

F R E E D O M D A Y

IN HOLLY SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI, FRIDAY, JULY 25, 1964, 8 AM to 5 PM

The following is a complete minute-by-minute account of our first Freedom Day as recorded from our short-wave citizens' band radio set s. We have three mobile units, 2 walkie-talkies, and one base set. The introduction describes the extensive preparations by the three police forces in the town to both prevent violence and to harrass us. The conclusion relates the aftermath of our voter registration activity when the police vented their frustration against the local people. All activity centered at courthouse square.

8 AM Reconnoitering mission report: 35 policemen armed with long billy clubs and the usual pistols; wooden saw horses blocking off one road; one fire engine parked in front of firehouse; leashed police dog leading game warden.

8:15 AM: 15 COFO people go to Asbury Church to rendez-vous with local people wishing to be carried down to courthouse to register. 50 people are there.

8:30 AM: head operator of Holly springs spoken to and ask her full cooperation, especially since people's lives will be in danger today more than usual, and to admonish her that if the operator's did harrass us, ie, loud sounds, dilatory tactics, that they would have to face consequences.

8:45 AM: Greenwood COFO national headquarters notified of situation as is our usual procedure.

9 AM: Asbury Church: police car circles twice; Mayor Sam Coopwood buzzes by.

9:05 AM: Opposition trying to confuse by pretending to be our "unit number 1."

9:12 AM courthouse: police fanning out along route to courthouse from Asbury.

9:15 AM report from observation team at square: 2 police dogs in parked wagon near furniture store; 55 police (city, county, Highway Patrol) many of them in yellow or in white helmets; Coopwood directing operations; man with movie camera ready to take pictures of local people registering.

9:20 call to FBI Memphis: Agent Olson informed of ~~infer~~ situation; Greenwood had called earlier and said that there would be integrated picketing; reminded that they had already been notified of Freedom Day 4 days ago and asked what they would do about it today - no answer (as it turned out, Olson came down in person later, indicating that if we had not called, FBI wouldn't have come down at all).

9:28 1st group on way down to courthouse led by our leader Ivanhoe. 2 staff and 3 local people in group.

9:30 halfway there group stopped by police and interrogated.

9:31 police insist that all people in group must be 8 feet apart "according to local ordinance."

9:37 group has reached courthouse and are stopped second time by police.

9:42 police are intimidating people as people file past groups of police. Pre-planned picket has been cancelled.

9:44 Greenwood called: Justice Department official Owens asked advice on 8 foot ruling; JD and FBI to be informed of cancelled picketing and police intimidation of group walking to courthouse.

9:48 new group of plice arrive at corner near Asbury.

9:52 2 people with cameras at courthouse entrance; 1 movie, and 1 still.

10 AM 2nd group arrives at courthouse; reinforcements for opposition arrive swelling opposition to about 70 in general area.

10:08 blue pickup truck spotted as relay point for opposition; police insist on escorting people up to registrar's office sans our escort.

10:19 4th group starts off.

10:29 4th group arrives at square.

10:32 blue pickup definitely a relay point; its license # A67108; '63 Chevy is also relaying.

(from now on, mobile unit numbers will be used as they call in to base)

10:37 #6 Police now tell us not to congregate in groups of more 5 or more while in car, standing, or walking; call Greenwood for advice.

10:40 #1 I'm not taking fixed position but moving around square.

10:42: #6 Group of 3 women who can't read or write gei but desiring to vote on way down.

10:46: #1 group being escorted to courthouse by 2 policemen; group seems frightened.

10:46: #5 group seems frightened.

10:48 #1 man with movie camera recognized as man running grocery store in Tate County; had previously represented himself as free lance movie photog; (following is COFO volunteer's report on photographers: when asked to identify themselves, replied, "reporters", where, "Freelance," identification papers, "no." One wore Deputy's star, other was plainclothes and, according to Bert Purkel, LCDR (Lawyer's Constitutional Defense Committee) of Memphis, his name is Tom Williams of Hickory Flat, Mississippi. Also when Purkel backed his car into a VW pickup, a policeman order "Mr. Williams" to photograph the scratch on the VW.)

10:49 #6 every pickup that has been seen driving by Freedom House staring at us has been seen downtown today.

10:50 #6 to #5 woman in brown dress who was in line to register has just left line after being spoken to by policeman.

10:51 #5 to #1 just spoke to woman; afraid to register; frightened by police; said she had to go meet husband somewhere.

10:57 #1 FBI just pulled up next to me.

11:06 #5 found house where police is monitoring radio sets - corner of Market and Van Dorn.

(the next few calls describe Elwood Berry's arrest)

11:07 #6 to all sets - am standing in front of courthouse across street giving protection and security to people; policeman is telling me to move on; he's pulling out his billy stick...his voice is full of hatred...his hand is quaking from fright...he just told me "Goddamn it, move on!"

11:08 #5 to #6 against FCC rules to use profanity over radio.

11:09 #5 evidently Woody has been arrested. #6 has been stopped.

11:09 #1 3 policeman grabbed Woody and took him toward firehouse. The FBI are just standing around.

11:19 #5 just gave FBI full details; they were talking to Shriff and Mayor; they only said, "We've got orders from Burke Marshall and don't take them from anyone else."

11:19 #5 just gave FBI full details; they were talking to Sheriff and Mayor; they only said, "We take orders only from Burke Marshall." Agents Olson and Brown.

(Berry was arrested on the false charge of breaking the public peace. He did say "God damn", but he was only doing his duty of relating to the office everything that was going on exactly. He spent Friday night in jail and was bailed out the next noon on \$500 bail. While in jail he witnessed the beating of a Negro inmate. Berry, a SNCC staff member, will have his trial removed to Federal Court on Monday, since he was doing voter registration work.)

11:40 the LCDC in Memphis was informed of Berry's arrest and lawyer was promised in 2 hours.

1:20 a 1963 black Chevy #47-1248 has electronic equipment.

1:50 #5 3 police are on my tail with walkie-talkie (stayed on his tail 2 hours)

2:00 lawyer Bert Purkel arrives to work on another trial for another one of our workers.

2:30 the police begin to jam our sets; one jamming station is in '60 Chevy blue truck w/ which has a small black device with antenna and emits beeps whenever one of our radios gets within a certain radius. (license #57108)

4:55 2 COFO cars picked up two carloads of people who had just finished taking registration test. The end of a successful Freedom Day.

During the day we made about 20 trips carrying down about 60 people to register. It is inevitable that the lives and property of these 60 Negro citizens will be threatened in one way or another from the publicity of the two cameras and newspapers which will print the names of those who attempted to register for two weeks. These are brave people.

That night the police tried to intimidate the people to counter-act the success of our Freedom Day. There were three shootings and one arrest. A drunken Negro was shot in both legs while trying to run away from the cops who he knew w/ would beat him up in jail. In the two other incidents the opposition shot at a house and over a car. Also, they arrested a 22 year old local Negro for carrying a concealed weapon, jailed him overnight, and fined him \$250. They caught him when they had a "shakedown" at a Negro restaurant which COFO people habitually retreat for victuals and liquid refreshment. Saturday night they again had a shakedown where they searched all present, obviously hoping to arrest one of us.

We utterly despise this flagrant injustice and denial of human dignity. We are keeping records and affidavits of all incidents, copies of which are sent to Justice Department, LCDC lawyers, and FBI. Copies of this radio log have been sent to the three aforementioned offices, as well as the FCC in New Orleans, and 40 different newspapers across the nation from Hawaii to Vermont.

We are making progress. We have only 10 voter registration workers covering a total Negro population of over 45,000 in a 5000 square mile area and yet we have Freedom Registered over 3000 eligible Negro voters who risk everything when they sign our Freedom Registration books. Last night we had a very successful precinct meeting and county convention in Benton County. Our three Freedom Schools with 20 teachers and a staggered session have 200 students. The Holly Springs And Benton County Freedom Schools have put out newspapers written by students and on July 26 a play will be presented on the life of Medgar Evers.