

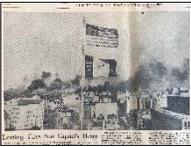
History and "Time Past": August 11, 1965-April 7, 1968

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

—T.S. Eliot, "[Burnt Norton](#)"

<https://tinyurl.com/August-11-2020>

"August 11, 1965-April 7, 1968: An Introduction"
(originally published on August 10, 2020)



On the morning of Friday, April 5, 1968, Norman Lane—a twenty-seven-year-old white man, Marine Corps officer, high school teacher, Vanderbilt graduate and law student, and now a casualty of the Vietnam War—lay in repose in a government-issued casket at Brownsville (Tennessee) Funeral Home. Sixty-five miles away, Martin Luther King—a thirty-nine-year-old black man, civil rights leader, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, and one who had spoken vigorously against the Vietnam War—lay in repose in a temporary bronze casket at R.S. Lewis Funeral Home in Memphis.

In his 1969 analysis, *The Making of the President 1968* (1969. Reprint, New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), the late journalist Theodore White had concluded that the 1968 presidential election had revolved around two, and only two, major issues. One was the Vietnam War. The other was the future for the "two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal," that had now divided the country, leading to deadly riots over 1965 and 1967 in Los Angeles, Newark, and Detroit, and now, in the wake of Dr. King's assassination, in Washington, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and other American cities. Norman Lane and Martin Luther King, in their deaths over seven days in the early spring of 1968, symbolized those two issues . . . Norman, as a casualty of the war, and Dr. King, as a casualty of racial hatred and violence. . . .

* * *

<https://tinyurl.com/August-11-1965>

"Part One: History, and 'Time Past.' Watts, Hayneville, and Brownsville-August 11-20, 1965"
(originally published on August 10, 2020)



Harvard-educated correspondent-author Theodore H. White (1915-1986) had covered East Asia for *Time* magazine during the Second World War. During the early years of the Cold War he lived in Europe, working as a correspondent. In 1960, several years after returning to the US, he took on his most famous book project—*The Making of the President 1960*, which received the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 1962. The 1968 presidential campaign led to his third "Making of the President" volume, published in 1969. In his "reporter's book of a campaign," Theodore White described the two halves that together, in his analysis, made up the issues of that 1968 campaign. One half was the Vietnam War.

As he later wrote, the author-correspondent had had lunch in the Los Angeles area on Thursday, August 12, 1965, not realizing that a forty-minute episode—one that had occurred in the Watts district of Los Angeles the previous evening—had "set the flare that lit up the other half" of the issues for the 1968 presidential campaign. That half would be the state of race relations—racial polarity and/or racial cleavage—that divided the people of the United States in 1968. In White's words:

The Watts riots of 1965 were to initiate a sequence of blood and disorder, spread by television, that would dominate the politics of 1968 three years later . . .

* * *

<https://tinyurl.com/Jul-27-1967>

"Part Two: July 27, 1967 . . ."
(originally published on August 31, 2020)



In America, two summers had passed since the Watts riots. It was now the summer of 1967. As stated later in the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders [the Kerner Commission; <https://tinyurl.com/Kerner-1968-Report> (download only)], chaired by Democratic Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois:

The Los Angeles riot, the worst in the United States since the Detroit riot of 1943, shocked all who had been confident that race relations were improving in the North, and evoked a new mood in African-American ghettos across the country.

Two deadly riots, or disorders, had followed in Chicago and in the Hough section of Cleveland in July, 1966. 4,200 National Guardsmen were needed to restore order in Chicago, where three African-Americans, including a thirteen-year-old boy and a pregnant fourteen-year-old girl, were killed. Of the 533 arrests, 155 were juveniles. Four African-Americans died in the Hough riots later that July, which required mobilization of the Ohio National Guard.

But, as the Kerner Commission report would state, in its opening "Summary":

The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorders to American cities, and with them shock, fear, and bewilderment to the Nation.

The worst came during a 2-week period in July, first in Newark and then in Detroit. Each set off a chain reaction in neighboring communities.

On July 28, 1967, the President of the United States established this Commission and directed us to answer three basic questions:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

What can be done to prevent it from happening again? . . .

* * *

<https://tinyurl.com/Mar-28-1968>

"Part Three: March 28, 1968 . . ."
(originally published on September 22, 2020)

March 28, 1968, was a Thursday. 1stLt. Norman Lane, commander for the 81mm Mortar Platoon, H&S Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, would begin his last full day, in this Life, at a Marine firebase known as Cam Lo Artillery Position, Cam Lo Hill, or simply—in the jargon of the McNamara Line—as



C-3. About 9,000 miles from Cam Lo Hill, sunrise in Brownsville and Memphis on that Thursday would come thirteen hours after the day had begun in Vietnam. For thirty-year-old Stewart Hall of Brownsville, March 28 would begin as a normal workday at Hall Plumbing and Electric, where he and his father worked as partners in the small town of about 7,000 residents. But in Memphis, sixty miles southwest of Stewart's hometown, a major civil rights march was planned in support of the city's sanitation workers, who had been on strike since mid-February. The march was being organized by Reverend James Lawson, leader of the congregation at Centenary United Methodist Church in Memphis, but the demonstration on that Thursday would be led by Reverend Lawson's old friend—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize. This would be Dr. King's second visit to Memphis, in behalf of the striking sanitation workers, in ten days. And so, on the morning of Thursday, March 28, 1968, Martin Luther King boarded a flight at Newark, bound for Memphis.

The plane touched down at around 10:30. King and his aide, Bernard Lee, an SCLC staffer, were met at the gate by King's closest friend and right-hand man, Ralph Abernathy. The flight was nearly an hour late. As Hampton Sides writes in *Hellhound On His Trail* (New York: First Anchor Books Edition, 2011):

It was a humid spring day, and the sun was just beginning to burn through the morning haze. More than ten thousand people had been gathering in the hot side streets, waiting for King to arrive. . . .

Exactly four weeks had passed since the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders—the Kerner Commission—had been released. . . .

* * *

<https://tinyurl.com/April-4-1968>

"Part Four: April 4, 1968 . . ." (originally published on October 12, 2020)



Once Chamberlain had a speech memorized from Shakespeare and gave it proudly, the old man listening but not looking, and Chamberlain remembered it still: "What a piece of work is man . . . in action how like an angel!" And the old man, grinning, had scratched his head and then said stiffly, "Well, boy, if he's an angel, he's sure a murderin' angel." And Chamberlain had gone on to school to make an oration on the subject: Man, the Killer Angel.

—Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel (Fiction, 1975) is, in the author's words, "the story of the Battle of Gettysburg," where more than 7,000 Union and Confederate soldiers died. Man, the Killer Angel, had done some of his best work over July 1-3, 1863. In the early spring of 1968, Man was again busy at his task. 1stLt. Norman Lane had been killed in action in Vietnam on Friday, March 29. And on the following Thursday, April 4, another Western Union telegram reached Mrs. Betsy Lane, living in Memphis. The message was painfully brief:

REMAINS 1LT NORMAN LANE JR ARRIVE MEMPHIS TENN 356 PM 4 APR
ON AA FLT 137 BROWNSVILLE FUNERAL HOME NOTIVIED [sic]
COMMANDER DOVER AFB DELAWARE

1stLt. Lane's funeral service would be held the following afternoon at Tabernacle Methodist Church near Brownsville—sixty miles from Memphis. But Man's work was far from done.

Dr. Martin Luther King, having recovered somewhat from the failure of the March 28 incident in Memphis, had returned to the Bluff City on April 3. That night, before an audience of thousands at the Mason Temple downtown, he ended his speech with the opening line from the "Battle Hymn of the Republic":

MINE eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. . . .

* * *

<https://tinyurl.com/Good-Friday-1968>

"Part Five: 'And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, . . .'"
(originally published on November 2, 2020)



From St. Matthew 21:6-11 (King James Version),

- 6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
- 7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.
- 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.
- 9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
- 10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
- 11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

As the weekly issue of the *Brownsville (TN) States-Graphic* went to press on Thursday afternoon, April 11, 1968, exactly six weeks had passed since the release of the Report of the National Advisory Commission—the Kerner Commission—on Civil Disorders. Within the past week, Dr. Martin Luther King had been assassinated in Memphis and buried in Atlanta. Rioting and violence had erupted in Memphis and in several major US cities, including the nation's capital, and had continued through that Palm Sunday weekend. In Brownsville, funeral services had been held for 1stLt. Norman Lane, who had been killed in action in Vietnam on March 29. And in Washington, on the evening of Sunday, March 31, Lyndon Johnson had announced that he would not seek a second term as President of the United States. At this point, Senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy were the only two declared candidates for the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination.

On page 1 of that Friday's Brownsville newspaper, one story reported on the local company of National Guardsmen, commanded by Brownsville resident Stewart Hall, who had served a total of ten days in Memphis over March 28-April 9, during the two periods of rioting and violence there. Elsewhere on page 1, a short article reported, "HHS Flag At Half Mast Apr. 5," in honor of Lt. Lane, who had been a faculty member at the high school only two years before. On page 3, in her weekly "Personal Mention" column,

Doris Burgess included a special mention of some of the people who had traveled to Brownsville the previous Friday, in order to attend Lt. Lane's funeral services.

But it was Doris Burgess' comment in another of her weekly features, "Across My Desk," that still resonates today, more than fifty years later. Easter Sunday would be observed two days later, on April 14. Mrs. Burgess began with a somewhat sentimental, perhaps idyllic collection of her personal Easter memories. But this peaceful discourse abruptly transforms into a view on the topic of Hate:

THE GREAT and good country in which we live so defiled by some so loved by others. The past few days have been days in which it is hard to focus clearly. Only one clear-cut thought comes to me. Hate is a deadly thing, it can destroy cities, men, and countries. . . .

* * *

As T.S. Eliot wrote, in the first stanza of "Burnt Norton":

What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. . . .