

Travel Notes from a Deep South Tourist

By FRANK HOLLOWAY

THE SUNDAY AFTER the mob violence in Montgomery, Ala., Harold Andrews, an Atlanta college student, and I decided to go to Montgomery to join the Freedom Riders. We didn't have the money, and most of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference people and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee were already in Montgomery so we couldn't get travel funds from them. We ran all over town after money, and finally borrowed some from a neighbor. He told us that his only regret was that he didn't have more to give us.

We bought our tickets at the Greyhound Bus Station, and went to the station cafeteria which had never served Negroes. We were served without any trouble, the first Negroes to eat there, and we felt pretty good that this was settled. However, there were heavy detachments of plainclothes policemen on the scene. I don't know how they got there so fast but there they were. After a piece of pie and about three cups of coffee, we went to the loading dock to board the bus. The plainclothesmen were right behind us, trying to be inconspicuous. We got on the bus and sat in the first and second

seats on the left side. I think this sort of shook the bus driver up. He kept looking at us and then got off the bus and talked to a couple of the policemen, pointing in our direction. The other passengers were mumbling and I could sense they were talking about us.

"It looks like the Freedom Ride is starting right here," I said to Harold. After about ten minutes the driver got back on the bus, and we were on our way. A police car followed us until we reached the city limits.

When we pulled into the LaGrange, Ga., station, the driver told us we had a 15-minute rest stop. Harold and I got off the bus and went into the so-called "white" waiting room. We were met by a man who called himself the manager or something like that. He told us the "colored" waiting room was around in back. We smiled slightly and kept on walking into the white waiting room. He said, "Get out of the --- white waiting room and go where you belong." We still didn't say anything to him. About this time up pops a policeman telling us to "get your - - - outa here or else." I asked the policeman where was the rest room. He pulled his night stick or blackjack, swung wildly at us. We backed off, but he did hit us a little. Then the manager and two or three

(Mr. Holloway, a 21-year-old Atlantan, is a veteran of sit-ins, kneel-ins and other student demonstrations of the last 15 months, and has served two jail sentences for violation of Georgia's anti-trespass law.)

About an hour after our arrest we were freed. Two sergeants escorted us back to the bus station. They refused to tell us why we were freed or where we were going. In fact, they told me to "shut your - - - mouth or else we'll take matters into our own hands." So I shut up. At the bus station we still had the problem of making contact with the Negro community. It seemed that everything and everybody was working against us, and we didn't know what to do or where to go.

Finally a brave young Negro cab driver came by to help us. Well, we were glad to see that cat. For one solid hour or more we rode through Montgomery streets, trying to get to the church, but the streets to the church were blocked off by Alabama Guards. We ran into several road blocks and were searched five times, but we finally made it to the church.

Two or three hundred National Guardsmen surrounded the church. Inside were three or four times as many people as the church was supposed to hold, and it was very hot and uncomfortable. Some people were trying to sleep, but there was hardly room for anybody to turn around. Dr. King, other leaders and the Freedom Riders were circulating through the church talking to people and trying to keep their spirits up.

But it was a relief and like a haven to be among friends. Anyway, they kept us in the church overnight until about six a.m. when everybody left. We Freedom Riders went to Negro homes.

We stayed there three days, during which time we had several workshops on non-violence. We couldn't move around the city, being guarded by the National Guard. In the meantime, several other Freedom Riders joined us.

About 7:30 a. m. Wednesday, the first busload of Freedom Riders left for Jackson, beginning our invasion of the Sovereign State of Mississippi and its rigid segregation.

I left on another bus at 11 a.m. First, we ate integrated in the "white" room without any trouble, guarded by about 50 National Guardsmen. We were also escorted on our ride by troopers and Guardsmen, about 10 cars in front of us and maybe 15 behind us. Ahead of the parade were some 20 Montgomery motorcycle police, who left us at the city limits.

We had several reporters and National Guardsmen on our bus. The Guards sat both behind and in front of us, with their commanding officer standing in front, looking as if he would shoot us if we made the slightest move. So we didn't make the slightest move.

The newsmen interviewed us and other times we looked out of the window at the pretty scenery and talked about what we would eat at Jackson. Some of us slept and some read.

The Alabama troopers and National Guardsmen left us at the state line, and more hostile Mississippi troopers and Guardsmen picked us up. The bus didn't make any regularly scheduled stops, but we did stop at a Negro cafe on the road with five minutes for whatever we had to do. After a five-hour ride, this was hardly time enough for all of us, but we were more fortunate than the first bus, which didn't stop any place. We made several requests to the driver for rest stops, but he had orders not to stop. At the outskirts of small Mississippi towns, people outside their houses and stores shook their fists and threw rocks at us. I thought it was rather amusing, because the trip had gotten so dull and tiresome.

Tourist *Continued*

At Jackson the city police met us and escorted us to the bus station. Behind all these escorts I felt like the President of the United States touring Russia or something. Outside the bus a sort of tunnel of guards led from the bus to the "white" waiting room. In fact, they had blocked the way to the "Negro" waiting room, so that if some of us had changed our minds we couldn't have used the "Negro" rest room anyway.

We got off the bus and walked through the "tunnel" of troopers, guardsmen, city police and reporters. At the door of the waiting room a policeman stood there like the doorman of the Waldorf Astoria and opened the door for us. There were more police inside. I guess the crooks in the city had a field day because all the Jackson police were at the bus station making tunnels and opening doors for us.

We tried to make our way through the crowded cafeteria but never did get there. I still wonder what do they serve in that cafeteria, since they guard it as if it was Fort Knox or America's security weapon. Anyway, a policeman in blue pants and lots of white, shiny buttons pinned on his shirt, by the name of Captain Ray, came over and said, "You people must leave, keep moving," etc. I kept moving because it was so crowded I was pushed all over the place. Captain Ray ordered again, "You people move on." His boys then began picking out the black people and placing them under arrest. Being black, I was arrested.

There was one white fellow and a very fair Negro who had a hard time getting arrested. The white fellow had to tell a policeman that he was with

the Freedom Riders. Then they took us out to the paddy wagon.

We got in and immediately began to sing our student songs. I heard one white spectator say to another, "What in the -- those niggers singing about?" and the other one answered, "I don't know, but they'll change their tune soon as they get their head beaten in a couple of times." "You're right," the first one said. "The police aren't going to take any--from those niggers like the other places did."

We sang until we reached the jail. Inside, the captain told us to stop singing. They took us to a room to be booked, and here we received unusually kind treatment. "What is your name, sir?" a policeman who was booking me asked. "My name is Frank Holloway," I replied. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "You mean your name is *Mister* Frank Holloway."

I could tell it was nearly killing them to be kind and polite, and that they were just following orders they didn't like and throwing some sarcasm in to make it easier on them.

After dinner they took us to our cells which were fairly clean; the beds were hard and uncomfortable but sleepable. About 12 of us were in one two-room cell.

We stayed in the city jail for two days, singing, discussing the news, telling jokes, etc. Time passed pretty fast because we had a lot to talk about and were becoming better acquainted with each other. The food wasn't too hot, but staying hungry most of the time made it taste pretty good. They gave us clean linen, soap, toilet articles, which I thought was very accommodating. That day we were allowed to shave, which they told me is very uncommon in Mississippi.

Then they took us to a room where

we met the other Freedom Riders and our lawyer, so we could decide what to do at the hearing. We decided right away to plead not guilty (of breach of the peace), and to take any sentence given to us.

There were many reporters and few spectators in the courtroom. This was the largest crowd they had ever had in this courtroom, I was told. The judge showed little interest in our attorney's and the city attorney's arguments. As soon as they concluded, the judge ruled guilty and gave us two months suspended sentences and \$200 fines, or 67 days time to serve.

Found guilty of breach of the public peace, for trying to use facilities of the Trailways Bus Station, for which we had bought tickets with good American money, we went back to the city jail to wait for transfer to the county jail. We were taken to the Hinds County jail right across the street from the city jail.

When we went in we were met by some of the meanest looking, tobacco-chewing lawmen I have ever seen. They ordered us around like a bunch of dogs, and I really began to feel like I was in a Mississippi jail. Our cell was nasty and the beds were harder than the city jail beds, hardly sleepable, but the eight of us in our cell had to lie down somewhere. It was very cold during the night because the window was broken, and we didn't have enough cover.

We struggled through a horrible breakfast the next morning. I had slipped in a couple of bars of soap from the city jail and decided to take a shower, but the shower didn't work properly, and the sink didn't either. We didn't have much to do but wait and see if lunch would be as bad as breakfast. After lunch we wrote letters we couldn't mail because we had sealed

them up. We talked about the Freedom Rides, the Student Movement in general, and our commitment to non-violence. Dinner was worse than breakfast or lunch, although I hadn't thought that was possible. We read a little literature we had smuggled in, and then lay down on those things they called beds, and had a very chilly and unrestful sleep.

After breakfast next day, we began to sing Student Movement songs. A jailer came into our ward and told us to "cut out that - - - noise." We kept on singing. He told us we were "a bunch of smart - - - and we got ways of taking care of black - - - niggers who get out of their place." We kept on singing, and we couldn't hear all of the cussing and name-calling.

The jailer left and came back with somebody of higher authority, and we had two Mississippi experts cussing us out. We kept on singing, and they threatened to put us in the sweat box or solitary. They took three of us and told us they were going to put all of us in the sweat box if we didn't shut up. We kept on singing, and they took a few more of us to the sweat box and threatened to beat the rest of us over the head with a stick.

Later, when they realized we were not going to stop singing regardless of what they did to us, they brought those they had locked up in the sweat box back to the cell. One jailer told me they could get rid of a nigger in Mississippi, and nobody could do anything about it. The first thing that came into my mind was the Charlie Parker case.

After several days they ordered us to pack up and get ready to move. Later a bunch of armed guards escorted

(Charles Parker, a Negro charged with rape, was abducted from the Mississippi jail and murdered by a mob in 1959. His body was found in a river. After investigation, the FBI offered its extensive report to a grand jury, which returned no indictments.)

Tourist *Continued*

us to two station wagons, which took us to the Hinds County penal farm. When we got there we met several men in ten-gallon hats, looking like something out of an old Western, with rifles in their hands, staring at us as if we were desperate killers about to escape. This tickled me, and I had to smile. Here we were, non-violent Freedom Riders, who had come to jail to stay there, and they led us through a tunnel of men holding rifles to prevent our escape. They locked us up in the farm jail. Soon they took us out to a room, boys on one side and girls on the other. One by one, they took us into another room for questioning before they gave us our black and white stripes.

There were about eight guards with sticks in their hands in the second room, and the Freedom Rider being questioned was surrounded by these men. Outside we could hear the questions, and the thumps and whacks, and sometimes a quick groan or a cry, when their questions weren't answered to their satisfaction. They beat several Riders who didn't say, "Yes sir," but none of them would Uncle-Tom the guards.

Rev. C. T. Vivian of Chattanooga was beaten pretty bad. When he came out he had blood streaming from his head. They took him to the penal farm doctor, who apparently patched him up so he looked like he had not been beaten when we saw him again.

We could hear somebody slap a girl Freedom Rider, and her quick, little scream—I guess it was knocked out of her. She was about five feet tall and wore glasses, and they beat her because she wouldn't Uncle-Tom them or behave in a subservient manner.

I wasn't beaten myself, but they did call me all the dirty names they seemed able to think of. I was about the 15th man to go in there, and the prison doctor must have warned them about beating us after Reverend Mr. Vivian's injuries.

So, after being guarded by men with guns big enough to kill an elephant, called nasty and unbelievable names, beaten until blood ran down some of our faces, we were ordered to work in the fields in 100-degree weather from sunup until sundown. I didn't get a chance to work too long and get too hot, because I was soon released.

My friend Harold Andrews and I got out on a \$500 appeal bond to go back to Montgomery as witnesses in a case against the city of Montgomery and its police department because of our unlawful arrest in Montgomery.

Guard rushed us back to Jackson, sirens clearing the way, being, I suppose, so glad to get rid of a couple of Freedom Riders. We told our lawyer about the brutality inflicted on the Freedom Riders, and that if something weren't done, someone might be killed at that farm. Our lawyers notified the FBI and the Negro Freedom Riders were transferred back to the Hinds County jail, where they were at least safe from guards at the isolated penal farm.

This experience of Freedom Riding and being locked up in Mississippi is something I will never forget. But I wouldn't trade it for anything. I am glad I was a witness undergoing the suffering which Negroes endure in Mississippi and helping in the big push for freedom all over the South, I feel also that the Freedom Riders are bringing about a new life for the Negro community in Mississippi. I would willingly go through the whole ordeal again.