

Beating of Negro
Voter Registration worker
In southwest Mississippi

State of Mississippi
County of Adams

Related by Archie C. Curtis

My name is Archie C. Curtis. I am the owner of Curtis Funeral Home, Inc. of Natchez, Mississippi. I have been in this business for fifteen years. I am a law-abiding citizen and a registered voter. I have been active in voter registration and am interested in things beneficial to my people and country.

On February 16, 1964, at around 1:30 a.m., I got a call to go pick up the wife of a man called Joe Gooden. The caller said she (Mrs. Gooden) had a heart attack. He said he was the foreman of Joe Gooden. I said I did not know Joe Gooden and did not know where he lived. The caller said to come to the end of the pavement on Palestine Road and there would be a man there with a lantern to direct me. Not suspecting anything, I got dressed and drove to the designated spot in my ambulance. I took with me my helper, William Jackson, but we did not see a man with a lantern. Instead, a car came up and some persons got out with white hoods over their heads and shoulders. They had guns. They ordered me out of the ambulance. When I was getting out, one of them struck me on the back of the hand with a pistol, opening a wound. We were blindfolded and taken about two miles away, I don't know where.

They demanded that I give them an NAACP card and tell them who else had one. I said that I did not have one, and did not know anyone else who had one. They beat us and roughed us up severely. One of them said they ought to kill us, but another one said not to do that, but just to leave us there. They left us and we found our way back to the ambulance. The lights had been left on, so the battery was dead. Then we had to walk about 2½ miles to find friendly Negro residents to help us back to town. This was especially hard on me because I am recuperating from a stroke.

I reported the incident to both local and federal authorities. I believe we should have protection from lawless elements and I will continue to be active in anything that will better our people without harming anyone else.

Original signed by Archie C. Curtis

Statement taken on April 23, 1964, at Curtis Funeral home, Natchez, Mississippi, by C. Herbert Oliver.

Original signed by C. Herbert Oliver