

Sunday, November 15

Dear Family,

How are you all? Received the package which you sent - many thanks - unfortunately at the last minute we didn't go because the VFW requires that the men wear tuxes. Since these outfits are hard to come by around ~~xxx~~ here, and have to be rented at \$12.50 a throw, i decided it would be better to forfeit this social event of the season than have us spend so much money for such a foolish thing. (~~xxxxx~~ mom, you still haven't told me whether or not it was you who sent us the box of cheeses and crackers so that i can thank you.)

Despite the fact that half of our staff has been out of town (down on the gulf coast for a staff retreat) for the past ten days or so, leaving us with no transportation other than feet and the grace of God and good will of the people, and hardly enough people to keep all our work going, we have been quite busy. Now that Val is working full time in Issaquena County (that's the one just below ours), I have started taking over where she started in the area north of Greenville. This is something new for me who has spent far too much time doing office work and coordination (?) of programs rather than being able to get into the middle of things. Every thursday evening we have a meeting in Lamont which i sort of push along - from leading the freedom songs and passing on announcements from our office to what is supposed to be a 20-minute or so inspiring extemporaneous talk on a subject of my ~~xxxx~~ choice. I had always admired people like Mrs. ~~xxxx~~ Hamer and our own staff who were able to get up and, without a moment's notice give forth, but was sure that i could never begin to do the same thing. Not that i am now a great orator, but have gotten over that initial nervousness of talking before groups of people. We set up a library in Lamont in a cafe last week and i'm hoping to start Saturday freedom school for the kids and voter registration, political discussion classes for the parents as soon as the cotton picking season is over and i can find someone's home to stay in over night.

The freedom school here in Greenville still leaves a lot to be desired unfortunately. I regret slightly not having taught or at least observed in ours this past summer. But at the moment being virtually the only one working on this i can only ~~xxxx~~ struggle in my own little way - they've promised us another teacher within a week or so. We are pretty much down to a system now: the older elementary school kids come on Mondays and Fridays alone. On Tuesdays, weather permitting, we all go over to the local school playground and kill each other on the swings, monkey bars, etc. and on Wednesdays and Thursdays, teacher permitting, the younger kids come to school - the older kids supposedly acting as supervisors of the bedlam. Saturday the older girls decided to wash the school floor (it is filthy - mainly with groupd in crayon, spilled paint, dirt, and dead roaches). The "cleaning" started fairly calmly, but very shortly all the rest of the kids showed up with mops and brooms - i had visions of the whole building floating away down the Mississippi in a cloud of ammonia. After finishing with the school, they decided to clean our office (all four tiny rooms of it), then the bathrooms, then the halls of the building. Oh what fun!

As you will be soon be gleaning from the Democrat-Times when the national scandal breaks, the Washington County white powerstructure had, during its weekly meeting a week ago Friday, a discussion on what they were going to be doing about the National Council of Churches' Delta Ministry, which is based here in Greenville. They decided against the NCC. Their first move in trying to get the ministers out of town (evidently the power considers them potentially more dangerous than us, at least in a short-range sense) has been to evict them from their office on Washington St. - the main shopping district street in town. They were given 10 days to get out - D day is next Friday. The NCC is hopping mad, as you can imagine. Last I heard they were planning to stay in the place and make the police and sheriff move them bodily out of the building and onto the sidewalk. It's sometimes hard to believe that a relatively small group of people has such influence in an area until you see groups such as our own liberal Wash. Co. power structure in action. It's rather ironic though that the NCC had been rather criticizing COFO for not having this city sewn up, what with the liberal atmosphere, etc etc etc. Perhaps they're finally beginning to realize what we're all up against - God on our side or not.

Haven't you enjoyed the DDT's articles on the big cultural event of the season, South Pacific given by the Greenville Orchestra. You may have noticed in passing that the paper said that usually the orchestra's programs are only open to ticket-carrying members, but that they'd made an exception for this gala event. In our book, this is known as segregation. The Negroes, not even the "good" ones, were invited or allowed to attend South Pacific. How can people say this town is progressive? You may also have noticed the coming Xmas programs, the Triad Club drive for toys and food for the underprivileged, the Xmas parade, to be lead by our own Chief Burnley, and the presentation of The Messiah. All of these, too, are for white consumption only. I hope they ~~shakes~~ choke.

Dave, Russ and I spent most of today at a little church down on the south end of town. Some of the members had asked us especially to attend, and it was one of the few sympathetic congregations, board of deacons and minister all under one roof that we've run into here in the city. We started out with Sunday school, then church, then the "2nd Year ~~Bar~~ Appreciation" of the pastor. The latter is very young (also unusual around here), now attending college (very unusual), seems quite hip. Was constantly comparing us with Paul, Jesus, the early Christians, etc. After the Appreciation part, we all ate dinner in the pews - lots of chicken, pies, cakes, potato salad. The ladies were all rushing around trying to wait on us - took us in as part of the brood. 'Twas really great and encouraging.

What does my plaque look like? Have never seen one before. Is it sitting among the golf and swimming trophies? Dave and I went to the O'Bannon football game last night (O'B is the county area "attendance center"--as many Negro schools are called). One of the kids who played the whole game--both defense and offense--and who works with us and hangs around the office all the time--was the only member of the first-string players not mentioned in the DDT article on the game. Nice? Dave and I were the only whites at the game--I understand we were a "first" in O'Bannon history. The principal condoned our attendance there but has asked us please not to come out around the school.

So much for Greenville. Am sending a carbon of this epistle to my dear long lost brother, David? Hi, Davey!

Love, Pat