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Essex, Called a 'Loving' Man, Buried Amid Militant Symbols

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EMPORIA, Kan., Jan. 13—Mark James Robert Essex, identified as the New Orleans sniper who shot and killed six persons, was buried today in ceremonies that mixed appeals for nonviolence with the militant symbols of black nationalism.

The last gestures before the black metal coffin was lowered in the wooded cemetery here came from six young black pallbearers, friends and neighbors of the 23-year-old Essex, who was shot to death by the police in New Orleans last Sunday.

One pallbearer raised his arm in the black power salute into the clear sunny sky and said: "Up goes my arm, for today we have freedom from our bonds."

Several other young blacks raised their fists. One draped a scarf that was red, green and black, the colors of black nationalism, through the handles of the coffin, while another took a sash of the same colors from around his chest and put it near the coffin.

Statements by Minister

Earlier, in a one-hour ceremony at the St. James Baptist Church, the Rev. W. A. Chambers, who had baptized Essex, told the 200 mourners that he had a message for young people.

"Don't listen to them who seek to persuade you that the world's ills can be cured with their philosophy," he said. "It just can't be done, particularly when these men try to teach you violence and hatred. The God I know teaches love."

While some in the audience punctuated his sermon with "yes sir," and "that's our Lord," Mr. Chambers continued: "I may not agree with my fellow man but I can respect and understand him."

His voice rising from the pulpit—the coffin was before it, topped with a wreath of red carnations inscribed to "Jimmy"—he urged: "I know our patience has worn thin but He will guide us and protect us. Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

He concluded with the words: "The meek shall inherit the

earth and will inherit themselves in the abundance of peace."

Some Mourners White

The church, prefabricated of light brown metal, overflowed with mourners, some of whom were white. Three of the top officials of the town were there: James Pickert, the Mayor; P. R. Woodbury, a commissioner, and Virgil Basgall, the City Manager.

Mrs. Essex sometimes wept

softly at the ceremony. She sat with her husband, Mark H., a foreman at the Fanestil Meat Packing Company, and her children, Timothy of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Benjamin, who lives at home, and two sisters, Mrs. Joyce Horn of Los Angeles and Mrs. Randy Fox, of Waterloo, Iowa.

The coffin was flanked by floral wreaths, including one made of black carnations inscribed with gold letters saying "Power to the people." On the other side was a wreath from the "Mothers for peace."

A female choir from the St. James and Mount Olive A.M.E. Churches stood in the background and, accompanied by a piano, sang spirituals. At one point the lead singer broke into tears and collapsed into her seat when she came to the words in the hymn, "He said trust in Me, and I'll set you free."

A 'Loving . . . Man'

Condolences were sent by various groups, including Sigma Gamma Rho, a black sorority at Kansas State Teachers College, which said that Essex was a "loving, friendly man and fun-loving."

Before he entered the Navy on Jan. 13, 1969, friends and neighbors remembered Essex as a smiling, respectful youth who never got into trouble.

A tribute on behalf of the officers of the St. James Church, read by Mrs. Mary Walls, recalled that Essex, who was born Aug. 12, 1949, had gone to Sunday School, was part of the choir and had been an usher.

She said that he had gone to the local public schools and when in high school had joined the band and the Boy Scouts, in which he was particularly fond of camping trips.

"We will always be thankful for having this relationship with him," she said.

Both parents and friends have said in interviews that Essex changed during his Naval career, embittered by what he saw as racial discrimination there. He was trained in San Diego and was stationed at Imperial Beach, Calif., as a dental technician.

The family this week released a transcript of testimony relating to a court-martial of Essex on a charge of leaving the base at Imperial Beach without permission.

Lieut. Robert Hatcher, his immediate superior, is quoted in the transcript as saying that after the court-martial Essex was living in a situation in which he was harassed because of his color.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!