

followed us just three or four feet away. Some were threatening to kick us out—or throw us all the way to Tougaloo, and a lot of other possible and impossible things.

Rose and I hit the swinging doors with our backs at the same time. The doors closed immediately behind us. We were now outside the station not knowing what to do or where to run. We were afraid to leave. We were at the back of the station and thought the mob would be waiting for us if we ran around in front and tried to leave. Any moment now, those that had followed us would be on us again. We were standing there just going to pieces.

"Get in this here car," a Negro voice said.

I glanced to one side and saw that Rose was getting into the back seat. At that moment the mob was coming toward me through the doors. I just started moving backward until I fell into the car. The driver sped away.

After we had gotten blocks away from the station, I was still looking out of the back window to see who would follow. No one had. For the first time I looked to see who was driving the car and asked the driver who he was. He said he was a minister, that he worked at the bus station part-time. He asked us not to ever try and sit-in again without first planning it with an organization.

"You girls just can't go around doing things on your own," he said. He drove us all the way to campus, then made us feel bad by telling us he probably would get fired. He said he was on a thirty-minute break. That's a Negro preacher for you.

Summer school ended the following week. I headed for New Orleans to get that good three weeks of work in before the fall term of my senior year began.

*part four*

THE MOVEMENT

## *chapter*

### | T W E N T Y - T W O |

In mid-September I was back on campus. But didn't very much happen until February when the NAACP held its annual convention in Jackson. They were having a whole lot of interesting speakers: Jackie Robinson, Floyd Patterson, Curt Flood, Margaretta Belafonte, and many others. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I was so excited that I sent one of the leaflets home to Mama and asked her to come.

Three days later I got a letter from Mama with dried-up tears on it, forbidding me to go to the convention. It went on for more than six pages. She said if I didn't stop that shit she would come to Tougaloo and kill me herself. She told me about the time I last visited her, on Thanksgiving, and she had picked me up at the bus station. She said she picked me up because she was scared some white in my hometown would try to do something to me. She said the sheriff had been by, telling her I was messing around with that NAACP group. She said he told her if I didn't stop it, I could not come back there anymore. He said that they didn't need any of those NAACP people messing around in Centreville. She ended the letter by saying that she had burned the leaflet I sent her.

"Please don't send any more of that stuff here. I don't want nothing to happen to us here," she said. "If you keep that up, you will never be able to come home again."

I was so damn mad after her letter, I felt like taking the NAACP convention to Centreville. I think I would have, if it had been in my power to do so. The remainder of the week I thought of nothing except going to the convention. I didn't know exactly what to do about it. I didn't want Mama or anyone at home to get hurt because of me.

I had felt something was wrong when I was home. During the four days I was there, Mama had tried to do everything she could to keep me in the house. When I said I was going to see some of my old classmates, she pretended she was sick and said I would have to cook. I knew she was acting strangely, but I hadn't known why. I thought Mama just wanted me to spend most of my time with her, since this was only the second time I had been home since I entered college as a freshman.

Things kept running through my mind after that letter from Mama. My mind was so active, I couldn't sleep at night. I remembered the one time I did leave the house to go to the post office. I had walked past a bunch of white men on the street on my way through town and one said, "Is that the gal goin' to Tougaloo?" He acted kind of mad or something, and I didn't know what was going on. I got a creepy feeling, so I hurried home. When I told Mama about it, she just said, "A lotta people don't like that school." I knew what she meant. Just before I went to Tougaloo, they had housed the Freedom Riders there. The school was being criticized by whites throughout the state.

The night before the convention started, I made up my mind to go, no matter what Mama said. I just wouldn't tell Mama or anyone from home. Then it occurred to me—how did the sheriff or anyone at home know I was working with the NAACP chapter on campus? Somehow they had found out. Now I knew I could never go to Centreville safely again. I kept telling myself that I didn't really care too much about

going home, that it was more important to me to go to the convention.

I was there from the very beginning. Jackie Robinson was asked to serve as moderator. This was the first time I had seen him in person. I remembered how when Jackie became the first Negro to play Major League baseball, my uncles and most of the Negro boys in my hometown started organizing baseball leagues. It did something for them to see a Negro out there playing with all those white players. Jackie was a good moderator, I thought. He kept smiling and joking. People felt relaxed and proud. They appreciated knowing and meeting people of their own race who had done something worth talking about.

When Jackie introduced Floyd Patterson, heavyweight champion of the world, the people applauded for a long, long time. Floyd was kind of shy. He didn't say very much. He didn't have to, just his being there was enough to satisfy most of the Negroes who had only seen him on TV. Archie Moore was there too. He wasn't as smooth as Jackie, but he had his way with a crowd. He started telling how he was run out of Mississippi, and the people just cracked up.

I was enjoying the convention so much that I went back for the night session. Before the night was over, I had gotten autographs from every one of the Negro celebrities.

I had counted on graduating in the spring of 1963, but as it turned out, I couldn't because some of my credits still had to be cleared with Natchez College. A year before, this would have seemed like a terrible disaster, but now I hardly even felt disappointed. I had a good excuse to stay on campus for the summer and work with the Movement, and this was what I really wanted to do. I couldn't go home again anyway, and I couldn't go to New Orleans—I didn't have money enough for bus fare.

During my senior year at Tougaloo, my family hadn't sent

me one penny. I had only the small amount of money I had earned at Maple Hill. I couldn't afford to eat at school or live in the dorms, so I had gotten permission to move off campus. I had to prove that I could finish school, even if I had to go hungry every day. I knew Raymond and Miss Pearl were just waiting to see me drop out. But something happened to me as I got more and more involved in the Movement. It no longer seemed important to prove anything. I had found something outside myself that gave meaning to my life.

✦ I had become very friendly with my social science professor, John Salter, who was in charge of NAACP activities on campus. All during the year, while the NAACP conducted a boycott of the downtown stores in Jackson, I had been one of Salter's most faithful canvassers and church speakers. During the last week of school, he told me that sit-in demonstrations were about to start in Jackson and that he wanted me to be the spokesman for a team that would sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter. The two other demonstrators would be classmates of mine, Memphis and Pearlina. Pearlina was a dedicated NAACP worker, but Memphis had not been very involved in the Movement on campus. It seemed that the organization had had a rough time finding students who were in a position to go to jail. I had nothing to lose one way or the other. Around ten o'clock the morning of the demonstrations, NAACP headquarters alerted the news services. As a result, the police department was also informed, but neither the policemen nor the newsmen knew exactly where or when the demonstrations would start. They stationed themselves along Capitol Street and waited.

To divert attention from the sit-in at Woolworth's, the picketing started at JCPenney's a good fifteen minutes before. The pickets were allowed to walk up and down in front of the store three or four times before they were arrested. At exactly 11 A.M., Pearlina, Memphis, and I entered Woolworth's from the rear entrance. We separated as soon as we stepped into the store, and made small purchases from various counters.

Pearlina had given Memphis her watch. He was to let us know when it was 11:14. At 11:14 we were to join him near the lunch counter and at exactly 11:15 we were to take seats at it.

Seconds before 11:15 we were occupying three seats at the previously segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. In the beginning the waitresses seemed to ignore us, as if they really didn't know what was going on. Our waitress walked past us a couple of times before she noticed we had started to write our own orders down and realized we wanted service. She asked us what we wanted. We began to read to her from our order slips. She told us that we would be served at the back counter, which was for Negroes.

"We would like to be served here," I said.

The waitress started to repeat what she had said, then stopped in the middle of the sentence. She turned the lights out behind the counter, and she and the other waitresses almost ran to the back of the store, deserting all their white customers. I guess they thought that violence would start immediately after the whites at the counter realized what was going on. There were five or six other people at the counter. A couple of them just got up and walked away. A girl sitting next to me finished her banana split before leaving. A middle-aged white woman who had not yet been served rose from her seat and came over to us. "I'd like to stay here with you," she said, "but my husband is waiting."

The newsmen came in just as she was leaving. They must have discovered what was going on shortly after some of the people began to leave the store. One of the newsmen ran behind the woman who spoke to us and asked her to identify herself. She refused to give her name, but said she was a native of Vicksburg and a former resident of California. When asked why she had said what she had said to us, she replied, "I am in sympathy with the Negro movement." By this time a crowd of cameramen and reporters had gathered around us taking pictures and asking questions, such as Where were we

from? Why did we sit-in? What organization sponsored it? Were we students? From what school? How were we classified?

I told them that we were all students at Tougaloo College, that we were represented by no particular organization, and that we planned to stay there even after the store closed. "All we want is service," was my reply to one of them. After they had finished probing for about twenty minutes, they were almost ready to leave.

At noon, students from a nearby white high school started pouring in to Woolworth's. When they first saw us they were sort of surprised. They didn't know how to react. A few started to heckle and the newsmen became interested again. Then the white students started chanting all kinds of anti-Negro slogans. We were called a little bit of everything. The rest of the seats except the three we were occupying had been roped off to prevent others from sitting down. A couple of the boys took one end of the rope and made it into a hangman's noose. Several attempts were made to put it around our necks. The crowds grew as more students and adults came in for lunch.

We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. All of a sudden I saw a face I remembered—the drunkard from the bus station sit-in. My eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other. Today he was drunk too, so I don't think he remembered where he had seen me before. He took out a knife, opened it, put it in his pocket, and then began to pace the floor. At this point, I told Memphis and Pearlana what was going on. Memphis suggested that we pray. We bowed our heads, and all hell broke loose. A man rushed forward, threw Memphis from his seat, and slapped my face. Then another man who worked in the store threw me against an adjoining counter.

Down on my knees on the floor, I saw Memphis lying near the lunch counter with blood running out of the corners of his mouth. As he tried to protect his face, the man who'd

thrown him down kept kicking him against the head. If he had worn hard-soled shoes instead of sneakers, the first kick probably would have killed Memphis. Finally a man dressed in plain clothes identified himself as a police officer and arrested Memphis and his attacker.

Pearlena had been thrown to the floor. She and I got back on our stools after Memphis was arrested. There were some white Tougaloo teachers in the crowd. They asked Pearlana and me if we wanted to leave. They said that things were getting too rough. We didn't know what to do. While we were trying to make up our minds, we were joined by Joan Trumpauer. Now there were three of us and we were integrated. The crowd began to chant, "Communists, Communists, Communists." Some old man in the crowd ordered the students to take us off the stools. *quote* *Comm of Commun*

"Which one should I get first?" a big husky boy said.

"That white nigger," the old man said.

The boy lifted Joan from the counter by her waist and carried her out of the store. Simultaneously, I was snatched from my stool by two high school students. I was dragged about thirty feet toward the door by my hair when someone made them turn me loose. As I was getting up off the floor, I saw Joan coming back inside. We started back to the center of the counter to join Pearlana. Lois Chaffee, a white Tougaloo faculty member, was now sitting next to her. So Joan and I just climbed across the rope at the front end of the counter and sat down. There were now four of us, two whites and two Negroes, all women. The mob started smearing us with ketchup, mustard, sugar, pies, and everything on the counter. Soon Joan and I were joined by John Salter, but the moment he sat down he was hit on the jaw with what appeared to be brass knuckles. Blood gushed from his face and someone threw salt into the open wound. Ed King, Tougaloo's chaplain, rushed to him.

At the other end of the counter, Lois and Pearlana were joined by George Raymond, a CORE field worker and a

student from Jackson State College. Then a Negro high school boy sat down next to me. The mob took spray paint from the counter and sprayed it on the new demonstrators. The high school student had on a white shirt; the word "nigger" was written on his back with red spray paint.

We sat there for three hours taking a beating when the manager decided to close the store because the mob had begun to go wild with stuff from other counters. He begged and begged everyone to leave. But even after fifteen minutes of begging, no one budged. They would not leave until we did. Then Dr. Beittel, the president of Tougaloo College, came running in. He said he had just heard what was happening.

About ninety policemen were standing outside the store; they had been watching the whole thing through the windows, but had not come in to stop the mob or do anything. President Beittel went outside and asked Captain Ray to come and escort us out. The captain refused, stating the manager had to invite him in before he could enter the premises, so Dr. Beittel himself brought us out. He had told the police that they had better protect us after we were outside the store. When we got outside, the policemen formed a single line that blocked the mob from us. However, they were allowed to throw at us everything they had collected. Within ten minutes, we were picked up by Reverend King in his station wagon and taken to the NAACP headquarters on Lynch Street.

After the sit-in, all I could think of was how sick Mississippi whites were. They believed so much in the segregated Southern way of life, they would kill to preserve it. I sat there in the NAACP office and thought of how many times they had killed when this way of life was threatened. I knew that the killing had just begun. "Many more will die before it is over with," I thought. Before the sit-in, I had always hated the whites in Mississippi. Now I knew it was impossible for me to hate sickness. The whites had a disease, an incurable disease in its final stage. What were our chances against such a disease? I

thought of the students, the young Negroes who had just begun to protest, as young interns. When these young interns got older, I thought, they would be the best doctors in the world for social problems.

Before we were taken back to campus, I wanted to get my hair washed. It was stiff with dried mustard, ketchup, and sugar. I stopped in at a beauty shop across the street from the NAACP office. I didn't have on any shoes because I had lost them when I was dragged across the floor at Woolworth's. My stockings were sticking to my legs from the mustard that had dried on them. The hairdresser took one look at me and said, "My land, you were in the sit-in, huh?"

"Yes," I answered. "Do you have time to wash my hair and style it?"

"Right away," she said, and she meant right away. There were three other ladies already waiting, but they seemed glad to let me go ahead of them. The hairdresser was real nice. She even took my stockings off and washed my legs while my hair was drying.

There was a mass rally that night at the Pearl Street Church in Jackson, and the place was packed. People were standing two abreast in the aisles. Before the speakers began, all the sit-inners walked out on the stage and were introduced by Medgar Evers. People stood and applauded for what seemed like thirty minutes or more. Medgar told the audience that this was just the beginning of such demonstrations. He asked them to pledge themselves to unite in a massive offensive against segregation in Jackson, and throughout the state. The rally ended with "We Shall Overcome" and sent home hundreds of determined people. It seemed as though Mississippi Negroes were about to get together at last.

Before I demonstrated, I had written Mama. She wrote me back a letter, begging me not to take part in the sit-in. She even sent ten dollars for bus fare to New Orleans. I didn't have one penny, so I kept the money. Mama's letter made me mad. I had to live my life as I saw fit. I had made that decision

when I left home. But it hurt to have my family prove to me how scared they were. It hurt me more than anything else—I knew the whites had already started the threats and intimidations. I was the first Negro from my hometown who had openly demonstrated, worked with the NAACP, or anything. When Negroes threatened to do anything in Centreville, they were either shot like Samuel O'Quinn or run out of town like Reverend Dupree.

I didn't answer Mama's letter. Even if I had written one, she wouldn't have received it before she saw the news on TV or heard it on the radio. I waited to hear from her again. And I waited to hear in the news that someone in Centreville had been murdered. If so, I knew it would be a member of my family.

28/6

On Wednesday, the day after the sit-in, demonstrations got off to a good start. Ten people picketed shortly after noon on Capitol Street, and were arrested. Another mass rally followed the demonstrations that night, where a six-man delegation of Negro ministers was chosen to meet Mayor Thompson the following Tuesday. They were to present to him a number of demands on behalf of Jackson Negroes. They were as follows:

1. Hiring of Negro policemen and school crossing guards
2. Removal of segregation signs from public facilities
3. Improvement of job opportunities for Negroes on city payrolls—Negro drivers of city garbage trucks, etc.
4. Encouraging public eating establishments to serve both whites and Negroes
5. Integration of public parks and libraries
6. The naming of a Negro to the City Parks and Recreation Committee

#### 7. Integration of public schools

#### 8. Forcing service stations to integrate rest rooms

After this meeting, Reverend Haughton, the minister of Pearl Street Church, said that the Mayor was going to act on all the suggestions. But the following day, Thompson denied that he had made any promises. He said the Negro delegation "got carried away" following their discussion with him.

"It seems as though Mayor Thompson wants to play games with us," Reverend Haughton said at the next rally. "He is calling us liars and trying to make us sound like fools. I guess we have to show him that we mean business."

When Reverend Charles A. Jones, dean and chaplain at Campbell College, asked at the close of the meeting, "Where do we go from here?" the audience shouted, "To the streets." They were going to prove to Mayor Thompson and the white people of Jackson that they meant business.

Around ten the next morning, an entire day of demonstrations started. A little bit of everything was tried. Some Negroes sat-in, some picketed, and some squatted in the streets and refused to move.

All of the five-and-ten stores (H. L. Green, Kress, and Woolworth's) had closed their lunch counters as a result of the Woolworth's sit-in. However, this did not stop the new sit-ins. Chain restaurants such as Primos Restaurant in downtown Jackson were now targets. Since police brutality was the last thing wanted in good, respectable Jackson, Mississippi, whenever arrested demonstrators refused to walk to a paddy wagon, garbage truck, or whatever was being used to take people to jail, Negro trustees from Jackson's city jail carted them away. Captain Ray and his men would just stand back with their hands folded, looking innocent as lambs for the benefit of the Northern reporters and photographers.

The Mayor still didn't seem to be impressed with the continuous small demonstrations and kept the streets hot. After eighty-eight demonstrators had been arrested, the Mayor

*Different roles of the NAACP*

held a news conference where he told a group of reporters, "We can handle 100,000 agitators." He also stated that the "good colored citizens are not rallying to the support of the outside agitators" (although there were only a few out-of-state people involved in the movement at the time) and offered to give Northern newsmen anything they wanted, including transportation, if they would "adequately" report the facts.

During the demonstrations, I helped conduct several workshops, where potential demonstrators, high school and college students mostly, were taught to protect themselves. If, for instance, you wanted to protect the neck to offset a karate blow, you clasped your hands behind the neck. To protect the genital organs you doubled up in a knot, drawing the knees up to the chest to protect your breasts if you were a girl.

The workshops were handled mostly by SNCC and CORE field secretaries and workers, almost all of whom were very young. The NAACP handled all the bail and legal services and public relations, but SNCC and CORE could draw teen-agers into the Movement as no other organization could. Whether they received credit for it or not, they helped make Jackson the center of attention throughout the nation.

During this period, civil rights workers who had become known to the Jackson police were often used to divert the cops' attention just before a demonstration. A few cops were always placed across the street from NAACP headquarters, since most of the demonstrations were organized there and would leave from that building. The "diverters" would get into cars and lead the cops off on a wild-goose chase. This would allow the real demonstrators to get downtown before they were noticed. One evening, a group of us took the cops for a tour of the park. After giving the demonstrators time enough to get to Capitol Street, we decided to go and watch the action. When we arrived there ourselves, we met Reverend King and a group of ministers. They told us they were going to stage a pray-in on the post office steps. "Come on, join us,"

*role of the media*

Reverend King said. "I don't think we'll be arrested, because it's federal property."

By the time we got to the post office, the newsmen had already been informed, and a group of them were standing in front of the building blocking the front entrance. By now the group of whites that usually constituted the mob had gotten smart. They no longer looked for us, or for the demonstration. They just followed the newsmen and photographers. They were much smarter than the cops, who hadn't caught on yet.

We entered the post office through the side entrance and found that part of the mob was waiting inside the building. We didn't let this bother us. As soon as a few more ministers joined us, we were ready to go outside. There were fourteen of us, seven whites and seven Negroes. We walked out front and stood and bowed our heads as the ministers began to pray. We were immediately interrupted by the appearance of Captain Ray. "We are asking you people to disperse. If you don't, you are under arrest," he said.

Most of us were not prepared to go to jail. Doris Erskine, a student from Jackson State, and I had to take over a workshop the following day. Some of the ministers were in charge of the mass rally that night. But if we had dispersed, we would have been torn to bits by the mob. The whites standing out there had murder in their eyes. They were ready to do us in and all fourteen of us knew that. We had no other choice but to be arrested.

We had no plan of action. Reverend King and some of the ministers who were kneeling refused to move; they just kept on praying. Some of the others also attempted to kneel. The rest of us just walked to the paddy wagon. Captain Ray was using the Negro trusties. I felt so sorry for them. They were too small to be carrying all these heavy-ass demonstrators. I could tell just by looking at them that they didn't want to, either. I knew they were forced to do this.

After we got to jail we were mugged and fingerprinted, then taken to a cell. Most of the ministers were scared stiff.



This was the first time some of them had seen the inside of a jail. Before we were mugged, we were all placed in a room together and allowed to make one call. Reverend King made the call to the NAACP headquarters to see if some of the ministers could be bailed out right away. I was so glad when they told him they didn't have money available at the moment. I just got my kicks out of sitting there looking at the ministers. Some of them looked so pitiful, I thought they would cry any minute, and here they were, supposed to be our leaders.

When Doris and I got to the cell where we would spend the next four days, we found a lot of our friends there. There were twelve girls altogether. The jail was segregated. I felt sorry for Jeanette King, Lois Chaffee, and Joan Trumpauer. Just because they were white they were missing out on all the fun we planned to have. Here we were going to school together, sleeping in the same dorm, worshipping together, playing together, even demonstrating together. It all ended in jail. They were rushed off by themselves to some cell designated for whites.

Our cell didn't even have a curtain over the shower. Every time the cops heard the water running, they came running to peep. After the first time, we fixed them. We took chewing gum and toilet tissue and covered the opening in the door. They were afraid to take it down. I guess they thought it might have come out in the newspaper. Their wives wouldn't have liked that at all. Peep through a hole to see a bunch of nigger girls naked? No! No! They certainly wouldn't have liked that. All of the girls in my cell were college students. We had a lot to talk about, so we didn't get too bored. We made cards out of toilet tissue and played Gin Rummy almost all day. Some of us even learned new dance steps from each other.

There were a couple of girls in with us from Jackson State College. They were scared they would be expelled from school. Jackson State, like most of the state-supported Negro schools, was an Uncle Tom school. The students could be

expelled for almost anything. When I found this out, I really appreciated Tougaloo.

The day we were arrested one of the Negro trustees sneaked us a newspaper. We discovered that over four hundred high school students had also been arrested. We were so glad we sang freedom songs for an hour or so. The jailer threatened to put us in solitary if we didn't stop. At first we didn't think he meant it, so we kept singing. He came back with two other cops and asked us to follow them. They marched us down the hall and showed us one of the solitary chambers. "If you don't stop that damn singing, I'm gonna throw all of you in here together," said the jailer. After that we didn't sing anymore. We went back and finished reading the paper.

We got out of jail on Sunday to discover that everyone was talking about the high school students. All four hundred who were arrested had been taken to the fairgrounds and placed in a large open compound without beds or anything. It was said that they were getting sick like flies. Mothers were begging to have their children released, but the NAACP didn't have enough money to bail them all out.

The same day we went to jail for the pray-in, the students at Lanier High School had started singing freedom songs on their lunch hour. They got so carried away they ignored the bell when the break was over and just kept on singing. The principal of the high school did not know what to do, so he called the police and told them that the students were about to start a riot.

When the cops came, they brought the dogs. The students refused to go back to their classrooms when asked, so the cops turned the dogs loose on them. The students fought them off for a while. In fact, I was told that mothers who lived near the school had joined the students in fighting off the dogs. They had begun to throw bricks, rocks, and bottles. The

next day the papers stated that ten or more cops suffered cuts or minor wounds. The papers didn't say it, but a lot of students were hurt, too, from dog bites and lumps on the head from billy clubs. Finally, one hundred and fifty cops were rushed to the scene and several students and adults were arrested.

The next day four hundred of the high school students from Lanier, Jim Hill, and Brinkley High schools gathered in a church on Farish Street, ready to go to jail. Willie Ludden, the NAACP youth leader, and some of the SNCC and CORE workers met with them, gave a brief workshop on nonviolent protective measures and led them into the streets. After marching about two blocks they were met by helmeted police officers and ordered to disperse. When they refused, they were arrested, herded into paddy wagons, canvas-covered trucks, and garbage trucks. Those moving too slowly were jabbed with rifle butts. Police dogs were there, but were not used. ~~From the way everyone was describing the scene it sounded like Nazi Germany instead of Jackson, USA.~~

On Monday, I joined a group of high school students and several other college students who were trying to get arrested. Our intention was to be put in the fairgrounds with the high school students already there. The cops picked us up, but they didn't want to put us so-called professional agitators in with the high school students. We were weeded out, and taken back to the city jail.

I got out of jail two days later and found I had gotten another letter from Mama. She had written it Wednesday the twenty-ninth, after the Woolworth's sit-in. The reason it had taken so long for me to get it was that it came by way of New Orleans. Mama sent it to Adline and had Adline mail it to me. In the letter she told me that the sheriff had stopped by and asked all kinds of questions about me the morning after the sit-in. She said she and Raymond told them that I had only been home once since I was in college, that I had practically cut off all my family connections when I ran away from home

as a senior in high school. She said he said that he knew I had left home. "He should know," I thought, "because I had to get him to move my clothes for me when I left." She went on and on. She told me he said I must never come back there. If so he would not be responsible for what happened to me. "The whites are pretty upset about her doing these things," he told her. Mama told me not to write her again until she sent me word that it was O.K. She said that I would hear from her through Adline.

I also got a letter from Adline in the same envelope. She told me what Mama hadn't mentioned—that Junior had been cornered by a group of white boys and was about to be lynched, when one of his friends came along in a car and rescued him. Besides that, a group of white men had gone out and beaten up my old Uncle Buck. Adline said Mama told her they couldn't sleep, for fear of night riders. They were all scared to death. My sister ended the letter by cursing me out. She said I was trying to get every Negro in Centreville murdered.

I guess Mama didn't tell me these things because she was scared to. She probably thought I would have tried to do something crazy. Something like trying to get the organizations to move into Wilkinson County, or maybe coming home myself to see if they would kill me. She never did give me credit for having the least bit of sense. I knew there was nothing I could do. No organization was about to go to Wilkinson County. It was a little too tough for any of them. And I wasn't about to go there either. If they said they would kill me, I figured I'd better take their word for it.

Meantime, within four or five days Jackson became the hotbed of racial demonstrations in the South. It seemed as though most of the Negro college and high school students there were making preparations to participate. Those who did not go to jail were considered cowards by those who did. At this point, Mayor Allen Thompson finally made a decisive move. He announced that Jackson had made plans to house

*role of the state*

over 12,500 demonstrators at the local jails and at the state fairgrounds. And if this was not enough, he said, Parchman, the state penitentiary, 160 miles away, would be used. Governor Ross Barnett had held a news conference offering Parchman facilities to Jackson.

~~An injunction prohibiting demonstrations was issued by a local judge, naming NAACP, CORE, Tougaloo College, and various leaders. According to this injunction, the intent of the named organizations and individuals was to paralyze the economic nerve center of the city of Jackson. It used as proof the leaflets that had been distributed by the NAACP urging Negroes not to shop on Capitol Street. The next day the injunction was answered with another mass march.~~

The cops started arresting every Negro on the scene of a demonstration, whether or not he was participating. People were being carted off to jail every day of the week. On Saturday, Roy Wilkins, the National Director of NAACP, and Medgar Evers were arrested as they picketed in front of Woolworth's. Theldon Henderson, a Negro lawyer who worked for the Justice Department, and had been sent down from Washington to investigate a complaint by the NAACP about the fairgrounds facilities, was also arrested. It was said that when he showed his Justice Department credentials, the arresting officer started trembling. They let him go immediately.

Mass rallies had come to be an every night event, and at each one the NAACP had begun to build up Medgar Evers. Somehow I had the feeling that they wanted him to become for Mississippi what Martin Luther King had been in Alabama. They were well on the way to achieving that, too.

After the rally on Tuesday, June 11, I had to stay in Jackson. I had missed the ride back to campus. Dave Dennis, the CORE field secretary for Mississippi, and his wife put me up for the night. We were watching TV around twelve-thirty, when a special news bulletin interrupted the program. It said, "Jackson NAACP leader Medgar Evers has just been shot."

We didn't believe what we were hearing. We just sat there

*racial terror*

staring at the TV screen. It was unbelievable. Just an hour or so earlier we were all with him. The next bulletin announced that he had died in the hospital soon after the shooting. We didn't know what to say or do. All night we tried to figure out what had happened, who did it, who was next, and it still didn't seem real.

First thing the next morning we turned on the TV. It showed films taken shortly after Medgar was shot in his driveway. We saw the pool of blood where he had fallen. We saw his wife sobbing almost hysterically as she tried to tell what had happened. Without even having breakfast, we headed for the NAACP headquarters. When we got there, they were trying to organize a march to protest Medgar's death. Newsmen, investigators, and reporters flooded the office. College and high school students and a few adults sat in the auditorium waiting to march.

Dorie Ladner, a SNCC worker, and I decided to run up to Jackson State College and get some of the students there to participate in the march. I was sure we could convince some of them to protest Medgar's death. Since the march was to start shortly after lunch, we had a couple of hours to do some recruiting. When we got to Jackson State, class was in session. "That's a damn shame," I thought. "They should have dismissed school today, in honor of Medgar."

Dorie and I started going down each hall, taking opposite classrooms. We begged students to participate. They didn't respond in any way.

"It's a shame, it really is a shame. This morning Medgar Evers was murdered and here you sit in a damn classroom with books in front of your faces, pretending you don't even know he's been killed. Every Negro in Jackson should be in the streets raising hell and protesting his death," I said in one class. I felt sick, I got so mad with them. How could Negroes be so pitiful? How could they just sit by and take all this shit without any emotions at all? I just didn't understand.

"It's hopeless, Moody, let's go," Dorie said.

As we were leaving the building, we began soliciting aloud in the hall. We walked right past the president's office, shouting even louder. President Reddix came rushing out. "You girls leave this campus immediately," he said. "You can't come on this campus and announce anything without my consent."

Dorie had been a student at Jackson State. Mr. Reddix looked at her. "You know better than this, Dorie," he said.

"But President Reddix, Medgar was just murdered. Don't you have any feelings about his death at all?" Dorie said.

"I am doing a job. I can't do this job and have feelings about everything happening in Jackson," he said. He was waving his arms and pointing his finger in our faces. "Now you two get off this campus before I have you arrested."

By this time a group of students had gathered in the hall. Dorie had fallen to her knees in disgust as Reddix was pointing at her, and some of the students thought he had hit her. I didn't say anything to him. If I had I would have been calling him every kind of fucking Tom I could think of. I helped Dorie off the floor. I told her we'd better hurry, or we would miss the demonstration.

On our way back to the auditorium we picked up the Jackson *Daily News*. Headlines read JACKSON INTEGRATION LEADER EVERS SLAIN.

Negro NAACP leader Medgar Evers was shot to death when he stepped from his automobile here early today as he returned home from an integration strategy meeting.

Police said Evers, 37, was cut down by a high-powered bullet in the back of the driveway of his home.

I stopped reading. Medgar was usually followed home every night by two or three cops. Why didn't they follow him last night? Something was wrong. "They must have known," I thought. "Why didn't they follow him last night?" I kept asking myself. I had to get out of all this confusion. The only way

I could do it was to go to jail. Jail was the only place I could think in.

When we got back to the auditorium, we were told that those who would take part in the first march had met at Pearl Street Church. Dorie and I walked over there. We noticed a couple of girls from Jackson State. They asked Dorie if President Reddix had hit her, and said it had gotten out on campus that he had. They told us a lot of students had planned to demonstrate because of what Reddix had done. "Good enough," Dorie said. "Reddix better watch himself, or we'll turn that school out."

I was called to the front of the church to help lead the marchers in a few freedom songs. We sang "Woke Up This Morning With My Mind on Freedom" and "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round." After singing the last song we headed for the streets in a double line, carrying small American flags in our hands. The cops had heard that there were going to be Negroes in the streets all day protesting Medgar's death. They were ready for us.

On Rose Street we ran into a blockade of about two hundred policemen. We were called to a halt by Captain Ray, and asked to disperse. "Everybody ain't got a permit get out of this here parade," Captain Ray said into his bull horn. No one moved. He beckoned to the cops to advance on us.

*Amelia* The cops had rifles and wore steel helmets. They walked right up to us very fast and then sort of engulfed us. They started snatching the small American flags, throwing them to the ground, stepping on them, or stamping them. Students who refused to let go of the flags were jabbed with rifle butts. There was only one paddy wagon on the scene. The first twenty of us were thrown into it, although a paddy wagon is only large enough to seat about ten people. We were sitting and lying all over each other inside the wagon when garbage trucks arrived. We saw the cops stuff about fifty demonstrators in one truck as we looked out through the back glass. Then the driver of the paddy wagon sped away as fast as he

could, often making sudden stops in the middle of the street so we would be thrown around.

We thought that they were going to take us to the city jail again because we were college students. We discovered we were headed for the fairgrounds. When we got there, the driver rolled up the windows, turned the heater on, got out, closed the door, and left us. It was over a hundred degrees outside that day. There was no air coming in. Sweat began dripping off us. An hour went by. Our clothes were now soaked and sticking to us. Some of the girls looked as though they were about to faint. A policeman looked in to see how we were taking it. Some of the boys begged him to let us out. He only smiled and walked away.

Looking out of the back window again, we noticed they were now booking all the other demonstrators. We realized they had planned to do this to our group. A number of us in the paddy wagon were known to the cops. After the Woolworth's sit-in, I had been known to every white in Jackson. I can remember walking down the street and being pointed out by whites as they drove or walked past me.

Suddenly one of the girls screamed. Scrambling to the window, we saw John Salter with blood gushing out of a large hole in the back of his head. He was just standing there dazed and no one was helping him. And we were in no position to help either.

After they let everyone else out of the garbage trucks, they decided to let us out of the paddy wagon. We had now been in there well over two hours. As we were getting out, one of the girls almost fell. A girl started to help her.

"Get ya hands off that gal. Whatta ya think, ya goin' to a prom or somethin'?" one of the cops said.

Water was running down my legs. My skin was soft and spongy. I had hidden a small transistor radio in my bra and some of the other girls had cards and other things in theirs. We had learned to sneak them in after we discovered they

didn't search the women but now everything was showing through our wet clothes.

When we got into the compound, there were still some high school students there, since the NAACP bail money had been exhausted. There were altogether well over a hundred and fifty in the girls' section. The boys had been put into a compound directly opposite and parallel to us. Some of the girls who had been arrested after us shared their clothes with us until ours dried. They told us what had happened after we were taken off in the paddy wagon. They said the cops had stuffed so many into the garbage trucks that some were just hanging on. As one of the trucks pulled off, thirteen-year-old John Young fell out. When the driver stopped, the truck rolled back over the boy. He was rushed off to a hospital and they didn't know how badly he had been hurt. They said the cops had gone wild with their billy sticks. They had even arrested Negroes looking on from their porches. John Salter had been forced off some Negro's porch and hit on the head.

The fairgrounds were everything I had heard they were. The compounds they put us in were two large buildings used to auction off cattle during the annual state fair. They were about a block long, with large openings about twenty feet wide on both ends where the cattle were driven in. The openings had been closed up with wire. It reminded me of a concentration camp. It was hot and sticky and girls were walking around half dressed all the time. We were guarded by four policemen. They had rifles and kept an eye on us through the wired sides of the building. As I looked through the wire at them, I imagined myself in Nazi Germany, the policemen Nazi soldiers. They couldn't have been any rougher than these cops. Yet this was America, "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

About five-thirty we were told that dinner was ready. We were lined up single file and marched out of the compound. They had the cook from the city jail there. He was standing over a large garbage can stirring something in it with a stick.

The sight of it nauseated me. No one was eating, girls or boys. In the next few days, many were taken from the fairgrounds sick from hunger.

When I got out of jail on Saturday, the day before Medgar's funeral, I had lost about fifteen pounds. They had prepared a special meal on campus for the Tougaloo students, but attempts to eat made me sicker. The food kept coming up. The next morning I pulled myself together enough to make the funeral services at the Masonic Temple. I was glad I had gone in spite of my illness. This was the first time I had ever seen so many Negroes together. There were thousands and thousands of them there. Maybe Medgar's death had really brought them to the Movement, I thought. Maybe his death would strengthen the ties between Negroes and Negro organizations. If this resulted, then truly his death was not in vain.

Just before the funeral services were over, I went outside. There was a hill opposite the Masonic Temple. I went up there to watch the procession. I wanted to see every moment of it.

As the pallbearers brought the body out and placed it in a hearse, the tension in the city was as tight as a violin string. There were two or three thousand outside that could not get inside the temple, and as they watched, their expression was that of anger, bitterness, and dismay. They looked as though any moment they were going to start rioting. When Mrs. Evers and her two older children got into their black limousine, Negro women in the crowd began to cry and say things like "That's a shame," . . . "That's a young woman," . . . "Such well-looking children," . . . "It's a shame, it really is a shame."

Negroes formed a seemingly endless line as they began the march to the funeral home. They got angrier and angrier; however, they went on quietly until they reached the downtown section where the boycott was. They tried to break through the barricades on Capitol Street, but the cops forced

them back into line. When they reached the funeral home, the body was taken inside, and most of the procession dispersed. But one hard core of angry Negroes decided they didn't want to go home. With some encouragement from SNCC workers who were singing freedom songs outside the funeral home, these people began walking back toward Capitol Street.

Policemen had been placed along the route of the march, and they were still there. They allowed the crowd of Negroes to march seven blocks, but they formed a solid blockade just short of Capitol Street. This was where they made everyone stop. They had everything—shotguns, fire trucks, gas masks, dogs, fire hoses, and billy clubs. Along the sidewalks and on the fringes of the crowd, the cops knocked heads, set dogs on some marchers, and made about thirty arrests, but the main body of people in the middle of the street was just stopped.

They sang and shouted things like "Shoot, shoot" to the police, and then the police started to push them back slowly. After being pushed back about a block, they stopped. They wouldn't go any farther. So the cops brought the fire trucks up closer and got ready to use the fire hoses on the crowd. That really broke up the demonstration. People moved back faster and started to go home. But it also made them angrier. Bystanders began throwing stones and bottles at the cops and then the crowd started too; other Negroes were pitching stuff from second- and third-story windows. The crowd drew back another block, leaving the space between them and the fire trucks littered with rocks and broken glass. John Doar came out from behind the police barricade and walked toward the crowd of Negroes, with bottles flying all around him. He talked to some of the people at the front, telling them he was from the Justice Department and that this wasn't "the way." After he talked for a few minutes, things calmed down considerably, and Dave Dennis and a few others began taking bottles away from people and telling them they should go home. After that it was just a clean-up operation. One of the

ministers borrowed Captain Ray's bull horn and ran up and down the street telling people to disperse, but by that time there were just a few stragglers.

After Medgar's death there was a period of confusion. Each Negro leader and organization in Jackson received threats. They were all told they were "next on the list." Things began to fall apart. The ministers, in particular, didn't want to be "next"; a number of them took that long-promised vacation to Africa or elsewhere. Meanwhile SNCC and CORE became more militant and began to press for more demonstrations. A lot of the young Negroes wanted to let the whites of Jackson know that even by killing off Medgar they hadn't touched the real core of the Movement. For the NAACP and the older, more conservative groups, however, voter registration had now become number one on the agenda. After the NAACP exerted its influence at a number of strategy meetings, the militants lost.

The Jackson *Daily News* seized the opportunity to cause more fragmentation. One day they ran a headline THERE IS A SPLIT IN THE ORGANIZATIONS, and sure enough, shortly afterward, certain organizations had completely severed their relations with each other. The whites had succeeded again. They had reached us through the papers by letting us know we were not together. "Too bad," I thought. "One day we'll learn. It's pretty tough, though, when you have everything against you, including the money, the newspapers, and the cops."

Within a week everything had changed. Even the rallies were not the same. The few ministers and leaders who did come were so scared—they thought assassins were going to follow them home. Soon there were rallies only twice a week instead of every night.

The Sunday following Medgar's funeral, Reverend Ed King organized an integrated church-visiting team of six of us from the college. Another team was organized by a group in Jackson. Five or six churches were hit that day, including Governor Ross Barnett's. At each one they had prepared for

our visit with armed policemen, paddy wagons, and dogs—which would be used in case we refused to leave after "ushers" had read us the prepared resolutions. There were about eight of these ushers at each church, and they were never exactly the usherly type. They were more on the order of Al Capone. I think this must have been the first time any of these men had worn a flower in his lapel. When we were asked to leave, we did. We were never even allowed to get past the first step.

A group of us decided that we would go to church again the next Sunday. This time we were quite successful. These visits had not been publicized as the first ones were, and they were not really expecting us. We went first to a Church of Christ, where we were greeted by the regular ushers. After reading us the same resolution we had heard last week, they offered to give us cab fare to the Negro extension of the church. Just as we had refused and were walking away, an old lady stopped us. "We'll sit with you," she said.

We walked back to the ushers with her and her family. "Please let them in, Mr. Calloway. We'll sit with them," the old lady said.

"Mrs. Dixon, the church has decided what is to be done. A resolution has been passed, and we are to abide by it."

"Who are we to decide such a thing? This is a house of God, and God is to make all of the decisions. He is the judge of us all," the lady said.

The ushers got angrier then and threatened to call the police if we didn't leave. We decided to go.

"We appreciate very much what you've done," I said to the old lady.

As we walked away from the church, we noticed the family leaving by a side entrance. The old lady was waving to us.

Two blocks from the church, we were picked up by Ed King's wife, Jeanette. She drove us to an Episcopal church. She had previously left the other two girls from our team there. She circled the block a couple of times, but we didn't see them

anywhere. I suggested that we try the church. "Maybe they got in," I said. Mrs. King waited in the car for us. We walked up to the front of the church. There were no ushers to be seen. Apparently, services had already started. When we walked inside, we were greeted by two ushers who stood at the rear.

"May we help you?" one said.

"Yes," I said. "We would like to worship with you today."

"Will you sign the guest list, please, and we will show you to your seats," said the other.

I stood there for a good five minutes before I was able to compose myself. I had never prayed with white people in a white church before. We signed the guest list and were then escorted to two seats behind the other two girls in our team. We had all gotten in. The church service was completed without one incident. It was as normal as any church service. However, it was by no means normal to me. I was sitting there thinking any moment God would strike the life out of me. I recognized some of the whites, sitting around me in that church. If they were praying to the same God I was, then even God, I thought, was against me.

When the services were over the minister invited us to visit again. He said it as if he meant it, and I began to have a little hope.

## *chapter*

### | TWENTY - THREE |

In July, CORE opened up an office in Canton, Mississippi, to start a voter registration campaign in Madison County. By this time, I was so fed up with the fighting and bickering among the organizations in Jackson, I was ready to go almost anywhere, even Madison County, where Negroes frequently turned up dead. Shortly before Christmas a man's headless corpse had been found on the road between Canton and Tougaloo with the genitals cut off and with K's cut into the flesh all over his body. Around the time the body was found, Tougaloo College had received a lot of threats, so an inventory was made of all the males on campus to see if any were missing.

When Reverend King discovered that I had agreed to work with CORE in the area, he was very much concerned. He discussed Canton with me, telling me he thought the place was too rough for girls. Some of my girlfriends also begged me not to go. But I just had to. I don't know why I felt that way, but I did.

Because I had come from Wilkinson County, I just didn't think Madison could be any worse. Things might even be a little better, I thought, since in Madison there were three Negroes to every white. I remembered that in Jackson there



had been one point when I could see the white folks actually tremble with fear. At times when we were having mass demonstrations we had them so confused they didn't know what to do. Whenever I could detect the least amount of fear in any white Mississippian, I felt good. I also felt there was a chance of winning the battle regardless of how costly it turned out to be.

Disregarding all acts of violence, Madison County was considered a place with a possible future for Negroes. In addition to the fact that our records showed that there was a population of twenty-nine thousand Negroes as against nine thousand whites, Negroes owned over 40 percent of the land in the county. However, there were only about one hundred and fifty to two hundred registered to vote, and these had registered as a result of a campaign conducted by a few local citizens a couple of years earlier. Of this number, less than half were actually voting.

I arrived in Canton with Dave Dennis one Friday evening, and was taken straight to the CORE office, a small room adjoining a Negro café. The café was owned by C. O. Chinn and his wife, a well-established Negro family. It was located on Franklin Street in the center of one of Canton's Negro sections. Dave and I were just in time to have supper there with George Raymond, the project director, and Bettye Poole, my old Tougaloo buddy.

Dave introduced me to Mrs. Chinn. She was a stout lady with a warm and friendly smile. I liked her right away. I spent the entire evening sitting around the office talking to her and George Raymond about Madison County.

The office had been open only a few weeks, and in that time, Mrs. Chinn had already had her liquor license taken away. The place had been broken into twice, and many Negroes had been physically threatened. George reported that so far mostly teen-agers were involved in the Movement. He said that about fifty dedicated teen-age canvassers showed up each day. They were sent out daily, but had little

success. Most of the Negroes just didn't want to be bothered, Mrs. Chinn told me. "That's the way it is all over," I thought. "Most Negroes have been thoroughly brainwashed. If they aren't brainwashed, they are too insecure—either they work for Miss Ann or they live on Mr. Charlie's place."

I just didn't see how the Negroes in Madison County could be so badly off. They should have had everything going for them—out-numbering the whites three to one and owning just about as much land as they did. When I discussed this point with Mrs. Chinn, I discovered that, although they did own the land, they were allowed to farm only so much of it. Cotton is the main crop in Mississippi, and, as Mrs. Chinn explained that night, the federal government controls cotton by giving each state a certain allotment. Each state decides how much each county gets and each county distributes the allotments to the farmers. "It always ends up with the white people getting most of the allotments," Mrs. Chinn said. "The Negroes aren't able to get more, regardless of how much land they have." Most of the farmers in Madison County were barely living off what they made from their land. Besides, they were never clear from debt. The independent farmers were practically like sharecroppers, because they always had their crop pledged in advance. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed that the federal government was directly or indirectly responsible for most of the segregation, discrimination, and poverty in the South.

Later, I was taken to the Freedom House, which had been provided by Mrs. Chinn's brother, Sonny. The house was newly built and very nice. There were three bedrooms, a living room, dining room, and kitchen. Sonny was a young man who had recently separated from his wife. Since his brother Robert lived with him now, we kind of crowded them, forcing them to share a bed. But they didn't seem to mind. The more I saw of the Chinns, the more I began to like and respect them. They were the one Negro family in Canton who had put their necks on the chopping block. "If a couple of other

families made similar commitments," I thought, "we might just get this place moving."

There was a rally that night at the CORE office. Mrs. Chinn was the only adult there among about twenty teenagers. We sang freedom songs for about two hours. After that, George gave a brief talk, and introduced me, saying, "I want you people to meet one of my co-workers. She is going to spend some time with us here in and around Madison County. She is a real soul sister. Why don't you stand, Anne?"

As I rose, one of the boys in the back gave a wolf whistle. "I don't mean that kind of soul sister, Esco," George said. "What I mean is, she is dedicated, man. She has been beaten and kicked all over Jackson. Remember that bloody sit-in, and the other demonstrations? She was in all of them. She has been in jail four or five times, and as a result, she can't even go home again. She is all right and don't you guys go getting any notions. Anne, why don't you say a few words?"

I felt I had to say something real serious after those remarks. "Anyway," I thought, "I better take advantage of such an introduction to put those teen-age boys in their place from the get-go. If not, I might have a little trouble on my hands later." Therefore, I decided to pull the religious bit. Now that I was facing the street, I saw that outside the cops were on the ball. There they were, two carloads of them. They were taking it all in. "The watchdogs of the Klan. They wouldn't miss a meeting for anything." I was beginning to hate them with a passion. "I just might try and give them something to think about, too," I thought.

"It seems as though a few of us have the spirit tonight," I started.

"Yes, we got it all right," one of the boys said, somewhat freshly.

"A few is not enough," I continued. "If a change is gonna take place in Canton, as we just said in one of the songs, then it's gonna take more than a few believers. Where are the rest of the adults besides Mrs. Chinn? Where are your parents,

sisters and brothers and your other friends? We sit back and say that we want Freedom. We believe that all men are created equal. Some of us even believe we are free just because our constitution guarantees us certain 'inalienable' rights. There are the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments that make us citizens and give us the right to vote. If you are depending on the writing on the wall to free you, you better forget it, it's been there a long time. We've gotta be the ones to give it meaning. Some of us believe that once we get enough nerve, all we gotta do is walk up to Mr. Charlie and say, 'Man, I want my freedom.' Do you think that Mr. Charlie is going to dish it out to you on a silver platter?"

"No, he'll tell me that I am already free," one of the boys said.

"If he is that bold and thinks you are that crazy, then you should be bold and crazy enough to ask him a few more questions," I said.

"Questions like what?" he said.

"Like 'what am I free to do?'" I said. "Then name a few things you can't do if he continues. In fact, if you ever get enough nerve to do it, let me know what happens."

"I probably won't live to tell you about it," the boy said.

"So you see, it's not that simple, and all of you know that," I said. "Now that we know that we are not free and realize what's involved in freeing ourselves, we have to take certain positive actions to work on the problem. First of all, we have got to get together. I was told that it's twenty-nine thousand Negroes in this county to nine thousand whites. What's wrong with you? Don't you realize what you have going for you?" When I said this, those overseers outside began to pace nervously. I had touched a nerve in them and I felt good, but I decided to stop before I overdid it. I ended by saying, "I am looking forward to the work ahead of me. I will certainly do my best to help you get the message across to Mr. Charlie." Then I took a seat.

George got up and said, "See, I told you she was all right.

Now let's sing a few more songs. Then go home and see what we can come up with to start on Mr. Charlie. *All right*, soul brothers and sisters."

"All right," Mrs. Chinn said. "We are going to get that freedom yet, ain't we?"

A few shouts of Amen and Sho-nuff came from the teenagers. We sang three songs, ending with "We Shall Overcome," and everyone went home. All that night I kept thinking about that pitiful meeting. We just had to get some more adults involved somehow.

The next day, Saturday, I went to the office to check over some of the reports by previous canvassing teams. I had been working for a few hours when George came in. "Come outside. I want to show you something," he said.

I ran into the street thinking someone was being beaten by the cops or there was some other kind of Saturday night happening out there.

"Take a good look at that," George said. "Just about every Negro in Madison County for miles around."

It wasn't hard for me to believe what I was seeing. I had seen it too many times before. In Centreville, my home-town, the same thing took place. Saturday night was known as Nigger Night. That's how the whites put it.

"Come on," George said, "let's walk out on Pear Street" (the main street in Canton). As we walked there, we had to push our way through crowds of Negroes. On Pear Street itself, everything was at a standstill. There were so many Negroes, and they were packed so closely together, they could barely move.

"Look over there," I said to George.

"Where?" he asked.

"At the two white cops standing on that corner," I said.

"They look pretty lonely and stupid, huh?"

"They sure do," I said. "Look just like they are in a completely black town at this moment."

"Most whites don't even bother to come in on Saturdays, I've noticed," George said.

I stood there looking and thinking. Yes, Saturday night is Nigger Night all over Mississippi. I remembered in Centreville, when it was too cold for anyone to walk the streets, Negroes would come to town and sit in each other's cars and talk. Those that didn't believe in sitting around or hanging out in bars, like my mother, just sat or moved from car to car for four or five hours. Teen-agers who were not allowed in cafés went to a movie and watched the picture three or four times while they smooched. There was a special "lovers" section in the movie house on Saturday nights. Often you saw more stirring and arousing scenes in the lovers' section than on the screen. Some Negroes would come to town on Saturday night just to pick a fight with another Negro. Once the fight was over, they were satisfied. They beat their frustrations and discontent out on each other. I had often thought that if some of that Saturday night energy was used constructively or even directed at the right objects, it would make a tremendous difference in the life of Negroes in Mississippi.

The next week or so, things went along fairly well. Within a few days, I had gotten to know most of the canvassers. They were more energetic than any bunch of teen-agers I had known or worked with before. There were about forty or fifty that reported daily. We kept running into problems. I found it necessary to keep dividing them into smaller teams. First I divided them into two teams, one for the mornings and one for the afternoons. Most of the eligible voters worked during the day, so a third team was organized for the evenings. Some of the teen-agers were so energetic that they often went out with all the teams. I usually canvassed with the last team for a couple of hours, then rushed to the Freedom House to cook.

It didn't take me long to find out that the Negroes in Madison County were the same as those in most of the other counties. They were just as apathetic or indifferent about voting. Nevertheless, we had begun to get a few more adults out to rallies at night. Pretty soon the whites saw fit to move in. They wanted to make sure that more adults would not get involved. Since our recruitment and canvassing was done mostly by the teen-agers, they decided to scare the teen-agers away. One night after a rally, George, Bettye, and I had just walked back to the Freedom House when C. O. Chinn came rushing in after us. He kept repeating over and over again, "Five kids were just shot. Five kids were just shot." We stood there motionless, not wanting to believe what we had just heard, afraid to ask any questions. Were they seriously hurt? Was anyone dead?

Before any of us said a word, Mr. Chinn was saying, "They are at the hospital now, George, let's go over and see how they are." George got his cap and headed for the door, with Bettye and me right behind him.

As we were all getting into Mr. Chinn's car, Mr. Chinn said, "I'm going to leave you girls by my house with Minnie Lou. Anne, you and Bettye can't go to the hospital. How do you know they weren't trying to kill one of you? Maybe one of the girls was taken for you or Bettye."

As we approached his house, we saw Mrs. Chinn standing in the doorway as if she was about to leave.

"Where do you think you're going, Minnie Lou? You're goin' to stay right here with Anne and Bettye," Mr. Chinn said.

Mrs. Chinn didn't answer—the voice of authority had spoken. Mrs. Chinn, Bettye, and I simply did as we were told. We sat around the house talking until about 4 A.M., and then we all tried to get some sleep. I didn't sleep at all. I kept thinking of what might possibly happen. This was probably just a warning. Something else was coming on. I could feel it. Finally, it was daylight and Mr. Chinn and George still hadn't

returned. Maybe they didn't want to face us and say So-and-so died.

"Anne! Anne!" Mrs. Chinn was calling me. "Are you asleep?"

"No," I answered.

"Let's go down to the office. Maybe C.O. and George are there," she said. We all got up and headed for the office. We arrived just as Mr. Chinn and George were getting out of the car. "They're O.K.," Mr. Chinn told us. "They were released from the hospital about five-thirty this morning." He explained that they had been hit with buckshot.

That afternoon when the five teen-agers came to the office to fill out affidavits to be sent to the Justice Department, I heard the full story. They had been walking home down Pear Street after last night's rally when the incident occurred. As they passed the service station on the opposite side of the street, Price Lewis, the white owner, had been standing in the doorway. This did not seem unusual—they generally saw him there. Then just as they were crossing the railroad tracks to the left of the service station, they heard a loud noise. They looked back and noticed that Price Lewis was now holding a shotgun pointed in their direction. At this point, one of the girls said she looked down and discovered blood was running down her legs into her shoes. She realized she had been shot and saw that the others had been wounded by buckshot pellets too.

Price Lewis had been arrested at the service station and taken to jail during the morning. Immediately he posted a small bail and was released. Within an hour or so he was back to work at the service station, carrying on as though nothing had happened. His Negro service attendant was still there too. He acted as if he really hated being there and he must have known how other Negroes were looking at him, but I knew he couldn't afford to leave his job.

The shooting really messed up our relationship with the teen-agers. Within two or three days they had stopped coming

to the office. I knew that their parents were responsible for most of them not coming back. From the beginning most of the parents had not approved of their participation in the voter registration drive. Several kids had told me that they came against their parents' wishes, but they always refused to let me go home with them to talk things over with the adults. They took too much pride in the work they were doing with us to let me do that. I think they knew as well as I that it was for themselves and themselves alone that they were working—because within a few years they would be the ones who would have to deal with the whites.

Now, however, I felt I had an obligation to go and see their parents. I did so with very little success. Some flatly refused to see me. Those that did gave made-up excuses as to why their children had to stay home. One sent her little boy to the door to tell me she was not home; "Mama say she ain't heah," he said.

I hardly knew what to do. I was not prepared to cope with this situation. I kept trying to think of some way to get the teen-agers involved again. For one thing, we would not be able to get our work done without them. Bettye and I tried canvassing alone for a day or so and ended up almost dead from exhaustion.

During this lapse in the project, I got one of those weeping letters from Mama again. As usual, she was begging me to leave Mississippi, and as usual she peeved the hell out of me, but I couldn't take lightly what she said about Wilkinson County. I knew too well what I was up against.

The next day, in an attempt to forget her letter, I decided to busy myself with cleaning the office. I got the one teen-ager that still hung around to help me, and sent him to the café for a pail of water. When he came back, he said, "Anne, there are two white men outside in a car asking to see the person in charge of the office."

"Are they from Canton or around here?" I asked.

"No," he said. "I've never seen them before."

My heart almost jumped right out of me. It was not until then that I really began to think of some of the things in Mama's letter. She had said that the white folks in Centreville had found out that I was in Canton, and that some Negro had told her he heard they planned to bump me off. She had been pleading with me this time as she had never done before. Why did I want to get myself killed? she kept asking. What was I trying to prove? Over and over again she said that after I was dead things would still be the same as they were now.

Now here I was standing in the middle of the office trembling with fear, not wanting to face the white men outside. Maybe they were here to tell me something terrible had happened. Maybe they came just to make sure I was here. George was out in the country talking to some farmers, and Bettye was cleaning the Freedom House. How I wished one of them were here now, so they could go outside instead of me. Finally I stopped shaking long enough to make myself walk out of the office. "You can't be getting scared without finding out who they are or what they want," I kept telling myself.

As I approached the car, and took a good look at the two men inside, I was almost positive I didn't recognize them from Centreville. Feeling almost limp from relief, I walked up to the driver and said, "I was told you would like to see the person in charge."

"Yes, we are from the FBI," he said, showing me his identification. "We are here to investigate the shooting. Where can we find the five kids who were involved?"

I stood there mad as hell. "The stupid bastards!" I thought. There I was getting all flustered and scared because of my mother's letter, not knowing who they were. "Why didn't you come inside and present yourselves as officials from the FBI?" I asked angrily. "We just don't happen to run out into the streets to see every white man that drives up in front of this office, you know. After all, it might just be someone ready to blow our heads off."

"Can you tell me where I could find those five kids that were shot?" he asked again, a little indignant.

"I'll see if I can find the addresses for you," I said sweetly. "Why don't you two come inside for a minute?"

I knew they weren't particularly interested in getting out of their car and coming into the office. However, I gave them a look that said, "You'll never get those addresses unless you do," so they followed me. They stood around impatiently, looking at our broken-down chairs and sofa, as if to say, "What a shame these niggers have to come into a place and open up a joint like this and cause all this trouble for us."

"I can find only three of the addresses for you," I said. "I would like that you wait and see George Raymond, our project director. He should be back soon and he'll be able to show you where they live. Why don't you two have a seat until he comes?"

"What time do you expect him?" one asked.

"Within fifteen or twenty minutes," I said. Realizing they had to wait that long, they decided to sit. They placed themselves carefully on the sofa, as if it was diseased or something. They must be from the South, I thought. "Where are you two from?" I asked.

"New Orleans," one said.

They waited restlessly until George returned. He spent a few hours driving around with them and they saw all the kids and questioned them. That was the extent of their "investigation." The same afternoon they left town and we never saw or heard from them after that.

By the beginning of August when the teen-age canvassers still had not returned, Dave Dennis decided to bring in three other workers—two girls, who were students from Jackson, and a boy called Flukie, a CORE task force worker. There were now six of us, but there was still more work than we could handle. George and Flukie went out in the country

each day to talk with farmers and to scout for churches to conduct workshops in. The rest of us were left to canvas and look after the office.

So far we had only been able to send a handful of Negroes to the courthouse to attempt to register, and those few that went began to get fired from their jobs. This discouraged others who might have registered. Meanwhile, we were constantly being threatened by the whites. Almost every night someone came running by to tell us the whites planned to bump us off.

One evening just before dark, someone took a shot at a pregnant Negro woman who was walking home with her two small sons. This happened in a section where a few poor white families lived. The woman stood in the street with her children, screaming and yelling for help. A Negro truck driver picked them up and drove them to the Boyd Street housing project, which was right across the street from the Freedom House. She was still yelling and screaming when she got out of the truck, and people ran out of all the project houses. The woman stood there telling everyone what had happened. She was so big it looked as though she was ready to have the baby any minute. As I looked at the other women standing around her, I didn't like what I saw in their faces. I could tell what they were thinking—"Why don't you all get out of here before you get us all killed?"

After this incident, Negro participation dropped off to almost nothing, and things got so rough we were afraid to walk the streets. In addition, our money was cut off. We were being paid twenty dollars a week by the Voter Education Project, a Southern agency which supported voter registration for Negroes. They said that since we were not producing registered voters, they could not continue to put money into the area. It seemed things were getting rough from every angle. We sometimes went for days without a meal. I was getting sick and losing lots of weight. When the NAACP invited me to speak at a Thursday night women's rally in Jackson, at one

of the big churches, I tried to prepare a speech that would get across to them how we were suffering in Canton. Everything went wrong the night of the rally. Ten minutes before Dave arrived to pick me up, Jean, one of the new girls, had a terrible asthma attack, and we had to drop her off at the hospital in Jackson. I arrived at the church exhausted and an hour late, still wearing the skirt and blouse I had worked in all day; they looked like I had slept in them for weeks. The mistress of ceremonies was just explaining that I was unable to make it, when I walked straight up on the stage. She turned and looked at me as if I was crazy, and didn't say another word. She just took her seat, and I walked up to the mike. By this time I had completely forgotten my prepared speech, and I don't remember exactly what I said at first. I had been standing up there I don't know how long when the mistress of ceremonies said, "You are running overtime." I got mad at her and thought I would tell the audience exactly what I was thinking. When I finished telling them about the trouble we were having in Canton, I found myself crying. Tears were running down my cheeks and I was shaking and saying, "What are we going to do? Starve to death? Look at me. I've lost about fifteen pounds in a week." I stood there going to pieces, until Reverend Ed King walked up on the platform, put his arm around me, and led me away.

Outside he said, "You touched them, Anne. I think you got your message across." He was still standing with his arm around me, and I was drying my eyes when Dave came up.

"What's wrong with her?" he asked.

"She just finished a speech which I think was tremendous," Reverend King said. "But I think she needs a rest, Dave."

Dave took me to his apartment in Jackson and said I could rest there a couple of days. I didn't really think about what had happened during my speech until I was in bed trying to sleep. Then I realized I was cracking up, and I began to cry again.

When I got back to Canton on Sunday, I discovered that a tub of food had been brought in from Jackson. We arrived just in time to find Flukie helping himself to some golden brown chicken. He gave me a note that had been left with the food:

*Dear Anne.*

*Brought some food for your people. Your speech was something Thursday night. However, you need a rest. Why don't you come spend a week with me? See you next week. Let me know if the food runs out before then. You take care of yourself.*

*Mrs. Young*

I knew Mrs. Young through her sons, who had gone to jail with me during the demonstrations in Jackson. She had nine children, five of whom had been arrested. She was a beautiful lady and I appreciated the food she brought. But I felt bad about taking it, thinking about all those children she had and no husband.

Dave and Mattie Dennis, and Jerome Smith, another CORE field secretary, moved in to Canton with us the next week. Dave felt that the only way we were going to get any money put back into the area was if we got more people registered.

Suddenly we began to get quite a lot of support from the local Negroes. Mr. Chinn began working with us almost full time. They saw that we were trying hard and that we were doing our best under the circumstances. Every day now we managed to send a few Negroes to the courthouse. Soon we had a steady flow moving daily. But the registrar was flunking them going and coming. Sometimes out of twenty or twenty-five Negroes who went to register, only one or two would pass the test. Some of them were flunked because they used a title (Mr. or Mrs.) on the application blank; others because they didn't.

And most failed to interpret a section of the Mississippi constitution to the satisfaction of Foote Campbell, the Madison County circuit clerk.

All of the Negroes who flunked but should have passed the test were asked to fill out affidavits to be sent to the Justice Department. Hundreds of these were sent and finally two men came down from Washington to look at the county registrar's books. They talked with the registrar and persuaded him to register four or five people who had been flunked because of using "Mr." or "Mrs." One of them was a blind man who had failed several times, and who should not have had to take the test anyway.

To keep up the pace, Dave brought in two more workers. Now there were nine of us working full time. When this news got to the white community, and they sensed the support we must be getting, they began to threaten us again.

One Friday evening, just as we were finishing dinner, Sonny's brother Robert came running into the kitchen. He was sweating and panting as if he had been running for a long time. At first, he didn't say anything. We all sat and stared, waiting. He just stared back. He looked like he was trying to decide how to tell us something. I thought that he had been chased by someone.

"Man, what's wrong with you?" George finally asked.

"Uh...uh..." Robert began. "Man, y'all better get outta Canton *tonight!* I got a funny feelin' when I was walkin' aroun' in town tonight so I went over to that Black Tom's café to see what people were talkin' 'bout. Sho' nuff, one o' them drunk bastards sittin' up there sayin' they gonna kill all them damn freedom workers tonight."

"What? *Who* said that?" Jerome Smith yelled. "You got more sense, Robert, than to go believe what you hear some drunkard sayin' in a café."

"Man, lissen, lissen, you don't believe me, go ask Joe Lee.

He was sittin' there a *long* time. He said he was just about to come over and tell y'all. They really gonna do it, they really gonna do it tonight! Did Dave go to Jackson yet? Man, y'all better get outta Canton!"

"What do you mean, Robert?" I asked. "How did that guy find out? Them whites probably spread that shit just so it'll get back to us. If they were really gonna kill us, wouldn't any nigger in town know anything about it till it was all over with."

"Moody, that man work for Howard, who's behind *all* this shit here in Canton, and if he say he heard somethin', he *heard* it."

"That's what I just said, it was intended for him to hear," I said.

"George, y'all can sit here and listen to Annie Moody if you want to, but I swear to *God*, you betta get outta here! You think that fuckin' nigger woulda said anything if he *hadn'ta* been drunk?"

It was hard for us to believe what Robert was saying; however, none of us had ever seen him this nervous before. Finally George and Jerome decided that they would go into town to see if they could find out anything. By the time they got back it was pitch black outside. As soon as Jerome burst in the door we could all see that Robert had been right.

"Them white folks in town's *together*, man, and we better do something but quick," he said, almost out of breath.

I knew we were in bad shape. Dave had taken the car into Jackson for the weekend and the only people in town that would put us up were C.O. and Minnie Lou and they weren't home. So we just sat there until after eleven, trying to figure out a way to get out of Canton. We couldn't walk because there was only one way in and one way out, and we knew they could just as well mow us down on the highway.

"We are just wastin' time sittin' here bullshittin' like this. I ain't about to go down that dark-ass road. And I ain't about to stay in this damn house either," Flukie said.

"Y'all can sit here and talk *all night* if you want to," Bettye



said, suddenly appearing in the door with a blanket in her arms. "But I'm gonna take my ass out back in that tall grass and worry about gettin' outta here tomorrow."

Since Sonny's house was new, he hadn't cultivated a garden yet, so the space behind the house where the garden would have been had grown wild with tall weeds. Sonny them just mowed the back lawn right up to the weeds and let them grow like hedges.

It didn't take us long to agree that the weeds were our only way out. Even so, we knew that there was still a good chance that we would be discovered back there, but we had no other choice. So we pulled open the curtains and left the lamps on dim so that anyone could see that the house was empty. We also removed the sheets and blankets and left the spreads so the beds looked made. We waited until about twelve-thirty when all the lights in the neighborhood had been turned out. Then we sneaked out back with blankets and sheets clutched in our arms. The nine of us spaced ourselves so that from a distance no one patch of grass would look mashed down. The five guys made us girls stay behind them. We agreed not to do anything but look and listen without saying a word to each other.

I was wrapped in one of the spreads and after lying still for what seemed like hours, I began to get very cold and stiff. I couldn't hear a sound not even a cricket and I began to feel like I was all alone out there. I listened for Bettye's breathing, but I heard nothing. I wondered if the others were feeling as alone and scared as I was. I could feel the grass getting wet with dew and I began to get colder and colder. I kept thinking about what might happen to us if they found us out there. I tried hard not to think about it. But I couldn't help it. I could see them stomping us in the face and shooting us. I also kept thinking about the house and whether we had left some clue that we were out back. Suddenly I heard a noise and I could almost feel everyone jump with me.

"Don't get scared, it's that damn dog next door. Just be quiet and he'll shut up," one of the guys whispered.

Now I knew we were in for it. That damn dog kept on whimpering. I could see the neighbor coming out and discovering us just when the Klan drove up. But finally the dog was quiet again.

I must have begun to doze off when I heard a car door slam.

"Quiet! Quiet! They're here," Flukie whispered as someone moved in the grass.

I couldn't even breathe. My whole chest began to hurt as I heard the mumbling voices toward the front of the house. When the mumbling got louder I knew that they were in the back. But I still couldn't make out what they were saying. As I heard them moving around in the backyard, I had a horrible feeling that they could see us as plain as daylight and I just trembled all over. But in a few minutes I heard the car door slam again and they were gone.

We lay quietly in case they had pulled a trick. Finally Jerome whispered loudly, "They think we're at C.O.'s. They'll probably be back."

Soon the roosters were crowing and it began to get light. Sure enough they drove up again but this time they must have just taken a quick look, because they were gone almost immediately. We knew they wouldn't be back because it was too light. So we sneaked back in the house before the neighbors got up.

George, who had been in a position to see and hear them, told us what happened. He said that there was a pickup truck with about eight men who had obviously been drinking. They had all sorts of weapons. They discussed burning the house down, but decided that they would come back and get us another night.

\* After this incident, Robert and a group of men all in their middle or late twenties formed a group to protect us. Three or four of them had already lost their jobs because they tried to

register. They couldn't find other jobs so they followed us around everywhere we went, walking with us as if they were bulletproof. They also spread rumors that the Freedom House was protected by armed men. We were all still a little up tight and afraid to sleep at night, but after a while, when the whites didn't come back, we figured the rumors worked. The threats didn't bother me as much now. I began to feel almost safe with those men around all the time. Their interest, courage, and concern gave all of us that extra lift we needed.

Now every Negro church in the county was opened for workshops. The nine of us split into groups of three. Almost every night we had workshops in different churches, sometimes sixteen to thirty miles out of town.

One or two of our protective guys had cars. They were usually sent along with the girls out in the country. It was dark and dangerous driving down those long country rock roads, but now that we always had two or three of the guys riding with us, it wasn't so bad. In fact, once we got to the churches, everything was fine. Listening to those old Negroes sing freedom songs was like listening to music from heaven. They sang them as though they were singing away the chains of slavery. Sometimes I just looked at the expressions on their faces as they sang and cold chills would run down my back. Whenever God was mentioned in a song, I could tell by the way they said the word that most of them had given up here on earth. They seemed to be waiting just for God to call them home and end all the suffering.

The nightly church workshops were beginning to be the big thing going for us at this point in the campaign. However, the white folks found out about this and tried to put a stop to it. One night out in the country three carloads of whites chased George and a group of the guys all the way to Canton. George said they were shooting at them like crazy. Since George thought the whites could have killed them if they had wanted to, we took it as a warning. We were extra careful after that.

☛ The luckiest thing that happened to us was that we had succeeded in getting C. O. Chinn to work with us. He was a powerful man, known as "bad-ass C. O. Chinn" to the Negroes and whites alike. All of the Negroes respected him for standing up and being a man. Most of the whites feared him. He was the type of person that didn't take shit from anyone. If he was with you he was all for you. If he didn't like you that was it—in that case he just didn't have anything to do with you. Because he was respected by most of the local Negroes, he was our most effective speaker in the churches. He was in a position to speak his mind and what he said was taken without offense to anyone in particular.

Just as Mr. Chinn opened up full force, the whites cut in on him. Within a week he was forced to close his place and he began moving out most of his things. This still wasn't enough to satisfy the whites. One evening, when he was taking home the .45 he had kept around for protection, he was stopped and arrested by those damn cops that hung around the office all the time. He was immediately taken to jail and charged with carrying a concealed weapon—actually he had placed the gun on the seat beside him. His bail was set at five hundred dollars. He was in jail for a week before his family could find anyone to post a property bond. Most of the local Negroes had borrowed money on their property, which meant that it couldn't be used for bail purposes.

I think this was the beginning of C. O.'s realization of what had happened to him. Not only had he lost everything he had, he was sitting in jail with no one to go his bail. Instead of this putting the damper on his activities as the whites had expected, it increased them. He began hitting harder than ever. Often when he was speaking, he would say, "Take me, for example, they have completely put me out of business. I have lost practically everything I have. These young workers are here starving to death trying to help you people. And for what? A lot of you ain't worth it!" Not one of us working for CORE could have talked to the local people like that.

It was the middle of August now, and we had been working in the county for two months. Up until this time, not one of the ministers in Canton had committed himself to helping us. When they did give us a chance to speak in their churches, it was only for two or three minutes during the announcements. The biggest Negro church in Canton was pastored by Canton's biggest "Tom." Most of his congregation were middle-class bourgeois Negroes. We all knew that if we could somehow force him to move, every other large church in Canton would open its doors to us.

We set up a meeting and invited all the ministers, but since the number one minister didn't show up, all the others did was mumble to each other and tell us, "We can't do anything until Reverend Tucker says so." After that we decided to forget the ministers and go to work on their congregations. At this point the ministers started coming around. In fact, they called a meeting to talk things over with us. But the talk was fruitless. The ministers tried to play the same game the Southern white people played when things got too hot for them. That is, to find out what you are thinking and try and get you to hold off long enough for them to come up with some new strategy to use on you. Those Toms weren't as dumb as they appeared, I thought. They had learned to play Mr. Charlie's game pretty well.

We had a surprise for them, though. We had made headway with several of their most influential members, and they put us right where we wanted to go—behind the pulpits for more than five minutes. Now we could hit the Canton churches hard.

For a little while that good old Movement spirit was on the surge again. Everyone began to feel it. We still were not getting any money, but for the most part we didn't need any. The Canton Negroes began to take good care of us, and we were never hungry. A Negro service station owner even let us have gas on credit. What pleased me most was that many of our teen-agers had come back. I had really missed them.

## *chapter*

### | T W E N T Y - F O U R |

Toward the end of August, it suddenly seemed as if everyone in our group was leaving. The Jackson high school students went back to school, one girl left for New York to get married, and one guy went to California. Soon George and I were the only ones left. To make things worse, the high schools in the Canton area were opening in a week. Dave promised to bring in a couple of more people, but meanwhile it seemed as though George and I would have to do all the work ourselves. We also had to find a new place to stay, since Sonny and his wife went back together. This was a problem because people just didn't want to risk letting us live with them. Within a week, however, we found a place which was ideal—a two-apartment house. One apartment for the girls and one for the boys. "Great," I thought, "just when everyone's leaving."

I was so busy moving into the new place, that I completely forgot that the August 28 March on Washington was only a few days off. I had been planning to go ever since it was announced. Suddenly it was August 26 and I didn't even have a ride lined up. There had been no room for me and other staff

people on the bus, since there were so many local Negroes who wanted to make the trip.

Reverend King and his wife were driving up and offered to take me, though they warned me it would be quite risky driving through most of the Southern states in an integrated car. I told them I was willing to take the chance if they were.

On August 27 at 6 A.M., we headed for Washington. There were five of us, three whites (Reverend King, his wife, and Joan Trumpauer), and two Negroes (Bob, a student returning to Harvard, and myself). In the beginning, we were all a little uneasy, but somehow we made it through the Southern states without incident.

After driving all day and night, we arrived at the grounds of the Washington Monument just in time for the march, and joined the section of Southern delegates. Up on a podium near our section, various celebrities—Mahalia Jackson, Odetta, Peter, Paul and Mary—were singing. During a break in the entertainment the Mississippi delegates were asked to come to the podium and sing freedom songs. I got up and followed the others to the platform reluctantly. I think I was the only girl from Mississippi with a dress on. All the others were wearing denim skirts and jeans. We sang a couple of songs and shortly after, it was announced that the march to the Lincoln Memorial was about to start. Thousands of people just took off, leaving most of their leaders on the podium. It was kind of funny to watch the leaders run to overtake the march. The way some of them had been leading the people in the past, perhaps the people were better off leading themselves, I thought.

The march was now in full motion, and there were people everywhere. Some were on crutches, some in wheel chairs, and some were actually being carried down Pennsylvania and Constitution avenues. There were all kinds of signs and placards—one group of men acting as pallbearers carried a casket that said BURY JIM CROW.

By the time we got to Lincoln Memorial, there were

already thousands of people there. I sat on the grass and listened to the speakers, to discover we had “dreamers” instead of leaders leading us. Just about every one of them stood up there dreaming. Martin Luther King went on and on talking about his dream. I sat there thinking that in Canton we never had time to sleep, much less dream.

I left Washington two days later with Joan Trumpauer and the Kings. As we drove out of town, no one had very much to say. I guess they were thinking about the historic event that had just taken place. I was thinking about it too, and I was also thinking that this was the first time in well over a year I had been away from my work with the Movement and away from Mississippi. I had really forgotten what it was like to be out of an atmosphere of fear and threats. I had even gone to a movie. The last movie I had seen had been in New Orleans the previous summer. “It’s kind of strange,” I thought. “I never really think of going to a movie when I’m in Mississippi.” There was always so much work, so many problems, and so many threats that I hardly ever thought of anything except how to best get the job done and survive from day to day.

I noticed that Washington seemed like a deserted town compared to two days ago. How had 250,000 people disappeared so quickly? I seriously began to wonder whether those 250,000 people had made any impact on Congress.

As we began to drive through Virginia, I started to worry about the trip back. I was now the only Negro in the car. The white people of the South must really have some strong feelings about the march by now, I thought. I knew when we returned to Mississippi, we would be faced with twice as many threats and acts of violence. And maybe we’d never even get back to Mississippi. After all, we had to go back through the rest of those backward-assed states. We were going to go through Alabama and I knew damned well how bad that state was.

Reverend King must have thought of the dangers of the

trip back, too. When we stopped at a Howard Johnson Restaurant right inside the Tennessee border, he suggested that we spend the night in Tennessee, then get up and drive through Alabama during the day.

When I discovered where we were going to sleep, I realized how much consideration he had given the matter. We were going to sleep in a Federal Park in the Tennessee mountains. I guess he thought that because the park was federal land most likely we would not run into any trouble there. The more I thought about it, the madder I got. Here I was forcing my white friends to sleep in a park because I was black and could not sleep in the same hotel with them. If it was not for me they could have slept in one of those luxurious hotels.

Reverend King and his wife were still asleep the next morning when Joan and I got up and wandered off through the park to find the rest room. We discovered showers there and decided to use them, since we seemed to have been the first to have gotten up that early. There were lots of parked cars around but we didn't see anyone stirring. We thought we could manage to get a good shower before all the other people in the park got up.

As we were finishing, two white women came in. They were from Georgia. We heard them talking as they used the toilets. Joan and I hadn't bothered to go back to the car and get towels. We were using the paper towels instead. When the women came from behind the little partition that gave privacy to the toilets, they saw us standing in the middle of the floor naked, drying each other's backs with paper. They didn't know how to react. It was a shock to them. Here we were, a black girl and a white girl, standing in a Southern public shower naked. I guess they thought we were having a "nude-in" or a "wash-in" or something. Anyway they didn't stay around to watch the demonstration. As they were leaving one sniffed, "Niggers everywhere."

Getting back to the car we found Reverend King and his wife awake. We told them that we had found some terrific

showers without telling them the rest of the story, and they went off to shower too. Just before the Kings came back, several white women came snooping around the car. Joan and I were sitting in the back seat. We recognized two of them as the women from the showers. I guess they had found more women and gone back to the showers to beat us up. When they hadn't found us there, they had gone looking for us. For a while they were all staring at the Mississippi license plate. They didn't know what to do. I guess they thought I was a maid or some kind of governess working for the owner of the car. When the Kings returned, the women really looked bewildered. Reverend King was wearing his clerical collar. He didn't look exactly old or rich, but just like one of those "civil rights preachers." Before they could make up their minds what they were going to do about us, Reverend King and his wife got into the car and drove off, with Joan and me looking out the back window laughing. At this point I think it dawned upon those ladies that we were, in their language, professional agitators. "Too bad," I cracked to Joan, "now it's too late—that's a bunch of women for you."

Fortunately, the drive through Alabama went without incident. We arrived in Canton about 6 P.M. Reverend King dropped me at the Freedom House and drove straight on to Tougaloo. It was too dangerous for white civil rights workers to be caught in Canton after dark.

*chapter*

## | T W E N T Y - F I V E |

Now that school was in session in Canton, I became more and more aware of the terrible poverty in the area. Many of the teen-agers who had worked with us had been unable to return to classes because their parents had been fired from their jobs and could not afford to buy their children school clothes. Some of these teen-agers had worked every summer to keep themselves in school, but this summer, because of the voter registration drive, had not been able to find jobs. To see those kids out of school standing around hungry all day sickened me. I felt so guilty, as if we were responsible.

Just across the street from the office, a lady lived in a two-room house with her five children. She supported them and her sick father on the five dollars that she earned doing domestic work. School had been open for two weeks and I noticed that the two girls were home every day. When I asked them the first week why they weren't in school, I was told that the younger girl had mumps. The older one said that she had to stay home with the younger. The second week of school I asked them again. This time they told me the truth. Their grandfather had been terribly sick during the summer. The

mother, after buying medicine for her father all summer long, was unable to buy clothes for them to wear to school. The oldest boy, who was seventeen years old, had been able to buy clothes for himself and the other two boys, but not for his two sisters. With tears pouring down her cheeks, the oldest girl told me that they would be unable to go to school if they stayed out another week. My whole childhood came to life again. I thought of how my mother had suffered with us when we had been deserted by my father. How we went hungry all the time, never having anything to eat but bread and on rare occasions beans and bread. I was reminded of my sick grandfather who looked after my sister and brother while I was in school. I remembered how he used to fish a dollar out of his money sack and give it to my mother to buy food with. All that I had vowed to forget and overcome came back to me. The life these kids were leading was a replica of my own past.

When George returned from canvassing in the country with Mr. Chinn, we had a four-hour meeting trying to figure out how to get some clothes and food to needy families. After the meeting, Mr. Chinn and George went to Greenwood to talk with the SNCC workers. We knew they were getting clothes in the Delta. Maybe they would agree to have the next shipment sent to Canton. Anyway, if anyone could convince them how badly we needed those things, C.O. could.

The next day I received my first twenty-five dollars from CORE. Dave Dennis had been trying to get us on the payroll for about two months. George and I were finally being paid. There was also a twenty-five-dollar check for Mr. Chinn. Looking at my check, I thought, "You didn't get here when I needed you before, but now you're right on time." I kissed it and headed across the street. Standing before the two girls on the porch, waving my check, I said, "We're in business. Let's go shopping. Tomorrow, you two go to school."

"What?" the older one said. "Do you mean that?"

"You see this check here? It says"—and I pointed—"it says, 'Pay to the order of Anne Moody, twenty-five dollars!'"

"Twenty-five dollars!" the younger one said. It was as if this was more money than she ever hoped to have.

"That's right, and it's all ours," I said. "You two ready to go shopping?"

"Yes," they shouted simultaneously.

"First, you two watch the office until I get back. I'm going up to the Washingtons' to cash it."

The Washingtons were well-to-do Negroes who owned a grocery store. They also rented us the Freedom House we were now staying in. They were the only ones in Canton who would cash our checks. None of the white stores, or the Canton bank, would.

In minutes, I was back to the office, and our shopping tour began. Our first stop was the five-and-ten. We found some tennis shoes on sale for a dollar, and bought a pair for each girl. On another counter, we found some blouses for fifty cents. Then we picked up a dollar book sack for the younger girl, a ten-cent comb and fifty-cent brush for each and headed for the bargain store. There we found dresses on sale, two for five dollars. I bought each of them two. Then two pencils for five cents and two ten-cent tablets. It took only thirty-five minutes for us to do all this shopping. Realizing I still had money left, the younger girl said she was hungry. So our next stop was our favorite little restaurant where we could get baloney sandwiches for ten cents. We had two sandwiches apiece and went back to the office. They seemed like the two happiest girls in the world, but I think I was even happier.

When their mother got home, she came over and thanked me. She offered to pay me back when she got caught up. I told her to forget it, that people had done the same for me when I was small. She looked at me as if to say, "I believe you, otherwise you wouldn't have understood."

The next day the girls stopped in on their way to school.

"Mama told us to let you see us and ask you if you want us to do anything for you when we get out of school," the older one said.

"Yes, there is something you can do for me," I said. "You can go home and study real hard. Then you might be able to make up for the two weeks you've missed. Now hurry on to school before you are late." I watched them out of the window until they were out of sight. They were beaming, and so was I.

Just as I was about to leave for the office, George and Mr. Chinn drove in from the Delta. They had enough canned food and peanut butter with them to last a month. As they put the food in the house, I said, "I have a surprise for you two."

George looked at me, puzzled. "If someone was shot, I don't wanta hear about it."

"It's good news."

"Did we have a fortune willed to us?" Mr. Chinn asked.

"Not exactly," I said, "but the three of us got our twenty-five dollar checks from CORE yesterday."

"That ain't exactly a fortune," Mr. Chinn said, "but right now it sounds like one."

"I have news for you, too," George said.

"Wait, let me brace myself." I backed against the wall. "Now, shoot."

"We might get some clothes in next week. SNCC has been getting quite a bit from the Delta. They have a big shipment coming in from a Jewish synagogue somewhere. We convinced them to send it straight to Canton."

"Are you kidding?" I said.

"I hope they ain't lying to us," Mr. Chinn said. "Anyway, they have enough food in Greenwood to keep us alive for a while. That I seen with my own eyes."

"In that case, we're in business," I said.

A few days later as George and I drove up to the office after a trip to Jackson, we found a big express truck outside. We jumped out of the car to see what it was. I had a feeling I knew, but I was afraid to find out it wasn't what I thought. As

George got out of the car, the driver of the truck asked, "Are you George Raymond?"

"Yes," George answered.

"We have a shipment of clothes here for you."

As we unloaded the boxes of clothes, I realized there was much more than we had expected. The office got so crowded we could barely move around in it. Boxes were stacked from the floor to the ceiling with little space left for us. I was so happy that they had come. They would help a lot of people, I thought. Maybe they would also help encourage Negroes to get out and vote. That was what had happened in the Delta.

The rest of the week I worked on sorting out the clothes. It was hard work, but I was happy doing it. I was feeling great until the weekend, then all of a sudden I became so depressed that I didn't even feel like seeing or talking to anyone. When Dave and his wife Mattie came to Canton on Saturday afternoon for a weekend staff meeting, I excused myself and went for a walk alone. I was afraid someone would ask me what was wrong and I would burst into tears. I had cried lots of times when things weren't going well with the project, but no one had ever seen me crying. I wasn't about to let anyone see me now.

The others knew that I couldn't go home again, but no one knew of the agony I was going through because of it. I never told anyone about all the letters I was receiving from Mama, begging me to leave Mississippi and always telling me that my life was in danger. They all had their share of problems. They couldn't do anything about mine.

Now that I was walking, tears were running down my cheeks. Tomorrow I would be twenty-three years old, I thought. I had never failed before to get a birthday card from Adline or Mama. Mama was probably mad because I didn't answer her last letter. "Why should I keep encouraging her to write, anyway?" I thought. "She never writes me a cheerful letter. She couldn't possibly conceive of the things we're going through here." I knew she would never understand me if I

tried to tell her why I felt I had to do the work I was doing. All she would say is what she always said: "Negroes are going to have troubles until they're dead, and after you are dead we'll still have the same problems."

Finally I headed back to the Freedom House. When I returned, I tried to be more cheerful, even though anyone could look at my eyes and tell I had been crying.

"Moody, come go shopping with me," Mattie said. "I'm not going to be long."

"O.K.," I said, knowing she wanted to talk with me and try to find out what was bothering me.

As we were walking to town she said, "What's wrong, Moody? Are you mad with us? It's not Dave's fault. He's tried to get someone to work in here with you all. People just don't want to come in here. Most of them are scared to work in Canton. You know that. Besides, Dave can't even get money to pay them. Dave thinks you're mad with him. You know how sensitive he is. He is trying, though, and he'll find somebody soon, I'm sure."

"That's not what's wrong, Mattie," I said. "I know Dave is trying."

"Then what is it?" she asked. "Did you get bad news from home? Are your people all right?"

"I guess they're O.K. It's just that tomorrow's my birthday and I was kinda looking for a card from them. When the mailman came and I didn't get one, I felt bad about it," I said.

"Why didn't you tell us? We could have planned something for you," she said.

"You all have enough problems without worrying about whether I'm happy on my birthday or not," I said.

She seemed very glad to hear I wasn't mad at Dave and ready to jump up and leave the project. While we were shopping, she insisted on buying me two pairs of pajamas that were on sale for my birthday. When we got back to the Freedom House, she called Dave into the bedroom. "She's probably telling him I'm not angry at him," I thought. They were in



there a long time. When Dave came out, he was smiling. He began twisting to a record that was playing on the radio.

"Come on, Anne, you ain't gonna let me finish this one by myself, are you?" he asked.

I was beginning to feel better.

"It's not that," I said. "I just don't want to show you up. My little brother twists better than that."

"Is that your excuse? I dare you to challenge me," he said.

I got up and began twisting with him. We were doing a a pretty nasty twist when Mattie came into the room.

"Anne Moody, how *dare* you dance with my husband like that!" she said.

"I think you're bitching at the wrong person. I'm not married to you, Dave is," I said.

"Dave, how dare you?" she scolded.

"Come on, George," Dave said, "let's go for a walk. Mattie is getting jealous."

When they were gone, Mattie and I sat down and talked for a while, and then I started cooking dinner. By the time I had finished, Dave and George were back carrying two large bags. "What have you two been buying?" I asked.

"Food, food, food," George said.

"Food! Where did you get the money? I thought you were broke."

"Mattie is calling you, Anne," Dave said, meanwhile looking at the plate of fried chicken on the stove.

"Did you call me, Mattie?" I yelled to her.

"Yes, come here, Moody. Come here a minute," she said.

"If you touch that chicken, Dave, I'll cut your hands off when I get back," I warned.

"I'm going with you," he said, "so if any's missing you know who did it." He looked at George, still standing there holding the two big bags.

"Do you want to go over to Henry Chinn's place tonight?" Mattie asked me. (Henry Chinn, C.O.'s brother, ran the

biggest Negro nightclub in town.) "Dave, tomorrow is Annie's birthday."

"No kidding, how old are you, Anne? Nineteen?" he asked.

"Nineteen!" I said. "I'll be twenty-three and I look twice that old."

"Twenty-three," Dave said. "I thought you were going to say fifty, so I could be kissing you from now until tomorrow." Then he started kissing me.

"Dave Dennis, if you kiss Anne Moody again, I'll quit you," Mattie said. "Tomorrow is her birthday and then you better not kiss her no twenty-three times."

"You two are too damn jealous," I said. "Come on, let's eat."

As I was taking something out of the refrigerator, I noticed two gallons of ice cream and a large coconut cake in the box. "So this is what George had in the bag," I thought. "They're probably planning to give me a surprise birthday party."

We didn't go out that night, but we had so much fun just being together. We sat around the house and played cards half the night and cracked jokes. We used to sit around and play bid whist almost every Saturday night. Half of the time, though, we were just sitting up because we were afraid someone would try to kill us after we went to bed.

Sunday, September 15, 1963, was my twenty-third birthday. I got up about nine that morning feeling like one hundred and three. Everyone else was sleeping so I just decided to let them sleep. After a shower, I started to fix breakfast even though Mattie had promised to cook that morning. As soon as I finished, I got them up because we were supposed to have a staff meeting later.

"Breakfast is ready! Breakfast is ready!" I called.

Dave came running in the kitchen, yelling, "Mattie, shame on you. Today is Anne's birthday and here she is cooking breakfast while you sleep."

"Is today your birthday?" George asked, stumbling into the

kitchen—as if he didn't know after buying two gallons of ice cream and a cake yesterday.

"I'm sorry, Moody," Mattie said. "I heard you cooking, but Dave wouldn't let me get up."

"You tell that on me, Mattie?" Dave said. "It was Mattie, Anne. She kept begging me, 'Just once more, Dave, just once more.' Now who do you believe, Anne?" He was hugging Mattie and both of them were trying to look at me with a straight face.

We were all eating and listening to the radio when the music stopped abruptly in the middle of a record. "A special news bulletin just in from Birmingham," the DJ was saying. "A church was just bombed in Birmingham, Alabama. It is believed that several Sunday school students were killed." We all sat glued to our seats, avoiding each other's eyes. No one was eating now. Everyone was waiting for the next report on the bombing. The second report confirmed that four girls had been killed. I looked at George; he sat with his face buried in the palms of his hands. Dave sat motionless with tears in his eyes. Mattie looked at Dave as if she had been grounded by an electric shock. I put my hand up to my face. Tears were pouring out of my eyes, and I hadn't even known I was crying.

"Why! Why! Why! Oh, God, why? Why us? Why us?" I found myself asking. "I gotta find myself some woods, trees, or water—anything. I gotta talk to you, God, and you gotta answer. Please don't play Rip Van Winkle with me today."

I rushed out of the house and started walking aimlessly. I ran up a hill where there were trees. I found myself in a graveyard I didn't even know was there. I sat there looking up through the trees, trying to communicate with God. "Now talk to me, God. Come on down and talk to me."

"You know, I used to go to Sunday school when I was a little girl. I went to Sunday school, church, and B.T.U. every Sunday. We were taught how merciful and forgiving you are. Mama used to tell us that you would forgive us seventy-seven times a day, and I believed in you. I bet you those girls in Sunday school

were being taught the same as I was when I was their age. It that teaching wrong? Are you going to forgive their killers? You not gonna answer me, God, hmm? Well, if you don't want to talk, then listen to me.

"As long as I live, I'll never be beaten by a white man again. Not like in Woolworth's. Not anymore. That's out. You know something else, God? Nonviolence is out. I have a good idea Martin Luther King is talking to you, too. If he is, tell him that nonviolence has served its purpose. Tell him that for me, God, and for a lot of other Negroes who must be thinking it today. If you don't believe that, then I know you must be white, too. And if I ever find out you are white, then I'm through with you. And if I find out you are black, I'll try my best to kill you when I get to heaven.

"I'm through with you. Yes, I am going to put you down. From now on, I am my own God. I am going to live by the rules I set for myself. I'll discard everything I was once taught about you. Then I'll be you. I will be my own God, living my life as I see fit. Not as Mr. Charlie says I should live it, or Mama, or anybody else. I shall do as I want to in this society that apparently wasn't meant for me and my kind. If you are getting angry because I'm talking to you like this, then just kill me, leave me here in this graveyard dead. Maybe that's where all of us belong, anyway. Maybe then we wouldn't have to suffer so much. At the rate we are being killed now, we'll all soon be dead anyway."

When I got back to the Freedom House, Dave and Mattie were gone. I found George stretched out on his bed.

"What happened to Mattie and Dave?" I asked.

"Dave was called for a meeting in Jackson, and they had to leave. Where have you been all this time?"

"Walking," I said. "Was there any more news about the bombing?"

"No," he said, "except that the four girls were killed, and the city is getting pretty tense, the closer it gets to dark."

They'll probably tear Birmingham to bits tonight. I pray that they don't have any violence."

"Pray! Pray, George! Why in the hell should we be praying all the time? Those white men who hurled that bomb into the church today weren't on their knees, were they? If those girls weren't at Sunday school today, maybe they would be alive. How do you know they weren't on their knees? That's what's wrong now. We've been praying too long. Yes, as a race all we've got is a lot of religion. And the white man's got everything else, including all the dynamite."

"Hold it—is that Miss Woolworth, the Nonviolent Miss Woolworth talking like that?" he asked.

"Let's face it, George. Nonviolence is through and you know it. Don't you think we've had enough of it? First of all we were only using it as a tactic to show, or rather dramatize, to the world how bad the situation is in the South. Well, I think we've had enough examples. I think we are overdoing it. After this bombing, if there are any more nonviolent demonstrations for the mere sake of proving what all the rest of them have, then I think we are overdramatizing the issue."

"You feel like talking about anything else?" he asked.

"Yeah, let's talk about that beautiful march on Washington," I said, almost yelling. "It was just two weeks ago, believe it or not. And 250,000 people were there yelling, 'We want freedom.' Well, I guess this bombing is Birmingham's answer to the march. But what's gonna be our answer to the bombing? We're gonna send more of our children right back to Sunday school to be killed. Then the President will probably issue a statement saying, 'We are doing Everything in our Power to apprehend the killers. And we are in close touch with the situation.' After which we will still run out in the streets and bow our heads and pray to be spat upon in the process. I call that real religion, real, honest-to-goodness nigger religion. If Martin Luther King thinks nonviolence is really going to work for the South as it did for India, then he is out of his mind."

On Monday, the day after the bombing, the Negroes in Canton were afraid to walk the streets. When they passed the office, they turned their heads to keep from looking in. Every time I passed one of them on the street, they looked at me and almost said, "Get out of here. You'll get us killed."

I left the office shortly after lunch. When I got to the Freedom House, I played freedom songs and tried to analyze what had happened thus far for us in the Movement. I discovered my mind was so warped and confused I couldn't think clearly. The church bombing had had a terrible effect on me. It had made me question everything I had ever believed in. "There has got to be another way for us," I thought. "If not, then there is no end to the misery we are now encountering."

I put a Ray Charles record on the box and he was saying, "Feeling sad all the time, that's because I got a worried mind. The world is in an uproar, the danger zone is everywhere. Read your paper, and you'll see just exactly what keep worryin' me." It seemed as though I had never listened to Ray before. For the first time he said something to me.

George came in later, bringing a girl with him. "Anne, I would like for you to meet Lenora. She might be working with us. She was kicked off her father's plantation."

"Why?" I asked.

"It seems as though she was thinking like you yesterday, after the bombing. Somehow it got back to her father's boss man, and she left running last night."

I knew that he brought her here because he wanted me to have some other person to talk to.

"If you can't go home, then don't go feeling like the Lone Ranger," I said. "I haven't been home since Thanksgiving of '61. I know a lot of other people that can't go home either. So you see, you have plenty of company."

She grinned like a silly little country girl.

"Where are you living now?" I asked. "Are you working?"

"In the project with an aunt," she answered. "I had a job, but..."

"Then why don't you move in with us?" I asked. "We need some help and maybe we can get you on the payroll. But you won't be making much money." I wondered, though, how long we could stay in the area ourselves, before the Negroes asked us to leave.

*chapter*

| T W E N T Y - S I X |

Lenora moved in the next day. The only thing she had to move was a shopping bag. She didn't come with any clothes, just Lenora.

That night she opened the icebox and found two gallons of ice cream. "Moody, what's the ice cream for? Can I have some?" she asked.

"Sure, Lenora, help yourself. It was for my birthday, which was Sunday," I said. "There's a coconut cake in there, too, if you'd like some."

"You want me to fix some for you?" she asked.

"No, thanks," I said. "I don't think I could eat it."

But suddenly I had an idea. We could use the ice cream and cake to give a party for the high school students. Maybe a party would stir up their enthusiasm again. I couldn't wait till George came in to ask him what he thought about it.

We gave the party Saturday night and it turned out to be a great success. There were so many high school students there that finally the party became a rally. We all went out in the