



County Commissioner Richard Ultican, a tugboat company owner, allegedly made cash payments to Dick Law in 1937 to stave off strike activity. (Jones Historical Collection)

an IWA member who helped organize the Grays Harbor Civil Rights Committee to defend Dick Law.

Interviewed in 1999, the longtime member of the Communist Party of the U.S., said he believed Laura's killer "was someone from among the ten names Dick Law named at the inquest — the Business Builders and their goons."

Moir said he "probably knew Dick Law as well as anybody" and admired his eloquence and tenacity as a union leader. "But a lot of things I didn't admire. I knew he was chipping on his wife."

Was Law a member of the Party?

"Sure he was a member of the Party!" Moir declared. "We all were. It was a struggle. All the Red-baiting was a crying shame because we had a rough row to hoe because there were so many doubts and controversy about Dick."

Controversy over his relationship with Helen Soboleski?

"Yes," said Moir, adding the new twist that some even believed Soboleski was a traitor to the union and the Party and had given information to the Better Business Builders and Joe Schneider.

"I could never understand how come Dick could get hooked up with her. So what are you gonna do with a guy like that? I wouldn't put all my chips in his basket for anything in the world."

As for the notion that Laura — or Dick — was going to betray confidences and do something that was injurious to the Party, Moir said, "First of all, I never heard any story like that, and, secondly, he couldn't hurt the Party anyway."

"So did they kill Laura Law to send you guys a message?"

"No. I don't think so."

Why did they kill her?

"Well, I'll tell you what I think," the old logger said, "and I was there shortly after the murder ... in that house, in that front room. I think they were looking for some union material, and I think it had to do with Dick Law and Dick Ultican."

In other words, something potentially as incriminating to the right as the left?

Moir nodded.

Finally, history must contend with literature. In 1949, Murray Morgan, who went on to become the Northwest's favorite historian, wrote a novel called "The Viewless Winds." Although he asserted that this was a work of fiction and not based on real persons or events, Morgan had been a reporter on the daily *Washingtonian* in Hoquiam at the time of the murder, and the book conjures up the turbulent Grays Harbor of the period.

In the novel, the young wife of a labor leader is murdered in her home by a drunken derelict who did not intend to kill her. The murder, which becomes the focal point of community suspicion, intrigue and conflict, was actually random and unpremeditated.

Morgan's novel may be a case of fiction being less strange than the truth. The ransacking of the Law house may have been a crime separate from the murder.

Assuming that it was not staged as a cover-up, its purpose remains a crucial question.

Was someone searching for information about Communist Party membership, a letter by Laura Law, threatening notes or clippings about the Red Finn Hall raid?

Is it more plausible that they were seeking derogatory information about Dick Law — information that would have undermined his position as a labor leader? Who might have sought and profited from such information?

The Better Business Builders, the AFL and the anti-Communist faction of the International Woodworkers of America.

But, in the words of Laura's husband, "Why do this to her, a poor innocent kid?"

Six decades after the murder, the person with the most intimate interest in finding the truth was Dick and Laura's son. The only living "witness," he was just shy of three and asleep in the back bedroom the night his mother died.



John Vekich as a young sergeant in 1941. (Vekich family)

'THAT BIRD VEKICH'

On January 26, 1940, Aberdeen police were grilling a friend of Laura Law's husband.

"What's the matter with you guys?" the man said, demanding to know why no one had been arrested twenty-one days after the murder.

The police said they had "quite a list" of suspects but no real evidence.

"Keep an eye on that bird Vekich," the man said.

"He's been pretty well checked," a police captain replied.

"You ain't checked him enough!"

John Dominic Vekich chuckled in 1999 at the "that bird" line in the Law case transcripts. The eighty-one-year-old was sitting in his tidy home near Fort Lewis, reviewing for the first time in fifty-nine years Dick Law's assertion that he was among ten people who "might have something to do" with Laura's murder. As Vekich read the documents, one got a glimpse of the cocky, idealistic Croatian kid who worked with the anti-Communist Business Builders. "I was born to be an undercover man," he said.

Vekich went on to spend thirty-two years in the Army, from counterintelligence during World War II to reconnaissance flights over Vietnam.

He said he made "a lot of enemies" in the 1930s, and if Laura Law was killed because she was poised to betray the Communists — which he found plausible — then he was "damn lucky" they didn't kill him too. Asked if he killed Laura Law, Vekich shot back, "Hell no! I wouldn't even kill Dick Law!"



Jack Law in the 1920s in California's Folsom Prison. (Washington State Archives)

MYSTERY MAN

"Who was Jack Law?" That question is nearly as intriguing as "Who killed Laura Law?"

Harland Plumb, an Aberdeen Daily World reporter who covered the murder, suspected "Dick Law's brother Jack," a "shadowy" ex-convict, was involved.

State Archives contain prison mug shots of Jack Law. They also yield a copy of a letter from Plumb telling investigators that while "this easily could be my goofiest notion yet ... nevertheless, after considerable research and thought, I suggest it is worth our while to do some work" on the possibility that Dick and Jack were also involved in the 1936 kidnapping/murder — still unsolved — of 10-year-old Charles Mattson.

The boy was the son of a wealthy Tacoma physician. Plumb adds that the Mattson murder might have been "the real reason behind the murder of Laura Law."

Plumb says he "learned inadvertently that the FBI once considered Dick Law as a suspect in the Mattson case." Both Dick and Jack were out of prison and "available" when the boy was kidnapped.

Both men were badly in need of money, the reporter noted, adding that the FBI sketch of the Mattson kidnapper looked a lot like Jack Law. Further, one kidnapper made remarks in the Mattson

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Or was he?

"Dickie" wandered around. His grandfather testified that he put up a gate on the stairs to the first floor so that Dickie wouldn't go tumbling down. So even if the toddler heard something scary, one could make a case that he got out of bed, saw something terrible, then cringed himself back to sleep.

Richard S. Law Jr., a retired Army officer, sat for hours of interviews with *The Daily World* in 1999.

By then, everyone called him "Dick," as they did his dad. With all due respect to his father, he disliked being a "Jr." and he positively hated being called "Dickie."

Law was convinced his father didn't do it. Although one person testified that Dick Law's eyes "could have paralyzed anyone," his son said he never saw a single sign that his father was capable of violence.

As for the fact that his father spent two years in the Oregon State Prison, he said that was "for stealing a loaf of bread" in the depths of the Depression.

"He was no thug like the anti-union faction portrayed him."

However, Law said he could "handle the truth" about who did it — about everything — whatever it might be.

Laura Law had "a sort of mirth in her voice," one acquaintance said. But her son said he couldn't conjure it up — the sound of his mother's voice — no matter how hard he tried, and he had spent a lifetime trying.

He said his only memory of his mother was of having his nightly bath rudely interrupted by someone who entered through the front door the night of the murder.

"She went out into the front room," Law recalled. "And after two, three, four, five maybe ten minutes, she came back in and dried me off, put me into bed. And that was the only time in my life that I was put to bed without the story, the snack, the play time, the now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep ... that kind of thing."

After his mother died, he was shuttled off to an aunt's house, then whisked to Canada "for his own protection," and eventually ended up in Olympia with his future stepmother, Helen Soboleski, when his father was drafted during World War II.

Aberdeen clearly was no place for Dick Law's son. On the playground at grade school, Law says, he was taunted as a "Commie" and challenged to fight practically every day.

"I caught hell in Aberdeen as a kid," he said. "Dick Law's son" used to get beat up all the time. He got so he could fight pretty damn good too. I started out with the kids my age, but after a couple of weeks they decided they couldn't whip me any more, so they kept getting bigger and bigger. That's one of the reasons they got me out of town.

"I can remember being spit on. I can remember being blind-side hit — all kinds of stuff. I think one of the best things that happened to me is when they pulled me out of this town. Away from that house."

He went to high school in Seattle and was "doing well, playing football, running on the track team just getting interested in girls. Then all of a sudden my lifestyle drastically changed again."

His father, who had been working as a fisherman out of Westport and Neah Bay, checked into the Governor Hotel at Olympia, took an overdose of sleeping pills and was found dead on July 1, 1953. Law, 45, left a note of apology to the hotel manager and one to his wife, whom he had married in 1945 after he was discharged from the Army:

"Dear Helen: I had a diagnosis of cancer made three to four months ago. What they told me then is coming true now. I've been taking lots of the stuff lately. No one loves life better than I, but this is the best way. I hope you and Dickie will forgive me. I love you. Dick."

"Dickie" was fifteen. And that was about the last time anyone called him Dickie.

"My childhood was a regular soap opera," Law said in 1999, adding with a laugh, "It's a good thing I'm half Scottish and half Finnish" — tight and resilient.

"Early on, I had been a street kid. I was rebellious. So the control Helen put over me was the best thing that ever happened or I'd have been sitting inside Walla Walla, I guarantee you," Law said of Soboleski. "She was straight, strict and turned me around. She put some restrictions on me that I didn't like when we moved up to Seattle, but she was totally fair and it was the best thing that ever happened. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but I do now."

"All of a sudden (after his father died) I'm the breadwinner, out working in a grocery store mak-

ing as much as an adult. It's kinda tough on a kid, but it taught me a lot about myself.

"I could tell that my dad was looking sick, but I didn't know how sick. Later, I learned he went to two different doctors and confirmed the diagnosis of cancer, and in his mind he was looking at his mother and his father, who had both died of cancer and it was long and torturous. And he said, 'I'm not going to go through that!' So he checked into the Governor House Hotel and pulled the plug.

"No one had any inclination he was going to take his life, and in retrospect — I can't prove it, it's just a feeling — I feel there's something fishy about it. It's just too pat, too neat, too clean."

Law said he had heard the autopsy found no cancer. Retired County Coroner John Bebich, who sat in on the interview, said he had heard it was clearly suicide, but there were conflicting autopsies as to the cancer. The Thurston County Coroner's Office no longer has autopsy reports for 1953. A coroner's letter in the State Archives regarding the autopsy makes no mention of cancer.

Young Law dropped out of school to join the Army in May of 1955. He retired as a chief warrant officer, went back to college and earned two master's degrees. His wife, Judy, served in the Air Force as a missile officer. In 2001, they were in Germany.

His wife has always prodded him to do whatever he needed, travel anywhere, hang the expense, if it would help him find some peace of mind about his mother's death.

"I kind of pride myself on objectivity. I don't know what I'd do if I ever find out who did it and they're alive, but I hope I'd stop short of violent actions," Law said. "I'm basically a calm person until someone really rubs me wrong."

Law said his father "was a good person. If he believed in something he would fight for it. If someone needed help, he was just like they say my mother was — always helpful. Like when he owned a fishing boat a lot of his crew were people who were on the down and outs."

Law said that he never saw a secret side to his father — never saw him "just lose it" — no episode where his temper turned so visceral, so mean, that he didn't know who he was.

"I never saw him anything but level-headed," he said, adding that his father never once hit, slapped or spanked him.

"His punishment was to make me hit him. And I wouldn't do it. He'd say, 'If you don't think anything more of our family than to do that, hit me!'"

"I couldn't."

"I saw him in some pretty rough situations, too. In fact, I saw him in a situation that pretty well shook him up, and when that happened I saw his temper and volatility go down."

Growing up, did he ever say, "Dad, who killed my mom? What happened?"

"Never did. Most of the talking when I was a kid and most of my belief in my father when I was a kid came from my grandmother. And the way she supported him."

Law just took it for granted that his father didn't kill his mother.

"It couldn't be anything else from what I had seen on the surface of the man."

Did he ever ask Sally Luoma, "Grandma, who killed my mom?"

"I never asked her that but we talked about it and this and that and she told me what I said the next day."

"I asked if 'those men' were still fighting? I don't remember saying it, but that's what she told me I said."

"Back in those days, the Weir Theatre every Friday night gave away groceries and prizes on 'Bank Night.' And everybody in town went, including my grandmother who never won anything but kept hoping," Law said. "But my mother was tired that night, having been with my other grandmother, who was dying of cancer in Oregon, so she didn't go to the show with Nestor and Sally. My dad dropped them off at the theater on his way to union business. So I'm in the tub early on in the evening after dinner, and she's drying me off, and we heard the front door close."

His mother "startled."

"I heard that night latch snap shut. So she went out in the front room."

When she came back in, "She was calm, but she put me right into bed. ... It was a rush job. Dry, pat, pat, pajamas, bang you're in bed. And to my recollection I got a little cranky because I wasn't going to have any fun."

In her statement to the police, Law's grandmother said Laura was punctual about putting Dickie to bed. "He went to bed when he heard the Silver program," she said, referring to "The Lone Rang-

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house that Plumb interpreted as possibly anti-capitalist, and "there is plenty of evidence that both (Dick and Jack) were Commies ... and that it was OK to do anything to and against a capitalist."

Dick Law, Plumb said, was "the hardest man I ever knew; he is cold, strong, calculating, ruthless ..."

"There is a parallel between the vicious, brutal character of the killing of the little boy and the killing of Laura Law," Plumb wrote. "In both cases, they were struck very forcibly on the head with a hammer or tire iron or something similar; the boy was stabbed in the back, Laura in the breast."

Plumb went on to conclude that if Laura — reportedly "fed up" with Communism and Dick's womanizing — had learned that her husband had been involved in the Mattson boy's murder "then her disposal becomes a must for the Law boys."

The plot thickens: Dick Law had no brother Jack. Nor was there anyone in his immediate family nicknamed Jack. When Dick Law Jr. was shown a picture of Jack Law in 1999, he said, "I've never seen this man before in my life."

Jack Law, some five years Dick's senior, lived in the Medford area of Oregon at the same time as Dick. But extensive interviews with family members in Oregon yielded no clues to Jack's relationship, if any, to Dick. Whoever Jack Law was, prison photos of him bear a striking resemblance to Dick Law.

Jack Law, 19, entered the Oregon State Penitentiary in 1922 on a burglary conviction. He was released in 1926. In 1929, he entered Folsom Prison, near Sacramento, in the wake of another burglary conviction.

Paroled in December 1931, Jack Law returned to Folsom on September 30, 1933, on a parole violation. His final discharge from Folsom was on April 4, 1936, nine months before the Mattson boy was kidnapped.

A NOVEL TAKE

Murray Morgan, who became one of the Northwest's best-selling historians, was working at the *Grays Harbor Washingtonian* in Hoquiam around the time of Laura Law's murder.

Several years later, he turned his experiences into his first novel, "The Viewless Winds."

Written during the winter of 1946-47 on Puget Sound's Maury Island and published in 1949, Morgan's novel takes place in the fictional town of Cove, but Harborites will recognize where Morgan is writing about:

"A low mist lay over the town. The fog was thinning under the morning sun and through it, almost directly below, he saw the roofs of the houses in the Lower Hill development. ... He stood by the window for a long time, staring at the mill sprawled along the shore like a giant's junkyard."

Like the real-life case which inspired it, the novel concerned the murder of a labor leader's wife and the political turmoil that erupts afterward.

In real life, the murderer is unknown. In Morgan's novel, the killer of Dee Dawson — the "golden-haired Finnish girl" — is a drunken "beach rat" whom she lets into the house for a cup of coffee.

The rest of the novel concerns the town's reaction as the mill manager seeks to implicate Dawson's husband, who in turn blames the business community. Standing outside it all is Morgan's stand-in, a reporter for the daily *Logger*.

The novel didn't sell well, however, and Morgan soon turned his attention to non-fiction, producing such classic books of Northwest history as "The Last Wilderness," "Puget's Sound" and "Skid Road."

In 1990, Oregon State University Press reprinted "The Viewless Winds."

er" — "Hiyo, Silver!" the masked man would tell his stallion — which came on at 7:30 nightly on KXRO, with a Finnish program following at 8.

"He got his bath and orange juice and cod liver oil. She would wash him and put him to bed," the boy's grandmother said. "Sometimes he would want to stay (up) and would start to look around. (But) there was no difference; every night he had a clean nightgown and clean towel and wash rag."

Law said he recalls vividly that when his father came home, he always used the side door.

But the noise he heard while in the tub that night was clearly the front door, up where the Christmas tree was.

"I'm not quite three, so I can't remember whether I recognized any fear in her face or any expression or anything like that. I can't remember that."

Law was asked about his most vivid remembrance of his mother.

"If you close your eyes, can you see her face and hear her voice?"

"That night. That's it. That night."

"No other recollection of your mother?"

"No other recollection."

"That's awful," the interviewer declared. "But clearly, though, what you don't have in your memory bank is a recollection of your mom in terror. She seemed..."

"Ahhhh," Law interjected with a sigh, "I can't recall any terror there. All I can recall is there was no hesitation at all in putting me into bed."

"I've had dreams about it for years. I relive it, even to the fact that she was wearing a white apron over her dress. And I can see her walk, her pace."

"I wish I could remember her voice."

Bebich, the former Aberdeen police chief and county coroner, was asked about the savagery of the crime.

"What kind of person would do that to a nice twenty-five-year-old woman with a baby in the back bedroom? Would it be accurate to say that the more you know someone, the harder it would be to kill someone that brutally?"

"You'd have to have a lot of hatred," Bebich said.

Bill Jones, who was at the crime scene as a teenager, helping his father photograph the scene, said in 1999, "I've photographed autopsies and this is one of the worst things I've ever seen."

"It shows hatred, savagery," said Bebich. "I don't think this could be a hired person. I doubt it very much."



Dickie Law kisses his grandmother, Sally Luoma, as he and Dick Sr. depart for Medford, Oregon, on January 29, 1940, in the wake of the death of his other grandmother, Loretta Vickery, who had been battling cancer. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

But wouldn't it be easier to kill someone that way if you were a "hit man," a methodical killer, than if you knew them?

"It wouldn't fit in this type of situation," the veteran investigator said. "You'd probably shoot 'em once or twice and leave 'em, and that's it. You wouldn't have two weapons. This is such an overkill it's pathetic."

"Probably the first blow did it. The stabbing thing wasn't necessary," Bebich added. "It would be a good thing for a modern criminalist to look at the wounds and evaluate what kind of person might do such a thing."

"My feeling," Law interjected, "is that it would have to be a very demented, hateful person who had no respect for the human being at all. ... Someone who had been over the deep edge for a long time."

Law noted that he had a letter from his mother to his father. It was written just a few weeks before



The Laura Law house at 1117 East Second Street in Aberdeen, as it appeared in 1999. Vacant for years, it had been repeatedly violated by burglars and vandals. Sally Luoma lived there until her death in 1954. Nestor had died two years earlier. Though owners had talked of restoring the house, Dick Law Jr. said in 1999 that he hoped to someday buy it, tear it down and plant a lilac grove, in honor of his mother. It was demolished by the city on March 2, 2003. (Daily World Archives)



Dick Law Jr. in the 1990s. (Daily World Archives)

WHAT TO READ

"Who Killed Laura Law," a 216-page document and artifact inventory of the Aberdeen Police Department's investigative files into the murder case, was published in 1983 and revised in 1996 by the Southwest Regional Branch of the Washington State Archives.

An invaluable source book for anyone interested in the case, it was painstakingly compiled by Aberdeen native Wayne I. Lawson, Southwest regional archivist for the State Archives.

The most encyclopedic account to date — twenty-four pages, featuring many photographs — was published by *The Daily World* on April 24, 1999, in the Grays Harbor newspaper's annual "Perspectives" edition.

Daily World Editor John C. Hughes and retired Seattle University history professor Robert Saltvig produced the section, which won a C.B. Blethen Memorial Award for "distinguished investigative reporting."

The account in this book is excerpted from their work.

The Law case is also featured in "One Union In Wood," a political history of the International Woodworkers of America, by Jerry Lembcke and William M. Tattam, Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd. and International Publishers, 1984.

her death. "She signed the letter, 'Love & kisses, Laura,'" he pointed out.

Law said that despite all the talk about his father and Helen Soboleski having an affair, it would be extreme, to put it mildly, to kill your wife instead of just seeking a divorce. Nor was there any life insurance on Laura, he said.

"But the thing in my mind that knocks off that 'other woman' theory is that even after the murder, it took some six years for them to get together," he said of his father and stepmother.

Asked what he would say to sum up his feelings "about anybody out there who might know something," Law said, "I would say, 'Solve the problem

— our problem — so I can have some peace! So we can have some peace! Help put it to rest. Get it off your chest. Give me some peace.

"Since I have been old enough to really realize what had happened, I've wanted it solved, but I've resigned myself to never knowing.

"I have this dream: Someday I want to buy that house, tear it down and put up an in-your-face monument. I doubt it will ever happen. But it's my dream. My mother loved lilacs. Make a lilac grove out of it and put up a monument right in the middle.

"To Laura Law."

Who Killed Laura Law?

LAURA LAW, aged 25, mother of a three-year-old child, while alone in her modest home on the night of January 5, 1940, was first tortured, and then brutally hacked to death.

Why? • • •

Laura Law was a union leader. She was one of those who forced the owners of the State of Washington, the lumber barons, to pay \$7,000,000 more a year to those working in the lumber industry. She was one of those fighting for a living wage for the thousands now working on "the fat war contracts" being filled by Washington lumber operators for Great Britain. She talked against a war that might destroy unions while rich men grow richer and poor men poorer. At first it seems incredible that a young woman, 25 years old, a wife and a mother, should have been tortured and then murdered in her own home, because she fought to make the world a better place. • • •

OTHERS THREATENED

Laura Law is dead. She has a power now that she never had in life. She protects her friends, those threatened as she was threatened on Grays Harbor in the State of Washington. Unprotected by the police, harried by almost every conceivable form of persecution, union families on Grays Harbor are "doubling up," are moving in together for protection. The men stand guard in shifts. They still are fighting for their union and for living wages in the war booming lumber industry. It is un-American to ask for a raise in Grays Harbor County. In 1915—there was another war then—if you asked for a raise in Grays Harbor county you were "an undesirable alien" and hundreds were "deported" without benefit of law. In 1917 if you fought for a raise in Grays Harbor County—we were in the war then—you were an I.W.W. and eighteen were lynched. (There

are photographs of them hanging from the trees.) Now if you organize for wage increases there you are "a dirty Communist" and so the union men stand guard each night over their homes and families. They know that the so-called "best citizens" of Grays Harbor made Laura's murder—and other murders—inevitable. They know that the civic leaders on Grays Harbor have consistently and constantly demanded violence against union men and women over the radio, in the newspapers, through public speeches, through organizing vigilante societies, through distributing handbills demanding "liquidation" of union officials. They hope and believe, however, that Laura Law, her battered body buried not far away, will give them a measure of protection. For they know as they huddle in their darkened homes, waiting, listening, that men in San Francisco, officials in Washington, people on New York's East Side, are speaking of Laura Law and how she died.

Laura Law, a neighbor said after her murder, "had a sort of happiness in her voice. She was always talking of Dickie, her three-year-old son."

"Wasn't she a red?" the neighbor was asked.

"She wasn't interested in politics. She just thought people should have enough to eat. That was why she organized those marches of the unemployed to the City Hall. She just thought people should have enough to eat."

"Wasn't she a red?" the neighbor was asked again.

"No, she wasn't a red. She was a Baptist."

THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER

IT is January 5th, 1940 in Aberdeen on Grays Harbor and it is a wet, unpleasant night. Dick Law, who has earned the compliment of being generally termed "the Harry

Bridges of Grays Harbor," is worried. He has in his possession a series of affidavits apparently proving that certain of Aberdeen's civic and political leaders, as well as members of the police department, deliberately fomented and built up a mob which a month before had wrecked the Finnish Workers' Hall, where the C.I.O. unions met. The affidavits prove, he believes, that the wrecking of the Finnish Hall was part of a general conspiracy to wreck the Woodworkers Union, to divert war profits from pay envelopes into dividends. A few moments before, a friendly deputy had stopped him on the street and whispered, "Look out. They know you've got that evidence. They're going to make another Tom Mooney of you."

Dick Law closed his office, went out on the street, climbed into his auto, and started towards his little frame house at 1117 Second Street for supper. The wet air was filled with the ever-present aroma of freshly sawed fir and now, as always, there was the screech of sawmills and the clamor that was constant from the ninety factories dependent on the lumber industry on and about Grays Harbor. He couldn't forget the warning. He was hated, there was no doubt of that, for his part in obtaining the \$7,000,000 raise for 50,000 lumber workers in 1937. The wrecking of the Finnish Workers' Hall had shown there was violence in the air if any more evidence was needed to add to the assaults, the bombings and the threats that union men and their families had recently been the victims of. Just a year ago, while he had been away on union business, his wife had received a series of telephone calls so threatening that she had had hysterics and had to be taken to the hospital. She had a miscarriage there and they had lost their baby. The muscles that framed Dick Law's jaw hardened. He had hated that because he had wanted another child. Perhaps, he thought, as he drove along, he might have time to play with Dickie before he went out to the three union meetings that night. He was uneasy. The local radio station had a nightly program called "That Was The Time" praising those who had broken efforts to obtain wage increases in 1917 and speaking nostalgically of the violence and "the red blooded Americans" who participated in it. There was scarcely an issue of a Grays Harbor paper that did not contain what could be construed as a call to action against union leaders. He, as had his friends, had received crudely writ-

The Laura Law MURDER CASE

THERE was once a man who said that he hoped the time would never come when Americans were denied the right to strike. He also declared that "labor was much the superior of capital." His name was Abraham Lincoln. Men have been lynched for saying less in Grays Harbor County, Washington. It was there that Laura Law, union leader, was tortured, then murdered on January 5, 1940. In that county efforts are being made not only to deny thousands their right to strike but also to deprive them of their rights as American citizens under the Constitution. Two hundred thousand Washingtonians, asking Robert Jackson, Attorney General of the United States, to investigate and prevent other murders, have alleged:

"(1) That an emergency situation exists involving the abrogation of civil rights and the breakdown of law and order in Grays Harbor County, Washington.

"(2) That constituted authority in Grays Harbor County has condoned and, in some instances, actually aided and abetted this reign of lawlessness.

"(3) That a certain class of persons, to wit, members of organized labor and particularly of the CIO unions, are denied the equal protection of the law.

"(4) That this emergency situation falls within the jurisdiction of the civil rights statutes of the United States as embodied in USCA, Sections 41-49, inclusive.

"(5) That it is our firm conviction that inaction by the United States Department of Justice at this time will lead to a fulfillment of the general call to vigilante action against organized labor in the entire West Coast lumber regions, and thus recreate the general abrogation of civil rights which followed the failure to guarantee civil rights of labor in Centralia in 1919."

There are many American statesmen who rage indignantly at injustice in foreign countries. Few of them have even mentioned this section of America where oppression is as ruthless as in any dictator-ridden country. Isn't oppression important if it's in the United States? Is it too much to ask that justice begin at home?

THE systematic reign of terror which is now being directed against the people of Washington by employer-inspired vigilante groups has for its purpose the smashing of labor unions as the first step towards dragging this country into war. As such it is not a local issue but one which concerns all Americans everywhere. The brutal murder of Mrs. Laura Law is but one crime in a carefully planned conspiracy that has made a mockery of free speech, free assembly and the country's Constitution and has turned communities of Grays Harbor County, Washington, into a section as violent and lawless as was Harlan County, Kentucky.

As was the case in Harlan County, union men and women are killed, beaten, kidnapped, searched, framed, hounded and harried. As was the case in Harlan County, law enforcement officials instead of being the servants of the people under the law are the creatures of corporations outside the law. The members of the Washington Commonwealth Federation, 250,000 strong, demand that the federal government restore the authority and protection of the country's Constitution to the State of Washington, that it expose the con-

spiracy which uses murder and violence to subvert the Constitution for the sake of profit.

Let no one anywhere make the mistake of believing the Law murder an isolated crime. Let no one anywhere believe that the wave of violence in Grays Harbor County, Washington, is a local phenomenon. Elsewhere in the country reaction prepares to take the offensive, a war offensive. Remember, too, that Mrs. Law's husband, militant and incorruptible member of the International Executive Board of the Woodworkers of America, had in his possession evidence tying up the lumber interests of the state of Washington with the war drive of vigilante groups. Remember that the evidence was in the Law home at the time of Laura Law's murder and remember that it was missing after the murder.

They will not smash the unions in Washington or anywhere else if you will raise your voice to urge Attorney General Robert Jackson, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., to make a speedy investigation of the conspiracy in Grays Harbor County.

Howard G. Costigan

Secretary, Washington
Commonwealth Federation

GRAYS HARBOR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE

305 1/4 EAST HERON ST.
ABERDEEN, WASHINGTON

I enclose \$..... as my contribution towards the

Defense of Civil Rights in Grays Harbor County, Washington.

Name

Address..... City..... State.....

Organization

ten threats for two years now and since the war in Europe they were increasing in number. He was certain that behind most of it was that organization of local big-shots known as the Better Business Builders. And of course there had been threats, too, from such vigilante organizations as the Ku Klux Klan, and the Silver Shirts. He was sure that he knew now where they got their money. He felt for the evidence in his pocket and again remembered the warning. "They're going to make another Tom Mooney of you."

"EVIDENCE TO SAVE UNION"

Laura met him at the door and kissed him. She noticed that he was disturbed. "I've got the evidence here," he said, "that will save the union." She did not ask him what it was nor see him as he carefully placed it away in a filing cabinet in the bedroom. "You'll feel better," she said, "when you've had a good, hot supper." Dickie was playing with a toy train on the floor. The Christmas tree, still up although New Year's was five days past, was in a corner. The little boy's father played with him until supper was ready.

Laura's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Luoma who lived downstairs, were at supper with them. They said

it was bank night at the movies and asked their son-in-law to drive them to the theater. Dickie insisted on following his father out on the porch when Law and the Luomas left. He wanted a kiss and hug before he went to bed and he got both. With her baby in the crib in the bedroom, Laura sat down on the davenport in the living room and began to crochet. She must have heard the rain beating down on the roof. The room was pleasant with its three floor lamps and the overstuffed furniture they had saved so hard to buy. Perhaps she heard a noise, for someone was in the house. She did not have time to get up from the davenport. She doubtless remembered "the papers that would save the union." An autopsy afterwards revealed that she was tortured before she was murdered. And the papers, the affidavits, were gone. • • •

A LONG CHAIN

• • • the murder of pretty Laura Law, union leader and mother of a three-year-old child, goes back further than the wrecking of the Finnish Workers Hall — further than the murders and threats and assaults and bombings and newspaper- and radio-incited violence that immediately preceded the wrecking of the hall on Grays Harbor. All of the violence was against

union men and women. All of the violence was skillfully incited by "the best citizens." This is true of each link in the chain that began in the 90's when loggers and woodworkers first tried to organize for a living wage.

Another link in the chain was forged in 1912 when ninety thugs were imported to Grays Harbor, there to join with the best people in beating, maiming and slaying those who had organized to better their economic condition. Still other links—each one leading forward to Laura Law's murder—were beaten out in the fights against the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World, those indigenous, foot-loose revolutionaries, as American as Indian corn, whose first goal in the fight for a better world was for an eight-hour day. Their members in Everett, north a piece from Grays Harbor, were taken out to the edge of town and forced to run a gauntlet of "leading citizens" who were armed with pick handles.

Wobblies in Seattle, determined to prove that free speech existed in Everett even if one was so radical as to ask for the eight-hour day, chartered the steamer "Verona" and sailed up Puget Sound for Everett. They were met by the "leading citizens," who were this time armed with rifles. "Who is your leader?" one of the patriots shouted from shore. "We are all leaders!" a Wobbly shouted back, his voice carrying over the strains of the hymn "Hold the Fort for We Are Coming!" There was a sheet of fire and some ten men were slain. That was a link.

Then in 1919 there was the Centralia Massacre, incited by vigilantes acting against the Wobblies. That was another link. And in 1935 hundreds of strikers were jailed and beaten on Grays Harbor when they had the audacity to ask for higher pay. One more link.

The murder of Laura Law does not stand alone, a crime apart, unrelated to the past or future. It began when the first immigrants arrived and when the first immigrant was cheated. Laura, too, was an immigrant. She came, when six years old, from Finland, with her parents, who had hoped to find dignity, safety and security in America. Instead, they found a death which is the latest link in a long chain of violence—1890, 1912, Everett, Centralia, the strike of 1935, the wrecking of the Finnish Workers Hall—and Laura Law, stabbed and beaten to death in her home on January 5, 1940.

In the three Washington towns overlooking the blue waters of



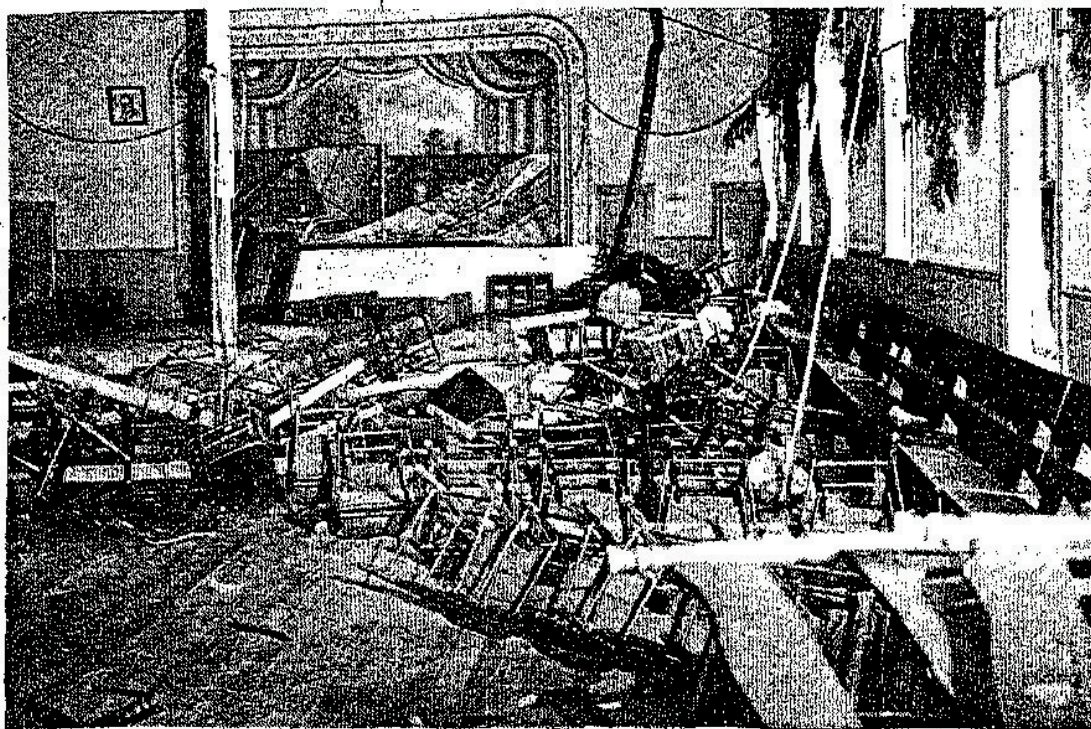
DON'T LOOK AWAY: THIS IS THE TRUTH

Grays Harbor—Aberdeen, Hoquiam and Cosmopolis—violence in the name of 100 per cent Americanism is as old as the first structure ever built on that lovely harbor. That is why the murder of Laura Law is almost a segment of the folkways of Aberdeen's "better citizens." And yet the way it was accomplished, the manner in which the violence was created before the slaying, is as new, and streamlined, as the latest model off an automobile assembly line. Murder and violence were created with the same care—and with much the same methods—as that used in a high-powered sales campaign for a commercial product. The product was violence and it was "sold" over the radio, in the newspapers, and even by what might be accurately called "a direct mail campaign." The product was death and it was "sold" by the best citizens, carefully organized to sell it.

THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS

The campaign began when Dick Law, his wife, Laura, and other union leaders were successful in getting an annual raise of \$7,500,000 for 50,000 workers in 1937. It moved forward on the following fronts:

1. Vigilante organizations were either formed or resurrected. They included the Ku Klux Klan, the Silver Shirts and the Order of Better Americans. An organization of businessmen dependent on the lumber industry was established, calling themselves the Better Business Builders; its leaders were the most active in the anti-union campaign.
2. The newspapers carried stories, apparently merely describing these organizations, but in reality inciting mob action against union leaders by declaring that the community was faced with a red peril that would destroy it.
3. Radio broadcasts nightly included nostalgic descriptions of the mob violence that broke up the Wobblies' fight for an eight-hour day in 1916 and 1917.
4. Union leaders were approached and given a chance to sell out.
5. Militant union leaders who refused to give up, and often their wives (including Laura Law), were the target of a barrage of telephone calls that continued for months and at all hours of the day and night, telling them to get out of town or they would be killed.
6. Incorruptible union men were



Finnish Hall, Grays Harbor, wrecked by hoodlums incited by newspapers

constantly mailed notes threatening them with death. Often they were signed by "Ku Klux Klan" and frequently they said, "We'll get you, you rat."

7. The public was not only incited by radio, newspaper, and speeches, but a series of handbills was also widely distributed, often signed by the Klan and demanding that union leaders be "liquidated." Many of the handbills asked for the "liquidation" of Dick Law. His wife was murdered.

8. There were open appeals for vigilante action by C. C. Crow,

Canadian border to the Mexican line. . . . What are we waiting for?"

This 8-point campaign, according to the 200,000 members of the Washington Commonwealth Federation, constitutes a conspiracy to deprive thousands in Grays Harbor County of their rights under the Constitution. Officials and police, they charge, are a part of the conspiracy, and union men and women have absolutely no protection. Members of the Federation,

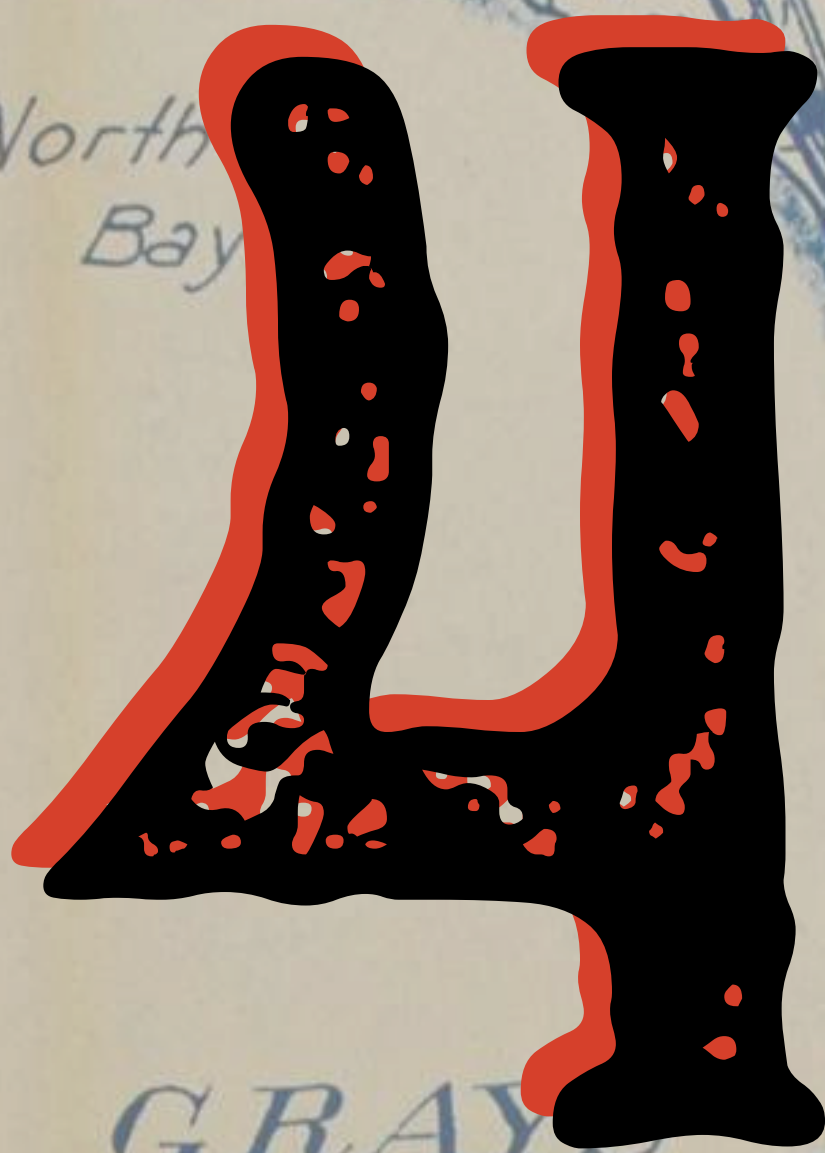


the editor of
"Crow's Pacific Coast
Lumber Digest."

One of his many vigilante-inciting editorials said, "There should be an Interstate Vigilante Society, formed with a closely knitted body, that could act as a man from the

Law home was given same treatment
—by the same mob? Arrests, none.

at their seventh annual convention, demanded that Robert Jackson, Attorney General of the United States, use the Department of Justice to prevent further murders and expose this conspiracy to subvert the Constitution.



4

EVERETT

CENTRALIA

SEATTLE

Everett Massacre (1916)

By Margaret Riddle
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HistoryLink.org Essay 9981

The Everett Massacre of Sunday, November 5, 1916, has been called the bloodiest labor confrontation in Northwest history. On that day a group of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also known as Wobblies, traveled from Seattle to Everett aboard the steamers *Verona* and *Calista*, intending to speak at the corner of Hewitt and Wetmore avenues in support of a strike by local shingle-weavers. A group of citizen-deputies under the authority of Snohomish County Sheriff Donald McRae (1868-?) refused to let them land. A shot was fired, followed by several minutes of gunfire that killed at least five Wobblies and two deputies. The ships returned to Seattle, where 74 IWW members were arrested and taken back to the Snohomish County jail. Teamster Thomas H. Tracy was first to be tried, for the murder of Jefferson Beard. In the dramatic trial that followed, held in Seattle, Tracy was acquitted and the other Wobblies were released.

Mill Town/Labor Town

Once proud to call itself the "City of Smokestacks," Everett was built as an industrial city, heavily funded by East Coast investments. The city's first industries were a paper mill, a nail factory, a whaleback bargeworks, a smelter, an iron works, and numerous lumber and shingle mills. By 1910 the Everett waterfront had shipbuilders, a cannery, a flour mill, and two iron works, but its economic strength increasingly came from the lumber and shingle trade. Mill owners were tough businessmen like David Clough (1846-1924), Roland Hartley (1864-1952), Fred Baker, and timber boss Joe Irving (1868-1953). Along with banker William Butler (1866-1944) and a group of Everett businessmen called the Commercial Club, these men held enormous power in town.

From its early years, Everett also was a union town. Trades (or crafts) unions formed almost as soon as the city began, and while most of these languished in the Silver Panic of 1893 and the depression years that followed, by 1900 the country was once again prosperous and

union strength grew. The 1904 Polk's city directory for Everett lists the following trades unions in Everett: Barbers; Bartenders, Blacksmiths and Horseshoers; Brewery Workers; Bricklayers; Carpenters and Joiners; Cigarmakers; Cooks, Waiters, and Waitresses; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); Building Laborers; Longshoremen; Machinists; Meatcutters; Musicians; Painters; Plasterers; Plumbers; Pressmen; Sheet Metal Workers; Shingle Weavers; Shirtwaist and Laundry Workers; Stage Employees; Steam Engineers; Switchmen; Tailors; Teamsters; Tinnners and Wood Workers; Typographers; and Woodsmen and Sawmill Workers.

With the arrival of a large immigrant population during the first decade of the twentieth century (some of whom advocated conservative socialism), union membership grew. Everett became one of the strongest union towns in the Pacific Northwest. In January of 1909, the *Labor Journal* began publication from the local union hall on Lombard Avenue, and the city even supported a Socialist Party weekly newspaper, *The Commonwealth*, from 1911 to 1914.

The Shingle Weavers

Everett became a major exporter of red-cedar shingles, and shingle weavers in 1910 considered themselves well paid at \$4.50 a day, compared to \$2.25 a day for workers in the logging camps. But shingle mills were highly dangerous places. Workers usually put in 10-hour shifts, and early twentieth-century technology brought machines that were designed for efficient production, not safety. Unshielded saws ran fast and the mill interiors were dark and damp. Accidents were common, and it was said that a shingle worker could be identified by his missing digits. Some lost their lives in accidents, but more fell victim to cedar dust. As cedar was cut, sawdust rose in clouds and filled workers' lungs, causing a condition commonly referred to as "cedar asthma." For many, this led to a slow and agonizing death.

The title "shingle weaver" most strictly described workers who stacked and bundled shingles and whose agility and dexterity resembled that of a skilled weaver, but it also came to be applied to all shingle-mill workers, including sawyers, filers, and packers. The Shingle Weavers Union was strong in good times and weak when the economy slumped. Everett's lumber-mill and shingle-mill owners increasingly resolved to control their workers.

The IWW versus the Trades Unions

A radical union called the Industrial Workers of the World formed in 1905 in Chicago with the aim of recruiting workers into "One Big Union." Appealing to workers worldwide, they challenged the policies of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). AFL members were skilled workers proud of their individual craft unions, the result being that there might be a dozen craft unions in one plant, while the unskilled workers belonged to no union at all. The IWW believed that greater strength came from uniting across the trades, across class, across gender, and across the world.

The Wobblies began organizing miners and lumber and shingle workers in the Pacific Northwest and were especially successful in recruiting members from the logging camps. Wobbly success with the loggers led IWW organizers to recruit laborers in the cities. As with the individual trades unions, IWW strength rose and fell with the economy.

In 1909, Ernest Marsh (1877-1963) was the executive secretary of the Everett Shingle Weavers Union, president of the Everett Trades Council, and editor of the *Labor Journal* newspaper. Uncomfortable with the Socialists and the Wobblies, who shared a distain for the trades unions, Marsh used the pages of his newspaper to argue the trades-union (AFL) position.

Defending Free Speech

Meanwhile, events in Spokane were to affect Everett. On New Year's Day 1909, a Spokane ordinance prohibiting street meetings became effective, largely targeting IWW street speakers who had come to the city the previous year to oppose exploitive employment practices. Among the targets of the Wobblies were 31 employment agencies that had set up shop in the city to sell work to transient and casual workers at the rate of a dollar a job.

Throughout the summer of 1909, Wobbly organizers continued their public speaking, but complied with the restrictions of the ordinance. However, Salvation Army evangelists were allowed more leniency for their public proselytizing, and the Wobblies challenged the city for violation of their free speech rights. They called on their membership nationwide to come to Spokane to test the ordinance, and soon Spokane's jails were full of IWW protestors, with more on the way.

Among those jailed in Spokane was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), a young Wobbly who had come west to organize. In January of 1909 she spoke in Everett, recruiting members for the IWW. The Wobblies' passive-resistance tactics in Spokane were so effective that on March 9, 1910, the Spokane City Council voted unanimously to repeal the ordinance.

Everett citizens watched the Spokane situation from afar, and industrialists and mill owners no doubt watched with trepidation. Everett workers gave money to support the Spokane cause and Wobbly speakers appeared in Everett alongside the Salvation Army at various locations on Hewitt Avenue.

The IWW needed a cause in Everett, and it found one in 1912 when a group of temporary, non-union workers took jobs with the Great Northern Railway to clear a mudslide from its tracks. When they were paid, these workers could not get their checks cashed in town. Wobbly support for the workers spurred the City of Everett to pass Ordinance No. 1501 on February 18, 1913. This imposed restrictions on speaking locations along Hewitt Avenue, and although IWW speakers continued to speak, they did set up their soapboxes in compliance with the ordinance.

The Events of 1916

Although the lumber economy soared in 1912, the years 1914 and 1915 brought deep economic depression to the region, and the shingle-weavers' pay scale decreased. Workers struggled to survive; many took non-union jobs, and some even looked to jail for their room and board.

In January 1916 shake prices began to rise, and when "clears" (the best-quality cedar shakes) hit \$1.71 a square, Ernest Marsh set out to rebuild the state's branch of the Brotherhood of International Shingle Weavers of America. This time it would unite all shingle-mill employees and become more of an industrial union than an individual craft trade union. Setting a target date of May 1, the shingle-weavers union demanded a return to the 1914 wage scale. Companies throughout the state complied, but Everett mills did not, and the mill owners refused to even meet with union representatives. On May 1, 1916, Everett's shingle weavers went on strike, and Marsh himself headed the strike committee.

The Wobblies had suffered in the hard times too, and when the economy rebounded they sought to rebuild their membership by supporting the Everett shingle-weavers' strike. They brought in one of their most persuasive IWW speakers, James Rowan (1879-1963), who spoke in Everett on July 31, 1916. Rowan drew a large crowd of spectators, including Jake Michel (1866-1955), secretary of the Everett Building Trades, who came to argue politics.

The Snohomish County sheriff at this time was Donald McRae, a former shingle weaver who had been elected on the Progressive Party ticket with strong union support. He lived in Marysville, a small town whose economy depended largely on logging. McRae had experience dealing with the IWW and considered them to be outside agitators, and Everett's mill bosses increasingly relied on him to help rid the county of the troublesome Wobblies. At the July 31 rally, Sheriff McCrae pulled Rowan down from the speaker's platform, took him to the county jail, and then released him with a warning. Rowan returned to his soapbox and this time was carted off to the city jail and released again, after which he returned to Seattle.

Encouraged that no violence had occurred, the Seattle Wobbly office sent a one-armed, 37-year old organizer, Levi Remick, to set up an IWW office in Everett on the west end of Hewitt Avenue. Remick was a skillful organizer and speaker, and his office distributed copies of the *Industrial Worker*, a Wobbly daily newspaper that published in-depth coverage of the shingle-weavers' strike.

Tensions escalated. On August 19, 1916, mill owner Neil Jamison (Jamison Mill) brought in strike breakers who clubbed the strikers at his mill. The shingle-weavers' union issued grievances and held McRae responsible for not stopping the violence

The Wobblies sent their best speaker to Everett -- James P. Thompson (1873-1949), the organizer who had led the successful free-speech fight in Spokane. On the evening of August 22, 1916, he measured off the required 50 feet from Hewitt Avenue, set up his speaker's platform, mounted it, and for the next 20 minutes spoke to the crowd in support of the Everett shingle weavers. When Sheriff McCrae pulled Thompson down from the soapbox and dragged him away, James Rowan took his place. He was also arrested, and was followed by other Wobbly orators. Then Letelsia Fye of Everett mounted the platform and began reading the Declaration of Independence. She too was hauled away, followed by Jake Michel, who was arrested and released.

Surprisingly, the Wobblies' Everett office continued to operate undisturbed. But on August 29, mill-owner Jamison marched his strike breakers to the Everett Theater in a show of defiance. Another mill owner, David Clough, tried to link the Wobblies and the trades unions, but the shingle weavers' Ernest Marsh insisted that his Trades Council had neither encouraged nor discouraged IWW support.

Everett's industrial elite depended more and more on Sheriff McCrae to drive the Wobblies out of town, and McCrae was eager to comply. As the repression worsened, trades unionists and many Everett citizens who disagreed philosophically with the Wobblies began supporting the Wobblies right of free speech and protesting the violent tactics of the sheriff.

Ordinance No. 1501 had regulated street speaking, but had been written by socialists and was designed primarily to keep crowds away from the busy Hewitt Avenue thoroughfare. In September of 1916 Everett passed a new and sterner ordinance, No. 1746, which was clearly intended as a punctuation mark to show that the authorities meant business.

Incident at Beverly Park

On the evening of October 30, 1916, a small boatload of Wobblies arrived at the Everett City Dock with the intention of speaking on the corner of Hewitt and Wetmore avenues. They were met by more than 200 armed deputies authorized by Sheriff McCrae and were told they could only speak at a location away from the center of town. The IWW members refused, and some were beaten at the dock.

Deputies then loaded the Wobblies into waiting trucks and cars and drove them to a remote wooded area near the Beverly Park interurban station southeast of town. In darkness and a cold rain, McCrae's men formed two lines from the roadway to the interurban tracks and forced the Wobblies to run a gauntlet that ended at a cattle guard. One by one the men were beaten with clubs, guns, and rubber hoses loaded with shot. A family living nearby was startled by the shouts, curses, cries, and moans they heard and came to witness the brutal scene. The injured were left to get back to Seattle any way they could.

The next morning Everett residents were enraged at the stories told of the previous evening's brutality. An investigating committee was formed that including Rev. Oscar McGill of Seattle and labor leaders Jake Michel and Ernest Marsh. Even though it had rained hard all

night, the committee found the area still heavily stained with blood. In a report to the State Federation of Labor, Marsh wrote, "There can be no excuse for, nor extenuation of, such an inhuman method of punishment" (Smith, 69-70). The events at Beverly Park hung like a dark cloud over the city, firming the resolve of both the authorities and IWW members.

A Very Bloody Sunday

On Sunday, November 5, 1916, about 300 Wobblies boarded the steamers *Verona* and *Calista* in Seattle and headed north toward Port Gardner Bay. They planned a public demonstration in Everett that afternoon on the corner of Hewitt and Wetmore.

Rumors had reached Everett that the Wobblies planned to burn the town. Two hundred citizen deputies under Sheriff McCrae's authority gathered at the Everett City Dock at west end of Hewitt Avenue to stop their debarkation. The *Verona* came in first and pulled along the south side of the dock. Raising a hand, McCrae asked "Who is your leader?" When he was told "We are all leaders!" he replied "You can't land here!" A single shot was fired, followed by several minutes of chaotic gunfire. Whether the first shot came from boat or dock was never determined.

Passengers aboard the *Verona* rushed to the opposite side of the ship, nearly capsizing the vessel. Bullets pierced the pilot house, and the *Verona's* captain struggled to back the boat away from the dock, then headed back to Seattle. The *Calista* did not try to land.

Deputies Jefferson Beard (1871-1916) and Charles Curtis (d. 1916) lay dying on the dock, and 20 others, including Sheriff McCrae, were wounded. Wobblies Hugo Gerlot (1893-1916); Abraham Rebenovitz, often misspelled "Rabinowitz" (1886-1916); Gustav Johnson (1894-1916); and John Looney (1891-1916) lay dead on the *Verona's* deck. Another, Felix Baran (1894-1916), lay dying. While the "official" count of IWW casualties was five dead and 27 wounded, as many as 12 Wobblies probably lost their lives that day, their bodies later recovered surreptitiously from Port Gardner Bay.

And Wobblies were not the only passengers aboard the *Verona* that day. Oscar Carlson, who was not a member of the IWW, was shot 11 times and sued the steamboat company for his injuries. He did not win.

When the *Verona* and *Calista* returned to Seattle, 74 Wobblies on board were arrested and brought back to the Snohomish County jail in Everett. Teamster Thomas H. Tracy was the first brought to trial, charged with the murder of Deputy Jefferson Beard. The town called for National Guard troops from Seattle, and terror hung over Everett for several days as armed deputies policed the streets.

The Wobblies prepared for a large funeral at Seattle's Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Queen Anne Hill, and in a ceremony officiated by English poet Charles Ashleigh, a large group of IWW members, their families, and friends buried Looney, Baran, and Gerlot. The bodies

of Rebenovitz and Johnson were returned to their families in other states. Snohomish County Deputy Jefferson Beard was buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Everett.

The Tracy Trial

The dramatic and much-publicized trial of Thomas Tracy was held in Seattle, and what is popularly known of the proceedings comes from Walker C. Smith, a Socialist writer and editor and a leading member of the IWW. His book, *The Everett Massacre*, was intended to reveal the injustices committed against the working classes of that city.

After relating the events that led up to the November 5th confrontation, Smith followed the court proceedings and recounts the testimony of numerous witnesses, bringing the trial, with its many memorable characters, to life. He wrote passionately in support of the IWW cause, but portrayed Sheriff McCrae as a hopeless drunk.

Thomas H. Tracy was acquitted. His Wobbly trial lawyer, George F. Vanderveer (1875-1942), considered this to be one of the notable victories of his career, and it was certainly a high-water mark for IWW activity in the Pacific Northwest. A series of photographs submitted at trial (re-enactments taken in the winter of 1916-1917) are now in the Everett Public Library's collection and are the only surviving views that show the Everett City Dock as it was at the time of the Massacre.

While the other 73 Wobblies waited to be tried, the Everett Prisoners' Defense Committee raised money for their release. Although a good deal of the money came from the IWW, local unions and other supporters also made many generous contributions. These prisoners were released.

The Decline of the Wobblies

The Everett Massacre stood as a big win for the IWW, and the Wobblies issued a series of postcards to remember its martyrs: photos of bodies of the Wobbly dead, their death masks, the funeral ceremony in Seattle, and political cartoons by artists Morris Pass (1894-1990) and Leon S. Chumley (1885-1938). These powerful images helped draw new IWW members.

The death blow came to the Wobblies during World War I. James Thompson's prediction of the U.S. empire's demise did not sit well with the country's growing mood of nationalism. When the Wobblies took a stand against America's entry into the war in 1917, nearly 100 of its members were jailed and convicted under the Espionage Act for conspiring against the draft and encouraging desertion. Both James Thompson and James Rowan served time in the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas.

Other world events also began to divide the Wobblies. Some advocated pushing for revolution and others, saddened by the tragedy that was playing out in Russia, longed for something better. As IWW leader Ralph Chaplin (1887-1961) pointed out in his 1948 book, *Wobbly*, when he saw the first list of those executed in the Russian purges, it contained the names of at least 100 of his IWW friends.

A Lasting Fascination

With the plethora of violence in our modern-day world, it is intriguing to consider why the Everett Massacre still draws the interest of students, historians, writers, filmmakers, and dramatists. Part of it may be the event's cast of larger-than-life characters, and some may draw a parallel to current times, with the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. Then there is the allure of so many mysteries that remain from that day. Who fired first? Were deputies Curtis and Beard killed by friendly fire? (The bullet that killed Beard entered his back and his widow kept his jacket as proof.) How many Wobblies actually died? Were the deputies drunk when they met the ships, as was said in stories passed down through families?

And what about Sheriff Donald McCrae? How did a man who was elected to office with strong union support end up becoming the iron hand of the Everett industrial elite? Because of his role in the repression of the IWW and his handling of events that led to the Everett Massacre, he was reviled by practically everyone. He went into seclusion and eventually disappeared, and the date of his death is unknown even to his family.

Over the years, the Everett Massacre has inspired fictional works, plays, documentaries, songs, and many scholarly articles. Of them all, historian Norman H. Clark's *Milltown: A Social History of Everett, Washington*, published by the University of Washington Press in 1970, stands out as the finest social history of Everett, from its origins to that violent and very bloody Sunday on the city's shore.