

An Experience in Mississippi

When Bryan asked me to speak about my experience with the civil rights movement, I was surprised. To my knowledge, I have never spoken about that in a public forum. I thought about it and decided that I ought to do it once and so I said yes.

It was 1964. I was a junior at TCU and the president of TRUCCF (Texas Regional United Campus Christian Fellowship). At the time it was an interesting meld of Northern Presbyterians, Southern Presbyterians, and Disciples—who tried to bring campus ministry together.

Earlier that summer, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman, who were a part of Freedom Summer in Mississippi, were murdered by the KKK with the help of the Law officers of the County. When we had our first TRUCCF assembly, we agreed to support one among us who would go to Mississippi and help the work of COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations, headquartered at Hattiesburg. At least four groups were involved. You may have heard of SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), NAACP, SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), and CORE (Conference of Racial Equality). The person we sent was John Wilkins, who was very dedicated to the cause of freedom.

I stayed in touch with John. I did not know he had been moved to McComb in SW Mississippi where there was to be a major move toward a voter registration drive for African-Americans. The COFO office was bombed along with a number of Black churches. John called me late one night in October. He said the danger was increasing, the phone was tapped and was going to be cut off soon, and he just wanted to tell me that he loved me, and the phone clicked off.

I worried to the point of fear that John might have a martyr's complex, so the next morning, I grabbed some clothes and a toothbrush, got in my car, and drove east. I got into Hattiesburg late that night and made my first mistake. I knew the address of COFO, but I didn't know where it was. It was dark and everything was closed. I saw a gas station with its lights on. So I went in to ask for directions. There were three men, two workers and a customer, all white. I asked if they could tell me how to get to 507 Mobil Street. They froze and then one of the workers moved to block the door. The customer said, "How did you get into this filling station, boy?" I said, "I walked in, sir." He said, "That's right. You walked in. How are you going to get out?" I had noticed that the door to the service bays was open and, before the other guy could block it, without answering, I ran through the door and out through the service bay as fast as I could. The one smart thing I had done in this scene was to park the car more than a block down the street. I was in it and gone and shaking. I was desperate to find COFO because I knew the gas station folk would call the police and I knew what happened to Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. And I was so glad when I did find the place.

The next day I went through training, how to talk to people who come at you, how to protect your head and throat if you're attacked. I then went to McComb. The COFO office there had been bombed and they could not serve meals to the crew because they did not have a restaurant certificate. We ate what we could find. And I tried to be a help in the shut-down kitchen, dishing out what supporters would bring. On Monday, October 26, the voter registration drive was on. Another fellow and I became chauffeurs, taking people, black and white, to the courthouse a few miles away in Magnolia, the county seat. We needed drivers because the people going to try to register to vote and those going as supporters would not be coming back. On one trip back to McComb, I was followed by people in a car. I could not speed because law officers would stop me, and I knew what happened to Schwerner and friends, and that was scary. I made it back and finally, the African-American director of COFO said, "Joey, we have one more group of people who want to try to register. They're old and they don't have any way to get there. Will you take them?" I said yes. One other COFO person went with us to take the car back because he knew we wouldn't be coming back.

We arrived and there were a lot of people standing around, many booing us. We walked together across the grass to the court house and there were about twenty police officers and state troopers who blocked our way into the court house. The sheriff stepped forward and of course would only talk to me. He wanted to know what my business was and I told him: "We want to go into the court house so these good people can see the county clerk and register to vote." The sheriff said, "He's not here." I said, "Then we'll see the assistant clerk." "He's not here either." "OK, we'll just wait here for him." He said, "You're trespassing." I said, "How can we trespass on public property?" He said, "You're under arrest." Two officers handcuffed me and others cuffed the African-Americans, took them away, and I never saw them again. I assumed there was a separate jail for them. I was fingerprinted and then put into one of the drunk tanks along with others who had come earlier: two ministers, one rabbi, all from the north, and three others who were civil rights workers. There was one small barred window and a concrete bench along the walls, where we sat and slept with no pillow or blanket. There was a small round hole in one corner for elimination. The food was the same every meal: grits and fatback with the hair still on it.

It was 2 or 3 nights after my incarceration when the door clanged open toward midnight and the officer said: "You all are free to go." I thought wonderful, this is miserable, and I was glad to leave. But just then one of the COFO workers, jumped up and said, "No, we're not going anywhere." He took me over to the window, and looking through the bars I saw several old pickups and the dark shadows of men standing under a tree with the little red lights from their cigarettes. He said to the officer, "We're not

leaving until full daylight and with a lot of people who would chaperone us out of here and out of Magnolia.” For the third time I realized how close to death I had been.

Several days later we were released and, after a few more days at the COFO office, I thanked the people, black and white, for their courage, their perseverance, and their faith. I didn’t do much, but I learned a lot.

When I got back to TCU, the word was out that the chancellor wanted to expel me, ostensibly because I was a criminal, but we all knew that there were donors who would not give their money to a school who would harbor such a troublemaker. (Anybody remember a similar situation?) But the word also came to me that theology professor Paul Wassenich stood up for me in public and the chancellor backed off.

When Bryan asked me to talk today, one of my thoughts was that apart from the Star-Telegram articles about me, mostly negative, I had no documentation that showed I had actually been in Mississippi. Night before last I searched the internet and found the *Freedom Summer Archive*. In that archive I found a document that said “Civil Rights Incidents in McComb, Mississippi, 1964.” It includes many of the bombs, arson, murder, jailing, etc. It’s an old document typed on an old typewriter and, probably for safety’s sake, no one claimed authorship. I read through the document until I came to page 6:

Oct. 26 Twenty-seven Cofa workers, NCC ministers, and McComb negroes arrested at entrance to Court House in Magnolia on charges of trespassing by loitering and refusing to obey an officer. The Cofa workers were J. Samstein, C. Hughes, J. Harris and J. Jeeter. The McComb negroes were Alyene Quin, Rosa Bates, Althea Spinks, Rev. Daniel Ross, Lillie Ross, Evelyn Nelson, Essie Mae Reid, Louise Banks, Mattie Dillon, and Steve Haring. The NCC ministers were W. J. Mehl, F. M. Cornell, L. G. Kemmerle, T. B. Foster, R. L. Beech, K. E. Bell, C. B. Blackburn, D. D. Curtis, and Rabbi R. S. Sternberger. General White, Dolores Johnson and Robert McGhee, McComb negroes, were also arrested.

When I graduated the next year, I went to serve in the Peace Corps in Africa, and later lived in Harlem in New York City. I was comfortable in those places, I think because when I went to Mississippi, the only people who wanted to hurt me were white. I used to walk up and down 125th Street in Harlem, until a fellow stopped me one day and said, “I see you walking up here a lot. What are you doing here?” I said that I’ve come back from Africa and feel comfortable here. He said: “This ain’t Africa. You could get hurt here.” I finally realized that the answer belonged not to a single race or culture, but to all of us affirming and caring for all God’s children.

Joey Jeter
February 15, 2010

January 15, 1970

Dr. James Moudy, Chancellor
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas 76129

Dear Dr. Moudy,

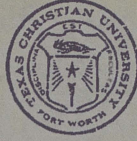
When I was in Fort Worth over the Christmas holidays, I heard a rumor to the effect that you had, in a subtle, but not-to-be-misunderstood fashion, made it known that you did not wish a black cheerleader to come into physical contact with whites on the field. I dismissed this out of hand as impossible and in total contradiction of the Jim Moudy I know.

However, since that time this rumor has been confirmed by several people, not students, whose truthfulness I have no reason to question. I am therefore sufficiently bewildered to write to you about this matter. I am asking you to categorically deny that this ever happened. I am not interested in an attempt to label boys and girls touching each other in public as immoral; nor am I interested in the possible adverse reaction of some bigoted alumni, who are threatening to withhold a lot of money from T.C.U. I am only interested in whether or not you told Ronnie Hurdle, straight-forwardly or underhandedly, that you did not want him to touch white girls on the football field.

I hope the answer is no. If it is yes, then I am forced, despite my respect for you and our friendship, to label your action racist in the most despicable degree and dehumanizing in a most un-Christian fashion. Furthermore, I will be obliged to stand against you in the councils of education and our brotherhood and call you to account for your deed.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph R. Jeter, Jr.



TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Fort Worth, Texas 76129

Office of the Chancellor

February 3, 1970

Mr. Joseph R. Jeter, Jr.
Park Avenue Christian Church
1010 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10028

Dear Joey:

Eight or nine people were present when I had a conference with the cheerleaders and their supervisor. I wish that you would be able to get your information from them, but I will summarize.

I asked them to be sensitive to the feelings of other people, even if other people were not being very sensitive to their feelings, and particularly Ronnie Hurdle's. I asked them particularly to avoid leg straddles and torso contact. I told them that Ronnie was a pioneer and that people don't change over night. I even quoted from Ecclesiastes (the Gideon Bible happened to be open to it when I took my bags into the motel room just before I met with the cheerleaders), "There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." I might have gone on to cite, "Love does not insist upon its own way."

They were hurt and somewhat dissatisfied, but I have great admiration for the way they have carried it off.

Most miracles come slowly. I suppose they even come slowly in the Park Avenue Christian Church.

I really do wish you the very best. Your earlier letter seemed to have an utterly self-righteous tone. That did not sound like the Joey Jeter I remembered.

We can talk about it some day.

Sincerely yours,

J. M. Moudy, Chancellor

tn

TCU

Linda Hughes

Jay Fleck - w Alzheimer's
4-7-14.

Several Reasons

I had friends who were
black. Has recently watched
12 Yrs a Slave.

There was a cheerleader -

maybe the 60s - nice guy
everybody liked him. Then trouble
4 men 4 ♀ cheerleaders - all
others white. Dean Moody said
black cheerleaders & not like
white. JJ wrote Dean & said
THIS WAS WRONG. - Dean replied

Too many people complaining.
2) Jeremiah Wright at Brit
invited. Chancellor cancelled the
went on campus. Was moved to
a church in Dallas. Had it
there instead. Chut

Back to Freedom Ride
in h.s. ^{pres. 7} Disciples groups that
gathered - and a black job.
And they were

Spent 2 yrs in Niger,
Africa, in peace corps -
only white person in 100
miles. They were his
people.

Why Peace Corps - he had 2nd
charges - **TCU** Peace
Corps of Canada -
Linda Hughes Viet Nam.
we not go to

When he returned from Niger
lived in Harlem in Miss. the
only people who wanted to
hurt him were white.

Re Miss. experience -
Bryan Feille -

John Wilkins - in Miss.
Worried that he had a
martyr's complex - & that
made JJ go to Miss -
we not want that
shared.

Returned to TCU to runners & Chancellor who upheld him as a criminal. But Paul Wassenich stood up for him & Chancellor backed down.

Faith as abiding factor
In h. 5. There were those who went out to beaty heads - "niggers knocking."

3 yrs ago, asked to preach at big event in Ga. - only white guy there when he came to huge church. Looked around on stage - & all the bishops on knees. And black preacher preached in every way.

He began white style - 3
& as they **TCU** up due to
him, he became an energized
& moder - [Check for his blis]

Linda Hughes

me:

He came back to TCU after
UG experience - why? Son
& wife wanted to come back -
& he knew most of those
people. He darn & raised
here - & quite good.

From: William R. Baird [williambaird@charter.net]
Sent: Saturday, May 10, 2014 4:50 PM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: Examined Life

Dear Linda,

Thank you for your splendid PBK address.

As a lover of the classical age, I was delighted to find the "text" in Plato. I was even more moved by your discussion of the problem of race at TCU. Rhodes Thompson is a long time friend, and Joey, of course, was student and colleague.

You may also know that Harold Lunger and his wife Alberta, faculty members at Brite, hosted in their home African-American dignitaries who could not get a room in any Fort Worth hotel. If my memory serves me well (which it often doesn't at age 90) these included Martin Luther King and Marian Anderson.

You might enjoy a couple of paragraphs from a "Memories" column I wrote for the Retirees Newsletter a couple of months ago.

"The academic atmosphere of the University was stimulating. I soon became involved in the effort to secure a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa for TCU. Jim Newcomer, who was active on the national level of the Society, played a leading role; also Jack Suggs (later, Dean of Brite, who was instrumental in my move to Brite) and Ben Procter from the History Department. Ben also did much to shatter my image of Texas ethos. Here was a big guy who had played football for the Longhorns, but had a PhD from Harvard. He often chided me about the superiority of Harvard to Yale. When we finally secured the chapter, the first president was Malcolm McLean (who later moved to UTA). A somewhat meticulous individual, Malcolm insisted that the initiates receive their keys, attached to purple ribbons, placed over their heads during the ceremony. It was my daunting task (as secretary) to arrange all this with questions as to how long the ribbons should be and the procedure for putting them over crew cuts and stylish coiffures. Malcolm's persistence was rewarded during graduation, when the new members received their diplomas with Phi Beta Kappa keys around their necks, over their robes. I should add that for many years, Jim Newcomer was the expert who instructed initiates in the mysteries of the Society's secret handshake. . . .

While Brite has profited from the relation to the University, it has also made a contribution, sometimes serving as TCU's conscience. In 1952, the Brite board of trustees voted unanimously to integrate. The TCU board, on the contrary, voted to maintain segregation. Since Brite had its own board and a degree of autonomy, the TCU administration acknowledged Brite's right to integrate. They insisted, however, that African American students could not eat on the TCU campus. Brite countered by setting-up food service in Weatherly Hall in the Brite building on property owned by Brite."

It's great to have you at TCU. Keep up the good work!

Bill

William Baird
Professor Emeritus of New Testament
Brite Divinity School, TCU

From: William R. Baird [williambaird@charter.net]
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2014 3:23 PM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: Re: Examined Life

Dear Linda,

I would be happy to share my recollections with Special Collections. Please correct my typo - "a faculty members" - I was thinking about Harold, but then remembered that Alberta also taught courses in spirituality and worship. At Brite, there is the Alberta and Harold Lunger Chair of Spiritual Disciplines.

My source for the information about Brite providing an eating place for African Americans was Pres. Newell Williams - he was using this to illustrate Brite's relation to TCU (with a degree of autonomy); he contrasted Brite's action with the Divinity School at Vanderbilt (which was completely controlled by the University). When in 1952, the Vanderbilt board voted to maintain segregation, the entire Divinity faculty resigned - leading to a series of problems.

A written source for problems of race (the Lungers, etc), feminism, and gender issues, etc. is *Institutional Change in Theological Education: A History of Brite Divinity School*, ed. Mark G. Toulouse, et al. (TCU Press). There is also an interesting section on reaction to the Vietnam War, including Prof. Glenn Routt's attempt to bring Jane Fonda to the campus. A major contributor was Lisa Barnett who is currently a doctoral student in the TCU History Department; she has a large collection of material on all these issues.

Regarding Rhodes Thompson, he is a graduate of Transylvania University (a Disciples related institution; the the current director of the Religion Faculty is a Brite grad.) and Lexington Theological Seminary (where I taught for 11 years prior to coming to TCU). Rhodes served in various positions of church leadership and was for a time a faculty member at Phillips Theological Seminary (in Enid, OK, when I taught there in the 50s; now in Tulsa). I sent an email this morning to Gene Boring, who was on the faculty there before coming to the Bradford Chair at TCU (later succeeding me at Brite), calling his attention to your address. Gene was delighted by the address, and expressed pride in having had both Rhodes and Joey as colleagues.

It occurs to me that you might enjoy the entire "Memories" column; in particular, remarks about Vice Chancellor for Academics, James Newcomer, who was tenured in the English department - a grad of Kenyon, with PhD from that great English Dept. at Iowa. He was an expert on Irish women novelists - also on the history of Luxembourg. (You may know all of this already).

I'll try to send it along.

Best wishes,
Bill

Memories

A major attraction to Brite was its University setting. Any hesitancy I had about the Texas Ethos was relieved by my first visit to the campus. My interview was handled by Vice Chancellor James Newcomer, who seemed more of an Ivy-leaguer than an exemplar of Texas macho.

The music scene at TCU provided a rewarding experience. For several concerts (and some rehearsals) of the University orchestra, Jim Newcomer and I sat at the last stand of the second violins, occasionally playing the right notes. During the early years of the Cliburn competition, it was a delight to walk over to Landreth and enjoy some fine piano playing – free, in those day.

The academic atmosphere of the University was stimulating. I soon became involved in the effort to secure a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa for TCU. Jim Newcomer, who was active on the national level of the Society, played a leading role; also Jack Suggs (later, Dean of Brite, who was instrumental in my move to Brite) and Ben Procter from the History Department. Ben also did much to shatter my image of Texas ethos. Here was a big guy who had played football for the Longhorns, but had a PhD from Harvard. He often chided me about the superiority of Harvard to Yale. When we finally secured the chapter, the first president was Malcolm McLean (who later moved to UTA). A somewhat meticulous individual, Malcolm insisted that the initiates receive their keys, attached to purple ribbons, placed over their heads during the ceremony. It was my daunting task (as secretary) to arrange all this with questions as to how long the ribbons should be and the procedure for putting them over crew cuts and stylish coiffures. Malcolm's persistence was rewarded during graduation, when the new members received their diplomas with Phi Beta Kappa keys around their necks, over their robes. I should add that for many years, Jim Newcomer was the expert who instructed initiates in the mysteries of the Society's secret handshake.

I also must confess that I have enjoyed the sports programs at TCU. When I arrived in the fall of 1967, Charles Kemp and Glenn Routt (from the Brite faculty) invited me and Marcus Bryant (who also had just arrived) to ride with them to Austin to see the Frogs in action. There was absolutely no chance, they insisted, that TCU could win the game! But to the amazement of the entire sports world, the Horned Frogs mounted an upset of historical proportions. During many years of suffering defeat, that victory continued to offer hope that the "under-Frogs" might one day prevail—a hope that has often been realized in recent years.

While Brite has profited from the relation to the University, it has also made a contribution, sometimes serving as TCU's conscience. In 1952, the Brite board of trustees voted unanimously to integrate. The TCU board, on the contrary, voted to maintain segregation. Since Brite had its own board and a degree of autonomy, the TCU administration acknowledged Brite's right to integrate. They insisted, however, that African American students could not eat on the TCU campus. Brite countered by setting-up food service in Weatherly Hall in the Brite building on property owned by Brite.

I like the alma mater – easy to learn and our own (not adapted from somebody else's). I have attended several memorial services for faculty members when the song served as a benediction. I believe I'd like that.

William (Bill) Baird
Professor Emeritus of New Testament
Brite Divinity School , TCU

From: ML Wass [mlwasseni@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, May 11, 2014 2:46 PM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: Re: PBK address

Linda,

Thank you for sharing this presentation.

There were a lot of people who put pressure on the Trustees from the mid 1950s on to get the desegregation done. Joey was the one who really went the second mile.

Here are a couple of reminiscences for you.

Chancellor Sadler was juggling several balls at once on this issue. He wanted to go ahead with desegregation but knew he had a small minority of Trustees who would go berserk when it happened and would cost the university a lot of pledged endowment. There was outside, nasty opposition from the John Birch Society who wrote threatening letters to Sadler, me and others, usually unsigned. They had no influence, really. Some of the older alumni and most of the Greek alumni interests were opposed. The Greek students were mainly indifferent. My friends and I got the segregationists students to stay neutral. He was also concerned that the student body would rise up in the opposite direction and force integration at the expense of a lot of pledged endowment, up to \$20 million. So he stayed pretty close to me that year. It was not common for the Chancellor to have much contact with students in those days. He scheduled the vote on desegregation for the Trustees meeting Homecoming weekend 1963. The trustees attended the John Kennedy prayer breakfast that Nov. 22 then moved to the Ft. Worth Club for their all day meeting, the discussion and possible vote was scheduled for the afternoon as the last agenda item. Needless to say that afternoon meeting never took place.

The next spring Sadler was pretty sure of his position for the Trustees meeting. The Kennedy assassination had totally changed the national and local mood. A couple of days before hand he had me meet with Trustees Chairman Marian Hicks (I may have his name wrong), the General Manager of General Dynamics Fort Worth (now Lockheed) in Sadler's office. Hicks told me that when he was TCU student body president in the 1930s that the students were agitating for permission to have off campus dances, which they got and in later years enjoyed big band events at "The Casino," a pier over Lake Worth. (Prior to air conditioning it was the coolest gathering place.) Hicks was fully for integration since his company did mainly US military contracts and was into racial equality for that reason.

After the board meeting at which the Trustees approved desegregation with about two negative votes, Sadler called me in the evening. He said "I was afraid that we would lose \$10 million on that vote but that we had only lost \$5 million." Then he said "I will get that back within five years." He blamed himself for part of the loss. He scheduled the vote as the last item in the afternoon. Trustee X had too many martinis at lunch and got to declaring that he would "damn sure never vote to let Negroes into the

school." So later when he was on such a short end of the vote he had to make a move and left with his money.

I came to have great respect for M.E. Sadler. He was a man of great character and like so many leaders at TCU was totally committed to the best that was possible with the meager resources available.

Mark Wassenich

From: Jeter, Joseph
Sent: Friday, May 16, 2014 11:23 AM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: RE: thank you!

Thanks, Linda. Your words were wonderful. I checked my message and laughed. I had said "Your talk was good and IMPORTED???" I meant to say "Your talk was good and important." But maybe I said "imported", because a lot of young people may not know about those days and you brought them a more meaningful knowledge. Carry on, Linda. Hope to see you someday. Joey

From: Hughes, Linda
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2014 9:13 PM
To: Jeter, Joseph
Subject: RE: thank you!

Thank you so much, Joey, for your kind words and your permission. You have had an impact on so many lives, and so many people have spoken to me about you after I gave that talk. I know you will continue to be in my thoughts for years to come.

Best,
Linda

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeter, Joseph
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2014 4:48 PM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: RE: thank you!

Hi Linda! I really appreciated what you did. I have always concern for African-American students who know about their sixties while whites forget it. Thank you for asking me to talk with you. Your talk was good and imported. I'm happy about that. You certainly may have and give my talk and the letters . All yours, Joey _____

From: ML Wass [mlwasseni@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, May 26, 2014 12:58 PM
To: Hughes, Linda
Subject: Re: History of racial desegregation

Thank you for your interest in preserving some of the history of the racial desegregation of TCU.

Here are my recollections of some student involvement in the racial desegregation of TCU in the early 1960s.

Our family, mainly my father, Paul G. Wassenich, had been involved in the desegregation of the University of Texas in the 1955-57 period before we moved to TCU. So we knew what it took and that it was an inevitable march of progress toward civil rights for everyone. As a private university, TCU was not pressured in the same way as UT. TCU, Baylor and SMU were in the same boat in working through the issue at the same time.

In the late 1950s a handful of TCU students started requesting that the school be desegregated. Valerie Brown of Dallas, who later married Rev. Wally Ford of Albuquerque, N.M., was a leader of this group. This group more or less stayed alive and grew into the 1960s. It was mainly a group of Disciples undergraduates with others involved including Brite students.

Three student body presidents worked the issue starting with Joe Short, 1960-61, if memory serves. Then Galen Hull, 1962-63, worked with this student "pressure group." The group grew and became several groups by my year of 1963-64. We started having informal Student Congress discussions in 1962-63 and moved to a formal resolution to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 1963.

Chancellor Sadler used our resolution as part of his timing regarding when to take the matter to the Trustees and when to press them. He and I stayed in contact throughout the year as matters developed. I developed great respect for Dr. Sadler and learned much from him.

STUDENT ACTIVISM

One of the most "radical" of the students was Raphael Ruis, an undergraduate from Mexico. He and a splinter group of no more than six students advocated public demonstrations. Several of them participated in sit-ins of segregated cafes downtown. Their most dramatic idea or plan was to build a bonfire on the front porch of the brand new Sadler Hall. I had two "spies" within this group. As is usually the case with intelligence operations, both sides knew who was passing information to whom, so they were more or less ambassadors. I got the group to hold off on timing the bonfire until after the Student Congress sent the resolution to the Trustees and received a response. At the time I wondered when I should quit playing politics and start calling

the police. As events unfolded this was all that was needed to avoid the crisis. (I learned an important life lesson: that in a crisis it is often good to delay so that things can calm down, then deal with the underlying problem. In non crisis times this is not a good approach, as delay can precipitate a crisis.)

By the fall of 1963 there were several groups advocating including other church related campus organizations. The main, long standing group were mainly friends of mine and various ones of them handled various parts of the work. Several got the University Christian Church Disciples Student Fellowship to state a position, others worked with the Catholics, Methodists, etc. at the student level. Several drafted the Student Congress Resolution which was the focus of some negotiation with the resisting students. Among the students who were important in the work in which I was involved were Mike Walsh from Oregon, who went into the ministry, George Archer, a ministerial student from Marfa where his father was chief of the district Border Patrol, and Wayne Ewen, who has worked in the Austin area with the Methodist Church most of his life. There were many others, probably 35 to 50 active students in that last year or two. There was never a single, organized coordinating committee.

STUDENT RESISTANCE

There were three or four representatives on the Student Congress who did not want to send the resolution to the Trustees. They were sorority girls and represented an opinion widely held among the Greeks. None of the Greek organizations nor any other organization on campus formally opposed desegregation, to my knowledge. I met with them once and with their appointed leader several times. I came to respect their method of negotiating and came to understand where they came from on the issue. Basically they were from old line, property holding families where Blacks were the uneducated workers for several generations. They could not visualize a different life style and it scared them. Once they understood that Black students on campus did not mean Black sorority sisters, etc. they became less concerned. We all grew through those negotiations. In the end they agreed to abstain on the vote rather than vote no.

The Student Congress voted overwhelmingly for the resolution to desegregate with only a couple of abstentions. Our side considered this a big victory in the resolution we sent to the Trustees. Dr. Sadler was surprised and impressed that we pulled this off, as he was hearing from Greek alumni with a stronger negative position.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Fort Worth was quietly moving to desegregate and avoid riots or other public difficulties. Amon Carter at the Star Telegram and Marion Hicks, Chair of Trustees at TCU and General Manager of General Dynamics Fort Worth, the largest employer in

town, were instrumental in moving the issue quietly forward. My dad would occasionally meet with Amon Carter about the issue.

Thru my dad's contacts, small groups of students met with Fort Worth Black leaders and their high school and college age children. There was not much the Blacks could do to help but they were very encouraging and worked their part of the general Fort Worth community. The Black churches were instrumental in moving the community forward.

There was a strong community resistance to any desegregation in any area of community life. The John Birch Society, a far right wing political group, seemed to be the public face of the matter. But mainly it was individuals, just as it was on our side. The KKK never showed itself in any recognizable way. As Student Body President I received fewer than ten threat letters or letters urging that we not move forward on integration. All seemed to be from outside the University. Two or three were threats that were made by pasting words and letters from magazines onto a sheet of paper. They were not signed. One Fort Worth lady sent me a carefully written, polite letter and signed it. I wrote her back and thanked her for her opinion and for her forthrightness in signing her letter.

These thoughts combined with my email to you regarding the timing of events summarize my recollections of those heady days.

Sincerely yours,
Mark Wassenich

BA in geography, minor in sociology, Air Force ROTC, 1964
Student Body President 1963-64