

## Desegregation In Chapel Hill

# Demonstrations Raise Nagging Question: Why?

### Record Of Progress May Be Unequaled

This newspaper received a letter two weeks ago from a Chapel Hill native about the current movement here for desegregation of public businesses.

The writer was a woman who had always considered herself to be in the forefront of those seeking equal rights for Negroes and to improve their lot in more material ways. Her life in Chapel Hill since childhood had been steeped in the liberal tradition. She still considers herself to be a liberal in the sense that she is willing to upset the status quo to achieve justice, equality, or an otherwise demonstrably better condition.

She had been away from Chapel Hill for the past two months, during the time the current protest movement was gaining its momentum. She had been traveling in another state when she first heard of the civil disobedience here. First there was startled disbelief, then shock.

"Why?" she wrote in the letter. "Why Chapel Hill?" Her friends were asking the same question, she said, and she had no satisfactory answer. She was unable to reconcile a segregation protest movement with what she had always considered to be one of the most liberal and tolerant community attitudes in the Nation. She is back in Chapel Hill now, but she still has no satisfactory answer.

#### The Heavy Irony

Besides posing that still unanswered "Why?" the letter underscored one of the heavy ironies of the Nation's civil rights movement. The irony can be illustrated in several ways:

Clemson College receives nationwide praise for enrolling one Negro student without violence, while on the campus of the University at Chapel Hill, which has more than twice as many Negro students as all other Southern state universities combined, demonstrators march protesting segregation.

Atlanta, Georgia, which has achieved desegregation of some 25 per cent of its public businesses, is praised as a model city of the enlightened New South, while Chapel Hill, where more than 95 per cent of the public businesses have been desegregated, is characterized as a bigoted wolf in liberal sheep's clothing.

The Charlotte Plan, which is credited with bringing about peaceful desegregation of many of Charlotte's theaters and restaurants, is held up to the rest of the Nation as inspired leadership. In Chapel Hill, where restaurants have been integrated for years and our theaters were among the first in the South to drop racial bars, efforts to convert the 5 per cent of the businesses still clinging to segregation are met with suspicion, distrust and accusation.

Other cities are praised for erasing ordinances requiring segregation, while Chapel Hill, whose official Town policy is completely hostile to segregation, is castigated for failing to adopt an ordinance forcing desegregation on all public businesses.

The irony of Chapel Hill's racial situation is not lost on those who are aware of the desegregation progress that has been made here in recent years in the University, the public schools, churches, public accommodations, employment, and Town government. Chapel



School Board Member J. R. Manley Inspecting The New Junior High

Hill's record of progress is unmatched by any Southern town.

#### The University

The color line in enrollment at the University was broken in 1951 as the result of a ruling by a Federal Appeals Court. In the fall of that year, five Negro students were enrolled in the Law School, one in the School of Medicine.

Six years later, there were still only 15 Negroes enrolled in the University. Last fall, Negroes enrolled as regular students stood at 40. Fifty-three others were enrolled in the Evening College and in other units of the Extension Division. Of 5,400 students attending the first session of this year's summer school, 122 were Negroes.

The fractional desegregation represented by 40 Negroes in a student body of almost 10,000 resulted from many things, but it was not the result of discrimination. For the most part, it resulted from a distressing lack of academically qualified Negro applicants. To a lesser extent, it resulted from inability to whip the financial problem of attending the University.

Those Negroes who have been able to qualify academically and to afford the cost have found ALL of the University's facilities and policies COMPLETELY non-discriminatory. This includes:

Men's and women's dormitories, married student housing, all dining facilities, swimming pools, tennis courts, the golf course and all other athletic facilities, varsity sports, eating and sleeping accommodations at the University-owned Carolina Inn, and all extra-curricular activities sponsored by the University.

In grants-in-aid, loan funds, self-help programs and scholarships controlled and administered by the University, color is not a consideration.

No Negroes have made varsity teams at the University, but this has been due to lack of ability, not discrimination. Two Negroes have tried out for the freshman basketball team, one surviving the first cut and being trimmed in the second. One Negro football player lasted through spring practice before being cut from the squad. Each received an equal chance, at least, to make the team.

In other areas of student life, Negroes have excelled. One was the top student in his Law class, elected editor of the Law Review (the highest honor for a law student), and tapped as a member of the Golden Fleece, a top honorary society. Another was tapped by the Valkyries, one of the highest honorary societies for women.

In the percentage of enrollment and absence of discrimination, the University at Chapel Hill is beyond question the most integrated institution of higher education in the South. By the same measure, it is quite possibly the most integrated state university in the Nation.

#### The Public Schools

Chapel Hill's public school system lagged far behind the University in desegregation, and six years behind the Supreme Court's 1954 decision. Once the barrier was broken, however, voluntary desegregation was accomplished here earlier and on a broader scale than in any other school district in the South.

After fighting a delaying action for several years, the Chapel Hill Board of Education in the spring of 1960 agreed to voluntary desegregation of the first grades. Transfers would be granted on application pro-

vided the Negro students lived closer to white schools. Three Negroes were enrolled in formerly all-white schools under this plan.

The following year, in 1961, the School Board adopted a new geographical assignment policy designating specific attendance areas for each school. This extended desegregation through the junior high school level, with about 40 Negroes attending formerly white schools.

In 1962, the School Board adopted another assignment policy eliminating the geographic attendance areas. Under this policy Negroes were assigned to predominantly white schools on the basis of space available. No transfer requests were denied on any grounds other than lack of space or an imbalance in class populations. Desegregation had been extended from the first grade through the senior high level.

Last fall, two white teachers were appointed to the faculty of the predominantly Negro Frank P. Graham School.

For the coming school year, 76 requests for transfer from Negro to predominantly white schools have been granted under what amounts to a wide-open re-assignment policy as far as racial considerations are concerned. There will be about 25 Negro students attending the formerly white Chapel Hill Senior High School next fall, and possibly that many or more in the new Guy B. Phillips Junior High. No estimate is available of next fall's Negro enrollment in predominantly white elementary schools, but it figures to be considerable.

Only one of the Negroes attending predominantly white schools in the Chapel Hill District was transferred as the direct result of a court order.

#### Chapel Hill's Churches

Integration has existed in Chapel Hill's churches, in principle and practice, much longer than in any other area of community life.

An appreciable number of Negroes attend predominantly white churches as members or communicants.

Several of the newer churches, since being founded in recent years, have actively encouraged Negro membership. A Negro supply pastor filled in for the regular minister at a predominantly white church last summer. A number of others have Negro members.

One of Chapel Hill's older churches has four Negro members, one of whom teaches Sunday school. According to the pastor, the church has had a policy of non-discrimination for "as far back as anyone can remember." The church has been open to all, without any conditions as to race or background. Participation in all activities of the church, including auxiliaries and circles, Sunday school and youth groups is entirely unrestricted.

Another of the community's older churches has no Negro members simply because it has never received an application. Ten years ago the church adopted a policy that it would be open to all. An officer of the church said, "Negroes attend services almost every Sunday. We have had some to take sacrament. I feel sure that if we had a bona-fide Negro applicant for membership, he would be accepted."

Another church, one more recently established in Town, has 12 regular Negro communicants. Its admission of Negroes dates from a diocesan decision rendered in 1945. The pastor said, "They're welcome, but they just haven't come."

One church has been integrated since its founding in 1954. It now has 12 Negro members, with others at-



Alderman Hubert Robinson Conferring With Town Manager Robert Peck

tending services and meetings regularly. The church actively encourages membership of all races. Among its activities have been integrated evening study halls and pre-school kindergartens to make the transition from segregated schools easier for Negro and white children.

Another of the newer churches whose denomination has historically supported non-discrimination both in religious and public affairs is also completely desegregated. The church still has no Negro members, but Negroes attend services and participate in all phases of the church's activities.

A large Protestant church with local autonomy adopted a new constitution in 1960, including the specification that membership would be on a spiritual basis alone. The church's minister said, "Anyone confessing and baptized is accepted into membership. This is spelled out in the constitution. Twenty to twenty-five per cent of the time there are Negroes in attendance at our services. We have no Negro members, but we have no racial or cultural barriers."

Another church reported that it had never had a segregation policy and had taken no official stands on racial matters. There are few Negro members in the church's denomination, and none in the congregation here. "There was one Negro student who communed with us regularly, but no resident Negro members," said the minister. The church will not exclude anyone on account of race.

One of Chapel Hill's oldest churches reported that it was completely integrated, but has no Negro members at present. It has had Negro members in the past, a large number of communicants from other churches, and Negro students from the University. The church arrived at its present policy through National church action at least two years before the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision.

Of all the predominantly white churches holding services regularly in Chapel Hill, not one could be found which refuses full membership to Negroes. Negro membership is sparse, but not because the churches have been turning them away.

#### Town Government

Negroes have been participating in all phases of Chapel Hill's public life for more than a decade.

Hubert Robinson, elected to the Board of Aldermen in 1953, was among the first Negroes to serve on a local government body in North Carolina since Reconstruction. He is now in his third term.

The Rev. J. R. Manley has been serving as a member of the Chapel Hill Board of Education since 1958.

Negroes also have served or are serving as members of the Chapel Hill Library Board, the Planning Board, the Housing Authority, the Recreation Commission, the Human Relations Committee, and have served on various interim committees.

According to official Town policy, "In the use of municipal facilities, in the administration of municipal services, and in the hiring of municipal employees. . . race is not a factor."

Chapel Hill had the first Negro volunteer fireman in North Carolina, but the Fire Department has no Negroes now, either full-time or on call. Chief James Stewart said Negroes had inquired about positions but apparently had been discouraged by the system here which requires that prospective firemen spend an extended period training as volunteers, after which they

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Patrolman Paul Minor Conferring With Chief William Blake



One 'Non-Traditional' Job Clerk At Work In A Chapel Hill Store