

79yr old Klansman Arrested for 1964 Murders

Written by Robert ID666

Thursday, 06 January 2005 11:19 -

Murdered Civil Rights Workers

Reputed Ku Klux Klansman Edgar Ray Killen was arrested on triple murder charges Thursday evening in connection with the 1964 civil rights murders.

Killen, 79, of 10651 Road 515, Union, has long been the reputed Ku Klux Klan leader who masterminded the murders 40 years ago in Neshoba County.

He was being held in the Neshoba County Jail without bond, said Neshoba County Sheriff Larry Myers, who along with his chief deputy picked Killen up at his home in rural Neshoba County without incident at about 5:45 p.m.

Killen, along with 18 others, were indicted in 1967 on federal conspiracy charges surrounding the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner.

A Neshoba County grand jury returned 29 indictments Thursday afternoon, some of them in connection with the 1964 civil rights murders.

Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood was with the grand jury all day and witnesses connected with the 40-year-old case were seen at the Neshoba County Courthouse.

Grand jury proceedings are secret and the names of those indicted are not public record until individuals are served with warrants.

Arraignments for those who have been served will be tomorrow starting at 11 a.m., at the Neshoba County Courthouse before Circuit Judge Marcus Gordon, said Neshoba County District Attorney Mark Duncan.

It was not known if any of the other indictments were connected to the murders of the civil rights workers as they were still being processed by the Circuit Clerk just before 5 p.m.

Carolyn Goodman, the mother of Andrew Goodman, said Thursday night from her New York apartment, "This has been a long time coming, but it was definitely worth the wait. I knew in my heart this would happen eventually. It just had to be. I feel so relieved. My late husband Bobby

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Goodman, Andy's father, said this day would come eventually because it had to."

The grand jury convened at 9 a.m. in a small upstairs courtroom as constable Ken Spears and court bailiff Robert Sistrunk stood at the door.

Duncan, along with Hood, was with jurors until they recessed about 4:30 p.m.

During the day at least four potential witnesses sat in the hall just outside the grand jury room which is adjacent to the main courtroom.

Among them was Billy Wayne Posey, who was accompanied by his daughter, Lisa Hardy.

Posey was one of seven who was convicted in 1967 on federal conspiracy charges in connection with the murders.

Authorities had said that reported Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen, commonly known as "Preacher," is the prime target.

During a mid-morning break, Hood asked members of the state and local media standing nearby to go downstairs, saying that some of the witnesses "felt kind of intimidated" by the media.

"They don't want to be talked to and the grand jury sure doesn't," Hood said. "This has landed in their laps and they are just dealing with it like we are."

Hood refused to comment on the grand jury proceedings until indictments are handed down.

"I'm not going to make any statement at all," he said.

The state never brought murder charges in the June 21, 1964, killings of civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney.

Chaney, a 21-year-old black man from Meridian, and Goodman, 20, and Schwerner, 24, both white men from New York City, were part of the "Freedom Summer" program in Mississippi in which young civil rights workers organized voter education and registration campaigns.

The threesome disappeared when they went to investigate a fire at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in the Longdale community east of Philadelphia on June 21, 1964.

Seven men were convicted of federal civil rights violations in their deaths and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years, but none of the men served more than six years.

Last May community leaders joined The Philadelphia Coalition, a 30-member, multi-ethnic group of citizens, in passing a resolution asking the county District Attorney, the state Attorney General and the U. S. Department of Justice to make every effort to seek justice in the case.

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“We deplore the possibility that history will record that the state of Mississippi, and this community in particular, did not make a good faith effort to do its duty,” the Coalition’s resolution said.

The Coalition met privately with Hood and family members of one of the slain men in September.

David Goodman, the brother of Andrew Goodman, pleaded with Hood to prosecute the case, not only to give his family some amount of closure, but for Neshoba County and the state as well.

Goodman said sometimes you try a case even if you think you’re going to lose because you have to.

“It’s a matter of principle,” he said.

Goodman and his mother were also in Philadelphia in June for the 40th anniversary commemoration of the murders attended by Gov. Haley Barbour and others, including U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) and other leaders of the civil rights movement.

Despite the horrific death of her son in Neshoba County four decades ago, Carolyn Goodman said she was still drawn back to the state.

Even before her most recent trip, friends warned her that Mississippi and specifically Neshoba County could be a dangerous place.

The 88-year-old Mrs. Goodman quickly corrected them saying she had nothing but love for the state and county.

Her husband died in 1969 of a heart attack.

Mrs. Goodman this week went on to say she was opposed to capital punishment should Killen be found guilty and favors instead life in prison.

She said her visit to Neshoba County in September with the Coalition and Hood was most meaningful.

“It was so wonderful to meet there with that group of lovely people. It was reassuring to see those Neshoba countians make statements in favor of justice,” she said. “I wish everyone could have seen what I saw there.”

In December a \$100,000 reward was offered by a statewide religious organization for information leading to an arrest in the case.

Killen was 11 days shy of his 80th birthday when he was arrested.

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He was brought into the Neshoba County Detention Center wearing blue jeans and a long-sleeve buttoned-up green shirt. He sat with his arms crossed and propped on the counter as he was booked.

Killen was booked in as 6-foot 190 pounds, bald with some gray hair and green eyes.

Florence Mars, a native Neshoba countian who wrote a book, "Witness in Philadelphia," about the events surrounding the case and its effect on the community, said, "I'm glad that I have lived to see this day. I never thought it would happen."

She was one of the first persons to denounce the murders in 1964 and call for justice in the case.

[Source](#)