Confession Gives Details Of Three Rights Killings

By WALTER RUGABER
Special to The New York Times

14 Oct 1967

MERIDIAN, Miss., Oct. 13—A surprise confession by a second member of the band of men accused of lynching three civil rights workers near here in 1964 was introduced today in Federal district court over defense attorney's objections.

In the statement, obtained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Horace D. Barnette accused James E. Jordan, who testified yesterday for the Government, of killing one of the three rights workers. Jordan said yesterday that he was posted as a lookout when the slayings took place.

The statement by Barnette reported that Michael H. Schwerner of New York, a white field worker for the Congress of Racial Equality, was hauled from the back seat of an automobile, spun around, and asked:

"Are you that nigger lover?"

'I Know Just How You Feel'

"Sir," the youth was quoted as replying, "I know just how you feel." With that, the statement continued, a member of the mob, who could not be identified in court for legal reasons, "took a pistol in his hand and shot Schwerner."

Andrew Goodman of New York, a 21-year-old white college student who had just arrived in Mississippi for a summer of civil rights work, was next brought from the auto, the statement related.

"Schwerner fell to the left so that he was lying alongside the road," the statement went on, "and Goodman spun around and fell back toward the bank in back." At this point, according to the statement, Jordan stepped forward.

Jordan, an admitted member of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, testified yesterday that he heard the shots fired but did not actually witness the killings.

Jordan Accused

But the statement read in court today named Jordan as the slayer of James E. Chaney of Meridian, a 21-year-old Negro plasterer.

"Save one for me," Jordan was quoted as saying. The statement reported that Jordan then got out of a car and pulled Mr. Chaney out onto the dirt road with him. The narrative continued:

"I remember Chaney backing up, facing the road and standing on the bank on the other side of the ditch, and Jordan stood in the middle of the road and shot him. Jordan then said, 'you didn't leave me anything but a nigger, but at least I killed me a nigger."

Barnette, formerly of Meridian, has been identified at the trial as a member of the White Knights group and a member of the Klan lynching party.

Henry Rask, an F.B.I. agent, testified that he obtained the 10-page statement from Barnette during a 5 hour 56 minute session at a motel near Spring-

Continued on Page 8, Colur 2

hill, La., on Nov. 20, 1964. The rights workers disappeared on June 21 of that year.

Defense attorneys fought the introduction of the statement and subjected Mr. Rask to a lengthy cross-examination while the all-white jury was not present. United States District Court Judge W. Harold Cox presided.

The judge invited the defense to put Barnette on the witness stand to testify about the statement, but the lawyers refused. It was considered unlikely that the defendant would take the stand later in the trial.

3 Days of Talks

Mr. Rask said that he and another agent, James A. Wooten, talked with Barnette on Nov. 19, 20 and 21. The defendant said the slayings "had been bothering him and he wanted to tell us about it," Mr. Rask said.

Several months later, the agent declared, it became "common knowledge" that Barnette had given the F.B.I. a statement about the lynching and the defendant "began to fear for his life."

Agent Wooten said that he gave Barnette a check for $200 on Dec. 18 and a check for $100 on Jan. 6, 1965. The money was paid "for services rendered and wages lost" during a total of 27 interviews, Mr. Wooten declared.

Judge Cox admitted the statement as evidence, but ruled that references to any of the defendants except Barnette must be blocked out. This decision riddled the statement as read with a series of "blanks."

A lawyer representing neither side explained that an incriminating statement made outside the presence of the 17 other defendants could not be used against them. Barnette was alone with the two agents.

The Government has charged the 18 men, including Neshoba County Sheriff Lawrence A. Rainey and his chief deputy, Cecil R. Price, with a conspiracy to deny the three rights workers their constitutional rights.

Conviction carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a $5,000 fine. Murder is not a Federal offense unless committed on Government property, and the state courts have taken no action in the case.

Barnette, a nearly bald man, wearing a neat shirt and glasses, stared impassively ahead as the statement was read to the jury this afternoon by John Doar, the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights.

Barnette, the statement related, was having dinner at "Blank's" house at about 8 P.M. on June 21 when "Blank" called and said that "the Klan had a job to do." Barnette learned more about that job later, the statement went on.

"'Blank,' told us that three civil rights workers were in jail in Philadelphia, Miss., and we were going to catch them and give them a whipping," Barnette was reported to have told the F.B.I. agents.

The Government has accused Deputy Price of arresting Mr. Chaney on a speeding charge and the other two youths on "investigation" and holding the three in jail until the mob had time to assemble and intercept them.

"'Blank' stated we have a place to bury them," the statement continued. This was Barnette's first indication, he reportedly said, that the evening's work was to involve more than a flogging.

The mob soon got word that the three youths had been released from jail and were driving toward Meridian on Highway 19, the statement reported. The group drove down the road and found the rights workers had been halted by another car.

Jordan testified yesterday that it was Deputy Price who had apprehended the youths. Today's statement said that the three were placed in an automobile and driven to the shooting site with "Blank" and Jordan.

The statement followed closely Jordan's testimony in its account of the disposal of the bodies. It said they were hauled through the outskirts of Philadelphia to a farm where an earthen dam was under construction and the three were buried by a bulldozer.

The F.B.I. discovered the remains in the dam on Aug. 4, 1964. The farm was owned by Olen Lovell Burrage, one of the defendants in the conspiracy case.

After the burial, Barnette's statement continued, "'Blank' said I'll kill anyone who talks, even if it's is my own brother." The lynching party returned to Meridian between 1 and 1:30 A.M. on June 22, the statement reported.