

A Post-War American Tragedy— Girl's Slaying Feared Sign of Moral Decay In Youth of Nation

Could Have Happened Anywhere,
Civic Leaders of Milwaukee Believe

(Editor's note: The Babich case in Milwaukee is already being called "a post-war American tragedy," a symptom of the rising juvenile delinquency worrying parents of teen-agers all over the country. The United Press sent staff correspondent Robert Musel, internationally famous reporter, there to report on what has happened and what is being done.)

By ROBERT MUSEL, United Press Staff Correspondent

MILWAUKEE, Wis., Mar. 28—Sixteen-year-old Patricia Birmingham thought it was funny that her 17-year-old sister, Kathleen, was pregnant from an illicit love affair.

She joked about it to her own boy friend, confided it to her high school classmates and remarked slyly on her sister's figure in front of her unsuspecting parents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Birmingham.

Desperate, unable to face a shame he knew must become known in a few weeks at the most, Kathleen's lover, 19-year-old Milton Babich, begged Patricia to keep the secret until he could manage an elopement.

Today, Patricia is dead, her body dragged from the Milwaukee River where Babich confessed he dropped it, wired to a concrete block—a method he read about in a comic book.

Kathleen is on the verge of nervous collapse. And two pleasant middle-class homes are all but wrecked.

THE RABICH case happened in Milwaukee. But it could have happened anywhere in the United States.

"Something has come over our young people," said Mayor Frank Ziegler, "perhaps something has happened in the American home in the aftermath of war."

Mayor Ziegler knows. Last October the city was stunned by the discovery of one of the worst juvenile vice rings in Midwestern history—20 teen-age girls, youths and older men who frankly confessed intimacies that police said were almost "beyond belief." Some of the girls were known to have come from "good homes."

This followed a raid by the minors squad on a party in which eight boys and girls were found intoxicated.

Another teen-age drinking orgy was reported to police who caught 24 boys and girls from 15 to 18 in the home of a woman who said she saw nothing wrong in minors drinking at home—"It keeps them off the streets."

Yet Milwaukee's record for a city of 700,000, is not bad. There are worse.

"What has happened here serves to indicate, however, that juvenile delinquency must be a tremendous problem the whole country over," Mayor Ziegler said.

MILWAUKEE's current sensation, the Babich case, is gruesome enough in its bare outlines but some of its aspects will interest social investigators beyond the scope of the crime itself.

Patricia apparently considered her sister's pregnancy a matter for jest—a curious attitude perhaps indicative of the changing ideas of what is right and wrong among young folk. That is what Milwaukee's church and civic leaders are setting out to fight.

Babich, tall, handsome honor student, apparently did not find it hard, judging from the way he smiled at photographers, to elope and marry Kathleen in Kalamazoo, Mich. (where the waiting period is waived for pregnancies), knowing he had killed the sister she was worrying about.

And most disturbing of all, the sisters and Babich were reared in good families, the kind which in normal times are expected to supply the type of citizen.

Eloper to Fight Charge

MILWAUKEE, Mar. 28 (UPI)—Indicated she will stand by him, Babich was denied bail.

Attorney Arthur Richter, former Dean of the Marquette University Law School, said he would fight the case "to the bitter end" if the state attempted to prosecute Babich for first-degree premeditated murder, despite an unsigned statement Babich gave authorities.

Mr. Richter indicated, however, that he would have Babich plead guilty if the state reduced its charge against the youth. Wisconsin law provides two lesser degrees of murder and four of manslaughter.

The case broke dramatically this weekend when Babich, confronted with a mounting stack of evidence suddenly broke down and confessed that he killed Patricia while attempting to divert her from telling her sister what was carrying his child.

He insisted the shooting was accidental and Mr. Richter appeared to be mapping his defense on that contention.

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Navy Rescues 11 Adrift on Pacific Plane

Landing Ship Reaches Craft Afloat 10 Hours

HONOLULU, Mar. 28 (UPI)—A rescue ship today saved 11 men who drifted for 10 hours in their Catalina flying boat after an emergency landing in a remote section of the Pacific Ocean.

The freighter Granger, one of two ships that raced to the sinking plane, radioed Pearl Harbor at 5:58 a. m., Indianapolis time, that the landing ship LEM-448 had taken nine crew members and two passengers aboard.

The Granger reported all the survivors were safe and well.

The flying boat, en route from Kwajalein to Johnston Island, was forced down some 650 miles southwest of Johnston yesterday after one engine failed.

The LEM was 75 miles away, but her radio operator happened to be listening off schedule. He heard the Navy relay a broadcast asking all ships in the area to steam to the aid of the stricken plane.

Planes Dispatched

The LEM, under the command of Lt. Floyd McDaniel Furr of Rock Wills, S. C., reached the scene about nine hours later. The Granger arrived shortly afterward.

None of those aboard the plane was reported as coming from Indiana.

After the pilot radioed that one engine had failed, he radioed his position and said: "I am ditching."

Soon afterward came another message reporting that the plane was down in the open sea and apparently undamaged.

Still later came another message from the pilot reporting that the plane was taking water in the radio compartment amidships. The pilot estimated the plane would stay afloat for three hours.

The Navy relayed distress signals to ships in the vicinity. Two Flying Fortresses from Johnston, 11 private patrol bombers from Oahu, one flying boat from Midway and two flying boats from Oahu were ordered to the scene.

"Milton was so sad, so good," the father said. "He could not have done it . . . never."

STOCKY Albert Birmingham, a machine operator, also has worked hard for his children. His wife continued part time work until recently so that she could send both her daughters through a school of nursing.

Kathleen, nursing her tragedy, murmured over and over: "I lived with him five days and didn't know he killed my sister."

**Leona Adam Re-elected
To Head State Nurses**

Miss Leona R. Adam, of St. Vincent's Hospital, today began a second year as president of the Indiana State Nurses' Association.

Other officers elected Saturday included Miss Isabel C. McCracken, Evansville, first vice-president; Miss Mildred Ellis, Brazil, second vice-president; Miss Thelma Koontz, Ft. Wayne, secretary, and Miss Ethel Jacobs, Indianapolis, treasurer.

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