Annotated article by Dudley Morris, Ole Miss Motel sent to Parker, New York, Atlanta, 27 September 1962

Dudley Morris

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In the rain washed streets of Oxford, Mississippi morning chief United States Marshall James McShane and Lt Governor Paul B. Johnson of this State engaged in a belly shoving scuffle as the Justice Department tried for the third time to register James H. Meredith at the University of Mississippi. And for the third time they were turned away by state officials who claimed to have interposed State law between Federal Authority.

Backed by more than two dozen State Police and plainclothes Deputy Sheriffs, Lt. Governor Johnson firmly continued the defiance of the Federal Courts that now threaten to bring Federal troops into the red hills of northern Mississippi. The dramatic argument took place at 9:46 a.m. as a crowd of radio, television, and newspaper men watched in disbelief. Governor Ross R. Barnett stood in an office doorway in Jackson and blocked Meredith as he tried to register. And last Thursday the Governor appear in Oxford to bar him from admission in a similar scene. He had intended to block him again, but heavy weather settled over the Jackson airport early this morning and he decided to drive instead. 

Yesterday
the campus too late to act.

Meredith and justice department officials peeled out of an overcast sky in a two-tone green Cessna morning.

and landed at the Oxford-University of Mississippi airport. They were met by a cavalcade of six state patrol cars which sped them through the edge of town, and down University Avenue to the main entrance to Old Miss. There, they were met by Lt. Gov Johnson and his men.

The heavy set, red faced McShane, looking like an Irish prize fighter, was the first out of the 1962 Plymouth carrying Meredith and Justice Department attorney John Doar. A hush fell over the State patrol men who stood behind the Lt Governor, their arms hanging loosely and their sides. McShane walked and planted himself firmly in front of Johnson. Then came Doar. And Meredith followed, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and tie, and carrying a brown leather brief case.

Behind the line of state troopers, a dozen unarmed sheriffs planted themselves in the middle of the road. And behind them, were three police cars drawn across the road to stop traffic.

Reporters circled the combatants. A catholic priest watched quietly from the sidewalk. In the bushes a negro reporter
(Jimmy Hicks of the Amsterdam news) watched with caution.

A small wind shook water from the leaves of trees, and the opposing forces merged into a solid knot.

Standing inches away from Johnson, McShane barked in a husky New York accent, "Governor, we want to take Mister Meredith into the University under the direction of the Federal Government and have him registered."

"I am going to have to refuse Mr. Meredith," said Johnson, then read Ross Barnett's interposition order softly.

When he finished Justice Department attorney John Doar stepped to the front and read Johnson the fifth circuit court of appeals restraining order enjoining the governor from interfering in any way with Meredith registering at Ole Miss. He also read the fifth circuit's contempt citation, tried to serve the governors papers on Johnson.

"I will not accept these papers," said the Lt governor, then added, "I do so politely."

"I know, I know," Doar almost groaned. And McShane spoke up, "Governor I think it is my duty to go into the grounds and take Mister Meredith to the building where he is to
be registered, if is all right with you..."

"We're going to block you," said Johnson as McShane threw his shoulder against the solid line of muscle. He pushed hard and for about a minute he and the troopers slid back and forth across the street, scuffling for advantage. "I want to tell you McShane," Johnson muttered in the middle of the struggle, "If there's any violence, it's on your part, on the Federal government, and on James Meredith."

"Well, as they say, I'm only doing my duty," McShane muttered replied heatedly. "I would like to go on in, I think we have a right to."

"We don't think you do, and we're not going to permit you," said the Governor.

"Mr Gray, Mr Tryon, you people understand you're under a court order," Doar shouted reading the names of the troopers off metal nametags as McShane scribbled them down on a pad. "Mr Dickerson, Mr. Rutland, Mr Henderson, you officers, the court has directed you not to interfere with registration here this morning," Doar shouted.

"We have told you we can't go in," Johnson repeated warning, "we intend to use whatever force you exert on us."

"Well I'd like to go to governor if it's all right with you,"
McShane shot back:

McShane was shoving against the unyielding line of troopers.

He tried an end run around Johnson's flank, but was turned back when he reached the sidewalk. "Are these men acting under your authority, on your behalf, on your instruction, physically preventing us from going on campus?"

he demanded to Johnson.

"They are, replied the lean politician. Then as suddenly as they had come Door decided, "O.K. that's enough," and the tussle stopped.

The three men nodded to each other, and trailed by Meredith the Justice Department aide and McShane climbed back into the green plymouth that brought them. "Well," said Meredith, as he got in, "At least I'm getting in a lot of free flying time."

As the cavalcade sped away towards the airport the line of deputy sheriffs broke into applause, and they lifted their coats high to show the newsmen they were unarmed. "By, God, if they'd of come over us they would have had to come right over our bodies," beamed one. Afterwards, as we newsmen and charged that McShane, "pushed me and pushed several of the officers. I told him putting on a big show was not going to help us or the national government, "he said several times.

But asked what the state's strategy would be he grinned, "we're just playing it by ear." Later added jocularly, "they'll probably put me
away for a long time for this."

The highway troopers were under the direction of Chief Dave Gayden, Chief of the State Highway patrol. But most thought that the man responsible for the troopers firm stand was William Simmons, national co-ordinator of the American white citizens councils, who stood quietly on the sidelines and watched the whole performance. "It's all in a day work," he said as troopers milled around in the street, and volunteered that "the feeling all over the state is just as cocky and confident as can be." As head of the politically powerful Citizens council, Simmons is the man who stands to gain, and loose the most influence should the state win or lose in its battle with Bobby Kennedy.

Meanwhile, Meredith's escort drove him to the Oxford-University of Mississippi airport where he board the border patrol plane, and took off almost immediately for Memphis, and security around the campus relaxed. Barnett arrived in his blue cadillac about 10:30 and went straight to the alumni house where he went to sleep for two hours. He shook hands briefly with students, and when asked if he would have stopped Meredith if he had been there in time replied, "Oh, I certainly would have," the way I did
Heavy patrols of State Police continued to ring the campus today long after Meredith had left. Some were jovial, and some a little bit surly. Such as Sheriff W.O. Dardy of Quitman county who Tuesday stopped a car of reporters entering the campus and asked for indentification I.D. As they handed their cards through the window he smiled thinly and hardly, "What no nigger reporters, why there's a magnolia tree down there, and one reporter told me once it wasn't news unless it happened under a magnolia tree. You boys be sure to get under it to write it up." But at the airport another plainclothesman was asked what he would do when Meredith arrived, said with a wink, "We ain't going to do nothing, we love 'em."

State troopers let it be known last night that plans of the moment were to physically resist, cut magnolias, without arms, any attempt by Marshalls to get on campus. "We got the big boys here," said one six foot six trooper. He predicted that it would take troops to desegregate the campus. And what if troops did come, "Why then they'd win," he smiled. People in Mississippi seem almost pleased that it may take troops to bring Meredith in to college. And, most of them are getting used to the idea that they may be coming soon.

Reports from Memphis say that a force of Marshalls may try to ram their way...
onto the campus today to get Meredith registered. Other reports say nothing will happen till tomorrow. But in any case there seems to be little doubt there will be a fresh climax before the week is out.

more to come. dudley morris, ole miss motel, oxford, miss/