Interview
Eugene Turitz
White, Male
MFDP volunteer

0327-1 (continued on 0328)
Sides 1 & 2
Batesville, Miss.

A: I don't know how many other people were as fortunate as we were, but this guy Bob Stinson, I guess he works in the second district, no, fifth district, in Hattiesburg, you know, felt that... I didn't know him, I had met him a while before, and he was very friendly, and he said, "Come on with me, we'll just go down to Hattiesburg." So we said, "Fine," we hopped in the car with a couple of other people, well, we went down to Hattiesburg. Well, Hattiesburg is a real fouled up place, but we knew Johnnie May Walker from California, she had been down there, I had become quite friendly with her. We stayed with her. But Hattiesburg was really messed up. There were five groups working in Hattiesburg, and a lot of conflicts between them, and Johnnie May's sort of an outcast because she's much too radical for everybody else. We talked, but it was really dull sitting around for three days not doing anything, so finally we got the call, all the volunteers, everybody back to Jackson. After spending three days doing nothing, we were getting a little annoyed because of the conflicts going on, the petty things that crop up between people. So we get in the car, which was supposed to pick us up at eight-thirty, and finally does at about seven o'clock at night, supposed to pick us up at eight-thirty in the morning, and we go up to Jackson again, where we find things once again in terrible confusion. People are supposed to start going to jail again the next day, and they get us a place to stay, there's a meeting that night where Charles Evers spoke. Did Charles Evers speak? No, he spoke at the first Tuesday night meeting before we went to... That was the funniest thing, to see Charles Evers leading our march, on the Tuesday when we went to jail. Supposedly he had been shoved in line, because he didn't believe in that, and they came up to him and they said, the cops, "Charles, do you have a permit to march?" He said no, and off he went to jail. He wouldn't stand and talk with anybody. When we were standing in the compound to be frisked, he stood alone. He always kept his tie on, and he wouldn't come and talk with us. Except some people engaged him in conversation, and he said, "You know, I don't think we should have gotten arrested, we should have done tactical marches, and every time they stopped us, turn around and come in another way." Which was senseless because they started arresting people right at the door of the church. But anyway, Jackson was confusion, and we just weren't going to go back to jail. We saw people going back the next morning, but we just didn't want to. Nancy had been in jail with Kathy Amatnick, who used to work up here, and we had met Mr. Miles in Waveland the first day we were in the state, because we knew George Slat. So, Kathy had told Nancy, "Oh, Batesville is so wonderful, come up and come to Batesville," And I sort of wanted

to go back to Belzoni.

A(Nancy Turitz): Nancy sort of wanted to go back to Belzoni, too.

A: But not as much.

A(N.T.): Yes, I did. I was just scared.

A: Yeah. Well, it was only a question...

A(N.T.): You're scared, too.

A: Scared for you. The problem with Belzoni...

A(N.T.): He was more scared than I was.

A: Well, I had to be scared for two people. You're not smart enough to be scared really. We were sitting at Reagan's with all these crackers riding around in this car, and she's not scared. I mean, I can't understand that. But anyway. I mean, the problems with Belzoni were so great and we saw the staff was just unable to function really, I mean, SNCC was unwilling to do anything with these people. SNCC doesn't look at them as people.

Q: SNCC was not doing it any more than FDP.

A: Well, FDP didn't really exist in Belzoni, there were about ten people in the FDP, but the staff people in Belzoni were SNCC people. People who'd come down, well, Steve Bass, who was the head of the project, was down on the Freedom Rides and has been in the state ever since, but he's a Mississippian. Alice Jackson is from Greenwood, or Greenville, I forget which one. I mean these are people...But Steve Bass is so sick. I mean, SNCC doesn't pay any attention, they just say, "That staff's not functioning," but they don't think of how sick a guy like Steve Bass is, and what to do for him. I mean,they have no way, I mean, like Willie Peacock, guys like that, who are really sick, or when Sam Block got really bad. SNCC doesn't conceive of how to work with these people. How do you get them out of the state? How do you get them someplace where they can begin to function?

Q: What do you mean by "sick"?

A: Mentally sick and physically sick.

Q: Tired?

A: Tired, yes. I don't...It's a hard word to use, tired. I mean, these guys, they no longer can function. They have been hit in the head so many times, thye've been thrown in

jail so many times. I mean, you get to a point where you start becoming very isolated. You don't... This is what Moses worries about. He talks about this all the time, why he's making a connection with the peace movement now, because he feels that the native Mississippians, he's not talking about the Northern Negroes, but the native Mississippi Negroes, who are working in the movement, are getting more and more isolated from the rest of the country. That the movement has become their home. But what's happening to the movement? You know, like when red-baiting comes. Who's going to help out? Is there going to be Northern help for these Southern people? What can these Southern people do, these Southern Mississippians, who can no longer live in their communities as satisfied members of the community, but who are just tied up in the movement, and can't see any place to go and can't see any way out? I mean, look, Moses goes travelling around, Stokely goes travelling around, you know, guys like this, they travel all over the place. The volunteers come in and go out. But what about these guys whose home is Mississippi? They can't go out any place. They've got no people to go to, they have no money to get there. I mean, that's what I mean, and it's really, I think it's a real mental sickness, where you see no way to go. And the movement does become a dead-end for people at certain points, when you're not able to function. So they turn to drinking. And that's what I mean by sick, you see. And the movement, like SNCC, is too concerned with its functioning, that it doesn't think of those people who aren't functioning. I mean, the reason that they're not functioning is because they don't want to function, they can't, they've given so much and so intensely. I mean, these people have done... they've given so much in an intense way, that they've given themselves out. They no longer, you know, they're shells, almost, of people, some of them. That's what Steve Bass is. You see this guy walking around, his face has no flesh on it, practically, it's all bones, you know, this skinny guy. He hardly ever smiles, you know, and he's just like a shadow walking around. I don't know if he's twenty-one, twenty-three. The guy is wasted. And he could be, he could get built up again, if somehow somebody would get him someplace where he could just...He'd been in the hospital for three months in Connecticut last year, and he's back, he can't stay away. That's another thing about these guys, not only that they have no place to go, but they can't go. They always turn around and they're back.

Q: Does the MFDP operate the same way with these people?

A: Well, you see, I don't think the MFDP has gotten to those kind of people yet. See, that's an interesting thing. I think there's a very fundamental difference between FDP, one thing, and SNCC or COFO people, that's that the FDP

people have religion. I'm very serious about that. You talk to Mrs. Hamer, you talk to a lot of these people, they quote the Bible, they have their God behind them. Most of the SNCC staff and COFO staff don't have any religion. I really feel that the, that a lot of the FDP people get a lot of strength from a belief in God. I really feel this strongly. I've seen this around so much. I mean, I didn't realize that the Negro staff wouldn't have religion. I can understand white volunteers not having it. I mean, Junior Robinson was just amazed. He went up to a residential freedom school in Chicago, you know, he was just, he came back and he was talking about how none of those people believed in God. It turned out that none of the people who were here last summer believed in God, and he asked all of us, and none of us believed in God. But I didn't realize that there were Negroes... But they don't, you see, and that's a big hang-up.

Q: What about Guyat(?)?

A: I don't know. Guyat I don't know. Guyat gets his strength elsewhere. I don't know. I really couldn't say. I just know Mrs. Hamer because I spoke with her. She was in California. She's very religious, she quotes from the Bible all the time. She's a very religious woman. And a lot of the people are, in their own way they are. You know, they have their belief in a verysolid divine being which is behind them. The SNCC people and the COFO people, they don't have this. I think that's a big difference, I think this puts them in a different... you know, it makes certain things harder for the COFO people.

Q: Are there any other big differences?

A: Yeah. Age. I don't mean this to be funny. They think a lot differently. I mean, like this whole thing because of the relationship of the volunteers to the staff. See, the FDP looked upon volunteers...I mean, I think...The reasons were many. FDP, I really thought, thought of volunteers as really helping out. I mean, that was another thing which came up. All of us, I mean, this group of volunteers that came down was much better trained beforehand, and I don't mean through orientation, but just through all that had gone on with last year's group of volunteers. I've heard this from a lot of staff people. I mean, they came down with the ideals of the movement and the way you function in it and your attitudes towards things much more solidly within them than last year's people. But the thing that was most in everybody's mind is what happens all the time, that Northerners come down and they start making all the decisions and then when they leave, you know, there's chaos, because nobody knows what to do. And you know, just because you can type faster, you don't type because when you leave there'll be nobody to type, you'll have discouraged that persom who

was pecking along at ten words a minute. And you don't make suggestions because if you make, people start...you know all this, you know the whole line. People came down andreally were asking the FDP, "What do you want us to do?" The FDP doesn't know. They just don't know. And this happens for a day, it happens for a week, and you know, it happens for two weeks, and finally you start wondering, well, something's got to start, you know? And so you say, "Well, should I make a suggestion or shouldn't I?" And all this, you see. And that's the thing, I mean, the FDP really worked with volunteers to do something, to save them, to help them in certain ways. SNCC didn't want this. SNCC thinks the people here should start doing all these things, which I think is right. SNCC also, well, you see, now it's hard to tell, you see, I don't know where SNCC is and the FDP is right now. I don't know the relationship. I don't know, see, I don't know who's SNCC and who's FDP. When they have a roving team made up of Ivanhoe Donaldson, Bob Smith, Doug Smith, Jesse Harris, Charles Glenn, couple of other people, who are all SNCC people, but they are working for the FDP, I mean, FDP or SNCC, or is SNCC running the FDP? The question, see...I don't know. Little things like this that all mount up, you see, I don't know where they separate, you see. The people who are with the FDP, are they SNCC or FDP. I can't answer certain questions like that, you know. What's the difference, I'm not sure, really.

Q: Can you break it down between state and local...

A: Well...well, I'm very, well, I can't talk about it breaking it down, I can't see, I mean, I see certain things happening which I don't like with the FDP set-up. I mean, like Guyat, and I don't know who's making them...(inaudible background remarks) Well, basically, to discuss what I feel badly about, that the decision-making is being done at the top and isn't coming up from the bottom, and when I became disgusted with this was when I was in jail and saw people not knowing why they were there, which I thought was the FDP's responsibility to tell people about, and not knowing how to run the demonstration, and not...Just making the decision about the demonstration, which supposedly was made a long time ago. Who's making the decisions, I'll say Guyat, but I don't know who's around there with Guyat. Guyat and Mrs. Devine and probably Mrs. Palmer, but Guyat more than anybody else, and whoever advises him. See, I don't know who does. I think Guyat makes a lot of his own decisions. I mean, you could start back with the decision on the challenge, which was made in Washington, by lawyers in Washington.

Q: What about it?

A: Well, I don't know exactly how it happened, this was a long time ago. We were in California. An interesting...

We had a SNCC conference in California last November, and at that conference it was (inaudible) where a lawyer who's very knowledgeable in constitutional law, Ann Ginger, gave a talk about how you could challenge the representation of Mississippi through section two of the Fourteenth Amendment, which nobody ever thinks about, which is that the states shall have their representation reduced, if they disenfranchise voters. And we all were very excited about this and we decided we'll contact SNCC and FDP and have them start working on this. But it happened that they were meeting in Washington about the same time, I think, and decided to challenge the representation under the statuatory challenge, which, I forget what it is, I used to know, under legal code. And then the challenge started on the fourth of January.

Q: Well, what about these conferences that Guyot points to, and says that this allows the people to...

A: Well, there was one last summer, I think, and then there are district conferences...

Q: I'm thinking of the district conferences.

A: I don't know too much about the district conferences, I really don't. I can't really say anything about them.

Q: Well, do any of the conferences...

A: You were at the second district conference, you know, last weekend, and there were five counties there, but there have been bigger ones, I know that.

Q: But do they exercise any influence on the decisions?

A: I don't really know. You see, I was upset by two things. I mean, I have only a relationship with one meeting where certain things were talked about. That was at the meeting that took place in Tugaloo a couple of weeks ago, and what I've heard about some executive meetings.

Q: What happened in Tugaloo?

A: Well, first of all, nobody really communicated to the counties who the meeting was for. First it was to be an FDP meeting, we thought, then a staff meeting, or a volunteers meeting. But we decided, since it was so unclear, we sent down mostly FDP people. Mr. Miles, Reverend Middleton amd Virgie Robinson. And Bill Saunders and myself went down. So we decided to split it, you know. But a lot of staff people came in from some places, and FDP people came in from other places. You see, Guyot wouldn't answer certain questions. Nobody would. Which I think were very valid

questions to answer. The questions basically...See, Guyot gets up and says, basically...You know, if you object to political machines...See, he always talks in terms of the FDP should be a political machine. Now, if you're going to be an idealist and object to politics, you know, we just can't talk about it, because we believe the FDP should be a political machine. Now, I think this is pretty much in line with what a lot of local people feel, I msut say, in judging from the meeting that took place Monday night. But you see, I think they're getting caught up in certain hang-ups, now like Guyot says the way the county should be run is that there should be executive committees in each county with three members from each beat, so there're five beats in very county, fifteen people on each executive committee. And these people should make a lot of the decisions, and have mass meetings for everybody every once in a while, once a month, once every six weeks, I don't know. Let's talk about that. So I got up and I said that it seems to me when you set up things like executive committees, you start losing people. When an executive committee starts making decisions, people stop coming around. And he says that you can have inclusive or exclusive executive committees, you know. Sure, you can, but it turns out, it seems to me, most of the time you have exclusive executive committees. So, the other important question came up at Tugaloo, that wasn't answered, as far as I was concerned. It was something which I brought up, and then which Bob Wyle from Shaw brought up, because nobody answered me, and then he made a long talk on it, and nobody answered him, really. And that was, why it was necessary to have a separate freedom labor union that wasn't in the FDP. See, we had spoken about it in jail, the problems of some cities, like Hattiesburg, where it was necessary to organize a maids' union as a maids' union, because the FDP wasn't working in this way, wasn't interested in organizing through setting up things like unions. And most people I had spoken to thought the FDP should be a larger umbrella under which a lot of other things could plug in. See, in Panola County the reason that there's a split between the labor union and the FDP is basically that the independent fathers who make up the FDP, who've been in the voters' league a long time, aren't interested in plantation people. Now, this is pretty true, from what I gather, in other parts of the state. I mean, in Shaw the labor union has taken over everything, pretty much, there's no longer much of an FDP. And once again, they felt it necessary to set up, and this is what Bob Wyle said, separate, because the FDP wasn't working in this way. So then Bob Smith gets up and says, "Well, that's only because you white guys put it in their minds to do that." Well, which isn't really true. And I know that this girl who's working in Rosedale, this white girl, what's her name, Lisa Vogel, got up and said, "You people who don't live in the delta, don't work

in the delta, don't really know what we're talking about. You just have no idea," and I think she was right. So, then Doug Smith pulled the normal SNCC tactic, which is, "I think from now on.." Now this was at five o'clock, the meeting had been going on for quite a few hours and nobody had been introducing themselves and saying how long they had been in the state, but Doug Smith says, "Why don't you introduce yourselves?" So she said, "I'm Lisa Vogel, I work in Rosedale." "How long have you been there?" You see, the normal put-down. So that was another thing which wasn't talked about. Then, like, in this last executive committee meeting that took place, when was it, a week ago last Saturday, where Ed King had apparently put on the agenda the discussion of the Vietnam statement by the McComb group, and Guyat just refused to go over, just refused to go by that.

Q: Did he say why?

A: No. Just wouldn't talk about it, just eliminated it from the agenda.

Q: (inaudible).

A: No, I mean, he just, well, he was running the meeting, apparently, just went past it.

Q: Intentionally?

A: I doubt that it was an accident, because although Ed King had put it on the agenda, Guyat had already made the FDP statement before.

Q: And nobody said anything about this?

A: No. Apparently not. You see, now, that's the other thing. You see, people are very conscious of people who are above them. I mean, it's like a long tree, you have Guyat...Now at a meeting, a guy like Mr. Miles will not question Guyat very much. And in Panola County people won't question Mr. Miles. My analysis would be basically because of the church and the set-up, you know, that people have learned so long to take what other people say. You remember at Monday night's meeting, how Mr. Miles said, "When somebody asks you why you vote for Mrs. Lowe, don't say Robert Miles told you."? Well, somebody told me the other day, I guess it was Mrs. Larson said, asked somebody, "Who did you vote for?" They said, "Mrs. Lowe." She said, "Why?" and she said, "Robert told me to." You see, that's the way it is. I don't know how you get people not to do this, but we have been unsuccessful (inaudible background remarks). You know, I can't analyze why. The work that has been done in the state has been a failure to this degree.

Q: What about in other degrees? Do you think the work this summer has been successful?

A: Well, I'm not sure exactly what we've done. More people have registered, but I can't say that that's because of our doing, it's more because the short test came out. But we did go around with the short test, we did make talks in church, we did pass out these forms and the people whom we talked to passed them out to other people. The literacy classes, I believe, have been successful, have been a good thing. They're about the most basic thing we have started. Our work with the co-op has been minimal. We held one cooperative meeting where we discussed co-op and what it means, and I think that was successful and we'd like to do more, but it's kind of late.

Q: On these programs FDP didn't tell you what to do...

A: That's the other thing, see, when I was talking about who makes, letting the local people make the decisions. When we came to Panola, we asked, "What do you want us to do?" And Mr. Miles said, "We want you to work on voter registration." And voter registration, it has to be realized, is the one thing, really, that the people in the movement who are ready and who have already registered could do themselves. If every registered voter would get ten of their neighbors to go out and register voters...That's such an easy job, to go and explain the form and this and that, the people could have done that job themselves. But they asked us to do that, and we started out the summer doing that. But that's all they asked us to do. And when you canvass Batesville and you work in Sardis and do a little work in Crenshaw...Because of the hang-up we had with transportation, having only one truck at our disposal, it made it hard, we couldn't get out to the plantations, except the Hayes place. We were mostly going to the same people that were known, that knew us before. We didn't hit any new people, very few new people. And the FDP just didn't have anything to tell us. We started working on school integration before the orders came out, before we knew, because the high school students were interested in school integration. Now that's been completely lost. I mean, some kids still say they're going to try to integrate the high school, but the FDP just never followed through with us on it. They were obviously uninterested in working with the kids, trying to get the kids to do this. The Panola County Student Union, which had been very strong last summer, is practically nothing now. The labor union is having a very hard time, because there are a lot of questions with the union, what's the union for, what's it going to do, what can it do. And it's very frustrating.

Q: Well, does this involve the state or local (inaudible)?

A: Yeah, I think it has a lot to do with both. But I think it has to do with local FDP, too, because, I mean, local FDP depends an awful lot on the volunteers. They expect us to make suggestions, they expect us to do things. And we do the things that we ... And this is where we get into the hang-ups, whenever we stop working, because we get mad. I mean, like, this thing with the car. From the first day we were here we were asking for cars. People, loan us cars, please, we need cars to get around. Nobody volunteered a car. We would have to go ask people. And the only people we felt we could ask for a car was Mr. Miles and maybe Mr. Williams. And those were the only cars we ever used. We used the panel truck, you know, all the time, that one we decided to use.

Q: You said before that you didn't think SNCC, and I don't know if you meant FDP too, would come to terms with the problems of (inaudible).

A: Yeah, well, I don't think FDP really has either. But I think it's most significant with SNCC, because, see, I think SNCC has, I mean, I don't think we should fool ourselves. You know, I mean, we always say whenever you write something talk about what the local people have done and talk about this. In Panola County, mind you, the movement was going before SNCC came in. But they did come in and they did start doing an awful lot throughout the whole state. And now the state's settling down, so they go to Arkansas, or they go to Alabama, and they leave people who can't do the things that they're supposed to be doing, they just left them, sitting there, not knowing what to do. And the problems of Batesville. Batesville has, I mean, it looks like a community that doesn't have many problems, it's got more registered voters, percentage of Negroes, than, I think, any other county. Two thousand registered voters. There were eighteen hundred, probably, when we came, between eighteen hundred and two thousand. So now there are probably two thousand. It's got a functioning cooperative. Might not be making all the money it should be, but it's functioning. It's getting a loan. It's got a lot of students integrating the schools. A lot of things look very good, and on the surface it is wonderful. And I felt funny going down to Tugaloo, feeling my feelings and hearing what other people said about their projects, about the conflicts between COFO and FDP, where there are a lot of COFO staff who aren't going along with FDP, things like this. And then to get up and feel badly about what's going on in Panola. But you see, Panola then is one of the places which SNCC stops paying attention to. They take our car away, and say we don't need a car because they should be able to get you your own car. Well, sure, they should. But, you know, we're

going to get the car a week before we leave here. See, the problems of Batesville and Panola County are the problems, to me, of the North. It is, what do you do, basically, with the poorest people, who have not been involved in the movement in a really meaningful way? What do you do with the man who in less than two years, or three years, is not going to have any work to do? What do you do with kids, even of the most active people, the farmers who have between forty-five to sixty acres of land, who have six kids? I mean, now, not every one of those kids, they can't divide up the land and have any farm that's going to make any money, enough to live on. What do you do with these people? Do you tell the kids to go to Chicago or go to New York or Los Angeles? What hope can you offer? I mean, it seems, I mean, I don't know the answer either, but the people who've been in SNCC and doing a lot of the thinking and been involved here, have stopped thinking about this.

Q: Can you tell us how you got involved in the movement?

A: I don't know, I was just, I wasn't doing too much when I first went to, I hadn't been too involved when I was in college other than with peace stuff, like marching on Washington, marching on certain arsenals in Massachusetts, but nothing serious. When I got to California I was more interested in myself than I was in other people, so I just spent time figuring out what to do with myself, which consisted of spending six months thinking, and then finally starting to write music again. And it wasn't I guess until the summer of '64 that I started to work for a Friends of SNCC group in Berkeley, and ended up doing thingslike packing boxes and things like that. You know, to send clothes South.

Q: Do you remember wanting to go?

A: Well, I was just pretty fed up. I had decided that sitting around thinking and saying that because you think right, that's all that's important, that's enough, you know. Like, now, I look at other people, I'm very critical of them, I say they sit around and do nothing. It doesn't mean anything to sit and think, you're just avoiding the issue, and you're really not concerned if that's what you're doing. And when I had reached that point myself, to say that about myself, that I really wasn't concerned if I was sitting around, I went down and started doing things. I didn't participate in a lot of the California demonstrations, like the Sheridan-Palace, or the Auto Row. Mostly, I mean, the biggest hang-up I had was with organizations, which I hate, and I didn't like to be put in a position where I had to take orders. And that was the hardest decision to make, to go work for SNCC, because it meant going into an organization

and doing what they tell you to do. And I really can't stand that, and I, it was just, I balanced the things and that's what it came out that I had to do. The demonstrations, well, I just was very unsure of them. Afterwards, I thought for a while that they had done a whole lot, but I don't think the hiring has improved at the Sheridan-Palace or any of the other hotels or the auto agencies, so a lot of people got arrested and I don't know...In a way it was worth it because it got a lot of publicity, but I couldn't, I couldn't do it. I couldn't go down there and do it. I just didn't have it in me to go down there and do that. Not because I couldn't be non-violent or anything like that. I just didn't want to do it. And so I worked for SNCC, and then finally about October I started getting more involved in the running of the East Bay group. By that time I was told that there was an executive committee that was running it, which I hadn't known before, I thought two people were running it, and they invited me to come to executive committee meetings, and I started going and participating. I remember the first things that I questioned was why Friends of SNCC weren't participating in local affairs. It seems that almost everybody who came into the group brought this up, but for various reasons, you know, from Atlanta, you weren't supposed to participate in local affairs. There were two groups, I think, that had, I think, in Detroit and in Seattle or Portland, I forget which. And they had started doing things, and in Chicago, too, they had participated in the school boycott, and they stopped sending money, and Atlanta cut them off as a Friends of SNCC group, and set up a new group. So, we went along with that. In January the former chairman of the group, they were leaving, they were co-chairmen, husband and wife, and I wouldn't be chairman, but I said I would work in the office, which I had been doing. And after they...Well, we had hired somebody, who didn't work out, so we got rid of this person we had hired. I started taking over a lot of the responsibility in the office. I worked from about the beginning of February through May, till I came down here. That's about how I started, how I got involved.

Q: How about deciding to come down here?

A: Well, I made the decision, I don't know, I made the decision to come down somewhere around in December, January of this year. I don't know why, I just, well, you know, I can tell you what I said when I wrote out my application, which actually was fairly true. Certain things have changed, looking at it from now, but the way I felt then was that, well, two things. One thing was that I felt working for Friends of SNCC, in the position I was in, in the office a lot, I was becoming a representative in the East Bay of SNCC.

People would come up to me and ask me questions about what's Mississippi like, what's going on, you know, why did they do this or why don't they do this, and all I knew was what I read, and you read so much and you still don't know anything. I felt the only way I could really be valuable in a position like that or really helpful, was to know as much as I could, what was going on here, to understand the feelings of people here. I could mouth the words, but I didn't know what they meant, really. Then you come down, you begin to see a lot more. People would talk about people being scared. Now I've never come in contact with fear like you come across in Mississippi. I just never have. Even from the kids I knew who lived in Harlem when I was going to high school, it was a different type of fear, because they felt they could fight back when they were scared, they could fight back and do something about it. You know, I remember a guy in high school who carried a big knife in his pocket, a bayonet. But here people don't feel that way, I mean, it's a different type of fear. It was nothing I could understand without having seen it. The other reason was that I felt, and I do feel still, that America is really so screwed up, that something has to happen someplace, and Mississippi, because of the blatancy of the situation, seemed like a place where it was most possible to begin. I mean, Mississippi to me is a grotesque of what exists in all the other places, all throughout the rest of the United States. But here you have a big stone wall against which you can, can run against, but in the other places it's an invisible shield. And I have the hope that if things can really get going here, then maybe it will mean something to, particularly, Negroes in other places, but also whites. You know, I have the feeling that when the Negroes really get the vote here, and they can vote here, then people in the North can't say to the Negroes, "Well, you've got the vote at least," you know. They'll want all the other things. And also I thought I could learn a little about organizing, which I don't think I've learned. But I don't think it's something that you learn.

Q: Were you married when you decided to come down?

A: Oh, yeah, we were married for three years.

Q: Was this kind of a mutual decision, you both decided to come down?

A: Well, I decided a long time before Nancy did. Nancy wasn't positive at first that she would come and then... it's true, isn't it?

A(N.T.): It's true. Why do you want the door closed?

A: So I don't hear you making noise. It's not so hot.

A(N.T.): It smells like...

A: I don't know where I was...Oh, yeah, I said I decided that I was coming down,and I was going to come whether she came or not. And basically she was scared to come, at first. And I wasn't sure at first that I wanted her to be in the same place that I would be in, because I felt that if there was any danger or anything like that, it would really make it much harder on me to have to be watching out for her all the time, than having to just watch out for myself. Then I think I would react to situations in a different way, I mean, if she's getting pushed around, I would react in a different way than if I was getting pushed around. And so... But then she decided, finally, that she wanted to come down, and that was fine, you know. At first, I had spoken to Doug Smith, have you met him? He's, well,he was fifth district director. He's a young fellow, around nineteen. He'd been up in Berkeley. And I spoke with him just before coming down, and he had suggested I come down and work with him around the fifth district. And Nancy could work in one project, sort of where I could be based, but we'd be working out in the counties mostly. And I was very interested in that, but when I got down things had seemed to change. I mean, he still was interested in having me come work, but I felt very strongly the Negro-white conflict of staff, and I felt there were a lot of people in the fifth district working who didn't want whites, especially white guys, working around in there.

Q: How did this conflict show?

A: Well, most evidently it came out to start with, you know, you could see it in the big meetings, you know, where, like the first meetings that were held, where there were volunteers and staff, the staff being mostly black and the volunteers almost all white. And the whites were just spoken down to all the time, and told if you didn't like what's going on, get the hell out of the state. Things like this would continually build up. Then on a lot of the projects there'd been black-white conflicts, where, I've heard, these aren't first hand things, I mean, it's all hearsay. In Atlanta it's very hard for a lot of the whites to work under certain Negroes, you know, it's this type of thing: "Oh, you can't possibly understand what's going." Things like that. And, "Oh, you're just a white liberal." And you see, certain, I mean, it didn't bother me that much, I was able to handle it. But I know when someone like Nancy, who's not very outspoken, a lot of the time, not very self-assured, would get up at a meeting and say something, and somebody wouldn't even pay attention to what she said, just said, "Shut up and sit down. If you don't like it get the hell out." You see, it would be very hard, she wouldn't say

anything anymore. I'd get up and I'd continue to say things, and tell somebody that if they wanted to put me out of the state, to go ahead and try. And that usually straightened things out, because, you know, they're just trying at times, they're just testing you, it seems to me, from the contact I have had. It's very interesting, there was a guy at a meeting at Mount Beulah, right after we had gotten out of jail, I think it was. When Nancy got up and said something, I wasn't at the meeting, when she got up and said something, he just, you know, walked right over her. I didn't know who the guy was and she didn't tell me anything about it. Now right after this I was standing, sitting having a talk with this guy for about two hours, you know, discussing, you know, things, conflicts, the way the FDP's been running, the way COFO's been working, things like that. When we were in Hattiesburg for a few days he came through and stopped and had lunch with us, stayed around with us. It was very odd, here was the same guy, and yet in a big meeting...See, that's what the thing is, that's where a lot of these, the staff people, feel they've got to assert themselves in big meetings. And they're entirely different in the big meetings than when you're talking to them as an individual. I mean, we found this with a number of people who at the meetings were just awful, yet when you sit down and talk with them you'd have a perfectly good conversation where you could communicate ideas, where you could exchange ideas, and no hostility at all.

Q: (inaudible).

A: I don't know, except I don't know whether it's a group thing, that people have to assert themselves. I don't know. It's a very...I mean, I've told them this. There's a girl, Thelma Hill, you know her? FDP. Now Thelma, god, did she sound like a real bitch when we were in some of the meetings. She would just get up and say the damnedest things that were really annoying. She said them to Nancy, too. Yet Nancy and she had many pleasant conversations together, just the two of them. I've sat down and spoken with her. When I left, you know, when I left, I really felt badly, because when I left Jackson to come up here, we didn't tell anybody. And she came over, she knew we were leaving. I mean, she just knew it, that we weren't going to stay around and take all the horseshit that was going on down there. I mean, I don't know if you know what Jackson was like when we came in after the demonstrations. Well, you know, well, first of all, the volunteers were told to come in the state June tenth to Waveland for orientation. So everybody comes into the state, not everybody, because a lot of people were going to the Washington lobby. We and about, there must have been about sixty or so volunteers, came to Waveland, and there were staff people, more staff, I don't know how many people there were altogether. So, we just had little talks that

day, which was a Thursday, then we had dinner, and we had more talks in the evening, whereupon it was decided, since the legislature was going to meet, that it was necessary, we were going to move up to Mount Beulah, because that was close to Jackson. So the next day we left Mount Beulah. We were in a car that had an accident, and we were stuck in a town called Wiggins, which is a pretty holy town,for two hours, with all these white guys roaming around the car, because it was an integrated car. And we finally made it to Hattiesburg, and then got another car and we made it up to Jackson and then Mount Beulah. Mount Beulah, well, it was horrible, with the freedom corps, I believe it was, I was told, were running through, and during the night you couldn't sleep because people would be crashing in and out of the rooms and things like that, all night long. The next day it was decided at a meeting, no, it was the same night we got up there, they talked about sending people out to the counties. We had gone up on Friday and that night they talked about sending volunteers out to the counties to help canvass for people to come back for the demonstrations on Monday. This was argued about, it really was, and there was a big, what I saw was that you could see the FDP-SNCC split, in a way, between staff and FDP, because, see, the staff didn't want to have anything to do with volunteers and the FDP wanted the volunteers. I mean, SNCC had decided not to have a summer project, and FDP did. You could see this, all the SNCC people were sitting up in the balcony. Jesse Harris was running the meeting, he could hardly run it because of the guys up in the balcony, who just kept yelling things. So, the FDP kept saying, well, we want the volunteers to come work with us, and the FDP people were just all very friendly, you know, very nice feeling about it. They had asked us down, we had come, they were very appreciative. The SNCC guys didn't want to have anything to do with us, they were just, we don't want them out in the counties, that type of thing. But it was decided that we would go out to the counties. So, on Saturday morning we all met and we were assigned to counties. Nancy and I were the first two people assigned to go to Humphreys County, where Belzoni is. And we went up with Steve Bass, who was the project director, Ellis, what's his name, Ellis Jackson, Matthew, I forget what Matthew's last name is, and this guy Johnny, and a girl, May Hazelteen, and a couple of others. Oh, Johnny wasn't down there. He's an SCLC guy, he hadn't been down there. Anyway, so we went back up to, want me to stop talking? We had, so we went up to Belzoni, and I found, I mean, these were all Negroes, and here we were, two whites, and they were extremely pleasant. And they hadn't, Steve had not, none of these guys had been any of the SNCC people who had been taking part in this, sort of this white-baiting kind of attitude. They were just very nice. And, well, we got up to Belzoni probably around noontime, and we met and just talked for a few minutes, to work out how we would arrange getting people down and where we were going to canvass, and

we set out canvassing. Nancy and two other girls and this one guy, Matthew, you might know, there's a famous picture from the Greenwood demonstrations of a guy being bit by a dog, he's lying on the ground holding his leg. I think that's Matthew. Matthew is a huge guy who, the reason he went around with the girls was that when he first came to Belzoni and the cops followed him around, one day he got sick of it and he just turned around on the cops and he walked back and he said, "What are you doing?" and they said, "Following you," and he said, "Why?" and they said, "We were told by the chief of police," and he stuck his finger in his face and said, "You follow me one more block and I'm goingto kill you," and the guy got all flustered and started to call all sorts ofpolicemen, but nobody ever came. They've never bothered Matthew again. So he went out with the girls. We were walking for less than fifteen, twenty minutes, and I was stopped by the police for my identification, which I didn't give very fast because I thought they were telling me not to give my identification, but they thought they were asking me something else, till the two cops jumped out of the car, said, "Well, we'll take you downtown if you don't want to tell us here." So I showed them my identification. So anyway, we worked, we canvassed there Saturday and Sunday. We had a mass meeting Sunday night, and about fifteen local people and about five staff people went down to Jackson. Monday we left. Well, we couldn't leave, with the cars and this and that, till quite late, I mean, till around ten-thirty, eleven o'clock. And when we got to Jackson, we parked the car and we started to go down, we had heard the demonstration has started, people had gone, I forget what street, Monument Street of something, towards the capitol. And we started off and people came, "Please, don't go down there, they're getting arrested right away, they'll arrest you if you walk down there." And the twenty of us stood around and we decided we would go get arrested. But then this other guy came along and begged us, said they needed people for a demonstration tomorrow, to help canvass this afternoon in Jackson, so please don't get arrested. So we said okay, although we, none of us, you know, we all wanted to go, but that's the way it was. Well, we went back to the church, and it was the most confused thing, because it seemed to me that nobody expected the demonstrators to get arrested. I'll admit I didn't either. I thought the state was smartening up. But, you know, with me, I was pretty naive to the situation. I think the FDP people should have thought that people would get arrested, and I don't think they did. You might say they did now, but to me it was so obvious that they didn't, because they had no plans. They had not planned for the possibility of people getting arrested at that point. I mean, what would you do when people got arrested? So about four hundred and fifty people were arrested the first day. Well, see, they didn't know what to do, everybody's sitting

around, everybody comes to the church, nobody knows what to do. Some people say, "We gotta go march this afternoon at two o'clock, we'll have a big march then." "No, no, we have to have a rally tonight," you know, this type of thing. Just confusion, total confusion. Well, people started to canvass, and people got arrested for passing out leaflets.

Q: Was there actually a meeting at the church?

A: People came back to the church right after the demonstration.

Q: Was Jesse Harris leading the meeting?

A: It's possible. I don't think, no, I don't know if he was. I don't know who was running it, I don't remember. It was just confusion. People all around the street there, you've seen where the church is. Were you there during any meetings? You know, the street's just...you know, cops sitting all over the place. And total confusion, and people started to get arrested. And it was decided that people would march the next day and we should get people out. Well, Jackson people just wouldn't move. The Jackson people were totally uninterested. They waved to you as you went by. So finally... I don't remember where we went that night, I think we drove out to Mount Beulah that night. Yeah. We went out to Mount Beulah that night. We left all our stuff there, except for one little bag of stuff that we brought back to Jackson with us. And then on Tuesday we went and went to jail. We marched and went to jail. Then we were in jail, so I was in jail from Tuesday till Thursday, the following week. Nancy was in till Friday, because by the time they had gotten everybody out to the fairgrounds out of jail, they didn't have time or money to get the girls out of the city jail, the white girls. But, I mean, the situation in jail was a very interesting one and fortunately we had some good people in jail. You know, we were segregated. On the whites, I mean, people like Marshall Gantz, (?) and Bob Wyle, and Bruce Maxwell, a couple of other people, people who were working throughout the state...Oh, and another Bruce, Bruce Palmer, who does research for the FDP. All good people. So, immediately, the second day, about, we set up workshops, and we started holding, you know, we had three workshops. There were about seventy whites, not everybody would participate, but it was very good. We talked about problems, then we talked about, I mean, it was very interesting, we talked about the relationships of the whites and the Negroes in the jail situation, which I found the most, really...See, it was a very hard situation. If you can imagine, there were about seventy whites, seventy to a hundred whites, and probably three to four hundred Negroes, in approximately the areas. I mean, we had about the same space, well, no, the Negroes actually had twice as much space,

because they could spread over their whole side, while we had to keep to one half of our side. Well, the cops were very, the cops, I mean, the way the cops treated whites and Negroes was very different. I mean, they, although on the first day the people who had gotten beaten the most severely were three whites, two guys and a girl. Had to go to the hospital. But the police, after that, were much more willing to shove and poke Negroes than they were whites, because they saw what happened, you see, the publicity that went with each type of thing was entirely...But it took a much longer time for the Negroes to get organized. The Negroes were much more likely to burst out, you know, something might happen. See, every day after meals people would start singing, and people would stand up and everybody would come up to our line of segregation, which was separated by about fifteen feet, we were separated by...Everybody would line up along the line, see, and the song that would get the cops the most was, you know, "Governor Johnson, you can't jail us all..." and people would start dancing, and then people would start crossing the line. The cops would get really scared, and the cops would start shaking and get their billy clubs moving, then they'd start shoving everybody back. Well, after a few days of this, where there were chances of people getting beaten and things like this, it became a whole question of how to react. You see, do you, we knew we couldn't integrate. The one time we integrated was the worst time of all, was when the newsmen were there, and they let us stay, while the newsmen were there, and then they separated us when dinner came along. And we realized that was a very stupid thing to have done, because we gave them, the newsmen, the picture just like the jailers wanted us to, of happy people, because we had just seen (inaudible). It was a very bad move, which at the time, I must admit, I was in favor of, but I think it was very stupid. And after that, when the newsmen would come in, we would just sit against the wall. Well, the point was that, it became a question of how the whites react to the Negroes when the Negroes get up and do something. Do you respond just because they do it, or do we take the position that, well, if we sat down at certain points this evening, the whole Negro group, or most of them, would sit down. And then it was also the consideration of, suddenly, of we and they, you see. By the segregation they had created, the police had created exactly the situation which they wanted, you see. We weren't conceiving, people weren't conceiving of all of us, you see, we were conceiving of we and they. And it was very interesting, when you started getting into the analysis of all these things, and how do you react, what is your responsibility? Where are you supposed to keep people from getting their heads broken? Is it sensible to get your head broken in jail? Who does it make any difference to, are you going to prove anything to the cop? Things like this. All these questions, we went through and through, and I think people

gained a lot. I mean, I think that was the most valuable orientation. Two days in Belzoni and ten days in jail, nine days, I forget what it was, were the most valuable experience as far as an orientation to working in Mississippi, because you really learned how to...We went through so many of the problems.

Q: What did you decide about...?

A: Well, most of us decided that we didn't feel that it was necessary to get your head broken while you were in jail, you have enough opportunity to have that happen outside of jail, you know. That if you got beaten in jail, you wouldn't be able to function when you got out. And your purpose was to function when you got out. And this is where the question of hunger strikes came up, too. You might be sick, if people went on hunger strikes, you might be sick for a long time after jail, and that's not good,really. And whereas, I don't think we kowtowed to the cops, we didn't provoke them either. There were times when we felt our rights were being infringed and then people would protest. But we didn't feel it was necessary, I don't believe, constantly to test the cops. You didn't have to lead them, you know. I mean, an example of what happened, that by the end of the time we were staying there, the last three or four days, about, we could roam anywhere over our half of this big huge fairgrounds quonset hut that we wanted. We had set up volleyball games with socks, you know, played it all over, and the Negro kids were playing football all the time. I mean, everybody just spread out. We would walk across to get water whenever we pleased, whereas the first day we used to have to ask if we could get a drink of water or go to the bathroom, because it was on the Negroes' side, you see, and we would always conveniently, the Negroes who wanted to talk with the whites would conveniently eat their dinners very slowly so that by the time we came out we'd go and sit with them, you see. It was a hard situation. And then we came out of jail, see, they finally bailed us, well, see, also, I want to point out, most of the Negroes did not know why they were in jail, except freedom. And that brought morale way down. It was terrible, I mean, it hadn't been explained to them what they were going down for, so that they couldn't know exactly what they were going to achieve. And they were told by Guyot, the first day they were in jail, that they would only be in jail for three or four days. Well, when the eighth day comes along, you're getting pretty mad. And then the FDP send in a letter telling about how important it is to stay in jail, the failure of demonstrations in the past had been that people had left jail immediately in thepast Jackson demonstrations of '61 and '63, or something like that. So you must stay in jail. But then they ended with, "Well, what is your wish?" And when they read this to the Negroes, there was a shout of

"Out!" I mean, a huge shout. That was about on Tuesday. On Thursday we got out. But people were very afraid, a lot of the people who had been working a long time were afraid people were going to go back to the counties and just have bad things to say about the jail and what did they get us into and this and that. I don't think it happened. Like, people from Batesville didn't stay in that long. Everybody from Batesville got out on Saturday, they spent five days, Mr. Miles got out in four, to come up and raise money for people.

Q: How did you finally get up to Batesville?

A: Well, you see, when we came out of jail, again there was total confusion. What do you do with the volunteers? And the volunteers start feeling that you're totally useless. I mean, how would you feel, being shuffled around, you can't do anything. They don't want you to. They are not considerate enough to say that maybe you should go back to the same county where you had been. So we all end up on Saturday up in Mount Beulah, and there was another huge fight up there, because Stokely Carmichael suddenly was running everything. I don't know when he had come into the state, but he was running things. And he came to a meeting of mostly volunteers, with a lot of staff people who had just come out of jail, too, to announce that the FDP had decided that we should all go back to jail the next day or two days later. Well, you know. Then he says, "What do you think about it?" and when somebody tries to ask a question they don't answer it, they refuse to go on. So, at that point Hardy Frye (?) walked out of the meeting in a furor.

Q: Walked out?

A: Yeah, of the meeting. He'd been in jail all the time, too.

Q: I thought Stokely Carmichael was SNCC.

A: Yeah, well, so is Hardy Frye. I mean, he was SNCC, I mean, that's what the thing was, that SNCC was trying to run the demonstration. But anyway, the point was that he was giving...People started...I talked with Bob Smith, wouldn't let anybody talk. People were mad. I walked out and a couple of other people walked out, and I went over where Hardy was and he was fuming, and we said, you know, that's really a nice meeting to have, nobody's allowed to talk. Stokely, I mean, so Hardy was really mad. And I just went away and then I saw him get in a confrontation with Stokely afterwards. And then they were starting to argue, and I walked over where they were arguing and Hardy said to me, "What do you think? Do you think you were intimidated in that meeting?" Were you allowed to speak?" I said, "No. I don't think any-

body was allowed to speak." Hardy says, "See what I mean?" So Stokely says, "Well, okay, let's talk this." So Hardy says, "Fine." Well, oh, see, before this I had told Hardy that I was going to go tell the volunteers not to say that they'll go out, that they have a right to say what they believe, and that they shouldn't go out into the counties just because somebody tells them to go out. He said to go ahead. At this point I had talked to the volunteers and I came back when Hardy said, well, I said, "Well, can I get some more people, let's hold a meeting, I'll get more people." And I called over a whole lot more of the volunteers and we all sat down outside at this time and started to hold a meeting. Well, everybody started asking all the questions. And in about fifteen minutes Hardy stood up and said, "See, Stokely, they were intimidated. Why didn't they ask these questions inside?" And a lot of questions were asked, a lot weren't answered. You know, and I, you know, came out to a point where I said at one point that I wasn't going be, you know, you guys can say whatever you want, that you're down here to serve the FDP, but I saw I was going to be shoved around. But anyway it was decided that day that you were supposed to go out to the counties and work to bring more people back, but nobody wanted to do it, because nobody wanted to go to jail...

Q: (inaudible).

A: The problems of this type, of how you get people above the stage of registering to vote and starting to function, they haven't considered. Now why, I mean, you could say why is this a problem, and to me it's a real question of how much the older people can really think. And this is, I mean, I don't like to talk like this, it sounds very snobbish, but you come to a point where you begin to realize certain things. That even your best people don't think sometimes. They don't know. You bring up something and they just don't know what you mean. They don't understand how you can apply it, and you go through explaining this and then maybe it works out. But they're not able, see, one thing that hasn't been done, and that I think, personally, is very important, is to teach people to think logically. To understand what they're really doing or really saying. And you see, I think it's wrong like at the meeting Monday night to decide...It's very interesting, you might not have realized this, but everybody, almost everybody, considers Professor Belt to be an Uncle Tom. They tell how after every meeting he'll go down and he'll talk to the white people and tell them what's going on. Yet Professor Belt gets up there and says that Mrs. Lowe is so wonderful, and everybody says, yes, we'll vote for Mrs. Lowe. And this is just amazing, it's really ironic. And they'll do things like this, they won't understand that what they've been fighting for, they're defeating, at least in my mind, by voting for these people, not casting a protest ballot, since they're not going to

make much difference in the election. They don't, I mean, Mrs. Larson and Mr. Williams, too, they're the only two people who wouldn't vote in favor of the referendum. Mr. Williams mostly because he spent time in jail opposing it. Now, when Reverend Neill said about why are you protesting in Jackson, the marching laws, that's not true. See, Reverend Neill, do you remember he got up and said, "What you were protesting was the law that said you couldn't march without a permit." Now, that's not true. People didn't go to Jackson to march, to demonstrate against marching without a permit, that you had to have a permit for marching. They went there because they knew the legislature was going to pass a law to evade the civil rights act, the voting rights bill, and keep federal registrars out. And since, and they also marched because they said that the legislature was illegally elected andshould not be allowed to make any laws. That's why people, that's why I was told I was marching, and that's what the FDP told people was the reason they were marching. And yet, what it, you know, and when it comes down to it, here they go ahead and vote right for this thing that they've been saying was completely illegal. And you see, I don't, you know, there were only two people in that whole meeting who were willing to understand that and willing to stand up for their reasons.

Q: Phoebe just said that she understood it, but she thought you should vote as a block.

A: Okay, but you see, and this is where people don't think. Now maybe you can't, maybe it's wrong to expect people who haven't been thinking basically, for fifty years, to suddenly start thinking and doing things, maybe that's unreasonable. But then you have to start really considering what you're going to do with the younger people, what are you going to do with...And how are you going to get the older people past certain of their stumbling blocks? Because, I mean, here they go running a co-op and they're running a big business, that's all they're concerned with runninga big business, they're not talking about cooperative anymore. They've thrown the burden, the only two people working in that co-op are the manager and the secretary. Now they blame those two guys for everything that goes wrong, and all the farmers, because the manager and the secretary hardly have any okra at this point. I don't think they grow okra. They're just working, and the farmers are dealing with the co-op, even the most active members of the co-op, they're dealing with the co-op purely as big business, purely as Mr. Jacobs. They come and they sell their okra.

Q: Yeah, but, well, it seems to me anyway, that the secretary certainly feels that there's a sense of cooperation, I mean, you know, he realizes the problems involved in teaching people to work, you know, to think as businessmen, when

they never have. It seems to me that the feeling is there.

A: Yeah, but the point is that you're going to only, I mean, the most efficient way to run a business is to put one guy in charge who knows most of the stuff and he can run the business, he can run it right or he can run it wrong, but he'll be running the business. That's the efficient way. I mean, I don't think there's any doubt about that, you get a good guy to run a business and you'll have a fairly good business, you know. He'll run it efficiently, he'll put in all the... But it's not cooperative, you see. And if you're going to send out, if one guy's going to end up having all the information, you're not having a cooperative.

Q: Can you tell me who that is?

A: Bobby James. It was proven, it was proven two weeks ago he did not come to the meeting. And people were talking... "Well, what about this?" "Well, I don't know this, the secretary knows that." "What about this?" "Well, I don't know, the secretary knows that." Therewasn't a thing that the people at that meeting knew except that they didn't know anything. It was a very good meeting. It really was, but people didn't know a thing.

Q: What about the idea, then you know, leasing the land and attempting to help the plantation workers?

A: Well, okay, now that's, okay, that's another thought. You see now, Bobby James is the only guy in the co-op who's interested in the sharecropper, who believes that the independent farmer, the wealthy farmer, has any responsibility to the sharecropper. He is the only one. That's why I talk about why the labor union had to form outside the FDP, because these independent farmers who are in the co-op are the FDP power. Now, when Bobby James talks about this, Penny Patch brought this up to Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams comments more or less were...Mr. Williams, do you think Mr. Williams is a pretty liberal guy, a pretty knowledgeable guy in the terms of the movement? "How do you know sharecroppers can farm at all? They don't know how to farm. They're not very responsible, either."

Q: That's what he said?

A: That's what he said. And Penny objected, you know, to look at the situation there. "You don't know anything about farming," he says to her. You talk to Mr. Miles, no, you listen to Mr. Miles. That's the problem, he says, he talks to some sharecroppers oneday, I was at a meeting, this took place in Tallahatchie County, and he says, "Now one of the problems is, now there're a lot of people sharecropping, and probably if they been more, you know, had saved their money

more when they were young, or hadn't spent so much on drinking and so much on fooling around, they too could own their own land. But it's not too late to start now, save up some money and buy some land." Mr. Miles never had to, Mr. Miles' father was an independent farmer. He didn't live on a plantation. There aren't too many farmersin this whole area, I believe, I'm not positive, but, who grew up on plantations. Mr. Thomas' father had land. B.B.'s father has land. And they don't like to talk about the sharecropper. Bobby James says, he said this to a guy last week who was writing something for SNCC, he said, I asked him, "Why are you so interested in sharecroppers?" He says, "First of all, I am a sharecropper. When I grew up I played only with sharecroppers. Now doesn't that sound like a white man saying, 'My kids play with Negroes'?" But you see, the attitude of the independent farmers to the sharecroppers is exactly the same as the white person to the Negro. That's really it. They're lazy, they... Now, his plan is a good plan, I believe, if what he says is right, and that is, that there are markets and that it is possible to sell vegetables in Chicago for a high price. Otherwise I don't know how a man can live on two acres.

Q: What is this with the sharecroppers? I mean, what are you going to do with these people in three years?

A: That's a qusetion we've been asking now for probablytwo months.

Q: Does anybody really care?

A: No. And in FDP they don't really care. There are some people, I mean, Frank Smith's brick cooperative is part of a plan of what to do with sharecroppers.

A(N.T.): Bobby James is going to get into it.

A: Oh, he is? Is he coming tonight to the meeting?

A(N.T.): Uh-huh.

A: I mean, I'd like to know how he's getting there.

A(N.T.): Do you want to go?

A: Well, I can't go. I go every place. The brick cooperative is an attempt to deal with this, but it doesn'treally deal with the problem. It just gives the person a piece of land to live on and a new house.

Q: Why don't you explain that brick cooperative?

A: Well, I'll explain it as much as I can. The brick cooperative was designed by Frank Smith, and probably John Mudd,

I'm not sure, it's only officially Frank Smith's. It's got, at the top it's got three things. It's got a brick factory, a factory which will turn out approximately fifty thousand bricks a day. To say that, apparently it takes about fifteen thousand bricks to build a house. On one side you have a foundation, which is just given lots of money. They, Frank Smith says he has found people who will donate to this. On the other side you have a training school, to teach people building trades. There will also be anapartment house nearby, where people can live while they are being trained at thetraining school. See, not many people are going to have to work for the brick factory, because it's almost all automated. I asked that question, I was very surprised at the answer. But anyway...Now what the point is is that it'll be a business. It has to be a business. The way it will be set up as far as how it will be run is that there will be two types of stocks, class A and class B. The class A stocks are to be sold for a dollar a share, one share per person, only to residents of the state of Mississippi. It is the only voting stock. Class B stocks will cost five or ten dollars, probably ten now, I hear, and they can be sold anywhere in the world. And I think we said before, I believe it will probably be pretty much of a donation of ten dollars, but maybe there'll be dividends, I don't know, I don't think so, though. The foundation will pay for persons' land, for a piece of land, and support a person while he comes to learn how to build, and while he builds his house. The factory will operate on a commercial basis, to other people. It will make cement and make bricks. Frank Smith believes one of the things that's going to happen is that the building industry is going to be one of the biggest industries in Mississippi, the coming year. I think he might be right about that, since there's not much...I mean, he's trying to get a contract to rebuild Mount Bayou (?), all the old houses in Mount Bayou, to build brick houses there. That'll be a commercial contract. They'll become contractors. And that's as far as I think he's envisioned it, really. I mean, that's what, you ask what are you going to do, the people want to get these houses, he says he doesn't know. So that's the brick co-op. I've heard of another idea put out by a guy, Curtis Hayes, who's SNCC staff who's running the Freedom Corps now. And his idea is an idea which comes from Israel, but which isn't a kibbutz, it's about a circular farm. In Israel it functions, you have seven hundred acres and there are two thousand people living on it. Each person gets a strip of land, or each family gets a strip of land, which they take care of. There'll be about, there're five, I think, strips till the end, from the middle, well, actually now, there's a circle in the middle in which people live, they can build a factory, they can build factories in there, and also have homes in there. And they'll be divided up into groups of about ten homes in each little community within this, the purpose being that people, you know, if the people want to

be socialists, socialists will live together, Baptists will live together, things like this, you know, if they want. All the money goes through the coperative to the central body, in other words, if you inherit money, it all goes to thecooperative or else you leave. Everything becomes the property of the cooperative. And everybody, you know, it's a voting thing, where everybody votes who lives there. Now Curtis Hayes said that they're thinking of buying some land, there's some land in Delta Pines which is a British-owned plantation, and they have many plots throughout the delta. They're selling out and there's a plot of six hundred acres in the delta, which would be five million dollars, the down payment on which would be about two hundred thousand dollars, which they are talking about. So I don't know how far they'll get on this. That's a real idea for the sharecroppers. And day-laborers, both. Those are the only things that I've heard of that are really, but they're not from FDP.

Q: Where are they from?

A: Frank Smith is working for Headstart right now and he used to be SNCC staff. Curtis Hayes is SNCC staff. You know who he is. He's the guy that most of the stink's been over, because he was arrested during the Jackson demonstrations. You see, I think they know, and I think (inaudible) but apparently in the Headstart contract, the guy who was in Headstart here told me, is that they will, if you get arrested for anything, they'll bail you out.

Q: Well, what about the project here, say, you know, the volunteers. How do the volunteers work together in Batesville?

A: Well...You must have asked this of each volunteer. I'd like to hear the other answers. I mean, we haven't had certain problems (inaudible). I mean...In a way fortunately we've all been the same color so we haven't had any black-white conflict in the staff, which has happened in a lot of other projects. We've also been able to work very closely with the FDP, we're very, you know, we're really close to them, to the people who are in the FDP. We really haven't... Oh, and the two people who've been here a year, Penny and Chris, were really very pleasant when we came in. They never had the attitude of, "Oh, we know everything that's going on, you don't know anything, we've been here a long time, why weren't you here longer," which is what you get from a lot of people. And so that was very easy. That worked out well. The problems that we had were, well, when we first got here, everything was going well. When one of the people came after the rest of us, we had a lot of problems. He just didn't work out with the rest of the group, and there a lot of conflicts. And it was just too bad, you know. We didn't know how to handle it. We didn't think we were able.

Q: What kind of conflicts?

A: Well, he was kind of really hung up with being a radical, and with "moving" the people, and he was very, also very dogmatic and assertive in everything that he wanted to do, and it always just ended up that it was all of us against him on something. He split for Holly Springs at one point. He left. He went there. He was going to go work up there, but they kicked him out in a day.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because he got there at the wrong time. Bob Smith was there and Ivanhoe Donaldson was there, and he was the prototype of the summer volunteer, you know, and Ivanhoe just tore him apart and so did Bob Smith. And he came back in a day. And when he came back we knew we just had to work with him, you know, we couldn't send this guy away. And we hadn't sent him away in the first place, which is what Ivanhoe accused us of doing. He just left of his own...Then the problem was, he felt Crenshaw, nobody was working in Crenshaw, and he wanted to go to Crenshaw. And, well, first of all, none of us, especially Chris and myself, we didn't like him at all. And I mean, Chris, he was the only guy Chris would blow up at. And also, he kept saying, "I want to go to Crenshaw," and we weren't sure that he'd be able to work in the community, well, we were afraid that he'd do some bad things. And we didn't want him up there by himself, either. We didn't want him, because of safety reasons, we didn't want him up there by himself, and because there would be nobody there to evaluate what he was doing. And this was a bad problem. It seems to have worked out now, but it was really bad for a while. Now we've just gotten into the conflicts of having been working, living, eating close together for six or seven weeks. And, I mean, it just gets to you after a while. I mean, I'm not a person, I mean, I can work with other people for only so long, I mean, before I start saying I want to work by myself, I don't want anybody bothering me. I mean, that's one of the reasons, look, that's one of the reasons I'm in music, I mean, composing is a very solitary thing. You're not answerable to anybody, you do what you want, you work as you want to. I work whatever hours I please, you know. And to have to start, you know, I was able to do this for five or six weeks,but it just starts getting to you. And then people get short and people get whiney, and people, you know...I mean, I can't take it sometimes, I mean, I couldn't take it when I wanted to go off by myself and the people would come along with me. I couldn't, you know, and I couldn't take it, I can't take it when I work on the truck for a day, trying to get the truck in good shape, and then somebody says, you know, "Why don't

you fix the truck?" And I can't take it when I work so long on the truck and somebody else says. "Well, I'm taking the truck now," when I was intending to use the truck. I don't like to, and I didn't like it that I was the only one, well, Chris started to, also, who felt any responsibility towards everybody else as far as safety was concerned.

Q: Chris and Penny didn't?

A: Chris finally, Chris did. Chris was, Penny was, Penny was hung up for her own reasons and just wasn't participating that much. And I started getting worried about people not saying when they were going to be back, or saying that they'd be back at two and showing up at five. And I was the only one who seemed to be concerned about this at all. And things like this, and I didn't want to have to tell people, "No, you can't do this because you don't have somebody else doing it with you," but that's what it ended up doing. I had certain hang-ups at the beginning with the two girls, basically, I mean, I was just, I intimidated them, because they just weren't, they wouldn't speak up, I mean, you know, and I guess I did in a way run over them sometimes. I know Carol was very upset about this and talked to Nancy, so I talked to Carol and we worked that out. And I got mad, I mean, like,with Bill, I had a bad thing with him. He, you know, when we were having all this trouble with Bill, one night he and I were going up to freedom school in Crenshaw, and Carol and Lee were going up to a meeting in Sardis, and Bill gets in the car with his suitcase all packed. And Carol and Lee, and Chris had seen him and knew he had his suitcase, he knew he was going, I think, but he didn't say anything, and Carol and Lee didn't say anything. So there we end up getting to Crenshaw, and Bill wants to go see Maurice Webb or Bob Perry, who work, you know, who are local people there. And he...Fortunately Perry wasn't home, and I had a long talk with Bill, saying that I wasn't going to let him stay up there. And I didn't want to be put in that position,it was really bad that nobody else would take that responsibility either.

Q: So essentially you had been put into a position of being the leader of the project.

A: Yeah, that's what Mrs. Miles was working from the first week we were here.

Q: What?

A: Well, we didn't want to have a project director, and she kept saying, "Well, Gene, I think you ought to be project director." But I didn't want to do this, you see, I don't, I mean, I don't want the responsibility any more than anybody else wants it. And it was really hard, because I

didn't want to say what was right, but...and, you know, but that's what happened a lot of times. But Chris, too. Once Chris started working, I mean, when they first came back they didn't work too much.

Q: Came back?

A: Well, they had been away on vacation for a month, and they came back about two weeks after we were here. And, I mean, Chris took a lot of the responsibility, because he knew what was going on, and he would, you know, when we talked about doing something, he would be the one who could say whether he thought it was feasible or not from his experience in the county. He took that responsibility a lot, too. But I didn't like having to be the one who always had to arrange, you know, which cars were going where and how many people would go one place and things like that. Then everybody gets mad at you, you know.

Q: Is it the same with other projects? Are the people here roughly the same?

A: I don't really know. I really don't. I mean, I think that we probably had a more cohesive group for a while than any other project. It happens, like, the girls, Nancy and Lee and Carol, were in jail together.

Q: And they get along pretty well together?

A: They did. Nancy's getting tired of Lee and Carol.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know. They get short with one another. It's very, I mean, I guess it's just being together so much. But I mean, people say things, people say things without thinking of what they're saying, other people get mad. I mean, like this business, it's so stupid, I won't pay any attention to it. I get annoyed. But like, "Why don't you fix the back lights of the truck?" or saying something in a nasty way, you know. It's so unnecessary, but people do it. Or some of the people become very possessive of something. You know. It's the same thing. I asked if somebody was reading a magazine, and they said, "Yes, I am," then there'll be, "Yes, and you can't have it till we're finished." And then I find out that somebody else has the magazine. You know, things like this. So I'm not going to get hung up over it. Every once in a while I just have to go off and work on the truck or cut the grass, you know.

Q: Was this personality or animosity towards the project?

A: Well, I mean, I don't know how you separate them. I

mean, I remember the first night Bill came, we had this discussion where he was trying to get me to say I was a radical, and I refused. Bill had this real hang-up with being a radical, he wanted to be a radical, and he felt he was a radical, and he keeps talking aboutthe civil rights worker. He wanted us to discuss it in freedom school one night, the role of the civil rights worker, and this is very odd. He has these pictures of what a civil rights worker is and does, or, I mean, the one time when people were, well, I mean, Nancy, Carol, Bill and I had gone to the singing union, at which we were called upon to speak, and Bill got up to speak and he comes out with the statement, "Well, you people don't have big cars and you don't have big homes, and they're not really necessary, but one thing you've really got is soul." You know, and we just, the three of us, went down into our chairs. It was really awful, you know, to tell people, "You got soul, baby." And there's Bill, he wants to be a radical, and what's he wearing to the singing union? He's wearing a pair of slacks, white socks, loafers, a blue work shirt, a tie, and a green corduroy jacket. And we started teasing him about that, and he got very defensive, and said, "Well, my ~~bark~~(?) shirt isn't ironed," you know. If you're going to be in the movement, if you're going to talk about being a radical, what do you go along with these things for, you know, dressing so collegiately and this and that. And you know, and I was talking about the possibilities for the people...What you want to do is change people's attitudes towards things, to get people to have a new attitude towards things, not change the things they want. There's nothing wrong with wanting a big car or a big house, if it's really something that you really feel is necessary. You shouldn't want it because your next-door neighbor has it. You should want it because it's meaningful to you. And you see, Bill objected that you couldn't have a Cadillac if you felt this way even, it was really very funny, that was a very bad argument, you know.

A(N.T.): Are you recording?

A: Yeah.

A: Nasty things about other people, huh?

A: Well, they asked me what I felt about the rest of the staff.

A(N.T.): What about your wife? What did you say about me?

A: I mentioned her....Yes, it was really funny. And I'm not sure why things have worked out with Bill, but things certainly have, you know, partially I think because Bill has found something. He started working with the young

kids and he's the first one who's been able to get the young kids who hang around the sundry to meetings. And I mean, I think this, when you talk, he's good with them and the main reason is is because Bill can act at their level, can be at their level very easily. He can play football with them, he can participate with them, he can fool around with them. I mean, this is something I can't do and I think it's very valuable that he did this. But I think it's really good that he did this, I think it's fine that he found something for himself. And he was very concerned about that, too, that he wanted to have something that he could do, that we all had something we could do, you see, that we were doing, which wasn't true. Carol and Lee had literacy classes, and Nancy had a few things, she started this maids' union, but Chris and I were just floating around, and whenever there was something to do we'd do it. You know, when somebody needed some help we'd go do that. And Bill couldn't do that, he's just not set up that way. And that's why I say the personality and the perspective. I mean, he had this idea of moving people, I mean, that's also his personality, too.

Q: What about Penny?

A: Well, Penny, see, Penny's been here for three years, working in Atlanta, and Penny's got a lot of hang-ups and she's trying to work them out, and maybe she's worked some out by leaving. She quit SNCC staff, because she got really disgusted with the same things I was talking about, you know, about their disregard of people, the way certain people are starting to run SNCC and the FDP, and not really being considerate of local projects, or how they work. And Penny had to find herself, and after one point, I mean, it's sort of odd, doing things got both of them back to doing things. Then Penny was sick for a while, she had terrible wisdom teeth. We finally took her up to Memphis and had them pulled out, which made her happier after that, a little bit. But she's got a lot of problems to solve on her own, you know, she was in Swarthmore and she left after her first year. And then she'd been working in SNCC for three years, you know. She's like, see, she's not, she comes from a very wealthy family, she's not in as bad a shape as a Mississippi Negro who's working for the movement. But it was her home. They both want to go to agricultural school so they can come back to Mississippi and work with co-ops and things like that. I mean, they're very attached to Mississippi and they feel that it's their home. And they've been through a lot of problems, how do you rationalize this with a lot of things? You know, they don't talk about them like this, they don't even like to say what their relationship is to their former homes. But that obviously has something to do with it, and they're not, you know, they're going to California, maybe they'll work things out.

Q: They're going to California?

A: Yeah, they're going to probably drive out with us, I'm not sure.

Q: What do you plan to do when you get back?

A: Write some music. I plan, the thing, as far as the movement is concerned, the thing, I have decided that I cannot raise money for the movement anymore. I think it's a false thing. I think the only way you raise money is by lying, and I can't do that. I couldn't even raise very much money when I was working there before. I would do all the background work, like, mimeograph all the things and answer the phone, but I couldn't really go and do the fund-raising, I couldn't sell tickets or things like that. But I feel less attached to raising money, I don't think I could do those things, but I am interested in doing work with freedom schools. I think the freedom school is one of the best things that has come out of the movement. I think certainly with the young kids, Negro and white, It holds the most possibilities for creating the type of society where people really think about their relationship to the society and start thinking about what they can do and start thinking clearly. You don't learn this in school, and I think the freedom school can do this. And I feel very strongly about that. I know SDS is working freedom schools in Oakland, I'd like to work some in Berkeley and some of the...I'd like to work with white kids, middle-class white kids, also, who live out in Lafayette and places like that out in the county, on the other side of the hills in Berkeley. I think the freedom schools, I think they stand a chance, I think they're something which is necessary. To me the freedom school is it, the freedom school is the thing which I will do. I'm willing to work, you know, three nights a week for freedom schools.