

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

At about 8:45 p.m., May 13, 1968, one of the marshals, called Barracuda, was having difficulty at the communications car with a policeman, Badge 2999, in front of Cobo Hall. It was the official communications car of the march. The car had been identified to all marchers and local officials at each city. The car was also at the disposal of CRS field representatives. The car is operated by Howard Royer, National Council of Churches, who is a member of the Church of the Bretheren. The car had encountered some mechanical difficulties concerning the battery. Several individuals, who were marshals and who had been riding in the communications car, had been sent for a new battery. An officer encountered Barracuda at the car and requested that the car be removed. He was informed that the battery was not working and that as soon as the battery came he would move the car. However, I should note that the car was not causing any undue problems and that the officer had no reason to request the moving of the car even in light of the fact that he did not know it was an official car, because most of the traffic was being detoured from the area. The car was located in front of Cobo Hall at the curb. The officer became angry and ordered a tow truck to pull the car. The marshals were summoned by Dave Rogers, captain of the marshals. The marshals came out of the building and surrounded the car. Some sat on the car and some stood around it. They began to sing and clap. I arrived on the scene from inside Cobo Hall.



As I arrived (1) I observed the singing, chanting and clapping of the marshals; (2) I observed spectators who appeared in a happy mood; (3) I observed a tow truck; (4) I observed four horse-mounted policemen hurrying to the scene. They stopped their horses about 50 feet from the communications car and about 30 feet on my left. I was standing 10 feet in back of the communications car directly in front of Cobo Hall. The officer in charge of mounted police approached the communications car and, on his approach, ordered citizens who were just standing and crossing the street coming in and out of Cobo Hall to get off the street pavement and onto the curb.

At that point, I moved out to the curb and identified myself verbally and by showing my Department of Justice credentials to the officer. The officer's name is Gerlac. His badge number is L-54. He was the officer in charge of the mounted police at the time. After showing him my credentials, I suggested he remove his mounted police because the problem was one that could easily be handled by local committee or march officials. He disregarded my credentials and deliberately caused his horse to tramp on my foot and ordered his men to forcibly, by using the horses, move the crowd back. Officer Gerlac approached the marshals who were still around the car. He caused his horse to push people against the car. He did this without warning. Other mounted police indiscriminately began to use their horses to push the spectators. At one time I was surrounded by three horses and was simultaneously being pushed by the horse of Officer Gerlac.



The horses were moved into a line, which was now immediately to my right at the end of the sidewalk, raced backwards and forwards bumping into, knocking down, and tramping the individual citizens who were there.

The actions of the horsemen on the crowd were, in my judgment, uncalled for. The crowd was just standing there observing, walking in and walking out. I observed no provocation on the part of the marchers, the marshals, or the crowd for the officers to behave in that manner. As the crowd of people sought refuge inside Cobo Hall, foot patrolmen quickly seized and manhandled them inside the building.

While this was going on, I raced from one policeman to another appealing to them to be more considerate, not to use their clubs, and stated that their force was unnecessary. I saw old ladies being pushed and manhandled, grabbed by the collar and pushed out the doors. I saw young men being beaten with billy clubs. I had one young man, Tommy Willis, in my arms and holding him there from falling and watched Officer Kurstiener, Badge No. 267, as I was keeping the gentleman from falling, take his billy club and poke it with great force into Willis' side.

The action described above took place in the span of 10 to 15 minutes. Upon its conclusion I complained to Conrad Mallet, the Mayor's assistant, and to Officer Bertoni, the officer in charge of all the police in the area. Officer Bertoni could not immediately respond and requested I give him time to "get things under control."

At 9:30 p.m. several individuals returned with a battery for the communications car.



We have the names of 6 individuals who sustained injuries. They are as follows:

James Brown, 4036 Champlain Avenue, Chicago, Illinois  
Karen Ashby, 4718 Woodlawn, Chicago, Illinois  
Michel Gramer, 7939 South Elizabeth, Chicago, Illinois  
Thomas Willis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

We also have:

Tommy Johnson, 3344 West Adams Street, Westside Chicago  
Donald Hill, 15211 Rddington, Indianapolis, Indiana.

These individuals were taken to the Detroit General Hospital and treated.

Other witnesses to the incident are as follows:

Catherine Wells, 4841 Stzetezant Street, Detroit,  
Michigan, phone: TE. 4-1919

Rita Brown, 9030 McClullen Street, Detroit,  
Michigan, phone: 922-5406

Sandra Bonjac, 9204 Livernois Street, Detroit,  
Michigan, phone: 935-6060

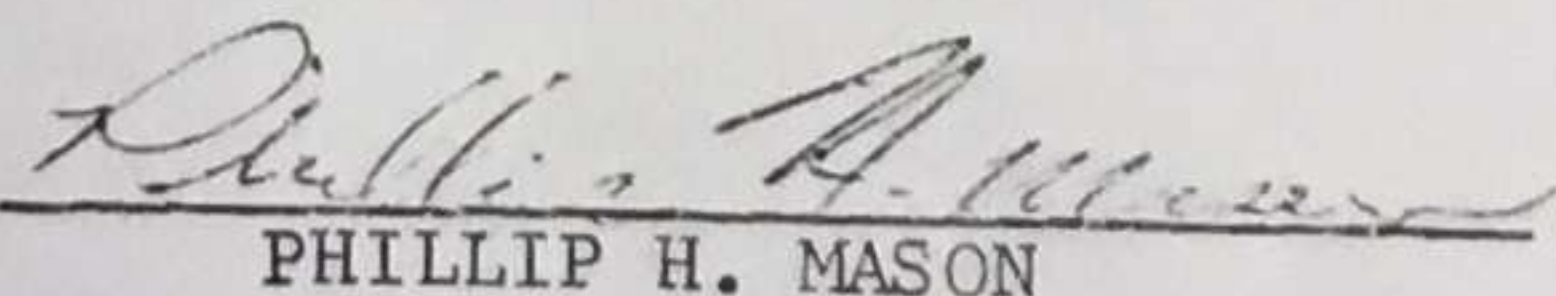
Virginia Jones, 3758 W. Euclid Street, Detroit,  
Michigan, phone: 895-1090

Jean Cellar Smith, 4081 Tyler Street, Detroit,  
Michigan, phone: 935-8604

Fred Hughes, 19341 Cherry Lawn, Detroit,  
Michigan (telephone unknown)

Date:

JUN 11 1968

  
PHILLIP H. MASON

Field Representative  
Community Relations Service  
U. S. Department of Justice