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LA. MINISTER
RISKS LIFE
FOR RIGHT
TO VOTE

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MILDA SIMM'S STARS IN NEW TELEVISION SERIES

L.A. MINISTER RISKS LIFE FOR RIGHT TO VOTE

'THEY'VE WAITED TOO LONG TO

By ALVIN ADAMS

Narrowly escaping death when wounded by a shotgun blast from a speeding car, the Rev. John Henry Scott of Lake Providence, La., who thinks the attack came because of his voter registration activity, declared: "They waited too long to kill me. I've already reached my goal. I've voted now."

One of 26 Negroes who voted in last July's Democratic primary, the 60-year-old clergyman climaxed a 15-year struggle to register in East Carroll Parish. Although Negroes out-number white citizens 8,481 to 5,602 (forming nearly 59 per cent of the population), not one black man was permitted to register in more than 40 years in the northeast Louisiana community on the Mississippi River. A place where Negro political activity declined since Negroes were forced at gunpoint to resign from the police jury in 1879, East Carroll Parish is where farmer Joseph Atlas was subjected to economic reprisals after testifying



Head of Baptist association and local voter committee, Rev. Scott looks over 62-year-old records of religious group.

KILL ME... I'VE VOTED NOW'



Displaying flesh wound, clergyman was saved when most bullet hit car door (arrow), ripping hole in metal.

about being denied the vote. The Justice Dept. had to sue several firms before Atlas could get his cotton ginned, soybeans marketed or even buy fuel oil.

The militant Rev. Mr. Scott, his wife, Alease Juanita, and 16 others succeeded in registering only when registrar Cecil Manning resigned rather than obey a Federal court order to give Negroes equal access to the polls. Twenty-eight Negroes turned to the judge, who tested them, declared 18 qualified and ordered them registered. The action came in time to let them vote in the Democratic primary, lily-white for nearly half a century. (Later 17 others were registered the same way.)

President of the local NAACP and a key witness from the parish (county) in 1960 and 1961 voter hearings conducted by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, the determined minister was shot the same day he appeared to testify in contempt proceedings against Manning. Charges were dropped, however, when Manning agreed to resume his duties and register all qualified voters. (No one can register until after the September election because

Cleric Under Pressure For Nearly Three Decades

the books are now closed.)

That night, as Rev. Mr. Scott drove his wife and four children home from services at North Star Missionary Baptist Church—one of several founded by his great-grandfather during Reconstruction Era—a speeding car pulled along side his sedan and the shot was fired.

Missing its intended victim, the shotgun blast ripped a hole in the car door and shattered the glass as the minister turned from the highway onto the dirt road leading to his home. FBI agents, state and local police officials are investigating the shooting.

A man who has lived under pressure nearly three decades, the civil rights veteran dismissed the danger of his position with the observation: "This is the worst thing that happened to me." He once said: "I don't like to talk about intimidations. I always felt if a fellow thought he was doing you some harm or that he was bluffing you or was upsetting you in your mind, that he would go further, so I just let it go."

He recalled that "way back in the Thirties (when he led opposition to a Federal program that saw Negro sharecroppers lose their homes to whites and for the Transylvania School) a man told me I was going to get run away or beat up or killed. But I told him I took that into consideration before I started. That blew over."

Not intimidated by the recent shooting, although most Lake Providence Negroes now clear the streets at sundown, he declared: "My plans haven't changed. If I'd been killed it shouldn't have stopped others, but given them new courage.

"I don't mind dying for what is right.

"And it's a poor man who couldn't stand a beating for what he believed in," he added.

Prophetically, he told the Civil Rights Commission in New Orleans in 1960, after more than a decade of disappointment at the registrar's office: "I just go on because I feel like I am right, and I know where I am going. I know what I am talking about, and I don't care what



At family meeting, Rev. and Mrs. Scott talk with five of their eight children (l.-r.) Sharolyn, Harriet, Cleo, Louis and Elsie. Whatever happens, I got to go to heaven, and if I go for my people or for the right to vote I would be perfectly satisfied."

Entering the civil rights struggle when he led the Transylvania opposition, the Lake Providence native has concentrated on voting conditions since he was elected NAACP president in 1946. Although no attempts have been made to integrate schools or public facilities, the Rev. Mr. Scott, once a part-time schoolteacher, said summer school is held for Negro children so they can be free to pick cotton in the fall. "I said this would lead to another Little Rock here."

Attempting to rebuild NAACP membership, he observed "The thing Negroes in the Southland think about most is making a better living, not politics."

The Rev. Mr. Scott first attempted to register in 1946 with another minister. "We didn't know exactly where the registration office was," he told the Civil Rights Commission. When they found it the registrar told them to go next door, he testified, and they went to look for it. "When we got back, the (registrar's) door was locked."

Voting: 'A Responsibility That Belongs To Citizens'

Usually Negro attempts came to naught when the registrar insisted they bring two registered voters along to identify the applicants. The only voters were white. Once a woman told the Rev. Mr. Scott she could get two "vouchers" because "I have some white friends and we are all Christians." More experienced, he replied: "But Christians and this registration business is different. Nobody is Christian when it comes down to identifying you." Explaining he never had trouble being identified at banks or the court house at tax-paying time, he continued: "We are all very well known . . . when you walk down the street, everybody knows everybody."

Once asked why he wanted to vote, the minister replied: "It is a responsibility that belongs to the citizens. It always gives recognition; I noticed the streets where they vote, they were fixed; I noticed the roads where the people lived on where they vote; it was gravel; I noticed the people that vote, the officers of the law respected them and treated them different from the people that didn't vote."



Sharoin watches sister Johnnita prepare for Southern Univ. as minister and Louis visit John Henry Scott Sr.

New Handshakes:

Proud of his two fingers, which were sewed back on his left hand after they were cut off when a steel door slammed shut, James Blackburn, 3, extends healed limb to Dr. B. J. Leininger (r.), who performed rare operation with Dr. G. Ariel at Chicago's Cook County Hospital.



Miss. Cerebral Palsy Group Leaves National Body

Mississippi's unit of the National United Cerebral Palsy Assn., Inc., voted to withdraw from the national organization and operate independently.

Cut In Half By Doctors, Minnesotan Survives

A man cut in half to get rid of the paralyzed, cancer-stricken lower part of his body has survived for a year and appears to be a rehabilitated wheelchair patient, surgeons at the University of Minnesota Hospital reported. Dr. J. Bradley Aust, who headed the surgical team, said the patient's legs and pelvis were removed in the operation, believed to be the first of its kind in which a patient survived for an extended period. The backbone was severed at the level of the navel, but no vital organs were removed, doctors said. The normal outlets for waste materials had to be relocated, however, and the patient continues to have a tube in his bladder.