

Bloomington woman helped politician in career

The murder shocked Bloomingtonians on that warm evening in July 1941. Distraught over the end of a 17-year relationship with a prominent Indiana politician, Caroline Payne, a divorcee, stepped up outside a window in the 700 block of South Walnut Street and fired a succession of bullets into the back of a man sitting at a kitchen table.

Time has not altered the horror and confusion of those moments on July 5, 1941. The victim, Charles O. Mattingly, an attorney and legal counsel for the Indiana Public Service Commission, died a few hours later in the Bloomington Hospital. The attending physicians, Drs. Russell DeMotte and J.P. Boulware, were unable to stop the massive internal bleeding.

The series of events leading up to the shooting began in 1923 when Mattingly came to Bloomington to study law at Indiana University. His attendance during summer school, too, made it possible for him to receive his bachelor of laws degree in three years.

During those years Mattingly met Caroline Payne, who rented rooms to students. A divorcee, she had previously been married to Earl Payne, a district agent for the



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

Indianapolis *News* and one-time state senator who ran on the Ku Klux Klan ticket. According to the Bloomington *Telephone* of July 7, 1941, his political involvement led to the breakdown of his marriage with Caroline Payne.

Recalling the victim's student days, the Bloomington *Evening World* said Mattingly helped to put himself through school by delivering that newspaper and the *News*. He was also paid for reading textbooks to a fellow law student who was blind.

Apparently, in spite of Mattingly's part-time employment, the financial ends did not quite meet, even though he had a scholarship. Caroline Payne, who had held a couple of newspaper circulation jobs, provided him with help in the form of a news-

paper delivering job, cash and a room at her house. In fact, he kept his room there from 1926 until 1939.

According to the *Telephone*, "After starting the practice of law, he was connected with the legal department of the Monon railway for several years. (That job was secured through the influence of Paul V. McNutt, a personal friend.)

In 1930 he returned to Bloomington. In an interview at the Monroe County Jail after the shooting, Payne told reporters she had been the one to arrange a law partnership for Mattingly. "Mr. Sare had his office in the Telephone building, and I would see him nearly every evening and urge him to take Doc (Mattingly) in his office and told him that Doc would share the rent and the expense of an office helper."

It was not the last time Payne helped Mattingly. They shared the cost of a car, before he was able to buy his own. At times she was not all that well-off financially. In talking to reporters she explained, "When he had money Doc would help, but he didn't have any at that time (1930). I kept roomers and I would do our washing on Sundays."

In the interview at the jail a reporter

asked, "Did you buy his clothes?" She replied, "Yes, when he needed them."

The idea of getting involved in politics intrigued Mattingly, and he started at the local level. The *Evening World* quoted Payne as having something to do with that, as well. "The young lawyer decided to go into politics, and again Mrs. Payne took the lead, talking to Robert Myers, at that time Democratic county chairman and using publicity to build up the man to whose career she was devoting herself, according to her story.

"He served as district chairman of the Young Democrats, was named as the Democratic member of the Bloomington police board by Mayor A.H. Berndt and was also named county attorney. When asked if these things were brought about by her efforts and influence, Mrs. Payne said, 'I took the lead.'"

In 1936, Mattingly was appointed by then Governor McNutt as secretary of the Public Service Commission. It may have been the single event that brought about a change in their relationship.

Next week: The automobile accident.

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