

# random gunfire



**SAMUEL  
HAMMOND**

1949-1968  
Killed when highway  
patrolmen fired on  
protesters,  
Orangeburg, S.C.



**DELANO  
MIDDLETON**

1950-1968  
Killed by highway  
patrolmen,  
Orangeburg, S.C.

Elizabeth Smith earned \$6.40 a day working as a maid for white families in Marion, S.C. She raised her four children by herself in a shotgun house in the country, and although she could not afford “luxuries” like indoor plumbing or an automobile, she managed to save money for her one great ambition — to send her children to college.

Henry was her second oldest child. When he went away to South Carolina State College in Orangeburg in the fall of 1966, Henry took with him a strong sense of family responsibility. He wrote home frequently, and called his mother whenever he had a problem he needed to talk about.

On the night of February 6, 1968, Henry called his mother at 2 a.m. He was frustrated and worried. Mrs. Smith listened to his description of what was happening at school, and then urged her son to pray.

That night, Henry Smith was among students who demonstrated at a bowling alley that refused to admit blacks. Police with nightsticks confronted them, and several scuffles erupted. Two women were beaten and many others, including Smith, were injured. The attack on the women enraged Smith, and he complained to his mother that night that student efforts to achieve integration were getting nowhere.

The next day, February 7, students wanted to march downtown to present a list of grievances to city officials, but their parade permit was denied. Tensions ran high. That night, the bowling alley was closed and the National Guard was called

in, but there was no violence.

The next night, still barred from the bowling alley and surrounded by police, students began to look for an outlet for their anger. Henry Smith was with about 200 students who gathered around a bonfire on a campus street. They were matched by an equal number of highway patrolmen, National Guardsmen, police officers and sheriff’s deputies. The police put out the fire, and some students retaliated by throwing rocks and bottles. Students rebuilt the bonfire, and police again arrived to put it out. This time someone struck a patrolman with a banister post pulled from a vacant house. More objects were thrown. A shot rang out, and students started to run away. Then a volley of shotgun blasts was fired from police into the retreating crowd.

## THE VICTIMS

Henry Smith was one of the first to fall. He was shot five times in the sides and back. Delano Middleton, a 17-year-old high school student whose mother worked as a maid at the college, was shot three times in the forearm, once in the hip, and also in the thigh, the side of the chest, and the heart. Samuel Hammond, a football player from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was shot once in the back. Within 10 seconds, 27 students had been struck by shotgun fire — most had multiple wounds, and all but three were hit from the rear or the side. Many were shot in the feet as they lay on the ground.

Samuel Hammond died less than an hour after the shooting. The stocky 18-year-old had let-

tered in track and football at a newly integrated high school in Fort Lauderdale and had come to State College with the ambition of becoming a teacher. A white high school teammate, John Bogert, heard about the tragedy at Orangeburg and wrote a letter to the Fort Lauderdale paper. He remembered Hammond as a loyal friend and mature competitor, and wrote, “This incident has caused me to take a long hard look at what I believe to be true. How could I say that what Sam died for is wrong?... I can only sit here and look at the news photo which was taken while I stood next to him at Lockhart Stadium and feel, as another student once put it, that someone had killed my brother.”

Delano Middleton’s mother made it to her son’s hospital bedside in time to hear him describe the “bullets ... flying everywhere.” Delano’s main interests were church and sports, and he had never been involved in civil rights activities. He had gone to the campus that night simply out of curiosity. As he realized he was dying, Delano asked his mother to recite the 23rd Psalm. “The Lord is My Shepherd,” she began. He repeated it with her, and then he died.

The doctors thought they had a chance to save Henry Smith, but his wounds suddenly hemorrhaged and he passed away a half hour after Middleton.

## KILLER SHOT

The first news stories described the violence on campus as a gun battle between students and patrolmen. Law enforcement





and government officials immediately blamed the tragedy on black militants.

Later investigations proved that the students, in fact, did not have guns, and no one but patrolmen had fired weapons on the night of February 8. The evidence also showed that patrolmen shot at random into a retreating crowd — there was no attacking mob. The patrolmen did not follow accepted riot control procedures. Instead of using tear gas or less powerful ammunition against the disruptive students, the patrolmen fired deadly buckshot.

Despite the evidence, a grand jury in October 1968 failed to indict the officers who fired their guns. Six months later, the U.S. Justice Department brought federal charges against nine highway patrolmen for using excessive force

against the students. All nine were acquitted.


The Attorney General of the United States, Ramsey Clark, disputed the general opinion that the officers had acted appropriately. "To use double-ought buckshot — it's a killer shot. You use it when you're trying to kill somebody. To think that law enforcement had to try to kill somebody to contain those students is to think wrongly. That cannot be true.

"You wonder if this had been Clemson or Amherst or Princeton or some place like that, what the public reaction would have been," Clark said.

Still, state and local officials never acknowledged that mistakes were made in handling the Orangeburg protesters.

Two days after the shootings, the Justice Department filed suit to integrate the bowling

alley. State bond issues were passed later that year to make improvements at the college. A year after the killings, a new physical education building on campus was dedicated as the Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center. A granite marker was placed on campus to honor the three students who lost their lives "in pursuit of human dignity." And each year, Samuel Hammond, Delano Middleton and Henry Smith are honored at a memorial service, as the victims of what has become known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

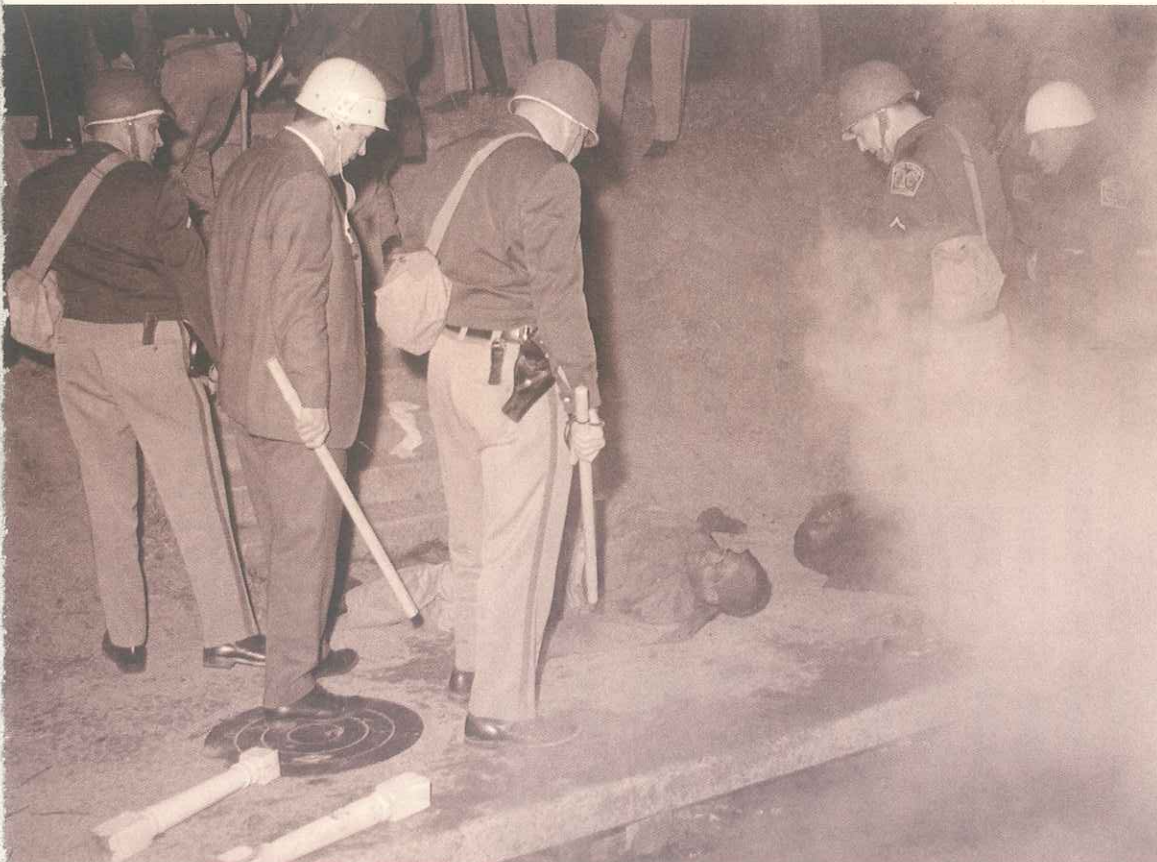
In 2003, Gov. Mark Sanford publicly apologized for the shootings. Following the apology, legislation seeking monetary compensation for the victims' families was introduced but not passed in the South Carolina legislature. 



**HENRY SMITH**

1948-1968

Killed by highway patrolmen, Orangeburg, S.C.



Henry Smith (left) and Delano Middleton lie wounded on the sidewalk after being shot by highway patrolmen.