THE TRIED TO GO WITH ME!': The Life Story of Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram

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HE TRIED TO GO WITH ME!



men sweater in ingram case—Mrs. Rosa Lee the under death sentence for the slaying of a white the near Ellaville, Ga., shows Robert M. Ratcliffe, we ellow of The Pittsburgh Courier, her sweater, which respect the farmer tore while beating her with a gun and the Pitture was made in the county jail in Albany, it allows are Photo.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Mrs. Ross Lee Ingram, 40-year-old widow

and mother of fourteen children; has been sentenced to die for the

slaying of a white farmer near Ellaville, Ga. Two of her some also were sentenced to die. Because of the national interest in this case,

The Pittsburgh Courier sent its news editor, Robert M. Ratciffe, to

Albany, Ga., to get her life story. This is the first installment.





STRATFORD INVITING MRS. INGRAM TO COTTON HOUSE . . . THE FIGHT IN THE FIELD ROAD . . . THE SLAYING OF STRATFORD.

These three illustrations, drawn by Courier Staff Artist Samuel Milai. present Mrs. Ingram's version of the slaying of John Stratford.

The Life Story of Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram

(AS TOLD TO ROBERT M. RATCLIFFE, NEWS EDITOR OF THE PITTSBURGH COURIER)

A!BANY, GA.—He tried to go with me . . . That's the main thing that caused this trouble.

"He was mad because I wouldn't go into the cotton house with him . . . He had tried three times to make me go into the cotton house and have something to do with him." Those were the words that fell from the trembling lips of Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram, 40-year-old widow and mother of fourteen children, as she became telling me her life story—a story that may have a sad ending because she dared oppose Dixie's "white supremacy."

Mrs. Ingram, a reddish brown woman with Indian features, is under a death sentence for the November, 1947 slaying of a white sharecropper, John Ethron Stratford. 66. Sentenced to die with her are two of her sons, Wallace. 16, and Sammy Lee, 14.

"He brought that killing on

himself." she said. rubbing her shoeless feet over the dustry concrete floor of the colored women's cell in the Dougherty County jail.

I spent three hours with Mrs. Ingram. She sat in the only chair in the room which has space for six prisoners. Her imprisoned sons had been allowed to visit her. There were two other women prisoners. One was sobbing, the other cursing.

Mrs. Ingram explained that she

and Straiford had adjoining out on houses—a small building on the land which they worked as sharecroppers near Ellaville. Ga.

She stared through from bars.

After my husband died last August me and my two cidest boys carned on the farm work. We was

NEXT WEEK

Mrs. Ingram tells how she met her husband, about the fourteen children born to them, and what caused her husband's death.

rining to make a living. And it worked all right until this here nan "Stratfold" stipped me "My bushand had trouble with him before he died. Mr. Stratford

sim before he died. Mr. Stratford always meddled my children. He would get a gun and chase them off his place when they tried to nick blackberries. He was a share-trapper just like us, out heliause to was white he tried to bus us. It was in the field road when his tring the fight and slaying happened. Sammle Lee, 14, and James, 12 my boys, was in the road leaning on their wheels. Waste 16 canother sont had gone to be house and was coming back.

when he heard me streaming."

Mrs. Ingram tugged at her blue frees and wiped perspiration from her forehead. "Mr. Stratford was standing in my cotton field," she went on. "He had a run. He yelled to me and said."

Wen damn see a beautiful flat you now. Tell these damn boys to get your mules out of my corn, and you'd better get your hogs off my place.

"He came over to me, still corring, and beat me on the read and shoulder with his gun. I grappied with him and he dropped the gun. He choked me and nearly tore off my sweater. He reached to his haife but I graphed his hand before he could open it. While I held him, he pounded me with the but of the knife.

Then Wallage guarded up. He

begged Mr. Stratford to stop beat

He Tried to Go With Me' -Mrs. Ingram

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ing me.

Wallace kept saying: Mr. Stratford, please stop beating mama'.

"Then Wallace picked up the gun from the road and started beating Mr. Stratford."

Mrs. Ingram looked out of the window at the yelping dogs that

guard the county jail.

"We left Mr. Stratford in the road and went home," she said she said

when questioned again.

"As soon as I came to my senses, I sent one of my children to a nearby house on the highway. I told the child to tell the people to call the man who owns the farm and tell him what happened. About one hour later, a crowd of men

came and got the body.

"The sheriff and his men came to my house and got a hammer and a hoe. They said we used the hammer and hoe to kill Mr. Stratford. They told my boy, James, they'd kill him if he didn't say we beat Mr. Stratford to death with the hammer and hoe."

The life story of Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram is a pathetic story. It's a story of poverty, the good earth, children, love-and premacy."

It's the story of a Negro share-cropper against a white share-

cropper.

It is typical of the poor Negro

farmers in the South. Rosa Lee Ingram was a sharecropper—a Negro sharecropper— before they snatched her from her bables and hustled her off to jail. Now she is a prisoner—a prisoner in Georgia—because she dared op-pose that thing called "white su-

premacy."

John Ethron Stratford was

sharecropper-a white sharecropper-until one of Mrs. Ingram's sons dealt him a fatal blow on a country read.

He was white. "White supremacy was his god. It is the unwritten law of the South, and it gave him the right to stand above a poor Negro sharecropper. It gave him the right to call Mrs. Ingram by her first name. She had to call him "Mister." It gave him the right to boss and curse her—It gave him the right to force himself upon her.

"White supremacy" cost Stratford his life. It may cost Mrs. Ingram and two of her sons their lives.

(The life story of Mrs. Ingram will be centi d next week.)