

# Keeler Pleads Guilty To Murder Charge

A calm, unruffled Donald Keeler, 16-year-old Kendrick High School youth, yesterday entered a plea of guilty to a charge of first degree murder in Nez Perce District Court in the killing of his uncle, Louis Conrad, North Lewiston service station operator, March 20. District Judge John W. Cramer postponed sentencing until Tuesday at 11 a. m.

The youth was calm throughout the arraignment as he sat between his mother, Mrs. Dorothy Taylor of Spokane, and his attorney, Thomas Feeney, Lewiston. He was attentive as Prosecuting Attorney Wynne M. Blake brought several witnesses to the stand. He was unmoved when his attorney summoned Dr. Robert Wetzler, Spokane psychiatrist, and listened to himself called "a simple schizophrenic."

The doctor said he believed that Keeler was insane at the time Conrad was killed, but that he is sane at this time. However, the doctor testified that he believed his schizophrenic tendencies are incurable.

When asked by Judge Cramer how he pleaded to the charge, the youth answered "guilty." When asked if he realized that by his plea he could be sentenced to hang, the lad said he did realize that.

Mrs. Helen Conrad, widow of the slain man, took the stand and told of discovering the body lying on the floor of the self-service station, located 3 miles east of Lewiston on the North & South Highway. She said she went to the station on the night of March 20 to bring him his lunch.

## Deputy Testifies.

Deputy Sheriff Paul Gilman testified that he and Latah County officers took the lad into custody at Kendrick for questioning after receiving a tip that the youth was spending a considerable sum of money. Robert Love, state police lieutenant, said that when he and Clarence and Hazel Kyle, Nez Perce County deputy sheriffs, first questioned the boy, he said that he had found the money in a billfold and later said it was money he had earned last summer. Finally, the boy confessed he obtained the money by robbing the service station and killing his uncle.

Mrs. Kyle then took the stand and said Keeler told them he took a pickup truck and a .38 caliber pistol, which belonged to Bob Nelson with whom he made his home at Kendrick, and drove to the service station.

Keeler told the officers he parked the vehicle near the station and then went behind the building, where he stood for some time trying to make up his mind whether to go through with the holdup.

Mrs. Kyle quoted the boy as saying he went around the east side of the station and saw his uncle standing inside the station near a window. She said Keeler told them he shot Conrad through the window and then went inside and turned his back on Conrad, who was lying on the floor, and began robbing the register. When Conrad moved and said "Oh, no," Keeler said he turned and shot him again. Keeler told the questioning officers he wore a mask made from a T-shirt, Mrs. Kyle said.

## Testify For Defense

Defense Attorney Feeney then summoned witnesses in an effort to show mitigating circumstances.

Nelson said that when Keeler came to his house to live last July, the youth seemed nervous and frightened. "He snapped out of it later on," Nelson said, adding that he seemed to "want to belong."

Two of Keeler's teachers at Kendrick High School, Irvin McGeachy and Ben Cook, said Keeler was making progress in school and was a good student and intelligent.

The Rev. F. C. Schmidt, pastor of the Kendrick Methodist Community Church, told the court that Donald attended services at the church Sunday evenings and that he attended services on March 22, two days after Conrad was slain.