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COVER—CO RENTMEESTER 3—HOWARD BINGHAM—JOHN LOENGARD 4—JOHN OLSON 26, 27—NASA exc. II. LYNN PELHAM from RAPHO-GUILLETTE 28 through 33—NASA 34, 35—NASA exc. bot. inset LYNN PELHAM from RAPHO-GUILLETTE 36, 37—LYNN PELHAM from RAPHO-GUILLETTE 38—cartoon by LURIE 43—STEVE SCHAPIRO 55—HARRY BENSON for the LONDON DAILY EXPRESS exc. t. LYNN PELHAM from RAPHO-GUILLETTE 56—HARRY BENSON for the LONDON DAILY EXPRESS exc. bot. LYNN PELHAM from RAPHO-GUILLETTE 64, 65—PIERRE BOULAT exc. t. II. BILL RAY 66, 67—HOWARD BINGHAM 92—GORDON S. SMITH

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'You pick a spot and go straight there'

Dick Hall picked up the phone the other day and put in a call for Howard Bingham in our Los Angeles bureau to clear up a few points. Dick is a reporter in New York and Howard is a photographer; both are city men. Last fall they spent five weeks in rural Mississippi to write and photograph this week's essay on a Southern poverty program. Now the story was going to press and their delight at this result of their deep involvement led them to reminisce:

HALL: Some bad things happened, but mostly it was good.

BINGHAM: That Mr. Blue, washing vegetables all day in an old Army jacket and a crumpled hat and laughing all the time? "Man," he said once, "if I wash another bunch of these turnip greens my blood's going to turn to *pot likker*." Then there was that white guy that aimed a rifle at me. He was working a black chain gang. You don't see that sort of thing where I live, in Watts, so I stopped the car, put a telephoto lens on my camera and got out. Just as I braced myself against the car to shoot, this cat with the gun spotted me, took aim—very fast—and hollered "Git out of here." Believe me, I was fast in that car, put my foot down on the gas, and got.

HALL: I'm not really sorry I wasn't with you that day. Generally, I got the feeling things have changed down South. I expected more trouble. Harassment. When I was a civil rights worker in '65 policemen stopped you for nothing at all and jailed you; hoodlums tailed your car on dirt roads at night, all that sort of thing. This time the Mississippi whites didn't go out of their way to bother us.

BINGHAM: What bothered me was the 15 pounds I put on down there. Mrs. Marshall's meals.

HALL: I gained 10. Black-eyed peas, string beans, okra, cornbread, turnip greens, chicken. Sweet potato for dessert. I came away fat. I also came away thinking that the South is moving faster on the race problem than the North. Down there, the black man and the white man know each other better. Maybe it's because they're both up against the same thing—the land. It's common to them and they talk about it a lot. It's in their blood, that land.

BINGHAM: Up here black people are always getting hit from the blind side. But there, the hunger and poverty is the worst I've ever seen in my life.

HALL: That co-op manager, John Brown. He's the one that showed me the determination to succeed that the project's given those poor farmers. I asked him a dumb, city-bred question once and his answer came out like a parable. I wanted to know how they plowed the rows so straight—did they use a string or something? He took off his hat and scratched his head and smiled. "You get on a tractor, man, an' you pick a spot an' say 'I'm goin' straight there.' An' you go straight there."



DICK HALL



HOWARD BINGHAM

George P. Hunt
 GEORGE P. HUNT, Managing Editor

LIFE

Vanishing Wildlife

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