

## A Mobile, Alabama Saga

(Continued from Front)

American community, as people questioned McLarty's competency to direct the investigation of the Donald lynching. The Police Benevolent Association (PBA), or organization of black police officers, claimed McLarty is a racist and demanded that he apologize for his remark. He refused. The Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department, which is notorious for undermining movements for racial justice, was called in to mediate. (See *Southern Exposure*, Vol. 8, No. 2, on CRS.)

A few days later, there came the slaying of Eddie Lee Pritchett, a 21-year-old black man who had escaped from the Mobile County Jail. A white Mobile policeman fired a shotgun blast into his back as he tried to escape his mother's house, which was surrounded by police. After we arrived in town, we read accounts of the Mobile *Press Register* of the arrests of three white men on charges of murder in the Donald death. They are Ralph Hayes, 23, and two brothers, Jimmy Edgar, 22, and Johnny Edgar, 26. Their bond was set at \$250,000.

Hayes, a pulpwood worker, was paroled in 1978 from convictions for burglary and possession of marijuana. Jimmy Edgar was paroled in 1979 after serving a year of a twenty-month sentence for burglary and carnal knowledge.

Beyond this information, nowhere could I find profiles of the alleged killers. There was no evidence that either of the town's two daily papers was investigating and reporting reasons for the lynching and its aftermath.

This was striking irony since Michael Donald was described by all who knew him as "clean-cut" and "industrious." Besides working part-time for the *Press Register*, he studied brickmasonry at the local technical institute.

On April 1, I was talking with WBLX radio news reporter Paul Mykals when our conversation was interrupted by a caller with a tip that a black inmate in the jail in Chickasaw (near Mobile) had been found hanged and dead in his cell. It turned out that Cleophus Powell had been found by jailers the night before. Powell, 31, was serving ten days for shoplifting.

Two days earlier in Slidell, Ala., another Afro-American was found hanging in a jail. In both

hangings, authorities claimed suicide. Powell's mother said the day before her son was found dead, she had visited him and he was in good spirits.

Then, while we were in Mobile, a Mobile Afro-American was fired as the top official in the Alabama Department of Pensions and Security. There had been a dispute over welfare cuts between him and Alabama Governor Fob James. Cooper was fired after Afro-Americans on his board were removed by James. Blacks across the state protested.

Then I heard on the town's grapevine that black and white students had fought the previous day at Shaw High School in predominantly white West Mobile. The fight reportedly began after empty nooses were found hanging at the school.

WBLX reporter Paul Mykal said he learned that two other noose-hangings had occurred two days earlier at Davidson High School. The earlier incidents had gone unreported by the daily papers. School officials dismissed all the noose incidents as childish pranks.

Meantime, parents alerted me to letters children had brought home from Booker T. Washington and Bessie C. Fonnville Schools warning them to beware of a vehicle with a white male who was attempting to pick up children after school. School officials said the letter was a "precautionary measure," in view of the Atlanta murders.

In the wake of these reports from the schools, I had to think about a meeting of the Mobile Board of Education, which Judy Hand had attended. Dr. Dan Alexander, the board chairman, had protested a U.S. Department of Education dictum to desegregate the schools. He claimed the dictum was "forced racism."

Alexander was the attorney for four white children whose parents defied a federal judge's order to send them to an integrated school fifteen miles from their home in Buckeye, Louisiana, a few months ago.

I talked with Mrs. Beulah Donald, Michael Donald's mother. Long before her son was lynched on March 21, her spirit had been lynched as she reached adulthood in Mobile. Her father was a lumber mill worker and her mother a washwoman.

Shortly before her son's death, she was "lynched"

again — this time by a welfare case worker who told her erroneously that because of the cutbacks being sought by the Reagan administration, her food stamps, medicare, and subsistence check had already been cut back.

The last time I saw her, her medicine prescribed for hypertension had run out. Her housing authority manager was threatening her with higher rent, after press reports on her son's death disclosed that he had held a part-time job to earn spending change and lunch money.

There's not much in Mobile to make one hopeful for the future — but as I talked with Mrs. Donald, I felt a glimmer of hope as I recalled a meeting that had happened the day before. Heads of Mobile County's social service agencies had met to plan organizing against those budget cuts that threaten the existence of Mrs. Donald and so many others. The agency heads were planning letter-writing, mass meetings and other action.

And meantime, Judy Hand had been meeting with white church leaders, labor organizers, and other whites discussing with them the idea of a public statement expressing outrage at racist violence and institutional racism. That statement will probably be published soon.

In the Afro-American community, local NAACP leader Dr. Robert Guillard was calling on people to "keep cool." But several black leaders were contemplating a boycott of the Chickasaw community and of several major stores in Mobile until racist violence ceases. Others discussed boycotting one of Mobile's major banks and asking blacks to remove accounts to the town's black-owned bank.

The sentiments of grassroots Afro-Americans could be summed up by

## Joe Louis

(Continued from Front)

kind of drug on his gloves. This conjecture was neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of Joe Louis fans until Louis put Schmeling away in a resounding first round knockout in Yankee Stadium, New York, on June 22, 1938.

During his seventeen years as a boxer, Louis added up a 68-3 record including 54 knockouts. During ten years of his spectacular career, the record read thus:

• June 22, 1937—Joe Louis knocked out Braddock, 8 rds, Chicago;  
• August 30, 1937—Louis defeated Tommy Farr, 15 rds, Yankee Stadium;  
• February 23, 1938—Louis knocked out Nathan Mann, 3 rds, Madison Square Garden;  
• April 1, 1938—Louis knocked out Harry Thomas, 5 rds, Chicago;

81-year-old tenant leader and retired school teacher, Mrs. Annie McGrue. Speaking at a Martin Luther King memorial service on April 4 in Prichard near Mobile, she said: "These are moving times." She concluded that blacks in Mobile are heading back into slavery.

Casmara Mani, at the same meeting, urged black unity and action and a progressive response from the white communities to combat the racist violence and racist mentality which, he said, "permeates America."

"If intelligent white people do not take a stand against racism, we are going to have a Miami on our hands," Mani said. "I am speaking from moving around in the streets, talking to the project people, talking to the brothers off the avenues. People are fed up, and if they don't see somebody taking an initial move, you are going to start to find people busted in the head and stabbed in the back out of the white community."

• June 22, 1938—Louis knocked out Max Schmeling, 1 rd, Yankee Stadium;  
• January 23, 1939—Louis knocked out John Henry Lewis, 1 rd, Madison Square Garden;  
• April 17, 1939—Louis knocked out Jack Roper, 1 rd, Los Angeles;  
• June 28, 1939—Louis knocked out Tony Galento, 4 rds, Yankee Stadium;  
• September 20, 1939—Louis knocked out Bob Pastor, 11 rds, Detroit;  
• February 9, 1940—Louis outpointed Arturo Godoy, 15 rds, Madison Square Garden;  
• March 29, 1940—Louis knocked out Johnny Paychek, 2 rds, Madison Square Garden;  
• June 20, 1940—Louis knocked out Arturo Godoy, 8 rds, Yankee Stadium;  
• December 16, 1940—Louis knocked out Al McCoy, 6 rds, Boston;  
• January 31, 1941—Louis knocked out Red Burman,

5 rds, Madison Square Garden;  
• February 17, 1941—Louis knocked out Gus Dorazio, 2 rounds, Philadelphia;  
• March 21, 1941—Louis knocked out Abe Simon, 13 rds, Detroit;  
• April 8, 1941—Louis knocked out Tony Musto, 9 rds, St. Louis;  
• May 23, 1941—Louis knocked out Buddy Baer, 7 rds, Washington, D.C.;  
• June 18, 1941—Louis knocked out Billy Conn, 13 rds, Polo Grounds, N.Y.;  
• September 29, 1941—Louis knocked out Lou Nova, 6 rds, Polo Grounds, N.Y.;  
• January 9, 1942—Louis knocked out Buddy Baer, 1 rd, Madison Square Garden;  
• March 27, 1942—Louis knocked out Abe Simon, 6 rds, Madison Square Garden;  
• June 19, 1946—Louis knocked out Billy Conn, 8 rds, Yankee Stadium;  
• September 18,

1946—Louis knocked out Tami Mauriella, 1 rd, Madison Square Garden;  
• December 5, 1947—Louis outpointed Jersey Joe Walcott, 15 rds, Madison Square Garden.  
Louis spent the World War II years in the Army. His contributions to the United States Government were numerous, including huge, outright financial gifts. He was, in later life, hounded by the government and Internal Revenue for taxes. His first retirement from boxing was announced in March, 1949. A need for funds sent him back into the ring against Ezzard Charles on September 27, 1950 where he was beaten in a 15-round bout. Two months later, he was back in the ring again, this time with some bittersweet victories. On October 26, 1951, Rocky Marciano knocked Louis out in the eighth, bringing his ring career to an end.  
Joe Louis Barrow was

## Mrs. Weaver Observes 90th Birthday

Mrs. Mamie Weaver of Brant Street observed her 90th birthday anniversary on April 9.

In addition to numerous gifts, visits and cards from family and friends, Mrs. Weaver got a telephone call from her youngest son, Edward Troy Weaver, who is in Saudi Arabia.

buried Wednesday among this country's honored at Arlington National Cemetery, in the Nation's Capitol.

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## North Carolina

### Recorded Victims of Lynching

Peter Bazemore	Lewiston, March 26, 1918
Robert Berrier	Lexington, October 25, 1889
Mack Bess	Nearland, September 8, 1891
Joseph Black	Kinston, April 5, 1916
David Boone	Morganton, September 11, 1889
J.A. Burris	Albemarle, June 12, 1892
Robert Chalmers	Cranberry, April 22, 1896
Jack Dillingham	Salisbury, August 6, 1906
Kinch Freeman	Winton, December 24, 1890
Harrison Gillespie	Salisbury, June 11, 1902
John Gillespie	Salisbury, August 6, 1906
Nease Gillespie	Salisbury, August 6, 1906
William Harris	Asheville, November 15, 1906
Lincoln Johnson	Wadesboro, August 21, 1901
Thomas Johnson	Concord, March 29, 1897
Henry Jones	Harps Cross, January 11, 1899
Thomas Jones	Seven Springs, August 25, 1902
Joseph Kiser	Concord, May 29, 1897
Isaac Lincoln	Fort Madison, June 2, 1893
Joseph McNeely	Charlotte, August 26, 1913
Robert Melker	Cherryville, April 13, 1941
John Moore	Clarkton, August 27, 1905
Oliver Moore	Tarboro, August 19, 1930
Lyman Purdee	Elizabethtown, May 3, 1892
Hezekiah Rankin	Asheville, September 25, 1891
George Ratcliffe	Clyde, March 4, 1900
John Richards	Goldsboro, January 12, 1916
George Ritter	Carthage, March 22, 1900
John Sigmond	Stanley Creek, September 9, 1889
Frank Stack	Morganton, September 11, 1889
George Taylor	Rolesville, November 5, 1918
James Walker	Washington, March 25, 1902
Nathan Willis	Town Creek, November 27, 1897
James Wilson	Wendell, January 27, 1914
Thomas Whitson	Asheville, February 24, 1893
Unknown Negro	Pocket Township, January 6, 1893
Two Unknown Negroes	Pitt County, May 11, 1899
Unknown Negro	Forest City, September 1, 1900
Unknown Negro	Seaboard, May 19, 1904
Unknown Negro	Pine Level, January 12, 1908
Unknown Negro	Charlotte, May 26, 1910
Unknown Negro	Pelham, October 8, 1910