

## SURVIVORS OF THE VICTIMS TALK

# The Real Bonnie and Clyde Left A Trail of Lingering Sorrow

[The much-discussed movie "Bonnie and Clyde," which stars Hollywood actors Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, focuses on a young, seemingly misunderstood couple of bank robbers in the 1930's. Newsmen Mike Royko takes a look at the other side of the picture—the one that didn't make the neighborhood theaters. He interviewed the children of the small-town policemen who were shot down by the real Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. The following article is a record of those interviews.]

By Mike Royko

(Des Moines Tribune—Chicago Daily News—Sun-Times Service)

Jim Campbell, a pipefitter, isn't going to see that movie about Bonnie and Clyde. He knows enough about them already.

He was 20 when the famous couple came to his part of Oklahoma. The date was Apr. 6, 1934, and Campbell has never forgotten it.

"My father was the constable in Commerce, a small town [in northeast Oklahoma]. The only reason he had the job was because the people liked him. He sure wasn't a professional lawman. He had been a contractor until the depression, then he lost everything. He was nearly 60 then.

"I was very close to my father. My mother died when I was only 3, so my father leaned toward me after that.

"After my mother was gone, he devoted his life to his family, keeping the five kids together.

"That's why he took that police job. It only paid about \$15 a week, but it kept us eating.

"When it happened, I was 20. I was going to a junior college in the next town. Most of the time I hitchhiked. It was my ambition to be a journalist. You know, you're the first one I ever talked to.

"A farmer came to town that day and told my father some



FAYE  
DUNAWAY

WARREN  
BEATTY

In Roles as Film  
"Bonnie and Clyde"

people he passed were in trouble. Their car had gone off the road. My father and another policeman—they were the whole force—drove out there.

"When they stepped from the car, my father was killed instantly. The other man was wounded. I'm sure my father didn't know who killed him. He was just going out to help someone.

"It's ironic. I don't think my father would have shot anyone if he had to. As I said, he got the job because he was well-



The real Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow

liked and needed it. He really wasn't a policeman.

"I never went back to my classes. I guess I became . . . oh . . . bitter, you might say. I didn't see much point in anything. I just brooded. He had given so much of his life to us, to keeping us a family after my mother was gone.

"I worked in a gas station and did other things like that. Now I'm a pipefitter [at an atomic energy plant near Kenne-

Barrow—

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# 'They Shot My Father To Pieces'

## Barrow--

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wick, Wash.), a job I enjoy. I probably wouldn't have made a journalist anyway.

"As far as that movie goes, I guess Bonnie and Clyde seem glamorous. The kids are fascinated by them. You can't blame the kids for that, but they shouldn't think they were glamorous."

"They may have had reasons for doing what they did. But they weren't glamorous. Certainly not glamorous."

## 'Tough Without A Father'

Russell Moore, a Korean War veteran and now a lawyer in Albuquerque, N.M., isn't going to the movie. He was less than a year old on Aug. 5, 1932, but he knows about Bonnie and Clyde.

"You're the first person to ever ask me about this. I've wondered if someday somebody wouldn't think to write about this side of it.

"We lived in Atoka, Okla. My father was only 31. My sisters were 7 and 3.

"My father's family had been wealthy. My grandfather had ranches, farms. But he was a speculator and the Depression wiped them all out.

"My father had us to feed, so he became a deputy sheriff and was glad to get the job. I'm told he was easy-going and people liked him, and that's why they picked him.

"It happened this way: My father and the sheriff, Charlie Maxwell, drove up to a dance in Stringtown to look in on things. Their car got stuck in a rut and they walked over to a parked car to ask for a push. The Barrow gang was in the car.

"They gunned my father down with shotguns. They thought he was after them. They wounded the sheriff. He was crippled for life.

"My mother was left with three children to support. We moved in with her parents and she got a job. There was no insurance, except my father had a burial policy. We couldn't have paid for that.

"My mother was still young and pretty when it happened, but she never married again. She hasn't had a date. Oh, we used to tell her that maybe she . . . well, let's not talk about that now.

"The roughest thing for me was growing up without a father. My grandfather was helpful and understanding. But it isn't the same. And in a small town there is a lot of unsolicited sympathy. Well meant, but for a small boy . . . well . . .

"We had it tough financially. I guess Oklahoma was as poor as anywhere in the Depression. But the toughest thing was not having a father.

"The only material possessions I had of his were a hat, his gun belt, and a gold railroad watch. And a picture. He was a very tall man. They tell me I look a lot like him."

## They Weren't 'Nice People'

Vernon Humphrey is 62 now. He has an auto agency in Alma, Ark. But he remembers June 23, 1933, when Bonnie and Clyde showed up near that tiny town.

"I was 28. The family was just trying to stay alive. We had a farm but you couldn't live off it in those days. I pumped gas at the service station. My father had the city marshal job. He was elected 30 days earlier. It paid \$15 a week. We both worked the farm, too.

"We got a call from another town. Somebody had robbed a store and they wanted my father to block off the road."

"The Barrow gang hit a car in front of them just as my father got there. He and the deputy got out. They got my father with shotguns. He was hit in 10 places. He lived for three days and I was with him in the hospital.

"We sold the farm then. I couldn't work it alone. It was hard on my mother. She's in a nursing home now. It was hard on all of us.

"I haven't seen the movie. I couldn't look at it. I don't know if there's anything about my father in it. If there is, I guess it would be what they call a bit part. I hear they made Bonnie and Clyde out to be almost nice people. They weren't nice people."

## 'It Was A Long Haul'

Claude Harryman farms near Saginaw (pop. 189) in southwest Missouri. His father used to farm there, until Apr. 13, 1933.

"You know how it was. You couldn't live off the land. My father was a county constable.

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No regular salary, just fees for what he did. I was 20, the oldest of five children. I worked construction and helped on the farm.

"The police from Joplin came into our county. They thought they knew where the gang was. To make it legal, they got a search warrant. But they needed someone from our county to serve it. My father.

"He was on the porch with the paper in his hand when they shot him to pieces. They killed a Joplin policeman.

"We sold the farm. I worked where I could to support the family. For a while I worked in a packing house butchering animals for \$1.50 a day. My mother sewed for the WPA.

"It was a long haul. It wasn't until my brothers and sisters grew up that I could make plans, get married, settle down on my own place.

"See the movie? No. There's nothing in it I'd care to see. I've heard about it."

Many critics say the movie is "realistic." Clyde is handsome; Bonnie is a beauty. They are fun-loving, dashing and very human. You can sympathize with them. The movie is touching, heart-breaking, brilliant. That's what the critics say. And realistic.

Of course, there's not much in it about the nameless, faceless dead men. Or the orphans and widows and the never-healing scar of a man who never knew his tall father.

If you put that in, how could you make a movie "realistic?"

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