

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/12/65

BOBBY R. SMITH, funeral director, Franklin Funeral Home, Meadville, Mississippi, advised that he was the director for the funeral of EARL HODGES on August 16, 1965. He said that there was a large number of individuals at the funeral and that he, SMITH, was a native of that area and had known HODGES for some period.

Mr. SMITH stated that he had sent the register of those who signed upon attending the funeral to EARL HODGES's former wife, Mrs. HODGES, who lives at 1026 LaBranch Street, McComb, Mississippi.

Mr. SMITH said that he would have no information as to who may have possibly been responsible for HODGES's death but that he would immediately furnish any information to this Bureau in the event he received same. He said that he had heard the rumor that members of the Klan had been responsible for HODGES's death but he could not furnish the names of the individuals from whom he had received this information.

Mr. SMITH said that he has never been a member of the Klan, has no use for its activities and feels that it is an organization which is very detrimental to the area.

He said that approximately four years ago he was asked by GENE SEALE and JAMES HUNT to go to a meeting which SMITH assumed was a Klan meeting. SMITH refused and has not been contacted since that time to attend a meeting.

Mr. SMITH stated that he talked with numerous individuals at the time of the funeral but that he had picked up no information as to who may have possibly been responsible for HODGES's death.

On 9/9/65 MEADVILLE, MISSISSIPPI File # Jackson 157-3830-25  
174-27  
by SA JAMES A. ARBOTT & SA ROBERT E. COOPER:bcs Date dictated 9/11/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/12/65

Mrs. BOBBY R. SMITH, address - Franklin Funeral Home, Meadville, Mississippi, was interviewed at her home. She stated that she is secretary to the funeral director, her husband, Mr. BOBBY R. SMITH. She advised that she has known EARL HODGES for many years and attended his funeral at the funeral home August 16, 1965. She said that the people in the community are very upset because of the fact that HODGES was apparently beaten to death and that she, Mrs. SMITH, will do everything possible to obtain information as to who might have been responsible. She said the only thing she can recall is that on the day of the funeral, MARGIE EMFINGER, wife of EDWARD EMFINGER of Eddiceton, Mississippi, was in the funeral home and ordered a \$10 floral wreath for HODGES. Mrs. SMITH was standing by Mrs. EMFINGER when the call was completed for the flowers and Mrs. EMFINGER commented to Mrs. SMITH, "That is pretty good for one whose husband is supposed to have killed HODGES." Mrs. SMITH said that Mrs. EMFINGER said no more but Mrs. SMITH assumed that due to the fact EDWARD EMFINGER was reported as having been with HODGES on the night before he was found dead, is what prompted Mrs. EMFINGER's statement.

On 9/9/65 at Meadville, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-3830-34  
174-27  
 by SA JAMES A. ABBOTT & SA ROBERT F. COOPER:bkb Date dictated 9/11/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/11/65

CHARLES E. SNODGRASS (NA), Administrative Assistant and Chief Investigator, Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol (MHSP), advised that on Saturday night, August 14, 1965, at approximately 7:40 P.M., BERNICE BEASLEY, Patrolman, MHSP, while issuing a traffic violation ticket approximately three-fourths of a mile west of Highways 84 and 33, on Highway 84, an unidentified motorist stopped and advised BEASLEY that there was an accident approximately one mile west of this location on Highway 84. Mr. SNODGRASS stated that according to BEASLEY, he immediately went to the location where the alleged wreck had been reported, found no one at the scene however noted that apparently there had been a slight automobile accident at this location which is in Franklin County. He stated that BEASLEY claims he then went east on Highway 84 and when he reached a point at a butane gas bulk storage plant located near the intersection of 84 and 33, he noticed two automobiles parked near the butane gas storage plant.

He stated that according to BEASLEY, one of these cars was a 1963 Falcon bearing 1965 Mississippi license 19B-339, which automobile was parked on the shoulder of Highway 84. SNODGRASS stated that according to BEASLEY, ETHEL RAY SMITH was occupying the driver's seat in this Falcon automobile with CURTIS RAY STOKES in the front passenger seat and MAXIE PRATHER with two other men who he did not recognize seated in the rear of this automobile.

SNODGRASS stated that according to BEASLEY, the second automobile at this location was a Ford automobile, not further described, owned by MAXIE PRATHER and it was noted that the left front fender of PRATHER's automobile had been slightly damaged. BEASLEY asked PRATHER what had happened to his automobile. PRATHER stated that he had hit the rear of J. C. EMFINGER's car shortly before this contact was made on Highway 84 west of the intersection of Highways 84 and 33. SNODGRASS stated according to BEASLEY, J. C. EMFINGER was contacted on Sunday, August 15, 1965, at which time

On 9/9/65 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-3830-33  
174-27  
 by SA EDGAR G. FORTENBERRY:bwb Date dictated 9/10/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/7/65

Mr. JAMES DOBBS WATSON advised that he is the closest neighbor of Mr. EARL HODGES. He advised that on the night of August 14, 1965, he went to bed at approximately 8:30 P.M., heard what he described as "heavy lumberings" in the HODGES house on two or three different occasions during the night. He described this "lumbering" as sounding like chairs or heavy furniture being moved about the house. He stated that he could furnish no information regarding the time he heard above. He stated that Mr. EARL HODGES is a heavy drinker and he has heard these noises on many occasions at the HODGES house.

He advised that he arose at 6 A.M., as usual, on August 15, 1965, did not notice any automobiles in the vicinity of the HODGES house or any unusual activity.

He advised that he walked from his home to that of a cousin at the end of the block at approximately 8 A.M., and was at that house when he learned of the death of EARL HODGES.

On 9/1/65 at Eddiceton, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-3830-32  
174-27  
by SA REESIE L. TIMMONS:bkb Date dictated 9/7/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

JN 157-3830

BEASLEY questioned EMFINGER regarding the above-mentioned accident and at which time it was noted that the rear right fender of a red Dodge Dart which EMFINGER was driving had been damaged. EMFINGER first claimed that this damage had occurred at Jackson, Mississippi; however, he later admitted to BEASLEY that PRATHER had run into the rear of his automobile the night before on Highway 84 west of Meadville, Mississippi.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/8/65

Mrs. SIDNEY JOEL WESTBROOK, Route 2, McCall Creek, was contacted by the interviewing agents concerning the ownership of an abandoned house place located near the WESTBROOK residence, which house place had previously been identified by Deputy Sheriff KIRBY SHELL as a Klan meeting house.

Mrs. WESTBROOK, after the agents identified themselves, appeared to be highly nervous and declined to allow the agents to come inside and talk with her. She stated that she and her husband own the property where the old house place is located which is used as pasture land. She advised she had no objection whatever to the agents going onto the property and observing the house but when asked by Special Agent DUKES as to the occupancy of the house she stated she would answer no further questions and that the agents should talk with her husband, whom she stated was at work.

On 9/7/65 at Route 2, McCall Creek, Miss. File # Jackson 157-3830-27  
Jackson 174-27  
 by SAs WILLIAM F. DUKES and  
J. L. MARTIN/WFD:elw Date dictated 9/8/65

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/8/65

An examination was made of a white frame abandoned house located off the McCall Creek Road near the residence of SIDNEY JOEL WESTBROOK, six miles southeast of Eddiceton, Mississippi. This abandoned house was observed to have one large room in which were a number of seats, apparently obtained from a bus or similar type vehicle and placed there for a meeting room. Old cardboard had been nailed to the windows shutting off a view from the outside. Numerous Viceroy and Lucky Strike cigarette butts were observed on the floor as was a cardboard box containing what appeared to be sugar and coffee. At the front of the room was a small table and chair. Immediately adjacent to this room was a similar room in which was located a 2" by 10" or 2" by 12" board with each end placed on a block of wood about three feet high. In the center of this board, which was approximately 12 feet long, was nailed on each side a strip of 1" by 4" board. It appeared that this device may have been used to secure someone to whom a beating was to be administered. Located in the same room adjacent to this device were several wooden sticks resembling bean sticks which were three to four feet in length. There was nothing in this room or on these sticks which resembled blood.

The electric lights were operable in the house and it was noted that on the side of the building was an electric light meter in operation which had serial number 10596466, and reflected 0060 hours on the meter.

Black and white and color photographs were made of both the exterior and interior of this building.

On 9/7/65 at Route 2, McCall Creek, Miss Jackson 157-3830-27  
 by SAs WILLIAM F. DUKES and Jackson 174-27  
L. MARTIN/WFD:elw Date dictated 9/8/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/8/65

SIDNEY JOEL WESTBROOK was interviewed at his place of employment, Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company, Natchez, Mississippi. WESTBROOK was advised by Special Agent MARTIN that he did not have to make any statement and that any statement he did make could be used against him.

WESTBROOK stated that when he returned home on September 7, 1965, his wife advised him that Franklin County Sheriff WAYNE HUTTO had been down under the hill to the abandoned house near the WESTBROOK residence. WESTBROOK stated that his wife had seen the car go down and drove down to the house to see who was there and discovered Sheriff WAYNE HUTTO and other individuals who HUTTO stated were FBI Agents.

WESTBROOK stated that he went to the home of Sheriff HUTTO on the night of September 7, 1965, to discuss the matter of the house on his place with HUTTO and that HUTTO advised him that the FBI had been to this house and had found bloodstains somewhere in the house. WESTBROOK stated that he related to HUTTO that he, WESTBROOK, and his wife had gone to the store in Eddiceton around 6 or 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 14, 1965. En route to the store they passed the home of EARL HODGES and WESTBROOK's wife saw HODGES in his back yard and commented, "EARL is back." WESTBROOK recalled that he had seen HODGES' pickup truck in front of the house but he did not actually see HODGES. He said that after the interview with Special Agents MARTIN and DUKES earlier on September 7, 1965, he had discussed this matter with his wife and was certain that the time she saw HODGES was between 6 and 6:30 p.m. He pointed this out to Sheriff HUTTO whom he stated told him that this information would just complicate matters because the FBI had talked to people who would testify that they were with HODGES the whole afternoon and early part of the night of August 14, 1965.

On 9/8/65 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-3830-27  
Jackson 174-27  
 by SAs WILLIAM F. DUKES and  
J. L. MARTIN/elw Date dictated 9/8/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.



JN 157-3830

WESTBROOK admitted at this time that he was suspicious that the persons using his old house were actually Klansmen rather than a legitimate hunting club. He was questioned as to the identity of the persons he knew or suspected as having gone to meetings at this house and of being Klansmen. He would furnish the name of only one suspect, a Jackson boy who lives the second house past him, but stated that if he were going to name people he suspected of being in the Klan he would have to name every man in that area.

WESTBROOK acknowledged he had heard rumors that EARL HODGES had been going with a married woman whose husband drove some kind of truck, possibly a transfer truck. He denied knowing the identity of this woman.

WESTBROOK was specifically questioned about whether he knew ROSIE DAVIS to be a Klansman or to have attended meetings at the old house. He denied such knowledge but admitted knowing that HODGES and ROSIE DAVIS were close friends. In this connection he stated he was also aware that HODGES frequently came to DAVIS' home while drunk and annoyed DAVIS and talked to him and prevented him from getting any sleep. WESTBROOK denied any knowledge of any disagreement between HODGES and DAVIS or anyone else.

WESTBROOK again denied being a Klansman but admitted that he had been asked to join the Klan on several occasions. When questioned about who asked him to join he commented that ROSIE DAVIS had "picked at him" about joining several times, pointing out that for a number of years he and ROSIE DAVIS rode in the same carpool to work.

WESTBROOK advised he is personally acquainted with DALE MC LEMORE, a member of the National Guard at Meadville. He denied any knowledge that MC LEMORE was a Klansman or sympathetic with the Klan.

IN 157-3830

The following description of WESTBROOK was obtained from interview and observation and records of the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company:

Name:	SIDNEY JOEL WESTBROOK
Race:	White
Sex:	Male
Birthdate:	10/24/27
Birthplace:	Magnolia, Mississippi
Residence:	Route 2, McCall Creek, Mississippi
Height:	5' 6"
Weight:	175 pounds
Eyes:	Hazel
Hair:	Dark
Build:	Stocky
Complexion:	Tanned
Occupation:	Tire Builder, Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company, Natchez, Mississippi
Social Security No.:	427-42-3854
Education:	10th grade
Relatives:	Wife, ELEANOR WESTBROOK, same address

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/8/65

Mr. SIDNEY JOEL WESTBROOK, Route 2, McCall Creek, was interviewed at the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company after being informed of the identity of the interviewing agents and after being advised by Special Agent MARTIN that he did not have to make a statement, that any statement he made might be used against him in a court of law and that he had a right to talk to an attorney or anyone else prior to making a statement.

WESTBROOK stated that the abandoned house located off the McCall Creek Road was on his property which he had purchased from his mother and that this house had been abandoned since 1958. WESTBROOK stated that he needed a pump in the well at this abandoned house to provide water for his stock and therefore had the lights hooked up to operate the pump.

WESTBROOK stated that he had rented this abandoned house to some fellows for a hunting club approximately one and a half to two years ago. He stated that they agreed to pay him \$10 per month rent, however, they only paid him two or three different occasions. In reply to a question as to who he rented the house to, WESTBROOK initially stated he would rather not say then stated that he did not recall to whom he rented the house. In regard to meetings at this house, WESTBROOK stated that he had seen four or five cars go to this house and that they normally went there on Thursdays. He stated that they would go sometimes before dark and at other times after dark.

After further questioning concerning his having the electricity turned on, WESTBROOK stated that he did not personally order the electricity turned on and did not know who did order it turned on, however it is in his name and

On 9/7/65 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-3830-26  
Jackson 174-27  
 by SAs WILLIAM F. DUKES and  
J. L. MARTIN/WFD:elw Date dictated 9/8/65

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

he receives the bills at his home. WESTBROOK stated that he had last been to this house about three months ago and that he observed seats in the house but that he thought these were used by the hunting club and had no idea that the house was used for any purpose other than a hunting club. He subsequently stated that he suspected the house was being used for some purpose other than a hunting club but declined to elaborate.

In regard to EARL HODGES, WESTBROOK stated that HODGES is his uncle's son-in-law and a good friend of his. He stated that on Saturday afternoon, August 14, 1965, he and his wife had gone to the store in Eddiceton and on the way home drove by HODGES' house and that his wife remarked, "There is EARL in the back." He stated that he did not see EARL at this time as he was driving the car. He stated that this was at approximately 2:30 p.m. and that he did not see EARL HODGES subsequent to this time. He stated that he had never observed EARL HODGES going to the abandoned house on his property.

WESTBROOK, obviously in a highly nervous condition, admitted that he is personally acquainted with CLYDE SEALE, JAMES SEALE, JACK SEALE and ARCHIE PRATHER. He denied having any knowledge that any of these persons had ever gone to the abandoned house and he specifically denied that he had ever attended any meetings at this house. He additionally denied that he is or has ever been a member of the Ku Klux Klan or that he was in favor of any acts of violence. He insisted initially that he had no knowledge concerning the identity of any of the persons who attended meetings at the old house but ultimately admitted that he did know three or four of these persons. He admitted that he actually rented the house to AUBREY BASS, a first cousin, whom he said is the same BASS whose home was burned at Meadville, Mississippi, on the night of September 3, 1965.

JN 157-3830

In connection to the initial renting of the house, WESTBROOK stated that BASS came to his house about a year and a half or two years ago accompanied by an old man whom he said may have been ARCHIE PRATHER. He denied that any discussion was had about renting the house for Klan meetings and insisted that he thought it was to be used for a hunting club initially. He admitted that AUBREY BASS was in the Klan at one time, probably during the time he rented the house, but stated he knows that BASS quit the Klan and is presently employed on an off-shore drilling rig.

WESTBROOK stated he was reluctant to help the FBI or to identify any other persons whom he knows attended meetings at this house, explaining that it might involve some of his own relatives. He advised in this regard that he would discuss the matter with his wife and requested that he be recontacted by the agents at a later date, suggesting that this contact be at the Armstrong Plant rather than at his home.

WESTBROOK related he attended the Americans for the Preservation of the White Race rally which was held at the horse show barn in Roxie, Mississippi, on September 6, 1965, and that he saw JACK SEALE at this rally.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 9/9/65

Mr. FRANK PRIEST, SR., was contacted at his home located next door to Hall's Store, Route 2, Roxie, Mississippi. Mr. PRIEST was very cordial and stated that he would cooperate with the FBI in any way possible. He was advised of the agents' identities and the nature of the inquiry. He was advised that he did not have to make any statement but that any statement he did make could be used in a court of law and he also had the right to consult with an attorney.

Mr. PRIEST stated he had nothing to hide and was willing to discuss anything at all. Mr. PRIEST was asked if he is now or was ever a member of the Ku Klux Klan or any other Klan type organization. He stated that he has never been a member of or affiliated with any Klan type organization.

He was asked if he knew the victim, GEORGE METCALFE, whose car was blown up while parked near the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company at Natchez, Mississippi. Mr. PRIEST stated that he knew who METCALFE was but did not associate with him nor did he work with him while on the job. METCALFE did walk by his machine at the beginning and ending of each shift and they would always exchange greetings but never indulged in any conversation.

Mr. PRIEST was questioned concerning his lunch period to which he replied he generally eats his lunch in the upstairs washroom area and has never eaten in the plant cafeteria as he feels it is too expensive. His particular job at the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company is that of "a slitter" which means that he operates a tire slitting machine. He has been so employed for the past 17 years at Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company.

Mr. PRIEST could furnish no information concerning possible suspects and could suggest no one who might have

On 9/4/65 at Route 2, Roxie, Mississippi File # Jackson 174-27  
Jackson 157-3830  
Jackson 157-1610  
 by SAs ROBERT F. COOPER, JR. and  
JAMES A. ABBOTT/JAA:elw

157-3830-25

9/9/65

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
1 - 1965	
FBI - JACKSON	

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.