

REPORT OF WEEK'S ACTIVITIES, NOVEMBER 12 -- 15, John O'Neal

These few days have been rather crowded with activity but nothing noteworthy have I done because the immediate objective is to become familiar with the people, the problems peculiar to these people and the terrain.

In summary, these few things have been accomplished: have met a few of the many "Mamas", Mama Goldie, Mama Dollie, and Mama King. Met a few others also. Attended meetings in Terrell and Sumter Counties. Got Driver's License from the "Great state 'a Georgie".

Several things, however, seem particularly important for I have been strongly impressed. The richness of the landscape, the lusty greens, the strong reds and yellows, the blue bowl skies. The takkm oriyd Georgia pines. I can't help being impressed by the beauty of the beauty of the place.

The militant attitudes of the people who attend the meetings is impressive. It causes me to wonder at my tole. What can I say to people already on the march? When called on to introduce myself at these meetings I have attempted merely to encourage them in their sturdiness and to introduce myself to them, trying to reveal my weaknesses to them, hoping that they will discover any strengths I might have.

I have been impressed most, I think, by the discipline of the individuals who are here on the SNCC staff. The most significant element of the Freedom movement, it seems to me, is the fact that here, for the first time in modern history, a moral force is being brought to bear on a real problem with real support from the people and is really effective in terms of the people's needs and aspirations. I have been disappointed to find that all too often the perception that guides us on social matters has not seemed to carry over to the personal realm. The patterns of discipline that have been established here in Southwest Georgia project are some encouraging and giant step toward this end.

A few germinal ideas have occurred to me concerning the plight of the sharecroppers in this area, the necessity of communication with our "good white brothers" and the kind of relationship or identification that our fellow campus bound students, particularly those at SIU. Happy to say, I have been encouraged to develop these ideas, but they do not warrent further comment at this time.

Regarding my personal hopes for my involvement here; at this time I hope to become a writer, eventually to concentrate on the theatre. The decision to come work in the South with SNCC, as well as all other decisions (I hope) was made imperative by my moral or rather religious committment. This does not, however, serve to minimize the former assertion; I would like to think of myself as an apprentice artist. I would hope therefore that my experience here provides the opportunity for the development of my art, both in form and substance. The substance, it seems to is almost inevitable. One cannot live among great people suffering a great crisis without developing some great insights. The ability to communicate these, however does not occur in such an accidental fashion. In short, I hope to take advantage of som of the incidents, some of the ideas that follow from these incidents for some kind of writing. Have already begun work on one short essay "A Boll Weevil's Eyeview of the Cottonbowl" (working title). A statement of neophyte&s view of the Freedom Movement, hopes, fears, expect@d dangers, expected returns, and stuff like that. Is still in the thinking stage.

Can't think of anything else for the time being.



Atlanta 14, Georgia

November 12-18

This week has been a very exciting, humorous and inspirational one for me, because I have been faced with many new tasks.

I have traveled through thirty of these United States, but only for pleasure. My trip here to Albany, Georgia is not a trip for pleasure, it's a trip to fight for freedom, equality and dignity for 20 million Negroes all over the United States. On the way to Albany, I thought of many things I would have to sacrifice, like dropping out of school for a semester, not being home to sing with the Howard Choir at Constitution Hall, something I have always looked forward to; being away from my family and friends. Was going to Albany, Georgia to work with Voter Registration worth all this? But then as I passed through shanty towns and big cities and gazed at the stars something crossed my mind. What good would it do me to finish school if I couldn't get the type of job I really wanted. The Civil Rights Commission has stated that most students graduating from a Negro college or University get the same type of jobs that white students get when they just graduate from high school. Maybe if we could get the right people in office something could be done about this situation. And then I thought about Constitution Hall, Washington's biggest concert hall. Sure it's great to get the chance to perform with one of the country's greatest choirs and with a world known symphony orchestra, but there was once a time when Marion Anderson had to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in freezing weather, because her skin is black and at the time no Negroes were allowed to perform at Constitution Hall. Nor were they allowed to go to any of the concerts given there. So why should I turn down a chance to fight for freedom so that I may sing at a place that was once Jim Crowed.

Then I thought about my family. Well, that was no problem. Because of the fact that both of my parents were born and raised in the South, they had to suffer the tribulations and heartaches caused by segregation. They wouldn't mind my leaving home for a few months to fight for equality.

So the decision wasn't very hard to make. My mind was at ease. "I am doing the right thing."

I arrived here with two other people on Monday November 14th. We hadn't been here fifteen minutes when someone called us and threatened to kill us if we came to Sumpter County.

We have gone to mass meetings in Sumpter, Terrell and Lee. All of these meetings have been wonderful experiences for me. It's wonderful to see these people so determined to fight for their rights, no matter what gets in the way.

I have met many wonderful people since I've been here, such as Mara Dohly, the ELNGs, the Jordens, the Browns, and many of the students from Muncie High and Carver Junior High schools. I had the great pleasure of talking with Dr. Martin Luther King last Friday night after he gave a thrilling speech at a mass meeting in Albany.

And Saturday I went canvassing for the first time - for Thomas C. Chatmon. Chatmon is in a run-off for city commissioner tomorrow (Nov. 20)