

NEW 'INSIDE STORY' OF FRANK LYNCHING

Obtained at First Hand by The
Associated Press and De-
clared to be Authentic.

MADE NO PLEA OR PROTEST

Did Not Reply When Asked if
Guilty—Statement About Wife
and Mother Came Later.

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 22.—An authenticated story of all that transpired on the death ride of Leo M. Frank from Milledgeville to Marietta, between midnight and dawn last Tuesday morning, became available to The Associated Press today. The recital did not come through second or third hands, but in a manner which seemingly placed its authenticity beyond all question. The narrator, however, will not be a witness before the Cobb County Grand Jury which on Sept. 1 will be asked to undertake a thorough investigation of the lynching of the man alleged to have been the slayer of little Mary Phagan.

Points in the "inside story" emphasized by the narrator were:

Made No Confession.

First—Frank did not confess. He twice was asked if he had anything to say, but on each occasion replied "No." Asked pointedly if he killed the Phagan girl, he is said to have made no reply whatever.

Second—No attempt was made to force a confession. Frank's statement just prior to his death that he loved his wife and mother better than he did his life came unexpectedly and without questioning.

Third—Frank was not maltreated in any way prior to the actual lynching. Stories that he may have met death before he was hanged to the oak are without foundation.

Fourth—Frank walked the 200 yards from the automobile to the death tree without a faltering step, and without a sign or semblance of protest. Fearing perhaps that his body might never reach his relatives, he asked that the wedding ring he wore be delivered to a certain newspaper man with the solemn promise that it would be turned over to his wife. This wish was carried out.

Fifth—Frank was told from the start that he was to be executed, as the courts had directed that he be, and every effort was made by the "vigilance committee" to see that the "legal hanging," as they termed the lynching, was carried out in an orderly manner. Members of the "vigilance committee" are said to resent any intimation that Frank was "maltreated" while in their custody. They assert that he received exactly the same consideration usually given to a condemned man on the day of his execution. The rough handling of the body after it was cut down was a matter concerning which members of the "committee" feel they were not responsible.

Sixth—The members of the "vigilance committee" felt they had a sacred duty to perform in "carrying out the mandate of the courts of the State and of the United States." There was no mob spirit; no demonstration, and there is said to have been no idea of hanging Frank in the public square at Marietta or in the cemetery where Mary Phagan lies buried. There was, however, a determination that the execution should take place in Cobb County. Inasmuch as all the members of the "committee" are said to be residents of Cobb County, the reason for this is obvious.

The Abduction of Frank.

Seven automobiles were required to transport the "vigilance committee" from Marietta to Milledgeville. Only four returned, including the car in which Frank rode. All of the machines were small cars of a popular make. These cars were specially selected because of the difficulty in identifying them. No car of conspicuous color or design was wanted. There were probably twenty-eight men in the lynching party.

The machines left Marietta singly during the afternoon of Monday last, and it was shortly after 10 o'clock when the prison farm was reached. After Warden Smith and Supt. Burke had been called from their homes and handcuffed the party proceeded to the prison house in which Frank was known to be quartered. Frank was just recovering from the wound inflicted on his throat by William Creen, a fellow-prisoner, and was to have been returned to the regular dormitory on Tuesday night. On the night of his death, however, he was still living in the hospital room adjoining the Warden's office.

When the lynching party had entered the prison and its members were disarming the outer guards one of the "trusties" at the prison, who was on guard duty, quickly blew out an oil lamp burning just outside Frank's door. He also extinguished the dim light burning in the hospital room. A member of the party was quick to see this. He hailed the "trustee."

"Come here with a match," he commanded.

"I haven't got one," replied the convict guard.

"Well, you had better get one damned quick."

The guard saw the gleam of a revolver and lost no time in complying. So far as known, this was the only semblance of an oath used in Frank's presence. This was in keeping with the determination of the members of the "vigilance committee" to give to their acts a consistent atmosphere of officiality.

Victim Found Awake in Bed.

Four men entered Frank's room. The noise at the outer door already had awakened the prisoner, but he was still lying in bed when his room was entered by the self-appointed executioners, who wore hats well pulled down to meet the automobile goggles which served the purpose of masks.

"We want you to come with us," Frank was told. There was neither surprise nor terror in the look he turned upon the four determined men. In silence Frank arose and made as if to dress himself. He was still feeble from the loss of blood suffered in the Creen attack, and swayed perhaps a little dizzily.

"Don't you are," he was commanded. Unresistingly and without appeal of any sort for protection, Frank permitted himself to be handcuffed. Clad only in a sleeping garment, he walked into the prison corridor, a member of the "vigilance committee" on either side of him and two bringing up the rear.

The night was one of the warmest of the Summer. When the party had reached the prison porch the leaders thought the progress being made was entirely too slow. It was then that Frank was picked up and carried down the concrete steps of the prison house. It is strenuously denied that Frank was dragged or "bumped" down the steps, and it is also denied that one of the members of the party helped carry him by the hair.

In substantiation of this it is pointed out that when Frank's body was cut down the only mark on it was a slight abrasion of the right arm, just above the elbow. This, it is said, was caused perhaps by striking the arm against the narrow door of the automobile as he was lifted into the machine at Milledgeville, or it may have been due to swinging against the trunk of the oak tree as Frank was being lifted to his death.

The ghastly scarred wound in Frank's throat was not opened until the weight of his body had been thrown against the hangman's knot, placed beneath the right point of the chin.

The Tragic Seven-Hour Ride.

There apparently was no doubt in Frank's mind as to the meaning of his abduction as he was lifted into one of the machines waiting outside the prison farm. He had been fully aware of the threats that had been made against him and of the holding in readiness of the militia several weeks ago, when

there is reason to believe the so-called execution first was planned.

Two men climbed into the back seat of the car in which Frank had been placed, one sitting on either side. Another member of the "committee" was seated beside the chauffeur. There were seven cars in Milledgeville at this time. Four got back to Marietta, the other three being left behind at Little River as a rear guard. These were the cars which successfully baffled those who first started in pursuit of the lynching party.

For seven long hours Frank sat in the automobile which was carrying him to a death-place of which he had no knowledge. It required this length of time to make the journey from Milledgeville to Marietta. The roads were often rough and bumpy, but the party maintained a speed of about twenty miles an hour. There was but one delay—a puncture, which was quickly mended.

Frank's hatless, white-clad figure, sitting erect in the tonneau of the leading car, was in striking contrast with the sombre garted men beside him. Although the roads were black and lonely, the glaring electric headlights of the cars following kept the first car brilliantly illuminated. The highways were deserted, however, and the farm houses which were passed were darkened for the slumber hours. There were no passers-by to witness the strange and tragic procession that sped steadily along in a race with the coming of the dawn.

Questioned on the Death Ride.

During all this long journey only two syllables left Frank's lips. The men who had determined that he should die left him alone with his meditations.

Soon after he had been placed in the automobile Frank was told that he was being taken to his place of execution.

"The courts of Georgia have sentenced you to be hanged, and they never reversed that sentence. It has devolved upon us to carry out their decree," he was told.

Frank did not flinch. The wonderful stoicism which had marked his long confinement in prison and with which he had met all the reverses which followed his many legal attempts for liberty did not desert him in the last hours of his life.

It was well after the destination of his captors had been disclosed that Frank was asked the question:

"Is there anything you would like to say before your execution?"

At first there was no reply. Then, slowly and perhaps painfully, the recently wounded man shook his head.

"No," he said. The word was scarcely audible above the throb of the engine.

For a long time following the only sound was that of the automobiles. Then Frank was asked if he had killed the Phagan girl, and the captors say he made no reply. This question was not repeated until near the journey's end, and again it is said there was no reply. The final interrogation was:

"Is there nothing you wish to say?"

"No."

These four questions constituted the sole conversation in the death car as it sped along the miles which were steadily bringing Frank nearer to Cobb County and to his death. As daylight approached the speed of the cars was increased. It was a full hour after dawn that the four cars drew up just below the gin house on the William Frey place and stopped at the edge of an oak thicket.

Eyes on the Ground As He Walked.

The door of the leading car was opened and Frank was told to step out. He arose, with the knowledge that death was near at hand, but did not falter. The big tree which so soon was to be his scaffold loomed large above the other oaks in the thicket, but Frank did not see it or, if he did, he did not attach any importance to it at first. He walked with firm steps between two of his captors, his eyes upon the ground.

It was while the silent procession was progressing thus that suddenly Frank spoke:

"I love my wife and mother more than I do my life."

The words apparently were uttered more to himself than to his hearers. Seemingly, he had been pondering that last question as to whether there wasn't something he wished to say.

A few moments later the noose had been placed, a handkerchief had been tied loosely above the eyes, there was a pull, a tightening of hempen rope, and Frank's life was fast ebbing away. It was half an hour after the "committee" had completed its work that the dangling body was found, still warm.