

Sunday night

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7/12/69

Dear Wattses,

Tomorrow I will confront the first students in a class in a church in Hattiesburg. I will tell you why I left Laurel later. I will teach science for 1½ hours in the AM and also a class in history, government, negro history, etc. in AM. Afternoons I will help in the guitar classes at the community center. Oddly there is a shortage of guitar players here. I am living out in the country among the loblollies and water oaks and some grass that looks like big bluestem, with a 40ish man who teacher in the slums of Philadelphia. The house is surrounded by chickens. Roosters are named Barry, PeeWee, and John F. Kennedy. A dog named Jacqueline had to be gotten rid of for eating chickens. It just began to rain as it has done almost daily in green downpour.

This is a high class, wallpapered room with board and batten whitewashed wainscoting, a picture of JC on the wall and a plastic Jesus on the dresser. Plastic roses on the other dresser in a dry jar. No TV. We hear the news eagerly on the radio hoping that J. Edgar will not make any more stupid remarks. The food here, except for the cornbread is homegrown: sweetcorn, okra, squash, beans, plum jam, and chicken. and eggs. Good.

Coming ~~xxxxx~~ from lunch the other day to the COFO office we noticed a hush unusual for that place. A boy in a bloody shirt was reporting via phone to the FBI a brutal beating by iron pipe of two Voter registration workers and a Rabbi a few blocks away. The FBI will "investigate" and no more. Where is the USA? It is a violation of FEDERAL LAW to harrass voter registration workers. Where are the Federal Marshalls to protect these people? How do the negros defending "democracy" in Viet Nam feel about the defense democracy gets in Mississippi? Just thought I'd rattle your cage in case you were getting complacent.

The patriotism and confidence these people in Hattiesburg have in the USA is heartbreaking when you realize that Uncle Sam does not really seem to care. It is as James Baldwin says. The Negroes are the only group who care about freedom and human dignity. I have been listening to too much of the "news". You need to forget about the rest of the country if you are in Miss.

Thunderstorm. Send 15 Master Tree Finders to 507 Mobile Street.

~~XXXXXX~~ Love, Tom

Hurry with tape package - Send some stamped envelope, too