

AUTOPSY ON RIGHTS CRUSADER

DR. WELLS
IS SIGHTED IN
HERE

Mississippi Horror: A Doctor's Report

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The phone rang about 1:30 a.m. I had just gone to sleep, after a restless hour in bed conjugating four days of utter failure to get my outboard motor running, and I walked half-asleep down the dark hallway to the telephone certain that it was a wrong number. The phone doesn't ring too often at our summer home on Martha's Vineyard Island, and

I was as surprised by the post-midnight call as I would have been if I looked out the window and saw my ailing outboard motor running around by itself in the bay.

THE OPERATOR said Jackson, Miss., was calling. The man on the wire was Dr. Charles Goodrich, a New York physician who was spending his vacation in Mississippi giving medical aid to civil-rights workers as a vol-

unteer for the Medical Committee for Human Rights. "Dave, can you get down here, right away?" "To Mississippi?"

"Immediately. The autopsy for those three kids is scheduled for tomorrow, and the attorneys for Mrs. Chaney and Mickey Schwerner's family want an expert pathologist at the examination as an independent observer."

I had been horrified by the newspaper accounts of the discovery of the bodies of the three young civil-rights workers. I would do anything I could to help. Goodrich said he had verbal permission for me to observe the autopsy.

People in New York were working on a way to get me from the little island off the coast of Massachusetts to Mississippi by lunch time. "You find a way to get me there, and I'll go," I said.

THEN I WENT back to bed and waited.

At 3 a.m., the phone rang again. There is a small airport on Martha's Vineyard Island. I was to be there at 7 a.m.

A special plane would take me to Kennedy International, where I could catch a 9:15 a.m. flight to Mississippi that would get me into Jackson 15 minutes before the autopsy was scheduled to begin.

It was still dark when we got up and my wife drove me to the airstrip. But there was no small plane. Instead, we got a phone call from the pilot. He couldn't get his motor started. I told him I knew just how he felt, and put in a call to Jackson to tell Goodrich that things looked pretty hopeless.

THE ONLY scheduled flight from the island into Kennedy was at 10 a.m., too late to make the morning plane to Mississippi, and the next flight for Jackson left at 4 in the afternoon from Newark Airport.

As I waited in the telephone booth for the operator to get through, my feelings were mixed. I was relieved at not having to interrupt my vacation, and I hadn't particularly looked forward to the reception an alien white man can get in Mississippi.

But I was disappointed, too, because I wouldn't have a chance now to do something that might help find the murderers of those kids. Goodrich, when he came on the phone, resolved my ambivalent feelings for me.

"Get down here anyway. Take the late plane. There's something funny going on about this business. I think we may be able to arrange for you to examine the bodies later. It may all be a wild goose chase, but let's try."

I said goodby, and then told my wife that I was going to Mississippi, after all.

The Newark plane left on time and I had just unfastened my seatbelt when I heard a man across the aisle tell the stewardess to let him know if "she ran across anybody

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Mississippi Autopsy

Behind The Doctor's Story

On June 21, 1964, two white men—Michael Schwerner, 24, and Andrew Goodman, 20, both of New York—and a Negro, James Chaney, 21, of Meridian, Miss., were killed near Philadelphia, Miss.

The FBI says it knows who the killers were but "intensive investigation" is continuing to build a court case.

The three young men were civil-rights workers. The suspicion that they had been killed was confirmed when their burned-out station wagon was discovered near Philadelphia two days after their disappearance.

THE ABSOLUTE FACT of their deaths was established Aug. 4, when their bodies were found by FBI agents, buried under a concrete footing beneath a 20-foot earthen dam on a farm six miles southwest of Philadelphia.

A coroner's jury reported two months later that it had been "unable" to determine the cause of death. No official autopsy report ever was issued.

But Dr. David Spain, 51, clinical professor of pathology at New York Downstate Medical Center, performed autopsies on two of the bodies—Chaney's in Mississippi and Schwerner's in New York.

His own account of what happened in Mississippi is printed in the Free Press for the first time in the Detroit area.

Dr. Spain says flatly that Chaney was brutally beaten with chains or a pipe and may have been dead before he was shot. Death by gunshot was the verdict of Mississippi doctors who performed an "unofficial examination."

Dr. Spain, director of pathology at New York's Brookdale Hospital Center and a former medical examiner of Westchester County, N.Y., performed an autopsy on Schwerner's body when it was returned to New York for burial.

HE SAID FRIDAY in an interview with the Free Press that he found only a bullet wound, and no indication that Schwerner had been beaten.

Dr. Spain added that he also found no indication that any previous autopsy had been performed.

"The point," he said, "is that, with an obvious case of murder, they hadn't even conducted an autopsy. That's one reason I'm still active in the civil-rights movement."