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Paul and Patricia Bokulich: Civil Rights Workers in Greene County, Alabama

PAUL T. MURRAY

AN ICONIC PHOTO BY JAMES KARALES SHOWS A LONG LINE OF WELL-Addressed people stretching into the horizon. Most of them are African Americans, striding three abreast along Alabama's Highway 80. Dark clouds threaten overhead, but the marchers seem unconcerned about the weather; they are focused on a larger issue. They are marching for the right to vote. A framed copy of this picture from the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March hangs in the living room of a modest home in Soquel, California. "That's me," Paul Bokulich told the author, pointing with pride to a tall figure beneath an American flag, stooping to guide a young Black girl back into line.¹

Paul was among the hundreds of people who streamed into Selma from across the United States in March 1965. They were responding to an urgent summons by Martin Luther King, Jr., for people of faith to protest the brutal March 7 attack by state troopers and mounted sheriff's deputies on nonviolent Black activists attempting to march to the state capital in Montgomery.² This confrontation soon became known as "Bloody Sunday." Thousands joined the first and last days

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¹ Author's interview with Paul and Patricia Bokulich, March 19, 2008. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes attributed to Paul and Patricia are from this source. The federal court order authorizing the march stipulated that demonstrators march no more than three abreast along this stretch of highway.

² Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA, 1987), 243.

of this historic five-day march, but only three hundred individuals hiked the entire fifty-four miles. Paul Bokulich covered that distance as part of the medical team assisting the marchers.

At the conclusion of this historic demonstration, most out-of-town participants returned to their homes to resume their careers. However, after a short trip back to Detroit, Michigan, Bokulich headed south again. He and his future wife, Patricia, enlisted as foot soldiers in the freedom movement. For the next two years, they worked as organizers with Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). First, they volunteered for the Summer Community Organization and Political Education (SCOPE) voter registration project. Later, they worked in Greene County, Alabama, living at a subsistence level in one of the poorest counties in the United States. They cooperated with local Black leadership empowering newly registered African American voters and supporting Black candidates for political office. As Roman Catholics in an overwhelmingly Protestant region and white people living in an African American community, Paul and Pat were outsiders, but their dedication to justice helped them overcome obstacles of religion and race.

Their story is remarkable, but not unique. During the early and mid-1960s, other "outside agitators" labored alongside southern Blacks in Deep South communities to build a more democratic society. Some stayed only a few weeks or months. A few, like Paul and Pat, made a longer commitment. Working alongside local residents, they, and others like them, helped to make possible the victories of the Civil Rights Movement.³

Paul Bokulich and Patricia Gryzch grew up in Detroit and its suburbs. Paul's grandparents immigrated to the United States from

³ Many of these activists wrote memoirs about their experiences in the South. See Bruce Hartford, *Troublemaker: Memories of the Freedom Movement* (San Francisco, CA, 2019); Charles McDew and Beryl Gilfix, *Tell the Story: A Memoir of the Civil Rights Movement* (self-published, 2020); Carol Ruth Silver, *Freedom Rider Diary* (Jackson, MS, 2014). See also the documentary, *An Ordinary Hero: The True Story of Joan Trumpauer Mulholland* (Taylor Street Films, 2013). The 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project brought an estimated 900 volunteers, most of them white northern college students, to the Magnolia State. Several of them stayed beyond the summer months.



Image 1. Paul and Pat Bokulich with Selma-to-Montgomery March photo. Photo courtesy Shmuel Thaler, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*

Croatia. Pat's grandparents came from Poland. Paul's family settled in suburban Harper Woods. He attended Catholic schools where he learned from the Baltimore Catechism that "we were made in the image and likeness of God." He later reflected that this belief "places a real obligation on us. It's the core of justice and virtue." After graduating from St. Ambrose High School in Detroit, Paul entered Sacred Heart Seminary to study for the priesthood. He left after two years. "When I came out of seminary, I got a job. I was also going to night school," he explained. "I thought I was a genius, and I could handle a physics and a math class and a job at the same time. Of course, I couldn't. I decided to go to school full-time."⁴ He enrolled at Wayne

⁴Sean J. Schiavolin, "You Have to Have Light to Dispel Darkness," n.d., via <https://creativepool.com/sean-schiavolin/projects/you-have-to-have-light-to-dispel-darkness> (accessed February 20, 2024).

State University planning to become an engineer for one of the Big Three automakers. He studied math and physics, but soon found philosophy more to his liking.

Pat attended public and parochial schools in Detroit. She went to six different schools for her first eight grades, changing schools as her mother moved from place to place. Then she enrolled at Immaculata High School. When she fell behind in her classes due to illness, she transferred to a public high school. In 1962, she entered Wayne State as an art major.

Both Paul and Pat gravitated to Wayne State's Newman Center, a haven for Catholic commuter students. For a time, Paul worked as a resident caretaker at the center. "A lot of times there were students who lived out in the suburbs, and they'd just crash on a couch at Newman. We stayed late there, and we'd be singing and discussing and discussing," he recalled. "The Paulist priests [at the center] were just great. They gave us a strong intellectual base for our religion. It was an engaging environment for young college students."

Paul and Pat were among a group of Catholic activists living near the university in a duplex on Prentis Street. Pat described their living arrangement: "Everyone shared the first floor. Upstairs there were the guys' bedrooms on one side and the girls were on the other side." This communal living arrangement fostered a commitment to social justice. "We had a very dynamic intellectual and prayerful involvement there," Paul added. "We were very much followers of Dorothy Day; with the pacifism and social activism she was involved in."⁵ Each year on August 6, the residents of Prentis House joined with Catholic Workers picketing at the Selfridge Air Force Base in Mount Clemens on the anniversary of the World War II bombing of Hiroshima. A dedication to the personalist philosophy of the French thinkers Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain reinforced Paul's activism. He learned that "social formations of society and individuals have to focus on the dignity of the person. We can't respect the dignity of the

⁵ "You Have to Have Light."

person by killing them. There are definable principles that we are called to know and follow."

At the time of the Bloody Sunday attack, Paul was no longer enrolled at Wayne State. "I was supposed to be writing philosophy class assignments to remedy incompletes, but these weren't getting done," he explained. He hadn't heard about the confrontation between Civil Rights marchers and Alabama state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge until a friend called the day after the attack to inform him that two carloads of Detroit Catholics were heading to Selma. "I wasn't reading newspapers or watching television," Paul confessed. When he learned that Dr. King was involved, he knew the protest would conform with his nonviolent principles. Without a second thought, Paul decided to join the group going south. "Yes, I'll go with you," he told them. He didn't have any serious commitments in Detroit to hold him back.

In his rush to leave for Alabama, Paul forgot one important social engagement. He had scheduled a date with Pat. They had known each other for three years, but this was the first time he had asked her out on a date. "I had a terrible crush on him, and he asked me out," Pat recalled. "So, I'm all ready to go out and he doesn't show up." At the communal dinner the next evening, one of their housemates offered a prayer "for Paul and the others who are headed down to Selma." This was the first Pat heard about her future husband going south.

The rest of the Detroit contingent in Selma returned home after a few days, but Paul remained in Alabama. He waited with hundreds of other Civil Rights advocates who hoped they would be able to resume the march to Montgomery. Meanwhile, federal judge Frank M. Johnson was considering whether to issue an order allowing the march to proceed. During the two-week interval between the Bloody Sunday attack (March 7) and the renewed march to Montgomery (March 21) the assembled activists staged daily demonstrations for voting rights to keep the pressure on local authorities. Paul was among a group of white priests, rabbis, and ministers who attempted

to picket in front of Selma mayor Joe Smitherman's home in a white residential area. He described their reception by local police: "We no sooner got out of the cars than we were very promptly hauled into police wagons and buses by the police. We started singing freedom songs on the bus. This really brought on their rage. They were ready to start beating these clergymen. We stopped singing." City officials tolerated Civil Rights protests as long as they remained in Selma's Black section. Because this group of demonstrators had ventured into the white side of town, the cops immediately arrested them. Police took between fifty and one hundred people to jail that day, Paul among them. After several hours, authorities released all of those arrested without requiring bail, something not done for Black arrestees.⁶

Like most of the visiting Civil Rights advocates, when not demonstrating, Paul passed the time getting to know Selma residents or attending mass meetings at Brown Chapel AME church. This was a transformative experience. Years later, he reminisced, "When I first went into Brown's Chapel and heard that preaching there, calling on the Lord to bring his efforts here, for us to love our neighbor, and to sing the Christian songs adapted for the freedom movement like 'Climbing Jacob's Ladder' and 'This Little Light of Mine' . . . it was wonderful. It was a new dynamic of life . . . They were acknowledging Christianity in the spirit."⁷ C. T. Vivian, Hosea Williams, James Bevel, and Jesse Jackson were among the preachers who left a lasting impression. "Dr. King would show up occasionally, but he wasn't there for any extended time," Paul noted. As a Christian committed to nonviolence, Paul found the atmosphere intoxicating. "This was enthralling, it was exciting, it was pragmatic," he reported. He resolved to continue being part of it.

On March 15, Paul gathered with other activists to watch President Lyndon Johnson's televised address to members of Congress. Johnson urged the legislators to pass the Voting Rights Act he soon would

⁶For developments during this interval, see Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 243-49.

⁷"You Have to Have Light."

send them. Viewers were amazed when Johnson's closing words, "And we shall overcome," echoed the Civil Rights anthem. "We couldn't believe it!" Paul exclaimed. Two days later, Judge Johnson issued the order approving the renewed march to Montgomery. Three days of hectic activity followed as SCLC staffers scrambled to make arrangements for three hundred people to hike the fifty miles from Selma to Montgomery. "There were a lot of logistics that had to be handled," Paul stated. "Providing food, tents, places to stop along the route because no white is going to allow you to camp on their grounds."

On March 21, five thousand people led by Dr. King and other dignitaries crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge where marchers had been attacked two weeks earlier. They headed east toward Montgomery escorted by U.S. Army troops and members of the Alabama National Guard. This time there was no violence. Paul was part of the medical detail. "I got on because I had worked on the ambulance in Harper Woods," he explained. "My dad was a fireman, and they ran the ambulance. I did that as a part-time job while I attended Wayne State. This was before the days of paramedics, so the ambulance crew mostly picked up the injured, administered oxygen, stopped bleeding, and so forth."

"It was magnificent," Paul said, reminiscing about marching along the highway. "You had this singing, and you had these young people in the front who would walk in step. They made a drama out of the whole thing." At the end of the first day's march, most participants returned to Selma. The highway for the next three days narrowed from four lanes to two. Judge Johnson's order allowed only three hundred marchers to continue on this stretch. "After that first day the main medical problem for our doctors was sore feet ... I'd just walk along ... I and the others would walk along and tell people to stay three abreast. That's what I was doing when that picture was snapped," he reported. "There was still a lot of apprehension about possible violence."

At the conclusion of the march, in front of the Alabama state capitol, Paul listened in awe as Dr. King shared his vision for an

America cleansed of the stains of racial violence and hatred. "How long?" King asked his audience. "Not long," was his response.⁸ Paul was inspired. He drove back to Detroit to pack up his belongings, determined to return to Selma to continue working for Civil Rights. "This was real, effective nonviolence in action, and philosophically I was very much a pacifist," he said.

While in Detroit, Paul met Mark Harrington, a SCLC staffer recruiting volunteers for a summer voter registration project. "No, you don't want to go back down to Selma. You want to go to Atlanta," Harrington insisted. "There's going to be a summer program for voting rights, and we need people down there." That's how Paul became part of the group preparing for SCLC's Summer Community Organizing and Political Education (SCOPE) project. "Mark convinced me to show up on Johnson Street in Atlanta [the location of SCLC/SCOPE offices] instead of going to Selma," Paul stated. "I showed up at the door and pretty soon I was sitting in on meetings or heading off with Hosea Williams to places in the South where SCLC was involved."

Meeting in Maryland six days after the triumphant conclusion of the Selma march, SCLC leaders approved an ambitious plan for the SCOPE project with Hosea Williams as its head. Not all in the organization's leadership were pleased with this decision. Williams's biographer wrote that "some members of SCLC's executive staff shuddered at the possibility of Williams becoming too powerful." The summer project had an unprecedented budget in excess of half a million dollars.⁹

While Harrington and others traveled from campus to campus recruiting northern college students, other SCLC staffers journeyed to southern communities persuading local leaders to host voter regis-

⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Our God Is Marching On!" March 25, 1965, The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/our-god-marching> (accessed February 20, 2024).

⁹ Rolundus R. Rice, *Hosea Williams: A Lifetime of Defiance and Protest* (Columbia, SC, 2021), 142-43. The SCLC treasury had experienced a surge in donations following Bloody Sunday and had never before contained such a large amount.

tration projects. Paul described their procedure: "You're sent out in groups of three. Sometimes you had the name of a contact person; sometimes you just had a county." Northerners asked, "How do we find the Black neighborhood?" The southerners laughed and said, "Where the ditches begin and the paved road ends, you're in the Black neighborhood." When they located the African American community, they introduced themselves saying, "I work with Reverend Martin Luther King." These words never failed to open doors.

Paul was dispatched to Crawfordville, Georgia, as part of a SCLC team preparing for the summer project. They found Civil Rights demonstrations already under way. Paul joined a group of African Americans trying to integrate Sunday services at a white church. Police arrested all the protesters. After being booked and released, Paul called Pat in Detroit asking her to break the news of his arrest to his parents. Pat had not yet met any of Paul's family but agreed to drive to their home and inform them in person. His parents were not at home, but his seventy-five-year-old Croatian grandmother, his "bubba," was there. "We had a very nice talk," Pat reported, "although I wasn't sure how much of the information I passed on registered with the elderly woman due to her limited command of the English language." Detroit newspapers picked up the story of Paul's arrest, triggering a flood of abusive mail addressed to Paul's parents, berating them for supporting their son's "meddling where he didn't belong."

During the previous summer, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sponsored the Mississippi Freedom Summer project, which recruited northern volunteers, most of them white college students, to teach in Freedom Schools, work on voter registration and organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.¹⁰ Only a limited number of Mississippi Blacks successfully registered that summer due to intense resistance from segregationists who employed intimidation, reprisals, and biased legal requirements that

¹⁰ For an excellent brief history of the origin and impact of Freedom Summer see John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL, 1994), 242-71. For a sociological analysis see Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York, NY, 1988).

impeded Black registration.¹¹ However, the project did succeed in drawing national attention to civil rights abuses in the state of Mississippi. In many respects, the SCOPE project was similar to Freedom Summer but targeted eighty-two counties with large Black populations in six southern states.¹²

In June, an estimated 500 volunteers arrived on the campus of Morris Brown College in Atlanta for a six-day orientation session. Pat Gryzch was among the ten-person delegation from Wayne State. The summer volunteers heard that they must concentrate on three main goals: voter registration, political education, and recruiting Black candidates for political office. SCLC leaders anticipated that congressional passage of the Voting Rights Act would eliminate most barriers to registration. However, opposition from southern members of Congress delayed passage of the bill. Speakers cautioned the volunteers not to risk arrest by trying to integrate segregated restaurants, movie theaters, or parks. Their primary purpose was voter registration.¹³

Distinguished scholars and Civil Rights workers briefed volunteers on the history of the Civil Rights Movement, non-violent practice, and white southern resistance to racial equality. The speakers constituted a veritable who's who of experts on inequality and the freedom movement. Among those addressing the volunteers were authors James Baldwin (*The Fire Next Time*), V. O. Key (*Southern Politics*), and Michael Harrington, (*The Other America*); prominent historians John Hope Franklin and C. Vann Woodward; and veteran Civil Rights organizers Bayard Rustin, Dorothy Cotton, and James Lawson. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke on Thursday. At late night songfests, the young people joined in singing freedom songs like "This Little

¹¹ The original goal for the project was to place a thousand volunteers in 120 southern counties, but SCLC leaders soon scaled back these overly ambitious numbers. See Hartford, *Troublemaker*, 198.

¹² The best account of the SCOPE project is Maria Gitin, *This Bright Light of Ours: Stories from the Voting Rights Fight* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2014).

¹³ Gitin, *This Bright Light of Ours*, 36-41.

Light of Mine," "Oh Freedom," and "We Shall Overcome." Their hosts told them, "If you are going to organize Negroes in the South, you have to sing." Saturday morning the volunteers received their assignments, and that afternoon they departed for the communities where most would spend the next eight weeks.¹⁴

Pat traveled to Allendale County, on the Savannah River in southwestern South Carolina. Seventy percent of the county's 11,362 residents were African American, many of whom were sharecroppers and small farmers. The white minority monopolized political power. Poverty, illiteracy, legal impediments, and white intransigence hindered Black political participation. Only 15 percent of voting age Blacks were registered voters while registered whites were 117 percent of their voting age population.¹⁵ The high percentage of white voters was due to the failure of local authorities to remove from the voting rolls the names of deceased whites and those who moved out of the county. The large number of unregistered Blacks made Allendale County an inviting target for SCLC.

Six SCOPE workers lived in the county seat, also named Allendale, a town divided by railroad tracks with African Americans living on the proverbial "wrong side of the tracks." The idealistic Civil Rights activists had the name of Reverend Robbie Dix, a Black Methodist pastor, as their local contact, but little more information.¹⁶ They knew next to nothing about the leadership of either the Black or white communities.

The SCLC staff arranged for the volunteers to live with local Black families. They also had access to a small building behind the Methodist parsonage which they used as an office. In their first weeks, they spent most days canvassing in the town and in rural areas,

¹⁴ Not all volunteers stayed for two months. Some served for shorter periods.

¹⁵ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, "The General Condition of the Alabama Negro," 28, via Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc_al.pdf (accessed February 20, 2024).

¹⁶ Dix left Allendale soon after the SCOPE workers arrived, transferred to another congregation by his bishop.

encouraging unregistered Black residents to come to the courthouse on the first Monday of the month, the only day that registration books were open to new registrants.

The editor of the town's weekly newspaper, the *Allendale County Citizen*, spoke for many of Allendale's white residents when he portrayed the northern "visitors" as "mixed-up beings, more to be pitied than censured. They are dupes, manipulated by masters of forces of evil intent." He believed the SCOPE workers came to the county "for the sole purpose of causing up trouble." He cautioned whites not to "play their game" by attacking or harassing the Civil Rights workers. He understood that violence against the volunteers or those trying to register would result in negative publicity, tarnishing the county's image. Instead, he urged his readers to ignore the outsiders. "Let them go about their business ... in peace," he wrote, secure in the knowledge that the SCOPE volunteers would depart in September when their college classes resumed.¹⁷

For the most part, Allendale's whites heeded the editor's advice. Lance Nelson, a seventeen-year-old volunteer from Albany, New York, remembered one incident while walking on a country road when a driver swerved in his direction, apparently trying to injure or scare him. Another time, someone fired shots at the house where he was staying, but these went wide of the mark. He considered them a warning, not an attempt on his life.¹⁸ Bill Leue, another New Yorker, spoke of carloads of white youths slowly driving past the SCOPE office giving him the finger.¹⁹ These were minor annoyances compared to the church burnings, beatings, and frequent arrests endured by Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers in 1964.

The northern students had difficulty adjusting to the unfamiliar environment. Pat remembered hordes of gnats so plentiful that she and others had to walk around waving their hands over their

¹⁷ Tom O'Connor, "Don't Play their Game," *Allendale County Citizen*, June 24, 1965, quoted in James Brewton, *A Slave of Circumstance* (Charleston, SC, 2005), 23.

¹⁸ Author's interview with Lance Nelson, October 22, 2014.

¹⁹ Author's interview with Bill Leue, October 15, 2014.

heads to keep the annoying insects out of their eyes. The problem was worse for the women who wore skirts and could not keep the gnats off their legs. Bill Leue never forgot giant cockroaches, known locally as "palmetto bugs," running up the walls of their office.²⁰ Of course, there was the "god-awful" heat and humidity. Not all their summer experiences were unpleasant. Lance Nelson fondly remembered locally grown peaches and watermelons "tasting richer and sweeter and more flavorful than the peaches and watermelon we had up north."²¹

White people living in the Black community were a novelty and a curiosity. When not out canvassing, the SCOPE workers often sat in the yard outside their office interacting with neighborhood youngsters who flocked around them. Recreational opportunities were limited, but the volunteers attended Sunday services in African American churches where they got to know adult congregation members. Black preachers invited their northern guests to speak about their voter registration work. This was the most effective method for getting information about their mission into the African American community. At church socials, the Civil Rights workers mingled with Black residents and enjoyed southern home cooking.

The climax of the SCOPE workers' summer efforts came on Monday, August 2, 1965, the one day that month when the county's books were open to enroll new registrants. More than two hundred Black citizens came to the courthouse that morning. Thirty state troopers and seven agents from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) kept a watchful eye on those waiting to register. Clerks in the registrar's office responded with delaying tactics. Only fifty-nine new voters were added to the rolls that day. More than 150 people remained unregistered at closing time. Civil Rights workers demanded that registration continue until all those waiting in line were processed, but county authorities refused. Chief J. P. Strom, the head of SLED, admonished the demonstrators, "You have created

²⁰ Author's interview with Bill Leue.

²¹ Author's interview with Lance Nelson.

enough disturbance so that the people cannot carry on their work. I ask that you leave the courthouse quietly at this moment. You can take your protest to the court.”²² Instead of dispersing as ordered, many in the crowd remained, singing hymns and clapping hands. Leon Hall, a young SCLC staffer from Atlanta, responded, “We will stay here until we drop.”²³ Forty-three years later, Pat described the events of that day: “We had several hundred [people]. They were all lined up—on the courthouse stairs, coming up the stairs and into the registrar’s office. And then they closed up. They said, ‘Well, everyone has to leave now. The day’s over.’ I said, ‘No, we want to register.’ So those who were willing to go to jail all sat down.”

Officers arrested thirty-nine people who refused to leave the courthouse, including four SCOPE volunteers and five other whites who joined the demonstration. Two Wayne State chaplains, Father Joseph Walsh from the Newman Center and Reverend John Hutchison, who had come to observe the registration effort, were among those arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. James Herman, a Wayne State SCOPE volunteer, was charged with resisting arrest. The men were held upstairs in the county jail and the women were locked up downstairs. Pat recalled, “Going to jail for me personally was not very traumatic. I called my parents to tell them I was in jail. They weren’t overly enthused about that.” Bill Leue noted that those arrested were not abused during their stay in jail.²⁴ Lance Nelson recalled a meal of grits and pigs’ ears.²⁵ The next day, Reverend C. A. Wilson, a Baptist minister from North Carolina working as a consultant for the federal Community Relations Service, signed a bond to release many of the jailed activists. Twelve people refused to be bailed out and remained in jail.²⁶

²² Willy Siegel Leventhal, *The SCOPE of Freedom: The Leadership of Hosea Williams with Dr. King’s Summer ‘65 Volunteers* (Montgomery, AL, 2005), 373.

²³ Brewton, *A Slave of Circumstance*, 27.

²⁴ Author’s interview with Bill Leue.

²⁵ Author’s interview with Lance Nelson.

²⁶ “U.S. Aide Bails Out Rights Workers,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1965. Wilson’s action in bailing out the demonstrators was not authorized by the Community Relations Service

Demonstrations continued for three weeks following these arrests. On August 3, five hundred people attended a mass meeting at Simpson Methodist Church to protest the arrests and delays in registering Black applicants. A crowd of about 175 people then marched to the courthouse. Repeated marches to the courthouse took place on August 4 and 5. On August 15, fifty-six people held a thirty-minute prayer meeting in front of the courthouse; some remained for an all-night vigil.²⁷ Lance Nelson explained that the meeting was part of "a prayerful campaign to secure extra voting days in Allendale." The next day, thirteen people sat in front of the registrar's office while ten others picketed outside the courthouse. Another sit-in demonstration took place on August 20. This time, seventeen people were arrested when they refused to leave the courthouse.²⁸ In a letter home, Nelson wrote, "For the last two days we have been sitting in at the courthouse during the day and attempting night marches. Pete Strom, the shrewd director of SLED, killed both marches. He called local leaders aside and threatened that he would charge them with inciting a riot if anything happened. He also said he could not protect us at night and mentioned the possibility of snipers behind bushes."²⁹

Local officials refused to extend the registration hours. South Carolina governor Robert McNair, an Allendale native, expressed confidence in Mrs. Minnie Wilson, chairperson of the county board of registrars. In response to the demonstrations, newspaper editor Tom O'Connor proclaimed, "There has been no persecution of Negroes in Allendale County. No Negro who wanted to become a registered voter ... has been turned away." He claimed that the organizers of the demonstrations "played on ignorance, made false promises, threat-

(CRS). When reporters contacted CRS officials in Washington, they said that Wilson had exceeded his authority as a consultant for the agency.

²⁷ SCOPE Incident Reports, August 1965, via Veterans of Civil Rights Movement, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508_scope_rpts.pdf (accessed February 20, 2024).

²⁸ Leventhal, *The SCOPE of Freedom*, 380; "Voter Registration Demonstrations, Allendale, S.C.," via Veterans of Civil Rights Movement website, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/650814_fbi_allendale-sc.pdf (accessed February 20, 2024).

²⁹ Lance Nelson, letter to "Liz," August 20, 1965, copy in possession of author.

ened and cajoled throughout the day to hold the crowd together." Governor McNair also blamed the demonstrations on outsiders "who have little comprehension of local conditions and circumstances."³⁰

The federal Voting Rights Act, signed into law by President Johnson on August 6, removed most barriers to African American registration. On September 7, the next registration day, 150 applicants showed up at the county courthouse. Because literacy tests had been outlawed by the Voting Rights Act, everyone in line registered without difficulty. In a key concession to demonstrators' demands, county officials announced, "The registration books will be open the rest of the week as long as registrants obey the rules and keep good order."³¹ Looking back on their summer experience, the SCOPE volunteers could take satisfaction in the increased Black registration numbers.³² White officials were happy to see them leave.

While Pat was busy in Allendale, Paul was helping to register Black voters in Savannah, Georgia, Hosea Williams's home base. "Apparently, Hosea knew there was some relationship between Pat and I," Paul observed. To prevent their budding romance from becoming a distraction, Williams assigned them to different locations. Although Williams had moved to Atlanta, he left a strong organization in Savannah. Dr. King praised his accomplishments there by calling the city "the most desegregated city south of the Mason-Dixon line."³³ The Savannah organization had more resources and was better coordinated than the Allendale movement. According to Paul, "They even had a sound truck." It cruised through Black neighborhoods urging people to register. His work involved overseeing the activities of SCOPE volunteers and local young people.

³⁰ Brewton, *A Slave of Circumstance*, 26-29.

³¹ Brewton, *A Slave of Circumstance*, 29.

³² Historian Stephen G. N. Tuck disputed the effectiveness of SCOPE's voter registration efforts. He concluded that "SCOPE's impact on voter registration [in Georgia] was negligible" and that the number of voters the program claimed to have registered was "greatly inflated." See *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens, GA, 2001), 199.

³³ Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 127.

Some weekends Paul was able to steal away from his duties and drive seventy miles to reunite with Pat in Allendale. On one of these visits, Paul proposed to Pat, and she accepted. "So, we went from a stood-up date in March to a marriage in October," Pat declared. Their wedding took place at the Wayne State Newman Center. Because they planned to return to the South, they asked their guests not to give traditional wedding gifts. They knew they couldn't use things like the "fancy glasses and bowls and toasters" usually given as presents. Instead, "some people brought the dessert; one person paid to have a whole lamb roasted (a Croatian custom); somebody brought wine—these were the wedding gifts." The couple exchanged rings engraved with the lilies of the field and the birds of the air symbolizing their desire to renounce the materialism typical of a middle-class lifestyle. "We were committed somewhat to poverty," Paul said. "We wanted to live a simple life."

Shortly after they exchanged vows, Paul and Pat drove back to Atlanta to continue their work for SCLC. "We thought we were going to be reassigned," Pat remembered. Instead, they remained at the SCOPE office and staff residence for the next three months. Pat worked in the kitchen. "Rather than learning how to cook for just a husband, I had to learn how to cook for twenty to thirty people," she exclaimed. When SCLC workers came in from the field, they wanted soul food. "Well, I didn't know how to cook soul food," Pat laughed. "I do casseroles. I do ham." Out of necessity, she learned to cook soul food.

While he was in Atlanta, Paul took charge of SCLC's fleet. "They had a number of cars that had been donated by a used car dealer in Boston. Most of them were cars he didn't want to sell," he observed. "Someone said, 'Paul knows about fixing cars,'" so that became his job. In addition, the cars had to have their registrations transferred to Alabama, so he also helped straighten out the paperwork.

Paul and Pat went back to Detroit for Christmas, then, in January 1966, they began an assignment in Greene County, Alabama. Many

SCLC staffers considered the county a “plum assignment” because of its large Black population with the potential to elect Black candidates. Observers wondered why Hosea Williams dispatched this relatively inexperienced white couple from Michigan to such a choice location. Paul explained Williams’ thinking: “Hosea wanted someone there who wasn’t going to start another movement.” Williams was looking for individuals who would concentrate on the unglamorous work of political organizing without getting people jailed while trying to desegregate restaurants or movie theatres. Their task was clearly defined—preparing to elect Black candidates for local offices in the spring 1966 Democratic primary. “They already had demonstrations and jailings in Greene County. Also, a boycott of white merchants downtown,” Paul explained. “The main part of my job was to get Black candidates out to campaign for office.”

Greene County was once among the wealthiest places in Alabama. That was during the era when cotton dominated the state’s economy and cotton plantations generated riches for white landowning families. African American sharecroppers toiling in the fields lived in poverty. During the twentieth century, it was a region in decline, both economically and demographically. The 1900 census counted 24,182 residents. That number dropped to 10,650 by 1970.³⁴ More than half of those who remained lived below the poverty line. Greene County’s Black residents outnumbered whites four to one. With nearly forty percent of the county’s workers still engaged in agriculture, Greene was the second poorest county in Alabama and the fifth poorest in the nation.³⁵

Prior to the Voting Rights Act, Black citizens of Greene County were politically powerless. A few had registered to vote in the years immediately following World War II, but not nearly enough to make a

³⁴ *12th Census of the U.S. Population: Population by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions, Census Bulletin*, October 10, 1900; *1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population: Alabama* (Washington, D. C., 1973).

³⁵ Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York, NY, 2007), 259.

difference. According to historian Jason Sokol, "County law required that a qualified voter had to vouch for any potential voter. In 1950 whites stopped vouching for Blacks."³⁶ A 1965 report prepared using data gathered by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission found 1,731 white registered voters in the county, 105 percent of the white voting age population, while only 166 Blacks were registered, just 3.3 percent of the Black voting age population.³⁷

Sokol wrote that until 1965, "The Civil Rights movement left Greene County virtually untouched." There were few public facilities to be desegregated in this rural county. Public schools remained rigidly segregated more than a decade after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. When the Voting Rights Act became law in August 1965, the task of registering Black voters became much easier. The Department of Justice sent federal registrars to Greene County, bypassing local registrars. Most of the time they worked from an office in the basement of the post office in Eutaw, the county seat, but occasionally registrars ventured out into churches in largely Black rural areas of the county. By 1966, Blacks had surpassed whites as a majority of the county's registered voters.³⁸

Before Paul and Pat could start their work, they had to find a place to live. For the first two months, they lived with Lewis and Juanita Walton on their farm of forty acres. Like all but one Black farmer in the county, Lewis Walton still plowed his land behind a mule. "They were solid people of the earth," Paul reminisced fondly. "It manifested in their stable wholesome spirit." As white Civil Rights workers living with a Black family, Paul and Pat placed the Waltons in danger, so they searched for another place to live. They found a vacant dwelling in a place called the Furze Quarter. The owner, Miss Bezzie, an elderly Black woman, showed them a shack with a back section formerly used as a chicken coop. "I just thought we were

³⁶ Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 259.

³⁷ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, "The General Condition of the Alabama Negro," 28, (accessed February 20, 2024).

³⁸ Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 259.

doing it to be polite,” Pat explained. “Of course, there’s no way we’re going to live in this thing. Then I hear my husband say, ‘Okay, this will be fine. We’ll be moving in.’” The only attractive feature of the ramshackle structure was its rent—only six dollars a month. It was all Paul and Pat could afford. They subsisted on a thirty-five-dollar monthly SCLC stipend.

“Our house was literally a shack,” Paul recalled. “The whole house was about twenty-four feet by ten or twelve feet. It was divided into two-thirds and one-third. It was just old boards and framing and a tin roof.” Previous tenants kept chickens in the smaller room. Paul and Pat relied on a wood-burning stove for cooking and heating. Their running water came from an outdoor spigot shared, along with an outhouse, with three other nearby families. Their first home improvement project was installing insulation. “We went to Tuscaloosa looking for some cardboard to cover our walls,” Pat remembered. “We found some big cardboard boxes thrown away behind an appliance store. We loaded them into our car.” “We did buy some tar paper,” Paul added. They nailed the cardboard to interior walls and covered it with tarpaper to serve as insulation. Civil Rights lawyer Donald Jelinek, a good friend and regular visitor to the Bokulich home, provided additional details of their frugal lifestyle: “They bathed by heating water on a wood stove, then standing up in a large basin and pouring the hot water over each other.” They grew some of their own food on a plot of land adjacent to their house, which Paul cultivated using a borrowed mule. Jelinek remarked, “Their Black neighbors could not fathom why any sensible person, especially a white one, would choose to live in such squalor, but they loved the Bokulichs all the more for it.”³⁹

One “luxury” the newlyweds enjoyed was a Volkswagen (VW) van. The grandson of a wealthy inventor heard about the Bokulichs’ situation in Alabama and informed Father Walsh at the Newman Center that he wished to donate a vehicle for their use. Paul thought it

³⁹ Donald A. Jelinek, *White Lawyer, Black Power: Civil Rights Lawyering During the Black Power Era in Mississippi and Alabama* (Berkeley, CA, 2015), 241.



Image 2. Pat and Paul Bokulich in Greene County, 1966. Photo courtesy Bob Fitch Photography Archive, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

probably would be a “used vehicle of some kind.” The donor insisted they could have any model they wanted. “Finally, I got the idea,” he said. “A VW bus! Economy, plus you can haul people around in it. So, we got a VW van.” Much of their monthly income went to pay for gas they consumed while driving around the county.

As observant Catholics, Paul and Pat did not use any form of birth control. Their daughter, Rebecca Shalom, was born in Selma’s Good Samaritan Hospital, on July 16, 1966, ten months after their October wedding. They chose Good Samaritan because it was a Catholic institution run by Edmundite Fathers from Vermont and staffed by Sisters of Saint Joseph from Rochester, New York. It served the African

American people of Alabama's Black Belt. Rebecca was the second white baby born at Good Samaritan.

Paul and Pat faced many difficulties practicing their Catholic faith in the Bible Belt South. There was a small Catholic church in Eutaw, but it had an all-white congregation with no resident priest. "We went there on a few occasions. I would guess that maybe twelve people would be there for Sunday Mass," Paul reported. However, this was not a satisfying experience. "We didn't feel a threat there, we just felt alienated. Nobody talked to us. We weren't included in any conversations." Everyone in the small congregation knew they lived with Black people and worked for Civil Rights. Paul, Pat, and baby Rebecca were mostly ignored by their fellow Catholics, but not entirely rejected. Paul remembered, "Come Easter, we went to Mass. A lady came forward and gave us a fancy basket of food." Perhaps, she pitied them. "More likely, she wanted to quietly give a loving gesture," Paul conjectured. Occasionally, "but not very often," they drove to Tuscaloosa to get "a Catholic fix" by attending Mass at the University of Alabama's Newman Center. Pat remembered, "Being able to communicate with Catholic intellectual kind of people" was a relief. While these Catholics were not openly supportive of the Bokulichs' Civil Rights work, "they were at least open to our being there as Catholics."⁴⁰

The main reason Paul and Pat seldom attended Sunday Mass stemmed from the nature of their work as community organizers. "Sunday was a working day for us," Paul explained. Visiting Black churches was the most effective method of contacting African American residents in rural Greene County. "Some of them were illiterate," Paul reported. "Virtually none of them had phones. You contacted them at church. Sunday was the day you went around."

⁴⁰ Not all Alabama Catholics opposed African American civil rights. In Selma, the Edmundite Fathers established St. Elizabeth's School and Good Samaritan Hospital to serve the Black community. Father Maurice Ouellet, pastor of St. Elizabeth's, actively promoted the voting rights movement. See Paul T. Murray, "The Most Righteous White Man in Selma: Father Maurice Ouellet and the Struggle for Voting Rights," *Alabama Review* 68, no. 1 (January 2015): 31-73.

When he walked into a church, the preacher often would interrupt the service. He'd say, "Oh, Brother Paul's back there. Come on up here, Brother Paul. What you got for us today?" Paul would walk to the pulpit and make his announcements. However, he didn't simply state the time and place of a coming event, he would give a sermon. He gave an example of the sort of appeal he made:

This Sunday we come out here to talk with you, but we want you to listen to the Lord who is saying that you've got other things to do. You've got to get up there to Eutaw and we're going to be registering to vote, and we're going to have people running for sheriff. If you want to see a Negro sheriff in this county, then you've got to come out there and you've got to vote. You've got to register, and you've got to vote. Let's all do our part. And bring that neighbor with you who needs a little push or pull.

Twenty-five-year-old Reverend Thomas Gilmore was the SCLC project director in Greene County. Raised on a forty-acre farm in the Forkland community in the southern part of the county, he was the pastor of a small Baptist church in Eutaw. Gilmore left Alabama in 1963 for Los Angeles, but never felt at home in California. Two years later, he returned to Greene County with his wife and three sons. On an errand to buy formula for his infant son, he pulled into a gas station and accidentally splashed mud on a state trooper's car. Gilmore apologized and offered to pay to have the trooper's car washed, but the angry officer saw Gilmore's beard and his California license plate and concluded he was dealing with a Civil Rights "agitator" bound for the Selma demonstrations. He demanded that the young minister wash the car himself. When Gilmore refused, the trooper threatened, "I'll get your ass. I know where you're headed." This incident convinced the young reverend to get involved in the Civil Rights Movement.⁴¹

⁴¹ Frye Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2015), 314-15.



Image 3. Sheriff Lee Slaps Reverend Thomas Gilmore. Photo courtesy Bob Fitch Photography Archive, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

In 1966, Reverend Gilmore announced he was a candidate for sheriff. With white voters now in a minority thanks to the Voting Rights Act, he believed he had a good chance of winning. His opponent in the May Democratic primary election was the incumbent sheriff, William Earl "Big Bill" Lee. For forty-four years, a member of the Lee family occupied the Greene County sheriff's office. Bill's father and brother held the office before him. Bill Lee was a stereotypical intimidating southern lawman. He was an imposing figure, standing six-foot-two and weighing more than 250 pounds. An All-American lineman for the University of Alabama football team, he was captain of the squad that defeated Stanford in the 1934 Rose Bowl. He went on to play professionally for the Brooklyn Dodgers and Green Bay Packers. In the off-season, he wrestled using the moniker "Alabama

Bill." A staunch segregationist, Lee was not known as a bully. Author Frye Gaillard described Lee as "a kinder, more complicated man than Jim Clark," the brutally racist sheriff of Dallas County, Alabama.⁴² Lee bragged about his cordial relationship with Greene County's African American population. He told reporter Marshall Frady, "I don't think no more about walking into one of those nigger joints without a gun, and a hundred likkered up niggers in there, than I would think of walking into a church—because they know ole Bill's gonna be fair with them."⁴³

Reverend Gilmore clashed with Sheriff Lee in 1965 when he led a group of thirty people to the district attorney's office to file a complaint against one of the sheriff's deputies for striking a young Black woman during a voting rights demonstration. When the Black protestors refused to leave the district attorney's office, he summoned sheriff's deputies. "They beat us up pretty badly," Gilmore remembered.⁴⁴ In 1966, He announced he was running for sheriff to replace Lee. He told a reporter from the *Southern Courier*, "The reason I want to be sheriff is to give my children and the rest of the children in the Negro community someone they can look up to without being afraid." In a pointed criticism of Sheriff Lee, he said, "When I appoint my deputies, I'm not going to have any racists—whites or Black—working for me."⁴⁵

Paul and Pat supported Gilmore's candidacy and recruited Black candidates to run for the county school board and other offices. "We coordinated getting people to run, getting them filing papers, and going around [campaigning]," Paul said. "Gilmore was a picturesque celebrity for his own people and for the white press—they liked to come and interview him." Paul and Pat also arranged for guest speakers like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Hosea Williams to speak on behalf of Black candidates. On one occasion, Dr. King was scheduled

⁴² Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom*, 318.

⁴³ Marshall Frady, *Southerners: A Journalist's Odyssey* (New York, NY, 1981), 159.

⁴⁴ Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom*, 318.

⁴⁵ Daphna Simpson, "Gilmore vs. Sheriff Lee in Greene Co. Election," *Southern Courier*, March 26-27, 1966.

to speak at two Black churches out in the country, but he and his entourage were running late. Pat went to advise the church people who were waiting that they should go to Eutaw instead. When she got to the church, she realized that few of the country people had cars and would not be able to hear King preach. That's when the pastor of one church asked Pat to deliver King's message. "So, I got up there, and I can preach too, you know," she declared. "I had them going up there. I preached; they sang. It was a good meeting." Afterwards, the pastor told Pat she was the first woman to preach in that church.

In the 1966 Democratic primary for sheriff of Greene County, the balloting between Lee and Gilmore initially was very close, but after absentee ballots were counted Lee emerged victorious—2,246 to 1,949. The *Southern Courier* reported that while Gilmore carried several heavily Black districts, he did so "by very small margins." SCLC announced it would challenge the results citing "irregular practices at twenty boxes in the county."⁴⁶ Among SCLC's allegations were reports that white people who had moved away from Greene County years ago were allowed to cast ballots and that white employers pressured Black workers to vote for Sheriff Lee and gubernatorial candidate Lurleen Wallace. They also stated that illiterate Blacks were not allowed to have a person of their choice assist them cast their votes.⁴⁷ Paul and Pat helped document instances in which white election officials ignored the wishes of Black voters. The only bright spot in this election was the victory of Reverend Peter J. Kirksey, a Black candidate elected to the county school board.

Paul's legal troubles began soon after the election. Pat was convinced that Sheriff Lee went after her husband in reprisal for his role in Thomas Gilmore's campaign. A month after the election, Paul was at home when a police officer served him with an arrest warrant for grand larceny. "They arrested me for stealing from an old lady out in a rural area—stealing her welfare check," he recounted.⁴⁸ "They

⁴⁶ Daphna Simpson, "Baby, We've Got to Make It," *Southern Courier*, May 7-8, 1966.

⁴⁷ Daphna Simpson, "Losing Negroes Protest Greene County Elections," *Southern Courier*, May 14-15, 1966.

⁴⁸ Don Jelinek offers a rather different account of the charges brought against Paul. See *White Lawyer, Black Power*, 242-45.

hauled me off to jail and I'm there essentially without bail." Pat began an urgent campaign to arrange bail for her husband. "I didn't trust the sheriff," she confided. Pat first tried to approach Lee through his newly appointed Black deputy. She and two Black women friends went to the deputy's home, but he said he couldn't help him. They would have to see the sheriff in person. The three then drove to Lee's home. Pat and Fannie Lou Dew approached the sheriff's front door. When they explained they wanted to arrange bail for Paul Bokulich, Lee began shouting at them, "What are you doing here? Why are you trespassing on my property? Get off my property." The irate sheriff chased them back to their car while striking Fannie Lou Dew.

Paul's lawyer, Don Jelinek, was astounded when Greene County officials refused to set bail for Paul. "With capital cases sometimes there's no bail, but petty theft always carries bail," he exclaimed. Jelinek immediately drove to Montgomery where he demanded that the Alabama Supreme Court intervene and order Greene County authorities to set his bail. It turned out that a Supreme Court order was not necessary. The chief justice placed a call to the county judge, and then informed Jelinek that a bail hearing would take place in Eutaw the next day. Paul soon was released from jail. Jelinek attacked his indictment, claiming that African Americans were systematically excluded from the grand jury that issued the indictment. At a hearing in federal court, Jelinek demonstrated that despite being a large population majority, Black residents of Greene County almost never served on grand juries. When the court issued its decision nine months later, the justices unanimously ruled that the county's jury commissioner had followed "a course of conduct which results in discrimination in the selection of jurors on racial grounds."⁴⁹ Paul was never prosecuted.

In 1967, Paul quit SCLC, but did not leave Greene County. He went to work for Southern Rural Action, a program established in 1966 by labor unions, churches, and Civil Rights groups to combat

⁴⁹ Don Jelinek, "Paul Bokulich: The Battle Against All-White Juries," oral history interview conducted by Bruce Hartford, 2005, via Veterans of Civil Rights Movement, <https://www.crmvet.org/nars/jelinek.htm> (February 20, 2024).

rural poverty headed by former SCLC staff member Randolph Blackwell.⁵⁰ One of its projects was the Southwest Alabama Farmers' Cooperative Association (SWAFCA). Over the veto of Alabama governor, Lurleen Wallace, the Office of Economic Opportunity, the federal government's anti-poverty agency, had funded the co-op with a grant of nearly \$400,000. The SWAFCA assisted Black farmers in ten Black Belt counties marketing their crops. Paul believed this program would be a great help. He also enjoyed the larger paycheck Southern Rural Action provided. Despite his initial optimism, Paul's time with the farmers' co-op proved to be a disappointment. He soon discovered that the federal money could only be spent on the salaries of two field representatives and administrative expenses, but not on the things the farmers needed most. More than fifty years after leaving Alabama, his anger was still evident. "Typical government crap," he exclaimed in a 2021 interview. "You could put all that money into office operations, but you couldn't buy real things. You couldn't buy a piece of equipment. Nothing! You couldn't buy seed. You couldn't buy fertilizer. All of that was restricted by the provisions of that grant."⁵¹ He asked himself, "What kind of program is this?" He "no longer had confidence in government money for solving real problems."⁵²

Eventually, Paul and Pat decided to leave the South. They had a young daughter and they hoped to have more children. Years of living in extreme poverty had worn them down. "I figured it was about time for us to leave. You're really there without a peer community," Paul explained. "We experienced a lot of beauty down there, a lot of richness. Nevertheless, you're kind of isolated."

They returned to Michigan and settled in a rural area outside of Detroit. When they learned of Martin Luther King's assassination, Paul called Hosea Williams to offer his condolences. At that

⁵⁰ For more on Randolph Blackwell and Southern Rural Action, see "Rural Action Helps to Give Poor Blacks Jobs and Pride," *New York Times*, May 8, 1972, 55, 57.

⁵¹ Author's interview with Paul Bokulich, November 16, 2021.

⁵² "You Have to Have Light."

time, Williams was organizing the Poor People's Campaign, and Paul offered to help with the project to honor King's life. Williams appointed him head of SCLC's Detroit office to assist in recruiting poor people to go to Washington, D.C. where they would press for effective anti-poverty programs. When the campaign came to the nation's capital, poor people constructed a makeshift encampment known as Resurrection City on the South Mall. Paul was arrested with a group protesting outside the Department of Agriculture building. While he was in jail, District of Columbia police invaded Resurrection City. Pat got sprayed with tear gas. This was their final battle as Civil Rights organizers.

Three years after the Bokulichs left Green County Thomas Gilmore ran for sheriff a second time and won by a narrow margin, becoming Alabama's second Black sheriff. Reverend William McKinley Branch was elected Greene County probate judge. Other Black candidates were elected to fill most county posts.⁵³ Gilmore remained in the sheriff's office until 1983. He gained fame as "the sheriff without a gun" because he did not carry a weapon. The efforts of Paul and Pat finally brought their long-sought results.

Paul and Pat moved to California in 1970. They settled in Soquel near Monterey Bay and built a home large enough to hold the eight children they raised. For many years, Paul operated a gas station and auto repair business in nearby Santa Cruz. Both he and Pat were active in St. Joseph's parish in Capitola. They sang in the church choir and the Latin chant choir. Pat was parish director of religious education. She organized a group of women who knitted items for charity. After retiring from the gas station, Paul worked part-time as a maintenance man for the parish. Pat died of cancer on March 25, 2012, after forty-seven years of marriage.

Paul believes that living on the same economic level as their African American neighbors was a major factor contributing to his

⁵³ Fred P. Graham, "Black Sweep of County Alarms Alabama Whites," *New York Times*, November 5, 1970, 28.

and Pat's success as Civil Rights workers. Reflecting on the years they spent in Greene County, Paul observed, "I think the fact that we were a faithful married couple living within the Black community, in their own status, in a shack house, her [Pat] cooking like any Black woman right next door would, was a tremendous witness to a small number of people. I think that was important."⁵⁴ When asked how her time in the South affected her, Pat paused to reflect for a moment, then said, "what really changed a lot for me was being in a rural area which I had never been in before. It opened up for me or increased for me that feeling of Christian community and of rural caring for each other that I really hadn't experienced all that much before that."

Although his days of Civil Rights activism and community organizing are more than a half century in the past, Paul still draws important life lessons from his years in the South. He says, "Today the main problem is [that people] ... want to eliminate the God force that we ought to call upon to do these things. You cannot dispel darkness with darkness. You have to have light to dispel darkness. You cannot dispel evil with evil. You have to have goodness to dispel evil. You cannot dispel violence with violence. You have to have nonviolence. You have to have love of your neighbor."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "You Have to Have Light."

⁵⁵ "You Have to Have Light."