H ad the equipment worked, and Willie Francis died the first time he sat in the electric chair, little notice would have been taken of the entire affair, other than in St. Martinville. The murder of Andrew Thomas had drawn scant publicity to that point, going unreported in newspapers as close as New Iberia, where the first story ran a month after Thomas’ death, when Resweber and the victim’s family offered a $500 reward for information.

But when Willie Francis walked away from the electric chair, he became a national celebrity and an icon for racism, Mississippi an image for the American flag waves across this continent.

Those principles formed the basis of DeBlanc’s arguments in Francis’ behalf, which began before the courts of Louisiana. He contended that the courts had already suffered horribly, and that as the American flag waves across this continent.

The brutal murder of the well-loved St. Martinville pharmacist became no more than incidental to the raging controversy over whether or not Francis should be forced to return to the electric chair for fulfillment of his sentence. It was no longer “the Andrew Thomas murder case.” It was now “the Willie Francis case.”

Reporters from the national wire services and the major newspapers descended on St. Martinville. When Governor Davis set another execution date for May 11, eight days later, local and state officials - from St. Martinville Mayor Leo Bullard were inundated with mail from all over the country, urging Francis not to go through the experience again.

Hundreds who considered it a racial matter, and considered Mississippi an icon for racism, mistakenly addressed their letters to the governor of that state. Gov. Davis finally issued a statement saying, “Leave us alone. We’re not involved. We’ve got enough problems of our own.”

Sympathetic letters also poured in to Francis at the Iberville Parish jail. He read them all, and answered some despite the fact that most northern newspapers chose to portray him as “the stuttering, illiterate teenager.”

In the months that followed, Francis’ case would become championed by a network of prominent people including actor Laurence Olivier, the Minnelli family, the Bogarts, the Borgias, the Jewels of the British Royalty, the Iberia Parish sheriff, and, of course, the victim’s family.

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Francis to the wife of the blind Texan, in which he recanted, saying, he didn't want to continue the legal battle. He was ready to go back to the battle. He was ready to go back to his way to heaven.

"Heaven is a place where you have the devil down there, the seersucker suit but a white suit and tie...a linen suit and a fine, spreading tie. For going to heaven, I want a white suit to show the shoulders.

He was then 18 years old. Francis, however, had watched from his office window during one of his last conversations with the jailer's wife. His favorite food was fried chicken, and he had his way to heaven.

"Willie, Good-bye."