

AFFIDAVIT No. 1  
Columbus, Mississippi beatings  
June 8, 1964

Came before me James Jones, who resides in Greenwood, Mississippi, who swears the following statement to be true.

My name is James Jones. I am 24 years old. I live in Greenwood, Mississippi and I am a member of the staff of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. We left Greenwood about 6pm, June 8th to drive to Atlanta for a SNCC staff meeting. Charles McLaurin and James Black had come over from Ruleville to pick us up.

At the intersection of Rt. 45 and 82 the Highway Patrol pulled us over and asked us to get out of the car. Then the patrolman, Roy Elder, called the sheriff and when the sheriff arrived he carried us (Willie Peacock, Sam Block, Charles McLaurin and myself) off to the Lowndes County jail. James Black was taken in the car of the highway patrolmen and we were told that he was being taken to Oktibbeha County. We learned later that he had been taken into the woods and beaten.

When we got to the jail I asked to make a phone call and the sheriff told me no, I couldn't. Then all five of us were taken upstairs to a cell. The trusty came and got Black and took him out. After he was returned to the cell the trusty took Sam Block downstairs and out the back door. We could hear him being beaten outside. Then the three of us (Peacock, McLaurin and myself) discussed what should we do. Should we stay in the cell and make them come in to get us or go when the trusty came up and took me out and repeated the process of beating. The highway patrolman Elder had a Mississippi Freedom Summer pamphlet in his hand and asked me what was the meaning of the pamphlet. I said it was part of the program. He then asked me whether I was a Negro or a nigger. I said I was a Negro. He then slammed me on the right side of my face with his left fist. I told him not to hit me in the head again since I had a plate in it. He then proceeded to hit me in my stomach a couple of times. The beating took place at the back of the outside of the jail. He kept calling me a black nigger and said that he would put me on the county farm for twenty years and that if he ever saw me after that, that he would kill me. Elder then asked me if I had been born in Mississippi. I said yes. He then asked me whether I'd ever been in a position where the niggers didn't help me but the whites did. I told him I had been poor all my life.

He (Elder) then sent me upstairs and the trusty brought McLaurin down for his beating. I spent the night in the jail with the rest of the fellows. We were all in pain. At no time was I informed of the charges against me or allowed to make phone calls. Around 9:30 the next morning (June 9) we were all taken to city hall. We were finger printed and photographed. At this time I asked the sheriff what we were charged with and he said reckless driving, and possession of illegal literature. I wasn't even driving the car. At about 10:15 am. the highway patrolman came and took us over to the Justice of the Peace Court where Black was the only one charged and then we were all released. We then drove on to Atlanta.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
James Jones

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

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AFFIDAVIT No. 2  
Columbus, Mississippi beatings  
June 8, 1964

Came before me James Black, who resides in Ruleville, Mississippi, who swears the following statement to be true.

My name is James Black. I am 17 years old. On the afternoon of June 8th, 1964, Charles McLaurin and I started out from Ruleville. In Greenwood, Mississippi we picked up Sam Block, Willie Peacock and



James Jones. Our destination was Atlanta, Georgia where we were to attend a meeting of the SNCC staff.

Between Mayhaw Junction and Starksville we were followed by a '56 Mercury. The car pulled up behind us and cut his lights off, then pulled out like he was going to pass and then didn't pass. We slowed down at that point. At Mayhaw Junction he turned off. At the intersection of Rt. 45 and 82 the highway patrol pulled up behind us and pulled us off the road. Roy Elder, the highway patrolman, said to us: "you god-damn niggers want to change our way of life." He then told me (I was driving at the time) to get out of the car. Then he told the others to get out on the other side of the car and stand by our car. Then he searched the car. He then went to call the sheriff and told the sheriff to pick us up cause we were "god-damn niggers trying to change our way of life." Then we were searched one by one. By this time the sheriff had arrived. (The sheriff of Lowndes County).

The sheriff handcuffed all of the others but not me. Then he told me to pick up all the literature in a box and put it in the back of his car. (The literature was Mrs. Hamer campaign literature, and Summer Project brochures). After I put the literature in the back of his car he told me to get in the back of his car (a '63 white Ford). He told me he was going to take me to the courthouse but before he took me to the courthouse he took me out into the country. The highway patrolman, Roy Elder, then drove me about a mile away from where the car had been stopped and pulled up in front of a large gray two story house. He told me to get out of the car; I refused to get out. So he pulled me out. He started hitting me with his fists and after about twenty blows he got his blackjack out and hit me one time with it and knocked me down. Then he told me to get back in the car. While he was beating me he asked me if any white folks had ever treated me bad; I told him yes and he hit me again. He asked me again had any white folks in Mississippi treated me bad and I told him no. At that point he helped me back into the car. Then he took me to the county jail (Lowndes) where I was questioned by the sheriff. The sheriff asked for my driver's license and to take everything out of my pockets. Then he told me to step back and told the others to do the same, i.e. to take stuff out of their pockets and step back. Then we were taken into a cell; there was only one cell in the jail so we were all together; a girl and three other boys besides us were in the cell. In about 5 minutes I was called again to be questioned and was taken to the sheriff's office. I had a friends ID card in my pocket and he asked me if my friend was a Negro or a nigger. I told him a Negro. The same highway patrolman was there and took out his blackjack and again asked if my friend was a Negro or a nigger. He started to hit me with the blackjack and I told him my friend was a nigger. Then I was taken back to the jail. Five minutes later the jailer came to take one of the other guys out. He took Sam Block to the sheriff's office, asked him a few question and beat him up. Then the jailer brought Sam back and took Charles McLaurin out. In each case they were beaten right in the sheriff's office.

We were kept in jail overnight and the next morning about 10:00 am we were taken down to the city police department and fingerprinted and photographed and interviewed again. we were asked names, addresses and phone numbers and asked where did we work. I am a day laborer and told him so. Then we were taken to the court and the presiding judge was R.V. Whittaker. I was charged with reckless driving. we were going about 35 miles an hour when the incident occurred. He said I was in the wrong lane which is untrue. I was also charged with running two stop signs which is also false. After this the judge told me to sit down and that my trial, the State of Mississippi vs. James Black, would begin. I was asked questions then such as: "Were you encouraged to drive the car?" I told him no. I told him I was a day laborer. "Are you on the NACCP staff?" I told him no. "Do you belong to any organization?" I told him no. Then he told me to sit down again and called in the others boys one by one. Then they were asked the same questions: Were they on the SNCC payroll. They answered yes. Then we were all told to go out while they had a conference in the court room. About five minutes later I was called back alone. Then I was told that he was going to let me off light providing I would leave town and never return. He charged me \$5 for running each stop sign and \$2 for driver education and charged the other four, \$4 each for the night they spent in jail.



The reason he didn't charge me the \$4 fee was because I had been officially arrested. We were then taken back to the jail and given our personal belongings, after which we paid the fine and a city policeman drove us to the filling station where the car was. We were charged \$2.08 for storage. Then we continued our trip to Atlanta.

Roy Elder, the highway patrolman, has a badge number 358 and his license tag number was MHP 97. We were followed between Mayhew Junction and Starkville between 10 and 10:30 pm and were stopped by the highway patrolman at about 10:30 pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
James Black

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

Notary Public

AFFIDAVIT No. 3

Columbus, Mississippi beatings

June 8, 1964

Came before me Charles McLaurin, who resides in Ruleville, Mississippi, who swears the following statement to be true.

My name is Charles McLaurin. I am 22 years old. We, James Black, James Jones, Willie Peacock, Samuel Block, and myself, were driving along Highway 82 in a 1963 Plymouth Valiant about two miles east of Columbus, Mississippi when a 1956 Mercury drove up behind us and put his head lights out. We pulled away because we thought someone was going to shoot into the the car but the 1956 Mercury sped up and kept right behind us. We then came to a four way intersection and the Mercury appeared to turn off going south. After we entered the city limits of Columbus, Mississippi we were stopped by a Mississippi Highway patrolman who came up behind us and stopped us. Patrolman Roy Elder ordered James Black to get out of the car, saying, "You god damn niggers trying to change our way of life," and ordered him to go behind the car and ordered the rest of us in the car to get out also. Patrolman Elder then searched the car and took the keys out of the car and began to search the trunk. He removed a whole box of SNCC literature, campaign posters for Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and put them in the trunk of his car. Another car with two Mississippi Highway Patrolmen and the sheriff of Lowndes County came up to the car. Patrolman Elder asked us why we had tried to force the Mercury off the road. We told him we did not try to force him off the road but that he had pulled up behind us. We asked us to stand up against the car with our hands down and searched us. The sheriff handcuffed all of us except James Black and took the four of us to County Jail and Elder took James Black in his car. There was another man in Elder's car in plain clothes. We drove away leaving Black with Elder on the highway.

About fifteen or twenty minutes after we got to jail Elder arrived with Black. Black's face was bloody and swollen. Black told us that Elder had beaten him with a black jack. Elder said, "This boy can't stand up, he fell on the ground." We heard the sheriff say to a caller on the phone, (who we think was a woman since the sheriff addressed her as ma'am), "you can't come down tonight, we have important business." We heard the jailer say, "The river is just right." We were taken upstairs to a jail cell. At about 10:30 PM a man with a key came up and said, "One of you guys come out here, we want to interview you." Sam Block was the first one to go out. From a window we could hear Sam Block groan from the licks he was receiving and then they brought him back and said they wanted one more. Sam said he had been beaten and fell on the floor of the cell. They then took each of us out one at a time and was beaten by Patrolman Elder. There was another Patrolman with Elder, Patrolman Jolly, who also beat me. I was told by Elder that after I was released from the county farm after twenty years that if he saw me again in Columbus or Lowndes County he would kill me. He said he could "smash me like a bug and it wouldn't hurt" him. I was taken back upstairs. The next morning about nine AM we were taken to the detective department.



We were fingerprinted and we were taken to the Justice of the Peace R. V. Whitaker. We had a hearing and we found out then that we had been charged with possession of illegal literature but these charges were dropped and James Black was charged with reckless driving and running a stop sign. He was fined \$23.00 and then we were released after paying the fine. I was never told that I was under arrest nor was I told what the charges against me were. We were not permitted to make a phone call.

My name is Charles McLaurin and I live at 909 Ridge St., Ruleville, Mississippi. I am 23 years of age and I am a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I have been working for SNCC since August, 1963.

The information given above is true to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Charles McLaurin

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_  
Walter Tillow

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

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AFFIDAVIT No. 4  
Columbus, Mississippi beatings  
June 8, 1964

Came before me Willie Peacock, who resides in Greenwood, Mississippi, who swears the following statement to be true.

My name is Willie Peacock. Five of us left Greenwood, Mississippi en route to Atlanta, Georgia for a SNCC staff meeting. We left Greenwood about 6:00 PM, arrived at Starkville, Mississippi at approximately 7:30 PM, in other words we stopped there for awhile. We left at approximately 8:30 PM. Between Starkville and Mayhew Junction we passed by a '56 Mercury which was driven by a white male, he was the only one in the car. I was told this by James Jones. After passing the car he began blowing his horn. The guy in the car turned his lights on real bright and it shined right in the window, and it affected the driver. A couple of times he cut his lights out completely and this is when we became afraid, because we thought that he was going to shoot. We slowed down our car several times thinking that he would pass, but he would not pass. Finally we arrived at Mayhew Junction which has a four way stop sign. After stopping at the stop sign, we proceeded across the highway. At this point the Mercury stopped following us and turned off at a service station. We were stopped by the Highway Patrol after we got to Columbus, Mississippi, just inside the city.

Then we assumed, the five of us, that this guy had called the Highway Patrolman. We were right. The name of the Highway Patrolman was Roy Elder, badge number 338, car licence MHP 97.

He came up to the car and said what do you niggers mean trying to run a '56 Mercury off the highway. So James Jones answered him by saying, "We haven't tried to run anyone off the highway." At this point he told all of us to get out of the car, using the word nigger again of course. Then he exclaims, "Are you the niggers who are going to come down here and change our way of life!" He began to search us at the end of our car which was a white '63 Valiant, one at a time. By the time he had finished searching all of us the Sheriff of Lowndes County had arrived on the scene. At this point they began to handcuff us, four of us. Sam Block and I, Willie Peacock, were handcuffed together; and James Jones and Charles McLaurin. The four of us were placed into the sheriff's car. Elder told the sheriff to take us on and that he would be ok later with the driver of the car, his name is James Black. He said that he had to take him to the justice of the peace. But when Black arrived at the jail where we were, the Sheriff's office, it was easily observable that he had been beaten. The



Sheriff had finished taking our names and our addresses. They took the original four of us up to the cell and left Black behind. They brought him up later, then came back for him again. They were asking him about a registration card which belonged to someone else. After they brought him back, it was about 9:15 PM. At about 9:30 PM a white trusty named Gray, that's all we know, said all you fellows that just came in come to the front, they want to interview you. So we came to the front, and the first person that they took up to the interview was Samuel Block. At the sound that left out we heard that someone was being beaten. Sam was brought back up, we knew that he had been beaten. So the three of us decided that we would not cooperate with this interview, and that we would not leave the cell. Gray, the trusty, saw that we, Willie Peacock, James Jones and Charles McLaurin, were slow coming out, said that we might as well come out because they will come in and drag you out and interview you anyway. I told the boys that I would volunteer to go and take it, the beating that is. I got downstairs, the jailer escorted me outside the door. When I got out the door I saw two Mississippi State Highway Patrolmen. The youngest one about age 26, about 6'2", light blue eyes (almost gray) and he was blond, his hair was cut short, flat topped; I found out later that his name was Roy Elder. He hit me twice with his fist. He asked me what my name was and I told him. He asked me who was I, and I told him. He said, "Nigger, you just want to die young." I said "No, I want to live." He said, "Nigger, I'd just as soon shoot you right now as to look at you." He said, "Do you believe it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Nigger, I'm gonna erase that data of doubt out of your mind." He said, "When and if you get off the County Farm, keep straight going and don't come back." He said, "because if you come back here again, I'm going to roll you out as thin as cigarette paper, and there won't be anything left for the ambulance to haul, they can just scoop you up in a shovel." Then he asked me did I believe that. I told him that I believed it. He showed me the brochure of the Summer Project, and asked me did I know anything about it and I told him that I had read it. After all this was over, I was carried back upstairs. Then it became someone else's turn. The next morning, this is June 9, 1964, at approximately 9:30 AM, we were taken over to the City Jail where we were processed by the identification bureau. We were photographed and fingerprinted and personal data was taken on all of us. All this was done before we were told what we were charged with or whether we were under arrest, and before we were allowed to a telephone. A little while before we left the identification bureau, James Jones asked what we were charged with. And he, the sheriff, told us that we were charged with reckless driving and possession of illegal literature. We finished that process about 11:30 AM, and we were transferred by Highway Patrolmen to the justice of the peace for District Five for Lowndes County. His name is R. V. Whittaker. Only one of us had to stand trial, which is James Black. He was tried for reckless driving, for running a stop sign. They called the four of us in one at a time and we learned that they were using us for material witnesses and that we were not on trial. When I walked into the courtroom I was asked several questions before I had a chance to ask for a continuance of the case, until such time as I had received legal counsel. When I finally made this request the judge told me that I was not on trial, only that I was a material witness. Then I was dismissed from the courtroom. They took the four of us, Willie Peacock, James Jones, Charles McLaurin and Samuel Block, in one at a time and wouldn't let us talk to each other until the trial was over. The judge sent, I assume, the prosecuting trial attorney out on the lawn to talk to us. And he told us that the judge was willing to go along with almost anything we were to suggest. And that he was dropping the charges against all four of us, charges being possession of illegal literature. And he told us that he was trying Black on reckless driving and running a stop sign. This time he informed us that he understood we were working for our cause, he also indicated that the laws were unconstitutional, but that they were on the book and that he has to uphold what is on the book. He asked then at this point how much money did we have. We told him a few dollars. He fined Black \$28.00 all told for both counts. We were brought back to the City of Columbus and released at the County Jail.

I feel that we were illegally retained, on the grounds that we were never placed under arrest. And the person swearing out the



affidavit never appeared in the Justice of the Peace Court. The Court said that he was from the adjacent county, Oktibbeha, and the charge for possession of illegal literature is unconstitutional on its face and a direct violation of my First Amendment rights.

My name is Willie Peacock and I live in Greenwood, Mississippi. I am 25 years of age and I am a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

The information given above is true to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Willie Peacock

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

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AFFIDAVIT No. 5  
Columbus, Mississippi beatings  
June 8, 1964

Came before me Samuel Block, who resides in Greenwood, Mississippi, who swears the following statement to be true.

My name is Samuel Block. I am 24 years old. I reside at 708 Avenue N, Greenwood, Mississippi. I am a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, working in Greenwood on voter registration activities.

We left Greenwood about 6 PM. Monday, June 8, 1964, en route to Atlanta, Georgia. We arrived in Starkville, Mississippi, about 80 miles from Greenwood. We made a couple of stops in Starkville to visit friends. We left about 9 PM. After getting 20 miles from Starkville, a car pulled up from the side of the highway, driven by a white man, a '56 Mercury, black and white. We passed the car, he caught up behind us. He blew his horn. He came up very close to the back of our car. He cut off his lights. We thought he would shoot into our car, because our car was very well known in Oktibbeha and Lowndes Counties in voter registration work. The car trailed us for 5 miles, he kept coming up to us and falling back and turning his lights on and off. When we came to Mayhew Junction, he turned left.

We were pulled over by Mississippi State Highway Patrolman Roy Elder, badge number 358. The car had license tag MHP 97. He ordered the driver, James Black, 17, of Ruleville, Mississippi, to get out of the car. He got out and the highway patrolman asked him, why did he try to force that man in the black and white Mercury off the highway? We all replied that we hadn't tried to force anyone off the highway. He said, "You all are the niggers that are trying to change our way of life in the State of Mississippi." He then ordered all of us to get out of the car on the right side. There was an unidentified white man in the car with the highway patrolman, dressed in a black suit. Elder then opened the trunk of our car, and saw literature for Mrs. Hamer, a congressional candidate, and brochures on the Mississippi Summer Project and Freedom Schools. He took the literature out, and put it in the back of his car.

He called the sheriff, who came and got it out of his car with a long stick in his hand,; Elder told the Sheriff, "these are the niggers who are trying to change our way of life."

Elder said, "that nigger over there tried to run a man off the highway." Sheriff said, "which one, that little short nigger over there?" Pointing at me. Elder said, "no, that big fuzzy-lipped nigger over there," pointing at James Black.



Elder ordered the sheriff to carry Charles McLaurin, James Jones, Willie Peacock, and me back to the county jail. They handcuffed all of us, so tight that they almost cut our wrists. The sheriff put all four of us in the back of the car and carried us back to the county courthouse, which is also the county jail. He took our names and checked our belongings and then ordered the trusty and the jailer to carry us upstairs and lock us up. Before we went upstairs, there was a phone call, which the jailer answered and he gave it to the sheriff. It was a lady asking him permission to come and visit the jail that night. He told her, "No, because we have some very important business tonight, and we don't have time, but you can come first thing in the morning."

He then told the jailer, "these are the niggers that are trying to change our way of life; they are working for the NAACP and CORE." The jailer replied, "The river is just right, let's carry them out and rifle them right now."

Then James Black walked in with Elder. His nose was bleeding very badly, and his eyes were swollen very badly and he had dirt in the right side of his hair. Elder said, "this nigger here, he can't even stand on his own two feet. He fell up side of the car."

They then carried us upstairs and put us all in the same cell. They didn't tell us we were under arrest. About five minutes later, about 10:00 PM a white trusty along with a Negro trusty named Moore came to get James Black. They questioned him about a draft registration card that he had in his pocket that didn't belong to him. (Black had a billfold belonging to someone who had left it at his house.) He stayed down about five minutes, and then they brought him back.

The white trusty returned about 10 minutes later, told all of us to line up at the door of the cell. He said, "they want to interview all of you downstairs." He pointed to me and said, "we want to take you first."

They carried me downstairs first and outside in back of the jail. Inside were the Negro trusty, the white trusty and the jailer. I walked outside with Roy Elder, and he began questioning me about trying to change their way of life. I told him we weren't trying to do that. He then hit me on my left cheek with his fist. I staggered and fell back to the window, and he grabbed me and hit me in the groin with his fist very hard. I fell down and he kicked me hard in the shin. I got up and he said, "tell me the truth, nigger, tell me the damn truth." "Where are you going?" I told him we were headed to Atlanta for a staff meeting. Then another highway patrolman wearing brown horn-rimmed glasses walked up and Elder asked why did you have all of that god-damn literature in the car? I told him I didn't put the literature in the car. The other cop said, "It's your car, isn't it? You mean to tell me you don't know what's in your car?" Elder said, no that isn't his car. Elder said, "come on and tell me the damn truth, nigger, just why are you all here, had any white persons mistreated you in the state of Mississippi?" I answered "yes, you are mistreating me now." He then hit me again with his fist on the left cheek and knocked me back. He shouted, "stand up, stand up!" "What are you, a Negro or a nigger?" I said a Negro. He said what? And drew back his fist again, he then asked me the same question again. To keep him from hitting me again, I told him I was a nigger. He said, all right, go on back in. I could just barely make it back upstairs to the cell. After I got back into the cell, I fell to the concrete floor and blacked out and laid there for about 20 minutes.

The same procedure was gone through for all the others except Black. We requested to make a telephone call several times and were refused. We spent the night in the cell. In the morning, we again requested to make a call about 9:30 and were again refused. About 10:00 AM, the jailer and the trusty told us to come down to be fingerprinted and photographed, which we did.

The sheriff said we were charged with transporting illegal litera-



ture. Black was also charged with transporting illegal literature and running a stop sign. Afterwards, Elder and another highway patrolman, different from last night, came and carried us over to the justice of the peace office. We went in the front and out the back of the office and were put in the back of three highway cars. We were carried about 8 miles west on route 82, to Judge R. V. Whittaker's office. We stood in there for about 20 minutes. The judge, some white citizens and lawyers went into the back of the judge's office, along with about 5 or 6 highway patrolmen. They talked for about 20 minutes. Then they carried us outside, handcuffed, except James Black. They put us under a tree and were guarded by a highway patrolman. They kept Black inside. After about 10 minutes, they called us individually into the office. I was called third. The judge questioned me, along with Roy Elder. He questioned me about, (general personal information), then James Black. How long had I known him? I said yesterday was my first time meeting him. Judge Whittaker said, "you can sit there and act a damn mother-fucking fool if you want to, but we are trying to help this 17-year-old boy, whom we have two charges on." He then questioned me about SNCC, the summer project and about my leaders. This lasted about 15 minutes. I had been sworn in. I again asked for legal counsel. He said, "we are not trying you, we are trying this boy here, and you are a witness to him." He said when we get ready to try you, we will allow you to get legal counsel. Then he told me to go back outside. This continued until everybody had been questioned.

Then a man who I think was the county prosecuting attorney came out and told us, "boys, I don't have anything against you all for working for your cause, but the laws are on the book and they must be obeyed. And when you come into my town, I want you to obey all laws. I am going to drop the charges on you all and see if I can get the judge to fine him, (Black), and if he didn't appeal to drop the other charges in Oktibbeha County. But if he does appeal, the other charges will remain." He talked to the judge. We were called back to the judge's office, and the judge told all the people in the room, "take a good look at these niggers, because it is more than sure that you will be seeing a lot of them this summer working on the Mississippi Summer Project. I don't want to catch none of you around here any more. If we see you again, we are going to get you, because we don't want you around. If we don't get you the colored people here will get you because they don't want you around either." We were then carried back to the county jail. We paid \$28.00 fine, plus \$2.08 for car storage fee and we were released.

We then drove to Atlanta. We went to Dr. James D. Palmer in Atlanta and were examined. He said I had a very badly bruised muscle in my cheek and in my back and groin, and he told me to get plenty of rest and gave me a prescription for pain and told me to soak in a hot tub. He said tomorrow I would be sorer.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Samuel Theodore Block

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

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