

John Stevenson age 21 []

2505½ - 5th Street
Meridian, Mississippi
28 June 1964

Dear Mother & Dad,

Sorry to have to resort to carbon paper, but since you're in different places I thought I might as well not write out the same stuff twice.

Still no trace of the missing three, but I guess you can find out about the search and all from the newspapers better than from me.

Today 11 more volunteers came in, all of whom will be working in the Freedom Schools. Things have been very chaotic around here for the past week because the 3 are missing & of course everyone is worried, & because one of the missing ones is the project director here, so we've had no clear center of authority, & because of millions of press-men milling about, plus an awful lot of local people, plus a lot of COFO staff who have come through here, taken charge for a little while, & then had to leave. All of us are standing up very well, I think, all things considered. We are now finally beginning to get the regular summer program organized. I am in charge of voter registration here, which means I'll be canvassing door-to-door, organizing registration workshops (to explain to people how to go about filling out the form etc), and taking them down to the courthouse to register.

I think I mentioned it before, but Meridian is reputedly the third most liberal place in Miss. The buses are integrated (altho not enough Negroes take advantage of this), there are 5 Negro policemen on the force, & no real police harassment of civil rights workers. These are nothing but tokens, of course, & don't indicate a willingness to have Negroes integrated into the life of the community in any meaningful way, but they do indicate that Meridian is anxious to keep up its reputation as a liberal city & to avoid any violence, so at least we will be free to do our work here, which is really all anyone asks of Miss. at this point.

The heat & humidity are bad. It usually stays between 80 & 90 degrees all day, with a humidity of about 80%, except when it rains, which it does, briefly, about every other day. It was very uncomfortable at first, but after a couple of days you get used to it. Southern fried chicken is no joke -- I've had it for every meal except breakfast since I've been here.

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I love the people here. Everyone has been so extremely nice and hospitable, besides the fact that everyone I've met has just seemed to be a very fine and wonderful person. (This is of course all within the Negro community --- and it is a real community, not just a group of people who happen to be living in the same area.)

So ---- except for a cold, my health is fine, I'm feeling well, & I'm very glad I'm here.

Love,
John