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The Pursuit of Community Journalism in a Segregated Tennessee Town, 1949-1969: Richard Smyser and The Alfred Hill Family

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Amy Rebecca Drews
May 2007

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Jeff. Thank you for everything you have done to make this process easier for me. From listening to me practice my class presentations to taking me to the library on those cold winter days, I could not have completed my degree without your help. Most of all, thank you for believing in my dreams and helping them come true. I love you.

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I owe many people a "thank you" for their encouragement as I completed this project, but none more than my husband and our "kids," Maggie and Dottie.

To Jeff, thank you for your constant support during my educational endeavors. I look forward to a wonderful future together.

To Maggie and Dottie, thanks for always making me smile and for teaching me two important lessons: 1.) Great happiness can be found in taking a simple walk with someone you love. 2.) If there is something you want, don't quit digging until you get it.

I want to mention my grandmother, Lucille Locher. She passed away before I completed this project. I miss her very much, but her sweet, gentle, and funny nature continues to inspire me. She showed me that even after enduring incredible hardships, it is still possible to see the beauty in life and be kind to others.

To Pam Ward, thank you for being a wonderful big sister, for trying to protect me and always loving me, even when I'm at my worst. It's nice to know I can always turn to you and Raymond. To my nephew, Thomas: It has been a joy to watch you grow up into a wonderful young adult. I'll be cheering you on as you pursue your own dreams.

To Mike and Arlene Scully, thank you for treating me like your daughter and not an in-law.

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Special recognition goes to the late Richard Smyser, who passed away in March 2005. Two years before his death, he opened his files at *The Oak Ridger* to me and shared his memories of the newspaper's early years. He is an excellent example of a journalist who made an impact in national news organizations without forgetting his roots in community journalism. Thanks to Alice Smyser Raphel for recalling stories of her brother.

I appreciate the help of Tom Hill, a descendant of an outstanding newspaper family. Thank you for being so generous with your time and with your family's archives. I wish to thank the current staff of *The Oak Ridger* for allowing me to examine their files.

To Willie Golden, Kenneth Moore, Robert and Elizabeth Peelle, and Kathleen and Nelson Stephens: Thank you for reliving your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement so more people can understand the sacrifices made for the benefit of future generations.

Abstract

In 1949, *The Oak Ridger* became the first successful independent newspaper to serve residents of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, previously called the "Secret City" because of its participation in the World War II Manhattan Project. Alfred and Julia Hill founded the newspaper, and Richard Smyser was the founding managing editor. The Hills were fully aware of the reciprocal relationship between financial statements and editorial content. The paper had to create ties with local businesses and readers for it to survive.

The paper paid special attention to the Civil Rights Movement. Oak Ridge was a unique southern city, and Oak Ridge schools were the first in Tennessee to willingly desegregate. As journalists take an objective approach to covering the news, the paper took a middle ground approach to civil rights. Letters to the editor indicated that not all residents were prepared for immediate and total desegregation in Oak Ridge. *The Oak Ridger* attempted to negotiate for peaceful change without upsetting those who had been raised with the southern tradition of segregation. By taking this moderate approach, the newspaper was able to develop a working relationship with both segregationists and integrationists. The newspaper published advertisements and statements from both sides in its coverage of desegregation.

The Oak Ridger's coverage of 20 local and national civil rights events occurring between 1949 and 1969 was analyzed in this study. Among the events selected were the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that made school segregation illegal, demonstrations at Oak Ridge establishments that refused to

serve all races, and the integration crisis at neighboring Clinton High School. In total, 424 issues of *The Oak Ridger* were examined, producing 135 news articles, 35 editorials and 48 letters to the editor.

Smyser said he favored desegregation in school and other public places, but was not supportive of demonstrations. He preferred nonviolent negotiations between the two sides rather than the sit-ins that could become volatile. It was important to keep residents from developing harsh feelings toward each other. The more difficult it would have been to bring social change, the longer its negative effects would have been felt. This was seen in Clinton where two years after the turbulent desegregation of its high school, a dynamite blast destroyed the school.

The desegregation of Oak Ridge schools was relatively tranquil. The newspaper covered news of the event, and wrote positively of it in a January 1955 editorial, saying integration was "a necessary and desirable move forward toward making democracy strong." When violence erupted in Clinton and Little Rock, the paper took an editorial stand against the segregationists' violence. One editorial expressed the guilt and worry felt by residents. About the black students targeted by the violence, it asked, "How can we rest when they shudder?"

Years after the Civil Rights Movement, Smyser said it was Oak Ridge residents that made the paper "so good on black issues." Because there were "enlightened" groups actively seeking change, the paper often wrote about the issue. The influence of the federal government and its insistence on integration helped the newspaper be "more liberal, more courageous."

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Chapter I

Introduction and Outline of Chapters

In 1949, 25-year-old Pennsylvania native Richard Smyser believed he was beginning a grand adventure when he arrived in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The reporter moved to Tennessee to serve as editor of *The Oak Ridger*, the first successful, independent newspaper in Oak Ridge, a town veiled in secrecy during its early years because of its connection to the World War II Manhattan Project. *The Oak Ridger* detailed life in the town after its security gates were removed. Although the town's history was different from other East Tennessee towns, it too faced the controversial topic of racial segregation. This dissertation studies coverage given to the Civil Rights Movement by *The Oak Ridger*.

The Oak Ridger was the latest venture of Alfred G. "Scoop" Hill, and his wife Julia. The Hills were well known for making a success out of community newspapers across the country. So well known that when Oak Ridge residents were making the transition from living in the secret government city to one open to the public, Atomic Energy Commission officials contacted the couple about creating and operating a local newspaper for residents. Officials believed that if the town were to survive, it needed a newspaper. At the time, the Hills were operating *The Chester Times* in Chester, Pennsylvania. Smyser had been working as a reporter for the newspaper.[1]

[1] Tom Hill, interview by author, 11 June 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Richard Smyser, interview by author, 12 June 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The Hills were excited about the venture and believed the community desired a newspaper. Transforming a laundry building into a newspaper office, they founded *The Oak Ridger* and began publication Jan. 20 1949.

There were several motives at work for the newspaper's management. The paper had to be a financial success in order to stay in operation. Oak Ridge had already seen two failed attempts at independent newspapers, and the Hills wanted assurances that there would be plenty of businesses to advertise and residents to subscribe.[2]

As a community newspaper, it wanted to support community members as they adjusted to a city without security gates and constant federal influence. It brought news to them about home sales and upcoming government meetings. Concerning civil rights, the newspaper supported desegregation as long as changes were made lawfully and after thoughtful discussion among residents. Smyser said the community made it easier for him to cover than perhaps it would have been in other southern cities. Oak Ridge was home to many scientists because of the Manhattan Project. Letters to the editor showed that not all residents wanted desegregation, but the intellectual background of many residents made a more welcoming environment to debate the issue.

Among the first editorials were those speaking out against rent increases at government dormitories. Residents soon started writing letters to the editor because it was evident to them that the paper operated without censorship.[3] From stories on the first residents to own their homes to news from different

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

neighborhoods, the paper was a means for residents to feel connected to one another.

The first residents moved to Oak Ridge in the early 1940s. Laborers and scientists alike had arrived in the newly developed town to work for a common goal, which turned out to be harnessing atomic energy. Although laborers knew they were working for the war effort, it was not until the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, that they that they knew the full extent of their work. It would be four years later before residents from outside communities would be able to travel freely through the city. When it opened its gates to the nation on March 20, 1949, Oak Ridge was heralded as a community that did not pay attention to social classes — everyone had worked together for a common project. However, this picture of an idyllic community where everyone was treated the same did not exist. Black workers were treated differently from whites. They were housed in a different section of town. They were not afforded the same educational opportunities, nor did they have the same opportunities to participate in social activities.[4]

Because the newspaper began operating during a time when blacks were fighting for equality, it is important to learn how the paper addressed the conflict. This study addresses how *The Oak Ridger,* which was owned and operated by a white staff, practiced community journalism in a town that was racially segregated. Specifically, it examined what the Hill family and Richard Smyser

[4] Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, *City Behind a Fence* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 8; June Adamson, "Atom Bomb Day," in *These Are Our Voices*, ed. James Overholt (Oak Ridge, TN: Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, 1987), 231-233.

thought about the editorial content of *The Oak Ridger,* and the ways in which in their editorial philosophies guided their reports on the difficulties faced by black residents. Twenty events during the Civil Rights Movement were identified, and the newspaper's coverage of those events was examined.

A content analysis of news articles concerning events, both local and national, during the Civil Rights Movement was conducted. It determined the amount of coverage devoted to the event, the sources used by the editorial staff, and placement of the articles in the newspaper. Editorials were studied to determine whether they were positive or negative toward integration. Studying editorials also helped determine whether *The Oak Ridger* changed its views on the Civil Rights Movement during the 20-year period.

Interviews with Tom Hill, the only son of Alfred and Julia Hill, and archival materials helped define the publishing philosophies of the Hill family. Interviews with Richard Smyser revealed his philosophies concerning community journalism. The information gathered was useful in determining what effect their personal beliefs might have had on civil rights coverage in *The Oak Ridger*. To provide context for the study, some Oak Ridge residents who were involved in desegregation efforts were interviewed. Secondary sources such as books written about the history of Oak Ridge and about the Civil Rights Movement were utilized to provide the proper historical framework for the study.

Desegregation

During the mid-1900s, the federal government's practice was to "conform with the laws and social customs of the state and local communities in which

federal institutions are located." Because racial segregation was accepted in East Tennessee, the government housed workers in segregated living quarters. When the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) assumed control of Oak Ridge after the war ended in 1945, it continued the policy of racial segregation. It would the mid-1950s before a black employee gained housing in the previously all-white dormitories.[5]

In 1953, Oak Ridge Town Council voted to desegregate Oak Ridge High School, but public backlash resulted in its rescinding its vote. The debate over school desegregation continued after the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional. The AEC announced in January 1955 that the public schools in Oak Ridge would desegregate in September. Oak Ridge High School opened with 1,500 students, 40 of them blacks.[6] Protestors picketed outside the high school, but Oak Ridge did not endure the violence that broke out in nearby Clinton, Tennessee. In 1956, segregationists threatened the 12 black students who attempted to attend school there. The first day of school was fairly peaceful, but segregationists from out of state stirred up emotions in Clinton residents resulting in mob violence. Cars were overturned and blacks were threatened as they tried to travel through the town. The National Guard was called in to restore order.[7]

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[5] Russell Olwell, "The History of Oak Ridge in the 1940s" (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1998), 135-136; Valeria D. Steele, "A New Hope" (Presentation made for the Altrusa Club, 28 Feb. 2001): 2; Elizabeth Peelle, "A History of Segregation in Oak Ridge 1943-1960" (Report given to Oak Ridge Community Relations Council, August 1960): 2; Patrick Kerry Moore, *Federal Enclaves: The Community Culture of Department of Energy Cities: Livermore, Los Alamos, Oak Ridge* (Ph.D. Diss., Arizona State University, 1997), 268.

[6] Peelle, 4.

[7] Lester Lamon, *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791-1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 100-101.

Even though Oak Ridge's desegregation was not violent, it did take time for blacks to be accepted in extracurricular activities. Willie Golden, who in 2006 was an Oak Ridge City Council member, was the first black to be named captain of Oak Ridge High School varsity basketball team in the mid-1960s. Although he had been accepted by his teammates, he could not travel with his team to other schools that did not allow blacks to play. When that policy was changed, he still faced name-calling and cheap shots by opponents.[8]

Black residents faced difficulties in using other public facilities. In 1963, sits-ins were conducted at Oak Ridge restaurants and the local laundry facility. The Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee formed in February 1964 to bring desegregation to Oak Ridge barbershops.[9] In 1966, Ken's Barber Shop became the first barbershop to serve blacks.[10] Despite Civil Rights legislation and the fact that Oak Ridge was federally operated during its first years, it took two decades for local civil rights workers to persuade local lawmakers to pass a public accommodations ordinance in Oak Ridge.

At the same time Oak Ridge residents were striving for integration, blacks across the South were fighting for equality. From Greensboro, North Carolina, to Nashville, Tennessee, students and adults were assaulted as they attempted to use lunch counters previously reserved for whites. It took months for the 1960s lunch counter sit-ins to prove successful, during which thousands were arrested for disturbing the peace. Civil rights workers in Alabama were battered as they

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[8] Willie Golden, interview by author, 8 Sept. 2005, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[9] Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee, *Report* (March 1966).
[10] Richard Smyser, *Oak Ridge 1942-1992: A Commemorative Portrait* (Oak Ridge, TN: Oak Ridge Community Foundation, 1992), 135.

fought for their civil rights. School children were not exempt from violence as police officers in Birmingham attacked them with police dogs. And in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine black teenagers had to be escorted to high school by federal troops to keep them safe from segregationists.[11]

The Press and the Civil Rights Movement

By 21st century standards, journalists could conclude that if *The Oak Ridger* served all residents and sought to bring community members together, the difficulties blacks faced should have been reported extensively. But it is important to remember the customs of the early-to-mid 1900s. William Allen White, whose ideals about community journalism were still referenced by journalists in the 21st century, was not immune to treating blacks differently in his newspaper pages. In his *Emporia Gazette*, he did accord them the titles of Mr. and Mrs., which were often denied them in other newspapers. However, most of the time they were differentiated from other people in the newspaper with the word "colored" after their names.[12]

In the 1950s and 1960s, integration was an emotionally charged issue that often resulted in violence between integrationists and segregationists. The press was caught in the violence. Reporters covering the Freedom Rides in the South during the 1960s were often beaten just as badly as the integrationists. The Freedom Riders were aimed at forcing compliance with the December 1960 ruling in the Supreme Court case *Boynton v. Virginia*. It extended the law against

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[11] Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 34, 54-57, 79.
[12] Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 76.

segregation aboard trains and buses regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission by stating terminal accommodations could not be segregated either.[13] *Life* magazine photographer Don Uhrbrock and correspondent Norm Ritter were among those who were beaten as they traveled to Montgomery with the Freedom Riders. Ritter recalled feeling the whack of a billyclub against his head.[14] In 1962, reporters traveled to the University of Mississippi to cover the enrollment of the first black student, James Meredith, and the scene turned deadly. Paul Guihard, reporter for Agence France Presse, was killed as he tried to get a firsthand account of the integration crisis. Others were beaten and threatened as some in the mob yelled out "Let's kill all the reporters!"[15]

It was difficult for newspapers to report on this topic without being criticized by at least one segment of the population. A reporter was criticized after writing an article about black and white children peacefully playing together in Memphis. "Why can't you report the facts without romancing the Negro race?" the subscriber asked.[16] Because of such criticisms, a reporter could hesitate to provide in-depth, interpretive reporting.

Some editors' personal opinions concerning segregation also affected coverage of the movement. T. R. Waring, editor of the *News and Courier* of Charleston, South Carolina, said the result of the Civil Rights Movement might be less desegregation "because enforced mingling of the races may lead to a

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[13] August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1941-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 135.

[14] "Days of Violence in the South," *Newsweek*, 29 May 1961, 21-22; "Bloody Beatings, Burning Bus in the South," *Life*, 26 May 1961, 22-25.

[15] "Kill the Reporters!" *Newsweek*, 15 Oct. 1962, 99.

[16] John Herbers, "Reporter in the Deep South," *Reporting Civil Rights Part I American Journalism 1941-1963*, (New York: Literary Classics of the U. S. Inc, 2003), 643.

withdrawal by white people, such as further flights to segregated suburbs from the cities."[17]

James Ward, editor of the *Daily News* in Jackson, Mississippi, agreed. He said nonviolent protesters were begging to be hit. "We were getting along fine before they came here. You see, when a man looks for trouble he can find it. And that's not just in the South, that's all over the world. If these folks go into any area, making overt, inflammatory acts designed to create violence, they're asking for trouble and they'll find it. And it's not different in the South from anywhere else. It's just a rule of nature."[18]

Reporters during the Civil Rights Movement faced other dilemmas, many are the same faced by modern reporters. In trying to beat a deadline, a reporter might not have time to develop a story beyond the basic questions of Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Even then, the question of why an event took place might not be thoroughly investigated by examining its historical significance. Their involvement in the community might influence how reporters present news. The beliefs of the owner can affect the newspaper's approach to reporting a topic. Their closeness to sources can have a negative affect on journalists' objectivity when reporting a story.

In 1983, H. Eugene Goodwin wrote words applicable to much 1950s journalism:

"The American press is afflicted with the country club mind. It doesn't make much difference how much of a crusading young Galahad the young publisher

[17] "Is the South Headed for a Race War?" *U. S. News and World Report*, 5 June 1961, 42-48.
[18] Ibid.

may be when he starts; by the time he starts to put his paper across, he is taken up by the country club crowd, and when that happens, he is lost. He joins the country club, for that is our American badge of success. And, before he knows it, he sees his community from the perspective of the country club porch and edits his paper to please the men who gather with him in the country club locker room."[19]

Richard Smyser agreed with Charles Seib, retired ombudsman of the *Washington Post* and former managing editor of the *Washington Star*, who said journalists encounter pressure to be active in the community. Seib said reporters should avoid any significant outside involvement. Smyser said each community requires certain role players:

"There must be doctors. There must be lawyers, unfortunately. A minister or two is helpful. ... Of course, we need a plumber. And each city needs at least one editor. One editor who is an editor and nothing else. ... Having chosen the role of editor, he doesn't muck up that role — confuse it, complicate it, contradict it, and most of all, take time away from it — by being an industrial promoter, a school board member, a United Way campaign chairman or even publicity advisor to the local little theater."[20]

Need for Study

Oak Ridge history and the Civil Rights Movement have been studied in previous publications, and numerous studies have been conducted on press coverage given to civil rights. However, background research of similar empirical

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[19] H. Eugene Goodwin, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press1983), 63.

[20] H. Eugene Goodwin, *Groping for Ethics in Journalism*, 2nd ed. (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1987), 70-71.

studies revealed no other study concerning *The Oak Ridger*. Oak Ridge is important because of its unique ties to the federal government. As part of the Manhattan Project, Oak Ridge was home to highly educated personnel from across the country. Also, it is worth examination because of its close proximity to Clinton, Tennessee, the site of major violence by segregationists.

The Oak Ridger provides a new perspective from which to study the areas of community journalism and civil rights. Desegregation in Oak Ridge provides an opportunity to learn more about the journalistic principles of *The Oak Ridger's* founders, Alfred and Julia Hill, and its founding editor, Richard Smyser, who was active in national news associations.

Among the books written about Oak Ridge is the 1981 work *City Behind a Fence* in which Charles Johnson and Charles Jackson chronicled the town's history. Six years later, the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge compiled stories from residents about life in the town in *These Are Our Voices*. Other publications about Oak Ridge include George Robinson's *The Oak Ridge Story: The Saga of a People Who Share in History* and Leslie Groves' *Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project.* Such books discuss the government's decision to locate in Oak Ridge as well as what life was like before and after the city's gates were opened to the public. Some residents have written their personal memories of the town's early days and filed them in the Oak Ridge Public Library.

Such books as *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* by August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, and David Garrow's *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963* detail activists' strategies to gain racial equality. The Civil Rights

Movement is still a topic of interest to communication scholars. In 1986, Carolyn Martindale wrote *The White Press and Black America*, detailing coverage of blacks in the *New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Atlanta Constitution* and *Boston Globe* between 1950-1980. She found little coverage during the 1950s. In the 1960s, coverage of civil rights increased, and when reporting of civil rights protests was at its highest, only 3 to 11 percent of total protest coverage was devoted to trying to explain the reasons for the protests.[21]

In 2002, Susan Weill wrote *In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1968*. She focused on five key events in civil rights history and found the Mississippi press did not advocate integration, but did not encourage violence. They often reflected an "us against them" mentality in reportage of such events as the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. She found the majority of editorials and letters published in the papers supported the segregationist point of view.[22]

Considering the strain put on reporters and editors by others in their community, it is important to study how news events are portrayed. Community newspapers are often criticized for being local boosters and ignoring problems. However, those same newspapers are likely to include more information to mobilize people, such as information about how people can take action to help a family in need or to make changes in city ordinances.

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[21] Carolyn Martindale, *The White Press and Black America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 8, 79, 96.
[22] Susan Weill, *In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1968* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 248.

Bernard Stein wrote: "Community newspapers are not the minor leagues of journalism. They serve a unique function that makes them at least as important as the mass media. Metro dailies, radio and television report on the famous, the notorious and the powerful. Community newspapers chronicle the lives and concerns of ordinary people."[23]

It is important to learn whether *The Oak Ridger* attempted to reach all members of the community, specifically black residents seeking equal services. Did the newspaper call attention to Executive Order 8802 prohibiting discrimination against defense industry workers, but still allowing segregation in housing and public accommodations? Russell Olwell wrote that it was not until the AEC encountered pressure from national African-American media about the housing situation that it started to take steps to remedy the problem.[24] It is worthwhile to study the approach taken by the newspaper, a publication for all residents of the community, as it addressed the racial inequalities in Oak Ridge.

When writing about Oak Ridge, scholars have tended to focus on the scientific community. Because Oak Ridge began as a federally operated town it provides a unique look at the role the local newspaper played in the process of desegregation. Information gained from this analysis of *The Oak Ridger* will contribute to the body of research on press coverage as well as historical studies of Oak Ridge and the state of Tennessee.

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[23] Bernard L. Stein, "An Ordinary Mission," *Media Studies Journal* 13 (Spring/Summer 1999): 96.

[24] Johnson and Jackson, 175; Olwell, Russell, "Lurching from Crisis to Crisis: Oak Ridge's Troubled Home Front, 1942-1960." Presented at the Society for Military History 2003 Conference, Knoxville, Tennessee, 3 May 2003.

Outline for Study

The study is organized into 10 chapters.

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the central issue this dissertation will address: the coverage of civil rights by *The Oak Ridger*, and the historical context in which *The Oak Ridger* began publication.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature concerning the role of the press in society and the influences on newspaper coverage. It reviews previous studies on press coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. It also addresses the definition of community, particularly the concept of intentional communities and the roles of history and participation in forming a sense of community. It is necessary to understand the definition of community to properly understand the importance of community journalism.

Chapter III presents the research design used in this study, detailing the subject for evaluation, time frame and unit of analysis. A content analysis of *The Oak Ridger* and interviews with key participants were employed. Historical documents were reviewed to provide the proper context.

Chapter IV gives the history of Oak Ridge, from its beginning as a secret wartime project to the town's structure as it gained more independence from the federal government.

Chapter V details the struggles of the black population in gaining equality in housing, education and the use of public accommodations. It also provides information concerning civil rights struggles across the South.

Chapter VI offers biographies of the Hill family, owners of *The Oak Ridger*, including their newspaper careers and philosophies on publishing newspapers.

Chapter VII details the life and newspaper career of Richard Smyser, founding editor of *The Oak Ridger*.

Chapter VIII reports on the beginning of *The Oak Ridger,* community involvement with the newspaper, and how news articles were selected.

Chapter IX details the findings of the content analysis.

Chapter X provides the conclusion to this study and addresses its limitations and discusses opportunities for future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

To properly study *The Oak Ridger's* coverage of integration in its community, it is necessary to review studies concerning influences on newspaper content and of newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. A working definition for the Oak Ridge community will be developed.

Role of the Press

The 17th century English poet John Milton in *Areopagitica* expressed the ideals of free speech and of a free press. He believed if truth and falsehood wrestled, truth would always rise to the surface.[25] The modern press in the United States champions the same ideal. Journalists seek to provide balanced and complete reports of the day's news, but it often does more than fill a surveillance role for their readers.

During a visit to the United States in the 1800s, Alexis de Tocqueville said the press provides opportunities for citizens to work together: "Nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment. A newspaper is an adviser that does not require to be sought, but that comes of its own accord and talks to you briefly every day of the common weal, without distracting you from your private affairs. … The effect of a newspaper is not only to suggest the same purpose to a great number of persons, but to furnish means for executing in common the designs which they may have singly conceived."[26]

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[25] Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News* (Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997), 156.
[26] Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* Vol. II (1840; reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 111.

Sociologist Robert Park contended that newspapers have the power to create political action. He explained that social change occurred through stages involving the reporting of news and the initiation of public opinion. By promoting discussion, the news brings about "understanding and unity, creating public feelings and opinions that otherwise might be stifled." [27]

Sociologist Jürgen Habermas wrote of the public sphere — a place where people could come together and discuss shared interests, form public opinion and influence politics.[28] Albert Schaffle described the press as a "large interconnected system for the collection and transmission of ideas and as such serve as an organ of public opinion." Schaffle focused on the primary importance of communication as a binding force in society.[29] Other scholars have found community newspapers to be a tool for unifying community members by printing local news and pictures, which the larger metropolitan daily papers do not publish.[30]

The community newspaper's content extends people's social contacts. For some, it is a substitute for primary social contacts.[31] One study showed news consumers and news producers believe the most important role of a newspaper is

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[27] Jean Frazier and Cecilie Gaziano, "Robert Ezra Park's Theory of News, Public Opinion and Social Control," *Journalism Monographs* 64 (November 1979): 2; Robert Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," *American Journal of Sociology* 29 (1923), 277-278; Everett M. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: The Free Press, 1997) 189-190.

[28] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 33.

[29] Hanno Hardt, *Social Theories of the Press: Early German and American Perspectives* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1979), 44, 66.

[30] Gerald C. Stone and Janet Morrison, "Content as a Key to the Purpose of Community Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (Autumn 1976): 494-498; Bradley Greenberg "Community Press as Perceived by Editors and Readers," *Journalism Quarterly* 41 (Summer 1964): 437.

[31] Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting: The Social Elements of Urbanism,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 150.

to give thorough reports of significant events. Social extension and recreation are roles of lesser importance.[32]

Letters to the editor perform an important role in newspapers, allowing subscribers to participate in debate. Ninety five percent of the respondents in one study said newspapers run letters to the editor to help provide the public forum expected of newspapers in a democratic society. Letters to the editor may also help the community identify public concerns.[33] Residents see the influence the newspaper can have in the community, and they use it to their benefit. Letters to the editors might provide a reader feedback from others concerning their opinions.[34]

The 1947 report of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press urged the press to work in a manner that would give "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning."[35] Often the press is caught between its responsibility to give an accurate portrayal of events and its desire to please newspaper subscribers, advertisers and owners. The reporters' routines, amount of time they have to develop a story and any biases held by reporters, editors and the newspapers' owners also affect coverage.

Role of Community Press

To study "community journalism" it is necessary to understand what that term means. Journalist Jock Lauterer in 1995 wrote that community papers are the

[32] Judee K. Burgoon, James M. Bernstein and Michael Burgoon, "Public and Journalist Perceptions of Newspaper Functions," *Newspaper Research Journal* 5 (Fall 1983): 83.

[33] Ernest C. Hynds, "Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters," *Newspaper Research Journal* 13 (Winter/Spring 1992): 127.

[34] Michael Singletary, "How Public Perceives Letters to the Editor," *Journalism Quarterly* 53 (Autumn 1976): 536-537; William D. Tarrant, "Who Writes Letters to the Editor?" *Journalism Quarterly* 34 (Fall 1957): 502.

[35] Hutchins Commission On Freedom of the Press, Report of the Commission, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), 21.

primary source for in-depth local coverage. Community newspapers differ from metropolitan papers because local interests affect their perspectives, focus and news judgments. "A community newspaper cares about its community in a supportive, positive, nurturing way. The paper's own birth, history, development, welfare and future is inextricably bound up with that of its community," wrote Lauterer. And, unlike metro papers, their offices are accessible to the public.[36]

William Allen White, editor of the *Emporia Gazette* said national events have a place in community newspapers. A reporter recalled White saying much of the national and world news is local news, and reporters should "probe deeply to find out and report what the effect will be on the homes and the people in them."[37] The small daily, published five or six days a week, usually contains a mix of state, national and international wires services.[38]

Historian David Paul Nord wrote of how the *Chicago Daily News* served the "public community" when it began publishing in 1875. He said the modern metropolis formed a new community — one that was powered by formal organizations, and eroded the line between private and public life. Although residents of large cities were from different backgrounds they shared the same experiences and problems of living in the city. The newspaper addressed those problems and promoted community life. One of its first editorials argued that the city should provide public relief and employment for all in times of need because

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[36] Jock Lauterer, *Community Journalism: The Personal Approach* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 15, 185.
[37] Griffith, 173.
[38] Lauterer, 14.

hard times were more difficult for unemployed in a modern city. By the 1880s, it became the highest-circulated newspaper in the city.[39]

Author Steven R. Knowlton said community newspapers have the same watchdog role as metropolitan newspapers, but they differ in how they approach the role. "At many large metro papers, when a bad guy is caught with his hand in the public till, they report it almost with a sense of triumphant glee," Knowlton said. "But at the community paper, when the bad guy is caught it is still reported, with a certain sense of sadness."[40]

In 1961, Kenneth Byerly wrote that community newspapers serve nine important functions:

1. Report local news items that appear in no other newspaper.
2. Report details of local news that are not included in stories used by other newspapers.
3. Aid local shoppers, serving as the advertising medium for the town's merchants.
4. Promote local welfare and projects.
5. Give recognition to those who work on community programs, further helping promote such projects.
6. Create interest in government and elections.
7. Stimulate thinking, particularly on local problems and projects.
8. Instruct, entertain and inform.
9. Serve as a unifying force for the community.[41]

Influences on the Press

Although reporters strive to be free from influence when reporting on the day's news, it is impossible to be completely free from the effects of their environment and the stresses of their jobs. Journalists use the news values of

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[39] David Paul Nord, "The Public Community: The Urbanization of Journalism in Chicago," in *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and their Readers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 111, 119-121.

[40] Lauterer, 183.

[41] Kenneth Byerly, *Community Journalism* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1961), 5.

conflict, timeliness, prominence, human interest and proximity to determine the newsworthiness of stories.[42] Once reporters are given a story that fits into one or more of these categories, they usually have a day or less to complete the story and then, unless it is an investigative or developing article, they move on to another article to pursue.[43] As Jack Lyle observed, readers are conditioned to perceive the news as a succession of crises. "The citizen-reader assumes that the crises have been successfully resolved as they no longer appear in the media."[44]

Reporting is further affected by reporters' beats. It has been suggested that about 90 percent of all local news comes from regular beats, such as the city police station, county courthouse, school district and chamber of commerce.[45] While an organization might participate in newsworthy events, if it does not have an office and a contact person who is readily available, it is more difficult for it to be featured regularly in the newspaper. The beat system further complicates reporting because stories might not fit neatly into one beat. Desegregation of public facilities in the 1950s and 1960s was a national and local story. It had many angles from which it needed to be reported, including government, law enforcement and education.

Newspapers that subscribe to wire services such as The Associated Press are further influenced in story selection. They get ideas about what are important state and national issues by what they see on the wire service. Further, they may decide

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[42] Julian Harriss, Kelly Leiter, and Stanley Johnson, *The Complete Reporter: Fundamentals of News Gathering, Writing, and Editing*, 5th ed., (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1985), 33-35.

[43] Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology*, 77 (January 1972): 662.

[44] Jack Lyle, ed., *The Black American and the Press* (Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchey Press, 1968), xxii.

[45] Harriss, 23.

to localize those national stories rather than looking for more relevant local issues. Newspapers also report on "pseudo-events," activities that are planned well in advance, such as ribbon-cutting ceremonies or press conferences.[46] When editors can plan ahead or predict coverage of a continuing story or planned event, it allows the editor to decide where to send reporters on a particular day.[47]

To be covered, an event or issue must be sociologically or psychologically important to a reporter's view of the world.[48] According to noted sociologist Herbert J. Gans, reporters rank stories in order of importance by considering their significance to the past and future and their impact on large numbers of people. One producer told Gans, "The conception of our audience is a reflection of ourselves." Many journalists said, "If it bores me, it will bore them."[49] Ruth Flegel and Steven H. Chaffee studied two daily newspapers in Madison, Wisconsin, through content analysis and surveys answered by reporters. They found the reporters were influenced in their writing by their own opinions.[50]

Sally Foreman Griffith wrote that William Allen White believed it was the newspaper's responsibility to "embody the spirit of the town by calling down shame upon the heads of wrongdoers as well as by praising benefactors." Despite this, White was known to — in at least one instance — give a resident "First

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[46] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 123.

[47] Gaye Tuchman, "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected," *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (July 1973): 124.

[48] Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978): 138.

[49] Gans, 147, 236-238.

[50] Ruth C. Flegel and Steven H. Chaffee, "Influences of Editors, Readers and Personal Opinions on Reporters," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (Winter 1971): 650-651.

Notice." To save a person's reputation, he kept unfavorable news out of the paper. White warned it was a one-time favor.[51]

Peers often influence journalists. Reporters fresh out of school learn how to cover events by feedback they receive from their peers. They also tailor their performance to patterns set by veteran reporters.[52] Even if a publication does not have a written policy, there are unwritten policies that are learned through socialization. Reasons for reporters' complying with these policies include the threat of losing their job, a feeling of esteem for superiors, ambition to move up in the company, the pleasant nature of the newsroom, and being rewarded for fulfilling their responsibility of producing news.[53]

While their opinions can affect their decisions of what to cover, journalists attempt to provide neutral reports. According to Gaye Tuchman, a method journalists use to provide a fair report is through quotations from others to offer supporting evidence. By including someone else's statements in a news article, reporters believe they are removing their own views from the story and simply reporting facts.[54]

Journalists must be aware of the different perspectives from which their sources view events. These perspectives can be the result of different physical locations or temporal locations, meaning they saw what happened during different time frames of the event. It also can be the result of the competence of observers. Some observers have less experience with the type of event they witnessed. Also

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[51] Griffith, 169.
[52] Lee Sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (July 1973): 138.
[53] Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* 33 (May 1955): 327-331.
[54] Tuchman, "Objectivity," 667-668.

some might have an interest in the event and see what they want to see. To deal with these multiple accounts of the same events, reporters must conceive of the different angles from which any event can be viewed and choose competent perspectives and sources. [55]

The influences in the newsroom play a role in the selection and reporting of news and in the layout of the newspaper. As they allocate space for these stories in the paper, editors must balance the amount of hard news and soft news articles.[56] When a person reads a news article, typically the first item she reads is the headline. Therefore, headline writers play an important role as they are charged with setting a frame of reference for readers. Writing headlines also involves subjective judgment in deciding the points of a story to emphasize.[57]

Robert M. Entman said despite the free press ideals, journalists do not control the creation of the news. He said what they report is restricted by their competition with each other to attract audience members and advertisers as well as the symbiotic relationship they must have with the political elite in order to get information.[58] Journalist Seymour M. Hersh said the sources journalists use affect coverage, whether intentionally or unintentionally. "I honestly believe that a major problem in newspapers today is not censorship on the part of editors and publishers, but something more odious: self-censorship by the reporters."[59] Reporters use such caution partly because they do not want to alienate a news

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[55] Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980) 116-118, 130.
[56] Gans, 174.
[57] Hillier Krieghbaum, *Pressures on the Press* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1972), 93.
[58] Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17-18.
[59] Seymour M. Hersh, "The Story Everyone Ignored," *Columbia Journalism Review* 8 (Winter 1969-1970): 55.

source with whom they must have continued contact.[60] Journalists must depend on sources to gain information or leads for their stories. Sources influence coverage by either withholding information, or by providing the context in which information is given.[61] Potential sources do not have the same opportunities to be contacted by journalists. Those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power. Reporters believe officials' claims are credible because it is their job to know. They are the "authorized knowers in the society." From a logistical standpoint, people with offices and regular office hours make it easier for them to be reached.[62]

Newspaper readers affect content through their purchasing power, of both the newspaper itself and the products advertised in it. Large newspaper chains tailor the news to meet the needs of a global audience. Community newspapers do not seek a global audience, but local pressure groups can affect community newspapers. In a small community, a member of the chamber of commerce pointing out to the publisher that a particular article could be bad for his or her business can influence newspaper coverage. This is especially true when the publisher is also a member of the chamber of commerce and will frequently see the businessperson.[63]

Advertisers largely fund the press. Advertisers are interested in reaching certain target audiences who will buy their products.[64] If a newspaper runs articles

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[60] Krieghbaum, 87.
[61] Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (White Plains, New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1991), 130.
[62] Gans, 119-125; Fishman, 145.
[63] Krieghbaum, 171.
[64] Martindale, 43.

that offend the advertisers, it can bring disastrous consequences. The *Arkansas Gazette* gave strong support to federal intervention in the 1957 Little Rock school integration crisis, and its losses during the following years added up to millions of dollars.[65]

Herbert Altschull said news coverage is determined by the ideologies of the media owners. "The content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press. The press is the piper, and the tune the paper plays is composed by those who pay the piper."[66] Pamela Shoemaker added to the media financiers theory. She referred to funding from "informal" sources such as relatives and friends. The more this type of source provides support to a newspaper the more likely the journalist will be encouraged to adopt the funder's philosophies.[67] Lewis Donohew found a high correlation between publisher attitude and news coverage. He concluded, "Publisher attitude appeared to hold up as the greatest single 'force' operating with the news channel."[68]

Another influence that deserves attention is the threat of reprisal from those who are covered by the press through use of the court system. The case of *New York Times v. Sullivan* exemplifies how one city official tried to silence the press through a libel suit. On March 29 1960, a full-page advertisement placed by a group of civil rights leaders challenging the racial segregation that still existed in the South ran in *The New York Times*. Although the ad did not mention anyone by

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[65] John Hohenberg, *The News Media: A Journalist Looks at His Profession* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), 102.

[66] Herbert J. Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1984), 254.

[67] Pamela J. Shoemaker, "Building a Theory of News Content: A Synthesis of Current Approaches," *Journalism Monographs* 103: (June 1987): 27.

[68] Lewis Donohew, "Newspaper Gatekeepers and Forces in the News Channel," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1967): 67.

name, L. B. Sullivan, Montgomery, Alabama, police commissioner, sued *The New York Times* for libel. He argued that as a city official he was implicated in the ad, which contained factual errors. Sullivan won his case in an Alabama court, but the Supreme Court later overturned the decision.[69] In reading the Court's decision, Justice William Brennan said, "Erroneous statement is inevitable in free debate… it must be protected if the freedoms of expressions are to have breathing space that they need to survive."[70] After the ruling, public officials accusing the press of libel had to prove actual malice. The victory was important for the press not only monetarily, but because it continues to protect it in its endeavor to keep the public informed.

Whether it is was a reporter's bias or threat of legal action, it is important to consider all of the influences on the press when studying civil rights coverage during the mid-20th century.

Civil Rights Coverage

Much has been written about press coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. Two researchers studied coverage of the August 1955 Emmett Till murder case in which a black 14-year-old boy who was visiting Mississippi from Chicago was killed after talking to a white woman.[71] In Jane Rhodes' study, one Mississippi editor explained that Southern journalism required the use of the label "Negro" in all stories that involved a black person, that they not use such courtesy titles as Mr., Mrs., or Miss when referring to blacks, local services were to be listed under

[69] Anthony Lewis, *Make No Law: The Sullivan Case and the First Amendment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 6, 27-28.
[70] Ibid., 271-272.
[71] Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. 1987), 39.

"white" and "colored" categories, and the omission of any photographs of blacks.[72] Warren Breed studied the reporting of the same case in 11 newspapers and found only one, a small Mississippi daily, to fit the southern stereotypes.[73]

A Southern Regional Council study conducted in the late 1940s said, "The Southern newspaper constitutes the greatest single force in perpetuating the popular stereotype of the Negro."[74] Another problem was that progress such as the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling garnered media attention, but the press failed to provide sustained coverage of race relations.[75]

Brown v. Board of Education came before the Supreme Court in the early 1950s after Oliver Brown was not allowed to send his daughter, Linda, to a white school five blocks away from their home. At that time Kansas law allowed cities of more than 15,000 people to segregate elementary schools, but it was not mandatory.[76] On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously declared that school segregation under the "separate but equal" rule was unconstitutional. [77] The case will be discussed further in Chapter V.

One repercussion of the *Brown* decision was civil unrest in Clinton, Tennessee. In 1956, rabid segregationists flocked to East Tennessee to protest the

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[72] Jane Rhodes "Racial Coverage of the 1950s Print Media and the Case of Emmett Till," paper presented at AEJMC Convention, San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 1987, 3-5, as cited in Beverly Ann Deepe Keever, Carolyn Martindale and Mary Ann Weston, eds., *U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities: A Sourcebook, 1934-1996* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 82.

[73] Warren Breed, "Comparative Newspaper Handling of the Emmett Till Case," *Journalism Quarterly* 35 (Summer 1958): 291.

[74] Rhodes, 82.

[75] Henry Lee Moon, "Beyond Objectivity: The 'Fighting' Press," in *Race and the News Media*, Paul L. Fisher and Ralph L. Lowenstein, eds. (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), 137.

[76] *Thurgood Marshall: His Speeches, Writings, Arguments, Opinions, and Reminiscences*, ed. Mark V. Tushnet (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001), 18; William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 23; Michael D. Davis and Hunter R. Clark, *Thurgood Marshall: Warrior at the Bar, Rebel on the Bench* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1992), 155.

[77] Roger K. Newman, *Hugo Black: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), 438; Don Shoemaker, ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Segregation-Desegregation in Southern Schools* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957), 1.

desegregation of Clinton High. Riots broke out, and the National Guard was called in to restore order. During the violence at Clinton, the national and local press was present, but the focus tended to be more on the segregationists rather than the black community. One of the black students, Regina Turner, said when she and her mother, Louise, were interviewed, they often were misquoted. Horace V. Wells Jr., *Clinton Courier News* publisher, responded to charges that there were no black voices in his newspaper concerning desegregation: "The controversy here was between whites about blacks. The Negroes were on the sidelines, even though they were the cause. People assumed blacks were involved, but they stayed home."[78]

Hugh Davis Graham studied Tennessee newspapers' coverage of civil rights. Regarding the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the *Nashville Tennessean* suggested people learn to live with the new "law of the land." The *Knoxville News-Sentinel* affirmed the ruling saying it "was a just and wise decision." The *Chattanooga News-Free Press* said it was an unconstitutional invasion of states' rights.[79] Wells ran an editorial in the Thursday, Aug. 30, 1957 edition of his *Clinton Courier News* saying, "We have never heard anyone in Clinton say he wanted integration of students in the schools, but we have heard a great many of the people say: 'We believe in the law. We will obey the ruling of the court. We have no other lawful choice.'" He told readers that he had "personally urged the

[78] June N. Adamson, "Few Black Voices Heard: The Black Community and the 1956 Desegregation Crisis in Clinton," in *Trial and Triumph: Essays in Tennessee African American History*, Carroll Van West, ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 335-337.

[79] Hugh Davis Graham, *Crisis in Print: Desegregation and the Press in Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press: 1967), 37-50.

county court to carry on the fight to maintain segregation, and we appeared before the board of education and made the same plea there."[80]

In 1957, riots broke out in Little Rock, Arkansas, as nine black students attempted to enter the previously all-white Central High School. National guardsmen, called up by segregation proponent Gov. Orval Faubus, used bayonets to stop the students from entering the high school. A few weeks later, during another attempt to desegregate the school, mobs overtook the building, forcing the mayor to request federal troops. The standoff between state and national officers lured reporters to Little Rock. It was June before the federal guardsmen left the school, and abuse of the students continued.[81]

Harry S. Ashmore was editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* during the battle for integration in Little Rock and won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the racial conflict. He said because of reporters' event-orientation they did a good job of covering what happened in the community, but failed to adequately report what he believed to be the real stories of Little Rock, which were the events leading up to the disorder and its aftermath.[82] Years after the desegregation of Little Rock, the turmoil continued as city officials fled to others states, many residents lost their jobs and teacher morale plummeted. Seven years after the mob violence, only 123 black children out of 7,000 attended desegregated schools.[83]

Buford Boone, editor of the *Tuscaloosa (Alabama) News*, also won a Pulitzer Prize for his editorials concerning segregation. He said one problem with

[80] Ibid., 95.
[81] Dierenfield, 29-35.
[82] Harry S. Ashmore "The Story Behind Little Rock: Was Its Meaning Lost in Reporting Its Drama?" *Nieman Reports* (April 1958): 3-7.
[83] Dierenfield, 36.

reporting was that journalists made quick trips across the South and then wrote a few reports. The subject was too complicated to be covered in few articles.[84] The press tended to concentrate on such information as the number of people hurt or arrested in a demonstration or the number of people participating in a march, rather than focusing on the underlying issue.[85] Simply reporting what happened at a sit-in and answering Who, What, Where, When and Why is much easier to fit into a reporters' formulaic writing. Attempting to describe the stages and results of segregation would take more time and research.[86]

Roy Carter Jr. studied the coverage of segregation in seven North Carolina dailies, the *New York Times* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Blacks and public school teachers rarely were selected as news sources, even though they were greatly affected by the outcomes of desegregation. Stories using black sources appeared on the front page half as often as items from white sources. Most black sources were attorneys involved in desegregation suits or spokesmen for pressure groups. Teachers were represented through teachers' organizations.[87]

In 1960, four black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, ignited the largest black protest to that time. On Feb. 1, 1960, the students entered the Woolworth's department store and sat-in at the diner counter. Students in other southern cities followed their lead. By the end of 1960, sit-ins had taken place in all southern states except Mississippi with 70,000 citizens participating in 150 cities, including Nashville, Tennessee. Lunch counters across the South

[84] Buford Boone, "Southern Newsmen and Local Pressure," in Fisher and Lowenstein, 48.
[85] Lawrence S. Fanning, "The Media: Observer or Participant?" in Fisher and Lowenstein, 111.
[86] Samuel Dalsimer, "The Justice of Persuasion," in Fisher and Lowenstein, 118-119.
[87] Roy E. Carter, Jr., "Segregation and the News: A Regional Content Study," *Journalism Quarterly* 34 (Winter 1957), 4, 17.

eventually integrated, but not before 3,600 protesters were arrested and charged with such crimes as disturbing the peace, trespassing and inciting a riot.[88]

Metro newspaper coverage of the sit-ins in Tennessee was not favorable. Knoxville papers did not publish information about the sit-ins until they almost were finished. It was reported that city officials had requested they not cover them because of concern of outside agitators.[89] The *Tennessean*, the *Times* and the *News-Sentinel* expressed disapproval of the sit-ins. From February through April, the *Tennessean* published eight editorials urging a halt to the demonstrations.[90]

Susan Weill found that Mississippi's daily newspapers focused on the "crisis" of desegregation rather than to explain social change. Editorials often viewed civil rights workers with skepticism.[91] Professor John Hulteng contended that editors' reasons for ignoring civil rights activity was because they thought to give attention to the sit-ins, picketing and the racial clashes would only make an unstable situation worse. The result of this censorship, he said, was a deliberate altering of the picture of the world presented to the readers of these newspapers.[92]

While some publications failed to provide much coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, others covered it and were outspoken about which side they represented. Andrew Secrest studied editorials in South Carolina newspapers during the decade after the *Brown* decision. He found several of the newspapers' editorials approved the action of white mobs that had prevented voluntary

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[88] Dierenfield, 56.
[89] Cynthia Griggs Fleming, "White Lunch Counters and Black Consciousness: The Story of Knoxville Sit-ins," in Van West, 380.
[90] Graham, 199.
[91] Susan Weill, "Mississippi's Daily Press in Three Crises," in *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement,* David R. Davies, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, 2001), 9, 41.
[92] Weill, "In," 4.

desegregation in West Virginia and Delaware. They also suggested that same tactics used there could be used in other areas facing the same problem.[93]

Newspaper support of the 1960 Civil Rights Act was split. The Act was introduced because of loopholes in the 1957 Civil Rights Act intended to ensure voting rights for blacks. At the time, few black residents were able to vote because of intimidation and various state laws. In Alabama about 14 percent of the potential number of nonwhite voters were registered compared with 63.6 percent registration of potential white voters.[94] Sherri Wilson studied eight major papers' coverage of the Civil Rights Act. Of the papers examined, five expressed some support for the bill. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* believed it was too weak, and the *Alabama Journal* strongly opposed it. One *Journal* editorial stated that the bill's worst feature was that it would "permit Negroes universally to vote merely because they are Negroes."[95]

Sharon Bramlett-Solomon found in a study of 10 major newspapers from 1960-1964 that southern newspapers used more black news sources when writing articles about the dime store sit-in movement. They also ran more articles on the topic, but the northern newspapers devoted more column inches.[96] Martindale studied the coverage of blacks in the *New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Atlanta Constitution* and *Boston Globe* between 1950-80. During the early 1950s the four newspapers provided very little coverage, both in column inches and as a

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[93] Andrew Secrest, "In Black and White: Press Opinion and Race Relations in South Carolina 1954-64," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1972) as cited in Martindale, 23.

[94] Sherri Wilson, "Newspaper Coverage of the 1960 Civil Rights Act," paper presented at AEJMC convention, Atlanta, August 1994, as cited in Keever, 91, 129.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Sharon Bramlett-Solomon, "Southern vs. Northern Coverage of the Dime Store Demonstration Movement: A Study of News Play and News Source Diversity," *Mass Communication Review* 15 (1988): 26-28.

percentage of their available news space. The *Atlanta Constitution* was the only newspaper of the four studied whose coverage of black citizens accounted for as much as 1 percent of total available news space.[97]

A study of the two Birmingham daily newspapers found that during the 1963 demonstrations, neither the *Post-Herald* nor the *News* carried pictures of demonstrators being knocked down by water jetting out of fire hoses or being attacked by police dogs. Ralph McGill wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* that the newspapers failed in their duties. [98]

In his 1960 study of how five California daily newspapers covered local civil rights issues, Professor Walter Gieber said journalists are more influenced by the pressures within their newsroom than a feeling of social responsibility. Just as Breed's study, Gieber found that the factors affecting stories were written and unwritten newspaper policies, the emotional climate of the newsroom and the values held by those with supervisory roles at the publication.[99] In his study of the racial attitudes of gatekeepers, Gary Norman Van Tubergen suggested that as a reporter joins a newsroom group, his or her racial attitudes move toward what is perceived to be the group's norm.[100] Even if a majority of the reporters at a newspaper were open-minded toward civil rights coverage, each newspaper had

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[97] Martindale, 8, 79.
[98] James Boylan, "Birmingham Newspapers in a Crisis," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2 (Summer 1963), 30.
[99] Walter Gieber, "Two Communicators of the News: A Study of the Roles of Sources and Reporters," *Social Forces* 39 (October 1960): 80-83.
[100] Gary Norman Van Tubergen, "Racial Attitudes of Gatekeepers" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1968) as cited in Martindale, 22.

gatekeepers that might represent opposing views. The placement of his or her article and its headline wording would affect the presentation of the articles.[101]

Johnson, Sears and McConahay studied coverage of blacks in Los Angeles newspapers between 1892 and 1968 and found that less than 1 percent of the papers' available news space was devoted to blacks during most of the first 52 years of the period studied. The coverage increased to about 5 percent between 1964 and 1967, and peaked at 15 percent at the time of the 1965 Watts riot.[102] Fred Fedler found that publicity given to minority organizations focused on demonstrations. The press failed to publish the same types of stories about them that they routinely publish about established groups such as the American Legion, including elections, meetings and conventions.[103]

Analysis of the disturbances in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, showed the local newspaper carefully worded its stories about civil rights. One example is its coverage of James Ellers, a 32-year-old black man whose death triggered riots. A United Press International dispatch reported that Ellers died "after he was blackjacked by a white policeman." The local *Journal*, wrote that civil unrest was due to the death of "James Ellers, Negro, who died after injuries believed sustained when he resisted arrest and was hit by Patrolman E. E. Owens." Although the *Charlotte Observer* quoted the Winston-Salem mayor as saying, "It looked as if we were going up in smoke," this statement was left out of the *Journal* reports. It also took almost two weeks before the *Journal* ran a complete

[101] Martindale, 23.

[102] Paula B. Johnson, David O. Sears and John B. McConahay, "Black Invisibility, the Press, and the Los Angeles Riot," *American Journal of Sociology* 76 (January 1971): 706-707.

[103] Fred Fedler, "The Media and Minority Groups: A Study of Adequacy of Access," *Journalism Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1973): 117.

account of Ellers' death, and the fact that blacks were rioting was not mentioned in a headline. It did run two articles concerning pleas for peace by black city officials and community leaders.[104]

Blacks in poor cities in the North also faced racism. During the summer of 1967, racial disorder erupted in more than 150 cities in the United States. On July 29, 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued Executive Order 11365, establishing a national advisory commission on civil disorders.[105] With Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner as its chairman, the commission studied newspapers in 15 riot cities, and asked, "What effect do the mass media have on the riots?" The commission found that most newspapers did make an effort to give a fair and balanced report, but did not give the background information necessary to understand what caused the riots and the consequences of the events. Most stories were placed on inside pages and tended to discuss the riots in national terms rather than local issues.[106]

Among the other conclusions of the report was that the press had failed to include blacks as a normal part of society and instead presented coverage from the standpoint of a white man's world, which reinforced stereotypes. There needed to be better communication and cooperation between the press and police officers, and press reports did not give a sense of the degradation faced by black citizens. It

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[104] David L. Paletz and Robert Dunn, "Press Coverage of Civil Disorders: A Case Study of Winston-Salem, 1967," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 33 (Fall 1969): 337, 341-342.

[105] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, The New York Times Edition (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., April 1968), 534-535.

[106] *Report*, 362-363, 371.

found that "most blacks see newspapers as a mouthpiece for the 'power structure.'"[107]

The commission also stressed the need for more minority reporters, stating that the journalism industry had been "shockingly backward" in hiring, training and promoting blacks. At the time, fewer than 5 percent of those in editorial positions were blacks.[108] "News organizations must employ Negroes in positions of significant responsibility to establish an effective link to Negro actions and ideas and to meet legitimate employment expectations. Tokenism — the hiring of one Negro reporter, or even two or three — is no longer enough."[109]

By this time journalists and other professionals were speaking about the poor press coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. National Urban League Director Whitney Young had said in the mid-1960s, "The press has failed to show that the Negro's grievances are real. To read the newspapers, you might think the Negro is reacting to some mild inconvenience."[110] A 1968 survey of mass media executives showed they believed coverage and understanding of blacks was inadequate, but the media was beginning to provide better communication between blacks and whites. A majority of spokesmen felt their employees do not understand thoroughly the problems of race relations. Blacks constituted only 4.2 percent of employees of the participating news professionals.[111]

During his remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, whose members were attending a panel on "How is the Nation's Press Reporting

[107] Ibid., 374-382.
[108] Ibid., 384.
[109] Ibid., 385.
[110] Woody Klein, "The New Revolution: A Postscript," in Fisher and Lowenstein, 147.
[111] Woody Klein, "News Media and Race Relations: A Self-Portrait," *Columbia Journalism Review* 7 (Fall 1968): 42.

Desegregation at Schools?" C. A. McKnight of the Southern Education Reporting Service said, "Too few newspapers have grasped the significance of the race question as it affected our regional, national and international existence."[112] Editor John Seigenthaler of the *Tennessean* said, "Newspapers must give staff members broader latitude in covering new areas of interests. There are hundreds of untold stories in the core areas." L. T. Anderson, city editor of The West Virginia *Charleston Gazette,* criticized the press because "it lacks compassion; fails utterly to cover the frustration, motivation of Negroes." [113]

Definition of Community

To understand the role of *The Oak Ridger* and its civil rights coverage in the community of Oak Ridge, it is necessary to develop a definition for community. Some researchers have defined it as people grouped by geographic location, while other researchers expand that definition to include the governmental structure that oversees the location.[114]

A community is more than just people living in a particular geographical area. In 1974, Seymour Sarason noted the basic characteristics of sense of community as "the perception of similarity with others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure."[115] M. Didier offered the following definition:

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[112] "Desegregation Gives Press Big Subject," *Editor and Publisher*, 30 April 1955, 112.
[113] Klein, "News," 45.
[114] Claire E. Taylor, Jung-Sook Lee and William R. Davie, "Local Press Coverage of Environmental Conflict," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 77 (Spring 2000): 177.
[115] Seymour Sarason, *The Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology* (London: Jossey-Bass, 1974): 157.

"A group of people that shares a common territory, a set of common resources, and a common culture, that interacts frequently, and that considers themselves as part of a social group."[116] M. Montero defined community as "a social group that shares problems and interests in a specific space and time."[117]

Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett discussed the idea that people organize to achieve a particular goal. Supporters get to know one another and the efforts increase toward that same goal, rather than many different directions.[118] De Tocqueville believed that because of the primitive surroundings and the absence of a preexisting government, the American colonists had to work together to survive. He said the experience taught them to skills necessary for a democracy. "The most democratic country on the face of the earth is that in which men have, in our time, carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the object of their common desires and have applied this new science to the greatest number of purposes," he wrote.[119]

Many intentional communities have developed across the United States. In the 1880s, Thomas Hughes established the Rugby Colony in Tennessee. It was envisioned as a place where people could build an agricultural community in a Christian community.[120] John Humphrey Noyes in Oneida, New York, established another community based on religious beliefs in the mid-1800s. Commitment of members is seen as vital to the success of all of these communities, regardless of

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[116] M. Didier, as cited in Isabel Garcia, Fernando Giuliani and Esther Wiesenfeld, "Community and Sense of Community: The Case of an Urban Barrio in Caracas," *Journal of Community Psychology* 27 (November 99): 729.

[117] M. Montero, 1984, as cited in Isabel Garcia, Fernando Giuliani and Esther Wiesenfeld, "Community and Sense of Community: The Case of an Urban Barrio in Caracas," *Journal of Community Psychology* 27 (November 1999): 729.

[118] Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett, *The Person and the Situation: Perspectives of Social Psychology* (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991), 173.

[119] De Tocqueville, 107.

[120] *The Rugby Colony-An Aspiring Utopia.* (http://www.historicrugby.org/history/history.html (accessed July 8, 2003).

its purpose. In Oneida the news was used as a tool to stress unity among residents.[121] These communities are similar to Oak Ridge because the residents moved to these areas with an overarching purpose in mind. For Oak Ridge, people moved there to be part of a top-secret national defense project.

The intentional communities of the 1880s aimed to provide a better lifestyle for residents based on their religious beliefs. Oak Ridge was not a utopian society. Even though residents of Oak Ridge were working on the same project, there were differences in position and wealth. Both the previously mentioned intentional communities and Oak Ridge offered shelter and jobs to workers; however, in Oak Ridge, their jobs, pay and individual interests were vastly different.

History and participation of members must be considered when developing a definition of community. Participation in such activities as volunteer organizations, church, politics and sporting events allows people to bond. When people share these similarities they feel closer to one another because they share a commitment, and a sense of community develops.[122] McMillan and Chavis said shared experiences are key elements in building a sense of community. They said it is not necessary for group members to have participated in the event to share it, but they must identify with it.[123]

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[121] William M. Kephart, *Extraordinary Groups: The Sociology of Unconventional Life-Styles*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 93, 101; Susan Love Brown, *Intentional Communities* (State University of New York Press: Albany 2002), 34.

[122] Sheridan J. Coakes and Brian J. Bishop, "Defining the Nature of Participation in Rural Australian Communities: A Qualitative Approach," *Journal of Community Psychology* 30 (November 2002): 635.

[123] David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory," *Journal of Community Psychology* 14 (January 1986), 13.

While participation is important, there are people who are not as active as others in the community. Some people might be more involved socially or politically than others. There are levels of leadership and power. William J. Gore and Leroy C. Hodapp contended in the book *Change in the Small Community* that there are three levels: influential, lieutenants and doers. Influentials, the most powerful, initiate policy and are the "core of the community." Lieutenants are "subleaders" who carry through the details of implementing policy. Doers are the "leg men" and are those who serve on committees, collect funds and carry out the many smaller tasks required to complete a project.[124]

Noel P. Gist and Roy Dean Wright wrote that a community has two components. One is a psychological element in which individuals think of themselves as a distinctive collectivity whose members share a common or similar set of interests, values and cultural elements. The second is a set of organizations whose functions are to satisfy certain needs of its members in the various activities of social life.[125]

A community's distinctive history is vital to understanding the characteristics of a town in such areas as politics, economics and social characteristics. When researchers studied the community of Springdale, New York, they discovered that much of the community's social life is not externally visible. To understand how

[124] William J. Gore and Leroy C. Hodapp, *Change in the Small Community* (New York: Friendship Press, 1967), 56–60.
[125] Noel P. Gist and Roy Dean Wright, *Marginality and Identity; Anglo-Indians as a Racially Mixed Minority in India* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), 96.

the community works, people must study the organizations and social groups that organize and conduct activities.[126]

McMillan and Chavis offered four dimensions of a sense of community: membership, influence, fulfillment of needs and integration, and shared emotional connection. They define them as follows. Membership is a feeling that a person has invested part of himself or herself and has the right to belong. Influence can go in two directions. A member can have influence over the group, and the group has the ability to influence the individual member. Integration and fulfillment of needs refers to the reinforcement that people feel from the group association. Shared values refers to the belief systems to which they adhere.[127]

Newspapers can help build community by fostering these four dimensions through reporting activities of its community members. By their coverage, newspapers can influence people, and people can influence coverage given by papers. History also plays an important role in towns such as Oak Ridge. Even though residents played different roles, such as different jobs in the Manhattan Project, they shared a history to which others in surrounding communities could not relate. *The Oak Ridger* often wrote about the history of Oak Ridge.

Participation was key to the town's development. When residents moved to Oak Ridge they were isolated from family and friends. Because of this, they established friendships with each other. Oak Ridge has been referred to as the

[126] Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 4.
[127] McMillan, 9-13.

"great leveler" and "one of the better tries at a classless society."[128] However, there were individual social groups. New residents created their own social structures based on interest, work divisions and education. There were divisions among the labor groups. Rather than one bowling or softball team representing the entire plant, employees of different locations created their own leagues.[129]

While promoting the community and writing about its unique history, *The Oak Ridger* could not erase the history of segregation in the South. In the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson* the Supreme Court devised the "separate but equal" doctrine that allowed segregated public facilities.[130] Oak Ridgers did have similarities in regard to the geographic area in which they lived, but not all of them could enjoy the same privileges. Housing, schools and restaurants were segregated according to race during the early years of the city. Because residents moved to Oak Ridge from many backgrounds, they did not all share the same interests and problems. It is true that all Oak Ridgers were aware of segregation, but it was not necessarily an important issue to all whites.

Working Definition of Oak Ridge Community

Because none of the previously mentioned definitions of community fit Oak Ridge perfectly, a working definition will be offered. It is as follows:

> Residents grouped in a geographic location known as Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The community formed in 1943 when the first residents arrived in the newly named town. Members share a history that is unlike other communities in that it was formed in secrecy by the government and during its first six years, was surrounded by gates to keep away "outsiders." They share experiences to which

[128] Martha Cardwell Sparrow, "The Oak Ridgers," (Master's thesis, Mississippi State University, 1980), 146.
[129] Moore, 31, 38.
[130] Dierenfield, 9.

residents of surrounding communities cannot relate. This provides them with a shared emotional connection. They identify with each other as members of "The Secret City."

Despite this connection, there are distinctions among the residents, including race, education and economic and employment status. Oak Ridge became home to laborers as well as military personnel, scientists and professionals holding advanced degrees.

Because of racial differences, individuals were not able to participate in all of the same activities. Because of the intellectual differences as well as their different backgrounds, people did not always share the same views on the subject of desegregation.

Conclusion

Study of *The Oak Ridger's* coverage of the Civil Rights Movement will add to the literature on press treatment of desegregation. It will provide data concerning a newspaper's treatment of the issue during an extended period of time. Also, it will present information concerning the publisher and editor's personal beliefs on the subject, and how they affected coverage. It will offer a different perspective from which to study civil rights coverage — of a newspaper serving a community started in secrecy.

Chapter III

Research Questions and Method

Community newspapers such as *The Oak Ridger* differ from metropolitan newspapers with larger circulations by focusing on news of more immediate concern to readers, such as local city council and school board meetings. Interviews with Tom Hill and Richard Smyser indicate that informing residents of the many changes their town was experiencing was of the utmost importance to them. Hill, son of Alfred and Julia Hill, served as publisher of the newspaper beginning in the 1960s. Smyser was the paper's founding editor.

As *The Oak Ridger* worked to support the community, it is important to study whether the paper represented all members of the community. Specifically, this study helps determine the extent to which *The Oak Ridger* covered desegregation in Oak Ridge.

The following research questions were asked:

RQ1: What were the philosophies of the Hill family and Richard Smyser concerning the editorial content of *The Oak Ridger*?

RQ2: How did those philosophies guide them in their reports on the difficulties faced by black residents?

RQ3: How extensive was the coverage of the Civil Rights Movement?

Data Collection

To answer research questions 1 and 2, interviews were conducted with Tom Hill and Richard Smyser. Archives belonging to Tom Hill, which included letters written by Alfred and Julia Hill, were studied. Richard Smyser's archives, which

contained text from speeches given by Smyser and letters from Alfred Hill, were studied. The archives at *The Oak Ridger* office contained text from speeches and letters written by Alfred Hill.

To provide a historical setting for the newspaper's work, city documents were reviewed. They were obtained from The Oak Ridge Room at the Oak Ridge Public Library. The library also made available memoirs written by Oak Ridge residents. Secondary material included news articles from other newspapers, journal articles and books concerning the Civil Rights Movement and the history of Oak Ridge.

Black citizens who lived in Oak Ridge during the 1950s and 1960s and who were members of the Community Relations Council (CRC) and the local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the organizations that planned civil rights protests in Oak Ridge, were interviewed to get a better understanding of the conflicts during this time.

Interviews extended over a period of several months as some residents changed their minds about participating and as the researcher became aware of additional sources. The researcher met more than once with some sources. In addition to face-to-face interviews, occasional phone and e-mail conversations occurred. Consent to participate in the study was obtained during the initial phone contact with the participants. In addition, participants signed an Informed Consent Form, agreeing to be interviewed and for their identity to be revealed.

The first interview occurred June 2003 and the last in September 2005. The average interview lasted approximately two hours. Interviews began with

biographical questions, followed by questions concerning the Civil Rights Movement and the roles they played in the desegregation effort. Interviews with Smyser and Hill began with questions about their newspaper careers and progressed by addressing how they approached covering particular events. All of the interviewed were taped. They were conducted on the following dates:

Richard Smyser, founding editor of *The Oak Ridger*: May 12, 2003, June 12, 2003, Nov. 13, 2003, March 18, 2004, and Nov. 11, 2004.

Tom Hill, former publisher of *The Oak Ridger*: June 11, 2003, Nov. 13, 2003, and July 12, 2005.

Elizabeth and Robert Peelle, members of the Community Relations Committee: July 29, 2004.

Kathleen and Nelson Stephens, members of the Community Relations Committee and CORE: Feb. 17, 2005.

Kenneth Moore, the first barber in Oak Ridge to serve all residents regardless of race: Aug. 19, 2005.

Willie Golden, the first black basketball player to be named captain of Oak Ridge High School's team: Sept. 8, 2005.

Content Analysis

To answer research question 3, which asked how the newspaper reported on the Civil Rights Movement, a content analysis of *The Oak Ridger* was performed. This method is the most appropriate to determine the manner in which *The Oak Ridger* addressed this topic because it allows for the determination of any change over time in the paper's treatment of the issue.

Bernard Berelson defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content in

communication." This means all of the newspaper articles must be analyzed by using a predetermined method that is unbiased. The categories must be designed so that other coders can analyze the same material and reach the same conclusions. Results must be put into a numerical form allowing it to be analyzed statistically. Manifest means reading the lines per se and not reading what the researcher believes the writer intended the material to mean. [131]

Included in the analysis are stories concerning civil rights that appeared in *The Oak Ridger* between January 1949, the month the newspaper began publishing, and December 1969, the year that the majority of public accommodations in Oak Ridge were deemed desegregated. Twenty years will allow the determination of any changes in the manner the paper reported the issue of civil rights and is a manageable amount of time to study. Issues of *The Oak Ridger* are available on microfilm at Hodges Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Because many stories are cyclical, stories about a topic might appear more frequently during one part of the year than another. Also, daily newspapers vary from day to day during a week because of the advertisements. For these reasons, if a random sample of *The Oak Ridger* were taken there would be a high risk of missing important instances of civil rights coverage. After interviewing Oak Ridge residents who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement, a list of events that occurred in or near Oak Ridge was compiled. In addition, a list of national events that were of significance to Oak Ridge residents' actions was compiled. Starting the day after each event occurred, the researcher analyzed each issue of

[131] Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1971) 18.

the newspaper published during the following 30 days. For example, if an event occurred on Jan. 1, issues published from Jan. 2 through Jan. 31 were studied. The purpose of the analysis was to determine how much and what type of coverage each event received. For two events involving town council action on public accommodations ordinances, analysis began on the Monday prior to the Thursday council meeting. This allowed the researcher to learn whether the newspaper brought attention to the upcoming action. The paper published Monday through Friday.

The civil rights events selected for the study are listed below. Also listed is the time frame studied for each event.

1. Waldo Cohn, chairman of the town's advisory council, proposes a resolution to desegregate Oak Ridge Schools. The council passes the resolution 4-2.
   --Tuesday, Dec. 22, 1953-Friday, Jan. 22, 1954

2. *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Supreme Court orders schools to desegregate.
   --Monday, May 17, 1954-Tuesday, June 15, 1954

3. It is announced that Oak Ridge schools will desegregate in the fall. --Tuesday, Jan. 11, 1955-Wednesday, Feb. 9, 1955

4. Oak Ridge High School opens with 1,500 students, 40 of them blacks.
   --Monday, Sept. 5, 1955 - Monday, Oct. 4, 1955

5. Clinton High School desegregates. Violence erupts, and the National Guard is called in to restore order.
   --Monday, Aug. 27, 1956-Tuesday, Sept. 25, 1956

6. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus posts members of the National Guard at the entrance of Central High School in Little Rock to prevent the court-ordered admission of black students.
   --Monday, Sept. 2, 1957-Tuesday, Oct. 1, 1957

7. Four students from all-black North Carolina A&T College sit down at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, vowing to stay until the management agrees to desegregate it.
   -- Tuesday Feb. 2, 1960- Wednesday, March 2, 1960

8. Lunch counter demonstrations begin in Nashville. This happens after four students in Greensboro, North Carolina, ignite lunch counter sit-ins through the South.
   --Monday, Feb. 15, 1960-Tuesday, March 15, 1960

9. Oak Ridge Mayor's Committee on Racial Relations negotiates a one-day integration of local restaurants as part of the Independence Day celebration on June 4, 1960. Seven out of nine restaurants tested served black patrons.
   --Monday, June 6, 1960-Tuesday, July 5, 1960

10. Residents in Oak Ridge organize a picket line in front of David Brothers Cafeteria.
    --Thursday, July 7, 1960-Friday, Aug. 5, 1960

11. Civil rights workers conduct sit-ins at Oak Ridge restaurants.
    --Monday Aug. 22, 1960-Tuesday, Sept. 20, 1960

12. Civil rights protesters led by Martin Luther King, Jr. begin the Children's Crusade in Birmingham. Police dogs disperse protesters.
    --Friday, May 3, 1963-Friday, May 31, 1963

13. After negotiations fail, CORE members in Oak Ridge test Multimatic Laundry by taking their clothes there to be washed. The manager throws them out of the building.
    --Monday, July 29, 1963-Tuesday, Aug. 27, 1963

14. Oak Ridge public accommodations ordinance is struck down.
    --Tuesday, Dec. 17, 1963-Friday, Jan. 17, 1964

15. Residents begin efforts to bring a new barber to Oak Ridge — one who will serve all residents, regardless of race.
    --Wednesday, Feb. 5, 1964-Thursday, March 5, 1964

16. Willie Golden becomes the first black athlete to captain Oak Ridge High School's basketball team.
    --Tuesday, Nov. 30, 1965-Wednesday, Dec. 29, 1965

17. Members of the barbershop committee sell tickets to bring a new barber to Oak Ridge.
    --Monday, March 7, 1966-Tuesday, April 5, 1966

18. Ken's Barber Shop became the first barbershop in Oak Ridge to serve all regardless of race.
    --Tuesday, April 12, 1966-Wednesday, May 11, 1966

19. Oak Ridge Public accommodations ordinance is approved.
    --Monday, Sept. 18, 1967-Tuesday, Oct. 17, 1967

20. Manager of a local skating rink becomes the first person in Oak Ridge charged under the city's public accommodations ordinance.
    --Monday, Oct. 13, 1969 – Tuesday, Nov. 11, 1969.

Defining Units of Analysis:

The unit of analysis is the news article. For each of the 20 news events, *The Oak Ridger* was examined for the news coverage and comment it gave to these events. The length of each article was noted. The placement of the articles was studied. The amount and direction of editorial comment was taken into account. The use of sources was analyzed to determine the number of viewpoints represented.

Wimmer and Dominick wrote that operational definitions for each unit of analysis must "be clear cut and thorough; the criteria for inclusion should be apparent and easily observed." Holsti wrote that they must be "exhaustive, mutually exclusive and independent." This means all relevant items must fit into a category, must be placed in only one category and not affected by the placement of other information.[132]

[132] Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 1997), 119; Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing, Co., 1969), 95.

Each article was coded according to the following categories:

Letters to the editor: published letters from readers.

Staff written stories: articles written by the newspaper's editorial staff or those of obviously local origin.

Wire and feature service stories: wire service articles or those not prepared by *The Oak Ridger* staff or stringers.

Editorial: copy written by a staff member or a writer for a wire service and reflects the writer's personal beliefs about an issue.

Placement: above or below the newspaper fold.

Page: Page one, inside page, or editorial page.

Length: measured by column inches. During the time studied, the newspaper was laid out using eight columns per page. Each column measured 1.75 inches wide.

Headline size: measured by number of columns. One column equals 1.75 inches.

Photos: measured by raw count and column width.

Sources: Supporters (those who either participated in the event or showed support for desegregation by statements or actions), opponents (those who either by their statements or actions expressed their opposition to desegregation), and neutral (those who could not be identified as either supporting or opposing the event). Police officials who simply reported facts would be considered neutral. It was not possible to determine the race of each source.

It is important to collect enough data to accurately portray the time frame being studied, but also establish what material will not be analyzed. Advertisements and editorial cartoons were not analyzed. Articles that concerned black citizens, but did not directly involve the particular event being studied, were not included in the content analysis.

Validity and Reliability

If research is to be deemed reliable, it must yield the same results when repeated by additional researchers. The potential does exist for coders to interpret newspaper content differently. To ensure this design is reliable, the researcher and Jeff Drews, B. S. in Journalism, conducted a pretest. Two events were randomly selected and coded. The percentage of agreement between coders was determined using the Holsti formula:

$$C.R. = \frac{2M}{N_1+N_2}$$

Where M is the number of coding decisions in which coders agree, the N_1 and N_2 are the total number of coding decisions made by the first and second coder, respectively.[133] The reliability test of agreement yielded a correlation of .896 out of a possible 1.00. This was determined to be acceptable.

Validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Content analysts often rely on content validity, or face validity, especially when there is high agreement concerning the definitions of categories. "Most of the time, careful definition of categories and judicious and attentive selection of indicators will take care of the matter," wrote Berelson.[134] Holsti agreed that a researcher's "informed judgment" could be assumed to establish content validity, especially if results are consistent with existing information.[135]

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[133] Holsti, 140.
[134] Berelson, 169-171.
[135] Holsti, 142-143.

Other researchers have utilized the same method employed in this study. Susan Weill in her study of the Mississippi press selected five events in the Civil Rights Movement and studied one month's worth of articles for each event. Her research was published in the book *In a Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1968.* David E. Sumner for his dissertation at the University of Tennessee utilized similar methods to determine the coverage of Nashville newspapers in *The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement, 1960.*

Wimmer and Dominick suggested using multiple methods of data collection. The use of interviews along with analysis of existing documents confirm that the topic was examined from several different perspectives, which helps build confidence in the findings.[136] This study used the following methods of data collection: interviews with newspaper personnel and participants in the Civil Rights Movement, review of archival material and content analysis of *The Oak Ridger.*

[136] Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction,* 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2003), 115.

Chapter IV

History of Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is a city unlike any other in the South. The town developed in 1942 when people from across the country moved to the "Secret City," established by the federal government as part of its Manhattan Project to harness atomic energy. Even though workers knew they were involved in a top-secret project to help the country's World War II effort, it was not until after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, that they were certain of the ultimate goal.[137]

Even after "outsiders" learned of Oak Ridge, it was not until March 1949 that the gates of the city opened to the public. During the next 20 years, the town would go through many changes, the main transformation being self-government in 1959. As the town continued to thrive as a site of scientific innovations, it had to face the same difficult issues as every other town in the South, including segregation.[138]

Located about 17 miles west of Knoxville and 7 miles south of Clinton, the land in Tennessee that would be dedicated to the Manhattan Project was inhabited before 1942. Tennessee was admitted to the Union on June 1, 1796, and on Oct. 2, 1798, the Treaty of Tellico with the Cherokee Indians opened for settlement

[137] Frank Hoffman, "Brief History of Oak Ridge." (Privately published, 1991), 5.
[138] Ibid., 6.

territory that would later become Roane and Anderson counties. Both counties were established in November 1801.[139]

In the southern part of Anderson County and northern part of Roane County were four small communities that would later house the Tennessee portion of the Manhattan Project. In Anderson County there were Robertsville (named after Collins Robert, who in 1804 established a store in the area), Scarboro (named for the Scarboro brothers, Jonathan, David and James, who came into the area from Virginia) and Elza (named for Paul Elza a construction engineer working on the railroad bridge construction project over the Clinch River). In Roane County was Wheat (named for Frank Wheat, the town's first postmaster). About 1,000 families made their homes in those communities and would be displaced by the Oak Ridge project.[140]

The foothills of East Tennessee provided a peaceful setting for its residents, but concerns about atomic energy disrupted the serene farmland. As scientists fled Europe during the 1930s to join colleagues in the United States, they became increasingly concerned about the possibility of Adolph Hitler initiating a program to develop atomic weapons. Among them were Hungarians Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner, and a German, Albert Einstein, who in August 1939 wrote a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt urging him to support research on nuclear

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[139] "Historical and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge." Historic Preservation Committee of the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce. (Grant Proposal Submitted to Tennessee Historical Commission April 1991): Section E, 2; William Robertson Garrett and Albert Virgil Goodpasture, *History of Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: The Branson Company Publishers, 1903), 133; *Tennessee: A Guide to the State.* (Federal Writer's Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Tennessee, 1939), 48; Fred Brown, *The Faces of East Tennessee: A Historical Perspective on the Counties of East Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN: Knoxville News-Sentinel, 1990), 34.

[140] George O. Robinson, *The Oak Ridge Story: The Saga of a People Who Share in History* (Kingsport, TN: Southern Publishers, 1950), 36-39; Clifford R. Seeber, "A History of Anderson County, Tennessee." (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1928), 22; Sparrow, "The Oak," 3.

fission. Roosevelt in October 1939 appointed a committee of scientists and government administrators to oversee federal scientific research.[141]

In June 1941, Roosevelt created the Office of Scientific Research, and in June 1942, Col. James C. Marshall of the Syracuse Engineer District became the commanding officer over the project.[142] The endeavor initially was referred to as "DSM Project," and Marshall told his staff that when questioned about that title, to explain that it stood for Division of Substitute Material. The name was changed to the Manhattan Engineer District because Marshall's office was in New York City.[143] Roosevelt provided additional support for scientific research in December 1942 by approving the first $500 million of the Oak Ridge facilities' construction costs.[144]

Finding locations appropriate for the top-secret research had been underway for some time, but Marshall's lack of progress led to his replacement. Government officials had visited the area now known as Oak Ridge and on Sept. 19, 1942, General Leslie Groves, the new project commander, approved the site because of its remoteness from a seacoast, hills that would provide protection to the operations, and ample labor, transportation and water.[145] Also chosen as project sites were Hanford Reservation near Richland, Washington, and Los

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[141] Leland Johnson and Daniel Schaffer, *Oak Ridge National Laboratory: The First Fifty Years* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 5-8; Leslie R. Groves, *Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 5.

[142] Historical, Section E, 7; Ed Westcott, "1942: Site 'Discovered' in April, Picked in September," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1974, 3.

[143] Westcott, 3.

[144] "1943-2003: A Proud History-A Promising Future." Supplement to the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* 16 Feb. 2003, 10.

[145] Hoffman, 1; Arthur Holly Compton, *Atomic Quest: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 154-155; Westcott, 3.

Alamos, New Mexico. They were selected based on their isolation created by deserts.[146]

East Tennessee property owners who would be affected by the project had received notices of condemnation by Nov. 1, 1942. They were ordered to vacate the project site no later than Jan. 1, 1943.[147] The average price per acre paid to land owners in Roane County was $34.26 and in Anderson County, $44.10 an acre.[148] Not all residents were so easily moved off of their land. One farmer lived in a remote section and successfully hid from government officials for about year before he was found feeding his chickens.[149]

Some citizens were concerned about the federal government's plans for the land. Congressman Albert Gore said it was going to be used for a demolition range, in which targets would be set up and destroyed by either artillery fire or airplane bombings. Initially, the Oak Ridge project site was called Kingston Demolition Range. Kingston was the name of Roane's county seat.[150] It later was referred to as Clinton Engineer Works after the Anderson County seat. Construction in Oak Ridge began in the fall of 1942.[151] The facilities included the graphite reactor (X-10), which during the war was known as Clinton Laboratories, the electromagnetic separation facility (Y-12), and the gaseous diffusion plant (K-

[146] Compton, 129
[147] Robinson, 27.
[148] Historical, Section E, 6.
[149] Sparrow, "The Oak," 21.
[150] Robinson, 27.
[151] Ibid., 17, 36.

25). Each was owned by the federal government, but operated by private companies.[152]

The Tennessee legislature did not cede sovereignty to the federal government. Even though Oak Ridge was a federal area, it was still held accountable to the laws of Roane and Anderson counties and the state of Tennessee.[153] A town council was formed in 1943 to "study problems and present recommendations." It gave residents a chance to discuss high prices, cafeteria food and housing. It also gave the government a way to find out what people wanted.[154] A Colored Camp Council represented the interests and needs of the project's black employees. Robert H. Wadkins, a general foreman for Roane-Anderson, served as its chairperson.[155] There were no elections for city government in Oak Ridge.[156]

One of the first decisions to be made for the town was to give it a name. Suggestions were made by employees, and "Oak Ridge" was finally chosen because officials believed the rural connotation would keep curiosity to a minimum, and because the long sloping side of a ridge, where the town site was being built, had been known as Black Oak Ridge.[157] A barbed wire fence and seven gates protected the entire reservation. Three checking stations monitored traffic between the town site and the plant sites. Military and civilian personnel were housed within the limits of the reservation, and all residents older than 9

[152] Johnson and Jackson, 8-10.
[153] Robinson, 60-61.
[154] A.K. Bissell, "A Brief Political History of Oak Ridge." (Presentation made at the annual meeting of the East Tennessee Historical Society, Chapel-on the-Hill, Oak Ridge, 3 Nov. 1967), 8.
[155] Johnson and Jackson, 113-114.
[156] Robinson, 61.
[157] Hoffman, 5.

years old wore identification badges. Vehicles were searched upon entering the site, and mail and books were censored.[158]

The Army set aside the northeast corner of the reservation — about 9,000 acres — for the town. San Francisco-based architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill designed the site. The first phase of construction accommodated about 12,000 people, but by the time the war ended in 1945, there were 75,000 residents in Oak Ridge.[159] At the peak of operation there were about 5,000 trailers, 16,000 hutments and barracks, 9,600 houses and 90 dormitories.[160]

The first residents arrived in July 1943, and housing was always an issue for Oak Ridgers. There was never enough adequate housing available, and assignments were made according to residents' military rank. Civilians were assigned housing according to their importance to the project.[161] Scientists and engineers as well as high-level military personnel were assigned to cemesto homes, which were considered to be the most comfortable. They were named such because of the mix of asbestos and cement from which they were made. Single people were usually assigned to live in dormitories, and bus drivers and clerical workers were assigned to trailers, barracks or remaining farmhouses, most of which did not have running water or electricity.[162]

Tennessee Avenue was the town's main street and ran east to west, parallel to Highway 61. To the north of Tennessee Avenue was Outer Drive, which also ran

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[158] Historical, Section E, 11; "Oak Ridge Turnpike Checking Station." Historic Preservation Committee of the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce. (Grant Proposal Submitted to Tennessee Historical Commission April 1991), Section 8, 1.

[159] Martha C. Sparrow, "The Building Begins" in *These Are Our Voices*, James Overholt, ed. (Oak Ridge, TN: Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, 1987), 48-51.

[160] "Background Material, the Town of Oak Ridge." War Department, Public Relations Division, 2 Aug. 1946, 1.

[161] Maienschein, 2.

[162] Johnson and Jackson, 85; Historical, Section E, 16.

east to west. They were connected by a series of avenues running north and south. A residential area of houses and dormitories was situated between the two roads. Homes were organized into three neighborhoods, and each had an elementary school and about five stores, including a grocery and a drug store. Neighborhood One, called Pine Valley, was located on the west side of the area. Neighborhood Two, designated Elm Grove, was located on the eastern side of the community with its commercial center on Tennessee Avenue. Neighborhood Three, Outer Drive, was to the north, centered along the top of the ridge. Between Pine Valley and Elm Grove was the main commercial area known as Jackson Square.[163]

The main town site was separated from the trailer and hutment areas, in which the less educated manual laborers lived. The most desirable living quarters were the single-family units that ran along the ridge north of the town site administrative buildings. They were assigned to members of the military and civilians who were highest ranking. This area was referred to as "Snob Hill."[164]

The area held the same policies concerning segregation as other southern towns during the war. The government's policy concerning federal installations was to follow the local laws, and Tennessee had segregation laws.[165] Black workers were segregated, living in hutments in an area known as Scarboro Village. Hutments were 16 ft. by 16 ft. rooms, which contained four to six beds. A stove in the middle of the hutment provided the only source of heat, and there was

[163] Johnson and Jackson, 19-23.
[164] Johnson and Jackson, 105; "The City that Atoms Built," *Business Week*, 27 Oct. 1945, 32.
[165] Historical, Section E, 32.

no glass in the windows. Bathhouses, which served 24 to 36 hutments, provided the only running water.[166]

There were plans for a "Negro Village," which would have included 50 cemesto homes, four dormitories, a cafeteria, church, school and limited stores. It was to be north of Route 61. Because additional housing for whites was needed, the village never materialized. The area became the fourth white housing area known as East Village. Corps officials said that because blacks were getting jobs in the lesser skilled areas, they would have been assigned housing in the hutment areas, and the land was better utilized for the white housing. After World War II, there were plans for improved housing. As white residents moved to "other suitable housing," black residents gradually moved to land near the existing black hutments in Scarboro Village.[167] (See Figure 13 on page 296 for a map of early Oak Ridge. All tables and figures are located in the appendix.)

The Roane-Anderson Company, a subsidiary of the Turner Construction Company of New York City, managed the military area. Roane-Anderson carried out such tasks as maintenance of roads and supervised water and electrical distribution in the town. The government paid the company a fixed annual fee, $180,000 a year, which did not increase or decrease with the volume of work performed. Roane-Anderson turned all revenues it collected over to the Army and made no profits from the operation except for the fee.[168] The same criminal and

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[166] Johnson and Jackson, 87.

[167] Johnson and Jackson, 22, 174; Richard Smyser, "City's Most Unique Neighborhood," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Feb. 1977, 1.

[168] Ibid.; Barbara Hart, "1950: New Stores, Voting Machines; Paducah Branch," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1974, 3.

civil laws of Tennessee applied to the territory and were enforced by a police department. There were no elected governing officials in Oak Ridge.[169]

In July 1943 there were 11 doctors serving Oak Ridge residents in the Medical Services Building. The facility was used until the Oak Ridge Hospital opened Nov. 17, 1943. It was built and equipped by the government and operated by the Roane-Anderson Company.[170]

The town's main commercial area was located in Jackson Square, an area made up of four buildings that were connected by a covered walkway.[171] The Army determined the goods and services that would be offered, and Roane Anderson managed the commercial development. By the war's end there were 165 commercial establishments.[172]

Attempts were made to make people feel at home by providing recreational opportunities. The Oak Ridge Recreation and Welfare Association sponsored dances, athletic leagues and talent shows. National groups such as the Girl Scouts formed in Oak Ridge, but as a security measure they were not listed on national rosters.[173]

For news, residents were provided the *Oak Ridge Journal* with Army Warrant Officer Murray Levine as editor. First appearing in September 1943, it was a bulletin-sized publication that was mimeographed and folded. Oak Ridgers were advised that the newspaper was not to be taken outside of the reservation. On the

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[169] "Background Material: The Town of Oak Ridge," War Department, Public Relations Division, 2 Aug. 1946, 2.
[170] Ibid., 3; Sparrow, "The Building," 55; Sparrow, "The Oak," 88; Ruth Carey, "1943: The Roar of Tractors, the Thud of Hammers," The *Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1974, 5.
[171] Oak, Section, E, 9; Sparrow, "The Building," 55.
[172] "Background Material," 1.
[173] Joyce K. Maienschein and Eileen A. Neiler, *And the Fence Came Down* (Oak Ridge: Oak Ridge Community Foundation, 1993), 2; Johnson and Jackson, 121.

paper was stamped "Published for Oak Ridge: Keep it here Please" or "Not to be taken from the CEW AREA." Levine hired a staff from the Women's Army Corps to gather news. Richard B. Gehman served as Gates' assistant editor.[174]

Certain names and photographs were not allowed in the newspaper. Francis Smith Gates, who later served as the *Journal's* editor, reported one instance when a picture of the Oak Ridge Woman's Club could not be used because Mrs. Arthur Holly Compton might be recognized. Arthur Compton was a famous physicist who played a large role in the development of atomic energy.[175] Gates said they took their copy to be checked by Army officers. The *Journal* contained no wire copy or demographic information.[176] The government subsidized the newspaper when it began printing, and advertising later helped pay costs. Bills were sent to the AEC, and if newspaper employees wanted a raise they asked the AEC.[177]

The *Journal* was published until May 1948. Soon thereafter there was an attempt to bring a daily newspaper to the town. *The Times* was to be published daily by the Chandler-Waters Company in Knoxville. Its first issue appeared in June 1948, and the editorial staff wrote, "There will be no control of its contents except that dictated by good taste and good judgment." On the 17th day, the paper's banner headline stated: "We Quit!" The company clearly did not have the financial resources to keep the newspaper operating. From June 22, 1948 to September 20, 1948 there was no paper in Oak Ridge. The next attempt was *The*

[174] Robinson, 53; June Adamson, "From Bulletin to Broadside" in Overholt, 144-146.
[175] June Adamson, "1944: Secrecy, Scarcity and Serendipity," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1974, 7.
[176] Adamson, "From," 146-147.
[177] Ibid., 153-154.

Mail, but it was mainly an advertising handout. It was printed until January 1949, and its last issue announced the arrival of *The Oak Ridger*.[178]

Residents also took it upon themselves to create entertainment opportunities. In October 1943, biochemist Waldo Cohn led efforts to establish the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra.[179] The Oak Ridge Community Playhouse was established the same year. Not everyone could take advantage of all recreational activities. A movie theater provided entertainment for whites only. Certain eating establishments were also closed to blacks, who also were required to ride in the back of the buses.[180]

As school construction was underway, the school superintendent, Dr. Alden Blankenship, was busy preparing for opening day of class. Robertsville and Elm Grove elementary schools and the high school opened Oct. 4, 1943. Pine Valley elementary opened November 1943 and Cedar Hill opened winter 1944.[181] In 1946, the school board hired Robert Officer and his wife to organize a school for black students. The students previously were bused to schools in Knoxville and Clinton.[182]

Living conditions were difficult, but when recalling their experiences, many of the residents said they enjoyed the adventure. "We recall those early days in Oak Ridge with pleasure. We had many friends of like age around us, not only from Chicago, but also (in my case) colleagues with whom I had worked in Berkeley. Most of the latter were associated with Y-12, but we all joined in the

[178] Ibid., 154-155.
[179] Smyser, 122.
[180] Steele, "A New Hope," 2.
[181] Marion Alexander, "The Schools of Oak Ridge " in Overholt, 135.
[182] Peelle, 2.

clubs, evening activities, sports, hikes, and dramatic and artistic activities," Oak Ridge resident Arthur Snell said of his experiences."[183]

Because of security, people working at the plants did not know much about the scope of the project, except that their work would help bring an end to the war.[184] While it did get frustrating when their superiors did not answer questions about their work, many workers were already formulating their own answers. They were not completely surprised at the announcement of the bombing of Hiroshima on Monday, Aug. 6, 1945.

Chris Keim remembered his first opinions as he strolled through the facilities upon his arrival: "By the end of the day I had drawn my conclusions, though I had been told nothing. I thought to myself. 'It looks like atomic energy.' I had known of the discovery of uranium fission in 1939 and it was only logical that the practical applications should be seriously investigated."[185]

Shortly after Truman's announcement that the atomic bomb had been dropped, workers in the plants received congratulations from Colonel Kenneth Nichols for maintaining the plants' secrecy and asking them to continue keeping information confidential, unless it was made public through press releases. Workers' excitement grew as they learned more information.[186]

After celebrating the fruits of their labor, people's thoughts turned to the future of Oak Ridge. The town was built with the idea that it would be a temporary city, so there was no guarantee that they would still have a job in

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[183] Arthur H. Snell, "Personal Reminiscences of Arthur H. Snell." (Privately published, 1986), 4.
[184] Historical, Section E, 11.
[185] Chris Keim, "A Scientist and His Secrets" in Overholt, 66-67.
[186] Sparrow, "The Oak," 140.

Tennessee. Three weeks after Japan's surrender, residents were told that operation would continue on the reservation in a peacetime capacity. It launched the town into a place for permanent nuclear and scientific research.[187]

Government officials and scientists, although they agreed on the importance of atomic energy research, did not agree with how to oversee such research. General Groves and other military officials testified before the House of Representatives that only government control could prevent the misuse of atomic energy. Scientists at the Manhattan Project laboratories believed that government control was not acceptable during peacetime. Residents became restless, as a year would pass before Congress took action. This restlessness caused a decline in population as job security was uncertain. In 1945, approximately 82,000 were employed on the reservation with 75,000 people living in Oak Ridge. By November 1945, employment fell to 51,000, and the town's population fell to 52,000.[188]

In August 1946, the Atomic Energy Act handed control of atomic research over to civilian control. The Atomic Energy Commission, as part of the executive branch of the federal government, assumed responsibilities of managing the Oak Ridge facilities on Jan. 1, 1947. S.R. Sapirie managed construction, production, research and community affairs at Oak Ridge. F. W. Ford directed the Community Affairs Division, which was divided into two branches, commercial

[187] Johnson and Jackson, 167.
[188] Historical, Section E, 25.

services and city management. AEC contracted Management Services Inc. to run the city. [189]

Residents were excited about the role the plants would play in atomic research, but they were tired of living in a drab town. Thelma Present moved from New York City to Oak Ridge with her husband Richard, who worked on the Manhattan Project and later joined the physics department at the University of Tennessee. In a letter to anthropologist Margaret Mead, Present described Oak Ridge as a combination of a huge summer camp resort, an Army camp, a city of industrial workers and a college campus. In a March 26, 1946 letter she wrote, "Everything looks so temporary — almost like a movie set with cardboard dwellings or a plan of a city such as you might see in the Museum of Modern Art."[190]

Citizens became more active in the community in terms of trying to create positive change. In the 1946 election, 53 candidates ran for seven town council seats. Again, these were only advisory positions. They could not enact laws. During the first meeting of the new town council, more than 300 people arrived to discuss such issues as the phone service, cafeteria food, lack of competition among merchants and poor laundry service.[191] Students also became more involved in civic affairs. During the 1945-46 school year, high school students

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[189] James S. Elliot, "Oak Ridge Maps Desegregation," *Southern Schools News*, 3 Feb. 1955, 13.
[190] Thelma Present, *Dear Margaret: Letters from Oak Ridge to Margaret Mead* (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1985), 13, 23.
[191] Colleen Black, "1946: A Mass Exodus but Also Signs of Permanency," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1974, 11; Historical, Section, E, 9.

organized the Youth Council on the Atomic Crisis. By March 1946, 171 students had joined the council to "promote responsible citizenship in the atomic age."[192]

With the general public now aware of Oak Ridge, it was inevitable that discussion would eventually turn toward opening the gates to the public. This made many residents apprehensive. They enjoyed the security the gates provided as well as the protection from unwanted visitors.[193] Raymond Hunt, Jr., who worked at the plant during the 1940s, reported that because some far-away towns had never heard of Oak Ridge, postmasters sometimes refused to send mail to Oak Ridge.[194] Regardless, on March 19, 1949, approximately 40,000 people came to Oak Ridge as the gates were opened. Festivities included a parade and speakers such as Vice President Alben Barkley, who said because of the atomic energy developments at Oak Ridge, World War II ended a year sooner.[195]

In 1949, community improvements began, including new schools, housing, and street paving. AEC policies followed the separate but equal segregation policies by providing the black community with new housing in Scarboro in 1950.[196]

The first vote for incorporation in 1953 failed, with a vote of 4,584 against and 1,120 in favor. People were afraid of incorporation because they were used to the benefits of having everything provided by the federal government.[197] Citizens for Incorporation formed to help answer residents' questions. The organization

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[192] Marion Alexander, "The Schools of Oak Ridge " in Overholt, 140.
[193] Sparrow, "The Oak," 137; Moore, 34.
[194] Raymond F., Hunt, Jr. "My Memories of Oak Ridge." (Privately published, Feb. 2001), 4.
[195] "Ridge Relaxes after Fanfare," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 March 1949, 1.
[196] Historical, Section F, 21.
[197] Sue Ellen Hudson, "A Town's Incorporation" in Overholt, 313.

aimed to meet with AEC officials to find out what plans they had for an incorporated city, especially for the schools. Local organizations, churches and all 12 voting precincts were represented at the initial meeting.[198]

Public Law 221, the Oak Ridge Disposal Bill, passed both houses of Congress, and Eisenhower signed it on Aug. 4, 1955. The law permitted AEC to sell homes and land in Oak Ridge with the condition that the city incorporate and all the transactions be completed by Aug. 4, 1960. Residents realized that if the town did not incorporate, the community would be dependent on Anderson and Roane counties for public administration. Home sales began in 1956 and the first commercial property sales began in 1957. By 1959, nearly all of the homes were privately owned. Prices for the homes ranged from $2,500 to $8,000.[199]

Oak Ridge's Advisory Town Council and its charter commission in 1959 created a 12-member city council with members elected from 12 different districts. A second vote for incorporation was taken with 5,552 in favor and 395 against.[200] The first 12-member city council and five-member board of education were elected June 2, 1959. Slightly fewer voters participated in the first municipal election than voted on incorporation. The total votes cast were 5,799. On June 4, 1959, the community held Oak Ridge Independence Day. On June 16, A. K. Bissell was elected the first mayor of Oak Ridge. He had been an Oak Ridger since September 1943, and was elected by his city council members by a 10-2 vote. He had been a member of the former advisory town council and served three

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[198] "Clark Heads New Citizen Committee," *The Oak Ridger*, 19 Jan. 1959, 1.

[199] "First Business Offering Today," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 June 1957, 1; Historical, Section E, 34; Smyser, 32; Herb Stein. "Ike Signs: Climax Comes on Bills That Kept Oak Ridge Eyes on Washington for Months," *The Oak Ridger*, 5 Aug. 1955, 1.

[200] Smyser, 36; Hudson, 314.

years as its chairman. He also had been involved with Citizens for Incorporation.[201]

During the postwar years, the town's school system was recognized as an independent part of the Anderson County School System. A new high school was constructed in 1951.[202] Residents continued to seek cultural activities after the war. The Oak Ridge Community Art Center was created in 1951.[203] The city's first Arts Festival was held May 1961, and in 1964 residents founded the Oak Ridge Civic Ballet.[204] For those who were looking for more routine recreational opportunities, new shopping centers were provided. In October 1955, J. C. Penney himself was in Oak Ridge to open the new Penney's store.[205]

Oak Ridge facilities continued to garner worldwide attention. In January 1948, Clinton Engineer Works was renamed Oak Ridge Area, and in February 1948, Clinton Laboratories became known as Oak Ridge National Laboratory.[206] During the Cold War years, ORNL focused on civil defense. It conducted research on underground shelters to protect urban residents. In 1962, the ORNL budget got an additional $3 million to put toward the space race against the Soviets. The lab performed studies on the biological effects of solar radiation. In July 1969, when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon he carried telescoping scoops fabricated at Oak Ridge for collecting moon rocks.[207]

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[201] Smyser, 37; "5,799 Voters Choose 1st City Officials," *The Oak Ridger*, 3 June 1959, 1; "First Mayor is Old Hand in OR Government," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 June 1959, 1.
[202] Historical, Section F, 23.
[203] Jane Warren Larson, "Building the Oak Ridge Art Center" in Overholt, 444.
[204] Smyser, 124-125.
[205] Ibid., 105.
[206] Ibid., 32.
[207] Johnson and Schaffer, 118-120.

Attention given to Oak Ridge was not always positive. Margaret Mead spoke to Oak Ridgers on May 15, 1964. She was intrigued by Oak Ridge and had received many letters from resident Thelma Present about the city. Mead told the audience that she thought of Oak Ridgers as "intellectual snobs smug in their good salaries and own little social circles and caring little about relating to, and possibly even doing some good — culturally, economically — in the less fortunate areas around them."[208]

While Mead's words were harsh, some Oak Ridgers were trying to make a difference in the lives of others. The Community Relations Council (CRC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were among the organizations whose aim was to help bring equality. Civil rights violations were not uncommon in Oak Ridge, and the council sought to achieve equality for black residents. Housing and education already had been important issues for blacks in Oak Ridge. The debate over segregated schools continued until the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional. Because Oak Ridge was federally owned and operated, the AEC announced in January 1955 that the public schools in Oak Ridge would be desegregated in September.[209]

There were still segregated facilities in the town, and CRC and CORE addressed them. In the 1960s, they organized picket lines in from of the cafeterias and laundry facilities that remained segregated. They formed additional committees to bring about integrated barber facilities and challenged the local

[208] Smyser, 78-79.
[209] Peelle, 4.

skating rink that defied the city's public accommodations ordinance.[210] These actions will be discussed in the following chapter.

Oak Ridge is a community that was born in secrecy, but after World War II garnered international attention. In addition to the scientific achievements of the local plants, the community itself took major steps during the town's first 20 years. Residents became homeowners, the gates were opened to the outside public, and civil rights activists achieved integration in schools and public facilities.

[210] Ibid., 14; Pat Riordan, "Whites Admitted but Blacks Refused in New Rink Test," *The Oak Ridger,* 13 Oct. 1969, 1.

Chapter V

Racial Discrimination in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Across the South

The passage of the Thirteen Amendment in 1865 brought an end to slavery in the United States, but it did not stop the subjugation of blacks. Despite Reconstruction legislation designed to ensure all former slaves were granted the same privileges as whites, widespread violence against blacks was reported as they refused to "remain in their place."[211]

Reconstruction legislation included the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Acts of 1866, 1870 and 1875. The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868 and stated that no state shall deny any person the equal protection of the laws. The 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870 and allowed the right of all citizens to vote. The civil rights laws of 1866 and 1870 declared all people born in the United States were entitled to the same rights, regardless of race. This included the right to vote. The 1875 law made it a crime to discriminate against blacks in places of public accommodation.[212]

In 1883, the Supreme Court found the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, declaring that Congress did not have the power to regulate the conduct and transactions of individuals. Southern states began passing laws restricting blacks from public areas, posting "Whites Only" and "Colored" signs

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[211] William J. Wilson, *Power, Racism, and Privilege: Race Relations in Theoretical and Sociohistorical Perspectives* (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1973), 100-102.

[212] Herbert Hill and Jack Greenberg, *Citizen's Guide to Desegregation: A Study of Social and Legal Change in American Life* (Boston: The Beacon Press: Boston, 1955), 7-8; Lillie Johnson Edwards in *Encyclopedia of African American Civil Rights: From Emancipation to the Present*, Charles D. Lowery and John F. Marszalek, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 186, 198.

at restrooms and waiting rooms. These Jim Crow laws enabled southern states to keep blacks from attending white schools and voting. [213]

In 1896, Homer Plessy, who was one-eighth black and seven-eighths white, refused to travel in a railway coach for blacks while on his way from New Orleans to Covington, Louisiana. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* allowed for segregated public facilities under the "separate but equal" doctrine.[214] In the late 1800s, states began imposing voter registration restrictions such as literacy tests to keep blacks from voting. They did not violate the 15th Amendment because they applied to all voters; however, there were loophole provisions for white citizens who were unable to read. Widespread use of intimidation and violence also diminished black political participation.[215]

It is believed the first slaves were brought into Tennessee in 1766, and in 1796 the population of Tennessee was 65,339, of which 12 ½ percent were slaves. It was the only Confederate state to accept President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1873 and abolish slavery on its own. The amended Constitution of the State of Tennessee was adopted Feb. 22, 1865.[216]

Despite this, blacks were not treated equally. In 1875, legislation gave owners of public accommodations the right to refuse service to anyone in the same manner as "any private person over his private house." In 1881, a bill was passed requiring railroad companies to provide separate facilities for blacks.[217] In 1884, Ida B. Wells Barnett bought a first-class ticket to make a 10-mile railroad trip.

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[213] Hill, 9.
[214] Ibid.
[215] William Wilson, 100-102.
[216] Caleb Perry Patterson, *The Negro in Tennessee*, 2nd ed. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 11, 198.
[217] Lester Lamon, *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791-1970*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 58-59.

After refusing to remain in the "smoking" car, she was ejected from the train. In 1887, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the railroad had done all it could by offering equal accommodations to "that mulatto woman."[218]

Blacks in Tennessee were kept from having much political influence. There were complicated registration procedures and poll tax requirements. With no help in reading or casting the ballots as well as being subjected to white interpretation of the laws, many blacks did not vote.[219] Just in case blacks forgot their "place" in society, the Ku Klux Klan was there to terrorize them. Blacks in Tennessee had conducted their own schools during the Civil War and continued to do so afterward. The KKK burned their schools, and harassed teachers and black families.[220]

By the mid-20th century, the dissatisfaction with the country that was supposed to have been built on the ideals of freedom and democracy was becoming too much to bear. During World War II blacks were drafted into the armed forces just as whites, but they were forced to serve in segregated units. Many of them believed in the "Double V" campaign, which stood for victory of fascism abroad and discrimination at home.[221] In his influential 1944 book, *An American Dilemma*, Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal emphasized the idea that the wartime rhetoric about freedom and democracy ran against the policies that citizens of the United States had adopted. Democratic gains for blacks at home

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[218] Ibid., 38-39; Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 231-323.
[219] Lamon, 59.
[220] Ibid., 39.
[221] Dierenfield, 16.

did not come easily.[222] He wrote that previous wars had brought some gains for blacks. World War I, as one example, provided blacks with opportunities to work in the Northern industry. But the effects of World War II on their lives back home remained to be seen.

Oak Ridge resident Nelson Stephens understood firsthand the hypocrisy practiced in the United States. He knew there was no such thing as separate but equal. As a black man who had just graduated from college, he was drafted into the Army and fought in Europe during World War II. After serving in the United States military for four years, he returned home and was forced to use segregated facilities. Sixty years later Stephens still struggled to find the words to describe how he felt. "At that time it was the kind of thing that hurt, but a little more than hurt," he said.[223]

Pressure on the government from black leaders helped to change the racist practices of the country. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, a top black union leader who was president of the National Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, suggested blacks march on Washington, D. C. to protest racial discrimination and military segregation in the nation's defense plants.[224] President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in which he stated, "There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries of government because of race, creed, color or national origin."[225]

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[222] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Vol. II (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1944,1996), 755, 997.

[223] Nelson Stephens, interview by author, 17 Feb. 2005, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

[224] William H. Chafe, "The Social Politics of Race and Gender" in Robert Griffith, ed. *Major Problems in American History Since 1945*, (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1992), 32.

[225] Johnson and Jackson, 175.

In Oak Ridge, blacks working on the Manhattan Project were discriminated against in the areas of housing, education and public accommodations. Despite their work on a federal project, they were not treated any differently than other blacks in the South.

Black citizens in Oak Ridge accounted for a small percentage of the population. According to the 1950 census, the population of Oak Ridge was 30, 229. The nonwhite population accounted for 1,202 residents.[226] The census for 1960 recorded the total population as 27,169, with nonwhite citizens accounting for 1,383 residents.[227] In 1970, the population was recorded as 28,319 with the total "Negro" population being 1,571.[228]

The remaining portion of this chapter will further detail the efforts of Oak Ridgers to desegregate their community during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Events of national importance are also detailed as they too were important to the work of integrationists in Oak Ridge.

Housing

The federal government's practice was to "conform with the laws and social customs of the state and local communities in which federal institutions are located."[229] Because segregation was accepted in East Tennessee, the government housed black workers in segregated living quarters called Scarboro Village. Blacks were relegated to living in hutments, 16 ft. by 16 ft. buildings usually

[226] Census of Population 1950: Characteristics of the Population, Vol. 2, Part 42, TN, 63.
[227] Census of Population 1960: Characteristics of the Population, Vol. 1, Part 44, TN., 179.
[228] Census of Population 1970: Characteristics of the Population, Vol. 1, Part 44, TN., 289.
[229] Steele, "A New Hope," 2.

shared by four people. [230] As many as 77 families shared the three bathhouses in the area. The hutments were built without a foundation or windows. One resident referred to her hutment as a "chicken coop."[231]

In addition to segregated housing, Scarboro residents were overcharged for groceries. The prices at the grocery store for blacks averaged about 25 percent above Jackson Square prices. Jackson Square was the main shopping center for Oak Ridge. Because many of the Scarboro residents had no transportation, they were unable to shop where the prices were lower.[232]

A Colored Camp Council was formed to help gain better housing. Residents requested family housing, such as family hutments and prefabricated housing. In 1944 some of the hutments were converted into family-dwelling units by taking three huts and placing them together in a row.[233]

When the Atomic Energy Commission assumed control of Oak Ridge after the war ended in 1945, it continued the policy of racial segregation. In 1949, 77 families were living in hutments, as the new "colored community" had not yet been built by the AEC.[234] When new homes became available to blacks in the early 1950s the homes still were in an area isolated from white communities in Oak Ridge.[235]

Small battles were won during the 1950s. In June 1955, a black technical employee, Charles Hargrave, rented a room in the previously whites-only

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[230] Olwell, "The History," 135.
[231] "It's About Time — But It's Not Enough," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 April 1949, 1.
[232] Ibid., 1.
[233] Johnson and Jackson, 113-114.
[234] Olwell, "The History," 136.
[235] Sue Ellen Hudson, "A Town's Incorporation" in Overholt, 313.

Cambridge Hall dormitory. During the next two years, two black workers moved into the Brick Apartments.[236] Also in 1955, the Oak Ridge Disposal Bill allowed the AEC to sell houses and land in Oak Ridge, and by 1958 all houses in the city were owned by private citizens.[237] Now in private hands, some subdivisions promised potential homebuyers that blacks would not be allowed to purchase homes in the area.[238]

Nelson Stephens and his wife Kathleen moved their family to Oak Ridge in 1955. The previous year, Nelson began working at Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies (ORINS), which later became Oak Ridge Associated Universities, in the medical division in basic biochemical research. They lived in a duplex in the black neighborhood. Even though the housing was better than the hutments, their duplex was smaller than those in the white neighborhoods. The Stephens family ultimately purchased the building they lived in and converted it into one home. In 1969, they became one of the first black families to move out of Scarboro when they bought a home in the previously all-white area of Emory Valley. They had six children and wanted to have plenty of room as well as a nice yard for the children to play. Still living there in 2005, they recalled being welcomed into the community by white neighbors.[239]

The Stephens family was involved in the Civil Rights Movement and Kathleen served as the chairperson of the local chapter of CORE. She said such progress made in Oak Ridge was because of pressure on the "powers that be." In

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[236] Peelle, 7.
[237] "Historical," Section E, 34.
[238] Peelle, 8.
[239] Kathleen Stephens, interview by author, 17 Feb. 2005, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

1965 the city council passed the Equal Housing Ordinance, which applied to rental property.[240] CORE, which was a direct action group, tested to make sure people were treated fairly when looking for an apartment.

"What we did in some cases was to have a white person call to see whether or not the apartment was available and if, yes, it was available, they gave all the information. And then when a black went to see about getting that house or apartment, sorry, it was gone. So there were so many different facets of desegregation. Pressure had to be brought to bear on those persons responsible in order to see they would open up," she said.[241]

School Desegregation

In 1946, the Oak Ridge school board hired Robert Officer and his wife to organize a school in Scarboro for black students.[242] School officials offered a paid staff of 2 ½ teachers.[243] Materials at the school were not the same quality as other neighborhood schools. [244] The Scarboro School usually had more students than desks, too few teachers, and not enough money to offer art, music and physical education.[245] Black students who attended high school went to Knoxville until 1950 when volunteers started a high school in Oak Ridge for them. Parents had to pay for their children's transportation to schools in other cities.[246]

In December 1953, Waldo Cohn, chairman of the town's advisory council, proposed a resolution to desegregate Oak Ridge Schools. The resolution said the

[240] Smyser, 135.
[241] Kathleen Stephens, interview.
[242] Peelle, 2.
[243] Peelle, 3.
[244] Oak Ridge Board of Education. "Proposal Regarding School Board Grant Program on School Desegregation Problem." 23 March 1965, 3.
[245] Peelle, 3.
[246] Kathleen Stephens, interview.

segregation practice "contravenes in spirit both the principle that all men are created equal and the conviction of President Eisenhower that federal funds should not be expended on projects practicing racial segregation." The resolution passed on a vote of 4-2. Those who voted against it said they did not disagree with its principle, but the council did not discuss it with other Oak Ridge officials sufficiently before voting on it.[247]

Although residents came from across the country, many of the hourly employees at the plant were from the South and upset at the resolution. The Citizens Action Committee — an anti-Cohn group — formed and circulated a petition asking for a recall vote to remove Cohn from the council. The petition said Cohn no longer adequately represented the people of Oak Ridge because of his support for the resolution.[248] About 100 people attended the next town council meeting, where the council passed another resolution rescinding the pro-integration resolution. Cohn continued to support school desegregation.[249]

The new resolution required the council to set up a committee to study such an issue before it votes on it. Cohn said he was concerned the second resolution would cause the AEC and the town's citizens to lose confidence in the council. Councilman E.E. Beauchamp said it was not the duty of councilmen to vote "personal philosophies but to represent the people." [250]

A vote was held to determine whether Cohn would be removed from the committee. Of the 5,417 who voted, 3,356 citizens voted for his removal while

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[247] "Council Resolution Asks AEC End School Segregation," *The Oak Ridger*, 22 Dec. 1953, 1.
[248] "Council Sets Feb. 8 Date for Recall Vote," *The Oak Ridger*, 19, Jan. 1954, 1.
[249] "Council Alters Original Stand on Segregation Issue," *The Oak Ridger*, 12 Jan. 1954, 1.
[250] Ibid.

2,061 citizens voted "no" to the recall. The total "yes" vote needed to recall Cohn was 3,612. [251] Cohn ultimately resigned, saying another chairman could expect better cooperation from all residents. He retained his council seat.[252]

The town council established a committee to study desegregation. Three subcommittees were formed to focus on legal problems, community fact-finding and school system fact-finding.[253] In August 1954, the committee recommended Oak Ridge schools remain segregated until a policy for all other Tennessee schools was established. It also asked the council "to ask religious, education, civil and social organizations to assist in asking a detailed study of the many problems associated with the possible transition of Oak Ridge schools."[254]

Brown v. Board of Education

The debate over the local school system continued until the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional. It came before the Supreme Court in the early 1950s after Oliver Brown was not allowed to send his daughter, Linda, to a white school five blocks away from their home. At that time Kansas law allowed cities of more than 15,000 people to segregate elementary schools. The suit was filed on behalf of elementary school age children in Topeka, Kansas, and it was accompanied by four other desegregation cases: *Briggs v. Elliot* (South Carolina), *Davis v. Prince Edward County School Board* (Virginia), *Bolling v. Sharpe* (District of

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[251] "Waldo Cohn Retains Town Council Seat; Total Vote, 5417, Exceeds Previous Candidate Balloting," *The Oak Ridger*, 9 Feb. 1954, 1.
[252] "Cohn to Quit as Chairman; Tells Council at Closed Meeting," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Feb. 1954, 1.
[253] "Part of Segregation Study May Soon Be Wrapped Up, *The Oak Ridger*, 11 March 1954, 1.
[254] Herb Stein, "Ridge Should Await State Integration; Study Group Tells Council," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Aug. 1954, 1.

Columbia), and *Gebhart v. Belton* (Delaware).[255] The cases came up for argument before the Supreme Court in December 1952. Thurgood Marshall, a future Supreme Court Justice and director of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, argued the cases, declaring the 14th Amendment prohibits a state from using race as a factor in providing educational opportunities to citizens.[256]

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously declared that school segregation under the "separate but equal" rule was unconstitutional. Chief Justice Earl Warren read the Court's opinion: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[257]

On May 31, 1955, in what became known as *Brown II*, Warren announced that schools must integrate "with all deliberate speed."[258] The Court did not set a deadline for all schools to be desegregated because Warren knew the schools would each have their own problems to address.[259]

Making the unanimous court decision in favor of desegregating public schools more interesting was the background of one of the justices. In his earlier days, Justice Hugo Black had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1940 he said that political rights for blacks "cannot be widely won through court actions until the white community is at least no longer violently hostile to their exercise by Negroes. No legislation can bring about overnight changes in the people's mores nor can any decisions of the Supreme Court. ..." Not only did he change his view

[255] Tushnet, 18; Riches, 23; Davis, 155.
[256] Tushnet, 20, 25; Riches, 23, 36.
[257] Newman, 438; Don Shoemaker, 1.
[258] Ed Cray, *Chief Justice: A Biography of Earl Warren* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 295.
[259] Don Shoemaker, 4.

on court-ordered school desegregation, but he disagreed with Warren's plan for implementation, saying it should be effective immediately. He questioned what the phrase "with all deliberate speed" meant.[260] The Court did not create the phrase. In his book *All Deliberate Speed*, Charles Ogletree studied its origin and determined that was a derivative of "speed thee slowly" found in Sir Thomas Elyot's 1545 introduction of the world "maturity" into the English language.[261]

Marshall had called for the court to issue a decree for desegregation to be complete by September 1955.[262] Warren felt that separating its principle from its enforcement was important. The delay would give segregationists time to come to terms with the ruling.[263] Black ultimately went along with Warren so that the ruling would be unanimous. A unanimous decision was important to Warren because if the court appeared divided the ruling would be more difficult to execute.[264]

In addition to school officials and parents, the *Brown* decision enraged many politicians. In 1956, 97 southern congressmen signed the Southern Manifesto, charging that the decision was an abuse of power. Senators Estes Kefauver and Albert Gore and Representative J. Percy Priest of Tennessee did not sign it. Those who did sign it vowed to continue the fight against integration.[265]

The Manifesto read, in part, "We regard the decision of the Supreme Court in the school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power." It declared that neither the

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[260] Newman, 94, 427-428, 440.
[261] Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half of the Century of Brown v. Board of Education*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2004), 10-11.
[262] Howard Ball, *A Defiant Life: Thurgood Marshall and the Persistence of Racism in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1998), 136.
[263] Cray, 293.
[264] Riches, 23.
[265] Corlew, 550.

Constitution nor any Amendment mentioned education, and in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court declared that no one was denied his rights under the "separate but equal" rule. "This interpretation, restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the States and confirmed their habits, customs, traditions, and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and common sense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children."[266]

Although most major newspapers did not take a stand in favor or against the decision, most of those that did take a stand approved it. The *Lexington Press* wrote that the decision came as no surprise to Tennesseans because "by any and all standards we live by — those of our Constitution...Christianity, and even those leading to the settlement of our country — segregation was doomed."[267]

Oak Ridge High School Desegregates

During the fall of 1954, Dr. Bertis E. Capehart, acting superintendent of Oak Ridge schools, asked principals and teachers to discuss what problems might be involved in desegregation. "We don't know when integration might come," he said. "It might be in a year, it might be three years, or it might be a lot longer than that. But we feel that it is a good idea to talk about these things now so that we will be ready when the time comes."[268]

Oak Ridge schools at this time were still under federal control, and the AEC announced in January 1955 that the public schools in Oak Ridge would be

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[266] Peter B. Levy, ed., *Documentary History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement*, (Westport, CT: 1992. Greenwood Press, 1992), 212-213.
[267] Robert Corlew, *Tennessee: A Short History*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 550.
[268] "Integration Studied in Effort to be Ready," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Dec. 1954, 1.

desegregated in September. Capehart made the desegregation announcement on Jan. 11, 1955 at a monthly meeting of the Parents' Advisory Council. Capehart told the 21-member council that in carrying out the reorganization the following principles would be applied:

1. Pupils will not be favored nor discriminated against because of race or color.
2. School district boundary lines will be strictly adhered to without reference to race.
3. All appointments of teachers (or other personnel) will be based on merit and not on race or color. [269]

Oak Ridge High School opened in fall 1955 with 1,500 students, 40 of them black.[270] Oak Ridge was the first community in the state to comply with the Supreme Court decision, and photographers from *Life* magazine were there taking pictures.[271] High school principal T. H. Dunigan greeted students saying:

> "I shall strive to see all individuals first as human beings and respond to their personalities before responding to their race, color or religion. Note I did not say we should ignore race. It is a reality to be considered, but it should not come before all other considerations."[272]

About 75 people attended a two-hour meeting of Oak Ridgers for Segregation to discuss how to protest school integration. Among the ideas were to picket the high school, keep their children out of school and put pressure on school officials to remove a black teacher at the high school. C. A. Golden, head of the organization, said the low number of students being kept out of school discouraged him. He said he went to school on the first day and found the

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[269] Herb Stein. "Local Schools Integrate in Fall," *The Oak Ridger*, 12 Jan. 1955, 1.
[270] Peelle, 4.
[271] Plant, Sandra Whitten, "Integration of Oak Ridge High School," in Overholt, 386-387.
[272] "7,100 Pupils Enroll Today," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1955, 1.

auditorium "overflowing" with students. He said they needed to have at least 50 percent of the students absent to get noticed. Golden criticized the AEC for integrating the schools as soon as it did because it was more than the Supreme Court decision demanded. He said the court's ruling was not based on law, and the hiring of a black teacher for white schools was more than the NAACP had requested. Golden also criticized the police who had patrol cars cruising around the schools on opening day.[273]

One citizen at the meeting said, "I'm not opposed to Negro teachers as long as they're kept in their place. But I am against the white people who are so strong for the Negroes. The white people are more involved in this than the Negroes." He added that during the teacher introductions on the first day of school, the applause for the one black teacher, Fred Brown, was louder than for any of the other teachers. Brown taught industrial arts at the high school.[274]

Despite rumors of planned pickets and circulars distributed urging parents to keep their children out of school, students entered school with little protest from community members. Members of Oak Ridgers for Segregation met for a few weeks to discuss the issue, but ultimately they admitted their plans to keep schools segregated had failed.[275]

Extracurricular Activities at Oak Ridge

Even though the high school had desegregated, blacks did not have equal opportunities to participate in activities. In 1956 and 1957, the Prom Festival

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[273] "Group Considers Integration Protest," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 Sept. 1955, 1.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Peelle, 5.

Committee made plans to hold separate after-prom parties for black and white students. The parties were planned independently of the school system by parents. Both years, black students declined the committee's offer to provide a separate party and requested that their share of the money be donated to charity. Criticism ultimately led the parents to discontinue the post-prom parties.[276]

"They didn't want blacks and whites dancing together. See, all of this always went back to the fact that the white man does not want his daughter to be involved with a black boy. It always went back to that and that's one of the things that controlled the thinking of people who were in power or who were making the rules and regulations," Kathleen Stephens said.[277]

Simple activities such as picnics brought great turmoil. Before integration, graduating seniors had always participated in "Skip Day," which allowed the students to attend a picnic at a state park instead of attending class. Because only two state parks were open to blacks, the black seniors were not included in the event. In the early 1960s, after receiving complaints, the school decided to discontinue Skip Day rather than hold the picnic in a place where all students could attend.[278]

Athletics was another point of contention. For the first several years there were very few blacks on the teams. The high school did not keep records on the integration of extracurricular activities, but *The Oak Ridger* in a 1977 article listed Fred Guinn as the first black letterman at Oak Ridge High School. He played

[276] Ibid., 12.
[277] Kathleen Stephens, interview.
[278] Ibid.

basketball in 1956. From 1958-1963 there were no black athletes playing for the Wildcats. Rufus Shepherd in 1965 became the first black baseball player for Oak Ridge High School. Ken Land, Perry Anthony and Larry Hodge broke the color barrier in track in 1967. The same year, Land and LeRoy White became the first black players on the football team.[279]

While blacks could play on basketball teams at Oak Ridge, when the team traveled to a school that did not allow blacks to play, Oak Ridge's black players had to either stay home or sit on the bench.[280] As a former basketball player at Oak Ridge High School, Willie Golden has memories of watching his teammates travel to games where he was not welcome. Golden's family moved from Auburn, Alabama, to the Scarboro community when he was about 2 years old. He attended Scarboro Elementary School, Robertsville Junior High School and entered Oak Ridge High School in 1963.[281]

While at Robertsville he participated in basketball, football and track. He became the first sophomore to play on the varsity basketball team, but could not play in away ballgames.[282]

The school board in 1963 voted not to schedule games in which opposing schools objected to black players participating.[283] None of their basketball opponents cancelled contracts because of the new policy.[284]

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[279] "'Same As Any City' Say Youths," The *Oak Rider*, 25 Feb. 1977, 1, 6.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Willie Golden, interview.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Craig Owen, "School Board Reelects Dr. Bigelow, Sets Policy on Negro Athletes," *The Oak Ridger*, 18 June 1963, 1.
[284] "Negro Athletic Policy is Working Out Well," *The Oak Ridger*, 5 Dec. 1963, 1.

In 1965 Golden was elected captain of the basketball team becoming the first black to captain a varsity sport at Oak Ridge High School. Tennessee at one time had two separate basketball tournaments — one for black high schools and one for white high schools. In 1966, Golden became one of the first black players to participate in a state championship.[285]

"Now I'm not saying it was a very great experience [playing in those away games]," he said. "There were some ugly times and name calling and [being] spat on and things thrown at you and these type of things, and parents made some statements and comments within the stands themselves."

He continued by sharing some of the experiences on the court. "In basketball terminology, you're on the backboard and you're trying to get set for a rebound. All of a sudden you feel an elbow here or an elbow there and you know it's a foul, and you see the official just standing there. You think 'Aren't you going to call something?' You wind up as a kid you had to make two moves. One move to make my shot and one move to duck whatever else was coming. [You ask yourself] Are your legs going to be cut from under you? Are you going to be run into the wall if you shoot a shot? Is someone going to take a cheap shot as you jump into the air and cut your legs and as you come back down all of a sudden you've fallen on your backside. Those are the type of things you have to be cognizant of. It's not just about playing a sport. It's about protection too."[286]

After graduation, Golden attended Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Golden got teary eyed in 2005 when recalling his visit to the historically black

[285] Golden, interview.
[286] Ibid.

college. "There was just something warm about it and somewhere I wanted to be … I was just tired. I was tired of being the only one. I just wanted to be a regular student," he said.[287]

Clinton Violence

Opposition to desegregation in Oak Ridge would prove to be minor compared to what occurred in nearby Clinton, Tennessee, the county seat of Anderson County. Clinton was the first court-ordered school desegregation in Tennessee.[288] At the same time Oliver Brown was seeking justice for his daughter, black families were doing the same in Anderson County. In 1952, *McSwain v. Anderson County Board of Education* was decided against blacks as they attempted to integrate schools. The case went to the Court of Appeals in Cincinnati until the *Brown* case was decided.[289] On Jan. 4, 1956, a federal court order required that blacks be allowed to attend Clinton High School beginning the next academic year.[290]

David James Brittain, 39, was principal of the school. Despite being against integration, he followed the court's ruling. He maintained his resolve during the 10 days of mob violence, which included burning crosses, threatening telephone calls and malicious anonymous letters.[291]

"I could not have lived with myself the rest of my life if I had done anything in this that I felt was wrong," he said. "It's clear-cut. You either obey the law or you don't. You're a law-abiding citizen or you're not. And I did not have to

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[287] Ibid.
[288] Jan Avent, "Clinton Bombing Left Some Feeling Cheated," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 2 Oct. 1988, A1.
[289] Adamson, "Few," 337.
[290] Don Shoemaker, 8.
[291] "The Principal in the Middle," *Newsweek*, 17 Sept. 1956, 72.

compromise my sentiments because after the court decision it was the law of the land."[292]

There were attempts by the Anderson County Federation for Constitutional Government to halt desegregation of Clinton High School, but plans to integrate the school in 1956 started fairly smoothly. Registration of students occurred without any violence. It was when John Kasper of New Jersey arrived in Clinton that emotions got out of control. Kasper, 26, was the executive secretary of the white supremacist group Seaboard White Citizens Council. Kasper told Brittain that he expected him to "get the niggers out." Despite harassing phone calls, Brittain continued with desegregation plans. Kasper went door to door to recruit protestors, heightening their anxiety about desegregation.[293] Clinton Mayor W. E. Lewallen and H. V. Wells, Jr., editor and publisher of the *Courier-News* met with Kasper, asking him not to cause trouble. They told him they preferred segregation, but it was now necessary to follow the law.[294]

On Monday, Aug. 26, the first day of school, there were only a handful of protestors as 12 black students and 715 white students entered the high school. In the following days Kasper spoke to more citizens and played on their emotions. The number of protestors grew while the number of students attending school decreased. When Kasper was served with a restraining order, Asa Carter, a leader of Birmingham's White Citizen Council, arrived to speak to the crowd of segregationists. Within a few days, the crowd had grown to such dangerous

[292] Ibid., 72.
[293] Ibid.; Valerie Marie Hulett Herd. "The Desegregation of Clinton High School: Then and Now." (Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1995), 37-39; Lana Carmen Seivers. "Words of Discrimination, Voices of Determination: Reflections on the Desegregation of Clinton High School." (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 2002), 65-67.
[294] Graham, 93.

proportions that local authorities could not control it. On Aug. 30, about 2,000 people who were leaving a local football game joined the 1,500 already assembled around the town square to protest the integration. As the crowd became more agitated, cars were rocked and overturned, and tires were slashed. A state of emergency was declared and Gov. Frank Clement ordered more than 600 National Guardsmen to the area. Outdoor public speaking was restricted to help calm the atmosphere. After the Labor Day weekend, school attendance dropped to 200. By the following weekend there were still 250 troops patrolling the area. On Sept. 11, the Guard withdrew.[295]

School attendance slowly increased, but harassment continued for the black students and white adults who supported them throughout the school year. On Dec. 4, 1956, The Rev. Paul Turner was beaten by a mob of segregationists after he escorted a group of black students to school. Afterward, school was closed for five days.[296]

Wells warned residents of how Kasper's efforts would affect them economically. He said that membership fees to segregationist organizations would line Kasper's pockets. "This is a democracy — if 803 students and their parents are willing to accept the ruling of the court and attend school, then the majority certainly has ruled and that should be the final decision." That same day a crowd of 200 hurled tomatoes at black students as they left school.[297]

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[295] Adamson, "Few," 338-341; Seivers, 71-78.
[296] Edward R. Murrow, "Clinton and the Law," *See It Now*, CBS News. 6, Jan. 1957.
[297] Graham, 96.

At the May 17, 1957 graduation ceremony, Bobby Cain became the first black student to graduate from Clinton High School. After receiving his diploma, someone turned the off the lights and Cain was hit. He never learned who struck him. There continued to be sporadic violence during the next two years. On Oct. 5, 1958, a series of explosions tore through the high school. It was reported that approximately 100 sticks of dynamite had been placed throughout the building.[298]

Little Rock Nine

In other parts of the South, similar violence occurred. In 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus posted members of the National Guard in front of Central High School in Little Rock to keep black students from entering as a mob of segregationists threatened them. Little Rock had begun to integrate state colleges in the 1940s, but Faubus, who was trying to win a third term, promised segregationists that he would not "mix the races."[299]

Prior to the new school year, 75 of the 517 black students in the district sought admission to the high school. Basing their selections on "health, character and intelligence," school officials narrowed it down to 25. After school board members discouraged their families, more students dropped out of the running. Those who remained became known as the "Little Rock Nine." They were Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls, Minniejean Brown, Gloria Ray, Thelma Mothershed and Melba Pattillo.[300]

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[298] Adamson, "Few," 334, 337; Herd, 53; Seviers, 225.
[299] Dierenfield, 30. Allen Kifer, "Little Rock Crisis," in Lowery, 318-319.
[300] Dierenfield, 30.

On the night of Sept. 2, as the "Little Rock Nine" were preparing for their first day of school, a newspaper reporter came to the door of Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas NAACP, asking whether she was aware of the National Guardsmen assembling at Central High. She drove by the school and saw the Guardsmen arriving as if preparing for battle. "Men in full battle dress — helmets, boots, and bayonets — were piling out of the trucks and lining up in front of the school."[301]

Faubus announced on television that it would "not be possible to restore order and maintain order ... if forcible integration is carried out tomorrow." He ordered National Guardsmen to stand watch outside the school — to act as soldiers, not help with the integration.[302] Faubus said, "Blood will run in the streets" if the students tried to attend Central High.[303]

Plans were made to integrate the school on Sept. 4.[304] Unbeknownst to Eckford, the meeting place had changed, and she showed at the school alone. At 8:15 a.m., Bates was driving to the meeting place when a radio report announced, "A Negro girl is being mobbed at Central High." Eckford later explained that as she got off the bus that morning she saw a large group of people standing across the street. After they saw her she heard someone shout, "Here she comes, get ready!" She was not aware at that time of the danger she was in because she thought the Guardsmen would protect her. However, when she tried to pass them to enter the school they raised their bayonets. "They glared at me with a mean

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[301] Daisy Bates, "The Long Shadow of Little Rock," in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990.* Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding and Darlene Clark Hine, eds. (New York: Viking, 1991), 97.
[302] Sanford Wexler, *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History*, (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 89.
[303] Bates, 98.
[304] Ibid., 99.

look, and I was frightened and didn't know what to do. I turned and the crowd came toward me." As the crowd yelled, "Lynch her! Lynch her!" there were at least a couple of white people who tried to help her. A man told her, "Don't let them see you cry," and a woman put her on the bus and rode with her to Eckford's mother's workplace.[305]

Eisenhower met with Faubus to no avail while Faubus kept the guardsmen at the school. When Faubus was ordered by a judge to remove the guardsmen, he replaced them with city policemen. On Sept. 23, Central High opened with a thousand whites protesting.[306] The nine entered the school via an alternate entrance. The mob was enraged and rushed into the school, yelling, "The niggers are inside!" Police couldn't hold back the mob, and the students had to be removed. Eisenhower ordered National Guardsmen and troops from the 101st Airborne to protect the nine students. They were taken to school in a convoy of Jeeps carrying machine guns. The guard remained there throughout the year. The nine students still were harassed, as the troops were not allowed in some places, such as locker rooms and the cafeteria. One student, Minniejean Brown was expelled February 1958 for fighting back when she was harassed.[307] On May 29, 1958, though, Ernest Green became the first black to graduate from Central High School.[308]

The events during the 1957-58 school year were not the last violence to be seen at Central High School. On Sept. 27, 1958, the public schools in Little Rock

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[305] Ibid., 103; Wexler, 89.
[306] Diereinfield, 32.
[307] Dierenfield 33-35; Riches, 27.
[308] Dierenfield, 35.

were closed after citizens voted against integration. On Aug. 12, 1959, the public high schools opened with four black students attending. On Sept. 7, segregationists bombed the school board office.[309]

Public Accommodations

In addition to school integration, Oak Ridge residents faced difficulties in using other public facilities. During World War II, there were no serious racial outbreaks in Oak Ridge, although minor disturbances were reported. There had been reports in the summer of 1944 that "white passengers had treated blacks roughly, and blacks complained that bus drivers had sometimes refused to pick them up."[310] After World War II, segregation groups made their presence known. On at least one occasion, crosses were burned at the edge of town and flyers and stickers reading "Yesterday, Today and Forever — The Ku Klux Klan," littered the town.[311]

The next decade saw only small improvements. The public library, playgrounds, tennis courts and hospital were open to all, regardless of race.[312] In May 1955, the public swimming pool desegregated as a group of black children showed up on opening day. AEC officials said the pool had never been segregated. Rather, blacks had never asked to use it. They said this was also the reason that blacks did not live in any other areas of Oak Ridge. They had never asked to live anywhere else.[313] In August 1955, the bus system desegregated. Previously, buses taking employees to the plants carried either whites or blacks.

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[309] Wexler, 95-96.
[310] Johnson and Jackson, 115.
[311] "KKK Burns Cross on Clinton Street," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 March 1949, 1.
[312] Richard Smyser, "City Makes New Moves Toward Desegregation," *The Oak Ridger* 25 June 1963, 1-2.
[313] Smyser, 133.

Buses on routes within the city required blacks to sit in the back. It took longer for other services to integrate. When an owner of a drive-in was a candidate for area political office, Scarboro residents were informed that his theatre would be open to all. Shortly after election, the policy reverted to "whites only."[314]

Even though blacks knew it was not fair, it was not always obvious how to go about making changes. "As you're growing up you get accustomed to certain things, whether you believe it's right or wrong. I grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. There were only two black families on the street where I lived. Blacks and whites played together and when you got to a certain age your ways parted. I think the socialization had a lot to do with that and it was just a natural thing. I went my way and they went their way. ... It's just a way of life, and I think maybe even though there are things that you want to change you're not sure about how to do it," Kathleen Stephens said.[315]

In October 1959, as a result of discrimination against some of their members, a group of 21 visiting scientists attending the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies signed a petition urging local restaurants, hotels and other public facilities to open their services to all citizens. The Unitarian Public Affairs Committee invited other church and civil groups to work together to end segregation in public commercial services, and they formed the Oak Ridge Federation for Equal Public Services (ORFEPS).[316] Winston Lockett, one of CORE's field workers, came to

[314] Peelle, 10.
[315] Kathleen Stephens, interview.
[316] Peelle, 13.

Oak Ridge to help organize and train volunteers in how to organize and demonstrate at segregated public facilities.[317]

A Committee on Racial Relations was appointed by the City Council in March 1960, a few days after an advertisement appeared in *The Oak Ridger* placed by 14 black organizations. The ad was titled "An Appeal for Human Rights" and stated that the same conditions that resulted in sit-ins elsewhere in the nation also existed in Oak Ridge, and that they hoped they could be corrected without resorting to demonstrations.[318] The biracial committee was to study the progress made in Oak Ridge and outline problems that still exist in civil rights.[319]

Washington Butler Jr., councilman from Scarboro precinct, the city's black residential area, said he had received numerous calls "with all showing interest in resolving the problem in a constructive manner based on the principles of equality of all men and the inherent dignity of all that should be respected."[320]

Names of 1,800 Oak Ridgers who pledged to support equal public services were published in the newspaper ad. The names were collected in a door-to-door canvas of the city. Elizabeth Peelle helped organize the effort and remembered not always being received with open arms. One man in particular cursed at her and chased her down the street. Peelle and her husband Robert, who was a physicist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, were among the white citizens of

[317] Kathleen Stephens, "An Era of Change in the Secret City," (Privately published, date unknown).
[318] Peelle, 13.
[319] "Race Study Group Will Meet Saturday, " *The Oak Ridger*, 31 March 31, 1960, 1.
[320] "Racial Survey OK'd: Mayor Will Name Group," *The Oak Ridger*, 25 March 1960, 1.

Oak Ridge who participated in desegregation efforts. Peelle would later serve as chairperson of the CRC's barbershop committee.[321]

In 1961, summertime visitors reported that they might not come back after feeling unwelcome at many facilities. During their summer visit, blacks were allowed to stay in two main dormitories, but they were told not to use the main entrance or the soda machine in the waiting room. One family was not allowed to enter the Skyway Drive-In. The family members said they were made to feel "embarrassment because of our race." The next day participants were given cards listing services open to all.[322]

In its newsletter ORFEPS stated:

> "Awareness of this should fill us with determination to work harder to ensure that racial barriers are dropped in all public services in Oak Ridge before the word gets around to all potential non-white scientists, students and teachers that, unlike other government lab towns, Oak Ridge does not extend a full welcome to Negro visitors."[323]

Nelson Stephens recalled efforts to integrate the drive-in theatre. After a day of picketing, one group decided to test the theatre. They made sure that blacks were in the first cars to drive into the site. They were told they could not come in, but by that time there was a line of cars behind them. Making it worse was a baseball game had just ended, and traffic on the highway was backing up because of the long line at the theatre. Police had to be called to the scene, and because of

[321] Elizabeth Peelle, interview by author, 29 July 2004, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[322] Oak Ridge Federation for Equal Public Services. (Newsletter, August 1961).
[323] Ibid.

the uproar, the theatre's manager agreed to a meeting with CORE while the mayor served as moderator. The theatre ultimately desegregated its services.[324]

Stephens said Oak Ridge was blessed with people who were able to look at the civil rights issue in an intellectual manner rather than with political bias. One such person was Dr. William Pollard, founder of ORINS. Stephens recalled one instance when he and a black coworker signed up to play in their plant's bowling league. As the league was playing at the local bowling alley, Stephens and his friend were told they were not welcome to play. With the support of such administrators as Pollard, the bowling leagues at all of the plants withdrew play at the local facility. Eventually, a competing bowling alley moved into town and did serve integrated leagues. This led the other bowling alley to integrate.[325]

Oak Ridge Sit-ins

In the 1950s, blacks wanting to eat in downtown Oak Ridge were limited to two restaurants — McCrory's and Walgreen's. The Mayor's Committee on Race Relations arranged a one-day integration for June 4, 1960. Blacks visited nine cafeterias and were served at seven. After June 4, restaurants continued segregation policies. Davis Brothers Cafeteria, which was a part of the original strip mall in the downtown area, did not participate in the June 4 test. The next month it became the site of the first demonstration held in Oak Ridge. On July 6,

[324] Nelson Stephens, interview.
[325] Ibid.

1960, a group of about 30 people — black and white — picketed the cafeteria between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. [326]

Elizabeth Peelle's first experience picketing was in front of Davis Brothers.

"We were instructed to go in a big loop around and in front [of the restaurant], and we should not block entrances," she said. "Our own rules were no interaction with people coming in. There were some people who told us they didn't like it. Others would just try to avoid us. ... They would draw the shades so the people inside wouldn't have to see what was going on outside. It was a big threat to the established order."[327]

Stanley Davis placed an advertisement in the July 21, 1960 issue of *The Oak Ridger* explaining his restaurant's policy. It said in part:

> "I have friends who operate restaurants for Negroes. They too serve food and please their customers. This is the Southern tradition. I have many friends in the Negro race — in fact many of them are happily employed in my restaurants... I seek the friendship and goodwill of all the people in Oak Ridge, but I must continue to operate my restaurant the only way I know how to operate a restaurant — serving the best possible food at the best possible prices — against the background of our Southern traditions."

Groups of about five blacks and whites visited eight eating establishments in Oak Ridge on Aug. 13, 1960. As a result of the lack of service given by some of the restaurants, the group announced it would continue demonstrations at Davis Cafeteria and would expand to other restaurants. During the test, McCrory's and The Gourmet were the only two restaurants to serve all regardless of race.

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[326] "Pickets March at Cafeteria," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 July 1960, 1; "'Wait and See' Policy by Racial Committee," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 June 1960, 1.
[327] Elizabeth Peelle, interview.

Walgreens Drug Store served only two black customers at a time. The Alexander Hotel had a policy of serving visiting blacks associated with Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies and Oak Ridge National Laboratory or other plant programs. The Oak Terrace, Mayflower and Bill's Restaurant stated policies of segregation "until the current situation is resolved." Coles Drug had a policy of segregation, but the assistant manager said "there might be change in the future." The Charcoal Broiler, Davis Brothers Cafeteria and Ford's Restaurant stated policies of continued segregation.[328]

Nelson Stephens said in response to this: "We wanted to accomplish integration in eating places without resorting to sit-ins. We feel it is tragic that the restaurant owners have not responded to the means we have used so far. It is especially unfortunate since the people of Oak Ridge have demonstrated through advertisements and other means that integrated eating places are accepted to them. Unfortunately, there is little choice left to us; we must use the means that has proven successful in other cities." [329]

Roscoe Stephens, owner of The Oak Terrace restaurant and chairman of the Oak Ridge Restaurant Owners Association, stated despite other people implying he is in favor of integration, he refused to take sides. "It has been rumored that I have been serving Negroes since the June 4 integration test conducted in other restaurants. I have not, for economic reasons."[330]

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[328] "Mixed Groups Ask Food Service, 'Sit Ins' Now Being Planned," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Aug. 1960, 1-2.
[329] Ibid.
[330] "Stephens Statement on Race Meeting Talk," *The Oak Ridger*, 13 July 1960, 1.

In August, the city saw its first sit-in. About 15 blacks and seven whites entered the Mayflower Grill. They were not served, but remained there for almost two hours. At Cole's Drug Store, seven blacks and three whites sat at the lunch counter. A waitress informed the blacks that if they took the food out of the restaurant, they could place an order. They declined the offer, wanting to eat at the counter. The counter was closed about an hour after they arrived. Once they left, it reopened. Both restaurants had served blacks without incident during the June 4 test.[331]

By Oct. 12, 1960, it was reported that two restaurants had total integration. Three lunch counters served two blacks at a time. One restaurant served blacks in private parties. The other places maintained segregation.[332]

That fall, about 100 people attended a meeting sponsored by ORFEPS to hear comments from officials and merchants from Oak Ridge and Knoxville. The community leaders agreed that a city could not create a law requiring a private businessman to give equal service to everyone. Councilman R. A. McNees moderated the meeting and summed up the discussion by citing the major roles the city government can assume:

1. Set an example by running the city without prejudice.
2. Provide direction in organizing racial study groups.
3. Change regulations to conform to feelings of the community members.
4. Provide an example through conduct of city leaders.
5. Refuse to condone or ignore the actions of groups wishing to discriminate.
6. Experiment with the laws, passing a law as a test to determine whether the courts have modified their position enough so that the prejudice commonly accepted by all have been worn away.[333]

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[331] "City Has Its First Sit-Ins," *The Oak Ridger*, 22 Aug. 1960, 1, 4.
[332] "Racial Committee Still at Work," *The Oak Ridger*, 12 Oct. 1960, 1.
[333] "Panelists Agree: City Can't Force Integration," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 Sept. 1960, 1, 4.

It would be three years before all eating establishments in Oak Ridge were integrated. The Rev. James Spicer, chairman of the advisory board on human relations, went with McNees to Atlanta to meet with Stanley Davis. Davis was worried about what the decision to integrate would do to his cafeterias across the South. Despite this, he agreed to desegregate.

"We got a dozen angry, hateful, death-to-you type looks from people going down the cafeteria line," McNees said. "As [The Rev. Spicer] and I sat there having our first integrated lunch in the city we weren't stupid though. There were three plainclothes policemen out there."[334]

On July 26, 1963, both the advisory board and CORE announced that all Oak Ridge restaurants were open to all patrons. It had conducted tests during the weekend and blacks had been served without incident. The tests included Davis Brothers Cafeteria. The board planned to move on to other public accommodations such as laundries, roller skating rink, barber and beauty shops.[335]

Kathleen Stephens said watching events in other communities gave them strength to continue their work. "I think sometimes you need a spark to light the fire that's been smoldering. And I think when the sit-ins happened in Greensboro, North Carolina, that made us realize that we did not have to accept what was being done here and I think that really got us started toward that," she said.[336]

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[334] Hudson, 319.
[335] "All Eating Places Now Serving All," The Oak Ridger, 26 July 1963, 1; "Barber, Beauty Shop Talks Set Soon; CORE Statement," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 Aug. 1963, 1.
[336] Kathleen Stephens, interview.

Greensboro and Nashville Sit-ins

What happened in Greensboro, North Carolina, started with four students and grew to include thousands of students across the South. At 4:30 p.m., Feb. 1, 1960, four black freshmen from North Carolina A&T College sat down at the counter in the Woolworth's department store. During this time blacks were prohibited from eating with whites in such places as Woolworth's and Kresge's, even though they were allowed to shop there. The four students — David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, Jr., and Joseph McNeil — purchased school supplies, presented their receipts at the lunch counter and asked for coffee and doughnuts. They were told they could not be served there. [337]

McCain recalled the students' response: "We said, 'We just beg to disagree with you. We've in fact already been served... We wonder why you'd invite us in to serve us at one counter and deny service at another.'" They sat at the counter until the store closed. The next day, 75 students sat at the Woolworth's counter. Within a week, the movement had spread across the South.[338]

"I think it was Joseph [McNeil] who said, 'It's time that we take some action now,'" said McCain. "After selecting the technique, then we said, 'Let's go down and just ask for service.' It certainly wasn't titled a sit-in or sit-down at that time. Let's just go down to Woolworth's tomorrow and ask for service, and the tactic is going to be simply this: We'll just stay there." He said they did not expect to be served, at least not the first day. "I think Ezell [Blair Jr.] said, 'Well, you know that might be weeks, that might be months, that might be never.' And I think it

[337] Miles Wolff, *Lunch at the 5 and 10*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1990), 11-12.
[338] Ibid., 11, 12, 95; Dierenfield, 52.

was the consensus of the groups, we said, 'Well, that's just the chance we'll have to take.'"[339]

Twelve days after the Greensboro sit-in, 40 students from Nashville, Tennessee's four predominantly black colleges — Fisk University, Tennessee A&I College (now Tennessee State University), Meharry Medical College, and the American Baptist Theological Seminary — took seats at the whites-only lunch counter at the downtown Woolworth's. Led by Fisk students Diane Nash and Marion Barry, other groups went to Kress's McClellan's Grant's and Walgreens.[340]

They sat at the counters for five hours. Two days later about 200 demonstrators visited the stores. By the end of the week there were about 350 demonstrators. Police were called to Nashville lunch counters as the students were harassed both verbally and physically by whites. On Feb. 27, Nashville police arrested 79 people, 74 of them were black college students.[341]

The Nashville students had been training in the non-violent protest techniques and conducted two sit-ins before Christmas 1959. They had planned to continue the sit-ins during 1960, and the protests and Greensboro provided more motivation. James Lawson, a 31-year-old Vanderbilt University divinity student, had participated in role-play that allowed students to understand the abuse they would endure while participating in nonviolence protests. He first tried to

[339] Howell Raines, "Franklin McCain Interview," cited in Levy, 114-115.
[340] Lamon, 106-107.
[341] Graham, 194.

dissuade the Nashville students from participating because only 75 percent of them had completed nonviolent training.[342]

In addition to the sit-ins, blacks refused to shop at department stores that refused to allow them to eat at their counters. They realized that business owners would be greatly affected by the loss of revenue. In Nashville, blacks spent about $10 million a year in the downtown area alone.[343] "Your mores start to go once they start to cut into your pocket," said Nelson Stephens.[344]

Nash recalled that at her first restaurant sit-in the demonstrators were sitting calmly, but the white employees and patrons were so nervous that some broke into tears. In one instance, two black students entered the "white" ladies restroom. An older white lady rushed out of the restroom yelling "Oh, Nigras everywhere!"[345]

Nashville Mayor Ben West was criticized for not handling the situation better. West said he favored ending lunch-counter segregation, but added, "I can't tell a man how to run his business. He has got rights too." The first blacks that ate at an integrated counter in Nashville were badly beaten, but four national and two local lunch counters in Nashville desegregated peacefully on May 10.[346]

In March 1960, Knoxville College students joined others in the South and held sit-ins. Mayor John Duncan had tried to negotiate desegregation between merchants and blacks, but he was unsuccessful. Sit-ins in Knoxville were

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[342] Riches, 57; Dierenfield, 54.
[343] "Ain't Scared of Your Jails," in Judith Vecchione, director, *Eyes on the Prize*, video recording (Alexandria, VA: Blackside, Inc., 1986).
[344] Nelson Stephens, interview.
[345] "Diane Nash Interview," in Levy, 69.
[346] *Civil Rights 1960-63,* Lester A. Sobel, ed. (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1964), 10, 12, 16.

relatively peaceful, and local merchants announced on July 12, 1960 that they had plans to desegregate.[347]

By the end of 1960, sit-ins had taken place in all southern states except Mississippi with 70,000 citizens participating in 150 cities. Lunch counters across the South eventually integrated, but not before 3,600 protesters were arrested and charged with such crimes as disturbing the peace, trespassing and inciting a riot. The Greensboro Woolworth's desegregated after losing $200,000 worth of business. The entire Woolworth's chain desegregated by the end of 1961. Joseph McNeil of Greensboro said of the protestors, "I guess everybody was pretty well fed up at the same time."[348]

Laundry Pickets

Barbershops and laundry facilities were among the last facilities to cling to segregation in Oak Ridge. Civil rights workers tried to teach owners that blacks would be the same kind of clients as whites. Members of ORFEPS handed out cards to business owners saying that if they lost business because of bringing in black clients, the group would help make up that money.[349]

After negotiations failed, Oak Ridge CORE members tested Multimatic Laundry on Jefferson Circle by taking their clothes there to be washed. About eight women, both black and white, began the first demonstration at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 27, 1963. The women began washing their clothes in the facility.

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[347] Cynthia Griggs Fleming, "White Lunch Counters and Black Consciousness: The Story of Knoxville Sit-ins," in *Trial and Triumph: Essays in Tennessee African American History*, Carroll Van West, ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 368. Duncan later served as a Congressman. His son John James Duncan, Jr., also served as a member of Congress.

[348] Dierenfield, 58.

[349] Elizabeth Peelle, interview.

They had practiced how to react in the face of threats and violence, and were taught to go limp whenever the opposition tried to physically remove them.[350]

Kathleen Stephens remembers that she did not practice this particular tactic before going to Multimatic: "I was one of the ones who went to the laundry facility to wash their clothes, and when the owner came in he unplugged the washing machines, put our clothes in a basket, and threw them outside. We just sat there, and he tried to get us out. We wouldn't move, so he called some friend of his and they were going to remove us bodily. You know, as soon as he came to me and tried to pick me up, it just happened. ... I just went limp and this big man couldn't carry me out and he had to get help."[351]

Joe Young, who owned the laundry with Harlan Mabrey, said on July 29 that he had agreed to talk with CORE officials that afternoon, but since they continued picketing, he was going to tell them "no." Picketers resumed their work, sitting with their laundry and placards in the city right-of-way adjoining the self-service laundry. Their efforts were part of "a further effort to make the public fully aware not only of the unjust policy of this one facility, but also of the system of segregation now existing in Oak Ridge," Kathleen Stephens told *The Oak Ridger*.[352]

Oak Ridge police officers stood guard as a group of about 50 white youths heckled the demonstrators. No violence was reported, but Young nearly got into a

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[350] Kathleen Stephens, interview; Demonstrators March at Laundromat," *The Oak Ridger*, 29 July 1963, 1.
[351] Kathleen Stephens, interview.
[352] "Demonstrators, 1; "CORE Plans Weekend Vigil," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1963, 1, 5.

fight as a member of CORE took pictures of him emptying their clothes out of the washing machine.[353]

After being removed, CORE members began picketing the facility only to be barred by a temporary injunction obtained by the laundry owners. The injunction was served on July 29 to Kathleen Stephens as she walked in front the of laundry entrance. They continued picketing because the injunction did not ban picketing on the public right-of-way near the laundry. Klansmen arrived during the demonstrations, but the police reported no violence. Klan members put stickers on poles that said, "The Ku Klux Klan was here." They also used the facilities to wash their KKK robes.[354]

Elizabeth Peelle said she and Robert received phone calls threatening to kill their children. "Which was a pretty serious threat except we knew they hadn't been monitoring us too closely because we didn't have children yet. It was a garden variety threat to get us back in line and stop this horrible stuff we were doing," she said.[355]

She and Robert said when the Klan did arrive in Oak Ridge, the police alerted the picket captains, who in turn worked with the police on where and when they would picket. "In Oak Ridge, the police were cooperative. They would tell us to be careful not to block the entrance. They would show up to make sure everything

[353] "Klanners Wash Sheets During Vigil," *The Oak Ridger*, 9 Sept. 1963, 1
[354] Ibid.
[355] Elizabeth Peelle, interview.

was going OK. The police did their jobs, unlike some places in the South," Robert Peelle said. [356]

Floyd B. McKissick, national chairman of CORE, spoke to residents and encouraged civil rights workers to continue demonstrations "until they have exerted sufficient pressure to make whites realize that all segregation must be ended — and that pressure includes demonstrations at the Multimatic Laundry in Jefferson Circle, Oak Ridge."[357]

By July 1964, Kathleen Stephens reported, "All Laundromats and restaurants are now open without racial barriers."[358]

Oak Ridge did not see the violence that plagued Birmingham or even that of nearby Clinton. Nelson Stephens said when they would picket a business they would call the police to make sure they knew where they were going to be. Picketers wanted to make sure it would be a peaceful demonstration. [359]

The national scene did have a continued effect on black residents in the town. Willie Golden remembers the marches in Oak Ridge, and participated in some of them around Davis Brothers Cafeteria. When he attended college he met students who participated in the marches in Birmingham.

"I could look at some of those students, and you could see some of the dog bite marks and some of the bruises that were on their bodies, and it puts it all in a different perspective," he said. "I'm not saying that those feelings weren't there or

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[356] Elizabeth and Robert Peelle, interview by author, 29 July 2004, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[357] Richard Smyser, "CORE Leader Urges Continued Demonstrations," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 Sept. 1963, 1.
[358] "Jefferson Laundromat Now is Serving All," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 July 1964, 1.
[359] Nelson Stephens, interview.

prevalent in the Oak Ridge community, but to take it to the next step of violent nature I guess Oak Ridge was lucky enough that it wasn't there."[360]

Birmingham 1963

During the Civil Rights Movement, Birmingham was one of the most violent areas of the South. There had been 18 bombings in the town's black neighborhoods between 1957 and 1963, resulting in the town's nickname, "Bombingham." As civil rights workers pushed for integration, Governor George C. Wallace said during his Jan. 14, 1963, inaugural address, "In the name of the greatest people that ever trod the earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny ... and I say ... segregation now...segregation tomorrow...segregation forever."[361]

Martin Luther King Jr. believed if they could desegregate the city through nonviolent protests, it would help desegregate other cities across the South.[362] The Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, along with members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, helped lead the demonstrations. The effort was known as "Project C," standing for Confrontation.[363]

On April 3, 1963, college students conducted sit-ins at local lunch counters. As the protests continued, Public Safety Commission T. Eugene "Bull" Connor, quickly sent police officers to arrest the peaceful demonstrators. By the end of the first week, 150 people had been arrested. On Palm Sunday, April 7, a prayer

[360] Willie Golden, interview.
[361] Wexler, 161; Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformtion of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 11.
[362] Dierenfield, 77.
[363] Wexler, 162-164.

march was made through downtown Birmingham. Connor, impatient with the demonstrators, allowed police to use attacks dogs and nightsticks on them. The protestors responded by throwing rocks at police. News crews caught the violence on film, bringing national focus to the city.[364]

The city on April 10 got a state court injunction against further demonstrations, but on April 12, Good Friday, King told reporters, "We have reached the point of no return." He led about 50 protestors to city hall where Connor's police again used their dogs on them before loading them into a police van. White moderate clergy members criticized King for his actions. From his jail he replied, "I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was well-timed in the view of those who have not suffered from the disease of segregation." This was part of what would later be published as "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."[365]

May brought a new phase of the protest, the "Children's Crusade." James Bevel, who had joined SCLC in 1961 after participating in the Nashville demonstrations, reasoned that teenagers would be less fearful than adults who were afraid to participate and lose their jobs. [366]

On Thursday, May 2, more than 1,000 blacks, ranging in age from 6 to 18, marched out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and into the streets of Birmingham. Connor brought in school buses to take them away. By the end of the day, 959 children had been taken to Birmingham jails.[367]

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[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Riches, 69-70; Dierenfield, 79; Wexler, 164.
[367] Wexler, 164-166.

The next day, Connor ordered firemen to turn high-pressure water hoses on the students as they tried to leave the church. Those who were not knocked to the ground by the water hoses were struck by police swinging nightsticks or attacked by German shepherd police dogs. The dogs bit at least three students. Students were herded into police wagons and school buses and headed to jail. Shuttlesworth was hospitalized with severe bruises after being pushed against the side of a building by water jetting out of a high-pressure hose. Connor said, "I wish they'd carried him away in a hearse."[368]

On May 4, President Kennedy sent Burke Marshall, assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's civil rights division, to Birmingham to conduct negotiations. By the time he arrived, more than 2,000 demonstrators had been jailed as the police continued to use dogs, clubs and fire hoses to keep them from gathering.[369]

On May 10, 1963, a four-point settlement was reached between the civil rights leaders, mayor of Birmingham and local businesses. In the settlement, civil rights workers demanded the release of prisoners; desegregation of lunch counters, restrooms and drinking fountains in downtown within 90 days; the placement of blacks in previously all white clerical and sales positions in stores; and the establishment of permanent communication between black and white leaders. [370]

Klan members were angered by this agreement and set off bombs at the motel where King was staying and at his brother's home. Some black citizens retaliated

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[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid., 166; Levy, 115.
[370] Ibid., 167.

against police, and state troopers began randomly beating blacks. On May 12, Kennedy ordered 3,000 federal troops to Fort McClellan, 30 miles away from Birmingham. The conflict began to cool as the city's new mayor Albert Boutwell and the new city council honored the previously reached agreement. According to the Justice Department, there were at least 758 demonstrations in 186 southern cities during the 10 weeks that followed the Birmingham demonstrations.[371]

Barbershop Segregation

While Oak Ridge residents did not take it to a level of violence seen in Clinton and Birmingham, Willie Golden said for many years they took part in other forms of discrimination. "Depriving people of things in a more subtle way. Clinton was more physical and open in that 'I don't like you and I'm going to physically hurt you,' where in the Oak Ridge community, 'I won't necessarily physically hurt you. I will mentally hurt you by not affording you some of the opportunities.' That silent hurting that was in Oak Ridge goes a lot deeper and has a more psychological effect."[372]

Barbershops were among the last holdouts for segregation. The Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee formed in February 1964 after the city council defeated a public accommodations ordinance recommended by the council's human relations advisory board. [373]

"In Oak Ridge, the barbershop has recently become a symbol of reaction against integration, and perhaps it has also become a symbol of the small business

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[371] Levy, 115.
[372] Willie Golden, interview.
[373] Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee. (Report, March 1966.)

fighting against the interests of big government," said William Ramsey, CRC board member.[374]

The committee, led by Elizabeth Peelle, sent letters to residents asking for support in desegregating barbershops. Residents were asked to give their business to any barbershop that gave service regardless of race. About 1,000 customers pledged their support. It was reported that two barbers received threats from segregationists when it was rumored that they were about to serve blacks.[375]

When tests revealed that barbers still refused service to blacks, the committee drafted a new public accommodations ordinance and submitted it to the city council. The ordinance was voted down by a vote of 7-5 in March 1966.[376]

In April 1966, Ken's Barber Shop became the first in Oak Ridge to serve all regardless of race. Moore had worked for Magnavox in Greenville, Tennessee, for 10 years, but always had a desire to cut hair. He quit his job, went to barber school, and in April opened his Oak Ridge shop. He came to Oak Ridge after visiting family there. William Ramsey was married to Moore's sister Rose, and Moore decided he too liked Oak Ridge. He was approached by the Community Relations Council to learn whether he would serve blacks.[377]

"I said, 'I'll cut anybody's hair that has the money to pay for it. I don't have any customers.' So they banded together to support me to help me get a start, which I appreciated. CRC sold tickets and they could guarantee me about $75 a

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[374] Relations Council Plans Petitions to Barbershops, *The Oak Ridger*, 17 Jan. 1964, 1-2.
[375] "Ask Pledges of Patrons of Barbers," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Feb. 1964, 1; Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee. (Report, March 1966.)
[376] Community Relations Council Barbershop Committee. (Report, March 1966.)
[377] Kenneth Moore, interview by author, 19 Aug. 2005, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

week. That was for the first year to help me get started. They helped me and I helped them and it was a good deal," he recalled.[378]

There were already about 14 barbershops in Oak Ridge, but he did not get many negative comments from other barbers.[379]

"We had a barber's union and at the union meeting we had one barber here who didn't like what was going on and I said to him at the meeting, 'You shouldn't really mind it because I'm taking pressure off of you by doing this. It's none of your business what I do or mine what you do.' I think at that time a lot of the barbers wouldn't have cared to integrate their shops, but they were concerned how many of their customers might quit because of it," Moore said.[380]

Many customers who patronized his shop in the 1960s continued to do so in 2006. Tom Hill, former publisher of *The Oak Ridger*, remained a customer. Founding editor of *The Oak Ridger*, the late Richard Smyser, also was a customer from the beginning. [381]

Public Accommodations Ordinance

As demonstrations were conducted to protest segregated cafeterias, local organizations were making statements in support of equal access to facilities.

On June 6, 1963, Oak Ridge Town Council adopted a resolution declaring Oak Ridge a "City of Equal Opportunity." Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce on May 27, 1963, passed a resolution asking all businesses to desegregate

[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.

immediately.[382] However, there was no law that required businesses to serve all races. The Human Relations Advisory Board in 1963 drafted a public accommodations ordinance, which would require restaurants, retail stores, laundry facilities and establishments providing personal services to serve all customers regardless of race.[383]

At the December 1963 town council meeting, 211 people attended to hear the council discuss the ordinance. Alvin Weinberg, director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, favored the law. He said Oak Ridge had no choice but to pass the law if it was to become a scientific center of the world, equal in every way to places such as Berkeley and Princeton. Resident Jack McKinney said the ordinance would cost too much money to enforce. "I would rather see the money spent on recreation. And I also note that the country club is exempted [from inclusion in the ordinance]," he said. After hearing all comments, the council voted to postpone action on the ordinance.[384]

On Jan. 2, 1964, the public accommodations ordinance was on the council's agenda, and this time the council took action. Some council members had issue with the wording of the ordinance while others wanted to remove references to barber and beauty shops from the ordinance. It was argued that the ordinance would be of no value because restaurants were already integrated, and it would

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[382] "City Council Unanimously Endorses 'City of Equal Opportunity,'" *The Oak Ridger*, 7 June 1963, 1.

[383] Gene O'Bleness, "Councilmen Favor, Discussion of Anti-Discrimination Ordinance, *The Oak Ridger*, 9 Oct. 1963, 1; "Here's Text of Proposed Ordinance," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 Dec. 1963, 1.

[384] Gene O'Bleness, "After 'Town Meeting,' Council Puts Off Accommodations Action 8-4," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Dec. 1963, 1.

apply only to the laundry facility. The ordinance was defeated in a 5-4 vote with two councilmen abstaining and one councilman absent.[385]

Three years later, the ordinance was still being debated. On Aug. 22, 1967, the Community Relations Council sent a telegram to Rep. Thomas Morris, chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy's subcommittee on legislation. A public hearing was scheduled the next day in Washington to discuss extension of financial assistance from the AEC to Oak Ridge. Funding was set to expire June 30, 1969, and the hearing was to determine whether to extend it to June 30, 1979. CRC wanted legislators to know the discrimination that still existed in Oak Ridge before it determined to provide additional money.[386]

The next month a group of 20 black youths attended a council meeting to urge passage of the ordinance. They explained they had been to Myers Brothers Skating Rink and were told they could not skate. "The operator said we weren't going to skate and started to turn loose a dog and asked his wife to get his shooting tools. They then started to close the windows and turn out the lights," said Paul White, chairman of the Community Relations Council's public accommodations subcommittee, who was with the youths.[387] Two nights before the ordinance was to be discussed by the town council, tests were conducted at a local barbershop and tavern. The interracial group was refused haircuts. They were allowed to buy potato chips at the tavern, but not beer.[388]

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[385] Gene O'Bleness, "Council Defeats Bias Law, Hopes for Talks," *The Oak Ridger*, 3 Jan. 1964, 1.
[386] "Raise Racial Issue on AEC City Aid," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1967, 1.
[387] "Negro Youths Ask Ordinance," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Sept. 1967, 1.
[388] "Tests Fail on Eve of Accommodations Vote," *The Oak Ridger*, 4 Oct. 1967, 1-2.

In early October 1967, the public accommodations ordinance passed by a 7-5 vote. It was aimed specifically at the barber and beauty shops, beer taverns and three recreational facilities in the city — the last remaining business that refused to serve all races. The vote came immediately after the ordinance was read with no discussion.[389] After the ordinance went into affect, tests were conducted with little resistance. The last holdout was the local skating rink.

Segregation at the Skating Rink

In 1969, the manager of the local skating rink became the first person to be charged under the city's public accommodations ordinance. On Oct. 11, 1969, a group of 25 residents — black and white — tried to use the facilities, and all but the four whites were refused. Douglas A. Morrow, operator of the rink, wrote a letter to the editor saying that he agreed to allow private parties that could be biracial, to be determined by those who booked the party. He contended that the Community Relations Committee had never booked a party, but had instead tried to crash other private parties.[390]

The skating rink had been an issue for years, refusing to let blacks skate and threatening violence if they did not leave. A warrant was served on Morrow in October 1969 for violating the public accommodations ordinance. Morrow went before the city council to plead his case, but discussion became heated when he referred to city attorney Luther Reed as "Martin Luther Reed." He then said the rink was closed to the public and instead was being used by the 2,800 members of

[389] "Accommodations Law Final, Effective Oct. 15," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Oct. 1967, 1.
[390] Douglas Morrow, "Letter to the Editor," *The Oak Ridger*, 25 Nov. 1969, 8; "Harassment Should Wait Court Verdict—Manager," *The Oak Ridger*, 13 Oct. 1969, 1.

the Rebel Skating Club. He argued that the ordinance did not include private clubs.[391]

Morrow found loopholes in the public accommodations ordinance to keep from adhering to it. It was first found ineffective because it did not have all of the required signatures. Then it had not been properly advertised in the newspaper. The charges against the rink were dropped because the violations occurred while the ordinance was invalid.[392] Ultimately, the skating rink closed rather than serve all people regardless of race. A new skating rink opened, serving all members of the public.[393]

Summary

Oak Ridge, Tennessee, did not encounter the physical violence endured by other southern cities as blacks fought for equal rights. Residents did have to negotiate, picket and conduct sit-ins to gain access to all public facilities. By the end of the Civil Rights Movement, organizations such as CRC, ORFEPS and CORE would be successful in desegregating of all of Oak Ridge's public accommodations except for the skating rink, whose owner opted to close it rather than serve blacks.[394] It took more than two decades for local organizations to be satisfied with the desegregation efforts, despite the legislation requiring equal service for all and the fact that Oak Ridge was dependent on the federal dollar for its survival during its early years.

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[391] Joan Wallace, "Heated Rink Talk; Council OKs Law Plan," *The Oak Ridger*, 18, Nov. 1969, 1; "3 Warrants Served on Skate Rink," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Oct. 1969, 1.
[392] "Too Many Troubles With City Ordinances," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 Dec. 1969, 18.
[393] Stephens, "An."
[394] Ibid.

The Stephens and Peelle families were harassed because of their efforts. They often received phone calls in the middle of the night from segregationists trying to intimidate them. Kathleen Stephens said they learned how to put tissue paper between the bells of their cradle phone so that they wouldn't hear it ring. The Stephens home became the headquarters for many of CORE's planning sessions. In addition to the local police, the local FBI provided protection for members by following them home from meetings.[395]

Elizabeth Peelle said threatening phone calls did not dissuade her from participating in the movement. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, she had believed in the ideals of democracy and "freedom for all." Even though she already had a chemistry degree when she moved to Oak Ridge in the mid-1950s, her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement led her to get a degree in sociology. [396]

> " I was just outraged at the notion that here in a town that was set up by the federal government, funded by the federal government, doing federal scientific projects, that Jim Crow was alive and well. So it was our idea, all of us that worked on this — black and white alike — that this was our community, and we wanted to make it one worth living in with freedom and justice for all. I thought those values were worth working for."[397]

For Kathleen Stephens, the Civil Rights Movement had more obvious effects on her life: "With my white friends, we were able to have good dialogue and talk to each other. In different instances they would say to me, 'I didn't know that happened' or 'I didn't know you couldn't go there.' And I said, 'The reason you didn't know was that it didn't happen to you.' The fact that they could go into a

[395] Kathleen and Nelson Stephens, interview.
[396] Elizabeth Peelle, interview.
[397] Ibid.

store and purchase anything they wanted or sit down at a counter or just get a drink, but I couldn't do that. It didn't really dawn on them that this was happening to me."[398]

[398] Kathleen Stephens, interview.

Chapter VI

The Alfred and Julia Hill Family

This research focuses on coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, but to understand what influences might have played a role in *The Oak Ridger's* coverage, it is important to study the publishing philosophies of the Hill family. This chapter begins by charting the careers of Alfred and Julia Hill and how they arrived in Oak Ridge. It ends by discussing Tom Hill's emergence in the newspaper industry and how he faced controversial issues.

Alfred and Julia

When Alfred and Julia Hill met at the beginning of their newspaper careers, both were working for large news organizations — he for United Press and she for the *Baltimore Sun*. It was through community journalism, though, that the adventurous couple made major contributions to the communications industry.

The two met in 1920 while on assignment in Baltimore, Maryland, and married in 1922. A few years later, with their two children in tow, they began crisscrossing the United States, breathing life into ailing newspapers and creating new publications for communities without a newspaper. It was because of their reputation that in 1948 Atomic Energy Commission officials contacted them about starting a newspaper in the Secret City — Oak Ridge, Tennessee.[399]

Oak Ridge was established in 1942 as part of the top-secret Manhattan Project, given major responsibilities by the federal government for the creation and building of atomic bombs. The federal government decided to continue

[399] Tom Hill, interview by author, 11 June 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

operations at Oak Ridge after World War II, and in 1948 AEC officials began the search for a publisher willing to take on the task. Local publishers declined because they were not convinced the town would continue to exist. With a fence around the town to keep outsiders at bay, it had few businesses to advertise in a paper and all property was federally owned. The Hills, though, were intrigued by the thought of being a part of the town's development and agreed to publish a daily newspaper. *The Oak Ridger* debuted on January 20, 1949.[400]

Early in their lives, Alfred and Julia chose the newspaper industry as the outlet for their creativity. Alfred Gibson Hill was born March 14, 1893 to Frances and Joseph H. Hill, president of Emporia State Normal. As a boy, "Hilly," as he was known then, earned his money gathering news items for the *Emporia Journal*, a daily newspaper in Kansas. The job allowed him to ride his pony to collect the news, and he received 50 cents per column. He found this job preferable to that of paper carriers who had to meet the 5 a.m. train in order to arrive to work on time. He also learned about government while serving as a pageboy in the Kansas Senate in Topeka during the 1907 and 1908 special sessions. The newspaper business was never far from his mind.[401]

As a child, Alfred was greatly impressed by meeting the nationally famous publisher of the *Emporia Gazette*, William Allen White:

> "In 1903, my father taking me, a 10-year-old boy, to Topeka to hear President Theodore Roosevelt speak at the cornerstone laying of the railroad YMCA gave me opportunity to visit during the train

[400] Richard Smyser, interview by author, 12 June 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[401] Biographical information on Alfred Hill, Available in the archives of *The Oak Ridger*.

ride with friendly, cheerful, reddish haired Mr. [William Allen] White of the *Emporia Gazette*," wrote Alfred. [402]

White operated the small daily newspaper for nearly 50 years, and became nationally known for his outspoken editorials. As a high school student, Hill found himself reporting student news for White's newspaper.[403]

Hill also was active in sports, lettering in track, football, and baseball. His writing talents were further developed as he helped found the *Echo*, the student paper at Emporia High School, where he graduated in 1911. He attended Emporia State College from 1911-1913 and continued to write student news for the *Gazette*.[404]

His father was supportive of whatever career choice Alfred made as long as he was dedicated to it, as is demonstrated in this Feb. 14 1908 letter written by Joseph to Alfred:

> "I have never cared so much what you were so far as your vocation is concerned as to have you make the most of yourself whatever you undertook and to have the same and helpful view of life that sees whatever one does to make others better and happier in the long run the thing most worth while. ... I hope one of the lessons you have begun to learn from your experience in the Senate is that man must 'give' as well as 'take' in order to get along in the world, and properly, men must do that from merely selfish grounds, often, but I want you to learn to do it unselfishly. ... A father ought to be his son's best friend and about most things his most trusted counselor. I shall never have any money to leave you, but I want to do better by you than that."[405]

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[402] Alfred Hill, "Notes on Emporia." Date unknown. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[403] Biographical information on Alfred Hill. Available in the archives of *The Oak Ridger*.
[404] Gordon Martin, "Hill's Mark is on the Hill," *Kansas University Alumni Magazine*, May 1963, 8-9.
[405] Joseph Hill, Letter to Alfred Hill, 14 Feb. 1908. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

Hill continued his education at Kansas University from which he graduated in 1917. That same year he joined the National Guard. He was discharged in 1919 and served as a state house reporter for the *Topeka Capital* until December 1919 when he took a reporting job on *Philadelphia Public Ledger*.[406]

During his early newspaper career, Hill's tenacity earned him the nickname "Scoop." His enthusiasm for reporting is evident in letters to his parents in which he wrote about his latest assignments.

Feb. 5, 1919:

> "Today is mine off — but when I came in after the mail, there were no reporters present. I went out to do a shooting story — a detective shot by a young motor bandit and saved by a citizen who rushed in just in time. I suppose it will be in the first edition."[407]

Feb. 14, 1920:

> "Friday I had a top head inside story about the possible 'junking' of Hog Island and today I covered a conference about the future disposition of the Hog Island ship yards which was held in the mayor's office at city hall. Got a good close up of the mayor who seems to be quite a respectable sort. It is interesting to see the city hall bunch of newspapermen. If I was a Philadelphian, I would want a city hall newspaper job just like I wanted the state house job in Kansas, but as a westerner I would rather have the outside assignments."[408]

In 1920, he moved to Washington D. C. to write for the United Press. At the time it might have looked like simply a good career move, but it turned out to be life altering. It was during his tenure with the United Press that he met his future partner in both personal and professional life. Scoop had been assigned to cover

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[406] Martin, 8-9.
[407] Alfred Hill, Letter to parents, 5 Feb. 1919. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[408] Alfred Hill, Letter to parents, 14 Feb. 1920. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

the national convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D. C. At the same time, Julia Gontrum, a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, also was busy covering the convention.[409] As fate would have it, their paths crossed.[410] "My dad liked to tell the story that he got there late and he asked the prettiest reporter there for help," Tom Hill said.[411]

Julia was born in Baltimore County, Maryland in 1895.[412] She had attended Goucher College in Baltimore when World War I started. She finished her freshman year and went to work in the society department of the *Baltimore Sun*. She later worked in the regular news department and covered state legislature in Annapolis for a year. Son Tom enjoyed telling the story of Julia's assignment to cover the opening of the Metropolitan Opera, specifically to get a story on women's attire. Julia loved the opera, but the event was standing-room-only and she had no ticket. She quickly noticed a man in the back with a pair of opera glasses, and during the intermission she asked to borrow them. Unfortunately they had some communication problems — he was Italian and did not speak English. Not understanding why anyone would want opera glasses during the intermission, he agreed to let her borrow them as long as they stayed around his neck. She had to hunch down next to the shorter man to use the glasses, but she got the story.[413]

Alfred and Julia began dating and married in December 1922. By this time, Alfred Hill had made his way back to Kansas University as alumni secretary. He was the primary force behind the campaign to raise a million dollars to build

[409] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Tom Hill, interview by author, 12 July 2005, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[412] "Julia G. Hill, Co-founder of *The Oak Ridger*, Dies," *The Oak Ridger*, 24 March 1980, 1.
[413] Hill, July 2005 interview.

memorial to KU men and women who had been killed in World War I as well as raising money for a new football stadium, but the newspaper business was still on his mind.[414]

In 1924 he returned to the newspaper business. He and Julia, along with baby daughter Mary Frances, moved to Arkansas City, Kansas, to buy his first publication.

He wrote his parents of his venture:

> "Just a note to tell you that I am going in with Oscar Stauffer in the purchase of the *Traveler* ... The *Traveler* is the old established paper — Arkansas City has 15,000 people, which is double what it had before the war, and has a wonderful industrial future. It is a revelation. I think I have a real opportunity.'"[415]

The Hills had 25 percent ownership of the newspaper while Stauffer held 75 percent. To buy the quarter-share in the *Traveler* they borrowed money from his insurance policy and from relatives. It was extremely important to them to pay back the money. They took Alfred's entire salary to put toward paying back their loans and lived off of money they earned from other jobs.[416]

"The next four years were spent in learning. Julia's *Baltimore Sun* experience enabled her to pay the house rent and grocery bills as a newspaper correspondent," said Alfred Hill, who used his sports background to get jobs officiating college football games on weekends.[417] "They made enough money

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[414] Martin, 8-9.
[415] Alfred Hill, Letter to parents. 3 March 1924. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[416] "The Oak Ridger," *Newsweek*, 8 Nov. 1948, 58.
[417] "Julia," 8.

with those two sources to raise one child and then another when I came along," Tom Hill said.[418]

Frequent letters to his parents revealed Alfred and Julia's determination to forge a successful path in the newspaper industry as well as their ability to recognize opportunity. The following are excerpts from such letters.

Feb. 26, 1925:

> "We have bought a new press — something I believe is a good thing for this kind of a developing town. I am spending most of my time on a special edition *The Traveler* will get out May 1 — we are aiming at 100 pages."[419]

Jan. 30, 1928:

> "The important news from my angle is my definite arrangement with Oscar to sell out my interest in *The Traveler* on May 1. Every instinct tells me that I must make the jump to get my own business, and the way to do it is to force myself. Also the price for minority stock is good and I feel it is wise to take advantage of it. The time is of my own picking — I may spend some time looking and also will be free to care for my family about that time. I'll tell you more about things when I see you. The decision was my own and there is no upheaval."[420]

The Hills made the sale three days before son Tom was born. From there they moved with Mary Frances and 1-month-old Tom to Fort Collins to purchase the *Colorado Express-Courier*.

The next year, on Oct. 24, 1929, the stock market crashed and Americans found themselves plunged into the Depression. During the next three years 13 million people would be without a job. Newspapers cut costs and wages to stay in

[418] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[419] Alfred Hill, letter to parents, 26 Feb. 1925. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[420] Alfred Hill, letter to parents, 30 Jan. 1928. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

business.[421] Making it more difficult for the Hills was a fire at the Fort Collins plant, which damaged the press and required them to print the newspaper at another plant. The Hills survived and continued to operate the paper in the town of about 15,000 until 1937 when, as Alfred Hill put it, "an Iowa publisher offered me too much money for the property."[422]

That same year the seasoned newspaper owners moved to Cheyenne to buy the *Wyoming State Tribune*. It was the established paper in Cheyenne, but was having difficulty competing with a new paper, the *Cheyenne Eagle*, which had made inroads into the advertisements usually featured in the *State Tribune*. In a short time the Hills had the paper on an upward course. Eventually, the two papers merged to become the *Eagle Tribune*. After two successful years, the Hills sold their share of the newspaper.[423]

They established the *Morning Guide* at Fremont, Nebraska and became associated with Les Walker as co-owner of the *Fremont Guide and Tribune*. They also established the *Daily Bulletin* in North Platte, Nebraska. Les Walker and Fred Speers, publisher of the *Escondido Times-Advocate* in California, joined the Hills in the venture. The Hills also worked with Alfred's brother, Ormond, in the purchase of *Kearney Hub* in Nebraska. They also reorganized the *Santa Fe New Mexican* for publisher Oscar Stauffer. They reorganized the *Nevada State Journal*

[421] Folkerts and Teeter, 385, 415.
[422] Biographical information on Alfred Hill. Available in the archives of *The Oak Ridger*.
[423] Ibid.

in 1939 leading to its sale to the *Reno Gazette*. They were in Santa Fe and Reno for about six months each.[424]

In the 1940s, the Hills made their way back to the East Coast. They purchased controlling interest of the *Jamestown (New York) Evening Journal* in 1940. The newspaper was not doing well, and Tom Hill explained that one reason for its lack of success was that the people of Swedish descent who ran the paper refused to run news about the Italian community. A second problem was the emergence of a competing newspaper, the *Jamestown Post*. Tom Hill said of his father, "He changed a lot of policy the first week he was there and it just took off." The paper merged with the *Jamestown Post* in 1941.[425]

The Hills owned the *New Kensington Dispatch* from 1948-1951, but one of their greatest success stories was the *Chester Times*, which they leased in 1942. Before the Hills entered the picture, the newspaper staff had been on strike for eight months, the longest daily newspaper strike to that date.[426]

Chester was a thriving town during World War II, with plants creating such products as liberty ships and paper. Without the newspaper, residents who were busy working in the plants did not get the news they needed. With his knack for "doctoring" ailing newspapers, Alfred Hill settled the strike within a week, and the paper began publishing again. Under his stewardship, circulation of the

[424] Ibid.; Duke, Charles W. "Hill Discloses Plans for Oak Ridge Daily," *Editor and Publisher* 6 Nov. 1948, 8.
[425] Hill, July 2005 interview.
[426] Biographical information on Alfred Hill. Available at the files of *The Oak Ridger*.

newspaper increased from 16,000 to about 35,000. One of the key ingredients to the paper's success was local news coverage.[427]

Tom recalled a story his father told about the importance of having the paper in Chester. "A man saw a friend walking toward him. Because the friend's wife had been sick and the man did not know whether she had gotten better or died, he crossed the street to avoid talking to him. He was embarrassed that he didn't know of his friend's wife's condition. There wasn't a newspaper, so there weren't any obits," he explained.[428]

On Aug. 31, 1942, Alfred Hill wrote a page one editorial for the *Chester Times*. It said in part:

> "To you of Chester and Delaware County, I pledge you my utmost in helping to produce a *Chester Times* worthy of a wonderful citizenship and community. I will appreciate your continued help and suggestions."

Alfred had a journalistic credo of five "gets." Get the news, get the advertising, get the circulation, get it out and get the income. Just as it was important to give local news to residents it was important to provide the newspaper with the business volume necessary for its continued self-sufficiency. Hill believed the paper should be "an institution that is friendly, a cooperative servant of the community and yet an independent master."[429]

The Oak Ridger

In 1948 the Hills were still happy in Pennsylvania. The Chester paper was going well, and they enjoyed hosting many staff social functions in their Tudor-

[427] Ibid.; Hill, June 2003 interview.
[428] Hill, July 2005 interview.
[429] Alfred Hill, personal notes. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

style home in Swarthmore. At one such gathering there was an official with Atomic Energy Commission to discuss a newspaper in Tennessee.[430]

For Oak Ridge to be a "normal" city, government officials believed it needed a newspaper. Gordon Molesworth, who worked in public relations at AEC, was assigned the task to find a publisher. Molesworth had at one time worked at the *Kansas City Star*, whose editor was Roy Roberts. Upon being contacted by Molesworth, Roberts reportedly said, "The only one I know fool enough to do something like that is Alfred Hill."[431]

Tom Hill recalled the August 1948 meeting between Molesworth and his family. He said his family was happy with their publication in Chester and had no desire to leave. However, the family had just sold its interest in a Nebraska paper. "He was never a wealthy man but he had some money and was looking for another newspaper property," Tom Hill said.[432]

The Hills were intrigued that for a town behind a fence with no local newspaper, Oak Ridge had a high percentage of residents subscribing to Tennessee newspapers as well as the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, plus a high number of subscriptions to newspapers in Knoxville and Chattanooga. One of the problems in establishing a newspaper in Oak Ridge was that there was no land for sale and virtually no business. All the land was federally owned and because a security gate surrounded Oak Ridge, it did not provide opportunities for businesses in other towns to branch out their locations. Nonetheless, the Hills

[430] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[431] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[432] Ibid.

were given assurances that private citizens and businesses alike would get their chance to buy property.[433]

"A lot of people said he made up his mind [to start the newspaper] after the first phone call, but that really wasn't true. He did a lot of checking to see if there was a chance it could succeed, and he did meet with congressional representatives from Tennessee. They essentially assured them that there was a mission for Oak Ridge," Tom Hill said.[434]

The Hills signed a contract with AEC to lease 7,000 square feet of building space for at least 20 years. The office was located in a former laundry facility on East Tyrone Road, near Jackson Square, the main shopping area in town. The newspaper would be printed Monday through Friday, offering local news and Associated Press articles. On the scene to produce the paper were publisher Don J. McKay, who had served as advertising manager for the *Chester Times*, and managing editor Richard Smyser, who had worked as a staff writer for the *Times*.[435] Still, more staff was needed. The first application Hill received for a job on his new paper came by airmail special delivery from a boy in Oak Ridge asking for a carrier route. Hill said the boy, Volney Goddard III, would get the job. Hill wrote Goddard back on Nov. 1, 1948, telling him that he had sent the following information to the circulation manager:

> "The attached letter from Volney B. Goddard, III speaks for itself. His was the first application received from Oak Ridge. Volney should serve as a good luck piece for us because he must

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[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid.
[435] "Chester Times Publishers Plan Daily in Oak Ridge," *Chester Times*, 29 Oct.1948, 8; "Introducing The Oak Ridger," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949, 1.

> be alert to write so quickly. Obviously it is my instruction that Volney be called when you take over, and be sure and see that he has a chance at a good route."[436]

Hill stipulated that the newspaper would have all of the guarantees of freedom of the press assured to any other publication, regardless of Oak Ridge's reliance on the federal dollar. Because of the security secrets at the local plants, the newspaper would also guard those secrets "just as any other newspaper guards classified information."[437]

With a newspaper office, a staff, and assurances there would continue to be a city, the next hurdle was to get equipment. Supplies were still in short supply following World War II. A major concern was getting newsprint, which had been rationed beginning in 1943. The end of such wartime controls did not mean a surplus of equipment and in the late 1940s congressional committees studied the newsprint problem. A Senate small business committee advised newspapers to form cooperatives to fund newsprint mills in Alaska.[438] The Hills learned of a mill being built in Coosa Pines, Alabama, and to ensure that he would have sufficient paper to print, Alfred bought stock in the plant.[439]

The Oak Ridger started with equipment from 20 states as the newspaper staff called up old contacts. When their Linotype machine could not be shipped as early as they needed it, McKay recalled that Alfred Hill had served as a judge in a New Jersey press contest a couple of years earlier. First prize for general all-around excellence had been awarded to Asbury Park's newspaper. McKay

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[436] Alfred Hill, letter to Volney B. Goddard III. 1 Nov. 1948. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[437] "Chester," 8.
[438] James J. Butler, "Small Dailies' Case To Be Aired Two Days," *Editor & Publisher*, 4 Jan. 1947, 34; "Urges Co-ops Finance Alaskan Paper Mills," *New York Times*, 24 Jan. 1948, 24.
[439] Hill, June 2003 interview.

suggested that Hill contact them about a machine. They eventually got one from Santa Monica, California.[440]

While preparing for the new publication, Hill shared the news of his new venture with the residents of Chester.

> "Six years ago when Mrs. Hill and I came to Chester we found a community which realized how badly it needed a daily newspaper. That is the identical situation at Oak Ridge and we could not resist the challenge offered by the opportunity when I was invited to come to Oak Ridge last August."[441]

The venture gained national attention as it was featured in *Newsweek*. Alfred Hill was quoted as saying he envisioned a local-boosting newspaper with "no scoops on atomic energy, but plenty on births, deaths, and marriages." He said that after talking with Oak Ridgers, it was this type of news they missed the most.[442]

Alfred and Julia Hill were under pressure to get the paper started quickly.

"The merchants down there wanted us to get under way in time for the Christmas shopping season," Alfred Hill said. "But this is out of the question. We hope to start Jan. 1; it will be a near-miracle if we do by Feb. 1, but it is definitely settled that we will by under way — we must be — by April 1, 1949."[443]

On Jan. 20, 1949, Alfred and Julia were in Oak Ridge to see the first edition of *The Oak Ridger*. As reported in later accounts of the day, Julia pulled the switch to start the press. "She gave it a hefty yank and then, off balance, fell

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[440] Don McKay, comments made June 1949 at the Tennessee Press Association Annual Convention, Clarksville, Tennessee. Reprinted in "A Miracle 10 Weeks Ahead of Its Time," *The Oak Ridger*, 29 Jan. 1969, 1.
[441] Duke, 8.
[442] "The Oak Ridger," *Newsweek*, 8 Nov. 1948, 58.
[443] Duke, 8.

backwards. Without a moment's hesitation Alfred Hill went to Julia's assistance first and *then* checked the first copies of the press."[444]

The Hills continued to live in Swarthmore, but kept a close eye on *The Oak Ridger's* progress.

"My father used to say he never spent five consecutive nights in Oak Ridge. Neither did my mother. But he knew more about what was going on in Oak Ridge than probably 99 percent of the people who lived here because he read the paper so thoroughly and he corresponded with Don McKay. They had an absolute rule: weekly correspondence. But it usually was much more often than that, augmented by frequent phone calls, so that he was right up to date in what was going on," Tom Hill said.[445]

The owners insisted the newspaper print local news. Alfred's motto was "First of All the Home News." This slogan was featured in each issue of the paper. "They had a strong bias on what the newspaper was supposed to do especially in small towns, and that is the local news is what the paper is for and that doesn't take any great genius to figure that out, but the genius was in the way they did it. They *meant* it when they said that," Tom Hill said.[446]

The lead story, usually located in the upper right-hand side of the front page, every day had to be local as well as a local editorial. The Hills wanted to see the

[444] Richard Smyser, "Founder Preached, Practiced: First the News," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1969, 1
[445] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[446] Ibid.

community be a success and the basis of *The Oak Ridger* was to support the community leadership.[447]

"He did not think it was the duty of the paper to step out and be a leader and develop policies, ideas that were going to be what the community did, but to identify responsible community leaders and support them, and that's what *The Oak Ridger* tried to do," Tom Hill said.[448]

Smyser said when he wrote editorials, Alfred Hill rarely imposed his viewpoint, "and then most always in retrospect rather than insistence on checking comment in advance. His policy was generally to lay out broad principles and then expect us to work within them. And very often he was willing to allow comment that is foreign to his own thinking. His only insistence was that the opinions expressed are based on a reasonable research into the facts and are sincerely held."[449]

Julia Hill wanted residents to be involved in the newspaper as much as possible, through correspondents and letters to the editor. She organized club and church news coverage and recruited correspondents from each of the neighborhoods in the city. She encouraged them to report on items of interest to their particular neighbors.[450]

Smyser said Alfred Hill insisted when obituaries were written that reporters talk to family members and get additional information. Rather than be printed in the same format in which they arrived from the funeral home, each was written as

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[447] Ibid.
[448] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[449] Smyser, "Founder," 1.
[450] "Julia G. Hill: Principles for an Emphasis on People," *The Oak Ridger*, 25 March 1980, 4.

an individual article. Tom Hill added, "My father had a saying: 'A good obit is never forgotten, and a bad obit is never forgiven.'"[451]

After two years of engagement announcements, high school sports stories and pounding the pavement to get local advertising, Alfred Hill reflected on the hardships and opportunities in Oak Ridge in a letter to Dick Smyser:

> "Counting the investment in newsprint stock (necessary in order to get newsprint) I have tied up in Oak Ridge between $150,000 and $200,000. That represents a large portion of my savings of a business career of more than a third of a century of exceedingly great effort and I hope accomplishment. The first year of our operation of *The Oak Ridger* we lost $28,000. The second year we lost $5,000. We are starting to make money now. The only sound basis for *The Oak Ridger* to operate is on a profit basis (and that goes more for the employees than it does even for me). We have developed our income. We must develop our control of expenditures to fit a sound business pattern. Particularly is this true in view of the fact that the life of Oak Ridge is not as certain as some communities. I went into Oak Ridge, you may be surprised at this, because of the opportunity to render a constructive service and because of the opportunity for adventure in the newspaper field in which you and I are interested. I knew there would be headaches. There have been — plenty. But I do see progress. One reason I have rather discouraged you from jumping to a larger newspaper has been my conviction that you could find no experience more valuable (and possibly more profitable) than being an administrative and constructive part in the development of *The Oak Ridger* as a proven success both in services and in profit. Remember this Dick, from the start we have given Oak Ridge people more of a newspaper than communities of similar size have had. You have been a tremendous factor in this accomplishment." [452]

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Hills continued their involvement in Oak Ridge. One of the biggest news stories during the 1950s was property disposal. It was significant because it signaled the town's permanence by allowing residents

[451] Tom Hill, interview by author, 13 Nov. 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[452] Alfred Hill, letter to Richard Smyser, 17 July 1951, 2. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.

to purchase their homes. Hill was pleased when his newspaper was able to bring news of such progress to residents before a nearby newspaper and wrote Tom about it.

April 18, 1954:

> "I was at Oak Ridge when Dick Smyser had the great triumph of scooping the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* on the all-important property disposal story. On a hunch, Dick had [reporter] Herb Stein phone Washington the morning the bill was to be introduced and they went into action."[453]

Progress in civic affairs was important to the Hills. Alfred wrote about one of his trips to Oak Ridge.

> "It was my privilege to attend a planning session of downtown merchants — a meeting of alert, community minded people who reinforce my confidence in Oak Ridge. There was time for calls, many by phone, particularly to friends of my early days in Oak Ridge. My father was a schoolman, and the status of Oak Ridge schools is of natural interest. The substantial increase in student attendance this autumn is evidence indeed that our population is trending upward again. It was my pleasure to visit with city manager Wiesbrod. 'City hall' is a busy place with architecture, landscaping and parking space to do a far better job than is being done in the average crowded American city."[454]

In addition to using their energy in business, the Hills were world travelers, visiting Scandinavia in 1954 and South America in 1956. They later made trips to Australia and Italy. The trips gave them the opportunity to meet with other news people and leaders in other countries, and they wrote accounts of their trips for publication in *The Oak Ridger*.

Regardless of how far away they might have been, they were always available for their newspaper family. Smyser wrote of his first meeting with Alfred Hill. It

[453] Alfred Hill, letter to Tom Hill, 18 April 1954. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.
[454] Alfred Hill, "Personal Comment," 17 Oct. 1960. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

was in 1946 when he was interviewing for a job with *The Chester Times*. "He had just hired me and I was leaving his office he said, 'We little fellows have to stick together' — something like that — he laughed, referring to our mutual 5 foot 5 height." Smyser added that Alfred and Julia's assistance went beyond the newspaper business, often making loans without interest.[455]

"Many a Hill employee has financed an appliance, an automobile, a home remodeling job, even a full home purchase through the 'Alfred Hill Finance Company,' a non-existent and yet very existent firm. Alfred has a sincere interest in his employees' families—the husbands, wives and children of those who worked for '*The Chester Times* Family' or '*The Oak Ridger* Family.' He and his wife, Julia, like to use those terms — and they are meaningful terms indeed."[456]

The Hills decided to end their operation of the *Chester Times* in 1953. They continued to be involved in the publication of *The Oak Ridger*, but eventually health reasons forced them to slow down. By this time, son Tom was more involved in the family business.

A New Generation

As Alfred and Julia operated newspapers across the country, their children, Mary Frances and Tom, always were present. Tom Hill fondly recalls his childhood. Even though he often moved in the middle of the school year, he always had a close friend nearby. "My sister and I moved so much that we

[455] Smyser, "Founder," 1.
[456] Ibid.

became very close and that was a benefit that was worth all of the moves. She and I were always good friends," he said.[457]

Hill joked that it never occurred to him to pursue any other career. "It really gets to you. It's a special business. People say 'what do you do' and I say 'which day?'"[458] When he was old enough, he worked every summer at a newspaper, except the year he worked as a lifeguard at a country club swimming pool. While Tom followed in his family's footsteps and became involved in the publishing industry, Mary Frances shared her mother's love for music. For a time she hosted a radio program in Delaware. She obtained her master's degree in music and taught music in Winter Park, Florida.

Tom Hill was in college when *The Oak Ridger* operation began, but he was at the initial meeting in 1948 to discuss the newspaper. In addition to working at the newspaper during summer breaks, he returned for the eight months between graduating from the College of William and Mary and entering the Army in January 1952.

One of the most significant events in the early years of the newspaper was a strike in early 1950. Tom Hill said his father always had good relationships with unions. He had settled the strike in Chester, and in Oak Ridge he invited in the International Typographical Union and the International Pressmen's Union. He believed because the local plants were unionized it was the appropriate action to take. "He was not opposed to unions, he was opposed to not using equipment to

[457] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[458] Ibid.

enhance productivity," Tom Hill said. During the early years of *The Oak Ridger,* union members went on strike over the use of technology.[459]

At that time, Linotypers set newspaper pages. They set copy into metal type on type casting machines. Impressions of the pages were made and fit onto high-speed metal presses. During the 1950s, many newspapers switched to Teletypesetting, which was a process that allowed typesetting machines to be operated without the use of Linotype operators. Typists were used to set copy the Teletypsetting machines. They in turn produced perforated paper tape that was fed into a machine attached to typesetting equipment. "The machine was operated like a typewriter, but instead of getting print on a page you got punched tape than could be used to run the Linotype faster that the operator," Tom Hill said.[460]

When *The Oak Ridger* began to use the new technology, employees went on strike. The front page of the Feb. 10, 1950 issue told readers of the strike.

> *"The Oak Ridger* will continue to be published. However, for a time, you might find more than the usual quota of typographical errors, and it probably will not be possible to handle the usual volume of advertising copy. We will, though, do everything possible to maintain the standards of performance our readers and advertisers have come to expect.
>
> "The reason for this non-appearance can be laid solely to a principle on which there is no giving in on the part of management. It lies in our use of Teletypesetter equipment, which definitely helped to make *The Oak Ridger* originally possible, and is a proven asset in both production and economy."[461]

Tom Hill in 2005 recalled the strike, but was not sure of its length. He said it did not last long, but it did affect the paper's circulation. When he returned to Oak

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[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.
[461] Don McKay, "Publisher's Statement," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Feb. 1950, 1.

Ridge between graduating from college and enlisting in the Army, circulation had dipped from 8,500 to about 6,000 because of the strike. He spent the summer working as circulation manager trying to win back subscribers.[462]

"We had tremendous effort to build the circulation back up and one of the best things is to make house calls and sell subscriptions, and I did that along with a whole lot of other people. There were a lot of times when you knock on the door and they say, 'I'm not going to subscribe to that scab paper,'" he recalled. It took some time to gradually win people over, Hill said. But subscriptions did increase and all of *The Oak Ridger's* employees remained at the paper. [463]

After being discharged from the Army in 1954, Hill returned to the newspaper industry. He worked as advertising director of a Spanish language daily in Miami, *Diario Las Americas*. He also worked as circulation manager at the *Coral Gables Times* in Florida, a newspaper co-owned by the Hill family and Leroy Keller of New York. He stayed in Florida for seven years. He worked in Oak Ridge as business manager before being named publisher of *The Oak Ridger* in 1967.[464]

When Tom returned to Oak Ridge, his wife, Joan Osteen, accompanied him. Joan, who also had a degree in journalism, wrote for the newspaper. Her weekly column, "Joanographs," covered topics ranging from book reviews to politics.[465] Tom also became involved with the Tennessee Press Association, serving as its president in 1980-1981.[466] In the early 1980s, the newspaper office was moved to

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[462] Hill, July 2005 interview.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.
[466] *A History of Tennessee Newspapers*, Tennessee Press Service, 1996, 58.

785 Oak Ridge Turnpike. As publisher, Tom used technology to improve the operation.

"The first thing after I became publisher I determined we absolutely needed to get into offset printing, and that unfortunately caused the employees in the composing room to become upset. I mean, they knew me because I had been there for six years, but at the same time they were concerned about their jobs and they knew a lot of papers that went offset they fired all of their composers. So, they voted in the union. It was a blow to me, but I told them there was going to be no change in the employment and we worked that out," he said.[467]

With some patience from both sides, management and employees held meetings to work out a contract. The series of meetings lasted about 2 ½ years and involved a federal mediator from Knoxville. The mediator worked primarily with plants involving thousands of employees. At *The Oak Ridger* there were about 14 employees. At one point the mediator told everyone involved that they had agreed on enough items to put it together in a contract. It was up to the parties to decide what to do because he was not coming back. The employees ultimately dropped the union.[468]

Tom Hill said offset printing was crucial because it allowed for hundreds of words a minute to be set rather than using a Linotype to set five lines a minute. Nationally, offset printing had grown rapidly since the late 1950s.[469]

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[467] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid.

Production of the newspaper was not the only controversial topic *The Oak Ridger* faced. In the 1950s and 1960s, newspapers across the country were struggling with coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. Because desegregation of schools and public facilities was not a one-time event it required journalists to try to analyze the long-term ramifications. Southern newspapers often were criticized for their job of covering the topic. A factor making it difficult was that during that time most newspaper staffs were all white. According to a study at the Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, only 21 black reporters worked at white-owned daily newspapers.[470]

In the 1940s, Alfred Hill was already working to create a diverse staff. In his early days at *The Chester Times* he recruited a seasoned reporter, Orrin Evans, from a black publication.[471] A study in 1955 reported that *The Chester Times* employed the one full-time black writer on a Pennsylvania newspaper.[472]

Alfred Hill conveyed to his son the importance of hiring minorities.

April 5, 1965:

> "Even with the low proportion of Negro population in Oak Ridge I still am apprehensive at our failure to include a single Negro employee. I realize that the proportion of Negro population in Oak Ridge is smaller than in Chester, but overconfidence might hurt us with the volatile atmosphere, which does exist. A promising high school graduate still would be sound assurance in the present explosive atmosphere."[473]

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[470] Armistead Scott Pride, "Low Man on the Totem Pole," *Nieman Reports* (April 1955): 21.
[471] Hill, July 2005 interview.
[472] Pride, 22.
[473] Alfred Hill, letter to Tom Hill, 5 April 1965. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

The Oak Ridger did attempt to bring such diversity to the newsroom. It participated in internship programs with Northwestern University, bringing reporters to Oak Ridge. Tom Hill gave credit to Smyser's work as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) to bring minority reporters to newsrooms across the country. Hill said finding employees from diverse backgrounds who were also qualified was a challenge, but Smyser conducted workshops to aid the process.[474]

Integration was a topic often discussed during the first 20 years of *The Oak Ridger's* operation. Smyser said some southern editors tended to play down demonstrations by burying a couple of paragraphs in the back of the paper, but *The Oak Ridger* tried to cover racial protests as thoroughly as possible. Smyser's coverage of the movement will be discussed further in the following chapters, but it is important to note that the Hills were supportive of his work.[475]

At least one time Tom Hill had to step in and explain that the newspaper's editorial stance was separate from the paper's advertising department. A story published Wednesday, Feb. 12, 1964, reported on a meeting of the Human Relations Advisory Board. During the meeting, some members indicated their displeasure with *The Oak Ridger* for publishing an advertisement two days prior. The ad quoted statements by Abraham Lincoln, which the Citizens Council (a segregationist organization) printed to show evidence that Lincoln would have opposed integration.

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[474] Hill, July 2005 interview.
[475] Smyser, June 2003 interview.

Hill was present at the meeting and said, "Regardless of the fact that the philosophy [the Citizens Council ad] stated was contrary to *The Oak Ridger's* editorial position, the newspaper accepts many ads that express differing philosophies."[476]

During his early days at *The Oak Ridger,* Tom Hill had frequent communication with his parents about such challenges of operating a newspaper.

In an April 16, 1968 letter, Alfred wrote to his son:

> "We appreciated your two-page letter. You are having many problems thrown at you at one time, but none are insurmountable. I have lived through too many emergencies and difficult moments in newspaper publishing not to know anything is possible when you are putting the thought, interest and work you are giving at Oak Ridge. The paper is a good paper. There may be over-diligence in reporting some things, but it offers excellent reading not only to Oak Ridgers, but also to others who see it. Your story on the hospital was a good one."[477]

Through all of the years of challenges their family faced during their years of newspaper doctoring, the Hills looked back with no regret at their decision to establish a newspaper in Oak Ridge. Tom said the venture was a risk because his parents had no guarantee that there would be no other paper in Oak Ridge, and there was no guaranteed income from the Chester newspaper because they did not own it.[478]

"Going in he had money from the sale of the Fremont paper, but it was a gamble. Chains operated many businesses, such as department stores. At the time

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[476] Richard Smyser, "Racial Board Hears Mayor's Letter, Sees No Change on Beauty Shops," *The Oak Ridger*, 12 Feb. 1964, 1-2.

[477] Alfred Hill, letter to Tom Hill, 16 April 1968. Available in the Alfred Hill archives.

[478] Hill, July 2005 interview.

he represented the largest private investment in a business in Oak Ridge," he said. "Nothing gave them more satisfaction than their success at Oak Ridge."[479]

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the background and publishing philosophy of the Hill family members and to identify some of the key moments of their careers during *The Oak Ridger's* first 20 years of operation.

The newspaper continued to publish in 2006, but no longer under the leadership of the Hill family. Tom Hill and his sister, Mary Frances Hill Holton, became co-owners of *The Oak Ridger* after the deaths of their parents — Alfred Hill in December 1971 and Julia Hill in March 1980. In 1986, the Hills sold the newspaper to Stauffer Communications of Topeka, Kansas. In 1995, Morris Communications of Augusta, Georgia, purchased the newspaper.

Wanting to honor their parents' memories and aid future journalists, Tom and Mary Frances created an endowment for a professorship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, providing a large selection of science writing courses. In 1989, they established the Alfred and Julia Hill Lecture on Science, Society and Mass Media.

"It was clear my sister and I wanted to do something. It seemed logical to both of us to do something special for the state's flagship university and a university that had been very supportive of newspapers across the state," Tom Hill said. Providing a means to teach science and technical writing fit perfectly with the

[479] Ibid.

science community of Oak Ridge that his family served for so many years, he added.[480]

While the Science Communication Program at UT introduces future journalists to the names Alfred and Julia Hill, there are others who have written about their own personal experiences with the couple.

"If Scoop as a publisher was often brusque and to the point, he has had a knack of inspiring confidence and loyalty too. He was a salesman in his field, and he preached the habit of success. He is a warm-hearted and sentimental man who never forgets a friend," wrote Gordon Martin in a May 1963 editorial in the Kansas University Alumni Magazine.[481]

[480] Hill, June 2003 interview.
[481] Martin, 8-9.

Chapter VII

Richard Smyser and The Invention of Community

Events during the early part of Richard Smyser's life influenced his career choice. He grew up in York, Pennsylvania, where as an 11 year old he co-edited a "newspaper" he created his friend Monroe Levin. The Friday, March 8, 1935 issue of *The East Ender* contained news of a new music course for seventh and eighth grade students at Hiestand School as well as commentary about the approach of spring. And during the school year, Smyser and his older brother would race from their bedroom to get the Sunday *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and read about their school's football team.[482] When Smyser enjoyed a successful career at *The Oak Ridger*, he based his work on the same values that guided him as a youngster — the importance of local news.

Smyser served as editor of the East Tennessee newspaper from January 1949 to August 1993. Following his retirement, he continued to write his column for the newspaper. After Smyser's death on March 14, 2005, at the age of 81, Tom Hill said, "I don't think people realize how important he was to this community. His devotion, his love for Oak Ridge guided him. You could almost say he was the conscience of Oak Ridge."[483]

The Rev. Jake Morrill, pastor of Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church, spoke at Smyser's service on March 19, 2005. Morrill compared Smyser to a griot, a storyteller in Africa who is entrusted with the safekeeping of the village's

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[482] Richard Smyser, "Begin With Respect for the Reader: A Small Town Editor's Perspective on Newspapers." (Speech given at the Fourth Annual Carol Burnett Fund Lecture on Journalism Ethics, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii) 12 March 1985, 5-6; *The East Ender*, 8 March, 1933. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.

[483] "The Oak Ridger's Founding Editor, Dick Smyser, Dies," *The Oak Ridger*, 15 March 2005, B3.

history. Morrill said when the storyteller dies, the community is disoriented. "We have lost our storyteller, the one who told us who we are," Morrill said.[484]

Although Smyser focused on community journalism in Oak Ridge, he gained national prominence, having service as president of Associated Press Managing Editors in 1973-74 and president of the ASNE in 1984-85. He also served on various committees throughout the years.

One APME meeting was most memorable. During the 1973 convention in Orlando, Florida, Smyser asked President Richard Nixon, "Senator Mark Hatfield said recently that we demand so much of a President, we ask him to play so many roles that no man can hold that kind of responsibility without having to share that responsibility with all Americans. To what extent do you think that this explains possibly how something like Watergate can occur?[485]

Nixon began to answer, "I could stand here before this audience and make all kinds of excuses, and most of you probably would understand because you are busy also. Seventy-two was a very busy year for me..." He then started talking about visiting China and Moscow and referred to an earlier question about his tax payments. He began talking about his financial sources. "I made my mistakes, but in all of my years of public life, I have never profited, never profited from public service... People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook. Well, I am not a crook. I have earned everything I have got."[486]

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[484] Rev. Jake Morrill, Remarks Made at Richard Smyser's Memorial, 19 March 2005, Unitarian Universalist Church, Oak Ridge.

[485] *APME Red Book*, "Account of the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors," Orlando, Fla., Nov. 16-20, 1973, 62-64.

[486] Ibid.

While Smyser was involved in national news organizations that gave him access to national figures, he said he never regretted spending the majority of his career in Oak Ridge. He credited his older brother Adam, or "Bud," as family and friends knew him, for influencing his career path. After college, Bud became editor of the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, but even before then, Richard Smyser looked up to Bud.[487]

"He decided very early that he was going to be a newspaper editor," Smyser said of his brother. "He was a major influence on me. We both went to Penn State. He was a senior when I was a freshman. He was the editor of the college newspaper, and I was the managing editor of the college newspaper. I just sort of followed in his footsteps."[488]

Smyser's younger sister, Alice Smyser Raphel, said Richard always had an outgoing personality. "Dick was enthusiastic in everything he did," she said at his memorial service. She recalled when he and Levin opened a nightclub, serving frozen candy bars. "It lasted about two Saturdays, but Dick loved the night hours," said his sister. One year he was a football cheerleader. "[The team] lost every game," she joked.[489]

He and Levin also produced talent shows for their elementary school and in their neighborhood. "By junior and senior high their productions were quite

[487] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Alice Smyser Raphel, Remarks Made at Richard Smyser's Memorial, 19 March 2005, Unitarian Universalist Church, Oak Ridge.

professional. Maybe Dick will come back in another life as a producer," Raphel said. But most of all, she remembered, "Dick loved words. He loved writing."[490]

He became editor-in-chief of the *York High Weekly*, and at Penn State he became editor-in-chief of the *Daily Collegian*. It was during his final year at Penn State when a series of events began ultimately leading him to Tennessee. In spring 1943, Smyser was drafted into the Army and assigned to a specialized training program, which essentially sent the soldiers back to college. He was enrolled in a language course at Stanford University. After nine months of intense study of the Dutch East Indies he was assigned to the Office of Strategic Service (precursor to the CIA) and traveled to North Africa and Italy. In June 1944, he was able to transfer credits earned at Stanford to Penn State, completing his bachelor's degree in journalism. He was discharged from the Army in November 1945.[491]

Smyser said he spent a couple of "miserable" weeks, not knowing what to do with himself when he contacted a professor and college newspaper advisor at Penn State, Lou Bell, who encouraged him to apply for a position at *The Chester Times*, operated by the Hill family. He began working as a reporter there in January 1946. As a member of *The Chester Times* family, Smyser had often visited the English Tudor home of Alfred and Julia Hill located in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. One particular meeting in the fall of 1948 was particularly

[490] Ibid.
[491] Richard Smyser, interview by author, 12 May 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

memorable. It was during that meeting that he learned of the plans to establish a newspaper in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.[492]

Early Days of *The Oak Ridger*

"I remember we sat on the floor and [Atomic Energy Commission official] Gordon Molesworth told about Oak Ridge and what the possibilities were and what the needs for a newspaper were," he said. "And just that particular evening we heard and we realized how excited particularly Alfred Hill was about the possibility of a newspaper [in Oak Ridge]."[493]

Hill asked Smyser, who at the time was a reporter at the Chester paper, to join *The Oak Ridger* as managing editor. "I wasn't quite sure what I was getting into, but I said yes. I think I was both excited and apprehensive. I was very young. I was just 25 years old. I didn't think I was all that young at the time. But now as I look back I realize how young I was, and again, I'm amazed that Alfred was willing to take a chance on me," Smyser said.[494]

In December 1948, Smyser made his first trip to Oak Ridge to visit the laundry facility on East Tyron Road that would be transformed into a newspaper office. "It was dark as we drove from Knoxville airport toward Oak Ridge on Western Avenue and what we then called Solway Road (now Highway 62), entering the city across Solway Bridge. I can still conjure the guards at the gate

[492] Ibid.
[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid.

there… there was some question about our visitor credentials, but it was soon resolved," he recalled.[495]

"We had rooms at The Guest House (Alexander Motor Inn) but the dining room was already closed and we were hungry. The desk clerk pointed the way to the Snow White Drive Inn, then on the Turnpike near where Physicians Plaza is now. We trudged there in the darkness for sandwiches and coffee."[496]

The next few months were busy for the young reporter, as he planned for his new home and career. His plan was to share an apartment with Don McKay, *The Oak Ridger's* first publisher. Before arriving, Smyser often corresponded with McKay, discussing everything from possible employees and news columns to license tags for his car and what he needed for his apartment. "I'm anxious to know this since I can make a raid on the extras at my home and thus save buying new things and the inconvenience of having to write back home for things to be mailed to me after I get there," he wrote to McKay.[497]

On Tuesday, Jan. 11, 1949, Smyser loaded up his 1937 Pontiac convertible (that didn't convert) and started the trek from Chester to Oak Ridge. His parents were concerned about his move, but Alfred Hill reassured them that their son would be OK. Nevertheless, Smyser made a stop in York until Thursday, Jan. 13, 1949 to visit with his family and continued to Oak Ridge on Jan. 14, 1949.[498]

"I'll look on the maps you brought back and check the best route [to Oak Ridge]," he wrote to McKay. "I'm also hoping for a break from the weather.

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[495] Richard Smyser, "Origins of The Ridger—II: A Small Miracle at Least.," The Oak Ridger, 21 Jan. 1999, 7A.
[496] Ibid.; Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[497] Richard Smyser, Letter to Don McKay, 3 Jan. 1949. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.
[498] Ibid.

Should we have a blizzard I would of course be delayed but we won't count on that. I've had the most pleasant holidays — spent the entire New Year's weekend at home — and have another big time coming up this weekend. So I'll consider myself having flung my fling up here in civilization and will be ready to buckle down to long months of lots of work in the hinterlands. I'm kidding — about the hinterlands — not the hard work."[499]

Upon arriving in Oak Ridge, Smyser went to work immediately, with the first issue published on Jan. 20, 1949. McKay had arrived in Oak Ridge in December to get the newspaper in order. Smyser said once he began working in his role as editor, McKay left editorial decisions up to the newspaper.[500]

Smyser recalled the atmosphere of the newspaper office during the early days as being "kind of wild and crazy." The office layout was wide open with the news department set up next to the advertising department, so staff members were very sociable with each other. The office was full of life, with members sharing jokes, and it was their custom not to go out to lunch. Instead, they took turns going out each day for what they called "treats."[501]

Until McKay was assigned to a cemesto on East Geneva Lane, he and Smyser shared an efficiency apartment down East Tennessee Avenue, next to what later became The Bleu Hound Grille. Each Friday staff members met at Smyser's apartment for a get-together. When one of his neighbors complained about the

[499] Ibid.
[500] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[501] Richard Smyser, interview by author, 18 March 2004, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

noise they started inviting her to join in … and she did.[502] The staff members started planting roots in the town. About a year-and-a-half after arriving in Oak Ridge, Smyser married his wife Mary, a research assistant at Oak Ridge Laboratories. They had two daughters, Lucy and Katherine.[503]

It seemed there was always excitement in the community. When the gates of the city opened in March 1949, government officials and celebrities arrived for the festivities. Present for the festivities were Vice President Alben Barkley, Sen. Estes Kefauver, actor Adolph Menjou and actress Marie "The Body" McDonald. And on Aug. 30, 1951, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. entered the newsroom. He was in town for the world movie premier of "Mr. Drake's Duck," about a duck that lays a radioactive egg. His visit "created quite a ruckus," Smyser said. [504]

The rich and famous were not the only ones who felt comfortable stopping by the office. "We had a wide open office. Anyone could walk in, and if you were busy they would stand at the counter and stare you down or just yell at you. So, we were available," he said. Publicity chairpersons brought in news items for their organizations, residents brought in birth announcements and news of weddings and anniversaries, and the newspaper's neighborhood correspondents made sure activities of their residents were printed. [505]

"We had lots and lots of local news, which was what our slogan was: 'First of All, the Home News.' This was the philosophy of Alfred Hill who believed very strongly in local news, local people, local names. There was a lot of folksy news,

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[502] Ibid.
[503] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Smyser, March 2004 interview.

but a lot of substantive news too, especially in our efforts to organize our own self government," he said.[506]

In addition to following Alfred Hill's lead, Smyser also drew from the practices of newspapers in his native Pennsylvania. He admired *The York Dispatch* because it included many in-depth news articles.[507] Smyser and his staff often wrote in-depth articles about Oak Ridge issues. During the early years, there was much to write about, from housing to incorporation.

Covering Racial Issues

Another paper from which Smyser drew guidance was *The York Gazette and Daily*, which hired one of the first black editors in American newspapers. "That was a very commendable thing to do at that time," he said.[508] Hiring minorities was an issue Smyser believed *The Oak Ridger* should address. In a letter to resident Kit Kuperstock, Smyser responded to comments that the newspaper was "so good on black issues." He wrote that during the first 34 years of operation, the newspaper had employed eight black staff members. "We need more," he said. "We need to develop more from within our own community." He said newspapers needed to promote the hiring of minorities for all departments. [509]

He served as chairman of APME's Black News Committee in 1969. The committee made specific goals:

1. Continue to develop sources of information about and contact with all of the special programs for black journalists.

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[506] Ibid.
[507] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Smyser, Richard, Letter to Kit Kuperstock, 2 Dec. 1982. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.

2. A continuing collection of, study of, exchange of, and evaluation of individual papers' efforts to become more black-oriented.

3. More efforts to increase APME contacts with the Negro press with the objective of black APME members.

4. Continuing channeling of "black news" story ideas to AP.

5. Some sort of guidebook on how to submit news items to a newspaper — not strictly aimed at blacks, but aimed in general at people who perhaps have had little experience.

6. A study of the language as it affects black and white communication through newspapers — different words that mean different things, sensitive words that might be avoided. [510]

Smyser said one of the reasons *The Oak Ridger* was "good" on black issues was because it was in a community that was more "enlightened" than others. "Having the federal government behind us — in fact, finally pushing us — to integrate was surely a factor in those early pioneering days that you know all too well. I'm sure it made it easier for us as a newspaper to be a little bolder, more liberal, more courageous — although I never really felt courageous at all," he wrote.[511]

Because groups formed in Oak Ridge to promote equality, he said the newspaper might have seemed "good" on those issues simply by reporting the news and activities of these local groups. "And perhaps also it is because we have always had a publisher and, modestly, editors, who simply think that fair treatment of all, regardless of race, is a very important thing," he wrote.[512]

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[510] *APME Red Book*, "Black News Committee Report," Account of Annual Convention of Associated Press Managing Editors, Hartford, CT, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, 1969, 13.
[511] Smyser, "Letter."
[512] Ibid.

The following chapters will address specific civil rights issues covered by the newspaper and the nature of the coverage. Smyser did give insights in articles and editorials about his personal feelings on desegregating public places.

Smyser began a July 12, 1963, article with the following lead: "More people need to have personal experiences with integration. More whites need to find out for themselves that it does them no harm to sit at a table next to a table of Negroes at a restaurant."[513]

In several editorials he referred to the newspaper's stand in civil rights as "moderate." It is necessary to clarify what the term moderate means in this context. In his 1976 book, Professor James W. Ely Jr., wrote that moderates were not easy to analyze. Some were integrationists who, in order to remain active in politics, took the stand of moderation. A liberal openly supported integration, while a moderate sought gradual accommodation to the desegregation ruling.[514]

They would not say that school desegregation was advantageous, but that obedience to the law was necessary. As soon as the current of public opinion permitted, these politicians abandoned moderation and urged acceptance of integration. Many others, however, were sincere in their moderate beliefs and genuinely hoped to stake out a middle course between massive resistance and massive integration.[515]

Brooks Hays served as U. S. Representative from Arkansas during the 1940s and 50s. In *A Southern Moderate Speaks*, he wrote that he was aware the separate

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[513] Richard Smyser, "More Day to Day Individual Experiences Needed, Racial Panel Chief Says," *The Oak Ridger*, 12 July 1963, 1.

[514] James W. Ely, Jr., *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia; The Byrd Organization and the Politics of Massive Resistance* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 108-110.

[515] Bob Smith, "Notes Toward a New Moderacy," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 41 (Spring 1965): 213.

but equal doctrine was out of date. However, he believed the Supreme Court ruling could have done a better job of bridging southern traditions and integration. He said work could have been done on the local level to gradually reduce segregated areas.[516]

In *The Moderate's Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia*, moderates during the 1950s were defined as those who did not support integration, but accepted authority of federal courts. Moderates in Virginia were influenced by larger national public opinion and slowly let go of their rigid stand. State legislators Armistead Boothe and Robert Whitehead proposed similar responses to the Brown decision. Their plans would allow for a "controlled, gradual process of desegregation." Boothe assured a Norfolk audience that "no substantial harm will be caused if a few outstanding Negro boys and girls are permitted to make their way through white schools."[517]

Smyser offered his own definition of a moderate, saying it is "one who sees a lot of gray in current conflicts between black and white." He wrote, "It is difficult amidst the intensifying blacks and whites, to see the gray. But indeed, in virtually every current racial situation, it is there."[518]

Another definition of moderate is provided in an editorial titled "There's a Great Need For Moderate Voices," published in *The Oak Ridger* on Dec. 6, 1956. The editorial discussed "the apparent disappearance of a truly moderate and

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[516] Brooks Hays, *A Southern Moderate Speaks* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 93.
[517] Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, eds. *The Moderate's Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 1, 3, 105.
[518] "More and More Lonely Being a Moderate," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1963, 4.

middle ground viewpoint on the racial problem: The viewpoint that is neither extremely integrationist or extremely segregationist."

It further stated:

"We define this group, and include ourselves in it, as including:

1. Those who agree with the basic principles on which the U. S. Supreme Court's recent decision was made, but at the same time, recognize the realities of its being applied. This group knows that, in some instances, many years must pass before compliance will be reasonable. In other areas, however, they feel that integration can and should come now.

2. Those good citizens who, although sincerely disagreeing with the basis for the Supreme Court decision, recognize that decision as the law of the land and agree that it should be complied with in realistic time and with order.[519]

In the context of this study, moderate views on civil rights is defined as one who supports the desegregation of public facilities, but does not support desegregation by measures that could result in violence. These measures include pickets and sit-ins. A moderate believes it is better to integrate slowly and keep the community as peaceful as possible.

Several editorials appeared in the newspaper concerning civil rights. Although there is no byline on them, it can be assumed that as managing editor Smyser either wrote them or had a part in writing them. In any event, he was the ultimate gatekeeper. If he did not agree with statements made in the editorials, he would not have allowed them to be published as the view of *The Oak Ridger's* editorial department.

[519] "There's A Great Need For Moderate Voices," *The Oak Ridger*, 6, Dec. 1956, 14.

When citizens favoring segregation demanded a recall vote for Waldo Cohn, the newspaper defended the chairman's desire to desegregate school. It disapproved of the fact that the council did not allow public discussion before voting to desegregate.

A Jan. 14 editorial titled "Comment on Latest Actions in Segregation Discussions," stated:

> "We very definitely disagreed with Councilman Cohn and the three other councilmen who voted for the original resolution as to their procedure in making the move. But though we disagreed strongly with their method, we certainly will defend their prerogative to have made such a move, as long as they did it with original good faith, which we are convinced was their motive."[520]

The newspaper maintained the view that Cohn should retain his seat. A Feb. 1 editorial, "Many Recall Vote Issues are Due Full Evaluation," asked citizens to weigh the pros and cons before voting. It further stated:

> "For ourselves our view remains in summary:
>
> 1. That all of the councilmen who voted on the resolution on Dec. 21 were unwise in doing so, primarily because there had been no advance notices of such action.
>
> 2. That no councilman escapes this censure and, therefore, no single councilman should stand alone for the blame.
>
> 3. That, nevertheless, the basic principle of the Dec. 21 resolution is ideally desirable and the intentions of all councilmen were good. Therefore, we criticize but do not ostracize them as our representatives.
>
> 4. That it is important to remember that we are indebted to all councilmen just for the mere fact of their willingness to run and serve on Town Council, a thankless, vulnerable, yet

[520] "Comment on Latest Actions in Segregation Discussions," *The Oak Ridger*, 14 Jan. 1954, 4.

tremendously important job for our municipally immature community.

5. That we believe Councilman Cohn has always been a hardworking, sincere councilman and that although we have disagreed with his ideas and actions as often as we have agreed, he can give the community much wise representation in the months to come, profiting, as do all councilmen and all citizens, from the experience of this present controversial situation.

Therefore, we will vote against Councilman Cohn's recall and will urge all others to do the same after the primarily urging all to vote."[521]

He did not entirely agree with students' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. When students traveled to Mississippi to help with voter registration, an editorial stated, "We are alternately admiring, apprehensive, disapproving." He said it was admirable for them to risk danger for their principles, but he believed some students were less than nobly motivated and were mixed up and immature. "While confusion and immaturity in young people is no cardinal sin in most circumstances, these qualities, or lack of qualities, become matters of more than personal concern when the immature and the confused presume to involve themselves in sensitive national problems."[522]

In 1969, the newspaper ran a series of articles with "one very specific purpose — to better acquaint white Oak Ridgers with their fellow citizens who are blacks." In each article, black residents were interviewed about their jobs and experiences living in the town.[523]

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[521] "Many Recall Vote Issues are Due Full Evaluation," *The Oak Ridger*, 1 Feb. 1954, 4.
[522] "Students Fill Mississippi Void," *The Oak Ridger*, 30 June 1964, 12.
[523] Maria J. Schenck. "Despite Housing 'I Feel Free Here,'" *The Oak Ridger*, 7 Feb. 1969, 1.

Community Journalism

Smyser's brother Bud was not the only journalist at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* who inspired him. He quoted the philosophy of former editor Riley Allen: "When someone brings something, or sends something, or calls with something he or she feels newsworthy, every effort should be made to somehow work mention of it into the [newspaper]. Or, if not, the contribution should be acknowledged warmly and with a full explanation of the reason why it cannot be used ... [Allen] understood what a precious thing it is when a reader thinks of us as a place where he or she may find shared enthusiasm for something that interests or just amuses them."[524]

Smyser recalled one time when he forgot that philosophy and received his most vivid lesson from Alfred Hill. When *The Oak Ridger* was about a year old, Smyser was preoccupied with an investigative article when he received a phone call concerning a mistake in an obituary. He dismissed it, preferring to put all attention on his news article. Hill, who was known for the "the bounce" — his tendency to become angry and prance on tiptoe when he became truly impatient with an employee — came out of his office. With his face reddening and walking with "the bounce," he reminded his editor that to establish credibility with its readers, a newspaper must care about personal items that might be easy to dismiss as routine.[525]

"It is past time you understood something, young man," Smyser recalled Hill saying in a voice building to a bellow. "Your big news stories are commendable,

[524] Smyser, "Begin," 4.
[525] Richard Smyser, interview by author, 20 Nov. 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

but they are not what our readers are going to clip out and press in their family Bibles or paste in their family scrapbooks."[526]

Smyser said he never forgot that point and shared it with fellow staff members at Oak Ridge and later to journalism students. As he told students at the University of Alaska, Anchorage: "Sometimes it is just a matter of being more conscious of what I call our 'intimate moments' with our readers; being more conscious that, while we may tend to think of these times as just part of the routine, they are very special, very vivid, very personal to the persons involved; a birth, a death, a wedding, an arrest, an award. It is during these intimate moments when we create or lose credibility with individual readers, credibility that we should covet for the times when we as journalists are reporting news that we feel is terribly important, terribly needing of being believed. Sometimes it is just a matter of making direct personal contact with the persons we are reporting about, writing about, rather than working through some impersonal go-between."[527]

That philosophy was the reason for the childhood competition between he and his brother to get the Sunday paper. They wanted to see how much space was devoted to the William Penn Senior High School football game. "We wanted recognition. We wanted acknowledgment that or high school, our town, that we existed." The residents of Oak Ridge sought the same acknowledgement in *The Oak Ridger*.[528]

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[526] Smyser, "Begin," 7.
[527] Richard Smyser, "More Gently, The News." (Atwood Lecture, University of Alaska, Anchorage) 22 March 1987, 11.
[528] Ibid., 5.

Smyser worked not only with Alfred and Julia, but also with the second generation of Hills in the newspaper business, as Tom Hill became *The Oak Ridger's* second publisher.

"He was a young eager-beaver," Tom Hill said of Smyser. According to Hill, the key to Smyser's role as *The Oak Ridger's* editor is a concept Smyser called "one-editor-one," an expression he coined referring to the "20-girls-20" of Baltimore burlesque marquee. "Dick [thought] every town needs one-editor-one," Hill explained. "A person who has no other allegiances, whose job it is to be editor. He's one of the world's greatest exponents and practitioners of a local, local paper, and he's a damn genius at it."[529]

He also gave Smyser credit for hiring local columnists to write about everything from bowling to gardening. "We would find local people who were experts and they would write those columns for us. … The whole philosophy was to involve the community as nearly as possible and also get some darn good copy. … They could write about those things with a local perspective," Smyser said.[530]

Focusing on the importance of local news and hiring a staff that could write about diverse topics were not the only concerns for Smyser. In those local stories it was important to pay attention to who served as sources as well as the context in which news was reported. He said journalists should report not only what

[529] Jones, Alex S. "The Dick Smyser Story." *ASNE Bulletin*, April 1984, 42; Tom Hill, interview by author, 11 June 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
[530] Tom Hill and Richard Smyser, interview by author, 20 Nov. 2003, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

someone said, but the atmosphere in which it was said and the demeanor of the source.[531]

"Be sensitive to the possibility that inadvertent availability of sources might skew one's information; therefore, takes steps to guard against such a slant until a fully representative set of sources has been contacted — or reasonable efforts to contact them have been made," he said.[532]

All of these steps were part of helping convince residents that *The Oak Ridger* was free of censorship. There were many people who doubted that it was going to be an independent newspaper because the newsroom was operated out of facilities leased from the Atomic Energy Commission. Although there were times when officials expressed opinions on how the newspaper handled an issue, Smyser said no government official ever told him not to print a particular story. Because he was a resident of Oak Ridge, Smyser did not want to breach security, but at the same time did not want his journalistic integrity to be compromised. He made it his policy to warn people in advance not to tell him anything if they did not want it printed in the newspaper.[533]

Not everyone appreciated the articles and editorials published in the newspaper. On Monday, May 2, 1953, Smyser was served with a summons to appear before the Anderson County circuit judge to answer a $50,000 slander and libel suit filed by Oak Ridge Justice of the Peace B. F. Standifer.[534] The suit was based on editorials Smyser had written concerning Standifer's actions at an

[531] Richard Smyser, "The Ethical Reporter." (Lecture given at University of Nebraska, Lincoln) February 1989, 1.
[532] Ibid., 2.
[533] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[534] Copy of summons delivered to Richard Smyser by Anderson County Circuit Court, 2 May 1953. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.

Anderson County Beer Committee meeting and allegations by Smyser that Standifer telephoned him at 3 a.m. Standifer allegedly said during the phone conversation, "If you print one more editorial about me like the one tonight, I'll beat the hide off of you." [535]

Standifer was referring to an editorial in the Thursday issue titled "Indifference Makes Things Cozy for Stand and Joe." It criticized Standifer's actions at the beer committee meeting where he dismissed "show cause" orders against a tavern, Highway 61 Club. The order was for the tavern to show cause why its beer license should not be revoked, and Standifer said the only evidence he had against the club was what he had read in the newspaper.[536]

Standifer allegedly told Smyser that the paper had been "ruining my character" for the past several years with various editorial comments, and that "No little punk is going to come down here and sit behind a typewriter and make a fool out of me." He later claimed he was not the person who phoned Smyser. [537] A jury found in favor of the newspaper. During defense testimony Smyser said that he had talked with Standifer on the telephone at least 20 or 30 times during the past four years and that Standifer had a "distinctive voice." [538]

While Smyser had occasional run-ins, there are stories that are memorable because of more pleasant interactions. He said one time he came close to missing his deadline when he got an exclusive interview with distinguished physicist Eugene Wigner, former Oak Ridge National Laboratory research director.

[535] "Justice of Peace Standifer Blasts Editor on Editorial," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Jan. 1953, 1.
[536] "Indifference Make Things Real Cozy for Stan and Joe," *The Oak Ridger*, 15 Jan. 1953, 12.
[537] " Standifer Denies He Made Call, Says it was a 'Joke,'" *The Oak Ridger*, 19 Jan. 1953, 1.
[538] "Oak Ridger Not Guilty of JP Standifer Charge," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Nov. 1953, 1.

Wigner, who at the time was teaching at Princeton University, was in Oak Ridge in November 1963 to mark the shutdown of the Graphite Reactor at ORNL when it was announced that he had won the Nobel Prize in Physics. Smyser heard the news on the radio and called the Holiday Inn where Wigner had been staying. Smyser learned he checked out and was on his way to the airport. The editor determined the airline Wigner was flying with and paged him.[539]

"The next thing I was connected to Eugene Wigner getting his comments," Smyser said. "He was known for being super polite. Suddenly he said to me, 'Mr. Smyser I'm sorry, but they're calling my plane, and they tell me if I don't put down the phone and get on the plane they will leave without me.' So of course I said, 'Please go and get on your plane.' He was that kind of a guy.[540]

"That day something happened with our press and we had to take our press forms over to Maryville, and Maryville had agreed to print our paper and we delivered it about midnight. That was my famous exclusive story about Eugene Wigner … a little late," he said.[541]

Publishing Philosophy

In 1986, Smyser took a leave of absence from the newspaper and accepted a temporary chair for professionals at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. In 1970, Robert B. Atwood, editor-in-chief and publisher of *The Anchorage Times*, established the Atwood Chair of Journalism. Smyser taught journalism there for one year. He also spent a year as a visiting professor and editor-in-residence at the

[539] Smyser, Nov. 2003 interview.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Ibid.

University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Journalism Department. While there he attended an ASNE convention where he ran into Penn State officials. They invited him to spend two years teaching at his alma mater. From 1991-1993 he served as the Edward Meeman Professor at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He would spend the summers at the newspaper, and in 1993, he formally retired as managing editor of *The Oak Ridger* in 1993. He continued to write his column.[542]

During this time he was able to reflect on his *Oak Ridger* experiences.

"My experience has left me with a strong feeling that it is possible in virtually every instance of news, no matter how sensitive or even horrible the circumstances, to leave out none of the facts, none of the truth and yet to find ways — to find words, to find emphases, to find context— to gather, to write the news more gently."[543]

He warned budding journalists not to be "overawed by so-called experts. … It is your job as a newspaper reporter to question, not just accept. … Police, firemen, hospital staff, morticians and their reports are of tremendous help. But they are not news people. Whenever possible (and sometimes when it doesn't seem possible, but is if you really try) check what you learn from the official reports directly with the persons involved. Most of these persons will thank you for doing that, and whether they do or not you will have a more accurate story."[544]

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[542] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[543] Smyser, "More," 10.
[544] Richard Smyser, "20_TIPS_20," University of Nebraska, Lincoln, January 1989, 5.

He spoke of "sources" and "sourcerers," calling the former "good people" who care about informing the public and the latter "bad people" who use the press to pursue their own interests.[545]

"Sources are very often 'little people,'" he said. "People down in the ranks who see wrongdoing and want to stop it; think a good newspaper reporter might report it and help stop it. So they confide in us. Sourcerers are most often 'big people.' People high in the ranks, and most frequently in public ranks, who have some trial balloon to fly, have some dirt to fling at some adversary, but don't want to take responsibility for it; have some thought or idea to plant for reasons of negotiation or diplomacy, but do not want to let on who planted it... Sources should be protected, even at the risk of jail. 'Sourcerers' should be actively exposed for what they are. Each time we allow ourselves to be exploited by a 'sourcerer' we weaken our case for protecting our sources."[546]

He said ethical reporters love "scoops," and work hard to get them, but do not distort a story to compensate for being scooped or because of how the competition addresses the particular story. They also take care not to be tempted to write for peers, superiors or sources, but instead write for their readers.[547]

His ideal newsroom would be a combination of small city and big city journalism. He called it "Ochs-White Journalism." Adolph Shelby Ochs was the founder of *The New York Times*. William Allen White was owner of the *Emporia Gazette*. To illustrate his point, he discussed White's Pulitzer Prize winning

[545] Smyser, "Begin," 13-14.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Smyser, "The Ethical Reporter," 2.

editorial titled "To An Anxious Friend," reassuring a friend that he knew what he was doing when he defied Kansas Governor Henry Allen and posted a sign sympathetic to railroad strikers in his newspaper's window. White declared it was a violation of the First Amendment for the governor to order that such placards be taken down. Smyser said there could be "big town journalism" in small towns.[548]

Twenty years earlier, he had shared with readers the "basic principles of newspapering as laid down by three revered journalists." Joseph Pulitzer, *New York World*, declared papers should always fight for progress and reform, and never tolerate injustice and corruption. Adolph Ochs, *The New York Times*, said it is the paper's job to provide the news impartially and in a concise form. Thomas Gibson, *Rocky Mountain Herald*, said it should be an advocate of the right and the denouncer of the wrong.[549]

Smyser said *The Oak Ridger's* philosophy was somewhere in between. He said the first obligation is to give the news fully and impartially, and accept the responsibility to pick and choose what is and is not news. "If, after filling this first obligation we have energy, space and conviction to campaign for some project or some issue, then we believe it is our obligation to exert the effort."[550]

While *The Oak Ridger* never won any Pulitzer Prizes, it did win its share of Tennessee Press Association awards under Smyser's leadership, and he had no regrets in spending his career at a community newspaper. "The combination of

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[548] Smyser, "More," 8-9.
[549] "Newspaper Principles," *The Oak Ridger*, 14 April 1960, 16.
[550] Ibid.

that national exposure with my good roots here in Oak Ridge I had a really enriched life," he said.[551]

During the early years there were memorable moments in the community, especially the desegregation of the local high school in 1955 and public accommodations during the 1960s. Statements made by Smyser during one-on-one interviews and to students are important because they provide greater insight concerning his editorial principles. He believed in seeking reliable sources that would represent both sides of the debate. He did not want to be a leader in the community, but serve as the editor and support others as they worked to bring change. These would have affected civil rights coverage in *The Oak Ridger*. Included in the next chapter are Smyser's comments on how the newspaper addressed particular desegregation efforts while trying to publish a successful newspaper in Oak Ridge.

[551] Smyser, June 2003 interview.

Chapter VIII

The Oak Ridger

The Paper's Beginning

The first edition of *The Oak Ridger* was published Jan. 20, 1949. Editor Richard Smyser said Alfred and Julia Hill decided on that date because it coincided with the date chosen for the opening of the town's gates. The federal government missed its deadline and did not open the gates to Oak Ridge until two months later.[552]

Featured on the front page of the first issue of the newspaper was a report of President Harry Truman's inauguration day, also on Jan. 20. It featured local news, such as the addition of a new pumper truck purchased for the Oak Ridge Fire Department as well as plans for a new senior high school and new housing for black residents. "Brevities," a column that listed who in the community had been sick, out of town or hosted a gathering, was featured on page six of the first issue.

An announcement on the front page pledged the paper would provide "wholehearted-community service. Its mission is the adequate presentation of local news. The full leased wire of the Associated Press, an array of top flight features, including comics and wire photo news mats, combine to make *The Oak Ridger* a well-rounded newspaper." The press had a capacity of 20 pages and the staff hoped that the minimum size of each issue would be eight pages. [553]

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[552] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[553] "Introducing The Oak Ridger," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949, 1.

J. C. Franklin, manager of the Oak Ridge Operations for the Atomic Energy Commission, was at the newspaper office to help celebrate the first issue.

> "When those presses began to roll today, Oak Ridge took a long stride toward its goal of becoming a typical thriving American city. This copy of *The Oak Ridger* you now are reading represents what long has been one of the keystones of American community life, a free and independent press. And this paper will be free and independent. Neither the owners nor we in the Atomic Energy Commission would have it any other way."[554]

There were some emergency repairs that had to be made before the first issue. Editor Richard Smyser asked readers to "go along with us" as the staff handled such obstacles.[555]

The Knoxville Journal wrote, "The initial issue of the new newspaper, while giving evidence in a few places of the mechanical obstacles that invariably plague the beginning of any publication, gives interesting promise of its future development."[556]

Don McKay, publisher, wrote a note to the staff on Jan. 21, 1949:

> "Through the combined efforts of each of you, plus much support from members of our 'mother' family, the *Chester Times*, we have succeeded in bringing to life a brand new newspaper in an almost new city. We all can be rightfully proud of our 'baby,' knowing we have produced a newspaper of which all Oak Ridge can be proud. I doubt that any venture in our field was ever launched with such widespread advance good will, and know that each of us will contribute to the fullest extent to preserve that feeling. I want you all to know that I appreciate greatly the job you have done in performing this 'miracle,' especially under such trying conditions.
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> D. J. Mc.

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[554] "A Message from J. C. Franklin," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949, 1.
[555] "The Difficulties of Starting a Newspaper," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1949, 1.
[556] "From the Knoxville Journal," *The Oak Ridger*," 21 Jan. 1949, 1.

> P. S. Mr. Hill told many interested persons that a start before February 1st would be a miracle."[557]

McKay, who previously served as advertising manager for *The Chester Times*, had arrived in Oak Ridge a month prior to publication to begin work as publisher. Smyser arrived a week before publication. He wrote that once the deadline for the first issue was determined, staff members were employed for the week of Jan. 17, and a "night and day effort was affected to assemble equipment and to put our new home into proper condition. Roane-Anderson Company, the operating contractor for the city, had provided office supplies such as desks and chairs. It later took them back, and the newspaper staff scoured the market for used supplies. A major job has been the erection of the press under the direction of Robert Isaacs, a press erector whose previous assignment was 15 months in Manila reconstructing presses put out of commission by the Japanese."[558]

Advertisements were another problem. Shortly after arriving in Oak Ridge, McKay dined at one of the town's two restaurants, the Oak Terrace. There he met the managers Bob Phillips and Roscoe Stephens, who agreed to purchase the first full-page ad. There were not too many opportunities to sell ads in Oak Ridge, which at that time had two auto dealerships and one department store. They did receive some needed advertising revenue from outside the city. A Philadelphia firm headed by Henry David Epstein was selling property in the TVA-developed

[557] Don McKay, "Letter to the Oak Ridger Family," 21 Jan. 1949. Available in the Richard Smyser archives.
[558] "The Difficulties of Starting a Newspaper," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1949, 1; Don McKay, "History of The Oak Ridger," in Overholt, 439.

city of Norris. Because workers could not buy their homes in Oak Ridge, they were prime candidates for purchasing land in Norris.[559]

The newspaper office was housed in 7,000 square feet of space in a former laundry facility on East Tyrone Street, Oak Ridge. Staff members often found reminders of the building's previous occupants — tokens, soap powder and even part of a love letter left behind by a female laundry employee.[560]

Before the staff began publishing *The Oak Ridger*, they knew it would be a daunting task. It was not the first newspaper to serve the city. After the government-operated *Journal,* the *Times* and *Mail* were unsuccessful attempts at an independently operated newspaper in Oak Ridge.

McKay said previous newspaper ventures in Oak Ridge failed because they did have the required knowledge of the newspaper business or the bankroll to sustain its operation. He gave credit to Alfred Hill, whom he called the "newspaper doctor," for bringing *The Oak Ridger* to life and making it successful.[561]

Hill commented about the failed *Times*: "The 'cold gray morning after' study of this enterprise made it extremely evident that it was physically and financially impossible to develop a self-sustaining daily newspaper published 23 miles away from the community it served." He added that during preliminary discussions

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[559] McKay, "History," 442.
[560] "Introducing The Oak Ridger," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949, 1; "Duz is Done; Ridger Does Everything," *The Oak Ridger,* 20 Jan. 1949, 1.
[561] McKay, "History," 436.

about his newspaper operation, a weekly operation was considered, but then he decided that it should be "either a daily or nothing."[562]

The name for the newspaper came about during a visit made by Alfred Hill and Don McKay. They had noticed that residents referred to themselves as "Ridgers." Therefore, *The Oak Ridger* was a logical choice for their newspaper. "And when, on hearing the name, people elsewhere did a double take, we would say, '*The Oak Ridger*, like *The New Yorker*,'" said Smyser.[563]

Mrs. Thomas Rentenbach of Knoxville was the first person to subscribe to *The Oak Ridger*. Her husband, head of Rentenbach Engineering, renovated the paper's office, and she helped inspire the "First Subscriber's Club." Ironically, she was allergic to newspapers. The smell of the fresh printer's ink caused adverse reactions, so she had to wait until the next day to read the paper. [564]

Mrs. Harold White also put in a bid to be the first subscriber. Others followed, and the "First Subscriber's Club" was born. The paper had been delivered for free until Feb. 4, 1949. Smyser wrote: "We've wanted everyone to see what kind of a newspaper we were putting out. We've had our problems... they come in multitudes. We've found the answers to many of them; we're continuing to discover solutions for others. On the whole, we're pleased and proud of *The Oak Ridger*. We hope you like it. It's your newspaper."[565]

He said everyone who subscribed during the next two weeks would be charter members of the club and receive certificates proclaiming such. Smyser listed the

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[562] Oak Ridger Co-Owner Gives Platform for Newspaper's Community Service," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 Sept. 1949, 2.
[563] Smyser, " Origins," 7A.
[564] " Despite Newspaper Allergy, Mrs. Rentenbach Was the First to Subscribe to The Ridger," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949, 9.
[565] "Oak Ridger First Subscriber Club," *The Oak Ridger*, 31 Jan. 1949, 4.

carrier boys and the number of subscriptions they had garnered thus far.[566] By Feb. 11, 1949, more than 8,000 people became paid subscribers to *The Oak Ridger*.[567]

The Oak Ridger Staff and Community Involvement

The Oak Ridger initially had a full-time staff of 28 with 90 carrier boys. Some *Chester Times* staff stayed in Oak Ridge until the paper was well established. They included Don Wilson, assistant to the publisher; Ed O'Connor, office manager; and Nick Fellman, mechanical superintendent.[568]

Other staff members came from Tennessee and Iowa. Advertising manager Dale Byrne had previously worked as publisher of the *Spencer Daily Reporter* in Spencer, Iowa. Red Champlain, apprentice pressman, had lived in Oak Ridge for six years. Marge Hurst, attended the University of Tennessee and served as classified advertising manager. She too had lived in Oak Ridge for six years. Helen Knox, reporter, was formerly with the *Morristown Sun*. Lee Lewis was a printer who had spent two years with the *Clinton Courier*. Frank Parrott had graduated from Oak Ridge High School and became an apprentice printer at *The Oak Ridger*. Jim Scott, pressroom foreman, was head pressman on the *Greenville Daily Sun*. Jim Spurlock worked at papers in Kentucky and Illinois before joining *The Oak Ridger* as a machinist. Marge Thornton taught elementary school before becoming a Teletypsetter. [569] Barbara Hart, a graduate of Cornell, whose husband

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[566] Ibid.
[567] "Report of Progress," *The Oak Ridger*, 22 March 1949, 5.
[568] "Oak Ridger Co-Owner," 2.
[569] "Chester Key Men Helped New Paper Get Its Start," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1950, 2.

worked with AEC, specialized on social items. Walter Wilkins served as sports reporter. He previously wrote as a correspondent for Knoxville newspapers. [570]

By the Jan. 25, 1949 issue, community correspondents were in place to report on their neighborhoods. This was a pet project of Julia Hill, and complemented the newspaper's slogan, "First Of All the Home News." Correspondents were paid by the column inch. The editorial staff initiated a weekly "Tipster" contest. It awarded prizes each week for the best news leads, with first prize being $5 and second place being $2. Spot news accounts of accidents or fires, human interest stories and suggestions for feature stories were accepted as entries. Among the criteria used to judge the tip were timeliness and the amount of information provided by the "tipster."[571]

Not all residents came by the office to place an article in the newspaper. Because it was renovated from a laundry facility, during its first days of operation the newspaper office was mistaken for part of the cleaning establishment. "People were heaving bundles of wet wash at us, asking us to press their trousers," wrote Helen Knox.[572]

Smyser also tried to get as many local columns as possible, which included gardening, bowling, outdoor activities, cooking and a church page each Friday. In an anniversary issue, *The Oak Ridger* recognized eight such community members for their contributions. Reef Waldrep, high school journalism teacher, brought articles about school personnel and activities. In addition to poetry, Sally Latham

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[570] "Introducing The Oak Ridger," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1949.

[571] "Want to Play Girl Friday to Our News Department?" *The Oak Ridger*, 29 March 1949, 1; Smyser, June 2003 interview.

[572] Helen Knox, "Ridger Staff Recall Tales of Years Ago as They Put Paper Number 262 to Bed," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Jan. 1950, 1.

wrote a series about interior decorating in Oak Ridge homes. Ester Kitzes brought in news as the publicity chairperson for the local Community Playhouse, and June Adamson worked as publicity chairperson for the Oak Ridge Civil Music Association.[573]

Betty Johnson wrote a weekly column, Ridger's Guide, in which she reported the new books at the local library. Evan Means wrote a twice-a-week column, Sportsman's Corner. High school student Bill Greer covered high school basketball and football games. Dawn Brewer, also a high school student, wrote "Teen Talk Topics," which appeared twice a week. Barbara Blizard wrote publicity articles for the League of Women Voters. Many also contributed to "Ridge Runners," a column that listed the activities of residents.[574]

Story Selection

During the early years of *The Oak Ridger*, there were many articles that addressed the changes the town was experiencing. Property disposal was of great interest to residents. *The Oak Ridger* was just as eager as residents to see Oak Ridge become "normal."

"Our town can never become normal in any sense of the world as long as it continues to be owned, lock, stock and barrel, by Uncle Sam. To us, the simple solution to all of the rent, refrigerator, dormitory, concessionaire and the problems lies in the government's retiring from the city just as fast as possible. Government

[573] "Oak Ridger News Staff Has Many Helpers," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Jan. 1952, 9, 10.
[574] Ibid.

never made a normal community. It takes ordinary citizens to do that," declared one editorial.[575]

The paper reported on the schedule of congressmen who traveled to Oak Ridge to learn residents' views on the disposal program. It gave a timetable for those scheduled to testify at the community disposal congressional hearing. Among them were members of the chamber of commerce, town council and parents' advisory council. It also reported about representatives of local organizations who traveled to Washington D. C. to encourage officials to pass the disposal bill.[576]

On Aug. 5, 1955, the front page featured a banner headline proclaiming "IKE SIGNS." Disposal of property would be an ongoing story in Oak Ridge.

"That was a big story. You have a whole town that everybody's house is for sale. We ran daily stories [with such as headlines as] '25 more homes closed,'" Smyser recalled.[577]

Articles would list the address of each property for sale. They also ran a news brief titled "Disposal Box Score" in which they reported how many homes had been offered for sale, the number of single and duplex homes sold to date, and the number of homes still unsold.[578]

Reporter Sally Latham wrote a series of home stories called "Bulging Walls." It featured news of people who were remodeling their homes and often included pictures. "That was a very popular series because so many of us had the same type

[575] "Lots of Problems With One Solution," *The Oak Ridger*, 20 May 1949, 4
[576] Herb Stein, "8 Leave for Capital to Ask Disposal," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 July 1955, 1; Herb Stein, "Long-Awaited Chance for Ridgers to Air Views on Disposal Comes Friday," *The Oak Ridger*, 9 June 1955, 1.
[577] Smyser, March 2004 interview.
[578] "First Business Offering Today, *The Oak Ridger*, 21 June 1957, 1.

of housing. We were terribly interested in what somebody was doing to a similar type home as ours," Smyser said.[579]

The newspaper encouraged people to vote in the 1957 election, stating that it could be the last town council in an advisory position. It cited the changes the city had gone through in recent years, especially home ownership.

One editorial stated: "This council may lead the city in the final steps to legal self-government — incorporation. ... There have not been many city elections more important anywhere. Where else has a town as large as ours grappled with such unique municipal problems and challenges?"[580]

Smyser said one of his favorite terms he learned from someone else was "reinforcing redundancy," particularly in those years that the city was forming self-governance. "Better that you read [about the same topic] maybe three or four times a week. And maybe we didn't get the readers' attention one day, but you got it the next day," he said.[581]

In addition to news of their own town, Smyser said they tried to localize national news stories. He wrote:

> "When we hear from Washington that there's to be a cutback in postal service we recognize that the local readers want to know more than just how that cutback was described in Washington. They want to know what Van D. Hicks, acting local postmaster, has to say and knows about it. What does that news mean to our mailboxes and letter drops here?"[582]

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[579] Smyser, March 2004 interview.
[580] "Never More Reason to Vote in Oak Ridge," *The Oak Ridger*, 9 Sept. 1957, 4.
[581] Smyser, March 2004 interview.
[582] "Home News Comes Easy," *The Oak Ridger*, 27 April 1950, 4.

They also used a feature called "Our Visitors Explain." Smyser explained the feature to fellow members of APME: "We select a foreign news brief from the wire. Then we get on the phone and see if we can't locate someone from that country who is temporarily in our town. ... The idea of localizing the wire report is not new. I would attempt here only to suggest a few variations of the system, particularly in relation to foreign news, that will help get the reader's saliva working and induce him to read more of your newspaper, and learn more from it."[583]

Oak Ridge itself continued to make national news. In 1951, an editorial discussed a *New York Times* article about Oak Ridge in which writer Gilbert Millstein pointed out that Oak Ridge did not have as much social stratification as most cities its size do. *The Oak Ridger* responded:

> "This is true. And this is one of the things we like most about Oak Ridge. We don't think there is only 'less' of this sort of emphasis on false values here, we think there is 'much less.' Of course, liberality is common in a new community. However, we're in hopes Oak Ridge will keep and enlarge its social broadmindedness even as it grows older. We hope also that what stratification and caste-type thinking does exist here will be diminished. We'd like to see Oak Ridge continue to be the kind of a town where memberships for the country club are sold and traded through classified ads in the newspaper."[584]

The paper also defended the city when Smyser felt it was necessary. Horace V. Wells, Jr., editor of *The Clinton Courier News*, wrote in an editorial, "The people of Oak Ridge are a giant in their voting strength, but a little child in their knowledge of politics and county affairs." Wells said he was not attempting to

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[583] *APME Red Book*, "Let's Get Personal," Account of the Annual Convention of Associated Press Managing Editors, Miami, Fla., Nov. 12-16, 1963, 103.

[584] "Country Clubs and Classifieds," *The Oak Ridger*, 27 Dec. 1951, 6.

draw political lines of "Oak Ridge vs. Rest of the County," but that he was attempting to awake Ridge voters. *The Oak Ridger's* May 8, 1950 editorial argued against his opinion, saying it would have been more constructive for Wells to recognize the growth of interest in county affairs and encourage more participation.

> "Perhaps more important than any argument about political awareness, however, is the question of friction between Oak Ridge and the rest of the county. This is a real problem and one that we think both Oak Ridgers and county residents should face realistically and positively. There is no use pretending that Oak Ridge and the other county towns are alike. There is a wide divergence of interests and opinions. And it is not hard to play those differences against each other and create bitterness. Bitterness is a poor objective and more a foolish, impractical practice for both Oak Ridge and county residents. For as Oak Ridge grows and prospers so does Anderson County, and vice versa. To prevent this bitterness calls for constructive compromise and understanding. We think civic leaders of both Oak Ridge and the county would do well to work hard at encouraging this compromise and understanding, perhaps even to the point of a planned campaign."[585]

An Independent Voice

Smyser said another obstacle was that people were unsure whether it was going to be an independent newspaper. About a month after publication began, a major controversy involving the dormitories erupted and the paper's coverage of it helped ease residents' minds about having a free local press.

The contractor who had been hired by the government to run the dorms announced the rent was going to be increased and that certain services, such as free maintenance, would be discontinued. At the time, rent for a dorm was $15 for

[585] A Child, Maybe — But Growing Fast," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 May 1950, 4.

a single and $20 for a double. The increase amounted to 50 percent.[586] Residents, upset about the news, brought in letters to the editor describing the terrible conditions of the rooms.[587]

"The first people came in and said, 'Here's a letter I know you won't print,' and we printed them and they were amazed that we would print a letter that was critical of the authorities here. So that helped us establish ourselves as an independent voice in our town, willing to carry news that was critical of the authorities," Smyser said.[588]

In addition to publishing letters to the editor that were critical of the authorities, *The Oak Ridger* criticized the management of the dormitories. One editorial in the newspaper accused the manager of "pulling the $7.50 [increase] out of a hat." *The Oak Ridger* staff arrived at a needed increase of $4.18 and wrote, "We think you'd better admit that $7.50 was a pipe-dream, Mr. Moore. … And how about those cockroaches? Sincerely, The Oak Ridger."[589]

The newspaper reported of plans by the renters to contact all congressmen and anyone in Oak Ridge or Washington who might have influence over the rent increase. Although the rent increase remained set for March 1, the renters did win one battle. They had been sending Sen. Brien McMahon (D-Conn.), chairman of the joint committee on atomic energy, articles and editorials from *The Oak Ridger*

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[586] "Roane-Anderson and AEC Assume Responsibility for Dorm Rent Hike," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 Feb. 1949, 1; "$7.50 to Continue Dorm Services Says Moore, Residents up in Arms," *The Oak Ridger,* 4 Feb. 1949, 1.

[587] Smyser, March 2004 interview.

[588] Ibid.

[589] "An Open Letter to James H. Moore," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 Feb. 1949, 4.

concerning the dorms. McMahon told the dorm committee that a congressional investigation was underway.[590]

During the first couple of years, *The Oak Ridger* was receiving twice the number of letters to the editor as the Chester newspaper. When the numbers began to dwindle, Smyser encouraged them to keep up their participation. In an editorial, Smyser assured them he understood the reluctance to write a letter for all to see, and to help them listed criteria for writing a letter to the editor:

1. Type if possible and be sure to double space.
2. Don't be abusive or too philosophical.
3. If you have special information, by all means divulge it.
4. Keep the letter short. If you do, it is less likely to be edited and favorite ideas eliminated.
5. Be sure to sign your name and address.[591]

He ended the editorial by writing:

> "Oak Ridge is full of controversial issues. Through letters to the newspaper citizens have an excellent chance to air their views. By doing so they will stimulate others to do likewise, sort of a 'chain reaction' of opinion. We always reserve the right to publish or not to publish letters we receive. However, we are anxious for, and solicit all letters written on subjects of general interest, in good taste, not libelous and in a spirit of constructive criticism."[592]

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[590] "Investigation of Dorm Problem," *The Oak Ridger*, 24 Feb. 1949, 1; "Dorms Plan Blitzkrieg Against Rent Increase," *The Oak Ridger,* 10 Feb. 1949, 1.

[591] "Spot a Wrong? Write!" *The Oak Ridger*, 20 Nov. 1951, 4.

[592] Ibid.

Covering Race Issues

One of the first investigative pieces the newspaper published was on housing for black residents. At that time, blacks lived in hutments in Scarboro Village. In April 1949, city editor Joe Hill and reporter Helen Knox wrote a series of articles describing the living conditions.

"The conditions were deplorable and we ran a series of stories about that," Smyser said. "And again this convinced people here in town that we were indeed independent. Those stories were pretty sensational. As I look back on them I think they were a little too sensational, but they did call attention to a problem. The Atomic Energy Commission officials protested loudly that they had recognized that this was a problem left to it by the Manhattan Engineering District and that they were planning for much improved housing, segregated however."[593]

The newspaper published pictures of the hutments in Scarboro Village, including a bathhouse that served nearly 50 people and was in poor condition. The cutline for the pictures read, "The scene illustrates the sad state of disrepair most of the ramshackle huts have been allowed to fall into. Note the warped window drop shutters which provide the only protection from rain and temperature." The pictures included one of the coal bins from which residents got their fuel to heat their hutment and to cook. The bin was broken. The cutline continued by saying, "Part of J. Carson Ridenour's contract with Roane-Anderson for the operation of Scarboro Village states specifically that he shall 'repair interior coal bins and

[593] Smyser, June 2003 interview.

exterior coal boxes.'"[594] An editorial discussed the progress made in the area, but also questioned whether it was moving as quickly as it could. "The removal of 101 families to good housing does not eliminate the evils remaining is Scarboro Village," it said.[595]

In an April 7, 1949 article titled, "It's About Time — But It's Not Enough," it was reported that 120 families were moving to better living quarters, but 150 "shameful" hutments remained. The article said, "Three *Oak Ridger* staff members took a tour of Scarboro Village Wednesday afternoon and evening. They were thankful that they approached the visit with an empty stomach."

The article also stated that Scarboro cafeteria and grocery stores were an average of 25 percent higher than Jackson Square prices. Although black residents could shop at other stores, many did not have automobiles to get to the other stores.[596]

It also alleged mistreatment of renters by the operator of the rental properties. If, for example, a renter paid his rent on Thursday, and on the following Thursday did not make "his immediate appearance to renew his rent, agents of Mr. Ridenour 'pull out' his cot. He is not given so much as an hour's grace. And if a mistake [had been] made, the Ridenour Company will right it 'tomorrow.' In the meantime, the renter must look elsewhere for his night's lodging." [597]

As mentioned in previous chapters, in December 1953, the town's council voted to desegregate Oak Ridge schools. This upset many residents, and the

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[594] "Pictures Tell the Story of Scarboro Village's Sorrow," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 April 1949, 1.
[595] "Job Well Done — More to Do," *The Oak Ridger*, 21 April 1949, 4.
[596] Joe Hill, "It's About Time—But It's Not Enough," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 April 1949, 1.
[597] Ibid., 8.

council ultimately rescinded its motion. Smyser said the newspaper took a disapproving stand on the council's action.

"The paper disapproved of the way the town council had gone about it, because they had done it sort of in secret and we objected to that very badly, but we supported them in principle. We agreed that there should be school integration here," he said.[598] The *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling declaring that schools must desegregate made the debate mute.

Smyser said as protests at such restaurants as Davis Brothers Cafeteria in Oak Ridge occurred during the 1960s, the newspaper might not have published an article every day, but the editorial staff did not ignore it either. He compared this to other editors in the South that buried protest articles in the back of the newspaper.[599]

"We didn't subscribe to that philosophy," he said. "We felt it was news. It should not be exaggerated, but it should be covered. I don't want to overemphasize our courageousness. The town was a town much more receptive to racial equality than many other towns were. We had this awful irony of being segregated by fiat of the federal government for the first years because their rule that they would obey the customs of the places they were located, but then they did a complete about-face with the Supreme Court ruling in 1954. We got some nasty letters. I think we even got some threats. There were some racists here in town. And people who resented us they said, 'You can't come down here from

[598] Smyser, June 2003 interview.
[599] Ibid.

Pennsylvania and tell us what to do.' Nothing extreme. No actual violence or crosses burned."[600]

Smyser said the riots at Clinton were a major story in *The Oak Ridger*.

"I remember that Thursday before Labor Day weekend in particular," said Smyser. "That Thursday afternoon Adlai Stevenson and his running mate Estes Kefauver came through Clinton and came on to Oak Ridge. That very night is the night that the violence broke out. Just hours after the presidential candidates had been in a motorcade through Clinton. The atmosphere was festive and just within hours it turned nasty because of this rabblerousing.

"I parked my car on the street in a residential area not far from downtown and I can remember there were two women standing out in the yards and they were saying, 'I hope that storm hits,' because they knew it would disperse the crowd that would gather around the courthouse. I was frightened, frankly, because people were so aroused and the worst elements of the county were out there and it was not very pleasant covering, but I don't know that any of our lives were in danger. It wasn't pleasant."[601]

He believed there were a few factors that made Oak Ridge different than other towns dealing with integration, including the town's reliance on the federal government and the fact that many Oak Ridgers held advanced college degrees.

"It took a lot more courage on the part of Horace Wells to simply say, 'We should obey the law' over there than it did for us, and we supported him. On a relative scale we were very progressive and supportive of the Civil Rights

[600] Ibid.
[601] Ibid.

Movement here in Oak Ridge. And the town was also, as we found out from that town council, was not quite as ready as it was going to be for school desegregation. ... We had a very effective minority here that worked for integration."[602]

Smyser recalled a day when a delegation "working quietly" toward integration visited the newspaper office, asking him not to print a story in the paper about a young black couple with a child moving into an all-white community. They said the couple would be harassed, and the person selling the house might be pressed not to sell. A clergyman argued that if the newspaper favored integration it should not jeopardize this important step.[603]

"We listened, yet knew that we must run it. But we would not do so on the basis only of plans. Once the family was in the house, however, it was news," he said. Some urged him to run the story in the back of the newspaper. "We used the story halfway down page one with a headline alluding to a housing milestone rather than a racial precedent," he said.[604]

Indicative of *The Oak Ridger's* philosophy toward integration was an editorial published June 3, 1955, in which it said they believed in the "desirability and inevitability of integration." It further stated:

> "At times it is our opinion that the less said the better in this difficult area — an area so rent with emotions on a mass basis that it is often difficult for any of us to participate in reasonable discussion. First and foremost — let's all of us just calm down a bit, regardless of how we feel. ...

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[602] Ibid.
[603] Richard Smyser, "Integration in Oak Ridge," *Drawing the Line: How 31 Editors Solved Their Toughest Ethical Dilemmas* Frank McCulloch, ed. (Washington D.C.: ASNE Foundation, 1984), 68-70.
[604] Ibid.

> "Of all the comments made relative to the U. S. Supreme Court's detailed interpretation this week of its decision of a year ago relative to school segregation, we think U. S. Sen. Walter George, of Georgia, has best summed up matters. The intent of the court is to ask, in regard to ending and easing segregation, 'Go Slow, But Go,' he interpreted. It is a good interpretation. ...
>
> "That's a good policy for making any large social change. ...We would offer that more harm than good can be done for all of our gradual adjustment to the changes that integration means if we move too fast, if we move ignorantly, if we move with intentions other than the aim of making a difficult eventuality work as well as possible."[605]

Summary

The Oak Ridger's emphasis was on local content, as in any community newspaper. It relied on community correspondents to report on each individual neighborhood within the city. It reported extensively on events that brought Oak Ridge closer to being a "normal" city. During interviews, Smyser indicated *The Oak Ridger* view on desegregation was favorable. The coverage of events such as sit-ins and school desegregation was cautious, though. He did not want coverage to be as sensational as the earlier articles on the hutments. The newspaper's coverage of the Civil Rights Movement will be analyzed in greater detail in the next chapter.

[605] "'Go Slow, But Go'—A Wise Integration Path," *The Oak Ridger*, 3 June 1955, 10.

Chapter IX
Results from Content Analysis

As outlined in Chapter 3, articles appearing in *The Oak Ridger* that concerned 20 specific events during the Civil Rights Movement were analyzed to determine the type of coverage the events garnered. During the time frames studied there were 424 issues (6,009 pages) published. This resulted in analysis of 135 news articles, 35 editorials and 48 letters to the editor.

Local events chosen for the study included the following:

1. Oak Ridge Town Council's resolution to desegregate schools (1953)
2. The announcement that Oak Ridge schools would desegregate (1955)
3. The desegregation of Oak Ridge High School (1955)
4. Violence at Clinton High School as it desegregates (1956)
5. One-day integration in Oak Ridge (1960)
6. Pickets at local restaurants (1960)
7. Sit-ins at local restaurants (1960)
8. Pickets at the local laundry facility (1963)
9. Public accommodations ordinance fails (1964)
10. Efforts to desegregate barbershops (1964)
11. Willie Golden named the first black basketball captain (1965)
12. Announcement that new barber will serve all (1966)
13. The first barber to serve all races opens shop (1966)
14. Public accommodations ordinance passes (1967)
15. Skating rink cited for violation of accommodations ordinance (1969)

Five national events that should have been of interest of Oak Ridge residents, particularly members of the black population, were chosen for this study:

1. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
2. Little Rock desegregation crisis (1957)
3. Sit-ins sparked by Greensboro students (1960)
4. Nashville sit-ins (1960)
5. Birmingham's Children's Crusade (1963)

General observations include: *The Oak Ridger* published most of the articles on the front page, above the fold. The mean length of stories was 14.22 column

inches with a sum of 3,099 column inches. The newspaper most often published articles that provided more than one viewpoint on desegregation or articles that used sources supporting desegregation. The newspaper always used official sources or members of particular integration groups. It did not interview the "man on the street" to learn his thoughts on the issue or how it would affect him. For example, when covering school desegregation, reporters did not interview students and parents who were affected. Instead, school superintendents and principals were interviewed.

The Oak Ridger provided daily coverage of the Clinton integration crisis, Little Rock crisis and Children's Crusade in Birmingham. It provided extensive coverage of public accommodation ordinance debate and school desegregation. It provided adequate coverage of local demonstrations, but it missed the opportunity to go beyond coverage of the event itself and provide analysis to readers by looking at the bigger social issue. It did not attempt to explain the reasoning behind Oak Ridge demonstrators' actions.

The sensational coverage provided in 1949 when the newspaper wrote about the hutment housing did not appear during the time period studied here. Smyser said in interviews in 2003 that he regretted the sensational coverage. He did not want to write articles that could enrage residents and fan the flames of violence. It was better to stand in the middle and encourage slow, peaceful integration.

Because of the obvious geographic constraints, the newspaper used more wire reports for the national stories: The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Little Rock integration crisis, the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, and the sit-

ins that began in Greensboro and spread throughout the South, including Nashville.

Concerning letters to the editor, citizens were the most outspoken about the vote to desegregate Oak Ridge schools (with 13 letters to the editor), discussion of a public accommodations ordinance (nine letters to the editor), the local skating rink's refusal to serve all races (with seven letters to the editor), and pickets at the local laundry facility (with five letters to the editor). All combined, 48 letters to the editor were published regarding the 20 events studied.

The events that garnered the most editorial attention were the Clinton integration violence, with 20 articles and six op/ed pieces, and the Little Rock integration crisis with 24 articles and four op/ed pieces. The least coverage was given to the new barbershop opening and Willie Golden's milestone. The three events related to the barbershop garnered nine articles. An editorial and article with an accompanying photo were published about Golden. Most headlines were 1 and 2 columns long. Eight-column headlines were saved for the more controversial events: the vote to desegregate Oak Ridge schools, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Clinton and Little Rock integration crises, and discussion of the public accommodations ordinance. Photographs appeared the most during coverage of Clinton and Little Rock. A list of photographs used for each event is included at the end of this chapter.

Tables in Appendix B, beginning on page 275, break down the number of articles written for each event, where in the newspaper they appeared and authorship. The remainder of this chapter will address coverage given to each

event. *The Oak Ridger's* editorials are most helpful in learning Smyser's views. They support what he said during interviews conducted in 2003 and 2004 when he said it was important to him to provide coverage of events, but not to exaggerate them.

Council Resolution to End Segregation

On Monday, Dec. 22, 1953, it was reported the Oak Ridge Town Council approved a resolution presented by Waldo Cohn calling for the Atomic Energy Commission to end segregation in Oak Ridge Schools. *The Oak Ridger* ran a banner headline across the front page, stating, "Council Resolution Asks AEC End Segregation." The article was more than 30 column inches long and explained who voted in favor, who voted against, and their reasons for their votes.

During interviews conducted for this study, Smyser said the newspaper took the view that the sentiment behind the town council's action was appropriate — that schools should be desegregated. However, he took issue with the manner in which they passed the resolution. This reflects what was written in an editorial published Dec. 28, 1953.

Appearing on page 6 under the headline, "Let Us Respect Other Views As We Discuss Segregation," the editorial stated:

> "Our own view is that school segregation should end as soon as feasibly possible. We also believe that the end is inevitable and therefore it is well, regardless of how we feel individually, that we adjust to this inevitability.
>
> "Therefore, we are basically in favor of the intent of the council action, but we do have one reservation and we feel it an important one. It is a reservation that applies not only to this particular issue, but to all issues that come before council.

> "We believe there is considerable justification for the argument, coming from some on both sides of the present question, that council should have given some advance indication that it was considering this action.
>
> "The fact that the resolution came as a surprise cannot help but arouse needless resentment, especially among those who oppose the principle of the resolution itself.
>
> "The segregation question is one many of us prefer to sidestep. It is largely an emotional argument and for that reason we avoid it, both consciously and unconsciously. ... Let's keep our heads as we bring this controversy to a head."

Several letters to the editor on the subject were printed in the newspaper. One referred to the "carpet-bagger" city council that had nothing else to do but vote on desegregation.[606] Letters to the editor outnumbered articles written about the event. The newspaper had to remind readers of its letter policy. It reported that *The Oak Ridger* had received unprintable letters concerning the controversy, including ones signed with false names or left unsigned.

***Brown v. Board of Education* Decision**

On May 17, 1954, the paper ran a banner headline on page one announcing "Supreme Court Bans Segregation." In addition to the AP wire stories about the decision, it contained comments from the local school board superintendent. The following day it ran another banner headline at the top of page one for an AP article discussing reactions to the decision. It printed another local article reporting there would be a "long, careful" study performed before the local schools were altered.

The Oak Ridger never interviewed local families or students who would be affected by desegregation. Reporters used official sources, including school

[606] H.M. Glen, "Letter to the Editor," *The Oak Ridger*, 24 Dec. 1953, 11.

superintendents, the Atomic Energy Commission's community affairs director, and school principals.

On May 31, 1954, an editorial on page four, "Oak Ridge is Ahead in Segregation Adjustment," mentioned the heated debate over desegregation that had already occurred during the winter. It further stated:

> "School integration, we believe, is a proper step in our country's sociological development. Believing this, we can only applaud the Supreme Court's action. However, we also recognize that the problems the decision presents in its implementation are such that much more than just approval by those who approve will be necessary to make it work."

Oak Ridge High School to Desegregate

On Jan. 12, 1955, a banner headline on the front page read: "Local Schools Integrate in Fall." Oak Ridge would become the first public school in Tennessee to integrate students. Announcement of the decision came from the AEC and Dr. Bertis E. Capehart, school superintendent. Capehart told reporter Herb Stein that all students would have the same choices of classes, and candidates for athletics would be accepted regardless of race.

There was not much reaction in the newspaper to the announcement that Oak Ridge High School would desegregate. The city had already been in turmoil over the council's resolution. This news was not as controversial. The newspaper covered it, but did not give it extensive coverage as it did the council's 1953 resolution. All articles were on the front page, and only one was placed below the fold.

"Integration Draws Few Comments" was a top story on Jan. 13. The article focused on editorial comments from other newspapers as well as school officials. Although residents were not quoted in articles, they did have the opportunity to bring in letters to the editor.

On Jan. 14, it ran an editorial by H. V. Wells Jr., editor of the *Clinton-Courier*. It originally appeared in his newspaper, and was reprinted on page one of *The Oak Ridger*. In "Clinton-Courier Adds Comment on Integration," Wells wrote that while a local school would be the first in the state to desegregate, Oak Ridge was different because neither the state nor county provides funds for the operation of these schools.

The Oak Ridger published one original editorial during this time, "An Opportunity to Set an Integration Example," on page four of the Jan. 17, 1955 edition. It said in part: "Despite the deep-seated conflicts of personal conviction this issue involves for some, integration is a necessary and desirable move forward toward making democracy strong. We have an opportunity to set a fine example in accomplishing it."

Oak Ridge High School Desegregates

Oak Ridge High School desegregated with little fanfare. All articles concerning the move appeared at the top of page one. *The Oak Ridger* ran an article the day before classes were scheduled to begin, reporting that members of a group called "Oak Ridgers for Segregation" were handing out circulars and encouraging parents to keep their children out of school. Their efforts were not successful as school opened with more than 7,000 pupils. According to a Sept. 6

article, it was about 600 fewer students than expected, but school officials said the first days of school usually see lower enrollment as families are still returning from vacations.[607]

As school started, the newspaper ran articles giving updates on the number of students in school, comments made by school officials regarding desegregation and attempts by segregationists to protest the desegregation. On Sept. 6 it ran an editorial again giving support to desegregation. On Sept. 9 it ran an editorial stating churches could help make a smooth transition to integrated schools.[608]

In one article, C. A. Golden, head of Oak Ridgers for Segregation, said, "It looks like I'm whipped." He said the group would need to have at least 50 percent of students out of the school for the group's effort to be noticed. He said he was at school the first day where the auditorium was "overflowing" with students. It further stated that applause for Fred Brown, a black teacher, was "greater than for any of the other teachers." Beside this story was an article reporting the increase in school enrollment.[609]

Clinton Violence

The integration of Clinton High School in September 1956 was the closest *The Oak Ridger* got to a firsthand account of the violence of desegregation. Daily front-page coverage was provided. Photos accompanied articles and stand-alone photos were published inside the paper. Among those photos were ones of the National Guard members at their checkpoints, people signing a petition to support

[607] "Schooltime Eve for Youngsters; Circulars Asking Children be Kept Home from Classes," *The Oak Ridger*, 5 Sept. 1955, 1; "7100 Pupils Enroll Today; Total 600 Under Estimate, *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1955, 1.
[608] "School Plan in Good Shape for 12th Term," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 Sept. 1955, 6; "Churches Always Helpful in Community Adjustment," *The Oak Ridger*, 9 Sept. 1955, 4.
[609] "Group Considers Integration Protest," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 Sept. 1955, 1.

segregation, and a picture of black citizens in their vehicle, obviously frightened as they drove through the angry mob.

In a Sept. 3, front-page editorial titled, "We Owe Harassed Officials Our Deepest Moral Support," *The Oak Ridger* spoke out against violence and expressed the guilt and worry among residents as the violence erupted. Reminding readers that the violence was aimed at black students, it asked, "How can we rest when they shudder?" It further stated, "We cannot escape the guilt, the shame, the anger, the sorrow, the worry, the confusion that is in our midst. We cannot forget the frantic faces of those attacked in their automobiles."

Smyser printed two more editorials. "The Dictates of Flesh Rather Than God's Gifts" spoke of the power of prayer to help heal the crisis. In "Area Trouble Has Violated Three Inescapable Sources," the paper said the sources we must answer to are God, government and our own conscience.

> "Those who rioted, or watched in support, have no honest response to themselves or to their fellow man other than that they are victims of prejudice sown in their souls by the prince of darkness."[610]

This quote is reminiscent of the earlier sensational hutment articles. When truly outraged by what they witnessed, Smyser and the rest of the editorial staff were capable of becoming less moderate in their tone.

On Sept. 6, the paper printed a full page of photos from Clinton. One half of the page showed scenes from the desegregation riots. The other half of the page contained pictures from earlier in the week when Adlai Stevenson and Sen. Estes

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[610] "The Dictates of Flesh Rather Than God's Gifts," *The Oak Ridger*, 4 Sept. 1956, 4; "Area Trouble Has Violated Three Inescapable Sources," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 Sept. 1956, 2.

Kefauver were in town. The headline across the page read, "Pictures of Area's Two Recent 'Big Stories' — One Gala, One Ghastly." Included in the riot pictures were ones of a black tourist being attacked, a tank driving through the town, Guardsmen drawing their bayonets on citizens and a quiet courthouse square after the crowd was dispersed.

Little Rock Nine

The Oak Ridger carried news of the Little Rock crisis from its beginning. AP news stories appeared on the top of the front page from Sept. 3 to Sept. 9. During the next few weeks there was a front-page article every couple of days, detailing the latest news. The first *Oak Ridger* editorial on the subject, which appeared on page 2 of the Sept. 13, 1957 issue with the headline, "Integration is Faces, But Moderate is Missing," exemplifies Smyser's feelings on integration — it should happen, but slowly. The editorial staff's view was that moderation was the answer to solving the desegregation crisis.

> "The face we most often is that of the jeering, spitting antagonist, fear, anger, determination, duty. Faces of judges, bewildered faces, enigmatic faces, funny faces, etc. Unfortunately, we see mostly the faces of extremes — only those directly and immediately, actually physically or spiritually hurt or hurting. Is the lack of moderates in this sea of integration faces before us reflective of the great sin of omission in this whole difficult situation?"

The Sept. 26, 1957 editorial, "The Despicable, Drastic Fill Integration Voids," stated:

> "To put our own philosophy in practical application: Integration of the Oak Ridge schools in 1955 was a proper gradual step; so was last year's integration in Clinton; integration, to the small degree it has come about, is proper in Nashville and it is proper in

> Little Rock. On the other hand, it is not proper that in such deep south areas where the Negro population is so heavy and the economic and social bridge so wide that integration be forced, hurried this year, or for many years to come.
>
> "With all deliberate speed," said the U. S. Supreme Court.
>
> It was just shortly after the Supreme Court decision that Sen. Walter George of Georgia gave his own version of what the Court had ruled: "Go Slow — But Go."

An editorial the next day suggested worship could help make the solution clearer. It did not say the editorial staff favored integration, but stated, "The vast majority of us on all different intellectual sides of the issue want only right to prevail. We separate, however, as we draw the lines between rights and wrongs."[611]

The newspaper also ran stand-alone photos of the violence. On Sept. 4, a 3-column photo of a person holding a confederate flag to show his support for segregation appeared on the front page. Also printed on the front page was a picture of Guardsmen standing at the school entrance. On Sept. 5, it published a stand-alone picture on page six of Elizabeth Eckford being denied entrance of the school. On Sept. 10, a stand-alone, 3-column photo of white students turning away black students appeared on page three.

On Sept. 24, a 2-column picture on page three showed a white man jumping on a black man during a violent episode. Also in that issue was a 2-column photo of Faubus. The following day, another picture of Faubus and of the violence appeared on page two. On Sept. 26, more pictures on the inside of the paper

[611] "Worship By All Involved Might Help Solve Dispute," *The Oak Ridger*, 27 Sept. 1957, 4.

showed the violence and of white girls laughing as soldiers with bayonets moved them along the sidewalk.

Lunch Counter Sit-ins

The Greensboro sit-ins began on Feb. 1, 1960, and more sit-ins quickly spread throughout the South. But the first article in *The Oak Ridger* concerning them ran on Feb. 16. All of the articles published during this month were AP wire stories, and more than half appeared on the front page. There were no photos to accompany the articles.

Smyser did take the opportunity to try to explain the objective of the "Negro Sitdowns" by running an AP article on Feb. 23. In the article, Joseph Charles Jones, a divinity student in Charlotte said the sit-ins were a "manifestation of the unrest among this generation of students. It comes from their desire to dramatize the injustice of the Negro's position. It is part of their feeling about the schools, the vote — civil rights in general." Only three articles spoke directly about the Nashville sit-ins.[612]

An editorial printed in the paper did not support the demonstrations. The editorial "The Positive Ways to Brotherhood" said in part:

> "The lunch counter demonstrations throughout the South are disturbing also. The goal is an understandable one, but the method is of questionable ethical as well as practical value. It is our feeling that the cause of brotherhood — and the tolerance and respect brotherhood requires — has been advanced many times more through improved education, increased religious participation and improved living conditions since the Supreme Court decision of

[612] The Associated Press, "Manifestation of Unrest—What is Objective of Negro Sitdowns?" *The Oak Ridger*, 23 Feb. 1960, 1.

1954 than through the courts, the legislature, the demonstrations."[613]

One-Day Integration

At the top of page one on June 6, 1960, the newspaper reported blacks were served at seven of nine restaurants they visited during the integration test held on June 4. It listed the restaurants that gave and refused service. One restaurant manager said he had received threatening phone calls about participating. The restaurant first refused service to a pair of patrons, but later served a second pair.[614]

A June 7 editorial stated, "We commend all those who have had a part for their reason, their restraint, their patience, their courage and their understanding. All of these are qualities so badly needed in all racial matters." It later stated that the test was made under pressure of possible demonstrations, but it did take place without the resulting "unpleasant incidents" at mass sit-ins that have taken place in other cities.[615]

Follow-up stories explaining the integration group's plans appeared at the bottom of page one. A page four editorial on July 5, "The Race Issue and Oak Ridge Economy," discussed economics as the primary reason for not giving equal service. However, it noted the city was still reliant on the federal dollar and continued assignment of work by the AEC, and decisions concerning those assignments could be influenced by racial policies of the town. This is an example

[613] "The Positive Ways to Brotherhood," *The Oak Ridger*, 26 Feb. 1960, 2.
[614] John Nicholson. "Six Eating Places Serve Negroes Saturday," *The Oak Ridger*, 6 June 1960, 1.
[615] "Another Step on Difficult Path," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 June 1960, 4.

of at least one time when the newspaper attempted to go beyond reportage of the event. It tried to explain some of the ramifications of segregation.

Cafeteria Pickets

The Oak Ridger covered the sit-ins, using members of the group conducting the picketing and managers of the cafeterias as sources. The first article, "Pickets March at Cafeteria" was a one-column article on page one and published July 7, 1960. The remaining articles during this month appeared at the bottom of page one. *The Oak Ridger* did not write editorials about the demonstrations.

In one letter to the editor, the writer questioned why Oak Ridge, "the city which constantly entertains visitors from every nation and continent of the world... is so slow to open its facilities to all decent and orderly people."[616]

Oak Ridge Sit-ins

When the integration efforts turned to sit-ins at local restaurants, the paper provided coverage at the top of the front page. One column did appear on the subject and provided an understanding of the paper's stand on the issue. It read in part:

> "Our position is still further from the endorsement of the sit-ins or even the picketing that has been conducted here. ...
>
> "We feel strongly that equal service is the right course. ...Feeling strongly on points of both principle and practicality, it is nevertheless difficult to approve the recent demonstrations and picketing. It's the old quandary of wondering whether the end justifies the means." [617]

It did not run photos of the demonstrations.

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[616] Margaret D. Weinberg, "Letter to the Editor," *The Oak Ridger*, 15 July 1960, 4.
[617] "Ridge a Paradox in Equal Service Effort," *The Oak Ridger*, 26 Aug. 1960, 3.

At least one reader criticized the editorial. The resident said the editorial itself was a paradox in that it "applauded the aim of those seeking equal service for all while decrying the demonstrations, which have been the major means of securing this and in city after city."[618] *The Oak Ridger* might not have agreed, but it published the letter.

After some residents placed a full-page advertisement encouraging public places to open service to all, the paper commended their effort. "Aside from its impact as an effective statement of policy, the ad also is a healthy demonstration of citizens willing to take a public personal stand on a sensitive issue," said one editorial.[619]

Birmingham 1963

The Oak Ridger ran 13 front-page articles on the violence in Birmingham during the 30 days studied for this project. It also published pictures of the violence. On May 7, a 2-column picture showed a police dog lunging at a demonstrator. The following day it ran 2-column photo of three officers restraining a black women after she did not obey their orders and allegedly began shoving them. On May 14, a 2-column photo showed a police officer being aided by protestors after he was hit in the head by a rock. All of the photos were on inside pages.

The paper did not support violence from police or demonstrators. One editorial stated that in each race crisis, much is the same. In Birmingham, though, a new chapter emerged — that of the "violent Negro." It continued:

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[618] Cecile Meyer, "Letter to the Editor, *The Oak Ridger*, 30 Aug. 1960, 4.
[619] "Healthy Expression," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 Aug. 1960, 6.

"We have become accustomed, almost impervious to the livid-faced white hoodlum, spitting, cursing; the harassed or frustrated police officer, trying to keep order in the midst of disorder, demonstration; the non-violent if obstructing Negro, sitting, standing, sometimes lying.

"But now we see pictures of the Negro with flashing knife, blazing torch.

"Provocation is cited. It is no excuse. The demonstrations that begin it are said to be provoked too — but more by lack of action than action. Their strength has been in their determination and yet their restraint. But now the restraint has come apart. It is a very troubling prospect that it may come apart even more before it is regained.

"Perhaps the President's dispatch of troops will forestall it.

"Really, the Alabama violence should not surprise. For, as has been pointed out before, the governor has set a course that could only ultimately lead to it."[620]

Laundry Demonstrations

On July 29, 1963, it reported on demonstrations at the laundry. It did include a 3-column photo of demonstrators. Although the newspaper provided coverage of demonstrations, it continued its stand that picketing was the wrong approach.[621]

A July 30 editorial said:

"Surely the Negroes and their white supporters have cause to say that the demonstration is a last resort. Surely also they can point to integration that has come only after the pressure of demonstration, here and elsewhere.

"But there is also this to consider. The goal of the demonstrators is the desegregation of one Laundromat. However, in the process of striving for this goal, the demonstrators are providing those who actively support continued segregation with a rallying point — an instance to arouse emotions, an instance to arouse support that they did not have before.

"And perhaps worse than that, in inviting the ugliness that the demonstrations have brought, the demonstrators are losing the support of many whom they could otherwise count on for at least passive endorsement of continued erasing of racial barriers.

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[620] "Disturbing New Element in Birmingham," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 May 1963, 12.
[621] "Demonstrator March at Laundermat [*sic*]," The Oak Ridger, 29 July 1963, 1.

> "It may be that demonstrations are the only resort in other cities, but not so in Oak Ridge. The Mayor's Advisory Panel on Racial Relations is available here and should be allowed to handle the situation."[622]

The following day, another front-page article on the laundry pickets appeared in the paper along with a 3-column photo of the demonstrators. In the article, "More Pickets Near Laundry," demonstrators, CORE's attorney and local police were used as sources.

It reported in August that despite an injunction obtained by the laundry facility's owner to bar the pickets, they were continuing on a public right-of-way. Police Chief C. T. Vettel was quoted in an Aug. 27 article saying demonstrations were being held twice a day.[623]

Golden Named Captain

Willie Golden in 1965 became the first black athlete to be named captain of the Oak Ridge High School basketball team. The newspaper covered it in a positive manner. On Dec. 1, 1965, the newspaper ran an article and Golden's picture, and it made an editorial statement. The editorial called the move a national story, "for Willie is a Negro and the first Negro ever to be named a captain of an integrated Tennessee school team, perhaps any integrated school team in the South." It said Golden was selected not because the team wanted to make a racial precedent, but because "Willie is a darn good player. ... The South's racial adjustment is nowhere more encouragingly obvious than in pictures of sport action that appear now with increasing frequency in the South's

[622] "Demonstrators Provide Opposition Rally Point," *The Oak Ridger*, 30 June 1963, 6.
[623] "Judge Denies CORE Request for Transfer of Jurisdiction," *The Oak Ridger*, 27 Aug. 1963, 1.

newspapers — Negro and white competing with spirit and teamwork together. Willie's choice is another high point in the whole transition — locally, regionally, nationally, and we hail him and his teammates for it."[624]

It ran a 2-column picture of Golden during his first game as captain. Remaining stories mentioning Golden were in relation to game coverage. Although the coverage was brief, it was positive. This event did not have the controversy behind it as desegregation of public accommodations and schools. It is not surprising that it did not receive much coverage. The school had been desegregated for 10 years. More coverage could have been given to it. The paper could have interviewed Golden himself to learn his feelings about being the first black captain.

Barbershop

When the barbershop committee formed to bring into Oak Ridge a barber who would serve all races, *The Oak Ridger* did report it. Articles focused on actions taken by the CRC's barbershop committee. It later reported that barbers were not happy with being pressured to integrate.[625] In all, six articles ran on the front page of the newspaper. Sources included members of the local barber union, city officials and members of CRC. There were no editorials or letters to the editor published during the time studied.

On March 7, 1966, it explained the efforts of the barbershop committee to bring a new barber to Oak Ridge. CRC officials were sources for the article. It

[624] "Golden is Named Wildcat Captain," *The Oak Ridger*, 30 Nov. 1965, 9; "Significant Sports," *The Oak Ridger*, 1 Dec. 1965, 22.
[625] "Barbers' Statement Criticizes Pressure," *The Oak Ridger*, 17 Feb. 1964, 1.

gave information about the new barber, but did not quote him as a source. Four days later it reported reaction by current Oak Ridge barbers to the news of the incoming barbershop. They reported that they saw the new shop as a solution to the integration problem for barbers. On April 7, it gave an update on efforts to raise money for the barbershop fund. No editorials were written.[626]

On April 12, 1966, it ran a 3-column photo of a black man and white man getting their hair cut at Ken's Barber and Style Shop, the city's first barber to serve all regardless to race. An editorial described the new barbershop as "another important step forward in local racial relations. ... It is unfortunate that this is not a policy of all shops. ... We commend the operators of the new shop and wish them well." It ended by saying the barbershop project had attracted interest from AP, and it would do the city's image as a racially tolerant community no harm.[627]

No further coverage was given.

Public Accommodations Ordinances Fails

It gave thorough coverage of council meetings concerning the ordinance. During the 30-day period studied, seven articles on the ordinance appeared at the top of page one. Reporters surveyed councilmen to learn who would likely vote for and against the ordinance and their reasons for their vote.

On Dec. 17, the paper printed the text of the proposed ordinance at the top of the front page. A banner headline on Dec. 19, 1963 said, "12 Ministers Back Accommodations Ordinance on Eve of Vote." It listed clergy members who

[626] "New Barber Shop Will Serve All," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 March 1966, 1; "New Shop Seen as Solution," *The Oak Ridger*, 11 March 1966, 1; Barbershop Fund Over $5,000 Mark," *The Oak Ridger*, 7 April 1966, 1.
[627] "Newest Racial Step," *The OakRidger*, 13 April 1966, 14.

signed a resolution recommending passage of the law. It reported council members had received letters from citizens representing both sides of the issue. Some of the councilmen reported they would try to table the ordinance. A later article reported that it was tabled.

A Dec. 23, 1963 editorial said the council's postponement of the vote was not necessarily negative. The three-hour debate was "something that has not happened here in a long time — a spirited and yet respectful town meeting on an issue that is very much on citizens' minds, but is too often consciously avoided in open discussion."[628]

At a subsequent meeting, the ordinance was brought before the council again, and struck down. A Jan. 8 editorial, "Problem, Progress Are Still With Us," said the purpose of the ordinance was laudable, but the writer was not convinced it would do the job. He also said it could prove to the city's benefit that the ordinance was not passed.

> "It is an unfortunate situation as the debate and vote on the ordinance creates a negative impression about Oak Ridge and civil rights. ... Oak Ridge is unique in the whole racial picture. But lest the negative headlines about the ordinance voting blot out memory of the many positive headlines of the past, we would remind that the vast majority of local business places do now indeed offer service without regard to race, color or creed, and that is good."[629]

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[628] "A Valuable Forum on a Vital Issue," *The Oak Ridger*, 23 Dec. 1963, 12.
[629] "Problem, Progress Are Still With Us," *The Oak Ridger*, 8 Jan. 1964, 8.

Public Accommodations Ordinance Passes

The ordinance came before the council for a vote in 1967. A Sept. 21 editorial urged the council to pass it "promptly and decisively." It stated that years of attempts at negotiation and persuasion on the skating rink had failed.[630]

That same day an article on the front page, "Negro Youths Ask Ordinance," reported a group of 20 black youths went before the council to explain that they had attempted to skate at Myers Brothers Skating Rink and were denied service. They encouraged the council to vote in favor of the ordinance.

On Sept. 22, the paper ran a page one banner headline declaring "Accommodations Law OK'd 7-4 on 1st Reading." It included a 3-column photo of the ordinance presented on an overhead projector during the meeting. On an inside page was a picture of the standing-room-only crowd who attended the meeting. Mayor Bissell was quoted as saying, "I'm ashamed that we have to pass such a law." In the past he had opposed the law, but he voted for that night. He said he would be willing to vote against it on its second reading if operators of businesses would negotiate on the matter.

In an Oct. 3, 1967 editorial, the paper urged the adoption of the ordinance as it came before the council for a second reading.[631]

A letter to the editor read, "Keep up the good work. Some day would I like to see an editorial on the subject of race bigotry, which I encounter often among the

[630] "Do We Keep Moving or Procrastinate?" *The Oak Ridger*, 21 Sept. 1967, 12.
[631] "Three Vital Decisions for Council This Week," *The Oak Ridger*, 3 Oct. 1967, 6.

poorly informed John Public. You have touched upon this idea in the past. However, reposition is so worth while in such a cause."[632]

The following day, the paper reported that not all public places were willing to serve all. During tests, a barbershop and a tavern refused service to a racially mixed group.[633] On Oct. 6, the paper ran a banner headline across the front page stating "Accommodations Law Final, Effective Oct. 15."

An Oct. 10, 1967 editorial said, "In a community in which whites and Negroes have been swimming together even longer than they have gone to school, eaten in restaurants and attended movies together, they surely can roller skate together also."[634]

Skating Rink Refuses to Serve Blacks

The newspaper got a firsthand account of integration efforts as reporter Pat Riordan went with a racially mixed group attempting to use Myers Brothers Skating Rink. They were denied entry, and the experience was chronicled in the Oct. 13 front-page article "Whites Admitted But Blacks Refused In New Rink Test." The article stated, "At all times the test groups behaved with decorum, allowing people who were members and wanted to skate to go ahead of them. Those who spoke with Mrs. Morrow said she, too, was polite, but firm."

The newspaper was outspoken in its support of enforcing the public accommodations ordinance. One editorial spoke about the local country club refusing applications from blacks, and the Atomic Energy Commission using the

[632] Mildred Juresco, "Letter to the Editor," *The Oak Ridger*, 3 Oct. 1967, 6.
[633] "Tests Fail on Eve of Accommodations Vote," *The Oak Ridger*, 4 Oct. 1967, 1.
[634] "History Shows Equal Service Works," *The Oak Ridger*, 10 Oct. 1967, 8.

same facility for functions. It said the manager of the skating rink and his counsel were right in saying the city's racial activists are inconsistent as they made the skating rink a continued target, but officials patronize the country club.[635]

A reader commended the commentary about the double standard, but then questioned whether Smyser or other managers of *The Oak Ridger* were members of the country club.[636] On Oct. 29, 1969, another editorial, "Not Apart From Hypocrisy, Only Its Confessor," addressed the letter. Appearing on page 4, it said:

> "The city's double standard on racial policies is 'more than an individual thing.'... It is more an overall practice of hypocrisy on the part of the city's leadership — the whole mass of people in important places, the top governmental, industrial and educational positions."
>
> "They seem to spend very little time thinking about how inconsistent (if not downright two-faced) they appear, especially to people like tavern, barber shop, launderette and skating rink operators who they and the organizations they represent have, at very least, been passively urging to eliminate race as a consideration of service. ... *The Oak Ridger* makes no pretense of being apart from the hypocrisy. To do so would be to admit that we claim no role of community leadership. We do, however, claim to have called attention to the double standard and to have urged, publicly and often, that it be put to an end."

The paper reported on Oct. 16 that a warrant was served on Mrs. Douglas Morrow, wife of the manager, charging violation of the public accommodations ordinance. Douglas Morrow was quoted as saying, "This has got to be a thing of harassment. Two thousand years ago they crucified Christ and now they're going to crucify me."[637]

Morrow also wrote letters to the editor. In one, he wrote:

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[635] "Skating Rink, Country Club: The City's Big Double Standard," *The Oak Ridger*, 15 Oct. 1969, 14.
[636] James A. Young, "Letter to the Editor," *The Oak Ridger*, 24 Oct. 1969, 4.
[637] "3 Warrants Served on Skate Rink," *The Oak Ridger*, 16 Oct. 1969, 1.

"My first two contacts with the editor of *The Oak Ridger* both ended the same way, with an admonition that he wasn't on my side. This, to me of course, was self-evident. ... *The Oak Ridger* never admitted the Rebel Skating club existed. I have heard of discrimination making second class citizens out of some people, but to deny by omission that 2,800 members of the Rebel Skating Club do exist, tops all the discrimination I ever heard of."[638]

In its Oct. 13 article, the newspaper did mention the Rebel Skating Club, but did not provide information on its members. It is unclear whether the newspaper had such information.

Use of Photographs

This study also analyzed the photographs used in covering these events. The following is a breakdown of the photos.

1. Resolution to desegregate: No photos were printed.
2. *Brown v. Board of Education*: A 2-column photo of the Georgia governor responding to the ruling.
3. Announcement that Oak Ridge schools will desegregate: A 4-column photo of the meeting discussing desegregation was printed.
4. Oak Ridge High School desegregates: No photos were printed.
5. Clinton High School: Nine photos of varying sizes ran in the newspaper. They ranged from pictures of the crowd to a picture of Clinton editor Horace Wells that accompanied an article he had written.
6. Little Rock crisis: Sixteen photos were published in the newspaper. They included pictures of the Little Rock Nine, the mob that had gathered at the school, and of Governor Faubus. All of them were 2 and 3 columns wide.
7. Sit-ins sparked by Greensboro students: No photos were printed.

[638] Douglas Morrow, "Letter to the Editor," The Oak Ridger, 3 Nov. 1969, 2.

8. Nashville sit-ins: No photos were printed.

9. One-day integration in Oak Ridge: No photos were printed.

10. Oak Ridge cafeteria pickets: No photos were printed.

11. Oak Ridge sit-ins: No photos were printed.

12. Birmingham Children's Crusade: Three 2-column pictures of the violence appeared on inside pages.

13. Oak Ridge laundry pickets: One 3-column picture of the demonstrators was printed on the first day of coverage.

14. Public accommodations ordinance fails: No photos were printed.

15. Barbershop committee forms: No photos were printed.

16. Willie Golden named basketball captain: A 1-column photo of Golden was printed after the announcement. A 2-column photo of Golden at a basketball game appeared at the beginning of the season.

17. Barber to serve all residents: No photos were printed.

18. Barbershop opens and serves all: One 3-column picture of a black man and white man getting their hair cut was printed the day after the shop opened.

19. Public accommodations ordinance passes: A 3-column photo of the ordinance's text displayed on overhead projector was printed.

20. Skating rink cited for violations: No photos were printed.

Chapter X

Conclusion

A newspaper shares a symbiotic relationship with the community members it serves. The newspaper informs residents and they in turn influence the manner in which the paper covers events. When *The Oak Ridger* began publishing, residents were pleased to have a local paper, but this did not stop them from criticizing it when they did not agree with editorial coverage. As the paper negotiated its relationship with readers, it also reflected the town's character to the outside world. Because gates previously separated nearby towns from Oak Ridge, the paper provided those outside the city limits with some of their first information about the community.

During the early years of *The Oak Ridger*, there were complex motivations at work for its management. Not only were they motivated to earn a profit, but they also had to cover an ever-changing community. Oak Ridge, a federally created town, faced the issue of desegregation at the same time it was taking the first steps of independence. The newspaper was faced with the challenge of helping to build the sense of community among residents while trying to support the proper actions concerning integration.

The Oak Ridger's coverage of civil rights provides a model business plan for newspapers as they cover issues that can be divisive among community members. Smyser used his moderate approach to cover civil rights, championing desegregation of public facilities while accommodating the feelings of those who valued southern tradition. The newspaper sought input from both integrationists

and segregationists in its coverage. This aided in the community's desegregation efforts, and allowed for the successful publication of *The Oak Ridger*.

This study examined three research questions. The following pages address those questions.

RQ1: What were the philosophies of the Hill family and Richard Smyser concerning the editorial content of *The Oak Ridger*?

Alfred and Julia Hill and their son Tom Hill began their newspaper careers early in their lives. As with any entrepreneurs, Alfred and Julia saw their newspaper venture as a moneymaking business. They bought newspapers they believed they could make successful and sold them at opportune times. They had particular ideas about how to be successful at community journalism. The slogan of *The Oak Ridger* was "First of All the Home News." They knew that a community newspaper brought news to residents that no other paper could. Julia Hill made it her priority to make sure each neighborhood in Oak Ridge had a correspondent. Alfred Hill had certain rules about how to write obituaries, making sure each one was its own individual story. They required local stories on the front page and local editorials.

Perhaps the best example of their combination of business sense and publishing sense was Alfred's journalistic credo of the five "gets." Get the news, get the advertising, get the circulation, get it out and get the income. For the local paper to survive, it had to have a solid business plan. Tom Hill shared those beliefs. He brought new technology to the paper to make the printing process

more efficient. This was not always a popular decision, such as when Linotype operators went on strike to oppose the use of teletypesetter equipment.

Richard Smyser drew on his experiences growing up in Pennsylvania. He understood the connection people had with their community's newspaper. It was the same reason he read his local paper for news about his school. They wanted acknowledgement. He said his ideal newsroom was a combination of big city and small town journalism, which, as mentioned in Chapter 7, he called "Ochs-White Journalism." He said newspapers should provide information impartially, but when there is an opportunity to do so, it should campaign for local issues.

He believed reporters should be diligent when choosing appropriate sources, making sure they do not slant an article because they failed to contact representatives from both sides of the issue.

RQ2: How did those philosophies guide them in their reports on the difficulties faced by black residents?

The type of community in which a newspaper operates influences the way the paper covers news. The newspaper enjoyed its First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press, but only as far as the community would support. If residents do not support the type of expression offered by the local newspaper, the newspaper will not survive. In Oak Ridge, it was acceptable for the newspaper to discuss civil rights as evidenced by the community's response to the hutment articles published in 1949 criticizing the town's segregated housing. When the paper published its series, many letters to the editor were printed as a reaction to the articles. When the town council passed a resolution supporting school

desegregation, public response indicated that the community as a whole was not ready for such a step. *The Oak Ridger* took the middle ground. It supported desegregation, but not without prior public discussion.

The newspaper's management team did not want to see the violence as experienced in nearby Clinton. Desegregation at Clinton High School started relatively peacefully, but within weeks became violent due largely because of outside agitators who played on the emotions of residents. Rev. Paul Turner of Clinton said residents were taken by surprise when the violence started in their town.[639] Oak Ridge was less than 10 miles away from Clinton and outsiders could have traveled there as easily to do the same. When *The Oak Ridger* began publishing, the town was going through several transitions, including incorporation, home ownership and the debate over plant operation. Desegregation was another difficult step for the town to address.

The town had to make these changes successfully in order for the newspaper to be profitable. Many businesses, including newspapers, lost money because of the desegregation crisis. The newspaper's leadership had to create a business plan that would allow the editorial staff to cover community issues including those important to minorities without alienating other residents.

Smyser relied on professional standards to address this problem. Just as news articles are supposed to objective and provide both sides of a story, the paper took the middle ground in the integration crisis. Editorials supported the eventual end to segregation, but without protests. It should happen peacefully, not forcefully,

[639] Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, "Courage in Action, in Clinton, Tennessee," *The Nation*, 22 Dec. 1956, 532.

he wrote. He advocated negotiation between civil rights activists and business owners. Smyser did not approve of demonstrations that had spread through the South in 1960, including Oak Ridge. He opted to provide more prominent coverage to progress made by local human rights organizations when they negotiated opportunities for integration tests at local restaurants or the town council when it addressed accommodations laws. This moderation in desegregation also served as a good commercial strategy for *The Oak Ridger*. It allowed leaders at the newspaper to have a dialogue with both integrationists and segregationists. Supporters of each side placed advertisements in the newspaper and wrote letters to the editor. Tom Hill defended the newspaper's acceptance of advertisements from segregation organizations, saying the policy was not to publish only those ads that coincided with its beliefs.

Another motivation for *The Oak Ridger* was to protect the image of Oak Ridge. People in other towns, such as Clinton, had doubts about Oak Ridge. The town has even been referred to as Clinton's "arch rival."[640] A newspaper advertises the community to the outside world. As a community created by the federal government, it would have brought much embarrassment to the intellectual residents if their town were given nationwide attention for violence instead of scientific advancements.

RQ3: How extensive was the coverage of the Civil Rights Movement?

In review of *The Oak Ridger's* coverage of 20 events related to Civil Rights Movement, the researcher noted general trends. Most news articles were printed

[640] Seivers, 232.

above the fold on the front page. Most articles either used sources that represented more than one viewpoint concerning desegregation or sources that supported desegregation. The paper used and named "official" sources, those who were members of law enforcement, city council or leaders of human rights organizations. When pickets of local cafeterias and other public facilities took place, the staff did get comments from owners of the establishments.

Several pictures of the violence at Clinton High School during its 1956 integration and the 1957 integration of Central High School in Little Rock were printed in the newspaper. Photographs of other integration incidents were used sporadically. Banner headlines were saved for major news stories, such as violence in Clinton and Little Rock, or when the local council made decisions about public accommodations ordinances. More letters to the editor were printed when the council voted to recommend desegregation of the local schools than for any other event.

Coverage was event-oriented. With the exception of an AP story that asked participants in the nationwide sit-ins what was their overall objective, and an *Oak Ridger* editorial that addressed the economics of serving all races in public facilities, there was no in-depth analysis done on the background of or effects of segregation.

Implications

This study suggests that regardless of Oak Ridge's reliance on the federal government, *The Oak Ridger* did not hesitate to speak out against segregation in the community before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. A Dec. 28, 1953

editorial about the town council's resolution on desegregation said, "Our own view is that school segregation should end as soon as feasibly possible."

This is a different stand from that taken by Horace Wells of the nearby Clinton *Courier-News*. Graham reported in *Crisis in Print* that Wells favored leaving the schools segregated. After the *Brown* decision, Wells met with John Kasper, segregationist agitator from New Jersey who had come to Clinton. Wells asked Kasper not to stir up people's emotions in Clinton. Wells was aware of the violence that could result, and while he told Kasper that he had fought for segregation, he intended to obey the law.

The views of *The Oak Ridger's* editor also affected coverage of student demonstrations. Although he believed integration was correct, Smyser believed actions that would be less likely to encourage violence should be taken. It is important to recognize *The Oak Ridger's* failure to provide in-depth analysis of the demonstrations, but as journalists Harry Ashmore and Buford Boone said, that was a problem for many newspapers covering civil rights. Ashmore criticized Arkansas press for failing to report on the events leading up to and after the school desegregation crisis.[641] Lawrence Fanning said it was easier for journalists to get the number of people hurt or arrested. *The Oak Ridger* often included police reports of any violence or arrests made during the local demonstrations.[642]

The newspaper had opportunities to publish more pictures of events in Oak Ridge, but did not capitalize on them. Perhaps photos of Clinton and Little Rock were chosen because they neatly fit the "conflict" news value adhered to by

[641] Ashmore, 3-7; Boone, 48.
[642] Fanning, 111.

journalists. The emotionally charged issues grabbed the readers' attention. Again, the newspaper was a business, and stories and photographs that fit into professional news values of Richard Smyser and the Hills helped sell more papers, at least in the sense of pleasing subscribers. The Clinton and Little Rock stories were of national importance and would have been of interest to Oak Ridgers.

The Oak Ridger could have gone beyond its use of official sources and interviewed black members of the community who were not directly involved in demonstrations. It could have presented a new viewpoint from which to look at the issue. Journalists often use sources that are readily available to them as they try to meet their story deadline. Police officers, participants in demonstrations and owners of public facilities were sources that would have been much easier for *The Oak Ridger* to contact.

The paper did provide similar coverage to sit-ins to that appearing in other papers. Knoxville newspapers — the *News-Sentinel* and the *Knoxville Journal* — waited until sit-ins there were almost finished before they reported on them. *The Oak Ridger* waited two weeks before reporting on the sit-ins that had spread across the South. It shared the disapproving view of the sit-ins with the *Tennessean*, the *Times* and the *News-Sentinel*.[643]

It is important to try to learn the personal beliefs of newspaper decision-makers when studying editorial content. By understanding the belief system that guided the newspaper, it is easier interpret the meaning behind the content

[643] Ibid., 199.

analysis. There was not extensive coverage of demonstrations. Editorials stated the paper's leadership did not approve of sit-ins or pickets. They wrote in favor of negotiations. The town already was going through transitions, including property sales and debate over incorporation. *The Oak Ridger*, as the voice of the town, knew it was important not to fan the flames of hatred. It did not want rabble-rousers arriving in Oak Ridge as they did in Clinton to make the situation worse. It was better to have discussions and bring about social change slowly.

The results of this study add to the literature on civil rights newspaper coverage and Tennessee press. While much has been written about the Mississippi and Alabama press, there is limited research pertaining to Tennessee. It also makes people more knowledgeable about community newspapers and how they interact with the public, especially when covering controversial topics.

In Graham's study, he focused most of his attention on the initial reaction of Tennessee's large metropolitan newspapers regarding the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, violence at Clinton and Little Rock and student demonstrations. However, he gave little attention to the background or philosophies of the newspaper owners or editors. While he did mention *The Oak Ridger,* he did not mention Alfred Hill or Richard Smyser. Also, he studied only editorials, not articles, photos or letters to the editor. This study provides a more detailed study of one newspaper's continuing coverage of the Civil Rights Movement and the beliefs held by the paper's decision makers.

This study also adds to the knowledge of community journalism. Community newspapers are the primary source for local news. *The Oak Ridger* provided daily

coverage of the Clinton integration crisis and extensive coverage of legislation discussed by the town council. However, it lacked in its analysis of the events. It did not explain in great detail the viewpoint of both sides on the integration issue. Nor did it fully explain how segregation affects society.

It did keep readers abreast of the latest developments in desegregation in their community by announcing the restaurants that had agreed to serve all, and the latest actions of civil rights organizations. While keeping Ridgers up-to-date on news about house disposal and local elections in their unusual town, it supported the ultimate desegregation of all public facilities.

In return, Oak Ridge residents often responded to editorials written in the newspaper. Members of civil rights groups did not hesitate to criticize the newspaper when editorials did not fully support sit-in demonstrations. Readers also used the newspaper to respond to each other. When the local skating rink violated the accommodations law, members of the Community Relations Council and the rink's owner communicated to each other through letters to the editor. The newspaper not only shared the latest events with residents, but also gave readers a forum to share their views about the events.

In Chapter 2, a working definition of community was provided. It included the geographic area known as Oak Ridge and the concepts of membership and shared emotional connection. *The Oak Ridger* aided in the formation of residents' sense of community. Segregation negatively affected a person's connection to the larger group. As previously mentioned, Kathleen Stephens discussed how her white friends were able to use certain public facilities that she was unable to use. In

some instances, her friends told her they did not realize she could not go to certain stores. Desegregation was vital in allowing residents to feel as though they belonged. However, it was necessary to make the transition as peacefully as possible. Violence would have only formed a wider gap between segregationists and integrationists, thus taking more time for the community to heal. In Clinton, for example, the high school was destroyed by dynamite blasts two years after the initial desegregation. The longer it took to integrate, or the fewer positive experiences residents shared, the less sense of community they would have felt.

In addition to black residents, segregationists were seeing a change in their way of life. As a newly formed town, Oak Ridge and its newspaper did not have traditions or history, past experiences as a reference on how to handle the situation. *The Oak Ridger* was concerned with the quality of relationships among residents. Both residents and the paper had to negotiate a balance of how to do the right thing without upsetting everything.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Because Oak Ridge and *The Oak Ridger* have unusual histories, the findings in this study have limitations in applying to other contexts. A second limitation is that the study was not completed before the death of Richard Smyser in March 2005. Therefore, it was not possible to gain further information from him concerning particular articles and editorials written about civil rights. A third limitation is personal error when making coding decisions. Finally, the researcher did not take into account unrelated stories that appeared on the newspaper pages. Civil rights stories that appeared on the bottom of page one or on inside pages

might have been placed there because there were more timely, urgent stories on those particular days.

This research could be replicated in studies of comparable communities, possibly the Hanford Reservation and Los Alamos site, also established as part of the Manhattan Project. Future research could include studies of how other Tennessee newspapers covered events in Oak Ridge.

In addition, studies could address the events in Clinton and Oak Ridge and how the two local newspapers chose to present them to their readers. Clinton is the Anderson County seat, and The Manhattan Project was not the first time residents in Anderson County were displaced for a government project. In the 1930s, land was seized for the TVA Norris Dam. In 1942, more land was seized for Oak Ridge.[644]

Clinton was a small rural town where many residents farmed or worked at Magnet Mills, the local textile mill.[645] Oak Ridge became a multi-cultural town as a result of the many highly educated residents who arrived to work on scientific research. While Oak Ridge had close ties to the federal government, Clinton was left to adapt to these overwhelming changes on its own. Wells reported at times there was friction between Anderson County and federal government officials over such issues as who was responsible for bridge repair in the area.[646]

Aside from the problems raised by these federal projects in Anderson County, Wells said that residents were not in favor of federally imposed racial integration.

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[644] Herd, 63.
[645] Horace V. Wells, *The Days Before Yesterday: My Life Sixty Years as an Editor* (Clinton, TN: Courier-News, 1991), 91.
[646] Wells, 71.

During an interview for Edward R. Murrow's "Clinton and the Law" report on Jan. 6, 1957, Wells said any newspaper is inclined to follow the thinking of the majority in the town it serves. He said the majority of Clinton residents favored segregation. "We did everything we could to maintain segregation," he said. Following the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling, Wells urged readers to obey the law.[647]

Wells work was still recognized in the 21st century. The East Tennessee Chapter of The Society of Professional Journalists presents the Horace V. Wells Jr., Community Service Award each year to acknowledge journalism that has an impact on the community.[648]

Born in Columbia, South Carolina, Wells graduated from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1930. He moved to Clinton in August 1933. He said segregation was a way of life for him. "In Clinton, most people treated the black people well, although with the southern attitude that they were different and should 'stay in their place.'" As for himself, Wells wrote, "At no time in my life was I associated with young black people and the only blacks I knew were customers and those employed as household servants or laborers. I always got along well with them and respected them as people, but not as equals. This was the attitude that the whole of our community had to overcome."[649]

Both the *Clinton Courier-News* and *The Oak Ridger* served residents in Anderson County communities, but the owners and editors came from markedly

[647] Edward R. Murrow, "Clinton and the Law," *See It Now*, CBS News. 6, Jan. 1957.
[648] Wells, 118.
[649] Wells, 8, 25, 81.

different backgrounds. A study of the *Clinton Courier-News* would allow for a better understanding of the differences and similarities between Wells and Richard Smyser in their coverage of civil rights during such turbulent times.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Coding Sheet for *The Oak Ridger*

Date: _____

Event Category:

0 = Vote for integration
1 = Brown v. Board of Education
2 = Oak Ridge schools to desegregate
3 = Oak Ridge High School desegregates
4 = Clinton integration crisis
5 = Little Rock integration crisis
6 = Greensboro sparks sit-ins
7 = Sit-ins begin in Nashville
8 = One-day integration in Oak Ridge
9 = Oak Ridge restaurant pickets
10 = Oak Ridge restaurant sit-ins
11 = Children's Crusade in Birmingham
12 = Pickets at Oak Ridge laundry
13 = Public accommodations ordinance fails
14 = Barber committee forms
15 = Golden named captain
16 = Barber to serve all
17 = Barbershop opens
18 = Ordinance passes
19 = Skating rink cited

Page:

0 = Front page
1 = Op/Ed page
2 = Inside page

Placement:

0 = Above the fold
1 = Below the fold

Author:

0 = Oak Ridger
1 = Wire report
2 = Citizen

Sources:

0 = Support integration
1 = Oppose integration
2 = Neutral
3 = More than one viewpoint represented

Headline: _____

Headline size: _____

Photos:

0 = No
1 = Yes

Photo size: _____

Appendix B: Tables from Analysis

Table 1: Frequency of Articles by Page Number

Newspaper Page	Frequency	Percent
Page 1	125	57.3
Op/Ed	83	38.1
Inside	10	4.6
Total	218	100

Table 2: Frequency of Articles by Placement on the Page

Placement on the Page	Frequency	Percent
Above	173	79.4
Below	45	20.6
Total	218	100

Table 3: Frequency of Articles by Author

Author	Frequency	Percent
The Oak Ridger	116	53.2
Wire Report	54	24.8
Citizen	48	22.0
Total	218	100

Table 4: Use of Sources in Articles

Author	Frequency	Percent
Support	82	37.6
Oppose	25	11.5
Neutral	28	12.8
Multiple viewpoints	83	38.1
Total	218	100

Table 5: Page Placement by Author

Newspaper Page	Oak Ridger	Wire Report	Citizen	Total
Page 1	82	43	0	125
Op/Ed	32	3	48	83
Inside	2	8	0	10
Total	116	54	48	218

Table 6: Event Coverage by Author

Event	Oak Ridger	Wire Report	Citizen	Total
Council votes to desegregate	5	0	13	18
Brown v. Board of Education	4	7	0	11
Oak Ridge to desegregate	5	1	3	9
Oak Ridge desegregates	7	0	1	8
Clinton	23	2	1	26
Little Rock	3	25	0	28
Greensboro	1	6	3	10
Nashville	0	3	0	3
One-day integration	5	0	1	6
Oak Ridge pickets	5	0	2	7
Oak Ridge sit-ins	5	0	3	8
Birmingham	1	10	0	11
Laundry pickets	7	0	5	12
Ordinance fails	13	0	3	16
Barber committee forms	6	0	0	6
Golden	2	0	0	2
Barber to serve all	3	0	0	3
Barber arrives	1	0	0	1
Ordinance passes	12	0	6	18
Skating rink	8	0	7	15
Total	116	54	48	218

Table 7: Events by Placement on the Page

Event	Above	Below	Total
Council votes to desegregate	17	1	18
Brown v. Board of Education	10	1	11
Oak Ridge to desegregate	8	1	9
Oak Ridge desegregates	8	0	8
Clinton	18	8	26
Little Rock	26	2	28
Greensboro	7	3	10
Nashville	1	2	3
One-day integration	3	3	6
Oak Ridge pickets	2	5	7
Oak Ridge sit-ins	7	1	8
Birmingham	8	3	11
Laundry pickets	8	4	12
Ordinance fails	14	2	16
Barber committee forms	5	1	6
Golden	2	0	2
Barber to serve all	3	0	3
Barber arrives	1	0	1
Ordinance passes	16	2	18
Skating rink	9	6	15
Total	173	45	218

Table 8: Event Coverage by Page Placement

Event	Page 1	Op/Ed	Inside	Total
Council votes to desegregate	3	15	0	18
Brown v. Board of Education	9	1	1	11
Oak Ridge to desegregate	5	4	0	9
Oak Ridge desegregates	6	2	0	8
Clinton	20	6	0	26
Little Rock	22	4	2	28
Greensboro	3	4	3	10
Nashville	3	0	0	3
One-day integration	3	3	0	6
Oak Ridge pickets	5	2	0	7
Oak Ridge sit-ins	4	4	0	8
Birmingham	8	1	2	11
Laundry pickets	6	6	0	12
Ordinance fails	7	9	0	16
Barber committee forms	6	0	0	6
Golden	0	1	1	2
Barber to serve all	3	0	0	3
Barber arrives	0	1	0	1
Ordinance passes	8	10	0	18
Skating rink	4	10	1	15
Total	125	83	10	218

Table 9: Type of Sources Used for Coverage of Each Event

Event	Support	Oppose	Neutral	More than one viewpoint	Total
Council votes to desegregate	8	7	0	3	18
Brown v. Board of Education	3	0	2	6	11
Oak Ridge to desegregate	2	2	3	2	9
Oak Ridge desegregates	2	3	1	2	8
Clinton	5	1	10	10	26
Little Rock	2	5	5	16	28
Greensboro	6	0	1	3	10
Nashville	1	0	0	2	3
One-day integration	5	0	0	1	6
Oak Ridge pickets	4	0	0	3	7
Oak Ridge sit-ins	5	0	0	3	8
Birmingham	1	0	2	8	11
Laundry pickets	6	0	0	6	12
Ordinance fails	7	2	2	5	16
Barber committee forms	3	0	0	3	6
Golden	1	0	1	0	2
Barber to serve all	2	0	0	1	3
Barber arrives	1	0	0	0	1
Ordinance passes	11	0	1	6	18
Skating rink	7	5	0	3	15
Total	82	25	28	83	218

The Oak Ridger, Oak Ridge, Tenn., Monday, Dec. 28, 1953

Let Us Respect Other Views As We Discuss Segregation

Town Council has taken its most controversial step since calling the incorporation vote last March.

In acting on the matter of racial segregation in local schools, council again runs into two types of opposition, just as it did relative to the incorporation vote.

Opposed to the action a week ago are those who say they are in sympathy with the end of school segregation but do not believe the council resolution the proper step in that direction. Opposed more strongly are those who flatly do not agree to the demise of separate school facilities, some objecting to is happening now, others objecting to it happening ever.

Our own view is that school segregation should end as soon as feasibly possible. We also believe that the end is inevitable and therefore it is well, regardless of how we feel individually, that we adjust to this inevitability.

Therefore, we are basically in favor of the intent of the council action, but we do have one reservation and we feel it an important one. It is a reservation that applies not only to this particular issue, but to all issues that come before council.

We believe there is considerable justification for the argument, coming from some on both sides of the present question, that council should have given some advance indication that it was considering this action.

The fact that the resolution came as a surprise can not help but arouse needless resentment, especially among those who oppose the principle of the resolution itself.

The segregation question is one many of us prefer to sidestep. It is largely an emotional argument and for that reason we avoid it, both consciously and unconsciously.

We believe it entirely proper that it is discusaed, however, for it is certainly one of the biggest problems of our times and one that we do ourselves a disservice by refusing to face.

We, therefore, can not help but have a feeling of admiration for council tackling the issue, but at the same time we wish the "tackle" had been billed in advance. We see no reason why council could not have discussed the issue at one meeting, allowed the public to have been informed of that discussion and then taken action on a resolution later.

However, essentially the above is talk of what might have been. Now the council action is fact and the matter is a topic of active community debate. We must deal with it as such.

We believe a profitable town meeting could be held on the question. We also believe a very destructive meeting could result. Our primary and immediate concern is, therefore, that before citizens get together they prepare themselves to be respectful of viewpoints opposite to their own. Let us try to allow the discussion to proceed in an atmosphere of mutual respect rather than in a mood of antagonism.

Perhaps some hindsight on the incorporation question is helpful here. There again the community was split into two opposite opinions. Discussions were held. Some of them were orderly and constructive. Others were not. Doesn't it now seem needless that anyone got mad despite vast gaps of difference?

As we look back does it not seem that we all profited much from airing opposing ideas? Weren't a lot of new thoughts stimulated for all of us?

We earnestly believe the incorporation controversy was, in the large, a very constructive event in Oak Ridge community life, the same as we believe a segregation discussion can be.

Oak Ridge is unique in the make-up of its citizenry. It has been said hundreds of times that the population is composed of persons from all sections of the country. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that we have differing opinions on an issue so closely tied to sectionalism as is the segregation question.

This sectionalism can, of course, be overemphasized, as Oak Ridge is proof. For while it might be said that predominately local segregation opinion follows sectional lines, there are many exceptions.

Despite our own belief in the ultimate benefits from the end of school segregation, we feel it necessary to remind ourselves that others differ from us. As we feel entitled to the right to express our opinion and work for our beliefs, we must respect the rights of those differing with us to do the same.

Some councilmen opposed the council segregation stand on the grounds that the issue would tear the community into two opposing, fighting camps. We certainly have this fear ourselves and dislike the prospect.

But at the same time we do not believe that it is inevitable that this happen and we believe every citizen should do his best to see that it does not happen.

Oak Ridge should rise to this issue and show that it can profit, rather than suffer from sharp difference within our midst. Our town can show that this issue, national in scope and currently preoccupying the nation's highest judicial body, the U. S. Supreme Court, can be debated without a lot of bitterness and name-calling.

Let's keep our heads as we bring this controversy to a head.

Figure 1-Dec. 28, 1953 Editorial About School Segregation

An Editorial —

We Owe Harassed Officials Our Deepest Moral Support

Never before in local history has there been news to cause the hurt that have this past weekend's developments in Clinton. Oak Ridge, while it may be wisest that it does not interfere, can still not sit aloof.

This is our county and it is in its greatest hour of trial. It is — for not too long a time, we fervently hope — the center of the immediate pain of a national illness: intolerance, racial hate, mob arousal leading to defiance for law and order and violence.

Circumstance has made Clinton the focal point for a national transition — probably our country's most difficult transition in nearly a century — from the traditions of segregation to integration. While it goes without saying that Clinton nor Anderson County as a whole did not seek this attention, it is to the everlasting credit of all county and city officials that, since it came, they have not fled from it.

This, supposedly, has been a holiday weekend. But it has been the saddest of weekends. Any sort of holiday spirit — any sort of relaxation — has been impossible for anyone who has read in newspapers, listened on the radio or watched on television the awful things that have occurred in and about Clinton — from Friday night's [illegible] through this morning's heavily [illegible] calm.

We cannot escape the guilt, the shame, the anger, the sorrow, the worry, the confusion that is in our midst. We cannot forget the frantic faces of those attacked in their automobiles. We cannot fail to feel the fear in homes — in the homes of officials who have only done their duty but who have been berated, intimidated and threatened for so doing; in the homes of those against whom the hate campaign is directed — the Negroes. How can we rest when they shudder?

Neither can we write off from our concern those who wittingly or unwittingly, in ignorance or in cunning, have fomented [illegible] pretend we have no responsibility for their feelings [illegible] action. As surely as we must work to prevent further trial for the oppressed, we must work as well to try to heal the sores that goad the oppressors.

Inevitable and deep as our concern is, however, we know that we must do more than just worry, feel guilty, know shame, rise to anger, sink to sorrow and be confused. We know that we must work — not just spend our energies in anguish. This need to work becomes particularly apparent when we realize that, although not apart, we are not as deeply and personally involved and, therefore, not as severely harassed, as are the many good and loyal county and city officials and law enforcement officers.

These men, in the vast majority, have behaved admirably and courageously through this all. We owe all of them our most intense moral support — in our prayers, in our discussions — public and private — among ourselves and with them. We owe them deepest respect as well and the fervent hope that this all may pass — pass justly — and finally, after their hours of pain, they may know the deep satisfaction that should be theirs to overflowing — satisfaction and peace in the knowledge that they have done right, regardless of immediate consequences.

Figure 2-Sept. 3, 1956 Editorial in Response to Clinton Violence



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Oak Ridger:

While reading last Friday's Oak Ridger, I was pleased to find an editorial entitled "The Positive Ways to Brotherhood." First, I thought, Maybe there will be a good word for the Equal Public Services group that the paper reported on the previous week. For I have been glad that we have people in our churches and civic organizations who are trying to build channels for discussion and reasonable persuasion in promoting equal opportunity for all; and I have felt that if other cities had such positive efforts there would not have been the fear and tension and alienation between groups that has so disturbingly erupted into violence. But this indication of a concren by our citizens for promoting brotherhood received no praise.

And then I thought, perhaps the editor will print the proclamation by which our city council declared Brotherhood Week, and will endorse that official encouragement to our citizens to rededicate themselves to democratic principles and friendly and harmonious relationships with people of all races, creeds, and origins. But no, the city council and their proclamation was not commended for a positive statement of brotherhood.

But, I thought, surely the editor will illustrate the positive ways to brotherhood by a kind word for the poster contest, in which our school children put their talents to work in an expression for brotherhood. (By this time I had no hope that the Community Relations Council would be approved for sponsoring this contest in the hope that it would be a positive way to brotherhood.) But no, not even the school children were applauded.

Reading to the end, I found that our editor had a kind word simply for good schools and churches. And I was glad that he did find something specific to approve.

But perhaps it is unfair to you, Mr. Editor, to write this way of your editorial and ignore the main point you wished to make: Your thesis that demonstrations, pickets, and court orders do not make for good feelings. There is certainly a measure of truth to that idea: Struggles and legal cases do not generally promote endearing friendships between the contestants. But they can contribute to progress in securing equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. And that achievement can promote in the beneficiaries a sense of belonging to the community, a sense of brotherhood with their fellow citizens. And I believe that when that feeling can be built we are all the beneficiaries, and we have a better democracy and republic for its service to that end.

And as for the lunch counter demonstrators, let us remember that in almost all of the cities where this approach has been tried the demonstrators themselves have scrupulously avoided violence, even to the point of withstanding insults and provocations. I would like to give them some praise, for their self-discipline and forbearance while they work toward what they hope will be a better life for them and their posterity. I don't know whether the technique they are trying will be an effective one, but I give them credit for trying.

Let us condemn violence and deplore bitterness, but let us voice support for all of those who are taking a peaceful and positive stand for what they believe will promote brotherhood.

Sincerely,
David R. Krieg
316 Virginia Rd.

To The Oak Ridger:

Should *businesses serving the* public do so without regard for the race or color of the customer? With some support of the townsfolk, is non - discriminatory service another responsibility to be shouldered by businessmen? Recently these questions have repeatedly come to my mind in association with the ideas below.

Our City Council has been considering ordinances, many of which serve to remind one of the responsibilities each of us bear to conduct ourselves without infringing the rights of others. For instance, I surely have sole right to decide when to "play" my radio—but only so long as I never seriously disturb neighbors. Similarly many of our personal or business "rights" as individuals or groups are circumscribed by our responsibilities to consider others. Ordinances should not be needed to remind us of our duties to others, but they often do so effectively.

Recent passive "sit-ins" at lunch counters serve to remind us in Oak Ridge that the same lack of service for Negro patrons exists here as in Nashville, Chattanooga, and elsewhere. Oak Ridge policies have not yet been demonstrated against, but many of our citizens are embarrassed and hurt by discriminatory lack of service. Some of us think that businesses which serve the public have the responsibility to serve all of it.

Now, before disturbing demonstrations occur, is the best time for constructive adjustment. Businessmen would not fear financial loss if they were encouraged to change policies by enough of their customers, and by acting in unison they could presumably retain even those few customers who might resent the presence of persons having another color.

The above matter is one for the concern of all of us, since all Oak Ridge is properly judged for any possible shortcomings in the policies of our businessmen. What do you think? Have we neglected a responsibility?

Yours sincerely,
Robert Peelle
409 W. Vanderbilt Dr.

Figure 3-March 2, 1960 Letters to the Editor

A Thorny Problem That Must Be Faced

It had seemed only a matter of time until the demonstrations by Negroes in other southern cities would reach Oak Ridge in one form or another. Now they have.

So far, the form is a statement of local Negro desire and intent and an appeal for communitywide concern about a solution. This was published as a paid advertisement in The Oak Ridger of Tuesday.

Oak Ridge is fortunate that it has made advances, adjustments with a minimum of rancor in this sensitive and perplexing area. These advances were made, however, largely under impetus provided by Oak Ridge's status as a federally-operated community. Now the city faces the problem with its own city government in charge.

The federal government's influence is not completely missing, however. There are federal statutes that do and will apply to use of federal assistance money by the city — assistance money that the city must have to survive. For example, should any entertain the idea that school integration might be dispensed with here because the AEC is no longer the official operator of the schools, they are mistaken. Federal moneys, as with federal contracts, carry with them non-discriminatory clauses.

We would disagree with any such ideas also on the ground that to take such a step would be turning the clock back on a difficult adjustment already made. Also, a federal court order would only be a matter of time to return the status quo.

But what of future steps?

The Negro community makes it clear that it is not complacent, intends to work legally and non-violently to achieve new goals. It challenges the whole community to work out some sort of plan over the conference table.

It is a fair statement, whether one agrees with the aims as being just aims or not. It is unfortunate only in that it suggests the possibility of "sit ins" here -- demonstrations the ends of which are considerably easier to agree with than the method. For the whole community's sake we hope these can be avoided.

This is a thorny problem and certainly the new city government is not lacking for thorny problems these days. However, it is with us and should be faced.

Other cities have either avoided demonstration extremes, quelled them or prevented them by just the kind of bi-racial negotiation that is now suggested here.

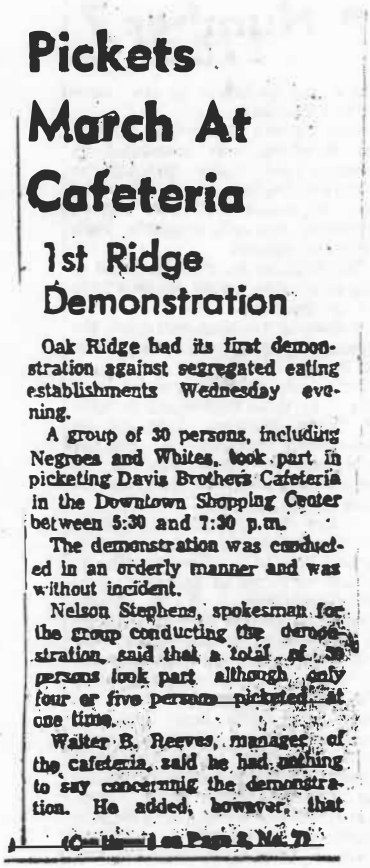
We hope earnestly Oak Ridge is up to the problem for it is one that will not go away and one that will only grow more intense if not met squarely, fairly and with a maximum of patience by all concerned.

We accept the desirability and inevitability of steps to improve the Negro's lot, but we also accept, as the U.S. Supreme Court accepts in its recent rulings, gradualism in making the changes.

What is too gradual? What is not gradual enough? The answers come painfully.

Nevertheless, these are the questions Oak Ridgers, white and Negro, must answer. Hopefully, may the answers come out mutually acceptable, if not entirely agreeable to all good citizens concerned.

Figure 4-March 25, 1960 Editorial Addressing Demonstrations



Pickets March At Cafeteria

1st Ridge Demonstration

Oak Ridge had its first demonstration against segregated eating establishments Wednesday evening.

A group of 30 persons, including Negroes and Whites, took part in picketing Davis Brothers Cafeteria in the Downtown Shopping Center between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.

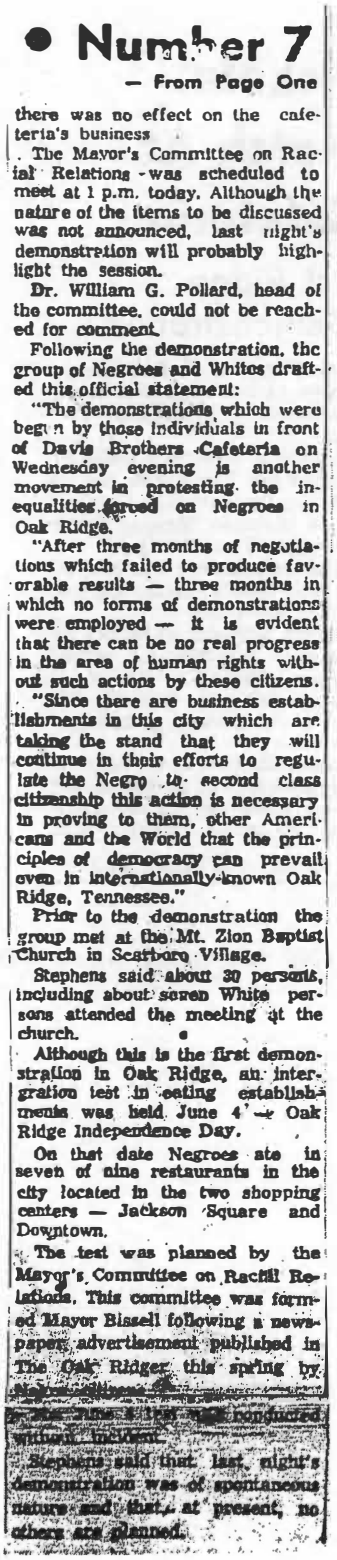
The demonstration was conducted in an orderly manner and was without incident.

Nelson Stephens, spokesman for the group conducting the demonstration, said that a total of 30 persons took part although only four or five persons picketed at one time.

Walter B. Reeves, manager of the cafeteria, said he had nothing to say concerning the demonstration. He added, however, that

(Continued on Page 2, No. 7)

Figure 5-July 7, 1960 News Article About Cafeteria Pickets



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there was no effect on the cafeteria's business

. The Mayor's Committee on Racial Relations was scheduled to meet at 1 p.m. today. Although the nature of the items to be discussed was not announced, last night's demonstration will probably highlight the session.

Dr. William G. Pollard, head of the committee, could not be reached for comment.

Following the demonstration, the group of Negroes and Whites drafted this official statement:

"The demonstrations which were begun by those individuals in front of Davis Brothers Cafeteria on Wednesday evening is another movement in protesting the inequalities forced on Negroes in Oak Ridge.

"After three months of negotiations which failed to produce favorable results — three months in which no forms of demonstrations were employed — it is evident that there can be no real progress in the area of human rights without such actions by these citizens.

"Since there are business establishments in this city which are taking the stand that they will continue in their efforts to regulate the Negro to second class citizenship this action is necessary in proving to them, other Americans and the World that the principles of democracy can prevail even in internationally-known Oak Ridge, Tennessee."

Prior to the demonstration the group met at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Scarboro Village.

Stephens said about 30 persons, including about seven White persons attended the meeting at the church.

Although this is the first demonstration in Oak Ridge, an integration test in eating establishments was held June 4 — Oak Ridge Independence Day.

On that date Negroes ate in seven of nine restaurants in the city located in the two shopping centers — Jackson Square and Downtown.

The test was planned by the Mayor's Committee on Racial Relations. This committee was formed Mayor Bissell following a newspaper advertisement published in The Oak Ridger this spring by

[illegible]

The June 4 test was conducted without incident.

Stephens said that last night's demonstration was of spontaneous nature and that, at present, no others are planned.

Figure 5-Continued

Ridge A Paradox In Equal Service Effort

A popular stand on current Negro efforts to secure equal service at eating places is stated this way: "We endorse the objectives of the Negro sit-in demonstrations and compliment the participants for the peaceful manner in which they conduct themselves."

This is essentially what both major political party platforms say. It is a relatively strong statement in support of the Negroes' position and yet it does not specifically voice approval of the sit-in tactic.

Our position is still further from the endorsement of the sit-ins or even the picketing that has been conducted here.

We feel strongly that equal service is the right course. We think this way not unmindful of the difficult adjustment it is for many to accept. Nevertheless, there can be no denying that the time has come for all of the U.S. to shed vestiges of the past in the matter of treatment of minority groups.

On a more materialistic basis, as has been stated before, it is just plain economic good sense in Oak Ridge, in particular, for all business facilities to offer service to all.

Oak Ridge is not primarily a city of The South or a city of The North. It is a city of The World that attracts official visitors and trainees from many countries, of many races, of many creeds. It is a vital part of our nation's foreign policy and, as such, it is highly important that Oak Ridge offer all if its visitors an equal welcome. The federal government can always go elsewhere with its training and research programs if it encounters too many difficulties and embarassments here.

Feeling strongly on points of both principle and practicality, it is nevertheless difficult to approve the recent demonstrations and picketing. It's the old quandry of wondering whether the end justifies the means.

There is a paradox about the local situation. The trouble continues here while in city after city throughout The South the trouble seems settled, at least for the present. Lunch counters in scores of cities — the target of the first sit-ins — have now been desegregated and there has been little outward reaction. Each day's news brings a report of an additional city making the step. It happened in Houston on Thursday.

Here in Oak Ridge, several eating places now have policies of equal service to all. Yet, outwardly, the city is giving the impression of one where progress is yet to be made. The facts are that more progress has been made here than in most cities.

This is not to say that still more progress is not desirable. It is. The question is: How to accomplish it? We fear that the sit-ins and picketing have now reached the stage where they are doing more harm than good to the cause of such progress.

Rather, tedious as the process may be, we think that an intensification — and in some respects a revival — of efforts by the Mayor's Committee on Race Relations is the best hope.

It is unfair for there to be any impression that this committee has not already accomplished a lot, for indeed it has. New efforts might well lead to more accomplishment. These efforts can undoubtedly proceed more effectively if there is an absence of the unrest and resentment that the picketing and sit-ins inevitably produce.

Figure 6-Aug. 26, 1960 Editorial About Demonstrations

Letters To The Editor

To The Oak Ridger:

We are surprised at some statements in your editorial of Aug. 26 You mention "the unrest and resentment that picketing and sit-ins inevitably produce".

Don't most Oak Ridgers feel unrest and resentment at the fact that in our city people may be refused service in a restaurant or admission to a movie because their skin is dark instead of pink?

When an Oak Ridger walks into his hometown restaurant and is refused service because he is a Negro we have a sit-in. Whom do we blame for it? The Negro who has too much self-respect to accept that a place open to the public may still be closed to him, as if he were not part of the public? Or do we blame the restaurant owner who refuses to treat every customer alike? Or the Oak Ridge community who keep patronizing places that practice this policy?

Should we not congratulate and encourage those who manifest their disapproval to a policy that is a disgrace to our town? Those who are too proud to accept inferior treatment? It must not be pleasant for a Negro to sit in a restaurant where he knows that he probably will not be served, or to march on a picket line. For him, too, it would be easier to say "this is the Mayor's Committee's responsibility" or, "there are other cities in the South where conditions are even worse than in Oak Ridge".

Was not this country founded by some who were too proud to be discriminated against and who revolted because they could no longer accept temporization or submission?

Very truly yours,

Barbara deSaussure

Gerard deSaussure

209 Louisiana Ave.

Figure 7-Letter in Response to Aug. 26, 1960 Editorial

Demonstrators March At Laundermat

The Oak Ridge Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) continued demonstrations this morning at the Multimatic Laundry on Jefferson Circle as the owner of the establishment began legal efforts to obtain an injunction to halt further demonstrations.

A group of some 12 persons, Negro and white, began picketing the laundry at 10:45 continuing demonstrations which started Saturday.

Meanwhile, Joe Young, one of the owners of the self-service laundry, was in Clinton all morning attempting to obtain an injunction to halt further demonstrations. He was in conference with his attorney.

Contacted this morning in Clinton, Young stated that he had agreed to talk with CORE officials between 12:20 and 1 p.m today about the situation.

He added, "I'll still talk with them, but since they went on and demonstrated I'll tell them no."

Young strongly stated that he wouldn't integrate the laundry. "I don't know what will happen," he added. "I don't know whether they will keep on demonstrating or quit. It's up to them."

Mrs. Nelson Stephens ORCORE chairman, announced that her group will continue to demonstrate until a satisfactory agreement can be reached.

The weekend demonstrations were climaxed Sunday evening when a 21-year-old white man was arrested for disorderly conduct by Oak Ridge police. James Harold Rogers, 133 Jarrett La., was arrested at 7:40 p.m. Sunday, and charged with disorderly conduct and using profanity in public.

His City Court hearing is scheduled for Aug. 7.

The demonstrations started Saturday about 1:30 p.m. as a group of eight women, both Negro and white, began washing clothes in the establishment.

Young, who was not on hand when the CORE members arrived, told the group they would have to take their clothes from the machines and leave the premises.

The women replied that they would wait for their clothes, according to a report written by CORE officials. Following this Young began emptying the machines being used by the CORE members.

Young and his assistant then carried the demonstrators out of the establishment.

The official CORE account of the incident states, "Shortly thereafter, Young and an assistant roughly yanked, dragged or carried out the eight women from CORE, one at a time."

Young said this morning that he and his assistat carried the demonstrators out "gently."

Also during the Saturday afternoon incident, Young and a photographer for the CORE group, Ian Williams, nearly became involved in a fight as the photographer took pictures of Young emptying baskets full of clothes. Young started toward Williams but stopped before reaching him.

The CORE demonstrators were took pictures of Young emptying met by a counter group during the Saturday afternoon demonstrations. A group of white teenage youths began marching carrying pro-segregation signs.

Suday's demonstrations took place during the afternoon and evening.

Oak Ridge police, who were on hand all weekend, kept especially close surveillance Sunda evening as a group between 50 and 75 white youth gathered and be-

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Figure 8-June 29, 1963 News Article About Laundry Pickets

• Number 3

— From Page One

gan heckling the CORE demonstrators.

As this morning's demonstration started, Oak Ridge police had three cars on the scene and others cruising in the immediate vicinity.

Shortly before the demonstrators arrived in five-car caravan, business was running normal with many persons inside using the facilities. But an air of anticipation was apparent as employers looked at each car knowing that the demonstrators would arrive at any moment.

When the demonstratore arrived there were some 20 persons inside the laundromat. As they got signs out of their cars and prepared to begin the demonstramons several left, but most stayed inside.

As the demonstrators arrived, the two doors of the establishment were manned by employes.

As the demonstration started, one Negro woman came to the door and asked if Joe Young was in. The man on the door replied, "No". The woman then joined the line of pickets.

This morning's demonstration was orderly as the three police cars maintained a close watch.

A group of several white teenage boys began forming near the street entrance to the parking lot. They were dispersed by police.

The continuing demonstrations at the laundry is the second major incident in the city recently. Two weeks ago the CORE group picketed the Snow White-Drive-in on the Turnpike for one day. The drive-in then agred to integrate its facilities.

Figure 8-Continued

Demonstrators Provide Opposition Rally Point

So much toward desegregation has been accomplished in Oak Ridge during the past few weeks, during the past few years.

Only Friday it was announced that all eating places in the city are now serving all, regardless of race. How many cities in the South can make that claim?

And it all was accomplished with a minimum of rancor. There were picket lines several years ago. There was a demonstration several weeks ago. But there has been much more intensive negotiation, persuasion.

Therefore, there is much irony in the fact that Oak Ridge is getting attention right now not for the major steps that it has accomplished — the ending of restaurant segregation — but rather for demonstration and disorder at the lone laundromat that refuses to serve Negroes.

Surely there is a principle involved.

Surely as they are sincere, and not just excitement seekers, we are aware of the courage of those who personally demonstrate, despite taunts.

Surely the Negroes and their white supporters have cause to say that the demonstration is a last resort. Surely also they can point to integration that has come only after the pressure of demonstration, here and elsewhere.

But there is also this to consider. The goal of the demonstrators is the desegregation on one laundromat. However, in the process of striving for this goal, the demonstrators are providing those who actively support continued segregation with a rallying point — an instance to arouse emotions, an instance to arouse support that they did not have before.

And perhaps, worse than that, in inviting the ugliness that the demonstrations have brought, the demonstrators are losing the support of many who they could otherwise count on for at least passive endorsement of continued erasing of racial barriers.

It may be that demonstrations are the only resort in other cities, but not so in Oak Ridge. The Mayor's Advisory Panel on Racial Relations is available here and should be allowed to handle the situation.

Figure 9-July 30, 1963 Editorial About Pickets

A Valuable Forum On A Vital Issue

Thursday night's City Council meeting need not be thought of as solely a negative session — a session at which Council postponed a vote, delayed a decision or, in some interpretations, killed a measure by calculated inaction.

The three-hour debate on the public accommodations ordinance was something that has not happened here in a long time -- a spirited, and yet respectful "town meeting" on an issue that is very much on citizens' minds but is too often consciously avoided in open discussion.

The meeting served one important purpose. It brought together segments of the community — segments from various economic and political levels, segments of opinion — that get together so seldom.

This was not the first public meeting held on racial questions. There have been many sponsored by groups like the Oak Ridge Federation For Equal Public Services and the Community Relations Council. But what was special about Thursday night's meeting is that this was the first debate of any consequence on the racial issue at an official City Council meeting.

The divergence of opinion expressed Thursday night on this particular proposed ordinance was representative of the whole broad divergence of opinion on racial questions that still exists in the community, for all the fine progress that has been made. For whether we like it or not, the facts are that more citizens are opposed to moves to break down segregation than is reflected in many of the steps that have been taken and the outward reaction thereto. The orderliness and peacefulness on the surface, for which we are exceedingly thankful, still is deceiving as it fails to indicate a lot of resentment. And whether we approve or disapprove this resentment is beside the point. The point is that we do not necessarily make further progress in ignorance or contempt of these feelings.

One hears two common expressions:

"Things must be done quietly. People get too upset."

"These big shots are trying to put something over on us"

There is truth, as there is exaggeration, in both statements.

Thursday night's meeting brought these two attitudes together in the same room. It is our hope that as a result of this exposure, both attitudes are now somewhat softened. It may not seem apparent at the moment, but in time it may be that a result of Thursday's discussion will be more inclination to conduct open rather than guarded action and talk on what will remain for a long time one of the most sensitive, most vital issues facing the community and the nation.

Neither should Thursday night's meeting be cause to forget, even momentarily, the tremendous progress that Oak Ridge has made in opening up more and more community facilities to all residents, regardless of race. For while the year appears to be ending on a note of inaction, the facts are that in 1963 here, as in the rest of the nation, great steps forward were made, albeit too often only after the pressures of demonstrations and boycotts.

It is something more than the sentimentality of this week of Christmas that makes us believe that this extremely important Council meeting accomplished much more than may be immediately apparent. It could, in an indirect way, even prove to be a step toward what would make moot all of the debate about an ordinance: Voluntary desegregation by those few business places that still refuse service to some solely because they are Negroes.

Figure 10-Dec. 23, 1963 Editorial on Ordinance

Do We Keep Moving Or Procrastinate?

Step by step for the past nearly two decades Oak Ridge has moved to eliminate racial discrimination.

One of the biggest steps was taken only two weeks ago as Scarboro School was closed and children from the Scarboro community began attending classes at all of the other city elementary schools — a final move on school integration that began in 1955.

The local racial climate is still not ideal, with the isolated Scarboro community itself still the biggest negative aspect in a community that in most other respects has been a leader in the state, in the South — even in the nation — in action to assure fullest rights for all citizens — to end the injustice and insult of segregation, denial of opportunity and refusal of service based solely on race.

Even now, however, although Scarboro's isolation remains a challenge still not squarely met, housing barriers are being broken down bit by bit as Negroes live in many neighborhoods other than Scarboro.

In many respects, the biggest steps toward full racial rights have been accomplished — and most of them by the initiative of persons and establishments affected, if ot times only after years of discussion and pressures, but yet not nearly so contentious and destructive as in many other cities.

Only to assure fairer housing treatment in the city's aportments was an ordinance finally necessary — the one passed in 1965 by a 8 to 4 vote of City Council.

Eliminating the relatively few remaining instances of business places refusing to serve Negroes might really be classified as hardly worth bothering about, were it not that, in contrast to what has already been done and accepted, these instances assume major proportions for their sheer inconsistency.

Only some of the city's taverns, virtually all of its ~~barber shops~~, virtually all of its beauty shops and its skating rink still persist in refusing to accommodate Negroes — the skating rink allowing them to skate only under certain restrictive conditions. Years of attempts at negotiation and persuasion have failed.

This leaves only a public accommodations law and this is what City Council has before it again at tonight's meeting. We earnestly urge that Council pass it promptly and decisively. We hope especially that it will have the support of Mayor A. K. Bissell, who has worked in many other ways in the past to break down racial barriers but who has, up until now, declined his support for an accommodations law; although he supported the housing law. His leadership is greatly needed now.

This law is almost as important as a symbol of Oak Ridge's official racial attitudes and intentions as it is for the direct effect that it will have. It could finally and conclusively put the city's government on record as not simply vocally expounding racial equality, but doing something about it. And by no stretch of the imagination can the action be considered hasty in the context of the many, many years of discussion and debate.

The issue is very simple: Do we keep moving with some degree of initiative in an area where constant movement is both morally right and practically proper (particularly in a heavily federally-supported city like Oak Ridge), or do we procrastinate further and invite the consequences — demonstrations, unrest, continued instances of personal affront to both residents and visitors, loss of fderal money for both plant and community operations?

(Although there are now no instances of restaurant, hotel or theatre discrimination in the city, this local law, plus the guarantees of federal civil rights legislation, would elminiate any possibility of any in the future.)

Figure 11-Sept. 21, 1967 Editorial on Ordinance

Whites Admitted But Blacks Refused In New Rink Test

By PAT RIORDAN

A group of 26 Oak Ridgers attempted Saturday to skate at Myers Brothers Skating Rink on Jefferson Circle. The group was racially mixed, and only a very few — all white — were allowed to skate.

But the fact that four of the group were permitted to skate will probably turn out to be the basis of legal action against the rink under the city anti-discrimination ordinance.

An Oak Ridger reporter was with the group as they attempted to skate in Oak Ridge, and traveled with them to Powell's Governor Skating Rink, where everyone who wanted to skate — both white and black — was admitted without question.

The group frankly intended to challenge the local rink policy of not admitting blacks except in a private party, and did not really expect that many would be admitted. G. Wayne Clark, Community Relations Council president, told them as they prepared for the test, "Don't argue with them, but do try to get them to state their policy. Get them to commit themselves."

"They," of course, are the rink's husband-and-wife management team, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Morrow. Morrow was charged and convicted of violating the city anti-discrimination ordinance just a year ago, but the case has been on appeal ever since.

Saturday's test involved only Mrs. Morrow, whose husband was not at the rink.

Oak Ridge police were in nearly constant attendance, to guard against trouble.

Shortly after the rink opened at 2 p.m., a group of four left the residence of Bill Johnson, 105 S. Seneca Rd., for the rink. All 26 had been briefed at Johnson's home on what to expect and how to handle themselves.

The first group was all white. In it were Mrs. Gerald Lamle, 113 Indian La., Freddy and Barby Brooks, teenaged children of A. A. Brooks, 21 Wildwood Dr., and Alan England, 861 W. Outer Dr.

Mrs. Lamale had obtained a card the previous evening, she told the group, and expected to be allowed to enter. She was, and so were her three guests — all white. The three non-members said they were told to fill out membership cards, which they did. Then they were issued the cards and had gained the status of membership in the Rebel Skating Club, a group which was created out of regular patrons of the rink.

(In the past, local Negroes and their white supporters have argued the club is only a means to the end of preserving racial segregation. Morrow, on the other hand, has contended it is a legitimate private club, with full rights to decide who its members will be. Both groups agree on the fact that Negroes are allowed to skate there only as part of a private party.

A few minutes after the first four entered, another group arrived. In this group was Betsey Lamale, 16-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Lamale. She had a Rebel Club card, which she had received he

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Figure 12-Oct. 13, 1969 Article on Skating Rink

● Number 7

Rink Test

— From Page One

Rd., Julie Burns, 14, 109 Willow La., and Jane Casto, 13, 336 Louisiana Ave.

This group presented itself to Mrs. Morrow, and were told they would have to fill out applications, since only one in the group was a member. They did, and left.

Then in an attempt to determine whether race itself were the only factor involved in deciding who received "instant membership," the group sent Betsy Lamale, who is white, down to the rink with John Purnell, 108 Prairie La. Purnell is black.

The two entered the rink and Miss Lamale presented her card. She asked if she and Purnell could skate, and Purnell filled out an application, but did not get a membership card.

They were turned away.

Purnell said he asked Mrs. Morrow when the meeting to decide on his membership would take place, and said Mrs. Morrow was vague, first saying it would be Thursday, then saying sometime after Thursday. Purnell said he asked if he could attend the meeting. He said Mrs. Morrow told him no.

Although the group was fairly confident they would not get in, they decided to send one more group of people to the rink to apply for membership. Eighteen people, 11 blacks and seven whites arrived, filled out the applications and left.

At all times the test groups behaved with decorum, allowing people who were members and wanted to skate to go ahead of them. Those who spoke with Mrs. Morrow said she, too, was polite, but firm. It was difficult to hear everything she said, because the rink organ was playing loudly and several people were skating.

Following a brief meeting at Johnson's house, a three-carload group left for the Governor Skating Rink in Powell. The rink, located just inside Knox County, is about three times larger than the one here, and had many more skaters.

When the group, about two-thirds black, arrived, there was no trouble. The only question asked of a Negro was concerning the latest score in a college football game. All were admitted, and all skated.

Ithamus Studgeon, 132 N. Illinois Ave., said at the conclusion of Saturday's tests, "It sure looks funny that a little place like Powell has a rink where we can get in without any trouble, and in a town the size of Oak Ridge, with all the industry, we can't skate."

Figure12-Continued

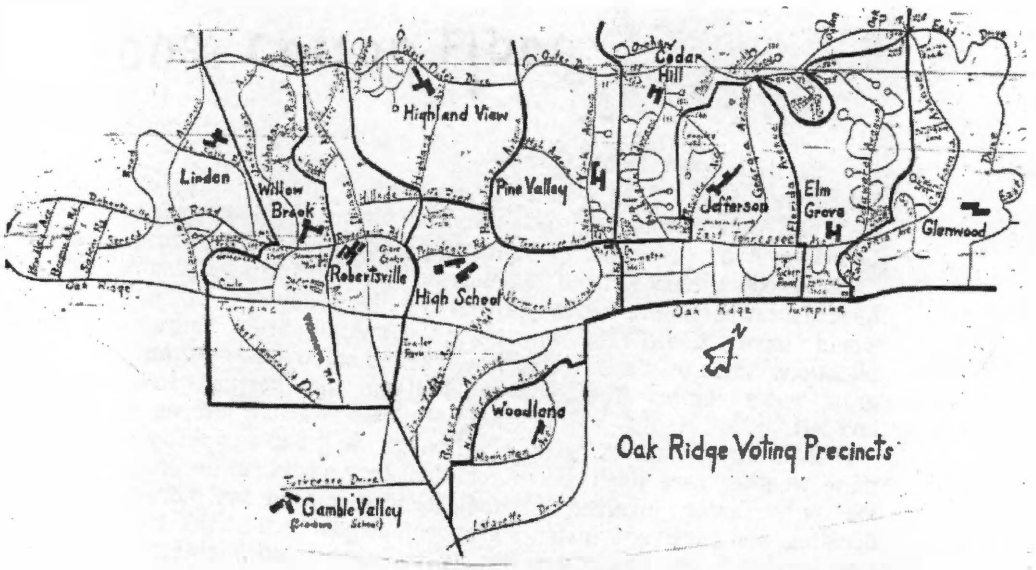

Figure 13- Oak Ridge Map Published Sept. 9, 1957

VITA

Amy Drews is a native of Dahlgren, Ill., and a graduate of McLeansboro High School. She earned her Associate of Arts degree in journalism in May 1991 from Rend Lake College in Ina, Ill. She earned Bachelor's of Arts degree in journalism in May 1993 from Murray State University, Murray, Ky. While attending college she helped pay for her education by working in the pressroom of the *Mt. Vernon Register News*. She was a reporter for the *RLC Times* and assistant news editor for the *Murray State News*.

She served as a staff writer for the *McLean County News* in Calhoun, Ky., from May 1993 until August 1995, when she was named managing editor of the publication. During this time, she won awards from the Kentucky Press Association in the categories of sports, featuring writing, on-the-spot-news, special sections and extended news coverage. In 1997, the Kentucky Education Association presented her with the School Bell Award for outstanding local news coverage.

In August 1998, she accepted the position of communications specialist for the United Way of Southwestern Indiana in Evansville where she was responsible for designing annual campaign materials. At the same time, she began work on her graduate degree at MSU. In 1999, she moved to Murray to continue her education and work as reporter for the *Mayfield Messenger*. She earned her Master's degree in December 2000.

She entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in August 2001 and taught copy editing as a graduate teaching associate until May 2004. In 2002, she

was named the recipient of the James A. Crook Excellence in Teaching Journalism Award. In 2005, she served as Science Communication Initiative Fellow, assisting with the annual Hill Lecture on Science, Society and the Mass Media.

In May 2007, she completed requirements for her Ph.D. in Communication and Information with a primary concentration in print journalism and secondary concentration in sociology.

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