

MADISON COUNTY

I was arrested in Canton, Mississippi, on May 29, 1964, charged with "parading without a permit" during a voter registration demonstration at which I was present but in which I was not participating. I spent 28 days in the Madison County Jail without being tried and during that period received no mistreatment from either officials or the white prisoners with whom I was housed. On Friday, June 26, eight of the fifty-five persons arrested on May 29th were still in jail in Madison County Jail.

At about noon on the 26th three men whom I believe are U. S. marshals, though I saw no credentials, took the eight of us to Jackson, Mississippi. I believe two of the marshals were Charlie Sutherland and Dan Kelly, and the third, a Negro whose name I don't know, I believe is the recently appointed marshal for the southern district of Mississippi. We were chained together in groups of two and three with chains and in that fashion we were driven in three cars to Jackson. In Jackson we were taken to the fifth floor of the Hinds County Court Building, where we were

“booked” as federal prisoners. After a wait of about half an hour in the hall on the fifth floor we were taken to a second-floor county court room, where a U. S. Commissioner, who I believe is John R. Countiss III, interviewed each of us briefly for the purpose of reviewing and resetting bail. After that we were taken to our cells on the fifth floor. I, being white, was of course put into an all-white cell of the Hinds County Jail while the other seven prisoners, all Negroes, were put into an all-Negro cell. I had no difficulties on Friday, June the 26th.

On Saturday morning, the 27th, however, I was beaten three times by white prisoners. One or two hours after the 5 A.M. breakfast that morning a white prisoner who had been brought in during the night for, I believe, being drunk, started questioning me in an accusing, aggressive, and profane way as to whether I was a “Freedom Rider.” He stopped after about five minutes, only to return in about 15 minutes. None of the other approximately 20 prisoners in the cell had questioned me in this regard the previous day, and I do not know why this particular prisoner decided to all of a sudden. Certainly jail officials were around the cell doors enough early that morning to have instigated such questioning, even though I have no specific evidence that they did so. After the second period of “questioning” the man returned in about 15-30 minutes and presented me with a civil rights leaflet which had been taken from the pocket of my coat which was hanging in the night section of the cell block. After he asked me a few questions about the leaflet someone started hitting me in the back of the head and in the face with their fists. The man who had presented the leaflet had been standing behind me and to the right as I sat at one of the long tables in the “day room” cell. While talking with him the third time I had not turned around to face him and so I cannot be sure whether he was alone and cannot be sure whether he was the one who hit me. He hit me about 15 times, stopped, and walked away. I remained seated at the table and did not respond to his implorations to stand up and fight him. As far as I was aware the other prisoners took no interest in the beating other than to watch. To the best of my recollection this took place at about 7:30 A.M.

About 15 minutes later a man who I believe was a deputy sheriff (he was wearing a uniform and a badge) called me to the door to ask what had happened. I told what had happened. He called out to the other prisoners to ask what had happened and the explanation he got from several of the prisoners was that I had been asleep on the table and had fallen off. I continued to explain what had happened because he did not seem to understand. When I mentioned that I was a civil rights prisoner he said “Oh” and promptly walked out. After about 15 more minutes the marshals who I believe are Kelly and Sutherland called me to the door and asked what had happened; Sutherland did all the talking. I told them; when they asked the prisoners what had happened, they got the same answer that the deputy had. Before leaving Sutherland did shout to the prisoners something like, “Leave that boy alone now.”

I didn't see any more deputies or marshals until I was bailed out.

At approximately 9:00 A.M. the first beating was repeated. This time a man approached me from behind where I was seated in the same place but did not say anything before he started to hit me. The beating lasted about as long as before, and both I and the other prisoners, as far as I know, had the same reactions as before.

After another 30-45 minutes a man approached me as the previous two had. I was still sitting at the table, but this time I had my head down on my arms on the table. This man pulled my head up by the hair and hit me once, from behind, directly in the right eye. As he walked away I could hear him mutter something angrily but couldn't really understand what it was.

Two drunks had been brought in early Saturday morning, around breakfast time. One of them slept most of the time but the other engaged himself in a lot of loud talking and antics of one sort and another. About 30-45 minutes after I was last hit the "active" drunk picked up a 4-5 foot length of broom or mop handle, which I noticed had been lying around the cell on the previous day. He charged at me from the front, but with the table and bench between us. He hit me about 6 times with the wood handle, the blows falling on my arms and shoulders as I was protecting my head.

I was standing in line for lunch when a deputy called my name and told me to get my things, that I was being bailed out. As the eight of us went one by one to the counter to sign for the return of our belongings, a deputy stepped on our toes as we signed the receipt form. I know this happened to me and I understand from the others that he did the same with them, too. Before we were taken down to the first floor the deputy called someone on the phone whom he called the "chief" to come up. When the chief came he asked me in a disinterested way about my beating. I told him briefly what had happened but did not go into any more details than he asked for.

On the first floor all eight of us signed a paper that Mr. Countiss presented us (in the presence of our attorneys, Carsie Hall and Marian Wright). Countiss had a county deputy photograph me; then we were released, about 12:30 P.M. Later that afternoon I talked with FBI Agent Kokes in his office and he took a report of the incident and also took photographs. My injuries, which did not cause serious bodily harm, consisted of bruises on the face and head, a black right eye, and one or two chipped teeth on the upper right side. On Monday, June 29, I gave a signed statement about the incident to Agent Regis Kennedy in the New Orleans, Louisiana, FBI office.

SIGNED: *Edward S. Hollander*