

## HINDS COUNTY

Around the supper hour on February 3, 1964, I was sitting in the COFO office at 1017 Lynch Street in Jackson when Joyce Ladner phoned to ask what was going on at Jackson State College. Minutes later, someone, possibly Clifford Vaughns, came into the office saying that there was a demonstration going on at Jackson State. He was then followed by Kirksey, who brought in the same news.

I went up to Dalton and Lynch Streets with Willie Blue. There were roughly 100-200 persons standing on three of the four corners with about 8 policemen standing in the intersection directing traffic. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, came the roar of engines. Twelve to fifteen motorcycles were coming up Lynch in formation—single file. They drove up Lynch, passed Dalton (going west), and lined up width-wise along Lynch. The policemen then dismounted.

Charles Cobb came over and told me what had happened: a girl student from Jackson State had been hit by a speeding car on Lynch Street while she was in a pedestrian crosswalk. The students who saw this became incensed because it seemed to them that the police let the driver go without even taking his name. The students then held a rally on campus and eventually the Jackson Negro policemen were sent on campus to “investigate” matters. Finally, the campus area was closed to “outsiders” and people started gathering at Lynch and Dalton primarily to see what was wrong more than anything else.

While Cobb and I stood there talking, at least another 100 people had gathered on three of the four corners that made up the intersection. The police occupied the fourth corner and were not allowing anyone now to go west on Lynch Street past Dalton unless the person was a student.

Barricades were placed across Lynch and cars couldn't even go west on Lynch past Dalton now. Finally a voice cried, "Disperse them." Utilizing a wedge-type formation, the police completely cleared the three corners of people in a matter of seconds. Cobb and I returned to the office.

A fellow entered the office with a gash over his eye that required 17 stitches. He was from Utica College and was in Jackson to attend the Jackson State game with some other school. He had been blocked by the police from going to the auditorium where the game was to be held.

After the game, a group of students demonstrated in the crosswalk, walking back and forth. Charles Evers appeared on the scene and asked the students to return to their dorms, that the police chief had promised them a light [a traffic light], and that there was no need to protest. Before he could finish, a line of police, spread from sidewalk to sidewalk, were coming down Lynch toward the students, all with rifles in their arms.

Suddenly, a bottle crashed in front of one of them, then another. The police then reacted by shooting in the air. Students screamed and scattered everywhere. The police were still shooting, but now the muzzles of the weapons were parallel to the ground. Emma and I went into the Penguin Cafe. Some 15 to 20 minutes later, between 6 and 8 policemen entered the cafe and told those of us in there to leave, saying, "This place is closed for the night." As we were going down Lynch, shots rang out continuously.

Just as we passed Smackover's, I was shot in the arm. I told Emma I had been hit and she led me up a little alley where we went to a house with a phone and she called the office. She told Cobb what had happened and Charlie said that George Greene had been shot in the chest. On hearing this, we forgot all about my arm and hurried back to the office. An ambulance was in front of the office taking away a fellow who had been shot in the buttocks. George was apparently O.K.—his eyeglasses case had stopped the bullet.

The office was now filled with pressmen who were writing stories. I had Cliff take me to the University Hospital, where the bullet was removed from my arm. I was then taken to the police station, where I signed a statement about what had happened.

SIGNED: *Jesse T. Morris*