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First of 4 Birmingham bomb victims is buried

By JAMES D. WILLIAMS
AFRO Asst. Managing Editor

BIRMINGHAM — Three thousand eyes were focused on the baby blue casket in the front of St. John's AME Church Tuesday afternoon.

In the casket was the body of Carole Robertson, 14, one of four young girls killed Sunday in the dynamiting of the 16th Street Baptist Church.

She was the first to be buried and an overflow crowd filled the St. John's Church and spilled out into the street where another 1,500 persons waited and listened to the faint sounds that came through the windows.

* * *

The coffin, over which has been placed a spray of red and white roses, was not opened during the services.

At 2 p.m., one and a half hours before the start of the services, some 25 people were already in the church. By 3:30 p.m. The area had to be closed to traffic because of the huge number of people at hand.

This was to be a quiet service and the tone was set ice and the tone was set when the family arrived at St. John's, and with grim and set faces walked into the church through a crowd of photographers.

CAROLE WAS a member of the 16th Street Baptist Church but the blast rendered the building useless, hence the necessity of using St. John's, two blocks away.

All week long the leaders of the Human Rights Movement have been urging calmness and warning against any resort to violence.

However, there were many persons in the crowd and in the church who were visibly angered by the cruel death of the four children and were vocal in their bitterness, which harbored on the thin edge of violence.

Present in the audience were the members of the Parker High School band, dressed in their blue and white uniforms. Carole had been a member of that band and played second clarinet.

The Rev. John H. Cross, pastor of the 16th Street Baptist Church, officiated at the rites.

* * *

"SUFFER LITTLE children to come unto me and forbid them not," the Rev. Hobart E. Oden Jr., assistant pastor of 16th Street Baptist Church said as he read the scripture.

Born in Birmingham on April 24, 1949, Carole was the third child of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin C. Robertson Sr., who survive.

"We come from all walks of life, but our ambitions and desires are the same. In the midst of this confused city, bring us the capacity to walk in a spirit of calmness," said the Rev. C. E. Thomas, pastor of St. John's.

A companion at the side of the mother gently waved a fan. The church was warm and still.

* * *

CAROLE ATTENDED the Hill School, and the Wilkerson Elementary School, graduating in May of last year. She was in the tenth grade.

"We live here in a society in which we have not made safe the streets, the homes or the churches," said the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, president of the Alabama Chirstian Movement.

Usually a speaker who hurls words of fire, the Rev. Mr. Shuttlesworth spoke simply as he told the family "you, by your loss, have made a payment on this great thing called freedom."

In the audience, as the words rang out, was a number of white persons and clergymen, who had come to add their grief to that of the family.

* * *

"WE SHALL work to see their deaths were not in vain. We pledge again our lives, our future, our sacred consciousness," said the Rev. Mr. Shuttlesworth.

There were cries of "amen" from the audience and it was evident there was agreement with the minister.

The clock raced swiftly ahead and now it was 2:50 and the Rev. Mr. Cross, the child's pastor, stood to deliver the eulogy.

What does one say about a 14-year-old girl who died before she had a chance to live? How does one sum up her life? How does one give meaning to her death?

* * *

THIS IS the way the Rev. Mr. Cross did these things.

"When the atrocious act was committed on Sunday morning, it was not committed against us but against all freedom-loving people.

I believe with my heart that out of this dastardly act, this inhuman deed, somehow we have been brought together as we have never been brought to gether.

It is not as colored, not as white, not as Catholic and not as Protestant that these people filled the church, but as the Rev. Mr. Cross said, "As Children of God".

"This was not an ordinary type of suffering. But here is suffering identified with a cause. The very way they died shows they were caught in a vice. It has been, so to speak, a righteous death.

"It has added to the cause of those who seek the righteous cause."

* * *

AND NOW THE tears came, slowly at first, but this was a time to cry not only for Carole, who was beyond crying, but for mankind.

The minister spoke on of the crucifixion of Christ and compared Carole's death to His. Both died for causes and both left behind "one great fellowship of love".

The words of the minister died and The Jilters, a group of four young girls—stood up from their green dresses. Laura Poole recited a poem remembering Carole and then the sometimes unsure voices of the girls turned to song.

At the piano was Mrs. Ruth Cowell, a teacher at the Wilkerson school. Carole was once a member of this group and it was fitting that the members should sing the last song for her.

SHORTLY AFTER four the business at the church was concluded and the casket was carried out. Behind on the floor lay sprigs of greenery.

Approximately 100 cars formed the motorcade to the Shadow Lawn cemetery. Shadow Lawn cemetery. They were led by a motorcycle patrolman, and in Birmingham, at the cut of the day, a little colored girl had the right of way, as all traffic stopped.

The graveside rites were brief and simple — a prayer and then farewell.

THE FAMILY sat beneath an awning that cut off the rays of the dying sun. As the casket slowly disappeared into the waiting hole, tears came to the eyes of the mother and father, and the sister, Mrs. Edwina R. Brad dock, and the brother, Alvin C. Roberton Jr.

As he turned away from his daughter for the last time. Mr. Roberston sobbed the horrible grasp of a man in pain. Led to a car, he turned to go back up the hill to where his daughter was waiting.

Finally, he was persuaded to enter the car.

Up on the hill, three men began to quickly shovel the red dirt onto the casket.

This was the final note. This was the end. A child is dead but she is not forgotten.

JFK urged to set Day of Mourning

WASHINGTON (NNPA)—Four Senators asked President Kennedy Tuesday to set aside Sunday for a day of national observance in memory of the four children killed in the bombing last Sunday of a Birmingham church.

In a resolution urging the tribute, the Senators said "the conscience of the nation was shocked by the killing and maiming of colored children attending religious services in the church."

Sens. Philip A. Hart (Dem. Mich.) Thomas H Kuchel (Rep. - Calif.), Hubert H. Humphrey (Dem. - Minn.) and Jacob K. Javits (Rep. - N. Y.) signed the resolution which they sent to the White House accompanied by a letter.

They also noted that Sept. 22 was the 101st anniversary of the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation.

THE CONCLUDING portions of the resolution read:

"Resolved by the Senate of the United States, that it extends its deep condolence to the families of these children; and

"Further, that the President of the United States be informed that it is the sense of the Senate that he proclaim Sunday, (Sept. 22) a day of national observance in memory of these children and a day of rededication in this Nation to the principles of law, equality and tolerance."

* * *

THEIR LETTER to President Kennedy said in part:

Dear Mr. President:

We share your grief and outrage over the killing of young Americans in Birmingham last Sunday. This day will always be remembered with shame, remorse and sorrow.

We respectfully urge you to issue a Presidential Proclamation designating next Sunday (Sept. 22.) as a day of national mourning and remembrance for the young children who were so wantonly taken from us.

We are confident that the religious leaders of this nation would cooperate in this day of national mourning and remembrance. Let us, a free people, search out our minds and hearts for the courage and sense of justice which is so urgently needed in this hour of moral crisis.

Workers give time for Evers youths

MARCUS HOOK, Pa. — A recent action on the part of factory workers here demonstrated how positive thinking can turn an angry protest into valuable tribute.

After the murder of NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers in Jackson, Miss., last June 12, approximately 100 workers at Philadelphia's Congoleum-Nairn Marcus Hook plant donated from one to four hours pay to the Medgar Evers Memorial Fund.

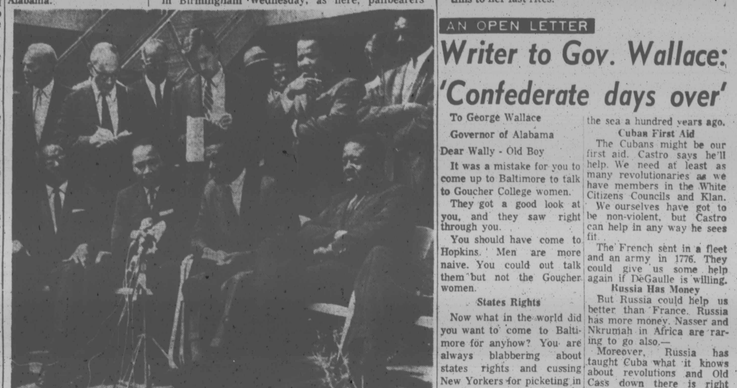
250 mourn Birmingham in Danville

DANVILLE, Va. — Some 250 high school students marched to the steps of the federal post office in Danville to hold a demonstration, "mourning the deaths of the six Birmingham youths, on Sept. 15, "according to Avon Rollins, executive committee member of SNCC.

During the 15 - minute prayer vigil, the students sang "freedom songs" written by SNCC field secretary Matthew Jones, about the recent deaths of Medgar Evers, William Moore, and the Birmingham children.

SNCC workers in Danville wired the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, to request that Birmingham be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly. Another telegram to U.S. Secretary of Commerc, Luthr M. Hodges, urged an embargo on dynamite and explosives going to Alabama.

SADDEST OF DAYS — It was a tears-flowing day in Birmingham Wednesday, as here, pallbearers carry one of the four church bombing young victims to her last rites.



TRAGEDY AFTERMATH — The vicious church bomb killing of four children Sunday brought these leaders in the Non-violent Protest Movement to Birmingham. Here at a press conference left to right are: The Revs. L. H. Pitts, president, Miles College; Martin Luther King, Fred Shuttlesworth and Ralph Abernathy.

They began to clear the debris and I saw a head'

By JAMES D. WILLIAMS
Assistant Managing Editor

BIRMINGHAM When the bomb went off Sunday morning at the 16th St. Baptist Church, the pastor, the Rev. John H. Cross, was in the main auditorium of the building with his mind on the children in the Sunday School, on the floor below.

"I was sitting with the Class, a ladies' Bible class," the minister recalled here on Thursday.

"I was looking at the clock and thinking it was time for the Sunday School class to reconvene and I should go downstairs and greet the children."

The bomb went off in the basement at approximately 10:22 a.m. Had the minister been standing at the pulpit, instead of being seated in the auditorium, there is no doubt that he would have been hurt.

* * *

DIRECTLY ABOVE where he normally stands is a large skylight that shattered in the blast and sent down a shower of heavy splintered glass.

"The whole building was filled with dust and smoke, so much that you could hardly recognize anyone".

The next few minutes were like an eternity for the 38-year-old minister, who had four children—Lynn, 4; Michael, 5, in the Sunday School.

"From the sound of the explosion I thought the whole building would collapse. There was the sound and a moment later the glass fell in. The first thing I did was to start downstairs to see about the children."

In the confusion, the 80 adults in the auditorium began to mill aimlessly about until the minister lead them out of a side door.

By this time volunteers had arrived and were taking the children out of the damaged basement. The only one of the minister's children hurt was Lynn, who sustained minor abrasions.

* * *

"I HAD JUST about come to the conclusion that the church, hadn't been hit too bad and then I walked around to the side [illegible] where the bomb had gone off and the pile of [illegible] and I said that anything could be under there," he said.

"The Civil Defense workers began to clear away the debris and I saw a head. They started pulling the girls out one by one.

The sight of the bodies sent ripples of hysteria through the crowd as parents pushed forward to see if one of the broken bodies was that of their daughter.

The identifications were made at the University Hospital where the parents were brought in to view the bodies.

When the sheets were pulled back and the parents saw their children, they didn't want to leave them.

One mother, even though blood was coming from the child's temple, wanted to rub the child's face with her own.

"The only thing you can say to the parents at a time like this is that it is an outrage. As bad as it is, it could be worse because we all could have been killed.

"I tried to tell them to rely on God to give them strength. The people who are doing these things will eventually be caught and punished."

* * *

IT WAS NOT until Thursday that the minister was able to go back into the church. The city engineers had to make a check of the building to determine if entry was safe.

What greeted the minister was a scene of nightmarish confusion. Glass was everywhere the floors were covered with pieces of plaster knocked from the ceilings and walls. The floor of the auditorium sagged.

Inside, the minister's study heavy furniture had been hurled about like toys. Twisted electrical wiring leaned out ugly from the walls.

The great stone steps leading to the side entrance blown away. The inside stairway to the basement was blocked with great heaps of rubble.

In the midst of all this the minister was calm as he spoke hopefully of rebuilding the church, which was founded in 1873 and is the oldest one in the city.

* * *

THE REV. MR. CROSS has been pastor since May of 1962. He has been in the ministry 22 years and came here from the Gravel Hill Baptist Church in Richmond.

He is a native of Forest City, Ark., and received his B.A. degree in sociology from Virginia Union University and his Divinity Degree from the School of Religion at the same university.

He is married to the former Miss Julia Ball of Kilmarnock, Va.

B'ham police threaten to jail newsmen

By JAMES D. WILLIAMS
AFRO Asst. Managing Editor

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Police officers threatened to arrest two news writers and a Justice Department employee here on Tuesday night.

The incident occurred when the men saw police line up colored men, and stopped to learn the reason.

In the group were James Hicks, editor of the Armsterdam News; Larry Smith of Johnson Publications; Thelton Henderson, the Justice Department Investigator; and Danny Lyon, a photographer.

The officers, armed with carbines and shotguns, stopped the reporters and demanded to see their identification. When this was shown, one of the officers suggested that "they all be taken in."

When Mr. Henderson of the Justice Department approached the group, he was asked to show his identification. It was only after this that the men were permitted to leave.

All of them, except Mr. Lyon, are colored.

Yale bars Wallace

NEW HAVEN — Prodded by Yale University president Kingman Brewster Jr., the Political Union, a student debating group, has cancelled an invitation to Gov. Wallace of Alabama.

He was to appear Nov. 4.

WJZ-TV recently had the defiant governor here for its Focal Point program aimed at seeking answers to metropolitan problems.

SNCC aide barred from Ala. campus

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — SNCC worker Sam Shirah Jr., was ordered off the campus of Birmingham Southern College, while trying to bring together a troop of students for the all-white Methodist college to register protest of the killings of six colored children in Birmingham on Sept. 15.

Shirah, a 20 - year - old white native of Alabama, attended Birmingham Southern last fall. Dean Ralph Jolly of the college stated that "the policy of the school is that he should leave the campus and never return."

AN OPEN LETTER

Writer to Gov. Wallace: 'Confederate days over'

To George Wallace
Governor of Alabama

Dear Wally - Old Boy

It was a mistake for you to come up to Baltimore to talk to Goucher College women.

They got a good look at you, and they saw right through you.

You should have come to Hopkins. Men are more naive. You could out talk them but not the Goucher women.

States Rights

Now what in the world did you want to come to Baltimore for anyhow? You are always blabbering about states rights and cussing New Yorkers for picketing in Alabama and helping colored folk down there to register.

Here you are up in Maryland asking us to vote for you for President. That's a stupid thing to do. You say we can't talk registration in Alabama but up here you are talking about your nomination for the presidency.

States rights are no good really. We settled that 100 years ago.

No More Debate

Just as we settled the question of equal rights, no segregation and no jim crow in schools, hotels, inns or anywhere. That's not really debatable any more.

You can debate it if you want to but not with us.

We put the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Sermon on the Mount and the 10 Commandments all in one book.

We accept them. For us they are good.

If you think sin and segregation are good, go somewhere else with your arguments. Our mind's made up.

The revolution is on, the spirit of the March on Washington is in the air and we propose to get freedom now.

Outside Aid

We can keep our revolution confined to this country and we get it quick or we can ask for outside aid to get it more slowly.

Those African countries are getting strong. We could ask them for help.

When we were trying to free ourselves of British oppression in 1776 we called on the French government which sent troops and ships to enable us to defeat our England.

In 1862 the Confederate Rebels called on England.

We could call on Cuba for help in our revolution. They are good at it.

So are the Haitians. They drove their oppressors into the sea a hundred years ago.

Cuban First Aid

The Cubans might be our first aid. Castro says he'll help. We need at least as many revolutionaries as we have members in the White Citizens Councils and Klan.

We ourselves have got to be non-violent, but Castro can help in any way he sees fit.

The French sent in a fleet and an army in 1776. They could give us some help again if DeGaulle is willing.

Russia Has Money

But Russia could help us better than France. Russia has more money. Nasser and Nkrumah in Africa are raring to go also.

Moreover, Russia has taught Cuba what it knows about revolutions and Old Cass down there is right good at it.

Now Wally, we are making our revolution in the open, fair and clear. For goodness sake get out of the way before you get hurt.

All we are doing is marching, sitting in, standing-in and lying-in. That's peaceable.

Underground

If we have to call on Old Cass down in Cuba to give us an assist he'll want to go underground.

Some of old Cass's