LaPorte/Morrie script

Hello; thank you for dropping by. I’m Daniel Hollis Kathan, mostly known around town as “DH” or “Dad” Kathan. Born in Maine in 1850, but my mother brought me to the Sacramento area after my father died. My first wife, Mary, and I did a bit of farming in that area as well as in Washington state. We came to your lovely city about 1903, and after a few years of ranching we moved into town and took up the auto livery business.

But enough about me. You’ll be wanting to hear about the events of March 14, 1914. Some of it I witnessed myself, but other details I pieced together from the newspaper accounts, same as everyone else.

It was late in the evening, somewhere around ten PM. I heard gunshots coming from the rail yard near my house. As a Civil War vet, I was familiar with that sound, and immediately ran to see if I could be of assistance. Charles Brooks, the night watchman at the Jameson packing plant, was headed that way too. We arrived in time to hear George LaPorte, the Santa Fe engine watchman, begging his assailant not to shoot him again. I guess the man ran off when he saw us coming.

It seem LaPorte had heard suspicious noises coming from a half-filled boxcar of oranges back of the Sunset packing house. When he went to investigate, the man hiding in the car fired three shots. LaPorte was hit in the heart and in the groin.

Brooks and I made LaPorte as comfortable as we could, then I fetched the police. Dr. Davis came to tend to LaPorte, and had him sent to the county hospital in Arlington, but they couldn’t save him and he died about midnight.

Meantime, Marshall Ramsey had showed up with officers Ewing, Sherman, and Colton. I think deputy Baird was there too, or maybe he came later. I’m a little unclear on some of the details with it all happening so fast, and the newspapers were a bit confused also. Anyway, all of us searched the area but found no sign of the intruder. I loaned my automobile to the police, and they set out towards Prado to spread the word about the fugitive; Ramsey had already notified some of the neighboring areas.

Thinking the man might have fled along the tracks, Ramsey sent Ewing and Sherman back towards Corona on foot while the rest of them circled around the other way. His hunch paid off. About 12:40, Ewing and Sherman had reached a point about a mile west of town when they heard footsteps. They stepped to one side until the stranger came close, then identified themselves as police officers and instructed him to put his hands up. The suspect immediately fired three shots from his automatic, one striking officer Ewing in the leg and another passing through officer Sherman’s sleeve. The officers returned fire, eight shots hitting the suspect. The suspect being dead, Sherman sought Marshal Ramsey who, with deputy Fred Baird, helped to search the area.

Besides the 32 caliber Savage automatic that he’d been shooting, the suspect was carrying a new 32 caliber Colts police special, a large supply of cartridges in a belt, twenty-three sticks of dynamite, a box of percussion caps, and 100 feet of fuse, as well as a flashlight, a dagger, a saw and other tools. Examination of the automatic showed that a bullet had failed to eject, which was no doubt a lucky break for the officers, as was the fact that none of their shots set off the explosives.

The dead man was later identified as Antonio Musouri, alias L Morrie, recently arrived from San Francisco, who had been temporarily employed by the Temescal Water Company to clean a tank, although it appeared he had been in another line of employment altogether. He was positively identified by Patrolman Eck of Arlington as one of the men who had dynamited the safe at Schneider Jewelry Store two nights before, and who had engaged in a gun battle with the patrolman. It was believed that he was also wanted for similar activities elsewhere. He and an accomplice had tried to purchase dynamite at the Corona Hardware Store, but were refused because they were strangers to the proprietor and had no identification. The explosives Musouri was carrying were purchased in Los Angeles according to a receipt found with his effects. Much of the safecracker’s belongings joined similar items in a display at police headquarters at the city hall.

Musouri’s accomplice or accomplices were not apprehended. A few months after this incident, officer Sherman resigned his position and moved to Elsinore to become a carpenter. He cited his family’s health as the reason for leaving, and it’s believed Mrs. Sherman was in fear for her husband’s life.

Mr. LaPorte was a popular man. His funeral at the M E (Methodist Episcopal) church was heavily attended by church members, members of Masons, Eastern Star, and Rebekah Lodges, Local Santa Fe employees, Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, and many individual friends and neighbors. His widow moved to Alamosa, Colorado, although she maintained ties with many friends in Corona.

Following the coroner’s inquest, Musouri or Morrie was buried at the county’s expense, in a pauper’s field adjoining Sunnyslope Cemetery.

Well, folks, that about sums it up. Thanks for listening.