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Bowers Happy Over Death Of Dahmer, Witness Says

HATTIESBURG (AP)—Robert Earl Wilson, an admitted former officer of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, told the murder trial jury of Sam H. Bowers Jr. today the former Klan chieftain was "jubilant" over the death of Negro voting rights leader Vernon F. Dahmer Sr.

Bowers, former Imperial Wizard of the militant White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, is on trial for the fiery predawn attack on Dahmer's Kelly Settlement home and store near Hattiesburg Jan. 10, 1966. Dahmer died the following day of injuries sustained in the burning.

Wilson, called as a surprise witness by the government, said he heard Bowers tell other Klan officials five days after Dahmer's home and store were firebombed: "Well, what do you think of what my boys did to that Dahmer Nigger for me? It's sure going to take the pressure off me in Washington."

BOWERS WAS to testify a short time later before the then House Unamerican Activities Committee in Washington.

"He (Bowers) really seemed really happy that Dahmer had been killed," Wilson testified.

Wilson said the remarks came at the home of Burris Dunn Jr. of Jackson, who Wilson said was then head of the Klan unit to which he belonged.

UNDER CROSS-EXAMINATION, Wilson stated he had received $1,600 from "different agents of the FBI" in return for his information.

Wilson testified in 1968 in an earlier trial not related to the Dahmer case he joined the Ku Klux Klan in 1965 and became Grand Giant, or state secretary-treasurer. He said he began selling information to the FBI in February, 1966, after he decided FBI

See BOWERS—Page 4

Continued from Page 1

agents suspected him of Klan activities.

He said after he heard Bowers speak of Dahmer's death he wanted to end his Klan activities. He testified he maintained the appearance of membership, however, so he could continue providing information on Klan activities to the FBI.

HE SAID he left Mississippi in May, 1967, with Dunn's wife and children and returned three months later. He left the state again in 1968, he said. He declined to reveal where he lives now.

Wilson was allowed to testify only after a secret conference with Bowers' attorneys, Lawrence Arrington of Hattiesburg and Percy Quinn of Laurel. The two attorneys objected vigorously when the surprise witness was called and asked that they be allowed to question him in private before he took the stand.

Circuit Court Judge Stanton Hall allowed the conference but only in the presence of two deputy sheriffs.

THE UNEXPECTED testimony of Wilson followed that of two former Klansmen yesterday who implicated Bowers in the planning of what the state maintains was a carefully rehearsed plot to kill Dahmer.

Billy Roy Pitts, considered the star state witness, said Bowers had ordered the attack and told klansmen he wanted Dahmer killed "if it is at all possible."

Under direct examination Pitts told the court: "Sam Bowers used me as an instrument or a tool to kill for him."

T. W. Rogers, also identified as a former klansman, also testified that the attack was ordered by Bowers.

Two earlier state trials for Bowers, former imperial wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, ended in mistrials as did a federal conspiracy trial.