

postmark June 28 [1964]

Elizabethtown, Ky
(in some motel)

Sunday 8 AM

Dear Mom and Dad,

We didn't get out until late yesterday, so we haven't made much progress. Our route requires professional navigation skill, it is so complicated. We are travelling via Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Meridian Miss. and then to Hattiesburg. (Look this up on the map and you will see that it makes sense. Miss. turns out to be more west than we thought it was). We will probably spend tonight in Montgomery. We are not anticipating any trouble en route; there are, ~~as~~ after all, many out-of-state cars travelling around on the highways, even in Miss. We are with a girl who just graduated from Smith, Marion Davidson (very devout Catholic) who can drive. When we get in we're supposed to register the car in Miss. and get Miss. plates, which will increase our security. We've been ordered not to travel at night for any reason, not to go out alone, etc.

We talked to Mrs. Gray, the woman who ran against Stennis for Senator in the primary and is from Hattiesburg. She said, what we knew, that the Jewish community in H. is sympathetic but frightened. She thought we probably could establish some contact with them. She says there are many white sympathizers in H. - she's been asked by white people to recommend Negro maids, etc. who had been fired from other jobs for trying to vote. All this makes H. sound like a pretty civilized town.

This week in Oxford has been an incredible experience. If the rest of the summer is a total failure, this week alone will have been enough. We have learned so much, and gone through so much. The people who have been here are all, in their own way, magnificent. It is hard to express our feelings towards the Negroes who are leading this movement - not only are they courageous and dedicated and that kind of thing, but they are such compassionate, deep, understanding people, especially Bob Moses, who is a genuine great man. I think there have been more great men assembled at Oxford than you could find in a week of searching among presidents, statesmen, and so on. The volunteers have impressed us immeasurably - this is not a movement which has attracted the usual sad lot of society - haters, parent-haters, and that kind. (I don't think we met any kid here who could be characterized in those terms.) This may be largely due to the quality of the leadership. I hear the 2 psychiatrists have been very impressed. Of course there's been a terrific amount of tension and anxiety, but of a constructive kind, by and large, the kind that enables you to understand yourself and what you're doing. Bob Moses said that, when no one had dropped out by Wed., he was very worried, it didn't seem real. Since then a few have left, but not too many. We heard (this wasn't announced publicly) that someone's father came to take her home and wound up letting her stay and donating \$2,000 besides. The people of Oxford, with no solicitation, raised \$700 travel money for the kids who needed it. Even the newsmen have been impressed, or so people who talked to them (we didn't) say. Life had 2 men here for a few days. Nancy called up the K Gazette yesterday and they want us to write some "letters" to them about what we're doing.

It's time to go. I know you'll worry, and we will worry with you. In many ways it's harder to be in NY waiting for news than in Miss. doing things - for us, I'm sure that once we get settled we'll feel much better. We both love you very much.

Loe

copy of a letter from Joseph Ellin, written in KY