

# INSIGHT

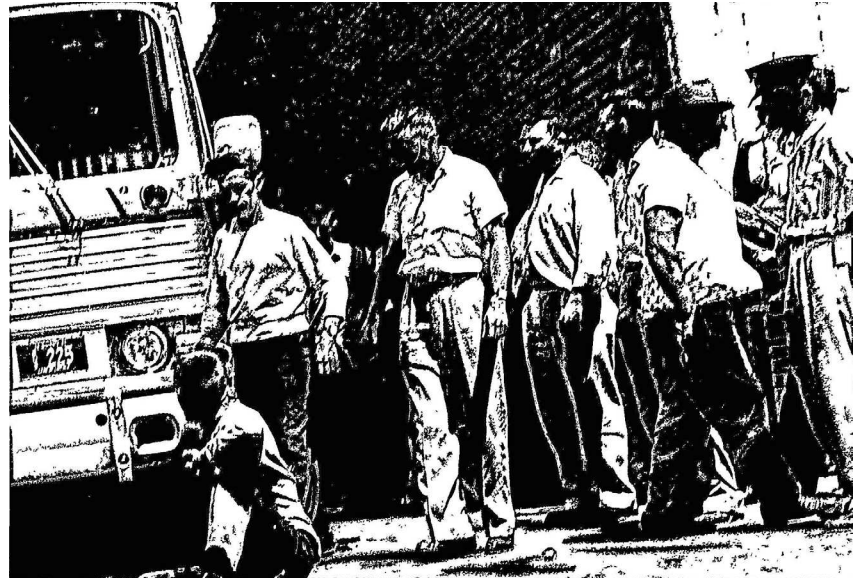
Commentary Editor: Phillip Tutor, ptutor@annistonstar.com • Sunday, January 15, 2017 • Page 1D

## Freedom's story, in pictures

On Thursday, President Barack Obama designated Anniston's two Freedom Riders sites as national monuments. Soon, the world will come to Anniston's doorstep to learn what happened on the day of the infamous bus burning and in the months that followed. What follows are a series of photocopied images provided to The Star by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. The black-and-white, low-resolution images from the FBI — many of which have never been published — reminded us of a graphic novel, one that tells part of an important story in the history of civil rights.



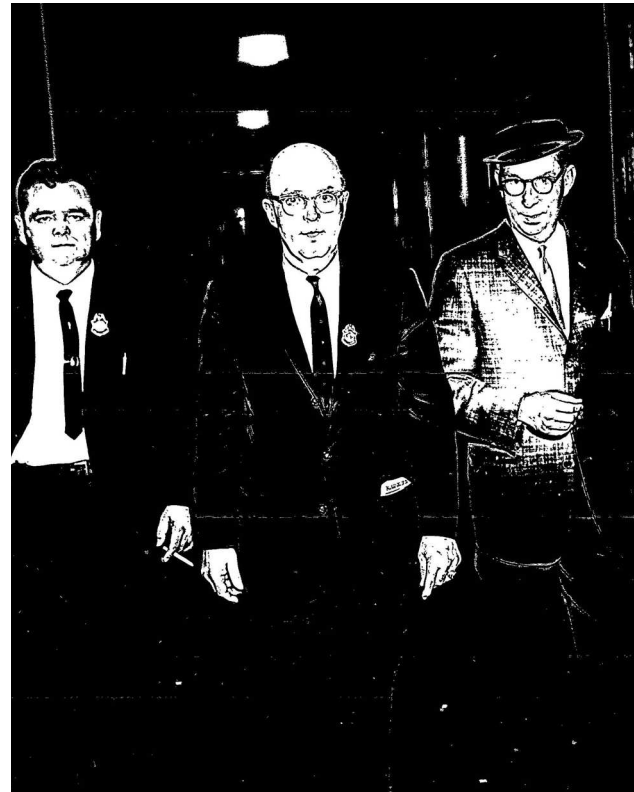
On Mother's Day 1961, two buses carrying civil rights activists known as Freedom Riders drove through Alabama.



At 1 p.m., a group of white men gathered at the Greyhound bus station on Anniston's Gurnee Avenue, blocking the bus' path and causing trouble. Some of the men yelled "Dirty Communists!" and racial epithets at the bus.



By 2 p.m., a mob had attacked the Greyhound bus on Alabama 202 and set it on fire. "Oh my God, they're going to burn us up!" passenger Genevieve Hughes said. All aboard the bus escaped, though several needed assistance on the side of the road. Twelve people were hospitalized for smoke inhalation.



Nine men were indicted for the violence and the trial began in the fall of 1961. Assistant U.S. Attorney R. Macy Taylor, right, is flanked by two U.S. marshals.



Anniston police, federal marshals, bus company executives and family members of the indicted men were common sights at the first trial, which was marked by allegations of jury tampering.



Judge H. Hobart Grooms said on the trial's eve that "this court will not tolerate any intimidation of jurors." The trial ended in a mistrial.



In new proceedings two months later in Birmingham, the defense claimed "there was no legal evidence" against the accused. Five defendants changed their pleas to "no contest" and received probation. A sixth was sentenced to a year and a day in jail, though he was already jailed on another charge.



Charges against all others were dropped.