

**Interview of Maude Burroughs Jackson by Mary Jo McTammany
Jan. and Feb. 2007**

I was with Dr. King in '63 and '64 when he came down to St. Aug on occasion. I started working with the Movement in St. Aug. sometime in 1962.

I was in college in St. Aug at Florida Memorial. I started there in 1960 and graduated in 1964. When I started 3 of us were in school there at the same time – my sister, Ann, my brother, Eddie and I. We all commuted to class.

I never lived in the dormitories at Florida Memorial. I met a family in St. Augustine and it so happened that their pastor knew my family. The pastor taught one of my brothers back in the 1930s and he knew the name Burroughs and he had talked us to people in St. Augustine.

When I met this family she recognized our name and made me welcome to be a part of her family and stay during the school term in her home.

About 1962, I learned about the local movement. I participated in all the sit-ins and the marches.

I went to headquarters a lot. Our headquarters was at Dr. Robert Hayling's office. He since moved from St. Aug. There is a great story in his being in St. Aug. He was in business there – a dentist. He had some terrible experiences trying to integrate St. Aug. Some things I don't think he even wants to talk about.

I guess that's why not too much has been written about St. Aug. and the movement there.

I met him by going to the mass meetings and by going to the sit-ins at Woolworth's. I'm not too clear on exact dates but I was deeply involved in all the sit-ins and demonstrations during '62, '63, '64. The only exceptions being when I was at home in Middleburg during the summers.

We would go and sit at the lunch counter at Woolworth's and the waitresses would just keep walking past us. Every

now and then a waitress would say "We don't serve niggers here." I know what the word means and maybe coming through the movement – it doesn't hurt as much these days as it did then. So if I use the word don't feel hurt about me using it. It doesn't really bother me if I use it because I'm using it in the context of how it was used back in the day. It did hurt during that time."

In those days, ladies of quality – black or white – dressed nicely to "go to town". The demonstrations and sit-ins were no different.

I would have worn a nice skirt and blouse or a nice dress with hose and heels, My nails done, my hair would have been combed. I probably looked much nicer than I would dress to go to town today. Times have changed.

Also being from 19 to 21 years old, I was very concerned about the way I was dressed. We were raised to be that way.

At the sit-ins, we always sat down in an orderly way because that was part of the instruction when you wanted to be a part of Dr. King's Movement. There were very precise and detailed instructions on how to go out and how to conduct yourself while you were out and no matter what people said to you, you were not to respond in any ugly way.

There was a group that was in charge of the Movement in St. Aug. and I got involved by just going and sitting at the office, typing letters, sending out information about the movement and talking to people who didn't want to go out on the marches. I would be left there to handle the office many times during those early marches.

At that time there might have been 15-20 people who would be there to organize things before the marches. They always reminded people to be at their best behavior, that you might encounter people

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who would make remarks that would upset you. They might throw things at you. They might hit you. They might spit on you. They might do anything to you and you must not respond. Anybody who could not accept this – could not participate.

So you already knew what to expect. You knew to expect doors closed in your face, skipping you in line, anything of that nature might happen to you.

Then Dr. King started coming down there. The first time that I saw Dr. King he came in for a mass meeting and I stayed there at the office to take care of answering the phone or to take care of anything else that came up.

He was getting in so late and after the meeting it was going to be so late that you wouldn't dare try to go to a restaurant or anything. So, I was asked to prepare dinner for him that night at the office using a small toaster oven.

I made a steak for him and toast and a little salad. And I got a chance to just sit and be in the inner circle of the leaders of the movement.

He was such a compassionate, such a common person – you just felt good being around him. A man of this importance but every one of us he treated like we were the special one. And he showed so much respect for all of the participants – for everybody. It wasn't like you were just a little person here in St. Aug. He didn't treat you that way.

After that, when he began coming to St. Aug. on a regular basis – I spent a lot of time with Dr. King. Sometimes he would fly in and have to fly right back out. All of us spent time with him just working around the office, organizing the meetings. Some of us even went out to the high school with him and recruited children to participate.

Dr. King didn't necessarily come to the mass meetings but he did the marches. At night we did the marches. While the picketing and sit-ins were done during the day.

After a mass meeting where Dr. King would give a fiery sermon – we would sing “God Will Take Care of You” and just feel all fired up and ready to save the world. Sometimes Abernathy or sometimes Andrew Young might be the speaker. All of them came to St. Aug. – C.T. Vivian, Y.T. Walker, Josea Williams, John Lewis. I got the opportunity to be around all these people. All of them didn't come at the same time, they kind of cycled in and out. It was very well planned.

One would leave and another would come in to help with the movement. Presence of the national leaders really was intended to generate national media interest. Local people could not get that kind of attention.

The first time I went out to go to jail, was on the march on Tallahassee but we didn't get arrested. A lot of Ivy League students came down from up north on spring break. There was nobody going to represent Florida Memorial and Dr. King thought they ought to be represented to he asked me to go – so I didn't stay in the office – I went on out to go to jail.

Before every march we already knew how many people we want in jail and we know when and how they are going to get out. It was always a precisely planned Movement.

The number to go to jail was determined by how many it took to fill the jail and how many were there to march. It was like the magic number to get the attention of the media. Newspapers and television stations were not going to make a trip to St. Aug. to report unless we hit that number. The more voices you had – the more attention you got. And the more

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important the people participating the more they are going to cover and the more you reach.

I went to the Monson Motel to sit-in and that was the first time I was arrested. We sat down and they asked us to leave. They offered to serve us in the kitchen but we said “no” because that would be defeating the purpose. So we stayed and I got arrested. I went to jail from the Monson twice. The second time I went there, they wouldn’t even let us in the door and they turned the sprinklers on us.

Being in jail in St. Aug. was a frightening experience because the KKK threatened to come and tear up the jail to get to us or ... burn down the jail. There were threats all the time. But we continued to have our marches and mass meetings.

At the jail in St. Aug., they built a pen as if they were going to put some chickens out there. It was May 1964 – so hot. They would not let us have any shade. Dr. King and other men tried to take their jackets off to make some shade for us but they made them put the jackets back on.

Mrs. Peabody, the mother of the Gov. of Mass, was in jail with us at that time. She came down and went to jail with us. That got a lot of coverage. And that day they let us go back inside out of the heat. They wouldn’t do that the third day – made us stay out all day.

We didn’t stop. When a meeting was announced, the St. Paul’s church would just be full of people. And we would just leave out of there and start marching.

I went to jail 3 times. One time I was in there a whole week.

You go to jail and you know you are there for a purpose and sometimes you have to stay longer than other times.

The time I was in jail with Mrs. Peabody – I stayed almost a week. We

were trying to get 500 people in jail that time and we did it. I was a senior doing my semester of internship and almost got kicked out of college for that - at Florida Memorial you did not miss a day of internship.

I was interning at Webster Elementary School in 2nd grade and I wasn’t there when I was supposed to be teaching that week. It was rumored that I would be removed from the program.

Dr. King simply said, “Don’t worry about that. If they do anything, we will handle it.” And I felt real good about that. I never had any problems. The reason he said that was no one else was there representing Florida Memorial and he felt that Memorial being the black college in St. Aug. that they should have been there leading the way instead of saying that I would get kicked out of school.

A lot of black churches did the same thing – sort of kept their institutions distant from the Movement. They were afraid to participate and when Dr. King came down so many of the churches closed their doors to him. When he was assassinated of course they felt differently and wished they had participated but of course, it was too late.

Mass meetings were held at St. Paul’s Church and there were several other churches that opened their doors.

The Movement grew in St. Aug. instead of Jacksonville because Dr. Hayling was in St. Aug. and he was the driving force at that time.

He was a young dentist not long out of dental school and I guess he was ready to see things change. He showed lots of courage and he wasn’t afraid to go out there and do what needed to be done. He had a very classy group supporting him in St. Augustine. Mr. and Mrs. Twine the Eubanks and some of the school principals who couldn’t openly participate worked

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hard in the background. And I think it happened in St. Augustine because it was a tourist town with a slightly more liberal attitude.

I come across some who participated every now and then and a lot more who wish they had been more active.

I didn't take Dr. King as a celebrity. The question was asked of him one time about how he could feel so comfortable with Queens and Presidents. His answer was that you just talk to them like you were talking to someone else and ask about their children. Gradually people begin to realize that we all care about the same things.

After the mass meetings when there wasn't a march planned a group would just come and sit around back at the office. We sat on the sofa, floors – wherever. Might sit there and talk with Dr. King until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning.

Just talking about the conditions of the world and what people can do to change things. We just got into what was real – the hopes and the dreams and sometimes you would just be sitting around talking just like you would with anybody else. It was a very comfortable setting and company to be in.

Dr. Hayling and I sometimes call and we talk about the old days.

I did not know – very few did – where Dr. King would be staying the night. Because – there were times when we said he would be a certain place and he actually had to go someplace else.

One time a lady invited Dr. King to stay at her beach house. Dr. King, Abernathy and Andrew Young and some others I don't remember all of them went to the house. But... they didn't stay. They had to be slipped out of there because of threats.

And this was not uncommon because St. Aug. was a place where they

had vowed that Dr. King would be killed if he ever marched there again.

And I remember the Thursday evening the announcement that word was received that if he marched that night he would die. It was indeed the bloodiest night of our Movement.

We went out on the march that evening and so many people got hurt. But Dr. King didn't get hurt, they protected him very well.

I almost got hit and it just so happened that I was saved. We always marched 4 across with men on the outside if possible and the man marching beside me, Jimmy Jackson, pushed me back just as a brick flew past my head. I would have been badly hurt.

We had a lot of people go to the hospital that night.

We started at the church and marched down to the slave market and made the turn and were coming back down King Street to the church. We were right in front of the Flagler hotel when bricks and bottles and boards – just everything you can imagine came flying from everywhere it seemed.

We had a nice crowd to turn out to march that night maybe 3 or 400 people. One thing I have to be grateful for – they didn't start shooting at us.

We ran back to the church. People assisted the ones who were injured get back to the church. Those that needed to go to the hospital were loaded into private cars. Less serious injuries we treated right there at the church

I worked on trying to get names of the people hurt and just assisting however I could. We wanted a record of anyone hurt so they could be checked on later. I was so young.

We went right back out and marched the next night and every night all week.

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This may not be for your newspaper but just think of three black men going and invading a Klan meeting - Dr. Hayling, Little Jimmy Jackson and Big Jimmy Jackson. Oh my God, did they beat those men. They beat them up.

I still can't figure out why they did that. I think what they wanted to do was to see if some of the people claiming to be Klansman befriending us and giving them information really were what they claimed or just deceiving and tricking them. Find out if they were friends or enemies, to see for themselves.

Little Jimmy still makes a joke out of it. He says that as long as they were beating us up about the head and everywhere, he was all right. But, when they started talking about castrating him, he knew it was time to run. He laughs about it. He dropped by here last week. He still works. He drives a school bus for the high school over there and he had to bring some kids to Middleburg High.

They bombed Dr. Hayling's house. He had to leave St. Augustine or they probably would have killed him

I didn't think life should be the way it was. I just thought things should be different. It was a good thing I had the Movement to work with; otherwise I probably would have been in jail anyway. Because when I was younger and saw a sign that said "white only" I went there - to that restroom, to that water fountain.

When we went downtown in Jacksonville to shop - they would have a filthy, tiny bathroom for blacks. I would take one look and know I couldn't go in there, it was too filthy. Those bathrooms weren't cleaned for weeks at a time. I would go right in the "white only" door. Just act like I couldn't read or didn't know any better. And if I wanted a drink, I

would get water from the white fountain just because it was clean.

The three things that I experienced that I thought were inhumane were the dogs, the cattle prods and that chicken pen in the full Florida summertime sun.

When the St. Aug. police arrested demonstrators they used dogs and cattle prods. It wasn't easy in St. Aug. The public didn't see, hear or know all the things that went on.

I wasn't that concerned about eating out in restaurants. You can keep your food. I didn't need to go to your restaurant. I can eat before I leave home. Besides if someone in a restaurant is upset at you they could spit in that food.

But, if I am here spending money in your store and I've got to go to the restroom and sometimes we would have walked 30-40 minutes from Mom's house to get to downtown Jacksonville - I have got to use the restroom.

I use to ride the Greyhound bus some weekends to go up to Augusta or Tampa. I was 19 or 20 and felt like I was grown and could go wherever I wanted.

But I had to sit at the back of that bus and not allowed to use the restroom on the bus. When you finally get to the bus station have to go to the colored restroom - which had not been cleaned since the station was built. Just nasty.

That was the thing that bothered me the most - those bathrooms.

Dr. King always said there were good white people who just didn't know or realize what our everyday lives were like. He never put everybody in the same category. He would always tell us there were good, well-meaning white people. He said in his sermons that when good white people see and begin to understand the injustices they will bring about change. That's what the movement was all about - bringing people together.

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So many white people tried to help, to comfort. Even during the sit-ins, there were just regular white people in St. Aug. who would come and join in. They would just sit down at the counter and because they wouldn't serve us - they wouldn't order anything. There were some whites that participated in the marches. I would have thought they would have been afraid for their lives too.

There were some people that I surely would like to see again. During the spring break in '64 I met some Ivy League students from Dartmouth and Smith College. That's when we marched in Tallahassee one day then came back to St. Augustine to march and demonstrate and get arrested the next day. Bill Jacoby, I'll never forget him and a girl named Faith. They kept saying, "Come and leave from here. We will help you go to school at Smith". But I knew that I would stay right here with my family.

I was at home for the summer vacation in 1963 when the children were arrested and four of them who refused to cease participation in the Civil Rights Movement were sent to reform school. As I understand it the children decided and the parents supported them. In a meeting with one of the girls last year she said that if she had it all to do over again - she would do it exactly the same way.

I really didn't talk much about the movement and what we were doing in St. Augustine when I was home in the summers. And my Mom was very upset when she found out I had been arrested the first time. The rest of the family just figured - well, that's Maude.

When I went to jail - it was Easter weekend and I of course didn't turn up for the family get together. I was sitting in the St. Augustine jail that Sunday when they came and said, "Maude Burroughs, you

have visitors." I didn't even know we could have visitors.

It was Mama and my brother Eddie. Eddie was a minister by then and I think that is why they let me have visitors. Anyway, Mama was there to bail me out. She had seen the arrest at the Monson on the television news and thought at the time that one of the girls looked a lot like me but... she didn't really believe it until I didn't show up for Sunday dinner. I had to explain to her that I couldn't let her do that because I had been assigned a specific time to spend in jail and then the Movement would bail me out. By the time the visit was over she had come to accept it and like the rest of the family decided "Maude's just going to do what Maude's going to do".

Some of those days were good days. Some were bad. Colored people just needed to know they had the opportunity do things with their lives. It is sad though that after laws were passed - people didn't even take advantage of it.

It was just the idea - I can do it if I want to do it. If I need to eat, I can get a decent meal. If I need to sleep there, I can. To know if they needed to, they could.

It makes me impatient with young people today who don't take advantage of their opportunities. Oh, you just don't know. I say all the time to them that it didn't come easy and we didn't do it for your pants to be hanging off your butt.

And when children have the opportunity to better their conditions and will not do it - it upsets me more than you can imagine. They just don't understand that it hasn't always been this way.

You have to earn respect to get respect. And if you want to achieve in life, you're going to have to put some energy into it. You can't just sit back.

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I look at some of the kids – they don't want anything especially if they have to work toward getting it. Life can just drift on and they'll just drift right on with it.

I tell them – I started working when I was 9 years old. I deserve everything I have. At least, I applied myself. I didn't sit back and wait and wait.

I went with my sister-in-law to clean newly-built houses in Orange Park. That's how I earned money to go to college.

At the time, I had no hint of the sheer power of Dr. Martin Luther King's lasting influence on the culture. Even when he won the Nobel Peace Prize I just didn't realize that I was sitting in the floor in that little office in St. Aug. talking with a man who was destined to become a bigger than life legend. He was just so down to earth. To him, The Nobel Prize and the money was more about what it meant for the movement than the man. One day in front of the fence outside the office he said "We all earned this together." He never took personal credit. His humility made us see him as a man not a legend.

I read a poem once that reminds me of him and I have made it my personal poem of life entitled "Myself" and written by Edgar A. Guest.

All of my things from that period were destroyed when we were over in Okinawa. They were at Daddy's house and they say that the rats got in them. All my mementos from high school and college were lost. When you live in the country rats and roaches are things you expect. Whenever they found evidence of rats in a trunk or drawer – they just burned everything in it.

I did buy some of his sermons and I always share them with people but they never bring them back.

Dr. King was arrested at least twice that I know of because I was arrested too.