

Witness Tells of Role in Slaying of Rights Workers



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James E. Jordan

By WALTER RUGABER

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MERIDAN, Miss., Oct. 12—

A former member of the Ku Klux Klan quietly described in Federal court today his role in the slaying of three young civil rights workers near Philadelphia, Miss., in 1964.

James Edward Jordan, a Government witness, testified he had been posted as a lookout when a group of Klansmen went a short distance down a lonely country road with Michael H. Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James E. Chaney in custody.

"I heard car doors slam, some loud talk that I could not distinguish, and then I heard several shots," Jordan said. He testified that he walked down the road to find "a bunch of men standing and milling around."

The three young men were sprawled on the ground, he said. They were then loaded into the back of a station wagon in which they had been apprehended, he said, and were taken to another site where a bulldozer buried them in a common grave.

The rights workers had been released from the Neshoba County Jail after the mob had assembled, Jordan said, and were then chased down by the

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Associated Press Wirephoto

The Rev. Delmar Dennis in Meridian, Miss., yesterday. He said he joined the Ku Klux Klan in 1964 and was given over \$5,000 a year and expenses for information by F.B.I.

chief deputy sheriff, Cicil R. Price, as they left town.

The Federal Government has charged the deputy and 17 other men with conspiracy to deny the youths their constitutional rights. Not all the defendants participated in the actual killing, Jordan said.

The conspiracy charge, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine, was filed because murder is not a Federal offense unless committed on Federal property. State courts took no action in the case.

Jordan, though under the same conspiracy indictment, is not a defendant in the current trial.

The courtroom, filled nearly to capacity, heard the testimony in silence. A Negro woman, who was not immediately identified, was led away from the courtroom sobbing uncontrollably.

Jordan's appearance on the witness stand was the climax of a day that began with testimony from a Klansman who identified Price and Sheriff Lawrence A. Rainey of Neshoba County as members of the militant white supremacist group.

Delmar Dennis of Meridian, a young Southern Baptist minister, said that before the slayings, some of his fellow Klansmen had been impatient over an apparent delay in the planned execution of Mr.

Schwerner.

The witness also named three of the men on trial here as members of an armed party that once left a Klan gathering to attack Negroes at a nearby church. He said the mob inter-reported the Negroes had been "well beaten and well stomped."

Klan Leader Accused

Both Jordan and Dennis said that Sam H. Bowers Jr. of Laurel, whom they identified as the Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, had approved of the June 21, 1964, slaying.

Jordan testified that the Klan leader, who is also on trial here, had said that Mr. Schwerner, a 24-year-old white New Yorker, was "a thorn in the side of everyone living, especially the white people, and should be taken care of."

After the slaying, Jordan said, Bowers pronounced it "well done" and "a job to be proud of."

Jordan quoted the Klan leader as saying that if there were any "instruments" involved, "they should be gotten rid of."

Dennis said that Bowers, after the slaying, indicated he was "pleased" and declared that "it was the first time that Christians had planned and carried out the executions of a Jew."