

TARRANTS CASE RESTED BY STATE

Officers' Testimony, De-
vice Keys in Trial

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(Times-Picayune Staff Correspondent)

MERIDIAN, Miss. — Missis-
sippi's historic bid to put
Thomas Albert Tarrant III to
death for placing a home-made
bomb of 29 sticks of dynamite
at the home of a Jewish busi-
nessman hinged Tuesday night
on an alarm clock device and
testimony of two policemen.

With surprising brevity, DA
George Warner Tuesday
afternoon rested the state's
case against the 21-year-old
Tarrant, a self-identified Klan
"guerrilla fighter," and hater
of Jews.

Warner called only the two
officers and put into evidence
a crude triggering device at-
tached to an alarm clock as
the state's case against Tar-
rant who had been arrested in
a bizarre police trap and shoot-
out here in the early hours of
last July 1.

UNDER 1947 LAW

The case is the first attempt
by the state of Mississippi to
use an obscure 1947 anti-bomb-
ing law in the siege of night
time terrorist bombings which
have accompanied the march
of racial desegregation in this
state over the past five years.

Both detectives L. A. Wil-
loughby and Ralph McNair
said Tarrant was the man
who drove up after midnight

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of June 30 in a darkened car,
laid the box in the driveway
of the home of Meyer David-
son and began shooting when
startled by police.

Only the alarm clock device
with a battery attached, but
none of the dynamite sticks,
was placed in evidence.

Defense attorney Thomas
Haas later sought to throw out
the state's case on grounds that
neither officer provided evi-
dence from the witness stand
that it was an explosive device,
placed at the Davidson home.

But circuit Judge Lester
Williamson denied the motion
along with other objections
raised by the defense seeking
a directed verdict of not
guilty on grounds the state
had produced insufficient
proof.

Williamson recessed the case
overnight with Tarrant's moth-
er on the witness stand.

She described the pimply
faced, black-haired youth as a
fanatic on segregation and com-
munism who several years ago
took refuge in the Bible and
radical organizations.

Mrs. Tarrant, a Mobile
housewife, said a change had
begun to take place in her son
when he was involved in de-
segregation at Murphy High
School in Mobile in 1963.

WOULDN'T WATCH TV

"His whole personality
seemed to become engrossed in
Communists taking over the
country," said Mrs. Tarrant.
"He became more withdrawn
into himself. He wouldn't watch
television because he felt it
was poisoning people's minds
against democracy."

She said her son had dropped
out of high school before finish-
ing, became affiliated with the
National States' Rights Party
and was a frequent target of
arrest by Mobile police when
racial disturbances occurred.

Part of the defense's conten-
tion is that young Tarrant is
not guilty by reason of insanity.

In his opening statement,
Haas said that the youth was
"suffering from a severe form
of paranoia," and was "so ob-
sessed that he felt compelled to
become a guerilla fighter and
sought justification for every-
thing he did."

The Mobile attorney said he
would seek to prove that the ex-
perience accompanying the de-

segregation of Murphy High
School was what began to trig-
ger Tarrant's mental change.

Detective Willoughby said that
he was part of a detachment
of officers who had been on a
stake-out near several homes in
Meridian last summer following
a series of threats arising out
of racially connected activities.

Haas sought to elicit from the
officer who had been the infor-
mant which supplied the infor-
mation that sent the officers to
the Davidson residence.

ASKS ABOUT INFORMATION

"Did you have any informa-
tion ahead of time that this de-
fendant would be there?" Haas
asked.

"If I had I would have had
more men there," Willoughby
declared.

The officer had testified short-
ly before that the man who he
identified as Tarrant placed the
box with the sticks of dynamite
and the device about "30 to 15
feet" from the Davidson home.

After the officer presented the
clock and battery wired device
that the state contends is the
triggering mechanism of the
bomb, Haas sought to have it
excluded on grounds that it was
obtained through illegal search
and seizure.

The defense attorney contend-
ed that the burden was on the
state under the fourth amend-
ment and interpretations by the
U.S. Supreme Court to show that
the evidence was obtained
through legal search and seiz-
ure.

Judge Williamson denied the
motion and permitted the evi-
dence to be submitted to the
jury, but would not allow the
officers to explain what the de-
vice was.

Willoughby said that when one
of the officers who was hidden
across the street from the David-
son home called to Tarrant to
halt, the youth turned and shot
twice, whereupon the officers be-
gan shooting at him.

NOTHING ON BATTLE

No testimony was offered re-
garding the chase of Tarrant
and the gun battle with police
in which, according to officers,
he opened up with a machine
gun wounding one policeman
and a bystander.

Also there were no references
to Mrs. Kathy Ainsworth,
Jackson public school teacher
who was found dead in the au-
tomobile driven by Tarrant.

In Tarrant's possession offi-

pers had found a diary which said "I have committed myself totally to defeating the communist-jew conspiracy which threatens our country — any means necessary shall be used."

It said further that he, since March 23, 1968, had been "underground and operating guerilla warfare."

Tarrants had been arrested in December, 1967 in an automobile with Sam H. Bowers, Laurel, identified by the FBI as

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the imperial wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, when a submachine gun was found in the car.

The jury considering the charge against Tarrants is made up of 9 white men, one Negro man and two white women. Under the 1947 statute, the state may inflict the death penalty for placing a bomb near a building or if the jury fails to agree on death the court may set the punishment.