

Preacher Flogged by Ku Klux Klan!!



A dark-eyed rotund little preacher, his back still carrying the stripes of a flogging today returned to the state he left seven years ago and offered his services in the fight against the Ku Klux Klan. The Reverend Grady R. Kent (left) Pastor of the Knoxville Church of God was lashed 60 times with two big bull whips in 1939 while he was pastor of an Atlanta church because “he preached too loud”. He later managed to stumble and drag himself through the woods where he was picked up by a street car conductor and taken to the hospital. After recovering he moved to Knoxville where he has been preaching since. When he made his plans known about coming back to Atlanta he received numerous threats from Knoxville Klansmen. Here Rev. Kent, (Left) shows where he was severely injured to Assistant Attorney General Dan Duke (right) who is leading the fight against the Klan in Georgia.

Below are some of the accounts that happened from the years 1939-1946 in the state of Georgia, concerning the beating of Rev. Grady R. Kent by the Ku Klux Klan.

Some of these articles were published in the Atlanta Constitution and The Cleveland Banner.

To read Grady R. Kent’s book “Sixty Lashes at Midnight” go to www.thevisionoffall.org/kentsermons.html

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Flogged Pastor Defies Kidnapers, Preaches Before Crowed of 600

May 27, 1939

Defying a mysterious bad of men who Tuesday night beat him until his body was black and blue and bleeding, and who ordered him to “leave town by sundown Wednesday,” the Rev. Grady R. Kent, pastor of the Church of God at Egan Park, preached last night before an overflow congregation of more than 600 persons.

At the same time, two of his assistant preachers, Fred Evans, 24 and Forrest Williams, 21, both of Egan Park, disclosed they had received indirect threats that they would “get the same medicine,”

The Rev. Kent and the others fervently announced they “will continue to preach no matter what happens.”

Evans said he learned from a friend that “he and Williams would be beaten up Wednesday night.”

Describing service at the church, Evans said the congregation hears testimonials at about 8 o'clock at night. This is followed by an hour and a half of preaching. Then, “saving of souls” begins, Evans said, “and they pray them through.”



The Rev. Kent, plaintively quoting scripture while members of his congregation grouped around his bedside yesterday afternoon, told of being kidnapped and lashed by 12 men.

The clergyman exhibited bruises and welts on arms, shoulders, legs and back, which he said were administered by his abductors.

Patrolmen W. C. Tumlin and E. D. West, of Fulton county police, were investigating.

Here is the story told by the minister:

“We had been conducting a revival for the past two weeks. Some of the residents had been complaining that we were holding services too late at night and making too much noise. That’s the only reason the men gave for doing what they did to me.

“The meeting Tuesday night was over about 11 o’clock. It was one of the best services of the revival. Many people crowded around the altar.

“Well, after the meeting was over I went down to Joseph Latham’s lunch room, on Whipple avenue, to get a sandwich. After I had left the house two automobile loads of men drove up. Two of the men went up on the porch and waited while another threw open the door. They asked my wife if I was there and she told them I was down at the lunch room.

Used Ruse

“After that they drove on down to the lunch room and two of them came up to the door to ask about me. I stepped out on the porch and they told me there was a lady in the car who wanted to talk to me.

“I went on out to the car and they told me to get in, but I told them I could talk to her from the outside. They told me again to get in the car and shoved me in, warning me that the less I said the better off I would be.

“There were six men in this car four in the front seat and two in the back, one on each side of me. After we had driven down the road a little way we came upon another car which took the lead.

Started Praying

“I didn’t know exactly where they were taking me. I didn’t say anything for a long time. I was praying. They told me to stop praying and pulled my hat down over my eyes and hit me in the face.

“I asked them why they were taking me off. They replied by asking me what I had been doing, and I told them I hadn’t been doing anything except preaching and trying to get souls saved.

“As we went through East Point they told me the quieter I was the better. I began praying again and prayed until we got to the other side of East Point.

Lashed Pastor

“We stopped in a patch of lonely woods. When we got out they told me to pull off my coat. I tried to reason with them, but they wouldn’t listen. I pulled off my coat and handed it to one of the men, but he said he didn’t want to touch it, and ordered me to throw it on the ground. They also commanded me to take off my trousers.

“Then they began lashing me with whips that seemed to have something on the end that cut into the skin. Two of them held me while the other two beat me. The licks were unbearable. I tried to wrestle free and fell on the ground. They kept on beating me until they had given me about 60 lashes.

“They warned me to get my family out of town by tonight or that they would just be a sample of what I would get. But I can tell you right now I intend to stay right here and preach if it is God’s will.

Finds Way Back

“When they were through whipping me I was paralyzed and bleeding. Then they started back, telling me to go through the woods in the other direction.

“We just bring them out here, we don’t carry them back,” they said to me.

“I watched the tail lights of the cars as they disappeared and found my way back to the road. I waited for a street car and came on back to Mr. Latham’s. But it was about all I could do to get here. It was then about 1 o’clock in the morning.

Didn’t Tell Family

“I have been pastor of the Church of God here since last September. I have a wife and six children. I didn’t let them know what had happened last night.

“It was a terrible beating they gave me, but you know we read in the Scriptures that in the last days the magistrates and rulers will deliver us up to be killed thinking they are doing God’s will.”

ONE MORE WORD

Nov 23, 1941— By Ralph McGill

CALL THE REV. KENT It ought to be a very good illustration of how impossible it is to shock the moral character of the state that no one seemed to get upset when the Governor of the State announced, in speaking kindly of Ku Klux Klan floggers, that he himself had once participated in a flogging.

Georgia has got used to being shocked. I kept wondering how the boys who insist newspapers should not print any of the bad publicity news felt about this revelation by the Governor. They felt, all right, I reckon. They never mentioned it.

The Governor said, in praising the motives of the convicted floggers whom he proposes to pardon or parole, that he himself was mixed up in a similar sort of case. The only difference seems to have been, he said, that he “got his off in the daytime.” The convicted men he proposes to release did their flogging in the nighttime.

The Governor did have more courage, or more assurance of safety, than the craven cowards he proposes to release. They did their flogging at night and they picked on helpless persons, as floggers always do. They resorted to extreme cruelty, as sadists always do.

It was a foul nest of cruelty and beast-like actions that was broken up by these convictions. These men were convicted by juries which heard the evidence. The judges who sat on the case judged the evidence. They were guilty and so found by a jury.

The Governor asks that a number of preachers be brought up this week when the hearing is to be held. He wants preachers to speak for them so that it may go in the record.

Well, I hope they call the Rev. Kent.

THE REV. GRADY KENT I hope the Rev. Kent is there to speak his piece. I recall there were a few preachers in the section where this foul nest of men operated, who preach about the glories of the Ku Klux Klan. We can imagine what they think.

The Rev. Kent is a Holiness preacher. He never went to a seminary and he knows nothing about the Greek roots and the fancy translation of the books of the Bible. As far as I know, the Lord may smile on his religion as much as He does on the expensive choirs and the more poetic sermons to be heard elsewhere.

I know that the tents and the small church's of the Holiness church dot the scenes all over Georgia.

The Rev. Kent had been holding a protracted meeting in his small church in Egan Park and he was getting the crowds. He probably was taking away some attendance and collections from the official preachers of the Ku Klux Klan gang in that section; a gang so bad the Klan itself couldn't stand the smell and had to suspend the charter.

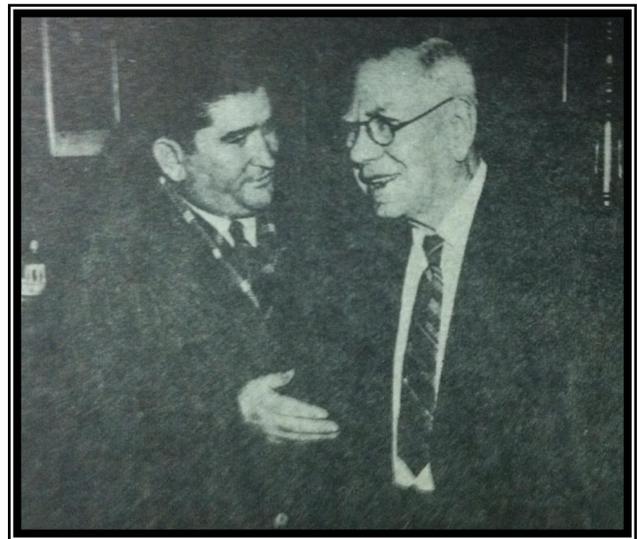
He received some threats saying he and his congregation were praising the Lord too loudly. County police chased away a car which was cruising up and down in front of his church one night.

I don't know who got him. But some of "the boys" did. They called him out of a small restaurant, the big, brave men that they were, and they took him out to the woods near Conley. There, another car joined the big, brave men and all of them beat him while he was handcuffed and tied up. He was whipped into unconsciousness. During the beating the men were cursing him and his church and telling him to leave town. They left him unconscious. They had served as judge and jury and there was no man to parole or pardon Preacher Kent. I hope he is there to speak up when they ask what preachers think about releasing floggers.

The Governor asked for preachers to be on hand.

I think it would be fine if the preacher of every one of Atlanta's big, powerful churches would be there and say not to release these convicted floggers and turn them back on the helpless ones of their community. If they aren't there they can let the Governor know what preachers of Atlanta think about it.

He asked to know!



In the waiting room of Governor Gene Talmadge of Georgia in the city of Atlanta, Pastor Grady R. Kent and General Overseer of the Church of God, A.J. Tomlinson, are discussing preparation for the clemency hearing of the "flogging" before the Governor of Georgia. This is the first picture of the General Overseer in connection with the famous "flogging conflict." Bishop Tomlinson took great interest in all the proceedings and remained throughout the trial.

Good Morning

Nov 28, 1941 by Louie D. Newton

DRAMATIC MOMENTS.

The occasion of the Governor's hearing of pleas for clemency for certain individuals, convicted for flogging citizens of Fulton and adjoining counties, held in the senate chamber of the state capital last Tuesday, presented a number of dramatic moments. I can mention only three in this limited space.



1. Assistant Solicitor Dan Duke holding before the Governor the leather lashes, which he said were used in the floggings, and later when Assistant Solicitor J.R. Parham, who, by the way, was Mayor of East Point at the time of these floggings, held the lashes before the Governor with his one hand and the nub of the other arm, from which the hand was shot off during the last World War, and asked if "men with good intentions" would have gone out under cover of night with such weapons, "sufficient to kill bull elephants," and beat their fellow citizens. Equally dramatic was the moment when Mr. Duke turned on the lawyers for the defendants and said: "God forbid the day when a bunch of floggers can intimidate the free press of a state."

2. A Jewish lawyer, Mr. Wingrow declaring: "If I were a Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan I would be proud of it." And Dr. Edward G. Mackay's reply: "I am ashamed of any Jew who will defend an organization that is founded on the same principles and pursues the same tactics as the secret societies that have sent so many of his relatives to the ghetto."

3. But by far the most dramatic moment, I thought, in the more than three hours of drama was by the Rev. Grady R. Kent, a preacher at Eagan Park, near East Point, who was one of the victims of the flogging, who stood there before the Governor and told the story of how he was dragged into the woods, under cover of night, after he preached, stripped of his clothing, and beaten with the lashes which lay on the desk in front of the Governor. "I wondered why one side of my body was worse mangled than the other side, Governor, and when I saw these lashes, I could understand, for one of them, as you will see, had metal in it. My back was beaten into jelly, and I was left bleeding in the woods. I prayed God to give me strength to find my way back to my wife and six children. I have never spoken one word against these men who beat me, but I do ask, Why did not they not show me some mercy that night, since mercy is being asked for them today?"

When the question was asked, following Rev. Kent's statement, if anyone in the senate chamber challenged his testimony, there was no reply. When It was asked if anyone could give a reason why Rev. Kent was beaten, a blind man came forward and said: "I understand he was beaten because he shouted and the people should and sang so loud until 11 o'clock at night." One could not fail to recall how Paul and Silas sang and prayed in the Philippian jail at midnight, and the prisoners were glad to hear them, and the jailer and all his household were saved. Nor could one discover in anything that there could have been any possible justification in beating this preacher, nor any of the other victims, as for that.



Grady R. Kent was about to appear before the Governor of Georgia in the hearing of the trail of the "Floggers." At the left appears Prosecutor Dan Duke, Assistant Attorney General of Georgia, holding one of the whips used by the Ku Klux Klan. Pastor Kent is explaining to Bishop A.J. Tomlinson General Overseer of the Church of God, that this is one of the straps from which he had received about sixty lashes. This strap is about one-half inch thick and is fastened to the end of a baseball bat.

Cleveland, Tenn. June 20, 1946

Two crosses were burned in Cleveland's downtown section Thursday night. Cleveland is the home of Church of God Minister Grady R. Kent who said he was flogged by members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1939 and who has offered his services to the State of Georgia in its fight to break up the Klan in Georgia.

Flogged Minister Returns to Aid State' War on Klan

June 19, 1946

The Rev. Grady R. Kent, Church of God Minister, who was lashed 60 times by the East Point Floggers in 1939, has offered his aid in Georgia's fight against the Ku Klux Klan, thus defying Tennessee members of the secret terror order.

Kent, who returned to Georgia for the first time in seven years, yesterday walked into the office of Asst. Atty. Gen. Dan Duke to offer Assistance. He told Duke he was prompted to do so after he was visited recently at his church in Knoxville, Tenn. And told to deny that Klansmen beat him in East Point in 1939 because he "preached too loud."

Kent still is a sick man from his beating of seven years ago because of an infection in his back which doctors say he will carry to his grave.

He had not recovered from a blow in his stomach given him as he lay in a semi-conscious state after receiving the beating, he said.

Has Fought Before

This is not the first time Kent has gone to the aid of those fighting the nightgowned bullies. He appeared to oppose clemency for the floggers in a hearing before former Gov. Eugene Talmadge and yesterday still had the vivid memory of Talmadge's remark that he was "once in a flogging" himself.

Despite his injuries and the nightmare memories of his brutal flogging, there is no hatred in the preacher's heart. "They'll have to make it right with God and then it will be right with me," he declared.

Kent can give no other reason for his being alive now other than Heavenly protection, because the 60 lashes which we received were given him with two bull whips, big enough to kill.

Dan Duke: "We got convictions in the Kent case, on Hawthorne we had eighteen counts and eighteen different floggings and the jury convicted on two and he went to the penitentiary."

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