



**INSIDE**

Marshall Ramsey on Colorado shooting, 3C

# Perspective

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## Big battle looms over Medicaid expansion

As I noted in a recent column, the majority ruling in the Supreme Court's decision upholding the Affordable Care Act presents a ready battle for state policy-makers who must now determine whether the proposed expansion of the Medicaid program dictated by the Obama health care reforms will impact Mississippi.



Sid Salter

On Medicaid, the court said that the federal government can't threaten or withhold funding for the state's existing Medicaid program simply because the state fails to expand Medicaid as dictated by the health care reforms. Almost immediately, the sides began forming for what will likely be a bitter battle during the next legislative session.

On one side are Republican leaders who are already on record opposing the Medicaid expansion for budgetary reasons. Gov. Phil Bryant said funding a Medicaid expansion would require substantial budget cuts in education and transportation.

Republican Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves said adding 400,000 people to Medicaid would cost about \$1.7 billion over a decade. GOP House Speaker Philip Gunn called the expansion a "budget-buster" for the state.

But Democrats say the poorest state in the union can't afford to turn down more federal dollars in a state with a high percentage of uninsured citizens. Advocacy groups are also pushing Medicaid expansion.

Under the ACA, federal taxpayers will pay the full cost of covering the new Medicaid enrollees for three years, from 2014 to 2016, and the federal share would then gradually decline to 90 percent in 2020. In poor states with large Medicaid populations like Mississippi, state officials worry that future costs will be shifted to the state.

Groups like the Mississippi Center for Health Policy cite different numbers in analyzing the impact of Medicaid expansion: "Over the period from 2014 to 2019 state expenditures for the newly eligible Medicaid recipients will be about \$11.4 billion with the federal government paying 97 percent (roughly \$342 million) of those costs."

Advocates for the poor and working families say Medicaid expansion is an issue that impacts middle-class families, not just the poor or working poor.

Ed Sivak, the dogged director of the nonprofit Mississippi Economic Policy Center, said after the high court ruling: "I've been asking, for a few years, about the health insurance status of people that I come across in daily life. The people who will likely be left out if Mississippi doesn't expand Medicaid are very familiar such as the people who cut our hair and take care of our kids or grandkids when we go to work."

Joining the Medicaid expansion fight will be a familiar political adversary for conservative legislators — the state's hospitals. Former Gov. Haley Barbour's policy battles with the Mississippi Hospital Association were the stuff of legend during his two terms.

But on the issue of Medicaid expansion, many hospitals — and Democrats and advocacy groups — will cite Mississippi's soaring price tag for uncompensated care (the cost of treating unin-

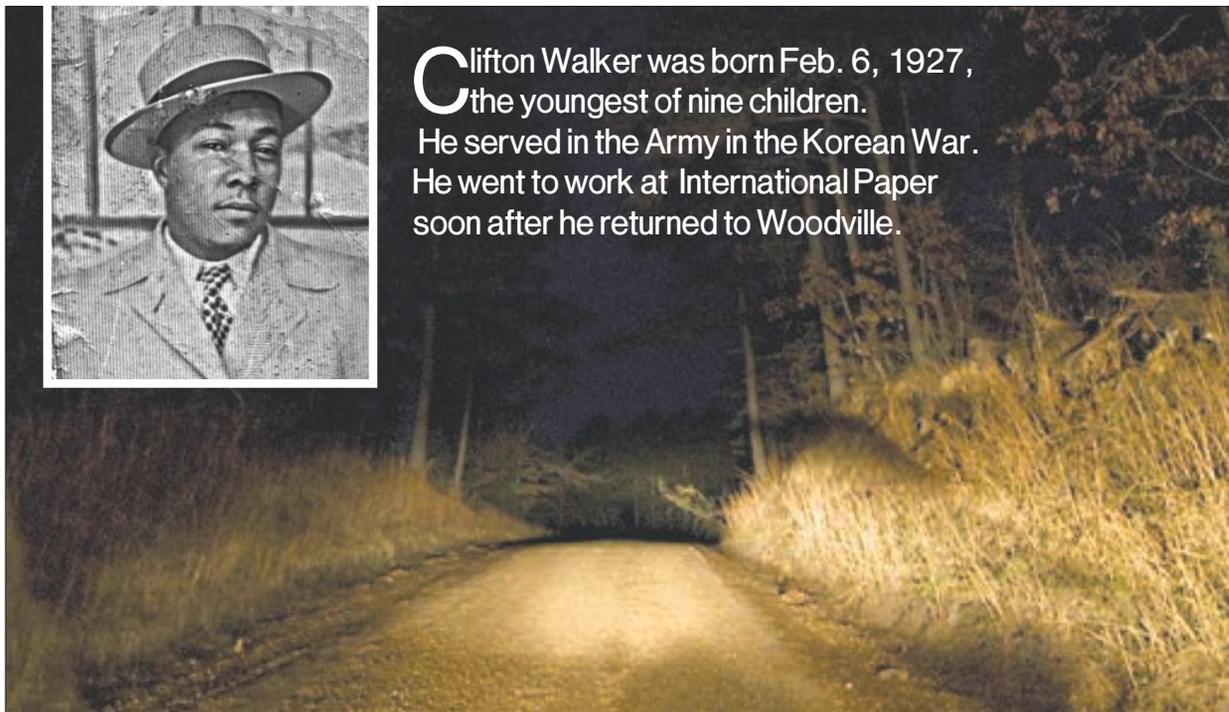
See BATTLE, 3C

# Traitor Town

## The unsolved civil rights slaying of Clifton Walker



Clifton Walker was born Feb. 6, 1927, the youngest of nine children. He served in the Army in the Korean War. He went to work at International Paper soon after he returned to Woodville.



Ben Greenberg/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Clifton Walker was ambushed by Klansmen Feb. 28, 1964, on Poor House Road in Wilkinson County, an unpaved road about six miles north of Woodville. The next day he was found dead in the car. All the windows were shot out and his face was blown off.

## 'We need to know; that was our father'

By Ben Greenberg  
Clarion-Ledger correspondent

Four and a half years after the FBI announced it would reopen and investigate more than 100 cases of unsolved civil rights-era killings in the South, the bureau has yet to initiate charges in any of the cases. It has instead closed all but 39 of those cases without recommending prosecution.

"Few, if any, of these cases will be prosecuted," the Department of Justice has acknowledged to Congress.

Despite its most vigorous efforts, the FBI has said, it has not been able to overcome "difficulties inherent in all cold cases: subjects die; witnesses die or can no longer be located; memories become clouded; evidence is destroyed or cannot be located; original investigations lacked the technical or scientific advances relied upon today."

But none of those reasons explains why the FBI has been able to gain little ground in a case that is still open — the slaying of Clifton Walker, a 37-year-old African American who was ambushed by a white mob and brutally gunned down in his car on an unpaved backwoods road outside the southwest Mississippi town of Woodville on Feb. 28, 1964. Walker was married and the father of five children.

For Walker's children, the FBI's own management of the case raises questions.

### The FBI's role

Since 2007, the FBI has rotated at least three different agents onto the case, and the Walker family says it has seen no indication any of the agents have made it a priority. When reached in July 2011, the latest agent, Bradley Hentschel, had been working the case a couple months and had not yet visited Wilkinson County, where the fatal shooting occurred. Key figures who were mentioned in 1964 federal and state investigative documents and who I interviewed between 2008 and 2012 say the FBI, as of mid-July 2012, still has not contacted them as part of its present-day investigation. Reached again this month, Hentschel would not comment on an open investigation but emphasized "the reliance that we have on the public to provide

"Anybody who commits such a heinous crime like that needs to be named. Just like my dad has a name and family, they also have families. They need to know the truth, what their dad did, what their grandpa did."

— Shirley Walker Wright



Ben Greenberg/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Catherine Walker Jones (left) of New Orleans and Shirley Walker Wright of Baton Rouge, along with their siblings, are still waiting for answers.

us information because we have resource and personnel limitations."

The bureau does not officially acknowledge Hentschel's constraints. "I don't think it's an issue of personnel or resource availability," said FBI spokesman Christopher Allen. In a written statement, Allen added, "Often, hoping to be helpful, individuals may profess to the media that they have direct knowledge of events that they later acknowledge to law enforcement was hearsay, rumor, or opinion."

When Hentschel's predecessor on the case, Agent Kevin Rust, contacted me in August 2010, Rust was newly on the case and showed little familiarity with investigative documents that are in the FBI files and that this report already had accessed through the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Rust was also under the mistaken impression his predecessor on the case, Agent Douglas Knight, had been in contact with the Walker family. Rust asked for Walker family contact information so he could arrange a meeting with them, but Clifton Walker's children are still wondering

in 2012 when such a meeting will happen.

"My hopeful feelings that the FBI might really make progress on my father's murder case are diminished to sadness, helplessness and anger," one of Clifton Walker's daughters, Catherine Walker Jones of New Orleans, said. "I pray we don't go through the motions of opening the wounds with no results."

Not interviewing the Walkers about their father's slaying may have something to do with the bureau's concern, noted by Allen, that "after 50 years memories can fade and become clouded." The FBI may rely on "information and sworn statements from ... initial interviews" made during the original investigation to "help guide decisions on whom to re-interview as part of the current investigation," Allen explained.

"We have those meetings when we can provide answers to a family," Hentschel said, "namely when an investigation is closed or there is a substantive prosecution that can happen."

Catherine, 62, her sister Shirley

Walker Wright, 57, of Baton Rouge and brother Clifton Walker Jr., 55, of Baker, La., want justice. Short of justice, they want the truth about their father's slaying, and they want the truth publicly known.

"Anybody who commits such a heinous crime like that needs to be named," said Wright. "Just like my dad has a name and family, they also have families. They need to know the truth, what their dad did, what their grandpa did."

### That fatal night

Clifton Walker worked the 3-till-11 p.m. shift as a laborer in the wood yard at the International Paper plant in Natchez. He typically drove to and from work in a carpool that — defying common conceptions of the segregated South — was racially integrated. Most days, he would drive from his home to a meeting place, join the carpool, and then return by carpool to his car at the end of the shift. On Feb. 28, 1964, Walker rode with three white co-workers and one black.

That afternoon, Walker drove from Woodville to the home of fellow carpooler Glenn Wesberry, who lived in Ford's Creek, a handful of properties cleared out of the dense woods lining the west side of U.S. 61, seven miles north of Woodville. From there, he, Wesberry and three other carpools drove to their shift together, Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol investigative records show. After work, they headed to Wesberry's to get their respective cars and go home.

On their way out of Natchez the men stopped at an after-hours club, state investigators would later conclude, and picked up three fifths of whiskey. They drank from separate cups, rather than pass the bottles around.

From Ford's Creek, Walker had a choice of two routes home: highways that took a little longer or a shortcut on a lonely, dirt stretch known as Poor House Road. White carpooler Loyal Townley, who was faced with the same choice, later told Highway Patrol investigators he preferred to drive three and a half miles out of his way to stay on better highways and avoid the twisty, unpaved road.

See WALKER, 5C

## As governor, I will resist expansion of Medicaid

A recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, or more commonly called Obamacare, has left many people asking what's next — and what does it mean here in Mississippi.

While some people say Obamacare will come as an economic boost with "free" money, the reality is simple: No money is free.

Since when did the federal government ever give free money with-



Phil Bryant

out asking for something in return? People tend to forget the so-called "free" money is actually your money.

So let's talk about the facts as they are in Mississippi.

During fiscal year 2012, the Mississippi Division of Medicaid — the agency in charge of operating most of the Medicaid pro-

gram in Mississippi — required \$3.62 billion in federal funds and \$763 million in state funds to directly administer the Medicaid program. These figures don't include \$210 million used by other agencies like the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Rehabilitation Services to meet their Medicaid responsibilities.

That means the conservative total cost to operate the Medicaid program in Mississippi during FY 2012

was more than \$4.38 billion as of July of this year. That is at least \$3.62 billion of your federal tax dollars plus at least \$973 million of your state tax dollars.

This is without the expansions the Obama administration is attempting to force onto Mississippi taxpayers.

Now let's discuss those proposed federal expansions. The federal government wants to give Medicaid to

See MEDICAID, 2C

# Walker: Case reopened in 2000, closed in 2003, reopened in 2005

From 1C

Clifton Walker always took the shortcut. Close to midnight, he turned onto Poor House Road from U.S. 61. About 300 yards after making the turn, Walker's car was stopped. The ballistic evidence would later show that gunmen gathered around the 1961 Impala and fired inside at extremely close range, blowing Walker's face apart.

Walker was found dead in his car around 1 p.m. the next day, Feb. 29, Highway Patrol reports show.

Walker's white neighbor, Prentiss Mathis, flagged down Mississippi Highway Patrolman R.W. Palmertree to first report the shot-up vehicle.

Palmertree, who was involved in much of the evidence-gathering in the initial police response, was himself under internal investigation at the time. He and two other state troopers from southwest Mississippi were suspected of being active members of the Ku Klux Klan, a Highway Patrol case report and two follow-up reports filed in March 1964 show.

The first of at least eight Highway Patrol reports on the slaying, in seven pages, described the crime scene, the state of Walker's body and some of the events following the shooting.

## Crime scene

All of the windows of Walker's 1961 cream-colored Impala were shot out, part of the steering wheel was shot off, and there were an unspecified number of gunshot holes in the car. Walker's feet were on the floorboard under the wheel and his body was flung across the passenger seat. The car was still in high gear. Walker's keys were dangling from the glove-box door, which hung open, revealing his chrome-plated Smith & Wesson .38 with a 4-inch barrel. At some point during the ambush, with the car still moving, Walker appears to have ripped the keys from the ignition to unlock the glove-box and get his gun. He never reached it.

Walker's family later discovered his gun had been tampered with and would not have fired even if he had reached it in time to use it, says Walker's nephew, Hayward Dixon, a 67-year-old retired truck driver in Baton Rouge. Dixon's mother Leola was one of Walker's sisters.

Walker's brother Elmo ended up with the gun, Dixon said in a 2009 interview. "He had to put it into the shop to get another hammer put on it, and that's when we found out the gun was tampered with. The hammer's pin, the point that hits the bullet, was filed down so it wouldn't make connection with the bullet."

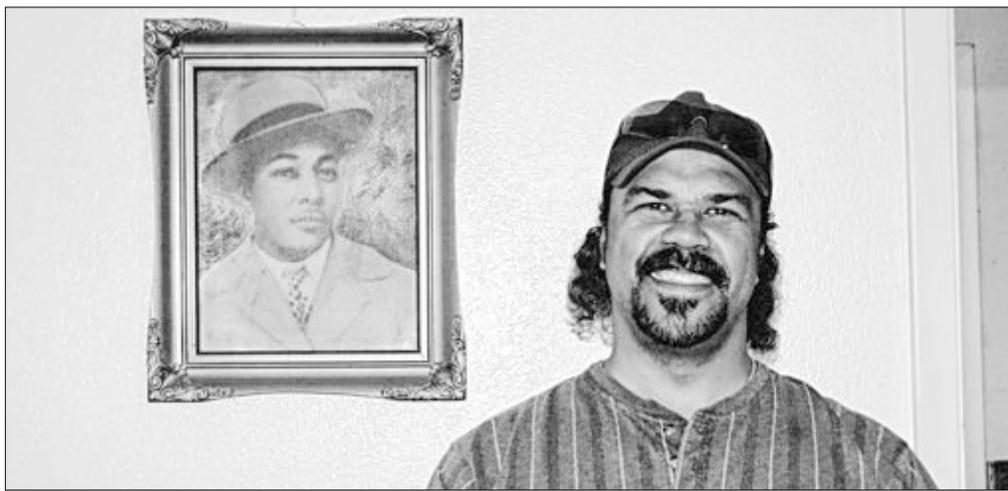
Highway Patrol reports show the sheriff and the patrol did not secure the crime scene and did not process the car for fingerprints before a coroner's jury inspected it. While the results of the inquest are not included in the available Highway Patrol documents, it is clear the coroner's jury's findings led nowhere.

Walker's body was handed over to Williams & Williams Funeral Home in Natchez, a black mortuary. State troopers who visited the funeral home that night stated in their report that a full load of buckshot appeared to have entered Walker from very close range just under the left ear. Another load appeared to have been fired from not more than three or four feet from the right, tearing away parts of the mouth, chin and neck.

"(They) showed us where Daddy's car was down there on Poor House Road," recalled Catherine Walker Jones, who was 14 at the time. "They had it roped off. They had policemen there, patrolmen there, and they were saying you cannot go to the car."

"I can remember running under the tape, looking at the car. All the windows were shot out. The carpet was saturated with blood. They removed me from under there, and everything else was just a blur. But I remember the car.

"I didn't cry at the funeral,"



Ben Greenberg/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Clifton Walker Jr. stands beside a painting of his father in the house in Louisiana where he and his sisters grew up after their father, Clifton Walker, was gunned down in southwest Mississippi. He was 10 years old at the time.

said Catherine. "I didn't even see him. I didn't even go to the casket. It was like going through the motions but not feeling."

Clifton Walker Jr. was 10 years old. "The casket itself had a glass cover," he recalled. "I looked at his face, and it wasn't his face. It was like a mummy made up. They had to make it up because the shotguns had blown his bones away."

Shirley was 12 in 1964 but remembers less of what happened.

"You just block it out. I don't know why I don't remember some things. It was such a void," she said.

For Clifton Jr., memories of his father are harder to come by. "The only thing I really remember is the ring on his finger," he said. "I don't even remember him when I was young. One time he bought me a bicycle, and I remember hugging him."

## Co-workers, Klan

In the mid-1960s, the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee investigated the Klan in Mississippi. Documents obtained from the National Archives by reporters with the Civil Rights Cold Case Project, which operates with support from the Center for Investigative Reporting, say that more than 40 of Walker's co-workers were Klansmen. Yet the racial climate at the paper plant is hardly explored in the Mississippi Highway Patrol. Those documents only hint at the racial tensions at International Paper.

The other black man in Walker's carpool, Walter Montgomery, told investigators that even after "White" and "Colored" signs were removed at the Natchez paper plant, "the colored ... did not attempt to use the white facilities."

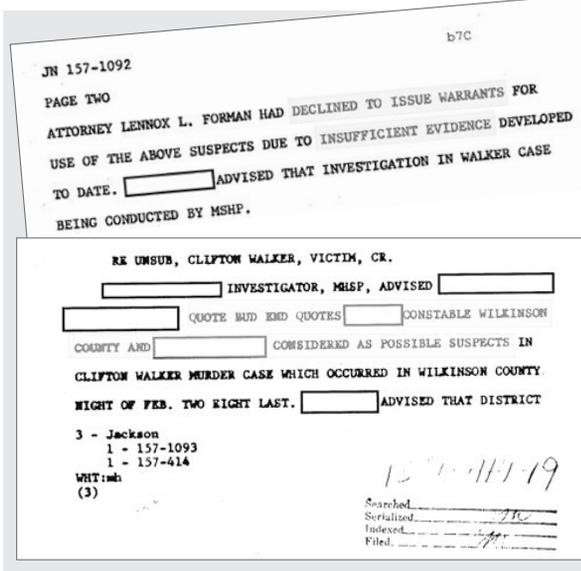
The state reports primarily focus instead on allegations that Walker had extramarital liaisons with women, white and black.

The Highway Patrol documents mention eight possible suspects but do not explore their motives. The documents allege at least nine different liaisons between Walker and various women — but the investigators' reports do little to connect the suspects to the circumstances involving Walker's alleged infidelities. FBI documents mention the allegations regarding women only in passing, calling them "unsubstantiated." The bureau classified the case as a civil rights case.

The FBI opened the Walker case in March 1964, closed it a few months later, then briefly reopened it before moving on without resolution in December 1964, at which point the Highway Patrol investigation also came to a close.

In November 1964, Highway Patrol investigators recommended two suspects for arrest to District Attorney Lenox Forman in Natchez, FBI documents from the time show. The DA said he had "insufficient evidence" to charge the suspects, the records show.

At about the same time that month, Klansmen Charles Marcus Edwards and James Ford Seale were arrested and charged with the May 1964 slayings of two 19-year-old black men — Henry Dee and



Ben Greenberg/Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Charles Moore, from nearby Franklin County. But in January 1965, Forman again resisted proceedings against Klansmen. He dropped the charges, again claiming lack of evidence. By 1967, the case was closed.

In 2000, spurred by investigations from ABC News and *The Clarion-Ledger*, the Department of Justice and FBI reopened that case. Efforts stalled, and the FBI closed the case in 2003 but then reopened it once more in 2005 after Canadian Broadcasting Corp. journalist David Ridgen and Thomas Moore, brother of Charles, discovered that James Seale was alive; his family had told reporters he was dead. In 2007, Seale was convicted on federal kidnapping charges for his role in the slayings. He died in prison Aug. 2, 2011, at age 76.

Throughout 1964 and 1965, the Walker slaying was treated as a major civil rights case, drawing significant attention at various times from the Highway Patrol, FBI, HUAC and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Interest in the Walker case has continued into the present day. Even before the FBI cold case initiative, a retired and well-known Natchez police chief, J.T. Robinson, now deceased, told Ridgen in 2006 that he thought the Clifton Walker killing could be solved. Before he died, Robinson had wanted to accompany Ridgen to Woodville to look into the case personally. In a 2009 interview, a retired Highway Patrol investigator familiar with the case told me he has periodically re-examined the case a number of times in the intervening decades because he, too, believes it could still be solved.

## Suspects

The names of the two suspects recommended for arrest in the Walker case were redacted from the documents released by the FBI in recent years. The documents nonetheless reveal one suspect was a Wilkinson County constable who was nicknamed "Bud." Woodville locals remember a Wilkinson County constable named Gordon "Bud" Geter in the 1960s. Woodville news reports reference him as well. Wilkinson County residents do not remember any other constable named Bud from that time.

According to an FBI document discussing the leadership of White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan units in Adams and Wilkinson counties, provided by two law professors who have formed the Syracuse University Cold Case Justice Initiative, the exalted cyclops of the Wilkinson County Unit of the White

Knights of Mississippi was "an individual by the name of Jeter."

Bud Geter died in 1982. In a 2009 telephone interview, his widow, Phyllis, confirmed he was a Wilkinson County constable and a deputy sheriff in the mid-1960s.

Asked if Geter had been a member of the Klan, his widow replied, "I couldn't swear on a Bible and say he was — or say he wasn't."

"Bud Geter was a Klucker," said the retired Highway Patrol investigator familiar with the case; he requested anonymity out of concern for his own family's privacy and safety.

"Bud ran with a guy called Ed Fuller," the retired investigator said. HUAC documents that appear to be based on the redacted FBI documents name Fuller as one of the suspects.

Fuller, a Klansman linked in numerous state and federal documents to mafia-controlled prostitution and gambling and to many acts of violence in Mississippi and Louisiana, would become a police informant later in 1964, documents included in the Walker FBI file show. Fuller died in 1975.

## Informants, immunity

In other cases from that time period, Klan informants became prized and protected wards of the FBI. Through these relationships, some of the most violent Klansmen were afforded an immunity of sorts from prosecution. The FBI was loathe to give up an informant and usually guaranteed them absolute anonymity. The FBI would protect informants even if doing so might mean more Klan violence or murder.

When James Seale and Charles Edwards were arrested for the Dee/Moore slayings in November 1964, for example, other alleged perpetrators — like Clyde Seale, Curtis Dunn, Archie Prather, Myron Wayne "Jack" Seale and Ernest Parker — were not pursued for fear further arrests would expose another FBI informant, White Knights state officer Earnest Gilbert, according to FBI documents obtained by David Ridgen.

If Fuller and Geter participated in killing Clifton Walker, the evidence suggests they could not have acted alone. The incomplete information in available state documents suggests gunshots from at least three different weapons, and documents and eyewitness accounts suggest gunmen fired into the car from at least three sides.

Catherine Walker Jones believes there may have been many more attackers. She recalls being told by her moth-

er Ruby Walker, who died in 1992, that in 1964 an FBI agent reported shell casings were found all along the banks that rise up along the part of Poor House Road where

Walker was ambushed — suggesting many men lined up along the road and fired on the car.

Documents and interviews indicate as well a number of people were involved in planning and orchestrating the ambush.

Around 1 a.m., about an hour after the slaying occurred, a white Woodville man, Carl Cavin, appeared at the home of his wife Annie, from whom he was separated, according to a March 1964 Highway Patrol report. Annie Cavin told the patrol that her husband "appeared to be extremely nervous and drinking heavily." The Highway Patrol also learned Carl Cavin and another white man, identified as Red Metcalf, were seen within a mile of Poor House Road at about 10:30 p.m. before the slaying. Unredacted FBI documents, obtained by Ridgen, describe a meeting between Cavin and Metcalf on the night of the Walker ambush at Nettles Truck Stop on U.S. 61, near Wesberry's home and within a mile of Poor House Road.

Though the Highway Patrol recommended only Ed Fuller and Bud Geter for arrest in November 1964, the law enforcement agency in March 1964 named Cavin and Metcalf, along with Walker's neighbor Prentiss Mathis, as prime suspects.

Mathis and Cavin are confirmed dead by family members and Social Security records. Metcalf is reportedly dead, according to sources living in Wilkinson County, but his death is unconfirmed.

"I think it's false," said Mathis' eldest son John, 62, about the allegations of his father's involvement in the slaying.

"I've never seen him hostile, in my eyes, to black folk," added Mathis, a semi-retired Bechtel Corp. executive residing in Hermanville. "They came to our house, and we went to their house. It was very friendly."

Carl Cavin's eldest daughter, Bessie Scott, 72, of Woodville, doesn't think her father could have been involved, either, though the scene on her late mother's door step rings partly true. "My dad did drink a whole lot, and it's entirely possible that he was out drinking that night," she said. "Dad and Mother still were friends even after he left her, and he would come and visit."

State and FBI documents

mention a number of black people with information important to the case — some still alive today.

Milton Granger, Rita Lea Dover In 1964, the FBI was interested in a black man from Louisiana, named Milton Granger, who had been at the Nettles Truck Stop on Feb. 28, 1964, and fled Woodville soon after the slaying.

According to an unnamed informant in the unredacted FBI documents, Granger fled Woodville because he let a 17-year-old white woman named Rita Lea Dover kiss him at Nettles Truck Stop.

The same informant claimed Walker was targeted because he asked Dover for a date — but according to Highway Patrol investigators, interviews with Dover and her father showed no connection between her and Walker.

Dover is dead, according to her sister and references in *Natchez Democrat* obituaries. Dover's sister, Doris Longmire, 61, of Woodville, said in a phone interview she was unaware of her sister having romantic involvements with black men. "I don't know nothing about that," Longmire said.

Two Woodville residents I interviewed in 2007 said Milton Granger told them in recent years that he fled Woodville in 1964 not because of Dover but because he witnessed the planning of the Walker ambush at Nettles Truck Stop.

"I knew her daddy well," remarked Granger in a 2010 interview. "He grew up with my oldest brother, but I don't know nothing about this thing here."

Granger confirmed in a follow-up interview earlier this month that I was the only one who had contacted him. "I wasn't there. I'd be lying if I was to say something," he said.

Highway Patrol documents go into some detail about a black woman, Emma Beasley, who worked as a cook at Nettles Truck Stop in 1964. "It is believed that she has knowledge of certain facts that would aid greatly in breaking this case," stated an April 16, 1964, Highway Patrol report. Another Highway Patrol report from two weeks earlier, dated March 30, 1964, said: "It is ... known that she left Woodville immediately after Walker's body was discovered, returned to attend the funeral, and immediately after the funeral, left." The report stated she "left in such a hurry that she took no clothes except those she was wearing, and stated to her common law husband, 'I know too much about this mess and I ain't gonna get involved.'"

After living in Louisiana for a decade, Beasley returned to Mississippi in the mid-1970s, where she lives today at 83. "I didn't know nothing about his death," Beasley insisted in a 2009 interview. "It hurted me when he got killed, and they said that I was in on it. And all the Lord above know that I wasn't in on it."

In a telephone interview this month Beasley said she has yet to be contacted by the FBI. She reported failing health, having recently lost her eyesight from diabetes. "I'm down in the bed sick," Beasley said. "I've been in the hospital I don't know how many times. I have nurses in to see me three times a week."

## Town secrets

Catherine Walker Jones is sure there are people still living in southwest Mississippi who can tell the truth about what happened to her father.

"The people in that town knew exactly what happened to Daddy," Catherine insists. "They wouldn't even look at us when we would walk down the streets because of the shame that they had knowing but not divulging the information."

"As long as I live that emptiness is there, that not knowing is there," Shirley said. "We have no faces to the names. No one volunteers that kind of information. But we need to know; that was our father."

"We just want closure, that's all," Clifton Walker Jr. said.

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