

Meridian

ATTEMPTS TO SEE GOVERNOR

from Rita Schwerner

Rita went with Rev. Ed King and Bob Zellner to try to see Gov. Johnson this afternoon. Tried first at Capitol. A fat man zoomed ahead of the three into PBJ's reception room, and slammed the door, tried to keep it shut and opened it a few seconds later. Rita barely introduced herself when the man yelled back: "He's not in." They spoke with PBJ's special assistant who is also a state senator - Frank Barber - who was "extremely rude." Barber said the governor cannot be reached and won't be back. Left that office and went downstairs. The receptionist there started telling Rita what a beautiful state Mississippi was. Next they went to the Governor's mansion. Arrived there just as PBJ was escorting Gov. Wallace (Ala.) and Mayor Allen Thompson (Jackson) up the steps. They too walked up the steps and reached the top in time for Bob to overhear a newsman or someone ask Johnson about the three missing men. Gov. Johnson replied: "Governor Wallace and I are the only two people who know where they are and we're not telling." At that point Bob stepped forward to introduce himself. PBJ stretched out hand to shake, and when PBJ realized who Rita was, he started walking, slammed the door and locked it. Rita spoke to a highway patrolman asking him to take her name and tell the governor she had tried to see him. He declined to give the message.

Then they went to the federal building to see Allen Dulles. They spoke with him about two minutes. He assured them the feds were doing all they could. Bob reported what he had overheard. Dulles insisted it was a misunderstanding twice. Rita then said: "You may be sure before we brought you any information, we'd check. Since we know you'll try to discredit it." Rita stated she was confident anything she told him (i.e., Dulles) would not leave the room - meaning the feds weren't doing anything. An FBI agent sitting in the room stated he thought it was a poor joke in poor taste. Bob retorted that indicated something about the kind of investigation being made. Dulles extended his hand to Rita. She pulled hers back. He said: "I want to offer you my deepest sympathy but I have another meeting to attend." Rita told him she didn't want sympathy, but wanted her husband back.

They filed report of this with AP, UPI, Bill Minor. Don't think anything was moved on it however. Rita says the press generally has not used the numerous statements and tapes she has made because she refuses to be maudlin or sentimental and deals with issues; feels they have purposefully refrained from using her statements.

From: Freddy Lee Watson in Meridian.

"We went into the county (Neshoba) today. We didn't see any police cars or FBI and we went over lots of portions of the county. The only thing we saw was a marine helicopter flying above us. The people said the sheriff was coming through the area everyday before the fire (Church burning June 16) for two weeks, and then that Tuesday there was the fire and four men beaten. But we didn't see any FBI."

June 24, 1964

From Don Harris (in NYC) re DAWSON, GA. RAPE CHARGE

Herman Kitchens, 22 (?), was arrested on a rape charge Sunday or Monday night (June 21 or 22). He was held in a Dawson jail without any food, and police tried to force a confession. Police claimed he held a gun on raped girl. No further details. Have to check with Mantz. Kitchens was known in area for activity with movement.