

## **Remembering Sam Napier – My Fallen Comrade**

In the middle of the New Haven trial of Bobby Seale, Erica Huggins, and the New Haven Panthers, in 1970, I received a very upsetting call from National Headquarters. The caller instructed me to go to New York and claim Sam Napier's body and bring him home to California. This nearly floored me because they gave me no information about Sam's death or any details about the circumstances surrounding it.

Sam Napier was in charge of our newspaper's distribution nationwide, as well as worldwide. Sam and I worked together in the early days of the Panther newspaper's development. A very devoted Party member, Sam was a natural-born distribution and traffic manager. At any given time, he could tell you how many Panther newspapers were shipped to each city and chapter, when they were due to arrive, and by what means. He loved the Party and he loved his work in the Party.

His death revealed to me the so-called split in the Party between the East Coast and the West Coast Panthers. A few months prior to Sam's murder, a Panther by the name of Robert Webb was murdered on the streets of New York. Webb was originally from the west coast, but had been assigned to work in the New York Chapters. What happened after Webb's murder was that the FBI, CIA, and the police fed false information via provocateur agents, to the New York Chapter of the BPP, telling them that West Coast Panthers had murdered Robert Webb. To me, it was obvious that Cointelpro had seized on the opportunity to drive a wedge in the Party, and kill a Panther Party member at the same time.

I met up with Sam's wife, Pauline Napier, who had flown in from the west coast to get her husband Sam's body, and take him home. She had been to the medical examiner's office and claimed him. Pauline then told us how Sam looked.

I told her what Panthers had related to me about Sam's death. They said that he had been held hostage in the Newspaper office, tortured, then shot, and the building had been set on fire.

During the days of the Panthers, because one had so little time, you got to know a person pretty fast, mostly by their attitude, and by their talents and work. Sam was also a great teacher and he built very strong cadres, mostly by his example. I never saw Sam down, he was always cheerful in his work,

steady, dependable, and dedicated to the idea of putting theory into practice. He would only get irritated when the Chapters didn't send in their receipts and always had a ready smile, and the words: "Circulate to Educate!" Sam was the main reason that the paper soon had a 200,000 plus copies per week distribution.

Sam and I met when I was Editor of the BPP newspaper, and although I soon went on to other responsibilities, we continued to see each other frequently and I was always amazed at his organization, discipline, and consistency. We met during the course of great struggles in our lives. I have often wondered where this great person came from. Where did he attend school? Did he have sisters and brothers?

Sam was my friend as well as my comrade in arms. I still miss him after 40-odd years. But then, I like to think that we will meet again and have all the time we need to talk of such things.

Long live the memory of Sam Napier! All Power to the People!

Elbert "Big Man" Howard  
Forestville, CA  
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