

FBI Probes Slaying of Veteran, 23

Cut Down As Wife Looks on

The Division of Civil Rights of the Department of Justice at week's end launched an investigation into the fatal shooting of a Philadelphia war veteran on Feb. 14 in backwoods Charlestown, W. Va.

Two Philadelphia agents of the FBI yesterday conferred with Mrs. Lucille Serrell, of 3825 N. 18th st., widow of 23-year-old George Serrell, who was shot before her eyes following a jim crow train incident in the West Virginia town.

SEEKING INFORMATION

They were seeking additional information from Mrs. Serrell which might strengthen a Federal case against the railroad detective who shot Serrell, and a Charles Town constable who was his accomplice.

The Federal investigation was launched by Senator Harley M. Kilgore, of West Virginia, to determine whether Serrell's civil rights had been violated.

Public indignation in the murder of the young veteran, who was discharged from the Army in 1944 after serving on the front lines, swelled and sparked protests from numerous groups in this city.

REIGN OF TERROR

It is apparent to many that the shooting of Serrell was one in a widespread reign of terror in Southern States against Negroes, admittedly in protest against President Truman's civil rights program.

Mrs. Serrell, on the verge of a breakdown and unable to undergo too much questioning, haltingly related the story of her husband's slaying.

Her attorney, Howard Richard, of this city, has represented her at most interviews. He attended the inquest for the slain youth at Charles Town and has been active in the investigation.

Richard disclosed that although the FBI is investigating the case, agents here have not been committal on their procedure.

Mrs. Serrell and her husband had left their home here on Friday, Feb. 13, to visit Serrell's family in Pearsburg, Va., where he was born and spent his youth. No direct travel line is maintained from

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FBI Probes

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Philadelphia to Pearsburg, and the next day the couple were required to change trains near Shenandoah Junction, W. Va. When they boarded the train at the junction the conductor advised them they had to find seats in the customary jim crow coach behind the engine.

An argument ensued but Serrell and his wife refused to sit on the dirty seats. Instead they parked their bags in the aisle and sat on them.

At Charles Town, the couple were arrested and taken off the train by a railroad detective and a constable. They were forced into an automobile, driven by the constable's wife. Mrs. Serrell sat up front with the constable and his wife, and her husband in the back with the detective.

After they had been driven for a while along a country road, Serrell, who had never been told where he and his wife were being taken, scuffled with the detective. In an ensuing fight, the veteran was shot three times.

Mrs. Serrell stood by helpless and was subsequently arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. She was held incommunicado in the county jail for several days. An inquest was held Feb. 20, at which Richard was denied the right to examine witnesses. The coroner issued a verdict of "justifiable homicide."

Mrs. Serrell was not permitted to attend the funeral for her husband on Feb. 18, but was confined in the jail. Serrell was not afforded even a military funeral, she said because officials refused to consider his veterans' status or examine his discharge papers.

A mass meeting in protest of the slaying will be held Monday at the Second Baptist Church, 3837 Germantown ave. the Rev. Rober Washington, pastor. A number of prominent persons will speak, including representatives from local veterans' organizations.

"Two midget" football teams are going to play for the championship of the finger-bowl."