

To: Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee
Atlanta, Georgia

From: Southwest Georgia Voter Registration Project
504 South Madison St.
Submitted by: Jack Chatfield

TERRELL COUNTY, NOVEMBER 7, 1962

Larry Rubin, Prince Turner and myself went into Bronwood yesterday to try to drag—excuse me — to try to coax people to the Wednesday night meetings. We found from talking to the people to whose houses we are returning at this point more often — Silas, Henderson — that there had been no more incidents with white men. It had been told to us before that Calvin Lee, the Omnipresent Presence, and another man had gone into a few homes and talked to the people. I have no evidence against the Ubiquitous Ubiquity; he may have spoken about voter registration. In fact, he probably did.

We went to see Mrs. Collier, but she was not at home. Three beautiful young children stepped out though and I began talking. I talked on and on and suddenly a car drove up with Mrs. Collier and in the back seat and her boss lady and her father in the front seat. She had told us previously that she would be in trouble if we ever came around again; she had also told previously that she worked for Calvin Lee's sister — aargh.

I was stuck for what to do: Mrs. Collier was taking her time getting out of the car and I suspected that some irrevocable dialogue was going on in the car. The children grew restless standing on the porch. I said a few more self-conscious words to them, the text of which was that we were really getting her mother stoned. I said it jokingly, but I said it because I felt that I had better acknowledge it.

On our second day in Bronwood we had been talking to Mrs. Collier in her yard and Calvin Lee drove up with another man. That was the first we had seen of the Ubiquitous Ubiquity. Lee called her over to his truck and we found out afterwards that he had asked who we were and what our business was. She also told us then that she worked for a relative of Calvin Lee. I believe it was his sister, a Miss Lee.

Anyway, there we were. The boss lady and her daddy had driven up. My thinking went like this: if we made a motion to leave, we would probably place Mrs. Collier in as much concrete jeopardy as we had already done; if we stayed, we might touch off the bit of monologue by Mess Lee that would convince Mr. Collier that the job was genuinely at stake. We made a move slowly and leisurely towards our car. Mrs. Collier had not yet gotten out of her car.

I was wrestling with whether or not to drive away immediately or to do the opposite: acknowledge the boss lady's presence ultimately by going up and offering my hand and talking to her about our work. I thought that leaving would give false impression that we were actually afraid of being encountered by whites. I thought for certain that Mrs. Collier's boss lady was during this time being provoked into saying what would drive Mrs. Collier away from us for a long while. Miz boss lady might have been listening to Dick Nixon's farewell address before she had seen us; but now that she had seen us in the flesh I was in great fear of her being goaded into making the fatal remark to Mrs. Collier that she otherwise might never have made. There is something about seeing that different from hearing.

I will bring this man's hired help in the prescription - what attitude does he have toward any white who you are.

We got into the car and Miss Lee pulled off. We waved; or at least I waved; and beckoned the others to do so. Miss Lee only scowled. We pulled up to Mrs. Collier's house and I made a big joke: "I guess we really got you in hot water now" or something to that effect.

But Mrs. Collier only laughed. She said Miss Lee was "a real lady." She said that Mrs. Lee had only said that she "wanted to see" who we were. Thus Mrs. Collier had not retrogressed as far as we were concerned and the ball game was not over. But the dilemma itself still remains.

We returned to Dawson after seeing a particularly reticent lady and her moderately interested young son. We pulled into a colored man's service station near Dawson and asked for gas. He told us his tank was empty. We vomited to ourselves and moved on. His name is Alex Lee.

We pulled into a gas station on the main street of Dawson. We ordered gas from a colored boy and I got out of the car to buy some matches. Every time I have a whim to do so, I feel that I should get out of the car and play the Natural Role. I tried to do so. I asked the white man inside for two boxes of matches. I sensed that he knew me; he did. He brought me the matches and I went outside. He called me back in. He said that he would sell to us this time, but if we ever came back here he would "beat your head in." I said, "I'm sorry you feel that way. I would be willing to talk to you about this."

He said he would talk right now about it and told me to follow him. He started around back and I followed. I was a bit tense. We got around back and the first thing I said was, "I don't want to fight you. I want to talk to you."

He made some vague statement about my fighting him. Then he began talking. He told me that I was down here "fucking the niggers." I said that that was not true. He said, "You callin me a liar?" I told him that I was not calling him a liar but that he was mistaken. I told him that I was not "fucking anybody."

I said that I was not down here to hurt him, but instead to help colored people. I said that colored people do not have their rights. He said they didn't and I said, "I know for a fact they don't."

He said he could get his "boys" and they would come around and "beat your butt". I told him his boys might do that, but that his boys were afraid of him. I said that all colored people were afraid of white people. I asked him how he would like to live his entire life fearing certain retribution if "you made the wrong step" I said the whites had taken the souls of the colored people.

He looked down at my shirt, which was filthy, and called me filthy. He said I was sorer than any colored person in the county. I said that I didn't get paid. I said that I had to live off people. He said, "Yeah, you sure do."

He started around front. I followed. There had been other whites standing at a distance but they had not spoken. When we got around the front the colored boy told me that I needed a quart of oil. I said "you'd better check with him." I gestured to the white man. He said that it was all right. I walked up to him again and he began talking. He called me sorry again, sorer than the "rest of them." I told him, "Jesus Christ sat among prostitutes and sinners. No man is too good to sit with any man." He said, "Don't bring that into it." He said, "I ~~should~~ sure as hell wouldn't sit with you."

We paid and left. I believe the man's name is Woodman. It may have been the same man who gave Ralph trouble.