

Meridian Tragedy:

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MERIDIAN, Miss. — Pretty young Kathy Ainsworth, a soft-spoken teacher with an excellent record, turned out to be a terrorist in a story that rivals that of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Since her death in a gun battle with police here last Sunday in a bombing attempt, the FBI has linked her to Ku Klux Klan records and files on violence and bomb-making. Many of her friends in Miami and Jackson, Miss., find it impossible to believe she is the same person who was revered as a cheerful churchgoer who loved children and was worshiped by them.

THE DOCUMENTS were found by Mrs. Ainsworth's husband, Ralph, in a desk at their home in Jackson and turned over to the FBI. Neither Ainsworth nor any of his relatives shared his wife's fanatical beliefs.

Mrs. Ainsworth, 26, and Thomas Albert Tarrant III, 21, were shot by Meridian police in a wild exchange of gunfire when officers caught them as they allegedly were trying to dynamite the home of a Jewish businessman here. Tarrant, who emptied a submachine gun in the battle, critically injuring a policeman and a bystander, was seriously wounded and is at a hospital under heavy police guard.

They were a strange pair — Kathy, adored by her students and their parents, who had no idea of her role as a terrorist, and Tarrant, a tough-talking hoodlum who exhibited hatred for Jews and Negroes and a fondness for firearms even at age 13.



KATHY AINSWORTH

... 'the sweetest person.'

Mendenhall car dealer and retired Army colonel. "Kathy was the sweetest person you would ever meet anywhere, but she just got brainwashed by her mother and other people. Her mother is anti-Negro and anti-Semitic — just the worst you ever saw."

The mother, Mrs. Margaret Copemacchia of Miami, a native of Hungary, is an outspoken anti-Semite who has told acquaintances her daughter died fighting for what she believed in. "She was just as satisfied at the manner in which Kathy died as if she had died in the middle of church," Ainsworth said.

Kathy had friends who range from Alton Telf, the highly respected religion editor of The Miami Herald to Sammie D. Myers, a violent Klan leader who has been convicted on a federal civil rights conspiracy charge in connection with the 1964 anti-

No one who knew Tarrant was surprised at his Ku Klux Klan activities, but all who knew Kathy, except for her associates in the Klan and perhaps a few other fanatical friends, were shocked to learn of her double role. Friends in Jackson, where she attended college and taught a fifth-grade class, found it incredible that she could be involved in any kind of hate action.

"IT WAS a Jekyll and Hyde case," says her father-in-law, Richard Ainsworth, a

ing of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Miss.

Kathy's husband, manager of two Jackson health clubs, would say only, "She was an angel, that's all I can say." But it was learned that while he knew of her Klan connection, he did not know she was so deeply involved and he frequently urged her to quit the Klan.

TARRANTS had been identified as a prime suspect in at least a dozen bombings, burnings and shootings that have occurred in the Meridian and Jackson areas in the last year. But until the violence here police knew little about Kathy's part in

Influence

Of Hate

ties, only that she was a member of the Klan and of a Klan front, the Americans for the Preservation of the White Race (APWR).

Found in Kathy's desk at the Ainsworth home were several manila folders bearing subject labels, including Klan, APWR, bombings, segregation, conspiracy, integration versus segregation, Cuba and civil rights.

Kathy and Tarrants carried out their Klan roles in the name of "Christianity" just like all Klan members do. While there is little to indicate Tarrants ever has been religious, Kathy was a devout churchgoer.

SHE WAS BORN in Chicago, but reared in Miami where her mother did domestic work and other menial jobs.

If Kathy ever had any racist or anti-Semitic feelings as a youth in Miami, she kept them well hidden. Even her closest friends say they never suspected a thing until long after she had moved to Mississippi in 1960. One of them, Adon Taft, the religion editor, says, "She was an ideal girl from all we knew, the kind of girl we had long told our daughters we would like for them to grow up and be like."

Mrs. Capomacchia was something else. Acquaintances say she long has been anti-Semitic, although neither her husband nor her son shared the trait.

Friends in Miami first began noticing Kathy's segregationist feelings a few years ago when she came back from Mississippi for visits, but no extremist leanings were evident until last summer shortly before she married Ralph Ainsworth. Even then there was nothing to indicate fanaticism.

WHEN KATHY moved to Jackson in 1959 to attend college, Tarrants, nicknamed "Tat" by his classmates, was just beginning to blossom as an extremist. A former classmate recalls that at age 13 Tarrants was engrossed in William Shirer's "Rise and Fall of The Third Reich" and that he put a stink-bomb in a Jewish girl's school locker.



THOMAS A. TARRANTS III
...an extremist at 13

As a student in the company of Robert A. Smith, 39, Mobile leader of the National States Rights Party, and charged with possession of an illegal weapon — a sawed-off shotgun.

TARRANTS pleaded guilty to the weapons charge in Federal court and U.S. District Judge Daniel Thomas gave him a suspended sentence.

On Jan. 21, 1967 — the day after his 21st birthday when his suspended sentence expired — Tarrants and Paul Winford Sam Bowers, 41, were arrested in Oklawaha, Fla., on a charge that had been noted in all papers. Tarrants was charged with possessing a submachine gun found on the seat of the car. But he refused to plead and returned to Mobile.

Kathy and Tarrants had been close associates long before the Meridian slaying. When Tarrants' picture appeared in a Jackson newspaper last week Kathy's husband remembered he had met the youth several months earlier while visiting with his wife in the home of Sister Cleopatra Barnes, a housewife known to police as a "strongly anti-Semitic."

Mrs. Capomacchia and Tarrants' father have been bitter about what happened at Meridian. "No one can tell me the truth about how my daughter died but her and she's dead," she told a Times reporter who telephoned her. She refused to say anything else, but Adon Taft of Miami said she told him, "Kathy stuck her neck out and if more people stuck their necks out this country wouldn't be in the mess it's in."

WHAT HAPPENED to Kathy Ainsworth? Her mother obviously had tremendous influence over her. But Kathy did not exhibit any real signs of racism or fears of a Communist-Jewish conspiracy until she moved to Mississippi where many of the officials, newspapers and business and professional leaders have voiced such fears.

But Mississippi has no monopoly on fanaticism, hate and violence. And leaders here, even those who strongly support segregation, are quick to point out that Tarrants was from Mobile and Kathy was from Miami. This is one thing, they say, that can't be blamed on Mississippi.

The fact is that the minds of Kathy and Tarrants were shaped not only in Mississippi but in the United States. Both were influenced by the hate propaganda which floods the country from California and many other states, and both were dedicated to wiping out the "common enemy."

The Kathy who belonged to the Klan undoubtedly died, as her mother said, fighting for her beliefs.