

Keeler Given Life Sentence

A 16-year-old confessed slayer of his uncle was sentenced yesterday in district court to life imprisonment in the state penitentiary at Boise.

The curly-haired youth, Donald Keeler, stood calm and unruffled as District Judge John W. Cramer asked him if he had any "legal reason why judgment should not be pronounced against you at this time?"

Standing quietly with his hands behind his back, Keeler replied: "No sir." The judge then said:

"I find you guilty of murder in the first degree and sentence you to imprisonment in the Idaho penitentiary for the term of your natural life."

Keeler had pleaded guilty previously to the \$140 holdup-slaying of Louis Conrad, 62, operator of a self-service gasoline station three miles east of Lewiston on the North & South Highway, last March 20.

Outwardly unemotional through the estimated five-minute period in the courtroom, the youth bit his lip as he was led back to his cell in the Nez Perce County jail by sheriff's officers.

He will be taken to Boise "within a few days" to begin serving his sentence.

"When am I going down?" he asked, on his way back to his cell.

"In a few days," he was told. "I guess I'll have some time for exercise," he said, adding that he would have to take a diary with him.

During the hearing April 17 when the good-looking youth was arraigned on a first-degree murder charge, defense counsel



LIFE IN PRISON — Leaving the courtroom a few minutes after being sentenced to life in the state penitentiary is Donald Keeler, 16, above. The youth confessed shooting two .38 caliber pistol slugs into his uncle, Louis Conrad, the night of March 20 at a self-service station three miles east of Lewiston on the North & South Highway. The former Kendrick high school student will be transferred to the state prison "within a few days." (Tribune photo.)

assigned on a murder charge, defense counsel Thomas W. Feeney, Lewiston, called Dr. Robert Wetzler, a Spokane psychiatrist to testify.

The doctor said he believed Keeler was insane at the time Conrad was killed, but was sane at this time. He identified the youth as a "simple schizophrenic."

Testimony Discounted

However, before Judge Cramer pronounced sentence yesterday he said that although the psychiatrist testified at length the court felt, "for various reasons, that his testimony was not of great value."

Neatly dressed in a gray tweed suit and yellow necktie, Keeler appeared in the courtroom at 11 a.m. with his court-appointed attorney and his mother, Mrs. Dorothy Taylor, of Spokane.

Before sentencing, the judge said:

"The evidence disclosed a most brutal murder, premeditated, as far as the law is concerned. The intent to rob is self-admitted. There is no evidence that the crime is less than murder in the first degree."

Referring to mitigating evidence of testimony of persons Keeler lived with, the judge said that there was no evidence of former criminal tendencies.

"Lack of remorse on the defendant's part makes the problem more difficult," he continued. "The purpose of punishment is not to atone for offenses committed, but to stop further offenses, particularly by young people."

"After a careful consideration the court, with great reluctance, concludes that life imprisonment is the proper sentence in this case. The ultimate disposition of the defendant will be in the hands of the State Board of Correction who have the means for that determination."

At that point Judge Cramer pronounced sentence.

Keeler confessed to Nez Perce County officers the afternoon and night of March 31 that he shot Conrad twice with a .38 caliber pistol 11 days earlier and robbed the till while wearing a mask made of a T-shirt.

He was arrested on March 31 on an anonymous tip that he was "spending too much money."