

TAKING OUR PLACE

TIME: 7:00

[This piece was intended to focus on the 1963 sit-in movement in Rome, Georgia. But the various social protests between the early 1960s and 1970s became difficult to sort out. For example, it is not clear if the sit-ins at Krystal took place in 1963 or in a later year. Other mentions of walk-outs may be referring to the black student walk-outs of East Rome High and West Rome High in the early 1970s.]

LAVADA DILLARD:

I don't remember talking it over with my parents. I just remember that I made the decision because we talked about civics and civic activities and what's going on in the world. We read the newspaper. At dinner table, we would sit down, and my granddad would say something about what the president said and so forth, and so at the dinner table we talked about world history and world news.

BACKGROUND

BISHOP ALEX ALLEN, JR.

If you really want to know, when I came to Rome it was where you couldn't go in the restaurants and sit down. Not even the hotels and motels you couldn't even go in and spend the night.

DILLARD

When we got to be teenagers, you have to go to the barbershop, you want to go to the movies, you want to go to places that are outside of your neighborhood. And we became inquisitive as to why is it that we can't go here, and why is it we can't go there, and I think some did try to go places to get service. And even I tried to go places and get services, you know, and it was just, like, "We don't serve you here."

DANIEL BROWN:

Then we had, well we had another spot here in Rome, what, on 2nd Avenue, where you, blacks couldn't go in, but you could go through a little alley way, and they had a window, but you could order through that window.

ALLEN

Water fountains, restrooms and stuff like that, you couldn't use. You see signs saying "White Only." So it wasn't none for blacks at the time. It was just—kinda rough.

LAVADA DILLARD:

And having all of that in mind and seeing the news and hearing the news, we gathered in the [Main High] gym that day, and we were prepared to walk downtown.

[TRANSITION TO MARCH]

ALVIN JACKSON

We began to march downtown, down Broad Street. *[FADE]*

DILLARD

It was three of them—it was three of them at first that went in to try to get something to drink. Then six went in. . . . And then twenty more went back after that. *[FADE]*

JACKSON

We marched from the Main High School gymnasium to what we called G.C. Murphy then. That was a counter where they refused to serve blacks.

BROWN:

I think all we did then was just, oh was sit in at the bar, and kicked back, picked up funny books, sit in the floor. You know, just to let them know we was there and we wasn't leaving. You know, we didn't like the treatment of more or less that white people could do one thing and white people could do another.

JUDY INGRAM

I remember my sister coming home and telling us that she went and sat the Krystal, at the counter, to eat, and they weren't given anything to eat, and so they said other things to her and told her she would go to jail. I remember that.

FANNIE LOU JACKSON

My second oldest son was in that. And they went to Krystal, on Broad Street. That's where they went to. I didn't know anything about it until it was over with. We used to we could go into the Krystal, but they didn't let you sit down. You know, so they took it over. But they changed it. Really don't nobody got hurt, they just thought they'd exercise it, show what they could do, without their parents knowing anything about it [laughs]. We didn't know nothing, until they came home and said. What?! We went in there and upset the Krystal.

ROSA BEARD:

When he called me on the job where I was working to tell me that the school was going to walk out, could he walk out with them, he didn't get me, because I had left that job and went to a little church where I was helping. When I knew anything he had walked out with them. I didn't say "don't walk out" or "you can." No.

F.L. JACKSON

They didn't do no bad damage. I think they laid in the floor or done something. I don't know what happened that day. All I know is what he come home and told me. And I told him he had no business – I said "what if you'd gotten hurt?" and he said, "well we didn't!"

DILLARD:

It was over a hundred of us. It was reported that it was, like, sixty-two, but there were sixty-two of us jailed, but there were over a hundred because there were four stores involved. Two stores made no arrests, but yet they had the kids there. And then two stores did make arrests.

A. JACKSON

And they arrested as many blacks as they could, that the jail could hold, and they couldn't arrest them all because they didn't have anywhere to put us, so several—I would say that mostly the senior class, and possibly part of the junior class -- was arrested and placed in jail.

BEARD:

The next time I saw him he was in uh, that little jail.

DILLARD

It was a thirteen-day sentence, but we spent four days like—what do you say, clams? All gathered in there together.

BEARD:

But they didn't let the parents bring them food or anything. They just, I guess they wanted to make it as hard on them as possible.

DILLARD:

But, see, you're talking young people so we really could tolerate one another. We did everything. We shared songs. We sung Negro spirituals.

BEARD

It seems like to me it was what they charged all of the children to get out of jail. The little bond was \$10, \$15 or \$25. I can't remember. Whatever it was, I borrowed the money from the people I worked for to get him out. He said "no, mama, I'm staying right here." He knew I had borrowed the money. He said, "Give them their money back, because I'm not coming out of jail, I'm staying here until this is over with." And he stayed right there until they had their little trials and everything.

DILLARD

The library was next door. And the library windows were filled with white women and children standing looking very compassionate toward the jail because they could hear us singing. The windows of the jail were open. And, you know, it just made us want to sing because we felt like we had their attention, and we just sung to them, and we sung to one another.

BROWN:

It was unbelievable, but you know, I mean, that's life. I guess, it was, somebody had to speak up and do something to make a change. Because like, it's just a wonder if all of that hadn't of took place, what would it be like now? Would it be different? Would we still be going around to the side, to the back, or, you know, I mean, what would it have come to?