Dixie Cops Beat Negro Grandmother To Death

SELMA, Ala.—A Negro grandmother died en route to the county jail near here this week, following a brutal beating by a Dixie sheriff and three federal officers who attacked her with blackjacks.

Mrs. Hattie DeBardeleben, 46, was the victim of the vicious attack which resulted in her death. Chief Deputy Sheriff Clyde White, accompanied by three federal officers, approached Mrs. DeBardeleben at her home and told her she was suspected of selling "wildcat" whiskey.

A search of the premises bore out her statement that she was innocent. The officers then turned on her son, Robert, and nephew, James, aged 15, and struck them both. Further enraged by the grandmother's attempts to protect the boys, the men struck her with blackjacks.

Dies En Route to Jail

As she begged for her life, Mrs. DeBardeleben was beaten to her knees. One of the boys slipped away from the house and ran to the field where two older sons, Bennie and Johnnie, were working. The officers met the men with drawn guns, commanding them to keep their distance, or be killed.

Mrs. DeBardeleben, weak from the beating she had suffered, was thrown into a car along with her 15-year-old son, Edward. During the trip to Platteville jail several miles from here, the victim died. Upon their arrival at Prattville, the boy was put in jail and J. H. Williams, an undertaker here, was called to take charge of the body.

Witnesses said that the sheriff then summoned a white doctor and had him report the cause of death as "heart trouble." The two grown sons persuaded a white farmer to get their brother out of jail. The boy was released and taken to Montgomery, Ala., where he was charged with "having untaxed liquor." A plea of not guilty was entered.

Ask Governor to Take Action

One of the federal officers, identified as one of the attackers, recommended the case be dropped. The judge then dismissed the case.

A full report of the case was made to the Birmingham branch NAACP, Emory O. Jackson, executive secretary, announced. A letter to Gov. Chauncey Sparks declared, "The evidence developed in this alleged slaying fits every definition, description and detail of a foul, shameful and intolerable lynching."