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# Department of Justice

## Division of **COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS**

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144-2-13

FEDERAL RECORDS CENTER

CLOSED

See also Nos.


Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

RECEIVED  
MAR 21 1946  
CRIMINAL DIVISION

TO : Assistant Attorney General T. L. Caudle  
DATE: March 20, 1946  
44-1220

FROM : John Edgar Hoover - Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: MRS. HATTIE DEBARDLEBAN - VICTIM  
CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Reference is made to your memorandum dated March 14, 1946, your file reference 144-2-12, with regard to the investigation requested in your memorandum of April 11, 1945.

I wish to refer you to the investigative reports of Special Agent Edwin Paul Dunphy at Birmingham, Alabama, dated May 5, and June 18, 1945, entitled "John H. Barrenbrugge; J. C. Moseley; L. O. Smith; Hattie Debardleben - Victim; Civil Rights and Domestic Violence." These reports were transmitted to you by memoranda dated May 14, and June 26, 1945, and by memorandum dated June 30, 1945, your file reference 144-2-13, you advised that no further investigation was requested.

144-2-13

File  
JOS

RECORDED

MAR 21 1946

CIVIL RIGHTS SEC

HOLLIE

We must plan our  
strategy in the case  
carefully

~~I strongly recommend~~

The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

May 21, 1945.

Tom C. Clark, Assistant Attorney General

TCC:EB:BC

John H. Barrenbrugge, J. C. Moseley,  
L. O. Smith; Hattie Debardleben - Victim  
Civil Rights and Domestic Violence

144-2-13

RECORDED  
77

This will acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of  
May 14, with attached report of Edwin Paul Dunphy. Before  
deciding whether we will proceed with full investigation of the  
above matter, we should like the following preliminary investiga-  
tion.

R. C. 2.

Please interview the undertaker who actually prepared the  
body for burial and attempt to determine from him whether he  
observed any signs of a broken neck or other evidences of  
violence. Please obtain from one of your medical experts an  
opinion as to whether or not the symptoms described as preceding  
the death of Hattie Debardleben would have resulted from heart  
trouble or whether they could have resulted from a blow which  
caused a broken neck and possible brain injury or whether we must  
seek some third cause for such symptoms.

S B  
R

CC Miss Bontecou  
Miss Healy  
Records ✓



## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Attorney General, Tom C. Clark DATE: May 14, 1945

FROM : John Edgar Hoover, Director - Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: JOHN H. BARRENERUGGE, J. C. MOSELEY,  
L. O. SMITH; HATTIE DEBARDLEBEN - VICTIM  
 CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CRIMINAL DIVISION

RECEIVED

MJC

MJC

144-2-13

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

MAY 16 1945

W.W.C.

CRIM - CIVIL RIGHTS SP1

Reference is made to your memorandum dated April 11, 1945, requesting an investigation of the allegation that victim Hattie Debardleben suffered a deprivation of her civil rights while being arrested.

Investigation has been conducted in accordance with your request, and there is transmitted herewith a copy of the report of Special Agent Edwin Paul Dunphy dated May 5, 1945, at Birmingham, Alabama, captioned as above.

It would be appreciated if you would advise whether you believe further investigation should be conducted in this matter.

Attachment ✓

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

FILE NO. **44-83** am

REPORT MADE AT <b>Birmingham, Alabama</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>5-6-45</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>4-24, 25-45</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>EDWIN PAUL DUMPHY</b>
TITLE <b>JOHN H. BARRENBRUGGE, J. C. MOSELEY, L. O. SMITH; HATTIE DEBARDLEBEN - VICTIM</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:** EDWARD LEWIS UNDERWOOD, son of victim DEBARDLEBEN, interviewed and signed statement obtained in which he alleges two of three officers carried as subjects beat his mother when arresting her on 3-23-45. Mother who had previously had heart attacks collapsed enroute to jail and was dead on arrival at the jail. UNDERWOOD also alleges that JAMES COLLIER was struck by officers for not understanding and promptly complying with directions. Signed statement of undertaker obtained, in which he states victim DEBARDLEBEN's head sagged, indicating something was wrong with her neck. Careful examination by himself and a Dr. TANKERSLEY failed to reveal any bruise or abrasions with the exception of two abrasions on victim's knees. Deputy Sheriff CLYDE WHITE, who accompanied subjects, in signed statement states that no force was used against victim and that UNDERWOOD furnished a signed statement to members of the Alcohol Tax Unit of the Treasury Department verifying that no violence was used.

- C -

**REFERENCE:** Letter from the Bureau dated April 17, 1945, entitled: "UNKNOWN SUBJECTS, Mrs. Hattie Debardleben, Victim; CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE".

**DETAILS:** This is a joint report of Special Agent ARTHUR H. HAUSSER-MANN and the writer.

APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES	
COPIES OF THIS REPORT 3 - Bureau 1 - U. S. A., Montgomery 3 - Birmingham		<span style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">144-2-13</span> DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE MAY 16 1945 CRIM. DIV.	

In accordance with the directions contained in reference Bureau letter, the writer and Special Agent HAUSSERMANN interviewed EDWARD LEWIS UNDERWOOD and obtained from him the following signed statement:

"Autaugaville, Alabama  
April 24, 1945,  
Rt. 1, Box 172.

" I, Edward Lewis Underwood of Rt. 1, Autaugaville, make the following voluntary statement to Arthur H. Hausermann and Edwin P. Dunphy whom I know to be Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I make this statement freely and voluntarily no force has been used against me and no promise of reward has been made to me. I realize that I need not make any statement and that any statement I do make may be used as evidence in a court of law.

" I was born in Autauga County, Alabama on Nov. 8, 1929. My father was Horace Washington Underwood and my mother was Hattie Deardle-ben. I lived with my mother and attend Atauga County Training School.

" On March 23, 1945, I went to school, about 4 P.M. I returned home I found my mother Hattie in the backyard of our house shelling seed corn. I went in and ate my dinner. When I came out my mother was starting to wash. We stood in the back yard talking of singing at the school when a car drove up. There were four white men and one colored boy in the car. I recognized the colored boy as a named Walter Shepherd. The only white man I knew was Mr. Clyde White, who I knew was the man next to Mr. Allen Stewart of the Sheriffs Office.

" The white man who was driving the car got out and walked over to my brothers car which was parked in the yard. He then said "Auntie, do you have any chickens to sell". She said, "No sir I don't have any to sell". He said I see a mighty heap of them on the yard. He said Well you have some whiskey to sell and we want to find it. She said you can go on and search. He didnt say anything and another one got out. This second man to get out said boy you go on over and sit down. I thought he was speaking to me so I went over and sat down. But he was speaking to my sunities son James Edward Collier who had come out of the house. When he had come out of the house he said to Hattie, I am fixing to go home now Aunt Hattie I will try to get back Sunday. James had been boarding with us, for the past three years so he could go to school. But the man who said "boy you go on over & sit down had meant James & not me, and when James just stood on up this man walked on over to him and hit him (James) with his fist back of his ear. James then went over and sat down, next to me. Then Hattie spoke up and said, "Leave him alone he is fixing to go home". Then the one the one who had struck James struck Hattie and knocked her down. She fell down on

her stomach and fell back on her back when she fell on a pot in which she was boiling water for her washing. She got up and didn't say anything then the man who had struck her and another man each hit her a couple of times each she fell down again she fell backwards against the pot. She got up again and they both hit her again this time she fell on her knees with both her hands on the ground. Then the two men who had hit her helped her up and put her in a chair which she had been sitting in before the men came. Then the men asked her what she had to do with that boy. She told them that was her sisters child.

" Then I called the other boys. These were my brothers. Johnny called Buddy who is about 22 or 23, Bennie James about 19 or 20 and they started up from the fields, but the men met them at the wire fence and they took out their guns and told the boys not to get over the fence to come and get over by them. The boys came up to the place where the men said and came over the fence. The men then told the boys to sit over on the ground which they did.

" The men then asked some questions of the boys. I couldn't hear just what was said.

" The boys then got up and the man walked along the man walked behind the boys. They came up to where my mother was and sat down. During all this there was one man standing with my mother, he was not the one that hit her. Mr. Clyde White was in the house searching.

" Mr. Clyde came out and just before that the men who hit my mother came over and asked me what was my name & where did I go to school. I told them. My mother was setting in a chair & not saying anything, just a panting & a grunting like a person whose breath was cut off. Mr. Clyde came out and he and another went & searched around the pasture.

" Then they came back from searching and the man who was driving the car said to my mother that they were going to carry her to jail and to go and get her shoes. One of her grandsons went & brought her her shoes he is Hiawatha Nelson he is only 7 years old.

" Mother put on her shoes and one of the men took her arm & put in the car. She was hopping along.

" They put my mother in the back seat then Walter Shepherd next to her and I got in Walter Shepherd's lap. The man who drove up got in to the back with us. Mr. Clyde White and the other two got in front. The fat man who was the first one to hit my mother drove back.



" When we got down as far as Mulbery Church my mother asked them to let her get out and get her some of the water at the spring. But no one said anything and they did not stop just kept on going. After they drove on she started to vomit down the front of her dress I held the dress up to her mouth. When Hattie started to vomit Walter said to me, Hold her dress up. After a bit it began to get full up and they stoped the car. Hattie got down on her knees in the door & vomited out the door. After she vomited awhile one of the men said, Get back up on the seat. She said no I am sick. I said not you got to do what they say, and I pulled her back up on the seat. Then we drove on off and she fainted. When we got to a creek they stoped the car and Mr. Clyde White went & got some water in a bottle. He poured some of it in a glass & I poured some on a handkerchief and washed her face. The man on the back seat with us tried to get her to drink some but she wouldnt she didnt say anything except thats my baby meaning me. I am her youngest child.

" We then drove on to Prattville. We went to go into the Sheriffs Office and the men tried to wake my mother up and then said, you boys carry her into the office. Then Walter Shepherd said, this woman is dead. Mr. Stewart, the sheriff, who had come to the car said let me see her. He looked at her and one of the men said you all go on into the office. Mr. Stewart came in then and asked us our names. Mr. Stewart then called the Dr. and they carried us on out and put us in jail. This was between 5:30 and 6 oclock.

" That night between 8:30 and 9 oclock Mr. Clyde White came on up and told me to come on out he said go on down stairs I am going to turn this light out. I went on down the stairs and into a room. Two men were there, these were not the same men who had been with Mr. White in the afternoon. These men asked me to tell them just what happened I told them just what I have said in this statement. They asked me what relation I was and I said a son. I told them about the men hitting my mother and they said when I told about her leg striking the pot that sometimes when a person aims to hit a person they dont hit them and that if she hit the pot she must have been shoved and so to make more sense he would put that she was shoved and not hit. I know this was not true but I knew my mother was dead and I was afraid they would bury her with me still in jail so I signed it. These men did not tell me they would let me out of jail if I signed the statement I just thought they would let me out of jail if I signed it and keep me in jail if I did not sign the statement. The statement was written down by one of the men and when he finished he said there was one paragraph at the top that he did not need to read then I read the rest

BH 44-85

of it out loud and then they told me to sign the paper. I signed it. After the man finished the statement Mr. Stewart came in and said the Dr. wanted to see him and he went right out.

" Then the other man took my fingerprints. After he finished taking my fingerprints I signed the card and then they let me out. Mr. Clyde said we are going to be good enough to let you go home because your mother is dead.

" When I got out to the Sheriff's Office my brother Bennie James and a white man with whom we do business were there. The white man is Mr. Frank Gober. We drove to Don Albright's Funeral Home where we saw my mothers body. I told Mr. Frank what happened and we looked at the side of my mothers neck but we could not find any scar.

" We asked Don Albright for his charge & he said it was \$5. Mr. Frank lent my brother that money. We left and went home.

" On the following Monday March 26, 1945 I went to Montgomery to the Post Office because the two men who took the statement had told me I had to come there & make bond.

" When I got to Montgomery I went to see the judge he read from some paper about being charged with having untaxed whiskey though the two men had said I with interferring with an arrest. Then one of the men said I recoment this case be dropped. I left and went back home.

" For about two month before March 23 1945 my mother had been under a Dr care. She had been to see Dr. Chiseln of Selma. She took sick whenever something excited her & had a shortness of breath so I had made her go to see a Dr. He said she had heart trouble and gave her some medicine.

" When my mother fainted after vomiting she foamed at the mouth and nose. It looked like foam that comes on top of a soda bottle when you open it.

" I have read the above statement consisting of this and seven other pages and now initial each page & corrections & sign it because it is true.

EDWARD LEWIS UNDERWOOD

Witness:

Edwin P. Dunphy, FBI, B'ham, Ala. 4-24-45  
Arthur H. Haussermann, FBI, B'ham, Ala. 4-24-45. "

\* \* \*

DAN ALBRIGHT, colored, undertaker who received the body of victim DEBARDEBEN from the car of subjects but who did not prepare it for burial, upon interview furnished the following signed statement:

"Prattville, Alabama

April 24, 1945.

" I, Dan Albright of Box 302 Rt 1, Prattville, Alabama, make the following voluntary statement to Arthur H. Haussermann and Edwin P. Dunphy who have identified themselves to me as Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I make this statement freely and voluntarily, no force has been used against me and no promise of reward has been offered me. I realize I do not have to make any statement and that any statement I do make may be used as evidence in a court of law.

" I was born in Lowndes County, Alabama about 1886 for the past thirty years I have been living in Autauga County.

" In 1940 I went into the undertaking business for myself prior to that time I had been employed by the Loveless Funeral Co.

" On March 23, 1945, the day after my wifes Daddy died I got a call from Mr. Allan, the High Sheriff just before dark, about 6 or 7 o'clock. Mr. Allan said, come up to the jail house and get a dead body. I told him alright Ill be right on in a few minutes. I came out & cranked up the ambulance and went. I stoped at Willie Greens house and picked him up. Willie Green is the man who helps me. We went on to Prattville to the court house. We parked the ambulance under some oak trees and went up to the door where Mr. Allan was standing. I said I came to get that body. He said alright just a few minutes until the Dr. gets here before I can let you get it.

" Two revenue men came out of the court house and went to a car which was parked up against the back door of the jail house. They opened the back of this car and took out a still. Mr. Clyde White the deputy sheriff was standing along on the side when these men got the still out.

" After I first saw the Sheriff he had said the body was in the car and I walked over and saw her lying on the back seat her head over on one side of the seat and her feet were on the floor.

" When the revenue men took the still out of the back of the car Mr. Clyde he sepeke up and said, "Dan after we got her whiskey she took the heart trouble and died. You didnt die when we got your whiskey did you. I said no sir, why should I die about a little whiskey.

BH 44-83

" In a little bit the Dr. came. It was Dr Tankersley. He went into the court house and then came out and said for me to take the body down to my place because he would have to strip it to examine it and we couldn't do that in the car.

" Willie Green and me took the body from the car, put it in the ambulance and came on down to my place.

" We took the body out and put it on my embalming table and took off the clothes.

" Dr. Tankersley and Mr. Allen came down then and the Dr. examined the body. I helped him and we looked all over the body for marks or bruises but found only a skinned place on each knee. The only thing I noticed was that was different from other bodies was that whenever we picked up the body the head would fall back. I said nothing to the Dr. about the neck. After his examination the Dr said she died from heart trouble.

" I forgot to say that when we first went to the car this woman was foaming at the mouth & nose just like a boar hog foams. I spoke up and said to Mr. Clyde and said there is something wrong with this woman lesson she got hold of some poison and he said she did take some medicine here awhile back. I didnt say no more.

" After the Dr said she died of heart trouble I just covered up the body and everybody went off.

" About 12 o'clock a white man whose name I dont know and two colored boys came to my house. The white man said these were the children of the dead woman and they wanted to see their mama. I said alright.

" The three of them came in and looked at the body. The white man said one of the boys just got out of jail, he was brought on the same evening they brought his mama. The boy who had been in jail said they hit mama right her pointing to a place on the neck of the body. He said dont you see a bruise. The white man and I both looked and we couldn't see any mark. Then the boy said "Well they hit mama right here pointing to the same place again. But we still couldn't see any mark.

" The white man then said an undertaker from Selma would come and pick up the body. The white man paid me \$5, and they went off.

" Later a colored undertaker from Selma came for the body. He said he needed a removal permit and I told him I didnt have any permit that the Sheriff just told me to pick up the body and hold it for further consideration. He talked awhile and I said I could sign my name to one

BH 44-83

of my blanks and he could take this one to the Sheriff. I did sign my name to one of my forms, a copy of which I have given to Agents Dunphy and Haussermann. All I put on this blank was my name. He took this blank and my boy drove him up to Prattville to Mr. Allen and they came back later and got the body.

" I have not talked to anybody else about this case or signed any papers since that time. I didnt sign the blank myself because I cant write. I had my daughter sign my name as she does all my writing; my daughter is Mary Celena Albright and she lives here with me, she is 17 years old and going to High School.

" I have had this statement consisting of this and four other pages read to me and now make my mark on each page and each correction and at the end of the statement because it is true.

His  
Dan (X) Albright  
mark

Witness:

Edwin P. Dunphy, FBI, B'ham 4/24/45.

A. H. Haussermann, FBI, B'ham, 4/24/45. "

\* \* \*

Deputy Sheriff CLYDE WHITE, who accompanied the other officers at the time victim DEBARDLEBEN was arrested, upon interview furnished the following signed statement:

"Prattville, Alabama  
April 25, 1945

" I, Clyde White, Deputy Sheriff of Autauga County make the following voluntary statement to Edwin P. Dunphy and Arthur H. Haussermann whom I know to be Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I know I need not make any statement and that any statement I do make may be used as evidence in a court of law. This statement is made freely and voluntarily no force has been used against me and no promise of reward has been offered me.

" I am employed as a deputy sheriff in Autauga County and have been so employed for the past 16 years.

" Sometime prior to March 23, 1945 I received several complaints concerning the illegal sale of whiskey by Hattie Debardeladen out on Route 3, Selma, and complaints that the sons of this woman were not working and were spending their time running up and down the roads in an old ford roadster.

" I contacted the men of the Alcoholic Tax Unit of the Federal Internal Revenue Dept. and we arranged to make a raid.

" On March 23, 1945 Mr. Barrenbergge, of the A.T.U. Johnnie Morley and L. O. Smith of the State of Alabama A.B.C. board went down to the home of Hattie Debardleden. We had first stoped on the property of Will Underwood a white man and found a negro named Walter Shephard operating a still. We confiscated that still and took Walter into custody. We then drove on to Hattie's place. Walter was with us.

" When we drove up Mr. Barrenbergge and I both spoke to Hattie and told her that we understood that she was selling whiskey and asked her permission to search the premises. Hattie said she was not selling any whiskey but we could go ahead and search. When we drove up Hattie was washing clothes. She was using what we call a batteling stick, it is a stick 3 or 4 feet long and about as big around as a man wrist. It is the usual thing for a negro woman washing to have such a stick. In the yard with Hattie was a boy whom we found to be her son Edward Lewis Underwood. When Hattie said we might search I went up to the house, as I entered the house I heard Edward say "come here Buddy these white sons of bitches cant search this house". I turned around and saw L. O. Smith take the aforementioned stick away from the old woman and Mr. Barrenbergge said to the boy you sit down there. The boy went over and sat on the ground and Smith told Hattie to go sit in a chair that was in the yard. Neither officer struck either the woman or the boy. Later I comment on the statement of the boy and what he called us to Mr. Barrenbergge and he said well he is just a boy.

" I went into the house then and searched the premises. I did not find any whiskey but I found 6 3 gallon jugs and a barrell of empty bottles some of the jugs smelled of whiskey.

" When Edward called Buddy two other negroes came out of the field. These two came over to the house and sat down with the others.

" When we completed our search which had resulted in my finding that which is set out above and in one of the other men finding a quart of white whiskey and told the old woman and the boy Edward to get in the car. We told the old woman she was charged with violation of the Int. Rev. Law Federal and the boy that he was charged with interfering with an officer in making an arrest.

" The old woman got up out of her chair and walked over to the car. She did not limp or complain and was not aided by anybody in getting into the car. Both negroes got into the back seat with Walter Shep-

herd who had been there all of the time. Mr. Barrenburgge got in back with them and I drove. Mr. Smith and Mr. Morley sat in front with me.

" We drove along for a little way when one of the boys said Hattie had fainted. I stoped at the first creek we came to and got out and filled a bottle with water. The boy Edward washed his mothers face and she seemed to revive. We drove on into the jail yard in Prattville and I got out and went into the Sheriffs office for the key. The negro boys were talking to Hattie trying to get her up when one of them said "shes dead". The Sheriff looked at her and then called Dr. Tankersley who said she was dead. Dr. Tankersley said to call the negro undertaker. I went on with the handling of the two boys. I then helped take the woman out of the car and put her into the ambulance I noticed that she was foaming at the mouth and nose it was a white foam.

" That night a white man named Frank Bover came to the jail and wanted to get the Underwood boy out of jail. I was told by Mr. Barrenburgge to let Underwood out with the understanding that Gober pardon him in court in Montgomery.

" That night laney White the head of the A.T.U. in Montgomery and C. W. Feates a Special Investigator from the same office came to the jail and interviewed the Underwood boy and Walter Shepherd, taking signed statements from each of them. I was present when they took the statement from the Underwood boy and heard Mr. Feates tell him he need not make any statement I know that no force was used against him and that he was not told he would be let out of jail if he made a statement or be kept in jail if he did not make any statement.

" I want to point out that when we drove up into the yard of these people Edward Underwood was wearing a pair of rimless glasses and that he wore them all of the time, when I released him from jail that night he was still wearing them and they were not broker or bent or damaged in any way.

" I have read the above statement consisting of this and five other pages, initialed each page and each correction and now sign it because it is true.

CLYDE WHITE

Witness:

Edwin P. Dunphy, FBI, Bham, 4/24/45.

Arthur H. Haussermann, FBI, B'ham, 4/25/45.

\* \* \*

BH 44-83

The following descriptions of subjects were obtained by casual observation of the writer.

Name	JOHN H. BARRENBRUGGE, Investigator Alcohol Tax Unit, Internal Revenue Department, Post Office Building, Montgomery, Alabama
Age	40
Race	White
Sex	Male
Weight	185
Height	5' 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Hair	Light brown, receding at temples
Eyes	Blue
Complexion	Fair

Name	J. C. MOSELEY, Investigator Alcohol Beverage Control Board, Montgomery, Alabama, assigned during emergency to ATU, Montgomery, Alabama.
Age	45
Height	5' 11"
Weight	205
Hair	Black
Eyes	Brown
Race	White
Sex	Male
Complexion	Swarthy
Build	Heavy

Name	L. O. SMITH, Investigator, ABC Board, Lee Street, Montgomery, Ala.
Age	55
Height	5' 11"
Weight	150
Race	White
Sex	Male
Build	Slim
Hair	Brown
Peculiarities	Wears glasses



BH 44-83

The following description of victim HATTIE DEBARDLSEN was obtained from EDWARD LEWIS UNDERWOOD.

Name	HATTIE DEBARDLSEN
Race	Negro
Sex	Female
Age	46
Born	Lowndes County, Alabama date unknown
Husband	Horace Washington Underwood Cincinnati, Ohio
Height	5' 4"
Weight	175
Complexion	Dark brown.

- C L O S E D -

TLC:TLS:esw

144-2-13

October 30, 1945

HOLLIE

Reverend E. Simpson James  
Daniel Payne College  
Birmingham 6, Alabama

Dear Reverend James:

I have your letter of October 23, 1945, inquiring as to the case of Mrs. Hattie Debardleben, who died in the custody of the police. The Department made a careful investigation of the matter but found no evidence of any violation of a Federal Criminal Statute. Accordingly, it was obliged to close its file as there was no further action that could be taken.

Respectfully,

For the Attorney General

THERON L. CAUDLE  
Assistant Attorney General

CC: Records ✓  
Chron.



Daniel Payne College

Birmingham 6, Alabama

October 23, 1945.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OCT 24 1945  
PL...

RECEIVED  
OCT 25 1945  
CRIMINAL DIVISION

Attorney General Tom C. Clark  
Dept. Justice  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Attorney Clark:

We have been informed that the case of one Mattie Debardeleben, Montgomery Alabama has been turned over to your office. It is further averred that all papers affecting the case have been given you. We are writing to secure any or all information that might be available concerning the disposition of the case by your office.

Much concern is registered here concerning the outcome of the said case and we would appreciate your reply to the matter at the earliest date convenient with you.

Yours for an early consideration in the matter,

Respectfully,  
*E. Simpson James*  
Rev. E. Simpson James.

RECORDS  
L. M.

144-2-13  
OCT 24 1945  
CRIM. CIVIL RIGHTS SEC. ✓  
I.E.F.

ADDRES REPLY TO  
"THE ATTORNEY GENERAL"  
AND REFER TO  
INITIALS AND NUMBER

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

TCC:EB:BC

144-2-13

HOLLIE

Date: June 30, 1945.

To: Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

From: Tom C. Clark, Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division.

Subject: John H. Barrenbrugge, J. C. Moseley,  
L. O. Smith; Hattie Debardleben - Victim  
Civil Rights and Domestic Violence

Reference is made to your recent memorandum to the Criminal Division in the above-entitled matter.

You are advised that from the information presently available it appears that the institution of criminal proceedings is not warranted. No further investigation requested.

CC Miss Bontecou  
Miss Healy  
Records ✓



FOR DEFENSE



# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Attorney General, Tom C. Clark JUN 28 1945 DATE: June 26, 1945  
 FROM : *JEA* John Edgar Hoover, Director - Federal Bureau of Investigation CRIMINAL DIVISION  
 SUBJECT: JOHN H. BARRENBRUGGE, J. C. MOSELEY,  
 L. O. SMITH; HATTIE DEBARDLEBEN - VICTIM  
 CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Reference is made to our prior correspondence in the captioned case and in particular to your memorandum dated May 21, 1945, your file reference TCC:EB:BC, 144-2-13.

Additional investigation has been conducted in this case and there is transmitted herewith for your information a copy of the report of Special Agent Edwin Paul Dunphy dated June 18, 1945, at Birmingham, Alabama, captioned as above.

In view of the information set forth in this report no further investigation is contemplated in the absence of a request to the contrary from you.

Attachment ✓

<p style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">144-2-13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">JUN 27 1945 .M.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.</p>	<p>RECEIVED</p> <p>BOARD</p>
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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1

THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

**BIRMINGHAM, ALA.**

FILE NO.

**44-83 Me**

REPORT MADE AT <b>BIRMINGHAM, ALA.</b>	DATE WHEN MADE <b>6-18-45</b>	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE <b>6-8, 11-45</b>	REPORT MADE BY <b>EDWIN PAUL DUNPHY</b>
TITLE <b>JOHN H. BARRENBRUGGE; J. C. MOSELEY; L. O. SMITH; HATTIE DEBARDELEBEN - VICTIM.</b>			CHARACTER OF CASE <b>CIVIL RIGHTS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</b>

**SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:** FRED WILLIAMS, who prepared victim's body for burial, and Dr. TANKERSLEY, who examined victim's body shortly after death, upon interview advise there was no evidence of violence. No indication victim suffered broken neck. Dr. TANKERSLEY states death due to heart attack. Dr. CHISHOLM, victim's family physician, advised victim suffering from mitrol regurgitation murrmur of the heart and that sudden death, especially if excited, not surprising or unusual.

C.

**REFERENCE:** Report of Special Agent EDWIN PAUL DUNPHY, Birmingham, Ala., dated 5-5-45.  
Bureau letter dated May 31, 1945.

**DETAILS:** This is a joint investigation of the writer and Special Agent ARTHUR HAYES HAUSSERMANN.

AT SELMA, ALA.:

FRED WILLIAMS, 709 Philpot St., Selma, Ala., colored undertaker who prepared victim, HATTIE DEBARDELEBEN's, body for burial, upon interview furnished the following signed statement:

" Selma, Alabama.  
June 8, 1945.

I, Fred Williams, Jr. of 709 Philpot St. Selma Alabama make the following voluntary statement to Edwin P. Dunphy and Arthur H. Haussermann whom I know to be Special Agents of the F.B.I. I know I need not make any statement and that any statement I do make may be used as evidence in a court of law. No force

APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT		<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="color: red; font-size: 24px; margin: 0;">144-2-13</p> <p style="margin: 0;">DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE</p> <p style="margin: 0;">JUN 27 1945 P.M.</p> <p style="margin: 0;">DIVISION OF RECORDS</p> <p style="margin: 0;">CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.</p> </div>
3 Bureau		
1 U. S. Atty., Montgomery, Ala.		
3 Birmingham		

BH 44-83

has been used against me and no promises of reward offered me to induce me to make this statement.

I am employed at J. H. Williams & Son undertaking parlor in Selma, Ala. and have been the embalmer there for the past eight years.

On March 23 at about 7:30 P. M. I received a phone call from Prattville from an Underwood boy asking me to go to Prattville & obtain the body of his mother.

I went from here to Prattville and went to the home of Don Albright the colored undertaker and asked him about a release for the body which was at his funeral home at the time. Don sent me to the Sheriff's house. I went in to see the Sheriff and he sent me to the Registrar's home. I obtained a release to remove the body to Selma from the Register.

I then went back to Don Allbright and picked up the body and took it to my funeral home in Selma.

The following morning I examined the body. On the previous night I had seen and talked with the sons of the dead woman and they had told me the woman had been struck by some officers. I had had cases like this before and I thought there might be some investigation so I made a careful examination.

I found scratches on both knees such as would be made by skinning ones knees in gravel. These were the only marks on the body. I examined the neck closely for marks and found none, there was no sign of a broken neck. I have in my experience handled some broken neck cases and am sure that if the neck of this body was broken I would have detected this fact. Of course when I got the body the woman had been dead several hours and rigor mortis had begun to set in.

I found no marks about the body which would indicate a blow had been struck. There was some swelling about the body and on the neck and face, but I could not say this was not the natural result of death. Bodies swell like that after they have been dead for a time and it was 12 or 15 hours from the time of death given me and the time I examined the body.

I have read the above statement consisting of this and two other pages and now sign it because it is true.

/s/ FRED WILLIAMS JR.

EDWIN P. DUNPHY,  
FBI, Birmingham 6/8/45

ARTHUR H. HAUSSERMANN,  
FBI, B'ham., Ala. 6/8/45

BH 44-83

This statement is being retained in the Birmingham file.

Dr. J. S. CHISHOLM, 117 Broad St., Selma, Ala., advised that he had been victim DEBARDELEBEN's family physician for the past ten years and that she had been in general good health up until about a month prior to her death when she came to his office and complained of shortness of breath and the swelling of her feet. He advised he examined her and determined that she had a heart murmur which is described as a mitral regurgitation murmur. He stated that he did not consider her seriously ill and that she might have been expected to live out her normal span of life, yet on the other hand it was not at all unusual to have a person in her condition drop dead very suddenly, particularly if they had been subjected to any unusual strain or excitement. Dr. CHISHOLM stated he had prescribed fifteen drops of digitalis to be taken by HATTIE three times each day. Dr. CHISHOLM stated that in his opinion it was perfectly logical that subject under the stress and excitement of having been arrested and having officers advise her they were taking her to jail to have an attack and drop dead.

Dr. JAMES TANKERSLEY, Prattville, Ala., was interviewed by the writer and Special Agent HAUSSERMANN at his office. He stated that he had received a call from Sheriff STEWART of Autauga County on the night of March 23, 1945, requesting him to examine the body which was at that time in the court yard of the County jail. He stated he went to the scene and determined that there was a body of a negro woman in the back seat of the automobile, which he subsequently learned was the automobile of investigators of the Alcohol Tax Unit of the Department of Internal Revenue. He stated he examined the woman and verified the fact that she was dead and then requested that her body be removed to an undertaking home where he could make a complete examination. This was done and on the same night at the undertaking parlor of DAN ALBRIGHT, the negro undertaker at Prattville, he, Dr. TANKERSLEY, made a complete and careful examination of the body. He stated he found a slight abrasion on one knee. He stated that this point had not bled and was merely a scuffing up of the skin. He stated he had previously been advised that there might be an allegation that the negro woman had been injured and he took particular pains to examine all parts of her body and he was positive that she had not suffered any violence, but had died of a heart attack.

CLOSED