

Keith's Corner/McGill News

February 19, 2021

This year, 2021, is the 80th year since the following happened, I felt it was time to do the story of.....

Cliff Drietzler

Cliff was a deputy sheriff in McGill during the late 1930s, early 40s.



Photo courtesy of Vicki Drietzler Uday.

Cliff Lorrان Drietzler, was born in Stromsburg, Nebraska on November 2, 1896, to John and Cora Daggy Drietzler. He moved to Park City, Utah in 1906, with his mother. She remarried. Her husband was Walter Christianson of Park City.

Cliff attended Park City schools, then worked for Silver King Mining Coalition at Park City and later operated a tavern on the main street of that city, before moving to McGill. Cliff started as a mill operator at Nevada Consolidated Copper on July 9, 1929, at a rate of \$4.45 a day. He was 32 years old and a husky 5' 9" weighing 169 lbs., with brown eyes and brown hair. He had a wife, Nina, and two sons, Clifford, age 10 and Walter, age 8.

On January 1, 1935, Cliff became a White Pine County Deputy Sheriff and was assigned to McGill. The copper company had a deal with the county to share the cost of a deputy in McGill.

Cliff knew the folks of McGill and served them well. He worked out of the small office on main street and was always there, or on call if you needed him.

Cliff was active in the B.P.O.E., the Loyal Order of the Moose, and the American Legion. In March 1938 he was chosen as a member of the White Pine Fish and Game Protective Association.

On November 7, 1941, a motorist reported to Cliff about a possible abandoned car just north of McGill. Cliff reported the incident to Sheriff Orrock. The sheriff informed Cliff of a nationwide alert for a stolen Wyoming car. A blue Chevrolet 2-door coupe, with license # 14-335. Cliff left the McGill office at 4:15 p.m. to investigate.

Cliff did not report back in again. As darkness approached, Cliff's wife, Nina, talked with Sheriff Orrock and a small search party was formed and set out to investigate. They found the Wyoming car, but not Cliff's police car. Soon it was too dark and the search called off. They reported to Sheriff Orrock that it was the stolen Wyoming car. Orrock notified the FBI.

Just after 6 p. m. Wendell Lambert of Ely called Sheriff Orrock to report his car missing. Upon investigating the officers found Cliff's car nearby. The car contained Cliff's handcuffs, coat and a suitcase with clothes not belonging to Cliff. His pistol and rifle were missing.

With this information, Sheriff Orrock considered the possibility that Cliff had been kidnapped and immediately put out a nationwide alert to all police and F.B.I offices. The license number of Lambert's, dusty-tan Ford sedan was Nevada 18-080. As word spread in the area, several people came forward with information about the incident.

Ward Swain told Sheriff Orrock that he was on his way to Cherry Creek for a short visit, earlier that Friday. He spotted the car and stopped to see if the driver needed any help. The driver, a young man about 20-30 years old, of slight build wearing dirty gray clothes, told Ward that everything was fine and that he was just tired and resting.

A truck driver, Jack Ritchie reported that he saw a car similar to Wendell's car going over Connor's Pass. Now there was some indication of which way the car thief was heading. The FBI called Sheriff Orrock and told him that they had been tracking the stolen car and had a possible suspect and would send out an FBI fingerprint man from Salt Lake the next morning.

In McGill that evening, a larger search party was formed to begin early Saturday morning. The group was led by Undersheriff Phil Aljets and included, Walter Farnsworth, Sam Georgia, Bill Merrill and Cliff's two sons, Walter and Cliff Jr.

Arriving at the site of the abandoned car at first light, the party noticed two sets of footprints, in the soft semi-muddy soil, heading up the hill towards the McGill-Duck Creek large water pipeline. They followed and soon found Cliff's lifeless body on the other side of the pipeline. He had been shot once in the back of his head just behind the left ear. It was now, not a possible case of kidnapping, but a premeditated execution of a Deputy Sheriff.

Every police and FBI office was notified. A nationwide hunt was on, especially in the western states.

The fingerprint expert, J.J. Creeden, arrived Saturday morning and after meeting with Orrock in Ely, he went to the scene. He met with Aljet and the two along with Chas. Gallagher, a photographer, followed the tracks to the body. They then returned to the car and Creeden started tapping for prints. He found several good ones and after consulting a small chart, he announced that the prints belonged to one, Kenneth Edward Shepley of Missouri. He explained that the FBI had

suspected Shepley and was gathering evidence in car thefts in Missouri and Nebraska. He also took prints off Cliff's police car left in Ely by Shepley.

The county coroner, William Willis showed up with a small coroner's jury and hiked to the pipeline. After the jury convened, Cliff was then brought down and taken to Ely.

Saturday evening, November 8, 1941, San Diego, motorcycle officer M. W. Murphy, was on patrol when he noticed a car coasting down the Rose Canyon highway. He noticed the Nevada plates and saw that the number was 18-080, which was in an emergency bulletin he had received earlier.

By now, the FBI was getting more and more involved, because the Wyoming stolen car had crossed state lines. A car left at the site of the Wyoming theft, had been stolen in Mo.. Several holdups had taken place at gas stations along the route of the stolen cars. This all lead the FBI to suspect a recently released inmate from an Arkansas prison, might be involved. The man had relatives in San Diego. The new evidence from McGill was the last straw. An FBI agent, along with San Diego police Lt. Ed Dieckman of the homicide squad, were waiting at the relative's house for Shepley. The FBI had notified the San Diego police, which is why Officer Murphy, used extreme caution in stopping the car.

He had the driver pull the car over on to the side of the road and with caution ordered the man out of the car. The man identified himself as Kenneth Edward Shepley. He admitted that he stole the car, but claimed no knowledge of the murder.

He was taken into custody and the car impounded. There were 2 rifles, several pistols, including Cliff's .38 Cal., lots of ammo and several articles of clothing.

Shepley was questioned for several hours and finally confessed. A police stenographer typed his confession and he signed it. He maintained that a struggle took place with Drietzler and the gun went off. He was held without bail and the White Pine Sheriff was notified.

The White Pine DA, John Bonner immediately filed murder and grand larceny charges against Shepley. Sheriff Orrock made plans to bring Shepley back to White Pine to stand trial.

Early Sunday morning Sheriff Orrock, John Bonner and Wendell Lambert left by car for San Diego.

On Monday morning, Shepley appeared before Municipal Judge John Brennan and waived extradition to Nevada.

The charges were piling up fast, from Mo. , Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California where cars were stolen and several holdups of gas stations occurred. Shepley had just been released from an Arkansas prison for auto theft. He was 18 years old.

Monday, Lambert left San Diego with his car and Orrock and Connor started back with Shepley. They stopped in Las Vegas and decided to stay for a while as the people in White Pine were in a rage. Orrock thought it best to stay and let things cool down a bit. Cliff's wife, Nina, pleaded with the people in White Pine to let the law run its course, as that is what Cliff would have wanted.

They left with Shepley Wednesday and arrived in Ely late that afternoon. Shepley was arraigned on grand theft, grand larceny and murder one. He was confined to the county jail, which at the time was in the White Pine County Courthouse. He was under heavy guard.

(Author's note. I searched the national newspaper files and found the following—Morberly Monitor—February 28, 1940-page 4 Thursday—Kenneth Shepley stole a Buick sedan from the driveway of Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Nichols, of Brunswick, Mo.. Wrecked the car in a ditch and then stole a Packard, belonging to E. Q. Cox, then he robbed a gas station and fled to Colorado. He was arrested there and held for Missouri officials, but the Governor of Colorado refused to sign extradition papers. Shepley then somehow managed to get back into Mo. In a CCC camp. Benkelman Post, June 7, 1940 page 3, reported that he stole a car in Atwood, then fell asleep at the wheel and wrecked the car in Bird City. Then he stole Robert Snell's car in Bird City. He was arrested and held in St. Francis. I couldn't find any more on this. Apparently he had a knack for stealing cars. He drove them till out of gas or wrecked.)

Next week—the trial. Very quiet in McGill and not enough room for Old Photos.

