

THE INDEPENDENT

TEN PAGES
IN TWO SECTIONS
THIS WEEK

ELIZABETH CITY, N. C., FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1935.

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Join "Tash" Courted Disaster By Carrying Much Money and Running With "Shady" Bunch

Murdered Armenian Watchmaker Chose Companions Who Were Not Above Murder For Money—Took Himself For a "Ride"—Baffling Mystery

Living a life in which he constantly courted danger, if not murder, John Tashjian, 47-year-old Armenian-born watchmaker and repairman of one of the most baffling murder mysteries to occur in this section in recent years. And indications are that the identity of the person or persons who shot and killed Tashjian may never be known.

Tashjian's dead body, still warm, was found sprawling in the middle of a lonely dirt road a few miles from the city, in Norfolk County, Virginia, on Sunday morning, August 18, 1935. A .32 caliber steel-jacketed bullet had passed thru his head, entering in the nape of the neck and coming out through the forehead. That he was deliberately murdered in cold blood was the only plausible theory as to the cause of death.

A sort of questions are baffling officers working on the case, but the principal questions to which answers are desired are: What mission took Tashjian to that lonely dirt road in Virginia after midnight Saturday night? Who accompanied him? What was the motive for the murder?

An Odd Person
Tashjian, a bachelor with a strange and paradoxical fondness for strong men and prostitutes, was something of a mystery to most Elizabeth City residents. Coming to this country from Armenia nearly 30 years ago, he worked in New York for a while and finally came to Elizabeth City in 1914, to work as a watch repairman for the firm of Louis Selig. Going into business for himself several years later, he built up a good business during the decade from 1919 to 1929. A clever salesman, he acquired a reputation for good work and was able to command a high price for his work.

A bankbook found among his personal belongings this week shows that the watchmaker made regular and substantial deposits with the Savings Bank & Trust Company of the city up until 1929, a year before the bank closed its doors in 1930.

Being faith in banks after the epidemic of bank crashes which swept the nation, John Tashjian kept all his money in his office safe or on his person thereafter.

Decidedly fond of beer, the watchmaker drank this beverage in varying quantities almost every night. He frequently flashed a roll of bills when he was drinking, thus virtually inviting a hold-up.

But the kind of company he kept was his strongest invitation to disaster. For a number of years he sought out the company of boys and young men, and he had a young man to live with him for several years. The morals of his young acquaintances naturally were not of the best, and it might have been expected that sooner or later some of them would try to rob Tashjian.

More recently, the watchmaker's life in depravity had turned to female prostitutes as well as to young men. In recent months he was seen frequently in the company of one or two of the town's most notorious prostitutes.

Keeping such company, carrying money on his person, and drinking quite a bit, John Tashjian invited the disaster that befell him early Sunday morning.

But who killed him and why? Tashjian's movements on the night of the murder have been traced until sometime after midnight, but the vital link of evidence that is missing is what happened between the time he was last seen here and the time he was murdered at around three o'clock Sunday morning.

Saturday night he was in and out of the Shamrock, a confectionery located in the Virginia Dare Hotel building, several times, drinking beer. The last time he was seen there was between 12 o'clock midnight, and 12:30 a. m. He was alone at the time and was said to be carrying a roll of bank notes.

It is reported that Tashjian was seen around two o'clock Sunday morning at the Water Edge Cafe ("Red's Place"), an infamous dive on the Camden side of the river, but the proprietress of the place denies this and police have been unable to verify the report.

John Tashjian was at "Red's" around two o'clock Sunday morning. He must have driven direct from there to the spot where he was killed, and the companions with whom

Danger Signal North Carolina Aged May Have Badly Needed To Wait 2 Years for Pensions On This Curve

The acute need for some sort of danger warnings on the approaches to the sharp curve in N. C. 311 at Currituck Courthouse was seen again last week end when three persons were injured when a truck failed to make the curve and turned over twice.

Chester Morris, Currituck attorney, who lives beside the highway on the northwest side of this curve, pictures this need as follows: "The Currituck curve is one of the most deceitful-looking curves in the State. The motorist who is not thinking or who is a stranger in this section is more than likely to come upon this curve doing 40 or 50 miles an hour before he is aware that the curve is there, or at least that it is as sharp a curve as it is. I hear the brakes squeal and the tires screech almost every day as cars round the curve on two wheels, or almost."

"There has not been a week end this summer, I think, but that there has been an accident on this curve. It has reached the point where I am almost afraid to sit on my front porch Sunday afternoons and nights for fear that a car will leave the curve and crash into my porch."

"I don't know of any curve where a danger signal is more badly needed."

At least two occasions within the past three or four years cars have crashed into the home where Mr. Morris lives.

In last week end's accident, a small boy, Dan Watson Knight, 5-year-old son of Daniel Watson Knight of Belhaven, was painfully cut, and his father and brother sustained minor injuries when the truck in which they were riding got out of control on the curve and turned over twice, landing only a few yards from Mr. Morris' home.

Lot's O' History Might Be Dug Up In This Section

That some of our American archeologists and museum collectors might do well to do some excavating in Northeastern North Carolina instead of spending so many years in Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy, is the opinion advanced this week by an Elizabeth City citizen upon hearing news of the discovery at Hatteras of a ship's rig rehead believed to date back to around 1000 A. D.

The Albemarle section, rich in history, should afford several promising archeological sites. For instance, might there not be beneath the sand dunes on the north end of Roanoke Island some trace of the ill-fated colonies of Sir Walter Raleigh, the first English settlements in America? And might there not be hidden beneath the shifting sands along the Dare Coast archeological evidences of settlements or ships dating back several centuries? There is good reason to believe that Spanish vessels, and perhaps Viking ships, visited the North Carolina coast hundreds of years ago.

And this section is rich in Indian lore. Innumerable Indian relics have been recovered from mounds at Point Harbor, at the lower tip of Currituck County, and in the vicinity of Nags Head. There are also traces of an Indian settlement on Colington Island and of another slightly north of Duck. It is said that there are two enormous Indian pots or kettles over in Perquimans County, the tops which are visible but which have never been dug up because of their size and weight.

All told, the spades of archeologists, either amateurs or professionals, might turn up many articles of interest and historical value in Northeastern North Carolina.

The figurehead dug up at Hatteras this month is in the form of a dragonhead. It is in a good state of preservation, although buried for hundreds of years. It is believed to have come from an African or Viking vessel.

The spot where the figurehead was found by R. H. Gray of Wanchese is known to have been beneath the center of a large sand dune at the time the original Hatteras Light-house was built around 200 years ago. The sand dune, during the intervening years, moved steadily, as the sand dunes do on the coast of Dare, until it finally left a portion of the figurehead exposed.

Miles Clark, to whom the figurehead was presented, says it must date back to around the year 1000 A. D. He hopes to trace its history.

North Carolina Aged May Have To Wait 2 Years for Pensions Because Governor Ehringhaus Made No Move To Anticipate Requirements of The Kind of Federal Pension Bill He Knew Was in the Making

With the recent passage of the social security bill by Congress, the way is open for the greatest measure of social protection to America citizens ever afforded by their government, but the aged needy in North Carolina and many other states may have to wait two years for the pensions the bill provides them.

The social security bill provides, among other things, a pension of \$15 a month for the indigent aged over 65 years, conditional upon the states supplementing the pension with a pension of \$15 or more, making the total \$30 a month. The string to be tied to the government's pensions for the aged were known to Governor Ehringhaus and to every member of the last General Assembly, but our Legislature did nothing about it and Governor Ehringhaus tipped off his key men in the General Assembly to do nothing about it. Governor Ehringhaus didn't want to spoil his "budget balancing," and passed the buck to his successor in office.

The Social Security Act throws an anchor of safeguard to about 30,000,000 Americans. It directly affects three groups: the aged, the unemployed, and women and children. Old people have under its provisions a system of pensions and a system of insurance.

States Must Now Act
Unemployed will have a form of insurance against joblessness just as fast as state legislatures adopt federal provisions. Through an enormous expansion of federal services, aid to children and to mothers will be available on unprecedented scale.

The first year's cost will run to \$100,000,000, but by 1950 a pay-roll tax is expected to channel annually about \$2,700,000,000 into a vast stabilizing fund intended to reduce the pinch of depressions and give every worker a reserve upon which he can fall when the specter of unemployment descends.

The entire system, in President Roosevelt's word on signing the bill, is part of a structure "... that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide for the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness."

President Defines Intent
The President's statement follows: "Today a hope of many years standing is in large part fulfilled. The civilization of the past hundred years, with its startling industrial changes, has tended more and more to make life insecure. Young people have come to wonder what would be their lot when they came to old (Continued on Page Three)



THE BANK CLERK AND THE SODA JERKER
BOOTLEGGERS AND THE A. B. C. STORE

"I see by The Daily Agony that an Elizabeth City bootlegger boasts that he is doing a bigger business now than before Prohibition. A. B. C. liquor store opened, all of which causes The Daily Agony to agonize right much and shed crocodile tears for fear that the liquor store will make conditions worse rather than better." The Soda Jerker speaking.

"Yes, I too have read The Daily Agony's editorials based upon the statement of an anonymous bootlegger who said in the presence of one of its reporters that he was doing a big business in buying liquor from the A. B. C. store and selling it to his customers at a higher price.

"It's a pity The Daily Agony saw fit to conceal the identity of its bootlegger informant. We can only guess who the bootlegger was, but it sounded very much like our old friend Kappy Ferrell talking to save his face. Or it may have been any one of a number of local bootleggers whose reputation for veracity is nil. Most of the bootleggers I know are notorious liars.

"But if any bootlegger in Elizabeth City is making a profit by buying liquor from the county's A. B. C. store and selling it at an added profit, what's that to agonize about? He is at least supplying his customers with legal whiskey manufactured under government supervision, and paying revenue to the county.

"I doubt that any bootlegger is finding any considerable sale for liquor bought from the A. B. C. store. To assume that any considerable number of people would pay a bootlegger a higher price for their

MR. COAN TELLS Many Negroes Will Vote In WPA PLANS FOR Next Tuesday's School Election NO. CAROLINA

In an address before the North Carolina County Commissioners Association at Wrightsville Beach, State Administrator, George W. Coan, Jr., outlined in simple language, the plans and purposes of the Works Progress Administration, that his message might be carried back to the citizens of the counties throughout North Carolina.

Every effort is being made, stated State Administrator Coan, to speed the program and begin work as early as possible. Organization of State and District offices have been completed, and over \$9,000,000 in projects has been dispatched to Washington for final review and approval. The approval of these projects will immediately place thousands of North Carolina workers on Works Progress Administration pay rolls.

District offices for the State have been located in Elizabeth City, New Bern, Raleigh, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Charlotte and Asheville, with a District Director and Administrative staff familiar with problems confronting their respective communities.

On an approved W. P. A. project, the Federal Government will pay the total labor cost and other than labor costs, including materials, rental of equipment, etc., up to 20 per cent of labor costs. All projects must have the sponsorship of a local governmental agency, such as Board of Commissioners, Aldermen, etc., with careful consideration being given to the type of project that it may be of useful and permanent benefit to the community, and at the same time, be of a nature that the community can furnish adequate labor of a type suitable for the completion of the project.

All projects under W. P. A. supervision will be completed with funds allocated at the time of approval. Especially desirable projects to submit for W. P. A. consideration are sanitation, drainage, farm to market roadways, rural recreational playgrounds, airports, school buildings and also gymnasiums where the total cost does not exceed \$25,000, stated Administrator Coan.

Ninety per cent of workers on W. P. A. projects will be selected from relief rolls, and only one member of a family may be employed simultaneously on work projects. To be eligible for work on W. P. A. projects, it is necessary that registration be made with the U. S. Re-employment Service, offices which are located through the State, as all workers will be drawn from the U. S. Re-employment rolls. W. P. A. workers in North Carolina will receive the Security Wage, ranging from \$19.00 per month of 140 hours for unskilled labor, to \$39.00 per month for professional and technical workers on W. P. A. projects.

While work projects are given first consideration adequate provision is made to assist other members of the family, with C. C. Camps to care for youths, and an educational program to assist needy students.

It is the desire of Works Progress Administrator Coan, that North Carolina obtain its full share of the Federal grant, and that the money thus obtained be used in a way that will be of permanent benefit to the State and assist the recovery of business to a point where every W. P. A. worker will be able to obtain permanent work in private industry.

Mr. Coan requested individuals, local civic groups, municipalities and state organizations to make a complete investigation of W. P. A. possibilities and offered the services of his State and District staff to assist those interested in obtaining full information regarding the W. P. A. program.

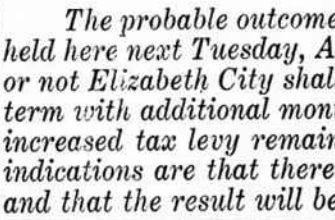
Rupert West Quits
Camp Weaver To
Supervise Wildlife

Rupert E. West, for sometime director of Camp Weaver, the government's transient conservation camp at Nags Head, will leave the camp September 1st to take over the supervision of game in the northeastern district for the N. C. Department of Conservation and Development.

In announcing his acceptance of the new post, Mr. West says: "While I have not had time to go into plans for the new work, I am inclined to favor a program of enlightenment as to the real status of our wildlife rather than a program of drastic law enforcement."

Labor threatens a general strike; that's what industry has been on for some time.

Heads W. P. A.



GEORGE W. COAN, JR., State Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, gave the North Carolina County Commissioners at Wrightsville Beach this week a statement of the aims and objects of the W.P.A. Mr. Coan's statement appears on another page of this newspaper.

A total of 1,175 persons registered to vote in this special election, the total being divided as follows: First Ward, 168; Second Ward, 341; Third Ward, 276, and Fourth Ward, 390. A majority of the total registration is required to carry the election, hence it will take 588 votes to carry the increased term to victory or defeat.

Large numbers of Negroes in the third and fourth wards of the city were registered for this election, most of them being hauled to the registration offices by Negro teachers interested in the extra month's pay a nine months school term would give them.

Last Saturday was the final day on which the registration books for this election were open. Prior to that time, according to Superintendent Edgar E. Bundy, there were 560 persons registered to vote in the special election. When the books closed last Saturday night, there were 1,175 voters registered. This means that the registration was more than doubled on the last day. But whether those who registered Saturday were chiefly opponents or proponents of the nine-months term can not be determined.

There is a possibility that Saturday's heavy registration resulted from this newspaper's expose last week of how a small minority of the voters of Elizabeth City could slip a nine-months school term and higher taxes over on the public in next Tuesday's election.

Contestants Hit Home Stretch In Big Campaign

Elizabeth Citizens generally were totally unaware until last week of the quiet but concerted movement the local school forces were engaged in. The 1933 General Assembly passed a school law whereby the State took over the operation of all public schools in the State and agreed to operate them with a standard eight-months term. Individual counties and municipalities were given the privilege, however, of increasing their school terms to nine months, providing the people of the county were willing to do this and would pay for the additional month of operation.

The law covering these special elections holds that there must be a new registration for such elections, and that a majority of the registered voters must vote for the nine-months term to make it legal. The school teachers and their friends, working thru the Parent-Teachers Association, went to work quietly and rounded up as many favorable voters they could find and saw that they registered for the special election. School teachers' salaries being what they are in North Carolina, an extra month's pay would be most welcome, naturally, to the local teachers. The general public, in the meanwhile, was unaware of what was going on and did not know until this newspaper exposed the machinations of the school forces, that a handful of school teachers and their families and friends were very likely to saddle the taxpayers of the City with the cost of operation of the City schools for a ninth month at a cost of around \$8,000 thus boosting the tax rate by some 11 cents.

So last Saturday's heavy registration may have been opponents of the increased term who had been unaware until last week of the importance of their registration for this school tax election. On the other hand, the P. T. A. members, foreseeing danger after their hand had been exposed, may have bestirred themselves more actively than ever last Saturday and registered many more of their friends.

No one has any idea how the election may go, but it is believed that there will be a rather close contest.

One thoughtful citizen who will vote against the nine months school term says: "I am opposed to being taxed to provide an extra month's schooling for a state system. The State says eight months are sufficient and State universities and colleges are geared to the eight months school term. The State sends nearly 80 high school students from Camden County to our Elizabeth City High School, and will bring in about 60 high school students from Newland this fall. It all (Continued on Page Five)

The campaign ends at 5 p. m. next Saturday. Just as soon as the returns can be checked over the winners will receive their awards, and next week's Independent will carry the final total votes cast by these four contestants, and results will be surprising, even to those who have followed the various fortunes of their favorites in the race.

In its initial announcement of Friday, June 14, The Independent offered prizes and cash commissions to those who would take part in the race. Every contestant competing so far has drawn 20 per cent in cash as a commission on all cash subscriptions (Continued on Page Six)

NOTE: A new book of The Bank Clerk and The Soda Jerker, 84 generous pages, printed on antique finish book paper from a new type of Garamond type, attractively bound in paper covers, now obtainable in this newspaper at 50c a copy, postage prepaid in the U. S. A. and Canada.