

Jealous man jailed after slashing IU student

"Jealousy — the green-eyed monster — is responsible for the plight in which Delbert Pryor, a young man handy at whittling with a pocket-knife, finds himself today."

—Bloomington Weekly Courier, Feb. 21, 1919.

The "plight" was spending some time in jail. He was charged with assault and battery with intent to kill.

The intended victim was a young man by the name of Walter Tate, an Indiana University student from Brazil, Ind. The argument was as old as the ages — competition between the two men for the attentions of a female.

The evening began simply enough. Tate was walking Myrtle Wray home from her job as a night operator at the local telephone company. According to the *Weekly Courier*, the time was 11:40 p.m.

Suddenly, at the corner of Fourth and Rogers streets, they



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

were confronted by Delbert Pryor, a rival for Wray's hand. Pryor struck a match and "held the light in the face of the student," ... saying, "You're the man I'm looking for."

Pryor pulled out a knife and began slashing at the heavy army coat Tate was wearing. It was in tatters when he was finished.

Unfortunately, Pryor did not confine his slashing to Tate's overcoat. The newspaper described what happened next. "The student continued to ward off the blows, most of which he says were made at his throat."

Not all of the cuts missed the mark. Tate had a cut on his back,

but the serious one was on his right wrist, severing tendons. Tate tried to strike back at Pryor, but his bleeding and injured hand was practically useless. Finally, Pryor sped off into the night.

Some immediate first aid was definitely in order, but Tate gallantly escorted Wray the rest of the way to her home, which was on Walker Street. There he did bind up his dripping hand with a handkerchief.

Back at his rooming house on East Seventh Street, wiser heads prevailed, and a doctor was summoned to have a look at the nasty cut. The one who came was J.W. Wiltshire. The *Weekly Courier* was perhaps more frank than necessary in describing the outcome.

Dr. Wiltshire called in another physician, J.E. Moser, to administer an anesthetic, "and an effort was made to get hold of the tendon, which had retracted in the sheath at the back end of the thumb." Both

doctors must have agreed that Tate's thumb needed more specialized treatment.

The young man was sent to St. Vincent's Hospital in Indianapolis. Added the newspaper, "He went there on the 9:15 I.C. (Illinois Central) train today."

There was some urgency in the correct reconnection of the tendon in Tate's thumb. As the *Weekly Courier* put it, "Tate, who is a medical student, has been a teacher in penmanship in high schools of the state and expressed a desire not to lose the use of the thumb so as to be able to continue his penmanship work at which he is said to be expert. At the present time the severing of the tendon prevents him from controlling the muscular action of the thumb."

Tate was not inclined to overlook Pryor's attack. When the police arrived, Tate was able to give them Pryor's address. The vehemence of

the attack must not have bothered the latter very much, because when the police went to arrest him, they had to wake him up.

Pryor did not have much of a chance of getting off on some charge, at least. There were witnesses to the attack. The newspaper revealed that N. Moore, another student, and Elsie Cooper, were on their way home and saw what happened. Oddly enough, Moore did not try to intervene.

At the jail Pryor finally confessed and told the authorities that he had warned Tate to stay away from the girl. The newspaper described Pryor's recent history. "Pryor was with the Howard Bros. circus during the summer when he was engaged in a couple of fights with other members of the crew. He drove a truck, but when the show quit, he returned to Bloomington."

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