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"But I Have to Be Confronted with Your Troops": A Historical Reinterpretation of Mississippi Governor Ross R. Barnett's Segregationist Defiance toward the John F. Kennedy Administration over the 1962 Desegregation Ordeal at the University of Mississippi

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"Friends, I am a Mississippi segregationist.
And I am proud of it."
—Mississippi governor-elect Ross R. Barnett,
September 8, 1959[1]

"Mr. President, please. Why don't you . . . can't you give an order up there to remove [James H.] Meredith [from the University of Mississippi campus]?"
—Mississippi governor Ross R. Barnett,
September 30, 1962[2]

I

In the history of the American civil rights movement during the first half of the 1960s, one of the most dramatic and defining moments came about in the fall of 1962 when the segregationist Mississippi governor, Ross R. Barnett, staged a series of well-publicized—but eventually failed—attempts to deny the entrance of a prospective black student, James H. Meredith, to the University of Mississippi in Oxford, and thus to defy the federally mandated racial desegregation at the all-white state-operated educational institution, better known as Ole Miss. A little over eight years earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court had unanimously outlawed legally imposed racial segregation in public schools in its epoch-making *Brown v.*

Board of Education ruling in May 1954.[3] Upon hearing the High Court's decision, the enraged white politicians and officials in the Jim Crow American South initiated their massive resistance to the desegregation decree and the intensifying crusade for black civil rights.[4] Those in Mississippi, to be sure, were no exception, and no public school in the state—neither its elementary and secondary schools, nor its colleges and universities—would become racially integrated until Meredith's eventual success in desegregating Ole Miss (prior to his success, Meredith's enrollment was physically blocked twice by Governor Barnett and once by Lieutenant Governor Paul B. Johnson Jr.).

In the nation's capital, meanwhile, John F. Kennedy—for fourteen months between September 1962 and October 1963 during his suddenly curtailed presidency—had recorded many of his White House telephone conversations, having a recording device called a Dictaphone hooked up to a telephone in the Oval Office.[5] Two decades after the president's untimely death, in the early summer of 1983, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, Massachusetts, set out to open some portions of the Kennedy White House recordings to the general public. And among them were those telephone recordings related to the 1962 University of Mississippi desegregation crisis.[6] Ever since then, historians and journalists alike have utilized the verbatim contents of the telephone conversations held between the Kennedy administration and the Barnett administration, and they have incorporated those contents into their historical narratives of the Ole Miss crisis in particular and America's volatile civil rights years in general. As the *New York Times* once termed them, the disclosed presidential recordings relevant to the Ole Miss desegregation ordeal are surely qualified to be "History's Raw Materials," and they provide us with a fascinating glimpse of the Kennedy administration's inner workings of trying to grapple with the problems of racial bigotry prevalent not only in Mississippi, but also in the entire American South, of the 1960s.[7]

Much has been narrated about the nature of the state-federal confrontation arising from the University of Mississippi crisis, but there still remains the widely held interpretation and representation—or misinterpretation and misrepresentation, to be more precise—that the showdown was fought between a confident and immovably determined president of the United

States, and a shrewd and unyieldingly stiff-necked governor of an intransigent southern state. What the Ole Miss incident-related telephone conversations—"History's Raw Materials"—reveals and highlights, however, is a set of much different—and oftentimes tormented—faces and postures of the two contesting executives (and their respective advisors). Abounded in their verbal exchanges were the participants' hesitations, agonies, and human frailties. While laying considerable emphasis on Mississippi's social and political climate of the day, which dictated the preservation of white supremacy as an overarching imperative, the author, in the following pages, revisits the substance of the secret telephone negotiations held between President Kennedy (as well as his younger brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy) and Governor Barnett over the 1962 University of Mississippi desegregation ordeal. And in so doing, the author intends to offer a historical reinterpretation on what the both administrations were really up against in the face of the civil rights crisis.

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From a humble beginning on a small farm located in the hamlet of Standing Pine in Leake County, Mississippi, Ross Barnett, being the youngest of ten children, worked his way through local public schools and Mississippi College as a barber, janitor, and kitchenware salesperson. After working for two years as principal of Pontotoc High School in north Mississippi, he entered the University of Mississippi Law School. Upon graduation, Barnett began his law practice in Jackson in 1926 and subsequently became the senior partner of a large law firm in the state capital. Standing over six feet tall and being a man with "a mixture of flamboyance and down-to-earth seriousness," the future Mississippi governor seldom failed in attracting and fascinating people around him with his "energy, rhetoric, and antics."[8] Following his unsuccessful runs for governor in 1951 and 1955, Barnett once again entered the gubernatorial race in 1959—five years after the Supreme Court rendered the *Brown* decision—where all three major candidates vigorously hammered down on racial segregation. Among those contenders, however, the candidate who "could crack the loudest segregation whip" was Barnett.[9] Billing himself as a "vigorous segregationist" during his

gubernatorial campaign, Barnett pledged that he would "owe allegiance only to my God, my conscience, . . . and the good people of my native state" in striving to "maintain our heritage, our customs, . . . [and] segregation of the races."[10]

After the election was over, on September 8, 1959, the very first postelection public appearance of the now governor-elect took place at a gathering sponsored by the Citizens' Council—the civil rights era's most vocal and widespread private organization dedicated to the segregationist cause and anti-*Brown* enterprises in the entire white South.[11] Founded less than two months after the *Brown* decision in the Mississippi Delta county of Sunflower (the home county of the state's all-powerful white supremacist, U.S. senator James O. Eastland), the Citizens' Council in Mississippi was particularly emphatic and influential.[12] "Friends," the elated governor-elect spoke to the appreciative white audience of nearly one thousand at the postelection gathering, "I am a Mississippi segregationist. And I am proud of it."[13]

Mississippi governor-elect Ross R. Barnett making his very first postelection public appearance before a gathering sponsored by the segregationist Citizens' Council at the Heidelberg Hotel in downtown Jackson, Mississippi, on September 8, 1959. Wearing a white carnation on his lapel to signify white Mississippians' determination to preserve and protect the state's racial status quo, Barnett told the appreciative audience that "mixing the races leads inevitably to the production of an inferior mongrel."
(In the author's possession by courtesy of the late Erle E. Johnston Jr. of Forest, Mississippi, a former director of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission)

On January 19, 1960, Barnett took his oath of office as Mississippi's fifty-third governor. "You know and I know," he took a solemn pledge in his inaugural address, "that we will maintain segregation in Mississippi at all costs."[14] As his

predecessor, James P. Coleman, had promised in his inaugural address four years earlier, when Barnett assumed his official oath, "the separation of the races in Mississippi" was still "left intact."[15] And the new governor, who was destined to symbolize the American South's harshest politics of segregationist defiance, was determined to keep it that way "at all costs." Paralleling Barnett's unwavering resolve, no sooner had the 1960 state legislature been convened than the lawmakers flooded the legislative body with scores of bills designed to further strengthen Mississippi's racial and racist policy. By the time the legislative session adjourned on May 11, twenty-one new segregationist bills had been approved and signed into law by the governor. Among those was House Bill No. 741, which provided that "the board of trustees of institutions of higher learning may, at their discretion, determine who will be privileged to enter, remain in or graduate from the institutions of higher learning" in Mississippi.[16] The bill was obviously designed to give the board authority to reject any applicant to state colleges and universities for virtually any reason but especially because of an applicant's race.

While these legal fortresses were added to Mississippi's armament to preserve and protect the state's segregated way of life, almost exactly a year after Barnett's ascent to the Mississippi governorship, John F. Kennedy took the helm of the nation on January 20, 1961, as the thirty-fifth president of the United States. In his short, but eloquent and often acclaimed, inaugural address, Kennedy, as the youngest person ever to have been elected to the nation's highest administrative office, summoned his fellow Americans to greatness and reminded them of their obligations. "And so, my fellow Americans," the president uttered the best-remembered phrase throughout the whole address, on which he had worked and reworked as the president-elect, "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."[17]

True to the new president's words, only the day after Kennedy's inauguration, a black veteran of the U.S. Air Force set out to do what he could do for his country, for his native state of Mississippi, and for his own race. The veteran was James Meredith, a twenty-seven-year-old native of Attala County. Having served for the Air Force for almost a decade from 1951 to 1960, he was in the military "to preserve and protect the rights and privileges of democracy" which, as the

veteran put it, he himself "didn't in fact enjoy." Soon after he was discharged from the Air Force and came back to his native state, where racial segregation and discrimination were kept intact, Meredith made a firm resolution to do something to right the wrongs for himself and for his fellow black Mississippians. Accordingly, breaking down the high wall of the state's white supremacy became Meredith's "absolute conscious decision," and he eventually chose the all-white University of Mississippi in the picturesque college town of Oxford—one of the most conspicuous symbols of the state's white supremacy—to test his resolve.[18] "In a real sense," Meredith later recollected, "the University of Mississippi *was* Mississippi" itself, and "Ole Miss was the Queen Bee of segregation."[19]

On the day following the Kennedy inauguration, Meredith wrote to Registrar Robert B. Ellis at Ole Miss to request an application packet for admission, and that symbolized the beginning of a subsequent "test of the federal government's resolve and a state's will to resist," which would ultimately develop into "one of the crucial events in the American civil rights revolution."[20] Ten days later, on January 31, 1961, sending his application to the university, Meredith enclosed a letter addressed to the registrar, notifying the all-white educational institution for the first time that he was "not a white applicant" but was "an American-Mississippi-Negro citizen." "With all of the presently occurring events regarding changes in our old educational system taking place in our country in this new age," Meredith expressed his high hopes in the letter, "I feel certain that this application does not come as a surprise to you." "I certainly hope," he concluded, "that this matter will be handled in a manner that will be complimentary to the University and the state of Mississippi."[21] Meredith's application did in fact come "as a surprise" to Registrar Ellis, Ole Miss, and the state's political establishment including Governor Barnett, and that certainly ensured that the university officials would handle the matter uncomplimentarily.

In due course, the Air Force veteran's entrance application was turned down by the university authority on the grounds that Meredith did not, and in truth could not, submit the required six letters of recommendation from the school's alumni, for no white graduate would dare to write one for him. As a substitute for the requirement, Meredith had submitted to Ole Miss five certificates that attested to his "moral character" prepared by some black residents of his

hometown of Kosciusko in Attala County.[22] For the purpose of ascertaining the validity of these documents, Mississippi assistant attorney general Edward L. Cates—a young Jackson attorney who would serve as one of the advisors to Governor Barnett over the Ole Miss incident—was immediately dispatched to Kosciusko. After a series of interviews that Cates had with all of the five black referees (conducted in the presence of the local justice of peace), four recommenders suddenly withdrew their certificates, informing the assistant attorney general that they had "misunderstood" and "never realized" that Meredith was "trying to go to Ole Miss."[23]

Feeling stuck and seeing no way out, Meredith, on May 31, 1961, filed a class action lawsuit at the U.S. district court in Jackson with the assistance of Attorney Constance Baker Motley of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—one of the nation's principal civil rights organizations and therefore, the white South's mortal enemy—and Medgar W. Evers, who had become the first state field secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi (and who would be brutally assassinated by a Mississippi white supremacist, Byron De La Beckwith, in June 1963).[24] Asserting that racial bias had been the sole ground for the University of Mississippi's rejection of his entrance application, Meredith sought a preliminary injunction for his immediate admission to Ole Miss, as well as a permanent court order that would prohibit the university from discriminating against any future black applicants in its admission policies. A series of legal battles ensued, but to Meredith's disappointment, the district court ruled in favor of the all-white educational institution. Faced with a legal impasse, the Air Force veteran decided to look to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, Louisiana.[25]

Almost thirteen months had elapsed since Meredith initiated his legal actions, and on June 25, 1962, the Fifth Circuit Court struck a blow at Mississippi, inviting an all-out constitutional crisis over black civil rights. Reversing the district court's ruling, the Fifth Circuit Court affirmed that Meredith had been denied his admittance to Ole Miss solely because of his race, and it directed District Court Judge Sidney C. Mize to order the university to accept Meredith.[26] In writing the court's majority opinion, Circuit Court Judge John Minor Wisdom, a native of New Orleans, sharply

criticized the lower court's mishandling of the case and declared that "a full review of the record leads the Court inescapably to the conclusion that from the moment the defendants discovered Meredith was a Negro," the Ole Miss officials and Mississippi's political establishment "engaged in a carefully calculated campaign of delay, harassment, and masterly inactivity" for the purpose of derailing Meredith's endeavor to be enrolled at the University of Mississippi.[27] Even some twenty-five years after he wrote his court's majority opinion, Judge Wisdom was still amazed at the fact that the U.S. district court in Mississippi ruled that there was no policy of racial segregation at Ole Miss. "Everyone in the state of Mississippi, and I am sure, almost everyone in the entire country, knew that there was segregation in the state of Mississippi," Wisdom reminisced, "and for the university to assert that there was no segregation and for the [district] court to find that there was no segregation was just like a land of fantasia."[28] The day of the appeals court's judgment happened to be Meredith's twenty-ninth birthday.[29]

However, to Meredith's dismay, his exhaustingly long legal battles to enter the University of Mississippi were not yet over. On July 18, 1962, when the Fifth Circuit Court's order was formally forwarded to District Judge Mize, Circuit Court Judge Benjamin F. Cameron turned the whole legal situation into chaos by issuing a stay to suspend his colleagues' order until the Mississippi officials would have a chance to have the Meredith case reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.[30] Although Cameron—a seventy-year-old federal judge from Meridian, Mississippi—was not a member of the three-judge petty bench at the Fifth Circuit Court that had actually heard the Meredith case, "the Fifth's only ultra segregationist," as he was once described, could not keep his silence when he "saw the ways of the Old South dying at the hands of liberal federal court rulings."[31] By the end of July, Judge Cameron had issued a total of three formal stays to suspend his own court's judgment. And on all of these occasions, the three petty bench members—including Judge Wisdom—who had initially dealt with the Meredith case overturned Cameron's tenacious stay orders. When, on August 6, Judge Cameron issued his fourth stay, Attorney Motley of the NAACP, who had diligently argued the Ole Miss case for Meredith, had enough of it, and she turned to Justice Hugo L. Black of the U.S.

Supreme Court for his voice of authority. Eventually, on September 10, Justice Black invalidated Judge Cameron's legal defiance, declaring that "the judgment and mandate of the Court of Appeals should be obeyed."[32] Three days later, on September 13, District Court Judge Mize in Mississippi duly issued an order to Ole Miss to admit Meredith immediately as a student.[33]

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Although the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the original decision rendered by the U.S. District Court in Mississippi and thus ruled that Ole Miss must accept James Meredith as the university's first black student, the grave question, as in the case of the 1957 Little Rock, Arkansas, school desegregation crisis (during which nine black students managed to enroll at the city's all-white Central High School as a result of the military intervention of John F. Kennedy's predecessor, President Dwight D. Eisenhower), remained unanswered: who would enforce the federal court orders? Earlier in May 1954, standing on the U.S. Senate's floor, Senator James Eastland from Mississippi had proclaimed in the immediate aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling that "people [in the South] will not change [their racial] views which have been instilled into them for generations, merely on the strength of a few words by a court." "It will take force to bring compliance with the [school desegregation] decision of the Supreme Court. Where is that force? The Court cannot supply it," the Mississippi senator asked with obvious defiance.[34]

As Eastland had uttered, in the face of the 1957 Little Rock incident, the relevant federal courts could not supply the force, and President Eisenhower, with much reluctance, eventually took on the task. Consequently, his popular presidential campaign slogan—"I Like Ike (Eisenhower's nickname)"—was replaced overnight by the enraged chants of "I Hate Ike" in Little Rock. Soon after the school desegregation became a fait accompli, an anonymous white Arkansan, who identified himself only as "A Patriot," composed poem entitled "The Battle between Ike and Faubus." Denouncing President Eisenhower as a race mixer and revering Arkansas governor Orval E. Faubus as one who stood tall to "uphold the rights of our dear 'Southland,'" the poem ended with the following verses:

"Old Ike had won and felt mighty nippy. But God help their souls when they try 'MISSISSIPPI.'"[35] And in the fall of 1962, the ominous prediction made by the Arkansas "Patriot" would prove to be more than just bluster.

It should be noted that, just as in the case of Eisenhower's, President Kennedy and his younger brother—Attorney General Robert Kennedy—were also reluctant participants in Mississippi's university desegregation incident. As a matter of fact, it was still fresh in their mind that in the late spring of 1961, only a few months after Kennedy's inauguration, the president and the attorney general had barely avoided bloodshed in Mississippi by striking a deal—mediated by Senator Eastland—with Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, when racially mixed civil rights activists known as the Freedom Riders traveled by bus and headed for Mississippi determined to make racial desegregation in interstate travel facilities a reality.[36] Robert Kennedy, after his brother's passing, recollected in a 1964 oral history interview: "What I was trying to avoid basically [over the 1962 Ole Miss desegregation crisis] was having to send troops and trying to avoid having a federal presence in Mississippi."[37] Nicholas deBelleville Katzenbach, who served in the U.S. Department of Justice as an assistant attorney general and then as the deputy attorney general under the Kennedy administration, also remembered that "the Kennedys thought that the one bad mistake Ike made was to send troops into Little Rock."[38] Meanwhile, Meredith—the central figure in the Ole Miss controversy—had a different perspective. "I knew that the Kennedys would do nothing on my agenda [if] they were not forced in[to] a position to do [something]," he looked back during an oral history interview conducted in 1994, a little over three decades after he succeeded in entering the all-white institution:[39]

> It was my experience in the military that made [the desegregation of] the University of Mississippi possible. Most people don't know what I really did at the University of Mississippi. What I really did . . . was to force the federal government to employ its troops on my side against the Mississippi troops. That's what I did, and that's what I set out to do—to force the Kennedy administration in[to] the position where they [had] to use the armed force[s] for my purpose.[40]

On the evening of September 13, 1962, only a few hours after District Court Judge Sidney Mize ordered Ole Miss to admit Meredith immediately, Governor Barnett went on statewide radio and television to speak to his fellow Mississippians on the state's "greatest crisis since the War between the States"—the American Civil War primarily fought over slavery in the 1860s. "The day of expediency is past," so the twenty-minute address delivered by Mississippi's sixty-four-year-old chief executive began. "We must either submit to the unlawful dictates of the Federal Government," the governor reminded the audience, "or stand up like men and tell them 'NEVER!'" "I have made my position in this matter crystal clear," he went on, "[and] I have said in every county in Mississippi that no school in our state will be integrated while I am your Governor. I repeat to you tonight—NO SCHOOL WILL BE INTEGRATED IN MISSISSIPPI WHILE I AM YOUR GOVERNOR." Then, "in obedience to [the] legislative and constitutional sanction" of the state, Barnett duly interposed "the rights of the Sovereign State of Mississippi to enforce its laws and to regulate its own internal affairs without interference on the part of the Federal government." "Let us meet this crisis with dignity, courage and fortitude," the governor concluded his address, "and show to the world that we are people of honor, that we do not, we will not surrender to the evil and illegal forces of tyranny."[41] Hence, having invited the nightmarish repetition of the 1957 Little Rock, Arkansas, desegregation crisis, Governor Barnett marked a fatal point of no return. Wiping large beads of sweat from his brow following the broadcast, the governor realized that better than anyone else.[42]

The bulk of the white audience in Mississippi, who had listened to and watched the statewide broadcast, applauded their governor for his uncompromising stand on the Ole Miss case, and few dared to do otherwise. The day after Barnett delivered his address, U.S. senator Eastland and his senatorial colleague, Senator John C. Stennis, joined four of Mississippi's five representatives in Washington, D.C., in sending a congratulatory telegram to the governor: "WE CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR EFFORT AND DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF OUR STATE AND PLEDGE YOU AND THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI OUR FULL AND UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT."[43] And while

a Mississippi state senator termed Barnett's address "historic, masterful and courageous," the prosegregation *Jackson Daily News*, in its front-page editorial, echoed the sentiments shared by the majority of white Mississippians.[44] The daily's September 14 editorial read in part: "We stand firmly behind Gov. Barnett and all public officials who pledge their courage to continue the Mississippi educational system under the control of Mississippi."[45]

The only Mississippi delegate in Washington, D.C., who refused to stand behind Governor Barnett, was U.S. representative Frank E. Smith of Greenwood in Leflore County located at the eastern edge of the Mississippi Delta. Smith, when the Supreme Court announced its *Brown* decision in 1954, urged his fellow Mississippians to give "calm consideration . . . of how the ruling will ultimately affect Mississippi."[46] Since then, his somewhat racially moderate views had gradually become apparent in the eyes of belligerent white Mississippians, and Representative Smith, as a matter of fact, was defeated in the June 1962 congressional elections to be reelected to the U.S. House of Representatives (he would resign from the House in November 1962 to assume an appointment made by President Kennedy as director of the Tennessee Valley Authority).[47] On the very same day his Washington colleagues applauded Barnett's unyielding posture, Smith declined to sign the congratulatory message sent to the governor and stated instead that Governor Barnett's resistance to the federally mandated desegregation would only lead Mississippi "down a blind alley" and "destroy our great university."[48] By issuing his dissent, Representative Smith now openly split with Senator Eastland—his fellow delegate from the Mississippi Delta—whom the representative would later describe as "a vituperative racist."[49]

In Jackson, few Mississippi state lawmakers sided with Representative Smith in Washington, D.C. To be sure, however, there were a couple of courageous voices in the wilderness. Elected from Greenville in the Mississippi Delta county of Washington, State Representative Joseph E. Wroten accused Governor Barnett of brewing "anarchy and defiance" in the state.[50] As a racial moderate and as the state legislature's "great dissenter," Wroten, throughout the Ole Miss desegregation crisis, continued to oppose the Barnett-led massive resistance policies.[51] Besides Wroten, State Representative Otto Karl Wiesenburg of Pascagoula in south Mississippi, a native of Rosedale, New

York, made every effort to be the state legislature's another voice of reason, denouncing Governor Barnett's defiant stand as "bordering on treason."[52] In time, State Representatives Wroten and Wiesenburg found themselves in what the latter once half-jokingly referred to as a "telephone booth caucus" of the state legislature.[53] While the prosegregation lawmakers "could go off and rent a ballroom to hold a meeting" to map their segregationist strategies, the group composed of Wroten, Wiesenburg, and few others was such a small minority that "the space in a telephone booth would have been large enough to accommodate a meeting" of those few dissenters.[54]

Five days after Barnett asked his fellow white Mississippians to join him to "stand up like men and tell them 'NEVER,'" on September 18, the governor called the state legislature into its first special session of the year. Summoned by Barnett, four state representatives, led by the omnipotent House Speaker Walter Sillers Jr., introduced House Concurrent Resolution No. 2 that pledged the legislature's "full support in the staunch stand" being taken by the governor. In expressing the "sense and conviction" of the Mississippi state legislature, the resolution asserted that the federal government had "broken every precept of man and God and by their arrogance attempted to confuse and bewilder our citizens."[55] There was no dissension in the Senate, but as expected, Representative Wroten voted against the resolution in the House. He was joined by Representative Wiesenburg, who vainly tried to convince his colleagues on the House floor that "the actions of the governor and the actions of our leaders would inevitably lead to bloodshed and riot."[56] Personifying Wroten and Wiesenburg as "Two Lonely Red Flashes," the *Jackson Daily News* castigated the two "traitors," whose lone nay votes had two red lights flash on the legislative scoreboard in the Mississippi House chamber.[57]

The nature of the state-federal conflict and confrontation over Meredith's attempt to desegregate the University of Mississippi was relatively clear, but the politics was not. In Washington, D.C., while President Kennedy and his advisors—including Attorney General Robert Kennedy—believed that Meredith should eventually attend Ole Miss, they were also desperate to find a way to avoid any direct military involvement in Mississippi by the federal government, which would certainly cost the president southern Democratic

support that he needed in Congress and might even ruin his bid to be renominated as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in 1964.[58] Thus, President Kennedy preferred a political solution by all means. Meanwhile, Mississippi governor Barnett in Jackson, more than anyone else, did not wish to invite the same federal intervention that had unfolded in Little Rock, Arkansas, just five years earlier with a possible bloody state-federal military confrontation. However, at the same time, Barnett could not simply retreat from the battlefield without a fight, so to speak, and let Meredith enroll at Ole Miss. The Mississippi governor wanted a political solution as well, and he turned to his advisors for any feasible suggestions to break the impasse.

One of the tragedies (including the governor's own indecisiveness) that Barnett consequently suffered from in handling the University of Mississippi crisis was the fact that those advisors, whom the governor heavily relied upon, pushed and pulled him from different—and sometimes opposite—directions during the ordeal. Paul Johnson, Mississippi's lieutenant governor under the Barnett administration, later observed that "there were too many advisors . . . who had something to gain and very little to lose."[59] The governor's advisors, on the intransigent side, included William J. Simmons of Jackson, the all-powerful administrator of the Citizens' Councils of America as the white South's leading anti-civil rights private organization; State Senator George M. Yarbrough of Red Banks in Marshall County, president pro tempore of Mississippi's upper legislative body; and State Senator John C. McLaurin of Brandon in Rankin County who, in the words of a Mississippi civil rights activist, was "the Citizens' Council's whip in the Mississippi State Senate."[60] Under Governor Barnett's administration, both Yarbrough and McLaurin served as members of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (whose chair was the governor)—the state's tax-supported executive agency created in 1956 to wage Mississippi's all-out public relations and investigative campaigns for the purpose of discrediting the intensifying crusade for black civil rights.[61]

On the other hand, some of those advisors who made up the more moderate and accommodationist (in a relative sense, to be sure) camp were: Thomas M. "Tom" Hederman Jr., who was the publisher of Mississippi's two largest daily newspapers—the morning *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* and the evening *Jackson Daily*

News; and Jackson attorneys William F. Goodman Jr. and Thomas H. "Tom" Watkins. Both Goodman and Watkins practiced law at a prestigious Jackson law firm—Watkins and Eager—and they were considered to be what a contemporary observer called the "clear heads" within the inner circle of Barnett's advisors during the Ole Miss incident. And in fact, Goodman and Watkins, in the course of time, would become almost the lone voices trying to dissuade the governor from carrying the state's resistance too much and too far.[62] Among those counselors who constituted the governor's "inner sanctum," Watkins played an important role as a conduit between the Barnett administration and the Kennedy administration—the arrangement that was made through the influence of Senator Eastland from Mississippi.[63] As a brilliant, polished, and genteel lawyer, Watkins served as the chief legal advisor to Governor Barnett (he was also a member of the twelve-member Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, having been appointed by the governor), and Barnett hoped that Watkins would somehow magically "create a compromise" with the Kennedy administration over the Ole Miss desegregation incident.[64] "He was [someone] at least you could talk to [reasonably] who could understand you," Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall for the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice once remembered of Watkins.[65]

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Exactly a week after Governor Ross Barnett keyed up his fellow white Mississippians to "stand up like men and tell them 'NEVER'" during his statewide address, on the afternoon of September 20, 1962, James Meredith was brought to the University of Mississippi campus in Oxford by Attorney St. John Barrett from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and James J. P. McShane, chief of the Executive Office of the U.S. Marshals.[66] Earlier on that same day, the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning held an emergency meeting in Jackson and voted to invest Governor Barnett "with the full power, authority, right and discretion" of the board "to act upon all matters pertaining to or concerned with the registration or non-registration, admission or non-admission, and/or attendance of James

H. Meredith" at Ole Miss, designating the governor as the official successor of Robert Ellis, registrar at the University of Mississippi.[67] Inside the University Continuation Center on campus, Meredith appeared before Ellis and Barnett and quietly told the two men what his intended business was: "I want to be admitted to the university."[68] Registrar Ellis, who did not waste his time, began to read the board's freshly formulated decision to transfer its (and the registrar's) authority to the governor. Following Ellis, Barnett then read his brief proclamation, refusing the admission of Meredith to Ole Miss. When Attorney Barrett asked the governor if he realized that his refusal to admit Meredith would possibly put him in contempt of a federal court order, Barnett replied emphatically: "Are you telling me I'm in contempt, or does it take a judge?"[69] After this twenty-minute drama, when Governor Barnett came out of the University Continuation Center, a crowd of one thousand surrounding the building broke into the chorus of "We Want Ross" chants. Waving to the gathered supporters with a beam of delight on his face, the governor announced with dignity: "The only comments I have to make is that the application of James H. Meredith has been denied."[70] Privately, though, Barnett realized that he had just bogged himself down.

Mississippi governor Ross R. Barnett (*center*), lieutenant governor Paul B. Johnson Jr. (*right*), and House Speaker Walter Sillers Jr. standing on the grounds of the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson, where the legislature was in session to deal with the University of Mississippi crisis, on September 20, 1962. The "Do Not Enter" street sign, captured by accident, was indicative of the state officials' obstinate attitude toward the desegregation attempt being made by James H. Meredith.
(In the author's possession by courtesy of the late Frank E. Smith of Jackson, Mississippi, a former U.S. representative from Mississippi)

Later on the evening of September 20, Governor Barnett, his advisors, and a few other insiders got together to hold a victory celebration in the Alumni House on the Ole Miss campus. One of those who were present on the occasion was Thomas N. Turner Sr., who owned and farmed several large plantations located in the Mississippi Delta county of Humphreys. Turner, because of his close relationship with the University of Mississippi, was a member of the steering committee, which had recently been organized by a few influential Ole Miss alumni to defend the university's segregationist positions during the Meredith crisis. As everyone was savoring the moment of victory, Turner asked Barnett in a casual way: "Governor, how far are you going to go with this thing?" When Barnett asked in turn how far Turner would go, the Ole Miss alumnus replied: "I'd go so far as to when they pulled a gun, [and] I would tell them to come on in." "Well, that's what I will do," the governor responded.[71] Barnett's playful remarks made everyone present laugh, but he was seriously considering it as a likely resolution to the worsening situation.

Three days had passed since the first Barnett-Meredith confrontation took place in Mississippi, and on Sunday, September 23, President John F. Kennedy, having been briefed by his younger brother as the nation's attorney general on the Ole Miss situation, called Governor Barnett from the Oval Office to express his apprehension over Meredith's fate.[72] "I'm glad to talk to you, Governor," Kennedy tried to charm the Mississippi segregationist. But their ensuing five-minute telephone conversation was filled with chaos and confusion. Attentive listening to the audiotapes recorded by the White House and careful reading of their transcripts reveal a discrepancy between the two deeply troubled chief executives, who were trying to achieve something unachievable. "I am concerned," the president uttered on the phone, "about this situation down there." "Oh, I should say I am concerned about it, Mr. President. It's . . . a horrible situation," the governor replied. "Well, now, here's my problem," Kennedy got on to the main question. "I didn't [decide to] put him [Meredith] in the university," the president explained, "but on the other hand, under the Constitution I have to carry out the orders of the [federal courts] . . . and . . . I don't want to do it in any way that causes difficulty to you."[73] After all, while President Kennedy, as the nation's chief executive,

needed to exercise his constitutional duty to uphold and carry out the federal court decrees, Governor Barnett had his own constitutional responsibility to abide by Mississippi's constitution and laws providing racial segregation.

By the time this Kennedy-Barnett telephone negotiation materialized, Tom Watkins, a Jackson attorney and one of the governor's closest advisors, had become a crucial link between the two administrations, and Watkins, under Barnett's instruction, had already suggested to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy that they hatch a farcical drama where the U.S. marshals would escort Meredith to Ole Miss and, upon the lead marshal's drawing his gun, Barnett and other state officials would step aside to let Meredith register. Informed by President Kennedy that Watkins and the attorney general were not making as much progress as he had hoped to break the deadlock, the Mississippi governor began to make a plea for the president's understanding: "[Y]ou know what I am up against, Mr. President. I took an oath . . . to abide by the laws of this state. . . . I'm on the spot here." "[T]he problem is, Governor," Kennedy also gave vent to his sentiments, "that I['ve] got my responsibility just like you have yours." At the end of their brief conversation, as if to try to put away the grave constitutional issue that he had just talked about with the nation's president, Barnett abruptly added: "I appreciate your interest in our poultry program and all those things." Laughing softly, but wryly, Kennedy simply replied: "Okay, Governor. Thank you."[74] Barnett's last utterance might have made the president wonder why the Mississippi governor could possibly mention his state's livestock business in the midst of a constitutional crisis.

Two days later, on September 25, Attorney John A. Doar from the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and Chief U.S. Marshal McShane escorted Meredith to the office of the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning located on the tenth floor of the Woolfolk State Office Building in downtown Jackson for their second attempt to get Meredith registered as an Ole Miss student. As the three men approached the board's office, Governor Barnett stood in the doorway. After studying Meredith and the two white federal officials seriously for a few seconds, the governor mischievously asked them a question which, as a contemporary observer put it, "rocked Mississippi with laughter": "Which one of you gentlemen is Mr.

Meredith?"[75] While Meredith flashed a little grin, the two white men showed no amusement. Then, Doar vainly tried to hand Barnett an order from the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to prohibit him from interfering with Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss. In response, the governor began to read a proclamation directed to Meredith that, in essence, confirmed his previous position. "I, Ross R. Barnett, Governor of the State of Mississippi," the proclamation read, "do hereby finally deny you admission to the University of Mississippi."[76] When the Justice Department attorney once again asked the governor to permit them to enter the board's office, Barnett launched into an extemporaneous speech: "I took an oath when I was inaugurated governor of this state to uphold and try to maintain and perpetuate the laws of Mississippi. . . . Gentlemen, my conscience is clear."[77] As the three men moved down the crowded corridor to leave the building, Governor Barnett blithely added: "Come to see us at the [governor's] mansion."[78] While the governor's innocuous remarks "rocked Mississippi with laughter," the state legislature, which had been in an extraordinary session since September 18, was being rocked with "intemperate language." Engulfed by the tense atmosphere, one "emotionally disturbed" legislator even tried to introduce a resolution in the upper House to have Mississippi secede from the United States. Only a hurried recess of the state senate prevented its introduction.[79]

The next morning, on September 26, Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division placed a call to Watkins in New York City, who had flown from Jackson on the previous evening as Governor Barnett's emissary and was on his way to Washington, D.C. Consenting to Marshall's general appraisal of the Ole Miss situation, the Jackson attorney told the Justice Department official that "the matter had gone too far" and suggested that federal officials "'gently' attempt to push the Governor aside" on their "next effort to escort Meredith into the University," which was to be carried out later that afternoon. Watkins reiterated and made sure that these officials "should use 'the mildest kind of force.'" "This would make the Governor's point," he explained to Marshall, "and give him an out because the Federal Government would have forcibly brought about desegregation" at Ole Miss. The assistant attorney general immediately passed Watkins's idea on to Doar and McShane and instructed them, with Attorney

General Kennedy's consent, "to make an effort physically to force their way onto the campus."[80] Hence, the plan for a farcical play was set at last, but both Watkins and Marshall had no idea that the play's leading actor—Governor Barnett—would not be able to show up on the stage that afternoon.

In accordance with the hatched Watkins-Marshall plan, Doar and McShane brought Meredith to the University of Mississippi campus for the black veteran's third attempt to get registered. But this time, much to the surprise of Doar and McShane, the party was met by Lieutenant Governor Paul Johnson. "We're going in," McShane told the lieutenant governor, wasting no time, but Johnson simply replied: "You aren't." Then, the chief U.S. marshal unsuccessfully tried to elbow the lieutenant governor aside, and at one point, even shook his fist at Johnson. Notwithstanding this "show of force" on the part of the Kennedy administration, Lieutenant Governor Johnson, who was not privy to the plan devised by Watkins and Marshall the same morning, "refused to be budged." Governor Barnett, who arrived late at the university due to some mechanical trouble with his airplane, congratulated Johnson for having "stood tall" against the federal "tyranny."[81] In a sense, the lieutenant governor was a thoroughly unprepared stand-in, who was suddenly drawn into the center of a very crucial scene without having been informed in advance that there was a major change in the play's script.

Soon after the third face-to-face confrontation between Meredith and the Mississippi officials occurred, Assistant Attorney General Marshall called Watkins once again and asked him what went wrong with their script. The governor's trusted advisor wryly explained that the federal officials failed to use "a large enough show of force." Perplexed, Marshall asked Watkins: "[W]hat show of force would be enough?" The Jackson attorney then suggested that Meredith's next attempt to be enrolled as an Ole Miss student be carried out with the presence of "25 marshals with side arms." The Justice Department official, in response, agreed to "send Meredith with 25 marshals to Oxford" on the following morning of September 27 as long as it was "clearly understood" that the Mississippi officials' "resistance to this amount of force would be token." Watkins promised Marshall that he would discuss the idea with Governor Barnett and call him back. That evening, calling Marshall at

his residence, the governor's advisor informed him that Barnett was agreeable to the plan, but that the governor "wanted the marshals to come with guns drawn." Having considered the matter with Attorney General Kennedy, Marshall called Watkins later that evening and told him that the Department of Justice could not agree to Governor Barnett's precarious proposal.[82]

V

While Lieutenant Governor Paul Johnson's defiant stand taken at the University of Mississippi would later assure his ascent to the Mississippi governor's office, Governor Ross Barnett began to lose his nerve. Following the Justice Department's rejection of the governor's idea to send twenty-five U.S. marshals—with their "guns drawn"—to the Ole Miss campus with James Meredith, a series of bizarre telephone conversations began to take place among Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Governor Barnett, Lieutenant Governor Johnson, and the Jackson attorney Tom Watkins as the governor's advisor. On the morning of September 27, 1962, Watkins, now visiting Washington, D.C., called Robert Kennedy. The attorney general informed Watkins that the Kennedy administration was prepared to make an arrangement that "only one man [marshal] would pull his gun," and that Governor Barnett would "step aside" to let Meredith be registered. Watkins, however, insisted that "that wasn't sufficient." "[T]his is a tremendous embarrassment for the Governor," Barnett's emissary contended, "and it would hurt him politically and he could not step aside if only one man drew his gun." "They should all draw their guns," Watkins stood his ground. Then, the attorney general suggested a compromise. "I would have one man draw his gun and perhaps have the other Marshals put their hands on their holsters," Robert Kennedy told Watkins. At the end of their phone conversation, Watkins asked Kennedy to discuss "that aspect of the arrangement" in more detail with the Mississippi governor, who was to call the attorney general early in the afternoon.[83]

At 12:50 P.M., Mississippi time, Governor Barnett placed a call to Attorney General Kennedy from the Ole Miss campus to discuss the detailed "arrangement" for another farcical play. Their conversation began with the

attorney general's informing the Mississippi governor that the Department of Justice would make another effort to bring Meredith to the University of Mississippi from Memphis, Tennessee, at 5:00 P.M.:

> *RFK (Robert F. Kennedy)*: I will send the Marshals that I have available up there in Memphis and I expect there will be about 25 or 30 of them and they will come with Mr. Meredith. . . and I will have the head Marshal [James McShane] pull a gun and I will have the rest of them have their hands on their guns and their holsters. And then as I understand it he [McShane] will go through and get in and you will make sure that law and order is preserved and that no harm will be done to Mr. McShane and Mr. Meredith.
>
> *Barnett*: . . . General, I was under the impression that they were all going to pull their guns. This could be very embarrassing. We got a big crowd here and if one pulls his gun and we all turn it would be very embarrassing. Isn't it possible to have them all pull their guns?
>
> *RFK*: I hate to have them all draw their guns as I think it could create harsh feelings. Isn't it sufficient if I have one man draw his gun and the others keep their hands on their holsters?[84]

"They must all draw their guns," Barnett was insistent, "[t]hen they should point their guns at us and then we could step aside." Lieutenant Governor Johnson, who was then sitting next to Barnett, also got on the phone and made a plea with Attorney General Kennedy: "[I]t is necessary to have all your people draw their guns, not just one." The conversation dragged on and finally, when the attorney general received the words from the lieutenant governor that both Barnett and Johnson would "do everything to preserve law and order at all times" at the University of Mississippi "to the best of [their] ability," Kennedy reluctantly agreed to make all of the U.S. marshals, who would escort Meredith to Ole Miss in the late afternoon, draw their guns. "We are going to step aside if they do that," Governor Barnett heaved a sigh of relief.[85]

Subsequent to this early afternoon conversation, between 1:50 P.M., and about 5:00 P.M., Mississippi time, a string of four more telephone conversations among the attorney general, the governor, and the lieutenant governor ensued. The transcripts of these conversations clearly attest that they were carried on at cross purposes: While Attorney General Kennedy wanted to get absolute assurance from the governor that he and other Mississippi officials would keep the peace and protect Meredith and the federal marshals, Governor Barnett, on the other hand, was desperate to find a way out of the sticky situation brought about by the desegregation ordeal with no violence, but much more than that, with some face-saving honor. And as the conversations advanced, the attorney general's confidence in the Mississippi governor grew weaker and weaker.[86] Eventually, during the fifth and the last telephone conversation of the day with Robert Kennedy, Barnett wavered and admitted that he was not able to promise to keep the peace on and around the Ole Miss campus once the Meredith party reached there:[87]

> *Barnett*: General, I'm worried—I'm nervous, I tell you. You don't realize what's going on. There are several thousand people in here. . . . Several hundred are lined up on the streets where they [the Meredith party] are supposed to land. We don't know these people.
>
> *RFK*: I had better send them back.
>
> *Barnett*: There is liable to be a hundred people killed here. It would ruin all of us. Please believe me. Talk to the Lt. Governor, he'll tell you.
>
> *RFK*: I just have to hear from you, Governor.
>
> *Barnett*: There are dozens and dozens of trucks loaded with people. We can't control people like that. A lot of people are going to get killed. It would be embarrassing to me.
>
> *RFK*: I don't know if it would be embarrassing—that would not be the feeling.
>
> *Barnett*: It would be bad all over the nation.
>
> *RFK*: I'll send them back.[88]

The attorney general immediately contacted the federal officials escorting Meredith, who had already left Memphis and were on their way to Oxford, Mississippi. Upon hearing from Robert Kennedy, the Meredith party turned around near Batesville, Mississippi, located only some twenty miles west of the university. Thus, the planned stage of the second farcical play was cancelled. At this time, Governor Barnett—the leading actor—was on the Ole Miss campus, but his supporting actors—the U.S. marshals—did not show up on the stage.

On the day following Meredith's fourth chance to be enrolled at Ole Miss was stalled, on September 28, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans convicted Governor Barnett of contempt of court and levied a fine of $10,000 a day. Meanwhile, having "stood tall" on the Ole Miss campus to physically block Meredith's registration, Lieutenant Governor Johnson also became a subject of the federal court's conviction, and his fine was set at $5,000 a day.[89] When the Fifth Circuit Court found both Barnett and Johnson guilty of court contempt, the Mississippi state legislature adopted a resolution, protesting against "the tyrannical effort of the federal government." Sensing an imminent possibility of the use of federal force by the Kennedy administration to achieve the racial desegregation at Ole Miss and "speaking for peace-loving, law-abiding citizens of the State of Mississippi," Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 108 declared: "We do hereby deplore and condemn the use of Federal force in any form and in an unconstitutional and illegal attempt to subjugate free American citizens and to subordinate constitutional government to the dictates of an organized, militant, and self-serving minority." Both Houses of the state legislature hurriedly voted for the resolution, with the only two dissenting votes cast by Representatives Joseph Wroten and Otto Karl Wiesenburg, whom the segregationist *Jackson Daily News* had once castigated as "traitors."[90]

President Kennedy, still hoping to resolve the Ole Miss crisis without employing federal forces, called Governor Barnett on Saturday, September 29, to discuss a new behind-the-scenes proposal, which Watkins had just suggested to Attorney General Kennedy. According to the scheme, the Kennedy administration would announce that Meredith was going to be brought to the Ole Miss campus to get registered on Monday, October 1. On the basis of this information, the governor and the lieutenant governor would

be at the university intending to block Meredith's admission once again. And while Barnett and Johnson would await the arrival of the Meredith convoy, federal officials were going to secretly bring Meredith to the Woolfolk State Office Building in downtown Jackson to get him registered there. The theory behind of this "hidden ball trick" proposal was simple because it would enable the Mississippi governor to claim that the Kennedy administration misled him, which in turn would allow him to save face. Enthusiastic about the new proposal, Barnett, throughout Saturday afternoon and well into the early evening, spent most of his time trying to talk some of his intransigent advisors into accepting the scheme. However, by the time he left the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Jackson later in the evening after attending the Ole Miss-Kentucky football game, the governor "had lost his own resolve to honor" the trick plan.[91]

Just before kickoff, as Governor Barnett and his wife appeared at their spectator box and waved to the crowd, over forty thousand people who packed the Veterans Memorial Stadium began to cheer, waving their Confederate battle flags. At halftime, in response to the endless loud chants of "We Want Ross" coming from the spectators, the governor dutifully went down to the middle of the football field. In the glare of a spotlight, Barnett spoke into a microphone with his right fist clenched and held high above his head: "I love Mississippi! I love her people [and] our customs! I love and respect our heritage!"[92] The governor did not utter a single word of "segregation" or "integration," but his message was clear. On that evening, Barnett was more than just the governor of Mississippi, becoming a symbol of the white South—a personification of the cherished "southern way of life." In addition, the waved Confederate battle flags also became more than the mere denotation of the Ole Miss spirit; those flags embodied a political message to defy the Kennedy administration's will. And for the occasion, the Ole Miss band, in place of the rendition of "Dixie," introduced the new state song—"Go, Mississippi"—to the spectators at the stadium, which had been designated as the official state song during the 1962 regular legislative session on May 17—the eighth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling. "Go, Mississippi, you cannot go wrong, . . . Go, Mississippi, let the world know, That our Mississippi is leading the show," the words reverberated through the stadium.[93]

It was true that the nation's eyes were fixed on Mississippi and that the state was "leading the show." But contrary to the words included in the newly introduced state song, Mississippi was definitely "going wrong." While the enthusiastic crowd at the Veterans Memorial Stadium was driven into frenzy by the governor's appearance, those who were privy to Barnett's secret negotiations with the Kennedy administration were simply puzzled. One of those insiders was former Mississippi governor Hugh L. White. After the victorious ending of the game for Ole Miss, as White and James Coleman, Barnett's predecessor, were leaving the stadium, White whispered to Coleman: "I don't understand Ross making that speech because I know that he has already agreed [with the Kennedys] to admit Meredith" (Coleman would metaphorically reminisce years later that Barnett had "kept throwing a match to every gasoline barrel he could find until we had a magnificent explosion" in handling the Ole Miss desegregation crisis).[94] Jackson attorney William Goodman—Watkins's law partner and one of the cool-headed advisors to the governor—was another puzzled insider. In fact, after the ballgame was over, Barnett called Goodman and simply told him: "I can't do it. I can't do it."[95]

Later the same evening, Governor Barnett placed a call to the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. Attorney General Kennedy had already gone home, but the governor's call was forwarded to his residence. Castigated by the attorney general that he was breaking his word to the president, Barnett told Robert Kennedy that he would have to call off the earlier proposal for the "hidden ball trick." President Kennedy was then called at the White House and informed by his younger brother that the deal was off. Upon hearing this, the president reluctantly signed the already prepared proclamation document, federalizing the Mississippi National Guard and authorizing Secretary of the Army Cyrus R. Vance to call out troops to send to the University of Mississippi if it became necessary. A moment before signing the document, President Kennedy looked up at Assistant Attorney General Norbert A. Schlei and asked gingerly: "Is this pretty much what Ike signed in 1957 with the Little Rock thing?" Assured that it was, the president went on to subscribe his name to the document.[96]

Ⅵ

While the Pentagon was busy notifying the Mississippi National Guard that it was now under the command of the federal government, Robert Kennedy and Ross Barnett resumed their desperate search for a peaceful solution before the situation got any worse. On the morning of Sunday, September 30, 1962, the Mississippi governor called the attorney general from his mansion in Jackson. The only person who was present with Barnett at this time was Tom Watkins, and it was one of the rare moments during the previous few days when the governor was not surrounded by a dozen of his advisors and insiders. Barnett and Kennedy were soon to be joined by Watkins and Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall on the phone, and their long distance conversation lasted more than thirty minutes. "[Y]ou should postpone this matter," the Mississippi governor made a frantic plea for the postponement of bringing James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. Failing at this, Barnett again proposed that another fake confrontation be played out between the federal marshals and him. Attorney General Kennedy, having learned his lesson from his past dealings with the governor, flatly refused Barnett's proposition, delivering his discontent to the governor that Barnett was only concerned with saving his face "politically":[97]

> *Barnett*: I will be in the front line and when Meredith presents himself, I'll do like I did before. I will read a proclamation denying him entrance. I will tell the people of Mississippi now that I want peace and we must have no violence, no bloodshed. When you draw the guns, I will then tell the people. In other words, we will step aside and you can walk in.
>
> *RFK*: I don't think that will be very pleasant, Governor. I think you are making a mistake handling it in that fashion. I suppose that . . . you feel it is helpful to you politically. It is not helping the people of Mississippi or the people of the United States. But I gather that is secondary in your judgment. I think it is silly going through this whole facade of your standing there; our

people drawing guns; your stepping aside; to me it is dangerous and I think this has gone beyond the stage of politics. . . .

Barnett: . . . I have said so many times—we couldn't have integration and I have got to do something. I can't just walk back. . . .

RFK: You can say the [Mississippi] National Guard has been called up and you don't want to have people from the State of Mississippi responsible for placing Mr. Meredith in the institution and therefore you are going to step aside on this.

Barnett: I'll say words to that effect. But I have to be confronted with your troops.[98]

Within a few minutes, however, Governor Barnett suddenly changed his equivocal attitude when Attorney General Kennedy exploded a bombshell, informing the Mississippi governor that President Kennedy was prepared to reveal the existence of their secret negotiations on national television. "The President is going on TV tonight," the attorney general broke the news, "[and] [h]e will have to say why he called up the National Guard; that you had an agreement to permit Meredith to go to Jackson to register [which was planned in the "hidden ball trick" scheme], and your lawyer, Mr. Watkins, said this was satisfactory." Barnett was horrified at the ramifications of the president's possible revelation of their secret conversations and started begging for the attorney general's mercy: "Don't say that. Please don't mention it." At long last, the Mississippi governor agreed with Attorney General Kennedy that Meredith would be brought to the Ole Miss campus later that Sunday afternoon, and that Barnett would make a statement to the effect that he would "recognize the authority" of the federal government. The attorney general made sure that the governor, to "alleviate the situation," would issue his statement prior to his elder brother's appearance on national television. Barnett, at the very end of their telephone conversation, wanted to have a final word from Attorney General Kennedy that the Mississippi governor would at least be able to talk about his "continuing the legal fight" in his statement. And much more than that, the governor wanted to make sure that President Kennedy would not reveal their behind-the-scenes negotiations:[99]

Barnett: . . . you won't mind . . . if I raise [C]ain about it [the Kennedy administration's forcing Meredith's entrance]?

RFK: I don't mind that; just say law and order will be maintained. . . .

Barnett: Please let's not have a fuss about what we talked about.

RFK: I don't think that will be necessary.

Barnett: . . . I hope you will consider my position here.

RFK: Let's talk about that after tonight. . . .

Barnett: You understand about our continuing the legal fight?

RFK: I have no objection; I understand.[100]

Sitting on his desk at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy consulting with his top advisors—Assistant Attorneys General Burke Marshall (*left*), Nicholas deBelleville Katzenbach (*right*), and Norbert A. Schlei (*standing*)—to handle the University of Mississippi desegregation crisis on September 30, 1962. Robert Kennedy dispatched Katzenbach to the university in Oxford, Mississippi, later on the same day in preparation for getting James H. Meredith registered there.
(Reproduction #LC-USZ62-133365, *New York World-Telegram and the Sun* Newspaper Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

Barnett and Watkins hurriedly set to write a draft of the governor's statement to be delivered. It was already 12:00 noon, Mississippi time, and time was running short. An hour later, the Mississippi governor called Assistant Attorney General Marshall at the Department of Justice and "dictated the statement he intended to make." Around 6:00 P.M., Attorney General Kennedy placed a call

to the governor "to inform him that Meredith had arrived on the campus" of the University of Mississippi. The attorney general also asked Barnett to make some minor changes in his statement, but the perturbed governor answered that "he didn't have a pencil or . . . a secretary."[101] By then, President Kennedy had already dispatched some 100 federal penitentiary guards, more than 300 border patrol officers, and 123 persons from the U.S. Marshals Service to Ole Miss, all of whom were deputized for the federal government to enforce the court orders to have Meredith registered at the university. Upon their arrival at the Ole Miss campus, they immediately took up their positions to surround the Lyceum—the university's administrative building.[102] At 7:30 P.M., looking tired and strained, Governor Barnett went on statewide television and announced that Meredith had already been placed on the University of Mississippi campus by the Kennedy administration. "Surrounded on all sides by the armed forces and oppressive power of the United States of America, my courage and my convictions do not waiver [*sic*]," the governor continued:[103]

> My heart still says "never," but my calm judgment abhors the bloodshed that will follow. I love Mississippi. I love her people. I love those 10,000 good Mississippians in the National Guard who have now been federalized and requested to oppose me and their own people. . . . I know that our principles remain true, but we must at all odds preserve the peace and avoid bloodshed.[104]

"To the officials of the federal government," Barnett added, "I say: 'Gentlemen, you are tramping on the sovereignty of this great State and depriving it of every vestige of honor and respect as a member of the union of states. You are destroying the Constitution of this great Nation. May God have mercy on your souls.'"[105]

Mississippi governor Ross R. Barnett appearing on statewide television on the evening of September 30, 1962, to announce that James H. Meredith had been brought into the University of Mississippi campus by the John F. Kennedy administration and to ask his fellow Mississippians to "preserve the peace and avoid bloodshed." Unknown to the governor who was in Jackson, however, by the time he went on the air, a large anti-integration crowd had started to throw bricks, Molotov cocktails, and other objects at the deployed federal marshals on the university campus in Oxford.
(In the author's possession by courtesy of the late Erle E. Johnston Jr. of Forest, Mississippi, a former director of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission)

Meanwhile, at the White House, President Kennedy went on the air to deliver his address to the nation shortly after the Mississippi governor finished his statewide speech. Just as President Dwight Eisenhower had done five years earlier in the face of the Little Rock, Arkansas, school desegregation crisis in the fall of 1957, Kennedy needed to explain his course of action and more importantly, to prevent any possible violence and riots on the University of Mississippi campus over Meredith's registration. Theodore C. "Ted" Sorensen, one of the president's closest advisors and speechwriters, later recalled that Kennedy rewrote his speech several times to make sure that it would demonstrate that his administration "was merely carrying out" the pertinent federal court orders and "was not forcing anything down the throats of Mississippians" on the initiative of the White House.[106] Reminding the American people of the fact that the United States was "founded on the principle that observance of the law is the eternal safeguard of liberty and defiance of the law is the surest road to tyranny," the president emphasized in his address that his "obligation under the Constitution . . . to implement the orders of the court" was "inescapable."[107] Having said that, Kennedy had

special words for white Mississippians in general and the Ole Miss students in particular, appealing to "white Mississippi's sense of honor":[108]

> You have a great tradition to uphold, a tradition of honor and courage won on the field of battle and on the gridiron as well as the University campus. You have a new opportunity to show that you are men of patriotism and integrity. . . . It lies in your courage to accept those laws with which you disagree as well as those with which you agree.[109]

"The eyes of the Nation and of all the world are upon you and upon all of us," the president concluded, "and the honor of your University and State are in the balance."[110] Thus, imitating Eisenhower's discourse in the wake of the Little Rock desegregation incident, Kennedy's address ended up with focusing on the law-and-order theme, his obligatory constitutional duty, and an appeal to white Mississippi's sense of honor, where the president merely perceived the Ole Miss crisis as "a legal contest" and "a problem of enforcement," rather than understanding the issue as part of America's moral dilemma.[111]

By the time Governor Barnett went on the air, unknown to both the governor and President Kennedy, a large crowd gathering around the administrative building had started to throw bottles, bricks, pipes, and Molotov cocktails at the dispatched federal marshals on the Ole Miss campus. And as the president began his nationwide address to appeal to "white Mississippi's sense of honor," those attacked marshals started to fight back by firing tear gas. Shortly after Kennedy concluded his address, the body of Paul Guihard, a thirty-year-old French journalist for Agence France-Presse, was discovered on campus. The cause of his death was a gunshot wound.[112] Around ten o'clock in the evening, sensing that the campus riots were now out of control, Nicholas Katzenbach, assistant attorney general from the Justice Department who had earlier been dispatched to the university by Attorney General Kennedy, called the White House from the campus, asking the Kennedy administration to send in federal troops. President Kennedy in turn asked Secretary of Army Vance to order troops to move in.[113] Around midnight, Barnett, finally realizing the gravity of the outcome of the state-

federal confrontation, made his last desperate plea to President Kennedy on the phone:

> *Barnett*: Mr. President, please. Why don't you . . . can't you give an order up there to remove Meredith?
>
> *JFK (John F. Kennedy)*: How can I remove him, Governor, when there's a riot in the street. . . ? I can't remove him under those conditions. . . .
>
> *Barnett*: Mr. President, people are wiring me and calling me saying, "Well, you've given up." I said, I had to say, "No, I'm not giving up, not giving up any fight. . . . I never give up. I have courage and faith . . . and we'll win this fight." You understand. That's just to Mississippi people.[114]

On the morning of Monday, October 1, just before 4:00 A.M., nearly thirty thousand federal troops deployed by the White House began to arrive at the University of Mississippi.[115] By then, the campus riots and the Kennedy administration's efforts to subdue the night of terror, which was officially designated as "Operation Rapid Road" by federal authorities, had brought two deaths—the journalist Guihard and Ray Gunter, a twenty-three-year-old local jukebox repairman who was watching the riots just as a bystander.[116] Besides the loss of these two precious lives, a total of 375 people were reportedly injured, including some 160 federal marshals.[117] In addition, two hundred rioters were arrested, only twenty-four of whom were identified as Ole Miss students.[118] However, more than anything else, the riots resulted in bringing "incalculable notoriety" to Mississippi and its people.[119] After all, it was the "Price of Defiance," as Mississippi state representative Otto Karl Wiesenburg termed, that Mississippi—and Governor Barnett as well—had to pay.[120] Meanwhile, Special Assistant Edwin O. Guthman to Attorney General Kennedy later admitted: "We lacked a sense of Southern history."[121]

The overwhelming military presence of federal troops deployed by the Kennedy administration had restored order to the Ole Miss campus by the dawn of October 1. At 8:00 A. M., escorted by a group of exhausted federal

The morning after the campus riots that engulfed the University of Mississippi in Oxford, James H. Meredith headed for his class as the university's first black student on October 1, 1962. Escorting Meredith were James J. P. McShane, chief of the Executive Office of the U.S. Marshals (*left*), and Attorney John Doar from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.
(Reproduction #LC-DIG-ds-00591, *U.S. News and World Report* Magazine Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

marshals, Meredith was finally registered, and he thus officially became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi (more precisely, he was enrolled as a transfer student from all-black Jackson State College in Mississippi). President Kennedy made sure that Meredith would be accompanied by plainclothes marshals, not by army troops, to the university registrar's office in an apparent attempt not to incite white Mississippians to further rebellion.[122] Meredith met with no further resistance and hurried to his first class—American history. Robert Ellis, who quietly registered Meredith on that Monday morning, reminisced years later with much accuracy:

> If the federal government had told Governor Barnett, "We are coming in, and we are gonna maintain the order, and we are gonna register Meredith," they would have had my complete respect and cooperation. They didn't do that. And by the same token, the governor was so obsessed with the idea of maintaining "our way of life" that [eventually straitjacketed him]. . . . And with those two [incompatible] points of view [possessed by President Kennedy and Governor Barnett] and with the two political leaders trying to make [themselves] look as good as they could, the situation just got out of hand.[123]

Ⅶ

With James Meredith's meandering but eventual success in desegregating the University of Mississippi, the absolute racial barrier in Mississippi's educational system was finally broken. After all, the Ole Miss ordeal embodied what Willie Morris, a renowned Mississippi writer, aptly called "Echoes of a Civil War's Last Battle."[124] And subscribing to Morris's observation, the NAACP attorney Constance Baker Motley, who had represented Meredith in his long legal struggle, once looked back: "What really happened in the Meredith case when the state [of Mississippi] decided to resist was that they were playing out the last chapter of the Civil War."[125] Coming out of the battle as a victorious hero, Meredith, while protected by federal marshals daily on campus and despite some last-ditch attempts made by the segregationist Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (then chaired by Governor Ross Barnett) to deny him a diploma, had remained as an Ole Miss student until his graduation on August 18, 1963, with a degree in political science.[126] "There were many who had said," Russell H. Barrett, who was a political science professor at Ole Miss when Meredith attended the institution, wrote in his 1965 book entitled *Integration at Ole Miss*, "that neither the University nor Meredith would ever see this [Meredith's commencement] day."[127]

Prior to his expected graduation, on the last day of final examinations at the University of Mississippi, Meredith wore the same clothes—dark suit, white shirt, red necktie, and black shoes—that he had worn on October 1, 1962, the day he became the first black student at the educational institution. However, there was one notable difference in his appearance. Meredith wore a metal button on his lapel that had become popular among recalcitrant white Mississippians and Ole Miss students during the desegregation crisis. On the button, there was one word printed in white against a black background: "NEVER." It served as a rebellious symbol of white Mississippi's defiance in the fall of 1962; nine months later, the graduating student put the button on upside down on purpose.[128] "I was making sure they [white Mississippians who fought against my admission to Ole Miss] knew who was the victor," Meredith recollected in his 1994 oral history interview conducted by the author, "[and] [i]f you make that plain enough, you don't have to worry about another fight." "It was a symbol of defeat [for my enemy]," the

air force veteran added, "[so] I wore it with total deliberation, [and] I planned it [wearing the button upside down] for nine months."[129]

Five months after Meredith became the first black alumnus in the University of Mississippi's 115-year history, on January 8, 1964, Governor Barnett delivered his farewell address to the joint assembly of the Mississippi state legislature. No mention was made of the 1962 Ole Miss desegregation ordeal, but at the very end of his address, the outgoing governor dutifully asked white Mississippians not to desist from having "confidence in our way of life."[130] Eight days later, when Barnett attended the last Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission meeting held under his administration, the members of the prosegregation state executive agency—including the Jackson attorney Tom Watkins who had served as the vital conduit connecting the Barnett and Kennedy administrations during the Ole Miss incident—unanimously adopted a resolution to express the commission's "highest commendation" to the governor, who had "furnished courageous leadership and guidance in fulfilling [the] mission" of the state agency. In response, Barnett praised the commission members for their "contribution toward perpetuation of . . . racial segregation" in the state.[131] No one dared to talk about the dishonorable outcome of the Meredith crisis at the meeting. Aside from the Ole Miss incident as a humiliating exception, racial segregation in Mississippi—the last citadel of racial and racist injustice throughout the United States—remained intact. But as history attests, it would not take too long for the state to realize that it could no longer shield its old—and segregated—way of life from the changing world.

A quarter century after the 1962 University of Mississippi desegregation ordeal, former Mississippi governor Barnett drew his last breath and quietly passed away at a Jackson hospital on November 6, 1987. He was eighty-nine years old. After helping to make his native state a major civil rights battleground under his administration, Barnett went back to private law practice, but he was always in demand for speeches throughout the state. One of his most favorite appearances was at the famed annual Neshoba County Fair held every August, where people, not only from Mississippi but also from all over the nation, got together and enjoyed various sorts of entertainment, southern cooking, and political orations. The former governor would deliver short speeches there, but what really made

the crowd cheer was his out-of-tune singing. When he brought out his guitar and began to sing "Are You from Dixie?," Barnett never failed in eliciting more applause than those offered to other political orators. "How many of you are from Dixie? Hold up your hands," he would ask the enthusiastic audience. "Friends, I love Dixie! And I know you love Dixie! And I know your friends and relatives everywhere love Dixieland!"[132]

Barnett loved the American South, and as the words in the song "Dixie" go, he "live[d] and die[d] in Dixie." But much more than that, he loved Mississippi and liked to brag about his native state in every speaking engagement that he accepted. "No man can make you prouder to be a Mississippian than Ross Barnett," he was often told.[133] At the same time, he never desisted from reiterating the vindictiveness of his handling of the 1962 University of Mississippi desegregation crisis until his death. "I have no regrets, no apologies," Barnett flatly answered in a newspaper interview conducted just five years before his passing.[134] Ross R. Barnett Jr., who attended his father's death, once reflected: "Things change, people change, times change, and Mississippi changes, too."[135] But his own father was a marked exception. Former Mississippi governor Ross R. Barnett, as he boastfully avowed on his postelection celebration evening of September 8, 1959, had remained and died as a proud—and unreconstructed—"Mississippi segregationist."

Notes

* The author dedicates this article to his very special Mississippians—Aya Rebekah and Ann Rachel—with lots of love and fond memories. Also, the author is grateful to Alexis Valentine and Kenneth Johnson at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., for having provided him with those library-held photographs used in the article; and to his departmental colleague, Associate Professor Peter Carter, for having read a draft version of the article and offered him many valuable suggestions to enhance the article's readability.

1 "Episode 2: Fighting Back, 1957-62," in *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, prod. Blackside, Boston, Mass., PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], Alexandria, Va., 1986, videotape.

2 Item #4F1, dictabelt #4F, transcript, in "Integration of the University of Mississippi," Presidential Recordings, President's Office File, John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Mass., audiotape.

3 For some superb treatments of the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision, see Richard Kluger,

Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976); and Paul E. Wilson, *A Time to Lose: Representing Kansas in* Brown v. Board of Education (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1995).

4 Coined originally by U.S. senator Harry F. Byrd from Virginia on February 25, 1955, the words "massive resistance" denoted the white South's organized and all-out resistance to the effective implementation of the Supreme Court's school desegregation decrees initially, and later to the black civil rights movement in the South in general. See Yasuhiro Katagiri, "Massive Resistance," in *Law and Politics*, vol. 10 of *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. James W. Ely and Bradley G. Bond (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008), 54-58.

5 *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 1982.

6 Ibid., June 24, 1983.

7 *New York Times*, Sept. 22, 2012.

8 Cecil L. Sumners, *The Governors of Mississippi* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1980), 129-30.

9 Erle Johnston Jr., *Politics: Mississippi Style* (Forest, Miss.: Lake Harbor, 1993), x.

10 Erle Johnston Jr., *I Rolled with Ross: A Political Portrait* (Baton Rouge, La: Moran, 1980), 73.

11 William J. Simmons [secretary, Jackson Citizens' Council] to "Dear Member," Aug. 31, 1959, folder 1: "Association of Citizens' Councils of Mississippi, Correspondence, 1956-1967," Citizens' Council Collection, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Miss.

12 William J. Simmons, "An Oral History with Mr. William J. Simmons," recorded interview by Orley B. Caudill, June 26, 1979, vol. 372, transcript, 44-45, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.; W. F. Minor, "The Citizens' Councils [*sic*]: An Incredible Decade of Defiance," typescript, n.d. [1965?], n.p., folder: "Citizens' Council," box 2, Wilson F. "Bill" Minor Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Miss. See also Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954–64* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971), 18-23.

13 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*. See also *Odessa* (*Tex.*) *American*, Sept. 9, 1959.

14 "Inaugural Address of Governor Ross R. Barnett, Jan. 19, 1960," *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi*, 1960, regular sess., 51, Mississippiana Collection, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

15 "Inaugural Address of Governor James P. Coleman, Jan. 17, 1956," *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi*, 1956, regular sess., 65, Mississippiana Collection.

16 Chapter 291 [House Bill No. 741], *Laws of the State of Mississippi*, 1960, regular sess., 413-14, Mississippiana Collection.

17 Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 273-78.

18 James H. Meredith, "An Oral History with James Howard Meredith," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, Jan. 11, 1994, transcript, 36, James Howard Meredith Collection, Archives and Special Collections, John D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, University, Miss.

19 James H. Meredith and William Doyle, *A Mission from God: A Memoir and Challenge for America* (New York: Atria, 2012), 44.

20 James H. Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), 54; David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1990), 156.

21 Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 57-58.

22 Ibid., 58.

23 Walter Lord, *The Past That Would Not Die* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 109; *New York Times*, June 14, 1983.

24 Among the nation's civil rights groups, the NAACP was also most vulnerable to irresponsible racial and racist red-baiting concocted by the white South, despite its repeated assertion that it was neither a Communist-led nor a Communist-dominated organization. In this regard, see, for instance, Eugene Cook, *The Ugly Truth about the NAACP: An Address by Attorney General Eugene Cook of Georgia before the Fifty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Peace Officers['] Association of Georgia Held in Atlanta* (Greenwood: Association of Citizens' Councils of Mississippi, n.d. [1957]), folder 10, box 3; J. B. Matthews, *Communism and the NAACP* (Atlanta: Georgia Commission on Education, n.d. [1958]), folder 15, box 4, both in LeBaron Family Papers, University Archives and West Florida History Center, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Fla. Also, see generally Yasuhiro Katagiri, *Black Freedom, White Resistance, and Red Menace: Civil Rights and Anticommunism in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2014).

25 Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 160-67.

26 Ibid., 162; David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1999), 289.

27 Jack Bass, *Unlikely Heroes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 178. See also Joel William Friedman, *Champion of Civil Rights: Judge John Minor Wisdom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2009), 152-54.

28 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*.

29 James H. Meredith, conversation with the author, Jan. 11, 1994, Jackson, Miss.

30 Bass, *Unlikely Heroes*, 179.

31 Jack W. Peltason, *Fifty-Eight Lonely Men: Southern Federal Judges and School Desegregation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), 26; Deborah J. Barrow and Thomas G. Walker, *A Court Divided: The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Politics of Judicial Reform* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1988), 55.

32 Bass, *Unlikely Heroes*, 182.

33 "Fact Sheet of University of Mississippi Desegregation," *Crisis* [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], Nov. 1962, 537.

34 83 Cong. Rec. 7256 (May 27, 1954).

35 "The Battle between Ike and Faubus," typed poem, n.d. [1957], folder: "Circuit Riders, Inc.—Correspondence," box 14, Myers G. Lowman Papers, Hoover Institute Library and Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

36 Yasuhiro Katagiri, "'Let the Word Go Forth': John F. Kennedy's Presidential Rhetoric on Civil Rights during the South's Second Reconstruction," *Japanese Journal of American Studies* [Japanese Association for American Studies] 17 (2006): 271-72; Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, *Some of It*

Was Fun: Working with RFK and LBJ (New York: Norton, 2008), 46; J. Lee Annis Jr., *Big Jim Eastland: The Godfather of Mississippi* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2016), 182-83.

37 Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy in His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 160.

38 Gerald S. Strober and Deborah H. Strober, "*Let Us Begin Anew*": *An Oral History of the Kennedy Presidency* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 302.

39 Meredith, "An Oral History with James Howard Meredith," 34.

40 Ibid., 25.

41 Ross R. Barnett, "A Statewide Address on Television and Radio to the People of Mississippi by Governor Ross R. Barnett, 7:30 P.M., September 13, 1962," 1-2, 4, 6, folder: "Barnett, Ross—Miscellaneous, 1962-1963," Godwin Advertising Agency Collection, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Miss. The full text of the governor's address is also located in folder 50: "Ole Miss/James Meredith, 1962-1963," box 2, Kenneth Toler Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Miss.

42 *Jackson (Miss.) Daily News*, Sept. 14, 1962.

43 Ibid. See also Russell H. Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), 96.

44 Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross*, 95; David R. Davies and Judy Smith, "Jimmy Ward and the Jackson *Daily News*," in *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement*, ed. David R. Davies (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2001), 103-107.

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46 Hodding Carter, *The South Strikes Back* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), 25.

47 Frank E. Smith, "An Oral History with Frank Ellis Smith," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, Aug. 27, 1993, vol. 154, pt. 2, transcript, 3, 7-8, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

48 Frank E. Smith, *Congressman from Mississippi* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), 304. See also Dennis J. Mitchell, *Mississippi Liberal: A Biography of Frank E. Smith* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2001), 171.

49 Smith, "An Oral History with Frank Ellis Smith," 5.

50 Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 94.

51 Joseph E. Wroten, "An Oral History with Mr. Joseph E. Wroten," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, Nov. 4, 1993, vol. 476, transcript, 27, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

52 Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 97. See also Charles W. Eagles, "'The Fight for Men's Minds': The Aftermath of the Ole Miss Riot of 1962," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71 (Spring 2009): 9-10.

53 *McComb (Miss.) Enterprise-Journal*, Feb. 16, 1983.

54 Wroten, "An Oral History with Mr. Joseph E. Wroten," 32.

55 Chapter 9 [House Concurrent Resolution No. 2], *Laws of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 17-18, Mississippiana Collection.

56 *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 8; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 5, both in

Mississippiana Collection; Karl Wiesenburg, "An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," recorded interview by H. T. Holmes, Aug. 9, 1976, OH 77-04, transcript, 24, Archives and Library Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.; Wroten, "An Oral History with Mr. Joseph E. Wroten," 36. See also Karl Wiesenburg, *The Oxford Disaster: Price of Defiance* (Pascagoula, Miss.: Advertiser Printing, 1962), 2.

57 Adam Nossiter, *Of Long Memory: Mississippi and the Murder of Medgar Evers* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994), 68; Wiesenburg, "An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 24.

58 President Kennedy understood that many of the important items on his legislative agenda were virtually in the hands of southern senators and representatives in Congress, who then chaired more than half of the thirty-eight congressional standing committees. The president knew that he had "no muscle" to stand on a par with Congress. "I can't [even] get a Mother's Day resolution [passed through Congress]," Kennedy once vented his frustration. However ill-favored it was for the president, Kennedy realized that he simply could not afford to alienate and antagonize such powerful and segregationist politicians as Senators James Eastland from Mississippi (chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee) and Richard B. Russell Jr. from Georgia (chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee) by pushing his civil rights policies. In this regard, see Hugh D. Graham, *Civil Rights and the Presidency: Race and Gender in American Politics, 1960–1972* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 32; Thomas J. Whalen, *JFK and His Enemies: A Portrait of Power* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 137. Also, see generally Maarten Zwiers, *Senator James Eastland: Mississippi's Jim Crow Democrat* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2015); Gilbert C. Fite, *Richard B. Russell, Jr., Senator from Georgia* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991).

59 Paul B. Johnson Jr., recorded interview by T. H. Baker, Sept. 8, 1970, AC 80-63, transcript, 12, Oral History Collection, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Tex.

60 John R. Salter Jr. and Edwin King, "An Interview with John R. Salter Jr. with Rev. Edwin King," recorded interview by John Jones, Jan. 6, 1981, OH 81-01, transcript, 103, Archives and Library Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.

61 On the history and activities of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission since the agency's inception in 1956 until its virtual demise in 1973, see generally Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2001); Yasuhiro Katagiri, "Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission," in *The Mississippi Encyclopedia*, ed. Ted Ownby, et al. (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2017), 851-53.

62 Erle Johnston Jr., "An Oral History with Mr. Erle Johnston," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, Aug. 13, 1993, vol. 276, pt. 2, transcript, 8, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

63 *New Orleans (La.) Times-Picayune*, Oct. 2, 1972; Johnson, recorded interview, 13.

64 Jonathan Rosenberg and Zachary Karabell, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Quest for Justice: The Civil Rights Tapes* (New York: Norton, 2003), 39.

65 Burke Marshall, recorded interview by T. H. Baker, Oct. 28, 1968, AC 74-215, transcript, 22, Oral History Collection, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Tex. See also Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of

North Carolina Press, 2009), 280-81.

66 Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 107; Friedman, *Champion of Civil Rights*, 160-61.

67 Erle Johnston Jr., *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary with Personal Experiences* (Forest, Miss.: Lake Harbor, 1990), 150.

68 Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 108.

69 Ibid.

70 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*.

71 Thomas N. Turner, "An Oral History with Mr. Thomas Newell Turner, Native Mississippian," recorded interview by Orley B. Caudill, Apr. 5, 1977, vol. 28, transcript, vi-x, 91-92, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

72 It is confusing to note that some historians and scholars have indicated that President Kennedy's first call to Governor Barnett during the crisis over the University of Mississippi desegregation took place on Saturday, September 29, 1962—the day the president, at long last, decided to federalize the Mississippi National Guard and authorize Secretary of the Army Cyrus R. Vance to call out troops to send to Ole Miss if it became necessary; and only the day before the university was engulfed in campus riots. Furthermore, other historians have written that the president's initial phone call to the Mississippi governor occurred on a different day (Ted Widmer, for instance, provides that the date was September 22). However, by carefully examining the contents of the relevant telephone conversation transcript (particularly, the part of the transcript referring to Jackson attorney Tom Watkins's impending visit to Washington, D.C., as the Barnett administration's emissary), it is reasonable to construe that the conversation in fact was made prior to September 29. Hence, the author believes that President Kennedy's first call to Barnett happened on September 23, relying on the date indicated on the pertaining transcript included in the "Integration of the University of Mississippi" records (a set of audiocassettes and their transcripts) made available by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. In this regard, see, for example, Philip A. Goduti Jr., *Robert F. Kennedy and the Shaping of Civil Rights, 1960-1964* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2012), 146; Ted Widmer, *Listening In: The Secret White House Recordings of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Hachette, 2012), 101.

73 Item #4A1, dictabelt #4A, transcript, in "Integration of the University of Mississippi."

74 Ibid.

75 Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973*, 152: Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 183.

76 Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 196.

77 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*.

78 *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Sept. 26, 1962.

79 Ibid., Oct. 1, 1972.

80 Burke Marshall to Robert F. Kennedy, memo, Sept. 27, 1962, 1, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Mass.

81 Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973*, 153.

82 Marshall to Kennedy, memo, Sept. 27, 1962, 2.

83 "Telephone Conversation between Tom Watkins and RFK [Robert F. Kennedy], September 27,

1962," folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

84 "Conversation between RFK [Robert F. Kennedy] and Governor Barnett, Wednesday [*sic*, Thursday], Sept. 27, 1962, at 2:50 p.m.," transcript, 1, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

85 Ibid., 2.

86 "Conversation between RFK [Robert F. Kennedy] and Governor Barnett, Thursday, Sept. 27, 1962, at 3:50 p.m.," transcript; "Conversation between RFK and Governor Barnett, Thursday, Sept. 27, 1962, at 4:20 p.m.," transcript; "Conversation between RFK and Governor Barnett, Thursday, Sept. 27, 1962, at 5:35 p.m.," transcript, all in folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

87 "Conversation between RFK [Robert F. Kennedy] and Governor Barnett, Thursday, Sept. 27, 1962, at 6:35 p.m.," transcript, 1, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

88 Ibid.

89 Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953–1973*, 154.

90 Chapter 20 [Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 108], *Laws of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 29-30; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 42-44; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 30, all in Mississippiana Collection; Nossiter, *Of Long Memory*, 68.

91 Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 186-88.

92 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*. See also *New York Times*, Sept. 30, 1962.

93 *Mississippi Official and Statistical Register*, 1992-1996, 32-33, Mississippiana Collection; *Jackson (Miss.) Clarion-Ledger/Daily News*, Sept. 30, 1962.

94 Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 189; James P. Coleman, "Oral History Interview with James P. Coleman," recorded interview by John Egerton, Sept. 5, 1990, A-0338, transcript, 7, Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N.C.

95 Johnston, "An Oral History with Mr. Erle Johnston," 8; Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953–1973*, 156.

96 Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 659. See also Mitchell F. Crusto, "Federalism and Civil Rights: The Meredith Case," *National Black Law Journal* 11, no. 2 (1989): 242-43.

97 "Telephone Conversation between Attorney General and Governor Barnett, Governor Barnett Called Sunday, 12:45 p.m., September 30, 1962," transcript, 1, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

98 Ibid., 1-2.

99 Ibid., 3-9.

100 Ibid., 9.

101 "Additional Conversation with Governor [Barnett] on September 30, 1962," transcript, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers.

102 Mississippi General Legislative Investigating Committee, *A Report by the General Legislative*

Investigating Committee to the Mississippi State Legislature concerning the Occupation of the Campus of the University of Mississippi, September 30, 1962, by the Department of Justice of the United States, 1963, 5, Mississippiana Collection. On the previous day—Saturday, September 29, 1962—Governor Barnett had asked Mississippi state senator George Yarbrough, president pro tempore of Mississippi's upper legislative body and one of the governor's hard-line advisors during the Ole Miss crisis, to represent him if and when Meredith was brought to the University of Mississippi campus in Oxford on the following day. By then, both the governor himself and Lieutenant Governor Johnson had been under the court injunctions issued by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that prohibited them from physically interfering Meredith's enrollment any further. "I told him [Governor Barnett] . . . that I wasn't interested in getting up there and be a dead hero," Yarbrough recollected thirty years after the incident, but the governor's sworn friend eventually complied. To make their agreement effective, Barnett issued a directive to Yarbrough, authorizing and directing the state senator "to proceed and do all things necessary that the peace and security of the people of the State of Mississippi are fully protected." By the time the governor's representative reached the Ole Miss campus around 6:00 P.M., on Sunday, September 30, though, an unruly mob of segregationist protesters had already begun to surround the university's administrative building. In this regard, see George M. Yarbrough, "An Oral History with [the] Honorable George M. Yarbrough," recorded interview by Orley B. Caudill, Feb. 21, 1980, vol. 367, transcript, 34-35, 56, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

103 Ross R. Barnett, "Statement of Governor Ross R. Barnett," folder: "Legal Briefs," box 170, Paul B. Johnson Family Papers, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 544.

107 John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the Nation on the Situation at the University of Mississippi," Sept. 30, 1962, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963), 726-28.

108 Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 323.

109 Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the Nation on the Situation at the University of Mississippi," 728.

110 Ibid.

111 Garth E. Pauley, *The Modern Presidency and Civil Rights: Rhetoric on Race from Roosevelt to Nixon* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2001), 212.

112 *Daily Mississippian* [the University of Mississippi student newspaper], Oct. 1, 2012. See also Henry T. Gallagher, *James Meredith and the Ole Miss Riot: A Soldier's Story* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2012), 74-75.

113 Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 323. See also Crusto, "Federalism and Civil Rights," 242.

114 Items #4F1 and #4F4, dictabelt #4F, transcript, in "Integration of the University of Mississippi."

115 *Daily Mississippian*, Oct. 1, 2012.

116 Ibid.; Mississippi General Legislative Investigating Committee, *A Report by the General Legislative Investigating Committee to the Mississippi State Legislature concerning the Occupation of the Campus of the University of Mississippi*, 2, 5.

117 McMillen, *The Citizens' Council, 346; John Dittmer, Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), 140.

118 Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 547.

119 McMillen, *The Citizens' Council*, 346.

120 Wiesenburg, *The Oxford Disaster: Price of Defiance*.

121 Edwin O. Guthman, *We Band of Brothers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 181.

122 Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 547.

123 "Episode 2," in *Eyes on the Prize*.

124 "At Ole Miss: Echoes of a Civil War's Last Battle," *Time*, Oct. 4, 1982, 8, 11.

125 Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 122.

126 Regarding the Barnett-chaired Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission's failed attempts to block Meredith's graduation from the University of Mississippi, see Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission*, 125-27.

127 Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*, 222.

128 Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 322; Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly*, 195.

129 Meredith, "An Oral History with James Howard Meredith," 18.

130 *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi*, 1964, regular sess., 21-22, Mississippiana Collection.

131 "Resolution of Commendation," record #99-69-0-7-1-1-1; "Governor Barnett's Comment to Members of the Sovereignty Commission at His Last Meeting as Chairman," record #99-69-0-6-1-1-1, both in Records of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, Archives and Library Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.

132 Peter J. Boyer, "The Yuppies of Mississippi: How They Took Over the Statehouse," *New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 28, 1988, 24; *The Neshoba County Fair*, prod. Tom Rieland and Marie Antoon, Communication and Resource Center, University of Mississippi, University, Miss., 1983, videotape.

133 Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross*, 131.

134 *Jackson Clarion-Ledger/Daily News*, Sept. 26, 1982.

135 Boyer, "The Yuppies of Mississippi," 24. It was an odd twist of fate that when the University of Mississippi desegregation crisis occurred, Governor Barnett's son, Ross R. Barnett Jr., served in the Mississippi National Guard as a lieutenant, and that by virtue of President Kennedy's proclamation to federalize the Guard, he was put in an awkward position, being mustered into federal service to enforce Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss and thus to take action against his own father's segregationist stand. In this regard, see *St. Louis (Mo.) Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 1, 1962; Paul Hendrickson, *Sons of Mississippi: A Story of Race and Its Legacy* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 149.

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