

# Percy Foreman—killers are his specialty

United Press International  
HOUSTON — Percy Foreman has forgotten when hired guns Eddie Morse and Jeff Cothron decided not to shoot after jumping him at noon in the Schlitz Bar 48 years ago.

He gave them every chance, showing up despite knowing they had a contract on his life. He even invited friend Ace Jacobs along to "watch a lawyer get shot."

What has survived in Foreman's memory about that 1933 incident, typical in the front-page life of the millionaire Texas lawyer, was the business generated that day.

"One of those men who tried to kill me, I had in the pen by noon the next day. Both of them eventually became clients of mine. More than that, the men who hired them to kill me eventually became clients."

Thugs hired Foreman to defend them because he was above being bought while twice serving as an assistant district attorney in the 1920s and '30s, he claimed.

"That was a pure business principle," he said. "I wanted the courts to decide the cases. Who was going to hire a criminal lawyer if he could hire the district attorney or the judge?"

Foreman, 77, has slowed down little since busting and then defending gamblers, since keeping an active file of "an average of 2,200 divorce cases" during the 1940s and since taking on the highly publicized mur-

der cases of James Earl Ray, Jack Ruby and Melvin Lane Powers in his career.

"I don't get involved in a 12- to 14-week case anymore," he said, preferring to leave them to his two law partners.

"Ever since I was 40, I looked forward to retiring," Foreman said. "Up to about 6 (years ago), I still thought I would retire in the next five years. But I know now I won't because I would go to seed."

The 6-4, 250-pound barrister remains a formidable courtroom foe. He has lost only one defendant to a

death sentence in about 2,000 murder cases. He never kept score, but in 1957 a reporter counted 700 murder cases he had handled in Harris County alone.

During a recent lunch, Foreman looked back at a career which formed the basis for at least one television series.

"I'd rather try a murder case than any other type criminal case," he said. "There's one less witness. Plus, the defendant in a murder case is a superior type person to the average thief or dope peddler."

"Murder is a crime of passion. It is

not usually a deliberate crime like systematic hot check writing or swindling. Most people charged with murder are charged but once. And most of them have more redeeming qualities than other criminals."

One of eight children, Foreman first felt the excitement of a courtroom in the Polk County Court-house in Livingston, 8 miles from his Bold Springs home.

"I was always on the front seat (of that courtroom). My father was sheriff," he said. "Big trials of train robbers and murderers were the primary

form of drama then. That and revival meetings.

"When there wasn't anything in town, why, all the kids would play revival. I remember one time preaching to an old cat and five or six or seven kittens. I converted all of them. And I didn't have any trouble baptizing the kittens, either. But that old cat, she scratched and clawed and spit. I finally told her, 'Well, we'll just sprinkle you and let you go to hell.'"

Foreman has a compassion gained partly from a time he served county prisoners their meals for his father.

He said he remembered them as ordinary individuals caught in a tragic web of emotion and circumstance.

"The death penalty," he said, "benefits nobody but lawyers."

But he also developed a toughness, even with clients, which drove some like Jack Ruby away.

Foreman dropped the appeal of the convicted murderer of Lee Harvey Oswald, who was accused of assassinating President John F. Kennedy, one week after taking it, because Ruby's family started dictating to him.

His defense strategy is simple: anyone but the defendant on the

A Florida woman accused of murdering her husband because he abused woman in the eyes of the courtroom and was acquitted in 1964 after Foreman littered counselors' table with whips and to the ones the woman's husband owned.

In another case, the former socialite Candace Mossler was acquitted in a 1966 trial of a charge killed Mossler's millionaire husband after Foreman described the man as a debased pervert.

## Beer city in 1800's described

United Press International  
MILWAUKEE — A working man's breakfast consisted of coffee and bread, beefsteak or some other roasted meat, potatoes, eggs and butter. It was served at 6 a.m.

A steamship ride on Lake Michigan with accompanying regimental music was 25 cents. Porterhouse steak was 10 cents a pound. A man's suit — wool and quality made — went for \$15 to \$20.

Heinrich Engelhart, 30, first foreman at the Miller Brewing Co., was earning an annual salary of \$1,300. That included free living quarters, wood and light.

The year was 1879, and Frederic Miller detailed his life in Milwaukee and America in a long, rambling letter to relatives in Germany.

Written in German slightly more than a century ago, the letter was found recently by Miller officials.

Miller had established the brewery in 1855, and now — despite the loss of "seven children and a wife in the flower of their youth" — things were going well.

He wrote of his present wife, and his children, Ernst, Friz, Clara and Emil, and of his growing business.

"I cannot complain, for in spite of the 55 years upon my back — born November 24, 1824 — I look healthy and strong."

In the summer, he wrote, he got up between 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning, toured the brewery and wrote a few letters before a 7 a.m. breakfast.

Bedtime was 9 o'clock in the summer and 8 o'clock in the winter.

In the Milwaukee of a century ago, Miller wrote, "At times after the day's work and efforts, we ride along Spring Street, which is a street bordered by beautiful landscaping such as gardens and springs. We drink glasses of fresh beer while we sit in our buggy parked in front of our customers' cafes or restaurants."

"On Sundays, much of our time is spent in nearby beer gardens. We listen to concert music or enjoy other pleasures such, as remaining at home or some light travel."

He outlined his brewery's operations — "Altogether there are 25 men, in addition to 16 horses plus a branch office in Chicago which has 3 men and 4 horses" — and said he found the business most satisfying.

"Today machinery is used everywhere, whereas in earlier times everyone had to use their hands and feet," Miller wrote.

He said many Milwaukeeans were making good wages and had savings.

"Socialism has no reason for existence in a country where the average worker can save such amounts of money if they do desire. The lazy Berlin windbags and big mouths and their associates should stay at home."

He recalled his "wonderful youth" in Germany, but said he was happy in America.

"I too have expanded my business as my means permit, and I will rely upon my sons to carry on and expand the business that their father started and established."

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