

From the archives of Liberal's hometown newspaper since 1886. Researched and compiled by A.J. Coleman, L&T Reporter

1963

Father dresses hair, convict makes a run

Fathers are known to be very protective and do just about anything for their daughters. One Liberal father in 1963 was willing to cut and curl hair in order to earn money and spend quality time with his girls, so he joined a hairdressing school with two of his daughters. "Father and two daughters in school of hairdressing," read the headline of the Southwest Daily Times.

The story explained that this was "a first for the Liberal School of Hairdressing and Beauty Culture."

Charles Rowden and his two teenage daughters, Lola Jane, 18, and Mary Ann, 16, enrolled for the six-month course. They had actually moved to Liberal from Scott City in order to attend the school, and hoped to start one of their own in the future "to teach young women and men how to dress hair," the story said.

In a way that was common at the time, the newspaper listed the home address of the Rowden family: 513 N. Washington.

Wheat harvest is a fickle thing, and always has been. "Wheat harvest here not much," read the headline of the Southwest Daily Times in early June 1963. The wheat crop harvested was less than 15 percent of the previous year's production. That was the discouraging story from elevator operators and the farm placement office in Liberal.

C.C. Griffin said that he had closed the Liberal harvest office "late last week after a very light demand for combines and harvest crews." Griffin said that only about 35 percent of the wheat acreage planted was cut in this area. Yields ran no higher than 10 bushels per acre and much in the five-bushel category.

Light Grain and Milling Company, the same building that burned to the ground in present day Liberal, reported that grain deliveries during the whole harvest "didn't amount to what a good half day would have brought in during a good harvest." Yields were from two to five bushels and only irrigated fields produced good yields, they said.

Joe Pitman at the Pittman Grain Company said dry weather, hail and bugs all contributed to the near failures of the '63 crop. Pittman estimated yields were four to five bushels on those fields that were cut.

“One-eyed car, all-night case,” read the headline of the Southwest Daily Times.

When Deputy Sheriff J.C. Kemper stopped a “one-eyed car” on Blue Bell road, the Times reported, “he didn’t realize he’d be spending the rest of the night on the case.”

Detective Kemper stopped a 1955 Chevrolet driven by Robert L. Wood, 27, of Boise City, Okla. Wood also didn’t have a license, so the deputy brought him to the sheriff’s office and booked him on the violation.

While permitting Wood to make the customary telephone call before jailing him, Deputy Kemper stepped into the hallway and heard the telephone clang on his desk. Wood had sprinted off into the night. He was found finally three miles outside of Liberal trying to make it to Oklahoma.

After the police captured him a second time, they found that Wood was an escaped convict and was wanted for assault and battery. Jailbreaking charges were being filed for his most recent run for freedom.