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What Now for Dr. Sam Sheppard?

This famous convict seemed likely to win parole until a beautiful blonde fell in love with him; now people again ask: is he a victim of fate or his own emotions?

By **PAUL HOLMES**

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AS A NEWSPAPER REPORTER who covered the famous murder trial of Dr. Samuel Sheppard in 1954, I went to Columbus, Ohio, earlier this year hoping to watch proceedings which would lead to the parole of this man convicted of killing his wife.

Over the years, as a newspaperman, crime writer, and lawyer, I have studied the case thoroughly, even written a book about it. I think that Dr. Sam was innocent of the crime.

As I traveled toward Columbus, it was my feeling that Dr. Sam's evil star, after nearly nine years of ascendancy, was finally on the way down. I hadn't taken into consideration love, headlines, and a beautiful blonde who I knew had entered Dr. Sam's life. I should have.

You will recall that the Sheppard murder case began July 4, 1954, when the pregnant wife of Dr. Sam, handsome, 29-year-old member of a

prominent Cleveland medical family, was bludgeoned to death in her bed. Only Sam and their sleeping son, 7, were known to have been in the house when she was killed. Sam said he was awakened by his wife's screams and twice knocked unconscious by one or two intruders when he went to her aid.

The jury which heard his story—and it took him the best part of three courtroom days to tell it—disbelieved him and convicted him of second-degree murder.

Dr. Sam began serving a life term on July 20, 1955. Ohio law requires that he serve 10 years before he can ask parole, so last January his attorneys tried another approach. They sought to make him eligible for immediate parole through a commutation of his life sentence solely on the basis of his excellent institutional record. The attorneys presented this case:

Assigned to the prison hospital, Dr. Sam had earned his keep by working as an anesthetist, technician, and male nurse. On one occasion he had saved the life of an inmate patient who had stopped breathing after surgery. He had participated in a cancer-research experiment by baring his arm to implantation of live cancer cells.

Dr. Sam had been adjudged worthy of honor status in 1960 by prison authorities and early in 1961 had been transferred from the dank, pre-Civil War prison in Columbus to a modern, medium-security institution at Marion, Ohio. Here he had set up a course in hospital and nursing techniques and as an inmate teacher had given training which enabled several convicts to get jobs upon release from prison.

The job of the parole commission, when it convened Jan. 29, was to decide whether this record entitled Sam to a recommendation for gubernatorial clemency, advancing his parole eligibility by two years. And he might have made

Ariane Tebbenjohanns—the woman who waits.



it except that fate suddenly intervened.

When his attorneys arrived at the hearing they were accompanied by a glamorous woman with platinum-blond hair and features of classic Nordic beauty. She was swathed in furs, bedecked liberally with jewels, and surrounded by an aura of Continental sophistication.

No one in the room had to ask her identity because the morning papers had been full of her sudden advent into the case. This was Ariane Tebbenjohanns of Düsseldorf, Germany, a well-to-do divorcee who had professedly fallen in love with Dr. Sam through correspondence and was in this country to fight for his liberation and marry him upon his release.

She would go to Washington, D.C., she said; she would make a personal appeal to President Kennedy and to his brother, the Attorney General; she would write articles about the case for German magazines, exposing American injustice.

Ariane Makes Matters Worse

This made exciting reading—but not for members of the parole commission, pondering their decision. They fumed with irritation; so did Ohio prison authorities. Even more exciting reading was provided later in the day by press cables from Düsseldorf with information that Ariane was indeed all she said she was—and more. She was a half-sister-in-law of the late Dr. Joseph Paul Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister.

This disclosure turned Ohio public opinion swiftly against Dr. Sam. As the public saw it, here was a man serving a life term for wife-murder after a trial which proved marital infidelity, if nothing else. Now he was involved with another woman. Knowledge that Ariane was a half-sister of the late Magda Goebbels clinched matters.

Retaliation against Sam was swift. On Jan. 30, the day following the commutation hearing, Ohio prison authorities revoked his privileges to receive visits and letters from the German woman. On Jan. 31, the parole commission unanimously voted to recommend that commutation be denied. The following day Gov. James A. Rhodes formally refused clemency.

But Ariane wasn't through. Stung by the ruling she could no longer write to Sam, she handed to a Columbus newspaper a love letter she had tried to send to Sam but which prison authorities had returned to her unopened. The newspaper published it on its front page.

To the prison administration, this was the last straw. On orders of Maury C. Koblenz, commissioner of corrections, Dr. Sam was awakened in the dead of night, manacled and chained, and unceremoniously hauled from Marion back to the prison at Columbus, his honor status gone.

Koblenz said the publicity was embarrassing the prison administration and that he had reason to suspect Ariane's effort to evade his edict against communication between her and the prisoner was carried out with Sam's possible connivance. Here was a plain hint that Sam's hither-