VOICES IN PROTEST

Rose Esserman Levin

FOREWORD

In 1962, as elsewhere throughout the South, public services and facilities in Rome, Georgia were racially segregated. From waiting rooms and restrooms, to restaurants and movie theatres, to schools, hospitals, houses of worship, the town swimming pool, and even the public library, the rule was the rule: blacks and whites were to be kept separate. This was not new. It had been both legal and customary, even after the abolition of slavery, even after blacks served the country with distinction as military personnel in two world wars, even after the Supreme Court, in 1954, had found school segregation to be unconstitutional. Social attitudes and traditions are slow to change, and the belief in racial 'difference' and the taboo against racial 'mingling' were deeply embedded in the institutions, interactions, and hearts and minds of many Americans, perhaps nowhere more so than in the southern United States.

Rome was a microcosm of the larger society. But in some respects, the situation in small towns was even more problematic. The flawed and disingenuous doctrine of "separate but equal" was exposed as even more ludicrous and mythical in a small community where often there was only one facility and thus 'separate' was not even an option. In Rome, where there was just one public library, the only way an African American could obtain a book was to order it by mail. Browsing was a privilege for whites only. There were no 'separate' (much less 'equal') public swimming pools as the town had only one, designated for 'whites' only. And certainly it was forbidden for African Americans to sit, purchase, and enjoy a soft drink, sandwich, or cup of coffee at a downtown lunch counter in Rome.

Changes to this racial caste system came slowly, due to the commitment and efforts of thousands and thousands of mostly invisible, ordinary people who were no longer willing to tolerate the insults and injustice of a dual society. Countless people displayed enormous strength and took significant risks in what was America's most important social movement of the 20th century. In March 1963, young civil rights activists -- African American students at segregated Main High School -- began intensive and coordinated efforts to desegregate downtown Rome lunch counters. They faced resistance, intimidation, and retaliation. They were arrested, jailed, brought to court, and in some cases convicted and punished for their 'crimes' of civil disobedience. With racial equality as the goal, their efforts helped pave the way toward a more open, just, and equal society.

My parents, Rose Esserman Levin and Jule Gordon Levin, lived in Rome during these years. Rose Esserman was a native of Rome, and Jule Levin moved to Rome from his native Cincinnati following their marriage. They spent almost 25 years together as members of the Rome community. During this time they held strong convictions about and were outspoken advocates for racial equality. 'White' and middle-class, they could have taken an easier and safer route and kept their politics and values to themselves. But they chose to speak out, to lend their voices, their energy, and their efforts to work for civil rights and social justice. Some of this may have stemmed from being Jewish and understanding aspects of the minority experience. But whatever the factors and reasons, they were clear, courageous, and consistent in their efforts to advance the movement. They did this publicly as well as 'behind-the-scenes,' as a kind of 'tag-team,' in ways that are detailed in this document.

Rose Esserman Levin's manuscript has two major parts: one consists of narratives written by the Main High School students describing the sit-in experience and its aftermath. The other is Rose's memoir about her life in Rome as a white Jewish woman and how that brought her – and Jule – to share in and support that struggle.

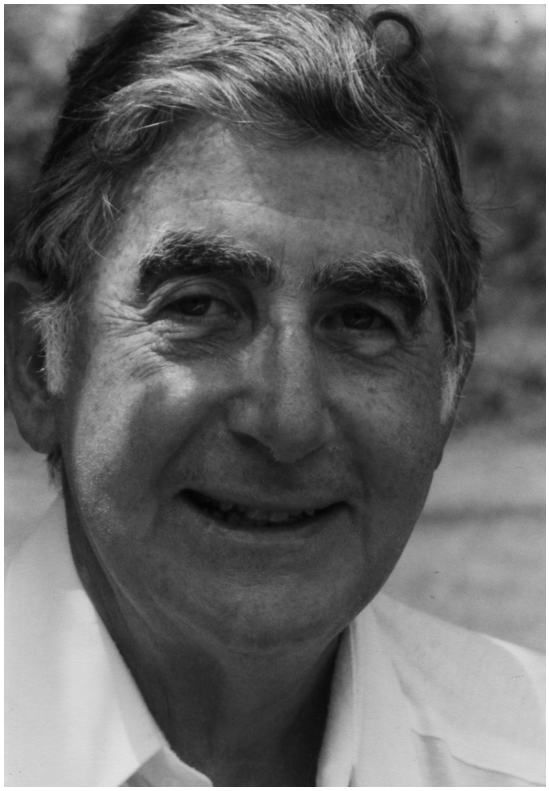
Voices in Protest represents her effort to contribute to the memory and preserve the stories of the civil rights movement and these brave young people.

In 1993 a fund was established in Rome to honor Rose and Jule Levin for their civil rights work. The Rose Esserman Levin and Jule Levin Fund for Social Justice awards an annual scholarship to a student with a demonstrated commitment to social justice and human rights. The Fund is now administered at Georgia Highlands College in Rome, Georgia.

As I write this foreword, it is more than fifty years since the lunch counter sit-ins in Rome. But the stories of courage, determination, and commitment to justice continue to inspire us.

Ann P. Levin
Cambridge, Massachusetts
August 2015

Rose Esserman Levin



Jule Levin

VOICES IN PROTEST

by

Rose Esserman Levin

"I remember the very day when I became colored." … Zora Neale Hurston

"In the place where I learned how to be a colored boy" … Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

"When We Were Colored" … Clifton L. Taulbert

Civil unrest had come to the South. Coming slowly and quietly, as if on tiptoe, it carefully made its way, first in one place and then another. It was unexpected, unnoticed, not possible. The very idea of change was not to be considered. Set in its ways, the South, a segregated, separated society, would not be shaken, threatened, or intimidated. Those with power or influence were satisfied with the status quo. Those with no influence or power had never, would never, dare to call out in dissatisfaction.

But suddenly it began. There were rumors at first, then news of demonstrations protesting the closed society, the double standard of one world for whites and another for blacks. Words of restlessness began to spread and with them came discontent. Civil unrest had come to Rome, Georgia, that insulated small town in the northwest corner of the state, which was my home. It was slow, getting to Rome, but it came as a shocking revelation to an unsuspecting, unwilling, unprepared people. The year was 1963.

Just as students all over the South began their march, so did the students in Rome. They began their protests at the downtown lunch counters, where they legally could not be served. For their action, they were harassed, arrested, and taken to jail.

These events are described in the pages that follow. The accounts given were written by those same students who risked their lives as they marched to challenge the legal system that made them second-class citizens.

Soon after their release from jail, the students were honored at a reception given by two members of the faculty of an all-white college in their large and gracious home. These women had had an ongoing involvement and interest in the Civil Rights movement, and inviting the students to their home was another demonstration of their constant support.

I was a guest at that reception, along with members of the segregated black Main High School. It was there that I made the suggestion to the students' English teacher that she have them write about their sit-in experiences, perhaps as a class assignment. For some strange reason, I asked that she give the papers to me. She did, and I have had them in my keeping all these years. Guarding them carefully, I knew that I must not let them be destroyed or lost. I had no plan, only a great sense of responsibility that they be used properly and well.

Years later, I took the papers out and read them again, and then again. As I read, I could once more hear and see the sights and sounds of the main street in that small southern community on those historic days. With many others, I stood and watched those brave, determined youngsters take their stand against the built-in system we had all come to accept.

Their only real support came from the news that others all over the South were marching as they were. With great courage and careful planning, their behavior is moving and inspirational, and their stories are part of this nation's history. With the help and encouragement of family and friends, I have edited their papers, making few changes in their words, their descriptions. The language is the students' own, the experiences are theirs, and the stories they tell are all too true and happened not so long ago.

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BEGINNING

Lonnie M... On March 28, 1963, there was a great event that took place. And I was the leader of what was to be a demonstration of rights by Negroes. And I, as the leader, had a great responsibility of planning and checking time and place and numbers of people, and the most important thing was to screen my students. Many thoughts ran through my mind as I, along with my comrades, kept waiting for an answer from the city fathers about our grievances. No progress was made so the only thing left to do was to show the people we would not take such an injustice.

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Hubert H... During the past months there had been "Freedom Walks" and "Sit-Ins" all over the country. Churches, homes, and cars were bombed.

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Eleanor H... I live on Hughes Street. My mother's name is also Eleanor. She works in a private home. The people who wanted to participate in the sit-in demonstrations were to sign their names on a piece of paper and come to a meeting.

My mother was glad that I participated in the demonstrations. She said that in a sense they were afraid to fight for their rights so someone must. My grandmother didn't like the idea. Older people haven't got used to the idea that we shouldn't always be in the back of the bus or standing at a lunch counter to be served.

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Eula Mae... I am a junior this year. We reside on Reservoir Street. I would like to state that my parents have stood by me all the way and I am grateful to them. I am also glad that they were not the type who are set in their ways on this issue. Had it been so, I would not have been able to participate in the “sit-ins.”

On this day, May 28, 1963, it seems quite appropriate that I should write a brief summary of the events that took place on March 28, 1963. This day, March 28, marks the second month of our giant step toward freedom.

This youth movement is something that will benefit every Negro, but also it is something that will help the whole city of Rome. We, the Negroes, want to be respected and treated as we should be treated. We are not going to accept the back seat of the bus; we are not going to accept inequality. We are going to strive for equality for our race. So, the younger generation feels "that if you never strive to become better, you will always remain in a rut."

Last summer an all Negro committee went to the city fathers and made a general statement of our grievances. The city fathers made a lot of promises. At this meeting it was decided to wait several weeks and during that time the buses and parks were “desegregated.” The city fathers thought that this would make the Negroes content. Some were content with just this, but the younger people were not. The older people were willing to take whatever was given to them but the young people became impatient with the weeks of waiting with few results. Yes, the buses and parks were “desegregated,” but we were not getting the full benefit. Our place was still in the back of the bus and the parks were plainly not ours to trespass upon.

We, the Negroes, who pay taxes just like the white race, still do not get the full benefit out of the things that we are both taxed with. It made us, the young people, stop and think, were we paying a white tax and a black tax? The parks were "desegregated.” Maybe you would get in, but more than likely you would not. If you did get in, all of the facilities were not open to you. It made us, the young people, even more discontent with the slow pace in which the movement for equal rights was moving.

The lunch counters had been discussed at this meeting, but the downtown merchants readily stated they would not negotiate. All of the stores are supposed to be open to the public, but there are no signs, stating that the Negroes, or whites for that matter, may or may not be served at the counters. After you have bought various necessities at the stores, it seems only natural for anyone to go to the counter, sit down, and order whatever they would like, provided they have the money to pay for it. This is definitely not the case in the eyes of the merchants. "You may buy in my stores, but you will not sit down at the lunch counters and order anything while you are there."

As has been stated, the young people became impatient with all the promises and waiting periods. They felt they were the ones who come in contact with the problem of the lunch counters every day as they walk home from school. It is rather hot and everyone wants something to refresh themselves, especially while they wait for the bus. Maybe there's a boy who would like to treat his girl to a soda or a pop, but because he is a Negro, he will not be served at the counters. He can stand and pay for it, but he will not sit down and maybe just chat with his girl, he will have to move on.

These are the things that we have been confronted with. These are the things that steered us into realizing that the Negro is a human being and that color is not and should not be the dominating factor when it comes to equal rights.

Without the help of any adults, the young people sat-in on February 25-27. They were not arrested, but they were warned against repeating the incident. There was a great deal of criticism from the adult Negroes. That really surprised me, it was as if they were willing to go along with anything the white man gave them, but the students decided they had waited long enough. It had to be us, the young people, to make these giant steps for equal rights, and most of all, for freedom.

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Mary H... It was the first period and the day seemed as if it were going to be just like any other day. I was sitting in Homemaking doing nothing in particular, when this person came up to me and asked me if I was afraid to sit-in. I told him no. He asked me if I would be willing and I said yes. Then he gave me a sheet of paper to sign my name. I went home and told my mother. She left the decision up to me and told me to do what I thought was right. So I did.

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William R... It all started at one of our basketball games when I overheard some fellows talking. One said that some of the students from our school had gone to a downtown lunch counter and demanded service. In astonishment, I could not help but say, "What? In our city?" Yes, was the reply that I received. Then I asked, "Why did they keep it secret?" Answering my own question, I said, "Well, I guess they didn't want to stir up any excitement, you know how some of our people are. But if I had known I would surely have been with them."

A few weeks later a lot of rumors had been going around campus that more demonstrations were to be held the following day. That day, after school, my grandmother sent me to town to pay some bills. I was glad because I wanted to find out if the rumors were true. I saw a group of high school students sitting-in at some of the lunch counters. They were refused service by the management, and asked to leave the stores. After refusing to leave, the demonstrators were taken in patrol cars to jail, but no arrests were made.

The next day at school, I learned from some of the demonstrators that more sit-ins would be held in a few weeks. A committee of some of Rome's well known Negro and white leaders met to discuss the situation. No progress was made and we were summoned to sit-in at the downtown lunch counters. This was my first time in participating in the demonstrations. As usual you would be nervous at a first time for anything and I was. I was nervous but I was proud.

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Harry H... I was born Sept. 1947. I began my education at the age of six at the Graham Street School. In the sixth grade I was enrolled at Main High School and transferred the following year to the Anna K. Davis School in South Rome. At the age of 13, I began going to Main High School and am now in the tenth grade.

On March 27th, a group of boys came up to me and said, "Will you be afraid to sit-in tomorrow in the downtown area?" I said no, I was not afraid. So they told me to come to a meeting and I did.

Lonnie M., chairman, called the meeting to order. After devotion, he asked twenty people to lead groups, and they accepted. After dividing us into groups, we discussed our plans and waited for what could be the most dangerous and defiant day of our lives.

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Ender H... I was born June 11, 1947. I reside at 104 Klassing Street. At the present time, I am a sophomore at Main High School.

We were given our instructions at school in the morning by our student leaders. Some of the rules that were told to us on how to act in carrying out the demonstrations were as follows: Don't have anything sharp inside your purse or anywhere about you, don't talk loud while being inside the buildings or even call our friends by their names. While in the buildings make sure you are reading a book or magazine.

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Bobbie T... I am 16 years of age. I live at East 14th Street. I have two brothers and one sister. Our parents are the best anyone could have. I am hoping to become a nurse.

On March 27, 1963, two boys, Lonnie M. and Ervin R., came to say they wanted to get about 75 or 100 boys and girls to perform a downtown sit-in demonstration. They passed a piece of paper around for us to sign our names and said we would have a meeting at 4:30.

We had another meeting the next day. In these meetings they gave us some tips on what we should do and what to expect. We were told that we couldn't say anything no matter what happened. If they hit or spit on us we had to take it. It was also understood that we were to discuss this with no one. Lonnie M. said if we wanted to back out to do it now and not to wait until the last minute because if anyone did they would have to fight him. Some of the students were dismissed because they had been in trouble before.

We were put into groups, with the captain's name at the top of the list. We were told which store to go to. Five groups were assigned to the same store, and we were the last group to go in.

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Sharon W... I am 16 years old. I was born in December, 1946. My home life is a happy and successful one. I am the youngest of five sisters and one brother. There are three of us at home. My ambition is to become an R.N. and work in a large hospital.

At our first meeting, Lonnie M. gave us some tips on how we were to act and what we were to do. We were to act as if we weren't afraid and be cool, calm, and collected. We were to take no sharp objects in our pockets or pocket books. We all checked our pocket books and took out anything that could be used for a weapon. We were asked if we were ready to chicken out and if we were, to get up and go out now or forever hold our peace.

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Glenda F... I am in the 10th grade. I live in West Rome on Central Avenue. My mother works at Floyd Hospital. A group of students asked if we were ready to fight for our Rights. Of course I said Yes. They told me not to tell anyone. That evening I went home and told my mother I was going to be in the sit-in demonstration tomorrow, and asked if it was alright. At first she said she didn't want me to but she finally said O.K.

On March 28, we met. This was the day we sit-in. They asked if everyone has some money, at least a dime.

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Vicky L... I live on Maple Avenue. I am in the 10th grade. I was born on May 2, 1947. In my earliest years I attended the Rebecca Blaylock Nursery, then I went to the Mary T. Banks Elementary School and Anna K. Davis School. In my seventh year, I was sent to Main High School and I am still here. I have always wanted to be a doctor (neurosurgeon) and a lady astronaut. My plans for the future are to finish high school, college, and then enter medical school.

I belong to the Thankful Baptist Church and am a member of the Junior N.A.A.C.P. I am a member of the Honor Society and the Charmetta Club.

It all began one evening after school as groups of boys and girls were downtown. They had seen white students sitting at the lunch counters eating their meals every evening. Since their parents and they themselves traded at the stores and buy what they were taught in history and government that "all men are created equal," they decided to see if they could attain equal rights and be accepted as first-class citizens in our town just like the other races there.

The boys went over to the lunch counter and sat down, but were unable to get anything to eat. So they stayed until the store closed. They went back again the next day and a few days afterwards with a larger group. They went to more stores, but this time the police were waiting to take them to the police department. Down at headquarters, they were warned that if it happened again, they would be sent to jail. But this didn't scare the boys one bit.

Previous meetings had been held to plan the procedure and steps that were to be taken in the next demonstration. We had it so planned that about five groups were to demonstrate at each store, with five students in each group. As each group entered its appointed store, and if they weren't arrested or served, they were supposed to sit there until the store closed. But if they were arrested, another group was to enter precisely after the police car drove off.

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Eleanor E... I was born December 12, 1947. I live on Hardy Avenue. At the present time, I am a sophomore at Main High School. It was a great honor for me to be a member of a group of high school students in the sit-in demonstrations.

ON THE MOVE

Thursday...March 28, 1963

James H... The day was very calm. The time had come for me, an American citizen by birth, and many others to claim our rights as a citizen given to us by the Constitution.

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Lonnie M... We left Main High School at 3:10 p.m. We were in groups, walking slowly. We were to walk in the stores at 4:00. At Sixth Avenue, I could see police riding the street and there were many more than usual on a day like this. As we neared the downtown area, I felt an object inside me. It was something that went all over my body. I felt as if someone was pouring cold water on me and then someone asked me this: would I be slapped, kicked, cut or even killed. As I came nearer my heart beat faster and faster. Was I afraid? Yes, I was afraid, and anyone who says he or she was not afraid or nervous in some way is telling a lie.

You see, I feel this way. Fear is a good thing to have, but there are times to run and there are times to stay and stand up for what you know is right. And certainly this was not the time to run but to stand up for your rights. I have made up my mind that I would do this no matter what the cost. Because no one should be refused the right to use a restroom or to sit down and eat because of his color.

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Mary T... I was born on January 6, 1947. I am the youngest of five. Thankful Baptist Church is our church home. My mother is the director of the Rebecca Blaylock Nursery and Kindergarten and also of the Rome Girls Club. She is a wonderful and understanding mother. My father is deceased. My ambition is to become a pharmacist.

The greatest experience of my life began to happen on March 28, 1963, when about sixty-one valiant students and I marched downtown in Rome, and sat-in at the lunch counters of various stores.

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Mary H... At school, on the day of the sit-ins, you could feel the tension in the air. That afternoon, we met. On the way downtown, I gave my coat to a friend and asked her to take it home for me. I was to regret that later. We started walking, group by group. So there I was, walking toward town, thinking. Several police cars passed us as we walked and when we reached downtown, there were policemen crawling all over the place. The first group was already in the store and as we stood in front of the bank, the police brought them out. It took a few minutes for the police car to come. As soon as it pulled away, the next group moved in. In approximately two minutes, they were out. It was our time.

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Sharon W... Divided into groups, some of us took the back streets. When we reached the downtown area, we window-shopped, stopped in the record store and listened to some heart soothing music. Again, we took the back street, and walked into the back door of one of the department stores, pretending to shop for clothes. Then it was time for us to go in and sit down.

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Eula F... We reported in. It was amazing to see how out of 100 people in the beginning, that we ended up with sixty-two. We came together to see if everyone had some money. For those who didn't, we chipped in and gave them some. The groups assembled and each was assigned to different stores. There was more than one group for each of the stores. As soon as one group would be arrested, another would move right in.

I was with Samuel's group. As we approached town, I suddenly began to get the feeling within me as if something was about to happen. I became tense as we got closer. There was a police car with two officers in it. They appeared to be observing the groups and as we passed, they pulled out and began slowly cruising behind us. It was then that we fully realized what was going on, the police had been tipped off! It was as plain as day, because as we moved on, there was a motorcycle cop in the middle of the street in what is called the “safety zone.” There were also officers on the opposite side of the street. We knew this was unusual for so many officers to be downtown at this time of the day.

Some of us began to wonder if we were to go ahead with the sit-in. We looked to Lonnie M. as our overall leader and we saw that he continued on his way and we knew we had come too far to stop now. We were the second group to go in.

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Vicki L... It was hot and humid, and as we were walking downtown one of the group leaders said, "You'll have a good time in jail because I am. At 2 o'clock in the morning, I'm going to sing “Jail House Rock” and at 2:30, “The Dog." He kept on cracking jokes like that because he really expected to be in jail. The others of us never dreamed of being there.

But Lonnie M., our leader, had warned us to be ready to expect anything. He said someone might spit on you, rocks may be thrown at you, on top of that, you may be put in jail. We listened to everything he told us, but we never dreamed of being in jail.

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Ender H... We left school campus about 3:15, on our journey. By the time we reached Gibbons Street, we were stopped by some students that had come from Albany, Georgia, so we decided to go to the Girls'

Club and listen to what they had to say. Their group consisted of two boys and one girl. They said they were here to help us, and told us what we were getting into. After they had finished, we moved on toward the downtown area.

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William R... Finally the big day rolled around. We met after school at the Metropolitan Church. Divided into groups by those who had been before, we were told which stores to enter. Our group took the back street and entered Broad at Fifth Avenue. We crossed the street in front of the General Forrest Hotel, and walked down Third Avenue. We stood in front of the Owens King store to wait for our turn.

Through close observation, we saw a group of "snuffs" had the front entrance of the store blocked. All of us, except Edward, took the crosswalk and went through a side entrance. Edward didn't come with us, because we were playing it cool. Edward, having a light complexion and straight hair, we thought he might be served.

We had it all planned, what we were going to say. As the clock struck four, we walked in. My heart was in my mouth, but I was going through with it.

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Rosa E... We walked downtown as any other normal school day. About halfway down East First, a patrol car with two policemen passed us on their way to town. I had seen a patrol car going by the school before we left. Some of the students stopped at Five Points as they usually do. At Fifth Avenue, we could see policemen lined up all the way down Broad Street. I thought I was going to be afraid, but I wasn't.

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Edward H... There seemed to be about ten or twelve policemen when we got to the store. I don't know whether my assumption was correct. I didn't count. I just followed the leader, so to speak. I really did not understand the seriousness of the demonstration, until we got taken down to jail.

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Harry H... The group ahead of us went in and sat down. In the next fifteen minutes, we saw them get into a patrol car and were driven away. All of us were a bit shaken after that but willingly went ahead as we had been told to do if a group was arrested.

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1963 Sit in at G.C. Murphy Co. 8 Broad Street - Rome, GA
photo by Clyde Collier

OPERATION SIT-IN

Thursday...March 28, 1963

Lonnie M... I, along with four other students, entered the store. We were there only a matter of minutes before the police came and told us the counter was closed and if we did not leave, we would be placed under arrest.

I wondered if the officer would hit me because I refused to move. He asked us again to leave but we did not. Then he placed us under arrest. I turned around on the stool and asked the officer what was the charge. He replied "loitering."

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Hubert H... The waitress got a bucket of soapy water and ammonia and pretended to wash the counters, but she was sloshing it on the demonstrators. No one moved except for one girl, who got up every time she started splashing us. Well, they had the big mess to clean up, we didn't.

There were as many as one thousand people on the outside, standing around. Also, there were about one hundred whites and Negroes in the store, just looking.

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Eleanor H... After we had placed our books and papers on the counter, we discovered they had poured water all over them. We sat at the counter about five minutes, when the manager came up to us and said, "What do you expect to accomplish? You can talk to me. I won't tell anybody." We just remained quiet, and he finally said, "I guess you're going to stay here until the store closes. We almost had it settled about the lunch counters until this happened. Now, I don't believe we'll ever get it settled."

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Mattie K... I am 15 years old, and in the tenth grade. I am the oldest of seven children. We are members of the Thankful Baptist Church, pastor Mr. Clarence T. My mother is a Lab Technician at Floyd Hospital.

There were four or five white boys already sitting at the lunch counter as we walked into the store. One of the waitresses said, "You'll come back because we can't serve you, here come those colored children." They left, as we sat down. All the waitresses had run to the back. There was no one to ask if we wanted anything, so we read our papers and books.

Then the manager came over and said "you have to leave, we can't serve you." But we didn't move or say anything to him. After that the waitresses started taking the tops off all the stools, except the ones we were sitting on. After a while, the police came over to us and said "you have to leave." We still didn't move. He walked around us for a while and then he told us we were under arrest, but he still didn't bother us.

He waited awhile and said again, "You're under arrest, come let's go." He took me by the arm and escorted me to the police car. People were all gathered outside the store as we came out. We got into the car. There were five of us but we sat so that it would take two cars to carry us.

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William R... Herbert was the first to sit down, Walter was second, and I was third. We could see that the "snuff" still had the front entrance blocked, but we had pulled a sneak on them. After we had been sitting about forty-five seconds, the manager came over and said, "I'm sorry, but we don't serve colored. When

all the other stores downtown start serving you, I'll be glad to, too." Our group spoke not a word but sat quietly. Meanwhile, Edward H. (light complexion and straight hair) walked in and we greeted him.

I said, "Hey, baby, what's on?"
Edward..."Ain't nothing happenin'."
Walter..."Where you been keepin' yourself, man?"
Edward..."Aw, I been around."

The manager looked at Edward as if to say, "What in the...is he doing with them?"
Edward..."How did your basketball game come out?"
I..."We lost, baby."
Edward H..."Too bad."

The manager in disgust walked away. In a couple of minutes, two plain-clothed detectives and three uniformed police came in. One of the detectives asked, "Boys, didn't the manager ask you to leave?" We sat quietly. Then he ordered us to stand up and we did. We were searched but all of us were clean. We were told to walk out to the waiting police car. As we left, I heard the manager ask, "Is that a local boy?" The police..."I've seen him around. Take him on, too."

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James H... We entered the store with a complete confidence that something would be accomplished. After five or ten seconds of complete silence, the manager came forward and asked that we leave the store. With this very intense feeling of the people around you, one feels like running away, and then you say why. I know I am right so finally the officer ask you to leave, you refuse and go to jail.

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Eula F... As we approached the counter, we noticed that the tops of the stools were taken down and the lights were off. We didn't have a chance to open our mouths. The manager said, "The counter is closed, the stools are down and here are the police."

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Rosa E...There were two Caucasian women seated at the counter when we sat down. They didn't look at us. They just kept right on eating and talking as they were when we sat down. The waitresses left from behind the counter when they saw us come in. When the two women left, the waitresses came to pick up their dishes and walked away again. No one was disorderly. In fact, I have never seen anyone act as dignified and sophisticated as the students acted that day. No one came to wait on us, so we just sat there and continued to read. I was reading something about Castro and Khrushchev, but I didn't know what it was about. I don't think anyone was concentrating. After the long walk in the sun, I was really thirsty, and would have liked to have had something to drink.

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Edward H... I guess someone called the manager, because he came running in, about twenty minutes after we had sat down. He spoke to one of the policemen, then came over to us and said, "I'm sorry, people, but I have to ask you to leave." He delivered his short speech, went back to the officer and said, "O.K., I asked them." About three officers came over to us and said, "That was the manager. He asked you to leave. If you don't leave now, I have to arrest you." No one said anything. He continued, "Then you're under arrest. Stand up." We stood up, and he told us to wait for a patrol car at the side entrance. He asked us if we had any kind of weapon, and we told him we didn't. When the patrol cars arrived and he opened the door of the store for us, we said thank you. When we got out to the car, another officer opened the door for us to get in. Again we said thank you.

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Friday...March 29, 1963

Ender H... The store was very crowded with white spectators, about five policemen, and two cameramen. We were not arrested. The day before 63 of our demonstrators had been arrested, so I guess there was no use to arrest more. My most frightened moment occurred when a group of white boys came and stood behind me. They made very nasty remarks. One said, "I should pull my knife out and see how brave she really is, see how she can take a stick in the back." But eventually, he didn't bother me.

The police ordered all Negroes out of the store while the whites remained and made all kinds of jokes about us. This, I thought, was a rude thing.

After we had sat there about 30 minutes, the manager ordered that the counters be closed. The waitress pretending to wash off the counters was really washing us. This made us very angry, but at a disadvantage, we couldn't do anything. After throwing a bucket of soap and water on us, she went to get another one, and while she was gone, one white boy said, "Make sure you put some ammonia in it, and maybe it will wash that black off them." And that's what she did. She must have filled the bucket with at least two bottles because it was so strong that it burned the tears out of our eyes, and when I opened my mouth it went down into my throat, which I almost couldn't stand. Somehow I survived. We pretended it didn't bother us.

The worst thing, while she was doing this the policemen and white spectators had the nerve to laugh. The waitress laughed while she was doing it. If I could have did what I wanted to, I would have choked her stiff and make her drink it, but unfortunately, I couldn't. It was almost time for the store to close, and the waitress yelled, "Coffee to go, 10 cents a cup!" Then, one of the boys yelled, "Yes, ten cents for the white, and 25 cents for the black." Another one yelled, "Sell me a cup, and I will pour it on this black over here."

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Eleanor E... When we walked in, one of our groups was already seated, surrounded by white spectators and police. I went around the other side of the counter, where a little girl was already sitting. When I started to sit beside her, her mother ran up to me and said, "I dare you to sit near my little girl. I just dare you." And so in order to keep from getting into trouble, I went around to the other side. If that woman had hit me, I could not have kept from hitting her back.

Seated on the other side beside a friend of mine, there were a group of rough boys standing behind us, saying, "They should go back to Africa where they came from." Others said, "Martin Luther King had better come get his monkeys and carry them back to Africa."

Nearly every fifteen minutes, the manager would announce, "the lunch counter is closed for the day." No matter what he said, we just sat there, talking quietly and reading our books.

When the time came to wash the counters, they really washed them and us as well. One of the boys ordered a cup of coffee, so he could "accidentally" spill it on us. The others laughed. But when he received the coffee, the manager announced the store was closed for the day. When we went out of the store, we were surrounded by white spectators and police. I was so wet, I looked as if I had been swimming with my clothes on.

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Glenda F... The counters were filled. People (white, that is) were cursing us, but we didn't say anything. The manager asked us to leave. We still didn't say anything. Then he went in the back. The next thing we knew, water was being thrown all over us. We didn't move. One of the waitresses said, "Why don't you blacks ...get up and leave while you still can?" We didn't move.

The manager came back and said, "When the store closes, you better leave." We didn't even look up. We sat at the counter until the store closed, then we left.

We went to see our friends, who were in jail. The officer told us to leave or we would be arrested too. I went home alone that day because my friends were in jail.

When I came in the house, my mother jumped up with tears in her eyes and said, "I am so proud of you." And she really was proud because she told everyone, "Do you know my baby sat-in today?" All night our telephone rang. I got calls from everybody, even from people I didn't even know and still don't.

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Glenda F... We sat again. This was the worst day. There were people from everywhere. Of course, we were scared, but we went on anyway. Newspapermen were there and people from Atlanta. When Dotta

and I walked in, the counter was filled except for three seats in the back, so we went and sat down. Oh, brother, they started cursing. Two white girls were standing behind us. One said, "They got their damn nerve." Then a lady walking by with a little girl said, "Black son of a bitches."

Dotta and I were alone in that store with about a hundred white people for about thirty minutes. Then the other groups came in. One man said, "If we kill about two or three of 'em, they'll stop." Then a big, fat man said, "I'd drown two of 'em if it was my store." Another lady said, "What are the little black...trying to prove?"

Then the waiter started throwing water on us, and everyone laughed (white, that is). We didn't even move or look around. When they saw we weren't going to leave, they cursed us again. One man said, "Call the fire department and let them get their water to their asses." Another said, "We ought to beat their asses right now." The waitress put ammonia in the water and came out throwing it again. We still didn't move. At 5:30 we got up and left without saying a word.

That night on television, I saw Dotta and me sitting at the counter. Everyone was proud of us.

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Robert H... I live on North Division Street. My mother works at a nursery home on South Broad. My father works at Griffin Foundry. I have two younger sisters and one brother. The children in our family get what we want. We have an easy time.

I was one of a group that sat-in. We were later joined by another group. I believe we were the only ones that sat-in at that store. We sat from 4:30 to 6:30, when the store closed. When we left, the manager opened the door for us. No one was arrested.

ARRESTED!

Thursday...March 28, 1963

Lonnie M... Reluctantly, we stood up and the officer lined us up and marched us to the side entrance where there was a patrol car waiting for us. As I entered the car, I wondered why I was being carried to jail. I had done nothing wrong; after all, we are human beings. As the car pulled up to the jail, I could hear the students singing and clapping their hands. I was carried to the desk and asked my name and address, my height and weight. Then one policeman said, "Give me your knife, nigger." I told him I did not carry a knife. After that, I was taken to the "drunk cell."

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Mary T... After arriving at the jail, we were checked in and ordered to give the officer our personal belongings. I was carried to cell 8, where I joined several other girls. The police kept bringing students in until there were sixteen girls and a lady there on a drunk case.

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Mattie K... He took me by the arm and escorted me to the police car. People were all gathered outside the store. There were five of us so we sat so that it would take two cars to carry us. We didn't want to be squeezed in, so we spread out, making a second car necessary.

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Rosa E... As soon as we pulled up at Police Headquarters, someone asked that another car be sent out right away, because as soon as one group was taken out the side entrance, another was taken out the front. At the desk, an officer was taking all personal belongings. He asked for names and we told him. Then he told the girls to give him their purses, newspapers, and books. The same applied to the boys. The girls asked if he really meant for them to give him their purses. He said yes. They shrugged and gave them to him. Someone told us to go to the right. We did.

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William R... As we came out the door, I tilted my hat to one side, pulled my trench coat up, put one hand in my pocket, and strolled down the sidewalk. Sure enough, there was our “taxi” waiting. We squeezed in the patrol car and we were off to jail. Our group was the first to be taken in.

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Harry H... All of us had a good grin and acted as though we weren't afraid, but deep down inside our hearts, we were very much afraid, because it was the first time that any of us had ever been arrested and taken away in a patrol car. When we arrived at the station, a big heavy policeman said, "All right, line up, and empty your pockets."

We did as we were told and we knew that he wished he could have found some kind of weapon on us, but he didn't find a thing. After we had emptied our pockets, we were led to our cells where we were greeted by our schoolmates, who were already there.

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Eula F... A policeman escorted us outside, and as were going to the car, our pictures were taken and the boys were searched. Then we were carried to the police station where all of our personal belongings were taken from us. There were 62 arrests, 33 were girls.

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Bobbie T... We formed a straight line to the police car. On our way to jail, we told the driver we like to ride fast, so he speeded up. We passed some of our friends who were also on their way to jail. It wasn't far, so it was just a matter of minutes, and we were there. We checked in to what we called the "River Side Hotel." Our cell was number 6. When we went to the cell, the girls greeted us with a big yell and the boys did the same.

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Sharon A... Since I was the last one out, I THANKED the officer who held the door for us. I must say we were riding in style with two chauffeurs. We rode in a 1962 black Ford, engraved in gold, with an inscription, ROME CITY POLICE. The officer at the desk took our belongings and put them away neatly and safely. The officer at the “inn” opened the door to the cell with a large key.

JAIL!!

Thursday...March 28, 1963

Vicki L..."Here are the police." With that unwelcome greeting, there was nothing we could do except go out to the police car and be hauled to jail. And we were actually put in jail!

I really didn't worry about being there, but the thing that bothered me was that I had not told my parents that I was going to be in the demonstrations. I figured they wouldn't let me be in it. Of course I wasn't the only one who hadn't told their parents. There were a few others who were in that same predicament.

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Lonnie M... I was taken to the "drunk cell." This was nothing more than a man-made hell. It consisted of four steel walls, a concrete floor, a dirty toilet stool and sink that was unfit for even an animal's use. The only light came from a small light bulb that hung in the center. The smell was terrible, and the heat was almost unbearable. After lying on the hard floor, I suddenly realized why I was locked up. It was because I am black, and not because I sat in. You see, if I had been white, I would not have been arrested. I had never been in jail before so there was a strange feeling within me. Lying on that concrete floor with a light shining in my face was the most inhuman thing that I had come in contact with. But as I lay there with my head and my back aching, I thought of the purpose that sent me downtown. When I thought about my race and the things which we are deprived of, the burden was much lighter.

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James H... Upon entering this house of solitude you think, “what am I doing here?” Someone ordered the heat turned on, and you wonder who would be so cruel to America's future generation. Some of the fellows were placed in the drunk cell, a room with no light, no ventilation, and worst of all, no beds.

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Rosa E... He opened the door for me to go in and I did. Surely, he had made a mistake because there were too many people in one cell, with four bunks. There were already fourteen girls and a drunk woman who was on one of the bunks. They made room for me on one of the upper bunks.

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Vicki L... The boys and girls were in different cells next door to each other, but we couldn't see them. So at different intervals, we had roll call to see who was in and where they were. There were at least 15 students in each department (cell).

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Mary T... This was a very warm and humid day. The cell was a small, unsanitary, filthy room. The sink, toilet and bedclothes looked as if they were never clean. Seventeen people in one small room was extremely uncomfortable and stuffy. The windows were closed, but because we were almost suffocating, we opened them. Since the police knew we wanted them open, they closed them. With the use of a clothes hanger and a stick that we'd found, the boys opened them. The police closed them again. We opened them. Finally, the windows were closed and then locked.

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Mary H... Jail is not at all like it is in the movies. There are four slabs that pass for beds. The whole room was about the size of a small bathroom. There was a toilet sitting in the corner and a basin. There were bars on the side facing the parking lot, and a corridor between the cells and the windows. Steel divided the cells. The back of my neck was swollen from leaning against them. There was a light that burned all night.

They put some of the boys in the “drunk cells.” We asked El Zoro (our name for the drunk woman) what was in there and she said, "Nothing but a shit hole."

Some of the people who weren't arrested came by the jail to see us, but the officers wouldn't let them talk to us.

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Mattie K... Some were sitting on three bunks and some were standing up. None of us would sit with the drunk lady, because she was too nasty. Before we sat on the bunks, we took all the sheets and blankets off and threw them in the hall. They were so filthy! We had roll call and all sixty-two were there.

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Harry H... We were all making noise and singing songs such as "Go Down Moses," but we changed the words and it went something like this:

Go down Kennedy
Way down in Georgia land
Tell the police chief
To let my people go.

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Lonnie M... About 6 o'clock I began to get hungry, and about an hour later we received what was called food. The door was opened and the food was put on the floor. We were told to get it, if we wanted it. I put the food in my mouth, but could not swallow it. One of my companions did eat.

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Daisy S... It wasn't fit for dogs to eat. We told them we weren't dogs and asked if they would let our parents bring us some food but that didn't work. Big bowls of food were brought by but we didn't get it.

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Mary T... Everyone was hungry and fatigued. We hadn't eaten since lunch time, but when the officers brought our food, we were greatly disappointed. It was dried beans, sauerkraut, and dried hard corn bread. There were no cups to drink from and nothing to drink. Since the food was unfit to eat, we threw it out on the filthy bedclothes.

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Edward H... Dinner was horrible. The man who brought it counted the number in each cell, then put it on the floor for us to pick up. I told him I didn't want any, but the others told me to take it anyway. As soon as everyone had gotten a plate, we threw it out. That place was in shambles.

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Rosa E... At about 7:15 we began to sing. Some Caucasian students were at the library (an adjacent building) and were standing in the windows staring down at us. Some were doing the “twist.” We continued to sing and they continued to stare.

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Harry H... About 8:30, I believe that's when we found out how much our mothers really cared for us. They came, prepared to pay our bond and asking (especially my mother), "Do you want to come home now?" I told my mother. "No, momma, I don't want to come home: we want to stay with the others." She said they figured that, so had brought cookies and drinks, but the police said no food or drink could be brought into us. Just then each and every one of us began singing the Negro National Anthem.

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Rosa E... We decided to get some sleep. Some of the girls sat on the bunks and leaned on each other. We said the Lord's Prayer in concert.

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Mary H... It was very uncomfortable. Have you ever tried sleeping in a cell with 15 people and only three beds? During the day, when it was really hot, they turned on the heat. At night, when it was cold, they turned on the air conditioners. We were freezing at night. How I wished for my coat!

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Lonnie M... I did not sleep a bit all night.

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Mary T... Some of the girls slept on the hard, concrete floor, and others stood against the wall.

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Eleanor H... That night we would sing for a while then we would sleep. Then we'd wake up and sing again.

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Friday...March 29, 1963

James H... Everyone knows loneliness is very hard. After a night of requests and part of the day, the fellows were finally released from the drunk cell. Now everyone was together. We began our day with prayers and Bible quotations.

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Lonnie M... When they brought us breakfast, I was so hungry I had to eat a little of it. Later in the morning, I was carried to a cell with six other boys. When I saw that bunk, I almost ran to get to it but my legs were so stiff, I could hardly walk. As I lay there, I looked out at the trees and the outside world which I had not seen since we had been in.

It is very hard to be in jail. People call you names you never even heard before. Every word that was said began with “Black S.O.B.”

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Eleanor H... In the morning when we were served breakfast, one of the Negro police ladies brought us several items which we needed.

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Mary T... Practically everyone woke up about 1:00 a.m. because we were freezing. The officers had opened the windows and turned on the air conditioner.

Eight o'clock was breakfast. The meal was remarkably better than the dinner the night before. It consisted of bacon, sausage, grits, scrambled eggs, jelly, toast, and milk, but still many refused to eat.

After breakfast we cleaned the dirty cell, then had some of our friends phone our parents to bring us clean clothes.

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Harry H... About 6:30, a boy named Johnny W. fainted. We began yelling for help. "Somebody come back here. A boy just fainted." As one of the sergeants came back toward us, Ervin R. called out.

"Hey! A boy back there just fainted. You better go back and see what's wrong with him."

Sergeant..."How in the `hell' do you know? Have you been back there?"

Ervin R..."I told you about cussing us. We aren't grown-ups yet."

Sergeant..."I'll cuss you whenever I get ready. Since you're so damned worried about the boy back there, why don't you join him? Hey! Come and get this boy out of cell five and put him in with the others back there."

Ervin R..."That's fine with me, boss."

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Mary H... El Zoro informed us that they were going to make us clean up the mess we'd made when we threw out the food the night before. A little later a man came in and swept it out. He was very nice. He gave us the broom so we could sweep our room too. Then a big fat sergeant showed up and asked us who were the people who put us up to all we'd done.

They brought us hamburgers and milk from the Krystal for lunch. It tasted good. Then I went to sleep. When I woke, I heard them bring someone in. They had opened the window on our door, so I could see out.

He was really drunk and red in the face. They started to put him in the cell with some of the boys, who said they would kill him, if they did. They put him in a cell across the hall from us. He cursed a while, then told the police to let him out of that place. It didn't even have a bed.

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Harry H... It began getting hotter and hotter. They turned on the heat and closed the windows. It was so hot, some of the boys took off their shirts. Then we found a broom, and with the broom handle we broke the latch, straightened the hanger, and opened the window. But the captain came back and said, "Keep those damned windows closed." He locked them and left. Just as we were about to unlock them again, the same officer came back, grabbed the broom, and said, "Now let's see you open them." We made so much noise, that they finally told us, "If y'all quit all that yelling, we'll let them stay open," so in order to get a little air, we all got quiet.

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Eula F... We asked the janitor what did they plan to do with us. He said our bonds were set for $104 each for city residents and for $304 for non-residents. He gave us washing powder and some cloths so we could clean our cells. We also learned from him that no food could be brought in to us and no visitors were allowed to see us. At one o'clock we were served hamburgers and a carton of milk from the Krystal.

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Harry H... About 3:30, we saw some students walking downtown. Later, we learned that they had sat in again but no arrests were made.

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Mary T... Many of our parents and friends brought us food but were not allowed to give it to us.

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Eula F... We had done all we could to pass the time. In the boys' cell, next to ours, they had found a mirror that had been broken into pieces. They passed a piece to each cell, and we could stick them out the bars, and could see what was going on in the front office. By evening, more boys were put in the "drunk cell."

At seven o'clock, they brought the same food they had given us the night before and again we refused to eat it, but we drank the milk.

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Saturday...March 30, 1963

Vicki L... We went through the same routine except at night another drunk was put in and she kept the place rocking. Also, some of us took showers for the first time.

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Mary T... We had the same breakfast as the day before. People would come by the window to see us. The police told them to keep going. Only the white spectators were permitted to stay.

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Mary H... In the afternoon, some of the parents posted bond. Our friends were getting out, one by one. I was beginning to think my mother had deserted me, but about six o'clock, they called my name. When I walked out, there she was. Boy, was I glad to see her! When we got home, I saw my picture in the paper. Mother wouldn't even let me sit down. She headed me straight to the bathroom. She had almost worried herself to death, and she wanted to get me out on Thursday night.

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Harry H... Hour after hour our parents and friends brought food to us, but again and again, they were told, "No food can be given to the prisoners."

It was getting dark, and some of the mothers had already paid their child's bond. At six o'clock I was out of jail and on my way home. I could see by my mother's face, she was deeply worried. She knew we had to go to court on Monday. I tried to ease her worries by saying, "Mama, don't worry. The judge can't do anything harsh to us. We'll be all right."

When we got home, I was tired and hungry, but the first thing my mother made me do was to take a bath. Then I could eat. I was so tired and sleepy because I hadn't slept a wink while I was in jail. I laid down on the bed, closed my eyes, and didn't open them until the next morning.

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Vicki L... We were disappointed that we were spending another night in jail. That night it was very lonesome, because some of our best friends had been bonded out.

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Eula F... We learned that a Negro attorney, Horace T. Ward, and Vernon E. Jordan, field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had inquired at police headquarters about charges made against the demonstrators, but no effort was made to post bond for those remaining in jail. We heard that bond was $102. Later, the lawyers were permitted to see us. They advised us to stick it out in jail. They also told us our trials would come up on Monday before the city recorder, on charges of violating three Rome city ordinances: loitering in public places, disorderly conduct, and loitering by minors.

That night, thirty-five of us still remained in jail. The others had posted bond and one had been released for illness.

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Harry H... At about 7:30, two policemen brought us breakfast from the Krystal. Usually they would have given us cold baloney and grits. But I believe when they found out that our parents had met all that night and sent for a lawyer in Atlanta, Mr. Ward, and an N.A.A.C.P. Field Director, Mr. Jordan, they figured they had better do something quick before they arrived. The breakfast contents were as follows: toast, egg, sausage, grits, butter, jelly, and milk.

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Lonnie M... After I had talked with the attorney and had been given all the facts, I felt much better.

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Vicki L... Our lawyers had been brought from Atlanta by our parents and with the help of the N.A.A.C.P. Mr. Ward had been an attorney for Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes when they entered the University of Georgia.

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Rosa E... They began letting our parents bring clean clothes. The clothes were left at the desk, and a policewoman brought them in to our cells. Our parents sneaked food to us, by putting it under the clothing.

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Sunday...March 31, 1963

Mary T... The breakfast menu had changed. It was a half piece of bologna with hard stiff grits. Only a few ate.

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Lonnie M... I could hardly stand myself. I needed a bath and my teeth needed brushing. Finally, we were permitted to take a bath. It was really a funny feeling to take a bath in jail.

Things had gotten better. I was less worried. We had many visitors and I saw my aunt for the first time since Thursday. People were permitted to bring us food and it was very good.

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Mary T... We had morning worship. We sang several hymns, and prayed in unison. Scripture was read by one of the students. The message was delivered by Ervin. In it he compared our struggle for freedom with the Hebrews and how Moses had led them to the Freedom land.

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Vicki L... One of the boys preached a very good and interesting sermon. He wasn't a preacher and his intentions were not to be a preacher, but I was enthusiastic by the way he preached and I enjoyed it immensely. He helped to give us more faith in God.

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Eula F... Sunday began to be the best day of our stay in jail! Rev. Hinton and Rev. Sander's son brought us religious pamphlets for our service that morning. Before leaving he asked us to bow our heads in a

word of prayer. He reminded us to be on our best behavior and he also said that some of our mothers and friends were preparing dinner for us at the Metropolitan Methodist Church. About one o'clock, the mothers brought us dinner which was the best we had had since we had come to jail. After dinner we had visitors for the rest of the evening.

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Lonnie M... I knew I would be tried the next morning so as the day went by, I began to get very anxious. I wanted to get out of jail. I wondered if I would be found guilty, but something kept telling me that I would.

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Eula F... After all the visitors were gone, we began to realize what was in store for us next. We started preparing for court because we were determined that when court time came around, we were not going to look like "first class jail birds." We vowed that we would look nice and clean, and that we would be ready for whatever was to come.

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Vicki L... We were supposed to be in court Monday morning. Because of that, we had evening devotion and went to bed early. We packed our clothes, ready to go home.

TRIALS!

Monday... April 1, 1963

Vicki L... It was April Fool's Day, but we never expected to be fooled.

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James H... After five days of misery and complaints, we went to court.

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Lonnie M... Court was to open at nine o'clock. We were to be tried by groups, but I was not in the first group. The weekend drunks were tried first. Then our first group went up. We wondered what type of questions they would ask. As I sat there awaiting my time to go, the tension began to mount. You could see it in the other boys too. We were so tense that we began to snap at each other. But lunchtime came and court was adjourned until two o'clock. About four-fifteen, my name was called.

The officer opened the cell door, and I, with five others, lined up in the hall. Just then, the chief came down and said court was adjourned until nine the next morning. The students were upset. We had to spend another night in jail.

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Eula F... Finally, Monday morning arrived. We were granted the privilege of taking a shower, those who wanted to take one. Our hearing began about 11 A.M. By agreement of counsel, the defendants were called to appear in groups rather than individually. Everyone was amazed at our appearance. They said we didn't look like we had been in jail, because we were dressed as if we were going to church. We were directed to the center of the room.

After a few minutes, the judge called the court to order. The trial was quite an experience for me. Our names were called in the form of a roll call. The trial then proceeded. The judge told us if we wanted to know whether we should answer a question, we should consult our lawyer. Our lawyer informed the judge that Samuel W. had been chosen as spokesman for the group.

During the trial, it was amazing how the lawyers could trick the store managers in a nice legal way. One question the lawyer asked, "Why a store that was open to the public for its service, would not permit a person to eat at the counter because he or she is a Negro?"

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Bobbie T... We had two very nice lawyers. One of them was short with curly hair. The other one was tall. The judge asked us if we had had meetings and where we had met. He dismissed charges against those thirteen or under, and the records were removed from the books.

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James H... Mr. Ward was a very tranquil person, but in the courtroom, he was a man of dynamic energy. He could and did move the courtroom, while advising and guiding us.

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Eula F... It was being said that we didn't have any money when we sat-in. The judge picked someone from each group, and asked them how much money they had. It was found that everyone who had participated had some money even if it was only enough for a pop.

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Vicki L... It wasn't until after lunch that our group went up. The court was packed with people, some even standing on the outside. Our lawyers did most of the talking for us. One of the store managers was sworn in and asked questions, which were not answered intelligently or truthfully.

Court was over about 4:00 and since all the cases were not tried, we were in for the biggest surprise of our lives. We thought we had served our time but since the trials weren't over, we had to spend another night in that horrible jail. We were really fooled.

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Daisy S... After the trial we had five more days in jail and that was enough for anybody, for me anyway. They started letting us have visitors and food that was better than at first and they also let us get some personal things from our bags.

Mr. Ward talked to the judge about letting us get out so we could go back to school and spend our remaining time on the weekends.

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Mary T... At the break in the trial, Mr. Ward and Mr. Jordan came down and asked us such questions as, "Do you want to go home or stay five straight days or come back on the weekends?"

Some decided to stay. I, and others, preferred the weekends because we didn't want to miss any more days at school.

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Eula F... Some said they would be willing to stay, if they could get some good wholesome food, but they didn't believe that would happen.

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Tuesday...April 2, 1963

Harry H... They sent for group 13, which was the group I happened to be in. Mr. Ward started asking questions, such as this, "What store did you demonstrate in on the 28th day of March?" The judge asked, "Did the manager ask you to leave?" He then asked me, "Son, if I let you go, would you go against the law and sit in again?" I told him, "Yes, sir, I would be glad to sit in for my 'Rights.'"

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Lonnie M... I was carried to court at nine that morning.

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Sharon W... Our lawyer asked one of the officers if he remembered any of us as we were being arrested. He pointed to me and said that he remembered the girl in the yellow dress. He was asked why, and replied that I was the only one who thanked him for holding the door as we walked out. The crowd in the courtroom burst out laughing.

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Eula F... During the trials, 57 of us had been convicted of violating a city ordinance governing disorderly conduct. Five were dismissed because they were under 14 years of age and did not “realize the seriousness of their actions.”

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Daisy S... Most of us were fined fifty dollars or five days in jail. Some got three days, or twenty-five dollars.

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James H... Some people were given ten days or one hundred dollars. One female and I were given three days or twenty-five dollars, for “good conduct.”

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Harry H... Everyone took the days, rather than the fines, because we didn't want our mothers to hand out a single dime. Some took the days straight and others took the weekends.

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Vicki L... One of the girls was fined only three days or twenty-five dollars, because she was polite to the police officer and thanked him when he held the door for them.

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Lonnie M... Though I had done nothing wrong, I was fined five days in jail or fifty dollars. I was released about five o'clock that evening. I had not been out in such a long time, I could hardly believe I was free.

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Daisy S... After the trials we had five more days in jail and that was enough for me.

They started letting us have visitors and food that was better than at first. They also let us get some personal things from our bags which they had taken from us.

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Vicki L... I was one of the first to get out, but I went back practically every day to visit my friends.

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Mary T... After court was adjourned, we went home about 4 o'clock. On the outside of the jail were many parents and friends waiting for our release.

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Bobbie T... After the trial was over, I went back to my home, which was cell 6. I, along with thirteen others, was serving my time straight through. After everybody else went home, we had a talent program, we listened to the radio, and read. We also had more than we could eat.

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Sharon W... We were taken back to our cell and I stayed three more nights. We had many visitors who brought us food. Our classmates came in the morning on their way to school, and again when school was out. Some of the teachers brought us breakfast, lunch, and then supper.

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Friday...April 5, 1963

Bobbie T... I was told for sure that I would be getting out by six that evening. I took a quick shower, dressed and was waiting when they came to let me out. Mother, Daddy, my sister, and brother were waiting for me. They took my package to the car while I went to the desk to check out.

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Sharon W... On the third day, I heard a key in the door and I was told it was time to go. I was already dressed, but I had just waked up, so I combed my hair. I went to the desk to get my belongings and off I headed for home. I was greeted with kisses and hugs and a million questions. I was glad to leave the "Holiday Inn."

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Saturday...April 6, 1963

Eula F... I served one weekend. When we came for the second one, all of us were suspended. But we were told that if we got into any more trouble, we would have to serve those other days. One defendant posted a bond of $115.50 to Floyd Superior Court, in order to appeal his conviction. Three others also appealed. Their cases should come up in the very near future.

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Vicki L... There were four of us that got their cases appealed to a higher court. I was one in that group. The case won't come up until the summer, but I am sure we will win.

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Mary T... We, who had chosen the weekends, checked back in the Rome city jail...our apartment...at approximately 8 A.M. This time it seemed as if we were going to college. We carried our schoolbooks, library books, pillows, blankets, transistor radios, and luggage filled with clothes and other items.

This time there were only six girls to a cell. When we got there we began cleaning the toilet and the sink, making the beds with our personal bed clothing. After cleaning the cells, we did our homework, read, played games, created new hairdos, and other interesting things. This time our friends could bring us food. Dinner was a delicious and nourishing meal given to us by a social club.

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Sunday...April 7, 1963

We received visitors from three to four. The jail was full. Some friends brought us fruit, candies, and cookies. And another tasty meal was sent by another social club.

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Monday...April 8, 1963

Edward H... We were supposed to get out at 7 A.M. so that we would be able to go to school. Some did. The others decided to stay since some had only one more day, and others two more. I was supposed to get out on Monday evening, but I didn't. Everyone, except those with ten days, were released on Tuesday.

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STUDENTS' PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Lonnie M....Being in jail is no fun, but for first-class citizenship, I will go again if I have to.

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Hubert H... Until the white man wakes up, the Negro will continue to strive for his "Equal Rights."

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Eleanor H... I can hardly wait until we have another sit-in. It might be this summer, next summer, next month or next year, but whenever it is, I will be more than glad to stand up for my rights. This is the only way we will achieve anything for the Negro race.

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Daisy S... Finally everyone was out and it all was well and good.

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Ender H... We, the Negroes of Rome, Georgia, feel that it is about time that we are given some of the equal rights and pursuits of happiness that we are entitled to as human beings. One thing we must remember is that this is no plaything, and there's no fun in it. It is something that we must do for the benefit of our people.

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Mary T... We are grateful to our Negro police, policewomen and many other people for their concern and care for us during our stay in the city jail.

Although we were mistreated in many ways and were very uncomfortable most of the time, we thought only of the goal to which we were striving...our standing as first-class citizens.

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Eleanor E... There were no arrests that day, but if there had been, I am sure that every one of us would have gone willingly, at least I know that I would have.

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Mary H... When I think about it, jail wasn't so bad, and I am willing to take it again to help my race.

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Mattie K... Since everything is over now, we've been having mass meetings raising money for some needy problems.

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James H... My stay in jail made me realize that all people are created equal, and most Negroes will always strive for equal rights. As for the jail, it is a place for people who are a menace to society. How can those who are trying to obtain their rights be considered a menace to anyone? We are here in a democratic country. I look forward to the day when the Negro and white can stand hand in hand and say, "This is my beloved brother whom I can trust for ever and ever."

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Glenda F... These days were very exciting but we did it for a reason not for fun. I am tired of waiting until I get home before I can get something to drink or eat. If they can take my money STANDING, they can take it SITTING. I'll go again and keep going until there are some changes around here, and I mean it.

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Rosa E. & Edward H... It was an experience I shall remember the rest of my life.

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Harry H... I have only one thing to say and that is, "I was and still am proud to be a 'sit-in.'" I know we are fighting for our Equal Rights.

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Eula M... After the trial, we held a meeting and it was decided that "For the good of the entire community, a "cooling-off" period is necessary until such time as reasonable discussions can be affected." We may need a "cooling-off" period, but the thing is not to "cool off" too long. It is now time once more to warm up again while everyone is stirred up. This youth movement woke the older people, even those set in their ways. The young are willing to go again if need be. As I heard one young person say, "The old people have had their day and now it's time for the young to have theirs." We've come to realize that what the young people started is something for all of us to be proud of.

It makes me glad to be able to do something to better conditions for us, the Negroes. The general attitude of the young the whole time has been “we have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

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Bobbie T... When I got out, the trees had bloomed and so had the flowers, the grass was pretty and green. The wind was blowing softly and I thought it was the most beautiful I had ever seen.

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Sharon W... This is an experience that I shall never forget.

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Vicki L... We didn't get what we wanted but that was the first step toward breaking the segregation laws in Rome. Many have tried to obtain equality for many years and are still trying. But the Negro wants to be able to accomplish certain things and to be given full credit for what he has done just as any other person in the United States and be considered a first-class citizen.

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MY MEMORIES OF ROME

Memory is not always reliable or dependable. One moment in time stands out clearly in the mind; another, equally as important or compelling, escapes. Looking back as I try to do now, more than thirty years later, I can only put together facts as I recollect them. I feel now that I should have been more watchful. Even then, in some measure, I knew that the events about which I now write were momentous. I did believe, rightfully, that I was witness to historic times, and that the world could no longer stand still.

And so, testing my memory, I search my past. And I remember...Rome, Georgia, like the Italian city for which it is named, is built on seven hills. In the northwest corner of the state, it is near both Tennessee and Alabama. Despite the many years that have gone since I lived there, Rome is still home for me. So much of my life was there -- and still is, in many ways.

I am a white, native Georgian. I was born in Rome and it was there that I spent my youth, my school years, and much of my married life.

My husband and I have two daughters. They, too, are native Romans and were students in the Rome public schools, as was I. After our older daughter's graduation from high school, and in her first year at college, we moved away. It was a difficult decision to leave both family and lifetime friends, but my husband felt impelled to accept a business opportunity that was offered to him. Leaving Rome was for us a great sorrow. I treasure the memories of the years we were there and the friendships we left behind -- some I still have!

I remember...glorious autumns, wonderful springtimes, hot, hot summer days, usually mild winters, and even a very rare snowstorm. The South had a certain aura...the red clay...the smell, the feel of the earth...before a storm...after the rain...the heavy summer heat...the winter cold. There was a quality in the air, perhaps it was only a whisper in the wind, a lack of frenzy, a slower pace, the southern drawl, the special lingo...It all came together for me, that sense of belonging, a rush of warmth, a touch of hope...or quiet or peace, even when there was no peace. Perhaps it never existed at all, or is, perhaps, gone as am I. If it was ever real, it may only have been in my heart, and now in my longing to remember the place that once was mine.

The South was blessed with a great variety of trees –- long-limbed pines, flowering pink and white dogwood, mimosa, magnolias, crab apple, plum, and peach. Camellias in bloom were masterpieces of nature, and from the rhododendron, honeysuckle, azalea, and crepe myrtle, a special fragrance. Even when the leaves and blossoms were gone, there was a softness in the air. To me, the land was beautiful.

I remember Rome as it was, though it has changed a great deal through the years. Broad Street, as wide as its name promised, ran through the downtown business section. Old established businesses lined the street. There were large and small shops in great variety -- the five-and-dimes, barbershops, hardware stores, shoe repair shops, new and used furniture stores. There were clothing and shoe stores, the Busy

Bee Cafe, the Partridge Restaurant. Lunch counters were in the drug stores. There were banks, movies -- the Rivoli and then the DeSota -- and the well-known Forrest Hotel.

The Cotton Block was at the end of the street where, in season, cotton was brought to market, baled, and stacked for sale or auction. With the possible exception of a black barber, I believe that all the businesses were owned and operated by whites.

I remember the city clock at the top of Neely Hill. Visible from many directions, it dependably announced the hour with a resounding gong. It stood on a one-hundred-foot red-brick tower that was built in 1871, and for many years supplied the city with water that was pumped from one of Rome's river stations.

The old red-brick county courthouse, built in 1892, housed court rooms, government offices and official records. It stood facing Fifth Avenue, leading to the bridge that crossed the Oostanala, one of Rome's three rivers. Further along, down Broad Street, at the corner of Fourth and Broad, was the Victorian four-story Masonic Temple building, and adjacent to it, the old yellow brick post office.

The South Rome Bridge, crossing the Etowah River, led to Myrtle Hill, the historic cemetery which was the resting place for members of Rome's old prestigious families. On the back side of the cemetery, a separate section was reserved for blacks. Also in the cemetery, but facing the front, were monuments dedicated to the memory of the old South and the Civil War. At the very top of the hill, a Confederate soldier stood tall, guarding rows of his fallen comrades. There was a memorial statue of General Nathan Bedford Forrest and one to the women of the Confederacy.

Also in Myrtle Hill were the graves of the Known Soldier of World War I and the first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, both native Romans. Mrs. Wilson's untimely death in 1914 came during her husband's first term of office as President. Her funeral cortege, arriving on a private train, was escorted by world leaders. Broad Street, draped in funereal black and white, was lined with thousands of spectators who had come to witness this historic procession. Records show that a simple service was attended by a well-managed crowd.

I remember...the general feeling of neighborliness. People in Rome would greet one another whether they were acquainted or not. The streets were safe. Romans left their doors open and rarely, if ever, locked them. Children played on the sidewalks and families sat out on their porches, visiting with friends or talking to neighbors as they walked past. Furnished with rockers, swings, or gliders, the porch was the family's gathering place, especially during the hot summer months.

I remember... “advantages” in Rome. Every summer the Chatauqua would come, set up in a large tent, always unbearably hot. Despite the heat, there was an often standing room only audience. There were eighteen performances in a seven-day series. In a desperate attempt to find some relief from the heat, the audience came armed with paper fans. Sitting together in folding chairs, they enjoyed a variety of performances -- musicians, lecturers, comedians. There were concerts, plays, operas, and special morning

programs for children with clowns, storytellers, acrobats, and magicians. I remember one morning when the children were told to drop their handkerchiefs if they believed in fairies! Indeed we did!

The Rome Music Lovers Club encouraged interested students to participate in performances of operettas, musicals, and plays. Concerts performed by Rome's symphony orchestra were held at the library, the city auditorium, or in neighboring communities. Most of the musicians were Romans; some came from local schools or nearby communities. Blacks were not included.

In later years an annual concert series brought nationally known artists to the city. Those concerts were open to the public, but not available to the black community. Later, when the policy "for whites only" was changed, the possibility of an unfriendly atmosphere made attendance by Blacks unlikely. Segregated seating and different entrances would have been provided.

The small but well-stocked library was the pride of the community. Founded and supported by the Carnegie Foundation, its presence there was a great asset to life in Rome, though its use was limited to the white community. Should a student or teacher from the Negro schools require the use of books or material, a request was sent to the library from the school. The joy of visiting the library, browsing for books, spending time to research a subject, making a selection, all were denied the black community.

During library hours, a stern librarian guarded the premises with an unbending discipline, allowing no conversation. Even a low whisper did not escape her watchful eyes or ears. Laughter, chewing gum, anything or anyone creating a disturbance was evicted, without exception. The best of times for me were spent in that library, wandering through the aisles, browsing through the bookshelves in search of yet another treasure. I was careful to follow the rules and never quite ready to leave. I grieved for those who could never come.

I remember...my early years in the heart of that Bible Belt. Families were faithful in their church attendance, Bible classes, and study groups. Everyone dressed carefully for Sunday morning services. The ladies were all well-turned out, with hats and gloves, and men wore suits, heavily starched shirts, ties, and hats. In the summer heat, as church let out, dresses lost their fresh look and seemed wilted. The men quickly peeled off their jackets, revealing shirts that stuck to their backs.

For more than forty years, my family lived at 10 Fifth Avenue. Our house was next door to the downtown Forrest Hotel, named to honor the Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest. We were at the lower end of steep Fifth Avenue hill. Our other neighbor was Miss Eliza Fanny Andrews, who seemed ancient to my then young eyes. I was not far wrong. She was a maiden lady, had lived during the Civil War and written a book about the war, entitled *The War Time Journal of a Georgia Girl* (published in 1908 by the D. Appleton Co. in New York).

Our home was in the center of church "row." The First Christian Church was across the street on the corner. One long block away were the First Baptist and the Episcopal Churches, and nearby, both the Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches. Across another street was the Rodeph Sholom Synagogue,

housed in rented space on the second floor of the Masonic Temple building. In its modest and somewhat sparse quarters, it was all the small Jewish community could afford until a bequest from a deceased member made possible the building of a small, but beautiful, temple, located in the same "church" area, next door to the Episcopal Church.

And, in our neighborhood and down the hill from our house were the Salvation Army headquarters. In army regalia with caps and bonnets, members of the corps faithfully appeared on the street corner for weekly service. Accompanied by their small band, they raised their voices in prayer and thanksgiving. Though few in number, their music was loud and clear. Some of their melodies are with me even now as I look back.

As in much of the South, the Baptist Church was predominant. I often went with friends on Sunday evenings to a "Scrap Iron" Bible class at their church. (I never knew the origin of its name.) However, I was faithful in my attendance at my own Sunday School and services at the Synagogue.

Churches were segregated. Occasionally, some hopeful black would venture into a white church but was quickly escorted from the sanctuary. There may have been rare exceptions, but segregation was the rule.

The "colored" population, as the black community was then called, was probably the most faithful of all in their church attendance. Their need to come together must have been great. The church became a gathering place for socializing and entertainment, a treasured haven of hope, their private sanctuary. Disadvantaged by the laws of segregation, there were few choices for assembly. The church filled that need and became the place for family and friends to come together.

They were a devout people, well known for the fervor and beauty of their song and worship. Perhaps, from days of slavery, hymns and spirituals were a part of their culture, their heritage. A love of music and its natural rhythm seemed so much a part of their world. Many great talents and fine artists were discovered in their choir lofts. Some became successful and renowned in their field.

I remember...in addition to the segregated public schools, there were private schools for whites only. Darlington was a prep school for boys whose families could afford the costs involved. Certain social criteria also had to be met to gain admission to the school. Housing was available for boarding students.

Cooper Hall, a similar school for girls, was closed after a period of time, possibly for financial reasons. Some years later, when integration in the public schools became a serious possibility, another private school for girls was established.

Berry Schools, founded by Martha Berry for disadvantaged farm and mountain children, had its modest beginnings in a one-room log cabin. Known as Possum Trot, it was primarily for religious school use. With time, changes came. Farm work, done on the grounds, led to a well-managed agricultural school. A vocational school was established, and other schools became a part of the growing and expanding campus.

Once Berry College was established, it attracted many prominent visitors. Henry Ford, Amelia Earhart, Theodore Roosevelt, and others came to its campus, bringing national recognition and large endowments. With its growing reputation, a well-maintained, impressive campus, a varied student body and fine faculty, the school became a proud addition to Rome and the surrounding area.

Shorter College, originally a Baptist-supported college for women, drew students from all over the South. Early on, its campus was in the center of town, but it later moved to its present location high atop Shorter Hill. I was a student there, as were my sisters.

All of the schools made a great contribution to the cultural life in Rome, attracting many distinguished educators and offering special classes and courses to Rome's citizens. Student performances and lectures by visiting artists and scholars were open to the public -- for whites only -- and were generally well-attended. That same policy (for whites only) applied to enrollment as well.

I remember...the rich, the privileged, the old aristocratic families with their large and gracious homes set apart on avenues lined with trees and well groomed lawns, carefully arranged formal gardens or flower beds, all well-tended by gardeners. Their homes were staffed by an ever-available pool of maids, cooks, chauffeurs, and butlers. Living as they did in their sheltered and exclusive world, holding high positions in the community, attending private schools and private clubs, expecting and receiving special treatment, this favored group had a certain aura. Social amenities (and barriers) were an accepted part of their lives.

In sharp contrast, there were white Romans with limited income, with no reason to hope for a better future. They had few qualifications, were without special skills or training. The possibility of an improved workplace or job was not to be considered. They were true victims of a poor and limited educational system, and living in the unprogressive South at that time made the situation a bleak one. Their homes, often on unpaved streets, usually in need of repair, supplied only the barest of necessities. Their lives were hard.

The vast majority of Romans were “middle class.” They too had little chance of advancement in the job market and carefully guarded their resources and positions. For the most part, homes were modest, though there were neighborhoods with better living conditions. Ambitions and hopes must have been limited, looking mainly toward a satisfactory and comfortable way of life and to some kind of secure future. From my memory of my own neighborhood, life was simple. There were gardens or lawns to care for, house repairs, and involvements with schools, church, and the family -- like much of middle America.

In surrounding mill villages, there were also great contrasts. As I remember, the villages were entirely under plant ownership and management. Housing for employees was determined by the level of operation at which they worked. Those in executive or supervisory positions were provided with homes in the better neighborhoods. Those employed in the mill itself had more modest housing and often were victims of careless or indifferent management.

Even among whites, social barriers existed everywhere -- between the rich and the poor, between the high-positioned and the low, between the old established and the less successful. Despite all of the differences, Rome's white citizens overwhelmingly shared one common bond: a determination that schools, parks, buses -- the entire community -- would remain segregated. It was an unshakable belief that integration would lead to disaster. The mere suggestion of change was viewed as a threat to the Southern way of life and was not to be considered or accepted -- ever.

I remember...the run-down, isolated neighborhoods for black people. They lived in ghetto-like areas, sometimes with makeshift barriers to secure the dividing lines which separated them from the whites. There were some few "choice" homes, modest at best. Many homes were so poor and had been so neglected that they were really shacks, badly constructed originally and, of necessity, poorly maintained. There was no money to do so. In a desperate search for a place to live, families might move into an abandoned house and use it as their home. There was little incentive for a landlord to improve rental property.

Many of the homes for "colored" had only old or hand-me-down furniture. They often used items that were broken or in need of repair or replacement. Blacks had few comforts, inadequate plumbing or no plumbing at all. Without adequate bathing facilities, hygiene and cleanliness were serious problems. There was insufficient heating, and sometimes no electricity.

Their homes were often surrounded by a clutter of abandoned or broken-down cars, discarded furniture, or toys. Iron pots over open fires heated water for washing clothes that would later hang on a line to flap in the wind to dry. Some households had small vegetable gardens, but there was little time or extra energy to work toward maintaining some semblance of order. It must have been an overwhelming task to just "keep going."

Streets were dirt, unpaved without lighting or sidewalks, with inadequate sewage and overgrown ditches along the sides of the roads or streets. There could only have been endless dirt and dust, a hopeless, discouraging sight, all adding to the lack of pride and dignity, or the useless idea of trying to improve living conditions.

I remember...separate school systems for white and black, in both city and county. The white community lived with the pretense that despite school segregation, they were all equal. Indeed, they were not. There was great disparity in qualification requirements for teachers, teacher salaries, facilities, and curricula at the schools. Educational materials were, for the black schools, often out of date. There were sharp contrasts also in athletic programs and playground equipment. Overall standards, at best, were not high, and with limited financial resources to spread over two school systems, the quality of education in all schools suffered. Yet state laws required the separate systems. The black schools paid the highest price.

I remember...long before busing became a national concern, it existed in the South. Black children, possibly living next door to a white school, or within walking distance, would be bused daily to any "Negro school" to which they were assigned. Distance was no consideration. There was no choice or

alternative. Having to travel great distances made school days longer and more difficult.

I remember...like most institutions in the South, hospitals dealt differently with the black population than with the white. There was a limited number of rooms for blacks at the hospitals. These were usually on the lower or basement floors. When the assigned rooms were filled, patients were treated in the halls. Even if rooms were available on other floors, black patients were not transferred to them. It is unlikely that the quality of care for the "colored" compared well with that accorded to most whites. Blacks, often unable to pay, were generally denied the hospital's usual courtesy and care, and would have been hesitant to go there, except in extreme situations.

For instance, Maggie W. met with a strange accident. Her common-law husband had shot her in the foot. He chose a most inopportune time, a Sunday evening in the midst of a terrible storm. Because she came without money, treatment was being withheld. Having had a long-time connection with our family, Maggie asked the hospital to call us to ask that we come to see that she get proper care. The hospital called, but refused to medicate her unless or until a fee (I do not recall the amount) was paid. We asked that they attend her at once, that we would be responsible for all costs involved and would come immediately once the storm had lessened. (In this small community, our request was not unusual.) There was no compromise -- no treatment, until payment was received.

Despite the weather, my husband rushed to the hospital, paid the fee, went to the emergency room to reassure the patient. As he was ushered into the room, Maggie's skirt was pulled up, buttocks bared; she finally got the shot she needed. In the genteel South, that kind of treatment was reserved for "poor white trash" or blacks.

White doctors and dentists did not accept black patients. There were few competent black physicians or dentists who were willing to settle in a community such as Rome, with its inhospitable atmosphere and segregated working conditions. In fact, there were few black professionals, lawyers included. Enrollment in medical or law schools was limited and often completely out of the question for blacks. As a result of the difficulties in receiving training and employment, there were also few black registered nurses.

I remember...John F., a long-time employee in our family. He was a handsome black man, who took great pride in his appearance, always well put together even in his work clothes. He was quiet, pleasant. He called me one day, asking for help with a devastating toothache. At that time, I believe, there was only one black dentist in the community, but because of his very poor professional reputation, John was reluctant to go to him. Knowing the policy of the white dentists and doctors of not accepting black patients, I held out little hope for success, but I promised to make some calls for him. I tried. I called one dentist after another, many of whom were personal friends, asking that they see him. They were apologetic, but firm in their refusal. White patients would boycott their office, they claimed, if John was accepted as a patient. Unfortunately, that was indeed the case.

Only menial jobs were available to those in the black community no matter how well qualified the applicants. There were no jobs in governmental institutions, from the local to the Federal level. Business

firms maintained the same policy. “Negroes” worked as maids, janitors, delivery “boys,” gardeners, street cleaners, chauffeurs, cooks, waiters, caddies. “Colored” were not employed as salespeople. No “self-respecting” white would accept their assistance.

Students graduating from the “Negro” high school in Rome had no hope of desirable employment and were without opportunity or help to pursue a career. In sharp contrast, at the white high school, an annual career-day workshop was held for the senior class, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. A similar program for black students was never available until my husband became president of the Chamber.

As president, he also arranged the first program for black students, which took place on October 24, 1961. It was held at Main High School for juniors and seniors of Main High as well as for students from the Georgia School for the Deaf, Negro division. It became a successful annual event.

For many years, most stores did not permit black people the use of fitting rooms or the opportunity to try on clothes, even when a purchase was likely. With limited funds, making a choice was a problem without that added hardship. Salespeople sometimes made selections for their black customers. Returns or exchanges were not allowed.

I remember...the courts. The justice system weighed heavily in favor of whites. Penalties imposed on blacks were disproportionate. Jails were segregated. The police could be, and often were, abusive or disdainful. That attitude was not new to the South. The black community knew only too well that law enforcement officers had separate standards of behavior toward them and they lived in fear of being arrested.

Behind the police force was the history of the Ku Klux Klan, which had been organized soon after the Civil War by former Confederate officers and some prominent citizens. Its declared purpose was to protect the homes and families of its members. The Klan maintained that since the war was over, the government offered no civil defense, and with the freedom of the slaves, life and property were endangered. Dressed as they were, Klansmen could not be identified. They were a vigilante group that brought fear and anxiety to many citizens. For years they took the law into their own hands. The Klan's purpose was to maintain the status quo, to keep the white race "pure" and blacks "in their place.”

Suspects, picked up by the police, were sometimes taken away by a mob despite police efforts to protect them. There were times when these suspects were whisked away and murdered. Blacks were often innocent victims. Mobs, encouraged and supported by the power of the Klan, dared to defy the law. They were a powerful force and a frightening and intimidating threat, especially to the black community.

I remember...John F.'s only son, Hiram, a teenager, was shot and killed by the police at the railroad station, known as the “depot.” His family knew only that this happened during the night. There was no explanation for his death. He possibly could have been involved in some mischief or some criminal activity -- or perhaps, he was just at the wrong place at the wrong time. That was just the way it was. No inquiry held.

I remember seeing the Klan in parade as a child. I stood with my family on the corner of Broad Street, in front of the Forrest Hotel. The Klan rode past, on horseback, holding lit torches high in the air. They were dressed in their famous white sheets, heads and faces covered with masks and tall, pointed hoods, their eyes peering out through small slits. That frightening picture never went away.

Voting restrictions remained even after the poll tax was removed and the laws changed. The right to vote was for whites only, though registration and voting were "open to all." Anne P. had spent much of her life wishing she could vote. She was interested and knowledgeable, and though fearful of going to the courthouse to register, was determined to try. Her concerns proved justified. To discourage Negro registration, there was a "qualifying" and complicated questionnaire that had to be dealt with to prove one's eligibility to vote. It was confusing and frightening, especially to those already intimidated by the courthouse atmosphere. There was the possibility of some kind of reprisal for those determined to register, perhaps the loss of a job or some form of harassment.

After one unsuccessful trip to the courthouse, Anne was prepared to give up. In the end, I went with her, and suddenly registration was easily accomplished, without questionnaire or qualifying form. She realized her dream. She became a voter. She still is.

I remember...the lack of restroom facilities for black people. In buildings (including public ones) where facilities were available, blacks were denied their use. Where only one water fountain was provided, that fountain was identified as being "for whites only." If a second fountain was available, it would be marked "colored."

I remember..."off limits": front seats on the buses (school buses included), the Carnegie Library, parks, hotels, restaurants, lunch counters, movie houses, theaters, concerts, churches, front entrances to most buildings, public restrooms. When access was provided, it was in separate quarters and/or through separate entrances.

In the genteel, well-mannered South, blacks were also denied the courtesy of being addressed by a correct Mr., Mrs., or Miss. All whites, regardless of age, relationship, or circumstance addressed all Negroes by their first or given names. So I remember...Mrs. Louis J., a dignified, gracious woman, handsome, always carefully groomed, beautifully dressed. She, too, was known by her first name, by any white, no matter the age difference, no matter the situation, no matter her quiet, and dignified response. She was many years my senior, yet I, too, took that liberty. I called her by her first name, never realizing how demeaning that was for her and for me as well. She nevertheless responded with great gentility and in her impeccable English. It does not diminish my sense of shame that I finally did accord her the courtesy she gave to me, a courtesy she so richly deserved.

At railroad stations, there were separate waiting rooms, separate water fountains, and separate restrooms, if available at all. There were separate cars on trains, few in number. Without first-class, dining, or Pullman cars (sleeping) accommodations, space was at a premium.

I remember...being approached by the conductor on the train as we traveled to Chicago. He wanted to know if my sister and I, sitting in a first-class "Pullman" car, would object to sharing our seat for a few hours with a "colored" soldier. Apologetically, he explained that there were no other seats available and the soldier's ticket was for first-class accommodations. Besides, he added, we were above the Mason-Dixon line. This was during World War II, and to spend time with a soldier returning from overseas duty seemed an opportunity to have an interesting traveling companion. And he was. Our time with him was well-spent. He told us of some of his overseas experiences, and we found him personable and interesting.

Later in the day, we invited him to join us for lunch, though he warned us that our eating together was not a possibility. We were very sure there would be no problem as we made our way to the dining car together. True to his prediction, despite our pleas and reminder that we were above the Mason-Dixon line, our request to be seated together was denied. The fact that he was in uniform and in the service of our country made no difference. The decision was firm. Blacks and whites could not and would not be served together in their dining car. He was seated behind a drawn curtain for his lunch.

And I remember...Kathleen S., "colored," came to work in our home before our children were born and stayed to help raise them. She was a "picture-book" nanny in her white, starched uniform (her choice). She traveled with us often, never without a problem, none of her making.

On trains, and in Pullman cars, where we had reserved private sleeping quarters, the conductors and porters were determined that she not be allowed to share our space. I was determined that she would, and in the dining car as well. Stewards and waiters insisted that she could not be seated or served with us. There were confrontations. We had our way, finally, every time. Traveling by car was no simple matter either. We were denied service in restaurants and the use of restroom facilities. It seemed never-ending.

During World War II, in most U.S. military settings world-wide, black troops were not allowed to eat, watch a movie, get a haircut, or ride in a bus with whites. Blood supplies were segregated, and plasma from black donors was stored separately in containers marked "A" for African.

Black soldiers were restricted to Negro units, mostly assigned to noncombatant (not dependable) roles. Black soldiers coming home from the war were disheartened and disillusioned. It was not until 1948 that the Defense Department changed its policy of a segregated military. But coming home from the war and finding the world unchanged was an added disappointment to a recently discharged soldier. So much was the same as before –– segregation, second-class citizenship, few job opportunities. No heroes welcome. There were still two worlds in the South -- one white, one black.

I remember Henry P... coming home from the war, battered and bruised both physically and mentally. He had left for the Army a productive member of his well-respected family and returned a changed man. He had learned to drink. The daily reminder of his color and his "place" had been more than he could bear. We talked about it, he and I, and he told me how it was. He lost his soul and his spirit, and he drank and drank...and drank until he died. He was my friend.

Henry came to help me pack as I, home alone, was getting ready for our move to Cincinnati. It was the only time I ever saw Henry really drunk. He had come to work before having had one drink or two, but this was different. There was no doubt. He staggered when he walked, his speech was slurred, his eyes, bloodshot. I knew, but I also knew how hard it was for him, our moving away. It was hard for me as well, and I felt that since we had so little time left, our being together, that it would work. He would sober up as the day progressed.

I sent him to the attic and asked that he bring down whatever was there. He did, quickly, and then he took it all back upstairs! Shaken as I was by the idea of our move and seeing his hurt, I turned on him in all my fury, screaming that he should get out of my house, that he was drunk, and then, over and again, I said it: "get out...get out...you're drunk!" And I watched him as he left, crossing a field behind our house. I sat on the kitchen floor and wept my goodbye.

We came together again, Henry and I, whenever I went back to Rome for a visit, which was often. The last time I saw him, styles had changed and my skirt was fashionably knee length. He was quick to remind me that I was too old for so short a skirt! I loved him, I still do.

But I also remember...Rome was not so different from other southern communities. Perhaps in many ways it was less harsh. In the very deep South, in other southern cities, and in the rural South, conditions were often more hopeless and deprivation greater.

Our way of life in Rome was well established. Life was simple. The pace was slow, the speech properly drawled. Manners and propriety were important. Everyone knew “their place” and few dared or cared to challenge the accepted pattern of behavior. There was no need. We were a satisfied, complacent and proud people, happy to be Romans, Georgians, Southerners.

I do not sit in judgment of my fellow Romans or Georgians. If there were sins of omission or commission, we were together in our actions. I was, and still am, a loyal Southerner. I love the South, I love its people. Our world was, as required, segregated, and there was no question by the vast majority of its correctness or need to change. That was our heritage, our culture.

I remember...we all believed that “Negroes” were a happy people. We were sure that there was no cause for concern, for worry. How could they be troubled, living as they did in a fine community, working for good, white folks who watched over them so well? Surely, that was all they could want, hope for, or need.

We did not see those stoic, immobile black faces. Faces, without expression of pleasure, displeasure or denial, with only a silent acceptance of a job to be done, pay received. Even a special favor was often received in silence -- perhaps suspicious of such unexpected good fortune.

Looking back, I know that most blacks in Rome and throughout the South were afraid and without hope, not daring to step over the established line. There could only have been hurt and anger, fear and

frustration. Desperation and despair had to be pervasive in the black community.

The dividing lines between blacks and whites had been too long, for too long. The need to bridge the barriers of hurt, indifference, pain, thoughtlessness, lack of understanding was endless. We lived in one small community but in two worlds. How to reach out, how to learn to care, to be willing to look for new ways. To start again. To take time to begin...and even now there is still the need...to search for answers, for forgiveness, for healing.

Life in that small town was fine for my husband Jule and for me, knowing people as we did in all parts of the community. We were involved in many activities; our acquaintances and friendships were widespread. I knew Rome well and loved it. I still do. Many friends and some family are still there, and we have not lost touch. In both the black community and white, Jule and I had long-time relationships and some very special friends.

And yet...nothing is ever quite perfect. Where prejudice against one people or another exists, it comes to others as well. There is no hiding place. For Jule and for me, it was our being Jewish. We never tried or needed or wanted to deny that. Everyone knew what we were, who we were. No one seemed to really care. There were times when our being Jewish was discussed for some reason or other. That was never really disturbing to us. But there were times, though rare, that brought us up short, perhaps only from a careless or thoughtless remark, but it was a reminder that we were considered "different." Perhaps we were even "forgiven" for our difference: we weren't "like a lot of other Jews," and there was the familiar "some of our best friends."

And then...it happened. We were so comfortable, so secure. How could the idea of our not being welcome in one neighborhood or another cross our minds? It never did, until we decided to buy a new and larger home. It took us a little time to "catch on" -- denial, refusing to believe that could happen "here" or to us.

But it did. It was fact, not fiction, a shocking revelation to both of us. The unthinkable "not next door" applied to us.

Growing up in Rome may have prepared me for some of this. Through the years, I had faced small reminders, sometimes even larger ones -- being made to feel inferior or uncomfortable. At an early age, I learned to bear some of that, though never easily. It was more than a terrifying moment for any youngster, a constant for those in the black world. As I grew older, I learned to meet it head on. It was easier for me that way. So, perhaps in some measure, we were better able to face this new turn and unexpected event.

We dealt with it "first class," at least in my own mind. It became our business to bring this story to light. It was for "all ears" and interesting to everyone who heard it, becoming a *cause celebre*, the talk of the town. We went to great lengths to describe the events, and I do admit to taking great pleasure in regaling my audience. Responses and denials were overwhelming and immediate. Many, we found amusing.

Discrimination dies hard -- or never does.

And then there came...the early 60's, when the world began to change. Suddenly, everything seemed different. There was a restlessness in the air, voiced dissatisfaction, tensions. Coming from unexpected corners of the South, there were the beginnings of a new and different spirit which was gaining momentum, becoming a contagion. The Civil Rights movement had become a force and was gaining strength. It had begun to grow and attract supporters. I was one of those supporters, and I became involved.

It was never my intention to become involved in the Civil Rights movement, but for me it began at a PTA meeting. It was 1954, soon after the announced decision by the Supreme Court that public schools were to be integrated. The meeting was held at the South Rome Elementary School, where our daughter Ann was in the fourth grade. The school was located in a working class neighborhood. Like many schools in Rome at that time, the building was old and poorly maintained. The lack of funding to better support the school system was obvious.

We met in a classroom, its condition reflecting the generally run-down appearance of the whole school. I sat in the first row facing the speaker, whom I knew well. He was a young, prominent attorney, invited to come to talk about the problems of school integration and how our schools could be affected by this ruling. He was a second or third generation attorney in Rome, with an established law practice. He had inherited wealth and social position. He was “old family,” distinguished in appearance and a true aristocrat of the South. For him, there was no need for change.

He spoke confidently as he addressed these parents, many with less than minimal education. They were frightened and threatened by the prospect of their children being forced to attend schools with “nigras.” I do not remember all that he said, but his opening statement remains clear in my mind: "When the Supreme Court made its famous, or should I say, its infamous decision..."

He might have spoken for a brief time or for long, I cannot be sure, but I was shocked and appalled that this experienced, “responsible” attorney would give hope to these parents that there could be some escape from desegregating the schools. When he finished speaking, the audience stood to applaud him. I did not move. Still seated, I looked him full in the face and said, "How could you?" That was my first stand for civil rights, my first protest.

After that, my involvement came easily enough. It was soon after the meeting at school, I was at Shorter College waiting in the car for our daughter Ann, who was there for a piano lesson. Franziska Boas, one of the Shorter faculty, stopped to visit with me. She asked if I would be interested in meeting with a group that was coming together to organize a Rome chapter of the Georgia Council of Human Relations.

With headquarters in Atlanta, the purpose of the Council was to work toward a peaceful solution to the problems that existed between blacks and whites. The question of school integration was urgent. The Negro community was restless, waiting for some response to their requests for improved race relations

and equal job opportunities, for basic human rights such as the elimination of “whites only” or “colored” signs.

They wanted the use of the parks, libraries, and restroom facilities in public areas, as well as “open” seating on the bus. Response to their requests had not been forthcoming from the City Council or from the Chamber of Commerce. There was obviously no will by the white community to respond or to change the status quo, despite repeated petitions. Restlessness in the black community was becoming more and more evident. Rumors and rumblings were pervasive. The need for responsible action was obvious.

Franziska Boas had been contacted by the Council in Atlanta, with the request that she organize a chapter in Rome. The organizational meeting was to be held at the First Episcopal Church, whose minister, Father D., had received special permission from his board for the group to have its initial meetings in the church parlor.

Franziska was no “run of the mill” Roman. For starters, she was a “Yankee” who had come to Rome to head the physical education and dance departments at Shorter College, a most conservative school. One would hardly have expected to find her there as a member of the faculty.

She was a large, heavy-boned woman with graying hair and a deep husky voice. A brusque manner belied the warm and caring person that she was, just as her large frame made her graceful movements surprising. Her late father was the renowned anthropologist, Franz Boas.

I do not remember how Franziska and I came to know each other. It may have been when our daughters were enrolled in the children's dance classes she gave at the college. I admired and respected this most unusual woman and cherished the relationship that we shared.

Through the years, I came to know her more intimately as our involvement in the Civil Rights movement grew. I had great confidence in her judgment and in her ability to make the right decisions. And despite the seriousness of the problems we were dealing with, she had an ever-present sense of wry, ironic humor!

We were a small group that first met in the church. Besides Father D., there were only a few whites -- another faculty member from Shorter, Charlotte V., Franziska, and I -- with about four or five black men. There were no women with them as I remember. These men shook my hand as they came in, and I felt the shock of their heavily calloused hands as they greeted me warmly. It was the first time I had ever been in a social situation with black men, and one at the meeting shared a settee with me.

They were all eager to be heard, grateful for a receptive audience. Paradoxically it was a Mr. White who impressed me, as he told how he hated the “whites only” and “colored only” signs. One especially offensive to him was a “whites only” sign over a local laundromat. Charlotte V. added a bit of humor as she told how her mother, on a visit from Chicago, thought that the sign meant that only WHITE clothes could be laundered there.

There was a great deal of input and almost a vying for a chance to speak, an obvious result of the limited opportunities of the black men to be heard. Their lack of experience was apparent, as was my own in being privy to such a group. We made plans for a second meeting. It was another beginning for me.

I do not remember how often we met and over what period of time, but it was not long before the church board advised us that they could no longer permit our meeting there. Their decision was understandable for it was socially unacceptable for the races to "mix," and the board could be held accountable for any legal action that might be taken against us, possibly for creating civil unrest. At that time, churches were segregated in the same way that all community facilities were, and the board was not really free to continue housing our meetings as they had.

It then became our business to find other places to meet, and we moved to basements in Negro churches. The meetings were held only at night. The churches were located on poorly lit streets. With the hostile environment that had begun to pervade the community, I felt more and more threatened, and it was with very uneasy feelings that I would go to the meetings. We could be arrested for meeting illegally, promoting unrest, or for some vague reason. I had warned our daughters, Ann and Ellen, of the possibility and I had even asked the Episcopal minister for his promise to sit next to me in the patrol car in such an event. Despite my fears (I was afraid!) and misgivings, I had to go on.

The membership grew slowly, but with every meeting, there were new faces. A former neighbor of ours who had recently finished his graduate work at a university and joined the faculty at Shorter College was one of those new members. I often went to the meetings with him, which gave me some comfort. Other whites began to come, though I now fail to remember who they were.

It was like a fever, the rumors and reports that began to spread. The idea of closing all public schools in Rome to avoid integration was fast becoming a serious alternative. For the black community, as well as for the white, there was a great deal at stake. Proof of the increasing concern came with the growing membership of the council. As time went on, those involved became less intimidated and were more willing to be heard and to challenge the system.

One night as we came out of a meeting, we were faced by a group of members of the White Citizens Council, cameras in hand. With their flashing bulbs, they were taking photographs of the group. There was a struggle for the cameras and film while I, and others, made a mad dash to our cars. I learned later on that some photographs were used, though unsuccessfully, as a threat against the faculty members at Shorter who were involved.

There were other activities. I went with other Council members one Sunday morning to a black church, which was one of the few located so close to the downtown business district and on North Broad Street. Apparently we had been invited for some special event or celebration, but my memory fails as to the reason for the invitation. I do remember that I was moved and impressed by the fervor with which they responded to their prayers and how fervently they sang their hymns.

Meanwhile, the increased pressure from the federal government for action toward integrating the schools was causing great concern in Rome. Frightened at the prospect of some immediate drastic change, the whites began seriously to look for some escape routes.

Interestingly, relief came from Darlington, Rome's private school for boys. In view of the "emergency" that had arisen, rules for admission were changed, making enrollment a possibility for some white students who earlier would not have been admitted. And with the ongoing crisis, some Romans were willing to make extra financial sacrifices in order to "protect" their sons.

However, schooling for girls and young women remained a concern. One group of parents, determined to protect their daughters from the "dangers" of integration, made the decision to establish a private school for girls. Their efforts toward that goal were successful, and the Thornwood School became a reality.

A related incident: Two of our neighbors came to "call" to ask that we consider enrolling our daughters in their school, still in its planning stages. They assured me that the advantages would be great, the possibility of improved education endless. I was less enthusiastic than they about those promised glories. I told them that my husband and I were well aware of the problems at hand and had given the matters careful consideration. I explained that it was our firm belief that the timing for starting a private school was unfortunate and that such a school would not be in the best interest of the community. And in fact, we would be abandoning the schools when public education was in jeopardy.

It was my suggestion that rather than desert our schools, we should come together and put to use our influence and resources to bring about change and improvement in the public educational system. I reminded my visitors that desegregation in the schools could not be avoided, that the situation was truly critical. They assured me that they had given all of these problems a great deal of consideration and had already made great efforts to effect some improvement in the system and in the quality of education. But they had decided the end results were more than discouraging, and they were no longer willing to wait for some such unlikely development.

Although they agreed their timing was unfortunate, they insisted that the question of integrating the public school system was in no way connected to their effort to start a new school. I did not say so, but I did not believe them. The visit ended as I told them honestly it was my hope that their mission would fail. It was my husband's intention and mine to have our daughters continue their education in the public school. We stayed with that decision and never had regrets about doing so.

The threat of closing the schools was indeed real, although there were strong differences of opinion in the community. Some in positions of leadership made great efforts to keep the schools open while others felt it would be preferable to close the schools rather than to "abandon them to a desegregated system where anything might happen." Some parents panicked; many who could ill afford the costs made arrangements to transfer their children to private schools.

I sent letters to the governor and to our legislators, urging for immediate action to save the schools. One

reply told me it was his opinion "the best way to destroy the Georgia public school system is to integrate." Another wrote it was time for “prayer.”

But many in office did realize that the loss of public education would prove disastrous to Georgia, which also desperately needed to improve its economy and to attract new industry to the state. The need for immediate action was more than urgent.

It was then that Governor Ernest Vandiver formed the Sibley Commission named after its chairman, Judge John Sibley. Members of this panel represented different sections of the state. Its purpose was to determine the consensus of the people concerning the future of the Georgia school system. Hearings, open to the public, were to be held in different counties. Anyone who was willing to speak would be given the opportunity to do so.

On March 10, 1960, my husband and I were among those who attended such a meeting, held at the court house in Cartersville, Georgia. The audience consisted of private citizens and representatives of civic organizations, labor unions, Chambers of Commerce, P.T.A. groups, and school boards. Jule spoke as a concerned parent for open schools. He said it would be "an act of suicide on the part of society" were the schools to be closed.

Some who spoke are strong in my memory: a representative from one of the labor unions testified that he was authorized to speak for a membership of 4,500. It was their belief that an “over-educated” black population in the job market would prove to be a threat to the safety of their jobs. Therefore, they unanimously opposed integrating the school system. There being no alternative, schools should be closed.

One white parent from the small community of Smyrna surprised everyone with her testimony as she described her experience in a recent ice storm. During that period with the schools closed, she and her five children were marooned at home. In her own words, they drove her crazy. No matter what, she wanted to send her children to school. I remember her saying, "If colored children would be their classmates, then so be it."

An aged black man took the stand. With words of anguish, he spouted out his embittered testimony. All his life, it had been "nigger, nigger, nigger." It had been too much for him, too long -- and he stepped down.

There were many others: the American Legion, League of Women Voters, Georgia Council of Churches, Floyd County Education Association, school superintendents, teachers, ministers, all speaking for their constituents. The result of this meeting was a 3-1 endorsement for each county to make its own decision (termed “local option”), despite strong support from many voices for “segregation at all costs.”

Additional hearings were held all over the state, all well attended. The schools in Georgia were never closed. Subsequently, they were and are integrated. The hearings proved to be a clever ploy by the

governor and the state legislators. They were realistic enough to know that the schools must remain viable. The hearings gave the public the illusion of having played a role in the decision-making process.

In that period during which the hearings were held, adjustments to the idea of change were gradually becoming more acceptable to the white community. The unmentionable, unwelcome, unthinkable merging of the school systems was becoming a reality.

Meanwhile, other organizations were at work. Local chapters of the NAACP and SNCC had become active, their memberships growing. There was a stirring of hope in the black community all over the South. That hope came to Rome as well.

My own role and involvement were small and behind the scenes. My husband's was more visible. He was outspoken and fearless, using his experience as past president of the Chamber of Commerce and as an active member of its board. His was an articulate and respected voice for change and reason. He had entree to decisions made by city officials on a day-to-day basis and he dared to challenge them to act responsibly, reminding them that Rome and its surrounding areas would suffer if they failed to meet the demands and challenges that faced them.

Jule was so well regarded in the community that his suggestions and ideas were listened to and often accepted. His contributions were important. Although he was often accused of being soft in the spirit of compromise, of being a communist and a "nigger-lover," he accepted that with good grace. He was not afraid to speak out and did again and again.

Jule's death in 1994 left me without my mentor in writing this history. Because he had been so close to the decision-making process, his information and his knowledge of Rome's history and its responses to some crises were often more reliable than were mine. Before his death and during his long illness we worked as a team. I wrote and he edited my work. We shared experiences, involvements, memories. We dug out old letters, read old papers, reminding each other of one event and then another. Our source materials were our few books of Rome's history, some documents and most of all, our memories. There may be errors in our reconstruction of this important period in Rome's history, but if there are, they are unintentional. Rome was too important to both of us and too much a part of our lives for us to have written this without thought and great care.

In that period of our nation's history, our lives took on new meaning and purpose. I look back now and am grateful to have been witness to and a participant in the changes that were being made. We had a cause, something which does not come often in one's life. It gave our lives a new dimension and, I believe, a greater understanding of the human spirit.

As I read and reread the papers, it became my hope that I would one day contact and perhaps meet some of the students. I wanted to know about them -- who were they, how did they dare to believe they could make a difference, how did they dare to believe they could do battle against such odds and even survive or perhaps win! Where did they find the courage to come face to face with so hostile a world, those

brave, young innocents -- I wanted to find them, to know where their lives had taken them -- did they remember the sit-ins, then writing about them and how it all began and ended? -- and had their actions then affected their lives?

I tried in a variety of ways to find them. I took copies of all the papers to Rome to a parent of one of the students. I asked that she share them with anyone who had been involved and who would be interested. She had not known papers had been written and was eager to read them and would contact as many students as she could. I know that she did. I also told her I was very anxious to hear from any of the students, and would like to have them either write or call me. I never heard.

From a variety of sources, I got addresses of many of the students, and sent letters of explanation, along with self-addressed, stamped postal cards, asking for replies, for information about themselves or about others I could not locate. Some cards were returned, and finally, a few unexpected phone calls, some rather strange, coming at very odd hours, but, for the most part they were curious about me -- who was I? How had I become involved? I sometimes felt almost suspect, as if I were some kind of a spy for whatever purpose. Meanwhile, my life had taken a different turn. I had come to a dead end with this effort.

Surprisingly then, on a visit to Rome, one of the students, hearing I was in town, called and invited me to meet him for lunch. I loved the idea. So that I could easily identify him, he told me he would be wearing a full length black coat with a white scarf. I did not have to look for him, he found me right off. As planned, we met in a shopping mall in front of a cafeteria. I was quite taken aback when I saw him, he was SO white! I said so at once and then he reminded me that he was the light complexioned student who had tried to confuse the manager of the store where he and his friends sat-in. And I knew who he was.

We had lunch at the cafeteria where he introduced me as his “date” to the women who worked there. He said I could have anything I wanted. He obviously ate there often; they seemed to know him so well.

He had no memory of writing his paper but he told me he remembered the protests, sitting-in at the lunch counters and of the party after their release from jail. His best memory was of the whites who were there when the students were being honored. I had been one of those!

I gave him his paper to read and he was instantly totally absorbed. I don't know if he remembered the actual events as they were written but we talked about his experiences as being a part of the movement and of his feelings. His having been involved was obviously a proud memory. Apparently, those events had led him to join other protests later in his life. He reminded me of the once school-athletic star who had never quite recovered from his moment in the “sun.”

He was anxious to know how I came to be involved, and how the papers came into my possession. He told me he had been married, was divorced and I believe, was employed at a carpet manufacturing plant. Meeting him was interesting for me. I was sorry I did not use my time with him to better advantage. At the moment, I was caught up between two worlds. My husband had had an accident soon after we came

to Rome and I was pressed for time.

I cannot now remember if he promised to help contact other students, or contact me again, but that was all. He treated me with great courtesy, reminding me that I was his guest for lunch. We were an unlikely twosome, but I am pleased at the memory of our being together. I believe it was February 1991.

Within my store of memory of the Rome sit-ins, there was one story that more than any other made me realize the personal hurt that lay beneath the real drama that was unfolding as we watched the students march together to protest discrimination against them. It was a shameful abuse of a child which could only bring a lifetime of hurt, resentment, anger and finally rage. A true seed for discontent that must have smoldered in that young heart all those years...

It came from a youngster who had marched at the head of his group. Small wonder that he and his classmates could and would take their stand for human rights, for dignity, for their rightful place in the human family. I write this story now to be sure it will be properly remembered...

At the party honoring the students after the sit-ins, I met several of the demonstrators. There was one who stood out in the crowd and I went over to speak to him. He identified himself as the leader of the group. He seemed at ease as he talked about his recent experience.

Now, as I look back, I am hard pressed to know how it was that I asked this strange and very personal question...when did he learn that he was black? Obviously he remembered it well since his reply was so immediate. This was his story:

He was five years old and had gone with a white neighbor to a nearby drug store to buy ice cream cones. They climbed up on the high stools at the counter, their nickels in hand, waiting to be served. Instead of taking their orders, the man behind the counter kept saying, "you'll have to go." Lonnie looked around trying to see who was being told to leave. There was no one else in the store, only the two youngsters and the man behind the counter, who said over and again "you'll have to go." Puzzled by it all, Lonnie got off his stool and walked outside.

With his nose pressed against the plate glass window, this five year old peered into the store and watched as his friend was being served an ice cream cone. And in that instant, the reflection of his own small face came into focus. He knew then. He learned quickly. He learned too soon.

He would not forget -- neither will I.