

SUBJECT "Ma" Barker (General)

FILE NUMBER 102-35637

SECTION NUMBER 1

SERIALS 1

TOTAL PAGES 5

PAGES RELEASED 5

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JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation
U. S. Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.

Edg
Mr. Nathan

RGG:CJ

May 1, 1935.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CLEGG.

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Attached hereto is a copy of a pre-release page of the Every Week Magazine, containing an item entitled "Bad News for Uncle Sam's Female Public Enemies", dealing with the conviction of well-known gang women, such as, Wynona Burdette, Dolores Delaney and "Ma" Barker, which has been indexed in the Bureau Library.

An additional copy of this page is being retained in the Bureau Library.

Respectfully,

E. Scheidt
E. Scheidt.

Encl. #667333

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BAD NEWS for



By Katharine A. Kellock

WHEN American women were demanding equal rights under the

husband and lovers were put out of circulation. Rose of Cimarron, who slid down a rope to carry ammunition to her besieged lover, Bitter Newcomb, and Jessie Finley, who smug-

It was some time before she decided to send a message to end the mischief of the men. As the men approach

UNCLE SAM'S FEMALE PUBLIC ENEMIES

Women criminals are learning that they no longer can expect privileged status on account of their sex. The old chivalrous idea of pulling punches is out, for the law has hardened up



a United States mar-
couple of deputies to
innocent creatures.
d a farmhouse where
Little Breeches caught

Now, women who choose to break the laws have to give up their old privileged status and swallow the same punishments as men when they undertake lives of crime.

An example of the new attitude toward women criminals was recorded in a federal courtroom at Miami, Fla., not long ago, when two girl friends of fugitive gangster Alvin Karpis drew sentences of five years in prison.

The girls were Winona Burdette and Delores Delaney. They were with Karpis and his pal, Harry Campbell, when those two gunmen shot their way out of a police ambush in Atlantic City during the winter. Left behind by the two men, the girls fell into the hands of the law; and when they pleaded guilty to five indictments charging them with harboring and concealing Karpis the court had no compunctions about handing out stiff prison terms.

Women have long taken advantage of the male's popular delusion that no woman is ever a deliberate criminal, that women enter crime only through the leading of some male reprobate.

This chivalrous idea never had much basis; the females of the species go in for highway robbery and murder for the very same reasons that their male companions do—for easy living and a liking for dangerous excitement. Where love plays any part in their criminal careers it is a love based on admiration for a pretty low set of qualities—usually bravery at the business-end of a gun.

LAW officers have long prayed to be delivered from having to catch women criminals. Aside from any sentimentality, they knew that a woman when captured usually bites, gouges, kicks, and chews ears in sure knowledge that her captor dares not venture as much as a slap in return; a man was ruined for life if any woman, no matter how much of a hellion, could sob, "He hit me."

Further, officers have had to stand this mayhem in the bitter knowledge that their captives on the whole would go free again after the lightest of punishments for crimes that send men to prison for life.

While women of today have greater opportunities for entering criminal careers, working in partnership with the Dillingers, Kellys, Barrows and Barkers, the female gangster is far from new in this country.

None of the old western bad men ever lacked women aides, if they wanted them; some even had female rivals.

Joaquin Murietta, the California bandit-chief, had several women in his train of pilaging followers. Jessie Freeman and Pearl Black, of Oklahoma, were quite as active as their men in horse and cattle stealing—although they got off with minor punishments when their

were exonerated of evil in by public opinion. Even Mrs. Kate Sobel, the wife of the Pittsburgh jailer, who freed the Biddle brothers and eloped with them, got her share of public tolerance.



Winona Burdette admitted harboring Gangster Alvin Karpis—and got five years in prison. . . . At the right, the body of "Ma" Barker in a Florida morgue. She was shot to death—a machine gun in her hands—after a desperate career of crime.

MANY people tried to put a romantic halo on the careers of Cattle Annie and Little Breeches of Oklahoma, but the sad truth is that these enterprising young ladies were interested only in gaudy adventure.

They had met and admired some of the strutting Doolin gang, heirs to the Dalton and James-Younger reputations, and after hard practice in riding and shooting, offered themselves to Bob Doolin as assistants in bank and train raids.

Doolin, with an old-fashioned idea that woman's place is in the home and a suspicion that weaker vessels might be a handicap to a quick getaway, rejected them. He did, however, permit them to act as spies on sheriffs who were following the gang and as stealers of fast horses.

off on a horse. When the faster horse overtook him he pulled her over his shoulder.

The Law would have had no compunctions about hanging a thief without compunctions. He said afterward, "I was the best he could get through her mount."

The fall knock was on the girl's hand, and she fell on top of her second officer. The officer had her before she had had a handful of sand.

As he rode back to join his partner, he was in the house, leaning over the aim a Winchester for her, the Stetson from seeing the opened to be creeping down. He pulled

dow, knocking the gun for only a couple of feet. He joined Little Breeches on spent in an eastern reform

A MUCH more successful Belle Starr, who became daughter of a southern ju

After the Civil War s Reed, fiery member of the trell guerilla band. The of a man sent the Reed ranch of Tom Starr, Che taught them his art. In and his wife sent to jail ment that Belle terminated jailer.

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EDITORS—This EveryWeek Magazine Page Releases Sat.-Sun., May 4

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One old accusation that no woman is ever a deliberate criminal failed to help establish Kelly's wife of the notorious "Machine-gun" Kelly. For her part in the Urschel kidnaping, she drew a life term.

A little later she married Starr's illiterate son and took up a homestead in the Indian country, where she assembled a changing band of henchmen who accompanied her on numerous horse-raids. She lived to be shot at 44 by a rejected lover.

The modern Belle Starr was "Ma" Barker, recently killed in Miami with a machine gun in her hand. Many years ago she left a law-abiding husband to throw in her lot with outlaw sons. As bank bandits and kidnapers the Barker crowd quite eclipsed the better-known Doolins and Daltons, and "Ma" Barker took an active part in planning the various coups. She is given credit for the long freedom enjoyed by her sons and their friends.

An outstanding criminal with remarkable near-immunity to punishment is "Shoobox Annie" French. She first came to the notice of the law some 25 years ago when she was known to be forging checks, which she passed through her young son Willie.

In time Willie graduated to burglary, motor-stealing, and White Slave law violation. He has been arrested, sentenced, and paroled after brief confinements, a dizzying number of times. On each arrest, with a loyalty worthy of a better cause, he has taken all blame.

About 1920 a man, Ole Larson, visited the French home and disappeared forever. A few days after he was seen entering the house Mrs. French presented a \$750 draft, signed with his name, for payment. The signature was shown to be forged. She said he had given the draft to her and had left for parts unknown. Since neither he nor his body was found the case was allowed to ride.

NOT long afterward a former sweetheart of Willie's came to visit the family and was seen no more. The French family said they did not know where she was, though Mrs. French was wearing her clothing, jewelry and furs. Again the law was puzzled by its failure to find a corpse.

In 1926, after one of his brief jail terms,

Willie returned home to find that his mother had acquired an aged husband on whom she had taken out a large amount of life insurance. Shortly afterward the old man became suspicious of his new family and left.

In 1928 a young naval officer, who was planning to sell his car to the son, made an appointment with him from which he never returned. Shoobox Annie and her offspring had his car, pocketbook and watch. This time, in absence of a body, the Frenches were tried for theft. The son drew life imprisonment as an habitual criminal but his dear old mother drew but five to eight years. She will be taking up her career again any day now.

The modern equivalent of horse-stealing is automobile stealing. Most of the many thousands of cars that are taken annually are lost through the carelessness of their owners, who will not take the trouble to remove the keys from the switches and lock the doors.

Since cars are to be had for the taking, most gunmen and gangsters use stolen cars for their get-aways, often sending their female helpers to do the actual purloining.

A NUMBER of large gangs pick up cars for passing on to "fences" who change the numbers and sell them in other parts of the country. Of recent years the Department of Justice has rounded up a number of such corporations with active women members. And the women are having to take their punishment with the men.

In spite of the years of freedom enjoyed by Shoobox Annie it is clear that the law's attitude on women criminals is hardening up.

Had "Ma" Barker lived to be tried with her sons it is probable that not even the wiliest lawyer would have been able to put up an effective plea about "a loyal old mother's touching faithfulness" to keep her from punishment.

After all, Kathryn Kelly and her mother are receiving equal punishment with their husbands for their parts in the Urschel kidnaping. Bonnie Parker, that tough little bandit who loved to pose with guns and cigars and who boasted that she and Clyde Barrow had killed at least six men, was shot down in the same rain of bullets with Barrow. Mrs. Irene Shroeder, who carried her little boy with her as a shield when helping with hold-ups, went to the electric chair with her lover for their murder of a Pennsylvania policeman.

Intelligent women like the change; they have never found any compliment in the assumption that they were law-abiding merely because their husbands or sons happened to be good citizens.

of the officers on a she tried to shoot The shots went wild killed a male horse- but; as the deputy couldn't shoot a lady." do was send a bullet

d the gun from the ned her to the ground d gun. In a second pinioned, though not ly blinded him with

with the prisoner to ttle Annie, besieged from a window to him. Unfortunately she wore kept her er deputy who hap- up to that very win- her through the win-



side. She had time ce gouges before she a rest cure that was school.

eful "badman" was a life as the sheltered edge.

e eloped with James e marauding Quan- cold-blooded murder into hiding on the kee horse-thief, who me Reed was killed Dallas, a confine- by eloping with the

Magazine—Printed in U. S. A.)

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