

# ARKANSAS MED SCHOOL OPENS ITS DOORS

Brilliant Hot Springs girl is first Negro to attend mixed classes since Reconstruction days

FOR four months now, a slight, pert, somewhat-shy girl has been making history in the South by hefting her weighty medical books to the University of Arkansas' campus at Little Rock and taking her regular place in class daily. She is 22-year-old Edith Mae Irby, the first Negro to attend mixed classes in a Dixie university since Reconstruction days.

Admitted to the medical school when the university board of trustees decided to comply with a U.S. Supreme Court decision against Jim Crow education, the onetime Knoxville College honor student has fitted easily into the routine of the previously all-white school. Teachers and students have accepted her as part of the campus and followed closely the promise of university vice-president Dr. H. Clay Chenault that "she will be a part of her class, just like any other member."

On her part the Hot Springs girl has completely recovered from the tenseness which marked her first day on campus. She recalls: "In chatting before my first class, I think all of my classmates felt the same nervousness. It wasn't exactly something which could be traced to my presence. But we all wondered what would happen next and how we would fare with it. I relaxed a little when some of the fellows joked about sitting next to me on tests as they thought I would know the answers."

The Arkansas-born miss had previously given reason to white students for believing she "would know the answers." She placed 28th out of 200 applicants who took the professional aptitude test of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Now completely adjusted and feeling that

"there's no obvious resentment from the white students," the white-jacketed freshman spends eight hours a day in class and another seven hours studying daily to meet the requirements of the rigid four-year medical course. She explains, "My test now is not as a colored student but it is as a medical student. Merit is the thing which counts from here on."

Judging students on ability has been declared basic in the University of Arkansas graduate school policy. It was used as a precedent two years ago when Negro ex-GI Silas Hunt was admitted to the law school, although in segregated classes. When Miss Irby was admitted, medical school head Chenault announced: "It is a physical impossibility in a medical education program to offer any measure of segregation." Other Southern states, however, have yet to follow Arkansas' lead.