

Georgia Elaine Mahaffey (Daughter of BULLARD, Ellen Verna) Class of 1937.

By: EMORY GRINNELL

A fatal bullet through the temple of his nine-month-old daughter and another one into his own head beside the infant's crib about 3:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon carried out the vengeful threat of an unemployed father against the estranged wife, who was preparing to divorce him.

The father, William Howard Mahaffey, Jr., 26, of 616 South Cox, knowing his wife, Mrs. Verna Bullard Mahaffey, 23, was at work, slipped through the unlocked front door of the house where she lived at 1971 Harbert, and fired the two shots before a relative of the wife could interfere.

Reconciliation Attempt Failed:

Failure Saturday night to effect a reconciliation with the wife from who he had been separated caused the tragedy, according to Captain Frank Glisson of the Police Homicide Bureau. Mr. Mahaffey threatened to "get even" for her refusal, she said. One bullet from the .38 caliber revolver went through the right temple of his daughter, Georgia Elaine, as she lay in her crib, and the second through his head, lodging in the ceiling of the rear bedroom of the house, Captain Glisson said. In three notes, one to his mother, another to his father, and a third to his wife, Mr. Mahaffey begged "forgiveness for what I have done." But said "it is the only thing I see to do."

'Love You Too Much'

"I love you too much to stay in a same world and not have you for a wife," the note to his wife said. "The only thing I see to do is leave it."

"I thought for awhile I would take you too, but you want to live," the note said. "I do too, but not without you. I am taking the baby with me as I feel she will be better off in God's hands than she would be here. So goodbye, sweet. I love you more than anything in this world."

Maurice Warren, uncle of Mrs. Mahaffey with whom she lived, said he heard the front door open and came down the stairs to see what had happened. "I was coming downstairs when I heard some shots." He said. "I ran into the bedroom but it was too late. My wife was upstairs ill and a negro maid was in the rear of the house."

Came Saturday Night.

Mrs. Mahaffey said her husband came to the house Saturday night and tried to change her mind about the divorce.

"I told him last night I had made up my mind and was going to sue for a divorce and he threatened to get even," she said. "I didn't know he would do anything like this." Mrs. Mahaffey, who was employed at Walgreen's at Main and Union, said he returned to her home yesterday morning, but that she had to leave for work at 1 o'clock and he left her.

She said they had separated since last summer and that he had been in New York, returning about a month ago. The couple had been married three years. They had only the one child.

'Milk Beside Crib'

The baby, nicknamed "Toots" had just finished eating and a half-filled bottle of milk was lying beside her in the crib. A

rattle and a small colored ball lay nearby. The notes, written in long hand, were clear and legible. They apparently were written yesterday morning after he had returned from talking with Mrs. Mahaffey. Mr. Mahaffey had been living with his father, W. H. Mahaffey, Sr., since he returned from Brooklyn NY. In his pocket was found a Christmas card which Captain Glisson said, had been sent to him at Brooklyn by his wife.

‘Love To Baby’s Father’

Written in ink on the bottom of the card was a note. “Love to the father of my baby, and wishing we could be together on Christmas,” it said.

In the note to his mother, Mrs. L. H. Doty of Brooklyn, Mr. Mahaffey said, “Verna is going to get a divorce and I am not kind of person who can love one minute and forget the next.” I could not live and not have her as my wife. The world is not big enough for that. If I stayed on, I would take the down road. That would in the long run cause you more pain than this will.

‘Do Not Hate Verna’

“Try to forget me and just say ‘I never heard of him,’ do not hate Verna as she will need your love now. I hope God will forgive me and we will be together in the next world.”

The note to his father, the briefest of the three, expressed similar feeling and said, “It was the only thing I could see to do.”

“I waited this morning and though you had changed your mind,” the note to his wife read, “but you had not.”

“I don’t want to take this course, but know nothing else to do. There is no happiness without you. When you left, I said good-bye, but you didn’t pay any attention.....

“Where ever I go I love you. No, I can’t wish you happiness, because I won’t be there to share it. I’m selfish I guess----Yours until we meet in the great beyond.”

The pistol used by Mahaffey was owned by Mr. Warren, who said he believed Mahaffey took it from his bureau drawer when he visited his wife yesterday morning. Captain Glissom said he had listed the deaths as a suicide and a murder. Funeral services for the Mahaffey baby will be conducted by the Rev. Rush McDonald at 2 o’clock tomorrow afternoon. Burial in Memorial Park. Funeral arrangements for Mr. Mahaffey are incomplete.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, February 5, 1940.