

May 9, 1947: Willie Francis

Saint Martinsville, Louisiana

The TIMES reporters asked him to describe the taste of death. *Cold peanut butter*. Fair stars, little speckles: *pink and green, like shines in a rooster's tail*. He said *God fool'd with the chair*.

His father smashed his gravestone into slivers of granite. Hundreds wrote *divine intervention*, how *gold electrodes would corrode* and silver wires short if they tried to kill that boy again. Like Daniel in the lion's den; those men in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace; unusual; cruel; double jeopardy: none of that could save him. At noon the chair was ready, voltage full. He said *everything is all right* and died without pink stars, green, anything divine.