

Ragland Pays The Supreme Penalty For County Crime

Condemned Man Said To Have Walked Nonchalantly To His Death

Otis Ragland, 30-year-old Granville County colored man, last Friday paid the supreme penalty for criminally attacking Mrs. Floyd Moore at her home near Williamston in Williams Township last November 8. The execution, the first in the State this year, marks the final chapter in one of the most heinous crimes reported in this county in years and years.

Said to have admitted the crime, Ragland, according to witnesses, walked to his death nonchalantly between two prison guards and behind the prison chaplain, William H. R. Jackson. He showed no signs of emotion, and after a quick glance at the witnesses he centered his gaze to the floor.

Five minutes before he took his last walk, Ragland, alias Sam Davis, joined twenty other inmates on Death Row in singing the hymn, "Pass Me Not, Oh Gentle Saviour," which he had requested. Ten minutes prior to that time, the activities in the State's large prison were halted, and a death silence cut the atmosphere. There was no passage in or out the prison gates, the seven witnesses, including Mr. Moore, husband of the attack victim, his brother, Herbert Moore, Martin County's Deputy Sheriff Murray Holloman, Patrolman W. E. Saunders and A. H. Sessoms, a former executioner in the electric chair days, and S. J. Tetterton took their places before the windows to the little gas chamber.

If the condemned man opened his mouth after singing the hymn, his words were not recorded. He moved to the death seat without aid.

At one-half minute past 10 o'clock that morning R. A. Bridgers, chief executioner, released the cyanide gas balls into a bucket of hydrochloric acid. Ragland, his face covered by a mask, took one or two deep breaths and lapsed into unconsciousness. His neck swelled to enormous proportions and then subsided, the prison physician, Dr. W. G. Cheves, pronouncing death 13 minutes after the gas pellets had been dropped into the acid. Ragland wore only white trunks, but a tube leading to a stethoscope outside the gas chamber was strapped to his body with adhesive tape.

Ragland did not struggle, Deputy Sheriff Holloman stating that the man partly closed one hand and that the index finger on the other moved just a little. State Bureau of Investigation Director Walter Anderson, one of the seventeen witnesses to the execution, was quoted as saying that Ragland "couldn't have died more easily under the circumstances."

After Ragland was pronounced dead, the body was cleared from the small room by a suction fan, and the body was placed on a stretcher and wheeled out of the room to the court yard and placed in a hearse. Removed to a Raleigh morgue, the body was not claimed immediately. He had requested that his mother, residing up north, not be advised of his fate. A brother and his grandfather visited him on Death Row Thursday but they made no arrangement to claim the body.

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ROUND-UP

Local and county officers had a busy time last week-end when they rounded up and jailed an even dozen alleged law violators. Two-thirds of those arrested were booked for public drunkenness or disorderly conduct. One each was booked for breaking and entering, assault with deadly weapon, assault and rape, and still another was detained on an old charge.

Numbered among the drunks was a 27-year-old white woman. The ages ranged from a low "sixteen" to 52 years. Six of the twelve detained were white.

Pay Over \$36,000 for Half Interest In Store Building

While little activity is being reported on the farm land market at the present time, real estate in Williamston, according to expressed opinions, continues to command high prices.

At a sale here last Friday noon, one-half of the Harrison Brothers Company store building on Main Street sold for \$36,600. The sale was made to D. E. Darden after the owners had received a \$36,500 bid from outside interests.

A small three-room tenement house on Simmons Avenue was sold to Henry Griffin for \$2,225, and a vacant lot on the same street was also sold to Mr. Griffin for \$625.

Three lots belonging to the Harrison heirs were sold on Elm Street for amounts ranging from \$650 to \$700, it was reported, and B. A. Critcher bought a house and lot on the south side of the Plymouth Branch Railroad for \$1,500.

The sales are being delayed pending confirmation within ten days, it was learned.

Purchasing one of the lots on Elm Street, W. C. Bunch, local barber, stated that during the depression back in the thirties he purchased a lot just across the street for \$35.

Several outside parties were said to have been here last week-end looking over certain pieces of real estate, but as far as it could be learned no transactions were effected at that time.

CONFERENCE

District Highway Commissioner Merrill Evans of Ahsokie and other highway officials and engineers will hold a conference in the Martin County courthouse Thursday morning at 11 o'clock. A delegation from Griffins Township, interested in the completion of a farm-to-market road there, is expected to meet with the officials and commissioners.

That afternoon the officials and board members will make an inspection of certain roads in the county, it was learned.

Two Minor Road Wrecks In County

No one was hurt and very little property damage resulted in two highway accidents reported in this county over the week-end.

James Raleigh Roebuck, of Broad Creek Road, Norfolk, was driving toward Williamston on U. S. 17 at 4:45 o'clock Sunday afternoon when Robert Rogers, meeting him, started to make a left turn into Ira Rogerson's driveway, blocking the Roebuck car. Investigating the accident, Patrolman W. E. Saunders said that the damage to Roebuck's car would approximate \$100 and that to the Rogers car would run about \$50. Rogers was temporarily detained on a drunken driving charge.

Backing his 1946 Chevrolet sedan out of a little used path into the highway near Commissioner R. L. Perry's farm and choking it down about 11:50 o'clock last Saturday night, Chas. T. Clark of Washington virtually blocked the thoroughfare and before he could move it, Morris M. Lubus plowed into him with his 1946 Ford coach. Lubus swerved his car to the right and avoided a direct crash, but fenders on both cars were smashed and a tire was ripped open on the Lubus car. No one was hurt, and Clark accepted the damage, \$120.00 on the other car and \$100 on his own.

The driver of the Clark car was cited for improper parking and a hearing is slated in the case later in the week. Corporal W. T. Simpson, investigating officer, said yesterday.

Lubus, traveling from Florida to his home in Danbury, Conn., was accompanied by Joseph Sctaro.

Facing Court On Car Theft Charge

Allegedly stealing a car belonging to an Oak City farmer, Robert Lee Ruff, colored, is facing trial in the superior court this week. In Robersonville Saturday evening, Ruff, of Hassell, drove the car away and wrecked it between Tarboro and Rocky Mount a short time later. He was arrested and is scheduled to answer a drunken driving charge in the Edgecombe courts next Monday. He was also said to have been operating an automobile without a driver's license.

Given a hearing before Justice J. B. Whitfield in Oak City last evening, Ruff was placed under bond in the sum of \$250. Unable to raise the bond he was placed in the county jail by Patrolman W. E. Saunders.

Native Of County Fatally Hurt In Norfolk Accident

Funeral In Local Church For John E. Whitfield Monday, 3 P. M.

Funeral services were conducted in the local Pentecostal Holiness Church yesterday afternoon at 3:00 o'clock for John E. (Dick) Whitfield who was fatally hurt in a street car accident at Norfolk early last Friday evening. Rev. J. Floyd Williams, pastor of the church, conducted the service and interment was in Woodlawn Cemetery here. The body was brought here from Norfolk early Sunday afternoon and lay in state at the Biggs Funeral Home until an hour before the service.

Complete details of the accident could not be learned here immediately, reports from Norfolk stating that an inquest would be held Tuesday afternoon. According to one report, Whitfield, a native of this county, was operating a Naval Base streetcar south on Norfolk's Hampton Boulevard when it became necessary for him to adjust the trolley line at the thirty-eighth Street intersection. Stepping from the left door of his car, Whitfield was struck by a northbound car operated by Martin T. Connelley. No charges were filed immediately against Connelley. One report reaching here stated that the young man was left in a dying condition for twenty minutes at the scene of the accident before he was removed.

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Painfully Cut In Sunday Attack

Henry (Latham) Peel was painfully but not seriously cut in a free-for-all fight on Pearl Street here last Sunday evening. Wannamaker James, colored man just recently out of the hospital where he lingered between life and death for several days as a result of knife wounds, carved Peel from about the temple to the chin.

Officer Chas. Moore, investigating the attack, said that James was being attacked by several others, that Peel rushed in to help break up the fight and took the slashing.

County Officers Baffled By Two Youthful Delinquents

Martin County officers, including those in the welfare, sheriff's and clerk's departments, have had many baffling problems to solve, but all were solved in one fashion or another. Possibly the two problems now facing them will be solved in time, but so far there has been no solution.

A colored lad in the Dardens Community has been roaming the territory without the benefit of parental care. He reportedly stole just about anything that wasn't nailed down and apparently couldn't help it. Victims there complained to the sheriff, and the officer had him in his custody a few hours later. The State Welfare Department says no minor shall be jailed, but in issuing that order the department or no other agency, including a "gagged" legislature, has made adequate provisions for keeping such wayward

Jurist Delivers Short Charge To County Jurymen

Judge J. Paul Frizelle Does Not Mention Crime Or Current Conditions

In a brief charge Monday to the Martin County Grand Jury, Judge J. Paul Frizelle of Snow Hill paid a timely tribute to those men who can find time to serve their State. The jurist, complimenting the men who serve in this county, made no mention of crime or existing conditions, and limited his instructions.

"I understand several of you have served before as grand jurymen," the jurist said. "It is indeed gratifying that capable and experienced men are serving in the administration of the law. Others should welcome the opportunity to do so. I hope all can get the proper perspective of the history, meaning and work of the grand jury," the jurist said.

"Few consider or recall that the grand jury is an indispensable part of our courts," he continued. "This district has an able prosecuting attorney, and your county has unusually fine officers, but all of them combined could not place a person on trial until action is first taken by the grand jury," Judge Frizelle said, explaining that minor violations are handled in the inferior courts.

"Only able and responsible citizens are chosen for jury service, and it should be considered as a badge of distinction and honor for one to serve on the grand jury." "Occasionally," he continued, "unworthy names get into the box, but provision is made to remove them when those charged with the responsibilities and duties fail. In a recent court in North Carolina, 46 men were drawn for jury duty. Twenty-eight of that number had been

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Change Made In Jury Personnel

Their one-year terms expiring as members of the Martin County Grand Jury, nine new members were drawn for duty this week. In addition to the time element, two positions made vacant by death were filled and in a third case a jurymen had moved out of the county and his place on the body was filled, leaving only six holdovers.

Juryman Lester Keel died in late December, Jurymen Garland Bailey was accidentally killed early this year and a third jurymen, Leslie Smith, moved out of the county. Messrs. W. W. Whitehurst, J. C. Anderson and Robert L. Pierce were called to finish the unexpired terms. They are to serve until next September.

H. S. Johnson, Jr., even though he had served as chairman of the jury previously, he was drawn again this week and Judge J. Paul Frizelle named him chairman of the present jury are, James E. Bullock, J. Carl Griffin, James H. Barber, C. M. Edmondson, Mack M. Bowen, D. A. Brown and S. T. Wynne.

Master Doug Stalls drew the lists and he was supported at the drawing by Little Miss Caroline Martin.

Sentenced To State Prison For Six To Eight Years For Assault

Local Chapter Is Nearing Goal In Red Cross Drive

Williamston Exceeds \$1,335 Quota By Nearly \$100; Drive Not Over

The Martin County Red Cross Chapter is believed nearing its goal in the current annual fund drive, according to a report released by Fund Chairman Claude B. Clark, Jr., yesterday noon. The announcement was based on fairly complete reports from only two districts and incomplete reports from three others.

Up until noon yesterday, \$1,669.67 of the \$2,500 quota for the chapter had been raised and reported. Mrs. J. Eason Lilley, chairman of the drive in Griffins, stated that approximately \$200 had been raised there, boosting the total to \$1,869.67. "We plan to go over the top by the weekend," Mrs. Lilley said, explaining that she would make a detailed report at that time.

Mrs. Roy Harrison and Mrs. Pete Mendenhall reported \$197.50 of the Bear Grass quota in hand. The chairmen explained that the canvass had been virtually completed there, that while a few more contributions might be made the drive is just about \$27.50 short of the township quota.

Assigned a \$25 quota, the little Biggs School district went over the top in a hurry with four dollars to spare. Since that report, the amount has been boosted to \$32. Professor W. V. Ormond announced.

Taking its cue from the little school district, Williamston with a \$1,335 quota, went out to meet the challenge. With several canvassers yet to report, the district yesterday had raised \$1,406.17, or \$71.17 in excess of the quota.

Making a preliminary report over the week-end, Woolard's or (Continued on page eight)

Mother Of Local Merchants Dies

Mrs. Alice E. Odum, mother of Messrs. C. D. and Grover L. Pittman, local merchants, died at her home in Rocky Mount early last Friday after an extended period of declining health. She was born on August 28, 1878, in Nash County, the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Edwards, and spent her entire life there.

Besides her sons here she is survived by three daughters, Mrs. Richard C. Tisdale, Mrs. Marvin S. Felton and Mrs. A. J. Thompson, all of Rocky Mount; a son, James Arthur Whitfield, of Richmond; two sisters, Mrs. Levy (Mrs. J. C. Anderson) of Rocky Mount, and Mrs. Lucy Sears of Rocky Mount; and a brother, E. E. Edwards of Red Oak.

Funeral services were conducted at the home Saturday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock by Rev. L. B. Scarborough, and interment was in Rocky Mount's Pineview Cemetery.

LITTLE BUSINESS

Meeting as a board of equalization and review, the Martin County Commissioners—Joshua L. Coltrain, R. L. Perry, John Henry Edwards, C. Abram Roberson and R. A. Haislip—had very little business Monday.

Only one request for a tax valuation reduction was heard. Nora Cherry, Elm Street home owner, declared that her property had been depreciated in value because a mule sales and exchange building had been constructed and placed in operation just across the street from her home. No action was taken in the case.

After receiving no further complaints, Chairman Perry adjourned the meeting two hours later.

Arrested On Old Car Theft Charge

Calvin Hodge, young local colored man charged with the theft of a 1941 model car from the Roanoke Chevrolet Company here in April, 1944, was arrested in New York City last Saturday by the FBI, it was announced yesterday by Special Agent John C. Bills of the Charlotte office. Hodge is being returned to North Carolina for trial either in Elizabeth City next Monday or in Washington the following week. His companion in the alleged crime, Robert Everett, young colored boy, is now serving a five-year sentence in a federal institution at Harrisburg, Pa.

For three years Hodge moved just one jump ahead of the FBI. While no special manhunt was instituted in the case, Hodge was listed among many wanted for alleged crimes. The FBI learned he married Mary Louise Brown, a Martin county girl, in April of last year. They trailed him to Philadelphia. His wife returned home soon after their marriage and has been separated from him since that time. From Philadelphia they trailed him to New York, learning that he had appeared on the radio as an imitator of birds. They learned he was interested in the show business. Last Saturday the case had ripened, and he was plucked for the courts.

Youngster Shot In Eye Thursday

Shot in his right eye with an air rifle while playing with Gerald Roberson, his cousin, last Thursday afternoon, Frankie Robinson, 6 1/2 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Robinson, still carrying the little pellet and still clinging to the sight in that eye.

The youngster, playing at the home of his cousin who is about the same age, was removed to a Durham hospital where doctors considered it advisable not to perform an operation for the present, at least.

Defendant Pleads Guilty And Then Guilty And Then

Third Defendant Draws Two Years In Dangerous Assault Case

Adjudged guilty in the Martin County Superior Court Monday afternoon of assaulting James L. Bond and William H. Harrell, two young white men, with a deadly weapon with intent to kill, inflicting serious injuries not resulting in death, Allen Brown was sentenced to State's Prison for not less than six and not more than eight years, and Lester Saunders, a second defendant, drew two years on the roads. A third defendant, Russell Ampley, pleaded guilty of assaulting William H. Harrell with a deadly weapon, and prayer for judgment was continued in his case until June. According to testimony offered at the trial, several of the young men's assailants escaped detection. Saunders said there were others, but he declared he did not know a one of them.

James Bond, former resident of Williamston, miraculously escaped death when Brown drove a home-made knife into his heart on the night of February 8 when the two young men were loading poultry in Robersonville back of the Roberson Poultry Company.

Taking the stand first, Bond, who received treatment in the Ward Clinic at Robersonville and in a Durham hospital for ten days, said that he was in his brother-in-law's truck cab that night when one of three colored boys snatched open the door and asked if it was a liquor truck. "I asked them if it looked like a liquor truck. They snatched me out of the cab and during the fracas I was stabbed in the heart, laying me up for ten days," Bond testified. He also told the court that he was cut on the wrist and elbow. Bond explained that Harrell saw something was wrong and went to help him when others joined the first three attackers with staves. "We fought our way back to the loading platform," Bond said, adding that he had had no argument with his attackers. He said that he could not definitely identify his attackers.

William H. Harrell, the second witness and victim of the attack, definitely identified Lester Saunders and Allen Brown as two of the attackers. "I was just inside the building weighing poultry when I saw three boys trying to pull my brother out of the cab. I went there and asked what was the matter. The boys turned him loose and Bond got out of the cab and we had started inside when the three made the attack and were joined by others rushing in

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Raise Over \$815 For Leaf Exports

According to fairly complete reports from three and scattering reports from two other townships this week, \$815.53 had been raised up until Monday morning in this county for Tobacco Associates, Inc., an agency designed to help relieve the condition surrounding the exportation of leaf tobacco.

Up until that time 464, or about one-fourth of the tobacco farmers in the county, had made contributions to the fund, the donations ranging from a few cents up to around \$11.

Working without reward and at their own expense, the following canvassers had reported up until Monday: R. S. Everett of Robersonville, \$111.97; J. R. Daniel of Robersonville, \$52.10; S. T. Everett of Robersonville, \$56.20; M. L. Peel of Williamston, \$153.00; H. U. Peel of Bear Grass, \$48.65; Wheeler Rogerson of Bear Grass, \$30.90; H. G. Harrison of Bear Grass, \$19.50; T. L. Roberson of Bear Grass, \$26.30; E. C. Harrison of Bear Grass, \$31.00; R. G. Coburn of Jamesville, \$23.25. Donations made at the farm agent's office amounted to \$24.00.

Hungry Robber Is Given Six Years In State Prison

Court Expected To Complete Trial Of Criminal Docket Today

After getting off to a slow start Monday morning, the Martin County Superior Court cleared a few cases from the docket during the remainder of the day and was working this morning with the possibility that the criminal cases would be cleared or continued before recessing this afternoon.

The early sessions attracted a capacity crowd, but no cases of unusual interest were called. Only two cases reached the jury and in one of those no agreement could be reached and the jurors were instructed to repair to their homes, sleep over the evidence and return this morning for further deliberations.

Pleading guilty of breaking into and robbing the Woolard Hardware and Pittman's clothing store in Williamston, Glenn Albert Chase testified in his own behalf. Without counsel, Chase told in open court that he broke into and robbed the stores because he was hungry, that his wife and baby were almost destitute, that he could not get sufficient advances and that he had to pay cash for his provisions. Chase, a native of Atlantic, Iowa, and dishonorably discharged from the Marine Corps, was stumped when Judge Paul Frizelle, the presiding jurist, asked him why he broke into hardware and clothing stores and not a grocery store if he was hungry. He denied that he broke into the stores in an effort to get money to pay a \$300 note which was past due or about to fall due on an old automobile. Chase, married to a Martin County girl, has consistently denied he had any part in the wave of robberies reported in Williamston during the past three months. Apparently failing to impress the court with his poverty plea, Chase was sentenced to State Prison for three years in each case, the sentences to run consecutively.

The year-old drunken driving charge against Henry L. Harvey was cleared away when the court directed a verdict of not guilty after expert witnesses testified that the man had possibly taken too much of a stimulant for a heart condition. The defendant brought character witnesses from his home county of Beaufort.

Ruth Davis, charged with indecent exposure, was adjudged not guilty. Jim Johnson, a co-defendant in the case, had his case continued until the June term. At the conclusion of the state's evidence, the defense counsel made a motion for a directed verdict of not guilty, and the motion was allowed.

The case charging Edward Griffin, J. E. Purvis and Lawrence Wiggins with the larceny of fourteen bags of peanuts was not prosed.

No true bill was found by the grand jury in the case charging James Barnhill and Lewis Freeman with raping Earline Edwards, four-year-old girl, last July 7.

Considerable time was spent Monday afternoon in hearing the case in which LeRoy Patterson was charged with bastardy. Private prosecution was employed by a relative of the victim, Katie Griffin, and quite a few witnesses were called, including one who almost drew a jail term for contempt of court. The case reached the jury shortly after five o'clock and after deliberating about twenty minutes and reaching no

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HASTY MARRIAGES

Victims of Dan Cupid coming to this county to effect a hitch may get their marriage licenses without delay within a short time. Under the present law, marriage licenses are issued to out-of-state couples only after a 48-hour waiting period. Martin County was included in the list of several northeastern counties where the 48-hour waiting period was eliminated by recent legislative act. The 48-hour law did not apply to North Carolinians.