

Some E.K. Personal copies on Far with Church/ Ministry/ Potomac

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Sixties and Sit-ins

The "Sixties" begin with the Sit-ins. The sixties begin in Greensboro, North Carolina at the white only lunch counter in Woolworth's, not in Camelot on the Potomac at a state dinner in the elegance of the White House. Eisenhower remains President for almost a full year after those first arrests. The black student uprising sweeps the South; student support for the sit-ins sweeps the nation. Hundreds are imprisoned; thousands march in demonstrations and picket lines. The changing America is reflected much later that year, in the November close election in which John Kennedy is the victor; his inauguration as President is not until 1961. The blacks, the students, the people did not need to wait for inspiration from a charismatic chief of state.

Many people thought the time was ripe to move against segregation. Jim Lawson and other pacifist agitators were preparing the uprising and were unconcerned about support, much less inspiration, from the White House. The plan was to expand workshops in many places with the goal of starting a direct action campaign, using something like sit-ins in Nashville under Lawson's guidance. In Tennessee Jim Lawson did set up nonviolent training workshops for black college students that fall and planned to begin the lunch counter sit-ins there late in the winter of 1960. The people, once again, were ready and moved first, if not quite spontaneously, given all the propaganda, talk, and, even training going on. In Greensboro, North Carolina, four young black men, students at North Carolina A & T College, talked about segregation. At least one later mentioned having read the F.O.R. propaganda comic book on nonviolence. On their own the men acted, nonviolently, entering the local Woolworth's store, and staging the first "sit-in" at the white only lunch counter, from which they refused to move when ordered, and were soon arrested.

The Nashville students led by Jim Lawson completed their own plans and started their action a few weeks later. Black students and a few whites all across the South (except Mississippi, where people were most afraid) followed with sit-ins that spring. The national press spread the word of this new kind of protest. Hundreds were jailed and thousands marched to support them. Boycotts let more thousands of local black people be part of the action without risking the widespread jailings and frequent violence. The nonviolent discipline and dignity of the black students aroused the conscience of the nation. Northern student support groups were organized to set up boycotts and picket lines around chain stores such as Woolworth's.

Dr. Paul Deats, a white Texas native, now one of my social ethics teachers and an F.O.R. leader, asked me to join a team of persons who had been trained at the 1959 workshop on nonviolence to be sent into several Southern cities to help the students with the sit-ins. I went to Montgomery, Alabama, where I was supposed to try to get white religious help against the violence being inflicted on black students from Alabama State College who had been jailed, beaten, and expelled from school in a series of local lunch counter sit-ins. Dr. King had moved on to Atlanta but I met the Rev. Ralph Abernathy and other leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement as well as the wonderful students. When mob and jail brutality did not halt these students, white police in disguised trucks had surrounded protesting students and revealed hidden machine guns, ready for a slaughter (like Amritsar in India a generation earlier, like Sharpseville in South Africa that very spring). The students had dispersed but few whites knew of the incidents. The national press did not tell this story.

My assignment was to be a bridge to the white religious people, talking with the black

students, then trying to set up secret interracial meetings where a black student could talk with white ministers, with white college students from the local Methodist liberal arts school, Huntington College, and especially where black women students could talk with white church women. The white ministers I met supported integration as a religious ideal, but felt isolated and doubted any value in even meeting. The white church women were more optimistic, more ready to become involved. They were particularly concerned when I said the meetings would be with black college women who had been mistreated by the white male jailers. The pessimistic prestigious white men, leaders of their churches, reluctantly agreed to a secret meeting after the women's meeting was set up.

I worked there several days but before my planned meetings could occur I was arrested in a police raid on black clergy meeting at a local black restaurant. Some white Illinois students from MacMurray College, another Methodist school, and their sociology professor, Richard Nesmith, were present. They had just arrived from Jackson, Mississippi where they had talked about race relations in separate meetings at Millsaps and at Tougaloo colleges, and with my old teachers, George Maddox and Ernst Borinski. Borinski had told them how excited he was about the possibilities of the sit-in campaigns for major change. Integrated dining in Alabama was, of course, illegal but for many years such meetings had been tolerated at the black restaurants. Not this time. Soon all of us there were in prison. Needless to say this caused so much fear that the secret interracial meetings I was organizing collapsed.

I had specifically told F.O.R. I wanted to do reconciling, bridge building work between black and whites, like a good Christian minister, and not take part directly in the sit-

ins and agitation. I did not want any bad publicity that would make it harder for me to return to Mississippi as pastor of a white Methodist church. So much for my plans and efforts at control. Over 20 people were arrested in that raid in Montgomery. Local press played up the "outside agitators" from the north, including one minister from Boston. What a farce, to think that blacks in Montgomery, of all places, needed "outside" agitators.

So I found myself in jail with mildly surprised blacks and greatly shocked whites. None of us were demonstrators, deliberately. Despite my best intentions to remain a proper white minister and assist the sit-in demonstrators but not join them, here I was, cursed in white Alabama as an agitator and, as I discovered when I phoned Deats back at the seminary, acclaimed in Boston as a demonstrator. In the white side of the jail I wondered how I happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and then wondered if, instead, I was in the right place at the right time, despite my best/worst intentions. Was my future ministry in Mississippi ruined? Could any good come out of this? I was certainly guilty of conspiring to start the sit-ins and was there on a mission of support. Why did I think I could stay on the "clean" side of thing?

We were soon in court, represented by local black attorney Fred Grey and white attorney Clifford Durr. In recent years they had represented good people like Mrs. Rosa Parks and Dr. King. We were all quickly convicted of "disturbing the peace." Clifford and his wife, Virginia, were native white Southerners helping the Movement who assured me it was good for blacks to be doing this and it was good for white ministers to go to prison with the blacks.

This arrest of northern white students received national notice. Back in Mississippi

my conservative parents were watching the morning Today show and saw pictures of those being arrested, including me. When I knew of the TV show I phoned my parents. My father was calm but angry as he condemned my foolishness and the people who had "mised" me; I could hear the hysterical crying of my mother in the background. They were not the only ones who saw that TV new. So did the white Methodist church leaders of Mississippi, one of whom "comforted" my parents by telling them I was under the influence of "liberal Communist" teachers who, it was well known, had "infiltrated" the seminary at Boston University. How could I ever restore things with my family, with my church?

The police raid was the end of March of 1960. Once publicly marked, later that year I did participate, at the request of black clergy and students in Montgomery, in actual sit-ins. I was imprisoned there several times. Once a black minister, the Rev. Elroy Embry, joined in the "Plantation Room," the coffee shop of the Jefferson Davis Hotel where I was a paying guest; at breakfast I had coffee with a white minister then asked the hotel manager if I could have another minister join me for lunch. "Of course," said the confused man, "You are registered in the hotel and the restaurant is open to the public." A black Methodist minister, the Rev. Elroy Embry, joined me. The police soon joined us and removed us. We were convicted of "trespassing on private property," in a trial where the City's prosecuting attorney said any such action against private property was a threat to the very grounds of the U.S. Constitution.

Elroy Embry and I were sentenced to a prison work gang, complete with black and white striped convict uniforms and white guards on horses with shotguns supervising our labors. Like the black demonstrators, I was cursed, beaten, and almost killed in prison by

guards, but, in my case, also by white convicts. On the work detail I saw white children and their mothers ignoring us as just a normal part of the scene, just as I as a child in Vicksburg had no fear of the chain gangs who did street work near my home. All of us, black and white, were almost invisible. And silent. We did not have chains, a detail Alabama had only recently abandoned. But the Montgomery newspaper took a photograph of the two agitator-ministers. My photo, in full black and white striped regalia, was run as a large front page item in the Jackson press which also mentioned my plans for a summer wedding to Jeannette Sylvester who worked for the Mississippi State Welfare Department in Natchez.

This further notoriety hurt me in white Mississippi with family and church but back in Boston it was an honor. I helped the F.O.R. in local workshops and also the developing northern student movement at Harvard, M.I.T., and B. U. with local support demonstrations. I was too busy trying to make up incomplete grades in graduate school to attend the North Carolina meeting led by Ella Baker, long time black organizer, who, although on the staff of SCLC advised the students to set up their own organization. I also did not attend the follow up Atlanta meeting. My friend, Jim Lawson, preached the accepted message of combining the teachings of love and reconciliation of Jesus with the tactics and philosophy of civil disobedience of Henry David Thoreau and nonviolent resistance and direct action of Mahatma Gandhi. They chose to call themselves SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Organizing Committee.

At first SNCC was to be a network linking the campus protestors but soon students left school to work full time in Civil Rights, in "the Movement," as SNCC "field secretaries, living simply on tiny wages and the support of the black communities. Northern students

traveled South for conferences to meet the new heroes. Northern support groups were organized and this provided much of the impetus for the soon formed SDS, Students for a Democratic Society. Several months after the sit-ins began West coast students at Berkeley became the first targets of fire hoses as they protested the ally of racism, the red-baiting political work of the House Unamerican Activities Committee. Most of those students involved in all of these uprisings of the winter and spring of 1960 had been part of the campus scene of the frightened and silent 1950s. Somehow out of that had come rebellion and an affirmation of Freedom.

In Mississippi in 1960 there was near hysteria about the shocking behavior of blacks who were assumed to have accepted their place. Verbal protest much less direct action in the sit-ins shattered an image. Now it was almost as if guilty people feared a slave uprising. They knew it was bound to spread even to their territory. I was married that summer to Jeannette Sylvester, whom I had continue to date since Millsaps college days, in a small, quiet, almost secret service. She worked for the Mississippi Welfare Department and had visited me in Montgomery. Her sympathetic supervisor protected her from being fired. Both our families were ashamed of my Alabama arrest and frightened of the attitudes of their neighbors. Her home church asked her to move the wedding; they feared a bombing. Our wedding, with only a few relatives and guests, was in the chapel at Millsaps.

In Vicksburg the John Birch Society, in league with the White Citizens Council, saw a Red Menace in the black freedom struggle. Conformity was demanded in the white community. Although my parents were segregationists, they were targeted for social ostracism, led by the Birchers. Frightened people did not dare speak to them at church or

the grocery store, lest someone think there was support for their Communist agitator son and the black freedom fighters. My parents and younger brother were forced, as so many others the preceding ten years, to flee the state. They moved to Memphis where my father could continue his engineering work on flood control with the Mississippi River Commission, a national government agency.

I returned to Alabama many times for trials over the next few years. I was in close touch with leaders in the developing Civil Rights Movement. My friend, Jim Lawson, in Nashville led the most powerful and effective of the major student movements. Atlanta became the headquarters for both SCLC and SNCC. By spring of 1961 Mississippi black students at Tougaloo College held their first sit in at the white only public library in Jackson. Prison, of course. A few weeks later the first Freedom Riders, led by CORE and SNCC, reached Jackson. This was a campaign to challenge segregation in buses in interstate commerce and to force Washington to enforce desegregation orders. In 1943 CORE organized interracial teams to challenge segregated transportation facilities in the upper South and border states with moderate success. CORE decided on a major effort for 1961; a handful of the older CORE agitators, like the black director, James Farmer, would be joined by the new agitators, veterans of the sit-ins of the past year.

The new generation of black students and their growing number of white student allies was willing to fight directly for rights and not wait patiently for politicians and courts. This new generation who launched the revolutions of the Sixties were not baby boomers who came in the latter half of the decade. From the first sit-ins through the 1964 Freedom Summer in Mississippi the leaders were young men and women born during the Great

Depression or the Second World War, had come of age in families where the economic fears of the Depression were balanced with being a good neighbor and helping strangers, and in a world where battles for Freedom and against oppression were always in the news. I was one of many who remembered exactly where we were when the radio announced the news of the death of Franklin Roosevelt.

Older blacks (like Medgar Evers) returned from battlefields of World War II and Korea unwilling to accept the violations of freedom at home but, other than in a few places like Montgomery and the Bus Boycott, they had not organized any resistance. The younger generation, despite the general repression and quietness of the 1950's, now felt a responsibility for personal and united action against injustice.

The old CORE "Freedom Ride" plan was revived when CORE saw the new support. Integrated teams would attempt to travel from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, violating segregation practices in each state, nonviolently submitting to arrest. The target was the conscience of all America and the reticent liberal administration in Washington. I did not participate directly in the Freedom Rides, but supported them and gave some assistance. I still thought that by avoiding jail in Mississippi, itself, I might yet be able to return and serve as pastor of a white church. I did make a test Freedom Ride with my black friend and fellow convict, the Rev. Elroy Embry, from Atlanta to Montgomery by way of Anniston (where another bus was soon burned) and Birmingham (where the mob soon attacked the Freedom Riders). We wanted to see what might happen with no advance publicity to arouse people, to let the haters get organized. In our belief in nonviolence each of us thought that the average white Southerner would not automatically respond to protest

direct action with terrible violence, that this violence was something that had to be organized and stirred up. On our trip we sat together and were not disturbed on the bus. At stops along the way we made token desegregation efforts in waiting rooms and lunch counters. People were surprised but we got away with our deeds and we quickly reboarded the bus, not wanting to stay and be arrested. That was left for the crew soon to follow.

The mob violence that did face the arrival of the announced Freedom Riders was not spontaneous but, as we thought, actually organized in advance by KKK and other racists. There were thoughts of calling off the rides after Birmingham and flying the remainder of the group to New Orleans. The Nashville Movement sent SNCC volunteers down to continue the trip on to Montgomery where the organized violence did spread to mob activity. Attorney General Robert Kennedy failed to persuade the Freedom Riders to call off the journey on into Mississippi after President Kennedy had to call out troops to prevent a massacre in Montgomery.

In Jackson the white police state was functioning smoothly and got along well with the White House. A deal was cut with Sen. Jim Eastland and white politicians that the Federal authorities would not intervene with unconstitutional arrests of Freedom Riders in Jackson as long as there was no white mob violence with the internationally embarrassing TV scenes. Mississippi did as it wanted. The illegal arrests were efficient and Nazi like. No mob. No need for a mob when the police took care of things. No need for a mob when the politicians in Washington looked away and ignored the rights of citizens. The American people just looked at TV and saw orderly arrests and no violence. (The violence was done by the police, off camera, after the arrests.) Several hundred persons from all over America,

black and white, joined the Freedom Rides in Mississippi and were convicted of "disturbing the peace" and sent to the state penitentiary, Parchman, for four month terms, and terrible conditions and violence. Eventually national public pressure forced the liberal administration to move towards enforcing desegregation in interstate commerce with local intra state segregation left intact.

Many black Mississippians welcomed the Freedom Riders and sent food and clothing to them in prison. Tougaloo College allowed the agitators to meet in the Chapel and to sleep in the dorms. Some local Mississippi blacks joined the Freedom Riders. Most Mississippi blacks from that time forth welcomed, however discretely, the new generation of nonviolent invaders, calling all future Civil Rights workers of any organization, "Freedom Riders."

I returned to Mississippi early that summer to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church. I had decided to stay in seminary and do further graduate school work, thus was not asking the Bishop to assign me as pastor of a local white church. A strange compromise was worked out, if I would not ask then to be admitted as a fully recognized minister in the state with rights to speak as a Mississippi Methodist minister at state church conferences or anywhere, I would be allowed to receive the rites of ordination as "elder," the denominational designation for the priesthood, but not be accepted into "full connection" as a recognized Methodist minister in Mississippi. I had been ordained a deacon and accepted into and "on trial" status as a minister several years earlier. So I would be allowed to celebrate the sacraments, but with no specific denominational connection. Back at seminary teachers were amazed at this odd ecumenical twist.

I put on my clerical collar as a Methodist minister and, the next day, went to the

Jackson jails and even Parchman Prison to visit the Freedom Riders. I got their names and addresses from Medgar Evers and Jack Young, a black attorney. (Young knew me and assumed I was a moderate so therefore warned me about "radicals" in the Freedom Riders, whom he represented despite the fact that he and NAACP strongly opposed their activities. Medgar, who knew me better, told me he admired the Freedom Riders. I knew enough about the NAACP's conservative position and liberal politics not to ask him about any official NAACP position. Then, with something less than the total honesty Mahatma Gandhi might have used, I approached the jails. I could ask for specific prisoners, mention their families, say (honestly) that I was a white Methodist Mississippi minister doing this to let their parents know something about them. I could even mutter that their parents had nothing to do with this and were very worried and I would be contacting the families.

To cover my mission further I carried bags of books to give the prisoners, explaining my concern for the salvation of their souls. On top of each stack of books I had several pamphlets of the "Where Will You Spend Eternity,?" and "Are You Saved?" variety. The big volume on top was by Billy Graham with a highly visible title. Other books distributed, with tell tale jackets replaced, included Martin Luther King's Montgomery book, Walk To Freedom, Gandhi's autobiography, and texts on nonviolence such as the book by Griggs. It was almost like smuggling Bibles behind the Cotton Curtain. The wary prisoners summoned by name to talk to me, wondered who on earth was this strange pastor. The trusting guards actually let me talk privately with these radical sinners. I got their stories, actually gave some of them messages from their families and took messages as well as reports of prison brutality. The books went into circulation in the proper cells (and even makeshift classrooms

on nonviolence) in Hinds County Jail and Parchman Prison. Some black clergy also visited these prisoners but the only other white clergy were the Jackson rabbi, Perry Nussbaum, and the Jackson Unitarian minister, Don Thompson, both later targets of KKK attacks.

While the Freedom Ride campaign continued SNCC was looking for ways to work more closely with the local people beyond demonstrations and the Kennedy Administration encouraged SNCC to move away from public direct action and demonstrations and into community based voter registration. Washington promised support, including arranging financial aid, legal work against voter discrimination, and promising protection from white violence for those involved in constitutionally protected voter work. Amzie Moore, black leader in Bolivar County, Mississippi and the tiny NAACP, also wanted community voter registration so urged SNCC, and the young New York black man, Robert Moses, to come to Mississippi. McComb in the Southwest, the corner bordering Louisiana above Baton Rouge, was chosen as site of this first SNCC initiative.

The response of the black community, in the small town and even in the rural, was cautious but warm and friendly. The response of the white community was shock, illegal arrests, expulsion of supportive black high school students from their schools, and heavy violence leading soon to murder of a local black man, Herbert Lee, in the town of Liberty, in Amite County. The response of the Federal government was discouraging to the Movement. The promised help did not come. SNCC had failed, had opened up a local community and led the people to disaster. No increase in voters. No desegregation. Students expelled from school. Local NAACP switched from support of SNCC work to hostility because of all the troubles. SNCC staff and locals imprisoned and beaten. Then

murder. Fear reigned. SNCC was forced to abandon the region and move over 200 miles north to start over in Greenwood in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, greatest black population, greatest black poverty in the nation, and almost no voters.

The Freedom Rides moved into months of court maneuvers but finally got an order officially desegregating facilities, only to find that local white police, as in Jackson, continued to enforce segregation under new titles, "breach of the peace," and most of the community people had too much common sense and too much fear to violate the customs. SNCC did some community organizing work in Jackson then settled into Greenwood and also nearby counties of the Delta, but had no success in registration although building up a cadre of local supporters like Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer in Sunflower County. In the summer of 1962 SNCC tried a major campaign in Southwest Georgia, around Albany, and, again, found a local people eager to respond but not ready to face the mass jailings and silence of Washington. Martin Luther King even gave some public assistance to the doomed Albany Movement, perhaps his and SNCC's greatest setback.

In Jackson, Mississippi Medgar Evers helped bring the old NAACP leaders in the state into a cautious cooperation with the CORE persons who had stayed to do voter work, led by Dave and Mattie Dennis from New Orleans, and the SNCC staff led by Moses. COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations, was created to set territorial limits, with SNCC to focus on the Delta, CORE on Madison County and the Fourth Congressional District, and NAACP in Jackson, led by Medgar Evers, the only paid staff person of NAACP, paid in part by the National office. The state NAACP president, pharmacist Aaron Henry of Clarksdale, would be president of COFO; Moses the key staff director. One actual

achievement was the start of a civil rights newspaper, The Mississippi Free Press. There was some national labor union money for the paper but not much. The significant money was for voter registration and without COFO there could have been destructive rivalry for this money from VEP, the Atlanta based Voter Education Project, through which the Kennedys and their allies channeled liberal foundation money (and, probably, CIA money through the foundation conduit.) In Mississippi the chief role of SCLC was to find local people ready for leadership roles and send them to training conferences run by SCLC and the American Friends Service Committee in Georgia and South Carolina. Highlander Center in Tennessee was another training center. In Mississippi most of the COFO staff were SNCC members.

Everywhere in Mississippi voter registration failed. But there was one effort at a statewide action in the fall of 1962. COFO ran an NAACP businessman and minister, R.L.T. Smith, for U.S. Congress. Bob Moses was campaign manager. It was a defeat, of course, but led to some national publicity and, more importantly, chances to educate local black people about politics and their rights as citizens. To stop the growing political interest, up in the Delta blacks lost jobs and white politicians cut off distribution of federal surplus food commodities to the hungry blacks. SNCC was being forced into full service activities; back in McComb SNCC had started Freedom Schools for students expelled from public schools and in Greenwood SNCC began social service work, gathering donated food and, even, clothing in the north to ship to Mississippi. It was quickly learned that no single effort, voter registration, lunch-counter sit-in, or such had any chance. The assault on racism in Mississippi had to be all out and many faceted.

One single black man took the next step. The courageous mystic, James Meredith, was backed by Medgar Evers and the "Inc, Fund," the NAACP Legal, Defense, and Educational Fund, an arm long separated from direct control by the National NAACP, in his campaign to desegregate the University of Mississippi. The President in the fall of 1962 finally had to order in federal troops, over 26,000, to put down the open white mob rebellion in Oxford. So there was a military occupation, but only of a tiny space, one campus, and not there to protect any black citizens but just this one black man and not to promote desegregation but to enforce one single Federal Court order. How many more troops would it take for Freedom in Mississippi and the South?

During the Meredith riots and federal invasion of Oxford Jeannette and I were still off in New England. It had seemed impossible after the Freedom Rides then the community work of SNCC in McComb, Jackson, and the Delta for me even to attempt to return to the state as pastor of a white Methodist Church. I had stayed on in graduate school working on a second degree hoping time would cool things in the church in Mississippi. It didn't. I accepted that and decided to move to the West. I served as pastor of a rural circuit of churches in Montana the summer of 1961 and planned to settle there after more graduate school work in Boston. The summer of 1962 was spent in the Holy Land and New Testament sites in Greece and Rome in religious studies with my teacher and friend, Dr. Harrel Beck. Beck took our class to a ruin where Paul was possibly held as a prisoner. It was just more archaeological site to the other students but it gave me strange feelings since none of the others had been in prison. Beck understood and we talked about the reasonableness of my decision not to return to the Mississippi church. He agreed but said I

should not think it impossible to return. We had a similar conversation earlier in the mountains among the Cedars of Lebanon when we had lunch at an Arab restaurant called, "The Mississippi Cafe," so named because of a tiny brook nearby and the owners just chose the name of the Big River for fun.

Jeannette and I were back in Boston when the state of Mississippi exploded in the madness of the uprising and riots at Oxford. I had listened to radio news through that awful night and the next morning went to pray in Trinity Church at Copley Square before taking the subway to Cambridge. One well meaning Yankee friend had commented about how ashamed I must feel to be from Mississippi. I thought of my feelings, no shame, but deep pain and fear, and still a little Southern pride that we had done what we said and stood up to the Yankee soldiers. But mostly awful feelings because I was not present during the crisis. In Cambridge by chance I met another white Mississippi student and we muttered and embraced. My pain and confusion were shared. I headed on to class and ignored the stares as I began to weep openly as I walked across the Harvard Yard. I was appalled at the failures of the politicians, both Gov. Ross Barnett and President John Kennedy. People died and thousands of US troops were sent to Mississippi. My old Vicksburg roots of hostility to Northern troops was aroused as well as my pacifist and Christian sentiment that this was no good solution. There had to be another way for blacks to achieve freedom. The Civil Rights Movement offered that way.

After the Ole Miss riots we once again looked at the idea of returning to Mississippi. My wife and I talked about this with many friends and advisors, especially seminary folks like John and Judy Warner, Virgie (Bartee) and Walter Fenton, Ruth and Russell Smith,

Shan and Bruce MacSpadden, and Jim and Jan Allen. Another source of advice and friendship, Woodie and Kim White, had graduated and moved from Boston, but I already knew the word from that source would be look South and stay open to any possibility. I was helped to realize that I had set too many limits on my ministry. Perhaps I should look beyond the closed white churches.

I visited the state that fall, driving South with a seminary friend, John Warner, for a trial in Alabama then on to Jackson to talk to many of the people I visited each return, from Medgar Evers, who told me of his pride in Meredith and that I had to find a way to come home, to Claude Ramsay, head of the AFL-CIO, who publicly supported desegregation, at Ole Miss and in his unions. Then I visited white church leaders and Millsaps College faculty. All my old white friends were in deep depression after the Ole Miss riots, thinking that nothing could be done. The strongest white support I got was from white clergy in north Mississippi and Oxford, such as the Rev. Duncan Gray, who had stood against the mobs. In Oxford I saw the U.S. troops occupying the Ole Miss campus and their jeeps and vehicles around the town. I even visited one of their camps where the Union/U.S. army was bivouacked. I was ashamed that I had not been in the state, pastor to a white congregation, when the terrible battles of that fall had erupted. I also wondered whether things might have been different if most of the liberal white refugees had stayed or returned.

As always, my most important conversations were with Dr. Ernst Borinski. Late at night John Warner and I went out to talk with and get words of wisdom from my old friend, advisor, and interpreter of Mississippi events. This trip was part of a ritual with me to have my body refreshed, my mind focused and expanded, my spirit challenged, and my soul

restored. Whenever Jeannette and I were in Jackson we always made the trip to Tougaloo, usually late at night.

John and I found Ernst in his usual place, the den. It had been a busy evening but he greeted us and took us in as if he could never be tired. Soon we were hearing his analysis of Mississippi, of America, and the world. (Sometimes his analysis after an event was not quite as optimistic as his earlier opinions; he could produce a new theory that covered both his present understanding and compensated for any too optimistic predictions.) This night he was not optimistic at all as he discussed the Ole Miss Battle and the present mood of white Mississippi. He described the state in terms of early Nazi Germany, especially the silence or ineffectiveness of the white liberals and moderates, as individuals or as institutions: law, school; church; professions; press; every aspect of Mississippi life. He described the collapse of the good elements in the white society. His word was "total demoralization" of the white community. Now there was no possibility of "moderate" action by local people.

Borinski explained that if Mississippi were to be left to itself, as in most of its past history, then the outlook was very gloomy, but (and Borinski began to predict a better future) the present action of the Federal government in sending the troops had committed the entire nation to the problems of Mississippi. After such involvement America could not easily just slip away. The "American Presence" would be felt in Mississippi if the black civil rights Movement demanded such a presence. This would happen, Borinski was convinced, because he had seen the identification so many Tougaloo students felt with James Meredith. Perhaps many of the older Negroes of Mississippi were not yet ready for the struggle for freedom, but the black students of Tougaloo College were. James Meredith would be followed, soon,

by young Mississippi Negroes who would knock, even pound, on every closed door in the state.

There was one other very important factor. The Mississippi blacks would be supported by civil rights workers such as Bob Moses, director of SNCC. It was obvious that Dr. Borinski had immense respect for Moses. I had not yet met Bob Moses but had heard wonderful things about him. Now I was really impressed; Ernst Borinski respected all persons, but he praised few. And so, after painting a picture of a neo-Nazi society, Borinski showed that some of the victims of that society would fight back and change the world.

Then I got around to discussing my personal situation. Ernst had always maintained that Jeannette and I should come back to Mississippi (even telling us that all the divisions with our family should be gently accepted by us and that these might even be healed one day). He knew that Millsaps teachers and others were telling us not to "waste" ourselves by trying to come back to Mississippi then soon being forced to leave. Borinski disagreed and for years had told us that our place was in Mississippi. Now I explained that we wanted to return but there seemed to be no such place. Borinski sort of said, "Ah,ah no, no, no. Zat is because you look only in one place. You may be able to get your job here at Tougaloo." And he explained that Tougaloo College was in need of a chaplain. The position was now vacant and he thought the school would want to fill job in time for the second semester. If I could leave graduate school then and was interested in the job he would arrange for me to meet the college president. I agreed to come back the next morning for the interview.

The next day I met the President, Dr. A.D. Beittel. I was impressed with this man. He was a northern white, about sixty, distinguished looking and professorial, small in

stature, with gray hair and mustache. I was suspicious about presidents of Southern black colleges, whatever their race. Many of them were strongly opposed to their students being involved in the Movement. Dr. Beittel explained the job of chaplain, which also was going to be combined with the job of Dean of Students for a time. I liked the chaplain part and was willing to put up with being a dean. We frankly discussed the racial atmosphere on campus and the difficulties any white chaplain might have and my special problems as a native Mississippian. I was very open about my Movement activity and various arrests in Alabama. Dan Beittel was not shocked. We talked about some of my seminary teachers that he knew, such as Dr. Alan Knight Chalmers, and Dr. Howard Thurman, Dean of the Boston University Chapel and my instructor in a wonderful small class on Christian mysticism, the spiritual life that was the foundation for strength for a religious social activist; then we talked about some of the teachers visiting Harvard whose classes I took, including Rinehold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, whose work Beittel certainly knew. All these teachers influenced me greatly and, obviously to someone like Beittel, this was in the direction of a religion applied to contemporary social problems. Dr. Beittel probably understood me, as did Ernst Borinski, better than I understood myself. I believe I was very much the kind of chaplain Beittel wanted; he offered me the job but knew it would take several weeks of thinking before I could give a decision.

Back in Boston Jeannette and I talked of the price to our families, but mine had already been run out and few people would know her maiden name and family. Above all we thought some white Mississippians had to become part of the Movement. We said yes. In January, 1963 we returned to Mississippi, to live inside the black community, to the job of

chaplain of Tougaloo College, to be in "the Movement."