

Howard Morgan Explains Accusation of Automobile Tire Theft

BY MERVIN SHOEMAKER, Political Writer, The Oregonian

For the past four or five years Democratic State Chairman Howard Morgan, and the party itself, have been haunted by a ghost in the form of a story that the state chairman stole a tire from a Maupin service station back in 1936.

Wednesday Morgan himself jerked the ghost into the light and beat it over the head with an affidavit from the man who says he gave Morgan the tire in question as part of back wages he owed him.

The affidavit is signed by Jack R. Eatch, Portland general contractor, who employed Morgan on a highway surfacing job in eastern Wasco county a few months before Morgan was arrested by Portland police in 1937 as a fugitive wanted for questioning in connection with the Maupin tire theft.

Enemies Employ Story

Morgan, a Monmouth rancher, Reed college graduate and son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Corbett, prominent Portlanders, was quickly cleared of any connection with theft of the tire from the service station, according to Eatch's affidavit.

That was the origin of the ghost, which has been nurtured in recent years by Morgans' enemies in the Democratic party and by some Republican politicians.

Both Democrats and Republicans have long carried billfold-size replicas of the record kept by Portland police in 1937; when they arrested the Reed college student as a "fugitive" wanted for questioning in connection with the Wasco county tire theft.

Morgan gave his version of the incident many times privately in the past five years, but never publicly until Wednesday.

The effect of explanations, Eatch said, was to send Morgan's enemies to the contractor "repeatedly," asking for statements that would be "damaging to Morgan."

Pressure Tactics Used

Morgan said Wednesday the ghost's existence first came to his attention during the 1949 session of the Oregon legislature, the one session in which the state chairman served.

"It was mentioned then," he said, "in an effort to change my vote on a couple of gambling bills."

But that was only the beginning, said the rancher-politician. He decided to make the incident public, he said, after a number of replicas of this record card in Portland police files recently were circulated by mail.

"Since I first served in the Oregon legislature nearly five years ago," said Morgan, "a bipartisan machine composed of the shabby element in both political parties has tried to control my behavior in public affairs through political blackmail."

Legal Action Threatened

"For five years I have been telling them quietly to go to hell. Instead of voting with them in the legislature I killed a good many of their bills. Instead of supporting their candidates in 1950, I campaigned for decent men."

"Instead of letting them control my party in 1952, I took the office of state chairman

unnoticed with the other materials to Portland."

Eatch said he had no idea how the tire got into the camp.

When Morgan next February sought back wages owed him, Eatch offered him the tire as part payment, saying he could trade it at some service station for one that would fit Morgan's car, according to the affidavit.

Report Bares Theft

A routine report by the service station accepting the tire revealed it to have been stolen from a Maupin service station, and Morgan was taken into custody.

"Upon learning what had happened," said Eatch, "I immediately went to The Dalles, explained that I had given the tire to Mr. Morgan, and arranged for reimbursement to the service station proprietor."

"Of course, the police immediately released Mr. Morgan. No formal charge was ever brought against him, nor was there any kind of court procedure concerning this matter."



HOWARD MORGAN Discusses tire case

Risk Concern Denies Claim

The Colonial Insurance company of California Wednesday filed suit in federal court asking that it be relieved from defending a death damage suit for \$123,400 and a personal injury suit for \$25,000.

The suit is the result of an accident on the Pasco-Spokane highway, July 29, 1953, in which J. Yandt, an employee of the Washington state highway department, was killed and Kenneth Beal was injured.

The complaint sets forth that prior to the date of the accident it had issued a public liability insurance policy to David R. and Charles Gilkey, Davis Satre, Jesse Lewis and Claude Verrall, doing business as the Chapman Manufacturing company, and Frank Ellis, on a truck and trailer owned by them.

The truck and trailer collided with a Washington highway department dump truck on the date mentioned, and Yandt was killed and Beal injured.

Beal sued for \$25,000 as the result of his injuries and the estate of Yandt sued for \$123,400 damages because of Yandt's death.

The insurance company states the Gilkeys, et al, claim protection under the policy and denies that it is liable to furnish such protection.

The court is asked by plaintiff to construe the policy (a) so as to find plaintiff not obligated to defend the two damage actions; (b) to find that the policy was not in force and effect at the time of the accident; and (c) that the policy was void at the time of the accident.

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over their bitter opposition, helped nominate the best slate of candidates either party has run in some years, and helped defeat some of the worst members of the bipartisan gang, regardless of party."

Morgan said he would take legal action if "these tactics" are continued.

"Although I could long ago have begun criminal and civil actions against the men who are involved in this matter," he said, "I have never felt such actions are really decisive in separating truths from lies."

"So far, I have never appeared in a courtroom as witness, plaintiff or defendant, and would like to continue thus. However, if my friends and family are subjected to these tactics any longer, I shall proceed against those responsible with the full force of moral, civil and criminal law."

Eatch said the passenger car tire in question "appeared in the construction camp sometime during the job (in the summer of 1936) and was transported

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