

## Rosa Ingram Tells Courier:

# 'I Cry to See My Children; I'll Be Glad to Go Home'

## They're Waiting For Mom

By TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON  
(Courier Staff Writer)

GEORGIA STATE PRISON, Reidsville, Ga. — She wore a pinkish cotton dress filled with small red squares. Her black hair showed heavy streaks of gray in places. Her round brown face was unlined and her five-foot-3-inch frame carried around 185 pounds.

Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram, now 49—Georgia's most famous prisoner—sat down across from me at the long wooden table after we shook hands . . . and waited for the first words to be spoken.

Now—for the moment—let's jump from the first words all the way to the last words, so The Courier can get over to its readers the very special message from Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram — convicted of murder nine years ago and sentenced to die with two of her young sons.

"Is there anything you want The Courier to say special to the people of the nation for you?" I asked.

"Tell them to do all they can to help me get home to my children, 'cause a mother needs to be with her children." These were her exact words.

"Anything else?" I asked further.

"No sir. I don't believe so. I just want to be home with my children."

That's how our interview ended in the cool

quiet of the pretty white reception room of the women's building at Georgia's multi-million-dollar state prison which, except for a short period, has been Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram's home ever since her death sentence was changed to life imprisonment.

Sometime during the next two months — if nothing goes wrong — Rosa Lee Ingram, widow and mother of 12 living children, will be free on parole, along with her two sons, Sammie Lee, now 22, and Wallace, now 24, who are at Camilla prison.

Mrs. Lucille K. Lee, superintendent of the Women's Division of the prison, ushered me into the reception room and told a white-attired aide to get Rosa Lee Ingram.

**THE STOUT,** stocky Mrs. Ingram was at the table and by my side before I knew she was even there, so quietly had she come in. I looked at her for a quick moment.

This was the widow whose plight had brought the State of Georgia the biggest splurge of publicity—and criticism—it has ever received in a prison case.

This was the little brown woman whose case had become the "cause celebre" of more fundraising groups than you could shake a stick at.

This was the widow for whom the heart of a nation went out so completely that the fund drive carried out by the Courier netted over \$45,000, every cent of which was turned over to the NAACP to help Mrs. Ingram.

Every newspaper in the country—white and colored—had told her story over and over. Her name had become a by-word and was as well known as that of Harry S. Truman, who was President when the Georgia incident occurred near Ellaville nine years ago.

**BUT FOR THE** noise made two

years ago when a group of women from New York came to Atlanta to pray and demonstrate for her release, Rosa Lee Ingram had become a forgotten figure.

Her name faded from the front pages, from the headlines and from the lips of the nation. She was just another number in the picturesque white structure in which Georgia houses its women prisoners.

This prison is called "The Alcazar of Georgia." It looks like a beautiful country club until you get close enough to note the heavy bars here, there and everywhere, from the front door on through.

So, here was Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram. The Courier wanted to find out for its readers what has been happening to this central figure in a world-wide drama (Moscow papers front-paged her case), and how she has been these last few years. So, here we were across the table from her ready to fire questions.

"You've gained some weight, haven't you?" was the first question.

**A SMILE BROKE** across the face that had borne the strain of wondering for nine long years about her flock of children: "I picked up a right smart."

Her voice was soft and easy. It sort of made you think she was getting set to hit a note from which she could raise a song in a long meter in some gospel choir.

There was a lack of emotion, but you could sense that her heart was leaping for joy because she was having a visitor who was from the outside world and who might have a message of hope for her tortured soul. You could see it in her fawn-like eyes.

"Well, how would you feel if they'd let you go home soon?" we asked her.

Again that smile, and there's



The family Mrs. Ingram left behind in 1949.

something fascinating about it. Maybe that was one of the things that had won Jackson Ingram for her mate those long years ago.

**THEN SHE Poured** her whole soul into the answer which came forth and it made you remember her anguished plea nine years ago: "Please get me out; my baby needs me." Her answer was put into measured words as if she had picked each one out individually for a special place:

"I'll be just too glad to get back home to my children. I just cry to see them when I think about them." You can see her alone in her yearning behind those cold bars weeping silently. Your heart goes out to her. You talk further.

Yes, she was in Richmond County, near Augusta, in 1948 and 1949, and she "liked it there just fine." She was happy helping look after aged people, just as Georgia Board of Corrections Director J. B. Hatchett had told you in Atlanta.

"Then some people from up the country (the North) came there to see me, so they sent me back down here." It wasn't for her untrained mind to analyze the whys or wherefores for that move, but you had seen the letter from the Augusta prison head

saying the publicity wasn't good for his camp.

**SHE TELLS YOU** that she sees her children "once in a while, but not this year," and this year is almost half gone, so there must be a loneliness in her soul.

When you ask her how her conduct has been here, you are thinking of the reports now being studied by Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles Chairman Hugh C. Carney, who wants to free her and her sons before August if possible.

"I never been on punishment since I've been here," she tells you. "I try to obey the rules."

You get verification of that from Mrs. Lee just before you left, when the "super" told you:

"We've never had any trouble with Rosa Lee. She's been one of the best prisoners we ever had. You wouldn't know she was here if you didn't see her."

**OUR NEXT** question had to do with an incident which caused quite a stir nationally during her early imprisonment when there was a report that she had suffered a heart attack and was not getting proper treatment.

"They thought it was a heart attack," she said. "The doctors

gave me medicine and that straightened me out. I got so I just couldn't rest. I guess I was worried about my children." There was that never-ending concern about her children.

Actually, Mrs. Ingram has mothered 14 children, but two are dead. She now has eight sons and four daughters.

The daughter she calls "Sister," is Mrs. Geneva Rushing, who now looks after the children at the home in Leslie prepared for the family by funds from the NAACP. Mrs. Rushing now has three children.

**ANOTHER DAUGHTER,** Mrs. Rosola Cooks, 26, is now married, but has no children except an adopted child. Two sons have married since her imprisonment and both now have families. They are Charles, 25, and James, 20.

Mrs. Ingram says she hears from Sammie Lee and Wallace regularly, and the reports on them are fine. "They're as fat as they can be," she said. They, too, have exemplary records at the Camilla prison.

The imprisoned widow says she attends religious services every Sunday in the recreation room of the prison, where they also have Sunday school. The services are conducted by the prison chaplain, Mrs. Ingram is Baptist.