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Annotated manuscript by Charles Whaley, Ole Miss Motel sent to The Courier Journal, Louisville, KY

Charles Whaley

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to The Courier-Journal
Louisville, Ky.

Day Press Rates
from Chas Whaley
Ole Miss Motel

Oxford, Miss., Sept. 22--University of Mississippi
Chancellor John D. Williams looked fresh and cheerful, like a man
who had had a good night's sleep, when he met me in his office
Saturday morning.

It was almost as if he had no part in the turbulent
political drama that has made Ole Miss the pawn in what promises
to be a fight to the finish between segregationist Governor Ross

Yet Williams is one of the most harried men at the
center of the storm that has blown up over efforts of James H.
Meredith, a 29-year-old Negro, to enroll at the university.
Only the day before, a Federal District Judge in Meridian, Miss., had cleared Williams, the Ole Miss registrar and liberal-arts dean, of contempt charges for failing to enroll Meredith.

The judge ruled that "all powers were vested solely and conclusively in the board of trustees" and not officials of the university. The trustees have given Barnett authority to act for them and the registrar. As registrar, Barnett personally turned Meredith away from the campus Thursday.

Although he broke into a relieved smile after being cleared, the 59-year-old Williams returned to the campus Friday night to learn that more trouble was on the way.

The Justice Department still feels Williams and his two associates should have obeyed the federal court order to admit Meredith because the order was directed to the three men as university officials and not to give any power or directions of the trustees.

So the department will ask Monday in United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals at New Orleans that the three officials' names be added to already-pending contempt proceedings against the 13 trustees.
This means that Williams probably faces a repetition of Friday's ordeal in court.

But the thing that appears to worry him more is the newly arisen threat to the university's accreditation. The chairman of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools has warned that events at Ole Miss are being watched closely by his group.

One thing the group studies carefully, the chairman noted, is "capricious and arbitrary political interference with the operation of state colleges and universities."

Williams' face darkened when he spoke of the Southern Association announcement.

Once before, during the Bilbo Administration, Ole Miss lost its accreditation because of Bilbo's meddling in university affairs "and we are just getting over it."

In meeting me Saturday, Williams was granting his first interview with a newspaperman since the Meredith affair arose. Williams, who served previously as president of Marshall College in Huntington, W. Va., has headed Ole Miss since 1946. But his ties with Kentucky are perhaps stronger than with any other state.

He was born in Newport, went to public schools in Kentucky, and received his bachelor's degree in business and education administration from the University of Kentucky in 1926.

(more)
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He taught in Kentucky's elementary and secondary schools, served as principal at several, and once was superintendent of Falmouth schools.

He has a master's degree and a doctorate from the U. of K., where he was associate professor and professor of education from 1935 to 1942.

Several members of his faculty here believe he would have absolutely no objection to the enrollment of Negroes, if it were up to him to decide.

Williams himself prefers not to talk about the Meredith case except indirectly.

Two things are uppermost in his mind, he said--"to keep the university open by any honorable means and to avoid violence."

This is what he told freshmen during orientation week and this has also been given to transfer students and upperclassmen.

Williams had fervent praise for the conduct of Ole Miss students--there are about 5,000--during Thursday's drama.

Only about 400 or 500 gathered to watch Meredith and Barnett arrive and leave and these were generally well behaved.

Williams said he saw no rock-tossing by one student, but other students said they did.

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Students have been advised to walk on and go about their business if they see crowds forming on campus, Williams said. Some of Thursday's on-lookers were noted.

Faculty members have been asked to avoid the Meredith topic in class discussions and to keep students so busy with academic work that they have time to get into mischief.

The most important thing is for the educational mission of Ole Miss to continue without interruption, Williams asserted. To the students the court battles should be something taking place in the outside world.

But what will happen if Meredith actually succeeds in enrolling? (Some may have forgotten that he isn't the first to try. Another Negro man made the attempt four years ago but was sent to a mental institution and is now said to state.) Will students accept the situation?

Williams said he would rather not answer. But the answer may come as soon as Monday. Predications are rampant here that the New Orleans proceedings that day may clear the way for Meredith's enrolling the same afternoon.

Note to desk: Check Williams for U.K. degree to see if honorary or earned.