The Southern Courier

Vol. IV, No. 1

Weekly Edition: January 6-7, 1948

Ten Cents

BY ESTELLE FINE

Mrs. Johnson Refuses to Give Up Her Desk

BY MERTIS RUBIN

Youth’s Body Found in Field

Miss. Negro Legislator Seated; Others Meet Deadline for Bond

BY BETH WILCOX

What Caused Wilcox Death?

Kids Beaten in Schools,

Lowndes Parents Claim

BY BETH WILCOX

Robert L. Clark (SNIP) Takes Oath of Office

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Can’t Stop BTW

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Two Faces of Jefferson County

Resident Calls Bessemer ‘Terrible Place’ to Live

BESSEMER, Ala.—Many years ago, said a Negro lady who is a native of Bessemer, her mother received a bit of kindly advice from a white woman.

"If I were you," the white lady said, "I'd move out of here, even if it's no farther than Birmingham. Bessemer is a terrible place for a Negro.

That was a long time back, but many people in Bessemer feel that nothing has changed very much since.

The civil rights movement came to Bessemer in 1964. The Voters League of Bessemer and SCLC workers conducted the first voter registration drives.

Negro leaders estimate that, even now, only a little more than half of the black people in Bessemer have registered to vote.

The leaders say that some people are still afraid.

"We'd offered to take them down in cars and provide baby-sitters for them if they knew what we said," said one veteran of the Voters League. "And still they wouldn't come out."
Blue-Gray Game, 1967

Charles Mitchell Was There

MONTGOMERY, Ala.--It was a cold day, but Charles Mitchell was sweating.

Mitchell, the first Alabama State College football player ever selected for the annual Blue-Gray game, was trying to impress the Gray coaches in practice the week before the game.

Gray have played in the nationally-televised all-star game for the past three years, but Mitchell, a native from Mobile, was the first man chosen from any of the nearby Negro schools.

"We (Alabama State) tried to get a player in the game last year," Mitchell said after the Dec. 26 practice. "We have players capable of playing in this game every year, but we are from Montgomery.

In practice, Mitchell (number 67 in pictures) worked out at defensive back against the Grays' offensive team. Most of the time, he covered Auburn flanker-back Freddie Hyatt--who ran wild against the Blue in last Tuesday's game, with two spectacular TD receptions.


Mitchell and Hyatt got along fine during the week. In fact, the Auburn star seemed to go out of his way to make things pleasant.

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR, COL. 1

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Photos by Jim Peppler
The Southern Courier

January 6, 1968

The Southern Courier is published in a non-copyright, non-exclusive
education corporation, for the study and dissemination of accurate information about
schools and other in the field of home economics.

Price: 11 cents per copy, $1.00 per year in the South, $1.25 per year elsewhere in the
U.S., personal subscription S150 per year in order to secure the name of printing of this publication. Second-class postage paid at Montgomery, Alabama.

Effective Editor: Mary Elgin Cole
Executive Editor: Barry Chen
Publisher: E. Robert Hyde
Layout: Ann R. Peglar
Composers: Barbara T. O'Neal, Mary Casto, Linda Wase
Typesetters: Joyce French, Glura Bradford
Ink Circulation Agents: George Walker, Harold Yarborough
Copy Editor: James B. Compton
Management Editor: Margaret C. Dobby

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By: Mitchell and the Gra.

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