

# Pursuit of justice leads to suspected Klansman

## Racial killing leads victim's brother to North Carolina

Continued from page 1A

brother. I didn't have, I didn't have anything to do with that."

Edwards disappeared into the church, and his wife slammed the door shut.

The old man had not confessed. But tucked under his arm, along with a black-covered Bible, was the envelope, with those chilling documents for the deacon to ponder.

The Sunday morning drama, which happened last year, would become a turning point in the quest for justice in the long-dormant Dee and Moore killings.

Just this week, another document was added in the case: a three-count federal indictment.

For four decades, Thomas Moore had shouldered guilt and shame. Guilt that he was not there to protect his younger brother; shame that he did not have the nerve to avenge Charles' death.

Over the years, the 63-year-old U.S. Army veteran had bloody fantasies of confronting the men suspected of killing his brother. Then one day, someone offered to help him shoot the men - not with a gun, but with a camera.

Canadian documentarian David Ridgen was working on another project when he stumbled across their story. The 38-year-old producer knew a good tale when he saw one.

Moore had long ago given up hope for justice in his brother's killing. But when Ridgen asked for help telling the story, Moore agreed to go back to the Mississippi pine swamps of his youth.

To be precise, back to May 2, 1964.

On that morning, Henry Dee and Charles Moore, both 19, were hitchhiking along U.S. 84 outside Meadville, Mississippi, when a Volkswagen pulled alongside them.

At the wheel was James Ford Seale, a 29-year-old truck driver. According to an FBI informant, this is what happened next:

Seale said he was a "Revenue agent hunting for bootleg whiskey stills," and told the two to get into the car. Seale pulled out a walkie-talkie and told the occupants of a trailing pickup truck - including his cousin, 31-year-old Charles Marcus Edwards - that he was bringing "two Negro boys" to talk with them.

In fact, the Ku Klux Klan had heard rumors that black Muslims were running guns in the area in preparation for an "insurrection."

Seale turned onto a forest road and, after traveling some distance, parked.

The Klansmen bound the two friends and began whipping them with beanpoles. Seale asked them over and over who was behind all the "Negro trouble" in Franklin County, Mississippi.

After the beating, the Klansmen loaded the unconscious pair into a car trunk, careful to line it with a tarp to catch the blood.

Driving to the Mississippi River, the white men dragged the barely breathing pair into a boat. Moore was lashed to a Jeep engine block, Dee to some old railroad tracks and wheels, the informant said.

Then the two friends went over the side, and the swirling, muddy water swallowed them alive.

That November, acting on information from a Klan insider, Mississippi state troopers arrested Seale and Edwards on murder charges.

In an interview with FBI

agents, Edwards admitted that he and Seale had kidnapped and beaten the two black men. But Edwards said they were alive when he left them.

The agents leaned heavily on the younger man.

"We know you did it, you know you did it," an agent said, "the Lord above knows you did it."

"Yes," Seale replied, according to an FBI report, "but I'm not going to admit it. You are going to have to prove it."

At the time, the FBI had its hands full with the so-called "Mississippi Burning" case - the murders of three civil rights workers.

The Dee-Moore prosecution was turned over to local authorities, who quietly dropped it.

Thomas Moore stayed in the Army, but he began drinking and cooked up all kinds of "crazy plans." One night, he found himself driving down Edwards' road, three loaded guns in the seat beside him, but turned back.

In 2000, The Clarion-Ledger newspaper of Jackson, Mississippi, published documents indicating that the beatings might have occurred in the Homochitto National Forest. Claiming federal jurisdiction, the U.S. Department of Justice reopened the case.

Thomas Moore, by now retired from the Army, began to believe that his brother would finally get justice. But as 2000 faded to 2001, and the government turned its attention to more modern terrorists, that hope faded.

### Media ally

Producer David Ridgen had been assigned by CBC Television to do a new documentary on the "Mississippi Burning" case. As part of his research, he came across old footage of police fishing human bones out of the Mississippi River.

Ridgen could not shake the images of the discolored bones and decomposed clothes.

His digging led him to Thomas Moore.

When 80-year-old Edgar Ray Killen went to trial in the "Mississippi Burning" case in 2005, Ridgen wrote Moore a letter. The Killen trial was proof that there was still a chance someone could be prosecuted for his brother's slaying.

After Killen was convicted of manslaughter in June 2005, Moore agreed to go to Mississippi.

Ridgen and Moore crossed the Mississippi line a month later thinking the most they could hope for was maybe a better understanding of what had happened to Charles Moore and Henry Dee.

Edwards was still living just outside Meadville, but he had rebuffed all efforts to break through his wall of silence.

And according to the newspapers, Seale had died a couple of years earlier.

Then locals gave them a shock: Seale was still very much alive, living near the kidnapping scene.

Moore stood on Highway 33 and shouted down at the man identified as the driver who, decades before, had offered his brother a ride.

"I'm the brother of Charles Eddie Moore," he shouted as the white-haired man hobbled off to a motor home and shut the door. "Why don't you come out and be a man?"

Over the next year, Ridgen amassed more than 1,600 pages on the case. He tracked down people mentioned in the files - even some who authorities believed were dead or senile. Moore passed information along. Still nothing happened.

Finally, the pair decided it was time to confront Edwards.

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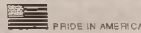
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