

Peoria's Mark Clark

12/14/69 Clgo 5-T (Back)

The overlooked Panther

Mark Clark, 23, may be the all-but-forgotten man of Chicago's Black Panther Party turmoil — but people in Peoria recall him vividly.

A policeman shot and killed Clark 16 days ago in a raid that also brought violent death to Fred Hampton, 20, the militant party's Illinois chairman.

Ironically Clark reportedly was in Chicago to help another Peoria Panther, Leonard Harris, 23, in jail here on a charge of attempting to murder a policeman.

The son of a clergyman and a rebel since the age of 16, Clark was attempting to enlist members in the party from Peoria and elsewhere Downstate.

The latest arrest, an item on a long list of police troubles, was for attempting to circulate Black Panther literature on the Bradley University campus in Peoria.

In September, Clark and other Panthers attempted to operate a program of providing free breakfasts for needy schoolchildren at the Ward Chapel Methodist Church in Peoria.

Left junior high

The project, similar to one started by Hampton in Chicago, failed for lack of support. Clark told a meeting of

about 100 Panther leaders in Peoria.

Roosevelt Junior High School records show that Clark was a drop-out in 1963, reportedly after he was accused of assaulting a manual training teacher.

From that time on, and particularly after the death of his father, the Rev. William Elder Clark, pastor of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, young Clark was in difficulties more often than not, Peoria records show.

Harris in jail

Carrying concealed weapons, assaulting the teacher, fighting with a movie theater usher, theft, violating curfew and traffic regulations were some of the charges brought against him. Along the way, he served jail terms of six and three months.

His fellow Peoria Panther,

^{SHOULD BE DEC.} Harris, was arrested (July) after what police called a shoot out in an apartment at 8055 S Merrill. Dozens of shots were fired but nobody was wounded.

Harris is in the Cook County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 bond, awaiting trial on charges of attempted murder, armed violence, aggravated assault, resisting arrest and failure to register a firearm.

On the second day after his friend's arrest on the South Side, death caught up with Mark Clark.

At a funeral service last Monday in Peoria's Afro-American Freedom Hall, the Rev. Blaine Ramsey eulogized Clark with these words:

"His concern for the poor and the dispossessed did not indicate that he was the type of person to engage in violence."



MARK CLARK