

REPORT ON INCIDENT AT MARQUETTE BEACH PARK (July 1, 1953)GARY, INDIANA

On July 1, 1953, at approximately 2:45 p.m. we\*\* arrived at Marquette Park Beach and purchased a parking permit (#4168).

While unloading our picnic equipment we were approached by a policeman (Badge 232 - Car 27). The policeman stated, "The attendant at the gate said he didn't sell colored people parking permits." Mrs. Vaughn said, "We have one; would you like to see it?" The officer answered, "No, but colored people don't come here." Mrs. Staples reminded the officer that this is a city park, maintained by the tax payers and she thought it was open to all law abiding citizens and that all citizens would be given the proper courtesy and protection.

The officer indicated he knew this, and that he could not keep them from attending, but some people might not like it and he would not be responsible for anything that happened to them. The officer asked again, "Do you have a parking permit?" Mrs. Vaughn answered for the second time, "Yes, do you wish to see it?" The officer said "No, but he did not recognize you." Mrs. Vaughn answered, "I do not understand what you mean." The officer replied, "If the attendant had recognized you as colored he would not have sold you a ticket, however, you may do as you wish."

After the discussion we went to the beach and had a nice time. The people on the beach were friendly, most of them paid no particular attention to our presence and generally we were well received by the public there.

About 3:45 p.m. police # 232 approached Miss Pulliam and Mrs. Vaughn on the beach and asked them how they were getting along. They answered "fine." He asked for their automobile license number which was given him by Mrs. Vaughn. (There was evidence of the car being identified or tampered with before this.)

At approximately 5:30 p.m. we returned to the car. We found that 2 tires on the left side of the car had been flattened. A motorcycle policeman appeared on the scene, wrote up a report on the tires and left to report the incident.

\*\* Mrs. Theo Vaughn  
Mrs. Greta Vaughn Brown  
Miss Peggy Vaughn

Mrs. Shirley Gibson and  
2 year old son  
Mrs. William Staples  
Miss Irashel Pulliam

Mrs. Staples, Mrs. Vaughn, Mrs. Gibson, and son went to the gate to report the case of the flat tires to the gate attendant. The attendant, who had only limited use of the English language revealed he was not responsible for the cars and furthermore, he would not have sold them a parking permit had he recognized them as Negroes. During the conversation, he stated that Negroes were not allowed at Marquette Park and that he had orders not to sell Negroes tickets. At this point, police car No. 70 appeared and took Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Staples to the pavilion to make a phone call for help on their car.

Mrs. Vaughn returned to the car alone. Police car No. 70 and the Motorcycle police returned to the scene. The Motorcycle police was seen near the Concession Stands with a group of boys crowded around him. These boys looked suspicious; they had been standing on the wall sneering - - - seemingly trying to excite or stimulate reaction on the part of the other people, who ignored them. We thought he was questioning the boys. The police in car no. 70 mentioned to Mrs. Vaughn that three women saw persons tampering with their automobile tires, but he refused to tell who they were and evidently failed to make an investigation as normally expected in cases of this type. Although, this officer had adequate opportunity to see and sense the potentialities of the situation he departed.

After the officer departed, the group of approximately twelve boys referred to above, sent a blonde girl, who they referred to as Connie, over to our car. She (Connie) asked, "What is wrong?" She was told that the air had been let out of two of our tires. Then "Connie" remarked, "Well you don't have any business here." Miss Pulliam replied all we wish to do now is to get our tires fixed and leave. Connie answered, "Dont get sassy." Then the gang of boys came over and said, "What's going on?" Mrs. Vaughn answered, "We are waiting on the police because we have had our tires flattened. This young woman (Connie) is trying to start something." The gang answered, "What about it! and do you think the police is going to help you - ha, ha, -- We know about CQ 666 (Mrs. Vaughn's car license number)". A couple of the boys and the girl then proceeded to insult and threaten us - - - a crowd was beginning to form. The girl (Connie) particularly threatened Miss Pulliam who knew better than to say anything to her. The boys and girl insulted and threatened Mrs. Vaughn.

At this point, a green Pontiac car, license No. CE 3962 appeared. The boys yelled, "What's going on?" The girl "Connie" leaned on their car and the other boys crowded around talking to them. In the meantime, Mrs. Vaughn took the license number. The girl (Connie) yelled, she's taking your license. The boys jumped out of the car and "Connie" yelled, "give me my friends' license number," Mrs. Vaughn refused.

A tall elderly man came up and asked what was the trouble. The girl and boys hollered "these niggers have my license number." This elderly man and a few others told them that these people had as much right there as they had. These helpful people were threatened. One man said he had a duty as a citizen to help protect these ladies. He was threatened and insulted. He spoke of how loyal Negroes had been to the Country; how they had fought in each war and how they paid taxes--and how Communists exploit undemocratic incidents as this, for propaganda purposes. The group of molesters laughed until the police in car #70 appeared again. Then the gang ran. Mrs. Brown followed "Connie" who had alcohol on her breath, and pointed her out to the police as the main agitator. Then Mrs. Brown was slapped by a tall very dark boy with a scar on his face. Another boy in the gang said, "No, we don't want to go that far," and jumped between the boy and Mrs. Vaughn, who struggled toward the boy who hit her. The police did not get the boys names but only chased them back into the crowd.

The police left us unprotected again, saying he was "going to get the girls at the pavillion". The group of molesters returned with the girl. This is when the real trouble began. They threatened to knock the ladies teeth down their throats if they did not give up the license number. Mrs. Vaughn asked Mrs. Brown, Miss Pulliam and Miss Vaughn to get into the car. Three of the boys--one who wore a sailor's cap, the one with "Bob" on his arm and the light one from the Pontiac went in Mrs. Vaughn's car and took her purse. The short one in the sailor's cap turned the purse over and emptied it on the ground. They found the license number and tore it up. However, Miss Pulliam had memorized it. All during this time, the tall elderly man, his wife and others were pleading with them to obey the law. They yelled, "why don't you get out of it?" Mrs. Vaughn then in the car, said, "the door has been broken and wont close because the boys have pulled and pushed on it". The short one in the sailor's cap and the tall dark scarred one saw that the hinge had been broken. They then pretended to want to fix the door and got oil on their hands. Mrs. Vaughn who constantly pleaded to their intellect asked did they want tissue and they answered, "no, here is our tissue", smearing oil on the seats.

They threatened to turn over the car but the tall man, his wife and friends talked and filibustered until the police finally returned with Mrs. Staples, Mrs. Gibson and her son. The tall elderly man then pointed out each of the boys and asked that they be arrested for taking Mrs. Vaughn's purse, breaking the door and smearing the car--vandalism. The police ignored him and everyone who tried to urge the gang's arrest. Police cars and motorcycles appeared. One car with the loudspeaker urged the people to disperse and return to the beach.

Police 267 brought in a tow car and told them to tow the car out. Mrs. Vaughn insisted that the car not be towed because she had new tires which would be ruined. She asked the towmen to pump air into the tires and repair them instead of pulling the car out.

He said he did not have a pump. She turned to the police who said that he carried no pump around with him and there was only one thing that could be done--to tow the car out, so the police said, "tow it out". Mrs. Vaughn said, "no". The ladies asked, "Are you afraid of them?" Police 267 answered, "I am doing all I am supposed to do, and that is to help you get out of here. What are you going to do, lady?" Mrs. Brown understanding the sneers and indifference of the various police officers begged Mrs. Vaughn to be towed out. Mrs. Vaughn then agreed, fearing the police would leave again, and seeing the garage man then began changing the spare to the front. Mrs. Staples from within called to police 267 asking him to get the name of the man who was so helpful. Police 267 answered, "Lady, if you want the man you have to get him yourself". Mrs. Gibson sitting in the car with her two year old son on her lap was spit on and was afraid to see who did it as everything was very tense, seeing the attitude of the police. One white man in the group who helped to defend us willingly gave us his name and address.

The garage men forced the car door shut, which had been sprung from its hinges. At this time, Mrs. Staples' husband, mother and friends in two cars appeared with a pump and insisted that the car not be towed. Mr. Staples brought the pump and John Berry pumped up the tires. Mrs. Vaughn was told by the police she had to pay five dollars for the towmen's services. The police from car 70 was seen at this time talking on friendly terms with the tall dark scarred boy by Mrs. Brown and others in our car. When we left, the gang of molesters was seen standing in front of the crowd. We were led out by police accident car #33.

When we returned to Gary that night we stopped at Mrs. Vaughn's home and examined Mrs. Brown's swollen left face and eye and called a doctor. Then County Prosecutor Metro Holovachka was called on the phone and notified. Efforts were made to reach Mayor Mandich who could not be located at home or elsewhere.

The next morning, Councilman Dave Mitchell came by and went to the police station with us. At police headquarters we learned from Captain Traeger that no report of the violence had been made by the police officers at the scene. The police had merely reported that we had two flat tires. Policeman Skinner made this report. The entire matter was reported to Captain Traeger and Chief Foley. The chief and Captain Traeger expressed surprise and said the matter would be thoroughly investigated.

Later, on July 2, 1953 we were called back to police headquarters by Detective Key to identify three men among the trouble makers. These men admitted being on the scene, but denied taking part. Their statements are not true. They were identified by the police as Mr. Luke G. Makris, 760 Adams Street, Mr. James K. Falas, 829 Monroe St., and Mr. Marion Mitchell Benjamin, 800 Madison St., the one who helped grab the purse. Police indicated that efforts would be made to call in or pick up the other offenders.

We, the individuals offended in the incident described above certify this to be a true and accurate report.

Signed:

- /s/ 1. Mrs. Greta Vaughn Brown  
Mrs. Greta Vaughn Brown
- /s/ 2. Mrs. Rosie Vaughn  
Mrs. Rosie Vaughn
- /s/ 3. Miss Irashel Pulliam  
Miss Irashel Pulliam
- /s/ 4. Mrs. William T. Staples  
Mrs. William T. Staples
- /s/ 5. Mrs. Shirley Gibson and son  
Danny Preston Gibson  
Mrs. Shirley Gibson and son  
Danny Preston Gibson
- /s/ 6. Miss Peggy Vaughn  
Miss Peggy Vaughn

Notary Seal

/s/ Thelma E. Marshall  
Notary - July 7, 1953

My commission expires September 20,  
1953.