

HERMON "RED" COOK

Hermon "Red" Cook served as Sheriff of Colbert County for only eight months (from January 1963 until August 1963). Mr. Cook was an Alabama State Trooper prior to being elected Sheriff.



Colbert County Sheriff Cook and the Town of Littleville Police Chief James Cornelius (Neal) Pace were killed when a bootlegger (Troy Thornton) gunned them down on August 18, 1963. Deputy Sheriff Donald Files was also injured. Another Deputy, Ray Murray, was unhurt. Cook, Pace, and Files were shot as they crept through weeds toward a shack owned by Thornton about 1.5 miles from Littleville. Cook had led a raid on the shack about a week before and arrested another bootlegger, John Henry Green, on a charge of selling moonshine there. Thornton had heled Green to secure bond. Thornton himself had been arrested several times on bootlegging charges. Thornton was seated in a chair underneath a tree away from the shack when he opened fire.

Murray said they ducked down into high grass but Cook and Pace, who were close together, were struck with one blast when they raised their heads. Pace Died instantly and Cook died a short time later. Murray said Thornton picked up a rifle and fired several more shots, one of which apparently struck Files in the stomach.

Thornton fled the scene. Approximately 300 law enforcement officers were led by Highway Patrol Lt. J. R. Prater and State Investigator Dexter Haney. Relatives told the searchers that a doctor had informed Thornton he had cancer and that he didn't have long to live. They said the wanted man felt he didn't have much to lose.

Thornton surrendered to Patrolman Ernest (Bear) Smith and Denver H. Tidwell the next day. Thornton was discovered dead in his cell at the Franklin County Jail on September 3, 1963.

EDITORIAL GRIST

“Dead In The Name Of The People”

The death of two lawmen in Colbert County at the hands of a suspected bootlegger should stab the conscience of the people in whose name they acted.

That bootlegging flourishes is the mightiest monument to the enduring hypocrisy of voters. They enact prohibition laws and cheerfully await the foreseeable results. By their votes they invite the bootlegger and by their dollars they secure him in his law-breaking.

Bootlegging will never be put down, for the men who try to enforce the law are forever betrayed by the people who put prohibition on the books.

In the majesty of the law, the officers are sent forth to do the unending dirty work assigned to them and created for them by the people, who for their part cackle over what seems to them to be a comical contest between the moonshiners and the “revenueurs.” The tragedy is that lawmen are killed in this grim charade.

The Montgomery Advertiser, as published in *The Tri-Cities Daily*, August 29, 1963

Twenty-eight names were submitted to Governor George Wallace for a possible successor to Sheriff Cook. Included in the list is Mrs. Frances Cook, who was nominated by Rev. N. Roscoe Griffin, a leader of prohibition forces in Colbert County.

Names included on a list from the Governor’s Office are Sheffield Police Chief Warren Aycock, Chief Deputy Jerry Sockwell, Deputy Sheriff Bobby Eckles, Bob Evans, Paul Keeton, O. W. Stanley, Tuscumbia Police Commissioner John L. (Buddy) Aldridge, Cecil B. Stout, W. P. (Ace) Perkins, Tommy Jackson, A. N. McKinney, George C. Wells, Otis McRight, L.E. Blasingam, Larry Dye, E. P. Garrett, Paul Grasham, James Venable, former Sheriff W. Raymond Wheeler, A.C. Whitsett, Guy Hale, Huston Patton, C. B. Highfield, Red Whidby, Reedus Lee, Charles E. Bradford, John B. Hall.

Information from *Tri-Cities Daily*, September 4, 1963

Sheriff Cook was born on May 22, 1905 and died on August 18, 1963. He is buried in Tuscumbia Oakwood Cemetery. Mr. Cook was married to Frances Cook and they had one daughter.