

AFFIDAVIT VIII.PHILADELPHIA - NESHOPA COUNTY

Junior Roosevelt Cole, 58, lay leader of Mt. Zion Methodist Church in rural Neshoba County, Mississippi, told in a statement signed in the presence of two witnesses, of his beating near the church on June 16, 1964. Later that night the church, site of a mass meeting on May 31 at which Michael Schwerner and James Chaney had spoken, was burned to the ground. Cole said a leaders and stewards meeting at the church had broken up about 10 p.m. that night and they got into their cars and pickup trucks to drive home. His statement said:

"We saw two cars and a truck driving up, and the people in them wasn't our color, but we didn't bother about it. Me and my wife got in our car and drove off. About 50 yards from the churchyard we were forced to stop. The lights in those cars was out. A man said to me, 'What are you doing? What you got those guards out there for?' I said we didn't have any guards. He said, 'You're a liar.' They jerked me out of the car and let me have it with a heavy instrument, on the jaw, the head, the neck, the back, and when I was lying there, they kicked me. Then I was unconscious.

"None of them where I was had any masks on, but Mrs. Georgia Rush and her son, John T., who were stopped down the road, said there were men with hoods on where she was. As far as I know there was only three of us beaten: myself, Mrs. Rush and her son. The men had many, many guns.

"I was treated at Dr. Charles Moore's clinic in Philadelphia. I don't think my jaw is broken, but it's out of line a bit.

"About 12:30 or 1 a.m. that night I saw a big light in the sky over where the church was, but I didn't think anything of it. Later, in the morning, I saw it was the church burned. The FHBs came by the following Friday."

His wife, Beatrice, said in her statement:

"There was at least 20 of them there. One of them pulled my husband out of the car and beat him, I couldn't see what with, but it looked like an iron object. Then they kicked him while he was lying on the ground. Then they said to him, 'Better say something or we'll kill you.' I said, 'he can't say nothing; he's unconscious.'

"Then I began to pray, a little prayer. They told me to shut my mouth. But I said, 'let me pray.' I stretched out my hands and said, 'Father I stretch out my hand to thee; no other help I know; if thou withdrew thyself from me; Oh Lord, whither shall I go?'

"That struck the hearts of those men. The Lord was there, because then the man said, 'Let her alone,' and he looked kind of sick about it.

"I think my husband's jaw is broken, because his teeth don't sit right in his mouth. But he doesn't think it is, and I can't get him to go down to the clinic again."



Mrs. Dona Richards Moses told in an affidavit of harassment by three highway patrolmen while returning from an attempted private investigation of the disappearance of the three civil rights workers in Neshoba County. She said she was riding in a car driven by Matteo Suarez, in the company of Preston Ponder, Gwen Gillon and David Welsh when they were stopped.

"The patrolman asked us why we had been in Neshoba. Mr. Suarez answered that we had wanted to investigate the situation of the missing men. The policeman then answered, 'There is nothing to investigate.' He began asking us questions about our work. He looked through all of our belongings and the literature we had in the car, pulling them out in the rain to read them. He read a personal letter that Gwen Gillon had, which mentioned a SNCC worker in Batesville. He made mention of the SNCC worker and asked who he was.

"When I answered, 'uh huh' to the question, 'Are you from New York?' this policeman said, 'You'd better say, 'yes sir' to me, little nigger.'...

"We were allowed to leave. It was then that we realized that during the whole interrogation there had never been mention of our violating the law in any way. We were surprised to find this attitude in the police since we had been led to understand by the Justice Department that there was federal presence in the area and local police were cooperating in the search for the missing men. Otherwise such treatment is the rule in Mississippi by the police, particularly of civil rights workers, and we are always afraid when we are stopped by the police."

+ + + + +

Daniel Pearlman, a law student, and David Welsh, a free-lance reporter, told in affidavits of their beating by civilians in the middle of a summer afternoon in downtown Philadelphia, Miss., on July 17, 1964. The pair were investigating the disappearance of the 3 civil rights workers and preparing a newspaper article.

Pearlman stated they had just left the office of a local attorney when they were stopped near the street corner by a man who asked what business they had in town.

"When Dave identified himself as a reporter, two men came out of the shadows and stood along side of me. Another man approached from the opposite end of the street...The man who first stopped us threw a hard punch to Dave's eye. I was hit over the head by the man standing next to me. I ran and turned to face him. He was chasing me with a link chain hanging from his raised right hand. The doctor said that my wound cannot have been inflicted from a fist alone. I therefore assume that I was hit with the link chain I saw hanging from his hand...

"I was then chased by two men and ran to the sheriff's office...The sheriff sent Deputy Cecil Price to the scene. Price leisurely strolled to the corner. When we got there he said that he didn't see my friend. I pointed to a crowd on the street corner and said, 'They know.'...He strolled toward the crowd."

Welsh said in his affidavit: "The first man struck me in the jaw hard with his fist. The other man then hit me several times, and additional men appeared to be closing in at the scene. I could not see Pearlman. I ran toward the courthouse, where two more men intercepted and struck me. So I turned around again and ran back to retrieve my sunglasses. As I did so, I was kicked in the ribs - one rib was cracked, according to X-rays taken in Jackson at the office of Dr. McIlwain - and absorbed a few more blows in the face. One of them gave me a symbolic kick in the pants and advised me to leave town. I ran to my car and drove back to the site of the initial attack. A crowd was gathering; in the center were Price and Pearlman, his head and shirt very bloody. The mood of the crowd was less than friendly. After explaining what happened to Price, we left town."