

Three men, ages 22, 24 and 29, all white (from New York, Chicago And Waltham, Mass) were traveling from New Orleans to Jackson. They stopped in McComb about 2 pm Monday June 8th to have some food at a drive-in. As soon as they entered the town (the car has Massachusetts plates), a police car spotted them and radioed the chief of police. Within 3 minutes the police chief arrived at the drive-in and demanded to know what they were doing in McComb. They answered that they were doing some free-lance writing on Mississippi and the South and were interested in seeing some of the city officials. The police chief detained them for another 4-5 minutes asking if they were planning to stay in McComb and, if not, why had they stopped in McComb. Again the men (one is a recent student, one a writer and the other a lawyer) answered that they were writing about the South and just traveling through. (They were on a two week tour of the South and were not connected with the movement directly). Then the police chief took them to the City Hall where they spoke with the mayor of McComb for about two hours. (The mayor is the past president of the White Citizen's Council in that area). Then they talked with the police chief again who told them that McComb was "ready for the summer and prepared to meet the Northern agitators who were coming down". The chief then asked if they were leaving McComb and they answered that they would visit a few more people in town before going on to Jackson. They left the city hall and visited several Negroes in town but were followed by the police the entire time.

During their conversations with the police chief he was extremely proud of his "efficient" police force; then the three men said that if the police force was so good then they expected that their rights would be well protected in McComb, too. Upon leaving McComb (about 8 pm) they were escorted to the city line by a police car that was tailed by an unmarked car. At the city limits a police car turned off and the unmarked car continued to follow them. Beyond Summit, Mississippi -- about 5-8 miles out of McComb -- the unmarked car passed them and slowed down. Another car pulled up behind them and a third car pulled out from a side road and forced them over to the edge of the road. Nine men jumped out of the three cars and at least three were armed with rifles. One had a pistol which he placed at the driver's head, and forced him (the driver) out of the car. He said: "you guys are going to get blown sky high". Meanwhile the other men with brass knuckles began to beat the two fellows left in the car. The one in the front seat (the lawyer) had a broken nose and jaw and smashed face as a result while the fellow in the back seat suffered head cuts. They were beaten continuously for 7 minutes. The man with the gun at the driver's head said this was only a taste of what outsiders would get in McComb and that they were sick and tired of having Northern agitators around. He then asked the driver which Negroes they had seen in town and the driver replied that they knew as well as he since the police had followed them all day. Suddenly the men stopped beating the three and drove off -- apparently because several cars had passed and they were worried about being seen. The three then drove on to Jackson to the COFO office where hospital treatment was required for the two who were beaten. Protests were lodged with the FBI, the Justice Department and with the McComb police department.