

Report from Hattiesburg
August 4-11, 1964

Those here since last report: William & Kathleen Henderson-Landsdown, Pa., Galen Ogden-Elgin, Illi., Louise Moseley, Marilyn Hotz, Lee Stiles, Mae York Ward-Indianapolis, Ind., Carol Weeks-Wilmington, Del., Bill Moreman-San Bernadino, Calif., Howard McClintock-Detroit, Mich., Don Clark-No. Andover, Mass., Joe Nystren, Ken Ichiyama-St. Paul, Minn., Martin Weinberger-Claremont, Calif., Allan Martin-Tecumseh, Neb., Dayton Olson, Arthur Newberg, Alan Pickering-Lincoln, Neb., James Watson-Springfield Gardens, N.Y., Chad & Brian Combs, William Vastine-New Cumberland, Pa., Stephen Padi-Bland, Missouri, David McAlpin, Jr.-Grosse Pointe, Mich., Leslie Stansbery, Mary Jane Patterson-Columbus, Ohio, Newell Johnson-NY, N.Y., Atlee Beechy-Goshen, Ind., Arthur King-Paulsboro, N.J., Nadine Newcomb-Glsbore, N.J., John Slee, Rosa Page Welch-Chicago, Ill., John Davies-Malibu, California, Fred Roblee-Springfield, Illinois.

The crew at present numbers over 20. The activities engaged in have multiplied. Still we do voter registration and white community contact. This latter has now reached into almost every strata in the community. Some are working in the library, cataloging books. Some are out at Faith Tabernacle Temple, John Cameron's church, helping to paint and add new siding. Others are working at the Palmers' Crossing community center. And finally, a team of four have been sent today into a Mississippi town about 40 miles from here on a brand new mission. Formerly, there have been statements made by local community leaders and clergy in the places where COFO and NCC have been active to the effect that we should have consulted the community leaders before beginning our work. Everybody was happy, we are told. All is well. They would have cooperated with us, had they been given the chance. Those of you who have been involved in the Freedom Movement probably share my skepticism at statements like this. However, we are eager to take a man at his word. So into this new town, a team has been sent IN ADVANCE of any effort by COFO or NCC. They are meeting with clergy, city leaders, etc., in an effort to open channels of communication...to be of help...to seek cooperation...to explain our motives in entering the struggle here. Next week's report will tell how effective this approach is.

A word about the trip to Batesville: We took 5 men with us. They are now involved in a effective voter registration effort in Panola County in cooperation with the COFO team already there. Batesville and several other rural communities are in the midst of an agricultural area as rich as any in the north central states. Cotton and cattle are the two main products. From the end of May until now, about 450 have actually registered to vote of some 600 who took the test (compared with about 400 registered voters out of 2000 since January here in Hattiesburg.) The difference...in Panola County, they are not required to interpret either the state or national constitutions. The spirit is good in Batesville. Many able local Negro citizens have stepped forward. As elsewhere in the state, we have discovered that a sizable group of the white citizens are not hostile, but are even privately in agreement with our aims. But they face the problem of harassment and reprisal if they openly support Civil Rights efforts. The Batesville team, both NCC and COFO, have decentralized their operations. Small teams are living and working in virtually every community in the county. The real problem is reaching the Negro workers on the plantations. Last Friday, we witnessed a new and encouraging event. After lunch, about 30 white citizens lined up to register to vote. They were factory workers given time off for this purpose. The local people admitted that this event was prompted by the large number of Negro registrants. We rejoice in this development. For, as we have said, right aent, ours is not just a Negro revolution. It is a fight on the part of black and white together for equal rights for all...black and white.

Two brief observations in closing. The overall reaction to the martyrdom of the three at Philadelphia is encouraging. Among the Summer Project workers, feelings include deep sorrow, benumbed hatred, deep resolve to continue on, and among a few...concern for the warped minds that could perpetrate such a deed. Native white Mississippians feel shock, shame, and still, the unwillingness to believe that this was done by white Mississippians. Among some, though they speak guardedly, the feeling persists that these three got what they deserved. And others who for different reasons also speak guardedly, share our sorrow.

Music makes the world go 'round. Miss. is folk singers' paradise. Tho' we've said little about it, the music is the backbone of this movement. Praise the Lord for those who can express our joys and sorrows, our humiliations and our triumphs in song!

Bob Beech, Co-director with
John Cameron, Hattiesburg
Ministers' Project