



FOR THE POST/SANDY PEOPLES

Donna Matcho plays with her sons, Andrew, left and Nicholas on the sliding board at the Trinity Learning Center just before the mini-march began.

## Children

(continued from page 1)

that is raised in my children's names." The event raises at least \$2,000 every year.

Cystic fibrosis is a hereditary disease that causes a malfunction of the pancreas and frequent respiratory infections. Parents may never get the disease themselves, but can easily be tested to see if they are carriers. Physicians can diagnose suspected cases of CF by testing the patient's perspiration. Symptoms usually occur during infancy or early childhood.

"There are no local CF care centers," said Matcho. "Andrew and Nicholas must travel for medical treatment."

There is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but antibiotics are used to fight the lung infections.

"Patients may also fail to digest their food completely, and that is why doctors recently gave Nicholas a feeding tube to help with this problem."

Because of the lack of local facilities to handle patients with this disease, the Matchos have had to learn physical and respiratory therapy and the nursing skills associated with caring for their boys, not to mention making the long trips when they need professional care. When asked how she and

her family manage it all and keep their stamina, Matcho simply said, "We have to."

Matcho also sees the psychological aspects of this disease for children. "As time goes on, they don't want to talk about this disease or have anyone else talk about it. They want to keep it private. They want to try to lead normal lives and they don't want to appear different from their peers. They just want to be kids."

There are two ways anyone can help Andrew and Nicholas and other children with CF. Visit [cf.org/legislative\\_action](http://cf.org/legislative_action) to learn about and support Senate Resolution 298, which if passed, will proclaim the month of May as National Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. This national exposure will help raise needed dollars for genetic research.

Locally, cheerleaders and basketball teams will take the court at the Wilkes University gymnasium on April 17 at 7 p.m. for a hilarious attempt at "trading places" as a fundraiser in the names of Andrew and Nicholas Matcho. Tickets are \$1 for students and \$3 for the general public.

## OBITUARIES

### MARGARET WEAVER

Member of Center Moreland United Methodist Church

Margaret M. Weaver, of Creamery Road, Tunkhannock, died April 5, 2004, at Wesley Village, Jenkins Township.

She was born in Wilkes-Barre on Dec. 24, 1916, daughter of the late Lewis J. and Margaret Gwynn Siperko. She was a member of the Center Moreland United Methodist Church.

She was preceded in death by a brother, Lewis Siperko; half-brother, David Siperko; and sister, Charlotte Morgan.

Surviving are her husband of

66 years, Stanley E. Weaver; daughters, Carol Richardson, Tunkhannock; Beth Matthews, Timonium, Md.; Alice Weaver, Tunkhannock; sisters, Doris Huffman, Severna Park, Md.; Audrey Bennett Morgan, Dunnellon, Fla.; six grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; half-brothers, Charles, Carl, Edward and Fred Siperko; half-sisters, Ellen Yost and Barbara LaCovita.

Interment, Perrins Marsh Cemetery, Center Moreland.

More obituaries appear on page 5

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DAY, OCTOBER 5, 1934.

No. 40

# Death Hovers Over Edwards As State Climaxes Its Case

## DEFENSE DEALT HARD BLOW BY REVELATIONS IN 172 LETTERS

Prosecution Bares Intimate Details Of Passionate Courtship; New Evidence Rocks Courtroom; Composure Deserts Edwards; Contents Of Letters To Aurora, N. Y., Sweetheart Unprintable; Not Known How State Secured Them.

### DEFENSE EXPECTED TO BEGIN ITS CASE SOON

#### DEFENSE ATTORNEY TAUGHT BROWN IN LEHMAN YEARS AGO.

When Dr. Harry Brown of Lehman, deputy coroner who was the first physician to examine Freda McKechnie's body when it was taken from Harvey's Lake, completed his testimony on Tuesday at the Edwards trial an incident, interesting to local persons, occurred. Attorney Frank McGuigan, defense chief, walked toward Dr. Brown and shook hands with him. "I taught Dr. Brown physiology forty years ago when I was a teacher in the Lehman schools" Attorney McGuigan said.

Death—stark, cold, and vengeful—hovered closer over the bowed head of Robert Allan Edwards yesterday as the State reached the smashing climax in its dramatic effort to prove that the 21-year-old Edwardsville youth murdered Freda McKechnie, his neighborhood sweetheart, because he wanted to marry Margaret Crain of East Aurora, N. Y.

Disregarding a likelihood of public offense, the prosecution, in a dramatic surprise move, divulged the intimate and passionate contents of some of the 172 letters which Edwards had written to Miss Crain. The contents, unprintable and damaging to the youth's character, created the greatest sensation of the trial.

Shortly after this issue of The Dallas Post was published, Robert Edwards was found guilty of murdering his girlfriend, Freda McKechnie, and subsequently sentenced to death.

## Tragedy

(continued from page 1)

man wading in the lake. They went past the floating dock walking close together in a leisurely and friendly manner.

Mrs. Ruff corroborated her husband's testimony, adding that her husband called her to the window to see the couple wading out.

The two young people were respected and well-known, from a Welsh church community in Edwardsville. The following morning, Irene Cohen, a summer resident, found the body of 26-year-old unwed mother-to-be Freda McKechnie 85 feet from Mayer's Landing, her head bludgeoned beneath her white bathing cap.

George Jones, a Sandy beach lifeguard, went to get the body, along with Ben Williams and Tony Kotch. Dr. H. A. Brown of Lehman, deputy coroner, was called to examine the body.

Miss McKechnie's neighborhood sweetheart, 21-year-old Robert Edwards, was charged with the murder.

"I knew Daniel Edwards, his father. He collected the rent from our family every month," said Danny McCue. The McCue family rented a company house in Larksville from the Kingston Coal Co. Daniel Edwards was paymaster of the company and his son, Robert Edwards, was a surveyor.

"My father went into the mines when he was 7 years old. We all worked in the mines and collieries at some time," said McCue. The mother and father of Robert Edwards were "sweet and quiet people," he noted.

"Daniel Edwards was a gentleman; he would sit and chat with my parents when he collected the rent each month. They were really broken up about this."

Danny McCue found Freda McKechnie's clothes, red hand-

bag, and gold watch the morning of July 31.

Tenters at Rood's Campground washed in the stream, but cooking and drinking water came from the communal well and that's where Danny McCue was going when he discovered a woman's clothes under some newspapers. "Everything was very neatly placed and folded with the gold watch on top," said McCue.

A photograph in the Wilkes-

*"No, Mr. Lewis, that's not how I did it. I did it like this."*

Robert Edwards

Barre Times Leader from October 3, 1934 shows a young man wearing a cap pointing to the spot where the clothes were found.

When he found the clothes, McCue ran to August Gomez's gas station and told him to call policeman Fred Swanson because the find was so unusual during the Depression era.

The shocking murder drew national attention when it was learned the handsome Robert Edwards, president of his 1931 class at Mansfield State Teachers College, was engaged to marry Margaret Crain of Aurora, New York, a classmate.

Informal testimony asserted that Robert Edwards could not have killed Freda McKechnie. Unnamed sources in The Dallas Post close to the family thought murder could not have been committed by such a "clean, wholesome, and respectful" person — a person from a "good family home atmosphere with religious train-

ing."

The Harveys Lake murder was referred to as Pennsylvania's "American Tragedy," a reference to Theodore Dreiser's novel. The 1925 classic tale of love and murder was based, according to Dreiser, on 15 murder case stories.

In the novel a small town boy tries to better himself by marrying someone more refined but is hampered by a poorer girl who is pregnant with his child. He takes the girl out rowing and murders her, then claims it was an accident.

Danny McCue's testimony and that of policemen Fred Swanson were challenged by the defense lawyers. Said McCue, "They really tried to rattle us. But that's all I could do was tell the truth."

The trial concluded Friday night October 5, 1934 around 11 or 12 p.m., according to McCue. "We were there all week and that whole day. Around 4 or 5 p.m. we stopped for supper, we were all very tired, but they kept on after Bobby until he broke down."

Prosecuting attorney Thomas Lewis tried to establish the exact manner in which Freda McKechnie was killed. Finally, according to McCue, Robert Edwards said very politely, "No, Mr. Lewis, that's not how I did it. I did it like this." A blackjack was found in Harveys Lake and 172 love letters to the other woman were also shown as evidence.

Robert Edwards was convicted, mostly from his own incriminating statements, at 2 a.m. Saturday October 7, 1934, according to the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader from that date. He was subsequently sentenced to death and electrocuted for his crime.

## Trial

(continued from page 1)

demands that Clyde marry her, he takes her rowing on an isolated lake and "accidentally" murders her. He is found out, tried, convicted and executed.

The novel caused a stir when it was published, achieving the dubious distinction of being banned in Boston. It was also made into a movie in 1931, just three years before the Harveys Lake murder that seemed to mirror it. A later movie based on the story, "A Place in the Sun," starred Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift and won awards for best director and best screenplay.

Ironically, the novel was based on an actual crime that had occurred in 1906, and other cases in which men had murdered women with whom they had been romantically involved but who had become inconvenient.

Dreiser himself came to the trial of Robert Edwards as a special writer on assignment. Danny McCue remembers him at the trial. "He came with his secretary, a woman with blonde hair, and they both took notes and wrote."

Another aspect that fired interest was the social status of the players. The two young people were respected and well-known, from a Welsh church community in Edwardsville. The handsome Robert Edwards had studied for the ministry at Mansfield State Teachers College, and was president of his 1931 class. He also was engaged to marry Margaret Crain of Aurora, New York, his classmate.

An article in the August 17, 1934 issue of the Post described the national blow-up of the trial. "Half a hundred or more reporters, sob-sisters, special writers will come to Wilkes-Barre next month to cover the trial in the Luzerne County Court House. The Western Union has requested 30 typewriters. Nearly every metropolitan newspaper devoted a page to the story and pictures and all except the sedate New York Times carried front page leads and banner headlines which grew in size and feeling as the trial progressed."

The trial was front page news in the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader from Monday October 1 thru Saturday October 6. The Post attributed the national attention somewhat to the secretiveness of the trial lawyers and also to a desire for a titillating "murder-of-the-week" story in the national press.

### Do you love local sports?

The Post is seeking a correspondent to write a weekly local sports story. We're hoping to find someone who has contacts in the local sports community, can ask interesting questions, write clearly and meet a deadline.

We're not looking for game reports, but rather stories about people who just happen to be involved with sports at a local level — from youth leagues to adult recreation.

If you can take a decent photo, that's a plus!

If you think this might be a good spot for you, drop an e-note to: [rbartzek@leader.net](mailto:rbartzek@leader.net).

THE POST

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