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'I'VE KILLED PEOPLE BEFORE'

Hassell's first victims, as shown by the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Feb. 16, 1927. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHUCK LANEHART

The forgotten Farwell family massacre of 1926, Pt. 2

Caprock Chronicles
Chuck Lanehart
Guest columnist

Editor's Note: Jack Becker is the editor of Caprock Chronicles and is a Librarian Emeritus from Texas Tech University. He can be reached at jack.becker@ttu.edu. Today's article about Farwell's 1926 mass murder case is the second of a two-part series by frequent contributor Chuck Lanehart, Lubbock attorney and award-winning history writer. This article is based on the 2022 University of North Texas Press book, "Man with the Killer Smile: The Life and Crimes of a Serial Mass Murderer," by Mitchel P. Roth, who provided photos from the book for this article.

George Hassell death row mugshot, circa 1927.
PROVIDED BY TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION.

After the grisly 1926 discovery of nine Hassell family victims, Parmer County public sentiment ran hot, with calls for an immediate trial, conviction and execution of the accused murderer, George Jefferson Hassell. From his jail cell, Hassell called out. With head in hands, he wailed, "I've killed people before . . . I've got to tell someone about it!" He began talking.

Flashback to 1910: following the end of his first marriage to Minnie, Hassell joined the military a second time—this time under his own name—and again he deserted. He was caught and spent three years in prison. In about 1914, he met Marie Vogel in San Angelo, and the two began a common-law marriage, living under the surname "Baker." Marie had three children—all under age eight—and the family moved to Whittier, California, where Hassell/Baker found work in the oil fields. All seemed well, but in 1917, tempers flared over money and whether Hassell should fight in WWI.

He later told Parmer County authorities, "I got mad. I went over to her and grabbed her by the neck." He turned to the children. "I grabbed them off one at a time and choked them too. Then I went down in the cellar and started to dig. When I got through, I had dug a good-sized hole. I threw the woman in there and the kids and covered up the place."

See LANEHART, Page 2A

U.S. GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Arrington expresses frustration, concerns

Mateo Rosiles
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

Several votes in the U.S. Senate have come and failed, leaving Americans uncertain about the future of their federal government as it remains shut down.

This shutdown is not only frustrating Americans, but also those who represent them in Congress — especially the chairman of the U.S. House Budget Committee.

U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington, R-Texas, expressed his frustration about why the Senate, particularly Senate Democratic leadership, isn't passing the House's "clean" Continuing Resolution (CR).

For context, Congress passes a CR to fund the government at the same level as last year to give lawmakers time to hammer out the final details of the final government funding bill, which is voted on in late November.

"Nobody added any poison pills or partisan policies and programs — it was clean," Arrington said. "The counter proposal for us to consider was completely absurd and unserious."

The counteroffer that was proposed by Democrats revolves around healthcare reform, including Affordable Care Act tax credits — which are to sunset

See ARRINGTON, Page 8A

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