

April 11, 1964  
Jackson

Report of interview with Herman Gates, 17, high school student from Belzoni, Humphreys County.

According to Gates, "trouble started in Belzoni when James Meredith was enrolled at Ole Miss." On the night of Meredith's arrival in Oxford, there were one or two cross burnings in Belzoni and the police tried to make Negroes close their businesses. Gates reported that his father refused to close his cafe because he couldn't afford to do it. Soon thereafter, whites pelted the Gates' house with rotten eggs and when Herman's father went out on the street to shoot at them, the police reassured him that they knew who was causing the trouble.

On Halloween, there were further incidents of egg-throwing and attempts to run down Negro children in the streets.

When Billy Shaw, SNCC Field Secretary, began working in Belzoni during October and November of 1963, Herman Gates became acquainted with him and was seen going to meetings and talking to him. Soon after, Herman became the direct object of intimidation.

During the period of Shaw's stay, mass meetings were begun, the biggest being a rally-home coming parade held on the day Kennedy was assassinated. A big meeting was held in the gym. One woman was fired on account of her attending such meetings, students were threatened with being thrown out of school.

In January, Herman was cutting across the Dairy Bar parking lot when a group of white high school students tried to run him down with their car.

*33 to 34*  
*to work*  
Last Wednesday, April 8, 1964, Herman's younger brother <sup>a very active local N. youth</sup> got into a fight at school with the two sons of a Negro confidante to the Belzoni police, one "Daddy" Henry. According to Gates Joe \_\_\_\_\_ was not previously aware that Henry was connected with the authorities. On Wednesday, the day of the fight with Herman's younger brother, Herman, while cutting through the lumber yard was assailed by eight Negro boys. *(including the Henry's)* From the time they first hit him until he "woke up in jail," Herman cannot remember what he did. His father told him that he came home and got his shot gun and that he fired two shots at the boys--others said he fired one shot by the railroad tracks. Before he went home to get the gun, the boys told Herman that they were going to get their own gun and shoot him before he could get his.

Herman remembers that at the same time Henry's sons ~~approached~~ approached him with a shot gun after he returned, a car full of white students passed in a car, a 22 rifle was pointed out the window at Herman. A shot-gun blast was fired, apparently by the Henry boys.

Herman returned home and waited for the police to come. When they did he simply handed them his gun. Herman was in jail overnight, the Henry boys were not released the next day, Thursday, when he was. They were

for whom Herman  
had worked

all charged with assault with a deadly weapon. They will be tried in the youth court on Monday. White lawyer, Dave Womet, said ~~that~~ Herman had nothing to worry about and that he would help him.

Yesterday, Friday, April 11, The superintendent of the all Negro public school in Belzoni told Herman that he should go to a psychiatrist, that he was "funny in the head."