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Journalism school's namesake donates unique historic photo collection to library

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Journalism school's namesake donates unique historic photo collection to library



The J.D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi soon will be home to a unique collection that includes never-before-seen photos of James Meredith attending his first classes at Ole Miss and what are believed to be the last photographs made of William Faulkner at his Oxford home, Rowan Oak.

Ole Miss alumnus and journalism school namesake Ed Meek has donated a collection of his images taken as a student photographer to the Meek School of Journalism and New Media and Department of Archives and Special Collections at the library.



The 1,600 images comprise many photos that show Oxford and the university during the 1960s, including the riots that occurred the night before James Meredith was admitted to and integrated Ole Miss on Oct. 1, 1962, and then-Attorney General Robert Kennedy's visit to Ole Miss.

Meek said as a student journalist with an office in the Lyceum, he had access to "both sides of the lines" during the riots.

Many of the never-before published images of that time have been kept secret for decades. Included in the collection is a string of eight photos that show James Meredith, accompanied by U.S. marshals, attending one of his first classes as a student. As Meredith takes his seat, students bolt from the class, followed by the instructor, leaving Meredith seated in the classroom alone.

"(President John F.) Kennedy made it clear that nobody was to get pictures of Meredith in the classroom," Meek said. "So I tucked my camera under my raincoat and took pictures. I just could not allow that historic moment to pass without it being photographed."

Will Norton, dean of the Meek School, described Meek as having "a wonderful eye for a good photo. This collection of hundreds of photos brings back the horror of those weeks on this campus, the memory of which tends to fade with time.

"Dr. Meek demonstrated great photographic skills and entrepreneurial journalism amid great danger," Norton said. "It was a violent time, and when journalists like Bob Schieffer and Dan Rather come back to campus, they are amazed at what this campus has become despite that tragic weekend."

Meek is thought to have been the last person to photograph William Faulkner alive, and at least 100 of the images show Faulkner riding his horses. He also did a series called "Campus Cuties," where he photographed the prettiest women on campus for the student newspaper. Many of those women have become very prominent in business, politics and social circles, Norton said.

More than 100 of the images will be published in a book called *Riot: Witness to Anger and Change* by Yoknapatawpha Press and the Meek School. Publisher Larry Wells said Meek is the only photographer who has an entire body of work of the riots on campus because many photographers had their cameras destroyed.

"No one photographer told the entire story, which makes this collection unique," Wells said. "We want this book to be an experience for young students who don't know much about the riots or James Meredith."

The book, expected to be printed this summer, will include perspectives from noted journalist, best-selling author and journalism faculty member Curtis Wilkie, as well as Meek and an afterword by former Mississippi Gov. William Winter.

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Wilkie and Meek were journalism classmates entering Ole Miss in 1958. Wilkie also is Overby fellow of the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics. Meek is a former assistant vice chancellor for public relations and marketing and associate professor of journalism.

"This historic gift represents another demonstration of Dr. Meek's extraordinary generosity to the university," said Jennifer Ford, head of archives and special collections for the library and associate professor. "His outstanding photographic work captured some of Mississippi's most pivotal moments, and Special Collections is truly honored by this significant donation."

The digitized collection will be available later this fall.

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