

A CIVIL RIGHTS SUMMER, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1966

A MEMOIR

By

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We were 'blowin' in the wind'

When Congress passed the Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965, it was enthusiastically signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. The law marked a signal achievement in the long struggle for equality in this country by outlawing any unconstitutional impediments to the right to vote. Given recent laws passed in several states, and the Supreme Court decision invalidating a key section of the act, it is worth citing the exact language of Sec. 2 to underscore its original intent: “No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”

Who would have imagined in 1966, the summer when a number of students from all over the country were enlisted to register black voters throughout the South, that we would be fighting a similar battle forty-seven years later? Certainly I wouldn't have thought it possible.

In the spring of 1966 I was beginning graduate school in Political Science at UC Berkeley. I was twenty-three years old. I didn't yet have summer employment and was looking around. As I did almost every day, I passed by the numerous tables set in front of the Student Union that were there to recruit students for various causes. It was a fine Bay Area spring day when I happened to stop at a table where someone from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) was sitting. The Friends were on campus recruiting students to spend their summer in various towns and cities in the South to register black voters. Never having been to

any of the southern states, I was intrigued by the prospect of getting directly involved in the civil rights movement.

I applied for the program, and was accepted for the Sumter, South Carolina, Citizenship Education Project. It required paying the Friends \$125.00 and getting myself to Sumter, which I had to look up on a map. It was a small southern town southeast of Columbia, the state capital. I have no idea now where I got the money to do this, since my family was in no position to help, and I was supporting myself with a graduate teaching assistantship—your typical starving student. Nevertheless, I somehow scraped together the money to pay the fee and to fly to Washington, D.C. around the middle of June. I stayed at the YWCA in downtown Washington for a couple of days to see the sights and meet some friends. I marvel today at how inexpensive things were back in the 1960s! A plane trip from San Francisco to Washington, a few nights at the Y, and then some sightseeing. Given my modest circumstances, that wouldn't be possible today. But I immediately fell in love with the nation's capital, where I had never been, and promised myself that I would return for an extended stay sometime.

After a brief time in D.C., with a small suitcase put in the hold, I boarded a Greyhound bus bound for Columbia, South Carolina. It left Washington sometime in the afternoon. I didn't know a soul, of course. From my window seat I looked out at the beautiful Virginia countryside until dusk fell. We proceeded South during the night and I dozed off a few times, waking when the bus made its regular stops. As the night wore on it became hotter and darker. I began to have an uneasy feeling that I was venturing into unknown territory. That was confirmed when the bus stopped somewhere in North Carolina in the middle of the night. I got off the bus and headed for the restroom. The sign on the door read: "Whites Only." Naively I believed that such segregation ended with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, and certainly with

the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But the sign remained , as if nothing had changed. I began to wonder then what I was getting myself into, and the sense of unease deepened.

The bus arrived in Columbia sometime in the morning. I was met by a couple of Friends' workers, and was driven to a house in the city. There I met several young men and women who would compose our working group in Sumter. I have little recollection of the two-day orientation program, but I did meet some of the other participants, and we also met an important member of the Sumter Steering Committee, attorney E. A. Finney. We were given a pamphlet with statistics on percentages of people, both whites and blacks, who were registered to vote in South Carolina in 1966. I don't recall the exact figures but of course they were heavily skewed in favor of whites. We also engaged in voter registration role-playing, which was useful since that was what we spent the majority of our time doing in Sumter County. Finally, we met the young Quaker couple from the AFSC, Bob and Margaret Welsh, from Charlotte, North Carolina, who would serve as our project leaders that summer. They brought with them their months-old baby.

It was on to Sumter on June 23. Most members of the group were housed in a run-down, two-story, frame house in the largest and most impoverished black section of town. The parsonage house at 405 Harvin Street was located on an unpaved street behind the church that owned it. The houses around ours were even more run-down; most had tin roofs and unpainted wood siding. Screen doors and windows often were in need of repair. Barefoot children of all ages ran through the streets surrounding our house.

Initially our group was composed of fourteen college students from various parts of the country, but one young woman had to leave after a couple of weeks when her father found out about her whereabouts and insisted that she come home. That was a loss because she was dynamic and involved in the civil rights movement in the Bay Area. (I didn't have that problem

because I told my widowed mother that I was spending the summer registering black voters “somewhere in the D.C. area.” I didn’t want to worry her, and in those days it was easy to hide one’s tracks. Still, I felt—and feel—guilty about hiding my real location.)

Of the thirteen remaining workers, there were seven young men, six young women, ten of whom were white, and three of whom were black. (The usage of “black” was gaining ground during the 1960s, gradually replacing Negro. In Sumter, we used both terms, depending on who we were with.) There was one black male student from Sumter itself, another black male from Greenville, South Carolina, and one black young woman from the Atlanta area. The local young man, Louie Dicks, sometimes lived at home while at other times with us in the big house. That meant seven men crammed together in one bedroom, and, likewise, six women in another bedroom. Louie turned out to be one of the most important members of the group, since he knew Sumter like none of the rest of us did.

Thirteen young people, plus our two directors and their baby, of mixed race and sex, lived in the parsonage from June 23 to August 24. This was 1966 and one can only imagine what the local Sumter residents thought about our living conditions. Shocking for most of them, of course. Even the neighborhood kids at first wondered what was going on. One of our first encounters with the children was when a young boy knocked on our door and asked, “Is this a whore house?”, or words to that effect.

In fact, our behavior both within our living quarters and outside of them, was very correct. This was a Friends’ project, after all. We conformed to those high standards: No alcohol in the house, separate bedrooms for the males and females, a meditation period before or after dinner whenever possible, a sharing of responsibilities for cooking and cleaning. We had a dietician who planned our meals but we all had chores to do, like cooking, serving, and cleaning

up, on a daily rotating basis.

Nevertheless, the house usually was a mess. There were ashtrays overflowing with cigarette butts, newspapers and other reading materials scattered about the living room, and dust from the unpaved street in front of the house needing constant attention, which it didn't always get. But the biggest problem we had at the outset of the summer was with the neighborhood kids. Once they learned that we were friendly and working in their interests, they flocked into the house at all hours, from early morning until bedtime. With the kids underfoot and wanting attention, it was impossible to do our work. So rather quickly we closed the Open Door Policy and replaced it with specified times that the kids could enter the house. This was usually later in the afternoon. We also started a semi-structured "educational" period for the kids in the basement of the church next door. We couldn't do this every day, though, because we were in Sumter to undertake one key project, and that was to register as many unregistered voters as we could in a two-month period of time. Nevertheless, a few group members including Marc Linder became very close to some of the kids, and kept in touch with them for years.

In the summer of 1966 the voter registration office for Sumter County was open for only sixteen days: July 5-7, August 1-6, August 8-13, and August 15. With such a limited window of opportunity, we had to work fast and hard. We naturally concentrated on the black sections of the city and county because that was what the Voting Rights Act was about—rectifying the large disparity between white and black voters in the South.

Our canvassing efforts started within the Sumter city limits. We divided up the black sections of town into several blocks apiece, and assigned two people to a particular area. Since we had to go back several times to reach as many people as possible, we wanted to have the same faces for each go-around. Many blacks were fearful of repercussions so it usually took

quite a bit of coaxing for those who had never voted before to sign up for registration. We kept note cards for each person we contacted, and told them we could provide transportation to and from the registration office at 112 Canal Street.

We used as many local contacts as possible. Students from Morris College, a local black institution, often helped, as did members and friends of the Sumter Steering Committee, which was the local group that oversaw what was formally called the AFSC South Carolina Voter Education Project of 1966. We made it a point to attend as many black churches as possible, where we tried to make friends with the ministers and their congregations. Since so much of black social life revolved around the church, we found this activity particularly important to the project. It also was sobering, and informative, to be the only white face among the congregation: A lesson in what it feels like to be a minority. A few of us, including myself, also often attended the small mixed race Catholic Church in Sumter. Father Ed Randall was the pastor at the time, and he took quite an interest in our project, probably more than we realized that summer. I will have more to say about this good person later.

We found that working in downtown Sumter on Saturdays was a productive way to meet potential voters. Although there were cold stares and some rude comments from white citizens, we were able to add to our registration lists. During the July 5-7 period when the registration office initially was open, we registered 266 first-time voters. As we moved into the county, starting sometime in mid-July, we of course encountered numerous black people who had never registered.

Canvassing in the county was a challenge. We continually had transportation problems covering such a wide area, and pairs of us would roam the back country roads on foot for hours. I had never seen such poverty as I did on those trips into the rural area of Sumter County. Most

folks lived in shacks: Windows covered only by a curtain, screen doors falling off their hinges, babies sitting on the stoop in diapers with a troubled look on their faces, and frequently guard dogs chained up outside the house. Being a dog lover, I once stupidly approached one of the dogs, only to have it lunge at me with bared teeth; fortunately the chain stopped it before it could maul me. Talk about naivete!

I also vividly remember one incident that occurred when Louie Dicks and I were riding in an old convertible and stopped at a small grocery store in the middle of nowhere. I got out of the car and went inside the store to get us two Cokes. A tired-looking white woman was standing behind the counter. I asked if I could buy two sodas. She gave me a hard look and said nothing for a minute. Then, “Why you drivin’ around with a nigger boy?” Flustered, I said something to the effect that he was a nice person and that he was just driving me around to do some work in the area. She said nothing more as she handed over the cokes. I paid her and quickly left. Even after a month or so in Sumter, I still had very little understanding of how we were being perceived by the white citizens there. Since our efforts were confined to the black community, we didn’t come into contact with, or socialize with, many white residents . A few white college students from the University of South Carolina came over a couple of times to visit with us, but other than that we were left largely alone, or ignored, by the white community. Or so we thought.

Were we in danger that summer? Clearly, yes. We were aware of the recent history of violence in the South: The murders of Medgar Evers in 1963, of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in 1964, of Viola Liuzzo and Jimmy Lee Jackson in 1965. We also knew about the beatings, imprisonments, police dogs, and water hoses

that greeted civil rights workers throughout the South: Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, being jailed in Birmingham in 1963, and the beating of Harold M. Ickes, the son of President Roosevelt's Interior Secretary, in 1964. He was beaten so badly that he lost a kidney.

Despite this knowledge, few if any of us fully realized how dangerous our situation was. But a handful of incidents at first got our attention, such as the woman in the grocery store who expressed such hostility towards me. I also remember being in a car with other group members one evening, and having our car forced to the side of the road by a car full of young white men. They then sped off and we continued on to our destination. Another project member, Sue Yellig, recalls that she and Gay Johnson went downtown for lunch one day. They entered a mostly empty restaurant and sat down, waiting to be served. They waited. And waited. Other customers came in and were promptly served. Finally, Gay said that it was because she was black and Sue was white. They eventually were served, but the point that they were not welcome was made.

The most serious incident occurred one evening when five members of our group went to the recently integrated bowling alley outside of town. Bill Wernz was one of them, and this is Bill's chilling and detailed description of what occurred.

“Near the end of our summer of 1966 project, we persuaded our project leader, Bob Welsh, to loan us his '55 Chevy, for an evening's outing at the Gamecock Lanes. I was the driver, and the passengers were Gay Johnson, Marc Linder, Bill Schauman and...Pete Iverson—four white guys from the north and a young black woman from Atlanta. We persuaded Bob that there was no real danger. Local whites had not shown any hostility beyond name-calling and nasty looks. We were young and felt we had been cooped up long enough.

“We generally had kept to ourselves separate from the white community in Sumter. Our

most regular encounters with whites were when we tried to recruit black voters in downtown Sumter. Otherwise, we were in black parts of the community. The Gamecock Lanes were—no surprise, if we had thought about it—white territory.

“We weren’t exactly bowling enthusiasts, but the entertainment alternatives in Sumter were limited. As it happened, Gamecock Lanes had an unusual promotion and I had most unusual luck. An offer was a free game if a solitary red pin appeared as the head pin, and the bowler rolled a strike. Three frames in a row, I won a free game. There must have been Power Ball odds against this, but it happened. For me, this improbable triumph explained a gathering crowd around our lane.

“A different explanation appeared when we left and went to the parking lot. There was a mob of young whites, cat-calling about our race-mixing. [Someone from the group recalls hearing one of the white boys saying, “I see four white boys and a colored girl.” Another yelled, “I see white trash.”] As we pulled out of the parking lot, one of them threw a chunk of concrete, shattering the Chevy’s rear window.

“The Gamecock Lanes were (and remain) on Broad Street, a four lane thoroughfare on Sumter’s outskirts, lined with stores, gas stations and the like. The mob arranged their cars ahead, behind and next to ours, proceeding at 5 m.p.h. or so. Our slow procession was filled with the mob’s yells and hurled objects, and with our own thoughts of what might happen. I had spent the summer of 1964 in Louisiana, and I thought of the murders then of the young civil rights workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Gay Johnson, being black, southern, and female, would have been recalling many stories of violence.

“Broad Street proceeds about two miles from the Gamecock Lanes, towards the center of Sumter, and then forks. The right fork, Washington Street, continued to the heart of town. The

left fork appeared to be a small lane, heading toward the heart of darkness. The mob's cars were forming an arc, to force us down the left fork. One of the cars had, however, been angled badly. I recall—as if it were the Red Sea parting!—seeing his arm move the stick shift up, to reverse. As his car started moving backward, I floored it, zig-zagging the Chevy through the arc's opening, turning onto Washington. A high speed, tire-squealing chase ensued, ending in the police station parking lot. We made it into the station and the mob re-formed in the parking lot.

“We were not welcome. The police hectoring us, for causing trouble. I recalled that Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman had been in the police station before their deaths.

“Up to this point in the story, my memory of the incident is the same as Marc Linder's and is quite clear. Regarding the events in the police station, our memories diverge and mine is less clear. My memory is that the police said nasty things to us, but called the State Patrol. I recall that the State Patrol came, quelled the mob, and escorted us to our house. I also recall the State Patrol or police providing some protective surveillance....

“One other memory I have, showing, I suppose, one reason why young people volunteer for ventures like the military and civil rights work. When we returned to the house, we told the Gamecock Lanes story. I'm sure there was excited conversation. Before too long, however, I said I was tired. I went to bed and I slept soundly.”

Our efforts to register black voters continued through the rest of the summer, except for a two-day retreat at the Penn Center, just outside of the small town of Frogmore. The Penn Center was located on St. Helena's Island and was built by the Friends during Reconstruction to educate and train former slaves. A century later the Center was often the site of civil rights meetings, and for retreats such as ours. Frogmore was aptly named; the croaking of frogs was incessant, and the

sultry climate, combined with palmettos and moss-laden trees surrounding our building, felt to me about as Southern as you could get. We reflected on our first month of work while at the Penn Center, but we also had time to go to the beach and have some fun. I remember it as an enjoyable experience, and a welcome break from our work.

In August, when the registration office was open for thirteen days – August 1-6, August 8-13, and August 15, we were able to register 1,265 voters. Counting July, the grand total for the summer was 1,531 newly registered voters. We were fairly pleased with the outcome of our efforts.

As to any hindrances we encountered in registering these people, we experienced clearly mixed responses from the county registrars. At times they were superficially friendly, and at other times antagonistic. Many of the people we brought in to register could not read or write, and lots of them had little idea of the exact date they were born. Birth certificates were rare, and these factors likely added to the hostility the clerks sometimes evidenced. It meant more work for them.

We had to closely watch the registration process for each voter. Frequently, the registrar would write “male” for “female,” and vice versa. They would record the wrong address; and at one point during the August registration days individuals were being refused if they did not know the exact date of their birth. Some pressure from us and the Steering Committee changed that policy. Also in August a chain-link fence was built around the registration office, thereby denying access to the large front porch and shade tree that was next to the building. It was another instance of harassment since it denied those waiting in line to register, (and us), the chance to get out of the hot summer sun. For the second week of August registration, we tried to get the office to change its hours of operation, from the customary 9am to 5pm, to noon to 8pm,

making it easier for working people to register. This request was not granted. But by the end of the August registration days, the clerks began to register people who were waiting in line at 5pm. We considered this a minor victory.

One other activity that some group members undertook that summer was to “participate” in the Sumter City Council elections held on August 9. This was a spur-of-the-moment effort and doomed to failure, but nevertheless the effort was made. We learned of the election only when *The Sumter Daily Item* published an article on August 8, stating that citizens of Sumter would go to the polls the next day to elect two incumbent city councilmen (both white). After a frantic search for two black write-in candidates, we persuaded Frank Robinson, Field Secretary for CORE, and W. S. Randolph, Pastor of the Sumter First Baptist Church, to run as write-in candidates. We spent that evening and the next morning planning a strategy of surprise: We would contact and bring black voters to the polls during the later hours of the day and encourage them to write in Misters Robinson and Randolph.

We began canvassing the morning of the election, asking black voters to vote later in the day. Our write-in candidates were to call as many people as possible. Attorney Ernest Finney and other members of the Sumter Steering Committee also were to bring out the vote. One member of our group wrote that “Enthusiasm ran high – ah, yes.”

But the election results were predictable: 910 for the incumbents, 240 for the write-in candidates. Although we never thought that Randolph and Robinson would actually win, personal observations and a review of voting in one of the precincts led us to believe, unsurprisingly, that there was fraud involved in the voting process. For example, we saw the voters’ list for that precinct, and noticed more than twenty instances in which successive signatures clearly were written in the same hand. We estimated that 700 votes for the

incumbents was more accurate. Despite an “official” protest, the original vote tallies remained. But everyone had learned the potential for write-in voting. The Mayor of Sumter had another view, however, calling write-ins “un-American.”

Mention needs to be made about Ernest Finney, who, among all of the members of the Steering Committee, appeared to me to take the most interest in our project. He often visited us in our house on South Harvin, offering us guidance and opportunities for social events in the black community. In 1966 Mr. Finney was a thirty-five year old attorney, and already an important voice in city affairs. He was ambitious, and perhaps saw that a successful AFSC voter education project would be of benefit, not only to himself but to the state at large. He ran for the State House of Representatives in 1968, and lost. He ran again in 1972, and was elected. That election was the beginning of a distinguished career in South Carolina politics. In 1994 Ernest Finney was appointed the first black Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, a position he held for years. Members of our project were, and are, privileged to have been associated with a person who broke through many racial barriers during his long and distinguished career.

I had to leave the project a week or so before it officially ended because of a family emergency. I suppose that, like most of the participants, life resumed where it left off: A return to normal after an adventurous summer in Sumter. I resumed my graduate studies at Cal in the Fall of 1966, but “normal” in Berkeley was not your everyday normal. Actually, it seemed to me to be more of a continuation of the summer. Several movements were in full swing: The civil rights movement was gaining momentum, and was taking a serious turn with the recent organization of the Black Panthers in Oakland; the Anti-War Movement also was dominating student life on campus, with marches, speeches, and demonstrations occurring on a continuing

basis. Joan Baez, Angela Davis, members of The Black Panthers, and Mario Savio, among others, were occasional speakers on the steps of Sproul Hall, where many of the demonstrations occurred. I also recall one day when I was walking across campus and nearly got run over by a phalanx of National Guard troops with weapons at the ready. Another time I woke up, looked out the window of my apartment on the corner of Derby and Fulton Streets, and saw armored vehicles blocking the intersection. Classes were sometimes disrupted, too. Deep divisions emerged among faculty and students. All of this activism was, however, an important addition to my formal education in politics. Needless to say, being a student at Cal in the 1960s was a unique experience, and I loved it.

My education at the University, from 1962 when I transferred there from Santa Rosa Junior College, to 1973, when I was awarded my doctorate, was, believe it or not, virtually free. I received a \$500 undergraduate scholarship for two years from the University, and worked twenty hours a week in the main library. As a graduate student, I worked twenty hours per week for various Political Science professors as a research or teaching assistant. I cannot remember how much tuition was in the '60s, but it was negligible. I lived comfortably (for a student) during many years at Berkeley, because academic expenses were so low, and I finished college debt-free! I mention this point because it is a disturbing commentary on our society that we have abandoned the principle of affordable public higher education. We are paying a high price for the loss of equal educational opportunity.

To conclude my story of the Sumter summer of 1966, I have to go back to 1968. As many of us remember, that was an incredibly tragic year when, to paraphrase Yeats, things fell apart. First, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis in April. It is hard to describe

the feelings of anger, shock, and disbelief that pervaded the campus. We mourned the loss for months. Then, on June 4, Senator Robert Kennedy was murdered in the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel, moments after giving his victory speech for winning the California Democratic primary. He was poised to become the next President. I didn't hear about his assassination until the next morning, the day after I had voted for him in the election. That day students and faculty gathered on campus, again in a state of shock; it simply couldn't be true, we thought. Many of us spent the day simply milling around the campus in small groups; classes were out of the question for a lot of us. I recall spending the day with fellow students and faculty members, talking about how and why such tragedies had occurred. I remember a famous author saying that he felt as if God had withdrawn His Hand from our country. That resonated with me and probably many others.

In part due to the trauma of the spring, I signed up for another civil rights project that took me, and three other students from various parts of the country, to Columbia, South Carolina. Unlike the voter registration project, this one was not so controversial. The four of us spent about two months teaching summer school to middle school black students. We were given room and board in the homes of black families, but our work was *pro bono*. We taught five days a week, for several hours each day, which gave us a lot of free time to visit other parts of South Carolina.

One weekend we drove to Sumter to see Father Randall and to visit the area where I spent the summer of 1966. It was during this conversation that he told me, "You all don't know how close you came to having your house bombed." He was reluctant to elaborate on what was happening in Sumter that summer, but he did say that there was talk among certain elements of the white community to take serious action against those outside agitators who were registering black voters and violating southern mores in such a blatant way by living in an integrated house.

It was only then that I finally realized how much danger we had been in. I think we all underestimated the anger in the air in 1966, and those individuals who may have known what was happening chose not to tell us. The members of the Sumter Steering Committee, for instance, said nothing of potential violence towards us, and said very little about the frightening bowling alley incident. It's an understatement to say that we who participated in this project are lucky to be alive.

That South Carolina was a violent place during the 1960s is indisputable. It did not receive the attention that Mississippi, Alabama, and Memphis received, for obvious reasons, but that changed with the February, 1968, "Orangeburg Massacre". Nine South Carolina highway patrolmen shot and beat thirty black people, killing three of them. Ironically, the group was protesting the segregation of the local bowling alley. Orangeburg is about sixty miles from Sumter.

Also, one of the project's participants recently found a letter in the FBI files. Dated September, 1966, and written by an FBI employee, it stressed the need to place an informant in the Sumter Klavern (the local Ku Klux Klan). This proposal came a month after our project ended. It seems that the FBI was running a counter-intelligence program on hate groups in the area. We found out later that someone in Sumter demanded at the outset of our project that the FBI investigate all of the participants. Thus, I have an FBI file on record because of my participation in this project, and I presume others do, too.

Finally, in 1970, it is important to mention that ten members of a Klan group were charged with a murder following a rally held near Sumter. *The Washington Post* reported on September 18 that a clash between two rival Klan groups erupted on September 17, and one person was killed in the melee. Grand Dragon Robert E. Scoggins was among those arrested for

the murder of Willie J. Odom, a member of another local Klan group. Scoggins was the Imperial Wizard of the “Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, Empire of South Carolina.” (*The Post* was not making this title up.) After serving a federal prison sentence for contempt of Congress, Scoggins became embroiled in a struggle for Klan leadership in South Carolina. The killing of Willie J. Odom, a member of the rival Klan group, led to charges brought against ten members of Scoggins’ Klavern. Of the ten, it appears that only one, Joe Turner, was tried for the murder. In November of 1971 Turner was given a directed verdict of acquittal. The Sumter County Sheriff said that it was the first time in eighteen years that there had been any trouble with the Klan in Sumter County.

This was the social and political context in which we worked that summer. To my knowledge, this story has not been told, and it is a notable part of the history of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. What *might* have happened to us is still chilling, forty-seven years later. But this is a personal memoir and not a definitive history. For those interested in learning more, the Final Report of the 1966 Citizen Education Project in Sumter, South Carolina, can be found in the AFSC archives. The unpublished report was very helpful in writing this memoir, and several members of the group, especially Bill Wernz, also were of great assistance.

Back to the beginning. As Max Weber wrote, “Politics is the slow boring of hard boards.” With the recent passage of stringent, and potentially discriminatory, voter registration laws in several states, it appears that we civil rights workers of the 1960s who are still around will be back again on the streets registering voters. This time, though, I will be walking more slowly.