

[1964]

Field Report - White Southern Student Project
From Sam C. Shirah Jr. - Director

Jan. 22 - 29

Wednesday the 22 was the Freedom Day in Hattisburg, Miss. I did not go down to Hattisburg for the Freedom Day because I was working with Bill Huber out at Emory University in Atlanta trying to get out a leaflet concerning the mass rally to be held at Morehouse on Sat. 25. We got the leaflets made up and Bill began to work on getting them out. That night Danny Lyon came in from Hattisburg and told me that Jim Forman thought I should come down there at once to work out with the students at the University of Southern Miss. I checked the bus schedules and plane schedules and decided to leave 1:15 Thursday afternoon and fly in.

Thursday James Bevel and I caught a plane for Hattisburg, Miss. (On the plane we discussed my project in length. Bevel got quite excited about the project and offered to try to get SCLC assistance.) We were grounded in Meridian, Miss and had to ride down to Hattisburg in a plane taxi. When we got to Hattisburg I went to the bus station and checked in my bags. I also wanted

to get to observe the situation before identifying
with it, There was a very large demonstration
both in front of City Hall and the Court House,
I mingled among the whites to see what
the reactions were. It was unusually quiet.
I then went to the SNCC office where I
found Goot and talked with him at length
about the situation and his white contacts there.
I found out that a white girl had been
arrested a couple of months before when
she had tried to attend a movement mass
meeting there. I got her name and began
working on getting her address. While I was
doing this I saw Bill Hanson and
asked him if he would go out to the
University with me. I talked with
him a little about my project and was
very interested. Bill decided that he
wanted to go with me out to the University
of Miss. We got out there about 8:00
that night and parked the car and began
walking around the campus looking at
Bulletin Boards and trying to see what kind
of campus it was. Then we went over to
the journalism dept and looked through the
campus newspapers. Bill left me and went
back to the SNCC office.

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I began talking to about 5 of the students there gradually making my self known to them. All five of the students agreed with me that they did not have academic freedom there. Three of the students took a completely pessimistic view and said that nothing could be done about it. One of the students said yes, something could be done but he was not willing to do it. The last student waited until everybody else had left and then told me he wanted to work with me. This was Robert Stockton a native Mississippian from Beloxi. He told me he was interested in setting up an off campus newspaper that would take stands and explore controversial issues. We talked about this for a while and then I told him I had to go to a SNCC Executive Committee at the SNCC office. Robert then ask me if he could go. I explained to him that he might be kicked out of school and arrested but he wanted to go anyway so I brought him.