

# Gantt can thank God for James Meredith

By CLIFF MACKAY

(Other stories on page 2)

CLEMSON, S.C. — Harvey Gantt, the first of his race in the last 70 years to shatter South Carolina's rigidly held school segregation barrier can get on his knees and thank God for James Meredith.

For had it not been for the determination and courage displayed by 29-year-old Meredith in desegregating the University of Mississippi, the reception given 20-year-old Gantt might well have been far different than it was Monday.

The tragic events which occurred on Ole Miss campus on the bloody night of Sept. 30, 1962 unquestionably provided the sobering influence that made official South Carolina reach the unanimous decision: "It must not happen here."

This determination of peaceful acceptance of "the new order of things" as one Clemson faculty member expressed it was reached long before departing Gov. Ernest Hollings made his famous speech and incumbent Gov. Donald S. Russell pointedly set an example by inviting South Carolinians of color to join other citizens at an inauguration day barbecue at the governor's mansion.

It began last October when Clemson President Robert C. Edwards called a faculty meeting to carefully make plans for what lay ahead.

Even while state officials were still fighting a losing battle in the courts to preserve the discriminatory status quo, Clemson was setting in motion the forces needed to create the climate for the uneventful arrival of Harvey Gantt on Jan. 28.

The Clemson Tiger in each issue after the Mississippi holocaust kept hammering on the theme that Clemson men are "civilized, mature, sophisticated citizens of the world," not like the "throwbacks to the Stone Age" which were making life

miserable for James Meredith at Ole Miss.

Article disclosing that Harvey Gantt was a B-plus student who had even made an A in calculus at a tough school like Iowa State University began appearing in the Tiger. Long before

(Continued on page 2)

## —Gantt can thank

Continued from page 1)

Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals this month said Gantt must be admitted, Clemson students had got the message that here was a man who would be a credit to Clemson.

While this "softening up" process was going on at Clemson, the state's politicians, pointing indignant fingers at Mississippi, were able to strike a "law and order" posture that left segregationist advocates of bitter-end resistance frustrated and leaderless.

With what happened at Ole Miss held up as a terrifying example of the crushing power of Federal authority when a state chooses to abdicate its responsibility, South Carolinians did not have to resort to long drawn-out explanations why Gantt must be protected.

South Carolina thus, as the last proud defender of state's rights was determined to prove that a state could do it, without aid from "Bobby Kennedy's soldiers" as one highway patrolman expressed it.

Detailed security arrange-

ments, including checks on every car entering the campus, police surveillance of the car bearing Harvey Gantt on the full length of the 160-mile ride from Charleston to Clemson and scores of sharp-eyed, hard-faced plainclothes agents of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division wandering about the campus insured the peace and calm that prevailed at Clemson College Monday.

These arrangements also provided a sharp slap in the face to Gov. Ross Barnett and law enforcement officials of Mississippi.

South Carolina, a one-time sister Confederate state, told Mississippi in blunt language Monday, "This is the way you should have handled it. Your way was stupid and wrong."

But make no mistake about it, South Carolina couldn't have done it without Mississippi.

Much credit goes to the good sense of South Carolina officialdom for Monday's peaceful desegregation of Clemson but a considerable portion also belongs to Barnett and the ugly hoodlums of Mississippi.

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By Keller