

Canadian woman missing since 1960s



MISSING — Anna Sylvia Just, 30, 5'6", 125 pounds, blond hair, blue eyes possibly using the name Mrs. A. Presely is the subject of an intensive search after Clark County Sheriff officials found her purse and clothing buried in the desert. Miss Just, a Canadian citizen, is thought to be the victim of foul play. Anyone having information on the subject is asked to contact the sheriff's department, homicide detail.

"Mud maps" are a common sight in Australia's Outback. To direct travelers through the lonely region, line maps in the hard-baked soil.

VITAL STATISTICS

DEATHS

SPENCE, Stella J., 44, 2018 Golden Arrow Ave., died here Sunday. Born Nov. 23, 1921 in Lubbock, Texas. Survivors: Her husband, Herbert, Las Vegas; two sons, Joe E. Cook, stationed in Florida with the U. S. Air Force, and John Charles Spence, Lubbock, Texas; a daughter, Jerry Ann Adams, Lubbock, Texas. Services: To be held in Lubbock, Texas, with burial here.

LUTHER, Vera H., 22, 1908 Sunland Ave., died here Monday. Born March 4, 1884 in Louisville, Ill. Survivors: Two daughters, Mrs. Fayne L. Vordenham, Las Vegas and Mrs. Fay L. Dyer, Portland, Ore.; three sons, Clyde L. Luther, Lewiston, Idaho; Lee H. Luther, Clarksburg, Wash.; and James W. Luther, Anacostia, Wash.; a sister, Mrs. Ruth Veneman, Washington, and eight grandchildren. Services: 2 p.m. Thursday in Clarksburg, Wash. Burial in Lewiston, Idaho.

BELL, William, 95, 412 West Jefferson Ave., died here Monday. Born July 20, 1877 in Sparkville, Mass. Survivors: Two sons, Millard Bell, Andover, Mass., and William Bell Jr., Milwaukee, Wis.; a brother Sam Rogers, Greenfield, Mass.; and four grandchildren. Services: 1 p.m., Friday at New Jerusalem Baptist Church, the Rev. F. H. Addison officiating. Burial in Woodlawn Cemetery.

COFFIN, James Robert, 58, 1101 East St. Louis Ave., died here Tuesday. Formerly 18 years, Co-owner of Washburn Petroleum Co. Born May 23, 1888 in Canada. Survivors: His wife, Claudine; two sons, James Robert and Michael Coffin; a daughter, Cecelia Coffin; an aunt, Johanna O'Grady, all Las Vegas. Services: 1 p.m. Thursday at St. Anne's Roman Mass 10 a.m. Friday at St. Anne's, the Rev. Joseph Bacus officiating. Burial at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Anaheim, Calif.

JONES, John Henry "Jack", 87, 1834 Converse Ave., died here Friday. Resident 34 years. Born June 27, 1900 in Anna, Idaho. Survivors: His wife, Marie H. Jones, Las Vegas; a daughter, Schuyler Lottford, Portland, Ore.; three brothers, William D. Jones, Weiser, Idaho; Paul N. Jones, Price, Utah; Wallace W. Jones, Las Vegas; two sisters, Mattie Guller, Arden, Calif.; and Louise Belkovich, Kumburg, Ore.; and two grandchildren. Services: 11 a.m. Wednesday in 17th Ward LDS Chapel, Bishop J. Glen Sanford officiating. Burial in Sunset Garden of Memories.

JOHNSON, Raymond Laverne, 22, 2273 Soane Lane, died here Sunday. Resident for 12 years. Born Oct. 1, 1915 in Barry County, Mo. Survivors: Two brothers, Charles W. Johnson, 1822 West Charleston Blvd., and Rex Johnson, Wichita, Kans. Services and burial in Wichita, Kansas.

WHITE, Edward F., 84, 229 "J" St., died here Tuesday. Born Sept. 22, 1883 in Oklahoma. No known survivors. Graveside services 9:30 a.m. Thursday at Woodlawn Cemetery.

CURRY, Harry Ernest, 81, 1525 Mayfair Circle, died here Sunday. Resident for 25 years. Born March 12, 1886 in Kentucky. Retired security officer. Survivors: Two sons, Harold and Harvey Curry, both Las Vegas; three grandchildren. Services: 2 p.m. Saturday at Palm Chapel, the Rev. Theodore Hester, First Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, officiating. Burial in Memory Gardens.

OAKLEY, Tolva Paul M., Fullerton, Calif., died here Sunday. Born Nov. 5, 1912 in Pennsylvania. Survivors: His wife, Roberta Oakley, Fullerton, Calif. Services pending in California.

BIRTHS

MARCH 11, 1968

SUNRISE HOSPITAL

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Henry, 3 boys

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lepera, a girl

Mr. & Mrs. Woodrow Wagner, a girl

MARCH 11, 1968

NELLIS HOSPITAL

USAF Capt. & Mrs. Ernest C. Kirkman, a girl

MARCH 11, 1968

WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

Mr. & Mrs. Merlyn Hayes, a girl

Mr. & Mrs. Clinton Jolley, a boy

MARCH 11, 1968

SOUTHERN NEVADA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Gavett, a boy

Mr. & Mrs. Patricia Avena, a girl

Five More Baker Bus Crash Dead Identified by Coroner

BAKER, Calif. (UPI) — The San Bernardino County Coroner's office Tuesday disclosed the names of five more persons killed in last Thursday's fiery crash of a greyhound bus on interstate 15.

THE NAMES of seven other persons who lost their lives in the collision of the bus and a wrong way car on the freeway were made public Monday.

Names of eight more passengers who died in the burning bus still haven't been disclosed.

The names released Tuesday:

Arthur Leslie Cole, 73, Garden Grove, Calif.; Mrs. Christina Jones, 53, Hawthorne, Calif.; Mrs. Anna Louisa Lewis, 65, Santa Barbara, Calif.; Mrs. Margaret Buntin Obbe, 50, Vancouver, B. C.; and Mrs. Obbe's son, Allen, 24, also of Vancouver.

AEC Plans Huge A-Blast at NTS

The Atomic Energy Commission plans to conduct a large nuclear cratering experiment—involving a 100-kiloton nuclear device — on its Nevada Test Site instead of in Idaho, Associated Press learned Wednesday.

The disclosure was made earlier this month in Washington when John S. Kelly, director of the division of peaceful nuclear explosives of the AEC appeared before a House subcommittee.

Kelly told the Panama Canal subcommittee of the house Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries that Project Schooner is planned during fiscal 1969 on the commission's Nevada Test Site.

Grants
KNOWN FOR VALUES
THURSDAY - I

GRANTS-MISS
BETTE
DRE

90 DAYS

A microfilm image of page 4 of the March 14, 1968 edition of the Las Vegas Review-Journal shows a short article about Anna Sylvia Just who had gone missing. (Las Vegas Review-Journal)

Police said human remains found in the desert outside Henderson in 1970 have been identified as Anna Sylvia Just, a Canadian woman missing since 1968. (Bizuyayehu Tesfaye/Las Vegas Review-Journal) @bizutesfaye



By **Kevin J. Barr**

Las Vegas Review-Journal

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Updated November 7, 2025 - 8:18 pm

Human remains unearthed in a desert area outside Henderson more than half a century ago have been identified as those of a Canadian woman who may have been an acquaintance of a mob-linked Las Vegas union leader and convicted killer, police announced.

The remains, which were found in 1970, are those of Calgary, Alberta, native **Anna Sylvia Just**, the Metropolitan Police Department said Friday.

The breakthrough in the decades-long mystery came after Metro was contacted by Calgary cold case detectives in October 2024 to learn more about Just, who was reported missing here in 1968 after her personal belongings were found in the desert, police said in a news release.

On June 7, 1970, children playing discovered human remains buried in a shallow grave about a mile away from where Just's belongings had been found, Metro said. Although the remains were unidentifiable, the Clark County coroner's office ruled the death a homicide caused by a skull fracture.

During the investigation of Just's disappearance, Metro said Friday, several reports suggested she was an acquaintance of Thomas Hanley, who according to UNLV archives was a Las Vegas union leader with ties to organized crime families in the Midwest. A deputy district attorney had also accused of Hanley of being responsible for Just's killing, according to previous Las Vegas Review-Journal coverage.

Just had reportedly gone to Hanley for money, according to Metro, and it was later alleged that Hanley had associates drive Just into the desert and kill her.

In 1978, Hanley was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the 1977 murder of former Culinary union secretary-treasurer Al Bramlet, according to Review-Journal coverage from the time.

At an April 25, 1978, sentencing hearing for the Bramlet murder, Hanley said it was unfair to speculate on other killings he was tied to by prosecutors, including Just's.

"I never even heard of the woman," Hanley was quoted as saying.

Hanley died in 1979.

In a press release Friday, Metro said Calgary police learned that Just was in the Las Vegas area at some point in the 1960s, and gave Canadian officials the name of Just's sister who collected the personal belongings that were found in 1968. Calgary detectives were then able to contact Just's sister, who is still alive, and collected from her a DNA sample that was compared with a sample taken from the remains found in 1970, according to the release.

Genetic genealogical testing confirmed the remains were Just's, police said.

A March 10, 1968, report in the Las Vegas Review-Journal stated authorities had discovered a suitcase they believed belonged to Just about a week after finding a purse holding her ID in a desert area near the city dump about four miles from Henderson. The report notes Just was a 29-year-old stenographer who disappeared from Calgary on Aug. 17, 1966.

Police at the time estimated the purse they found had been in the desert for more than six months, the Review-Journal previously reported.

Nobody was ever arrested in connection with the disappearance or suspected murder, a Metro spokesperson said Friday.

Contact Casey Harrison at charrison@reviewjournal.com. Follow @casey-harrison.bsky.social on Bluesky. Contact Kevin J. Barr at kbarr@reviewjournal.com.