



Louisiana - Summer, 1964



the students report
to their hometowns



INTRODUCTION

by *Ronnie Moore*
(*Director,*
CORE Louisiana Project)

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the Mississippi Summer Project. An equally significant project was conducted by CORE this summer in Louisiana, where civil rights workers face similar terrorism and intimidation. While Congress and the Supreme Court may let the "niggers get out of their place," Louisiana racists believe that beatings, jailings, and even murders, will keep Negroes from moving where they "ain't got no business being." They believe violence will keep the "niggers" from voting, using public facilities and accommodations, and seeking equal job opportunities. As CORE Field Secretary in Louisiana, I have fought these racists nonviolently for the past three years. During this period, I have been arrested fifteen times and served a total of 6 months in jail, of which fifty-seven days

were solitary confinement. I am free today to fight in this nonviolent revolution against the bullets and bombs of segregationists, because CORE has posted over \$30,000 in bond for my release. Seldom does a day pass in Louisiana without civil rights workers being intimidated and local citizens — particularly voter applicants — being subjected to economic, political, and physical reprisals.

During the search for the bodies of the three murdered Mississippi civil rights workers, the mutilated bodies of two Negroes were found, floating in a Louisiana river in the parishes of Tensas and Madison. No one knows whether they were killed in Louisiana or Mississippi. But I believe they were murdered in Louisiana. I know for sure that it was in Tallulah, the parish seat of Madison, where this summer CORE worker Mike Lesser was threatened, beaten, stripped of his clothing, jailed overnight, tried in a segregated courtroom in the early morning without a lawyer and sentenced to twenty-five days in jail with a fine of \$25. The judge suspended his sentence and ordered him out of town, escorted by the police with a warning never to return or he'd be killed.

There have been no known murders to date in the civil rights struggle in Louisiana. But judging from the prevailing patterns of violence, I say killings are inevitable unless federal protection is made available.

I can cite numerous incidents of reprisals against Louisiana Negroes, desiring the benefits of their American heritage. Rev. Joseph Carter was arrested for "disturbing the peace" when he first attempted to register to vote in St. Francisville. On October 17, 1963, he became the first Negro registered voter in West Feliciana parish since Reconstruction. In the same parish this summer, a CORE worker was beaten, and others, including myself, were shot at by ex-Sheriff Teddy H. Martin, Sr. while we escorted voter applicants to the registrar's office. Recently, after parish authorities arrested the former sheriff on a warrant signed by me, he was appointed by Gov. John McKeithen as Assistant Warden at Angola State Penitentiary.

Teachers, librarians, school bus drivers, and others in public employment have been fired from their jobs because they taught persons how to fill out voter registration forms. Farmers have been denied access to the only markets for their crops. Civil rights workers have been jailed for canvassing possible voter registrants on "Mr. Charlie's" plantation. The suffering, pain, and humiliation of being forced from home at night — like Johnny Hamilton of West Feliciana parish — or of seeing the remains of a burned community center — like the Faith, Hope and Charity Hall in Hammond — are part of the struggle of underprivileged Americans in a state like Louisiana, where neither parish officials nor the

federal government offer any real protection. Into this situation, from all sections of the country, came the CORE summer volunteers. They were deeply impressed. In reading this pamphlet, you will share their impressions as they described them — and in two instances actually wrote them — for their hometown newspapers.

The final story is a newspaper interview with a volunteer attorney.



REPORT FROM PLAQUEMINE

by James Van Matre
(CORE volunteer)

from the
St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times,
July 13, 1964

PLAQUEMINE, LA., is a small town south of Baton Rouge on the Mississippi River. It was chosen two years ago by CORE Field Secretary Ronnie Moore as headquarters for voter registration in Louisiana.

It was in Plaquemine that the Louisiana group met to prepare for the summer's activity. For a week, we 60 workers got up early and met, with only food breaks, until 9 p.m. Our leaders warned us of new dangers; we were beaten in mock hatred; we spoke to mock potential registrants; we spoke to non-existent church crowds; and we spent time in mock jails.

With this thin veneer to protect us, we were sent out into the parishes.

The training session couldn't have warned us about the Louisiana sun and terrain. A sugar plantation is hot and dusty. Dust or mud, depending upon the weather, make up the roads, which are lined with sewage ditches.

But the training sessions did prepare us to work, to register voters.

"Good afternoon, Ma'am," the interracial team says. "We're from the Congress of Racial Equality and we'd like to know whether you'd be interested in registering to vote?"

If the answer is yes, there begins the long process of teaching application. In Louisiana, a Negro applicant may be failed for not dotting an "i" or for circling something which should have been underlined or for many other minor errors not related to his ability to vote.

The worker becomes accustomed, if he is white, to having little children timidly reach up to him to touch his skin, and then draw away shyly. Flies buzz freely through a screenless door. As the worker teaches, drops of sweat fall on the form, smearing the ink. The city is a little better in that the houses are close together and local clinics may be set up at night.

Registration clinics are held from morning until the last person leaves at night: "How old are you Ma'am?" One old woman who'd never thought of it before, spent 10 minutes recollecting. "Your exact age, Ma'am, is 64 years, six months and seventeen days? The application wants it just like that."

Marked on clinic tables, scrawled on old envelopes and paper scraps are words of the Preamble: "...in order to form a more perfect union." Spellings have to be known by Negroes in Louisiana.

Speaking in churches is also a part of the task force worker's job. In our week's training session in Plaquemine, we were told that in certain parishes, if you wore a suit, you would offend the people because you would appear to be showing-off. In other parishes, if you didn't wear a suit, you'd be embarrassed. The worker must be prepared to spend hours socializing with people hungry for talk after spending an isolated week.

Sometimes it's rougher:

About two weeks ago, I was in Clinton, La., 20 miles from the Mississippi state line. I was there to assist Negro registrants to the registrar's office and to question them on their treatment by the registrar.

Things were going all right, with only minor incidents until the afternoon, when three local toughs jumped me while I was talking to a successful applicant.

"Get up," they screamed after they had knocked me to the ground. All I can remember now is that the pavement was warm and that maybe if I covered my head, I wouldn't be badly hurt.

They pulled me to my feet. By now, there was a crowd around, yelling at me.

I thought, "*I have never even talked to them before; what is making them hate me?*" I tried to go away, and somebody ripped off the back of my shirt. As I went down the second time, I thought, "*There it is, baby,*" But then somebody yelled, "*Stop it. Let him go back to Niggerville.*"

I can remember the dust grinding in the abrasions on my back and the voice addressing me: "*You got off lucky this time, son. Don't let me see your face around here again.*"

I walked back to what they called "Niggerville" alone.

One day six people were shot-at as they left a registrar's office in St. Francisville, West Feliciana parish seat. (Feliciana means happy land.) Four of our workers had accompanied two Negro women to the registrar's office. A man waving a gun approached them and shot at their retreating car. The police made no arrest, although our workers identified the gun-toter.

Nearly everyone here admits of being scared. No one wants to become a martyr. But still people come down—no pay, sweating the long, hot rides, the long walks and the long hours.

The northern office in Monroe, La., is a little larger and a little cooler than the main office in Plaquemine. But the air still hangs tensely about it. A week before I arrived, a group of workers were driven out by a bomb scare. Crank phone calls come over the wires, keeping the lines tied up continually.

West Monroe, tense twin city to Monroe, has been the scene of numerous harassments of our workers by the police. Two were arrested for vagrancy, three were arrested on an obscure solicitation ordinance. The word came from the police department not to canvass interracially but CORE doesn't compromise its principles and finally we won the argument.

Stories come back after work finishes in the evening.

One person tells of an old gentleman who at first played the part of a slave, saying "*Yassuh*" and scratching his head. Then, upon hearing the canvasser's reason for knocking at his door, he lost his grin and his face wrinkled and he said, "*See that ditch out there? It smells of manure. I wake up every morning smelling that and I never get used to it. My little girl had hepatitis from it. For 25 years I've voted to get rid of it. But what's the white man going to give me?*"

Another story is of a Negro woman in Clinton, Mama Jo, who takes care of all the CORE workers there. Outside her door is a sign reading: "*It is time for you to take a stand and become a first class citizen. A voteless people is a hopeless people. Register and vote.*"

Back in the main office, a sort of 10 x 10 box in a frame hotel in Plaquemine, sits a volunteer worker, amidst two mimeograph machines, four typewriters, a file cabinet, supply cabinet, a folded cot, a desk and a pay phone. A small fan is on the desk. Its only job seems to be to blow the humidity around. His job is toughest, for along with it comes the boredom. The office hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. His pay: food to eat and a roof overhead.

But there is some time for fun. On the weekends, the workers go into local Negro cafes — "*Black, white, gray and every other way,*" as a local Negro citizen observed. Over a glass of beer, the workers discuss home, politics, responsibilities, school and the big one—the Negro's problems in America. In the black cafes ring out words which the walls will never hear again. The students learn new dances. Sometimes a group will hop around the floor in unison hollering, "*We want freedom.*"

Around newstime, everything comes to a hush and a crowd gathers around a portable TV, straining to hear of news of Mississippi and St. Augustine and Tuscaloosa and Cambridge. A lot of us have friends out there. Talk dwindles and we leave together, remembering the warning that we must never travel alone and always in a car at night.

Almost invariably, every time a group gets together, waiting for dinner or resting afterward, we sing freedom songs. They range from old Negro spirituals to modified rock and roll. When a group breaks up, the final song sometimes drives the people into a thoughtful silence:

"May be the last time, May be the last time, May be the last time we sing together. May be the last time, but I don't know . . ."



CANVASSING IN LOUISIANA

by Sharon Burger
(CORE volunteer)

from the
Mishawaka (Ind.) Enterprise,
July 30, 1964

THIS AFTERNOON we did some canvassing about 30 miles from Plaquemine. We talked to people who were afraid of us,

people who didn't want us bothering them, and many more people, who wanted us to help them get registered. The various community leaders are very concerned about their people (I speak of the Negro community) and anxious to work with us in every way they can.

I'm the only Hoosier here, but Chicago and Detroit are represented. There are kids from California, New York, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Florida, and Ohio.

You've driven through the south. You've gone down bad roads and seen shacks with a dozen ragged children sitting on the porch—too hot to play. Well, that's where I am—sitting on the sagging porches or inside on a broken down bed with bugs crawling over the walls and floors and ceilings—walking through a dry field under a blazing sun to a woman picking butter beans—trying to get past the wall of fear a white face causes.

And even if they know of us—that they have nothing to fear from CORE itself, even if they would like very much to register to vote, even if they know that when they can vote they may be able to change some things—they aren't sure that someone won't fire bullets into their homes in the night, because they were seen talking to us in the day.

Yesterday a man sat talking to us with a knife in his hand. As we were leaving he laughed and told us what had been in his mind when he'd seen us coming. White bill collectors down here hire Negroes to lead them to the houses they're looking for and to beat the debtors.

Last week I was in the "home" of a young couple. He was one of the fortunate few who had a job, and the three room shack they lived in was owned by his employer, who took the rent from the wages. She was barefoot, wearing a dress that was faded and didn't fit.

Dirt was blowing in through all the holes and cracks, but they had a new chair, there was a plant on the porch, the cheap bedspread was clean. They try—they have a little bit of next to nothing—and they may lose even that if they do something the "white folks" don't want them to do—such as register to vote.

This morning we had about 20 Negroes waiting outside the registrar's office. They were standing quietly and calmly, waiting for their turns to go into the office where the registrar looks over their shoulders and blows smoke in their faces as they fill out the forms. (They have to go in one at a time.)

The registrar walked out behind a lady he had just failed (without telling her why, of course) and saw a CORE member. He said, "*Come here, you. Do you work for CORE?*" Bob said yes and the man shouted "*I refuse to be intimidated.*"

He then threatened to close the office if Bob didn't leave, and as Bob was leaving he said that he wouldn't let anyone that Bob had brought down come into the office.

istrar to invite a Negro home for supper—neither he nor the Negro wants that. We're asking that an American citizen, 21 years of age, who has lived one year in this parish, six months in this ward, and 30 days in this precinct be allowed to fill out an application to become a registered voter.

And who can say that no pressure should be brought to bear on a man — on a state — which says O.K. if that citizen is white and No if that citizen is black.

Hooray! The boys just came back to the clinic (we're teaching the forms in a church); and said FIVE PEOPLE PASSED! We danced around and grinned silly grins at one another. FIVE people in ONE day. It must be some kind of record!

Loria and I are canvassing Montpelier this afternoon and holding a clinic in a chapel there tonight. I have been soaked with sweat since I've been here. I don't remember how dry clothes feel. The work is hard—a lot of walking in a lot of sun. My patience is really developing — everything takes a lot of time — especially teaching the minute details of the form.

But I wouldn't be anywhere else doing anything else for anything. I really feel—for the first time in a long time—that there's some reason for me to be living and that what I'm doing really matters.

canvassing in another part of the state. I'm in St. Helena Parish this week and comparatively safe. The sheriff here is afraid of us because they don't want the Justice Department here at any cost.



“LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS WERE UNFAIR”

from the
Wilkes-Barre (Pa.) Record,
August 9, 1964

THE EXPERIENCES that James H. Tredinnick, 21, of 302 Blackman Street, had while encouraging and teaching Negroes to register and vote in Louisiana this summer have not discouraged him.

"I expect to continue working with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) most of my life," Tredinnick said yesterday afternoon in talking with a Record reporter.

"My plans are now to do church-related civil rights work among Negroes in northern cities, such as in New York's Harlem section and in Chicago," the dedicated young man said.

"It was somewhat dangerous, but not clearly as much as in Mississippi," Tredinnick said. He said he and his coworkers frequently were "harassed by white folks."

The slender, slightly-built young man, in recalling some of his experiences in Louisiana, said law enforcement officials of the state "were very unfair to us." He said one parish (county) sheriff told the CORE group that "he would give us no protection while we were in his parish." Tredinnick said the sheriff referred to the CORE group as "Communists and outside troublemakers." At one time, the sheriff came to their residence and told them they were under arrest. The sheriff later changed his mind.

Tredinnick said the sheriff, at the time he said they were under arrest, did not state on what charges he was going to arrest them.

"There were three of us—myself and two other workers. He frisked the three of us and handled me rather roughly," Tredinnick said.

He explained that CORE's work in Louisiana "was fairly successful." He said the entire group, numbering about 40 and working in about one-third of the state, managed to encourage more than 1,000 Negroes to register in the last two months. In the group, he said, were 25 from out of the area and 15 Negro workers.

"Most of the workers were experienced in civil rights work. More than half had been in jail at one time or another as a result of their civil rights work.

"I, myself, was in jail last summer in the city of Danville, Va., for marching on the city hall. I served eight days in jail and was later released under \$2,000 bond. The case is still pending and has been appealed in federal court."

Declaring that the state government of Louisiana is committed to a policy of segregation, Tredinnick said CORE's work in the state was hindered extremely by the fact that the printed forms, which the Negroes must complete in order to register as voters, had been deliberately complicated by the state government "in an effort to discourage Negroes from becoming voters."

He said the forms have a total of more than 60 items which must be answered by the Negroes in their own writing. A single, misspelled or uncapitalized word means that the Negro applicant fails and must wait 10 days before applying to register.

"This means that it takes at least one-half hour to teach the average adult to complete the forms properly. Many of the Negroes have little education, especially in the rural areas. We have to turn down many of these people as possible voters. Many of them sign their names only with an X," Tredinnick said.

He said the Civil Rights Law defines the minimum education of a voter as a sixth-grade education or its equivalent. He stated many of those with a sixth-grade education have a chance of completing the complex form.

"We hope in the next year that the federal courts will have outlawed the use of the present registration forms and pave the way for at least two-thirds of Louisiana's Negroes to become registered voters."

When queried about some of the experiences that the CORE workers encountered, Tredinnick said about four of the workers were beaten severely by local whites. "Eight of the workers were arrested on false charges, such as loitering and vagrancy. And we were visited almost weekly by FBI agents and Justice Department officials. They were the only protection since we could not depend on the local police."



RIGHTS WORKER LIVED IN FEAR

by Jackie Germann
(staff writer)

from the
St. Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press,
August 17, 1964

A MINNEAPOLIS GIRL who was shot at and jailed while teaching Louisiana Negroes how to fill out voting applications this summer said Sunday she lived in fear for her life 24 hours a day.

Ronnie Sigal, 21, of 3731 Abbott Ave. S., spent nine weeks in St. Helena as a member of the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) Summer Task Force. And during those weeks she learned to live each day "because I never knew if I'd be alive the next day."

Miss Sigal, who was the only white CORE worker in St. Helena, said about the only contact she had with whites during her stay was when they were "calling me names or throwing things at me." One time it was when she was the target of a shotgun aimed by a "white cracker."

"Three of us took two elderly ladies to West Feliciana to register to vote. The office hadn't been open since January, 1963, and it was only going to be open two days. We were getting out of the car when the former sheriff ran up and started throwing things at us. Then he hit one white boy with a stake. When we started driving away, he fired after us."

But Miss Sigal said the closest she ever came to being killed was when the car she was in was surrounded by nine armed men on a country road.

"Four Negro workers and I were returning home after investigating a murder. We approached a sharp curve, hit a wet spot and landed against a post by the side of an old, abandoned building. The fender was bent over the wheel, so we got out to try and fix it.

"Suddenly these men who apparently had been fox hunting were swarming around the car. When they saw me, they asked if I was white. I told them my daddy was, and they didn't bother to ask about about my mother. I was afraid that if they knew both my parents were white they would kill the Negro boys.

"We all thought they would kill us. Luckily they called a deputy and he recognized us. After the deputy arrived, they beat up one boy very badly. Finally he told them to stop. They charged me with reckless driving, exceeding the speed limit and destroying private property. They didn't want to jail me, so they set my bond at \$400 and told me to get a bondsman. I told them I couldn't get anyone till morning, so they took me to another parish and put me in jail overnight."

While Miss Sigal was in Louisiana her primary job was to teach Negroes how to fill out voter applications that are "designed to be failed."

"In our parish people had to fill out the form and produce an affidavit that they were 21. A great grandmother might come to register, but if she didn't have a birth certificate stating she was 21, she was refused.

"If people aren't taught how to fill out the applications, they can't possibly pass. Questions on color and common-law marriage were asked. And they asked for your employer. Negroes with good jobs wouldn't register because they were afraid they'd be fired."

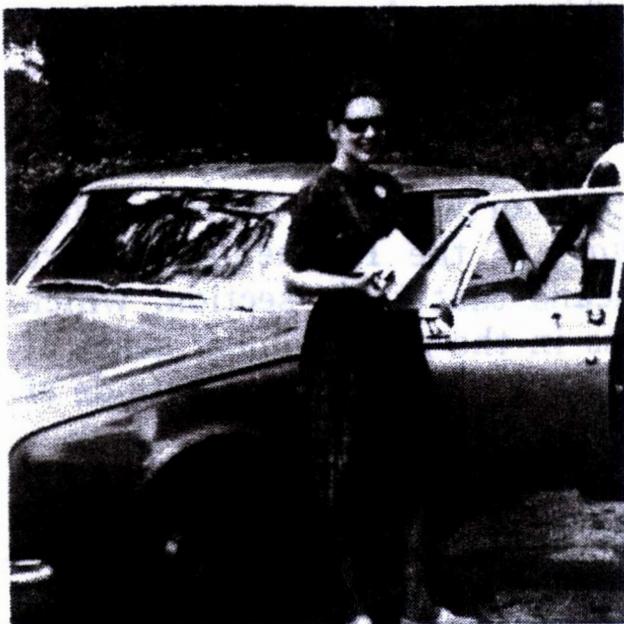
But although it is a slow and tedious job, Miss Sigal said inroads are being made.

"CORE is helping to bring hope and unification to the Negro community. The Negroes in Louisiana are living, sleeping and eating hope. And they're experiencing a pride and respect they never had before.

"There is fear, but it's experienced by both the Negro and the white. Some whites believe in integration, but they're afraid to admit it. They don't want to be called a nigger-lover. But at least in Louisiana there isn't the state pride in killing a Negro that there is in Mississippi."

Why does a girl who loves to go horseback riding, lives in a fashionable part of Minneapolis and has only six credits left to earn before receiving a psychology degree at the University of Minnesota leave it to go south and live with a Negro widow on a farm where she sleeps and eats with cockroaches, works without pay, subsists on two meals a day of chicken and rice, milks a cow each morning and is hungry much of the time?

"I wanted to do something more than sit up north trying to raise money. I've been working with CORE since the Freedom Rides three years ago. On Sept. 14 I have to go back for my trial. Then in January I'm going back on a full-time basis. I'll be the first white woman CORE worker in northern Louisiana, so I'll probably spend most of the winter in jail."



CLINTON GIRL WORKS WITH CORE

*by Judi Burken
(staff writer)*

*from the
Clinton (Ia.) Herald,
August 20, 1964*

WE SHALL OVERCOME! With the words of the civil rights song still echoing in her ears, Peggy Ewan, of 1524 Lazy Lane, came home last week from Louisiana where she worked two months with the Congress of Racial Equality. (CORE)

"We were subjected to a silent intimidation," Peggy said. "Hate stares, being followed by a semi-arrest on a charge of vagrancy."

"On the day I arrived in Plaquemine, the police stopped me and took me to the police station on a charge of vagrancy. It wasn't really an arrest. The police chief talked to me about being there and working for CORE." He didn't threaten her or attempt to discourage her attempts, Peggy said.

With her main work concentrated in registering Negroes to vote, Peggy trained in Plaquemine (pronounced Plackman) for one week. Besides being taught the fundamentals of peaceful demonstration and the art of self protection without retaliation, she was taught how to canvass the Negro community and setting up clinics to instruct the citizens in how to fill out the necessary voting forms.

When Peggy put her training to work, she found opposition from some of the Negroes as well as many Louisiana whites.

"Fear is a big thing in the southern Negro's life," she said. For that reason some of them refused to even listen to the pleas of the CORE workers to exercise their right to vote.

Apathy is another Negro problem, according to Peggy. *"Many of the older Negroes have lived without the vote for years and are perfectly happy with their situation. They do not want to change."*

The CORE people would explain their purpose and invite the Negroes to a clinic on voter registration which CORE would then set up in a town building, usually a church.

In one rural parish (county), 41 persons attended a clinic, while in the city the number slipped to three or four several times.

At the clinic, the CORE workers distributed registration forms which Louisiana law requires to be filled out by prospective voters. Included in the forms is a space in which the writer must state his color.

Peggy said she and other CORE people told the Negroes to leave blank the spaces which CORE did not consider constitutional.

Another question, seeking the party affiliation of the voter, required the word *"Democratic"* to be written-in, Peggy stated, or else the registrar would consider the application void.

A part of the voter registration requirement is the taking of a test. Six questions are asked and the applicant must answer four of the six correctly. Peggy failed in her first try.

There are 10 different forms of questions and the applicant does not know ahead of the actual testing period which form he will draw. CORE located each of the 10 forms and in the voting clinics went through each question and answer with the Negroes.

In the Herald newsroom, various reporters took the tests and the results showed few prospective Louisiana voters among the group.

Following up on the clinics the CORE workers next moved into the Plaquemine courthouse where they directed Negroes to the registrar's office.

"It was our desire to keep the registrar busy, as well as registering the Negroes," Peggy said. *"He (the registrar) gets paid for doing nothing."*

A steady stream of Negro voter applicants filed into the office and Peggy said an average of one out of three was successfully registered.

"It was almost as though a quota for successful applicants had been set up to appease us."

A word in a history book to most northerners, *"gerrymandering,"* to the Plaquemine Negro means that their section, which lies in the geographical heart of the town, is considered outside of the city limits.

Not being a part of the town, the section is without street lights, has open sewers and its own sheriff, who in reality has no police power.

"When it rains," Peggy said, "the sewers back-up and flood over into the streets, giving off a terrible stench. Small children are often found playing in the overflow."

The CORE volunteers worked and lived only with the Negro population, receiving a sustenance wage and room and board. "Many local Negroes are active in the civil rights work," Peggy said. "And some are real spitfires."

Peggy stayed with the Seigent (Sergeant) Caulfield family. Of the six Caulfield children, only one daughter, Thelma, 14, is still at home.

"Although CORE is a non-violent movement some of the Negroes are armed," Peggy said. "The Caulfields have a shotgun and Thelma knows how to use it." On one occasion, when a group of white youths parked menacingly near the Caulfield home, Thelma armed herself with the gun. "Fortunately," Peggy recalls, "she didn't have to use it."

During the time Peggy lived with the Caulfields, one shot was fired at the house by passing whites. The shot went wild and did no damage, but Peggy soon received instructions on how to shoot the gun.

In a question and answer period which followed Peggy was asked what police protection was given to the Negro. Her reply: "NONE!"

But all is not as bleak as it looks. Peggy told of at least one instance among the CORE workers where a white man, under the anonymity of darkness, met with a CORE volunteer and talked for over an hour on Negro rights.

Peggy noted too that some young southern whites have joined the CORE movement.

Will Peggy return to work again with CORE in the south? "I hope to. I've even given some thought to teaching there. There is a need for qualified teachers. A lack of education is the Negroes' biggest problem."



TORTURE IN A LOUISIANA JAIL

by Donovan Bess
(staff writer)

from the
San Francisco (Calif.) Chronicle,
September 8, 1964

A FRAIL-LOOKING San Francisco State College student, Charles Fenton, 23, told last week about the terrors of a ten-week stay in northern Louisiana to help Negroes there get equal treatment.

He told about being chased continually by white toughs driving cars at speeds up to 90 miles an hour, and of being ambushed by gangs of toughs bent on preventing briefing sessions with Negroes.

He told of the torture of being thrown in a jail tank with 32 fervent segregationists — who took turns keeping him awake for his 96-hour stay, made him eat soap and forced him into shower baths so hot he broke out in blisters.

Fenton resides at 361 Tenth Avenue. He and 51 other young Americans went to Louisiana last June to help Negroes get registered to vote, and to get other rights, such as equal access to the public library books.

The program was organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). But little publicity was given the work, he said, in the hope of getting more local cooperation by "not shaming them in the eyes of the world."

Fenton reported this approach had brought "amazingly favorable" results, considering the depth of bigotry in the state — that officials there now recognize the time has come when they must begin to yield before the civil rights surge.

But the cost of this progress was a summer of extreme mental and emotional anguish for the CORE pioneers.

Fenton and eight other workers were assigned to Monroe, a city in northern Louisiana with 17,000 Negro residents—500 of them registered to vote when the project began on June 17.

At the first mass meeting to instruct Negroes on registration, he said, only 18 dared to show up.

"The meeting was in the Calvary Baptist Church in (suburban) West Monroe, and the people had to walk there over dirt roads, sometimes five miles," he said.

"Policemen were stationed along the way and kept people away by telling them they'd be jailed if they went to the church. Our people counted 22 Negroes who were turned around that way.

"After the meeting was over, the 18 Negroes were followed by policemen using flashlights.

"When we left, the chase came. That's the way it was after every meeting. The boys come around with their hopped-up '56 and '57 Fords and play the game of the cat chasing the rats.

"We had to go 90 miles an hour to get away. Intersections? You don't worry about stoplights when you're a civil rights worker.

"The chase always stops as soon as you get back into the Negro community, where we lived."

Fenton told how he joined in the campaign to send 22 Negro children into four Ouachita parish (county) libraries reserved for white borrowers. The Negroes, he said, are confined to the Carver branch, "which is an overgrown closet and gets all the dog-eared books cast off from the Caucasian libraries."

The 22 children were arrested on charges of trespassing. Their parents and CORE workers were jailed on charges of contributing to the delinquency of minors.

"They shoved me into the tank with 32 other white men and the jailer said, 'Here comes a nigger lover.'"

On another occasion, Fenton said, he and two other CORE workers were put under civilian house arrest by 31 white toughs who convened outside in seven cars and stood guard, wielding clubs and baseball bats.

He said that when police finally arrived on the scene, after a two-hour wait, he was threatened with arrest for disturbing the peace and told, "You're not wanted here."

During the long summer, he reported, 292 additional Negroes were registered to vote in Monroe. Similar success was had throughout the state, including integration of many lunch counters, restaurants and other public facilities, he said.



PEORIA LAWYER FINDS POLICE STATE

by Theo Jean Kenyon
(staff writer)

from the
Peoria Journal Star,
August 3, 1964

“WHAT EXISTS in Northern Louisiana today is a police state run at the pleasure of sheriffs, state troopers and police officers who are savage and ignorant men.”

Peoria attorney Arthur G. Greenberg, who returned this weekend from two weeks as a civil rights volunteer, described the northern part of Louisiana as “completely lawless” and “positively incredible.”

He said that he and another attorney who formed the first legal team to go into northern Ouachita parish (county) left “with no doubt in our minds that CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) workers in northern Louisiana are working on a continuing basis with their lives in danger.”

Greenberg was one of 150 attorneys who signed-on this summer under the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee (initiated by CORE), and the only one from the midwest.

That was the aim. This is how Greenberg got his feet wet in the northern Louisiana area.

"Jack Burnett of Manteca, Cal., a little suburb near Stockton, and I made up the team that was sent north from New Orleans to an area that includes Monroe and West Monroe with a total of around 100,000 population.

"A family had called CORE headquarters in New Orleans and asked us to come up to Arcadia. Their son had been sentenced to six months in jail for drinking out of a fountain reserved for whites only. Six months 'with public works' in Louisiana means on the road gang."

Greenberg, Burnett and a Negro attorney named Lolis Elie of New Orleans (CORE's chief southern attorney), traveled up to Arcadia on a humid summer day.

"We were traveling in an 'integrated' car, and as we pulled in to the courthouse a squad car pulled in right behind us."

When the trio walked into the sheriff's office, his desk was covered with cattle prods. The sheriff asked for credentials, finally asked them to state their business. When the Negro attorney began to explain, the sheriff turned on him, *"You shut up, when I want to hear from you I'll say so."*

Greenberg said he and the other white attorney explained the case and said they wanted to see the boy. They were told that was impossible unless they got a letter from the district attorney, 25 miles away. They finally were allowed to see the records.

"As we left, the sheriff put his arm on our shoulders, 'You fellows can come back anytime. I'll see you don't get hurt,' he said, 'but don't bring that nigger lawyer here again.'"

Because the team feared they would place the boy's family in jeopardy if they called on them publicly, and could not see the boy, they tried calling on the FBI only to be told it was purely an "investigative" agency and could not assist them.

In another instance they were able to proceed further. During Greenberg's stay an attempt was made to integrate the libraries at Monroe where only one branch, the Carver branch, *"which looks like a \$3,000 home on Peoria's South Side,"* was available to Negroes.

"A group of Negroes first went into a segregated branch and asked for a library card. They were told they could not be issued one. Some sat down at the reading table. The librarian first told them to leave, then called the sheriff," Greenberg explained.

That case is now pending for federal court hearing. The legal team filed for an injunction and \$1,625,000 damages against Sheriff Bailey Grant of Monroe, La., charging violations of the 14th amendment and the newly passed Civil Rights Law.

In an attempt to obtain justice, Greenberg said he and his legal partner filed at least 25 petitions to remove cases from the state courts and take them to the federal courts.

Most of the pleadings were filed at Shreveport, La. Greenberg was struck each time by the huge courthouse at Shreveport with the big statue of Generals Lee, Beauregard and Hooker, and the "Stars and Bars" flag of the Confederacy flying above them. No American flag was on view.

"Almost the only place we saw the American flag was at post offices," Greenberg said.

Greenberg said that the car in which the team rode was *"followed many times,"* that his car experienced a mysterious blowout on one trip, and that *"we were followed in every town."*

"The only place Jack and I felt safe was in the Negro neighborhoods where we ate and slept. It was the only place we felt insulated from hostility."

He stayed twice in white motels, but his attempts to find lodgings with white persons were futile. One minister refused even to meet him, and another turned him down for lodging.

Greenberg no longer finds it difficult to call-up the idea of southern violence by southern white people.

"The streets in Monroe, La. are patrolled by automobiles with members of the Ku Klux Klan, or the White Citizens' Council, all using citizen's band two-way radios. Their cars are armed with the favorite weapons of the southern bigot, baseball bats and shotguns."

Maintaining the only headquarters at Monroe in northern Louisiana are a party of four white CORE volunteers, headed by Mike Lesser of New York who interrupted work on a doctorate of political science at Syracuse University to aid the civil rights cause.

Greenberg said Lesser and the others all have the look of *"people involved in extreme battle fatigue."* One worker, David Kramer of Detroit has been told, *"You're on the list and you're going to be killed."*

Kramer had sent a description of northern Louisiana "justice" to the Detroit Free Press and it was printed. It has since been reprinted and circulated in Monroe with Kramer's name and address on it.

Neither Greenberg nor his companion was allowed to practice in any court in Louisiana, although they bore with them their state bar credentials and permission to practice before the federal court.

The most disappointing and frustrating aspect of the trip to Greenberg, he said, was that the federal government itself must do more to obtain racial justice in Louisiana, and it is not doing it. The building in which the U. S. Justice Department is located in New Orleans *"has segregated toilet and drinking facilities,"* Greenberg added.

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