

season of terror



**CHARLES
EDDIE MOORE**
1944-1964
Killed by Klansmen,
Meadville, Miss.



**HENRY
HEZEKIAH DEE**
1945-1964
Killed by Klansmen,
Meadville, Miss.

They called it Freedom Summer. For many, however, the summer of 1964 would be remembered as a season of terror.

It was the year that hundreds of college students, recruited from Northern campuses in a highly publicized campaign, came to work in rural Mississippi. They started Freedom Schools to teach black children about their rights and their heritage. They coached adults through the hurdles of voter registration procedures. And they brought national attention to the repression and poverty that enslaved black people in Mississippi.

They also confronted a force of white resistance more brutal than any of them had imagined — the kind of terrorism that had haunted blacks in the South for generations.

COUNTERATTACK ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Even before Freedom Summer began, members of the South's most violent Klan organization, the Mississippi White Knights, were planning their response. They began by burning 64 crosses on a single April evening throughout Mississippi. By June, the White Knights had established 29 chapters with an estimated 10,000 members.

On May 3, White Knights Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers issued what amounted to a declaration of war against the Freedom Summer workers. "The events which will occur in Mississippi this summer may well determine the fate of Christian civilization for centuries to come," Bowers wrote in his Imperial Executive Order to all White Knights members. Bowers urged his members to con-



duct "counterattacks" against "selected individual targets."

A month and a half later, White Knights murdered James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in one of the most widely publicized atrocities of the entire Civil Rights Movement.

By the end of the summer, 80 people had been beaten, 35 shot at, five murdered, and more than 20 black churches had been burned to the ground in Mississippi alone. Much of the violence could be traced to members of the White Knights.

Although the murders of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner received worldwide attention, two other White Knights victims went practically unnoticed. They were Charles Moore and Henry Dee, young black Mississippians who had disappeared in early May. Their mutilated bodies were discovered in the Mississippi River during the massive search for the three civil rights workers.

FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

Maisey Moore last saw her son Charles talking to Henry Dee on May 2. Moore, 20, had just been expelled from college for taking part in a student demonstration. He had gone into Meadville to look for work. Dee, 19, worked at a local lumber company and lived with his grandmother near the Homochitto National Forest.

When Moore did not come home that night, his mother assumed he had gone to Louisiana to look for a job. When he still had not returned in two days, Mrs. Moore notified the sheriff. A few days later, the sheriff told Mrs. Moore that the two were staying with Thelma Collins, Dee's sister, in Louisiana. Unconvinced, Mrs. Moore and a relative traveled to Collins' home. Charles Moore and Henry Dee were not there and never had been.

More than two months later, on July 12, 1964, a man fishing

ABOVE RIGHT
Rescuers drag Mississippi rivers in a massive search for three civil rights workers.

The bodies of Charles Moore and Henry Dee were discovered during the time the search was under way.



in the Mississippi River near Tallulah, La., found the lower half of a badly decomposed body. The body was dressed in jeans and the ankles were tied with rope. FBI agents rushed to the scene, suspecting the body might be one of the missing civil rights workers. The search continued, and the next day a second body was discovered. This one was decapitated and a piece of wire was wrapped around the torso.

A school key was found in the jeans on the first body, identifying it as Charles Moore. The second body was identified as Henry Dee.

Two White Knights members — James Ford Seale, 29, and Charles Marcus Edwards, 31 — were arrested for the murders. Seale, a truck driver, was the son of a White Knights chapter leader. Edwards worked at the International Paper Company in Natchez, a center of White Knights activity.

Edwards gave the FBI a signed confession. Moore and Dee had been murdered, he

explained, because the White Knights believed they were black Muslims plotting an armed uprising of local blacks. Dee was suspected because he had once lived in Chicago and Moore because he had participated in a student demonstration. (In fact, the black Muslim plot was a wild, unfounded rumor.)

In his confession, Edwards described the killing. The White Knights abducted Moore and Dee from a roadside and took them deep into the Homochitto National Forest, where they tied them to trees and beat them unconscious. Then the Klansmen loaded their victims into a car and drove to the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River. After tying heavy weights (including a Jeep motor block) to their bodies, they threw them in.

The FBI gave Edwards' confession along with other evidence to state prosecutors, who were responsible for bringing murder charges. But a Justice of the Peace promptly dismissed

all charges against the White Knights, without explanation and without presenting the evidence to a grand jury.

Federal authorities reopened the case in 2000 after the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* reported that Dee and Moore were possibly killed on federal land in the Homochitto National Forest. In March 2003, an assistant U.S. Attorney concluded that there was "no chance" for a successful prosecution and closed the investigation.

In 2005, Moore's brother, Thomas, persuaded U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton of Jackson to take another look at the case. In January 2007, Seale was indicted on federal kidnapping and conspiracy charges, and the following June, a jury of eight whites and four blacks convicted him of both charges after hearing testimony describing the murders from Edwards, who received immunity from prosecution. A judge sentenced Seale to three life terms in prison for his role in the murders. ☉

The South's most dangerous Klan organization, the Mississippi White Knights, planned a violent response for Freedom Summer. Charles Moore and Henry Dee were the first victims.



LEFT Klansmen thought they would be able to stop the Civil Rights Movement by intimidating blacks. When masked confrontations did not work, they resorted to violence.