

When I get back to the car, I pop open the dash drawer to check my tape recorder. It is a small Sony with a builtin mike, but I use a cord microphone which I attach to the lapel of my coat. After turning the car around and heading back to Marshall I snap the recorder on.

"St. Raphael Parish. On the St. Charles River." I check the date on my wrist watch. "October 28."

"A white man, Beau Boutan, was killed toeay at Marshall plantation. Marshall plantation is located across the Mississippki River, approximately thirtly miles West of Baton Rouge in St. Raphael Parish. What makes the killing of Boutan different f from most is that at least thirty people claim to have done it. All of these people are black men, except one, a white woman. These men are all over sixty, except one, a young mulatto in his mid-twenties who arrived from California last Friday, and who gave a speech at Southern University last Fr day night.

"The white woman, Candi Marshall, who also calaims to have shot Boutan comes from one of the old3st and most respected failly on the St. Charles River. Her family has owned the thousand acre Marshall plantation from the time of slavery. It was here, where Boutan leasing part of the land, was gun down by a shotgun blast. Some of the men who claim to have shot him are the sons of former slaves of the Marshall family. Some have lived on this plantation all their lives. In the same house ~~thirty, forty, fifty years.~~ *they stay, my and thirty years.*

"Sheriff Mapes Walker of St. Raphael Parish concedes t that the killing took place around noon. What he thins happen is that Beau Boutan, while taking a load of sugar can to the mill, struck the parked car of Lecoze with his tractor. Lecoze the young man from California was at that time visiting Mathu Bla. bla, bla, who was in the process of moving from the Marsshall



plantation. Sheriff Walker fig8res that Lecoz and Boutan got into an argument over the incident and Boutan got off his tractor and came at Lecoz with a scythe blade. ~~ch3re~~ were other people several ~~hkh hnd~~ at Mathu Bla bla bla's house helping him move. Miss Marshall was one of them. When Sheriff Walker at approximately 2 o'clock reached the scene/there were about thirty people there, all with shotgunss all claiming to have shot down B utan. The men ranges in ages from sixty to n nety. Some are half blind, ~~xxxx~~ many can hardly hear anything, most are arthritic. But every last one want credit for shooting down Beau Boutan.

"Sheriff Walker is still questioning the suspects."

I try to think of something else to say, but I cannot at the moment. I figure that if things have changed by the time I reach Marshall I can all ways add or delete. If not I'llk just let it stay as is for the present.

"Mitch, this is just a brief outline of what happened today. This is not the story, not by a long shot. I don't know when all this began--maybe couple centuries ago--but With me it started just last Saturday night. At this time I cannot tell it all. So many other little details must be included. There's a woman called Lelia who fits in somewhere, I'm sure. There's old Dix Boutan, the father of Beau Boutan, an old man who has been accused to have done his share of killing in his day. There are others. There's Jack Marshall, Candi's uncle. Many many more. They'e not directly Involved in this particular ~~killing~~ death--but ind rectly it's quite possibly that we all are. That includes you, my dear editor.

"I hope by tonight or early tomorrow the whole mess will be cleared up, and then I might be able to get the story written I know I can't until the killing has been solved. And I don't think there's anyone else can do it as well as I, because I have been on the inside. I have seen things and heard things