

Fred Avery Hulsey, Sr. (1901-1932)

The story of a triple murder, an attempted coverup, and a father and son dying in the Georgia electric chair within minutes of one another sounds like a “made for TV” movie plot. But these events happened in Polk County, GA during a two and a half year time span in the early 1930’s.

Fred Avery Hulsey, Sr. and his father, William Avery “Bill” Hulsey, Sr. died in the Georgia electric chair after having been convicted for the murder of Clifford Jones. Although two other men, Lige Harper and Ernest McCullough, also lost their lives at the murderous hands of the Hulsey pair, a conviction and death sentence for one murder deemed it unnecessary in the eyes of Polk County justice officials at the time to spend time and effort on two more trials.

The murders occurred on the Hulsey farm in Van Wert following a card game which the Hulsey men lost. Intoxicated and enraged at losing, one of the Hulsey’s produced a gun and methodically shot the three victims at close range. Staying mum for months about which one pulled the trigger, Fred Hulsey confessed just before his death that he was solely responsible for the killings and his father’s role was simply to help him dispose of the bodies in a well. Mystery has always shrouded that confession, however, with some believing he was vainly trying to spare his father’s life and that his manipulating father instead was the actual shooter.

The son Fred was the first to die. After a suicide attempt just before being led into the death chamber and some delay to contact the governor to question what to do, the governor’s chilling instructions were to proceed “unless his injuries are fatal”. Lead into the chamber weakened and pale he spoke poignant words asking that “the 60 cents in his pocket be given to his daughter” three-year-old Hope. This request demonstrates the human capacity for both tender goodness and unconscionable evil. A man, brazen and evil enough to commit cold blooded murder by shooting three men in the back of the head was thinking in the end of his, soon to be, fatherless child and leaving her the only thing of value he had left, a meager 60 cents.

After Fred’s lifeless body was removed from the electric chair, his father William, was brought into the death chamber and seated to face justice either as a murderer or an accomplice to murder, no one knew for sure. Only this one time in Georgia history has a father and son died in the electric chair on the same day.

The bodies were claimed by Mrs. William Hulsey, wife and mother to the deceased pair. After funerals, Fred was laid to rest in Rose Hill Cemetery. His father, William, lies today in an unmarked grave in the Aragon City Cemetery.

If you would like to know more about this story, check out Fred's grandson, Brad Hulseley's book. "60 cents, Secrets and Tales in a Small Town". Brad, his brother and his four first cousins were kept completely in the dark about their family history until they were adults. Brad learned of the story in an interesting way. His book is a fascinating read.

Son: Fred Avery Hulseley, Sr. (July 16, 1901 – November 4, 1932)

Father: William Avery "Bill" Hulseley, Sr. (December 8, 1877 – November 4, 1932)

Date of murders: June 19, 1930

Victims: Clifford Jones, Lige Harper, Ernest McCullough

Date of conviction: July 16, 1930

Executed on: November 4, 1932

Source: "60 Cents, Secrets and Tales in a Small Town", Brad Hulseley, 2016.

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Rose Hill Cemetery Tour Committee