

July 8, 1964

Dear S and D:

Greetings; and like, why havent you written? Didnt you get our many (two) letters? With request for photo of auto title? I got Miss plates yesterday; was I proud. What a false sense of security they impart; but I feel like a rat riding in the Negro sections of town.

We are busy unto distraction; something like 600 600 people signed up for Freedom Schools, but they sort of come and go like the Arabs. Nancy promised the Gazzo to write them periodical letters about what's up, but she hasnt had time, and I dont feel up to it; we don't write to anyone nearly. (Thinking it over I cant remember whether I have written from here or not; maybe we only wrote once). In the other room people are assorting our library; which has really thousands of volumes; the tiny ex-barber shop we've got for it is too small. We all do this in our spare time. Nancy is off teaching at True light Baptist Church; I have gotten away with nothing to do for the evening sessions because noone showed up at the place I was supposed to be at; but the minister was embarrassed and has promised (threatened?) to corall students for us, which doesn't exactly make me glad. In the am I ride out to Palmer's Crossing, which is this incredible large Negro sort of town outside the city limits, where I teach at Priest's Creek. (Baptist Church). We are going bats not knowing what to do with all the types who have enrolled; like I mean, the thing has gotten totally out of hand and become a mass movement of the worst order. (Interruption: they just put the head of the minister's project in jail for cashing a bad check. The minister's project is this project that keeps bringing these ministers into town; Bob Beech ~~is the head of it~~ has been in town since Feb doing it. He made a big breakthrough the other day when he got a local MD to agree to hold inter-racial seminars in his home and to lobby for a committee on the race problem in town.) Anyway we are up to our ears in tiny kids and old men; the original idea of an elite training school for future leaders has gotten lost and not been replaced by anything whatever, conceptwise; we have made to terrible mistake of bowing to popular demand and teaching math and science. And then there's this Negro history jazz; our co-ordinators are big on Negro history and have sold it to everyone, except the white teachers; anyway we have these Ebony magazines and similar source material to boost our self-confidence. But the idea is to teach everything in modern terms: who was a great Negro and wht's his relevance for today? Things are five times more structured than you could have imagined and there is thirty times as much to do as anyone could do and the classes are closer to thirty than the proffered five and the classrooms are in church attics and like that; and we are always being rescued by busloads of pro-teachers manufactured in NY; and today the Wednesday in Mississippi Women from the Nationla Women's Club arrived and one out of every three people is an FBI or a lawyer or a minister; BUT ANYWAY we are doing all sorts of neat things, such as talking, often really talking, to Negroes, who are quite on top of it all here, I mean, they are most alert and knowlegeable, even though the kids are frightfully ignorant in an academic sense; they don't get alien ideas and words and can't understand what isn't talked to them in the conversation style. But we've been doing socio-drama and stuff like that which is very fine; today my class (jr-high to soph high) played a Congressional committee and learned all about how Congress works, of which they were totally ignorant; apparantly noone who's tried has found someone who knows about the intergration Supreme Court decision. Which supprises me because they are all quite up on current events; they really whopped up the civil rights bill, and all hate Goldwater fantastically; he really has utterly lost every last Negro vote, down here anyway, where the bill means a great deal. Kresge's and such have integrated with no trouble (I just read that funny last sentence. If there were any Negro votes to lose down here, G would have lost them). I have begun to realize what a terrific obstacle the requirement that they read and interpret the Constitution is; understanding the printed word is not a strong point, perhaps because the printed word is usually a lie in their experience. But this is more or less based on inadequate evidence; I haven't asked my clases to read anything yet.

Nancy is finding the teaching, under most appalling conditions, very trying. She feelutterly unprepared and at sea both Negrohistory wise and discipline in big class wise, and hasn't been able to loosen up enough to do daring things like stage extemporaneous plays (not that she's got any room in her attic) or something. So she's tense; but everyone else seems pretty loose. Of course all sorts of antipathies, some of them very strong indeed, have developed, and life is not easy in all sorts of ways. There is simply no privacy nowhere, for instance, and no time off, or anything to do with time off, though we did have a wonderful July 4 picnic Saturday out in the country on a Negro farm (wildly integrated with local blacks). And it's been up in the hundreds or high ninties temp-wise for days. But the cops and other citizens have been quite at peace with us, so far. My feeling is that the Negroes are very ~~restless~~ restless and are set to do big civil rights thins this summer; SNCC is pledged not to demonstrate and not o test the civil rights law, which in

my opinion was a mistake; people will be wanting to demonstrate and have already tested the law (some made it, some got arrested: apparently if the owner is ready it's ok with the city, but if not you get arrested), and they will be looking to us for leadership. If they don't get it from us it will be too bad for us and too bad for them; we are certainly not going to make a major contribution to civil rights by trying to channel all the energy into schools. It's possible that if the city decides that the Negroes are about to get out of hand, they may hit us first in order to take the steam out of the Negroes; and of course if there is overt agitation we are likely to get hit anyway; but otherwise (if there is any otherwise left) we're safe (from the cops). The office in McComb was bombed last night; I suppose those ideas spread, though the FBI has been very alert and aggressive in Hattiesburg looking around in every little incident, and that's good. (The minister's bail is \$2500, quite a sum for a bad check, or rather for overdrawn account/insufficient funds).

Well well I'm running out of energy. How are you and all that? We really have been searching the rather ample mail bin for letters from you (we met someone today just down from Jackson who had run into the four Kzoo lawyers the other day). Bon Soir and much love,

"ancy and Joe

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Hattiesburg

Mississippi (County)