

**TRAGIC CASE OF  
LOUISIANA NEGRO  
WHO TRIED TO VOTE**

15, 1965

**Y LINCOLN:**  
Chicago-born  
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after praise  
er first film

**Film Career  
Beckons Girl  
Of Many Names**



## LA. FARMER STILL FACES REPRISALS

By LARRY STILL

While President Johnson seeks speedy passage of a new voting rights bill, a congressional committee investigates KKK terrorist activities and the U. S. Civil Rights Commission reports on racial progress in the South, a proud Louisiana farmer sat in his white frame cottage and tearfully related to JET what has happened to him since he first voted three years ago.

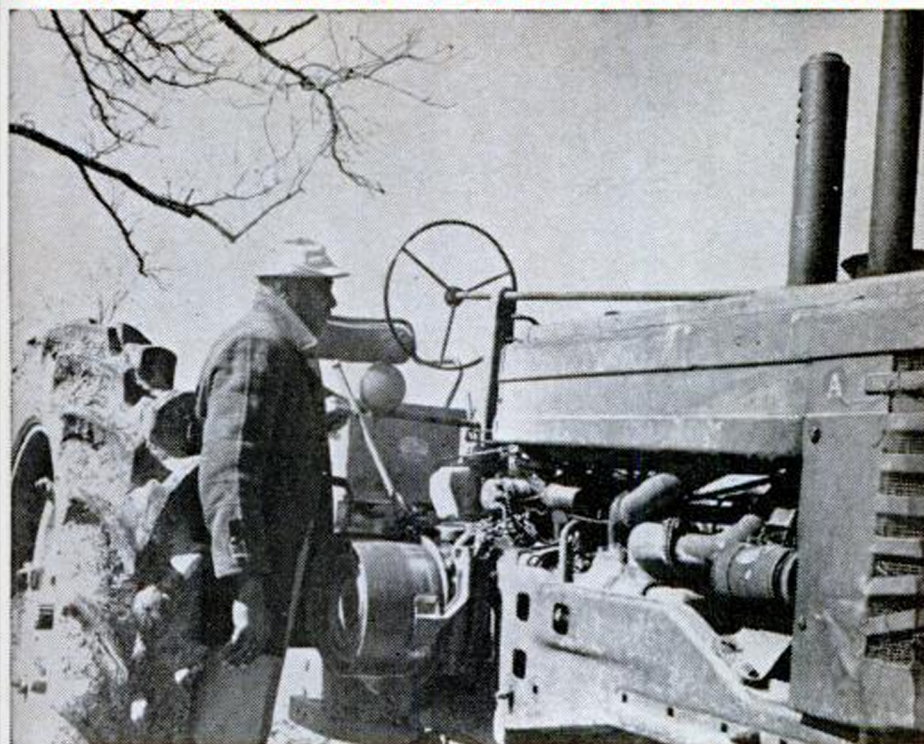
Tough, 62-year-old Francis Joseph Atlas appeared to have the world on his shoulders as he recalled the reprisals faced by him and other Southern Negroes for merely testifying before the civil rights commission on the problems of voting in the hard-core Black Belt areas. Less determined Negroes have long ago given up their rights while others in Jonesboro, La., have armed themselves and vowed to fight back, but Atlas told JET: "I am not worried about them killing me, but I'll die before I let them run me out of my country . . ."

A bold, bronze tiller of the soil who believes farming is a profession like medicine, law or teaching, Francis Joseph



Atlas lists losses to Still as a result of white merchants' refusal to gin his cotton, process soy beans, supply feed.

## FOR TRYING TO VOTE 3 YEARS AGO



Looking over tractor, proud planter was forced to mortgage farm and equipment after voting in Louisiana Delta area.

Atlas, told the commission in 1960 how he educated 12 children while trying to vote for 15 years in Lake Providence, La. After he voted in 1962 gin mill operators stopped ginning his cotton, the local soy bean plant stopped processing his soy beans and the local feed stores stopped selling him food for his cattle until the government intervened.

Still about to lose his home and 200 acres of choice farm land in the Louisiana delta, Atlas told JET last week that when he appealed to the federal government for more aid, he was told "to get a private lawyer and go to court." The farmer added: "That's like a bug going on trial before a courtroom full of ducks. The judge is a duck. The jury is a duck and all the lawyers are ducks."



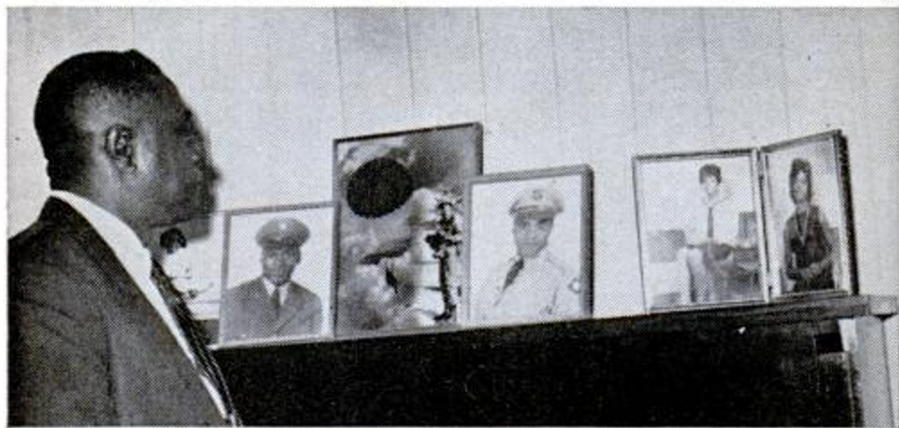
## KKK Conviction Easier To Get Than Vote For Negroes

Now what chance has he got when you know how ducks pick on bugs . . ."

The Atlas case was so unusual that it was once singled out by former Assistant Atty. Gen. Burke Marshall as the nation's most tragic voter registration case. The U. S. Justice Dept. even filed suit to force Louisiana merchants to trade with the Atlas's but they are still in danger of being forced out of the area. A spokesman for the commission contends the agency is still looking into the case and Dr. Martin L. King Jr. recently demanded that Congress pass a law to subsidize the many persons who are victims of economic and physical reprisals as a result of trying to vote in the South.

Despite all the forces of the U. S. government and the spotlight of public opinion, a close study of the Atlas case shows why it is more difficult for some citizens to vote in Dixie than it is to convict a Ku Klux Klansman of murder. Although he is still farming, lean 62-year-old, 175-pound Atlas reluctantly revealed his life has been threatened, his home mortgaged and he was more than \$10,000 in debt as a result of trying to cast his ballot in tense East Carroll Parish, 90 miles from Jackson, Miss.

The expert farmer explained he lost 60 acres of soy



*Father of 12 college grads looks over photos of family that was barred from voting until rights commission hearing.*



*Feeding cattle on lonely estate, Atlas was forced to sell stock; he also bucks drive to run Negro farmers out of area.*



*Going to church with daughter, Ruth, and grandson, Francis III, third generation Louisianian vows to die before leaving land.*



## Says He Would Rather Be Killed Than Flee State

beans and 50 acres of cotton, yielding a bale and a half per acre, as a result of the economic boycott against him. Although merchants are doing business with him now as a result of a U. S. court order, he had to mortgage his home and sell his cattle to keep his farm going. "I can never make up for the crops I lost, because nature doesn't work that way," he explained.

Atlas and 20 other Negroes from East Carroll Parish began trying to vote in 1948 after the U. S. Supreme Court outlawed the Texas all-white Democratic Party primary. After testifying before the commission in 1960, the 21 Negroes were ordered registered by the District Court. Atlas and the Rev. John Henry Scott were the first Negroes to vote in July, 1962. The Rev. Scott was later wounded by buckshots in his car (JET, Sept. 12, 1962) and from that day on, Atlas was the center of a tense campaign to force him out of the county. "It looks like they're trying to run all Negroes out of here," he declared.

A student of bricklaying and plastering at Tuskegee Institute for three years, farmer Atlas admits he could make a good living in the North or West. "But I didn't want to expose my children to city slums . . . I want it understood that I am proud to be a farmer and we stand for something. I was born and raised in this county. I am a taxpayer and a loyal citizen and they will have to kill me to get me away from here," he declared, fighting back the tears. Three of the five Atlas daughters are teachers, one is a nurse and one remains at home with her parents. Two of the sons are also instructors, three are still in the armed services and one is a student at Grambling College.

"The Justice Dept. promised me all the protection of the United States, but when I wrote Mr. John Doar (Deputy U. S. Attorney General) I got a letter telling me to see a private lawyer," cried Atlas. "I'm not afraid and I'm not begging, but if the government can give all that protection to a man like Valachi (Joseph, underworld figure now in prison) they ought to make some provisions for the people who stand up for their country . . ."