

# SATURDAY OKLAHOMAN & TIMES

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52 PAGES

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## THREE TROOPERS GUNNED DOWN

By Judy Fossett

**CADDO** — The 34-day flight of two Oklahoma State Penitentiary inmates ended about mid-morning Friday when two bloody gun battles seven miles apart claimed the lives of three Highway Patrol troopers and the escapees.

Another trooper was wounded. The slain officers were identified as Lt. Pat Grimes, 36, Moore, and troopers William G. Young, 50, Woodward, and Trooper Houston "Pappy" Summers, 62, Enid, a 32-year veteran about to retire from the patrol.

Wounded was Lt. Hoyt Hughes, 46, Edmond, who was admitted to University Hospital in Oklahoma City with a gunshot wound in the shoulder.

Killed in the final exchange of gunfire in this Bryan County community were escapees Claude Eugene Dennis, 35, and Michael Lancaster, 25, who April 23 tunneled out of the state penitentiary at McAlester to start a crime spree that left at least seven persons dead in a 1,000-mile trail between Oklahoma and Alabama.

Gov. Boren called the officers' deaths "the

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worst single tragedy in the 40-year history of this outstanding law enforcement agency. The heartfelt sympathy of all Oklahomans

goes out to the families of these brave officers."

Motorists across the state turned on their headlights Friday afternoon in tribute to the slain officers as news of the shootout spread.

The officers' bodies will lie in state from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Sunday at the state Capitol. A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m.

The Oklahoma Highway Patrol was already focusing its search for Dennis and Lancaster in the Lake Texoma area when Kenefic farmer Russell Washington notified officers Friday morning he had been tied up

by the escapees and his pickup truck stolen.

Alerted that the two killers were in Washington's truck, partners Summers and Young reportedly passed the pickup on SH 48 about eight miles north of Durant, recognized the occupants as the escapees, and took off in pursuit.

The chase continued to a point south of Kenefic where the escapees turned east on a gravel road, stopped the truck, jumped out and began shooting at the troopers. The officers returned fire from beneath their cru-

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## Witness to Shootout Watched From Porch



Oklahoma Highway Patrol Lt. Hoyt Hughes, Edmond, winces in pain as his wounds are bandaged.

By Jon Chavez

**CADDO** — "I was in the yard working in my flower garden when I saw this pickup pull up at their driveway. Two men jumped out and down they went — guns were going off everywhere."

Addie M. Salladay, 83, was still nervous as she described the gun-battle that shocked this sleepy southeastern Oklahoma community of about 900 Friday morning.

"I'm so nervous that I'm still jerking bad and I don't think I'll get over this for a few days or so. I've never seen anything like it."

Mrs. Salladay was near the front porch of her southwest Caddo residence Friday morning shortly before 10 a.m. when Oklahoma prison escapees Claude Eugene Dennis and Michael Lancaster decided to stage the final chapter in their multi-state death spree just three houses away.

Dennis and Lancaster were gunned down by lawmen on the front lawn of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Earnest Slack, but not before Trooper Lt. Pat Grimes was killed and Trooper Hoyt Hughes was wounded.

Highway Patrol Troopers Houston F. "Pappy" Summers and William Young were killed minutes earlier in another gun battle a few miles away near the town of Kenefic.

Mrs. Salladay, who lives alone on the 400 block of Court Street, said she noticed a blue pickup truck — which the two killers had stolen from a Kenefic farmer Friday morning — drive slowly down her street about 9:30 a.m. and pull into the Slacks' driveway at 510 Court Street.

"It just drove up to the place slowly," she said. "When I saw them pull up, I thought it was Mr. Slack coming home early."

Two men got out of the pickup and walked to the front yard, then jumped to the ground, she said.

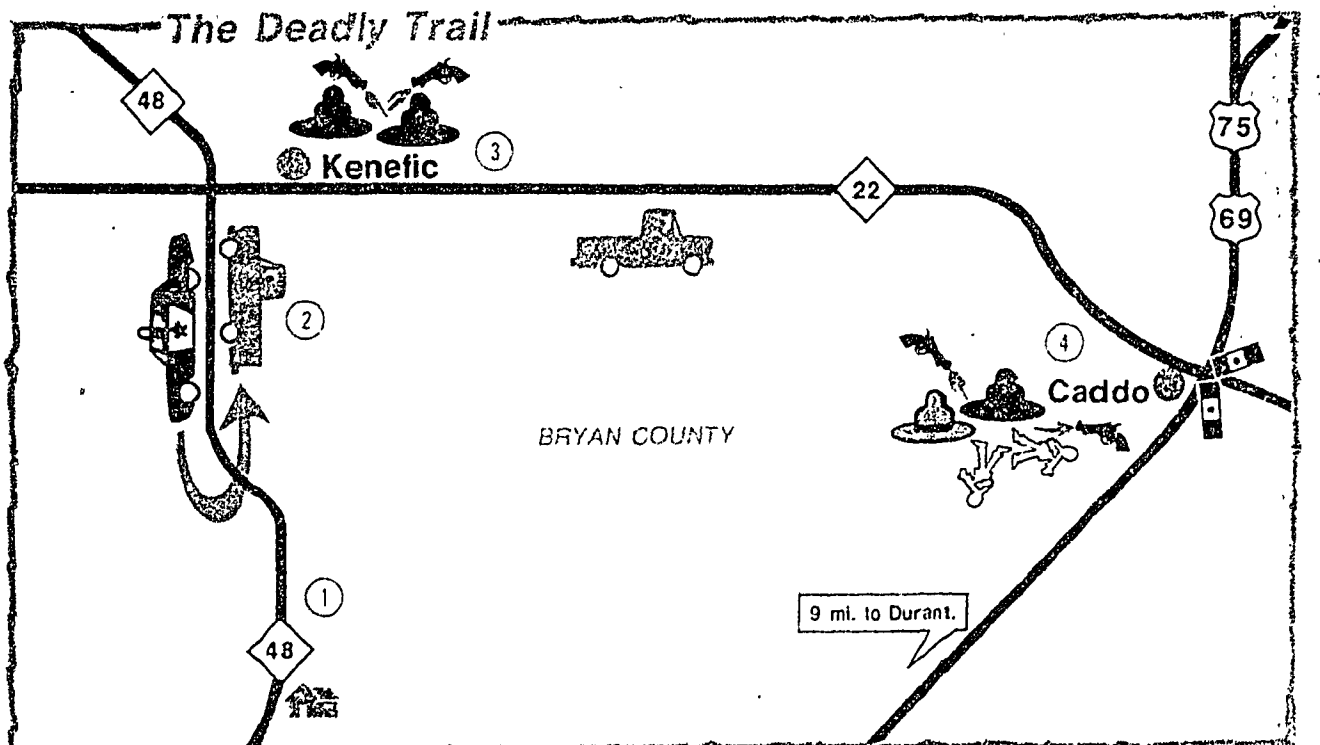
Mrs. Salladay said a few seconds later a white unmarked police car drove up slowly and stopped in front of the Slack house and gunfire "started immediately."

"I couldn't tell you who starting shooting first," she said. "But all of a sudden the policemen came up and guns started firing."

She said after shots started ringing out she moved from her garden to the front porch to watch the gun battle.

Within minutes, "between 15-20 police cars pulled up," she said.

"They were lined up



Fatal drama began when the escapees stole a pickup truck at farmhouse, 1, and were spotted by two troopers who gave pursuit, 2. At Kenefic, about five miles away, 3, the first gun battle left both troopers slain. Fugitives raced along SH 22 seven miles to Caddo, 4, where they were slain, another trooper died and a fourth trooper was wounded.

## HUD Denies City Project Block Grant

By Lynn Hamilton  
Oklahoma City's request for more than \$400,000 in federal funds for day care centers and health clinics has been denied by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, city officials confirmed Friday.

The denial could mean closing facilities that already depend on community development block grant funds for their operation, officials said.

Mayor Patience Lattling received a letter Friday from the local HUD office announcing the city's social services programs will not be funded under the grant program, she confirmed.

The money could be made available later if the city submits other projects that HUD decides qualify for the program.

City officials described HUD's decision as further evidence that the Carter administration is aiming its urban programs at Eastern cities and ignoring urban blight in Southwestern communities. Officials also criticized HUD for "ignoring" the lengthy citizen participation process that resulted in the list of projects sent to HUD for approval.

Appeal Expected  
Both Mayor Lattling and City Manager Jim Cook said they expect the city to appeal the decision to HUD officials in Washington.

The letter from the local HUD office says that although the city has been allocated \$7.4 million in block grants, not all projects submitted to HUD qualify for the city's share of the money. It says that \$7 million in projects have been approved, though

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## PATROL MOURNS FALLEN COMRADES

### 'It's a Hell of a Price to Pay'

By Kevin Donovan  
Staff Writer

**CADDO** — Four pools of blood curdled in the hot dust that had just settled on the most tragic day in the history of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

Dead were Claude Dennis and Michael Lancaster. They killed one trooper here and wounded another before they were cut down themselves in a blazing firefight which settled everything — everything and nothing. A corps of grim troopers shuddered at the cost.

"We've been through a lot of them, Paul," Public Safety Commissioner Roger Webb was talking to Trooper Paul Johnson. "This time we ran out of luck."

"It's a hell of a price to pay," Johnson said as he and Trooper Dave Blackburn, an airborne spotter this day, inspected the yard of the Earnest Slack residence where the two escapees made their final stand against the State of Oklahoma.

The state won, but the trade was far from even.

Blackburn, who spotted the outlaws as they drove a stolen pickup truck, said he watched events unfold from the air shortly after Troopers "Pappy" Summers and William Young were ripped by a fusillade of gunfire on a country road south of Kenefic and southwest of Caddo.

"I picked them up about three miles west of Caddo. We followed them in, trying to direct units to get in front of them and to get behind them," Blackburn said.

"We saw them traveling east and continue on a county road until they got into Caddo. They were one block away from SH 22 (Caddo's main east-west street). Then they stopped. It looked like

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Pat Grimes Houston Summers William Young

## Farmer Lives to Recount Meeting With 2 Slayers

By Jon Chavez

**KENEFIC** — A local farmer, who deserted his home Thursday night fearing two Oklahoma prison escapees might arrive, returned to his rural Bryan County farmhouse Friday morning only to find the two heavily-armed men sitting in his living room casually munching peanut butter sandwiches.

Russell Washington owed thanks — and probably his life — to his own generosity and the fact that escapee Claude Eugene Dennis, who was killed Friday morning with fellow escapee Michael Lancaster in a shootout at Caddo, remembered it.

"I was doing a whole lot of praying. The Lord was protecting me," said Washington.

The 34-year-old Washington, his wife and two daughters had left their home near SH 48 south of Kenefic Thursday night after the two escapees were reported sighted in the area.

"We just wanted to stay somewhere else and get out of there," he said.

However, Washington said he returned to his home at 8:30 a.m. Friday morning with a friend, 59-year-old G.D. Busby, "to go to work like I always do," and found himself face-to-face with Dennis and Lancaster.

Washington said when he arrived, he put his small dachshund "Cleo" in the unlocked house.

"The dog started barking and acting kind of strange," he said, so Washington, armed with a .22-cal-

iber rifle, and Busby decided to check inside.

"I went into the kitchen and bedroom and he (Busby) went into the living room and ran straight into them."

Washington said Busby, described as "a real cool character," smiled and said, "Hi, boys! How ya doing?" "Dennis replied, 'We're fine. How are you? And tell that ole' boy with the rifle to come in here and put it down. Then both of you lie down 'cause we're going to have to tie you up,'" said Washington.

Lancaster looked up and said, "You interrupted my sandwich," he added.

"Everything was just kind of nonchalant and it just kind of stayed that way," Washington said.

"He (Dennis) said, 'I know you and I know you're a family man and a hard-working boy. We're not going to kill you. We just need a way out,'" Washington said.

He added that Dennis, holding a sawed-off shotgun, recalled that four years ago Washington had done him a favor by letting him hunt on his land.

Washington said the two escapees continued to eat peanut butter sandwiches, apples and drink milk and talk to him and Busby about hunting and farming.

The convicts tied Washington to the hinge of the kitchen door and tied up Busby on the bedroom floor before taking groceries and guns

and leaving in Washington's truck.

## Winds, Rain Enter State

High winds and heavy showers fell Friday night over the Panhandle as thunderstorms, for the third day in a row, crept into Oklahoma from the west.

Oklahoma City skies were partly cloudy Friday with warm, muggy air sweeping across the city from the south.

A funnel cloud was reported Friday night by the public 2 miles east and 7 miles south of Hardesty in Texas County, but the Highway Patrol said no damage resulted.

The thunderstorms in the northwest contained heavy amounts of rain Friday night but were brief, officials said.

High in Oklahoma City was 83 with a morning low of 62.

The forecast calls for fair to partly cloudy skies and warm humid conditions Saturday in the metropolitan area with a 40 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. High Saturday will be in the

## TODAY

The Oklahoma City area will have a 40 percent chance of rain Saturday with partly cloudy skies and a high in the low 80s. Details, Page 13.

## Bellmon Gives Boren a Tip

Sen. Henry Bellmon has some advice for Gov. David Boren: His campaign attempts to divorce himself from President Carter may not be wise. Although he says his own opinion of Carter has not "particularly improved," Bellmon reasons that Carter is beginning to look like a stronger president than he did a few weeks ago. Details, Page 3.



Sen. Henry Bellmon

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— Staff Photo by Doug Hoke

The body of Lt. Pat Grimes is placed into hearse after arriving by helicopter at the Governor's Mansion.

# Events Between Escape, Final Shootout Traced

By Mark D. Green

With the shootout deaths of McAlester prison escapees Claude Eugene Dennis and Michael Charles Lancaster near Caddo Friday, authorities in several states began piecing together a month-long crime spree linked to the escapees.

The following is a chronology of those events:

April 23 — At about 3 p.m., Dennis, serving a 50-year term for manslaughter, and Lancaster, serving a 25-year term for armed robbery, escape in broad daylight through the same utility tunnel used by Rex Brinlee and six other inmates in a 1976 Oklahoma State Penitentiary escape. Dennis and Lancaster barge into the house of prison guard Sam Key and steal Key's car along with guns and ammunition including a 12-gauge shot-

gun. Mrs. Key reports the two "smelled of sewer."

April 29 — David Bobo, 26, of Garland, Texas, is killed while on a fishing trip near Farmersville, Texas. Bobo's car, clothing and fishing gear are stolen.

May 2 — Mathal Thannikal Matthew, 31, a Garland service station employee, is killed during a night robbery. Lancaster is identified by a witness as the robber. James Dowdy, 57, of Hemphill, Texas, is reported missing, his pickup stolen.

May 10 — Bobby Spencer, 28, of Denison, Texas, is killed by a shotgun blast during a bait shop robbery. Two rubber rafts are stolen and Spencer's wife, Loretta, abducted.

May 11 — Loretta Spencer escapes from her abductors and re-

ports the men launched the rafts into the Red River downstream from the Lake Texoma dam. In Denison, a 1966 Chevrolet is stolen by two men. At 9 p.m. Judy Clement of Mill Creek slams her front door in the face of a gunman she later identifies as Lancaster.

May 12 — The 1966 Chevrolet stolen the day before in Denison is found abandoned near Ada along the Pontotoc-Murray County line. Pontotoc County authorities begin scouring the area for the pair, but Dennis and Lancaster elude the search. An abandoned pickup found just north of the Oklahoma-Texas border near U.S. 69 is linked to Dowdy, still missing. Hershel Williams of Roff reports his blue and white pickup stolen. Texas authorities charge Dennis and Lancaster with the murder of Spencer.

May 14 — Law enforcement officials discover a hidden campsite in a heavily wooded area along the Red River east of SH 75-A. Authorities say they believe the campsite was used by the escapees after the slaying of Spencer. Spencer's billfold is found at the campsite.

May 15 — FBI and Texas officials say they believe Dennis and Lancaster are out of the Oklahoma-Texas area. FBI agents in Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Colorado and Wyoming check friends and relatives who might harbor the fugitives.

May 16 — Butler, Ala., policeman Dean Roberts is hit with a shotgun blast while on patrol. Alabama authorities suspect Dennis and Lancaster in the incident.

May 17 — Alabama trooper John Christenberry stops a stolen car in

Sumter County, Ala. The driver unleashes a shotgun blast but Christenberry avoids injury.

May 19 — Fishing rods found at the Red River campsite are identical to those used by Bobo, slain April 29. The brother of the still-missing Dowdy offers a \$1,000 reward for information about his brother.

May 23 — Stacy Beavers, 68, is found shot to death in her home north of Cuba, Ala. Alabama and Mississippi authorities join in a search for two men believed to be the Oklahoma prison escapees. Officers mass in a wooded area nine miles north of York, Ala., where a woman spotted a man with a gun.

May 24 — Alabama authorities say they believe Dennis and Lancaster are responsible for the slaying of Mrs. Beavers late May 22. The

crime follows a familiar pattern, a killing followed by escape in a stolen vehicle.

May 25 — Full roadblocks are set up in a 30-mile radius 17 miles northeast of Durant where Dennis and Lancaster abandoned Mrs. Beavers' car. Dennis is identified in the Butcher Pen area of Johnston County. Bell Telephone checks for cut telephone lines in the area. In Alabama, Mrs. Beavers' phone lines were slashed.

May 26 — Dennis and Lancaster are killed in a shootout with Oklahoma Highway Patrolmen near Caddo. Three troopers are killed and another injured. Slain are Lt. Pat Grimes, 36, of Moore; Trooper Billy G. Young, 50, of Woodward; and Trooper Houston "Pappy" Summers, 62, of Enid. Injured was Lt. Hoyt Hughes, 46, of Edmond.

## PRISON OFFICIALS BAFFLED

# Escapees Not Known as Friends

By Mick Hinton

The two prison escapees killed in gun battles Friday that also killed three state Highway Patrol troopers had both been incarcerated at the State Prison at McAlester for just over a year.

But Michael Lancaster, 25, and Claude Dennis, 35, were not known to be friends or associates, prison officials said Friday.

Their communications "were limited to those few times when inmates are allowed out of their cells, like during meals," said prison spokesman Nancy Nunnally.

"But we have no indication they even talked with each other when

they were there," which leaves prison officials without any answers as to how the pair collaborated and tunneled their way out April 23.

Dennis arrived at McAlester in December 1975, convicted of first-degree manslaughter in the slayings of Henry and Mary Witt in Stephens County.

The couple had been robbed and shot to death. Investigators linked the weapon used in their killings to the death of a Bryan County man, Arthur Lake, shot from a distance "with no apparent motive" in January 1975 as he was putting gasoline in his pickup near Durant.

While being held in



Claude Dennis



Michael Lancaster

the Stephens County jail, Dennis escaped. He was recaptured 10 days later, in September 1975, when Texas lawmen set tall grass

afire near Hillsboro, forcing Dennis and two other escapees to give up.

Two months later, he was found guilty of the

Witt deaths, and sent to McAlester.

But in January 1976, he was returned to Stephens County to testify in a trial. He again escaped, but was recaptured the same day. He received a four-year term on an escape count.

Lancaster also had two escapes on his record.

First sentenced from Oklahoma County for armed robbery, he walked away from the Oklahoma City Community Release Center in August 1974.

He was arrested two months later, and was charged with robbing an Alva liquor store. He was also being sought by Cleveland County officials in the armed robbery and shooting of an Oklahoma City woman, Terrie Barnes.

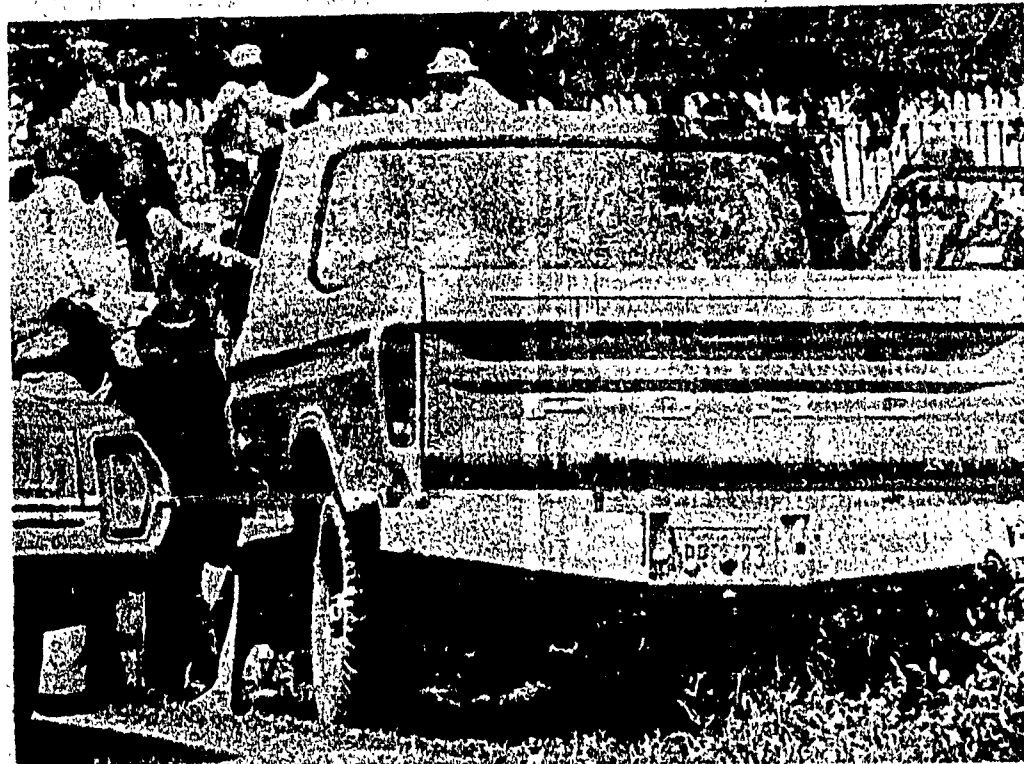
Lancaster was sentenced to a total of 76 years on the two robbery counts and sent to Granite State Reformatory.

But he was taken to Cleveland County for arraignment on the shooting charge, and subsequently escaped with five others.

He and another escapee allegedly kidnaped a store clerk, and fled Cleveland County in her car, leaving the woman tied to a tree near Prague.

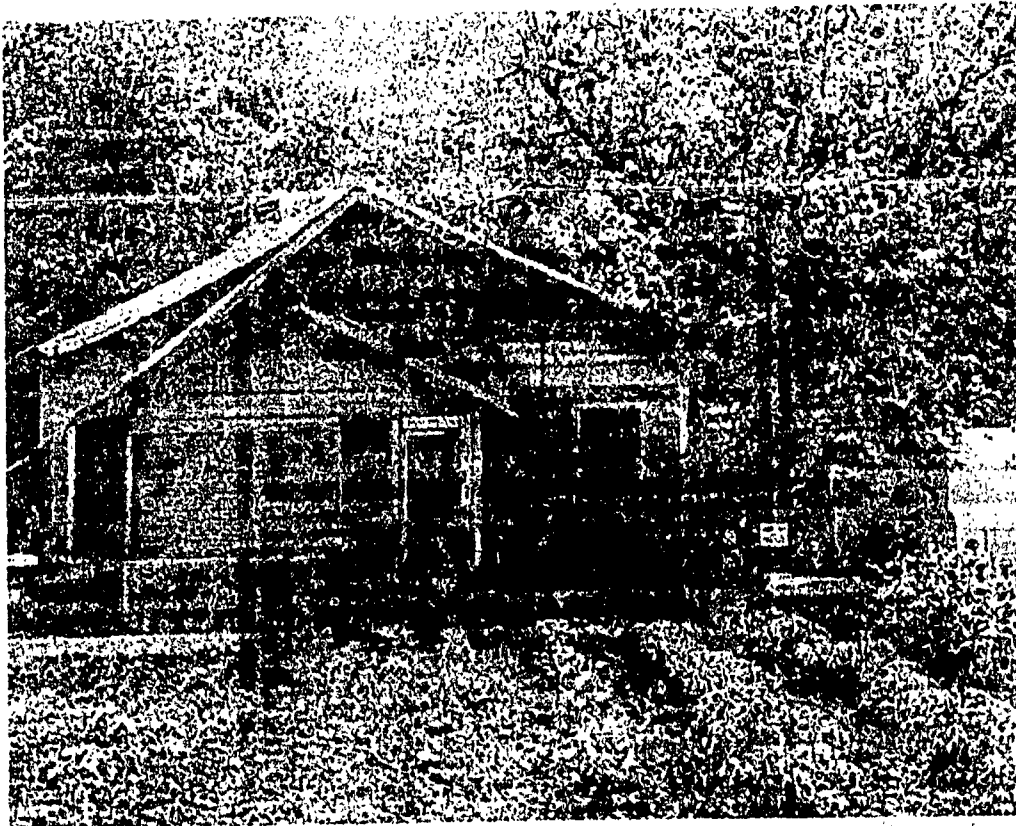
Lancaster was recaptured near Bristow, and a few months later he went to McAlester, where he considered a "high-risk" inmate.

He was never tried on Cleveland County escape and kidnapping counts because officials feared they couldn't provide adequate security if he was returned to Norman for trial.



The escapees' stolen truck, its rear window shattered by gunfire and blood dripping down its

tailgate, is inspected by law officers in the driveway of Mr. and Mrs. Earnest Slack at Caddo.



— AP Laserphoto

Escapees met their fate in bushes around Caddo home of Mr. and Mrs. Earnest Slack.

# Shaking With Emotion, Trooper Says Help From God Saved Him

CADDO (AP) — In a voice shaking with emotion, state Trooper Paul Johnson, thanked God he was still alive Friday afternoon.

Johnson was one of the lucky ones.

Three of his fellow officers were not so fortunate.

They died along with two "thrill killers" during a pair of vicious, pitched gunbattles here.

"I guess the 'ole Man above' must've been taking care of me," said Johnson, between deep drags on a borrowed cigarette. "Otherwise, I would have been the first one to get here."

Johnson and about 100 other curious people, reporters and police stood talking in groups of three or four in Ernest Slack's front yard.

The ground beside the house told its own silent story.

Blood, drying quickly in the

hot Oklahoma sun, provided the grisly markers where men — both good and bad — had fallen.

Trooper Pat Grimes died here. Trooper Hoyt Hughes was wounded in the shoulder. Troopers Billy Young and Houston "Pappy" Hughes died minutes before when the fugitives, Claude Dennis and Michael Lancaster, blasted their patrol car on a rural road about seven miles outside of town.

One Caddo resident, who asked not to be named, "because Dennis has kin living here," said he was outside about 10 a.m. working in his garden when a blue pickup, "roared by."

"I saw 'em coming up the road," he said, "I put my hoe down and went in the house and got my gun."

"I kinda figured it was them two."

After the pickup went by, a pa-

trool car drove up and a man said he told the trooper which way the pickup was ahead.

"He took off and I guess he ran smack into 'em."

Johnson said he arrived just before the fight ended.

"We had a report they were in a stolen pickup. I stopped one outside of town, but it was the wrong one," he said. "When I got to the house, I heard what sounded like two shotgun blasts, some pistol shots and then rapid fire."

The troopers reported finding two sawed-off shotguns, two rifles and two pistols in or near the pickup.

The two fugitives lay about 20 feet apart.

"If I hadn't stopped that pickup . . ." said Johnson, his voice trailing off mid-sentence. "You know, it'll be a long time before I miss Mass again."