

Dear Phil,

8/17/82

Thanks for the clip on the Vascon Smith's.

I got the same information from the FBI in 1977 but because I hold the same view that Garow expressed, I said nothing about it. Those people and others like them mean no harm and hoped to accomplish some good. They had a higher opinion of the two FBI agents than I think is justified. The FBI also had informers in several of the local black colleges where, again, the hope was to be helpful, particularly when violence was feared.

Not much new here. I've been busier than usual recently preparing affidavits in FOIA suits.

Hope you can get here next month. I'm almost never away. Once a month I go back to the DC hospital for a checkup (tomorrow and again about a month from tomorrow) but otherwise I'm never out of town. I go to a local mall six mornings a week and spend three hours walking there, which takes a hunk out of the working day, but that is best medicine and I do it. About 1/6 mile at a time. I walk, sit, rest and read, and then walk again.

I've gotten no new records in the King case for some time. I'm trying to end it satisfactorily and the DJ can keep me tied up by finding excuse after excuse. As soon as I catch up on the accumulator correspondence I'll have to get back on an affidavit in that case. I sent my lawyer the first part of it and another one yesterday.

Depends on where you start in DC how long it takes to get here. From most of the downtown, not much over an hour.

If you are able to come and can let me know in advance where you'll be starting from, I'll give you directions. Or, perhaps best, I'll give you general directions now.

Find out the best way to get on I495 going north, or if you are uptown and to the east, going west. If you are downtown, you'll probably get on it at River Road or below that cloverleaf. Just to the north of it, on I495, there is a fork, with I495 going ~~straight~~ to the right. You take the left fork, which is almost straight. There used to be a large overhead sign saying that is the way to Frederick. That fork becomes I270, and you stay on it to Frederick. There the I 270 identification disappears and the same road becomes first, US15N and then is joined by US 40 West. DO NOT TAKE THE # 70W exit because that is a different road and it bypasses us. Not more than 5 minutes after you are on US15 you will see on the wrong side of the divided highway the sign of the Holiday Inn. Right after that take Exit 6W. Be sure you do not take 6E. Cross the bridge and it is 6W. Loop under the road you've been on and go to the Holiday In., where you turn right a little less than a mile to a 4-way stop, at Shockstown Road. Take it, to the left, about 2 miles. You'll be in the flat and then will start going up the mountain on it. After you start to climb the first road on the right is Old Receiver. Take it to the right about .3 miles to our mailbox on the right. Close landmarks: about a city block onto Old Receiver there is a poorly-marked fork. Keep to the left. Then, on the rt., will be a small white house, a larger red brick one with a TF mast and then a patch of woods, all on the rt. Our woods. Turn into the paved lane, which goes nowhere else but here.

Thanks and best wishes,

Hal: I haven't heard from you in a while. Hope all OK.
I may be in Wx area in late Sept. Best, *Phil*.

Memphis Press-Scimitar

History and politics

Vasco Smith in league with the FBI? Smith, a county commissioner, says that minor revelation, broadcast by a local radio station this week, was pure politics, coming as it does 14 years after the fact.

It seems a book recently written by a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina — called *The FBI and Martin Luther King* — mentions Smith's past association with the FBI.

David Garrow, the author of the book, wrote that Smith, along with his wife Maxine Smith, now executive secretary of the Memphis branch of the NAACP, and Jesse Turner, another county commissioner, provided information to the FBI during the 1968 sanitation strike in Memphis.

The Smiths and Turner were civil rights activists associated with the NAACP and led a number of marches, demonstrations and sit-ins between the late 1950s and late 1960s.

During February 1968, Garrow said, the Smiths and Turner provided critical information to the FBI on at least two occasions — focusing on the level of agitation in the black community. The sanitation strike — and the ultimate assassination of King — led to riots in Memphis.

Citing FBI documents, which he obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Garrow said the Smiths and Turner were provided code numbers and phoned information to two Memphis FBI agents.

"The bureau used the term informant rather loosely," Garrow said. "Just because people like the Smiths and Turner provided fairly extensive information about what was going on in the black community, doesn't mean they were trying to intentionally sandbag the civil rights work."

Smith defends his association with the FBI, saying the FBI traditionally protected civil rights workers when "there might even be abuse by the local police department."

Smith suggested that the publicity might have been prompted by his race against Dr. Leo Gray. But, he said, "that's the way it goes in an election year."

Vasco won easy re-election.