

Wats line report taken by Mendy Samstein --June 9, 1964 4:00 p.m.

Re: Beating and arrest of Greenwood SNCC workers in Columbus

Last night Sam Block, James Black, James Jones, Charles McLaurin, and Willie Peacock were driving in one of the 1963 white valliants along route 82 on their way to Atlanta for the SNCC staff meeting. As they were passing through Starksville, a 56 black and white mercury pulled out suddenly and attempted to drive them off the road. With the exception of the driver, everyone got down expecting shots. Finally, the car pulled off at Mayhew Junction and they continued on route 82 toward Columbus. Just outside Columbus, their car was stopped by a highway patrolman, who apparently recognized the car (it had been used previously in Columbus by Frank Smith). ELDER The highway patrolman, whose name was Roy Huddleston (badge number was 358 and license tag was MIB 97) made them all get out. The driver, James Black, was made to stand off by himself. When the sheriff arrived Huddleston made Black get into his car (there was also an unidentified white man in the car). Meanwhile, the highway patrolman had cursed all the SNCC workers, repeatedly calling them "dirty niggers." The sheriff also took part in the name calling and he had everyone frisked and handcuffed. The highway patrolman drove off with Black into the county, while Sam Block, McLaurin, Jones, and Peacock were taken to the county courthouse. Black was taken out to the country and beaten with a blackjack across the face. When he was later returned to the county jail his eyes were bloodied and his face was badly bruised. The Huddleston brought him remarking, "this nigger can't stand on his own feet." Meanwhile Black and the others had been taken upstairs to the county jailhouse where the sheriff apprised the jailer that "these are niggers who are trying to change our way of life. All their names were taken as well as their belongings and they were put into cells.

Around 10:30, starting with Sam Block, all four were taken out of their cells individually and beaten. Sam was kicked and punched in the back, legs, and face. After beating him for a number of minutes he was returned to his cell and Peacock was taken out. Then same happened to him and then Jones and then McLaurin. All the beating was administered by the highway patrolman, Roy Huddleston.

After each was beaten they were returned to their cells until the next morning. Sometime in the morning they were taken out and carried to court before a judge, lawyers, and many highway patrolmen. They were all charged with carrying illegal literature (they had campaign posters of Mrs. F.L. Hamer) and Black was also charged with reckless driving. They requested legal counsel, but it was denied. They had to convince the judge that they were on their way to Atlanta. Apparently on this basis, the judge was willing to drop the charges.

R. V. Whittaker

Though the charge of reckless charge against Black was maintained. All together they had to pay \$26--\$12 for Black, and \$14 for each for jail charges, plus \$2 for a car storage fee. They were thus allowed to go free, but they were warned ~~that~~ that they had ~~not~~ better not come back. When the judge was about to release them, he told all the policemen to take a good look at them, saying if you come back you will be killed, even our good colored folk, who don't want you around here, might kill you.

McLaruing has three loose teeth. Peacock's jaw is swollen and Black's back is hurting.