Bobby Hutton

Bobby Hutton was born in 1950. He was only 16 years old when he joined the Black Panther Party (BPP) in December, 1966. He was arrested in May 1967 when he led a Black Panther march in Sacramento to protest against a new gun bill. The Mulford Act made it illegal to carry guns in public and was a direct response to the Panthers" police patrols in the community.

On 6th April, 1968 eight BPP members, including Hutton, Eldridge Cleaver and David Hilliard, were traveling in two cars when they were ambushed by the Oakland police. Cleaver and Hutton ran for cover and found themselves in a basement surrounded by police. The building was fired upon for over an hour. When a tear-gas canister was thrown into the basement the two men decided to surrender. Cleaver was wounded in the leg and so Hutton said he would go first. When he left the building with his hands in the air he was shot twelve times by the police and was killed instantly. Over 2,000 people attended his funeral at the Ephesians Church of God in Berkeley, California on 12th April, 1968.

Little Bobby Hutton was the first to join the newly formed Black Panther Party for Self Defense. He was only 16 years old when he joined but already believed in the ideals that Seale and Newton had outlined in the Ten-Point Program; he was dedicated to serving his community.

On April 6, 1968, Oakland police ambushed a carload of BPP members on a side street. An hour and a half shootout ensued, resulting in the death of BPP member Bobby Hutton and the arrest of all others present on the scene. Bobby Hutton was shot more than twelve times after he had already surrendered and stripped down to his underwear to prove he was not armed. The murder of Bobby Hutton was a major event in the party's history: it incensed them and inevitably made them stronger.

BOBBY HUTTON -

The Day My Beloved Brother Comrade was Murdered

On April 6, 1968, two days after Martin Luther King had been murdered, I got dressed and prepared to go to Central Headquarters of the Black Panther Party (BPP) along with Panthers Jimmy Charley and Terry Claridy. I read a chapter of the "Red Book - Quotations by Chairman Mao" before I left. We arrived at Central Headquarters at 45th and Grove St. to get assigned to various locations to sell the Party's newspaper "The Black Panther," collect donations and pass out leaflets in the community about the barbecue for the "Free Huey Newton" defense committee to be held at then called - Defremery Park on April 7th.

Later that evening, around 4pm, other Panthers and I, in groups of two and three, were circulating in the community and going to high schools spreading the word that despite the murder of Dr. King, they should stay cool, lay low and refrain from all counterproductive and random violence, because riots would cause nothing but mass genocide. If trouble erupted, it would be open season on blacks and the BPP would be the first attacked.

Around 6pm, some Party members and I met at a Panther's apartment off San Pablo Ave. We decided that we would ride in three vehicles transporting food and supplies for the barbecue picnic and at the same time we would observe and patrol the police activities in the Black community.

Around 7:30pm, after patrolling and picking up supplies for the rally, two policemen turned their cruiser south observing and following us onto 28th street and Union street where we had stopped for a minute for Eldridge Cleaver who had to urinate. Eldridge and L"il Bobby Hutton were riding in a 1961 Ford with several other Panthers. I was riding shotgun, in the center of the back seat, armed with a banana clip 30 caliber carbine. Panther Charles Bursey was to the left of me and Donnell Lankford was to the right. The officers pulled their cruiser to a stop in the middle of the street side by side with these vehicles. (The 1961 Ford with Florida license plates had been observed all week because it was known by the Oakland Police as a Panther vehicle.) Gunfire erupted at once, two wild shots were followed instantly by a deluge of lead that riddled the squad cars and shots were fired by police into the rear window of the 1954 Ford in which I was riding.

More policemen flocked to the shooting scene. Charles Bursey was able to get out of the car and escape the scene. Donnell Lankford, who was to the right of me, attempted to open the door so we could take cover, but the door was jammed. The door finally came open, but as soon as we tried to exit the vehicle, there were about a dozen police with their guns and shotguns drawn and thrust into our faces. They were making racist, insulting remarks while we were lying face down, handcuffed behind our backs, helpless on the pavement. They made statements such as, "you niggers just lost Martin Luther King and if you make one move we will not hesitate to blow your heads off."

We were then put into the police paddy wagon. Donnell, John L. Scott and I were the first to be arrested. The over- reactionary pigs sprayed mace into our eyes after we were already handcuffed and helpless. As the police wagon drove away from the scene, I could barely see out the back, but it appeared to me that there were black people running behind the wagon saying, "Free these brothers, you racist cops." I told my comrades in the police wagon that this was a deliberate ambush, attempting to commit genocide against the BPP.

The booking officer asked me if I wanted to make a statement after being booked. I said no, I was taking the 5th amendment until I consulted with my attorney, Charles Garry. They put Lankford, Scott and me into different holding cells. I could hear racist statements like, "They should kill Eldridge Cleaver. He's like a wild animal running amok." Note: the ambush of other Party members was still going on at this time. Later that night, Harold Rodgers, Charles Garry's assistant attorney, visited me in my cell and told me that one Party member did not survive. That was the Party's first member and treasurer, Bobby James Hutton.

Long Live the Spirit of L"il Bobby Hutton.

Terry M. Cotton, former political prisoner and BPP member

Info compliments of It’s About time