

AMBUSH KILLING OF NEGRO, 44, PUZZLES AMITE OFFICERS

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Liberty --- Whoever gunned Louis Allen to death Friday night mortally frightened him first.

The powerful 44-year-old Negro logger was lifting the top loop of a barbed wire fence gap so he could drive his bobtailed log truck into the gravel driveway to his house when he saw or heard his assassin make ready to kill him.

Allen hurled his 200 pound frame headlong under the front end of the truck and scrambled as fast as he could. His head was under the driver's seat, headed southward, and his feet were under the front bumper when the first load of buckshot hit him.

---TWICE SHOT

It hit him at the hairline at the left top corner of the forehead and tore a widening hole to come out through his right cheekbone.

The second load of deer shot struck slightly lower on the left side of his face and emerged through the right side of the neck, some of the shot entering his chest.

One or the other of the strong shotgun loads ripped through and blew out the left front tire of the log truck.

MYSTERY CASE

Sheriff Daniel Jones of Amite County continued his almost uninterrupted investigation into the case Sunday. The tall young sheriff, but a month in office was confronted with one of the hardest to crack of all Amite County cases of many past years.

Meanwhile, active and concentrated integration organizations all over the United States were apparently working relentlessly to make a "civil rights" case out of the killing of Allen.

As a reporter stood in Highway 24 Sunday and studied the scene of the ambush slaying of the independent Negro logger. Robert Moses drove a late model car from in front of the Allen home, some 125 yards north of the highway, and headed eastward toward Liberty.

MOSES ON HAND

(Moses was the mainspring in the McComb racial turmoil of 1961. The New York City Negro, a former teacher in schools of that city, was also involved in racial events of that time in Liberty.

(He has since become perhaps the most widely known of the intergration workers in the state, through activities in Delta localities and only last week in Hattiesburg.)

Several other persons, not recognizable in the fast flash of sight, were in the car with Moses.

FBI PROBE

Meanwhile, C. G. Prospere of Natchez, special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's South Mississippi division, and three or four more G-men were in Amite County probing the case for possible civil rights implications.

The FBI agents had come in Saturday night in response to

complaints to the Justice Department from Mississippi, Milwaukee, Wisc., New York City and probably other places, that Allen's killing came because he had been active in Negro voter registration and similar efforts in the locality. But Sheriff Jones and other competent insiders in Amite County are inclined to doubt that the cause of the Negro's death. They are not overlooking the possibility, but seem to hold troubled Allen may had other problems - such as domestic - that brought about his death.

SHERIFF'S STORY

Jones told a reporter he was asleep at his house, also on Highway 24 and about halfway from Liberty to Allen's driveway, when Allen's son, Henry, 18, and a nephew, John Westley Horton, 18, awakened him at 12:30 a.m. Saturday to tell him that "something bad was wrong with Louis Allen, at his house.

The sheriff found that "something" indeed was wrong. Allen was dead in a three foot smear of blood. The sheriff and Coroner E. D. (Genie) Bellue empaneled an inquest jury at the scene.

Members were Jones, Bellue, Liberty Town Marshal C. L. Bates, recent sheriff E. L. (Brother) Caston, K. L. Gordon, Charles Purvis, Flynn Dixon Jr., B. A. (Sonny) Harvey and Quin Toney. Dr. W. D. Bridges also accompanied the party to the scene.

LEFT HOME

The coroner's jury found evidence to indicate that Allen had left his house in his truck between 6 and 7 p.m. to go to the house of a white man, Lloyd King north of Liberty on business.

Shortly after Allen left home, his son Henry and nephew John Wesley had also departed the tar-papered house to go to Gloster, about eight miles further west on Highway 24.

The youths had returned at midnight to find the father's truck in the 30 foot driveway from Highway 24 to the gap in the fence. They moved it so they could drive into the road to the house - and found Louis Allen's shot-torn body underneath.

That is when they drove eastward two miles to Sheriff Jones' house.

It appeared to the officers that Allen had returned home, halted his fairly new Ford truck, pulled up its emergency brake, left the engine running and the light on and dismounted to undo the two barbed wire loops that closed the fence.

DEATH APPROACHES

He had lifted the top loop of the gap when, apparently, he became suddenly, terrifyingly aware of the approach of doom. He dived under the truck and died there in a crescendo of gunfire.

His wife told Sheriff Jones that she heard three shots in front of the house about 8:35 p.m. Friday. She fixed the time by the fact that what she said was her favorite television program, featuring somebody named Jimmy Newman, had just come on at 8:30, and she was listening to it, or watching it, when she heard the shots.

WIFE SAW LIGHTS

She went to a front window and could headlights shining near the highway 125 yards away, but did nothing about it. She said she returned to the window several more times before she went to bed and saw the lights each time, but growing dimmer.

The lights had gone out with the truck's battery and the engine when her son and the other youth reached the scene.

Dr. Bridges' examination at the scene also fixed the time of death at about 8:30 to 9 p.m. Friday, or somewhat more than three hours before the body was found.

TIME PINPOINTED

King confirmed that Allen was at his house on business Friday night, leaving about 8:10. Some 20 or 25 minutes would be required to travel the distance tween the two places, Jones said.

It is the sheriff's opinion that the Negro's assassin either rose up suddenly from the deep ditch south of the highway or came swiftly over the crest of a hill a few yards east in a vehicle and fired from the highway.

In either case, it appeared that Allen knew what he was in for, did not have time to run, and dived under the truck in frantic desperation.

Sheriff Jones said that several persons had appeared to tell him that, at one time or another from 9 to midnight Friday, they had passed and had seen the truck with the lights on.

NEWS SPREADS

By Saturday noon the word of the Negro's death had spread to many areas of the U. S., particularly Jackson -- where Moses' group and other integration organizations are centered for Mississippi; Milwaukee, where a brother of Allen's lives, and New York, where Carl Rachlin an integrationish lawyer, has headquarters.

Allen's brother, Morris, told the Milwaukee Journal that his brother had once testified against a white man charged with killing another Negro. The brother added that Louis had been subjected to "harassment by the law" since then.

Sheriff Jones said Sunday that he believed he was in better position, through having been chief deputy sheriff for the past four years during most of Amite Count's civil rights agitation, to know the leaders among the Negro integrationists than almost anybody else.

NO 'RIGHTS' TROUBLE

He added that, to his knowledge, Allen had not been in any position in integration efforts. The sheriff said, however, that Allen had been in trouble with the law many times, mostly on bad checks and concealed weapons.

The Negro also recently seemed to have been having domestic problems, including reported violence, the sheriff indicated.

Edward Smyth, president of the Milwaukee chapter of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People, told the Associated Press Saturday he had asked the NAACP's field representative in Jackson to investigate.

WHITE LAWYER HEARD

Rachlin, who was chief counsel for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) when the recent city administration of McComb defeated the organization and secured a federal court injunction against "test rides" to the McComb bus station in 1961, was next heard from.

"Louis Allen has just been killed Liberty, Miss.," the white lawyer said in a telegram to U. S. Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy. "Ten others have been wounded since the Herbert Lee killing. Other abuses in Hattiesburg and Canton require immediate presence of federal marshal."

Rachlin's telegram did not identify others allegedly wounded.

FBI SENT IN

In Washington, the Justice Department said it had asked the FBI to start immediately upon an investigation to determine whether there was basis for federal action.

Jones said Sunday he believed the G-men were concentrating upon the question of whether there was a civil rights violation involved in Allen's killing.

He emphasized that he did not think the agents were probing the killing, as such, and that he likewise did not believe they would find the Negro-white question a ruling factor.

WIFE HURT

The sheriff said that Allen's wife was injured on the head several weeks ago to an extent that stitches were required. At the time, he continued she told a physician treating her that she had been struck by her husband.

"She says now that she fell and struck her head on a bedpost," Jones added. He said that he had also been told that Friday afternoon, the victim and his wife had a "bitter word battle" on the streets of Liberty.

The sheriff said he was told during the inquest Saturday morning by Henry Crawford Allen, son of the dead man, that "mamma has been expecting this."

But, later, when he took a statement from the youth, the latter said the sheriff had misunderstood him.

LEE DEATH WITNESS

On Sept. 25, 1961, Louis Allen was one of three Negro and two white witnesses to the fatal shooting of Herbert Lee, 52, a Negro farmer of the Fifth District of Amite County, by his neighbor, State Rep. E. H. Hurst, at a liberty cotton gin.

A member of a coroner's jury that cleared Hurst the next day says that Allen told the jurors that, following an argument over an old debt owed by Lee to Hurst, the Negro came on the legislator with a tire tool in his hand; was warned by Hurst not to come closer, then was shot by the white man when he continued approaching.

But later, when the now familiar civil rights violation hue and cry had been raised in connection with Lee's killing, Allen changed his story and related a different version to FBI agents, Liberty sources say.

Strictly non-documented rumors have been current in and around Liberty since the Lee case of 1961 that Allen may have become a "tip-off man" for the integration-minded Justice Department.

Similarly, there was at one time a belief that the logger was one of the spearheads of a reported complaint that "economic pressure" was being applied against some Amite County Negroes.

OTHER TROUBLES

Then, in 1962, Allen was arrested by Amite officers and charged with trespass and interference with officers when he interposed himself in the case of a number of Negro shoplifters held in jail in Liberty after their arrest with a large number of stolen suits and other items of clothing.

Last October he gave Sheriff E. L. Caston a bad check for his motor vehicle tags and was bound over to the grand jury that will meet this month in circuit court, Jones--a deputy at that time --said.

In addition, he has an appeal of his conviction and fine of \$100 and 10 days in jail on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon from a justice of the peace court coming up in the same term of court, the sheriff said.

Over the past several years the Negro had been held on other bad check and similar cases, the officer added.

But civil rights affair? Not to his knowledge, Jones said. The sheriff said even the rumor that Allen changed his Lee killing story in a FBI report was news to him -- he did not know if it happened.

WEST OF LIBERTY

The Allen home is exactly west of the Tanyard Creek bridge on Highway 24 leaving Liberty for Gloster. Allen, his wife, Elizabeth, and their baby Mary Elizabeth, 3, live there.

The two sons, Tommy Louis Allen, 22, and Henry Crawford Allen, 18, and a stepdaughter, Elaine Allen, have liberty addresses but live elsewhere.

The funeral was scheduled for 11 a. m. today at the Star Hill Methodist Church.