulating some of the loot. They also took him to his nondescript home, a cluttered up affair alongside the railroad tracks at Long Pine, just a few hundred feet from the rail station there.

McLimans then saw the new baby for the first time.

Mrs. McLimans, the wife of the confessed slayer, wouldn't discuss with Cal the murder . . . or the robberies . . . in fact, she declined to talk at all if he asked any pertinent questions. That explains the nature of some of his questions. But she insists she'll stay by her husband till the end. And the mother-in-law says the same thing.

This morning, the day that is expected to climax this story, dawned bright and clear. There's not a cloud in the sky and the courtroom filled to capacity well before the trial was to begin.

(Stewart then interviewed in Long Pine the wife, Pearl, and the mother-in-law, Mrs. Alice Coen. See article, "Wife Will Stick By Him" elsewhere in this edition.)

Reporting at Its Best—

(Editor's note: Time and space do not permit a transcript of the tape-recordings made in the courthouse by Mr. Hammond. However, they were heard by the WJAG radio audience and they will be preserved for all time. The Frontier honestly believes Mr. Hammond's reporting from the door of the courtroom will go down on record as a remarkable instance of radio reporting at its best.)



Walt Calkins . . . he found his brother's lifeless body that fateful morning—March 7, 1952.



This is the interior of the cruiser car . . . where the body of Chet Calkins was riddled with five successive bullets at point-blank range.