

Oxford, Ohio  
June 19, 1964

Dear Pop:

Just a note to get a few things off my mind. No doubt you have read or heard about Alsop's column in the Tribune a few days ago, a column in which he criticized the summer project, saying that there will be violence as a result of this planned "invasion" and that an example of the violence is the Louis Allen killing in Mississippi only a few days ago. From what I've seen and heard here, violence has been on the increase there since 1954, and has moved steadily along ever since on a high, but level, plane. Besides, Louis Allen was killed last year. Alsop is all wet. Like so many others he's caught in some sort of low pitched hysteria and won't bother to check his facts. I hope, if anyone talks to you about this, that you will set him straight.

This confusion, from what I understand, stems from inactivity on the part of the Justice Department which refuses to act in many cases. Medgor Evers body was never examined by the FBI. I could name other examples but it is hard really to make others believe what one hears from Civil Rights leaders and what the Press avoids (CBS showed us a film privately, on the state of affairs in Mississippi. It refuses to release the film for public showing).

I'll end this letter by retorting to a criticism of the movement that I heard on television. We've been criticized for instigating pressure for Federal Troops this summer. This is true but only in order to obtain from the Federal Government a promise of troops to protect us from toughs and rowdies. Our primary purpose is the vote registration, not troops, because that accomplishes little. As I said, such a threat might diminish some of the harassment and let us work in peace.

I just wanted you to hear this end of it so that when someone buttonholes you, you can give both sides of the argument.

I'm still in Ohio. I move to Greenville, Mississippi either tomorrow or Saturday.

Love,

Rust (signed)

Greenville, Mississippi  
July, 1964

Dear Mom:

Thank you for the articles and clippings. I would appreciate your sending them if they bear on a particular point or pertain to anything in Greenville.

Did I tell you how we arrived here? We drove West of the river to avoid traveling in Mississippi, came down through Arkansas. The road led through cotton fields, swamp and game preserves. Twice we had to cross a river. First the Arkansas and then the White by ferry. The highway, State Number 1, looked as if it had been built during the Twenties. It was, however, in good shape and a pleasant enough drive.

I wouldn't worry so much about my activities here. As I mentioned before to someone, the police provide us with protection, that is the local police. Harassment is at a minimum compared to the rest of the State. I, myself, canvass for voter registration with ease. The Delta Democrat Times is behind us more or less. At least they are sensible. Last week they were about to print an editorial praising our efforts and asking the white community to support us. But we held a demonstration in front of the Post Office protesting a lack of Federal protection in connection with the Philadelphia incident and they changed their minds. What came out was essentially this; that they lauded our goals to register the negro for the vote, to set up schools and a community center, but condemned any thought of direct action on our part that would increase tension. I believe that, like some of us, they fear that long term objectives will be hurt by such actions. Others of our groups scorn the so called liberality of Greenville and want to push the town "to the limit". Our militant leaders

against the advice of headquarters in Jackson want to continue in this vain by trying to integrate the two public swimming pools here, one white the other colored. This could be disastrous because the town would close both pools, setting both white and negro against us. A closed pool could lose for us the much desired support of the young negro group. I personally would like to attempt some direct action, but in a manner that won't interfere with our ultimate goal.

Life here isn't so bad. The day is long, hot, but interesting. We often get free meals. The family I'm with is great, and their house is comfortable. The people I meet daily are easy to talk to. You simply hit on a few truths, quote from the Bible, and praise President Kennedy (every family has his picture) and you've got a promise to go to the courthouse.

The skies are clear even as a thunderstorm passes through, the dark cloud delineated against the hot blue sky. A single tree in a yard is of great property value for it does a lot to cover the tin roofs from the heat. The whites here are darker than the colored sometimes, making you wonder who should swim with whom. As for the colored, I heard a little negro girl saying scornfully to her friend while touching her neck, "Oh Honey, you sure is black". The psychology of skin color is difficult to plumb. I have to travel now.

Love,

Rust (signed)

Greenville, Mississippi  
July, 1964

Dear Mom:

The work is settled down to routine. Bombings and beatings are remote to us, more so probably than they are to you since you don't know the conditions in Greenville. About a week ago one evening some klansmen filed down Main Street distributing leaflets. Right behind him were the local gendarmes picking them up and snatching them away from pedestrians. When several months ago a cross was burned here on the levy, the sheriff arrested the instigators and took them to jail. One of them was so surprised and dismayed that he had a heart attack and died in the sheriffs office. These two incidents reflect the strong sentiment here for law and order. It is stronger than in any other part of the state, and regardless of left and right wing agitation, it tends to persist. The rabble element is aware of this feeling of long standing and stays out of sight. My job here could be monotonous but is made interesting by my contacts. Needless to say, I prefer it this way considering what obstacles I could be needing.

When I walk down a street to begin knocking on doors, kids either run up to you shouting gleefully "Freedom Riders" or not knowing you stare with dull hostility. Teenagers range from the helpful to the obnoxious. The latter seem to think that we've

come here to give them excitement, to buy them beer and cigarettes and so forth. The office spends half its' time chasing them out.

I enjoy going to the Sunday church services. The singing comes from the heart, but unfortunately so do the sermons. They approach the ridiculous, to my New York bred mind, But the basic themes are good and would be the same you might hear in any Episcopal church.

Today is my day to help in the kitchen to make some dough. If I don't learn anything else this summer, I'll have left the South knowing how to make a pie crust.

Love,

Kusty (signed)

Greenville, Mississippi  
Sunday, July 19th

Dear Mom:

You asked me why Greenville differs so from the rest of the state. I believe I already went through some of the reasons, but I probably did not make myself too clear.

Greenville used to be Mississippi's - or one of Mississippi's - port. From the Delta came the cotton to be shipped. Not only cotton and the crops of the hill cuntry were sent here, but also came many peoples, and therefore a few outside ideas. The Chinese

came to work on the railroad, while Greeks, Italians and Jews arrived to open businesses. Of course , that's not to say the hinterlands influence wasn't felt. These people were discriminated against for a long while, especially the Chinese. But now the Chinaman has the right to go to a white jail if he so wishes.

Greenville is not a good town. It's just as bad as the rest of the state because the voice of moderation does not speak loudly. But the moderates have operated behind the scenes. This shows in the local Greenville Police Force. The primary fear of the moderates is of disorder. I could cite several examples, but will settle by saying that they are quick to enforce the law whether it be for segregation or Civil Rights.

Thanks for Professor Silver's book. I don't know if I'll get a chance to read it here. It's so hard to do anything on ones own here.

Thanks for the stamps and for the articles and clippings. They're appreciated. Yesterday I talked to a reporter who represented two French newspapers.

Love,

Rusty (signed)