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**Oxford, U.S.A.**

Paul G. Hahn

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5/2/63

# Letters to the Editor

Oxford, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

On Tuesday of last week, a news story announcing the public premier of a "new documentary film" appeared in The Mississippian, and the Wednesday and Friday editions carried advertisements of its appearance at the Lyric Theatre. Stories similar to the one in The Mississippian appeared on other papers on Wednesday and Thursday.

According to the stories and advertisements, Oxford U.S.A. presents proof of "federal atrocities" and "verifies legislative investigation." An advertisement in the Oxford Eagle claims the film "Exposes Naked Facts of Federal Government Atrocities During Invasion, Proves Flagrant (sic) Violations of United States Constitution." The news releases stated that according to Mr. Patrick Sims of Dallas, Texas, the film's producer, the purpose of Oxford U.S.A. is "to show violations of the American constitution and the bill of rights" by the federal government during "the invasion of Mississippi last fall." Mr. Sims, who wants "the American people to know what happened in Oxford on September 30, 1962," describes his production as a presentation of "the true facts of the side that has not been told." It is reported that Mr. Sims described the film as "picturing injured patrolmen, gassed coeds, wounded students, and soldiers driving away Mississippi highway patrolmen at bayonet point from the roadblocks."

After reading the advertisements and news releases an individual going to a showing of Oxford U.S.A. might anticipate seeing a detailed, factual account of what occurred at Ole Miss on the evening and night of September 30, 1962. He might anticipate seeing scenes of actual rioting, of marshals attacking students with clubs and weapons, of highway patrolmen manning roadblocks until driven away by squads of squads of soldiers advancing with fixed bayonets. If he expects to see these things on the screen he will look in vain; they are not there. For example, he does not see patrolmen being driven from roadblocks at bayonet point, but only a soldier, carrying his rifle since he can do nothing else with it, who approaches a police car and speaks to the driver. The viewer does not see the bayonet being pointed at the police car does he see the patrol car driving away.

Individuals from the University who attended a showing of Oxford U.S.A. know that they did not see "what occurred at Ole Miss on the evening and night of September 30, 1962." They know that they did not see the "true facts," that they did not see a revelation of "federal atrocities." What they saw was a collage of scenes on the campus (and

elsewhere?) glued together with interviews of politicians and students, mostly new freshmen (without their beanies). Instead of presenting the "true facts," Oxford U. S. A. presents distorted stories (largely from hearsay evidence), half truths, and out and out lies. Among the latter is a claim by the narrator that James H. Meredith attends class only from time to time, that he skips his exams, that he did not make his grades last semester, and that any other student with his record would have been dismissed from the University for academic reasons. The faculty of this university knows that this is not true, if no one else does.

Another example of a lie is told, perhaps out of ignorance, by a man who holds a high political office in this state and is a candidate for the position of chief executive. During his long appearance on the screen this politician states emphatically that Mississippi highway patrolmen manned roadblocks at the entrances to the campus throughout the night until they were relieved at bayonet point the next morning. The highway patrol knows that this is not true as do the individuals who poured onto the campus on the night of September 30 without hindrance, the campus police, the University Administration, and many others.

I know that the highway patrolmen withdrew their roadblock on University Avenue by 9:30 p.m. and that it was never returned! Furthermore, I know that I did not see a single highway patrolman in the east end of the campus after about 10:00 p.m. (It is needless to say I was not sleeping that night). I did, however, see a large number of patrolmen return to the campus in a caravan of patrol cars at 7:30 a.m. on October 1, and before 8:00 a.m. I observed a crowd of patrolmen in the University Cafeteria having a hearty breakfast with jokes, laughter, and smiling faces as though they were celebrating a joyous occasion. One wonders why the truth in this matter is not told.

It may or may not be unfortunate that in our society a collection of distorted stories, half truths, and lies can be presented to the public as a true documentary account. It is unfortunate that many of the people in our society who will see this film will believe that they have seen the truth because they are naive and gullible, or because they can see only what they want to see. Perhaps it was by Divine Providence that on the night of April 24 a fictional story on the movie screen on the north side of Van Buren Avenue portrayed basic truth while on the screen on the south side of the street a supposedly true story portrayed fiction.

Sincerely,  
Paul G. Hahn