

Coroner's Jury Finds That Ben Rigney Was Murdered

Skull Was Fractured; Mystery Remains Unsolved by Officials

Coroner Suspends Hearings After Hearing Number of Witnesses With No Clue

In the death of Ben Rigney, of this city, Saturday night, March 2nd one finds all the elements of a cold blooded, deliberately thought out murder. It has all the elements of interest. Much has been written about the unfortunate affair during the past few days, but no connected story that we have seen has given the public mind a version of all the elements that go into the tragedy. A coroner and his jury have gone thoroughly into the whole matter and not a thing that points to the guilt of any one has come to light. No arrests have been made, and until some evidence is developed that points to guilt further than suspicion, no arrests are likely to be made. As to a suspicion there is plenty of that, but the courts do not convict on suspicion, interesting as it may be.

Life is so dear to all of us that a case of this nature has a special interest for every one. Man is given but one life to live and to have that taken away when one is just beginning to live, is a tragedy that has no equal in human existence. So great is the love of life and so well are we all grounded in the value of life that every little detail in a case like we now have becomes of special importance in that it may throw some light on more important parts of the case.

Ben Rigney was no ordinary young man. He might justly be called an exception to the rule followed by the average young man. He came of humble parentage, his people having lived for years back up in the face of the Blue Ridge mountain, up among the rocks where no roads are made and where the mountaineers make a crop in the coves with a hoe and live in their cabin homes on the face of the mountain. His people are intellectually smart and when young Ben came to town from his mountain home he was not confused by the white light and the fast life of the age. He secured a job in a factory and began to save his money from the first. He never lost touch with the folks back in the mountains, and his church relations were such that he was selected as a teacher in the Sunday school in the little church back where he had his membership. Each week after his labors were ended he walked back to his home church and taught the Sunday school lesson to his former neighbors. Then he would foot it back to his job and again put in a solid week's work. He saved his money while others spent theirs. He bought a home in the suburbs of the city and rented the house to a family and reserved one room for himself, thus making his cost of living less.

On Saturday the 2nd day of March the family of Mr. Leftwich who lived in the home with Ben, went to spend a day or two with relatives. When they returned Sunday night they found Ben Rigney cold in death in his bed. It appeared that he had been undressed and his clothes laid on a chair and his body carefully placed in his bed, stretched out naturally, and his hands carefully folded over his body. He was in exactly the position one would naturally place a dead body to await the services of the undertaker. No disorder in the room indicated struggle or any serious illness or a death in agony from any disease or pain. There was only one conclusion that could be reasonably reached, and this is that Ben Rigney was dead before he was placed on that bed. Where he died, by what means or who carried his remains to that room and disposed of the body as above stated is the effort now to uncover. The matter is yet a mystery.

Here are some facts that seem to be common knowledge. Mr. Manuel Snow lives five miles up in the country just over the Virginia line. He has two young daughters, Misses Virgie and Essie. Miss Virgie has a position here in this city at the Hutchins Laundry. Jimmy Tolbert and Coy Sikes both live in the section of country about four miles west of this city. They are sons of farmers in that section and both about twenty years of age, just merging into manhood. They are both house carpenters by trade and work about this city. It is known that young Tolbert is a man who takes his drink of times, and yet is not known as a heavy drinker or a drunkard. The re-

putations of young Sikes and Tolbert are good.

Raymond McDowell is a young man of this city, a worker in a furniture factory. If there is anything against his character we have not heard it.

Some time ago gossip has it that young Jimmy Tolbert was keeping company with Miss Virgie Snow. Then for some reason the young people quit going together. On Saturday night, March 2nd Ben Rigney when his week's work was ended put on his best clothes and went to call on Miss Virgie Snow at her father's home up in Virginia, walking the distance of five miles to make the call. He had not been at the home long until Coy Sikes and Jimmie Tolbert also came in their car. When they were in the house Coy Sikes gave his attention to Miss Essie Snow, Ben Rigney was talking with Miss Virgie and Jimmie Tolbert sat to himself saying nothing to any one. Coy Sikes admits that he and Tolbert had each had a drink. After spending an hour or so in the home Sikes and Tolbert left the house, got in their car and drove away. In a few minutes after they had gone Ben Rigney also left, evidently intending to walk back to town.

Coy Sikes says that he and Tolbert drove straight to this city and then to a home at Cross Roads two miles west of here and spent some hours at the home at a party, and then went to his home where they both spent the night. They have witnesses to show that they did spend some time at the party.

Now enter Raymond McDowell. He is said to have told that about 11 o'clock Saturday night he saw Ben Rigney on the bridge over Lovilla Creek on the Rockford road in what appeared to be a drunken condition. He is quoted as having asked him what was the trouble and that Rigney said some boys had hit him on the head with a bottle. He is further quoted as saying that Rigney went with him into the store at the filling station near by and refused the offer of a soft drink and appeared to be in a drunken condition. McDowell seems to drop out of the picture after this.

When all this was known a coroner was called and a jury selected. The body of the dead man indicated foul play and Dr. R. E. Gorham, the county health officer, was ordered to make an examination of the remains. Outward indications were that the man had been poisoned. The condition of his mouth and throat were such that he appeared to have swallowed some kind of fluid that burned the flesh. As the result of the impression this made Dr. Gorham removed the stomach and decided that it contained poison. The jury ordered the stomach sent to the state chemist for examination. On receipt of the stomach the state chemist wired back that the charge for this service was \$150. W. E. Lindsay, chairman of the board of county commissioners is said to have been approached and asked if the county would pay this charge and he is credited with saying that the county would not. In the meantime the remains had been interred at the cemetery near the home of Rigney up on the hill country. When it appeared that nothing was to come of getting the stomach examined the jury sitting on the case decided that it might be well to go more thoroughly into the examination of the skull of the dead man. Outwardly it appeared to be unharmed. But when the remains were exhumed and the skull removed a new situation developed. Drs. E. M. Hollingsworth and Gambell assisted Dr. Gorham in this examination. The skull was found to be fractured and under the fracture they found a clot of blood large enough and of such nature that it was beyond question that the blow on the head had caused the man's death. He could have lived some hours after the blow on the head, but the clot of blood and the bruise was all that was needed to bring death.

With all these facts before the public mind folks just naturally make up a verdict. Who killed Ben Rigney? It could not have been for the purpose of robbery, for several dollars were found in his clothes after his death. What motive was back of the whole affair? Why was he hit on the head. He was not a drinking man, and could not have been in a drunken brawl. Some time after he left the home of

Mr. Snow and before he reached the filling station at the railroad on Rockford road, he was hit on the head and from the blow he died. Who hit him and who went with him to his home and who undressed him and put him to bed and tried to make it appear that he had died a natural death? Some would like to believe that he was forced to drink a poison after he was in an unconscious condition, and thus try to leave the impression that he had brought about his own death by suicide. Try as hard as it can the public mind has not been able in any way connect the young men in the case with Rigney's death. Some who have followed the case all along are now of the opinion that nothing has come to light that points the finger of guilt to any one, and that unless new evidence is developed, it may never be known who killed Ben Rigney.

Parent-Teacher Asso. Will Open Reading Room

The most constructive piece of work yet undertaken by the local Parent-Teacher association was planned at a meeting of the Rockford Street School Parent-Teacher association Tuesday night when the regular meeting for March was held. Complete plans have not yet been worked out but it is thought that books can be secured by popular subscription to furnish good reading matter for the pupils of the school during the coming summer. To spur up both parents and children to take interest in the plan a cash prize of \$5.00 has been offered to the grade which secures the most books. This money will in turn be invested in books which will be the gift of the winning grade to the reading room project. Volunteer workers will have charge of the reading room when it is in operation.

Diversion from the serious business of the organization was furnished by pupils of Mrs. Henry Wolfe's fifth grade who put on a play which also dealt with the theme of "books". Mrs. Wolfe's room won the attendance prize, a picture of "Old Ironsides" which is bestowed each month on the room having the largest attendance of parents at the monthly meetings.

Preparatory to cooperation in the county-wide pre-school clinic being put on by the Surry County Health department the next meeting will be held the second Tuesday in April with Dr. H. A. Gorham of the County Health department as the principal speaker.

The interest and attendance in this organization is growing in a most encouraging way.

Mrs. Sarah Armfield Dies in This City

In the passing of Mrs. Sarah Greenwood Armfield which took place last Saturday morning about 4:30 o'clock in the home of her daughter Mrs. W. A. Jackson, on the Westfield road, the county loses a woman of fine character and noble qualities.

Mrs. Armfield was about seventy-five years of age and had been fighting a losing game with disease and advancing age for many months and the end was not unexpected. A simple service was conducted from the home on Monday at 12:30 o'clock and the body carried to the Lowgap Baptist Church where the final rites were observed and where the remains were laid to rest in the cemetery near the church. Dr. I. T. Jacobs, pastor of the First Baptist Church and the Rev. Mr. Hall, pastor of the Lowgap Church officiated in both services. Mrs. Armfield united with the Lowgap church in early girlhood becoming one of its charter members and never moved her membership when she came here to make her home, but rounded out more than sixty years of continuous and loyal devotion to that church.

Mrs. Armfield is survived by four sons Ester, of Herndon, Va.; James Isaac, Birmingham, Ala.; Roy, of Los Angeles; and Elmer of Oregon and one daughter with whom she made her home, Her husband Mr. Frank Armfield died about twenty-five years ago. Mrs. Fern Armfield, widow of the late O. H. Armfield, of Miami, Fla., is a daughter-in-law. One sister Mrs. P. D. Holcomb, of this city, and a brother Monroe Greenwood, of Montana, also survive.

Miss Irene Simmons has completed her business training at the Roanoke Business college and will accept work in this city returning here the last of the week.

Mexican Revolt Is Felt Here in Surry

No More Mexican Quail to Be Had Until Little Af fray Down There Is Ended.

That little revolt that has been in progress in Mexico for the past week is now spreading out and is being felt even here in Surry. While the rumblings cannot be distinguished as clearly as those that are being set in motion at Raleigh by Surry's representative, Dr. Holman Bernard, yet it has interfered with the plan and program of the county game warden, Martin Bennett.

The state game commission last year released a large number of Mexican quail in the counties of the state and plan to repeat the same thing this spring. But now word comes from the border towns down in Mexico that no more quail can be had until the revolution ends and the Mexicans go back into the field catching live quail instead of killing each other. These quail cost the state \$2.25 each delivered to the counties and the expense is borne by the state game commission, they getting the funds from the sale of hunting and fishing license. Surry County will get 18 pair some time during the spring if that revolution is brought to an end.

On April 1st the state will discontinue paying bounties on the following: Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, crow and wildcat. So after that date game warden Martin Bennett of this county will no longer pay the bounties for the above game.

Dr. Register In This City Tuesday

Dr. F. M. Register, director of the Bureau of Vital Statistics, of the State Board of Health of North Carolina was a visitor here Tuesday consulting with Dr. H. J. Gorham and others in the interest of better state-wide reporting of births and deaths. Dr. Register says that while North Carolina has the highest birth rate of any state in the union and a very low death rate he feels that if all births were reported we should have an even higher birth rate than we now have. Infant mortality is based on the number of live births and a report of all births would make the infant death rate lower.

Dr. Register is urging the parents of new born infants to see to it that their baby is registered and it is important that every doctor and midwife report births promptly to the local registrars.

It is important to the baby and to the parents that this record be made. It is also important in a different way to the doctor or midwife as failure to report is a violation of the law and no physician or midwife of good standing wants to be a law violator or be classed as ignorant about a well known law.

Dr. Register says that with few exceptions there is little complaint about the reports from Surry county.

Kiwanians To Be Fed By Baptists.

The Kiwanis Club meeting will be held tomorrow evening in the dining room of the First Baptist Church and the supper served by ladies of the church organization. Owing to the illness of C. W. Andrew, proprietor of the Blue Ridge Hotel, the members are taking advantage of the opportunity to eat a supper prepared by the Baptist ladies. The hour of meeting is 6:30.

Hospital News

Among the newest cases at the hospital are several appendicitis patients: Mr. John Scott, of Rusk, who submitted to operation Wednesday; Master Rex Tiley who also had an operation Wednesday and Mrs. Jesse Gwyn of route 3 who was operated on Tuesday night for acute appendicitis.

Mrs. Ira Wood, of Rockford, is a patient for treatment.

Floyd A. Marshall, of Ocala, Va., had a slight operation.

Mrs. Annie Clark, of Claudeville, Va., is being treated for rheumatism.

Mrs. W. S. Wolfe of this city who has been quite sick is improving.

Mr. Tom Samuels also of this city, is able to be up and about the hospital.

South Georgians Expect Hoover Prices

When renewing his subscription to The Mount Airy News, Col. J. S. Ball, tobacco warehouse auctioneer writing from Nashville, Ga., says: "I am at home now in South Georgia. There are plenty of tobacco plants down here, the farmers will plant a good sized crop here, and will look for 'Hoover Prices'."

Fight Over Surry Politics Goes On In Legislature

Pre-School Clinics Be Held in County

The Surry County Health Department is doing everything possible within the limit of the funds and working force provided by the county and state to conserve the health of its citizens. Beginning Wednesday, March 20 Pre-School Clinics will be held for the small children who will enter school for the first time next season.

When the little tot reaches school age the parents begin to consider the matter of school clothes, school shoes, overshoes, books, etc. but how many take the child to a doctor and dentist to see that he or she is in the best possible condition to get the most out of the training offered by the schools?

It is of the utmost importance that the child be physically fit to enter school. Very few children make satisfactory progress in their studies if they are handicapped by physical defects. Most of the causes of poor health in children can be removed or remedied. This should be done before the child is ready to enter school so that the child may get the most out of its work and may make progress. It is not fair to the child to place it in school handicapped so that study will be a hardship and disappointment. Why neglect the most important part of the child's preparation for school?

The clinic will be conducted by Dr. H. J. Gorham, Surry County Health Officer and Miss Harte Oliver, M. & I. County nurse. The schedule for March and April follows and May's schedule will be announced later:

- March 20th, Wednesday, Eldora School.
- March 22nd, Friday, North Elkin School.
- March 27th, Wednesday, Long Hill School.
- April 3rd, Wednesday, Bannertown School.
- April 5th, Friday, Lowgap School.
- April 10th, Wednesday, Little Richmond School.
- April 12th, Friday, Franklin School.
- April 17th, Wednesday, Cooke School.
- April 19th, Friday P. M., Tesh School.
- April 24th, Wednesday, P. M., Salem School.
- April 26th, Friday, Copeland High School.
- April 30th, Tuesday, Zephyr School.

Service at Holy Trinity Sunday

The Rev. Reginald Mallett, of Greensboro, will preach at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in this city Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. The public is cordially invited to hear him.

To Make Electricity Servant in Home

Through a cooperative movement started by the Southern Public Utilities Co. and the electrical contractors of this city patrons of the S. P. U. system are being afforded an opportunity to better equip their homes for the use of electrical appliances at a low cost and on very easy terms. The plan that is being offered carries forward the idea of installing more convenience receptacles in the homes so that the housewife can have more freedom in the arrangement of her furniture and the use of the appliances.

It has not been but a few years when an electric iron and a half dozen light bulbs hanging from the ceiling was all the electrical outfit the average home possessed. The inventive genius of the nation at that time had not foreseen the uses to which electricity could be put. Ten years ago all of Rockefeller's millions could not have purchased a modern electric range, and Henry Ford's untold wealth could not have purchased him an electric refrigerator. The advent of these and many other articles into the life of the home has revolutionized the housekeeper's daily routine. But to get the most benefits from the use of these articles one must have means of connecting to the electric line. Many homes have no convenient receptacle to connect to and for that reason are not able to derive the greatest benefit from their articles. It is for this reason that those interested in the electrical business will for the next 30 days make a special offer for the installation of these convenience outlets. The electrical contractors have agreed upon a specified price for this work and the S. P. U. Co. will finance the work collecting from the home owners in monthly payments. The plan is fully explained in a page advertisement in this issue and is one that should be attractive to every one who has not fully wired their homes for the use of electrical equipment.

Bernard Continues Fight to Remove Folger-Llewellyn

Reports from Raleigh reaching this county says that the Senate has gone Democratic, meaning thereby that the Democrat members have set their feet down on all measures that are being sought by Republican representatives. This mood of the senate this week saved the Recorder's court in Mount Airy when Dr. Bernard, through friends in that body, led by Senator Carter Williams of Yadkin made another futile attempt to interfere with the present status of things in Surry. This act that the Senate turned down would have left the selection of a Recorder to a vote of the people of Mount Airy township.

Today a measure comes before the Senate to allow the county commissioners to name the salary of the purchasing agent. While the saying is that the Senate has gone Democratic, it would appear from this distance that the House has gone Republican for a time at least for the first of the week Dr. Bernard succeeded in getting that body to pass his measure which would allow the Surry commissioners to pay the purchasing agent of the county as little as they might choose. This was a subtle way to oust from the office the present Democratic holder, Frank Folger, for if such a measure were to become a law Mr. Folger could be reduced in salary to a negligible amount. And then the measure also did not name any maximum amount that the commissioners should pay, leaving the path clear for them to fitly repay some political debt with the appointment to this office of some worthy and true member of the Republican fold.

Several Surry people are in Raleigh this week and both sides are carrying on an intensive lobby for and against the measure which will be decided by the Senate today or tomorrow. To this date the representatives elected on the Republican ticket have not been able to get any of their political measures through and with the legislature expecting to adjourn it will soon be known who has been the final winner in the two months' contest that has been waged down at Raleigh over Surry affairs.

Remains of Mrs. Taylor Interred at Oakdale

Friends gathered from far and near last Sunday afternoon to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of Mrs. E. M. Taylor whose remains were brought here from her winter home in Florida for interment which took place in Oakdale cemetery following services in the First Baptist Church at 2:30 conducted by her pastor Dr. I. T. Jacobs assisted by Rev. Mr. Millikan of Lexington.

Mrs. Taylor had lived her life in a simple unpretentious way going quietly about her daily tasks, a good wife, a good neighbor, a loyal and untiring friend she made her place in the hearts of those who knew her, as was evidenced by the large number of friends who gathered for the funeral and the numerous floral offerings.

Among those from a distance gathering for the funeral were her son Robert J. Taylor, Birmingham, Ala.; E. F. Cox, Harvey Cox and daughter Miss Clyde Cox, Galax, Va.; Mrs. J. L. Hawks, Tazewell, Va.; Mrs. T. L. Lamb, Lumburg, Va.; Mrs. Will Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Dickerson and son Clyde Dickerson, Lexington; Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Moser and family, Winston-Salem, Mr. and Mrs. Claude Watson, Winston-Salem; Mr. and Mrs. Ed Sainling, Greensboro; Sam Lane and son Dock Lane, J. M. Hayworth, High Point; Rev. and Mrs. B. H. Millikan, Goldsboro; Glenn Hawks, Bluefield, W. Va.; Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Hawks, Idaho.

Youth Accidentally Wounds Self

Harry Binder, young high school student and son of C. Binder, is carrying his left arm in a sling these days while a hole through it heals, drilled there by a little 22 caliber rifle bullet. Harry was monkeying with a rifle in the rear of Turneyre and Lamm's drug store Monday afternoon and in some way let the thing go off. The wound was a flesh one, the bullet just barely missing the bone below his elbow.

Mrs. H.H. Has issued Dinner-Bricks Invitations

Mrs. J. Carroll Hill has issued invitations for dinner-bricks on Friday evening, eighteen couples being the recipients of her hospitality.