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Jerry Miller

Tohula, Miss. July 5

Dear Mom, Dad, Bob and Bill:

Sorry that I missed you when I called home Friday nite. HopeY'all had a good trip down south. What did you think about the state of Miss when you were passing through, which I presume was about the time when the three civil rights workers operating out of Phila. Miss were announced as missing.

What I'd like to try to do now is to give you a capsule summary of everything that has transpired since I last saw you in Chicago. Because of the long period that has since then elapsed and because of the fact that much of the mail that civil rights workers send and receive is opened and read, some details will out of necessity be left out and I'll have to wait until I see you again in order to relate them to you. By the way, the phones are also tapped. (More about that later). Therefore, please number your letters so we will each know whether all have been received. Also, any enclosures such as checks, etc, should be immediately acknowledged. Speaking of checks, there is no way I can cash personal checks here. I still have \$30 cash left from Chicago and as it turns out my expenses for the summer probably will not be very great due to the fact that family with which I'm staying, (the Turnbows) has refused to accept any sort of financial remuneration. If it happens that at some point I do run out of money, I will write and ask you to send me postal money orders, which I will be able to get cashed.

Now, back to the story. Ruth and Mike drove me to the bus Saturday night, June 20. It was a 7 hour trip to Cincinnati, where I arrived at 7:45 A.M. Unfortunately, I missed by about 15 minutes, a bus for Oxford, Ohio, which is the location of Western College for Women. So I had to remain in Cincy for over five hours waiting for a bus to Oxford. In addition, my "tons" of baggage did not arrive with me although we had checked them through in Chicago in plenty of time before my bus left. The suitcases and boxes, etc, didn't arrive until Wednesday and I had to go about 15 miles to Hamilton Ohio in order to pick them up. While waiting at Cincy bus station I met a girl from Oberlin, Martha H,

whom I hadn't known at all during my stay at Oberlin, and we passed the time together by talking and having lunch in a restaurant downtown.

This next portion of the letter is coming straight from the notes that I took during the orientation period so don't be surprised if they are disorganized. Sunday, I registered and moved into the dorms. I was fortunate enuf to room with Charles Walker, a field secretary for the American Friends Service Comm who was there on the staff to help with the training on non-violence. "e had some interesting discussions on both civil rightsand the peace mov't. He knew Mike and has worked with the SPU in the Phila. area. During the week, I and the approximately 250 other volunteers attended workshops, lectures, had folk sings(with Freedom songs) and individual discussions among ourselves. By the way, the temperature was unbearably hot -- in the nineties every single day. But they reminded us that it is that way down in Miss and that we'll have to get used to it.

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The COFO staff has requested that parents not call Greenwood or Jackson to inquire about their sons and daughters whenever there is an outburst of violence somewhere in the state. Don't worry, if something does happen that affects me, I will notify you by phone or have someone else do it. The Miss area code is 601.

The week of orientation at Oxford was marred by the disappearance of three of our fellow workers, one of whom had just left Oxford a couple of days before. I'm sure you read all about them - so I won't go into detail. (By the way, as I ask Bob, might I please ask you to save for me all newspaper r articles concerning the Miss summer Project. Thanks)/
The disappearance of these young men cause the session to operate not with despair but with greater determination to help solve the problems in Mississippi that just had to be solved. We were all greatly upset, but due to the fact that there was no sign of them that whole week we were forced to think about our own jobs in the state, our reasons for coming, etc. I sent you a copy of the telegram that we Ohioans sent to Lausche and Young. Might I ask all of you, and ask you to urge our "liberal minded" friends

to write to our senators and Rep. Bolton and Pres. Johnson in Washington urging stronger fed'l protection for both civil rights workers and Miss. Negroes. This is very important.

I was assigned to teach in the Freedom schools in Holmes county. This is an unusual county as far as counties go in Miss. It has a population of 27,000 of which about 18,000 are Negroes. Most of the Negroes own their own land which they received during reconstruction. There is but one registered (to vote) Negro in the county. Many have attempted to register but have failed due to their inability to interpret correctly a portion of the Miss constitution which is designated at the time of registration.

Tuesday evening we discussed curriculum for the Freedom schools and the importance of the teachers attitude in relating to his students. Wed. morn we had a discussion of the non-violent approach, led by Rev. James Lawson. Thurs. morn Bayard Rustin gave a magnificent talk dealing with nonviolence in action. Thurs. afternoon we discussed legal questions with civil rights lawyers. It was stressed to us the absolute necessity to remain at all times within the confines of laws on civil matters such as traffic rules, etc. Miss. police always are looking for excuses to arrest "outside" agitators and we don't have to make it any easier for them. They never arrest people for violations of the state's segregation laws due to the fact that these laws would then come up for review by the fed'l courts. On Friday, John Doar of the Civil Rights division of the Justice Dept spoke on the role that the Fed'l govt could legally play in Miss. While he seems a true friend of the movement for civil rights, his interpretation of the range of legal Fed'l govt steps which could be taken in Miss is much narrower than ours. Let me say here that he was speaking as a representative of the Justice Dep't and his own personal views might be more inline with ours. Due to the Phila. Miss. crisis we have witnessed a strengthening of the FBI in the state and a public cognizance of the the Miss. problem on the part of the fed'l gov't. On Friday I was contacted by Charles Barry of KYW TV. He said that they were

interested in the workers of the Project who were from the greater Cleveland area and that they might come down to Miss, to do a story. So far, I have not heard further from him. Friday nite we were lectured on "security" and were given "security Handbooks". Some of the cardinal rules are: do not go anywhere alone; do not travel at night; keep blinds down at night; refer all "visitors" to the project director; carry identification; dress neatly; watch for and report suspicious automobiles, events, etc. I could probably use down here a notarized copy of my birth certificate. Could you please sent that to me. Also send me a few handkerchiefs, (which I somehow forgot to take with me. And, as I ask Bob, periodically make a package of magazines, etc. and please send down to me.

The trip down south had both elements of fear and apprehension, and comedy to it. I came down in a car with 3 other persons. All the way to Miss. we followed a 1950 Plymouth station wagon with 6 of our fellow workers in it. 40 miles out of Oxford, Ohio, in Indiana, the station wagon broke down. We were thinking of leaving it there (we feared that even if we did get it fixed, it wouldn't be able to make it all the way down to Miss). We didn't have with us any one over 25 years of age who could rent a car; but we were lucky enough to spot one of the chartered buses taking Project workers down south and I flagged it down with my straw hat. Well, we traded one of our girls for a man over 25. As it turned out we got the station wagon fixed and it survived the trip despite several wrong turns on the part of its driver. When we arrived in Memphis Sunday morning we decided to go to the Greyhound Bus Terminal for a bite to eat, since we didn't know of any other integrated dining facilities in Memphis. Were we astonished when we arrived for the place was just staked out with police (who obviously were there to make sure that no incidents with the civil rights workers occurred in their city). We left about 9 that morning from Memphis and entered the state of Miss. not knowing quite what to expect. Fortunately we were not harassed at all on the way down by either the State Highway Patrol or local whites, though some cars were.