

4 The Clarion-Ledger Friday, June 3, 1977

Religious Cult Leader Sentenced

The woman known as MATHIAS, the leader of a Webster County religious cult, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison after his conviction on charges of kidnapping a woman and holding her captive on a farm near Dapins.

John Henson, director of the 16-acre ranch where the Church of Satan, was found guilty Wednesday by a Webster County Circuit Court jury of directing the abduction of Christine Hill, 21, from Miami in January 1975.

Mr. Hill testified that she was tied to chairs and held in a room.

Henson was fined on \$5,000 bond pending appeal.

Judge Clarence Morgan Jr. told Henson that although he did not believe the case called for the maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment, "what you are charged with is an unconscionable — the restraint of an American citizen without any right whatsoever — to a very serious crime."

Henson testified Mrs. Hill went to the residence of her own free will and "asked me to cast demons out of her." He denied

leading Mrs. Hill but said she was not trained in demonology because she was "mentally disturbed" and might have hurt herself.

"There is an easy and admissible way provided by law by petitioning a chancery court for restraining one who would harm himself and someone else," Morgan said. "You had no authority to do that."

Mr. Hill testified she was taken against her will from Miami, where she was living with her three children, and flown to the residence where her husband, William Hill, had lived for three months.

Hill said his wife went voluntarily to the courtroom and denied she was ever beaten or prevented from leaving.

He said his wife was bound to both ears and hands, occasionally because "she was rebelling."

Sherry Smith, a former member of the movement who spent six months at the farm in 1975, testified she was beaten and forced into cold showers during her stay.

She said she witnessed the beatings and others, and saw them tied to chairs, where they were forced to listen to speeches of movement leaders on headphones.

Candidates Make Their Pleas At Election Rally

In a 10-minute speech at a public hearing, it was held as an old-fashioned election rally for the folks sitting back in the park.

And before it was over, four candidates seeking to be Jackson's next mayor and four contenders for city commissioner had presented themselves to the public as the man to elect.

Mayoral candidate Martin Short, an independent, said he was crowned in South Park that he may be an "oddball," but his "Maverick" spirit was indicative of the type of mayor he would make. "It's the old-time way of the hillmen in Mexico," he said. "And I'm here to represent you as a servant."

Democratic hopeful Dale

Democratic Tom Kelly and Fred C. Johnson and Republican Nelson Cochran and James D. Drake all said they would oppose recognition of unions for city workers, and all four put in a plug for public education.

Kelly and Cochran both said they would be opposed to extending current labor hours to 7 1/2 hours a day. That Cochran claimed would lead to "Communist City" and "red" infiltration.

Johnson said he was personally opposed to the extension, but wouldn't keep his voters on "one" — both he and Drake said they would leave the issue with the voters to decide in a referendum election.

All was not high-spirited debate and political rhetoric Thursday, however. Johnson took credit for being the strongest candidate. Drake said he was the oldest and Drake said he was the oldest and Drake said he was the oldest.

The rally was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Jackson.

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