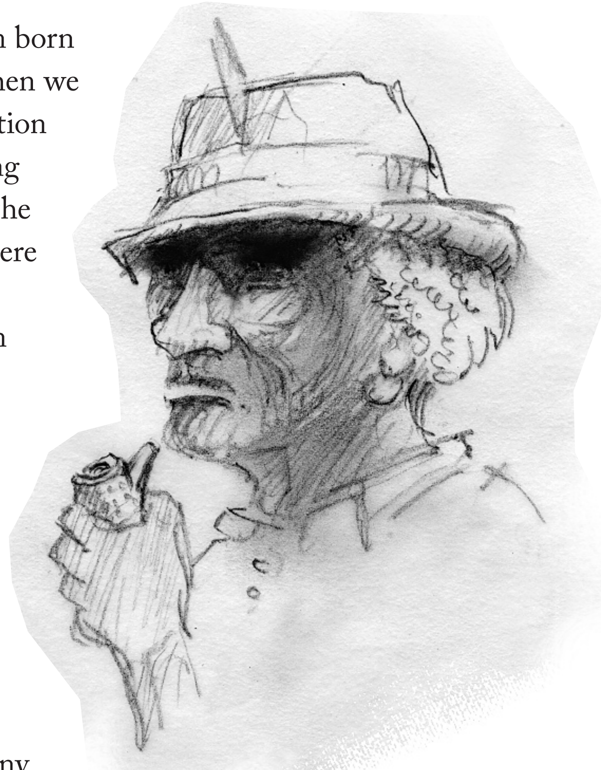
it had not come easy. Soon, however, this deep anger was supplanted by a realization that what Charles had given me could not be measured in dollars and cents, and that his need to escape the economic prison represented by the South at that time had, for him—like so many of his peers—been overwhelming. I began to entertain pleasant visions of Charles flagging down the Greyhound bus at Pocotaligo and—with my money—buying a ticket for the first leg of a trip to Philadelphia and a new life. In those days, on $1.25, he could have made it as far as Charleston.

"Aunt" Sarah Heyward

"Aunt" Sarah Heyward, who had been born to slavery, was well into her eighties when we first knew her. Walking was her recreation and passion. She was often seen walking the road between the "big house" and the little frame house near the landing, where she had lived for decades. It was said that she would never accept a ride in an automobile.



Sarah would negotiate the sandy road in measured pace and with more than a hint of the graceful glide characteristic of one who might have carried many a burden atop her head, a practice not uncommon in the lowcountry among women of West African heritage. I have seen many such performances, including the truly remarkable feat of the woman who, having placed a full bucket of water on her head, grasped another in each hand to begin a flowing movement along the path to home.

Whether or not Aunt Sarah could do this in an earlier day, she was remarkable for her own dignified carriage and grace. An air of serene calm was enhanced by the ever-present corncob pipe, nestled close to her face on a very short stem. This was a homemade corncob pipe, not the lacquered store-bought variety. She might have made it herself.

I met Aunt Sarah Heyward one day when Daddy stopped the family car as we drew alongside her on the back road. She obligingly stopped also and for several minutes exchanged pleasantries with him through the open car window. The conversation consisted mostly of her answering questions which, I believe, were designed less to elicit useful information than to showcase to Momma an authentic plantation personality and relic of the past. Her answers were delivered in tones of a Gullah servility learned three-quarters of a century earlier—

"I bin doin berry well, Mossa"

"No Mossa, I ainh f'shum"

"No Mossa, I ainh know wey e dey."

—and so on, the corncob pipe being removed ever so fleetingly to deliver each answer. When she tired of exchanging banalities she chomped down on the stem of her pipe and turned aside, signifying that she was ready to move on.

In this brief encounter, Momma and I thought we had seen something other than a servile Sarah Heyward. Beyond the corncob pipe, deep in the shadow of the felt hat, two gimlet eyes—restless, darting left and right, sizing up each white face in the car—belied the appearance of a continuous inner calm. I think we had gotten a glimpse of a still-smoldering ember, a slave-child remembering.