

“FOR YOU WERE CALLED TO FREEDOM, BRETHREN....”

—Galatians 5:13

A Short History of the Freedom Movement in
Barbour County, Alabama

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Dedicated to my brothers and sisters
throughout Barbour County who made
me proud to be called a “white nigger.”

L.S.B.

I. The Original SCOPE Group

For many folks in Barbour County, the movement came on June 22, 1965 with the arrival of a SCOPE (Summer Community Organization and Political Education) group in Eufaula. This is not true. The movement began in Barbour County when the first slave asked for freedom, when a mother cried for her sons who were sold to a Mississippi plantation owner, when a father burned with wrath over the violation of his daughters' innocence, when an old woman prayed that God would lead His children out of the land of Egypt. That's when the movement began. Everything that has happened since then is based on these yearnings and passions. Without this, SCOPE or anything else, would have had no foundation.

The Carlisle SCOPE group that would ultimately end in Barbour County began at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa., and at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa. Both are liberal arts colleges. Some young men from Dr. Martin Luther King's SCLC organization were touring the colleges to recruit students to go south for the summer and work to register and organize people. I was going across campus one day when a professor friend caught up to me and said that some civil rights workers were on campus looking for me. I went to see the delegation headed by LeRoy Moton, the young man who was with Mrs. Viola Liuzzo when she was murdered after the Selma March. Since I was chairman of the Carlisle Chapter of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), I was asked to gather a group and talk over the possibility of going south for a summer. It took Su Kenderdine and myself about an hour to decide we would go. Su was the secretary of the local CORE chapter and, like myself, already in the movement. We were told to contact some students at Gettysburg College who also wanted to go down and this was accomplished at a rally held at Gettysburg for the purpose of raising money to go south. Other money and equipment came from parents, an Episcopal church, a Friends Meeting (Quaker), the two colleges and the Carlisle CORE chapter.

The group from Dickinson was composed of Jean Allen, Larry Butler, Su Kenderdine, Mike Laupheimer and Geraldine Robinson (a temporary observer from the Carlisle CORE chapter) and from Gettysburg came Scott Chambers, Bob Friedman, David Hoon, Dick Hutch and Bob Smith. (Bob was a transfer from Dickinson College to Bluffton College in Ohio who came with the Gettysburg group.)

Using Mike's brave little green Valiant which we named Sybil and a Volkswagen bus driven by a Mennonite minister from Gettysburg, the group arrive in Atlanta, Georgia in time for the June 14 meeting of the training session.

This orientation session was presided over by Mr. Bayard Rustin, a great leader in the civil rights and the peace movements. Mr. Rustin, in golden words, taught us the philosophical and physiological meanings of love and non-violence. He was the organizer of the march on Washington and had been in countless jails including a federal

penitentiary because he would not go to war. The directors of SCLC were in force. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke, The Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, The Rev. C.T. Vivian, Randolph T. Blackwell and Hosea Williams. SCOPE was Mr. Williams' project for SCLC and it was easy to see that he was working with every fiber of his body for its success; he was everywhere. Besides these men, speakers were there from the federal government, the labor movement, radical social reform groups and other civil rights organizations. Particularly impressive were The Rev. James Bevel and Dr. John Hope Franklin. The Rev. Bevel had been among the original civil rights workers; he and his wife, Dianne, had been beaten and jailed so many times that they seemed to represent the militant movement. In all his work, he used non-violence in an imaginative and creative way and was deeply convinced of its effectiveness. Dr. John Hope Franklin, the famous Negro historian, spoke about the history of the freedom struggle for Negroes. His book From Slavery to Freedom is a classic in its field.

From Atlanta, the group left in a caravan for Camden, Alabama in Wilcox County. For most of us, it was the first time in Alabama. We felt we had entered a foreign and hostile nation with silent Klansmen watching our every move. That impression was not weakened by our first week in Alabama. When we arrived for a stopover in Montgomery, police surrounded the block where the Freedom House was. After arriving in Camden, the group got their first taste of Alabama country life. Each person lived with a family, generally in the rural district. For most of the SCOPE workers, this was their first time having greens cooked in ham hocks, chicklins, pork skins and grits. It was also our first period of frustration in the movement. The time in Camden was to be a training session, but most of the day the workers sat around the Baptist Church which served as the headquarters. There was little direction. But when night fell, the action began. During the mass meetings, local Klansmen would call the church with bomb threats, and all evening Klansmen with Rebel flags would ride by. One evening the threats were increased and it was decided to evacuate the church that night. On our way out, Klansmen, who had been gathering all evening, advanced on the church shooting guns. It was hard to realize that here, in democratic America; there were groups such as this, aided by local law enforcement agencies. We were from safe, quiet communities where this sort of thing only happened in the newspapers. And, now it was us. We quickly got behind the church and then headed for a dark ravine. There was a footbridge over the creek at the bottom, we could hear in the darkness. We all made it over except Dave Hoon, who fell in and spent the night in wet and muddy clothes. That was a sleepless night for many. We had retreated to a Masonic Hall and spent the night on concrete (perhaps a warning of what was to come).

Aside from this excitement, we were anxious to get to our county. Our county was Henry County. We had not even heard of Barbour. While in Pennsylvania, we had decided on the county. The reason was that it looked so small and lonely and we knew that it was a rural county. Reasons for doing certain things are not always based on any logic and this most assuredly was not a logical decision. We had fought through

orientation to keep Henry as our county and we were impatient to get there. Then Rev. Daniel Harrell told us that the folks in Henry were not ready for us, but since we were so impatient to get to work, that a Mr. John Kelly in Eufaula, Alabama has invited us to Barbour County. We wanted Henry County, but Rev. Harrell extolled the virtues of Barbour which left us unimpressed until we learned that George Wallace had come from Barbour County. There was no more discussion; we were on our way.

Our first impressions of the county came from Eufaula. It had such nice wide streets. We joked about how perfect they would be for marches. But SCOPE at that time had a policy of no demonstrations and Eufaula looked so pretty and quiet that it was hard to imagine any civil rights activity.

We went straight to Mr. Kelly's home and met and talked with him. He is the County Director for the NAACP and had been active in registration work. He quieted our nervousness somewhat and Mrs. Kelly made us feel at home. There would be problems getting homes for us in the future because we were a white SCOPE group, but the first impression, which is extremely important, was that of friendliness and a desire for work. Mr. Kelly had the Eufaula Baptist Academy for our headquarters and we began work. While others got the office set up, Dave Hoon and myself began to gather information around town. After finishing that, we went to see the mayor. He had no idea that Eufaula had its first group of civil rights workers. He greeted us pleasantly. I glanced around his office and noticed numerous pictures of the mayor and Gov. George Wallace. Mayor Graves asked our business. I told him. Fortunately, the mayor is a young man and could sustain the shock. But as it was, his mouth dropped enough for me to catch a doctor's view of his throat and his face burned the color that milk does when it begins to sour. And sour is what the mayor did. He seemed extremely upset. He called in a councilman and asked him what he thought of this. The councilman didn't know what SCOPE was and the mayor asked him if he didn't read the newspapers. Like most white southerners, the mayor then began to praise the efforts of the town – they had a colored man working in the courthouse (a janitor), some colored secretaries, a colored doctor, he said all the restaurants were integrated, 600 or more Negroes were registered (later we found it was closer to 450) and of course the old line that some of his best friends were colored.

Rev. White was also present and the mayor tried to get him to say that civil rights workers were not needed. Rev. White said that things were progressing, but some help might be needed. The mayor said he didn't want us in the town and wished we would leave, but if we stayed, police protection would be provided. He was correct. We barely got back to the Academy when the police commissioner, the sheriff, the police chief and some policemen came in. They seemed nervous for some reason and the reason mystified us. Here were two girls and seven boys against the white structure of a county with all its money, police and power, and they were nervous. We thought about it and decided that they knew their time had come, they knew what organized Negro citizens could do, they knew that once a slave scents freedom, that the old ways are gone forever.

We began by canvassing for our first mass meeting. But the word was out that the “freedom riders” were in town, and people wanted to see what sort of strange creatures we were. The Baptist Academy was packed for the first mass meeting of the movement in Barbour County.

II. A Period of Frustration

From the first successful mass meeting, we went to many others all over the county. We preached registration and political education. Our first test was coming in the early part of July. From July 6 until July 9, there would be registration days. We had been canvassing from door to door, at church picnics, churches and mass meetings to prepare for these four days. But on July the Fourth, we got a small taste of what was to come. I quote from the report that Jean Allen sent to our headquarters. "State Troopers--- On Sunday afternoon, July 4, Larry Butler and Jean Allen, SCOPE volunteers, were stopped by two state troopers...the car was integrated and suffocated with freedom stickers....An hour later at the Eufaula courthouse, we paid a \$16 fine for a bad muffler rather than spend valuable time in jail. It was all we could do to give up our first chance."

Our first registration day in Clayton was a success; we had between 200-250 people there to register. About 90 were processed and 21 were registered. The old literacy test disqualified all but the well educated from registering. A special "treat" for us while in Clayton was the presence of Gov. Wallace who watched us all afternoon from an auto body shop. The SCOPE workers were aglow. We were in the Governor's home town working for the fall of his kind of government and he was there to witness the crumbling of white supremacy at his home. He made one comment the whole time--- "That's the best dressed group of civil rights workers I've ever seen." In Eufaula, about 150 persons showed up, 92 were processed and 16 were registered. It went like that for the rest of the week. In all, about 112 people were registered that week. It was a battle for that number considering the test and that everyone waited for many long hours. White men from town came and sat in the jury box and mocked us, made cruel jokes as children and men, who have never grown up, are prone to do. One old man, 74 years old, got there very early and was one of the first to go to the registrars' table. He worked on his test from 9:00 in the morning until 4:15, no lunch and no breaks. The registrars treated him as they would have a cute child or a playful puppy. He took their attitude in good humor, submitted to their disrespect for his age and also passed his test. One more black man was registered and the next time the joke would be on the registrars.

The only trouble that week was a man who tried to run us over with a truck. But that was only part of the picture. We had many visits from some young, white college students who lived in town. They would come to the Academy late at night with some friends from the radar base or we would meet them in Georgia, to talk with them. But somehow the white people found out and the mayor, it's reported, went to at least one of their homes to try and stop it and all the students were confined to their homes, sent away, and/or threatened by local people. One young white couple attended our mass meetings and was evicted from their home and spent weeks living at the Academy with

us until they moved on. Although a small group, this is refreshing, because it shows that the beginning of change is coming to Alabama.

The rest of July was spent in canvassing, mass meetings and organization. Paper organizations were set up in Clayton, Eufaula and Rocky Mt., but they had little effectiveness. Mr. Cole was elected President of the Clayton Voters League and then ceased to be active. The Eufaula Voters League was set up with the Job Committee headed by Mrs. Mary Marshall and the voter Registration Committee headed by Mr. David Denard and the Youth Squads of which Elizabeth Hoskey was the Chairman and Jasper Snipes the secretary. The Voters League in Rocky Mt. was headed by Mr. Thomas Walker. The leagues were not strong and were not well organized and their meetings were just mass meetings. The SCOPE workers became frustrated. All their energy was spent in canvassing and mass meetings. Little was being accomplished and we were becoming a Boy Scout chapter whose special project was voter registration. Many people were afraid of the workers because we were white and the old fashion attitude of "Yas sir, Mr. Charlie" was evident. Often in our canvassing we ran across old people in the backwoods who had heard of Dr. Martin Luther King, but thought he was the United States President. Freedom had not come to Barbour County, only civil right workers had.

We knew something was wrong and we were bored and disappointed. Su, Mike and myself had been active CORE workers in Pennsylvania and one night while riding in a car we heard over the radio James Farmer, chairman of CORE, ask all CORE people to come to Bogalusa for the marches. We wanted a short vacation, a change of scenery and some action. Like children on Christmas Eve, we decided in an hour to go to Bogalusa that night. It was dangerous and exciting. Dave Hoon and Bob Friedman stayed behind because they were intent on leaving the county. Scott Chambers swore that if we didn't take him, he would hitchhike. When it was decided to go, he acted as if someone had put a hot poker on his behind. Dick Hutch (Dirk) could hardly contain himself at the thought of his first march, and Bob Smith broke his traditional silence to make sure that he went. Jean and Su were, as usual, bursting with excitement. We left early the next morning and had a tense, but uneventful trip to Bogalusa. The reason I mention this trip in such detail is that it had a profound impression on us and shaped our handling of the movement in our own county to a great degree. In this city of extreme racial tension, we experienced for the first time what is called creative conflict. These people were running their own movement, they were men and women, who appreciated help, but let it be known they were the leaders. In short, any vestiges of Uncle Tomism had passed. What was it that produced this? We decided that it was because of the conflict between the idea of freedom and bondage. A conflict out in the open, in the streets with the freedom song being plainly put, "Which side are you on, boy?" Our no demonstration policy and working strictly in the area of voter registration was what was wrong. The conflict had to be brought to a head and the issues could be related to registration, but the people of Barbour County would have to decide the issues.

It was a new SCOPE group that came back and the movement took a new impetus and a fresh start. A conference was held with Rev. Daniel Harrell and our new position explained. After much talk, he agreed to let us handle it our own way. We were jubilant. Mayor Graves spoke at one of the mass meetings while we were gone and offered a “sugar tit” that many accepted. We had changed our direction just in time. The youth were organized into test groups. The mayor had said that anyone could eat in the restaurants that wanted to, but the people told a different story of back door alley service.

Restaurants all over town were hit on a single day. A car would descend on a restaurant, groups would empty into the place and quickly seat themselves, before the owner or patrons could finish their gaping looks. Only small “incidents” happened. Patrons walked out, waitresses grumbled, our folks were served on paper plates, but only one person was discriminated against, Scott Chambers. The waitress told the test group that they didn’t need him and she would not serve him. Scotty went hungry.

The first action group proved a success and more people became interested in the movement. An attempt was made to apply the same method at Clayton on July 28. The white café there had been integrated in a test group shortly before by the students in Clayton, but the price of a hamburger for us then was 90¢, and we felt we should see if they had lowered their prices any. While going into the town in two cars, Mike Laupheimers’ car slowed down and a jeep behind Mike slammed on its brakes and in Mike’s words from his complaint, “the Valiant finished its turn and stopped to let out the girls. The jeep pulled up to the Valiant and the driver swore at me and got out and came towards me in a very hostile manner. To protect myself, I rolled up the window. When it was about halfway up, however, the assailant broke it out with his hands. He then reached inside the car and ripped my shirt off in the front. Scott Chambers and I exited from the car. The assailant chased me around the car...” The man was stopped by one of his friends and appeals to sheriff’s deputies standing across the street were in vain. The action of creative conflict seemed to be working as far as the conflict part was concerned, but the creative side of it was to come later.

The day Mike was assaulted; the Barbour County SCOPE group became integrated. We were fortunate enough to have Miss Lolita Jones from La Puente, California. On Lolita’s first day in Barbour County---we had told her the county was quiet---there was Mike’s incident in Clayton and that night some white men tried their best to run us off the road, but Mike was a skillful driver and Lolita sent up some mighty quick prayers, and we made it all right. Jean, Bob Friedman and David had since left the county and now Su had a partner in Lolita. I must add they were worth double their weight in boys. They both led marches, were jailed and displayed courage that I’m sure shamed the white men who tried to intimidate them.

III. Clayton and the 1965 Voting Bill

The enthusiasm for the movement in Clayton had not been as warm as it had been in Eufaula. This was understandable as there were no permanent workers there. Mass meetings were held at Jones Chapel Methodist Church where the Rev. P.R. McCants was the pastor. On July 27, Rev. McCants was given word to come to the jailhouse in Clayton. He went and after going in the office, he was arrested for "disorderly conduct." Later, he wrote a check for a utility company and as was his usual custom, wrote "hold" on the check. He was arrested for having insufficient funds in the bank. He also lost his job as janitor at the white school. His wife, while taking some children from school in her car, was run off the road. One night very early, Rev. and Mrs. McCants retired to bed. About 2 p.m. in the morning a car drove slowly by and shotgun blasts were fired in windows of both sides of the house. If Rev. McCants had been in his own bed, he would have been killed. As it was, he caught a ball in his toe. They spent the night on the floor. No one came to see if they were all right. Later the sheriff arrested two suspects. That was the last that was heard of it. These incidents upset the community. The other churches refused to allow mass meetings to be held in their churches and the community was nervous.

On the national level, the Voting bill had not yet passed Congress. The Selma to Montgomery march had spawned the bill, but it had been held up in passage in what many believe was an attempt to wait until the SCOPE workers were out of the field and thus cut down the number that would be registered. Over 700 SCOPE workers were in the field and if the Voting Bill passes early, it would mean a sudden huge increase in registrations. During the last few days of July, Dr. King was warning congress that any further delays would mean demonstrations throughout the South. There were further delays and Dr. King called for demonstrations. It was decided by the Eufaula and Clayton Voter Leagues to answer the call with marches. Monday, August 2, was a registration day in Clayton and about 32 registered. This was an unusually high number, and we felt that the board was getting nervous. On Wednesday, we marched. Carloads of teenagers and adults came from Eufaula and adults and teenagers came from Clayton. Approximately two-thirds of the people who marched were from Eufaula. The news release on that day said "from Jones Chapel AME Church 100 or more people, mostly teenagers, marched to present a list of grievances to the public officials, especially the board of registrars. Seven SCOPE volunteers also marched. As the march began, the adults were silent and the young people sang 'Ain't Gonna Let nobody Turn Me Round.' The march was without incident." The next day the most tragic accident of the movement happened. There was an auto accident on the way to Clayton. There was a possibility they were run off the road, but that was never firmly established. Denny Woodson was injured critically, including internal injuries; Linda Thomas had a broken collar bone, and Nellie Porter had a broken back. All three are out of the hospital now

and recovered. Denny, with gentle patience and perseverance, suffered the most and is now out of the hospital after many, many months. The movement in Barbour County owes these children and their parents a debt of gratitude for their suffering for the movement and for the freedom for all of us.

As soon as we knew the injured were taken care of, the march continued that day. A prayer service was held on the steps of the Barbour County courthouse in Clayton and the marchers returned singing. There were no incidents concerning the marchers, but a woman became so intent on watching the line that she ran into a car coming out of an alley and a man driving a truck thought he would exhibit some typical southern white bravery and try to scare some of the children marching by coming as close to them as possible at a high speed. George Wallace's momma watched the line also, but did it behind a newspaper. The prayer service was uneventful. Sheriff Adams wanted to know where Larry Butler, the leader, was. It just shows how hard it is for some white men here to get used to the idea that the colored folks in Barbour County can take care of themselves. That night at a mass meeting, Sheriff Adams heard that we were planning to take our folks down and camp out on the courthouse steps and spend the night. I told him we hadn't planned that. He seemed scared and said that he was afraid of trouble. Sometimes the white folks come up with some pretty good ideas for our fight for freedom. We must save Sheriff Adams' idea for future demonstrations, if we need them.

Friday was the day the Voting Bill was supposed to be signed. The Voters League decided to march to insure its passage. Unfortunately, the day was dreary and clouds were heavy with rain. It started to sprinkle, but folks said march, and the rain came down. It was a downpour. Everyone was soaked to the skin, but on the way back you could hear the freedom songs for three blocks. The sight of lines of now sunlit marchers dancing to the rhythm of freedom songs in wet clothes glued to swaying bodies is one that cannot fail to strike a chord in the most ironclad throat. When the group returned to the church, the singing and clapping and dancing was so spirited, I was afraid for the church. The young people were "hung on" freedom. Later that day, the Voting Bill passed and at the mass meeting that night, we offered prayers to an understanding Father.

With the Voting Bill, we knew that things would change. Before Aug. 16, we had only 611 people registered. But over four hundred people attempted to register at the Eufaula Courthouse on August 16. 224 were processed and these people were registered. The board of registrars began late and their number rallied from two to six. The board was slated to close at 4 p.m., but about 50 people waited in a vain attempt to register. Later in court, the lawyer for the city called this a sit-in. They called it that, we didn't.

IV. Eufaula's Wide Streets Receive Marchers

With this chapter, the character of the movement in Barbour County will change. Up to this point, the work and the ideas had been initiated by the SCOPE volunteers. Now the local organization began to take the leadership. It began gradually, but before many weeks, the movement would be directed by the Voters League and assisted by civil rights workers instead of the other way around.

Su and myself tried to set up a meeting with Mrs. Alice Hudson, chairman of the board of registrars and the local leaders to discuss the problem of registration in the county. Chief of Police Abbott relayed the message that, "They have nothing to say to me." At that rebuff, we went to Mayor Graves' office and tried to discuss the matter with him. He refused to have anything to do with the problem and ordered us out of his office.

The Eufaula Voters League met that night. Previous to this time, elections had been held and Mr. Roy Wilborn was elected temporary president. Now elections were held again and Mr. David Denard and Mrs. Mary Marshall were elected co-chairmen. The decision was then made to demonstrate. The demands we felt were very reasonable. We wanted two additional weeks of registration immediately and two nights a week for working folks. In the newspaper the following days, it was announced about the additional days of registration provided for under Alabama law.

On August 17 at 9:30 a.m., approximately 12 people picketed the Eufaula courthouse with signs bearing slogans such as "Eufaula, Alabama – A Fine, Quiet Southern Community – If You're White" (a takeoff on the Chamber of Commerce brochure). At 10:30 a.m., approximately 160 people met on the steps of the courthouse for a prayer service. It was peaceful. Lolita Jones and Mrs. Leila Dennis spoke. There was no actual march, because we had applied for a parade permit and it had been denied for that day, but given for the next day. So instead, the people convened on the courthouse steps.

The next day there was a march led by Mrs. Mary Marshall, Mr. David Denard and Mr. John Kelly. They were met by at least 25 police officers with clubs. There was no trouble and the march progressed. The following day, there was another march with no problems. This time we, as usual, applied for a permit, but heard nothing. We felt that it was our constitutional right to protest and we would conform to a law as long as it did not violate our rights.

Trouble began the night of August 18. The following is from a signed affidavit by the sister of Joseph Daniel Williams, Mozell Rogers. Joseph is an army veteran who had a war injury and then subsequent epilepsy. "A police car was following him and when he stopped in front of my house the two policemen got out and accused him of running two stop signs on Bullock St. He said he would have to get the money from me as he didn't have any. He came up to the door, but when he found that I wasn't at home he went back to the police and said he would have to go to his cousin, Annie Williams on Bullock

Street, to get the money. The police told him he wasn't going 'no God damn where.' A struggle of some sort ensued and the police hit him across the head with a night stick. They knocked him to the ground and it was a long time before he was able to get up. In the meantime, the police called for two more policemen. The police handcuffed him and all four of them beat him. They put him in the back seat of the car and beat him some more with a club. He was taken to the Eufaula city Jail which is located in the courthouse and beat him again with a night stick. These are the tactics of a "fine, quiet southern community."

Friday, August 20, was the beginning of the jailings. The march to the courthouse was uneventful enough, but once at the courthouse, it all began. There were speeches by Mrs. Leila Dennis, Mr. James Kelly and Mr. Scott B. Smith, a SNCC worker who came recently to work in the area, and Miss Lolita Jones. The local officials must have been angered at the speeches, because for the first time they enforced a clause in the old parade permit which stated a gathering of only 30 minutes could be held. The mayor came out and ordered the people to leave after five minutes. They say he was wearing a gun. If he was, it's beyond me why. Peaceful people come to express their dissatisfaction with conditions and they are met with guns and clubs.

The people did not leave, and they arrested the speakers mentioned. Immediately work got to me and I sent Su down to survey the situation. She was arrested for blocking an eight foot sidewalk. Su is not fat. Mike and Scott went down and were arrested far from the demonstration scene. They charged Scott with reckless driving and Mike with leaning out of the window. Scott can't even drive and wasn't driving; Mike was. They had to get Mike – he had a beard and for some reason they hate that. They were carried to the Clayton Jail that night. The police began pushing the marchers back to the Academy. They were not gentle. For example, when Annie Craddox refused to trample children when the police were pushing her, she was struck in the back with a club. She still has back trouble.

We marched the next day also, and everyone was expecting an arrest, but none came. Sunday we rested. It's a good thing we did. On Monday, we applied again for a permit; we heard nothing. And so, we marched that morning. Mrs. Mary Marshall led the march and spoke and when the time came, the mayor ordered them to leave. They didn't and were arrested. It's hard to say exactly how many were arrested. At least 50 people over 16 years of age and an untold number of young people were taken. Those children were taken off somewhere and we feared for their safety when we couldn't find them. After sending out teams to every large building around town, we located them in the National Guard Armory. They had been cursed, threatened and warned not to march. They were let out in pairs and most came to the Academy immediately. One young lady, Linda White, 15, wanted to make sure she could identify the place they had taken her and somehow managed to rip a corner off some "National Guard" stamped envelope to bring to the Academy for evidence.

The older marchers, along with Jasper Snipes and Roy Wilborn who had just been

observing the march and were arrested, were sent to Clayton to spend the night. On the trip, James Reese would point to a black and white cow and solemnly warn the officers to arrest the cow for being integrated. This earned Mr. Reese special treatment because the police just couldn't see the humor of it. The leader, Mrs. Mary Marshall wanted to make sure that she didn't leave her followers in the march and so when the police officers passed her over when they started to arrest people, she sat down until they finally arrested her. The Clayton jail is a small one and all these marchers were in two rooms packed together. It was foul and it took a great deal of fortitude not to lose heart.

The trial of the people who were arrested on Friday was held Monday evening. They had no lawyer and noted in their own defense. They described the trial as a sham and a travesty on justice. All except Mrs. Dennis who was told to get medical attention, but decided to go with her group, were sentenced to terms ranging from 60 days to 6 months. Mike was given six months (again his beard did it). He had been arrested before in August for driving in Alabama for over three months without changing plates. Su had also been arrested earlier for driving without an Alabama license. Mike and Su spent a considerable amount of their time in jail while they were here. But again this was just a taste of things to come for three young freedom fighters from Eufaula would serve a 23 day sentence later.

The same procedure was again done on Tuesday. Lewis "Sonny Bill" Thomas led the march on Tuesday and he also led his followers to jail. An equal number of people were arrested on this day. They were taken directly to Union Springs Prison Camp in Bullock County. The people who were arrested on Monday were carried to the Negro prison camp also. On the way to the camp, they noticed some beds being taken the other way. When they got there, they were taken into two rooms, one for men and one for women, with nothing but bare concrete floor and a toilet. They slept on the bare concrete, the guards got drunk one night and threatened them, they were given food that looked like glue and was actually seasoned with cockroaches, rocks and dirt. The girls were frightened – one toilet, in the open, in a room with gaping guards.

The triumph of the prison experience was the courage of the people that were there. On the male side, "Sonny Bill" took the leadership and helped hold the men in line. He was assisted by men like Mr. Nathaniel Cummings, who is 76 years old and a proven veteran of the 1931 Birmingham racial demonstrations, Mr. Fred Thorton and Henry Franklin with his songs that could be heard "way over yonder." On the female side, the able Mrs. Mary Marshall governed with her characteristic enthusiasm for work and jive. "Mom" (Mrs. Jimmie Lou Osborne) and Annie Craddox helped with their desire for order and prayer. Louise Slater and Elizabeth Hoskey (Elizabeth was youth squad chairman at the time) were trying their best to match Henry Franklin's efforts at songs. The whole group managed to keep together through a very difficult time.

At home, things were tense. All the SCOPE workers were in jail except myself and Bob Smith who was stationed in Clayton and regrets to this day not being where the action was. Wednesday not enough people showed up for a march and the people were

shamed by the fact that so many children were in jail and the adults wouldn't march. So the next day, there was a march and it was largely adults. People came from Clayton to help. One notable example was Mrs. Emma Sheppard, 71, who marched with us in Clayton and Eufaula and although not as spry as some and needing help toward the end of the march, she stuck with her promise "to be with us to the end."

We marched again on Friday and there were no incidents. By this time, the wire services were spreading the news throughout the country. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reassured Su's father, General Kenderdine. Senator Robert Kennedy sent a telegram to our lawyer, Mr. Solomn Seay. The parents were nervous about their children and some children were nervous about their parents. Some of the folks in the Clayton jail were on a hunger strike to impress their sincerity on the white people – no food for four days is a sacrifice which cannot go unnoticed.

We were nervous about all the marchers particularly the ones in Clayton. They had been sentenced Monday and under Alabama law an appeal must be made in five days to get out or they would have to serve their sentences. The lawyer was here and got us word that evening to go get the members in Union Springs. What money we had went for gas and a school bus to bring the marchers home. That day, we had sent food and a note slipped inside a package of cigarettes in order to give them news of what was going on. It was the only way to communicate with them.

The mass meeting waited for us to bring them home. The process was slow and it seemed that some names were lost, and we were afraid that not everyone would be able to come home. We all did. The private cars and bus were alive with news and talk on the way back. The bus rang with freedom songs when we got to the mass meeting, and then the meeting was like a holiness service. Joy couldn't have been measured. Later that night, the local leaders and SCOPE volunteers were released and came back. Everyone was out of jail. The freedom fighters were ready to march again the next day. And so we marched.

There were no mass arrests on Saturday. The police arrested James Reese (I guess they didn't like his jokes) for obstructing traffic and breach of peace. That was the only arrest. He was freed later on local bond.

All the SCOPE workers left the county for the North and in Lolita's case for California. It was time for them to go back to college or for Mike, graduate school. Dick "Dirk" Hutch had left a few weeks earlier. Since SCOPE was just a summer project, the county now became an SCLC project, and I became the SCLC field worker for the county.

V.
T.V. McCoo High School and the Eufaula voters League
November of 1965

Now that SCOPE had gone, the movement began to settle and catch up with itself. Elections had been held and Mr. James Kelly was elected president, but had to drop out for personal reasons. His spot was filled by the veteran worker, Mrs. Mary Marshall, who had been elected vice president. John Kelly was treasurer; Rev. William Lewis, assistant treasurer; Mrs. Lila Dennis, secretary and Mr. Roy Wilborn, assistant secretary.

At this time also the Voters league in Eufaula provided a Freedom House at 348 Center St. "The Freedom House on the Bluff" became the home for myself and Richard Wright. Richard had all but abandoned his home on Dale Road for the Academy and later the Freedom House in order to help the movement. He acted as director, secretary and anything that needed to be done. The Freedom House also became the social center for the Eufaula teenagers and particularly the Bluff. Much credit must be given to Mrs. Calloway, Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Daniels, Mrs. Alice Williams and Mrs. Philips for making the house a home.

The Voters League decided to move into new issues and it was decided that the school issue was of pressing importance. The school board of Eufaula had presented a plan for integration of the schools to the federal government. The exact procedures had not been followed as specified by the government. A great deal of federal funds had been poured into the school system and yet the Negro school had little to show for it. There was a lack of typewriters, sewing machines, school books, library books and good sports equipment. School collections of one sort or another were constantly being taken up for school items. The white school board had adopted the freedom of choice plan and reportedly wanted only four Negroes to attend the all white schools for token integration.

The community became aroused over the misuse of funds and decided to do something about it. There was a call for withdrawal from school activities especially for the football players. Some players sacrificed football for the love of freedom and withdrew, others were undecided. The football game was to be withdrawn from also. This was a crisis in the movement. Many dedicated movement people played and participated in the game. The Voters Leagues decided to dramatize the situation. A picket line was set up at the game and Mr. Foster, the principal, came out and took the signs from the demonstrators. At the meeting of the Voters League, which was in progress at the time, it was decided to go down in mass to protest. We gathered at the game and began singing freedom songs. The principal was upset and wanted everything peaceful and then the mayor came accompanied by police and deputized police. The mayor ordered us to leave the premises. We decided to obey and as the SNCC worker, Scott B. Smith, and myself turned the people around to go, the police grabbed me and Scott and put me in a police car. This is what happened when we were obeying the mayor. I hate to think what would have happened if we had disobeyed the mayor.

The orderly demonstration then became an enraged crowd. The police began to use unnecessary force, using their clubs on young girls and old people. The people from the game and the Project then joined in. It became a senseless battle between police and the crowd. Tear gas was used, the principal was roughed up and it was a long while before things began to quiet down. In the afternoon, the school was broken into, windows and equipment smashed and books and papers tossed everywhere. A father, Mr. Nelson Smith, and his two sons, Nelson and Willie, were arrested also on various charges. Mr. Smith was inquiring about his sons when he was arrested.

On Saturday, picket lines appeared at the courthouse and six of the teenagers were arrested including 17 year old Elizabeth Hoskey, Youth Squad chairman. The teenagers refused to attend school on Monday and staged a march instead. Mr. Frank Marshall led the afternoon march to the courthouse. Mayor Graves came out and asked them to leave; the demonstrators stayed. Circuit Judge Jack Wallace, brother of the governor, was holding court at the time and claimed he couldn't hear. He ordered the teenagers to leave and Willie Cochran was taken inside by the police, but released later. William Johnson, Willie Albert Massey and James Robinson were talking to the mayor about them taking the other boy in when they were arrested for contempt of court. They stood up to the indignities offered them in the court and afterwards. They were sentenced to a \$50 fine apiece plus three days in jail. Because the charge was contempt of court, there was no appeal bond on it. The only hope was to appeal to a federal court. The other alternative, we found out later, was to pay the fine during those three days. We tried to pay the fine for the young men, but Jack Wallace refused it. The boys began serving their sentences in the Clayton jail. They were disappointed at not being able to get out, but like the veteran freedom fighters that they were, they accepted it. Food, clothing and books were sent to them.

The trial for Scott B. Smith, the Smith family and myself was held Tuesday, and we were given different sentences. Smith and myself got \$300 fine and six months in the city jail on each charge. That amounted to a year and a half in jail and a \$900 fine for disturbing the peace, unlawful assembly and resisting arrest. They released us on bond.

The aftermath of all this produced some much needed changes. The local P.T.A. formed committees to improve the schools. More equipment was procured and parent groups were formed to study the school including the problem of truancy. Mrs. Rosie Jordan led the fight in the P.T.A. to better the conditions in the school and more important stuck with it when it passed into the committee stage.

The other important result was the police chief calling Mr. William Hollins to get Negro men to serve as deputy policemen. The Negro community was bitter. "They got colored cops to beat colored heads."

Three men, Mr. William Hollins, Mr. Grafth Palmere and Mr. Luther Henry finally accepted the job as part time policemen with the condition they could arrest anyone who broke the law. This came after a talk with movement leaders. The town officials agreed to the demands of the Negro men. The three can now be seen cruising on

weekends in their police car. Their acceptance by the local community is evidenced by the fact that the Voters League gave a ball in their honor at the Rainbow Inn on December 3. Rosie Jordan organized and directed the affair which was a success and began the Christmas season.

VI. Barbour County Goes to Washington

All registration days were faithfully observed by the Voters League. Voter registration was increasing quickly, and we felt some intensified political education was necessary. The League decided to sponsor a trip of about a week duration to Washington, D.C. The long range goal was to establish some sort of linkage between the Negro citizens of Barbour County and the traditions of the United States as a whole. This could best be achieved by visiting the seat of the Federal government along with the evidence of the American heritage displayed there. The other goals were to visit agencies of the government where the League members could observe government in action and find out for themselves what help is available and the methods used to get such help.

It was also decided to finance locally. The League members began a campaign to raise money. Mrs. Bertha White, who had in the past always been our best fund raiser (she raised over \$100 at a talent show on one night), came through again. She was assisted by Rev. Lewis, Mrs. Lilian Philips, Mrs. Osborne, Mr. John Kelly, Richard Wright and a host of others. I left early for Washington in order to set up the trip there. Miss Terri Johnson, a former SNCC worker, joined our SCLC staff in Barbour County at that time and ably assisted Mr. John David, my new regional director, and Mr. Mike Bibler, my new co-worker, who came into the county in my absence.

Churches, League members, school teachers, organizations and Dickinson College of Carlisle, Pennsylvania assisted financially to make the trip possible and a success. Without the dedicated efforts of these people there never could have been a trip. Over \$800 was finally raised for the trip and it was done completely by local people. Rev. Lewis handled the finances for the trip.

The group was in Washington from Oct. 16 – Oct. 20. Mr. & Mrs. Ward P. Allen along with the famous Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C. arranged for places to stay free of charge for the people. The hosts included government officials, executives and teachers. It was interesting to see the meeting of deep South Negroes and well-off Northern liberals. It became a mutual admiration society. Out people respecting the generosity and friendliness of their hosts and the hosts respecting the courage and dedication of the League members.

The representatives of the United Barbour County Voter League had arrived in Washington Saturday afternoon. There were twenty-three people with most of the adult and youth officers present. They visited the Smithsonian Institute that afternoon. Sunday, they went to churches with their host families and took a sightseeing tour bus and saw Washington provided by Mr. Allen. They also visited the Art Museum that afternoon. The real work was to begin Monday.

Representatives of the Voter League met early Monday morning with Mrs. Alice Hamm, director of the Overseas Education Fund for the League of Women Voters. The League wanted to move into U.S. domestic education in “grass roots” political education.

She was extremely interested in seeing the group. Mrs. Marshall, Mrs. White and Willie James Daniels along with others gained much useful information concerning organization.

Later that morning, the Voters League met with Mr. Wiley Branton – the executive secretary of the President’s Council on Equal Opportunity (now being absorbed into the Justice Department).

That afternoon, the younger people testified about county conditions in the civil rights division of the Justice Department. The older people then spent the afternoon in the Commerce Department in conference with the Small Business Administration (about small business loans), the Economic Development Administration and the Community Relations Service. Good contacts were made and the process of getting federal help was explained to the people.

On Tuesday, the group was the first to testify before the new ad hoc subcommittee on civil rights of the House Judiciary Committee (Rep. Kasternier of Wis., Rep. Korman of Calif. and Rep. Mathias of Md.). That afternoon they met with Mr. David Seeley, director of the Equal Education Opportunity Program in the Department of Education. Testimony was given to aid the government – they had just cut off aid to the Eufaula City Schools. The city had agreed to certain stipulations in the “freedom of choice” plan and had not carried them out. Mr. Seeley was greatly concerned and promised that investigators would be sent to Eufaula in the near future. Assistant Attorney General John Doar also was in conference with the people and promised that there would be a federal investigation of registration procedures in Barbour County and an observer would be sent. He urged the League to send him complaints personally.

The younger members sat in on the House of Un-American Activities Committee hearing on the first day of their investigation of the Ku Klux Klan. It was interesting to watch the beginning of a long series of claiming the Fifth Amendment which, of course, is their right.

Some of the people met with Rep. Nyman Craley of Pa. and Rep. John Conyers, Jr. of Mich. Congressman Conyers, a Negro, issued the following statement, “I was shocked and disturbed by the reports given me by members of the Barbour County Voters League on continued non-compliance with the civil rights Act of 1964, and the voting Rights Act of 1965. I have contacted the Justice Department and other affected agencies to call for immediate investigation.”

The next day the group decided to visit their own senator’s office. They talked with a legislative assistant of Senator John Sparkman. The assistant seemed nervous. His lily white office was engulfed in a sea of black faces. He informed them, half-apologetically, that although the senator voted against the Voting Bill, he did vote for federal aid to school lunches.

Some of the League members testified at a hearing on the Eufaula City School System and Richard Wright testified at a hearing on the Barbour County Hospital. We had sent in a complaint in July about the hospital and now they were acting on it. Later,

the hospital complied fully with the government regulations and issued a statement to that effect. The Voters League had won another battle. Mr. A.B. Hamerter talked with folks in the Department of Agriculture and found out where to get assistance for farmers.

Later that afternoon, Mrs. Mary Marshall held a press conference at the Rev. Walter Fauntroy's church in Washington. Rev. Fauntroy is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference representative in Washington. The group began the long trip back to Alabama that evening.

Special mention must be made of Miss Su Kenderdine, a former SCOPE worker and Mr. James Philip, a SNCC worker in Washington, D.C. I became sick and hospitalized while in Washington. Su and Tim-O (his nickname) helped set up the remainder of the program and spent the entire period with the group. Su had left college for a week to help out.

The promises of the official in Washington were kept for the most part. One exception has been integrating what once was Benton's Truck Stop in Eufaula. Rev. Ned Williams led a test team there, but was refused service. Rev. Williams's complaint has not been answered yet. Other follow up is continuing. The Voter League had incurred some debt and was struggling to pay it off. Later, a \$200 gift from one of the host families in Washington came and wiped out the debt completely. Mrs. Bertha White, who had been serving as treasurer, would leave her office with a small treasury, but with the League completely out of debt.

When the people came back, they passed out literature and informed the Clayton and Eufaula Voter Leagues of the trip. The process of using the knowledge gained in Washington continues and as long as it does, the trip was a success.

VII. The United Barbour County Voters League Becomes a Reality

Although it was only mentioned off and on, registration continued throughout the whole six months covered in this paper. When SCOPE first came, there were approximately 450 Negro registered voters. At this date (Dec. 10), there are 2,693. At different times, there have been 500-600 people attempting to register on one day. The Voters League members organized into canvassing teams and "bar committees" for registration work. Mrs. Marshall, Mr. John Kelly, Mrs. Lilian Philips, Mr. Nathaniel Cummings and Mr. Richard Wright worked closely to increase registration. People who lived in the rural areas spread the word and brought in their relatives and friends. Mass meetings, a large number, have been held continuously throughout the county to stimulate registration. Some of the texts used for mass meetings were John 8:34; Isaiah 42: 8-16; 51: 1-7; Ezekiel 37: 15-22; Jeremiah 6:9-15; Mark 12:23; Exodus 6:18 and Matthew 5.

Soon after the Washington trip, a man from the Community Relations Service came to organize interest in the Office of Economic Opportunity poverty program. The Voters League is working on this aspect of economic development as well as increasing Negro ownership of business. Progress in this field is understandably less spectacular and much slower.

Representatives from the marches have been to Montgomery twice in order to testify. We appealed our conviction to the federal court in Montgomery over which Judge Johnson presides. Many longtime members of the League testified well in the face of the distortions offered by the city. We have yet to hear any final outcome from this trial. James Reese's trial created many problems and misunderstandings, but now is being handle by our lawyer in attempts to get back bond money paid when James didn't appear in court because the white officials didn't tell him when to appear.

During a week of registration in Eufaula when 489 people were registered, a temporary SCLC field worker in Barbour County, Mr. Eddie Sanders, was arrested on the pretense of having an improper muffler. He refused to sign for appearance in court. He was jailed on Friday, Nov. 19.

Members of the League and the Youth Squad along with SCLC workers picketed the courthouse with signs like "Lady Justice is supposed to be blind," "Let Justice roll down like waters" and "Justice for every man." Justice had been administered in light of a person's color. The pickets remained from Friday afternoon until 12 noon on Monday. It was a continuous picket day and night. Mrs. Janie Battle and Mrs. Rosie Jordan kept the pickets supplied with daytime and midnight sandwiches and soft drinks. There were few incidents. One picket was threatened by a man with a hammer who continually watched us. The "hammer man" didn't carry out his threats though. Mr. Sanders was given a \$6 fine. We felt out point had been made concerning equal justice.

The Clayton Voters League on Nov. 29 and the Eufaula Voters League on Nov. 30 voted to affiliate their organizations with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This was done in order to insure help in the community if needed and to be able to have a voice in the movement across the South. An office is being completed at the Baptist academy for SCLC workers and the Voters League.

On Nov. 15, the Clayton Voters League reorganized after a long dormant period to emerge as a small, but strong organization. The Executive Board consists of Mr. Athlean Watts Hammiter, president; Mrs. Kizzie Simmons, vice president; Mrs. A.W. Hammiter, secretary; and Mrs. Aleen Dossey, treasurer. Clayton is working on voter registration and political education. A file system is being set up in order that local problems can be handled by the local organization. Political education classes are being conducted and plans are being conducted for special classes in government. Governor George Wallace's home town is beginning to organize and arouse. The organization is in strong and capable hands.

In Eufaula on Dec. 1, the Voters League elected officers. There was a complete reorganization and a bureaucracy was set up. Mrs. Mary Marshall was elected president, Mr. John Kelly was elected vice president, Mrs. Janie Battle was elected secretary, Mr. Richard Wright was elected assistant secretary, Mrs. Rosie Jordan was elected treasurer and Mrs. Lilian Philips was elected financial secretary. The above executive officers comprise the elected officials under the Board of Directors which is composed of all the department heads and the executive officers.

The two Executive Directors are Mr. David Denard and Mrs. Annie Ruth Davis. Mr. David Denard's department heads are Welfare, Mr. A. Battle; Education, Mr. Beecham; Business, Rev. Lewis; Housing and Property, Mr. Galloway; Highways and Streetlights, Mr. Roy Wilborn; Health, Mr. Standford; Employment, Mr. Alex Kelly. Mrs. Davis department heads are Social Activities, Mrs. Lampley; Political Education, Mr. Walker; Fund Raising, Mrs. Bertha White and counseling which is not yet filled.

The Youth Squad of Eufaula is tightly organized and is in the process of trying to organize Clayton. Jasper Snipes is the chairman, Mary Jane White is the secretary-treasurer. Under these executives are five action squad chairmen who have about four members each. The action squad chairmen are Louise Slater, William Johnson, Jimmy Tennille, Willie James Daniels, Ronnie Gibbs and Willie Ed Cochran. These groups have been especially effective in canvassing, test cases and on the picket line. One only hopes they keep the enthusiasm that made them "pros" in the fight for freedom.

The movement has completely changed character as it should. The local organization now directs its own fight for freedom. Local participation is increasing especially from the professional Negro community. I was the last SCOPE member, later SCLC field worker to leave the county which I did Dec. 12, 1965. The SCLC staff now stationed there are John David and Mike Bibler.

The title of this paper is "For You Were Called to Freedom, Brethren...." from Galatians 5:13. I am a lay preacher and a member of the Religious Society of Friends

(Quaker) so I think it is important to quote the full verse. “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.” If St. Paul’s admonition is observed, there will be no end to the freedom movement in Barbour County.