

Chapter 15 Emmett Till

“The delta region had the highest number of lynchings [in Mississippi] during the period 1880-1930 and therefore, the highest in the nation. Ominously, Tallahatchie and Leflore County were at the top of the list... It was into this volatile land, poisoned by decades of racism and paranoia, that a black Chicago teenager was placed for his summer vacation.” – Mark Gadoⁱ

Three months after the murder of Rev. George Lee, around a Boy Scout campfire burned down to its last embers, Robert Keglär and his campers heard a story they would not forget. A “very shaken” man came into Tallahatchie camp in the early morning hours and told of hearing the screams of a teenage boy being tortured and beaten to death only hours earlier in a machine shed on the Sheridan plantation outside of Drew, over in Sunflower County.

There were horrible screams, the visitor said, and when “several” men finished killing the young boy, they took his body from the barn and hauled it off. More than two men were in the lynching party, the visitor told Keglär and others as the fire smoldered. Campers finally went to sleep and when they awoke for breakfast, the visitor was gone.ⁱⁱ

The two half-brothers, J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, after disposing of the body, were seen later that morning in a Glendora home washing off the blood.ⁱⁱⁱ

Around midnight that same day, forty-six miles away from the scout camp, the white parents of a seventeen-year-old Ruleville girl let early-morning visitors stay in their home for the night. J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, the latter her mother’s relative by marriage, were loud and nervous, she remembered.

“My parents didn’t tell me then what was going on at the time. J.W. had a full brother, Bud, and I am very sure he was with them, too. I was in bed but I could hear their voices.”^{iv}

The Drew woman, who asked to remain anonymous, said that years later her father told her that Milam and Bryant let him know what they had done to Emmett Till. “They knew the law was looking for them. They also said that Carolyn Bryant was with them when they killed Emmett Till. I don’t know when Bud joined them. I think they caught up with him later. He was a nicer person than his brother and I don’t think he would have killed someone – I hope not.”

When she awoke at sunrise, all three men had left. “I never knew what happened to them after they left our house. I think they knew the law was going to catch up with them. And I think they felt safe, since most of the officers were covering for them, anyway. I don’t know if they turned themselves in, let themselves be found or if they were picked up by the sheriff and charged.

“I still can’t believe how they put our family in such danger; there was so much turmoil after Emmett Till was killed. People in Drew – black and white – were threatening to kill each other’s entire families. Some were threatening to kill as many as ten members of another person’s family as payback.”^v

Even though her parents hid the killers of Emmett Till, the Drew woman denies their involvement. “I know that my parents would have never covered for them. The men came to our house and sat there all

night. Later my parents told me what was going on. But I would never want anyone to think that our family helped them out.”

Most white people in Drew and Ruleville felt the same way, she said. “After the trial, the only support Milam and Bryant got came from the Klan because they were members. Most people didn’t want to have anything to do with them; they had killed a 14-year-old child, after all. Maybe they didn’t mean to do it, but they did kill him.”

In Greenville, Hodding Carter pulled a story off the news wire and placed it on the front page of his newspaper:

Two White Men Charged with Kidnapping Negro

Greenwood, Miss. (UP) – Two white men charged with kidnapping a 15-year-old [sic] Chicago Negro because they claimed he insulted the wife of one of the men, claimed today they released the missing boy unharmed. Sheriff George Smith said Roy Bryant, a storekeeper in nearby Money community and his half-brother, J.W. Nilan [Milam], were held on kidnap charges in the mysterious disappearance of Emmett Till of Chicago. They were arrested yesterday ...^{vi}

Young Till had left his Chicago home on August 20, 1955, to visit relatives in Money, Mississippi, a tiny cotton hamlet (population 100) on the eastern edge of the Delta. This was to be a summer vacation with relatives in the Delta countryside.

Till’s mother, Mamie Carthan, was born to John and Alma Carthan in the small Delta town of Hazelhurst, not far from Money. When she was two-years-old, her family moved to Illinois where she grew up and eventually married Till.

Emmett would never know his father, who was shipped out to Europe as an Army private. Mamie and Louis Till separated in 1942. But his father’s silver ring was given to the young man as a remembrance. Sadly the ring eventually served to help identify his decomposed body.

Prior to his journey to Mississippi, Emmett's mother, Mamie Till Bradley, had cautioned him to "mind his manners" with white people. She told her boy not to fool with white people down there: "If you have to get on your knees and bow when a white person goes past, do it willingly."^{vii}

But something happened when Till went inside the small Money grocery store owned by the Bryants; Carolyn Bryant later asserted that Till had grabbed her at the waist and asked her for a date. She said that he used “unprintable” words.

When his cousin took him outdoors, Emmett allegedly said, "Bye, baby.” He had a slight stutter that Bryant might have misinterpreted. Others have speculated that he might have been mildly retarded and any unexpected behavior on his part might could easily be misconstrued. Another possibility – he stuttered and may have accidentally made a whistling sound as he tried to correct what he said.

By the time Roy Bryant, 29, returned to home from a road trip three days after his wife’s encounter with Till, it seemed that nearly everyone in Tallahatchie County knew about the incident, and every conceivable

version. Bryant decided that he and his half-brother, J. W. Milam, 40, would meet Sunday to "teach the boy a lesson."

At around 2:30 a.m. on August 28, Bryant went to the Mose Wright home, Till's great uncle, on the outskirts of Money and demanded to talk with Till.

Both Bryant and Milam forced their way into the back bedroom where Till was sleeping, woke him up and made him go outside to the car. That was the last time anyone in Till's family saw him alive.

Within only one day, perhaps setting a Mississippi record for a white on black crime, officers from Tallahatchie County and nearby Leflore County arrested Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam in Leflore County and charged them with Both were jailed in Greenwood, Mississippi and held without bond after admitting they had taken Till from his great-uncle's home – but had turned him loose the same night.

As word first got out that Emmett Till was missing, Medgar Evers and Amzie Moore quickly became involved, disguising themselves as cotton pickers and going into the cotton fields searching for anything that would help find the young Delta visitor.^{viii}

Moore surmised, after collecting stories first hand from the field laborers, that "more than 2,000 families" had been murdered and lynched over the years, with their bodies thrown into the region's swamps, rivers and bayous.^{ix}

It was possible that relatives of Till were hiding him out of fear for the youth's safety, some believed, or that Till had been sent back to Chicago.

As the search progressed, one witnesses told the Sheriff that Mrs. Bryant had identified Till that night.^x

Then Bryant and Milam changed their story, claiming they later found out Till was not "the one" who allegedly insulted Mrs. Bryant, and again claimed they had released him.

Journalist Hodding Carter followed up the next day with a second UP wire story reporting that a 17-year-old fisherman Robert Hodges found Till's decomposed body barb wired to a seventy-four-pound cotton gin fan and floating in the Tallahatchie River 12 miles North of Money. Emmett Till had been stripped naked, pistol-whipped and shot through the head with a .45-caliber Colt automatic before he was thrown into the muddy river, the sheriff's report concluded.^{xi}

In an editorial appearing that Friday, September 2, Carter asserted that "people who are guilty of this savage crime should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," a brave suggestion for any Mississippi newspaper editor to make and remain out of harm's way, even Carter.

Till's body was first taken to Greenwood of Leflore County, even though the body was found in Tallahatchie County (after he was killed in Sunflower County). Soon, the body was moved to an undertaker in Tutwiler to be embalmed and shipped by rail to Chicago.

Woodrow Jackson of Tutwiler in Tallahatchie County will not forget the day he was assigned to embalm Emmett Till's body. His first task was to drive 42 miles from Tutwiler to Greenwood to pick up the young man's corpse and then bring it back to the Tutwiler Funeral Home.

"There was a patrol car in front and one in back. Billy Ray Cole, a state highway patrolman from Tutwiler, told me not to stop for anything, and I didn't."^{xii}

Jackson reached Tutwiler at approximately 4 p.m. and worked on Till's body all through the night, until 8 the next morning.

“It was terrible and that's why it took a long time. I remember thinking his body must have been in the water for three or four days, and maybe longer. It was clear to me that he died from blows to the right side of his head.”

When Jackson finished his work, he put Emmett Till's body in a shipping case and sent him home by train to his mother. “I never met his mother, but I always hoped I helped her in some way.”

IN CHICAGO, HORRID pictures of the young man's corpse appeared in *Jet* magazine, drawing national attention. Over 100,000 people walked by his open casket before the funeral took place; hundreds of thousands read about his murder. Emmett Till's mother insisted the world see what was done to her son.

In the film documentary “The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till,” Till's mother recalled telling the Chicago funeral director, “If you can't open the box, I can. I want to see what's in that box.”

What she found, according to movie critic Roger Ebert, was the already decomposing body of her son, which had spent three days in a bayou of the Tallahatchie River, a heavy cotton gin fan tied to his neck with barbed wire. The mother was purposeful as she described what she saw: “She always thought her son's teeth were ‘the prettiest thing I ever saw.’ All but two were knocked out. One eyeball was hanging on his chin. An ear was missing. She saw daylight through the bullet hole in his head. His skull had been chopped almost in two, the face separated from the back of the head.”^{xiii}

Emmett Till's mother made history as thousands of Chicagoans filed past her son's remains. “A photograph in *Jet* magazine made such an impression that, 50 years later, ‘60 Minutes’ reporter Ed Bradley remembered seeing it; he discussed it on his program with Keith Beauchamp [the documentary's director] as ‘a much younger man who saw the photo and became obsessed with the case.’”

It took Beauchamp nine years to investigate the Till lynching and his work was considered “primarily responsible for the Justice Department reopening the case.” From his investigation, Beauchamp proposed that 14 people were involved in some way in the murder, including five black employees of the white men, as well as Carolyn Bryant. Five of his named suspects are still alive.

Beauchamp used old black and white television and newsreel footage, including shots of Milam and Bryant before, during and after the trial. Till's cousins who were in the house the night Till was kidnapped were interviewed. The filmmaker also paid tribute to the courage of Mose Wright, “who in the courtroom fearlessly pointed out the men who had taken Emmett, when such an act was a death sentence in Mississippi.” Mamie Till died in January 2003, “just a little too soon to learn that the case had been reopened.”

Back in the Delta, Hodding Carter's editorials called for punishing Till's murderers. Taking a more middle ground, the journalist asserted the “macabre exhibitionism, the wild statements, and the hysterical overtones” at the Chicago funeral for Till were “too well stated not to have been planned to inflame hatred and to set off a reverse reaction in Mississippi,” where there had been a reaction of “honest indignation.”^{xiv}

Rumors kept circulating about Till's death, especially in Drew, only a few miles from plantation's machine shed where Till was taken, tortured and murdered. There would be whispers that a woman's voice was heard in the dark when Till was taken from his uncle's home.

"There were so many rumors. We all knew, right away, that Emmett Till was killed in Sunflower County and not over in Tallahatchie County," Woodrow Jackson said. "There were others involved besides Milam and Bryant. And we knew that some of the witnesses were held in Charleston's jail during the trial."

"Papa" Mose Wright had claimed hearing a woman's voice from the truck. Till's great-uncle was at home when Milam and Bryant broke into his house to kidnap his great-nephew, Till.

Simeon Wright, his son, who later became a Chicago minister, often tells of hearing his father recount to him and others "They took Emmett out to the truck to ask, 'Is this one?' And a female voice said 'Yes.'"

"... get the FBI on the case ..."

August 30, 1955

To: Mr. Gloster B. Current, Director, Branches NAACP, New York, New York

From: Medgar W. Evers, Field Secretary, Mississippi

On Sunday, August 28 at 2 A.M., a fourteen year old Negro boy, Emmett Till of Chicago, was forced from his home at Money, Leflore County, Mississippi, by three white men and a white woman who alleged that Till had made remarks that were displeasing to a white grocery owner's wife. One man has been apprehended by the Sheriff of Leflore County, the other man is being sought. If it is possible to get the FBI on the case, maybe we can get some results.^{xv}

Emmett Till never knew his father; his mother received a letter three years earlier from the Department of Defense informing her, without a full explanation, that her husband had been killed in Italy due to "willful misconduct."

Staunch segregationist and cotton planter Senator Eastland dug up "information" on Louis Till's past and leaked it to the press. According to Eastland's version, the U. S. Army had executed Private Till in Italy in 1945 "for raping two Italian women and killing a third." The senator's insinuation was that Emmett's behavior ran in the family.^{xvi}

As it turned out, Louis Till was executed after the war. Emmett's mother had tried for many years to find out what had happened, according to journalist Christopher Benson, who co-wrote a book with Mrs. Till-Mobley that was published in 2004 after her death. What Till's mother finally received, according to Benson, was a notice from the military that her spousal allotment was being terminated:

It actually was an allotment for Emmett. And she never really knew what the cause was, except that the language in the letter included the words "willful misconduct." It was only after the murder trial that the cause was publicized, and she discovered then that Louis Till was accused of murder, rape and murder in Italy, and that he was executed. The execution order was signed by General Dwight David Eisenhower. And it was a curious thing to her because after that -- I mean, it came as a shock to her, and it came after the murder trial but before the grand jury was to be convened to -- to consider a kidnapping charge, which was separate from the murder. And she believed always that this was a deliberate attempt to influence the grand jury, which didn't hand down an indictment, as it turns out.^{xvii}

After Eastland's intervention, Mobley sought to learn more about her former husband's execution by talking to some of Louis Till's Army buddies, eventually learning "this was a common thing that occurred among blacks in the military, who were marched out at, you know, 2:00 in the morning or so and told to line up, and identified by women in Europe as men they had had relations with or men they were accusing of something," Benson wrote.

LIKE countless black males before and after him, Emmett Till received the ultimate punishment for threatening Mississippi's rigid Jim Crow laws of racial behavior. In the past, the press would have ignored such a killing. However, this time it was very different for several reasons, said several Delta residents.

"He was just a kid, that's why this murder was so different than all of the rest." Nettie Davis makes her point for a second time during an early evening conversation. Davis and others are patient in offering Northern guests what facts they know about Emmett Till's murder on this cool, fall evening forty-eight years after the murder.

Their memories bring fresh reality to the story on this night.

"You need to understand. There had been other murders. Joe Pullen, George Lee. Horrible murders. But Emmett was a young boy, just 14, and he didn't know the rules. Emmett's mother said she tried to tell him, but he couldn't have really understood how much different things were in the Delta than they were in Chicago," Davis states.

How could black parents ever protect their children in those days? What if you had a precocious child who might be misunderstood? How would you keep an active child quiet?

"Well, you didn't take your children out very much," one man offers. "You tried to protect them by keeping them away from places where they could get into trouble or be hurt or see something bad. But you didn't talk a lot about these things, because a child shouldn't have to be scared."

A close friend of Davis's had remained on the periphery of this conversation, but pulled his chair closer and began to talk about his own experiences regarding his sister and Emmett Till's lynching. She was also 14 at the time of Till's death and a student at the Drew Colored School. She was so traumatized and angry at the time, she has never spoken to a white person since, he

said. Maybe it would be good for his sister, if she would speak to someone now about her feelings.

He drew out his cell phone and offered to try to set up an interview with her. After a few rounds over the phone with her brother, the sister said she might talk, after all. An appointment was made for a week later but fell through when she backed out that morning. His sister was not alone in her trauma.^{xviii}

MISSISSIPPI WRITER ANN Moody described her own reactions and those of other youngsters around her upon hearing of Till's murder. Moody was walking to her after-school job the evening she heard the news, a scene she described in her book, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*:

There was a whole group of us, girls and boys, walking down the road headed home... However, the six boys in front of us weren't talking very loud ... they were just walking and talking among themselves. All of a sudden they began to shout at each other.... "That boy wasn't but fourteen years old and they killed him. Now what kin a fourteen-year-old boy do with a white woman?" "That boy was from Chicago.... He probably didn't even think of the bitch as white." I walked up to one of the boys. "Eddie, what boy was killed?" "Moody, where've you been?" he asked me. "Everybody talking about that fourteen-year-old boy who was killed ... by some white men..."^{xix}

One of the "meanest white women in town," confronted Moody the moment she reached the woman's home where Moody worked after school as a domestic servant:

Mrs. Burke entered the kitchen. "Essie, did you hear about that fourteen-year-old boy who was killed...?" she asked me.

"No, I didn't hear that," I answered, almost choking on the food.

"Do you know why he was killed? He was killed because he got out of his place with a white woman. A boy from Mississippi would have known better than that. This boy was from Chicago. Negroes up North have no respect for people. They think they can get away with anything. He just came to Mississippi and put a whole lot of notions in the boys' heads here and stirred up a lot of trouble," she said passionately.

"How old are you, Essie?" she asked me after a pause.

"Fourteen. I will soon be fifteen, though," I said.

"See, that boy was just fourteen too. It's a shame he had to die so soon."

Young Ann Moody went home "shaking like a leaf on a tree" For the first time out of all her trying, Mrs. Burke had made her feel "like rotten garbage."

Many times she had tried to instill fear within me and subdue me and had given up. But when she talked about Emmett Till there was something in her voice that sent chills and fear all over me.

Before Emmett Till's murder, I had known the fear of hunger, hell, and the Devil. But now there was a new fear known to me – the fear of being killed just because I was black. This was the worst of my fears.^{xx}

The trial

“If we in America have reached the point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what color, we don’t deserve to survive, and probably won’t.” – William Faulkner

Tallahatchie County is one of ten counties in Mississippi with two county seats – Charleston (named after the city in South Carolina) and Sumner, named after its pioneer settler. In 1902, the county was divided, and the second courthouse was built at Sumner, housing the records of lands in Tallahatchie County west of a line almost parallel with the Tallahatchie River.

This is the Second Judicial District, and it is set on the most fertile land in the country. The Sumner courthouse was setting for the trial, while the county Sheriff kept several critical witnesses locked up and isolated in Charleston, twenty-two miles away.

One of the Delta’s most scenic waterways, Cassidy Bayou, runs through Sumner flowing southward and is the longest stream in Mississippi because it is so crooked. Sumner’s Baptist Church, erected in 1917, used the pews from the old Baptist church that were slid across the bayou on ice.

The Presbyterian Church, designed after a great church in Paris, was finished in 1920. The standing courthouse, built in 1909, features a somber monument to the memory of Southern Soldiers that was erected four years later on the Northeast corner of the courthouse square.

It was here in historic Sumner – a mile and a half from the birthplace of Till’s mother – where the Milam-Bryant trial unfolded in the fall of 1955. Few visiting journalists lost the irony when greeted by the town’s slogan emblazoned on a prominent sign: “Sumner – a good place to raise a boy.”

Scores of national reporters and photographers – white and black – would come face to face with Sheriff Strider, “... a big, fat, plain-talking, obscene-talking sheriff you would expect to find in the South,” wrote John Herbers, representing United Press.

Not used to caring for an international pool of journalists and photographers, Strider made sure black reporters were “provided” a card table off to the side. When Detroit Congressman Charles Diggs came to Sumner to observe the proceedings, Strider wouldn’t allow him into the courtroom until the presiding judge made the sheriff do so. Then Strider escorted U. S. Rep. Diggs to the “Jim Crow” table where black reporters sat. Strider was later memorialized by state legislators who named a portion of a highway after him.

Opening Monday, September 19, and ending that Friday, September 23, this trial was named the “first great media event of the Civil Rights Movement,” by David Halberstam, then a young correspondent covering Mississippi. More than seventy reporters and thirty photographers were in attendance, including Booker Simeon for *Jet* magazine; John Chancellor for NBC news; John Gunter for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; David Halberstam for the *West Point Daily Times Leader*; and Robert F. Hall for the *Daily Worker*.

ASK FOR A TRANSCRIPT of the “Milam-Bryant” trial at the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner and the clerk will say it does not exist: “We only keep transcripts when there is an appeal, and there wasn’t one”

Tallahatchie County courthouse officials get at least a half-dozen requests a year for the transcript but no longer have a case file on the Till trial. If there are any copies of the transcript – and no one knows for sure – “there are many different versions of who has a copy,” according to Davis W. Houck, an associate professor in the Department of Communication at Florida State University, who has involved his graduate class in tracking down the documents:

“[One version is that] an Itta Bena man had the transcript, but it was stolen by a prostitute” during an argument.

"Everybody's got their own story, and the stories keep spinning out," Houck told an Associated Press reporter.^{xxi}

Charleston, Mississippi native Steve Whitaker wrote his 1963 political science master's thesis at Florida State on the Till case and at one time had a copy of the 320-page manuscript, given to him by lead defense attorney J. J. Breland. Whitaker apparently stated there were “possibly up to three copies made,” According to Houck.

As a researcher with the Florida Department of Health, Whitaker apparently claimed his copy was ruined when his basement flooded in the 1970s “along with 1,000 letters, which then Tallahatchie County Sheriff Clarence Strider received during the trial.”^{xxii}

His stepfather, N.Z. Troutt, was Charleston’s chief of police at the time and provided security at the trial. Whitaker, then a fifteen-year-old, actually attended one day: "There were a lot of people in the county who would have unquestionably voted guilty. But the particular people they picked for the jury, they were not going to convict, no matter what," Whitaker was quoted in a newspaper interview.^{xxiii}

ADA GUEST, IN HER eighties and still living in Sumner in 2004, remembered attending the trial, “the biggest week in Sumner,” for one day, as guest of her boss, a Sumner attorney, who arranged for her to stand at the back of the courtroom.^{xxiv} “He told me this was something I should not miss. I remember the courtroom was crowded and it was so hot.

“Mostly I remember that Emmett Till’s mother came to the trial every day; her car door was opened courteously by the black courthouse janitor each morning when she arrived at the courthouse.”

Guest remembered seeing the black reporters working at a table separated from white reporters. “The black Congressman [Diggs] was sitting by the black reporters,” she said. Wives of the defendants sat with their husbands and their children stayed close by. “The children played sometimes, and they slept and got cranky, too.”

The all-white grand jury had surprised most people in the first place by quickly ordering Bryant and Milam to stand trial. It was unusual in Mississippi for any action to be taken against whites who committed violence against blacks; it was not the first time a Mississippi court would hear a case of white men accused of murdering a black, but it would become the most famous example.

A group of black journalists had tried to help the prosecution team of District Attorney Gerald Chatham and Robert Smith, a former FBI agent appointed to assist by Gov. Hugh White because “the people of Mississippi are anxious that justice be done.”

Even the harshest critics of Jim Crow justice believed that the prosecutor was making an earnest effort to convict the defendants and that the judge was being fair-minded in his handling of the case. But the sheriff’s investigation was lackadaisical, and the prosecutor lacked witnesses that everyone in the black community knew existed: the field hands who had seen Till with the defendants in their truck, who had seen the truck drive into a barn, who had heard the beating and screaming, and who had seen the truck leave the barn and head for the river. Indeed, word was out that two of the field hands had been on the truck with Till, had been inside the barn during the beating and had been ordered to clean the blood from the barn floor.^{xxv}

Encouraged by prominent black leaders in the Delta, L. Alex Wilson, a well-known black journalist, with several other black journalists decided to seek out the witnesses themselves; two white reporters were “brought into the hunt” as well – since their credibility with white law enforcement authorities would be needed in order to hand over the witnesses.

The reporters worked late into the night, as the trial was in progress, driving across the dirt roads through the flat cotton fields leading to the doors of sharecropper homes. “Eventually, the reporters pulled in three witnesses who reluctantly agreed to testify and who lent great weight to the prosecution’s case. But the two who were said to have been inside the barn eluded the searchers.”^{xxvi}

Many reporters observed the most dramatic moment in the trial came when Mose Wright, at the potential risk of losing his own life, openly named the two white men who kidnapped his nephew, Emmett.

Wright was scared, and some thought he might skip town instead of testifying. “Only considerable effort on the part of Medgar Evers kept Wright from fleeing.

“Wright received a number of threats saying that he would be killed if he took the witness stand. But without his testimony there was no prosecution case. Showing exceptional courage, he took the stand and named both Milam and Bryant,” David Halberstam later wrote.^{xxvii}

Defense attorney John C. Whitten told the jurors in his closing statement, “Your fathers will turn over in their graves if [Milam and Bryant are found guilty] and I’m sure that every last Anglo-Saxon one of you has the courage to free these men in the face of that [outside] pressure.”

The jurors – all white – listened to Whitten. It was later alleged they had been hand-picked by Harry H. Dogan, Tallahatchie County sheriff-elect. According to one of the defense attorneys, Dogan sent word to the jurors while they were deliberating to stall the verdict in order to make it “look good.”^{xxviii}

Deliberating for just 67 minutes, they returned a not guilty verdict on September 23rd, the 166th anniversary of the signing of the Bill of Rights. The jury foreman later explained, “I feel the state failed to prove the identity of the body.” But some reporters wrote they overheard laughing inside the jury room and one juror later admitted, “We wouldn’t have taken so long if we hadn’t stopped to drink pop.” When the verdict was read, Milam and Bryant lit up cigars and kissed their wives in celebration.

PROSECUTORS HAD BASED much of their case on the testimony of Willie Reed, an eighteen-year-old high school student and farmhand on a plantation near Drew. Reed in his testimony at the trial claimed he saw Till, along with three whites and two blacks, in a pickup truck shortly after the kidnapping:

The truck pulled into an equipment shed near Drew, and Reed said he heard ‘licks and hollers’ that sounded like a beating. The prosecutors never asked Reed to identify the other men in the truck. The press, law enforcement and civil rights leaders, however, focused on three black employees of Milam’s: Levi ‘Too Tight’ Collins, Henry Lee Loggins, and Willie Hubbard.^{xxix}

Some in the press corps wept when the jury acquitted Till’s murderers. Hodding Carter asserted “the tension from the murder and trial was the worst [he] had ever seen.” The Greenville publisher believed that matters were going to get “more violent down this way before things take a turn for the better,” and told others he had never before felt quite as discouraged about racial relations and attitudes, his biographer Ann Waldron wrote: ^{xxx}

After a grand jury in Leflore County refused to indict Bryant and Milam for kidnapping, to which they had confessed, Hodding wrote one of his strongest editorials. The grand jury, he stated, had “told the world that white men in Mississippi may remove Negroes from their homes against their will to punish them or worse, without fear of punishment for themselves.... That [Bryant and Milam] admitted taking the boy from his uncle’s home to punish him for insulting the wife of one of them meant nothing to the grand jury.”

Unfortunately, it is going to mean a great deal of Mississippi and none of it will be good.... If this miscarriage of justice were an isolated incident we could be less ashamed of the present and less fearful for the future. But it is not unique. The records of our courts reveal a shocking number of related incidents. In one Mississippi county a Negro who raped a white woman has this year been executed, a fate he deserved, but the same day a white man was given a minimum jail sentence of two years for the heinous rape of Negro child.

In another Mississippi county, a grand jury was unable to indict the white slayers of Negro political worker who was shot to death on the courthouse lawn, with a large number of people nearby, because no witnesses would testify.... Most of what is happening in Mississippi has nothing to do with segregation, although violence has multiplied in the wake of the ... Supreme Court ... decision on segregation in the schools. This is naked racially-inspired terror. We are paying and will continue to pay a price for it, both in the sight of God and our fellow man.^{xxxi}

Reactions around the Delta to the entire Emmett Till saga were nearly as swift [and mean] as were most earlier reactions to *Brown vs. the Board of Education*; an editorial in the *Yazoo Herald* stated: “Through the furor over the Emmett Till case we hope someone gets this over to the nine ninnies who comprise the present U. S. Supreme Court. Some of the young Negro’s blood is on their hands also.”^{xxxii}

Two months after the trial, magazine writer William Bradford Huie got the slayers of Emmett Till to confess to the crime. Not only did Milam and Bryant admit to abducting Till, Milam also admitted that he

shot the fourteen-year-old in the head. Although Huie's interview was published in the January 1956 issue of *Look* magazine, Milam and Bradley could not be legally prosecuted because of the constitutional prohibition against double jeopardy. Yet even in their home community of Ruleville, Milam and Bryant were ostracized for "disgracing" their community for their well-publicized act.

Another version of the story: three email messages received

11/5/2004 1:20:18 AM

Thank for writting this great Peice of history.^{xxxxiii} I'm so glad to see your writing on these murders I cannot wait to see your book by it and put it in my fathers hand. I'm from Drew Mississippi my name is Xxxxx. I want to tell my fathers story of emit till. He had a freind thats dead now that told the story his story was diffrent he said that one of the Milan ladies had been riding emmit around spending time with emitt because he was retarded and she liked the boy and the man was mad at his wife and they told three men to get emmit and teach him a lesson and instead of these men teaching him a lesson they took him to a barn outside of Drew and beat him .The place you can find it if you go through Drew by AW James school and follow the road pass the bridge on out pass ,the golf course .Drew Country club Keep that road straight on around you will see a big beatiful house surronded by 2 ponds and woods. It use to be an even bigger house back there with a barn and that is supose to be the place where Emmitt Till was killed. Do not go to far around when you pass that white church and the old tore up miller store you have passed it. The house is a beautiful house setting of to itself its a curve of the road. The men were supposidly did this for just a jug of whiskey. The lady after seeing emitt all mutlated suposedly shot emitt and put him out of his misery that is when emitt was taken to moneys and dumped. There was a store in Ruleville a long time ago that belong to the milams it sat to the side of where Jug Burgers ,One stop is now this man told my fat have diedher that the store went down because of the killing of Emmitt no one would go to it. 3 of the men suposidly have beat emit t died. This is the story I was told as a child.

I do not no what happen to emmit I'll just be glad when the truth comes out my dad is old and always beleived Emmitt was killed in Drew and he mentioned the death of Joe Pullen and Joe eartha Love her father Paul love lives in Ruleville and my father Knows him. Cleve Mcdowell was my fathers lawyer and it hurt dad when he heard how he died your book will make him feel better.Your book is gonna be the best gift to him a peice of history and I cannot wait to buy it and put it in his hands.

11/8/2004 12:31:11 AM

Hi, Sorry for being so late getting back to you. I had to talk to my family about meeting you. I just left them and They do not think its a good Idea so I have to say no. I'm sorry. They believe that if

it was a way to prove some of this or any of this that it would be alright to talk to you. This was just a story someone told my family years ago.

11/8/2004 2:27:14 PM

Your welcome but I promised my family I would leave this alone so I can't meet you or dig in this anymore This will be my last letter to you and thanks again for not using my name. My family [removed] they were concerned about there name being mention on something that may or may not be true.They are all up in age and still believe in people getting hurt about such information like this. Just do me a favore don't stop writing about these deaths your on a good start and there's re a lot more to be discovered. Drew has it's share of history and its ghost. Don't thank me .Thank you for this opportunity.

[name removed by request]

Howard Spence, a Mississippi native helping Medgar Evers with the investigation, had watched searchers look for Till's body in the river: "They began to search the rivers; they began to search from place to place.... And as a result [Till] was found in the Tallahatchie River. When they brought him to Greenwood, what we had formerly thought was a bullet hole – it was explained to us that it was a bit that had been drilled through the child's head. This is a fact – I'm only talking facts."

Years later, Professor Christopher Metress discovered historical materials that could support Spence's chilling assertion. Working through back issues of the *Washington Afro-American*, "one of the half-dozen or so black papers that devoted extensive coverage to the case," Metress found an "open letter" dated November 19, 1955 from James Hicks to Attorney General Herbert Brownell and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Hicks, who covered the Till trial for the National News Association, was informing two government officials how to find new evidence about the murder that would allow the federal government to claim jurisdiction and open up a new prosecution of Milam and Bryant.^{xxxiv}

Hicks had provided specific directions for locating a witness, Leroy "Too Tight" Collins, who was in hiding and hard to find. He suggested agents go to "Reid's Café" and talk to cotton pickers to learn what "Too Tight" was saying about the murder: "Listen to them tell how Too Tight boasts that the hole in the Till boy's head was not a bullet hole, but a hole drilled in his head with a brace and bit by one of the white men."^{xxxv} The FBI briefly considered the matter, according to Metress, but decided not to enter the case, stating that it did not have jurisdiction because state lines had not been crossed.^{xxxvi}

Aaron Henry was visiting his grand-uncle in Leflore County for the summer when he heard about Till's murder. Rumors were circulating that someone in Drew [Sunflower County] had seen Till in the back of a pickup truck early one morning and that the two men were seen stealing the gin fan that was found tied

around Till's neck: "I drove over to Mound Bayou to tell Dr. Howard, who went to Sheriff Sandy Smith of Leflore County, where the men were being held on the kidnapping charges. We were asking, in light of new and still-developing evidence, that the trial be postponed for several days. Sheriff Smith and Attorney Stanley Sanders refused and said that the trial would proceed as scheduled."^{xxxvii}

In a press conference in Mound Bayou called by Dr. Howard, reporters were told that more evidence was uncovered in the Till case – that several people in Drew were potential witnesses. Howard also asked for a one-day postponement of the trial: "Smith and Sanders realized the reporters would make a big story out of it, so they agreed to put off the trial for one day."

That night, according to Henry, several people, including himself, went to Sanders' office in Drew and told him they were going to comb the area. "He told us that we were on our own if we were going to go looking for witnesses and that if we got shot, it was our business."

Henry and others had heard about a cotton worker, Mamie Smith, who might know something about the murder, "... so Ruby Hurley, NAACP regional director from Atlanta, put on an old dress the next morning and went into the fields to pick cotton. We hoped she could get the story without being noticed. Mamie had seen two Negro boys on the back of a truck driven by Milam and Bryant, and the boys were holding something under a canvas. The boys' names were Collins and Loggins."^{xxxviii}

Henry and Hurley talked to others living in the region who said they saw Milam and Bryant moving Till. The two were able to convince these witnesses to appear at the trial. "They told what they had seen, but the trial was not taken serious ... and the two men were freed." One day after the trial, Henry and Hurley drove Mamie Smith and several other people to Memphis and put them on a Northbound bus, according to Henry.

After the trial and exoneration of Milam and Bryant, both Henry and Hurley got word that Collins wanted to talk. "Considerable preparation was made for the meeting, and Alex Wilson of the *Chicago Defender* came down to get Collins out of the state if he wanted to go. We went to a restaurant in Tutwiler to meet the boy. He was frightened to death and said that he didn't know a thing.... We insisted that he had been a participant and that perhaps he felt his life was in danger," Henry recalled.

But Collins stayed with his story that he knew nothing. Wilson promised to take him from Mississippi if he would talk, and Collins agreed to "let us know something later on."^{xxxix}

That night, Collins appeared at Henry's house, stating he wanted to go to Chicago. Wilson put Collins in his car that night, and Collins' story later appeared in full in the *Defender*, but Milam and Bryant were already free.

Still another black journalist, Louis Lomax, came to the Delta a month later searching for Loggins, the second young black who reportedly participated in Till's murder. Lomax told Henry he found Loggins and that he was close to a mental breakdown. Loggins had begged Lomax not to ask questions, and then Loggins disappeared, never to be heard from again.^{xl}

Mamie Till Mobley died in 2003 at the age of 81. She had kept frequent contact with several Mississippians, including Drew attorney Cleve McDowell, who was born in the same year as her son, Emmett, in 1941. McDowell spoke with Till's mother often, confirmed his former office manager, Nettie

Davis. “Cleve kept many records on the Till Case. Unfortunately, they were burned up [or somehow disappeared] in a fire that happened six months after Cleve was murdered in 1997.”

Until her death, Till’s mother always maintained that two black men, Leroy “Too Tight” Collins and Henry Lee Loggins, were with the killers that night. Their names emerged in 1955 news accounts as possible prosecution witnesses who may have been jailed to prevent their testimony.^{xli}

Nearly 50 years after 14-year-old Emmett Till’s murder shocked the nation and helped give rise to the modern civil rights movement, the FBI announced in early May of 2005 that Till’s body would be exhumed as federal authorities attempted to determine who killed him.

Till was buried in a cemetery in the Chicago suburb of Alsip, would be exhumed within the next few weeks so the Cook County Medical Examiner’s office could conduct an autopsy, announced an FBI’s spokesperson from its office in Jackson, Miss.^{xlii}

"An autopsy was never performed on the body and the cause of death was never determined," the agent said. The report, carried first in the Chicago-Sun Times, quoted R. Alexander Acosta, the assistant attorney general for civil rights, who said recent documentary films and new information indicate Milam and Bryant “had accomplices who may still be alive.”

Citizens Councils Increase Memberships

Since *Brown*, the NAACP had been filing suits for the integration of public schools in Clarksdale, Vicksburg, Yazoo City (all Delta cities), and in Jackson. In response, Citizens Councils grew in membership. By December of 1955, though, all petitions for integration had been withdrawn and the number of eligible black voters in Mississippi fell from 22,000 in 1952 to less than 12,000.

Blacks were still powerless, and the NAACP had virtually written off Mississippi as hopeless. At a convention of Citizens Councils in Jackson on December 1, Senator James Eastland announced that desegregation was dead.

But that was the same day Rosa Parks was asked to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama and a citywide boycott of the buses by blacks soon followed. Eastland was wrong. Desegregation was coming, even to Mississippi.^{xliii}

Almost fifty years after the murder of Emmett Till, on May 10, 2004, the U. S. Justice Department launched a new investigation of the case to determine whether others were involved in the kidnapping and brutal slaying of the young man. Federal authorities at the time said they were acting in part “on information that materialized in a pair of documentaries focusing on the Till’s death and from numerous letters urging the government to reopen the case that spurred national outrage.”^{xliv}

Alexander Acosta, assistant attorney general for civil rights, suggested that others were involved in the killing, including two black field hands. “We owe it to Emmett Till, and we owe it to ourselves, to see whether after all these years some additional measure of justice remains possible,” he told *USA Today* reporters Kevin Johnson and Laura Parker.^{xlv}

Acosta sent staff members to meet with Mississippi authorities and talk over new information about the case – new facts that were included in the film *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*. When the documentary

was shown to Mississippi officials that January, filmmaker Keith Beauchamp suggested that “as many as 10 people could have played a role in the murder.”^{xlvi}

Stanley Nelson, director of a separate PBS documentary, *The Murder of Emmett Till*, which first aired in 2002, told the *USA Today* reporters it was “clear there were other people who have evidence who never gave it at the trial. We quickly and easily found them,” Nelson said.

“I hope the Justice Department will quickly and easily find others.” Acosta said FBI agents were being dispatched to assist in an investigation to be headed by an assistant district attorney in Sunflower County.

The disappearance of the original court transcript and most courthouse documentation from the case may affect efforts to prosecute the case.

The FBI had not commented whether it found the document and the Sunflower County district attorney's office reported not having one: “I don't have one. I don't know whether the FBI does or not,” said Hallie Gail Bridges, assistant district attorney.^{xlvii}

The cotton gin fan used to weigh down Till's body when it was dumped into the river was also missing. The fan, a key piece of physical evidence, had been stored in the Sumner courthouse's basement, but disappeared when the facility was renovated in the 1970s. “When the contractor moved in there to renovate the courthouse, what the county hadn't moved out, he just threw in the street,” Circuit Judge Andrew Baker said.^{xlviii}

As FBI and other law enforcement officials worked to re-open the Emmett Till case, one Drew woman observed “... as far as rumors go in Drew, the FBI has struck out in learning much of anything.” It was her parents who had secreted Milam and Bryant in their home for 5-6 hours the night after Till's murder, helping the two men hide from law enforcement officials.

Emmett Till Lore

“X,” a black Delta businessperson grew up in Minter City and was ten when Emmett Till was killed. “My mother was so worried about us. I had brothers and sisters, and she told the girls and then the boys about what happened. Sometimes we traveled to Drew and my mother was afraid for our safety.”

The young Chicago visitor was killed after he went into the store in Money with another boy, her mother told her: “She said he whistled at a dog that was sitting on a chair, and Carolyn Bryant thought Emmett was whistling at her.”

There were also rumors that Emmett Till was castrated before he was finally killed – “X” was told by her mother. “We grew up with the hurt of what happened to Emmett Till. My brothers were always afraid that someone would take them away and kill them, too – just like Emmett Till.”^{xliv}

SOME THIRTY YEARS after reporting on the Emmett Till case for Ebony magazine, Cloyte Murdock Larsson, a former Ebony staffer, returned to the Delta to write an article on "The New Mississippi." The trial coverage she initially provided was still in her mind.

Larsson and young Till had shared the same birth date. "There are some stories that a journalist can never forget no matter how hard one tries. Like fading pictures in a photo album, certain impressions remain in the mind long after time has erased the details of the events. For me, the Emmett Till murder case was that kind of assignment."¹

When the trial of Till's murderers ended, and they were acquitted, Larsson worked abroad for the next thirty years, returning in 1986 to write the thirty-year anniversary story for Ebony.

Larsson had joined the team of writers and photographers from Johnson Publishing Company who volunteered to cover the trial in 1955 and when the all-white jury returned an acquittal, she saw "a side of the American way of life that even I, a Southerner, found shocking. Prejudice was a phenomenon that I was prepared for ...but not open, raw, vulgar menacing hate."

One day before the trial began, Ebony and Jet photographer David Jackson and Larsson visited Rev. Moses Wright at his weathered gray tenant farmhouse in Money.

Larsson recalled, "While we sat talking on the porch, an open truck came rumbling down the road. It slowed as it approached the house, and in my mind's eye I can still see the six white men standing in the back, armed with shotguns that glittered in the sun.

"How slowly the truck seemed to move...so slowly that I could see the eyes of the men regarding us with a cold and ageless hostility. The menace was obvious, the message clear. The spell was not broken until, abruptly, the truck picked up speed and raced on."

Larsson met Sheriff Strider, "another unforgettable Mississippian," the following day at the courthouse in Sumner.

"Standing in the entrance to the courtroom, like the anointed defender of the unreconstructed South, he rested his right hand meaningfully on his gun as he saw the members of the Black press approach.

"Malevolently aware that we could do nothing except accept his insult, swallow our rage and go on, [Strider] said with a poisonous smile, 'Mawnin', niggers!'"

Larsson got the message. "We were behind enemy lines now. We had no rights that a White man was bound to respect. Our press cards were no guarantee of safety. Not even a member of the U. S. Congress could expect a courteous welcome, not if he happened to be both Northern and Black."

Congressman Charles Diggs of Michigan discovered this quickly enough when he joined reporters to witness the proceedings. "A nigger congressman!" scoffed a White deputy at the door. "It ain't possible. It ain't even legal!"

Knowing that any encounters with white journalists would arouse suspicion, Larsson and the other black reporters on their team were careful to pretend they did not know the white photographer who had come with them to photograph "aspects of the trial and of Mississippi life which it would have been impossible for Black reporters to cover."

They would only meet secretly with Mike Shea to exchange information quickly at pre-arranged rendezvous points.

Since telephones in the homes of Black activists were tapped, Larsson dared not use them to make contact, fearing she would draw unnecessary attention to her hosts, "militant Blacks of Mississippi who were already in trouble enough."

Dr. T. R. M. Howard, with whom some of the black journalists stayed in Mound Bayou, had received many death threats. "For his family's protection and ours during the Till trial, he kept a small arsenal of shotguns behind the door."

Most spectators at the Till trial were white Mississippians, some bringing their children and their box lunches. "They bought soft drinks from vendors who curtly refused to sell their wares to Blacks, and peered admiringly at Carolyn Bryant, the 'victim' of the alleged wolf whistle," Larsson observed.

When Sheriff Strider told the court that the body which he had pulled out of the water had deteriorated to such an extent that "he couldn't be sure whether it was that of a Black person or a White," Larsson's temper flared.

And then she did something totally out of her character.

"During a pause in the trial, I pushed my way through the milling crowd of Whites and asked Judge Curtis Swango, whose impressively evenhanded conduct of the trial was like a breath of fresh air, why, if Sheriff Strider was unsure of the victims racial identity, he had asked a Black undertaker to take charge of the body!"

Heads turned. Eyes focused on Larsson, and.... "I felt like a marked woman."

The White Citizen's Councils were active in the area and Larsson had seen a letter on White Citizens' Council stationery on Sheriff George Smith's desk during an office visit.

"I knew that a White reporter from the North had been run out of town, and I knew that Sheriff Strider was perhaps the last man in Mississippi whose truthfulness I should publicly challenge."

As the trial proceeded, tension in the courtroom was so high that when somebody dropped a glass bottle – it shattered – the sound was like a shot. "In a single, reflex reaction, everybody, Blacks and Whites alike, ducked."

After the acquittal, Larsson remembered her dismay. It had seemed clear from evidence presented that a strong case had been made against the accused.

"Till may or may not have wolf whistled. What did it matter? He had a right to life. I thought about his last moments, the terror...the blows...the bullet. How could anyone have done such a thing to a 14-year-old child?"

On their return trip to Sunflower and Tallahatchie counties, Larsson and the news team tried to interview Roy Bryant at his present place of business, a country-style general store in Ruleville. Bryant granted them an interview, but was not in the mood to say much except that the case had hurt him, financially and that after the trial, his customers in Money found other places to shop.

"Forced to give up the business, he left Mississippi, and his wife Carolyn eventually left him. His half-brother, J. W. Milam, also moved out of state and, like Roy, split up with his wife," Larsson would learn.

Larsson found that Milam had died from cancer. Sheriff Strider was dead and so was Moses Wright, whose house in Money had been leveled. "I remember [Wright] as a brave man whose finger never shook when, in that hostile courtroom, he pointed out Milam and Bryant."

What in the past would have been a quiet lynching had made news around the world and Larsson on her trip back to the Mississippi Delta found that many whites were still embarrassed.

She interviewed Aaron Henry in Clarksdale who by then was serving a second term in the state legislature. Henry had been one of the NAACP officials who had helped produce the “missing witness” that the FBI may never have found.

Henry told Larsson that white men had been killing black boys in the Delta for years without ramifications. But this time, perhaps “the hand of God” was involved, causing the Emmett Till case to become a cog in the wheel of change.

”Perhaps we have television to thank for that,” Henry told Larsson.

Searching for Roy Bryant, Larsson and her team met up with Cleve McDowell in a courtroom in Clarksdale of Coahoma County. McDowell took them to see Bryant during a quick trip around the counties.

The black attorney who was the regional director of the NAACP in his state looked vaguely familiar to Larsson.

”We had seen his picture in the newspapers. In 1963, he was the first Black student, after James Meredith, to be admitted to the University of Mississippi and the first ever to study law there.

After the murder of NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers, McDowell learned that he and James Meredith were next in line for assassination [a fact confirmed by a retired Parchman guard who said he was asked to perform this act by a Delta planter. McDowell bought a gun.

”Most everybody else had one,” he told Larsson, ”but when mine was discovered, I was expelled.” He finished his education at the Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Texas, a “better and safer” place to be. The black law school was emphasizing civil rights law and the University of Mississippi was far behind, McDowell later told oral history interviewer Owen Brooks.

Larsson was surprised that Bryant's store was in a black Ruleville neighborhood where he was not hassled. But McDowell explained that Bryant wasn't worried "because blacks forget" and that "even when they know what certain whites have done, they don't do anything about it."

But this was no reason to think the Klan had gone away, McDowell added. "They're not wearing sheets any longer. They're wearing gray flannel suits! But some of them have just gone under cover. And some of them are doing it to us in a different way—the Northern way.

”If Northern whites had been in power down here, we'd still be in slavery!.... Now, we have situations like Black lawyers being harassed by the bar association, and we have economic freeze-outs whenever big money is involved.”

In McDowell's opinion, conditions in parts of Mississippi were worse in 1986 than in 1955: “You can see open sewers, a level of poverty as bad as in some deprived, developing countries, with insects crawling over everything. Down here, we've still got a massive job to do.”

McDowell introduced Larsson to Greenwood Councilman David Jordan and his wife, Christine, both science teachers in Greenwood's integrated city schools. The Jordan couple had fought long and hard for civil rights and as president of the Greenwood Voters' League for 20 years, David Jordan was instrumental in initiating lawsuits aimed at democratizing the political and educational systems.

The couple were at the movie theater when Emmett Till's body was pulled out of the Tallahatchie River. Jordan remembered feeling shocked that someone in their midst could kill a 14-year-old child.

“After that happened, we were ready to do whatever was necessary to change the social conditions which had made this possible,” he told Larsson.

* * * * *

During the remainder of the Decade, the Emmett Till case remained the overriding force in black people's minds. It was “evident that white people didn't care,” the Greenwood teacher told Larssen in 1986.

“I am intelligent enough to realize that the same kinds of things that happened once could happen again...We are still in the struggle, and even though we have made some gains, we are still skeptical.”

ⁱ Mark Gado, “Mississippi Madness: The Story of Emmett Till,” *Court TV Crime Library* (online).

ⁱⁱ Interview with Robert Kegl by Susan Klopfer, 2003. Kegl, then a junior high teacher in Tallahatchie County, would later discover this same man, a potential court witness, was locked up in the Tallahatchie County Jail during the trial three months later of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant (Milam's half brother), accused of kidnapping and murdering Emmett Louis "Bobo" Till.

ⁱⁱⁱ Personal communication with Margaret Block, civil rights activist, April 9, 2005.

^{iv} A story appearing September 3, 1955, in the *Jackson Advocate* suggested that three white men were, in fact, involved in the kidnapping, marking “the first suggestion that more individuals were involved in the abduction than either Milam or Bryant let on,” according to Christopher Metress, editor of a comprehensive book on the Emmett Till incident.

^v Interview by Susan Klopfer on March 4, 2005, with a Sunflower County resident who asked to remain anonymous out of fear of retaliation. “Just a few years ago, our minister and his family were threatened when the minister tried to talk about church integration. They were almost run out of town.” Bud was probably with the group, as she suggested. Dr. TRM Howard's version of the kidnapping and murder appeared in a small booklet in February 1956, *Time Bomb: Mississippi Exposed and the Full Story of Emmett Till*. The author was Olive Arnold Adams, the wife of Julius J. Adams, the publisher of the *New York Age*, but Howard was her main source. He also wrote the forward.” In addition to *Time Bomb*, a series of articles appeared in the *California Eagle*, a black newspaper in Los Angeles. “The author was a mysterious white Southern reporter who wrote under the pseudonym of Amos Dixon. Dixon put forward essentially the same thesis as *Time Bomb* but offered a more detailed description of the possible roles of Loggins, Hubbard, and Collins. He also alleged that another brother of Milam and Bryant, Leslie Milam (now dead) took part in the crime,” wrote David T. Beito and Linda Royster Beito (“Why It's Unlikely the Emmett Till Murder Mystery Will Ever Be Solved,” *History News Network*, 4/26/04).

^{vi} “Two White Men Charged with Kidnapping Negro,” *Delta Democrat-Times*, 30 August 1955.

^{vii} Juan Williams, “Eyes On The Prize,” (New York, NY, 1988), p. 41.

^{viii} Metress, Christopher, ed., “The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative,” (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 14.

^{ix} Myrlie Evers, 172.

^x What Emmett Till said to grocery store owner Carolyn Bryant five days later will probably never be known. But fifty years later, in 2005, she was still alive and residing in Greenville, refusing to give any media interviews.

^{xi} Christopher Metress writes that in some versions of the Emmett Till story, Till was found with his cut-off penis stuffed in his mouth. “Here is a detail that is reaffirmed again and again in ‘some versions of the story’....And yet, however much it may be part of ... collective memory of Till's murder, it is not ‘true’ in the historical sense.” Metress also followed up on other versions that the

murderers drilled a hole in Till's head. Because Metress discovered information that corroborated this story..."Perhaps it was true, and thereby closer to history than to memory."(9)

^{xii} Interview with Woodrow Wilson Jackson by Susan Klopfer, November 2004.

^{xiii} Roger Ebert, "The Untold Story of Emmett Till," April 22, 2005, Roger Ebert and Co., online.

^{xiv} Waldron, 257.

^{xv} Letters between the U. S. Justice Department and the FBI on "American Experience," the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) website.

^{xvi} Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson "Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America," (New York: Random House), 2003. From and interview with Christopher Benson conducted by Brian Lamb, Booknotes.org, April 20, 2004.

^{xvii} Ibid.

^{xviii} From a group conversation on November 2003, attended by Susan Klopfer.

^{xix} Anne Moody, "Coming of Age in Mississippi," (New York, NY, 1968), 123-124.

^{xx} Ibid., 125.

^{xxi} Associated Press, "Professor searches for Emmett Till murder trial transcript," *The Greenwood Commonwealth*, Feb. 20, 2005.

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Ibid.

^{xxiv} Interview with Ada Guest by Susan Klopfer, fall of 2003 in Sumner.

^{xxv} Hank Klibanoff, "L. Alex Wilson: A Reporter Who Refused to Run," *Media Studies Journal*, Vol.14 no.2, Spring/Summer 2000.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} David Halberstam, "The Fifties," (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 440.

^{xxviii} See *Who's Who in the Emmett Till Trial*, Appendix.

^{xxix} Metress, 8.

^{xxx} Waldron, 258.

^{xxxi} Waldron, 58-59. Author cites the *Delta Democrat-Times*, Sept. 21, 1955.

^{xxxii} Myrlie Evers, 176.

^{xxxiii} No changes have been made to spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

^{xxxiv} Ibid., 7.

^{xxxv} Ibid., 7.

^{xxxvi} Ibid.,7.

^{xxxvii} Henry, 95.

^{xxxviii} Ibid., 96.

^{xxxix} Ibid.

^{xl} Ibid.

^{xli} David T. Beito and Linda Royster Beito, "Why It's Unlikely the Emmett Till Murder Mystery Will Ever Be Solved," *History News Network*, April 26, 2004. David Beito is an associate professor of history at the University of Alabama and Linda Royster Beito is chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Stillman College.

^{xlii} Don Babwin, "Body of Emmett Till to be exhumed," The Associated Press, May 4, 2005. May 4, 2005

^{xliii} Waldron, 261.

^{xliv} Staff and wire reports, "Till case to be reopened," *Delta Advertiser*, May 12, 2004, 1.

^{xlv} Kevin Johnson and Laura Parker, "Feds Reopen 1955 Racial Slaying Case," *USA Today*, May 10, 2004, *Nation* section.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

^{xlvii} Associated Press, ("Professor Searches").

^{xlviii} Ibid.

^{xlix} Conversaton with a Delta business woman, "X", who requested to remain anonymous. April 2005.

^l Cloyte Murdock Larsson, Ibid.
