

Sacramento Bee

1-22-1972

Oroville Woman Is Sent To Home For Manslaughter

OROVILLE (UPI) — A 75-year-old woman, Hazel Coombes, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the ax slaying of her husband of 51 years, was placed on probation on the condition she stays in a nursing or boarding home.

Butte County Superior Court Judge Lucian Vandegrift yesterday placed Mrs. Coombes on probation for an indefinite period after noting probation reports stated it was unlikely she would commit any violent acts in the future.

Police said Mrs. Coombes hacked her husband, Howard, 77, to death with a hand ax in the couple's home here last July. The charge was reduced from murder to manslaughter.

5-18-1972

Magalia Escapee Arraigned On Three Counts in Oroville

OROVILLE (E-R) — Edward Louis Peluso, 26-year-old escapee from the Magalia Conservation Camp, was arraigned in District Court here on three felony charges yesterday, escape robbery and burglary. Judge William Savage set a preliminary hearing for May 30.

Peluso was arrested by deputies at gunpoint on Concow Road near Highway 70 Monday, in the same area where he reportedly broke into a residence and then robbed Wade Stanfield of Oroville of two rifles and a hunting knife.

The escape charge involves his walking away from the camp Monday. He was serving a prison term on a check charge.

According to sheriff's reports, Stanfield was returning his two children, Joseph, 10, and Amelia, 7, to the home of his estranged wife Evalyn on Jordan Hill Road after having taken them on an outing Sunday.

A neighbor told him Mrs. Stanfield was having car trouble in Chico and would be delayed and Stanfield decided to take the children to his home for the night. The daughter then

told him she touched someone when she went into her mother's darkened bedroom.

Stanfield reportedly found Peluso sitting in a chair and holding a rifle. Peluso left about a half-hour later, taking Stanfield's rifles and a hunting knife.

Early Tuesday Stanfield called the Sheriff's Department to report that the suspect was seen near the burned-out store on Concow Road. Investigators Bill Elliott and Tom Butler found Peluso near Highway 70 and placed him under arrest.

The judge set the suspect's bail at \$10,000.

6-21-1972

Butte Bandit Chase Slated On Weekend

The annual Butte County Sheriff's Posse Bandit Chase and Overnight Trail-Ride, postponed two weeks ago because of rainy weather, has been rescheduled for this weekend.

The ride and campout will be held at Camelot, a portion of the Spring Valley Ranch at the north end of Lake Concow.

Those wishing to participate may pick up entry blanks from any posse member or at Hoyt's Cafe, 17th Street and Park Avenue; Geno's, 146 Broadway; Paradise Texaco, Seventh and Main Streets; Farm and Industrial Supply, 491 Country Drive; and Ken's Tire Service, Gridley.

Those wishing to drive to the site should travel north on Highway 70 to the large white geodesic dome, turn left onto Concow Road and follow the signs to the north end of the lake.

The bandit chase, fishing, a trail ride and a barn dance are in store for participants.

The Chico Enterprise Record
8-19-1972

CURIOUS ABOUT "CAMELOT" SPRING VALLEY RANCH?

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Man Feels Winter Will Not Be Hard, Others Do

By William M. Talbitzer
Bee Staff Writer

OROVILLE — Professional weather forecasters have predicted the coming winter will be a hard one in Superior California, but Harlan Smith thinks otherwise.

Smith, a Maidu Indian, lives on a ranch near Milsap Bar, Butte County, where he was born almost 60 years ago. The ranch, which has been in the Smith family for more than 120 years, is a verdant 80 acres snuggled in a valley halfway down the towering mountain that borders the Middle Fork of the Feather River.

Semiretired, Smith raises a few sheep, cares for the fruit trees that were planted long before the turn of the century by his father, the late Hood Smith, and spends much of his time on the front porch of his 50-year-old cabin.

He says the signs he has observed during a lifetime on the ranch and in the surrounding forest do not indicate that the winter will be unusually severe.

"I notice that there are very few pine nuts and acorns this year, which means to me that the winter will not be bad," he explains. "Mother Nature has a way of providing a supply of food for the animals to last them through the winter and, in years past during severe winters, the supply has been a lot greater than this year."

Where other prognosticators who depend on the signs of the wilderness for their predictions point to the activities of squirrels, chipmunks and other small animals in storing up food for the winter months, Smith discounts such indications.

"The gray squirrel (and

there are many of them on the ranch) is not one to put things by for the winter, so you can't figure on him to give you an idea," he says. "The chipmunk and the ground squirrel sleep through the winter so they aren't much help either."

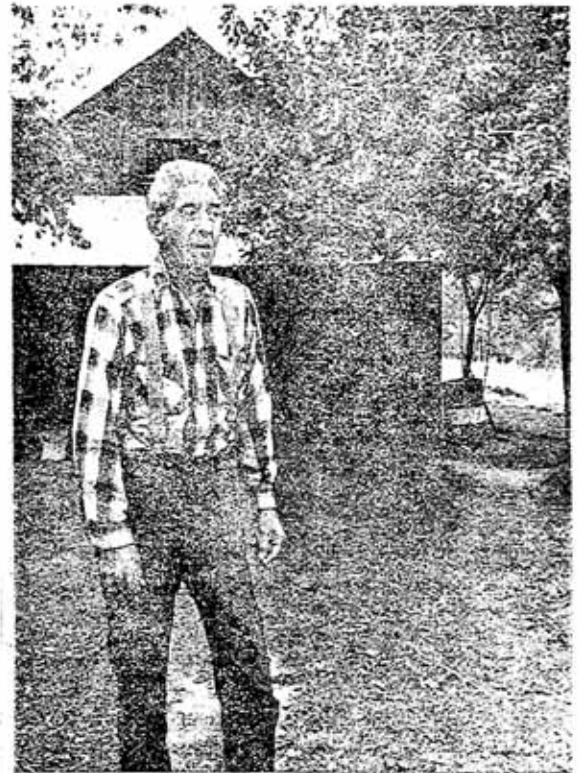
Nor does Smith believe that the migrating habits of larger animals such as deer have anything to do with the severity of coming weather. "Animals are smart enough to move when it's time to move but they won't start drifting until they have to. They don't move weeks in advance because they are smart enough to stay where they have plenty to eat."

Smith believes that weather conditions move in cycles over periods of years. "I think we are in one of those cycles of dry years such as we have been having. I can remember such a period in the early twenties when the Middle Fork almost dried up and I can remember a period when rain and snow for several winters in a row set new records.

"My father always said the same thing. He used to tell us stories of such winters and summers and I, in my lifetime, have seen the same things. I guess there are some people who have more instinct about the weather than others, but I haven't seen any of them."

Hanging on the wall of Smith's cabin is a pair of snowshoes he has used in the past to get away from the cabin during periods of heavy snow. "I haven't even worked on them this fall," he said, "because I don't think I'm going to need them this winter."

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Weather observer Harlan Smith near his cabin.
Bee Photo