

25 June 1965 [Friday]
[Washington, DC]

Dear Dad and Tom,

Under cloudy skies, my best friend a certain Esso map, I was propelled by some lucky force with little delay to the church I was looking for, always ending on the right bus. The only incident was a brush with a southern belle (not bad), who was (ahem) looking for something I also wanted very badly... a bus. The difference in destination cut short a relationship which would have lasted -- who knows -- 10 minutes longer. Ah well.

Registration had closed at 10:30 so I wasn't able to pay my unexpected fee of \$20 (covers food, program, shelter). The male contingent (out of 150), excluding staff and those already elsewhere located, is staying at a church about 40 blocks from the center of activity (more on this later). After eating lunch I decided to look around the church. I went upstairs and ran into a workshop of nonviolent resistance in defense -- mainly with regard to getting knocked down, although with some experimental work on mutual assistance in bad beatings. Some of it was pretty rough (one girl accidentally got a pretty violent bloody nose), but all was instructive. Later it turned out this was unofficial and the SNCC [*Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*] staff didn't like it so it was cut off.

Arthur Kinoy, counsel for the MFDP [*Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party*], gave a really inspiring (courtroom type) speech on the challenge [*by the MFDP to the seating of several Democratic Congressmen*] after dinner. He and the three contestants and the congressmen's lawyers had been talking with the clerk of the House trying to get him to print up to 15,000 pages of 600 depositions obtained by the MFDP as evidence for the challenge. McCormack is putting pressure on the clerk to stall, and apparently is himself being pressured by our great President. Anyway, things look rough but good, though overshadowed by the appointment of former Mississippi governor and current counsel for the five Coleman. The set up is orientation and briefing for the challenge and for those going south until next Tuesday, and then three days of intensive lobbying.

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Back again Saturday evening. The main reason I have had little writing time is that I have been volunteering for KP with every meal since it is such a wonderful [*change from pen to pencil*] (darn these interruptions -- in the process of the last one I misplaced my pen) chance to work with people who turn out to be really friendly. The self-confidence I gained this past year really is helping me now. Among some of the Negro guys (old-timers), there is an apparent inverted prejudice. Sometimes it is overt, usually a brusqueness (which possibly is nonracial, rather "experiential") but I tend to doubt it. This is much like a fraction of my whole experience last year, so I've already experienced it. Nevertheless, though it is also probably very enlightening so far as switching positions goes, it is no easier to take and gives me the same quickening sensation that the derisive "Santa Claus" reaction to my book bag in high school gave me. There is also the problem of the large amount of prejudice I still possess. I sensed a lot of that in the session of readings by a playwright tonight.

I'll close briefly to hit the sack. We've got to go to the church in the morning to speak.

[For the complete set of my Mississippi 1964-65 letters, see
<http://dickatlee.com/issues/mississippi>]