

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

6 RAYMOND STREET, N.W., ATLANTA 14, GEORGIA • 680-0331

702 Wall Street
McComb, Mississippi
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Wilbert Lewis 46
1010 Warren Street

I was working at Mathew Motor Company in McComb. There is only three of us who work there - Mr. Mathew, Mathew's son-in-law, Mr. Al Sibling, and me. It was June 19, 1964, and Mr. Al Sibling came in and told me there was a man out front and to bring a pair of pliers and a screwdriver. It was about 5:45 p.m. and we usually knock off about 5:00. They said there was a car with a leak in the gas tank down the road apiece. So I get in this car with the man. He had a 1960 Cheverolet; I call it bluish green. We went out about three mile near Berthadale, on Berthadale Road. There was a dirty gray Plymouth out there. A man had his head under the hood. So I got out and said, "Did it just stop all of a sudden." Before he said anything, he raised his head from under the hood and pointed a gun right at my temple. He pushed my head aside and said, "Don't look at my face." So these two men come out of the woods where there is lots of bushes and they have a canvass bag like people usually put stone coals in, only they put that over my head. They made me lay on the floor of the car. Then we drove 30-45 minutes and we come to a place back in the woods where nobody lives no place, hardly. They got out and took the hood off me. But all four of them had hoods on them. I didn't see but two of them get in the car but I could hear all four doors shut while I was on the floor. I wasn't sure whether the man who first drove me out was there because they all had hoods on; but there were four of them. They took me to a tree and set me down and put my back to the tree with my hands own and my legs spread out. They had something they call a cat-of-nine-tails; it is leather that issplit with a wooden handle on it. And they had a rope about the size of my little finger with a hang man's noose on the end. They layed that and the cat-of-nine-tails along with a black jack in front of me. A fellow was standing over to one side with a pistol and the other had a sawed off shot gun. So one says, "We not going to hurt you. We just want some names, dates and places." So they asked me when the C.O.R.E. workers was gonna set up their schools here, what places, what churches, waht dates. So I didn't know anything about it; I hadn't heard. They then asked me who was the lieutenants of the N.A.A.C.P. and I told then I didn't know about those; they made me sit up there and said I was lying.

"One Man, One Vote



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They made me get up and walk across to a tree and tied my hands to the tree; the tree was in the middle and my hands were around it. They dropped my trousers and said they was gonna give me five licks apiece. Well they whipped me alright. But I didn't have no answers to give them. In fact of the matter, I tried to lie about it. Well I know of C.C. Bryant being the leader and I told them but they'd already know'd. I told them of other people I know'd was member of the N.A.A.C.P. but they know all of those and they wanted to know the new ones. They said I had 26 answers I had to come up with. I couldn't. So when they finished whipping me, they whipped me so I didn't have no feeling back here, and I told them they might as well kill me 'cause I do not know them answers. The first time they hit me, I hollered and they said if I hollered again, they'd leave my brains side the tree. So I bit my own self and every time they hit me, I bit myself to keep my mouth shut. They jerked me in the side with the shot gun and said, "We oughta give you a black jack whippin'." So I didn't say anything. They unloosed my hands just enough for me to get loose. So I dropped my hand and slid down by the tree. One of them said, "Nigger, can you run?" I said, "Yes sir." I reached down to get my pants and while I was there, I guess he hit me five or six times.

I run as far as I could. I was practically blind and I fell right at the edge of a creek; I put my hands in and water was running across my wrists. So I stayed there until I got to feeling pretty good and I heard the car leave from out of the woods. I Walked about three miles and saw a white lady in the yard and I started not to ask her which way was McComb but I thought I might as well; they couldn't do no more to me. "Son," she said, "you goin' the wrong way. McComb is bak th t a way. You can go this way about two miles and get to Home field." I started walking to Homefield to call Reverend Dickey, my father-in-law, to come pick me up. During the course of the whipping, they said I better not notify the police, better not notify Bryant and to tell Rev. Dickey he better be damned careful around Amite and damned careful around Liberty. This fellow I came across in Homefield was a colored fellow. I was kinda scared to tell him what happened. He brought me back. He is the same one who brought the other fellow back who got whipped out there two weeks before me. He told me he brought the other fellow home and that he had moved to California and that he had been working for the railroad.

I haven't been bothered or talked about like that since. I didn't go back to Mathew Motors 'cause I new they had something to do with it or else they wouldn't have sent me off like that, by myself. Every other time I go ogg on a repair job he, Mr. Sibling, go with me. This particular time he didn't. But he still

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claims he don't know the man which I know he do. Sibling acted like he didn't believe I got whipped until I showed him myself. Then I decided not to work there anymore. I was told by some of the white folk and some of the police that I shouldn't go back. I wasn't going to anyway. I never had nothing to do with no civil rights work or the N.A.A.C.P. I never went to but one meeting and that was last year and if my boss knew about it, he never did mention it.

There used to be meeting at this garage. Some of the men who were released for the bombings would come. I recognize their pictures. While they was whipping me, they said if I told anybody, they'd wipe out all McComb because they were 200,000 strong. These people's cars are still parked in front of Mathew's Garage occassionally. I saw them there last week.

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