



**Your On the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Mayhem in Lea County

Religion

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Mayhem in Lea County

Riots, and killings, and slayings, and such.
 They've often something in common: a religious touch.
 ---- anon

February 27, 2014

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Last year, I visited my childhood home in New Mexico. The town of Lovington is the county seat of Lea County. This part of America is where I grew up. Lea County is located in the southeastern part of the state, as shown with the gray area in Figure 1.

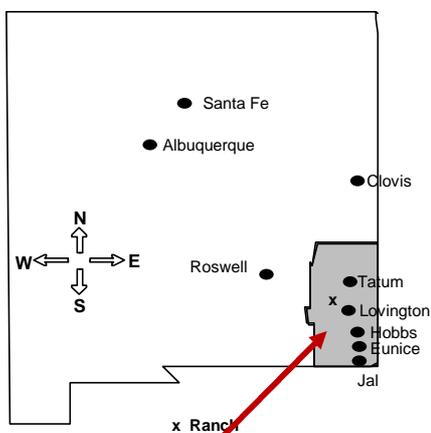


Figure 1. Lea County.

You may not have heard about the recent turmoil taking place in Lea County. This part of America does not get a lot of attention in comparison to say, Egypt. But it should. Just last year:¹

A Presbyterian checkpoint

A Baptist traveled to Hobbs from Eunice to purchase some goods from the local Walmart. He was stopped at a Presbyterian checkpoint. It turned-out that his ID card showing his last name identified him as a Baptist. So, the Presbyterian checkpoint guards shot him.

This killing was counter-productive to the Presbyterian cause. The Presbyterians own Walmart, and the murder cut down on their business. But sometimes religious zeal and sinful surnames must trump making a living.

Effects of Contentions

Before you know it, those Lea County zealots will be mired in poverty but still angry about the situation for which they are ultimately responsible. No clean drinking water? No jobs? No future? They'll just blame it on the Baptists...the Church of Christ people; anyone but themselves. Look at that burned out courthouse in Lovington (explained shortly). They continue

¹ All the events cited here took place, but not in Lea County. I did not make-up any of these accounts. I substituted the names of the religions. My literary license does not make the episodes any less surreal.

to riot, which does little more than tear down their own neighborhood. Not anyone else's community. It's the one they live in! In Lea County, it is called shooting yourself in the foot.

Same Religion, Different Legacies

Perhaps shooting both feet. How about this one: The Catholic, Baptist, Church of Christ, Assembly of God, and other denominations practice from the same holy book, the Bible. But the Baptists have divided themselves into different denominations. It turns out that the Southern Baptists have taken up the cause that several of the elders in the church are the descendents of John the Baptist and his wife. Therefore, the Southern Baptist creed is the correct religion to practice. The non-Southern Baptists (Yankee Baptists, as the Southern Baptists call them) are up in arms about this claim. They say John was married twice, had some more kids. Therefore, a different set of elders in the church are the rightful descendents of John the Baptist. All of which translates into two opposing beliefs about which Baptist church is the correct church.

The two factions are now at each others' throats; not metaphorically, literally. They often become so vexed about this ancestor situation that they cut the throats of the "infidels" who are on the other side of the argument. A few incidents have resulted in the Southern Baptists and the non-Southern Baptists setting each other on fire, with the designated infidel held in check by his standing inside a stack of burning tires.

Holy smoke (ha). These people practice the same religion! They worship the same God, the same prophets, and share the same holy book. Yet the Southern Baptists and the non-Southern Baptists routinely slaughter each other, making Lea County a mess (what with burnt bodies, and associated decapitated heads appearing on the Hobbs-Lovington highway).

Small wonder Lea County is a destitute part of the world. All these church people do is build their own churches then look for opportunities to burn down churches of other faiths.

Studying for the Far Future While Ignoring the Near Future

While in Lea County, I took a trip to Jal (see Figure 1). I paid a call on the local elementary school run by the Catholic Church. There, the children were spending over half their time reading and studying the Bible.

Don't get me wrong (and behead my head for an ornament on the Hobbs-Lovington highway). I respect the Bible. It's a fine book. But I wondered if these children were being given the tools to make their way in a competitive world. Sure, they could stay in Lea County and get by. But across the county line in Eddy County, the children are being taught subjects beyond "Jesus Saves." So, there is reason for hope. These Eddy County kids (except for girls) were even learning math!

There is the other side of the coin. Some of Jal girls have insisted on getting a real education and are learning the multiplication tables. While walking home from school, some of the girls were hunted down by Catholics and shot for their trying to learn something in a book other than religion. One of these brave girls, who was almost killed, went against her religion and appeared on television to expose these acts. She has been put on a death list composed by the Vatican.

Stoning the Slut

Just before I arrived in Lea County, *The Lovington Leader* (a local paper) carried a story about a married woman who was stoned to death by her Jewish congregation for having an affair with one of the locals. The man was a Jew, which should have mitigated the harsh sentence, but he was also married. Thus, the male adulterer, by cheating on his wife, resulted in the doubling of the penalty on the woman adulteress. Far out!

The only problem that *The Lovington Leader* surfaced about this event was the dilemma faced by the Jewish elders: Female infidelity vs. male infidelity. So, there's a movement in Lea County to give men equal punishment to that of women for mucking around. But any laws passed in the county are decided by an all-man county seat authority, so the chances are remote that men will be stoned to death for their trespasses on forbidden territory. In this case, the man went free. The woman is buried in the local cemetery.

One Person Creates a County-wide Riot Which Spreads to Other States

Last week was a topper down here in Lea County. It was another example of the disproportionate ratio. This ratio is **m:n**, where m is very small and n is very big.

While I was visiting my kinfolk in Lovington, the Mormons rioted. While a decided minority in this part of the country, they do have an active missionary program. Their missionaries became upset because a person (who represents the value **m** in the disproportionate ratio) put a video on YouTube (followed by an unbiased report about this posting in *The Lovington Leader*) showing the revered Mormon leader, Joseph Smith, with horns sticking out of his head. The video also described Mr. Smith as a devil. Other derogatory comments were made about Mr. Smith that further inflamed the Mormon population.

The Lovington Leader reported on this event and an accompanying editorial disparaged it. Unfortunately for the *Leader*, its editor is (make that *was*) not a Mormon.

The sparse Mormon population in Lea County protested. But the Mormon citizens of Utah rioted. The streets of Salt Lake City are still filled with demonstrating Mormons who do not like their venerated leader disparaged. Days of demonstrations have gone on, with offices and factories closed. By the way, these hundreds of thousands of rioting people constitute the value **n** in the disproportionate ratio.

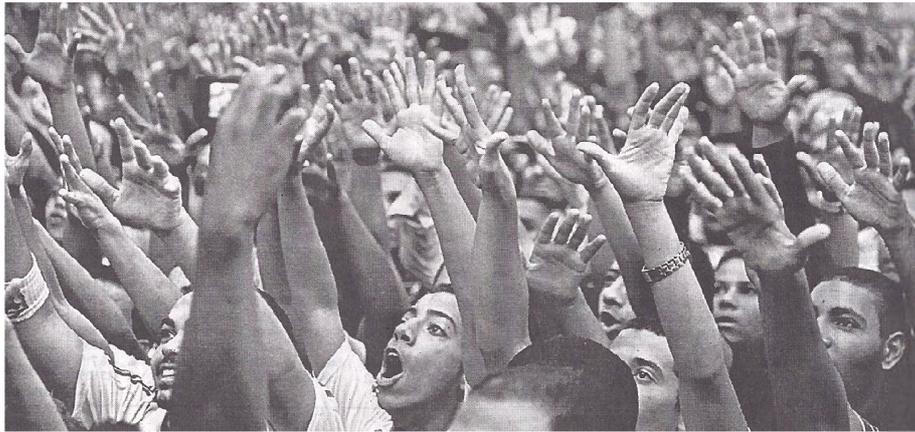
There is another m:n ratio, where **n** is the number of people killed around the world during these riots. Ironically, the people killed were members of the rioting factions. Zeal got the best of them, and they let off steam killing one another.

Anyway, the Lea County Mormons, encouraged by their Salt Lake City brothers, attacked the county courthouse in Lovington and set fire to *The Lovington Leader's* office---just because one misguided and ignorant person posted his hatred into the Internet and a local paper simply reported the incident. *The Lea County's government did not post the video mind you. A solitary citizen did.* Had he been a Mormon, only his family and he would have been killed. But his being a non-Mormon meant the Mormons would attack just about anything outside their faith.

Here's a news dispatch about this situation (at last, someone is paying attention to Lea County):²

Protesters angered over a film that ridiculed Mormons' Joseph Smith fired gunshots and burned down the Lea County courthouse in Lovington, New Mexico, killing one county clerk. In Tatum, another town in Lea County, (see Figure 1), protesters scaled the walls of the mayor's office and replaced a Tatum High School Coyote flag with a Mormon banner.

Here is a photo of disgruntled Utah Mormons:³



Word has it that this now dead county clerk, alongside three other murdered public servants, uttered---just before his heartless heart was rendered as too heartless by his heartfelt killers---“I’m confused. I thought our religions were supposed to bring us together.”

Other Thoughts

Before leaving my hometown and the visit with my relatives, I ventured out into the streets of Lovington. I asked my sister-in-law to drive me, but her religious denomination (Church of Christ) forbids her to be behind the wheel of a car (Unless there is a designated male back-seat driver...I declined, as Southern Baptists are forbidden to ride in *any* back seat of an irreligious Church of Christ worshipper).

So, I took my relative's vehicle out but stayed on the avenues controlled by the Southern Baptists (of which I am one). You wander off the beaten path of your religious district, and you put yourself in danger. Not much of a peaceful approach to life in your neighborhood.

One of the problems with being a Baptist in a Church of Christ area is that we pronounce some words in the English language slightly differently. Whereas I say *ambulance* with emphasis on the “am,” the Church of Christ people say *ambulance*, with emphasis on the “lance.” It's a subtle but sure give-away, and can spell trouble when going through a Church of Christ check-point:

² Extracted and edited---a lot---from Associated Press releases with thanks to Maggie Michael and Sarah El Deeb for the report.

³ Sourced from an Associated Press dispatch.

- A person approaches a Church of Christ check-point. The Church of Christ security guard challenges the person, “The password is ‘ambulance.’ Say the password!”
- Person, who is a Baptist, but is traveling secularly, “Eh... ‘ambulance,’ thus unsuccessfully attempting to mimic the Church of Christ diction.”
- The security guard is momentarily confused. ‘Ambulance’ is not a recognized set of phonemes, but they are not necessarily those of an enemy, “Say again and make it fast!”
- The Baptist, now spooked, resorts to his wired vocabulary, “ ‘ambulance.’ ”
- The Baptist does not need an ambulance. He needs a hearse... which, coincidentally, is pronounced the same way by Baptists and Church of Christ adherents.

Anyway, I headed for the local McDonald’s, but the Born Again Christians had burned it down as it was being run by Jews, who incidentally, own most of Lea County anyway. They are about the only religious group down here who practice “Jesus saves” but with this addendum: “So do we, including our wealth.” As well, it mattered little if some of the McDonald’s cooks were Born Again Christians. They remain dead, but not Dead Again---only once.

Stay tuned for more news about the turmoil the religious folks are creating in Lea County---once again leading the county down the road to, yes, religious purity; and yes, down the road to a place of perpetual unemployment to the folks who are experts on the Bible, but have absolutely no economic skills:

- Interviewer of an applicant for a Lea County job, “Can you read the Bible?”
- Job applicant, “You bet! I’ve been studying the Bible since grade school in Tatum.”
- “Can you read this user’s manual on Adobe’s graphics packages?”
- “What’s a ‘user’s manual?’ What’s ‘Adobe?’ That’s a house, ain’t it?’ What’s ‘graphics?’ ”

Meanwhile, Lea County sinks further into irrelevance as the various religious factions assemble in the town square to raise their hands in protest. Meanwhile, their empty desks await some hands that actually contribute to the well-being of the county’s citizens.

Your on the Street Reporter

PS

This narrative uses facts and circumstances from news releases of world events in other countries. I have placed it in my home town to add a shock value to events that are happening in other countries that are religiously related. The statements using local denominations are not factual. Quite the opposite. Viewing these scenarios should give insight into world problems that are religiously based. If these statements are taken out of context, could the same sort of turmoil be ignited in Lea County? No, and that is the theme of this satire.

For clarification: There are few Mormons and Jews living in Lea County. But the Mormons, Catholics, and Jews living there, as well as Baptists, Methodists and others practicing religions take these approaches if their faiths are insulted:

Mormons are routinely told their prophet was a misguided counterfeit. The Mormons' reaction? They do not murder their accusers. They go about building one of the most successful religions on earth.

Jews are routinely castigated for killing Christ and lending money at usurious rates. They take these vilifications in their stride, while creating one of the most successful religions on earth.

Other Christians cited in this satire, such as Catholics and Baptists, are informed Jesus Christ was a huckster. Their reaction? None. They are too busy forging a prosperous social order from their religions' positive credos.