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Rev. Johnson, Neal Seek State Equal Rights Post Lone Nevada 'Freedom Fighter' Honored by NAACP Saturday

LAS VEGAS Voice

Vol. 3, No. 30 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA Thursday, July 29, 1965

COULDN'T GET THERE FAST ENOUGH

Three Mississippi Arrests in 30 Days For Recent Reno University Graduate

A SPECIAL CITATION for "Outstanding Service and Fortitude" in the struggle for racial equality in "darkest America" will be conferred on a 27-year-old Nevadan at a ceremony scheduled for Saturday night, July 31, at Kit Carson School.

The Las Vegas branch of the NAACP is sponsoring the "Welcome Home, Garland Strother" celebration for the young white man from Reno who was jailed three times within 30 days in Mississippi recently for civil rights activities. The citation honoring Strother for his efforts in behalf of the beleaguered colored people of the deep South will be presented by the Rev. Marion D. Bennett, local NAACP president.



GARLAND STROTHER
"Three-Time Loser"

Strother passed up his own graduation exercises at the University of Nevada on June 10 so he would not be late in reporting for a voluntary "tour of duty" in Mississippi with a team of several hundred young people from states outside the South. The group was recruited by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to assist Negroes in registering to vote and for teaching in "freedom schools." It is understood that Strother was the only volunteer from Nevada who participated in this particular operation.

Strother reportedly left Mississippi early this week and is due to arrive in Las Vegas Saturday morning. Waiting to greet him here, along with a committee of local NAACP officials, will be his fiancée, Barbara Miller of Reno, and Eddie Scott, former president of the Reno-Sparks branch of the NAACP.

BOTH STROTHER and Miss Miller are officers of the Friends of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee which Strother helped organize on the University of Nevada campus in Reno. Anticipating that he might be arrested during his stay in Mississippi, Strother arranged with the SNCC affiliate in Reno to send him money if and when he needed extra cash to bail his way out of jail or pay a fine. It turned out to be a smart move.

Strother was born in Louisiana, where his father managed a plantation, but he moved to Mississippi at the age of nine and later lived in Oklahoma and Montana. His family now resides in Sidney, Mont.

During his hectic six-week "tour of duty"

in Mississippi, Strother kept a detailed account of his sometimes fantastic, sometimes revolting experiences as a "freedom fighter." He will read excerpts from his journal at Saturday night's rally at Kit Carson School, which is slated to start at 8 p.m. He also will present a short documentary film showing recent activities on the civil rights front in the south and answer questions from the audience.

THE FORMER Army sergeant, who enlisted in the service in 1960 after receiving a BA degree in social studies from Montana State University, enrolled at the University of Nevada in 1963 and was awarded his second BA degree last month, this time as an English major.

Strother left Reno by bus on June 9, the day before he was scheduled to receive his second college diploma, and arrived in Mississippi on June 13. The very next day he was arrested in Jackson for distributing MFDP leaflets without a permit and jailed in lieu of \$1,000 bond. Lawyers for the MFDP were instrumental in having his bail reduced to \$100 and Strother was released on June 15 after the SNCC in Reno wired the necessary funds to Jackson.

Within 24 hours he was again arrested along with several hundred others for parading without a permit. He spent the next 12 days in an improvised stockade at the State Fair Grounds in Jackson before regaining his freedom for another \$100. His civil rights duties subsequently took him to several other Mississippi communities, including Edwards, Vicksburg and Hattiesburg.

Shortly after being assigned to a voter registration drive in Stonewall, Strother was picked up by police for the third time (July 13) on a trumped up charge of trespassing and lodged in the Clarke County jail at Quitman together with three other canvassers. All were turned loose upon payment of \$25 fines following a trial on July 15 which Strother later described as a "mockery of justice." He said it "might have been worse" but for the fact that his friends in Reno and the mother of a companion from the east contacted Sens. Howard Cannon of Nevada and Robert Kennedy of New York, who arranged for the Justice Dept. to send FBI agents to Quitman to investigate the circumstances surrounding the arrests.

Ponderville



SERIOUS BUSINESS--These members of the Nevada Commission on Equal Rights of Citizens appear to have a knotty problem on their hands--and minds--as they take time out from interviewing applicants for the key commission post of Executive Director here last week to pose for VOICE photographer. From left: Mrs. Helen Whitacre, Yerington; Chairman Bob Bailey, and George Rudiak, both Las Vegas. (See story below)

Executive Director For Rights Agency Makes Bow Aug. 14

AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR for the Nevada Commission on Equal Rights of Citizens probably will be named following a meeting of the five-member board on Aug. 14 in Reno according to Chairman Bob Bailey of Las Vegas.

"It had been our hope to fill this extremely important position by August 1," Bailey told the VOICE this week, "but it was decided to postpone a decision until the commission has had an opportunity to interview several interested parties from the northern part of the state."

"All members of the commission have indicated they will be able to attend a meeting in Reno on August 14, a Saturday, when applicants from the northern counties will be given a chance to present their qualifications for our consideration," he said. "I am reasonably certain we will make a choice at that time."

Five candidates for the full-time job which will pay between \$8,500 and a statutory maximum of \$9,880 per annum already have been interviewed. All five are from the Las Vegas area.

INTERVIEWED HERE last Saturday by Bailey and commissioners Helen Whitacre of Yerington and George Rudiak of Las Vegas were the Rev. Leo Johnson and Joe Neal, both colored, and Mitchell Bell, a Caucasian. Bailey, Mrs. Whitacre, Rudiak and commissioner John Mendoza

(See RIGHTS, page 12)

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