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Daily Beacon Article: “Robinson Remembers University Discrimination”

Commission for Blacks

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By JACKIE WILSON

This year's Homecoming theme, "Bringing it back," takes on quite a different connotation for black students at UT. "Bringing it back" recalls a time 12 years ago when three black students were admitted as undergraduates-the first black students admitted blacks as graduate students after a Federal Court decision in 1951 required UT to accept blacks in programs not offered in black state-supported institutions.

The role of the University in the early sixties was significantly different than it is today. The University had been discriminating against blacks for years. The admission of blacks as undergraduates was a major step forward. However, the University had not yet fully integrated and had not accepted the idea of integration as a reality.

Zwingle is Grand Marshall of Homecoming festivities

Zwingle, a 1931 graduate of UT, has long been active in alumni affairs. He is currently chairperson of the Alumni Board of Directors, and he is currently chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Vic Davis Torchbearer Scholarship Fund. Zwingle is responsible for the Vic Davis Memorial Plaque to be unveiled at 10 a.m. Saturday in Circle Park.

Zwingle is vice-president of Consolidated Millinery Corp. in San Francisco.

Robinson remembers University discrimination

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This year's Homecoming theme, "Bringing it back," takes on quite a different connotation for black students at UT. "Bringing it back" recalls a time 12 years ago when three black students were admitted as undergraduates-the first black students admitted blacks as graduate students after a Federal Court decision in 1951 required UT to accept blacks in programs not offered in black state-supported institutions.

Theol Robinson, Jr., incumbent City Councilman for the 6th District, recalls those days well. He was one of the three undergraduates. In an interview, Robinson described what it was like to be a black student at UT in 1961 during the days of sit-ins, picketings, and marches.

Robinson said he had applied and received a scholarship to attend Knox College, but he changed his mind when he read an ad in a newspaper. The ad had been placed by a civil rights organization and cited several grievances, one of which was the exclusion of blacks from white state-supported universities. "That was the beginning of an effort that eventually culminated in the election of Jimmy Baxter as Student Senate president some years later. There were no black professors or instructors in the early sixties. Robinson recalled this was such a touchy situation that when Marion Berry, a black candidate for a doctorate, applied for a teaching assistantship, he was given the money but was not required actually to teach.

Robinson said that UT had made progress but "is in greater need of progress now than when I was there." He added, "Now the whole of college life needs to relate to black students." This was not a pressing problem when he was a student since there were no black students living on campus. Now, with the enrollment grown to 625 black undergraduates and 181 black graduate students, there is an urgent need for changes in this area, he observed.

He pointed out one other area in which changes are needed—the Athletic Department's policies of recruiting, especially for basketball. He said recruiting should be based on ability, not on a quota or any other system. "I'm not convinced that that's the way it is being done."