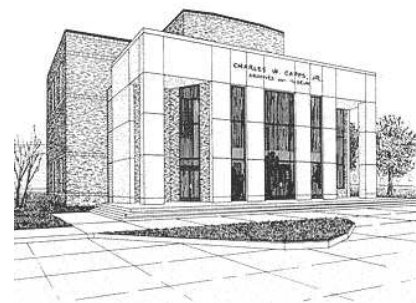




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Reflections of Freedom

He started out angry. Charles McLaurin spent his childhood in Jackson, Mississippi and as a young man witnessed many of the injustices heaped on the black communities through the 1960's. In 1962 he turned his discontent into a positive force when he joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), intent on registering African Americans for the vote. Bob Moses had introduced the SNCC to the Mississippi Delta, so when McLaurin decided to target the county for voter registration efforts, some foundation already existed. McLaurin chose Sunflower County as his area because he felt the people there could be led and inspired. He realized that the South's most infamous prison, Parchman Penitentiary; and the Citizens' Council, the region's top segregationist organization of the 1950's and 60's, were part of his territory. However, it did not take him long to discover that one of the nation's most recognized and vocal supporters of Civil Rights would also come from Sunflower County: Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer.

McLaurin felt that his part in the Civil Rights movement was to inspire the local people to take initiative and then act for themselves, for their own rights. This was his way with Mrs. Hamer. In the fall of 1962, McLaurin had his first encounter with Mrs. Hamer as he rode a bus from Ruleville to Indianola intent on registering the riders at the courthouse there. However, the bus was stopped; the driver was arrested, and all returned to Ruleville. Bob Moses had heard of Mrs. Hamer's voice and charisma and instructed McLaurin to find her and bring her to the SNCC meeting in Jackson. McLaurin says that Mrs. Hamer had heard someone was coming to get her and when he arrived at her door, she calmly got in McLaurin's car and rode with him to Jackson. That experience and car ride began a political career neither envisioned for themselves.

One would assume, then, that McLaurin had much to do with encouraging Mrs. Hamer in her endeavors. When asked about this, McLaurin explains that it was never his intention to do all of the work *for* the people of Sunflower County. They would never feel a sense of accomplishment or ownership if someone had fought for them, while they remained behind. They would have to fight for their



Charles McLaurin, then and now: Reflecting on his work in Freedom Summer of 1964.

(Continued from page 1)

own rights. McLaurin would simply be there as support. He was quite content in the sidelines, encouraging. This was something he did quite well.

Through his fears he found faith, and his personal reconciliations benefited a state's needs

His encouragement took an active turn when he drove Mrs. Hamer down to Jackson to get her qualified to run for Congress, for Mrs. Hamer needed a campaign manager and McLaurin was the only one present to sign for the job. He worked closely with Mrs. Hamer through all her life, as a friend and confidant. He says his life is better for having known her.

There are thousands in the Mississippi Delta whose lives are better for having known Mr. McLaurin. He became the director of Freedom Summer in Sunflower County during the summer of 1964, encouraging voter registration. Although arrested 48 times from 1962-1968, McLaurin never lost his sense of purpose for Sunflower County and voted for the first time in 1965. Through his fears he found faith, and his personal

reconciliations benefited a state's needs. In 1970, McLaurin went back to live in Jackson for a few years only to realize that he had been at home in Sunflower County. He moved back and now works with the Public Works of Indianola. When he rides down the streets of Indianola, he is proud of what he sees. He is a humble man and does not take credit for the work of those he inspired. He is simply proud that he was part of the Mississippi Civil Rights movement. The Delta is proud he is a part of us.

When They Were Strangers at Our Gate: Tracy Sugarman Illustrations and Photographs of Freedom Summer 1964 will be on exhibit through 4 March in the Capps Archives and Museum. Images of Charles McLaurin and Fannie Lou Hamer are prominent throughout the exhibit. It can be viewed Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Mr. Jerry Ward of Dillard University will present the Lunch and Learn Lecture, "African American Life Histories: The Oral and the Written" on 10 February at Noon in the Capps Archives.

Student Worker Comments



Scanning Photographs: Continued

By Eric Dodd

Technology changes everything. With that said it is changing archiving as well. New technology allows us to keep records and documents well in to the future. Scanning has become the forefront of this technology. I think that it is almost as big as the use of acid free paper and white gloves in previous years, and I think CDs are certainly acid free. With scanned material one of its greatest benefits is that it can be seen around the world through the internet. That means that here from the DSU archives anyone can see pictures of the great 1927 flood right from the levee in Rosedale, MS in the Sillers Collection or look at Memphis, TN and black southern America in the Hooks Brothers Collection. Who knows, maybe one day everything will be scanned and we won't have to loose any of our past. But, that's what archiving is all about.

Stormy Harris

There have been many interesting, fun and informative things taking place at the Delta State Archives and Museum located in the Charles Capps building. And I have been fortunate enough to partake in a lot of the festivities. These projects are rightly called festivities because they have been formatted in a way that makes them palatable to the general public as well as the average university crowd. Instructors, students, parents, and children from all around the Delta and surrounding areas have been treated to insightful and sometimes hands-on events. Since the Fall semester of 2003, a number of exhibits, including The Men of Delta State, which focused upon the past and present DSU presidents, and Delta Food Traditions, which concentrated on favorite recipes and old time kitchenware that frequented households throughout the South. Mini lectures, such as the Perfect Biscuit and Six Ways to Squeeze a Lemon were conducted by Dr. Cam McMillen. After instructions and demonstrations by Dr. McMillen, attendees were allowed to come up and try their hand at some of the techniques for making biscuits and other lemonade products. There is always question and answer sessions at these events as well. All in all, the exhibits and lectures provide wonderful and interesting information and opportunities for more socializing among students, faculty, and the general public.

Robert L. Williams, Jr., Graduate Assistant

Hello Delta State! My name is Robert L. Williams Jr. and I am currently a first semester graduate student here. I am working on a Masters in counseling education. I received my undergraduate degree in history from Mississippi Valley State University. I am currently working as a Graduate Assistant in the Charles Capps Jr. Building on "Archives." I am also currently working on the digitization of historical items collected dealing with and relating to Walter Sillers Jr. I would like to wish everyone a successful and prosperous spring semester.

Mario Carter, Graduate Assistant

Hello, my name is Mario Carter. I serve as one of the graduate assistants in the Capps Archives. I graduated from Delta State in the fall of 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree. This is my last semester upon completing the requirements to receive a Master's of Science in Education degree. I have worked at the Capps Archives for a variety of semesters. I have served as a work study and regular student employer under the past archivist Meredith and past assistant archivist Farae. Now, I am working under Emily and James. Since, working here I have done a variety of tasks with the different exhibits and collections, such as Walter Siller, Sr, Walter Siller, Jr and the Hooks Brothers, that is presented in the archives. The project that I am working on this semester is regarding the collection of Florence Sillers. This is the project that the graduate assistant, Lakco Kelley was working on. I have to do a paper on her life and accomplishments of her life. Since, working at the archives, I have met many great people and have found out many great things about the people that lived in the Delta and the surrounding areas. I have enjoyed every detail of my job because of all the information that one can learn. I love history and like to read and I feel that this job is good for me because I can do both. I have lived in the Delta all my life and I am proud that there is a place on campus where I can learn about the positive aspect and progression of the Mississippi Delta. I REALLY look forward to working this graduate assistantship this semester.

Delta Dinner Tours

**16 April 2005
Tea Under the
Dogwoods**

Rosedale, MS
10:00a.m-2:00p.m

18 February 2005

Dinner at The Senator's Place

Senator Willy Simmons will discuss his involvement with Civil Rights in the Delta.

Menu:

Fried chicken, rice and gravy, green beans, yams, cornbread, dinner rolls, and peach cobbler

\$12 per person

6:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.

21 April 2005 Anniversary of 1927 Flood

Do You remember the Flood?

Do you want to share memories or learn more about the flood that consumed the Delta. To mark the 78th anniversary of the 1927 Flood, the Delta State Archives and Museum will host a Picnic at the Levee Break Site.

We will leave the Capps Archives building by 5:15p.m.

Dinner will consist of sub sandwiches, potato chips, brownies, and soft drinks.

Mr. Joe Renfroe will lecture on the history of the levee break.

For Reservations call the Archives at (662) 846-4780

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