

Fugitive Seized in New Orleans In Slaying of 2 Policemen Here

By PAUL MONTGOMERY

The last of five alleged members of the Black Liberation Army indicted in the 1971 murder of Police Officers Waverly Jones and Joseph Piagentini in Harlem was arrested in New Orleans yesterday morning after a police stake-out.

The suspect, Herman Bell, was surrounded in his Buick Riviera by a combined force of New York City and New Orleans detectives and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents. He was held in \$500,000 bail awaiting extradition proceedings.

Bell, who is 25 years old, had eluded capture for more than two years. He was placed on the F.B.I.'s ten-most-wanted list in May. The police said that he was unarmed and that he had surrendered without a struggle.

The fugitive had been living at 820½ Second Street in the Garden district of New Orleans. His wife and two children were with him when the joint force armed with submachine guns, rifles and shotguns, threw a cordon around his car.

It is believed that authorities traced him through his wife. Assistant District Attorney Robert Tanenbaum of Manhattan and three detectives from the major-crimes-investigation unit left New York City for New Orleans on Thursday to take part in the stake-out.

The other four men indicted for the Piagentini-Jones murders are already in custody awaiting trial in Manhattan. District Attorney Frank S. Hogan has said he will seek the death penalty in the case, which former Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy called "the most vicious crime against policemen in this city in memory."

Victims Were on Call

Police officers Jones and Piagentini were answering a report of someone sick in the Colonial Park Houses, 159th Street and the Harlem River Drive, on the night of May 21, 1971, when they were killed by a group of men who followed them and shot them down from behind.

In the waves of attacks on policemen, officials began to talk of a Black Liberation Army as the group responsible. It was described as a loosely knit organization dedicated to killing policemen, and robbing banks to finance its activities. Its adherents were variously numbered from 20 to several hundred, and it was said to be active in New York City, Atlanta, San Francisco, St. Louis and other cities.

The first break in the Piagentini-Jones case came on Aug. 28, 1971, in San Francisco, when two men—Albert Washington, now 23, and Anthony Bottom, 21—were arrested and

charged with trying to fire a machine gun at a policeman. Officer Piagentini's service revolver was found with two men.

At the end of 1971, a Manhattan grand jury indicted five men in the double murder, including Washington and Bottom. Two brothers, Gabriel Torres, now 25, and Francisco Torres, age unknown, were also named. The fifth man, now identified as Bell, was not named because he was still at large.

Bank Robbery Charged

The two Torres brothers were also in custody—Francisco in connection with a bank robbery in San Francisco, and Gabriel in the Bronx on a charge of possessing a sawed-off shotgun.

The four men were subsequently transferred to the city on the Jones-Piagentini charges. All pleaded not guilty, and were awaiting a trial that was to start tomorrow. With Bell's arrest, it is expected that the trial

Bel was first named public defender Murphy in connection with another case—the ambush and murder of Police Officers Gregory Foster and Rocco Laurie in the East Village on Jan. 27, 1972. He was listed as one of four men wanted in connection with the case, but was never indicted.

It was also revealed at the time that Bell was being sought in connection with a robbery of \$12,000 from a San Francisco branch of the Bank of America on Sept. 20, 1971.

This year at least nine members of the Black Liberation Army have been arrested or killed in shootouts with the police. Of the 20 persons named at various times as adherents of the group, only four—Avon White, Melvin Kearney, Twyman Meyers and Raul Estremera—are still believed to be at large.

At his arraignment before United States Magistrate Morey Sear in New Orleans yesterday, Bell said he had not worked in six months but had about \$4,000 in his house. He said his only conviction was for second-degree robbery in Oakland, Calif.

Bell is a native of Belzonia, Miss., whose parents now live in Charlottesville, Va. He said he attended Oakland College in 1967 on an athletic scholarship and subsequently worked as a mail handler and laboratory assistant.

The magistrate appointed Martin E. Feldman of New Orleans as Bell's attorney and set a hearing for Sept. 12 to determine if he would be sent first to California or New York City to face charges.