

Klan Leader Lectures Widely to Rebuild Power

By ROY REED

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NEW ORLEANS, Nov. 27—Robert M. Shelton Jr., imperial wizard of the United Klans of America, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, got out of the Federal prison at Texarkana, Tex., one year ago last week.

The first thing he did on arriving home in Tuscaloosa, Ala., was to make a speech. It was as if he had never left. The Negro had taken over the white man's job and now was in his bedroom, he told the enthusiastic crowd that had gathered to welcome him.

Mr. Shelton, 41 years old, his blue eyes a little less fiery than before, has been on the speaking circuit ever since that day, working night and day to rebuild the Klan organization that very nearly crumbled in his absence.

Visits Campuses

He makes two to four speeches a week and appears frequently on local television. He also speaks to college students and says he is not discouraged by what he acknowledges is a "mixed reaction" on the campuses.

And, following the example of his political hero, George C. Wallace, in 1968, he is not staying in the South, but is speaking in all parts of the country.

He says his efforts are paying off especially well in Michigan and Pennsylvania, as well as in the Southern and Border states where the Klan has long had a foothold.

Observers in Pennsylvania say the Klan does not have anybody worried there. But Michigan may be a different story. There seems to be an upsurge of Klan activity in that state, particularly in communities that have large populations of Southern immigrants.

Mr. Shelton and one of his lieutenants, J. Robert Jones, grand dragon of the North Carolina Klan, were sentenced to a year in prison for contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over certain membership records to the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1966.

Membership Declines

All the Klan organizations, among which the United Klans is by far the largest, had a combined membership of about 14,000 before Mr. Shelton was imprisoned, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Membership dropped drastically while he was out of circulation.

The F.B.I. estimated the total membership of 18 Klan organizations at 5,300 as of March 1 of this year. With Mr.

Since Release from Prison, Shelton Is Bringing His Message North

Shelton's campaign, the figure undoubtedly is higher now, although he will not reveal the size of his organization.

Mr. Shelton talked of his new mission in an interview recently at Forrest City, Ark., while he was waiting to address a rally. He seemed excited by the response he was getting in the North.

"This is no longer a sectional thing," he said, imitating, perhaps unconsciously, the language that Mr. Wallace used to describe his third party political movement in 1968.

"We're strong enough in the North to tie our shoes," he said. "But we want to put our boots on."

Mr. Shelton has appeared at a number of rallies this year in Pennsylvania and Michigan. He spoke to more than 400 persons in February at the city-owned youth center of Dearborn, Mich., an all-white Detroit suburb of 107,000 population. The Klan announced that it had scheduled rallies or cross burnings this fall in the Michigan cities of Dearborn, Flint, Grand Rapids, Dundee and Benton Harbor.

Claims 3,000 in State

The Michigan Klan claims 3,000 members, which is probably inflated if the F.B.I. estimate of a nationwide total of 5,300 in March was sound.

It lists nine addresses from which interested persons can buy Klan literature and such items as 45-r.p.m. records entitled "Ride With Wallace" and "Who Likes a Nigger."

The American Independent party of Michigan, the Wallace party, nominated Robert E. Miles, the Michigan grand dragon of the United Klans, for secretary of state at its convention last summer. A Klansman ran for the city commission in Pontiac, but withdrew because of what he described as threats.

Mr. Wallace received more than 10 per cent of the vote in Michigan in the Presidential election in 1968.

"Once they see I'm not sprouting horns, they understand the organization," Mr. Shelton said of his Northern audiences.

After the interview he went on stage to speak to 300 to 400 persons in the Forest City Civic Center. It became clear that he had taken on considerable polish since his preprison days.

He spoke forcefully and deliberately, using some of the

inflections and mannerisms of Mr. Wallace. He wore a blue suit and a blue shirt. A blue handkerchief was tucked into his breast pocket. His face, once thin and hawk-like, was fuller and almost handsome.

He told a few jokes. "Negroid is like hemorrhoid: they're both a pain," he said.

'Anti-Christ Conspiracy'

He got in a few licks at the Jews and "the anti-Christ conspiracy," all the while protesting that he should not be labeled anti-Semitic.

He talked of Negroes raping white girls in integrated schools; of the coming of racial amalgamation, of socialism, welfare cheaters, Communists and Black Panthers.

He described Vice President Agnew as "a Greek coming South bearing false gifts, trying to make Wallace-type speeches" while President Nixon was "saying something else in the North."

The rally began with a right-wing film and ended, after Mr. Shelton's 50-minute speech, with a recording of "The Old Rugged Cross." While the hymn was played, the auditorium was darkened and a picture of a flaming cross was projected onto a screen on the stage.