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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

THE INTEGRATION OF SCHOOLS IN MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE:
A COMMUNITY STUDY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

MELINDA JOHNSON LICKISS

MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

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THE INTEGRATION OF SCHOOLS IN MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE:
A COMMUNITY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

THE INTEGRATION OF SCHOOLS IN MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE:

A COMMUNITY STUDY

Melinda Johnson Lickiss

The issue of race relations has been in the forefront of much of American history and continues so today. Uncovering the histories of communities that experienced peaceful race relations following the Supreme Court's decision in the Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas (1954) case may help leaders devise models for improving race relations in the future. This thesis examines how ordinary citizens, both white and black, influenced the policies of local, state, and national governments.

Murfreesboro, Tennessee, was a calm, tradition-laden, southern community in the midst of the social unrest and violence that permeated much of the South during the 1950s and 1960s. The attempt to integrate public facilities was the cause of much of that violence. City buses, lunch counters, and schools were all targets of protests and pickets, sometimes leading to riots and bombings. In stark contrast, the integration of the Murfreesboro City Schools resulted from a series of small changes over the course of fourteen years. There were no public displays of displeasure, no picketing, no bombings, and no court orders mandating the integration of the city schools. Instead, the

Melinda Johnson Lickiss

Murfreesboro City Council tightly controlled the political scene, the City School Board and Superintendent Baxter Hobgood controlled the pace of change in the schools, and elite, white women worked within their church and social networks to build an atmosphere of acceptance for racial integration. This thesis argues that this slow pace, the leadership within the school system, and the women's social networks led to peaceful desegregation and integration of the Murfreesboro City School System.

This thesis is built on minutes and reports of the City Council, the City School Board, and several women's groups in Murfreesboro. These documents detail specific actions taken by individuals or groups in the process of school integration. Numerous interviews with school and community leaders provided personal reflections that elaborated on these actions. Local anecdotal writings and newspaper accounts developed a context for the official actions.

The writings of Richard Kluger, Harold Cruse, Albert P. Blaustein, Jack Bass, John M. Spivack, and John Edgerton provide the national context for the story of Murfreesboro's school integration. These historians have spent considerable time documenting the legal background to the Brown decision and its immediate aftermath. The works of several women's historians, including Karen J. Blair, Lori D. Ginzberg, and

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Ann Firor Scott, examine women's networks and provide a solid foundation for studying the networks within Murfreesboro. As these historians show, women's associations, whether religious or civic, have a long tradition of social reform, and the groups in Murfreesboro were no exception.

Following the 1954 Brown decision, fourteen years lapsed before Murfreesboro changed their southern tradition of parallel educational systems. Desegregation and integration of the schools were finally accomplished in Murfreesboro due to the passage of time, the administrative ability of Baxter Hobgood, and the community networks of women reformers. Although Murfreesboro is only one of many communities that dealt with integration, this study enlarges our appreciation for the complexity of changing race relations in a small southern community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The subject of school desegregation and integration has always held a fascination for me. I grew up in the rural Midwest and could not understand the actions I saw on the television in the 1950s and 1960s. This study has allowed me to explore my feelings and perceptions, as well as those of individuals involved in the processes. It has also helped me become better acquainted with my recently adopted community.

I have met fascinating individuals. People allowed me into their homes to share their memories with me, and for that valuable gift of time and insight into their lives I am deeply indebted. The discovery of the women's networks was truly serendipitous and I am thankful as it has added immeasurably to the depth of this study.

The time I spent at Middle Tennessee State University has not only been thoroughly enjoyable but has been intellectually stimulating. Dr. Janice M. Leone and Dr. Thaddeus Smith have been wonderful counselors, mentors, and friends. They have listened to far too many of my personal problems, but always graciously guided me through in order to accomplish my academic goals. Liz Johnson Morris and

Rebecca Taylor-Sturdivant have been the best colleagues imaginable--always ready to laugh, cry, or discuss new ideas.

My family members have been steadfast supporters of my advanced education. My parents, Floyd and Marilyn Johnson, instilled in me the love of reading, questioning, and searching for answers. Their obvious enjoyment in learning provided a supreme environment for childhood. My dear husband, Lyle, has taken on more than anyone should be called to do in middle age and has done it graciously. And my children, David, Matthew, and Angela, each endured countless episodes of forgetfulness or mental absences as Mom did "her own thing."

I owe each of you a debt of gratitude for the time, the support, and the opportunity to indulge myself. To all of you I say, "Thank You. We finally did it!"

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAUW	American Association of University Women
CWU	Church Women United
GSUSA	Girl Scouts of the United States of America
HEW	United States Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare
LWV	League of Women Voters
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
UMW	United Methodist Women

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The renewed interest in the problems of racial strife makes it imperative that we study past race relations in the United States. Much of the recent media coverage about the social turmoil of the 1950s and 1960s centered on the widely known incidents of hatred and violence in places like Little Rock, Mobile, and Montgomery. Yet histories of communities that handled desegregation and integration in a calm manner need to be developed in order to create models of racial cooperation for the future. This study examines the relatively smooth integration of the city schools of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and identifies key elements that contributed to this successful endeavor.

The history of racial integration in southern schools has been, and continues to be, a controversial subject. For nearly a century, beginning in the 1870s, racial segregation in public schools was the law in southern states. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century race relations fragmented further with the implementation of "Jim Crow"

laws. As a result, two parallel societies existed in the South.

Following World War One, the relatively new National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became more vocal about the denial of citizenship rights for African Americans. By the 1940s and 1950s, the NAACP began to win court cases challenging racial segregation. For example, in 1944, the NAACP won a case for equalization of teachers' salaries in Charleston, South Carolina. Teachers won a similar case in 1945 in Columbia, South Carolina. And in 1947, the NAACP filed a case in Clarendon County, South Carolina, to have the public school district provide bus transportation for African American school children on an equal basis with white children. Later, NAACP lawyers changed this case to a petition for equal educational opportunities, known as Briggs v. Elliot. Eventually they combined Briggs with four other cases and entitled the case simply Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court rendered a verdict in the Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. The decision reversed the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896 that declared "separate but equal" treatment of African Americans to be constitutional.¹

¹ Barbara A. Woods, "Modjeska Simkins and the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP, 1939-1957," in Women in

The Supreme Court in Brown overturned segregation in the nation's schools based on the NAACP's argument that all children of both races suffered psychological damage from being forced to attend separate schools. The following year the Court ordered desegregation to proceed with "all deliberate speed" in all educational facilities. Reactions to the news varied widely. Many southern politicians vehemently opposed the decisions. Perhaps the most widely known was Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas. In 1956 he used the Arkansas National Guard to prohibit black students from entering Central High School in Little Rock. President Dwight Eisenhower eventually sent federal troops to protect the black students for the remainder of the school year. Faubus, however, closed the Little Rock schools for the next two years to avoid continued integration.² The Little Rock

the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965, ed. Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods; Blacks in the Diaspora Series, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, John McCluskey, Jr., and David Barry Gaspar (New York: Carlson, 1990; Indiana University, 1990), 107-112. See also, Mark V. Tushnet, The NAACP's Legal Strategy against Education, 1925-1950 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1987); and Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (New York: Knopf, 1976; New York: Vintage, 1977).

² David Chalmers, And the Crooked Places Made Straight: The Struggle for Social Change in the 1960s (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 17-18, 35-36. For a more detailed account of the struggle at Central High see, Daisy Bates, The Long Shadow of Little Rock (New York: McKay, 1962).

situation is but one example of an extreme reaction to the Supreme Court decisions concerning school integration.

Within Tennessee both Clinton and Nashville also had violent reactions to school desegregation. Clinton, a small town of nearly 4000 residents, was the county seat of Anderson County, and located less than twenty miles from Knoxville and Oak Ridge. In October 1955 school officials in Clinton decided to desegregate Clinton High School so as to be in compliance with the court order resulting from a lawsuit brought by five African American students in 1950. The following August, school opened on the twenty-seventh amid a flurry of protest. Frederick John Kasper, executive secretary of the Seaboard White Citizens Council, working with the Anderson County Federation for Constitutional Government, led protesters in a picket line against desegregation. Attitudes and actions escalated until finally six hundred National Guardsmen were deployed to keep peace in the community. National Guardsmen restricted all public meetings. However, Labor Day weekend brought new waves of violence as five areas were dynamited in the black community. National Guardsmen remained in Clinton until mid-September when newly-enlarged police forces were deemed capable of handling the remaining resentment.³

³ Anna Holden, Bonita Valien, and Preston Valien, Clinton, Tennessee: A Tentative Description and Analysis of

Nashville, too, became a site of court proceedings and resulting violence. Twenty-one African American students filed suit against the Nashville Board of Education in 1955. When classes were ready to start in August 1957 black children registered for first grade in white schools as designated in the court-approved desegregation plan. Unfortunately, some white parents chose to protest and the eventual outcome was the bombing of the new Hattie Cotton Elementary School scheduled to be desegregated. Black students filed another lawsuit in Davidson County. Again the Court ordered the schools to desegregate. Eventually Nashville City Schools and Davidson County Schools merged to form the Metro School System and all court cases were merged. Judges issued a variety of court orders over the ensuing thirty years; in fact, the Metro School System is still under a court order for desegregation.⁴

Nashville is an example of a community that required a great deal of time to accept change. Desegregation and

the School Desegregation Crisis, Field Reports on Desegregation in the South (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1956); George McMillan, "The Ordeal of Bobby Cain," Collier's, 23 November 1956, 68-69; and June N. Adamson, "Few Black Voices Heard: The Black Community and the Desegregation Crisis in Clinton, Tennessee, 1956," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 52 (Spring 1994): 30-41.

⁴ Tennessean, 1955-1997.

integration are complex processes.⁵ As in any broad cultural change, desegregation and integration were deceptively smooth in some communities but caustically violent in others; while they were painfully slow to culminate in some communities, in others they were exhaustingly fast; some plans aborted in mid-stream. Most published accounts of these integration attempts deal with metropolitan areas in turmoil or in the midst of court proceedings, and, as such, merely chronicle the flashpoints of the integration dilemma. This thesis examines the complex process of desegregation and integration of the Murfreesboro City Schools in the 1950s and 1960s by focusing on community development, social activists, and official school actions.

The often repeated story of integration in Murfreesboro depicts it as a fairly smooth process with few problems, in contrast to the perception that most people have of integration in the South (i.e., one of federal troops and police dogs). For example, Murfreesboro, unlike many communities, has never been under a court desegregation order indicating that race relations were perhaps more amicable than in other communities. In an attempt to explain the uniqueness of integration in Murfreesboro, this thesis

⁵ The process of desegregation involves the removal of legal restrictions mandating parallel institutions. The process of integration involves passive and active actions to force the mixing of races in public institutions.

goes beyond the description of the integration plans used in the City Schools to show how the passage of time, the efforts of some activist women, and Superintendent Baxter Hobgood's capable leadership influenced community values and contributed significantly to the successful integration of the schools.

This study draws heavily upon minutes from the Murfreesboro City Council, Murfreesboro City School Board, and various women's organizations as well as newspapers. Oral histories were collected from numerous teachers and community volunteers.

The wealth of secondary sources provided the national context in which to place this local study. Plural But Equal, Gemini, A Rage for Order, The Negro in the South Since 1865, and Speak Now Against the Day all describe living conditions for African Americans in the South prior to desegregation. A History of Negro Education in the South addresses African American education; Arbors to Bricks and A History of Rutherford County's African American Community look at the local situation.

The various court cases affecting segregated education are discussed in Unlikely Heroes, Desegregation and the Law, Simple Justice, Swann's Way, Race, Civil Rights and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial

Circuit, The NAACP's Legal Strategy against Segregated Education, 1925-1950, and The Burden of Brown.

Desegregation and integration plans implemented in other southern cities are numerous. Herbert Wey and John Corey developed a handbook detailing various plans for Phi Delta Kappa, Action Pattern in School Desegregation, A Guide Book. The United States Commission on Civil Rights and the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith each developed several pamphlets and reports on plans in use throughout the states, as well as periodic critiques of integration efforts in the nation's schools.

Memoirs of participants were another useful source. Warriors Don't Cry is the story of one of the African American students who attended Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas, under armed guard. I Have a Kind of Fear is a collection of journal entries, poems, photographs, and conversations of teachers and students in an integrated city school. One teacher kept a diary of her feelings and her students' reactions during the integration process. She has annotated these entries with comments about the court case under which they were proceeding; these are in Southie Won't Go. And a journalist living in New York returned to his hometown in Mississippi to chronicle the integration process in his book, Yazoo.

The history of Murfreesboro is drawn from community planning reports, official city minutes, and newspapers. Collections of anecdotes in Falling Leaves, Flowers for Grace, Little Bits of 'Boro Lore, and The Lonely People were very helpful in developing the atmosphere of the community. Oral histories greatly enhanced this area of study although the stories of many Murfreesboro residents remain to be told.

In developing the women's networks, the following were extremely helpful: The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914; Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History; "Bound by the Spirit, Found on the Journey: The Methodist Women's Campaign for Southern Civil Rights, 1940-1968"; "Integrating the American Association of University Women, 1946-1949"; and "'The Very Best Influence': Josephine Holloway and Girl Scouting in Nashville's African-American Community." Whenever possible I have used women's given names as part of the historian's effort to put women back into history. The appendix lists the names of these community women and their spouses, and a description of their community involvement listing each of the organizations to which they belonged.

This study, with its focus on integration as seen through the eyes of white citizens in Murfreesboro, is only part of a much larger picture. Much work is still to be done

on the perspective of African Americans in Murfreesboro. The papers of the late Baxter Hobgood, city school superintendent, need to be mined for the wealth of information regarding the community, its actions and its attitudes. Presently, only anecdotal histories of Murfreesboro exist. Historians have much work to do at this local level before the impact of ordinary citizens both white and African American on the policies of local, state, and national government becomes clear. This thesis adds to the complex picture of school integration in our nation's history.

CHAPTER TWO

A SOUTHERN COMMUNITY STRUGGLING WITH TRADITION AND CHANGE

Murfreesboro, Tennessee, county seat for Rutherford County, is located in the exact geographic center of the state. The city also occupies the middle ground of the state's philosophy regarding change and tradition. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, the community struggled to decide whether to join the Confederacy or remain in the Union. A hundred years later, town officials debated whether or not to allow outsiders to bring new industries into their community. Even though the Chamber of Commerce formed in 1929, Murfreesboro citizens wavered for the next fifty years between their much-loved traditional way of agrarian life and a new, but feared, industrial path that promised much-needed revenue. An examination of these struggles reveals a southern community committed to preserving its way of life, in the physical as well as the philosophical sense.

Murfreesboro was incorporated in 1817 six years after the State General Assembly named it the county seat of Rutherford County in 1811. Situated on the banks of the west

fork of Stones River, Murfreesboro was the center of a thriving farming area. Like much of Middle Tennessee, Murfreesboro depended on cotton, tobacco, and horses. Because of its location Murfreesboro was the state capital from 1817 until 1826 when the capital moved to nearby Nashville.¹

Murfreesboro has a long tradition of providing quality education and religious opportunity for its residents. Bradley Academy was built in Murfreesboro in 1811, the result of legislative action calling for academies in each county. Such notables as James K. Polk, his future wife Sarah Childress, and John Bell, presidential candidate in 1860, attended Bradley. After the Civil War, Bradley Academy became the center of education for blacks in Rutherford County. Also, Murfreesboro has been home to several colleges: Murfreesboro Female Academy, Eaton College for Women, Union University, Soule College, Tennessee Women's College, and the current Middle Tennessee State University. Religious conviction was strong among the early founders of the community. Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians have been mainstays in the community since its founding. Murfreesboro, nearly decimated by the Civil War, rebuilt and

¹ Mabel Pittard, Rutherford County, Tennessee County History Series, ed. Robert E. Corlew, III, no. 75 (Memphis: Memphis State University, 1984), 26-27, 34-35, 40.

retained its rural identity and stable population centered on education and religion through the middle of the twentieth century.

In the years following the 1930s Great Depression and World War Two, Murfreesboro started to grow. New businesses moved into town, people migrated from nearby metropolitan Nashville, Middle Tennessee State University grew from a small teachers' college to a full-fledged university, and Sewart Air Force Base employed five thousand servicemen, many of whom lived in Murfreesboro. Murfreesboro's population grew from 13,052 in 1950, to 18,991 in 1960, and by 1965 its population totaled 21,225. Much of the population growth resulted from annexation of surrounding areas. For example, between 1950 and 1960, eight of every ten new city residents were due to annexations.² As in many communities after World War Two, neighborhoods developed on the fringes of Murfreesboro. Here, veterans enjoyed the benefits of the G. I. Bill; residents were white, had slightly higher education levels than the rest of the community, and worked in white collar jobs.³ The

² City of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Population and Economic Base Study, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, vol. 2, Future Prospects, a special report prepared by Eric Hill Associates (Murfreesboro, TN: City of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1967), 4-6.

³ Murfreesboro, Future Prospects, 4-5.

annexations of the 1950s and 1960s allowed residents of these new neighborhoods to enjoy the benefits of the city that included schools, a water and sewer system, garbage collection, and utilities.

During the years between 1954 and 1965, fifteen major businesses built plants in Murfreesboro, including State Farm, Singer, Chromalox, Samsonite, and White Stag.⁴ The policy of bringing in new industries was a major change for the city; Wanda McCauley recalled trying to relocate their family business to Murfreesboro in 1946. Her husband had a great deal of trouble getting city permits to locate their plumbing supply house in Murfreesboro, and they eventually ended up building outside the city limits with much higher expense to them. But plumbing was a good business to be in as large areas of Murfreesboro still lacked indoor plumbing.⁵ A 1968 survey of blighted neighborhoods showed 33 percent of the homes in Murfreesboro had no indoor plumbing.⁶

⁴ Daily News Journal (Murfreesboro, TN), 4 April 1965, 16D.

⁵ Wanda McCauley, interview by author, 8 May 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

⁶ Murfreesboro Municipal Planning Commission, Neighborhood Analysis, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, a special report prepared by Eric Hill Associates (Murfreesboro, TN: Murfreesboro Municipal Planning Commission, 1969), 12-13.

In addition to the physical side of Murfreesboro, the makeup of the social elite was also shifting in the 1950s and 1960s as the new business leaders and their wives took an active part in their adopted community. Social groups in town clearly showed the effects of newcomers in their organizations. The American Association of University Women (AAUW), because its membership base was closely tied to Middle Tennessee State University, had always had numerous "outsiders" in the Murfreesboro branch. By the 1960s, however, United Methodist Women (UMW) and Church Women United (CWU), both affiliated with St. Mark's United Methodist Church, increased numbers of new members from outside the community. The Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) based at St. Mark's followed the same pattern. Women in these organizations were actively involved in their adopted community whether they served as Girl Scout troop leaders or prepared and served dinners to raise funds for their organizations. ⁷

⁷ For a detailed look at women's social groups as influences in the greater society of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914, preface by Annette K. Baxter (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980); Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1991); for later in the twentieth century, see Alice G. Knotts, "Bound by the Spirit, Found on the Journey: The Methodist Women's Campaign for Southern Civil Rights, 1940-1968" (Ph.D., Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver, 1989); Janice M. Leone, "Integrating the American Association of

Newcomers also made their presence felt in the area of community planning. Murfreesboro city officials instituted several community studies and long-range plans during the 1950s and 1960s. The numerous land annexations were vital parts of those plans. The growth of the city both caused the need for the planning and resulted from the planning. Along with the increasing population came the problems of traffic, water and sewer, and educational needs. In the late 1950s, the City Council designated the area with the least amount of modern plumbing, sometimes referred to as "The Bottoms," as an urban redevelopment project. "The Bottoms," a residential area south and east of the commercial district around the Square, was composed of the Bradley-Holloway and Courtland neighborhoods, that were predominately African American, and the McFadden neighborhood that was predominately white.⁸

As the city officials focused on urban redevelopment, they also looked at traffic patterns. In an effort to relieve congestion, officials routed the major traffic outside the Square instead of through it for the first time

University Women, 1946-1949," Historian 51 (Spring 1989): 423-445; and Elisabeth Israels Perry, "'The Very Best Influence': Josephine Holloway and Girl Scouting in Nashville's African-American Community," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 52 (Summer 1993): 73-85.

⁸ Murfreesboro Municipal Planning Commission, Neighborhood Analysis, 21.

in Murfreesboro's history. As in most southern communities, the Square was the center of the community's life, both socially and economically. An outgrowth of their study was the rerouting of U. S. Highway 70, with the creation of Broad Street, and rerouting U. S. Highway 231, by building Memorial Street. Soon the development of businesses on Broad Street forced transition, for the Square had always been the center of all retail, service, and government activity. Eventually this led to a deterioration of the downtown area as the strip malls developed along the new thoroughfares. Downtown underwent several transformations before its revitalization in the 1980s.

Still, Murfreesboro retained the feeling of a small town. People knew one another and were comfortable letting their children wander. People looked out for each other and lent a helping hand when needed. Margaret Salisbury was one of the newcomers of the 1950s, and she remembered the community spirit, especially as shown in supporting the Central High School athletic teams. As a minister's wife she was used to moving, but she and her husband felt that Murfreesboro was the best place they had ever lived. She very quickly became involved in the schools as a teacher, and later an administrator, in part, because she happened to move into a house next door to Baxter Hobgood, the city school superintendent. He needed teachers desperately in the

growing community and prevailed upon her to go back to teaching.⁹

According to Wanda McCauley, "Murfreesboro was just a little country town. Mops and brooms were right out on the street. Vegetables and fruit sat out in baskets. Poultry-on-foot was sold on the Mink Slide."¹⁰ Wanda McCauley, Margaret Salisbury, and others have these memories of this quaint happy village; interestingly, Olivia Woods, Myrtle Glanton Lord, and other black women in Murfreesboro share many of those same memories. Olivia Woods remembers that the neighborhood where she grew up was integrated with poor, but hard-working whites. She said, "We grew up in each other houses . . . and we [family members] still visit when we see each other."¹¹

On the whole, the community, at least on the surface, had peaceful race relations in the 1950s and 1960s mainly because everyone knew his or her place and kept it. Wanda McCauley related the time she asked her maid, Martha Williams, to get something for her from someone on Main

⁹ Margaret Salisbury, interview by author, 15 July 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹⁰ The Mink Slide was the black commercial area on the south side of the Square. Wanda McCauley, 8 May 1996.

¹¹ Olivia Woods, interview by author, 13 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

Street, Murfreesboro's most affluent residential neighborhood. Martha was unable to do this, because, as a black woman, she was only allowed on Main Street when she was in uniform and pushing a baby carriage.¹² Though they had certain roles to play in society, the races were friendly with each other. People of both races went into many of the stores on the Square. Blacks cared for the homes and children of whites. Olivia Woods recalled baby-sitting for white couples and spending the night sometimes so she could be available early Sunday morning to help prepare the children for Sunday School. Once her employer took her to the movies with the family, but, of course, she had to sit in the balcony. Her employer made sure she was safe in the balcony and then met her immediately when the movie ended.¹³ Whites looked out for blacks they knew and helped them out when they could. Both Wanda McCauley and Florence McFerrin related stories of helping out their maids' families with car loans and caring for elderly family members. Wanda took Martha to vote at the fire station, the first time that Martha had ever voted. According to Wanda, "It really took a lot of courage for her to vote." The others gave Wanda dirty

¹² Wanda McCauley, 8 May 1996.

¹³ Olivia Woods, 13 May 1997.

looks, but she went in the booth with Martha, because Martha could not read.¹⁴

Yet another side of Murfreesboro existed. Although calm on the surface, African Americans felt the need to form a local chapter of the NAACP in 1950.¹⁵ Perhaps this was due to the inaction of the City Council to concerns of the African American community. For instance, in May 1954, representatives from the "Citizens Service League" (a black organization)¹⁶ presented a petition requesting that the city hire one or more black police officers; the Council took the issue for study. A week later, another group asked the Council for the appointment of two black officers, but community resident Joe Vaughn "protested the proposed appointment of negro policemen." The following week a letter by The Reverend Ralph M. Llewellyn, minister of First Presbyterian Church, opposing the appointments was read in the Council meeting. A Council committee reported the recommendation "to employ one full-time and one part-time

¹⁴ Wanda McCauley, 8 May 1996; and Florence McFerrin, interview by author, 13 May 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹⁵ William Butler, interview by author, 15 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹⁶ Kluger notes that due to the animosity usually exhibited by whites upon the mention of the name, NAACP, often the group simply called themselves "The Citizens'

negro policeman." The Council took no action. In June the Citizens Service League was back with a repeat of their request.¹⁷ Although these and similar requests continued to be presented to the Council over the next ten years, the Council usually took no action on them or referred requests to another agency or committee.¹⁸

Sometimes the City Council acted quite consciously to preserve the status quo. For example, in the midst of the population growth one of the most pressing needs was classroom space, but the Council consciously acted to preserve the status quo in education. In 1954 the City Council voted to allocate funds for blueprints for a new black school just days after the United States Supreme Court outlawed separate educational facilities.¹⁹ In another

Committee"; this is simply another variation, see Kluger, Simple Justice, 393.

¹⁷ Murfreesboro City Council, "Minutes for The City of Murfreesboro, TN," 13 May 1954; 20 May 1954; 27 May 1954; and 17 June 1954, City Hall, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹⁸ Examples of this non-action are 2 June 1960 request for recreational space for blacks that was sent to the recreation department for study; the 22 February 1962 request for drainage of standing water in the sixth ward that was forwarded to the city manager; the 16 May 1963 request for black police officers that was met with no action, even though the same request had been repeatedly made for nine years; and the 17 July 1963 request for redress of restaurant policies that was shifted to the city police. City Council minutes.

¹⁹ Murfreesboro City Council, 24 June 1954.

instance, after numerous requests for recreational facilities for black city residents, the Council appropriated money for "specifications for a pool for the colored citizens of the City."²⁰ Despite Supreme Court decisions that outlawed segregated beaches and golf courses, the Council took a deliberate stand to continue the segregated way of life in Murfreesboro.²¹

In more mundane matters, the treatment that City Council members afforded individual blacks also showed less respect than that given to whites. The Council routinely ignored black residents' requests or passed them to another office, whereas white residents' requests were usually addressed immediately by the Council. For instance, Collier Woods, the highly-respected principal of the only black high school in the county, approached the Council concerning drainage of surface water at his home. Council members referred him to the State Highway Department. When he again came before the Council five months later, the Councilmen decided that they would need a survey before they could make

²⁰ Murfreesboro City Council, 20 March 1959; previous references are 20 March 1958; 10 June 1958; 20 June 1958; money for the pool construction was finally allocated on 9 July 1959, thus the pool for "colored citizens" finally opened for the summer of 1960.

²¹ The cases of Mayor and City Council of Baltimore v. Dawson (1955) declared segregation unconstitutional on public beaches in Maryland, and Holmes v. Atlanta (1955)

a decision on his concern.²² When white residents from the more affluent Bel-Aire neighborhood, however, approached the Council with a request, Councilmen filed the order promptly at the meeting.²³ The Council also handled a similar situation in the working-class Clark Addition immediately.²⁴ Obviously, race played a factor in the Councilmen's reaction.

Then, in April 1960, during the racial unrest in nearby Nashville,²⁵ the City Council passed three amendments to Chapter 19 of the Code of City of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1949. The first amendment created and defined "additional offenses and misdemeanors." Councilmen amended Section 5-A to read, it is "unlawful and a misdemeanor for any person within the city to commit, or to aid, abet, incite or

declared segregation invalid on public golf courses in Georgia.

²² Murfreesboro City Council, 8 March 1956; and 30 August 1956.

²³ Ibid., 9 August 1956.

²⁴ Ibid., 23 August 1956.

²⁵Black students from Fisk University and the American Baptist Theological Seminary chose Woolworth's lunch counter to stage a sit-in on 12 February 1960. These students, joined by others from across the community, continued their sit-ins for several weeks; they faced arrest and violent abuse by many whites. Eventually the black community developed a total boycott of the downtown stores that lasted through the traditional Easter shopping season. There was a great deal of national press, including the NBC documentary

instigate the commission of any act or acts causing, bringing about or resulting in, or to be guilty of, turbulent or riotous conduct within or about any hotel, inn, theatre, or public house, common carrier or restaurant." The new Section 29-A used equally inclusive language to prohibit the congregating of individuals on public property. And the new Section 30-A universally forbade the gathering of individuals in any privately owned area or building when the owner asked them to leave.²⁶ Obviously, the Council, concerned with the activities in Nashville, wanted to assure themselves and the city that Murfreesboro was not going to make headlines in the national news.

The southern way of handling business offended African American residents in Murfreesboro the most. In September of 1954 a group of blacks took a signed petition to the Council to complain "of the manner in which business was conducted by the Snow White Ice Cream Company on North Maple Street."²⁷ No indication is given that the Council took any action in response to this petition. Myrtle Glanton Lord, a black school teacher, recalled years later her emotional distress at being refused service at a city ice cream store

filmed during the demonstrations: Sit-In, 2 parts, NBC White Paper Series, prod. NBC, 27 min., NBC, 1961, videocassette.

²⁶ Murfreesboro City Council, 8 April 1960.

²⁷ Ibid., 2 September 1954.

because she was black. Murfreesboro resident, Mary Scales, recalled that as a young mother she planned a wonderful outing to a root-beer stand with her children, just as her own mother had done for her when she was growing up in Chicago. This time, after being ignored, she asked to be served, "and they pointed at that sign 'We Reserve the Right to Refuse to Serve' and laughed and laughed. It hurt me so badly. I was devastated and took my children home."²⁸ The Jim Crow tradition of water fountains, entrances, and services segregated by race was an accepted feature of daily life in Murfreesboro.

If the political and business leaders were concerned about controlling the rapidly changing community, so were some of the social groups in town. Charity Circle, a benevolent group of elite, Murfreesboro women, had a long history of providing the indigent with food and shoes, paying for hospital gowns and wheelchairs, and raising money for overseas relief projects.²⁹ Charity Circle members took

²⁸ Mary Scales, interview by author, 4 September 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN; and Myrtle Glanton Lord, interview by author, 1 July 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

²⁹ Lori D. Ginzberg, Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States (New Haven: Yale University, 1990). Ginzberg's discussion is centered on the nineteenth century but can easily be interpolated to the work of Charity Circle in the twentieth century.

very deliberate steps in 1954 to close their ranks and resist the influence of new residents. At the September meeting, the first meeting after the Brown decision, they discussed membership and decided "for the time being names for the waiting list be closed." Six months later they decided that old members who had been dropped for non-payment of dues would be given precedence over anyone on the waiting list. And, in May of 1958, the ladies decided, "after discussing the advisability of increasing the membership, it was voted that each person be allowed to sponsor one proposed member; the daughters and daughters-in-law of members being given precedence."³⁰ Whether the group was worried about integration from the Brown decision, or just worried that some of the new women in town would have integrationist ideas is unclear; what is clear is that the group wanted to maintain tight control of its membership.

Perhaps the stern line that most white Murfreesboro residents took in regard to racial matters accounts for the decline in the population of the African American community. Although the white population grew significantly, the percentage of blacks in Murfreesboro declined from 20

³⁰ Charity Circle, Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, Tennessee Records, Reel 1, 5 vols. Minutes and Membership Lists, 1910-1929, 1941-1979, 2 September 1954; 29 March 1955; and 1 May 1958.

percent in 1950, to 16 percent in 1960.³¹ Of course the annexations, predominately white, explain part of this decrease. A population study completed in 1967, showed that 7 percent of the black population in 1960 had lived in another county five years earlier, compared with 27 percent in 1955.³² Thus, the black presence decreased in relation to the white population during the 1950s and 1960s.

Although the facts show clear discriminatory patterns in the City Council actions, business practices, and housing patterns, few people objected. Because there appeared to be little resistance to this traditional Southern lifestyle, Baxter Hobgood and others involved in school operations chose to take very small steps over a long period of time to integrate the schools in Murfreesboro. Small steps, taken slowly, aroused the least opposition and gradually resulted in an integrated school system. Only one segment of the population disagreed with this tactic: the reformed-minded, elite women in a number of socially active groups. Church Women United, United Methodist Women, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and Girl Scouts all desegregated early and peaceably. Women in

³¹ Murfreesboro, Future Prospects, 6.

³² *Ibid.*, 59.

these organizations led the community in accepting the idea of an integrated society.

CHAPTER THREE
BUILDING WOMEN'S NETWORKS IN MURFREESBORO
AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

Besides the community of Murfreesboro undergoing rapid expansion in the 1950s and 1960s and the school district grappling with the Brown decision, the Murfreesboro social structure was changing as well. No where were these changes as profound as in the social network women of the community forged. Although Charity Circle chose not to allow the newcomers to join their organization, many other groups welcomed the newcomers and their enthusiasm and modern attitudes. For example, United Methodist Women, Church Women United, Girl Scouts of the United States of America, League of Women Voters, and the American Association of University Women were influenced by newly-arrived Murfreesboro residents and in turn offered these women opportunities to continue community reform efforts.

These newcomers brought varied experiences and opinions regarding race relations. Some of these women came from other southern regions where African Americans were more numerous than in Murfreesboro, others came from northern areas where there was a different history of race relations,

and several came to Murfreesboro after living on integrated bases of the armed forces. Each of these women brought different perceptions of racial equality with them to Murfreesboro. These new perceptions influenced their actions within their social organizations.

These newcomers joined organizations that had a tradition of social activism and liberal attitudes concerning race relations. The national organization, United Methodist Women (UMW), was historically reform-minded. Since the Civil War Methodist missionaries worked to improve the living conditions of African Americans in the South. For example, in the early 1870s, Mrs. M. L. Kelley worked in Middle Tennessee and Laura Askew Haygood worked in the Atlanta area to encourage black women to attend special services combined with sewing classes.¹

The United Methodist Women in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s made up over half of the women working for improvements in race relations in the South.² In the 1920s, these Methodist women tried to improve public accommodations for blacks, again not directly attacking segregation, but

¹ John Patrick McDowell, The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Church, South, 1886-1939 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982), 8-10.

² Knotts, "Bound by the Spirit, Found on the Journey," 41-42.

subtly undermining it. For example, a local unit in southern Georgia arranged for a public restroom for blacks, something that had not been available before; other units worked to establish day nurseries and parks for blacks.³ In the 1930s their emphasis changed from "work for to work with women of color."⁴ Methodist women held integrated leadership training sessions by the end of the decade. Much of this work can be directly attributed to the leadership of Thelma Stevens, leading eventually to her being the first paid executive in the Women's Division.⁵ In the 1940s, the women attacked the segregation within the Methodist Church, itself, an attack that lasted until 1968 when church leaders abolished the Central Jurisdiction, or black administrative unit. The Methodist Church, and thus the Women's Division, had previously been organized by regional divisions, except that all black churches in the nation were grouped into the

³ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Thelma Stevens, a white woman raised in Mississippi, directed the Bethlehem Center in Augusta, Georgia, then worked as the Superintendent of the Bureau of Christian Social Relations before she was appointed the Executive Director of the Women's Division of the Methodist Church in 1940, where she continued until 1968. See, McDowell, The Social Gospel in the South, 56-57; and Knotts, "Bound by the Spirit, Found on the Journey," 78, 82, 84-85.

Central Jurisdiction.⁶ The thirty years brought a great deal of change within the women's work; they moved from working to help subservient blacks to recognizing their equality and building networks for interracial communication.

In 1952, the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church adopted the goal of integrated public education in the United States. This group happened to be meeting in their week-long national quadrennial when the Brown decision was announced in May 1954. Due to strong leadership, the Women's Division made the first public announcement of support for the decision to end segregation.⁷ By 1957, after watching the slow, nearly non-existent, movement toward integration, the leaders of the Women's Division realized that they needed to attack segregation in housing in order to effect change in school integration.⁸ By attacking segregated housing they could support the public's sentiment for neighborhood schools and still effect integration of schools.

These national resolutions were supported in Murfreesboro within the local UMW units. Mary Hurt Harrell held a variety of offices over twenty years in the unit at

⁶ Knotts, "Bound by the Spirit, Found on the Journey," 26-170.

⁷ Ibid., 188-189.

⁸ Ibid., 49.

St. Mark's, as did Lucy Strickland, Eska Garrison, Wanda McCauley, and Florence McFerrin. Martha Corlew held similar positions in the unit at First Methodist, and Lydia Glanton, black parishioner, did the same at Key Memorial Methodist.⁹ Within the church these women were often called upon to lead lessons. In this way the women were able to influence their local congregations in matters of race relations. For instance, Louise Robinson presented a program to the Wesleyan Service Guild (an evening group of the UMW) about the conferences being organized throughout the nation concerning peace, children, civil rights, and inter-racial problems.¹⁰ These issues had been the primary focus of study and mission-work for Methodist women throughout the twentieth century. Mrs. Coil Branson spoke on "Improving Inter-racial Relations" to the Methodist Youth Fellowship group at First Methodist Church.¹¹ Each of these women also took an active part in community work to better race relations, and used their public-speaking opportunities to

⁹ "Scrapbook," St. Mark's UMW Collection, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Murfreesboro, TN; "Scrapbook," First United UMW Collection, First United Methodist Church, Murfreesboro, TN; and Wanda McCauley, 8 May 1996.

¹⁰ Wesleyan Service Guild, "Bulletin" (Murfreesboro, TN, 14 November 1955), First United Methodist UMW Collection, First United Methodist Church, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹¹ First United Methodist Church, "Bulletin" (Murfreesboro, TN, 20 January 1963), First United Methodist

influence others outside of their congregation on issues of race.

Methodist women also worked to establish Girl Scout troops in Murfreesboro. The Girls Scouts, founded in 1912, reached the Middle Tennessee area in 1917, and briefly existed in Murfreesboro in the late 1930s.¹² Nita Heflin and Anita Martin revived girl scouting in 1951 when they established an all-white brownie troop at St. Mark's.¹³

The Southern Region of the Girl Scouts denied admission to African American girls until 1942, although they had been part of the national organization since 1913. Prior to their official recognition in the Southern Region, local custom required separation of the races, and the local councils did not feel they had the financial backing to support separate black troops. Local volunteers worked with the YWCA and with the Bethlehem Centers (black community centers administered by the Methodist Church) to provide a scouting program for African American girls.¹⁴ In the early 1940s national

UMW Collection, First United Methodist Church, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹² Perry, "'The Very Best Influence', 73; and 78.

¹³ Nita Heflin, interview by author, 6 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

¹⁴ Perry, "'The Very Best Influence'," 73-78.

administrators tackled the difficult question of sustaining the Girl Scout ideals and handling local southern customs. They established a new policy stating, "Blacks should be considered for every vacancy occurring in the junior executive staff." The national leaders again revised intercultural policies in 1953 to state, "race, religion, national heritage, or economic status shall be no barrier to membership in the Girl Scout organization." The 1950s and 1960s were busy years for the national leaders as they worked to uphold the Girl Scout ideal that Girl Scouts "shall be open to all girls and adults."¹⁵

Bertha Chrietzberg arrived at St. Mark's in the early 1960s, nearly fifteen years after Anita Martin, Nita Heflin, and Wanda McCauley, but she brought with her the same commitment to girl scouting. She had formed her first troop when she was only twenty-one, and led Girl Scout troops in Germany while her family was stationed there. After finishing a career with the Army, Bertha's husband, Jim, moved the family to the South. With her extensive background in scouting Chrietzberg quickly became a training leader and unit chairperson for Murfreesboro. In this capacity she formed Murfreesboro's first integrated troop, in the early 1960s, before the schools had integrated. St. Mark's

¹⁵ Lillian S. Williams, A Bridge to the Future: The History of Diversity in Girl Scouting (New York: Girl Scouts

accepted this racially mixed group when their neighborhood church refused to sponsor them, an indication that Murfreesboro was not comfortable with integration on a social basis.¹⁶

St. Mark's hosted another racially mixed group when other white churches would not. In Murfreesboro, Church Women United, started in 1950 under the name Church Women of Murfreesboro, was mainly comprised of women from the mainline Protestant churches. In 1960 the Murfreesboro group affiliated with the national organization, changed their name to United Church Women (in 1969 they changed their name to Church Women United), and became an integrated organization. This bi-racial group studied community issues such as care of the indigent, pornography, liquor issues, and race relations, and then petitioned City Council to reform conditions. These women viewed these issues as affecting the whole community rather than particular neighborhoods. The group alternated meeting at black

of the United States of America, 1996), 17, 21, 10.

¹⁶ Bertha Chrietberg, interview by author, 9 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN; and Eska Garrison, interview by author, 8 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN, telephone. Today, two members, one white and one black, of that first integrated troop now share the leadership of a troop at Reeves-Rogers Elementary where they teach.

churches and then at St. Mark's, the only white church willing to host the integrated CWU for several years.¹⁷

Nationally Church Women United organized in 1941 as an ecumenical, racially diverse umbrella for "the cooperation of 'all God's people'" in the "most politically and socially liberal groups in American Protestantism." During the 1940s the group concentrated on war relief efforts; later they concentrated on peace initiatives, strongly supported the United Nations, and worked for the "cultivation of harmonious and just racial relations."¹⁸ The leaders in this organization were generally well-educated, middle or upper-middle class women married to clergy, elite businessmen, or professionals. They saw their work as apolitical and simply an "extension of their roles as mothers and homemakers." They focused on local action, making public statements without regard for the official stance of any of the denominations represented by the group.¹⁹ Racial inclusiveness was a founding principle of this organization.

¹⁷ Myrtle Glanton Lord, "The History of Church Women United: Murfreesboro, TN," TMs (Murfreesboro, TN, 1995); and Bertha Chrietzberg, 9 May 1997.

¹⁸ Virginia Lieson Brereton, "United and Slighted: Women as Subordinated Insiders," in Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960, ed. William R. Hutchison, Cambridge Studies in Religion and American Public Life, ed. Robin W. Lovin (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), 149.

¹⁹ Ibid., 151, 154, 155.

For example, women met in homes in Washington, D. C., in 1945 rather than deal with the segregation of the restaurant and hotel establishments. In 1948 they condemned school segregation as "contrary to our Christian principles and inimical to the democratic pattern." Throughout the 1950s the group held workshops to help churchwomen deal with "the immediate difficulties of school desegregation."²⁰

Church Women United in Murfreesboro was organized around the same principles. In 1963 CWU, under the leadership of Mary Hurt Harrell, met with the Ministerial Alliance Association, an all-white social group for ministers in Murfreesboro; this dinner meeting was the first step toward integrating the men's group. That same year a delegation from CWU approached Murfreesboro Mayor A. L. Todd about developing a bi-racial committee to improve race relations and communications in the city.²¹ The Mayor appointed Councilman John Rucker to develop a study committee; no women were appointed. When representatives

²⁰ James F. Findlay, Jr., Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970 (New York: Oxford University, 1993), 49.

²¹ Myrtle Glanton Lord, "History of CWU," 2.

from the League of Women Voters asked about this omission, the Mayor told them, "they just did not think of it."²² Obviously, women and blacks were still not an accepted part of the political pattern in Murfreesboro, even though they were dealing with pertinent issues of race relations in the community.

Little was accomplished with the bi-racial proposal until 1967, when Dr. J. R. Patterson, an African American dentist and prominent black community leader, requested the establishment of a Human Relations Commission.²³ After studying the Nashville Commission on Human Relations, the City Council appointed ten whites and five blacks "for the purpose of helping all people in solving their differences, and to act as a go-between in matters of employment and management differences." In keeping with the CWU original intent, Mary Hurt Harrell and Lydia Glanton, both very active CWU and UMW members, were selected for the steering committee of the new commission.²⁴

In 1966, after considerable study on the extent and nature of poverty in Murfreesboro, CWU successfully lobbied

²² League of Women Voters, "Minutes" (Murfreesboro, TN, 11 September 1963); ironically, John Rucker's wife was a member of the LWV.

²³ Murfreesboro City Council, 19 April 1967.

²⁴ Ibid., 24 August 1967.

for Council passage and implementation of the "Southern Standard Housing Code," a set of minimum standards for housing concerning electricity and plumbing. The other major action CWU initiated through the City Council was the development of a non-profit housing complex for low-income whites and blacks. CWU proposed to put this development on Sulphur Springs Road in a middle-class, white neighborhood thus advancing integrated housing and relieving the congestion of the traditional low-income areas. This produced "considerable debate," but finally died for the lack of a second to Councilman Robert Scales's (first black city councilman since Reconstruction) motion to buy the land for the group. Two months later Mary Hurt Harrell notified the Council that the federal funding had been reduced and "the project in Murfreesboro would have to be abandoned." She asked for assistance from the Council to get the funding restored and the Council agreed to do what they could.²⁵ Other federal housing projects were built in Murfreesboro but none through the special program whereby CWU would have been the organizer as that funding source became extinct.

Harrell also worked on improving race relations and sub-standard housing through the League of Women Voters. Although the national League began in 1920, Murfreesboro women did not organize a local unit until 1956. This group

²⁵ Ibid., 4 May 1967; and 13 July 1967.

was interracial from its inception and included several university wives. Its purpose was to "promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."²⁶ Mary Hurt Harrell participated in the League as an officer, both locally and on the state level, as a board member, and as a program presenter to other social groups as well as to the City Council. She took particular interest in the problem of sub-standard housing, and in school issues such as the appointment of school superintendents, a continuing debate in Tennessee.²⁷

Others in the group worked to improve the quality of the county school board and superintendent; this local action item became a "continuing responsibility" for the Murfreesboro League through at least 1968. In fact, Eska Garrison, an active board member and officer, was elected to the Rutherford County School Board in 1968, and helped the Board cope with the reapportionment of voting districts and the addition of seats on the Board.²⁸ But the interest of League members in education did not stop with just studying the issues. They also became involved with community groups

²⁶ League of Women Voters, "By-Laws" (Murfreesboro, TN, August 1956).

²⁷ LWV, "Minutes," 18 May 1967, 4 April 1967, 15 August 1968; and 27 September 1962.

²⁸ Ibid., 20 June 1968; and Eska Garrison, 8 May 1997.

working on solutions. When Baxter Hobgood requested local input on a special counseling and research project with the Murfreesboro City Schools, Mrs. John Nelson and Martha Corlew joined an advisory group headed by Dr. Jean Jordan, the school psychologist from Vanderbilt.²⁹ Lucy Strickland and Mrs. Jennings Jones accepted the responsibility to attend school board meetings to keep the League of Women Voters advised as to the Board's actions concerning education of their community's children.³⁰ And Martha Corlew attended an "In-Service Training Meeting for teachers and supervisors to study curriculum" in the high school.³¹

At times the groups intersected with each other. St. Mark's women's group held three Citizenship Coffees explaining citizen rights and responsibilities and invited the League members to attend.³² Several of the women's groups regularly asked Girl Scouts to distribute information flyers throughout the community.³³ In 1962, CWU held a study meeting on the United Nations with League president, Dr.

²⁹ LWV, "Minutes," 9 January 1959.

³⁰ Ibid., 15 January 1960; and passim.

³¹ Ibid., 24 January 1963.

³² Ibid., 7 February 1958.

³³ Ibid., 15 March 1962; and passim.

Lois Kennedy, presenting the lecture, and League members were urged to attend.³⁴

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) by definition is select in its membership; one must have a college or university degree from a nationally approved institution. AAUW is also one of the oldest organizations in Murfreesboro, having organized in 1913 under the Southern Association of College Women. Because of AAUW membership criteria, the vast majority of members are not native to Murfreesboro. AAUW's purpose is to promote education among young women and work for gender equity. The members meet every month to hear a guest lecturer, with programs usually built around a yearly theme. In the early 1960s the local branch studied and lobbied for kindergartens. They were part of a local task force to survey kindergarten needs in Tennessee, eventually resulting in legislation to establish a pilot program in 1965.³⁵

In 1949, AAUW's national board prohibited racially segregated branches; the local branch welcomed its first

³⁴ Ibid., 29 November 1962.

³⁵ American Association of University Women Collection, box 4, Education Forum folder (Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN).

black members in the fall of 1967.³⁶ However, even before that year the Murfreesboro branch clearly was open to learning about race relations.³⁷ Dr. James Weldon Johnson, then a member of the Fisk University faculty, spoke at the general meeting in May 1938. According to branch minutes, "A large and appreciative audience, in which negroes were included, heard his lecture on poetry and his reading from his own poems." In fact, since the meeting went so well, the branch members decided to spend the next year studying race relations. The capstone was the general meeting of the next year when Dr. Thomas Elza Jones, president of Fisk University, gave a talk about the previous year when he and his wife had traveled through Africa.³⁸

³⁶ AAUW released a new list of approved institutions in Tennessee in the March 1965 newsletter. Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University and Fisk University are two historically black schools included on the list; schools that most of the black professionals in Murfreesboro attended. AAUW Collection, Box 4, Photographic Materials folder (Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN); and Daily News Journal, (Murfreesboro, TN), 19 December 1967.

³⁷ Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women, 423-445.

³⁸ AAUW Collection, "History of AAUW in Tennessee," TMs (Tennessee, 1945); and "Minutes," 5 May 1938, and 4 May 1939.

Nearly twenty years later, Carol Harding wrote in the minutes for the March 1955 meeting, "Dr. H. C. Brearly, of Peabody College, spoke on the subject 'Current Issues in Racial Integration in Education.' He especially emphasized the need of working out the coming problems without excitement and strong emotional feeling. It was an especial privilege to hear and to share this speaker."³⁹ The local branch members were preparing to help the community deal with integration. This organization has a long tradition of studying other cultures, building appreciation for differences, and using their knowledge to influence those around them.

These women's groups had diverse memberships, with several influential women who crossed over two or three of the groups and racial boundaries. This crossing-over allowed the women in Murfreesboro to lead the groups in cooperative efforts where they could work together for the betterment of their community. When asked who led the way in integration in Murfreesboro, Florence McFerrin relayed what her brother, a Methodist minister, had told her: "one of the real regrets of his life was that the church did not take the leadership, it came afterwards. . . . 'However I [McFerrin's brother, The Reverend J. R. Cox] think the women did more to bring this about than anybody because the women of the churches, both

black and white, had done more than any other group to bring this good relation about. . . . We [the church] had to let the government step in and order it and we followed the [women's] leadership.'"⁴⁰ Newcomers often led the way in this integration.

Each of the women mentioned moved to Murfreesboro as a young adult, with the exception of Florence McFerrin and Martha Corlew. Most of them joined St. Mark's Methodist Church, a church situated on the edge of the state university, a new break-away from First Methodist located downtown and home of the old families in town. Many of the women became involved in several reform-minded groups. Helen Morgan, after her husband left the military and moved to Murfreesboro to establish a veterinary practice, joined St. Mark's, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.⁴¹ Like Helen, Susan Lyons moved to Murfreesboro in the 1950s and became heavily involved in St. Mark's, Church Women United and League of Women Voters. Lyons and, later, Bertha Chrietzberg had more independence in their movements as their husbands were affiliated with Middle Tennessee State University, and were not financially dependent on the

³⁹ AAUW Collection, "Minutes," 3 March 1955.

⁴⁰ Florence McFerrin, 13 May 1996.

⁴¹ Helen Morgan, interview by author, 9 May 1997, Murfreesboro, TN.

community for patronage of their husbands' businesses.⁴² Mary Hurt Harrell, having married into one of the old, established, white families of Murfreesboro, also enjoyed the extra freedom of financial independence from the community. Mary Hurt resigned her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution because of their refusal to allow prominent African American opera star, Marion Anderson, to perform in their auditorium in Washington, D. C. Mary Hurt was also very public about her membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and marched in their parades. Her involvement in UMW, CWU, and LWV as well as her later appointment to the Murfreesboro Human Relations Commission kept her highly involved in racial issues for three decades.⁴³

These outsiders put a new perspective on race relations. As they became involved in social organizations in Murfreesboro they influenced the groups' attitudes concerning race. The groups' activities in the community gradually allowed residents to become comfortable with integration. This new image of black and white women working

⁴² Wanda McCauley, 8 May 1997.

⁴³ Ibid.; Eska Garrison, 8 May 1997; and Murfreesboro City Council, 24 August 1967, and passim.

and speaking out together set a new tone for the community. Therefore, it was quite understandable that Baxter Hobgood called on these women to help the community understand the implications of full integration in the Murfreesboro City Schools in 1968.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MURFREESBORO CITY SCHOOL INTEGRATION PLANS

The City of Murfreesboro adapted to rapid change after World War Two. The community grew rapidly; the rural town became an industrial city; social expectations changed. A large number of outsiders moved to Murfreesboro bringing new ways to look at old ideas. Racial tensions intensified after the war, and new political and social responses developed. The network of women working to ease racial tension was a new development for Murfreesboro, a community awash with tradition but faced with change.

Historically, Murfreesboro City School Board of Education ran Crichlow Elementary School for white children and Bradley Elementary School for black children. This segregated organization was the result of local custom as well as the state law passed in 1891, and reiterated in 1901, that forbade schooling black and white children in the same building.¹ With the 1954 ruling in the Brown v. Board

¹ The 1891 Tennessee Legislature enabled Murfreesboro to create a school system. The city founded Murfreesboro Public School; the name was later changed to Crichlow Grammar School. The present building on Maple Street was

of Education, Topeka, Kansas case, however, the educational structure in Murfreesboro needed reevaluation and revamping to meet the Federal mandate of removing "separate but equal" education.

Murfreesboro's booming white population had already sent the Board of Education into a remodeling and building frenzy after World War Two. For example, in 1946 the Board asked for a "complete study" of present and future needs of the city schools.² As a result of that study, the Board voted the following year to build an annex to Bradley to relieve overcrowding of black students. Then, later that same school year, the Board adopted a "Seven Point Program for Immediate Action by the Murfreesboro City Schools" that called for construction of annexes at Bradley and Crichlow.³

built in 1928. Bradley Academy became a city school for black children with the same legislative action noted above. This chapter focuses on the 1928 Crichlow Grammar School, the 1918 Bradley building on Academy Street, and the new Bradley Elementary, constructed on Mercury Boulevard in 1955. Tennessee, Annual Report of State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Tennessee for the Scholastic Year Ending June 30, 1891 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, 1892), 35; and Laws of Tennessee, 1901, Ch. 7, House Bill No. 7, p. 9 [found in Civil Rights and the American Negro: A Documentary History, ed. Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando (New York: Trident, 1968), 314-315].

² Murfreesboro City School Board, "Minutes for the City School Board of Murfreesboro, Tennessee," (Murfreesboro City School Board of Education, Murfreesboro, TN), 7 October 1946.

³ Murfreesboro City School Board is a decision-making board only, and all funding must be approved and provided by

The new buildings would house K-3 and the old buildings would be remodeled to accommodate the curriculum needs of the upper grades. The plan further stipulated proposed expenditures of \$150,000 for building and \$20,000 for remodeling Crichlow (with an enrollment of 838 pupils); \$75,000 for building and \$15,000 for remodeling Bradley (with an enrollment of 399 pupils); \$30,000 for equipment; and \$10,000 for miscellaneous. The plan proposed an expenditure of \$25,000 to employ kindergarten and enrichment teachers, an expense not allocated in state disbursements, and to have the money for increased salaries to attract the "best available teachers" for Murfreesboro City Schools.⁴ Clearly the Board was trying to be pro-active in their responsibilities, and the City was financially secure enough to accommodate school building needs. Yet, the plans were only partially completed.

Three years later, in June 1949, the School Board again reported to the City Council about the overcrowding and the

the Murfreesboro City Council; therefore, Board actions are often repeated until city funding is approved.

⁴ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Seven Point Program for Immediate Action by the Murfreesboro City Schools," (Murfreesboro City School Board of Education, Murfreesboro, TN), undated, located after 7 April 1948 where the Board voted to ask the City Council to allocate the money for the annex to Crichlow; and enrollment figures are from Murfreesboro Regional Planning Commission, Murfreesboro Public Schools: A Survey and Plan (Murfreesboro, TN: Murfreesboro Regional Planning Commission, 1957).

need for repairs to Crichlow and Bradley. They further noted that the previous Council action had allowed Bradley and Crichlow to be re-roofed and all rooms and halls painted, including the Bradley Annex.⁵ But apparently the city's growth was still ahead of the schools' capacity, so six months later the Board accepted bids for the new Mitchell-Neilson Elementary for white students and authorized development of plans for a new Bradley Elementary to replace the aging 1918 building.⁶

The budget that School Board members presented in July 1951 showed a city dealing with increased enrollment. Total school enrollment had grown from 1111 in 1945, to 1337 in 1950, and by 1951 had added another 145 pupils to reach 1482 students.⁷ In March 1953, amid discussion of the "anticipated Supreme Court decision on segregation," the School Board "agreed that every effort should be made to find a suitable location for the construction of a new Bradley Elementary School."⁸ The March 1954 minutes show a recommendation to purchase land on the Harrell farm on East Main Street for another white school (later named Hobgood

⁵ Murfreesboro City School Board, 16 June 1949.

⁶ Ibid., 26 January 1951.

⁷ Ibid., 16 July 1951; and school enrollment figures from Murfreesboro Public Schools: A Survey and Plan.

⁸ Murfreesboro City School Board, 28 March 1953.

Elementary), to purchase additional land near the recently acquired Wood's property for the site of the new Bradley Elementary, and to hire an architect to design Bradley.⁹ The City Council then signed a contract for "architectural services for the proposed construction of a new elementary for colored children and a new elementary for white children."¹⁰ Two months later, on May eighteenth--the day after the Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas decision--the Board sent a resolution asking the City for "immediate construction of a new elementary."¹¹ The City Council heard that petition on May twentieth and approved payment for architectural fees for the new Bradley on the twenty-fourth of June.¹² At last, after three years, the school was off the drawing board and under construction. Clearly, Murfreesboro was a community in a quandary. The Murfreesboro Board of Education had carefully allocated proportionately equal sums to its black and white schools. The 1951 budget showed equal pay for the teachers at each of the city schools.¹³ With the rapidly rising white population

⁹ Ibid., 9 March 1954.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18 March 1954.

¹¹ Ibid., 18 May 1954.

¹² Ibid., 20 May 1954; and 24 June 1954.

¹³ Ibid., 16 July 1951.

and stable black population, however, building moneys went to new white schools while the much-needed, new black school was put on the back burner--until the Brown decision was announced in 1954. With the Supreme Court pronouncement of the illegality of "separate but equal," the Murfreesboro School Board urged the City Council to begin "immediate construction" of the new black school. Did this School Board believe that a new school would ease the problems of segregation by offering equal facilities and opportunities? Or were they tied to the traditional belief that integration of the races could not work? Did they believe that a new school would show the federal government that they were working to correct any deficiencies in their school system? Or did they believe that the Brown decision had nothing to do with them? During the previous year they had a lengthy discussion about the segregation case before the Supreme Court, so they were aware of possible changes to educational philosophies and practices.¹⁴ The Murfreesboro School Board appeared to be working toward equalizing the two learning environments and, therefore, may have assumed they would be able to continue a segregated system.

In attempting to account for the Board's actions, it is important to look at the leadership of Baxter Hobgood. Hobgood served as both the superintendent of the City School

¹⁴ Ibid., 28 March 1953.

System from 1945 to 1975, as well as the principal of Central High School in Murfreesboro, under the jurisdiction of Rutherford County from 1945 to 1952. He was a well-respected leader in his community whose understanding of the ramifications of the Supreme Court Brown decision led him to initiate a series of small changes that resulted in complete integration of Murfreesboro City Schools fourteen years later. For example, when the City Schools opened in August 1954, for the first time the teachers had an integrated in-service training session.¹⁵ These few days when the teachers worked together and planned curriculum for their students, shared ideas and found solutions together, were very important steps on the road to desegregation and eventual integration of the schools. Black and white teachers became acquainted and learned to trust and rely on each other. They shared a bond in their love of education and desire to help children. The integrated in-service training set an excellent example for the rest of the community including

¹⁵ City School Board Minutes are extremely vague making it hard to discern who was responsible for actions--the Board or Hobgood. This seems to be the pattern for the Minutes at least for the previous two decades so it does not seem to indicate an attempt to avoid disclosing responsibility for actions. The interview with Rupert Klaus upholds the assumption that the responsibility for initiating action was Hobgood's.

the pupils.¹⁶ Following the first in-service session the Murfreesboro Education Association meetings and faculty training sessions were always integrated, which allowed teachers to become accustomed to working with each other and sharing ideas. As Margaret Salisbury remembers, "there was a camaraderie among the teachers."¹⁷ Hobgood understood the southern culture; he knew he would have to lead with small changes spread over time.

At the end of that first year of cooperation among the teachers, the School Board established a committee to develop new school zones because of the opening of the new Hobgood Elementary. The city was cut into pie slices for white enrollment while all black students continued to attend Bradley. Board members also sent a request to the City for another new school and a community survey to update the last one done in 1948.¹⁸ In June 1955 board members discussed a report entitled "Reasons for Operation of Murfreesboro City Schools on Same Basis As in Previous Years." This report was essentially a rationale for continued segregation based on these facts: (1) "crowded conditions make changes impossible" since the new Bradley

¹⁶ Each of the teachers were effusive in their praise for the leadership of Mr. Hobgood.

¹⁷ Margaret Salisbury, 15 July 1996.

¹⁸ Murfreesboro City School Board, 3 May 1955.

School was not yet finished, (2) "wide range in scholastic achievement would make non-segregation impractical" since the job for teachers would be "overwhelming," (3) "changes would handicap teacher staff of both races" since integration had not been studied sufficiently to enable the best plan of implementation, and (4) "present action" included a community survey for future needs that was on-going; Bradley Elementary, under construction "close to a large negro housing development, will be an outstanding school building and will be of value in providing equal educational opportunities"; and the School Board was studying the "non-segregation question" and accepting suggestions from "teachers and other interested parties of both races."¹⁹ Therefore, with the new Bradley School building still under construction, the Board felt it was too much to ask of the teachers to handle crowded conditions and integration at the same time. Apparently, Board members assumed that the black students were poor students and the white students more advanced, thus causing problems for the teachers to handle such diversity of educational needs. Reasons three and four suggest another attempt to stall for time and re-affirm their belief in separate-but-equal

¹⁹ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Reasons for Operation of Murfreesboro City Schools on Same Basis As in Previous Years," (Murfreesboro City School Board of Education, Murfreesboro, TN), undated.

facilities. An assumption underlying each of these reasons was the Board's perceived right to disregard the Supreme Court decision and their belief that the rest of the country would understand the "southern situation."

In March 1957 Board members decided to meet with the County Board of Education, County Judge, County Budget Committee, City Council, and County and City Planning Commissions "to study the school situation relative to the 13th District."²⁰ It is unknown whether this meeting was in relation to enrollment changes caused by annexations or whether it was a joint session to develop cooperative plans regarding the impending integration mandated by the Supreme Court.

With the annexation of more land around Murfreesboro, the Board again started to plan another new school (this would eventually be Reeves-Rogers Elementary.²¹ At this time, there were three white schools and one black school, with an additional white school under construction. Still the Board's school construction program did not keep pace

²⁰ Murfreesboro City School Board, 14 March 1957. The meeting was to be held 28 March, but no comment appeared again in the City School Board or City Council Minutes. The Thirteenth District referred to is the Thirteenth Civil District of Rutherford County, and had essentially the same boundaries as the City of Murfreesboro at that time.

²¹ Ibid., 11 July 1957; 5 November 1957; 24 April 1958; and 28 May 1958.

with the city's growth rate. In October 1958, the School Board discussed and received City Council approval for additions to Hobgood, Mitchell-Neilson, and the new Bradley.²²

Growth brought new problems. As the city spread out, children had to travel greater distances to attend school. In November the Board discussed a request from a "group of colored citizens" asking for "transportation for some colored children who live some distance from the Bradley Elementary School." Since Murfreesboro did not have buses, the Board authorized Superintendent Baxter Hobgood to develop a contract with one of the county bus drivers.²³ Thus, in 1958 the Board paid drivers to transport black children from outlying areas past nearby white schools to Bradley Elementary in order to continue the system of segregation.

The problem of what to do about segregation, however, had nothing to do with the growth of the city. The Supreme Court had continued to hand down decisions since 1954 that made desegregation inevitable.²⁴ The question became when

²² Ibid., 11 October 1958; 18 October 1958; and 30 October 1958.

²³ Ibid., 3 November 1958.

²⁴ For further discussion of the various cases, see Jack Bass, Unlikely Heroes: The Dramatic Story of the Southern Judges of the Fifth Circuit Who Translated the

and how to go about it. In November 1959 the Board appointed a new committee "to study integration problems."²⁵ Edwin F. Hunt, of the Nashville law firm Davis, Boulton, Hunt, and Cummins, presented a school integration plan in July 1960 to the Murfreesboro City School board. The Board "requested Mr. Hunt to assist in drawing up a plan of integration for the City of Murfreesboro which would be similar to the one already in operation in the City of Nashville."²⁶ Mr. Hunt was again before the Board in September 1961 with his plan for the Murfreesboro City Schools. His plan, based on voluntary integration, was unanimously adopted and put into effect immediately. It stipulated that "September 1960 be regarded as the beginning date for the plan, and that although there were no applications by negro children for

Supreme Court's Brown Decision into a Revolution of Equality (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981); Albert P. Blaustein and Clarence Clyde, Desegregation and the Law: The Meaning and Effect of the School Segregation Cases (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1957); Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (New York: Oxford University, 1986); Bernard Schwartz, Swann's Way (New York: Oxford University, 1986); and John M. Spivack, Race, Civil Rights and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, Distinguished Studies in American Legal and Constitutional History Series (New York: Garland, 1990).

²⁵ Murfreesboro City School Board, 28 October 1959. No further mention of this committee, or its findings, are in the School Board Minutes or City Council Minutes.

²⁶ Murfreesboro City School Board, 12 July 1960. It is interesting that the Board chose the Nashville Plan since it was already being challenged in court in Nashville.

admission to the first grade of an all-white school during the 1960-61 school year, the first grade shall be regarded as non-segregated." And each year an additional grade would be non-segregated. Thus, that autumn, 1961, grades one and two were declared non-segregated and "negro pupils for either grade applying for admission to an all-white school located in their residential zone approved by the Board and City Council shall be promptly admitted." No mention was made concerning the opportunity for white children to attend Bradley because there was no residential zone for the school. And presumably no white children would want to attend a black school, so only black children would be changing schools. It was "further resolved that at the beginning of the school year 1964-1965 compulsory segregation be abolished at all grade levels."²⁷ In other words, the Board committed to allowing black children to leave black schools one grade a year until 1964 when all compulsory segregation would end. At no time did the Board consider moving white students to Bradley School.

Thus, the Board adopted the school desegregation plan after school had already started for the year 1961-1962. Obviously, there could be no desegregation the first two years because no one knew the plan existed. There was little

²⁷ Murfreesboro City School Board, 22 September 1961, and the following "Resolution" outlining the plan.

notice given to the community about the plan; apparently the intent of the plan was to show the Murfreesboro School Board as being on record with a desegregation plan for government purposes only. Since the Nashville School System was already involved in a court desegregation case involving a similar plan it seems odd the Murfreesboro Board of Education would use the Nashville Plan as their model if they were serious about achieving desegregation. Perhaps they believed that satisfying federal requirements for a plan was enough for their community.

Of course, given the lack of information, voluntary desegregation by black children developed slowly. A report to the Board in early 1964 showed thirty-four African American children at Bellwood, forty-eight at Crichlow, twenty-seven at Hobgood, fifteen at Mitchell-Neilson, and one at Reeves-Rogers for a total of 125 black children at previously all-white schools. And 620 black children still attending Bradley.²⁸ When the Board met with the Murfreesboro City Council in August of that year, Superintendent Hobgood announced that the current voluntary desegregation plan was "obsolete and non-operative" due to

²⁸ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Negro Children Enrolled in Previously All-White Schools," (Murfreesboro City School Board of Education, Murfreesboro, TN), undated; and Tennessee State Department of Education, "Preliminary Report on Minimum Requirements for the Approval of Public

changes in the civil rights field. Congress had recently passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and schools across the country were studying it to understand its impact on education. As a consequence, the Board and City Council passed a resolution to "abolish the grade-a-year plan previously adopted by the Board and Council and that beginning with the 1964-1965 school year compulsory segregation would be abolished and all children allowed to attend school in the school zone where their parents resided. All other features of the 1961 plan were retained."²⁹ Thus, all students, black or white, of all grade levels could attend school according to their residential address rather than their color. Again, it was black children making the moves between schools, if they so chose.

The following January brought another meeting to "study compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964." After discussion the board approved "full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and instructed the Chairman to sign compliance forms."³⁰ Section 601 of Title VI of the

Schools, Grades 1-12," "Murfreesboro City Schools" Tennessee State Library and Archives, RG51, reel 65.

²⁹ Murfreesboro City School Board, 20 August 1964.

³⁰ Ibid., 5 January 1965.

Civil Rights Act states: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."³¹ The Murfreesboro City Schools used federal money "through public laws 874 and 815, the School Lunch Program and the National Defense Education Act," and were therefore obligated by the Compliance Act.³² With the new plan of 1964-65 in effect, the School Board believed they were in complete compliance with federal regulations.

Five months later, on May 7 1965, the Murfreesboro City Schools made the change from active desegregation with its 1964-65 plan to passive integration with a new plan. The Board abolished school zones and adopted the "Freedom of Choice Plan" after Board members agreed that the previous plans of 1961 and 1964-65 had produced little integration. The "Compliance Information: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs" form showed one black child enrolled in a previously all-white fourth grade and one in a sixth grade,

³¹ Blaustein and Zangrando, Civil Rights and the American Negro, 537.

³² Murfreesboro City School Board, 7 May 1965; Baxter E. Hobgood, Murfreesboro to J. H. Warf, Nashville, 10 May 1965, TMs; "Compliance Information: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs," 10 May 1965; "Freedom of Choice Plan," 7 May 1965; and "Minutes," 20 August 1964.

a sizable drop from the number reported the year before.

There were two hundred white teachers and forty-five black teachers in the system, each within his or her own racially identifiable schools. The new federal guidelines were now "requiring, not just an end to segregation, but direct and specific efforts on the part of school boards and other school personnel to bring about integration."³³

The "Freedom of Choice Plan" addressed integration in the student body as well as in the faculty and staff. All students would be allowed to list their six choices for school placement; first choices would be filled until overcrowding developed and then administrators would move down through a student's choices. Newspaper and radio notification would enhance letters sent home with students to their parents to inform them of the choices to be made and forms to be filed. Faculty transfers would take place as openings existed to further "the elimination of segregation of teaching and staff personnel." The 1966-67 school year promised further reassignments to improve the status of integration.³⁴ The "Supplement to School Desegregation

³³ Murfreesboro City School Board, 7 May 1965; Hobgood letter to Warf, 10 May 1965; "Compliance Information: Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs," 10 May 1965; "Freedom of Choice Plan," 7 May 1965; and "Minutes," 20 August 1964.

³⁴ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Freedom of Choice Plan," 7 May 1965.

Plan," signed in August 1965, listed the school system as having 2600 white students and 600 black students, with 135 of the black students choosing to attend previously all-white schools.³⁵

The Board recognized the need to educate everyone involved to make this new "Freedom of Choice Plan" successful. Hobgood and the Board planned faculty meetings and in-service training to educate the faculty and staff and gain their cooperation. Steps to publicize the new plan included using the Daily News Journal and the two local radio stations. Hobgood asked Parent-Teacher Associations to hold general information meetings for parents. He also asked the League of Women Voters and Women's Christian United Club [Church Women United] to assist in interpreting the school integration plan at public meetings such as civic clubs, ministerial associations, and other church groups.³⁶ Hobgood understood the community, its values and relationships, and he knew that the women in those groups were highly respected and would be able to convince the public of the necessity of the new steps.

³⁵ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Supplement to School Desegregation Plan: Murfreesboro City School District," 4 August 1965.

³⁶ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Freedom of Choice Plan" packet, in the sheet "Preparation of Pupils, Teachers, State, And Community For Desegregation," 7 May 1965.

In March 1966, Superintendent Hobgood outlined new integration guidelines from the United States Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and relayed that the main emphasis would "apparently be on getting Negro teachers into previously all-white schools." He also presented the "possibility of operating Bradley and Crichlow on a part-time basis during the summer" using Title I funds.³⁷ Title I money was to be used to provide remedial help to underprivileged children. In this case Hobgood felt the federal money would help promote an easier transition when full integration became a reality since most people believed that the black students were less capable than the white students, and therefore slowed the progress of the white students in an integrated classroom. By April the summer school was a reality; the curriculum was based on "developmental reading and enrichment activities." Bob Crowder, a white teacher, was assigned to teach at Bradley for the summer session.³⁸ In May, Hobgood informed the Board (1) of "plans to assign Negro teachers to previously all-white schools" to conform to HEW, and (2) the "Freedom of Choice Plan was proceeding on schedule, but that several

³⁷ Murfreesboro City School Board, 11 March 1966.

³⁸ Ibid., 15 April 1966; and Bob Crowder, interview by author, 25 June 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN.

problems were being encountered because some parents could not be given their first choices."³⁹ At the June meeting Board members discussed "various school problems particularly as related to school integration and assignments."⁴⁰ When Hobgood posted fall teachers assignments no one was allowed to request or refuse a transfer. In keeping with the effort to integrate staff, Olivia Woods was transferred from Bradley to teach at the all-white Crichlow, Bob Crowder was transferred from Mitchell-Neilson Elementary to teach at the all-black Bradley, and Mary Scales was transferred from Bradley to the all-white Bellwood. Olivia Woods recalled saying, "But Mr. Hobgood those black children at Bradley need me. And he replied, 'Did it ever occur to you Mrs. Woods, that the black children at Crichlow may need you more.' I wasn't very happy, but of course when you have a job you do what your supervisor says."⁴¹ These were the first of many teachers transfers.

Not until February 1967 did the School Board minutes again reflect any discussion concerning integration. The

³⁹ Murfreesboro City School Board, 27 April 1966.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 24 June 1966.

⁴¹ Olivia Woods, 13 May 1997; Bob Crowder, 25 June 1996; and Mary Scales, 4 September 1996.

Board received a copy of a letter to Superintendent Hobgood from the Tennessee Department of Education, Equal Educational Opportunities Program. This letter was a confirmation of previous discussions concerning the status of the Murfreesboro City School's integration program. The "Freedom of Choice Program" was given another year,

provided that some increase in numbers of Negroes choosing predominately white schools is achieved (at least, that the present twenty-five percent is maintained), and that more faculty desegregation is achieved at Bradley. I think you would be safe in swapping teachers between Bradley and the other schools so that Bradley will have at least five full-time white teachers on its staff for the year 1967-68. . . . I [Robert K. Sharp, Director] believe that to assure continued compliance approval for the future the Board should make some plans to achieve this goal by the fall of 1968, at which time Bradley will no longer exist as a Negro school, the system will be wholly integrated, and there would be no further compliance problems, at least with the U. S. Office."⁴²

In May, Mrs. Dunn and Mrs. Taylor were transferred from Bradley to Mitchell-Neilson and Reeves-Rogers respectively.⁴³ No white teachers were transferred to Bradley and Bob Crowder had already been transferred back to Mitchell-Neilson; however a few new white teachers were hired to teach at Bradley.⁴⁴

⁴² Tennessee Department of Education, Robert K. Sharp, Director, to Baxter E. Hobgood, Superintendent, 6 February 1967, TMs.

⁴³ Murfreesboro City School Board, 31 May 1967.

⁴⁴ Bob Crowder, 25 June 1996; and Rupert Klaus, interview by author, 26 January 1996, Murfreesboro, TN.

That year the Board held numerous discussions about alternative plans for the Bradley building and unification with Rutherford County Schools.⁴⁵ In September, because whites were unwilling to attend a previously all-black school, the Board discussed making Bradley the junior high school for the district by placing numerous portable buildings on the campus. Each of the other city schools would then incorporate Bradley Elementary children. Along with this plan was the suggestion for further study of city limits, county enrollment in the city system, and further study of continued population increases due to industrialization of Murfreesboro as each of those items affected the racial balance in the city schools.⁴⁶

During the next two months the Board and the City Council discussed a proposal entitled "Action Now." This proposal called for the building of a new comprehensive high school, the remodeling of Central High to be a middle school, the establishing of an interim School Board that would unify the Murfreesboro City Schools and the Rutherford County Schools, and reapportioning and reorganizing of the

⁴⁵ Murfreesboro City School Board, the first discussion was held on 28 October 1966; further discussions were 8 September 1967; 31 October 1967; 28 November 1967; and 26 March 1968.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 8 September 1967; and "Series of Tentative Proposals on Murfreesboro City Schools."

School Board with the eventual outcome of a unified school system.⁴⁷ This movement was centered on several issues--some people wanted unification for cost-cutting reasons, others looked at the overall increase in educational standards for all the children in the county, others were concerned with perceived weaknesses in the county school system.

The unification effort did not last long. In March 1968, Hobgood appeared before the Council once again, this time to ask the City to build a new high school. The Council authorized the Board "to proceed to prepare definite plans and obtain options of sites for a new senior high to be operated by the City in line with previous recommendations of the Murfreesboro City Board of Education." Furthermore, Bradley and Crichlow would serve as middle schools, and four-room additions were to be built at Mitchell-Neilson Primary and Reeves-Rogers.⁴⁸

In May, the Board outlined the new class configuration, and announced the discontinuation of "Freedom of Choice"

⁴⁷ Ibid., 31 October 1967; and Murfreesboro City Council, 1 November 1967; and 29 November 1967.

⁴⁸ Murfreesboro City Council, 14 March 1968; see also Murfreesboro City School Board, 14 March 1968. However, two weeks later the City Council asked the Board to put plans for a new school on hold until the soon-to-be-elected County Court and County Board of Education could get acquainted with the past and present proceedings, and be ready to work on "much needed improvements," Murfreesboro City School Board, 27 August 1968.

because of the institution of attendance zones.⁴⁹ The Board divided the city into zones whereby all children would be assigned to a school, with relatively equal racial mixtures. No longer would the black children be in a zone by themselves as past zoning had done. The use of attendance zones would finally put Murfreesboro City schools into compliance with active integration; that is, Murfreesboro would finally be acting so as to "cause" integration, rather than simply "allowing" integration to occur. The staffing reports for 1968-69 submitted to the State Commission of Education show at least two racial crossover teacher assignments at each school in the Murfreesboro System so the Board was actively integrating staff as well as students.⁵⁰

As school reopened in August 1968, the Board approved "guidelines for waivers of school zone attendance" that included three allowances: (1) one parent is deceased; (2) a recommendation is made by a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist based upon claims for good mental or emotional health; (3) parents are to move into a new zone prior to the close of the first quarter of school work.⁵¹ The Board was

⁴⁹ Murfreesboro City School Board, 10 May 1968.

⁵⁰ Murfreesboro City School Board, "Report of School Personnel Elected and Assigned," 14 May 1968.

⁵¹ Murfreesboro City School Board, 27 August 1968.

making a concerted effort to ensure that all children attended the school for which they were zoned.

The 1968-69 school year was a little more difficult than most. Hobgood explained to the Board that "schools had opened under more complicated situations than in years past. The complete elimination of the dual system had brought some problems which might require long periods of work and much understanding before complete solution."⁵² Several teachers recalled resentment on the part of the black community in that only black elementary children left their home school. Bob Crowder recalled the first day of school. "The children gathered at Bradley and then we loaded them onto a bus to take them to Mitchell-Neilson. There was tension in the air. The first ones unloaded and went into the school and then some started to run. It was the next day before we could get them all again. We could have done things differently. We just called their names individually for their classroom assignments and they didn't know what was going on."⁵³ This first year of active integration, with zones and bussing, and the new classroom configuration of integrated middle schools at Bradley and Crichlow, and integrated elementary schools at the other buildings, happened under the cloud of

⁵² Ibid., 27 September 1968.

⁵³ Bob Crowder, 25 June 1996.

continuing negotiations concerning consolidation with the County School System, a cloud that persisted for another three years.⁵⁴ Teachers, students, and community members were unsure about the future of the school system.

Accounting for the success of this latest plan, several Murfreesboro teachers referred to both Clinton and Nashville Tennessee, as examples of what they did not want their city to become. Training was obviously a priority for the teachers and was supplied abundantly. How to handle cultural diversity, how to handle disruptive students in racially tense situations, and how to reach the lower achieving student were topics of training. Many commented on the racial consultations among the staff and how useful it was to have teachers of the other race there for advice. Few teachers left the system over integration and most accepted it as a necessary step to improving education for all the children.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Murfreesboro City School Board, 1 October 1968; 24 October 1968; 4 November 1968; 15 December 1968; 17 January 1969; 12 September 1969; 21 October 1969; 14 November 1969; 16 January 1970; 13 February 1970; 17 April 1970; 11 May 1973; and 8 June 1973.

⁵⁵ Rupert Klaus, 26 January 1996; Florence McFerrin, 13 May 1996; Bob Crowder, 25 June 1996; Mary Garvin, interview by author, 25 June 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN; Myrtle Glanton Lord, 1 July 1996; Margaret Salisbury, 15 July 1996; Sara West, interview by author, 31 July 1996, Murfreesboro, TN, tape recording, tape held by author, Murfreesboro, TN; Mary Scales, 4 September 1996; and Olivia Woods, 13 May 1997.

Perhaps the most ardent segregationists made the move to private schools rather than cause public problems. School enrollment figures show there was some white flight to the newly-established private schools, but the numbers were negligible. Middle Tennessee Christian school and St. Rose Elementary School were each founded in this era but their enrollments were very small; newspaper accounts show their combined enrollments averaged about five hundred students every fall from 1964 through 1968. During this same time Murfreesboro City Schools grew from 3281 pupils in 1964, to 3861 in 1968.⁵⁶

On the whole, Murfreesboro leaders seemed very tightly focused on maintaining a positive atmosphere and avoiding unpleasant publicity. The local newspaper cooperated in making integration run smoothly. Margaret Salisbury, a city school administrator, commented about the local paper's acceptance that community peace was more important than covering every piece of news. "There were times we asked the paper to not print an article, that we needed time to work

⁵⁶ Daily News Journal, 16 August 1964, 15 August 1965, 29 August 1966, 15 August 1967, 25 August 1968; and Tennessee State Department of Education, "Preliminary Report on Minimum Requirements for the Approval of Public Schools, Grades 1-12," RG51, reels 69, 72, 75, 81.

through things."⁵⁷ The fear of "outside agitators" was ever present and newspaper coverage would only encourage them.⁵⁸

The Board of Education for Murfreesboro City Schools worked hard during the late 1950s through the 1960s to deal with rapidly increasing enrollments and changes in governmental policies on segregation. They also tried innovative programs to advance the level of education offered in Murfreesboro. The School System sought and received a national grant to put psychologists in the schools in 1959 by using student interns from Peabody College. The Early-Training Center at Bradley and the Classroom on Wheels (the model for the national Head Start Program) were started in an attempt to increase the success rate for young, economically disadvantaged youngsters.⁵⁹ In 1966, Both Bradley Elementary and Crichlow Elementary qualified for Title I funds due to the "high enrollments of pupils from economically deprived families." The Board suggested another survey be taken by the Tennessee Planning Commission as a result of the recent announcements

⁵⁷ Margaret Salisbury, 15 July 1996.

⁵⁸ "Outside agitators" were frequently identified as the cause of problems in Clinton, Little Rock, and Nashville.

⁵⁹ Rupert Klaus, 26 January 1996; and Murfreesboro City School Board, 1955-1968.

concerning the possible closing of Sewart Air Force Base.⁶⁰⁷⁷
The Board also actively pursued establishing kindergarten
and a separate junior high program.⁶¹ The Board obviously
was concerned with offering the best education to the
students in Murfreesboro even though racial integration was
extremely slow and the Board's plans were always in response
to the federal government.

Hobgood worked tirelessly to handle the demands of the
school system, the city power structure, and the Federal
Civil Rights Office. He handled desegregation and
integration as a series of small steps taken very
methodically. Although he took each of those steps only in
response to the Supreme Court rulings and the Civil Rights
laws, he was cognizant of community traditions and is to be
commended for using his leadership skills to make the moves
so peacefully.

⁶⁰ Murfreesboro City School Board, 6 January 1966.

⁶¹ Ibid., 16 February 1966.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

For segregationists the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision by the United States Supreme Court created a crisis, a crisis for their schools, their social surroundings, and their political independence from federal government interference. At the same time, integrationists saw the decision as an opportunity to rid their nation of a moral wrong. Some of those integrationists lived in the South.

The City of Murfreesboro and its schools dealt with the immense social changes of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly with the issue of school integration, with relatively little disruption to the community. There are three primary reasons for this ease: the passage of time, activist women who worked to develop an atmosphere of acceptance, and Baxter Hobgood's leadership.

Fourteen years elapsed between the Brown decision and complete school integration in Murfreesboro. In those fourteen years the city benefited by watching other communities' attempts to integrate schools. Repeatedly,

interviewees commented that they were not going to have another Little Rock or Clinton, Tennessee, in Murfreesboro. Anything was better than violence and outside interference, including waiting fourteen years.

Women used their experience within their integrated community organizations to encourage the community to accept integration peacefully within the public schools. These white, middle-class, southern women worked with black women in church organizations. The resulting relationships went beyond the traditional mistress/servant relationship; rather, they were built on mutual respect. Many of these same white women joined with others in civic organizations that focused on community concerns. Here, too, they worked together as equals with black women and city political leaders to better their community. It is no wonder that Hobgood called on the League of Women Voters and Church Women United to lead the educational seminars for the public prior to initiating integration plans. Hobgood understood the cultural significance of asking these influential women to lead their community in this moral and legal challenge to tradition.

Baxter Hobgood was a masterful politician and motivator within the community and especially within the school system. In dealing with the integration issue he often took the path of least resistance. Other than his initial move to

integrate teacher in-services quickly, Hobgood waited to push for succeeding steps only when it was evident that the government was going to force them. He did, however, encourage pro-active training so the teachers knew what to expect in the new circumstances that integration would bring. In addition he temporarily put a white teacher at Bradley before he moved any black students to white schools so the students would recognize a teacher in the new setting when they were moved. Hobgood's efforts in these areas smoothed the way for many of the later changes in the school system.

The combination of these three factors allowed Murfreesboro to integrate their schools peacefully. At no time was the Murfreesboro City School System involved in a court desegregation case. There were no bombings or riots in Murfreesboro. And there was no appreciable white flight from the public schools.

Murfreesboro's background suggests that this was a community committed to using the passage of time, education, and religious and civic networks to solve its problems. As a model for future race relations, Murfreesboro presents a complex picture. No violence occurred in the integration process, but fourteen years was a long time for the offended party to wait for redress. Murfreesboro was steeped in tradition, and residents were often reluctant to abandon

their traditions. But Baxter Hobgood cleverly relied on the tradition of churchwomen involved with social reform issues. He called on them to use their community networks to prepare Murfreesboro residents for integration. Without Hobgood's reliance on these women who worked in integrated groups, who served as role models, and who supported better race relations, the process of school integration in Murfreesboro would have taken even longer.

APPENDIX ONE
WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK

Bertha Chrietzberg, (James, university professor), university professor, northern white woman arrived in the early 1960s from armed forces base in Germany, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Girl Scouts, and the American Association of University Women.

Martha Corlew, (Jack, engineer), homemaker, white woman raised in Murfreesboro, involved in United Methodist Women at First United Methodist Church, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Eska Garrison, (S. C., doctor), homemaker, white woman moved to Murfreesboro in 1959 from Nashville, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Girl Scouts, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Cora Lee Glen, white woman arrived in Murfreesboro in early 1950s, a Deaconess in the Methodist Church sent to First United Methodist Church, involved in United Methodist Women, Church Women United, and Girl Scouts.

Mary Hurt Harrell, (Henry, merchant, engineer, pilot), homemaker, white woman came to Murfreesboro from West Tennessee in late 1930s to attend the Tennessee Women's College, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Nita Heflin, (J. B., pharmacist), homemaker, white woman from West Tennessee arrived here in late 1940s, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church Women United, and Girl Scouts.

Myrtle Glanton Lord, (John, teacher), teacher, black woman raised in Murfreesboro, involved in The Original Church of God, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Susan Lyons, (C. Hughes, drug salesman), homemaker, northern, white woman arrived in Murfreesboro in 1950s, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United

Methodist Church, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Anita Martin, (Tommy, insurance agent), homemaker, white woman from West Tennessee moved here in late 1930s, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church Women United, and Girl Scouts.

Wanda McCauley, (Lewis, wholesaler), homemaker, white woman raised in Texas, moved here from Michigan in late 1940s, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church Women United, League of Women Voters, and Girl Scouts.

Florence McFerrin, (T. S., Jr., salesman), teacher, white woman raised in Murfreesboro, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, and Church Women United.

Helen Morgan, (Clyde (Gene), veterinarian), homemaker, white woman raised in Alabama, arrived here in the early 1950s after having spent time in the armed forces, involved in United Methodist Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Lucy Strickland, (Roscoe, university professor), homemaker--
later an attorney, white woman from North Carolina
arrived here in the 1950s, involved in United Methodist
Women at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Church
Women United, and League of Women Voters.

Olivia Woods, (Collier, teacher, Principal at Holloway High
School), teacher, black woman raised in Murfreesboro,
involved in United Methodist Women at Allen Chapel
African Methodist Episcopal Church, Church Women
United, and Girl Scouts.

APPENDIX TWO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work

P.O. Box 10
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
(615) 898-2508

Social Work Program
P.O. Box 139
(615) 898-2868

TO: Melinda Lickiss (Box 23) and Janice Leone (Box 23)
FROM: Brandon Wallace *BW*
Chair, Institutional Review Board
RE: "School Integration in Murfreesboro, Tennessee" IRB Protocol Number: 96-105
DATE: March 26, 1996

The above named human subjects research proposal has been reviewed and approved. This approval is for one year only. Should the project extend beyond one year, you will need to submit a memo requesting an extension. Further, should you decide to change the research protocol in any way, you should submit a memo describing the proposed changes for review. Thank you for your proposal and good luck in the your research.

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West, Sara - 31 July 1996
Woods, Olivia - 13 May 1997