

July 25, 1964

*Jimmy Parker*

Dear Mom, Dad, Grandma, Bob and Bill,

It was so nice talking to yawl on the phone last night. One thing we always have to remember is that the phones are tapped. That is why I did not want to mention names or specifics about incidents which have occurred.

Last Sunday, (July 19) we attended a county-wide mass meeting at Pilgram's Rest, a small rural community about 30 miles from here (the last 10 or so being on dirt roads). The meeting was very well attended. Families from all over the county were there. Women brought picnic baskets and we all feasted (and I do mean Feasted) after the meeting was over.

On the way home, the still and calm that I had described in my previous letters about Holmes county vanished like a stroke of lightning. (In fact the whole week was full of the unusual as compared to the 3 previous weeks down here). The frightening, almost terrifying experience, occurred when hwe had just gotten off the dirt roads and onto the main highway. After we had gone a few miles, a car whizzed past us. As you know, our station wagon is quite old and Joel usually drives it around 50 milesPH, so any car driving at the speed limit would seem to us to be going mighty fast. As the car passed (it was a green 1961 corvair) we saw many arms sticking out of the windows, and we assumed that it was some of our friends returning from the meeting in Hollis Watkin's (he's the staff director in Holmes county) car, which is also a 1961 Corvair, but is grey. It was getting dark at that point so noone noticed then that the car was of a different color. When the green car pulled off the road and stopped, someone in our car suggested that Hollis wanted to speak to us and that we should stop. We did and it proved our undoing. ~~Spinkix~~ Luckily for us, we noticed when they got out of their car and started walking toward us that they were not any of us workers. We took off as fast as we could for home. The half an hour it took us to get there had us all pretty scared though there was some amusement in it all. In that C orvair there were 4-6 young white "toughs" who I'd estimate to be in their early twenties. They were big and looked especially strong (they had removed their shirts and bared their chests). During that hectic 30 minutes they tried several tactics, all designed to

scare us and stop us. They succeeded in scaring us but not in stopping us. Luckily there was only one car chasing us. Two could have sandwiched us between them. While waiting for it to get dark they would ride right behind us (by about 3 feet), pass us with their arms extended out and making fists and calling out words which we could not hear, though no doubt they were obscenities. Whenever they'd pass, they would cut in sharply ahead of us, almost producing a collision every time. When ahead they would slow up to about 20 mph in the hope of getting us to stop. If Joel would try to pass they would either speed up or pull into the center of the road. These tactics continued for about 10-15 miles. When we had just passed Tohula and were about 5 miles from Mileston and safety, they were in front of us. Suddenly they pulled into a safe with I'm sure the intention of recruiting some of their cronies to join in the fun. At that point we pushed our old buggy as fast as she could possibly go without falling apart, in the hope that we would reach safety before they caught up. Unfortunately we did not. They passed us and then slowed down in their customary manner. At that point we were really getting worried because it was already dark and they were still chasing us. Suddenly we spotted the Mileston sign and our hearts leaped for joy. Before they knew it we had cut across the railroad tracks and were safely in Mr. Howard's house. An hour or so later he escorted us home.

We still aren't sure what their intentions were. My guess is that they would have beaten us up when they caught us, and nothing more. What might have infuriated them (as it seems to do to all southern white males) was the fact that one of our white girls was sitting up front next to one of the Negro boys from Mileston.

Enough on that incident. This past week has been long and tiring. The first 3 days kept us busy from 8 A.M. - 9 P.M. On Tuesday we went voter registering in Tohula for the first time. Each of us teachers took along one of our students while we went canvassing. In the three days (about 2 hours per day) that I have been canvassing houses I have visited 9 homes. Of the people with whom I talked, 4 gave definite courthouse