

LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

End Of A Monumental Year

Tonight as over 300 students march across the stages of the six Franklin County administrative unit high schools, an end will come to the most monumental year in the history of education in this county.

Looking back some 180 school days to last fall, it seems to have been a short year. Along the way, however, to many it seemed graduation day would never come.

Forced by a court ruling to totally integrate the schools in the county system, the Board of Education and school personnel found themselves with only nine days to make the transition after exhausting all legal avenues of appeal.

Perhaps nothing in its long history shook Franklin County as did this court order. Large numbers of parents began plans for a county-wide boycott of classes while others planned and established two private schools. Everywhere parents were asking others what they planned to do. Many took a wait and see attitude and kept their youngsters out for the first few days of the fall term.

But in the long run most parents decided to send their children to the public schools. This is not to say these parents were happy about the circumstances and disruption at the time nor that many were not apprehensive over the effects total integration would have on their child's education. Some even feared for the safety of their children for awhile.

The opening of this school year was accompanied with many a wrinkled brow and almost as many years. To say there was confusion at the beginning would be a gross understatement. There was turmoil as teachers and students began adjusting to an entirely new situation.

All the confusion-never completely

cleared. Many parents continued to withhold their support for the schools although their children attended. Many never allowed their children to ride the buses and in some schools parent organizations were inactive this year.

Through it all, however, those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them, did their job and most of them did it extremely well. Surprisingly, to some, most students continued to show progress and as the days rolled into weeks and the weeks into months, things began to settle down and now, tonight, the end comes.

For such a hectic beginning, the ending is exceptionally good. Credit for a successful year must go to the professional school people, particularly the teachers and to the parents. Most of all credit is due the students themselves. They were thrown into a situation not of their making and readily decided to make the best of it.

If one reason had to be given for the successful outcome of this school year, it might be the people's ability to adjust. It is unlikely that those opposed to integration have changed their minds and it is likely that some of those expecting great advantages would come from it are disappointed. And many have said before, integration is not utopia.

But, contrary to what some would make the world believe, students of both races attended schools together in Franklin County this year and the world did not end and Franklin people of both races did what they have always done-worked together.

It might be interesting to watch as other counties face Franklin's dilemma come fall. They might do worse. We doubt any will do better.



WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

Chapel Hill (N. C.) Weekly

High School Confrontation

When a black student confrontation happens at a public school, as it did at Chapel Hill High School on Monday, it is never as easy as falling off a log to know what to do. The confrontation hardly ever is clear; sometimes it is not even what it seems to be. And this makes it doubly difficult to make a clean decision as to how to respond. The instinctive thing for a rational and reasonable administrator, a school board, and all other responsible parties involved is to try to keep the lid on, by almost any means possible. Under the pressure of the moment, permissiveness, yielding to unfair demands, any sort of disengagement might appear to be preferable to taking a chance on blowing the lid.

The pressure of the moment at Chapel Hill High School on Monday morning was particularly heavy. Shooting and killing had just taken place in Burlington, touched off by nothing more consequential than an election of high school cheerleaders. In Greensboro young people were being clapped into jail for protesting the election of a student council president.

The black confrontation at Chapel Hill High not only was inconsequential in its origin, the demand that it was pressing was patently unfair. What is more, the black students themselves knew they were without a just cause and became tongue-tied trying to explain their action.

Obviously, the protesters wanted more black students to serve as marshals at commencement. In the election of marshals, five whites and two blacks had been chosen. Although this black-white ratio was fairly representative of the student body, the black students demanded an even split.

So, they sat down in a lobby of the high school, barricaded a couple of passageways and waited for the administration to give in. No matter how nice a face you try to put on it, that is exactly what the administration did. Instead of having the students arrested for violating a State law (disturbing a public school), the administration added four more marshals, making a total of six blacks and five whites, which was even better than the black students had demanded.

This adjustment did not set well with many of the white students and they took their case to the School Board Monday night. The president of the senior class pointed out that the election of marshals had been fair and democratic and that the original results ought to be allowed to stand. One of the black protesters put it to the School Board this way: "If we can't get what we want through the democratic process, then we'll get it some other way."

Obviously, there was no way for the School Board to win in such a

situation. If it let the original results stand, it would incense the blacks and put the School Board in the position of reversing its administration. If the Board stood by the "adjusted" election, then it would incense many whites and make something of a farce of student elections. So the School Board did a most remarkable thing: it abolished commencement marshals, thereby in one stroke incensing blacks and whites. The administration's decision wasn't really reversed, only flattened.

This action so incensed Ed Tenney that he resigned from the School Board on the spot, stalking out to a standing ovation. Whatever this grand gesture might have lacked in cool reason, it fitted in nicely with the absurdity of the whole situation.

There followed, of course, the pro forma downtown march on Tuesday afternoon, which was immediately followed by frantic efforts all around to cool the situation.

In the meantime, many parents were keeping their children out of school for fear of what might happen. Students appeared to be leaving the high school pretty much at will. As of Tuesday afternoon, militant blacks had appropriated the Roberson Street Community Center for a headquarters. And Preston Dobbins, the Black Student Movement leader from the University who has been agitating the students, was being permitted to remain at large, although he clearly trespassed on school grounds.

We don't know if anything can or should be done to rescue the commencement marshals from limbo. But it ought to be clear, from what is happening elsewhere if not from plain common-sense, what ought to be done in other respects.

One thing that must be done is to halt immediately every illegal protest like the one we saw Monday, regardless of why it is being mounted, whether the cause is just or not. Such demonstrations have no place in our public schools and they ought not to be tolerated for an instant. If protesters have to be jailed to halt them, then they ought to be jailed.

School officials should have agitators like Preston Dobbins arrested on any charge they can make stick as soon as they make an overt or covert move toward a public school confrontation.

And finally, school officials ought to make it as clear as possible that no students will get preferential treatment of any kind just because they happen to be black, or white.

The school officials have the authority. If they make everyone understand that they are determined to use it, we aren't likely to see another absurdity like Monday's.



by frank count

I told Melvin-you remember old Melvin Smudgen who run for Congress last year and got beat picking his teeth on the street corner-I told Melvin I won't much at swimming and I didn't want to go. He insisted though. And nobody can insist like old Melvin. We went to school together.

So hot as it was and not wanting to as I didn't, I went with Melvin to the new swimming hole opening anyway. I ain't never seen such a place. They done runt everything.

They ain't got no rope and they ain't got no used tire. Folks wear about as much clothes as they do anywhere maybe except to church and the whole thing is runt.

I told Melvin I thought they runt it when they put all that cement around the water hole. The Youngins can't learn nothing just jumping in. We use to swing over the hole sitting in the old tire and turn loose. Splash. Plop. When we hit the water, we knowed it. And it was always interesting what would come up when we did. This new one-you can see bottom-and that takes all the fun out. If anything wanted to grab your toes, it wouldn't cause everybody could see it and all the fun would be gone.



I reminded old Melvin of the time I and him went swimming. His mama had told him he couldn't go in without his bathing suit. Well, it really wasn't no real bathing suit. It was a cut off pair of old overalls where the hooks had rusted.

We joshed old Melvin something awful. Called him a sissy and some other things. Finally shamed him into taking them off. He should of kept them on.

Old Melvin has changed a lot since back then. Can't say none of it is for the better either. So, embarrassed as I was, I followed while he made the rounds patting everybody on the back 'cept a couple of women who had husbands with them and grinning and spitting and strutting. He was gettin attention though. He got almost as much as some girl who couldn't keep her buttons buttoned. That's the way it is with folks around here. Just about everybody wanted to help her. Folks around here always have been the neighborly kind. Specially Melvin.

I reckon I have to agree he did look some sort of fetching. I thought he overdone it when he cut off a brand new pair of overalls. After all it was just a swimming hole opening. It won't like he was going to a chittling supper or something special. But, I reckon old Melvin had his reasons.

I seen a whole lot of people there. You ever seen a whole lot of people in wet bathing suits? Ain't it a awful sight?

They throwed one fellow in with his clothes on and then I seen him walking around later with his bathing suit on. I thought he was a little mixed up but I didn't say nothing. I didn't want to embarrass Melvin. But it shore did seem strange to me for a fellow to go swimming in his everyday clothes and strut around in a dry bathing suit. But, whatever turns a fellow on, I always say. Everybody got their own hangups.

I reckon I'd have to say I enjoyed it though. It ain't everyday you get to see Cousin Noah in a bikini. He was there in his baggy pants. You ever seen a man bald from the back of his head to where his bathing suit comes in front? That's Cousin Noah.

When we was leaving, Melvin wanted to impress a couple more folks and insisted (again) that he buy me a soft drink. I said no, thank you. But this didn't stop Melvin. He kept fumbling in his bib trying to find a dime until somebody else come up and paid for them. The fellow give me a pink drink in a paper cup. It won't as good as old spring water used to be but it was a little cold. It was more pink than cold, though.

It was a nice place and I'm glad Melvin ook me. I'm going back soon's I get my overalls cut off and if they'll let me have a inner tube, who knows, I might even hook up a rope and tire. But I don't reckon they'll let me do that. Things have changed and I don't reckon I can break the generation gap and go back to the good old days. Shore would be nice though-when you come to think of it.

The Franklin Times

Established 1870
Published Tuesdays & Thursdays
by

The Franklin Times, Inc.
Subs. Serv. Dept. GYS-2283 Lenoir, N. C.

CLINTY FULLER,
Managing Editor

ELIZABETH JOHNSON,
Business Manager

NATIONAL EDITORIAL
ASSOCIATION

Advertising Rates Upon Request

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Three Months, \$3.00

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THE INCOMING CHIEF JUSTICE

JOHN J. SYNON

President Nixon's choice of a successor to Earl Warren has inciting. On its face, that nomination is so much better than it might have been that it is almost impossible to restrain oneself. Judge Warren Earl Burger - and I am not going to niggle about that curious juxtaposition of given names - Judge Burger is an absolutely-first-class man.

Judge Burger is what a Supreme Court Justice should be: First, he is honest; second, he is intelligent; third, he is well trained in the law; and fourth, he has a wealth of experience as a judge.

Those four items are the criteria upon which a jurist can build himself to greatness.

Judge Burger, then, is like a promising yearling. He has all the needed attributes; apparently he is a good one. But only when he is given a trial heat will we begin to get a rating on him in fact. And only after he has passed a milestone or two will we know whether he is of stake-horse calibre or is just another plater. I think Judge Burger has got it. And I think we have turned a momentous corner.

It may be, as I imply, Judge Burger will fall short of my high hopes. Even so, let's not look too closely at this gift horse. Just remember what sort of a plug he is replacing - there is no way but up.

The reverberations from this nomination - once it is confirmed by the senate - may be felt in every county in this nation. Attorneys who have cases they despaired of may be expected, now, to dust them off, to seek justice. Justice, that is, as it is spelled out in the Constitu-

tion, not as the essentially-doltish Earl Warren saw justice.

And the wild people who have been "winning" ludicrous decisions - I have in mind the sort of cases Thurgood Marshall used to "win", cases that couldn't be lost such as these may be expected to think twice before proceeding with their legal hooliganisms. Wherever you care to look - in the Justice Department, in HEW, the Civil Liberties Union, anywhere at all - there will be a re-evaluation. There will be, that is, so long as the Chief-Justice-To-Be holds to his history, that of being a strict Constitutionalist.

Yes, sir. This can be the beginning of the road back. And I didn't think I would live to see the day. But let's not have any labelling. I don't care whether the new man is called a Conservative or a Liberal. Such tags mean absolutely nothing. So long as he reads the Constitution of the United States of America as that Constitution is written, and so long as he renders his decisions accordingly, that is all anyone can expect of him.

What is more, I suggest there is no right-minded person anywhere who disagrees with that sentiment. Conservatives, true Conservatives, patriotic Americans, make no demand for special treatment. That - special treatment - is precisely what we have been opposing. And as we do oppose it for the Left, so we should oppose it for the Right.

As I read Judge Burger's history, that is the way he feels, too.

Who could ask for anything more?