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#### A Southern Hero Returns Home

Greenwood, Mississippi--The large banner outside Greenwood that proclaimed "Welcome Home Delay" and brought tears to the eyes of Byron De La Beckwith is down now, after having remained up for several days after the return of the accused assassin of Medgar Evers. But the royal welcome is still continuing.

When Beckwith returned he was greeted by dozens of whites at the county courthouse and that night he was <sup>e</sup>trated by officials to a steak dinner at one of the finest restaurants in this Delta city. Then he moved in with his wife at the Hotel LeFlore, where they still live.

After his second trial ended in a mistrial, Beckwith commented, "I have to work for a living." And his wife explained, "This thing has about wiped us out." Beckwith replied, "I think I can get over our financial problems when I get back to work."

But Beckwith still has not returned to work some two weeks after his release and still does not appear to have any financial problems. (Delta residents raised over \$15,000 for his defense.)

He has all his laundry done at a laundry owned by a prominent Greenwood citizen and none of the many Negroes who have seen him take it and pick it up have ever seen him pay for it.

During the day and during the evening, he frequently rides through the city's Negro section with police in a police car. Sometimes he even sits up front with the police.

Several Negro cab drivers have seen him on these trips as well as dozens of other Negroes. "It's him all right, I know Beckwith; there's no mistaking him," a Negro woman told me. "He makes these trips mostly at night; I've seen him a couple times," a Negro voter registration worker told me.

When Negroes see him with the police they are reminded of the only witnesses who testified that Beckwith was in Greenwood and not in Jackson the night of the Evers slaying. Two Greenwood police testified that they had seen him in Greenwood at 1:05 that night. A Greenwood auxiliary policeman testified that he saw Beckwith in Greenwood at 11:45. The shooting occurred about 12:30 in Jackson, 95 miles away.

Greenwood is the home of the founder of the white Citizens' Council of which Beckwith is a member and the original home of that white supremacy, segregationist organization. Today, three of the five officers of the Association of Citizens' Councils of Mississippi, including the executive secretary, are Greenwood residents. The Greenwood city attorney, Hardy Lott, was Beckwith's chief attorney.

Greenwood has been the center of a voter registration drive organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in August 1962. Since that time, one SNCC worker, James Travis, has

been shot (the bullet lodged in his spine but he recovered), five others have been shot at, and four were forced to jump from the second floor rear window of the office to escape from a mob carrying chains and pipes. Three Negro businesses near the SNCC office were burned down and a month later the SNCC office was burned. Shot gun blasts were fired into a vote workers home. Greenwood police have made over 70 arrests of persons active in the vote drive and the County Board of Supervisors has dropped the surplus food program.

Violence and harassment have become almost an official part of Greenwood life. But the return of Beckwith has filled the Negro community with a feeling of disgust which it never had before in spite of everything else that has happened. It's not just the fact that Beckwith has been freed but the treatment that he has received, that they have seen him receive.

A Negro women told me how whites shook Beckwith's hand in the post office. "Glad to see you back, Delgy," they told him.

Many Negroes feel that Beckwith should be shot. Several told me they expect him to be shot. Many don't like to see him riding around in the Negro community, a suspected murderer who wrote in a letter: "For the next 15 years we here in Mississippi are going to have to do a lot of shooting to protect our wives and our children from bad Negroes and sorry white folks and federal interference."

As a Negro man told me, "Beckwith proves that Negroes aren't safe."

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