

Faith brought former students to reconciliation

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standing. Smith graduated from Harding the year before Counts-Scoggins integrated it and was aware that several members of his Sunday school class were witnesses to her historical journey. He asked them to share their recollections of that day, illustrating his point with the now famous picture of Counts-Scoggins walking up to Harding High School.

In the picture, many white students can be seen standing by and not doing anything as Counts-Scoggins is ridiculed. Cooper spoke up and admitted that he is actually one of the white students in the picture and relayed his feelings of regret for standing by that day and how that decision has bothered him for almost 50 years.

"When someone preaches a sermon they have no idea how many lives that might change or even when it might change them," said Smith. For Cooper, that change occurred the very next day.

In what would consider an interesting coincidence, the day after that Sunday school lesson a local publication ran an article about where Counts-Scoggins is today and used the same photograph Smith used in his Sunday School class. According to Cooper, however, the occurrence was more like a

sign from God. "That Monday after I read the article, [my] thought process was really after all these years maybe it would help if she hears from somebody," he explained.

With assistance from the writer of that article, Cooper was able to get in touch with Counts-Scoggins via email. In it, he explained the events from his Sunday School class and apologized for choosing not to do anything to help her. A few days later, she graciously responded. "When I first got it, I was sort of taken-it sort of took me back," said Counts-Scoggins. "Basically what I said was 'why now'...It was really strange for me and I had to really think about it."

But despite her initial surprise, she decided to write Cooper back and applaud him for coming forward after all these years. The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, she describes herself as a "forgiving" person and said she realizes that Cooper was just a teenager at that time, just like she was.

It is this spiritual upbringing from her parents that Counts-Scoggins said would have prevented her from responding negatively even if the email had come from one of the racist students who actually spat on her or called her a name that day.

"I don't think it would have

been any different because, like I said, it's what I believe," she said. "If I do that, then I'm as guilty as they were."

Despite her harsh experience, Counts-Scoggins said she harbors no ill-will toward any of the students. In fact, she has vowed to take the experience and turn it around. It is something she does everyday in her career as Vice President of Quality Initiatives at Child Care Resources where she says she "fights to ensure that children have a quality experience at every age" and is "working to improve the quality of care for all children."

As the fiftieth anniversary of that historic day approaches, Cooper and Counts-Scoggins, both now grandparents, have thoughts on future generations. Counts-Scoggins said she has taught her children acceptance, and hopes others are doing the same. "What happened to me at Harding was basically [that] people were making a judgment based on the color of my skin. They never got to know who I was."

As for Cooper, he marvels at

how his grandchildren see no discrimination compared to the past.

"I see them playing and they

don't have any thoughts about skin color. They just don't care" he said. "It took us really two generations to get it to

happen. It took brave people to do that, and Dorothy was one of those."

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Yes, he longed after Christ. And was in bitter mourning, as one who is in bitter mourning over the death of his first-born. (Zech. 12:10) He knew he had to get to Christ or go to hell. He knew God's Word was all so true. Practically no one around him understood him. He cried out day after day: "Oh! Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I think I see him now. So cast down with the burden of sin weighing down so heavily upon his back. It seems he can't go a step further. He knows he must flee the city of destruction. But no matter how much he struggles, he can't get the burden of sin off his back. He finds the burden sinking him lower and lower into the depths of hell. At times, he feels he is unwilling to do the first, and unable to do the second. He cries out: "I don't know if the Lord is going to save me or not. If I go I can but perish. If I stay where I am, I will surely die!" So he resolves: Come hell or high water, I must get to Christ! And he casts himself completely on the mercy of God, crying unto the Lord night and day: "Lord, you said in your Word that You died for sinners, and only a few would be saved. Lord, I'm the chief of sinners. I want to be that few, if only one gets saved." For weeks he cries unto the Lord. And it dawns upon him: "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." (Lk. 19:10) He knew somehow the Word could not lie because the Lord could not lie. So he began to cry from the depths of his soul: "Oh, if I can just get lost, the Lord will save me!" So he began to cry unto the Lord to make him lost. The Lord heard and answered that cry. The Lord showed that young man He loved him. And then the blessed Holy Spirit opened that young man's heart and showed him what was on the backside of his heart. The unbelief and hatred for God, His Word and His people. It killed that young man, seeing all this. And it was there the young man's will was completely broken.

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Inmates strip-searched

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search," Lipscomb, 36, said. He said the search takes up to 45 minutes and is performed out of sight of church volunteers, who are not strip-searched.

Lipscomb said the searches have been intermittent since 1999.

Traylor said in an e-mail to the Richmond Times-Dispatch that services taking place in classrooms within the secure part of the prison may not necessarily be searched. Also, he said, those services are conducted by registered volunteers, not visitors who have not had background checks.

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