Boy, Left for Dead by Lynchers, Tells How He Fled to the North

By BETTY MOORSTEIN

A six-foot, 17-year-old Negro, Albert Sonny Man Harris, Jr., sat in an office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People yesterday and with amazing aplomb told a dozen reporters how he'd been beaten by the same mob only to "come back to life" and escape to the North with his family.

The youth's cousin, John C. Jones, a 28-year-old veteran, was beaten to death by the same mob. His mutilated body has been recovered from the woods 15 miles from Minden, La., where the two youths were attacked on Aug. 8.

Albert has identified two of the men in the mob. Their names and the names of 11 other men, including three deputy sheriffs, who allegedly took part in the attack, have been turned over to the FBI by the NAACP.

The youth has been the object of an intensive search by the FBI and the NAACP, who for three weeks scoured the South and Middle West in an effort to find him before the Louisiana mob got to him again. His whereabouts were reported to the NAACP Monday by a relative with whom the Harris family had taken refuge in a Midwest town. Albert and his father were brought to New York yesterday by the NAACP.

Albert told his story yesterday—a tangle of threats and fears, futile all-night drives, miraculous survival. An ugly, half-healed gash marked his left eyebrow where he had been struck with the butt of a .45 caliber pistol. His wrists and ankles were scarred—souvenirs of the grass rope which had bound them. A white sport shirt covered the lash marks of the heavy leather straps with which he had been beaten. But Albert's face was one of equanimity.

The Harrises had lived in Cotton Valley, La., for three generations, Albert's father said. Harris, his wife, Albert and three daughters, 9, 11 and 13 years old, lived in "a little old three-room shack" about two miles out of town. Harris earned a good living, $45 a week, in a saw mill.

On July 31 Albert was arrested for complicity in a rape allegedly committed by his cousin, John. He was released from jail two days later but was severely beaten by five white men who waylaid him as he was going home. His father then took him to stay with friends in Texas, but brought him back after being threatened and beaten by the local sheriff. Albert and Jones were again arrested and held in the Minden jail. According to the NAACP, they denied the charges and the woman involved refused to prosecute.

After nine days they were released. As they left the jail about 8:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 8, they were set upon by 10 men, forced into two automobiles, bound and driven 15 miles from Minden.

"They told me to hold my head down so I couldn't see where we were going," Albert recalled. "There wasn't much talking. We drove for about an hour on round-about roads.

"When we got out of the car they said they would beat us up. They said they ought to kill us. They threw me down on my stomach and put their feet on my head and on my feet so I couldn't move. Then they beat me with a strap about that wide." He held his thumb and forefinger about three inches apart.

"They had a bunch of straps. They took John on the other side of a little creek. First, they'd beat him; then they'd beat him.

"They kept asking me was John in that woman's yard. I said no and they told me I was lying."

Albert doesn't know how long he was beaten, but at the end the men hit him on the head with the butt of the .45 and left him for dead.

Back in Cotton Valley, Albert's parents heard he'd been beaten to death. It was Friday—pay day—but Harris didn't wait to get his pay. He kissed his family good-bye, told them to sit tight until he sent for them, and caught the first train for Chicago.

A few hours later, Albert, battered but alive, drove up to his home in a taxi.

He'd "come back to life" in that blood-splattered Louisiana woods. He doesn't know what time it was. It was very dark, he said. He saw John lying on the other side of the creek and went over to him. John asked for a drink of water and Albert took off his shoe, scooped up some water and fed it to him. John asked Albert to tell another cousin to take care of the German Luger automatic which John had brought back from overseas. "Then he died," Albert said.

Albert's mother didn't say a word when he arrived. "She just grabbed me." As soon as it was dark, she loaded the boy in the car and drove him to the home of friends in Arkansas.

They left Arkansas at 1 a.m. Friday and didn't stop driving until they reached Chicago about noon Saturday. They got in touch with Harris, who was with relatives in another town, and pushed right on Saturday night until they reached him.
Albert Harris, Jr., who escaped death at hands of Louisiana mob, shows his scars to his father. He told his story to reporters here yesterday.