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Raymond R. Coffey to Chicago Daily News, 28 September 1962

Raymond R. Coffey

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 Coffey filing

Note to desk: I'll try to call you before the deadline for any questions. Also, assume you'll do any updating necessary from wires which are unavailable here on Washington etc development.

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BY Raymond R. Coffey
Staff Writer

Oxford, Miss. -- Hundreds of U.S. Marshals were massing in nearby Memphis Friday for the next showdown in the battle over integration of the University of Mississippi.

No one knew just where the showdown would come -- here, Jackson, New Orleans? But for a town potentially on the brink of violence or bloodshed, this tiny university town was a remarkably peaceful place as dawn broke.

Gov. Ross Barnett, who has been spearheading the state's defiance of federal court orders to admit Negro James H. Meredith was nowhere to be seen.
add one coffee

He had a date with a federal court in New Orleans Friday morning to answer a contempt summons. But it was considered certain that he would refuse to show up, carrying out his pledge to go to jail if necessary to keep Ole Miss all white.

Some 500 state, county and local police officers — equipped with helmets, gas masks and billy clubs Thursday to block any attempt by Meredith to set foot on the campus — also decamped during the night.

They were expected back in force, however, the minute word came that Meredith planned a new attempt to enter the university.

Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy continued to insist in Washington that the court orders demanding Meredith's admittance would be enforced.

He ordered the strong force of marshals, including five from Chicago, into Memphis, 50 miles north of here. He also conferred with an Army general on the possibility of sending in troops.

But Kennedy did not say when Meredith, a 29 year old Air Force veteran, would try again to enroll.
add 2 coffey

meredith has been turned away by state officials three times already. He planned a fourth attempt thursday but his plane turned back to memphis.

atty. gen. kennedy said this attempt was called off because it appeared—with the 500 battle-dressed law officers guarding the campus—that violence might result.

meanwhile, this quiet little community storied in the works of the late nobel prize winning novelist, william faulkner, awaited the next move like it had never heard of either barnett or meredith.

the town square with its colonnaded, whitewashed lafayette county courthouse, was deserted at 9:30 p.m. thursday.

a white sheet of paper tacked to a tree on the courthouse

announcing a repossession sale announcing a repossession sale

"business as usual" look. stores in the business area were closed early and even the lyric movie house just off the square was dark by 10 p.m.
The few townspeople encountered were unfailingly polite with the invading "yankee" newsmen. But they made clear they would rather not talk about the Meredith case.

more than 1,000 of Ole Miss' some 5,000 students turned out Thursday afternoon to watch the show of strength by the Mississippi lawmen.

But as time passed and Meredith failed to show up, the students and police both gave the affair almost a picnic atmosphere, lounging...
add four coffey

on lawns and under shade trees. The lawmen left their guns in
their patrol cars.

While Mississippi papers carried extensive
reports of the strong support Barnett was getting
in his defiance of federal authority, there were a
few signs of opposition.

Seven clergymen from the Oxford area sent a
telegram to the governor saying they were "fearful
of the anarchy thrust upon us and our people through
continued defiance of federal court orders and
convinced of the Christian call to obey the laws
of the nation and white land..."

they called on Barnett "above all else to
avoid closing the university, to protect its
accreditation and to uphold the good name and dignity
of the university."

Some students were being quoted locally, too,
as believing that closing the university would be
too high a price to pay for keeping meredith out.

Somewhat it might be the late to get into
another school if ole miss shut down. Somehow

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE
add 5 coffey

some students feared it would be too late to get into another school this year. Some of the male students were concerned that they'd lose their student deferments in the draft.

the graceful old courthouse surrounded by two-story brick storefronts, p

a walk around the graceful old courthouse

Just by wal
Perhaps the simpl

A walk past the graceful old courthouse, however, offered probably the best indication of how most Mississippians feel about the affair.

In front of the building stands a monument topped with a statue of a confederate musketman. The inscription says the monument was erected in memory of
add 6 coffey

Just a short walk around the courthouse shows what the whole battle is about—what the Negroes are trying to eliminate and how white Mississippians feel about it.

"White only" signs are openly displayed around the building. And before it stands a monument topped by a Confederate musket man. The inscription reads that Lafayette County's Civil War dead gave their lives in "a just and holy cause."

end it