

December 27, 1964

Dear Friends:

This wasn't a terribly eventful week, and being broken up by Christmas not a hell of a lot got done. On Monday we had a visit from one of the guys working for the Justice Dept. This one seemed considerably better than most - by this I mean he wasn't so damn defensive about the J.D. and didn't attempt to offer ridiculous excuses for the fact that they don't do a whole hell of a lot. When we told him we thought it was a damn good thing that Burke Marshall wasn't in charge of the Dept anymore he just smiled cryptically, but didn't charge to his ex-boss' defense. We asked him if there was any indication that JD policy would change in regard to initiating prosecutions against police officials in the South and he said that it seems very possible that the old policy of having the local US Attorneys decide whether to prosecute or not would be revised and more discretion would lay with Washington. He also mentioned the rumor that Marshall would be moving on as Humphreys assistant on that civil rights committee - what a god damn joke that will be. We also learned that a former employee of the JD who worked in this area is now on the new commission headed by the guy from Florida - I forget the name but it is some kind of mediation and conciliation board set up under the Civ Rts Act. This is the perfect place for him. When he worked for the JD he would go into some of the worst red-neck counties and offer what amounted to a deal where the county would agree to register some insignificant number of Negroes in turn for the promise of the JD not to bother them or bring voter reg suits - a by-product of this kind of ludicrous paternalism was also to kill off any local voter reg movement which might have been developing. But now he's gone off to Mediate and Conciliate, whatever that's supposed to be. Like I said this new guy from the JD isn't bad. He seemed to recognize the fact that the local FBI here are shits and also that he couldn't really expect people here to file reports with his office regarding voter reg irregularities and brutality until the Dept proved to them that they were altering their long policy of almost total inaction. But you can't expect too much out of him - like he told us that everything was fine in Baker County and he knew this because he talked to the Registrar and also the wife of the sw worst E Tom in the county.

An interesting development in Americus. John Perdue, a SNCC worker from Denver, white, and a former student at Harvard married Amanda Bowen, a local Americus girl. It would have been interesting to see the reaction of Denver society (John's father is a big shot at the U of Denver or U of Colorado) as Amanda is very very black, very militant, and would not put up with a whole lot of nonsense. Since they left for Denver to get married it's the biggest news item in SW Georgia. The Albany and Americus paper had stories on it, and it was broadcast on radio and t.v. also. From a reasonably reliable source we heard that the courthouse gang in Sumter County asked Fred Chappell, the Sheriff, what he intended to do about it when they came back to Americus. Fred, who feels the threat of injunction and criminal prosecution hanging over him since the insurrection arrests, said he didn't want to see them. When one of the gang reminded him that they would be violating a state law which the Attorney General has declared is legal and advised that all law enforcement officers of the State should arrest violators of the law, the Sheriff said that the Attorney General can come on down and arrest them if he wanted them arrested. This is only one more example of the "therapy" of harassment litigation directed against the police in these violent counties.

Also during the week I went over to the Court House to learn how to search property titles. The records in Dougherty County are so screwed up that it is impossible to feel certain in certifying any titles here. It is very interesting to thumb through the indexes as you see which families in town own most of the land. Title searches drive CB crazy but he has to do them as part of the total service which he must provide to the Negro community. He said that the only interesting part is when he takes a title back far enough and discovers that the deed originally included not only a

certain acreage of land, but also cattle hogs, and a number of slaves. But even that brush with history doesn't make up for the drag of spending an entire day pouring over musty handwritten incomplete records of property transactions with side excursions into the books of the finance companies.

A fascinating old guy came into the office the other day - a client whose case CB had handled, and now he came in to wrap up loose ends. I don't really remember how we got around to talking about it but we got into a discussion about "buying a hand" - idiomatic expression for seeing a fortune teller. He knew all about buying hands and root medicine though he claimed he didn't believe it himself, but he knew a lot of people for whom it had worked, including the story of a woman whose mother came back from the grave and led her to the place where a lot of money had been buried.

That night Wendy and I drove Don Harris to Cordele. We wanted to hear him speak at a mass meeting other than Albany, and also I had heard a lot about the youth movement there and wanted to see what was happening. It was a bad night as it was during the Christmas holiday and there was also a dance in competition, but there were still about 60 kids between 14 and 20 there. He gave an extremely militant speech. He told us that non-violence isn't much of a creed in Cordele. The first time they demonstrated they drove into a drive-in diner to test the Civ Rts Act. Some Cracker stuck his head into the car and started to curse them out. Someone beamed him with a hammer. Harris is very frustrated here and is planning to leave in the middle of January. He wants to start law school in the fall and wants to prepare during the year - learning to type, improve reading skills, etc, so he is really just hanging around. But even in his hanging around he manages to get more done than any other person around here. He was the one who took the guys down to Unemployment to see about the way they were giving out Manpower Training information to Negroes; when clothes came in he set up a real distribution program to reach the most needy, instead of just letting them sit in SNCC headquarters to be picked over by the SNCC kids and then a few other people; all sorts of publications come into the SNCC office, most of them come in huge bundles and go unread - Harris takes them out into the street and hands them around to guys in the pool rooms and barbershops. It's a weird thing to see a guy leaning up against the outside wall of the pool room and leafing through Monthly Review or the National Guardian. There is also a funny story attributed to Harris which he claims isn't true, and I was there and didn't hear, but it could easily be true and reflective of his present attitude. Harris, Slater, and I went out to the American Legion (Negro) to have a drink a few days ago. The Legion is one of the few social clubs where Negroes gather. A big candy company in Albany which employs a considerable number of Negroes had rented the back room to have a Christmas party for its employees. Same old pattern, substandard wages and Christmas bonuses. And to show what a fine guy he was Mr. White man, the manager, is there drinking and laughing it up with the hired help. The guy at the door knew Slater and let us go in. The white guy comes over to us and started talking to Slater and Harris. I drifted away. The story has it that during the conversation he turned to Harris and said something about what a nice party it was and how the people really seemed to enjoy it and Harris is quoted as telling him, "that don't mean shit" and walking away.

This had been a very lethargic week but on the day before Christmas I pulled out of it. It can get very depressing here, knowing you have a huge pile of work waiting and not knowing where to begin, and all week I have just been able to get out the daily stuff that comes in, but not get into any back work that I should be doing. But on Wednesday an unexplainable burst of energy, and once I started and got a lot done. I finally drew up the incorporation for Slater's business and also one for a nursing home in Ben Hill County.

We spent Christmas eve at Slater's, and were also over there last night. A very interesting thing happens in a relation to women. The first time we came over Slater's wife Marion, and Carol King were sitting in the living room talking. Slater and CB were in the study and I went in to join them

... sort of assumed that eventually
... together, but it never happened. The next time we w
... we came over very late. There were alot of people already there.
the same set up only this time there were 6 women in one room and 6 men
the other. I am not sure exactly what to do. I have been thinking of
mentioning it as kind of a joke, or maybe bringing Wendy in to integrate
next get together. It all reminds me of Salt of the Earth. But I learn
something else that night. They were talking about Dr Anderson's trial.
He was tried for intimidation of jurors, not perjury, and tried before
the others; three jurors held out and he got a mistrial. It seems that
three jurors, all white, have been questioned by the FBI, harrassed at th
businesses, and all had the Internal Revenue Service give them close che
It is very revealing to learn how the Federal Government, protector of Ci
Rights, works out in fact. Here are three crackers who dont believe the
preposterous charges that the Federal Government has cooked up to placate
the Georgia politicians and a vote against conviction - and learn what it
costs to have an independant opinion. Another thing discussed at Slaters
that night was his visit to England and his brother Preston who went to
school there and is now a professor at the University of Ghana. It seems
that Preston is a very close friend of alot of literary people including
Lancey Sigal, and Sigal had spent some time in Albany after meeting Slat
in England - the last was really for Mike Elias who will understand all th

On Christmas Don Harris got picked up for driving without a license.
and the damn thing is that it is a ~~valid~~ valid charge. His old one expir
file here was in Africa and he never got around to renewing it while he w
ck here. This little oversight should ~~cost~~ cost about \$100.

Best wishes for a good year to everyone, and please accept this letter
from the others as acknowledgment for assorted cards we received. Time does
allow any other reply.

1: Mike Elias wrote and asked me who was sending the ~~pm~~ letters and
whether they needed money for stamps. It would seem that he either didnt
the first letter or didnt remember it. In the next letter ~~xxxx~~ you
why dont you re-run that paragraph about money and a ~~list~~ list of the
s of all the letters to date and your address in case someone didnt
one of them (I hope you have extras?)

The care and best wishes for
the holiday.

Dennis

Murray Bob just sent Wendy a check for \$15. Hopefully she
she time to thank him but she is up to her
uld mention its receipt