

CRACKING THE CLOSED SOCIETY: JAMES W. SILVER AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT IN MISSISSIPPI

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This thesis examines the life of James Wesley Silver, a professor of history at the University of Mississippi for twenty-six years and author of *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, a scathing attack on the Magnolia State's history of racial oppression. In 1962, Silver witnessed the campus riot resulting from James Meredith's enrollment as the first black student at the state's hallowed public university and claims this was the catalyst for writing his book. However, by examining James Silver's personal and professional activities and comparing them with the political, cultural, and social events taking place concurrently, this paper demonstrates that his entire life, the gamut of his experiences, culminated in the creation of his own rebel yell, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*.

Chapter 1 establishes Silver's environment by exploring the history and sociology of the South during the years of his residency. Chapter 2 discusses Silver's background and early years, culminating with his appointment as a faculty member of the University of Mississippi in 1936. Chapter 3 reveals Silver's personal and professional life during the 1940s, as well as the era's notable historical events. The decade of the 1950s is discussed in chapter 4, particularly the civil rights movement, Silver's response to these changes, and

those in his own life. Chapter 5 follows the path of James Meredith's integration of Ole Miss, the publication of Silver's book, and its aftermath. The conclusion is a brief epilogue of Silver's post-Mississippi life.

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CHAPTER 1

WAY DOWN SOUTH: A HISTORY OF THE PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE

James Wesley Silver, a professor of history at the University of Mississippi for nearly three decades, began his lengthy career there in 1936, and remained on the faculty until the fall of 1964, following the publication of his book, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. Throughout his years at Ole Miss, Silver had often spoken out on issues sensitive to southerners in a Jim Crow state such as Mississippi, and his words occasionally invoked an unfavorable response. As an academic and a professional historian, he was careful to back up his comments with facts gleaned from reputable sources. As a family man who could not afford to risk losing his job, however, Silver also ensured that his comments were only controversial enough to invite dialogue. Silver wanted to educate his readers or listeners but not alienate them, believing that “when the evidence logically pointed to correct answers, the teacher of wisdom became obligated to declare his convictions.”¹ Indeed, it was his belief in this doctrine that compelled Silver to write *Mississippi: The Closed Society*.

¹ James W. Silver, *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), x.

Although he was born a Yankee, Silver was well-versed in the history of the South, having studied the Confederacy and the American frontier at southern institutions before coming to Ole Miss. He had lived in Dixie since the age of twelve, long enough for him to consider himself a son of South regardless of his birthplace. This Old South historian, however, lived in the New South, and he brought to the Magnolia State a liberalism that invoked “sympathy for the underprivileged of the past and among the living” as well as a strong belief in basic democratic institutions.² He therefore found it puzzling that his students held such an inherent belief in the inferiority of blacks and made it his goal to learn as much as he could about the post-antebellum South in general and race relations in particular.³ The timing for this undertaking couldn’t have been better, for the period was ripe with scholarship by historians, political scientists, and sociologists intent on understanding the South. These new theories and examinations by Silver’s contemporaries continue to have a tremendous impact on their respective areas of study.

In 1936, the same year that Silver arrived at Ole Miss, Howard W. Odum published his sociological study of what he classified as the Southern Regions of the United States.⁴ For his purposes, Odum separated the South into two

² Ibid, xi.

³ Ibid, 21.

⁴ Howard W. Odum for the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council, *Southern Regions of the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936). For the purpose of his study, Odum lists the states that made up the Southeast Region as Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky. Those of the Southwest were Texas, Oklahoma, New

regions, the Southeast and the Southwest, each composed of states with a semblance of similarities that placed them in their respective categories. As the largest region, the Southwest section was given the most attention in the nearly 700-page work, packed with charts, maps, and other aids to substantiate his findings on, among other things, the “resources...deficiencies...trends...and culture of each region.”⁵ The intent of Odum’s study was to produce information that would be useful in the development of a sense of regionalism which, by his definition, places “the nation first, making the national culture and welfare the arbiter.” Sectionalism promoted the opposite, placing more priority on the area rather than the nation.”⁶ During the period of Odum’s study, the South was reassessing its place within the nation, torn between the sectionalism of the past and the regionalism of the New South.

In 1941, W.J. Cash’s *Mind of the South* was published and instantly became a valuable reference manual for Silver and most southern historians. Writing from a post-World-War I perspective and from within the industrializing southern state of North Carolina, Cash asserted that like blacks, poor whites were being economically enslaved by the institutions of segregation propagated by the white power structure throughout the South. Wrapped in a romantic writing style that encompassed a biting diatribe, Cash gave a savage portrayal of southerners as fearful of “all that stood without them and perhaps....even of

Mexico, and Arizona. Not included in these regions were Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Missouri.

⁵ Ibid, 15.

⁶ Ibid, 253.

themselves.” “But above all,” he proposed, “because of their fears and their will, they were filled with hate for whatever differed from themselves and their ancient pattern.”⁷ Although Cash was a journalist by trade and his work concentrated on the cotton mills of the Piedmont, his book was groundbreaking for courageously railing against the oppressive tactics utilized in the South that ensured a continuation in the modern era of the economic and social hierarchy established in the antebellum days. Cash died a year after *The Mind of the South* was published, but his work so heavily influenced Silver that he sought to emulate it in later years.

Three years after Cash’s book appeared, Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal published his massive volume, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.⁸ After an extensive study, Myrdal noticed the cycle of oppression that perpetuated a sense of superiority in whites through their oppression of blacks. Given the psychological, economic, and social constraints in place within American society, blacks were predestined to underperform, thereby verifying their inherent inferiority in the eyes of whites who, believing that they could never advance further, continued the tactics that kept blacks on the lowest tier of the social hierarchy. Myrdal believed that this dilemma could be resolved either by whites relinquishing their sense of superiority, which Cash asserted was impossible, or by allowing blacks the opportunity to disprove the

⁷ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 294.

⁸ Gunnar Myrdal with the Assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York and London: Harper, 1944) 998, 1012-15.

theory of their inferiority. Myrdal's work clearly influenced Jim Silver, for this postulate became the basis for his civil rights advocacy in Mississippi, his idea of "equality at the starting line." Like Myrdal, Silver believed that if blacks were granted full access, the basic principles of democracy would ensure that society would correct itself and blacks would ascend to a natural place within it.

Politics, however, would be a key element in establishing any type of equality for blacks in the South, since *de jure* segregation was essentially the heart of racial oppression. Long-denied the opportunity to participate in elections, to hold public office, or to influence legislation in any way, blacks were shut out of any reasonable possibility to effect change through the democratic process. Only through court cases or direct action would equality be granted to those disfranchised masses. V.O. Key's profoundly influential study, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, explored this problem by analyzing the eleven southern states of the former Confederacy.⁹ Key determined that:

The South's heritage from crises of the past, its problems of adjustment of racial relations on a scale unparalleled in any western nation, its poverty associated with an agrarian economy which in place is almost feudal in character, the long habituation of many of its people to nonparticipation in political life – all of these and other social characteristics both influence the nature of the South's political system and place upon it an enormous burden."¹⁰

⁹ V.O. Key, Jr. with the assistance of Alexander Heard. *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

As a result, Key asserted that whites in the agriculturally rich Black Belt areas held the greatest political sway in their regions.¹¹ Because these areas would have withered under a two-party system, they united in a Democratic bloc that, in turn, influenced the politics of their respective states. “(T)he fundamental explanation of southern politics is that the black-belt whites succeeded in imposing their will on their states and thereby presented a solid regional front in national politics on the race issue.”¹²

The seminal volumes listed above were essential sources of revisionist histories of the era, as was George Brown Tindall’s narrative on *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*.¹³ Tindall argued that World War I was a transformational event for the South when patriotism ruled over any sectionalism that previously existed, uniting Odum’s southern regions with the rest of the nation. Economically, the war yoked the South to northern factories that produced war material using the labor of blacks migrating from southern cotton fields. After confronting modernity, the South struggled to resume the burden of its long-standing traditions, what Cash called the “savage ideal,” in every aspect

¹¹ Key defines the Black Belt as “those counties and sections of the southern states in which Negroes constitute a substantial proportion of the population.” Ibid, 5. The term “Black Belt” has historically encompassed both a geographical and sociological definition. It was originally used to define the various areas of the south, stretching from the Mississippi Delta to the Tidewater of Virginia, that contain the rich, black soil conducive to successful agricultural industry. However, since large plantations with numerous slaves were generally situated where the dark, nutrient-rich soil was found, the term was also used to refer to those areas where the African American population outnumbered that of the white residents. See Gerald R. Webster and Jerrod Bowman, “Quantitatively Delineating the Black Belt Geographic Region,” *Southern Geographer*, 48, no.1 (May 2008), 3-18.

¹² Ibid, 11.

¹³ George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*, A History of the South, Volume X (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 48-9, 56.

of its society.¹⁴ Tindall also explained how this legacy of nationalism provided southern political leadership with a wider world view. Franklin Roosevelt then harnessed this Wilsonian spirit during the Second World War to provide the national support essential to fight a global war. As a result of this unified effort against Nazism and Fascism, many southern dirt farmers were transformed into skilled laborers, rural communities became less isolated, and towns grew into cities. In addition, blacks who fought against oppression on foreign shores returned home expecting and demanding the same freedoms their efforts had produced overseas. Nationally, southern political leaders “advanced boldly toward new horizons,” but domestically “they retreated within the parapets of the embattled South where they stood fast against the incursions of social change.”¹⁵

C. Vann Woodward, the premier historian of the South, also viewed the region as “burdened” by its history, a topic explored in eight essays published as *The Burden of Southern History*.¹⁶ Woodward argued that the distinctiveness of the South was not cotton, the Democratic Party, sharecroppers, or Jim Crow but rather the collective history of the southern people. He asserted that the South’s rejection of black suffrage during Reconstruction separated it politically and socially from the rest of America, a concept also noted by Myrdal. By denying blacks full access to the political process, segregation in the South could continue until challenged and overturned in federal court.

¹⁴ Ibid, 184.

¹⁵ Ibid, 637, 731.

¹⁶C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960) 98, 102-105.

By Woodward's definition, the South remained politically distinctive until May 17, 1954, when the Supreme Court issued its ruling in the case of *Brown v Board of Education* declaring segregation in public schools as unconstitutional. Woodward gave a series of lectures at the University of Virginia that were compiled and published as *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, a concise treatise on the history of race relations in the American South.¹⁷ Woodward determined that the creation of Jim Crow segregation was not the result of a pre-ordained plan stemming from slavery but rather derived through a series of changes in the South. Until 1898, the significant continuing aspect of black and white relations in Dixie throughout the years had been its fluidity. The methods by which segregation was implemented and enforced varied by locale, and ebbed and flowed as political and social forces mandated. Around the turn of the century, however, southern state legislators passed into law more stringent forms of racial oppression known as Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation in nearly all aspects of public life. At the time he was writing, however, Woodward noted that change had ensued again and blacks were making great strides toward equality as a result of various factors of both local and national origins. Woodward's slim volume was meant to console the southern white populace that feared the coming integration of its public schools. Although deficiencies in his work were noted, it was nonetheless hailed for its modern approach to understanding a

¹⁷ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

persistent structural problem within southern society. The message Woodward attempted to deliver fell upon deaf ears as the ensuing years would attest.

John Egerton gave voice to the generation before the civil rights movement in *Speak Now Against the Day*, a historical narrative of the years from Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 to the *Brown* decision in 1954.¹⁸ A journalist like W.J. Cash, Egerton's writing style, while lyrical, dispensed with some standards of academia such as citing sources with footnotes and the omission of first-person narrative. His work transcended the standard history as a result, and reflected the changes within traditional historical scholarship that occurred in the 1990s. This examination enveloped all southerners, black and white, male and female, the noteworthy and the nameless. Likewise, Egerton included events of monumental importance and the seemingly insignificant. He also included societal issues, such as the prevailing fear of Communism in America during the 1940s and 1950s, to present a total picture of the South two decades before the *Brown* decision. Considered by one reviewer to be "for readers who have time for only one book on its subject," it is a comprehensive overview of this important period in American history that is often overlooked in favor of the more dramatic years in civil rights history.¹⁹

¹⁸ John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 8-11.

¹⁹ David L. Chappell, Review of *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*, *African American Review*, 31 (Spring 1997), 128-9. The book's title is derived from a speech given by William Faulkner at the 1955 annual conference of the Southern Historical Association, for which James W. Silver was program chair. It was Silver who invited the reclusive novelist to participate as a panelist for the opening session which discussed the ramifications of the *Brown* decision.

The impact of communism and the Cold War on American civil rights efforts cannot be overlooked. Mary Dudziak explained how America's image abroad helped transform race relations within the country in *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Segregation and racial oppression in America bolstered the arguments of Communist nations that the United States, in essence, did not practice what it preached, and this fact hindered relations with world powers following World War II. The concept of civil rights was not merely a domestic issue in this period. "As the United States emerged...as a world power, looked to for leadership amid ensuing Cold War fears of a new global conflagration, domestic politics and culture were profoundly affected by events overseas."²⁰

Cold War politics were still in play during the period in which Martin Luther King dominated the civil rights movement and when direct action resulted in both harrowing and heroic events. Taylor Branch's three-volume narrative of this period, from 1954 to 1968, closely examined the significant moments of the movement, the personal and public lives of King and the leading members of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference as well as the machinations of the organization itself.²¹

²⁰ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15.

²¹ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

The *Brown* decision was a watershed moment in southern and civil rights history by overturning the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v Ferguson* ruling that had legalized segregation. It paved the way for blacks to integrate other public facilities and ultimately achieve full equality in the eyes of the law, but it also caused white southerners to abandon any remaining sense of nationalism from the war years and embrace once again their sectionalism. Fueled by this federal intrusion upon their "Southern way of life," whites came together in defense of their traditions and organized to counter their efforts. Political scientist Numan Bartley demonstrated the persistence of Key's findings in his book, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950s*.²² Bartley's history examined the political, cultural, and economic conditions in the South following World War II and determined that much of the organized resistance generated in response to the Brown decision, such as the Citizens' Councils, originated in the black belt areas populated by political "neobourbons" and their supporters.²³

Neil McMillen detailed the history of probably the best-known resistance movements outside of the Ku Klux Klan in *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64*.²⁴ Shortly after the Supreme Court rendered its school desegregation decision, segregationists founded the

²² Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

²³ Ibid, 17. Bartley defines the neobourbons as whites whose "social, economic, and political outlook was in the tradition of nineteenth century bourbonism," and whose intention was to "crush the Second Reconstruction."

²⁴ Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

first White Citizens' Council in the Black Belt town of Indianola, Mississippi. The organization grew quickly and local chapters were found all over the South. McMillen examined how sectionalism contributed to the popularity and effectiveness of the councils, and how chapters in each state responded to the issues unique to their areas while still adhering to the unity of the national organization. "To a degree unrivaled by any other section, the white South in the middle of the twentieth century retained its peculiar regional awareness. Despite its ever-growing diversity, its cultural, economic, and political heterogeneity, the region clung tenaciously to its sectional self-consciousness."²⁵

Despite federal law, school integration in Mississippi was slow to be implemented, due to the efforts of the Citizens' Council and the state legislature, which implemented its own tactics to stall, if not outright prevent, the mingling of races in their educational facilities. A full account can be found in Charles C. Bolton's *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870 - 1980*.²⁶

The most visible incident of massive resistance to school integration in the Magnolia State took place on September 30, 1962, when James Meredith prepared to become the first black student at the University of Mississippi. Although many accounts have been written, Charles W. Eagles's recently published book, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of*

²⁵ Ibid, 1.

²⁶ Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005).

Ole Miss is the most comprehensive of all. Incorporating the history of the university, the state, and many of the players, Eagles effectively showed that “the most violent confrontation over school integration evolved from many complex historical factors, and it occurred at the University of Mississippi in 1962 for reasons peculiar to that time and place.”²⁷ Advancements toward equality for blacks as a result of the civil rights movement, the growth of organized resistance, the rise of sectionalism, the Cold War, the inherent belief in white supremacy, the state’s manipulative and corrupt political system, the racial and social hierarchy, all factored in to the violence that was unleashed by the white mob on federal marshals during the campus riot that left two persons dead, countless others injured, and James Silver an altered man.

The riot triggered something in Silver that made him shed his inhibitions and unleash without reservation the words he feared to vocalize for years. A year after the campus violence, Silver delivered his presidential address to the Southern Historical Association in Asheville, North Carolina. In “Mississippi: The Closed Society,” Silver unleashed his broad historical knowledge accumulated through the study of sociological, political, economic and historical texts. Like Cash, Silver ignored academic formalities and instead wrote an accurate but personal account of Mississippi and warned that the state was headed for a disaster as great as that of the Civil War:

²⁷ Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

The striking parallel between people and events of the 1850s and the 1950s reminds us that Mississippi has been on the defensive against inevitable social change for more than a century, and that for some years before the Civil War it had developed a closed society with an orthodoxy accepted by nearly everybody in the state. The all-pervading doctrine then and now has been white supremacy – whether achieved through slavery or segregation - rationalized by a professed adherence to state rights and bolstered by religious fundamentalism.²⁸

Silver expanded his speech into a book by the same name, which was released to a public hungry for answers about Mississippi's terrifyingly violent resistance to advancing civil rights in the state.

One day before *The Closed Society* appeared in bookstores, three young civil rights workers participating in the Freedom Summer voter registration effort, disappeared in Neshoba County. The bodies of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were discovered six weeks later. Silver's book, authored by a long-standing history professor at the University of Mississippi, was a credible source of information for a befuddled nation unable to comprehend the depth of hatred that resided within some of their fellow citizens. Silver's was a voice of reason within a cacophony of racial vitriol. He became something of an overnight sensation, and his book quickly climbed up the New York Times' Bestseller List.

Silver, however, was not a popular man in Mississippi as a result of his speech and subsequent book. He left the state to teach at the University of Notre Dame, but a good portion of his time was spent giving lectures on the

²⁸ James W. Silver, "Mississippi: The Closed Society," *Journal of Southern History* 30 (February 1964), 4.

closed society of Mississippi since he was now considered something of an expert on the subject of civil rights within the state.

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, peaceful activism turned more militant and demonstrative. Blacks were becoming more outspoken, making demands rather than requests, embracing the use of racial slang and coarse language in place of eloquent speech. Silver bristled at these changes and recoiled when personally affronted. Silver realized that while his entire life had prepared him to write *The Closed Society*, he was ill-equipped to move beyond it. Blacks were fully involved in this new world, but Silver's work did not include them. His books and articles were written from the perspective of a white male, a liberal academician, who understood the history that oppressed blacks but not the history of the oppressed.

It was at this crossroad that Jim Silver stood in 1968: whether to become educated on black history in order to participate in the current dialogues on race or leave it for the new generation of historians to analyze, debate, and theorize. No longer the expert and with not enough time to become one, Jim Silver, the courageous white liberal of Ole Miss, retreated into the comfort of the past, in the safety of the subjects that he had studied during his nearly three decades in Mississippi and in a lifetime of learning.

Mississippi: The Closed Society became Jim Silver's legacy. Although its historical relevance diminished almost as soon as it was published due to the deficiency Silver himself noted – that of the absence of black voices – it remains

an oft-cited source in civil rights histories. Yet it is not a civil rights history; it is a history of Mississippi and the state's short-sightedness at two similar periods in time. Silver ensured the book's historical accuracy, but the personal narrative in which it is written gives it a different tone than a traditional academic volume because Silver was addressing the masses rather than scholars. *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, like its author, is difficult to categorize and define.

By the time Silver reached his crossroad, civil rights histories consisted primarily of autobiographies or biographies of the black male participants in the movement. Silver, however, was white and not a participant in the true sense of the word. In speeches and articles he made overtures to white Mississippians to embrace racial equality, but his audiences at Rotary Clubs and historical associations were not violent supremacists. He certainly was not an activist and had no intention of becoming one. Any interaction he had with blacks was with those in traditional subservient roles or other academicians. In general, Silver did not defy the standard codes of racial separation dictated by his environment. Perhaps the best description of him is as a cautious, ideological, liberal. Even use of the term "southerner" is questionable given his northern background. None of this, however, explains why Silver is a person of historical interest.

James W. Silver demands attention because although his efforts seem minor in comparison with other civil rights proponents of the time, the fact that he attempted any type of overture toward racial reconciliation within a "totalitarian state" like Mississippi is remarkable. That he was a white and a member of the

faculty at the University of Mississippi is also remarkable. A trained historian, he wrote a book that revealed the status of Mississippi at that point in time and contextualized it with its position a century earlier, which added to the scholarship of southern history and civil rights history. Of course, any discourse on Meredith's integration of Ole Miss also mentions Silver. For these reasons and others, Jim Silver's name can be found in post-revisionist histories, although few elaborate beyond his *Closed Society* speech or book, which were historical events in themselves.

Until recently, Silver seemed destined to remain a footnote in history but there has been a recent surge of interest in him and his work. Charles Eagles devotes an entire chapter to Silver in *The Price of Defiance*, and Peter Slade provides a lengthy discussion on the friendship between Silver and Will Campbell in *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship*.²⁹ And Silver himself determined that he was historically relevant, for in 1984 he published *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi*, a semi-autobiographical account of his life.³⁰ But there is more to Silver than what he reveals in his book, and more to the creation of *The Closed Society* than even he understood. This paper examines the life of James W. Silver, his activities, his academic career, his personal and professional writings, and contextualizes them within the political, cultural and social events taking place concurrently. It

²⁹ Peter Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁰ James W. Silver, *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984).

demonstrates how all of these factors contributed to the creation of his own personal rebel yell, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*.

Chapter 1 describes Silver's family life, his adolescence, and young adult years leading up to his arrival at the University of Mississippi. Although he was born and raised in upstate New York, Jim Silver considered himself a southerner. He spent twenty-eight years in Mississippi and referred to it as his home state. He first became a resident of Dixie at the age of twelve, however, when his family moved to North Carolina, an event that had a tremendous impact on the rest of his life. Educated at southern institutions, Silver became well versed in the history of the Old South, the Confederacy, and the American frontier. He married a girl from Alabama with, which further solidified his connection to the South. But it was his long association as a professor at the University of Mississippi, the state's revered educational institution, that firmly affixed the term "southerner" with Jim Silver's name.

Chapter 2 discusses Silver's first decade in Mississippi, his navigation of the new environment in which he lived and worked, and his coming of age as an academician. In 1936, Silver embarked on a career at Ole Miss that would span nearly three decades. He began as the fourth member of the university's history department and eventually became chairman, a role he held for fourteen years. Through the 1940s Silver expanded his family as well as his professional standing, culminating with the publication of his first book in 1949. Throughout this period, however, Silver harbored a fear of failure in his job and rejection by

his peers, as well as some recurrent health issues that occasionally caused him trouble and prevented him from serving in the armed forces during World War II. Silver concealed his worries behind a brave façade. He was unafraid to vocalize his staunch opinions so long as he could back them up with irrefutable historical evidence. It was the safety net of documented facts that gave Silver the courage to act on his convictions, as he had since his arrival at Ole Miss, with scant regard for the repercussions, which could be severe.

The decade of the 1950s brought significant changes to the nation, to Mississippi, and to Silver, as described in chapter 3. Comfortably settled in his career and having no need to find his professional footing within the history department, Silver focused his attention on things outside of his campus responsibilities. Family took on a greater importance as he approached middle age and faced an emptying nest. Silver contemplated his life and his purpose in the world, particularly after the birth of his third child and after several bouts with illnesses that required hospitalization. He did extensive research on Mississippi's antebellum history and found striking parallels with the present situation in the state and as a result, he began to question even more the racial structure in the South. At the same time, blacks in the region began to organize and take direct action to raise awareness of their struggle for civil rights while white opposition to those efforts grew increasingly violent. It was clear that down in Dixie, Jim Crow still wielded more power than Uncle Sam, a fact that greatly disturbed Jim Silver. As an academic, Silver believed it was his job to educate even outside of the

classroom. Through speeches, articles, and other activities, Silver attempted to inform the people of the South that its present stance on civil rights was a destructive path to ruin.

In 1962, that path led right to the University of Mississippi, as discussed in chapter 4. When a campus riot erupted on the eve of James Meredith's admission as the first black student to Ole Miss, Silver witnessed firsthand how deeply embedded was the belief in segregation within the Magnolia State. The level of hatred demonstrated that night compelled Silver to stop "running scared" and bring his message to a larger audience regardless of the ramifications. The result was a book that would become a staple reference tool in the study of southern history, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. The timing of its publication in 1964 and its damning portrayal of the state as a bastion of white supremacy brought Silver commercial success and public notoriety. It also cemented his name and his work in the footnotes of numerous volumes of civil rights history. However, while Silver is inextricably associated with this period, he was not a civil rights historian, nor was he a civil rights activist. He did not attend rallies or marches, and he did not belong to any organizations that promoted civil rights. He was an academic. As such, what he knew of the movement was gleaned from the predominantly biased local press and viewed from within the protected environment of the University of Mississippi. Once he was personally confronted with the full onslaught of white supremacy and racially motivated hatred, Silver was forced to take his expertise beyond the classroom and into the public forum.

As this thesis reveals, James W. Silver's entire life, the gamut of his experiences, culminated in the creation of his own rebel yell, the extraordinary work entitled *Mississippi: The Closed Society*.

CHAPTER 2

MINING FOR SILVER

James Wesley Silver, the fourth child of Henry and Elizabeth “Lizzie” Silver of Rochester, New York, was born at 11 a.m. on June 28, 1907. In his diary Henry Silver noted that his new baby “was a big fellow weighing 11 pounds.”¹ No mention is made of how James’s birth weight compared to that of his older siblings, Earl, Florence and Henry, nor does the diary entry for daughter Margaret’s arrival in 1910 mention any physical specifications.² One can assume, then, that an eleven-pound baby was unusual enough in the Silver family to warrant noting. James grew to an adult height of nearly six feet two inches, lending credence to the theory that his length at birth was proportionate to his weight. Such stature as an infant seems somehow fitting since later in life James Silver’s presence loomed large. There were no special circumstances in his childhood, however, that stand out to indicate the kind of man he would become. Still, there are definite signs to imply that father and son shared some personality traits and that some, but not all, of Henry Silver’s wisdom and advice was heeded by at least this one child.

¹ James W. Silver, ed., “Making a Living in Rochester: The Diary of Henry D. Silver, 1906-1914,” *Rochester History*, 15 (October 1953): 9.

² The four children born to the Silver family were Earl (1890), Florence (1895), Henry (1902), James (1907), and Margaret (1910).

By the time of James's birth, Henry Dayton Silver was a successful businessman who provided a stable and economically comfortable home for his growing family. He was born on a farm near Sodus, in upstate New York, in 1865, and followed the lead of his forefathers by learning the carpentry trade. Like many young men in this period, he left the countryside for the opportunities that existed in urban areas, and in the 1880s he relocated to the city of Rochester where he could better ply his craft and expand his cultural horizons. On March 14, 1889, twenty-three-year-old Henry Silver married sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Julia Squier of Seneca Falls, New York, a union that he "never for one moment regretted."³ No doubt the newlyweds entered the last decade of the century in anticipation of a bright future. Four years later, however, the panic of 1893 forced the young couple and their toddler son, Earl, to abandon their home and seek refuge with Henry's parents on the family farm. "Pa boarded us and gave me enough to keep up the payments on the place," Henry recalled in 1902.⁴ Fortunately, this arrangement proved temporary for they were back in Rochester in the spring of 1894.

Jobs were still scarce, however, so Henry and his friend Ed Seymour discussed the idea of selling groceries to those on the outskirts of town for whom a trip to the city was not a common occurrence. By begging for credit and borrowing cash, they secured enough capital to establish their business that

³ Silver, ed., "Making a Living in Rochester," 13.

⁴ James W. Silver, ed., "Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser: Fifty Years Ago in Up-State New York," *Journal of New York History*, 60 (April 1955): 172.

year. By 1900, the partnership had dissolved but by then Henry Silver was a prosperous grocer with two free-standing stores in Rochester. There still existed a need for the delivery of goods to his rural clients, though, so Henry himself continued to peddle those groceries by wagon and left his wife or the hired help to manage the daily activities of the stores. It was a grueling and tiring business but it proved monetarily fruitful. “I commenced peddling on the rout [sic] in April, 1894,” he noted in his diary entry for June 11, 1902. “In January 1895 I had standing out on my books the amount of \$75.40. Today it will amount to over \$1500. Last year our total sales was about \$30,000. A big business for such a small beginning.”⁵ Clearly, Henry was an adept businessman.

The city of Rochester grew considerably in geographical size and population at the end of the nineteenth century. Since every household needed groceries, Henry Silver was well-positioned to profit from the city’s expansion. In 1880, approximately 90,000 persons called Rochester home; by 1890 it was populated by almost 134,000 inhabitants, an increase of nearly 50 percent. Seventy percent of the population was native born while 30 percent hailed from other shores.⁶ Germans, Italians, and European Jews comprised the bulk of Rochester’s immigrant population, but representatives of multiple ethnicities could be found in the city and its surrounding area. Reflecting upon his childhood, Silver “looked with contempt on the heathen who went to the Catholic

⁵ Ibid, 169.

⁶ United States Census Office. *Twelfth Census of the United States* (1900), Vol. 2, CLXXIV – CLXXVI.

school (and)...probably absorbed some of the local prejudice against the new immigrants, in this case the Italians” and notes that the city was virtually devoid of African Americans. “There wasn’t a single Negro that I can remember.”⁷ He does not note whether any of that local prejudice came from within his own home, but it is probable given the depth of anti-immigrant sentiment that flowed through the country during this period. Racial diversity was virtually non-existent in this area of New York state. The black population of Monroe County, which encompassed Rochester, grew by approximately 10 percent, increasing from 740 persons in 1890 to 802 in 1900. The total number of Indians recorded in the 1890 census was 23; by the 1900 census, no such inhabitants were documented within the county.⁸

Many of the immigrants who swarmed to the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century found Rochester an appealing place to live and were lured by jobs generated by the local industries. Rochester acquired its nickname as the Flower City due to its numerous nurseries and seed packaging plants. In 1880, George Eastman established an office from which to sell his dry emulsion photographic plates and by 1888 was successfully marketing and producing his Kodak cameras. These and other Rochester businesses, which included a prominent carriage manufacturer, a cigarette factory, a furniture company, and other enterprises helped to draw employment-hungry persons to

⁷ James W. Silver, *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 6.

⁸ United States Census Office. *Twelfth Census of the United States* (1900), Vol. 2, CLXXIV – CLXXVI.

this thriving metropolis. Indeed, by 1899, the Rochester Chamber of Commerce could proudly boast that the city possessed “the largest preserving establishment in the world, the largest button factory, (and) the largest lubricating oil plant,” in addition to sixty-four shoe manufacturers and thirty-seven clothing factories.⁹ Clearly the Industrial Revolution did not pass unnoticed in Rochester.

In 1890, the city introduced both electric street lights and electric trolley cars. Barge travel on the Erie Canal gave way to an extensive railroad network, that allowed for easy access to and from the city by both visitors and residents alike. Tourists and locals found relaxation on the beaches of Lake Ontario or at any of the numerous city parks. Picnickers favored the pastoral landscape of Mt. Hope Cemetery. Those in favor of more stimulating entertainment could take in a stage performance at one of the city’s four theaters, visit the Powers Art Gallery, which housed the largest collection of original paintings and old master reproductions in western New York, or take a close-up view of the stars at the only observatory in America open to the public.¹⁰ For many, Rochester proved an ideal location in which to live out the American dream. Indeed, before the economic troubles of the 1890s, 44 out of every 100 home dwellers in Rochester owned their own houses.¹¹ A skilled carpenter, Henry Silver not only owned his home but also built it. In 1905, the cost of the lot and construction materials for the Silver’s home at 527 Lexington Avenue totaled \$3,100. The three-story

⁹ Blake McKelvey, “The Lure of the City of Rochester in the 1890’s,” *Rochester History* 27 (October, 4, 1966): 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 2-5.

¹¹ United States Census Office. Twelfth Census of the United States (1900), Vol. 2, CLXXIV – CLXXVI.

structure was commodious enough to welcome the addition of James Wesley in 1907 without overcrowding the family.

Henry did not, however, find Rochester to be the perfect site for permanent residence. Although his diary reflects many periods of contentment with his life and his surroundings, these entries tended to occur during fair weather days of spring and summer. More often Henry wrote glowering reports of the wretched conditions induced by Rochester's inclement weather that, in his opinion, lasted eight months of the year. "It was a miserable rainy nasty day, enough to make a dog sick," he noted one October day of that year when his mood was as foul as the forecast. "I am just disgusted with the weather here from Oct 1 to May 1."¹² The strenuous work of hauling groceries was compounded by the bitter winters and rainy summers of upstate New York. He longed to save enough money to enable him to relocate his family to a state with a warmer climate for at least part of the year and where he could work only when he wanted to. "Any one that likes this beastly climate or says they do must be a damn liar," he professed in 1903. "I will fly the coop as soon as the frosts come again."¹³

Weather conditions had a tremendous impact on his rheumatism as well as his disposition, as his diary reflects. One July day in 1904 was so rainy that Henry morbidly stated, "No wonder people commit suicide in such miserable weather," while "(a)nother depressing suicidal day," in April 1904, found him

¹² Silver, ed., "Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser," 189.

¹³ *Ibid*, 185.

proclaiming that “the weather makes a man hate himself,”¹⁴ Regardless of the outdoor conditions, Henry Silver had customers who depended upon him, and he did his best not to disappoint them or to lose the profit that he stood to gain from their grocery orders. “A cold winter blast was blowing down Otis street when I crawled out this morning,” he wrote in November 1903. “Moses, how I hated to get out. It was some after 5(AM) when I got away....Got home at 10 PM.”¹⁵

Henry Silver appeared to possess a strong Puritan work ethic, rising well before dawn and returning late in the evening. However, his involvement with that religious denomination, or any other for that matter, was not as obvious. His diary entry for April 13, 1902, stated, “Did not go to church, which is not as much news as if I had went.”¹⁶ No doubt, then, it was either at Lizzie’s urging or simply a desire to please his new bride that motivated Henry to serve as a Methodist deacon during their early married years.¹⁷ As time wore on, Henry seemed to find less time for church and less respect for congregants. Although he was brought up to attend Sunday worship and once served as treasurer of the Grace Presbyterian Church, he had little esteem for churchgoers in general, who he felt were “very lax about paying their debts,” and Sunday school attendees in particular for “(t)hey will skin you quicker than anyone else.” “I wonder,” he

¹⁴ Ibid, 170 and 186.

¹⁵ Ibid, 182.

¹⁶ Ibid, 167.

¹⁷ Silver, *Running Scared*, 5.

pondered, “what God thinks when he looks down on some of the dead beats kneeling in his house of worship.”¹⁸

That is not to say that Henry Silver was a godless man. He possessed an appreciation for earthly beauty and believed that he best served the Lord through his actions as an honest, humble, and forthright person. “The ones I like best are common everyday people like myself who are not tied to any dinky society,” he espoused in 1904. “I like people who are optimists, people who know God and worship him as should by loving the birds and flowers and fresh air and good fellowship.”¹⁹ He had little appreciation for those who could be found in the pew every Sunday preaching the golden rule while violating it the other six days of the week. “It is against my grain to have much to do with the average hypocrit [*sic*] who howls and shouts in church and beats his grocery week days,” he explains in his diary. “Hell is the place for that kind.”²⁰

Lizzie, on the other hand, had a strong attachment to religion, which was either Baptist or Methodist. “That she named her son ‘James Wesley’ suggests the latter,” her grandson, Bill Silver, surmised.²¹ In later years, James, like his father before him, put less emphasis on organized religion and more on demonstrating Christian ethics on a daily basis. “[I have] no interest in religion as such, but [see] the church solely as a powerful social organization,” he wrote

¹⁸ Silver, ed., “Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser,” 187.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ James William (Bill) Silver, email to author, August 30, 2004. Hereafter cited as Bill Silver.

in 1957.²² His son, Bill noted that there was no religious practice in their household and that, although they encouraged their children to do so, his parents did not attend church except for weddings and funerals. To Lizzie, her son's moral integrity and good deeds may have upheld the teachings of the Bible, but they were not enough to ensure him a place in heaven, where she clearly intended to spend eternity with her family. Bill Silver recalled that until her death his grandmother remained steadfastly determined to see that James "get right with Jesus."²³

As the years passed, Henry Silver found his quiet life disturbed by the rapidly changing world around him. Profits from his grocery continued to please him, but prices for his goods rose accordingly. In 1902 Henry lamented that "[t]he Standard Oil thieves have put up oil to 9 ½ c per gal.," while in early 1903, he listened as a "fakir [sic] by the name of [Eugene V.] Debs lectured on socialism – the brother of anarchy in this city" and cursed the growing influence of labor unions.²⁴ The 1904 World's Fair opened in St. Louis, Missouri, but the expense of attending was too much for him, as he and Lizzie were saving for their first venture to Florida. The death of his father, Harvey O. Silver, in the autumn of 1905 was a profound loss for the forty-year-old Henry. "Pa never accumulated much money because he always had a mob riding him," he

²² James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*. (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 8.

²³ Bill Silver, email to author, August 30, 2004.

²⁴ Silver, ed., "Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser," 173, 175.

recalled. “For years all the Advent ministers in New York state fed on him in droves. He was a mighty good father and we always had plenty to eat.”²⁵

Henry and Lizzie continued to prosper and financial success resulted in a nest egg that enabled them to enjoy the luxuries of their time, among them an automobile, a most-treasured Victor Talking Machine, and the ability to travel. Family photographs include one that appeared on a 1907 calendar depicting Lizzie, with son Henry in the passenger seat, at the helm of Rochester’s first Cadillac, presumably the same one that caused Henry so much consternation while they owned it. By 1910, he was happy to rid himself of it and the financial drain it had become due to its continual malfunctions and costly repairs. “What a cussed fool I was to waste a thousand dollars on it,” he bellowed in self-recrimination. “I must have had a swelled head at the time and imagined I was a Carnegie or Rockfellow [*sic*].”²⁶

Travel was one of Henry’s greatest joys and he spent countless hours visualizing the trips he and Lizzie would take once they had enough money in the bank. Visits to New York City, Washington D.C., to the 100th anniversary celebration called the Jamestown Exposition in 1907, and to his long-dreamt-of southern states were undertaken as the Silver’s income grew and leisure time became more abundant. “It is not so much taking a trip and enjoying it as it is the pleasant rememberances [*sic*] of it,” he philosophized.²⁷ Henry’s journeys

²⁵ Silver, ed., “Making a Living in Rochester,” 4.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

induced a greater wanderlust, however, and the books he borrowed from Rochester's Reynolds and Central libraries further encouraged him. Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and others stirred an interest in far away lands as well as the ever-expanding United States. "If I live long enough I am going to see something of this beautiful country," he vowed in 1902.²⁸

Two years later the Silver family undertook an extensive trip, one that was meant to be permanent. In early December 1904, Henry sold his business and left his sons Earl and Henry in the care of his parents, while he, Lizzie, and presumably Florence moved to St. Augustine, Florida. They planned to send for the boys once they were established, but by April they realized that despite their substantial savings and the income they earned at their respective jobs in St. Augustine, they were ill-prepared for the type of semi-retirement lifestyle for which they had planned. "We sold out two or three years too quick," Henry surmised. "We have enough to live comfortably on the interest but not enough to travel on or to have anything fancy."²⁹ They returned to Rochester and Henry worked at various jobs until, in 1906, he bought from his employer the grocery store where he had been working.

Tired as he had been of the grocery business prior to his move to Florida, Henry quickly realized that he had "killed the goose that was laying the golden eggs" when he gave up his previous business.³⁰ Still, during the next thirteen

²⁸ Silver, ed., "Diary of a One Horse Enterpriser," 172.

²⁹ Ibid, 190.

³⁰ Ibid.

years his business acumen extended to stock market speculation and home construction as well as groceries. The volatility of Henry and Lizzie's shares in the Swift Packaging Company caused him no end of consternation but ultimately resulted in a strong investment vehicle that produced dividends for James Silver and his children well into the 1950s.

Henry Silver's money management and penchant for hard work resulted in a steady growth of the family coffers. The family, too, continued to grow when another daughter, Margaret, was born in 1910. Earl, the oldest child, was a constant worry for Henry, who saw his son as either destined for failure or on the road to success, depending upon the young man's circumstances at any particular time. Earl did not attend college, but he was afforded other opportunities by his parents. Earl's teacher informed Henry that his twelve-year-old son had a greater interest in smoking than he did in his schoolwork. That very night Earl was deposited at a private school on the outskirts of town where, for tuition that averaged about one dollar per day, his actions and studies could be monitored by the staff. After one month at the seminary, Henry noted that, "Earl is improving and I now have hopes of his being a smart man. All I ask," he added, "is that he becomes a good, honest man and grows up to love his country and keep out of the Democrat party."³¹

In April 1905, Earl, aged fifteen, went to work at Mr. Eastman's company and was earning a good wage of \$4.50 to \$5.50 per week, but Henry sent him to

³¹ Ibid, 173.

the Rochester Business Institute the following year. In hindsight, Henry saw this as a waste of the one-hundred-dollar tuition, for Earl learned nothing of practical value and showed no signs of ambition. And so the cycle continued, with Earl doing well for a while only to once again fall into displeasure with his father. “Work has greatly interfered with Earl’s pleasure,” Henry related in June of 1913, “so he has given it up and puts in his time running his auto.”³² The following year saw Earl, like his father before him, add carpentry to his growing list of careers, and he eventually left his home in search of greater prospects, first in Florida and later in Toledo, Ohio. “Distance lends enchantment,” Henry surmised.³³

The other children endured the usual growing pains, bumps, and bruises, with Henry noting no debilitating incidents in his diaries. It appears that Florence possessed a delicate constitution, although there is no mention of the particular ailment from which she suffered. Henry, Jr. was struck in the belly by a rocket set off by a careless reveler one Fourth of July but sustained no serious injury. And “Bub,” as James was known, recalled that during his Rochester years he was “eternally shy, a rather chubby and clumsy boy.”³⁴ He fell down the stairs when he was a year old, and through the roof of a house his father was building when older, but otherwise he appears to have emerged from childhood physically

³² Silver, ed., “Making a Living in Rochester,” 25.

³³ *Ibid*, 26.

³⁴ Silver, *Running Scared*, 5. This nickname is noted only in Henry’s diary and is not seen in personal family correspondence in later years. His mother referred to him primarily as “James” while his siblings favored the less formal “Jim.” Silver himself used “James W. Silver” in his professional capacity and “Jim Silver” in his private life. The two will be used interchangeably through the course of this manuscript. Interestingly, he chose the moniker “Jim Silver” for use in the title of *Running Scared*. Silver may have wished to imply a more intimate relationship between himself and the reader by this time and appear less cantankerous than the public image of him that was put forth in 1963, at the time *The Closed Society* was published.

unscathed. His grammar school principal recalled young Jim as “being brilliant mentally,” as well as a “most lovable chap, as every one of his teachers would say.”³⁵ He must have outgrown his clumsiness for he excelled at athletics when he matured, but his shyness persisted well into adulthood, manifesting into a lack of confidence that plagued him, it appears, almost until his death. It is worth pondering, however, if his self-deprecation was sincere or whether it masked a lesson that Jim Silver learned from his father: to remain modest and content with life.

“I am positively sick of Northern winters and look longingly at the time when I can spend part of the year in the sunny South,” wrote Henry Silver on a September day in 1903.³⁶ In 1920, his long-awaited dream came to fruition: he left Rochester and its brutal New York winters behind him for good and moved his family to the hamlet of Southern Pines, North Carolina. James Silver recalls this incident as rather benign, evoking no particular feeling in him for or against this action. By this time the family had undertaken many scouting sojourns to various southern states during the colder New York months, and Henry must have found something appealing in this area of North Carolina. He often yearned for a quiet place in the country and perhaps this was as close to his ideal as he would find. Or it may be that this section of the American South was more economically conducive to Henry’s retirement budget. Health issues may have

³⁵ M. Frances Logan to Elizabeth Silver, December 23, 1935. Accession 87-25, Box 6.1, James W. Silver Collection, Archives and Special Collections, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi. Hereafter cited as Silver Collection with file number only. All files from Accession 87-25 unless otherwise noted.

³⁶ Silver, ed., “Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser,” 181.

also played a role in where the Silver family settled down, as Southern Pines by this time was an established wellness resort due to its temperate climate and rail access.³⁷

Rail lines served as a way for tourists and new residents to reach not only Southern Pines but also other cities and towns of North Carolina. Nearly 1,783,779 white persons resided within the state by 1920, an increase of close to 284,000 during the previous decade. The African American population was 763,407 at this period, an increase of almost 67,000 persons during the previous ten years. African Americans comprised 38 percent of the state's population in 1880, the period during which Southern Pines was being transformed into a health resort and the state was experiencing a booming timber industry. A slow but steady decline occurred with each passing decade, however, and by 1920, only 29.8 percent of North Carolinians were African American, due in large part to the Great Migration of blacks deserting southern states with their Jim Crow laws for northern states offering more liberation and job opportunities. Since trains traveled in both directions and provided a way for people to leave the state as well as enter into it, some of the racial disparity could be attributed to a large influx of whites to the state and a smaller but significant number of African

³⁷ In describing its history, Moore County, North Carolina, states that during the 1880s, "people wishing to improve their health or seeking 'refuge from the northern blizzard' began to flock to the resort towns," of which Southern Pines was the most popular. See the official website of Moore County [www.moorecountync.gov/pages/About MooreCounty/historical_outline.htm](http://www.moorecountync.gov/pages/About%20MooreCounty/historical_outline.htm) and www.southernpines.net/ourtown.aspx (accessed February 2, 2009).

Americans departing for opportunities elsewhere³⁸. The state may also have marketed itself so successfully as a favorable location to reside that the influx of white northerners simply outpaced the African American birth rate.

Racially, Southern Pines was a somewhat unique area of North Carolina for its black and white populations were clearly delineated between east and west. Indeed, “West Southern Pines” was its own incorporated African American town.³⁹ Silver recalls “with awe” viewing “the body of a black man on the ground after he had been shot,” but otherwise offers no further evidence of witnessing any type of racially motivated violence.⁴⁰ He relates that his “folks were ever on the poor side,” and writes of being “keenly aware that we lived on the wrong side of the tracks in an old boarding house my father had transformed into a comfortable home.”⁴¹ Clearly Henry and Lizzie were now settling into their retirement after years of “slaving away” and saving their pennies. James remembers his mother tending to her chickens and his father puttering in his little tool shop.

³⁸James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 12-13. The years before and after World War I saw the largest migration of blacks to northern states in search of work in war-related industries. By 1920, more than 2.7 million southern blacks had moved north.

³⁹ There were two distinct sections of Southern Pines during this period, “East” Southern Pines where the health resort was situated, and “West Southern Pines” which, according to the town’s history, “was one of the few – and among the first- incorporated African American towns in North Carolina. The two communities were merged through its annexation into Southern Pines in 1931.” See www.southernpines.net/ourtown.aspx. It is interesting to note that in *Running Scared*, Silver omits this delineation and offers no recollections of either integration or segregation during the years he lived there.

⁴⁰ Silver, *Running Scared*, 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3, 7. Presumably the Silvers resided in the less-affluent portion of the white area of “East” Southern Pines.

A man like Henry Silver could not remain still for long, however, for he only felt whole when at work. “I can hardly remember a time when I was not ashamed to be not at work. I feel guilty when I am not slaving,” he emphasized many years earlier.⁴² In Pinehurst, he assisted his son, Henry, in building many homes in the local area. Henry Jr. reunited with his family following two terms of enlistment with the U.S. Navy during World War I, where he served as a cook on a submarine. He ultimately became a bricklayer and constructed homes of his father’s design.⁴³ The younger Henry Silver presumably resided in a home of his own creation, and he remained in North Carolina until his death from lung cancer in 1981.

Details regarding this period of life for the Silver family remain sketchy and are culled primarily from James Silver’s recollections nearly sixty years later in his 1984 semi-autobiography, *Running Scared: Jim Silver in Mississippi*.⁴⁴ Life seemed simple enough for an adolescent New York boy transplanted to the piney woods of North Carolina. He was a Boy Scout, played on the high school baseball team, and surely enjoyed the advantages of being related to the local boxing celebrity: his brother, Henry. He remembers that his parents “assumed that all southerners were a little on the lazy side,” but given his father’s propensity to work, such a statement is not surprising.⁴⁵ Rare, indeed, would be the man who could measure up to the work ethic possessed by Henry Dayton

⁴² Silver, ed., *Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser*, 188.

⁴³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 8.

⁴⁴ Requests to UNC for any of James Silver’s academic records produced no results.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

Silver. It must have been a daunting prospect for his children to live up to their father's expectations.

In 1923, James Wesley Silver earned the role of salutatorian of his high school graduation class of six students. He spent that summer working as a bellhop at the Upland Terrace Hotel, a rambling Victorian structure located on Main Street in the resort town of Bethlehem, New Hampshire. In later years, Silver recalled it as being "my happiest summer."⁴⁶ That fall he entered the University of North Carolina, the first in his family to "have a try at what is called higher education,"⁴⁷ and marked the beginning of his long academic career. "My four years in Chapel Hill must be deemed largely a disaster," he noted, "particularly as to growth in the social graces and self-assurance."⁴⁸ Silver was a fifteen-year-old freshman, which may account for his belief that he did not perform as he should have during his years of undergraduate education. In later years he reflected upon those "four somewhat fearful years," at UNC and determined that he "quickly laid aside my thin veneer of fundamentalism and indulged myself without enthusiasm in the conventional liberalism of the day."⁴⁹ How deeply such an insecure youth would involve himself in world events beyond his college campus remains questionable.

⁴⁶ James Silver to Bill Silver, February 28, 1958. Personal collection of Bill Silver. Copy in author's possession. Hereafter cited as Bill Silver Collection.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, x.

⁴⁹ Copy of ODK Mortarboard Speech delivered in the Fulton Chapel at the University of Mississippi on May 2, 1973, although the speech was written sometime during the previous year and used at another event. According to a handwritten notation on the document, Silver received a standing ovation. Box 16.7, Silver Collection.

Presiding over the university at this time was UNC's tenth president, Harry W. Chase from Massachusetts who, like Henry Silver, was a transplanted Yankee and a Republican. Chase, however, was a Congregationalist, a factor that would have precluded Henry Silver from holding him in high regard. Chase joined the faculty of UNC immediately upon receiving his Ph.D. from Clark University in 1910, and assumed the university's presidency in 1919. This was a pivotal period for the university, as the country was recovering from the effects of World War I and the state was perched on the cusp of a transformational new era in the South.

Chase astutely recognized both the short-term and long-term problems that faced the campus, the state, and the nation. He saw the immediate issues, such as the need for adequate facilities to accommodate the university's swelling post-war student enrollment, as well as the necessity of preparing the institution to serve a major role in the years ahead. Indeed, the topic of his inaugural address was "The State University and the New South," and one of his first acts as president was to lure a fellow Clark classmate, Howard W. Odum, to the faculty that same year, a collaboration that resulted in the institution's place at the forefront in the fields of sociology and southern culture. In the 1920-1921 academic year, 1,547 students could be found on campus but 2,308 applicants had been denied admission. By 1924, the campus had acquired several new dormitories and classroom buildings in which to house and educate the 2,549 students at Chapel Hill that school year, an increase of 1,000 students in a mere

three years.⁵⁰ Among them was sophomore Jim Silver. That year also saw the arrival of the new UNC mascot, Rameses the Ram, whose on-field presence was credited for UNC's last minute 3 to zero football victory over the Virginia Military Institute that fall.⁵¹

After a shaky beginning to campus life, the "inveterate loner" Jim Silver eventually navigated his way through his courses well enough to gain acceptance into Phi Beta Kappa. He also established enough acquaintances to make up the number of players needed for a good game of cards. No doubt his father, Henry, questioned the investment he had made in his son's education and saw too clearly the similarities between Earl's and James's youthful indolence when poker games took precedent over church attendance. "(M)y Baptist fundamentalism underwent severe attack from class lectures and dormitory bull sessions," Silver recalls.⁵² This, then, must have marked the beginning of Lizzie's perpetual quest for her son's salvation. James's predilection for poker was firmly established, however, and it proved to be a life-long hobby for him. Indeed, throughout the years his correspondences were littered with references to monies won and lost. Wagers were always nominal and a winning night would generally do nothing more than provide a bit of a cushion for his weekly spending allowance or an unexpected gift to be tucked into a letter for his children, Bill or Betty, while they were away at college.

⁵⁰ William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 169-179.

⁵¹ William S. Powell, *The First State University: A Pictorial History of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 175-180.

⁵² Silver, *Running Scared*, 9.

In his junior year, Silver “perhaps foolishly” changed his scholastic path from business to education because there were no tuition charges in the School of Education.⁵³ This statement contradicts another whereby Silver claims that his father paid \$2,000 tuition for his four years at UNC.⁵⁴ Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between: that Henry Silver paid for the first two years of tuition and that Jim’s memory inaccurately applied cost of living allowances to the actual fees charged by UNC.⁵⁵ Working under this assumption, it is clear that economic need would have motivated Jim’s change of major and two probabilities seem to have prompted it. Either Henry Silver’s financial condition could not warrant the expense of tuition at UNC or, more likely, he viewed James’s college experience as a poor investment since his son was failing to take full advantage of a higher education.

Henry regretted not being afforded such an opportunity himself, but he compensated for his lack of formal education by reading voraciously and had learned enough through real-world experiences to become a successful business owner. Seven degrees from Dartmouth, he believed, would not have made him a

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁵ *Catalog of the University of North Carolina, The One Hundred and Thirty-Second Session, 1925-1926*, p. 61. The catalog states, “Free tuition is given to...students (residents of North Carolina) preparing to teach. In order to secure this free tuition, students preparing to teach must be candidates for the degree of A.B. in Education, and agree to teach in North Carolina for at least two years after leaving the University.” Furthermore, an unpublished compilation of tuition and fees at UNC throughout the years was created by a graduate student employed at the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. According to this report, tuition for the 1923-1924 academic year was \$60 per year (three academic quarters) and fees were \$48; in 1924-1925 \$60 and \$89.32 in fees; in 1925-1926 \$100 and \$88.64; in 1926-27 \$100 and \$88.64. Assuming that these stated tuition charges and fees were to be paid per academic year, four years of matriculation from 1923 to 1927 would cost \$634.60 (excluding room and board).

better grocer.⁵⁶ In addition, previous experiences with supplemental education for the Silver children did not bear fruit, as witnessed by Earl's short-lived stay at the private seminary and his brief studies at the Rochester Business Academy. Likewise, Henry's own enrollment in an auto repair course at the Rochester Mechanics Institute taught him "only that a fool and his money are soon parted."⁵⁷ Still, these undertakings are not the same as receiving a college degree, and if Henry was financially capable of providing James with the ability to attend a university, he would certainly expect to see a return on his investment. Given the sweat equity that went into acquiring every penny that Henry made, it is doubtful that he would stand idly by and allow another one of his unappreciative children to squander away his hard-earned money.

James Silver was the first in his family to attend college and become a member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1926, but any pride Henry felt at his son's achievements was surely extinguished during the 1927 spring semester. In his senior year, Silver and approximately twenty other poker-playing students were expelled for violating the university's honor code that prohibited gambling. Fortunately, he had already acquired enough credits for graduation and, although he was denied participation in the commencement exercises, he received his degree nonetheless. Years later and regardless of this blemish on his academic

⁵⁶ Silver, ed., "Diary of a One-Horse Enterpriser," 172.

⁵⁷ Silver, ed., "Making a Living in Rochester," 7.

record, UNC was able to overlook the indiscretions and folly of his youth and honor James Silver with the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1984.⁵⁸

If Silver experienced remorse over his expulsion, it was not expressed in his later writings. Indeed, he fondly recalls the experience as a “spectacular development,” and in some ways he must have relished being liberated from an environment to which he had never fully adapted. “I think I was unhappy most of my time at the University of North Carolina,” he later recalled.⁵⁹ Still, his parents’ disappointment in him must have been profound, perhaps prompting Silver and a friend to spend the next few months wandering the country. Like the Jack Kerouac of his time, Silver traveled by car, freighter, and train, picking up work where he could, and managing to go from New York City to San Francisco via Panama and back to the East Coast through Wyoming, Nebraska, Chicago, and Rochester, where he found temporary lodging with his brother, Earl. During this three-month sojourn, Silver acquired some measure of self-confidence. His self-worth was further enhanced upon his return to Southern Pines, where his tales of “hobo jungles, confrontations with the police, living off the land” and the rest of his adventures made him a “minor hero” in the eyes of some of his contemporaries.⁶⁰

For the next year, Silver found employment as a coach at the high school at nearby Ellerbe, North Carolina, where he was in charge of the newly formed

⁵⁸ UNC General Alumni Association website, <http://alumni.unc.edu/article.aspx?sid=4#alum> (accessed March 23, 2010).

⁵⁹ *Running Scared*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 10-11.

football team, the basketball team, baseball and track, as well as geography instruction. His monthly salary for this array of duties was one hundred dollars.⁶¹ At the end of the season, he was recruited by another school that offered him twice the salary. Instead, on the brink of the Great Depression, he chose to enter Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. It is unclear whether Jim paid his own tuition or if Henry once again funded this educational pursuit, but the fact that he worked at various jobs during this period indicates the need for an income.

Silver would remain in the city for the next several years, until receiving his Ph.D. in 1935. After completing his graduate studies at Peabody, he pursued doctoral work across the street on the campus of Vanderbilt University. Although by this time the university was no longer under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, it still must have eased Lizzie Silver's conscience to know that her son was being educated at an institution with a strong denominational history.

Peabody College for Teachers and its reciprocal educational agreement with Vanderbilt University was the logical choice for James, considering his undergraduate degree in education and his teaching experience. Surely UNC, one of only a handful of southern institutions offering graduate programs, would not be eager to welcome an expelled student into their graduate program. Perhaps his less-than-stellar academic record there prompted his decision to

⁶¹ Ibid, 12.

attend Peabody as well, for admission standards for their graduate school were notoriously low, requiring only that a candidate possess a Bachelor of Arts degree. Once admitted, he needed only a minimal amount of coursework and a thesis to graduate, while lax grading policies that awarded mostly As and Bs made it virtually impossible for one to flunk out. So popular was Peabody's program that by 1925 its graduate student enrollment was larger than any other southern college or university. By 1931, the graduate school's reputation garnered the attention of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. A subsequent investigation into their practices resulted in a major overhaul of Peabody's graduate program.⁶²

Vanderbilt, too, underwent some changes during this period. More than half of its students came from Nashville or the surrounding areas, making Vanderbilt more of a regional rather than a national institution. In an effort to rectify this, the administrators sought funding to revamp many aspects of the university and to expand its reputation outside of Tennessee. Beginning in 1920, they suspended admission of new graduate students while the requirements and curriculum for post-graduate work were revised. Their efforts were greatly enhanced in 1925 by a \$750,000 gift from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial in 1925, which was awarded for the particular purpose of improving advanced education in the social sciences. An new graduate program was implemented in 1926, following the donation of a \$200,000 Carnegie gift

⁶² Paul Keith Conkin, *Peabody College: From a Frontier Academy to the Frontiers of Teaching and Learning* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), 231.

earmarked specifically for this use. A year later, a total of eighty-three graduate students were matriculating and several departments at Vanderbilt were once again accepting Ph.D. candidates. By 1929, Jim Silver was among the first new doctoral students in the history department.⁶³

Perhaps it is only coincidental that Silver's educational path routed him toward institutions where notable scholars were honing their skills or erupting onto the academic scene. While Silver was learning the intricacies of college life and poker playing at UNC, Howard W. Odum was settling in to his duties with the School of Social Welfare at Chapel Hill. Odum's reputation as a sociologist was well under way at the time of his arrival at UNC, but his contributions to the field of study and the university itself during his tenure would secure his place in scholarly history. Much of his prominent work in folk culture was created during the same years that Silver was on campus.⁶⁴ While Silver may have been oblivious to the importance of the sociologist's studies during his undergraduate years, he recognized its value by 1936 when Odom published *Southern Regions of the United States*. Almost immediately it became one of Silver's primary sources.⁶⁵ Likewise, the Southern Agrarians, as they were collectively known, were active members of the Peabody and Vanderbilt campuses during Silver's years of enrollment, yet he barely acknowledges this fact. Years later, however, as a historian himself he would study in greater depth the implications of their

⁶³ Ibid, 291.

⁶⁴ William D. Snyder, *The Light on the Hill*, 178-80.

⁶⁵ Silver, *Running Scared*, 21.

writings in the controversial book *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*.⁶⁶

This 1930 publication was a collection of essays composed by a contingent of Vanderbilt students and faculty members who, for this volume, assumed authorship as “Twelve Southerners.” Several of these dozen contributors, namely Donald Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, had begun to meet in the 1920s to share conversation on current events and to critique one another’s literary works. Known then as The Agrarians, they began publishing their writings and those of others in a self-produced magazine called *The Fugitive*. Not unlike other young people of the post-World-War I “Lost Generation,” these men were disillusioned by the country’s growing industrialism and materialism. Most of them hailed from rural communities near Nashville or elsewhere in the South and had been regaled with family tales of bucolic farm life and Confederate glories. Not surprisingly, their increased disenchantment with contemporary life in general and the New South in particular resulted in discussions about an idealized Jeffersonian America made up of noble yeomen farmers and artisans. This ideology became known as the Southern Agrarian Movement and was transformed into written works: the essays that comprised *I'll Take My Stand*.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930). Many subsequent editions have been published and numerous volumes exist that examine and interpret the writings of the Agrarians and/or Fugitives.

⁶⁷ Perhaps the most definitive volume about the group is Paul C. Conkin’s *The Southern Agrarians* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

Although the Agrarians had academic or employment ties to Vanderbilt, the relationship ended there. The university did not publish or sanction their writings. Indeed, at the time *I'll Take My Stand* was published and generating publicity, the university was trying to shed its reputation as a regional institution and seek a place as a respected national university. Having Vanderbilt connected to the Agrarians and their anti-corporate beliefs worked against this goal, for the funds needed to enhance the university could only come through corporate donations. Despite the administration's best efforts to do otherwise, the Southern Agrarian Movement was indelibly linked with Vanderbilt since the beginning, but as time passed that connection was embraced and celebrated by the university.⁶⁸

Silver's master's thesis at Peabody, entitled "The Backcountry People in the Historical Novels of William Gilmore Simms," is an examination of both literature and history which, at a glance, might imply that Silver had as his advisor one of the Fugitive professors who taught these subjects. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals no such relationship, since neither his major nor minor professors, Fremont P. Wirth and Charles S. Pendleton respectively, were one of the Fugitive counterparts or their later transformation, the Southern Agrarians. Silver alludes to the fact that, while a student at Vanderbilt, he may have enrolled in the graduate classes taught by these renowned men and notes that at one point he was allotted the office once occupied by Robert Penn Warren. But

⁶⁸ Paul C. Conkin assisted by Henry Lee, *Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 346.

beyond these instances, nothing more is known regarding any interaction with or influence by the Agrarians.⁶⁹

Jim Silver may have been too busy relishing his own experiences to recognize the historical importance of the Agrarian movement going on around him. Any “racial matters,” around Nashville at that time also failed to intrude on (his) education.⁷⁰ He had “never felt more content or so free from restraint,” than he did at Peabody, where he was enjoying the full effects of post-war America’s “Roaring Twenties.”⁷¹ This could be due to the geographical distance between himself and the overseeing eyes of his parents or, if he was paying his own way through school, Silver may have felt that he had only himself to answer to and could thereby do as he pleased. Regardless, he matured intellectually and emotionally while in Nashville.⁷² His poker playing kept him in pocket money and supplemented whatever income he earned at various jobs such as furnace stoker or short order cook. Clearly his social life was improving as well, for he bought a “second-hand coupe with balloon tires and a bullhorn” and apparently had a need to invest in his first tuxedo.⁷³ In between socializing and working he managed to complete his studies and was awarded a Master of Arts in History from Peabody in 1929. Although he did not know it then, this heady period of his carefree youth was over. That same year, the stock market crash signaled the beginning of a lengthy economic crisis that became the Great Depression. A

⁶⁹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 13.

⁷² *Ibid*, x.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

year later, the Agrarians published *I'll Take My Stand*. It is also the year that his father died. Henry Silver's death came as a shocking blow, made all the more painful by the fact that Silver was not made aware of it until after his father had been laid to rest.

I learned one day by letter from my mother that my father had been buried in Southern Pines. When he was taken to the Moore County Hospital for what turned out to be a fatal operation, she had chosen not to interfere with my new job, and the presence of two older brothers obviated the need for my appearance at the funeral. In my silent grieving I cursed the Puritanism back of her decision.⁷⁴

Twenty-five years later, while editing his father's diaries, Silver must have come fully to realize what a remarkable man Henry Silver was and to appreciate him as his father. Still, there were some family traits that he regrettably inherited. In April 1958, he wrote poignantly in a letter to his own son, Bill, of the Silver family's incapacity to demonstrate affection although they may feel it "much more strongly than most. For instance," he explained, "I still feel extremely close to my father (who died 28 years ago) although I don't suppose we ever exchanged any particularly emotional greetings in our lives together." To dispel any doubts that Bill might have regarding his father's love for him, Silver further revealed, "And I do know that I am more concerned about you and what you do than I am about anything else in the world."⁷⁵ However physically undemonstrative he may have appeared in person, James Silver compensated for it in his writing. His

⁷⁴ Ibid, 13. The exact date of Henry Silver's death is not known.

⁷⁵ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, April 7, 1958, Bill Silver Collection.

correspondences to family and friends exude an obvious, if understated, affection.

The loss of his father may have been a catalyst for the sudden turnabout in Silver's academic performance which, by his own admission, was a low priority. Tennis, poker, the occasional teaching job, and his improved social life all interfered with Silver's degree plan save for a few course credits. When his major professor calmly suggested that he not return for the fall semester, Silver took heed and owned up to his responsibilities.⁷⁶ Although he credits his professor's blunt comments with changing his life, those words surely resounded in the voice of Henry Silver, admonishing his son for regarding so casually his enviable position in life. Silver "settled down," began researching his thesis subject, and was granted a fellowship that involved facilitating discussion in two political sciences classes. A proponent of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, Silver took umbrage with the content of the lecture material provided by Gustavus W. (Gus) Dyer, the "doughty old professional hypocrite" who instructed the classes. So upset was Silver by the professor's teaching that he openly argued with him and arranged for the instructor to debate another faculty member on New Deal economics. In addition, he apparently instigated a successful boycott by his students of the lecture portion of the class.⁷⁷ Already Silver was demonstrating the kind of actions for which he would become well

⁷⁶ Silver, *Running Scared*, 13. There is little evidence to indicate the specifics of Jim's academic shortcomings, although he notes that he needed to pass the language examinations and to put some effort into writing and completing his thesis.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 14. Although Silver is not mentioned as the instigator, a brief account of the 1937 debate is found in Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 360.

known in Mississippi: questioning the status quo, challenging authority, speaking his mind, holding firm to his convictions, and inciting others to do the same.

The country was experiencing severe economic troubles during this period and job opportunities were not plentiful. Falling tuition prices made college an attractive option for those who could afford it, and enrollment at Vanderbilt and other institutions saw noticeable increases as the Depression worsened.⁷⁸ “I got into teaching because of the Depression,” Silver rationalized. “By the time it was over I had my doctorate...what else could I do?”⁷⁹ By the spring of 1935, Silver had satisfied all of the necessary requirements for his Ph.D. in History from Vanderbilt and completed his doctoral dissertation, “Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Exponent of the Frontier.” Silver’s work must have sufficiently impressed his advisors, William C. Binkley and Carl S. Driver, both of whom were influential members of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. Silver saw his work published as an article in the August 1935 edition of the *Journal of Southern History*, and the following year his presentation on Gaines opened the first session of the group’s annual meeting in Austin, Texas.⁸⁰

Silver was twenty-eight years old at the time of his graduation from Vanderbilt, and Lizzie Silver was justifiably proud of her youngest son’s

⁷⁸ Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 354.

⁷⁹ “‘People’s’ Dr. Silver – the honoree stayed home,” *Tampa Neighbor*, October 30, 1975.

⁸⁰ James W. Silver, “Edmund Pendleton Gaines and Frontier Problems, 1801-1849.” *Journal of Southern History* 1 (August 1935), 320-344. Leota S. Drive and William C. Binkley, “The Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Mississippi valley Historical Association,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 23 (September 1936), 217-18. Binkley served on the Board of Editors for the journal and Driver was the program committee chairman for the annual meeting.

accomplishment. She shared the news of his newly conferred degree with family and friends, including Miss M. Frances Logan, who was his grammar school principal in Rochester. Silver's achievement made Miss Logan "glad away down deep. Our boy, James Silver, to be now Dr. Silver. It is just as fine as anything can be." "James has made a fine mark for one so young," she commended, "and I am sure that there is a splendid career ahead of him."⁸¹

When he departed from Nashville Jim not only possessed the newly conferred title of "Dr. Silver" but also the promise of marriage from an Alabama freshman, Margaret McLean "Dutch" Thompson. As a prospective bridegroom, it was with relief that Silver received an offer to serve as head of the history department at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. Lizzie Silver must have considered this a tremendous opportunity for two reasons: it was employment for her son and, since Southwestern was a Methodist institution, there was hope that James would return to the Christian flock.

Silver accepted the position at an agreed salary of \$1,980 for nine months, although a contract clause related to his wages would be the impetus for his departure one year later. In the meantime, however, he was well positioned to begin family life and on Tuesday afternoon, December 31, 1935, Jim and Dutch were joined in matrimony at the Alpha Omicron Pi fraternity house on the Vanderbilt campus. The local newspaper announcement indicated Dutch was

⁸¹ M. Frances Logan to Elizabeth Silver, December 23, 1935. Box 14.1, Silver Collection. Lizzie Silver shared this letter with James and included the notation, "Isn't this a nice letter for Miss Logan to write about you. I know you won't get conceited."

given away by her brother and attended by her sister, while the invited guests were “restricted to close friends of the bride and groom.” The bride “wore a gown of old gold satin...and her flowers were an arm bouquet of Talisman roses.”⁸² Perhaps it was for nostalgic reasons, then, that Dutch Silver remained a very active member of Alpha Omicron Pi for the rest of her life. In later years, she was also heavily involved in her local Democratic Executive Committee, which surely would have provoked a lengthy entry in Henry Silver’s diary.

If Dutch, a proper southern girl from Montgomery, Alabama, expected a marriage of moonlight and roses, she was certainly in for a surprise. Their honeymoon consisted of a train “to St. Louis and points west” and “included a burlesque show and a visit to the Kansas City stockyards,” which, as Silver pointed out was “not a place amenable to romance.”⁸³ Silver had registered his new bride for home economics courses at Southwestern, and they supplemented Dutch’s cooking with meals in the campus dining hall. A local widow rented them a room overlooking an oil rig, and in the absence of air conditioning they avoided the summer heat by sleeping on cots in the backyard.

In mid-April 1936, the newlyweds journeyed to Austin, Texas, in the centennial year of the state’s independence to attend the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association for Silver’s presentation. This trip

⁸² “Miss Thompson and Dr. James Silver Wed At Quiet Ceremony,” *Nashville Banner*, January 2, 1936. Omicron Pi is technically a fraternity as the term “sorority” was not in use at the time of its inception in 1897. See The Official Website of Alpha Omicron Phi at <http://www.alphaomicronpi.org//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home> for more information (accessed February 16, 2009).

⁸³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 16.

invariably altered the course of their lives, for it was during this event that Dutch heard about a position in the history department at the University of Mississippi. Silver's inquiry resulted in a job offer, and he had no reservations about leaving Southwestern. Indeed, the unscrupulous wording in his employment contract with regard to his salary left him with some very un-Christian feelings toward the college president.⁸⁴ Silver's business experiences with members of the non-secular world caused him to harbor the same mistrust of pious individuals as his father. Nevertheless, their experience in Kansas, he believed, was beneficial. "Learning about life in a dusty, one-crop state in a depression was a pretty fair preparation for moving to penurious Mississippi, at that time engaged mainly in the production of cotton," he surmised.⁸⁵ The happy pair arrived at Oxford in time for the fall semester of 1936, and Silver began in earnest his newfound role of historian and teacher.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 15-16. Silver was verbally informed that his salary was for nine months of service, but the written contract guaranteed only 60 percent of his salary. Silver was assured by the president that he would receive all of his money and he signed the contract, "assuming that if you can't trust a former missionary to China, who can you trust? Besides, I had no other offers." But his experience, and that of other faculty members who were denied their full salaries, made him uneasy.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 17.

CHAPTER 3
MOONLIGHT, MAGNOLIAS AND OLE MISS

Little did Jim Silver realize that by accepting a faculty position at Ole Miss he was beginning a career that would span nearly three decades and would fully immerse this native New Yorker into southern life. Silver arrived on campus “eager to be accepted, in earnest about conforming so that [he] might become one of the boys,” but “fearful of lack of success in the career that had come to me by chance.” He soon realized, however, that his “tendency toward liberalism,” his “support of the underdog” made him something of a square peg within the round hole that was Mississippi.¹ Considering the history of the university, it is not surprising that a “naturally contentious” liberal-thinking professor like Silver would eventually clash with those within his new surroundings.² Chartered in 1844, the University of Mississippi was founded in part as a place where the “southern way of life” would remain forever preserved. Indeed, one of the main factors contributing to its establishment was the fear of exposing young Mississippians to out-of-state educational facilities, where they might be subjected to outside influences and foreign ideas. Governor George McNutt, who was instrumental in the university’s formation, espoused this belief in 1838.

¹ Silver, *Running Scared*, ix-x.

² *Ibid*, 139.

“Patriotism, no less than economy urges upon us the duty of educating our children at home,” he cautioned. “Those opposed to us in principle cannot safely be entrusted with the education of our sons and daughters.”³ Later, as pressure mounted for southern states to relinquish their old ways and abandon slavery, Mississippians dug their heels deeper in their native soil and their belief in internal education became even more intense. “It is immaterial where and by whom the luxuries which surround us are produced,” declared one loyal southerner, “but it is the deepest importance that the minds of our youth of both sexes should be trained up under our own glorious institutions.”⁴

Although it made logistical sense to place the state’s first university in the capital city of Jackson, the legislature had other ideas. Already the founders were determined to create an educational institution with a self-made reputation for excellence conjured by their careful public relations. The state legislators accumulated a list of Mississippi hamlets “designated by a distinctive name” for consideration as the site of the proposed educational center. The town of Oxford in Lafayette County was chartered in 1837, and specifically chose to name itself after the illustrious English university town in the hopes that such an affiliation would secure it as the site of the new state educational institution. The gambit paid off for in 1841, the Mississippi legislators voted in favor of placing the state’s first public university at Oxford despite its somewhat remote location in the

³ David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 13.

⁴ *Ibid*, 18-19.

northern portion of the state with limited transportation options. In November of 1848, construction was complete on six campus buildings, and its four-man faculty was ready to welcome for matriculation its first class of eighty students, seventy-eight of whom were native Mississippians.⁵

From its inception, the University of Mississippi cultivated an alluring image of what would soon become known as Ole Miss, a vision that is still perpetuated today as evidenced by the flowery description included in a lengthy study of the university on the eve of its 1994 sesquicentennial:

Across the contours of time the University of Mississippi has become a special place, to some it is like a sacred place. Some have called it holy ground, others hallowed ground. ...There is a mystique about Ole Miss and the love its graduates have for it goes far beyond the filial affection alumni have for their alma mater. In a world of ravishing change, when Ole Miss alumni come back to Oxford, they do not just stroll across the campus and through the Grove, they retrace the steps of their forebears, not just over place and space, but back through time as well.⁶

Clearly the founders were successful in their quest to imbue the state's first university with a reputation as a bastion of southern nobility, gentility, and chivalry. The fact that the school shuttered its doors at the dawn of the Civil War because the entire student population enlisted in the Confederate Army no doubt enhanced this romantic image. All of the young men of the "University Greys" were either killed or injured in battle, but a campus monument erected in their honor perpetuates the memory of their patriotic actions. Interestingly, while the University of Mississippi vehemently eschewed racial integration in later years, it

⁵ Ibid, 4, 22, 54.

⁶ Ibid, ix.

was more receptive to gender equality during its early evolution. In 1882, the university became coeducational with the arrival of eleven women students, and in 1885, an Oxford native, Sarah McGehee Isom, became the first woman faculty member.⁷

Ole Miss continued to grow in size, stature, and student body enrollment. The university broadened its curriculum beyond the study of traditional liberal arts with the addition of five new schools that opened between 1900 and 1917: Engineering, Education, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Business Administration. Ten years later, the university established a Graduate School, however, it then experienced a period of stagnation and decline. Enrollment dropped, the medical school was at risk of losing its accreditation, and it appeared that the institution's highly-polished mantle had tarnished due to neglect. For too long the university did little to enhance its academic credentials, and as a consequence its reputation diminished. This was not a strong foundation upon which to build a well-respected institution of higher learning. Nor was it enough to draw students, funding, or credentialed faculty from within an increasingly competitive playing field.

In 1935, however, Dr. Benjamin Butts assumed the role of Chancellor at Ole Miss and ushered in a new era of reform. "The glory of a university should rest upon the character of its teachers and scholars," he noted in his inaugural

⁷ Ibid, 137-39. Isom was Chair of Elocution and taught speech and oratory at the university. A dormitory was named for her in 1929, and in 1979 the Sarah Isom Center for Women was established. The Center's website indicates that Isom taught at Ole Miss for twenty years while Sansing states that she served for twenty-five years. See http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sarah_isom_center/aboutsarahisom.html (accessed 4/1/10).

address. “A University is no nobler than its faculty.”⁸ So firmly did he believe in this idea that he immediately set about creating a nobler institution at Oxford by establishing more stringent hiring and retention requirements for university faculty members. He intended to create a staff of well-qualified educators through the implementation of the “Ph.D. rule,” which mandated that a teacher could not advance beyond the rank of Associate Professor without a doctorate degree. This action was meant as an incentive to the many faculty members who at this time did not possess such credentials and were now faced with the option of either obtaining a Ph.D. in their field, remain as they were and accept the resulting limited professional advances, or seek employment elsewhere. In addition, the university actively recruited Ph.D. holders to fill current faculty vacancies. In 1936, Dr. James Wesley Silver was one of twenty-four such new hires to benefit from Chancellor Butts’s vision for the future of the University of Mississippi.⁹

While the new administration was preparing to lead Ole Miss into the realm of academic glory, the university was also facing competition for students with Mississippi State College in Starksville, now Mississippi State University. Established in 1878, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the State of Mississippi was a land-grant college offering courses in agriculture and horticulture, as well as the mechanical arts. Federal legislation passed in 1914 allowed for the expansion of its courses through extension offices, thus granting

⁸ Ibid, 247.

⁹ Ibid, 247-48.

it a statewide presence. In 1932, it was renamed Mississippi State College and offered a more diverse curriculum including engineering, business and industry, general science, and continuing education. Two years later, in 1934, Mississippi State established a graduate school.¹⁰ This expansion placed the institution as an academic rival of the University of Mississippi and the administrators in Oxford were unaccustomed to competition.

By 1938, Mississippi State was accepting three new students for every two that matriculated at Ole Miss. This situation was deemed enough of a “crisis” that, by the end of the 1937-38 academic year the university attempted to rally its students into serving as ambassadors. In a speech asking for student assistance in the creation of a “greater Ole Miss,” Jim Silver pleaded with them to return to their hometowns for summer break and contact five local high school seniors or those about to graduate from junior colleges. In the lobby of the local YMCA was a listing of “some 7500” of these individuals within the state. “They are from your home town, they are friends of yours. We are asking that every Ole Miss student worthy of the name...talk to them about Ole Miss and drive home the point which you think might influence them to make this their school.”¹¹

Perhaps the attempt to attract new students is one reason why the university’s athletic teams were endowed with a new nickname at this time. Prior to 1936, the sports teams were referred to by the school colors, the “Red and

¹⁰ http://www.msstate.edu/web/gen_info.htm (accessed March 22, 2010). Mississippi State College became Mississippi State University in 1958. For a detailed account of the university’s history see John K. Bettersworth, *People’s University: The Centennial History of Mississippi State*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980).

¹¹ Untitled speech labeled “Ole Miss 1938,” Box 22.10, Silver Collection.

Blue,” a rather bland name without much inference of athletic prowess. That year the school newspaper held a contest to determine a more fitting moniker and the winning entry, the Rebels, was heartily endorsed. A year later, the character of Colonel Reb made his first appearance on the yearbook and quickly became the new school mascot. A short, mustachioed fellow in a white suit, string tie, and jaunty planter’s hat, his image complemented the other antebellum icons of school spirit at Ole Miss such as the “whoop” of a Rebel Yell. Still other ways to display Rebel pride appeared later.¹²

Their first five years in Mississippi proved to be a busy time for the Silvers, for Ole Miss, and for the nation as the country emerged from the Great Depression. Like many Americans, Jim Silver was a great proponent of President Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal programs. Indeed, his family directly benefitted from the WPA that built the faculty housing in which the Silvers lived through much of their time in Oxford.¹³ However, his admiration for Roosevelt and his subsequent interest in labor relations cast suspicion on him nearly from the outset and were later used as evidence of Silver’s Socialist leanings.¹⁴ Silver was not free of suspicions himself, however, for early on he “began to question the stated convictions of most of [his] brightest students” which he “perhaps erroneously” eventually attributed to most Mississippians.¹⁵

¹² Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 248.

¹³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 34.

¹⁴ Charles Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 139.

¹⁵ Silver, *Running Scared*, ix.

During this time the country's increased optimism regarding domestic matters was tempered by the escalating war in Europe and the possibility of U.S. involvement. There was a fear of American participation in a war in which the country seemingly had no enemy. The government was in favor of maintaining an isolationist stance since the damage and deprivation inflicted by the Depression were still quite evident. So were the memories of those who experienced World War I and who wished to avoid another such conflict. American action would later become inevitable, but for the time being the nation remained focused on its own domestic issues.

For Jim Silver, new husband and assistant professor of history, this was a period of personal and professional growth, what he refers to as his "Embryonic Mississippian" stage.¹⁶ Silver threw himself into his work, and he and Dutch adjusted to the local customs of both the college and the community. The picturesque hamlet of Oxford, with its historic town square anchored by the imposing county courthouse, had a population of approximately 3,000 residents in 1936, one-third of who were black.¹⁷ Also among those living in Oxford was future Nobel laureate William Faulkner whose daughter, Victoria (Cho Cho), was a student of Silver's at Ole Miss and soon became a fast friend of Dutch. For

¹⁶ Ibid, vii.

¹⁷ Oxford's population was 2,890 in 1930 and rose to 3,433 in 1940, thereby making 3,000 a fair estimation of the number of residents in 1936. In 1940, the black population numbered 1,053 with 595 women outnumbering the 458 men. Lafayette County saw a small increase in its population during the decade of the 1930s, growing from 19,978 to 21,257. Oxford gained 543 of these new residents. Whites comprised 59.6 percent of the county residents while 40.3 percent were black. Nearly 75 percent of the county's population resided on rural farms. Of these, 8,910 were white and 6,893 were black. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census Reports, Vol. II, "Characteristics of the Population, 1943,"* 298.

Dutch, a native Alabamian who had never been out of the South until her marriage, a return to the soil of Dixie was welcome after a year on the plains of Kansas. To supplement his annual income of \$1,800, Silver sought out various extracurricular employment opportunities such as coaching the tennis team, filming football games for the coach's review, and summer teaching positions wherever they could be had. Meanwhile, Dutch attended classes, tutored football players for fifty cents an hour, and chaperoned numerous parties and dances with her husband.¹⁸ In 1939, the couple welcomed their first child, James William (Bill) Silver. Bill became a big brother with the arrival of a sister, Virginia Elizabeth (Betty), in 1943. Much later another daughter, Margaret Gail (Gail), was welcomed in 1954. To keep the busy household in order, Dutch had the assistance of Thera Jones, a local African American woman who worked as the Silver's "maid, nurse, housekeeper and general factotum" for nearly twenty-five years.¹⁹ Her length of service with the Silvers and her indispensable abilities essentially made her an extended member of the family.

During these years Silver's curriculum vitae was expanding as rapidly as his household. In 1941, Dutch received her undergraduate degree and Jim was promoted to Associate Professor, no doubt appreciating both the fact that the university recognized his work and the accompanying salary increase to \$2,160.00 per year. In between fulfilling his faculty duties, teaching summer

¹⁸ Contract between the University of Mississippi and J.W. Silver, September 1, 1936 Box 20.7, Silver Collection. See also Silver, *Running Scared*, 19, and Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 140.

¹⁹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 22.

sessions, and pursuing other professional and personal endeavors, Silver found time to publish a number of scholarly works during his first decade at Ole Miss. Several book reviews and at least one article were published in scholarly journals each year from 1942 through 1945. He made maximum use of his extensive dissertation research on the life of Edmund Pendleton Gaines. The *Journal of Southern History* accepted his lengthy article on the subject in 1935, and a year later he published two different articles on Gaines, one in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* and another in the *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, with each tailored to its regional audience. In 1949, Silver's relationship with the topic was culminated when the Louisiana State University Press published *Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier General*, his first book. It garnered favorable reviews within the academic community and the proud author sent copies of his book to family, friends, and mentors. Among the recipients was his dissertation director at Vanderbilt, William C. Binkley, whose guidance was generously acknowledged by the author.²⁰ Binkley had high praise for the work and its author. "The book shows that you have done an enormous amount of work since the study was submitted to us in fulfillment of the Ph.D. requirements," Binkley wrote his former student. "It reflects maturity of judgment and careful scholarship on every page...You have every reason to be proud of

²⁰ For articles see James W. Silver, "Edmund P. Gaines and the Protection of the Southwestern Frontiers," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 20 (January 1937): 183-91; James W. Silver, "Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Railroad Propagandist," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, 9 (1937): 3-18. See also James W. Silver, *Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Frontier General* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949).

what you have done.”²¹ Whatever misgivings or insecurities Silver possessed regarding his somewhat lackadaisical performance during his years at Vanderbilt must have been at least temporarily assuaged upon receipt of this letter.

Throughout most of his career, Jim Silver was a popular teacher on campus and was well-liked among his peers. He was a rather imposing man, physically and mentally, standing nearly six-feet, two-inches tall, with thick black hair and hazel eyes. He was attractive, intelligent, affable, and in possession of an acerbic wit. Silver’s former grammar school principal, M. Frances Logan, was full of praise after a visit by him in 1930. In a letter to Silver’s mother Lizzie, she explained her surprise and delight at discovering that “that lovable little boy developed into such a big lovable boy. He looks so strong and sturdy and fine, a body that matches his splendid mind.”²² The Dean of Men at Ole Miss described him as “progressive in his thinking and courageous in his leadership...pleasing in manner, neat and attractive in bearing. He possesses a good sense of humor which makes it easy for his [sic] to adjust himself to people and changing situations.”²³ His outward robust appearance, however, masked an assortment of allergies that plagued him all of his life and resulted at times in severe outbreaks of dermatitis and eczema. His allergies and their possible side effects resulted in a somewhat restricted diet and were severe enough to keep him from being accepted into any branch of the United States military during World War II.

²¹ William C. Binkley to James W. Silver, November 2, 1949, Box 36.9, Silver Collection.

²² M. Frances Logan to Elizabeth Silver, September 28, 1930. Box 6.1, Silver Collection.

²³ R. Malcolm Guess to Mr. John Russell, Assistant to the Director, American Red Cross, January 25, 1945. Box 19.11, Silver Collection.

By the waning months of the war, however, he did manage to serve his country through a position with the American Red Cross.²⁴

Stationed in the Pacific, Silver encountered black servicemen on a regular basis and noted that there was a “decided color bias” in the military. Blacks were routinely assigned to manual labor jobs and treated as second class citizens, but how much this affected Silver, if it did at all, he could not say.²⁵ In all probability, Silver thought little about the experience of blacks in the armed services since in all likelihood their situation bore a strong resemblance to what he witnessed back in Mississippi.²⁶

²⁴ Box 19.11, Silver Collection. Also included in this box are several letters from doctors attesting to Silver’s allergies and their medical treatment of him during periods of outbreaks and reactions. See also, Silver, *Running Scared*, 32-33. Silver served as an Assistant Field Director for the American Red Cross from February to October 1945, only after he exhausted his efforts to be accepted into any branch of the military. In a letter dated September 27, 1959, to his son, Bill, who was serving in the U.S. Army at the time, Silver wrote, “Believe it or not, one of my pet grievances has been that I had no official connection with the ‘service.’ I was ten years old when World War I came, and unavailable in the second war except on the basis of being a private, which I didn’t want. I might not have been taken even for that but I gave no one the chance. I should have gone into the historical section of the army in 1942 but for various and what seemed at the time good reasons did not.” Not serving in America’s armed forces meant Silver was ineligible for veteran benefits such as low-interest mortgages, educational opportunities, and medical coverage.

²⁵ Silver, *Running Scared*, 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Interestingly, the only three anecdotes Silver includes in this paragraph describe black servicemen displaying the kind of characteristics attributed to their race by white supremacists, including a penchant for gambling all of their wages, and a general ignorance that had a group of soldiers indiscriminately using up massive amounts of ammunition for their 90-millimeter cannons because they had been informed that they could return home when they had no more rounds to shoot. The passages seem almost cruel and somewhat out of place in light of the gushing account of other blacks described in his book, such as Roland and Dorothy Chamblee, a “most impressive black family” with “six remarkable children” whom he expounds upon on pages 119-20 of *Running Scared*. “A first class speaker,” Roland Chamblee was “a first-rate physician” with “a pedigree superior to that of most whites” and heavily involved in the Catholic Church. Although the Chamblees owned a “big home,” Jim and Dutch hosted the wedding reception of their “beautiful daughter” to a “Harvard law graduate.” Dr. and Mrs. Chamblee eventually left to medically minister to the needy in Uganda. So enamored was Silver by the Chamblee family that they appear in one of the few photographs found within the volume. Silver is clearly demonstrating his own biases in these two segments: he denigrates blacks who, given the opportunity to better themselves, chose to squander the opportunity, while extolling the

Silver's good looks and charming demeanor apparently made him a target for the attentions of women, which he perhaps invited as well.²⁷ In one of the few preserved letters between Dutch and her husband, she states that she "will not sit calmly by" and watch other women throw themselves at him. Most disheartening to her, however, were the rumors that Silver encouraged his role as prey for some of the local female hunters through comments that implied that he and his wife shared little in common. She went on to inform her husband that "there have been a couple of women – not our friend to be sure – who have let me know that you had – shall we say – given them that impression."²⁸ In 1941, six years into her marriage and two years into motherhood, Dutch acknowledged in a letter written on what is apparently their wedding anniversary that they have had difficulties. In it she reflects upon these "happiest six years" of her life but also finds herself "regretting the bad moments of our marriage and resolving that

virtues of the black physician who, having achieved success and respect within society, sought to improve the lives of others. Roland Chamblee personified for Silver the blacks who would populate an open rather than a closed society. "In my fantasy mind I have often taken all of the Chamblees back to Mississippi to demonstrate once and for all the extraordinary qualities people can have when they are not deprived of the chance by local custom," he wrote.

²⁷ Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 140. Eagles states that Silver was "a notorious ladies' man and his philandering was legendary." That Silver had an eye for an attractive woman is irrefutable. There is enough evidence to support that assertion, and there is probable cause to believe that he was not entirely monogamous in his marriage, as Dutch's letter implies. However, the only sources cited by Eagles to bolster his strong allegations are two letters, one from 1956, and the other from 1958. The comments in question are not quoted by Eagles and are rather benign to be used as evidence for such a damning condemnation. Eagles could have taken them out of context. In the first, a letter from Bennett H. Wall to Silver dated February 15, 1956, Wall writes, "I have not heard from you in a long time concerning either your prowess in the field of romance or your great intellectual activities." On its own, this is hardly evidence worthy of a conviction.

²⁸ Undated letter estimated to be written in 1954 from Margaret (Dutch) Silver to Jim Silver, Box 16.2, Silver Collection. Dutch also worried that such behavior could be damaging to the point where "it could cost (him) his job, reputation and all that's been accomplished in over 18 years."

I won't be responsible for any more of them. And yet," she surmised pragmatically, "it takes the bad to make us appreciate the good and I suppose the two make up life."²⁹ There is, however, nothing to indicate that their problems were anything greater than those common to marriage itself. Still, records show that Dutch and Jim did have many separate interests and spent a considerable amount of time apart. In later years, after Silver had retired, they separated as a couple for an indefinite period of time but never divorced.³⁰

Although Oxford was home, the Silvers happily embarked for new lands when opportunities arose. Such journeys were undertaken out of economic necessity, for academic enhancement, or both. Beginning in 1937, Silver taught summer classes at various institutions including one unique organization called the University of Tours. This fly-by-night outfit was essentially a cross-country bus excursion for school teachers who sought to earn college credits. The months-long journey had the participants sleeping in tents while traversing North

²⁹ Dutch Silver to James Silver, undated letter attributed to 1941. Box 6.1, Silver Collection. The letter is only dated "Wednesday," but her reference to six years of marriage places it in 1941 since they were married on December 31, 1935. In 1941, December 31 fell on a Wednesday and the contents of the letter imply that it was written on their wedding anniversary, which was New Year's Eve.

³⁰ Various letters from the Silver Collection, as well as the personal letters of Bill Silver reveal this information. Dutch was often visiting family and friends, or was conducting business on behalf of Alpha Omicron Pi fraternity for women. In the late 1970s through 1980s, the couple lived apart for an unknown but apparently considerable period of time. During this period Jim lived briefly with William Faulkner's granddaughter, Victoria Fielden Black, and her young daughter, Gillian, until he tired of the situation and moved out into his own apartment. In a letter dated January 6, 1983, he notes that Dutch read his draft for *Running Scared*, and she was relieved to find little written regarding their personal life. In another dated September 29, 1981, he wrote to Bill, "Your mother and I don't seem to do any better, though we do stay out of each other's hair. Vicky [*sic*] and I don't do very well, either, so I guess I have a few deficiencies." Jim had known "Little Vicki" since childhood, and apparently she had lived with the Silver family at some point between 1960 and 1961. See notes on the Faulkner family tree in folder 16.6 of the Silver Collection.

America from Quebec to Mexico, British Columbia to Kansas City. Its methods were suspect not only to Silver but also to the Interstate Commerce Commission, which conducted an investigation the following year. Although Silver testified on behalf of the organization, he later participated in action that led to its eventual dissolution.³¹ Already Silver was championing the underdog in a situation that he deemed exploitative.

While Silver actively sought teaching positions to escape the sweltering Mississippi summers, he also enhanced his professional career by participating in such programs as the Summer Session on International Law held in Montreal, Canada, in 1939.³² A lengthier international venture occurred when Silver served as a Fulbright Scholar to the University of Aberdeen during the 1949-1950 academic year.³³ Shortly after returning from Scotland, the family relocated to Boston for yet another year when Silver was awarded a Ford Fellowship to Harvard University to study “the dismal science” of economics.³⁴ In later years

³¹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 20.

³² *Ibid*, 22. See also Certificate of Attendance of the Summer Session on International Law, Box 20.7, Silver Collection. Silver attended the last of such sessions, created under the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

³³ The University of Aberdeen was unable to locate any records pertaining to Silver’s teaching or residency. A niece also accompanied the family to Scotland. Presumably this was Joan Silver, daughter of Jim’s brother, Henry S. Silver. She lived with the family for an unknown amount of time during the 1940s when Henry was unable to take her to a job location. He arranged for her to stay in Oxford with her uncle and aunt. See undated letters from Henry S. to James Silver, Box 16.1, Silver Collection.

³⁴ Silver, *Running Scared*, 53.

he asserts that the time spent at both of these institutions “confirmed my already established predilections on race.”³⁵

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness,” Mark Twain noted, “and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things can not be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”³⁶ Jim Silver clearly agreed with Twain’s assessment, for all of these experiences and the information gained as a result helped to shape his perceptions of the world, broadening his knowledge as a historian and his ideas regarding race relations.³⁷ All of the Silvers benefitted from their time in Britain and Europe, but in retrospect Silver could not say whether he or his children experienced a greater “expansion of southern horizon.” What was certain, however, was that their extensive travels were “tremendously liberalizing influences on the thinking of the Silver family,” and undoubtedly more vividly exposed the provincialism that permeated small-town Mississippi life.³⁸

³⁵ Untitled, undated speech pertaining to Faulkner, though clearly written post-1965, beginning “There never was any real doubt about my attitude toward blacks in Mississippi.” Box 24-2, Silver Collection.

³⁶ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 650. First published as Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrim’s Progress* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1869). Travel apparently broadened the Silver children as well, for Bill and Betty chose to attend college in Massachusetts while Gail studied in the Pacific Northwest. Bill Silver in particular relocated several times in his life, living for a while on a sailboat in the Virgin Islands, in San Francisco, California, and in 2004 he moved to Paris.

³⁷ Later, Silver believes that many “young whites” in Mississippi had an awakening regarding segregation and racial oppression in response to some of the same things that influenced him: “travel outside the South, military experience especially since the start of the Korean War, reading some writer like Baldwin or Faulkner or Wright or Lillian Smith, or even contact with an enlightened teacher.” Silver, *Running Scared*, 136.

³⁸ Silver, *Running Scared*, 53.

Silver may have inherited a sense of wanderlust from his father, or perhaps the hobo summer he spent following his expulsion from UNC whetted his appetite for globetrotting. Regardless, traveling did more than alter his perceptions of Mississippians and their long-held beliefs regarding race relations. On every trip and at every academic conference or function he attended, Silver accumulated a network of personal, professional, political, and publishing contacts that he cultivated throughout his life. In the ensuing years, he did not hesitate to call upon them if he felt they could assist him in any way.

These outside teaching positions not only provided additional income and valuable academic experience but also granted Silver a global perspective on the many social and political changes that were permeating the post-war world. The Silvers arrived in Scotland only a few years after the end of World War II and on the heels of the Marshall Plan's implementation on the European continent. As a result, the family experienced more than just the differences of other countries and cultures within Europe's war-ravaged nations. They were also immersed in an environment where political and social winds still carried the pollen of upheaval and discontent. Communist expansion was a very real threat as Europeans struggled to stitch together a new world out of the remnants of the old. Silver looked forward to conducting a sociological study of the British perspective by speaking not only to his classes and fellow academicians, but also to community organizations, businessmen, and the proverbial "man in the street." During their year-long sojourn, the family also planned to explore other

countries, affording the Silvers a fairly well-rounded “grand tour” of post-World War II Europe.³⁹

Anticipating this, Silver made arrangements with several newspaper editors, including Mississippian Hodding Carter, to publish various reports wherein he would describe his experiences abroad. In a total of forty “Reports from Britain,” Silver expounded upon such topics as Communism, politics, education, food, the textile and mining industries (which were of particular interest to southerners), the peculiarities of the British vernacular, and the nations’ newly implemented program of socialized medicine. This process was meant to be reciprocal, however, for he also sought to dismantle the erroneous beliefs held by the local European populace regarding Americans, their customs and beliefs. One method of introducing continental residents to activities occurring in the U.S., and particularly the southern states, was through the publication of seven articles in *The Economist*. He did not receive a byline for these, however. Instead they were labeled “From a Correspondent in Mississippi,” the anonymity of which granted him some semblance of literary freedom.⁴⁰

While at Harvard, Silver wrote editorials and other works revealing the chasm that still separated the country along the Mason-Dixon Line. Through his writings he also informed a skeptical northern audience on the existence of a “New South” and defended Dixie’s educational, economic, and industrial

³⁹ Ibid, 50-53.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 35-36.

achievements that occurred as a result. It is apparent that Silver carefully chose his words and topics based upon the publication's readership. His northern childhood coupled with his southern residency granted him a sort of "dual citizenship," whereby he could effectively speak as an observer or an inhabitant of either world. He was skilled at assessing whichever of his origins best fit a situation and parlaying that into a respectable qualification for imposing his perspective upon an audience. This chameleon-like ability worked well for him over the years, yet Mississippians felt his "mixed heritage" merited him status as an outsider rather than a true son of the South. This was particularly apparent in the wake of the campus riot over the integration of Ole Miss in 1962, even though he had been residing in the Magnolia State for nearly thirty years.

While there is no question that Silver always welcomed an opportunity to pad the family pocketbook, in these instances and on similar occasions he clearly felt an obligation to enlighten the American public with his observations, however meager the interest may have been. Since a great number of Mississippians claim Scottish descent, Silver assumed that many such readers would be intrigued by what he found in their ancestral land. Instead, some found his motives suspect, particularly after he sat in the audience during a speech given by a Communist candidate for a local British office. Silver's intellectual curiosity of the menacing political party and of Britain's nationalized medical and industrial programs was enough for some southerners, including those on the Board of Directors at Ole Miss, to see him through pink-colored glasses. Some believed

him to be collecting Communist propaganda rather than conducting research.⁴¹ This was, after all, the era when the accusations of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the investigations of the House Un-American Activities Committee were ardently seeking to reveal subversives and traitors residing within the U.S. Indeed, the charge of espionage against Alger Hiss and his subsequent trial for perjury coincided with the Silvers' European furlough.⁴²

Beginning early in his new career Silver wrote that he was "puzzled over my advanced students who seemed to have little doubt of the Negro's inherent inferiority. Not willing to take opinion as gospel, I began to collect and study books on the problem of race."⁴³ Fortunately, there was no dearth of reading material for many such volumes were appearing at this time. Among them was Howard Odom's sociological study, *Southern Regions*, which appeared in 1939 and remained a mainstay until 1944, when Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* became the handbook of race relations. In 1948, David Cohn added his perspective to the field of southern studies with the publication of *Where I Was Born and Raised*. Cohn became a good friend of Silver's and the book was a particular favorite of his. Indeed, he was instrumental in getting the volume reissued in 1967, and wrote the introduction for that version. A fellow UNC graduate, C. Vann Woodward, burst onto the literary scene in 1951, with his examination of *The Origins of the*

⁴¹ Ibid, 66-67.

⁴² G. Edward White, *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars: The covert Life of a Soviet Spy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39.

⁴³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 21.

New South, followed four years later by *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Woodward's work established him as perhaps the quintessential southern historian of his time. Also published in 1948 was William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*. Although it was a work of fiction and remained unread by Silver until some years after Faulkner's death, both Silver and Woodward nonetheless found it in later years to be a relevant and insightful source of Mississippi's racial history. Indeed, it was during the 1949 filming of the movie that the relationship between Silver and Faulkner went from acquaintance to friendship, buoyed in part by their similar beliefs regarding civil rights.⁴⁴

In all of his work, Silver was a thorough researcher and critical thinker. In the classroom he encouraged his students to employ the same type of liberal scrutinizing, to look beyond the given statements and seek their own conclusions whether regarding history or life itself. As early as 1936, he challenged his students at Southwestern College in Kansas not to be so obsessed with finding evidence to support their own ideas that they overlook that which would counter them.⁴⁵ It is precisely this kind of thinking that drove Jim Silver, as evidenced in his book on Edmund Pendleton Gaines.⁴⁶ As a historian, it was his role to

⁴⁴ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁵ Speech dated February 1936, given at Southwestern College in Kansas, possibly on Lincoln's Birthday. Box 22.10, Silver Collection. In it he told his audience, "Unless you are a group of mental fossils you are bound to come upon new theories which run counter to ideas you have always accepted as true. Shall you accept the new or the old? Or, to state the question more clearly, need you accept either?"

⁴⁶ Brainerd Dyer, "Review of *Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier General* by James W. Silver," *Journal of Southern History*, 16 (May 1950): 223-25. Of Silver's work he writes, "His view of the general is more favorable than that usually found in the historical and biographical works of the period, but at most points his evidence justifies a modification of older traditional views, and in every instance the reader is informed that less favorable interpretations are available."

research a subject thoroughly and carefully weigh the evidence with a fair and impartial mind. Only then would a final determination be made. Too often, however, his findings went against the status-quo, particularly with regard to race relations and Mississippi history. Voiced publicly, such comments could be viewed as treason or a demonstration of “contumacious conduct,” a charge leveled against Silver by the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning in 1948.⁴⁷ Also, the speaker of such statements could be labeled a rabble-rouser, a liberal, a progressive, a hero, a Communist, a Socialist, a traitor or simply insane. Indeed, beginning with his support of Roosevelt and the New Deal and continuing throughout his career, these monikers and others were frequently applied to Jim Silver. His accusers included the general public, the press, students, his fellow academicians, and local legislators. The fact that the surname of Silver is common within the Jewish community afforded detractors more ‘evidence’ to support their claims and vilify him.

These designations became more prevalent as the years passed and Silver’s numerous speeches and publications became more widely known within Mississippi’s borders and beyond. Silver was a popular speaker at local events such as Rotary functions, and a prolific writer to the local and national newspapers primarily in an attempt to set straight what he believed to be

⁴⁷ “Historical News and Notices,” *Journal of Southern History*, 54 (November 1988): 696. Silver, *Running Scared*, 66-67. Silver’s “Reports from Britain” were used as evidence to justify this claim. As a result of the Board’s inquiry into Silver’s classroom activities, Governor Fielding Wright was prepared to ask for his removal from the Ole Miss faculty. Several of Silver’s former students, now veterans of World War II and several of them legislative members, met with the governor and persuaded him to drop the issue.

erroneous information disseminated by various publications. Through the years there was much for him to editorialize on considering the restrictive nature of Mississippi journalism and even some of the national publications. Many magazines and print materials carefully edited their content to limit or omit information that they deemed un-newsworthy or not in keeping with the needs of their readers based upon the personal biases of the publishers or owners. This was particularly evident as civil rights activism increased. For instance, *The Saturday Evening Post*, with its nostalgic images of bucolic American life, contractually prohibited Norman Rockwell from portraying any person of color in his cover art unless that individual was in a position of servitude.⁴⁸ Locally, the two Mississippi newspapers with the largest circulation were controlled by the Hederman family, who were avowed segregationists and espoused their racist views within the pages of their publications.⁴⁹ They later became well known

⁴⁸ *American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell*. Traveling exhibit organized by the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, attended by the author at the Detroit Museum of Art on April 12, 2009. Confirmed by Priscilla Anthony, Researcher at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Virginia, email to author, July 14, 2009. Only two of Rockwell's covers portray blacks, both in servant roles. "Woman in Riding Habit Fallen Off Horse" in 1934 and "Boy in Dining Car" 1946. Rockwell ceased his association with the *Post* in 1963, in part because of his inability to portray visions of American life as it was occurring at the time. Rockwell instead went to work for *Look* and produced three works that were very different than the idealized images he created for the *Post*. Two dealt with integration and one accompanied an article on the murders of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman. See Laurie Norton Moffatt, *Norman Rockwell: A Definitive Catalogue* (Stockbridge, Vermont: University Press of New England, 1986). See also Richard Halpern, *Norman Rockwell: The Underside of Innocence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3.

⁴⁹ Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 82-5; Susan Weill, *In A Madhouse's Din: Civil Rights Coverage by Mississippi's Daily Press, 1948-1966*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 10, 82; Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 25. The Jackson, Mississippi, morning paper, the *Clarion-Ledger*, was purchased by brothers Robert and Tom Hederman in 1920. Their five sons ruled the family business during the civil rights years.

supporters of the Citizens' Council, which promulgated states' rights and white supremacy.

The importance of an objective media increased as the decade of the 1940s drew to a close. Although World War II had ended and Americans returned to the U.S. and some semblance of normality, the country was uneasy. True peace remained elusive. The war affected the nation in numerous ways, most notably in establishing the United States as the most powerful country in the world. But American troops battling the Nazis and Japanese had witnessed unfathomable human atrocities. The U.S. warily allied with Communist Russia during the war despite that nation's despicable actions against its enemies and its own people. Once victory was secured, however, relations between the two countries quickly soured. After four years at war alongside or against oppressive regimes, Americans became overwhelmingly convinced of the superiority of democracy and the great need to encourage its propagation within receptive countries. This concept manifested in the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and was quickly tested. Due to U.S. intervention, Stalin's yearlong blockade of East Berlin in 1948 and 1949 failed and left him with political egg on his face. Likewise, upheaval in the governments of Greece, Turkey, and other Eastern European nations led the U.S. to implement the European Recovery Plan, or Marshall Plan, which poured billions of dollars into war-damaged countries beginning in 1948.

The Hederman brothers bought the city's evening paper, the *Jackson Daily News*, in 1954. Aside from the two newspapers, their media empire included three television stations in Jackson, a radio station, and a large printing company.

This action, too, elevated the principles of democratic America over communist Russia. The icy distrust and steely resolve of the two nations resulted in a Cold War that lasted nearly fifty years and had far reaching political, social and military ramifications.

Yet America's so-called superior democratic principles had an Achilles' heel that was easily exploited by Communists, namely the injustice of segregation and racial discrimination perpetuated against its black citizens. Stalin's accusatory finger was pointed directly at the United States, and his assertion that America was not a nation of freedom so long as African Americans were denied their civil rights was undeniable. This fact became something of a global embarrassment with regard to American foreign relations. Black dignitaries visiting the U.S. found themselves subjected to Jim Crow laws, much to the embarrassment of American politicians. International newspapers sensationalized reports of violence or discrimination toward blacks that were downplayed in local and national publications. Many nations viewed the United States as hypocritical, asking others to accept a set of principles that it refused to endorse on its own soil. Clearly the U.S. could not win a war against Communism, nor even contain it within its present boundaries, without first implementing what it asked other nations to do. It became apparent that the federal government must begin to make strides toward racial conciliation.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

As the nation began a slow but perceptible shift toward promoting civil rights and ending racial discrimination, proponents of segregation noticed disturbing changes. Integrationists were beginning to make headway as government agencies acquiesced to their demands for change. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened a march on Washington D.C. by 100,000 black citizens to protest discriminatory hiring practices by government defense contractors. This proposed action prompted President Franklin Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802, which integrated defense industry production plants on the eve of American involvement in World War II and created the Fair Employment Practices Commission, which prevented manufacturers holding contracts with the federal government from discriminating on the basis of race or religion. Although Roosevelt offered no way of enforcing this directive, it was nonetheless a significant advancement for African Americans. Supreme Court decisions during this period greatly benefitted black citizens as well by bringing a legal end to the all-white primary (*Smith v Allwright*, 1944) and racially restrictive property covenants (*Shelley v Kraemer*, 1948). In addition, several cases challenged public school segregation and the concept of “separate but equal,” including *Missouri ex. Rel, Gaines v Canada* (1938), *Sweatt v Painter* (1950), and *McLaurin v Oklahoma* (1950).⁵¹ Nevertheless, most black Americans still lived

⁵¹ Amilcar Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 29-30, 39-39, 52, 62-63, 95-98, 101-111.

under the oppression of segregation. Having achieved a victory for democracy abroad, African American veterans had yet to achieve the second half of their “Double V” campaign: victory at home. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) , which experienced a surge in membership during this decade, and new civil rights groups such as the Committee of Racial Equality (later the Congress of Racial Equality), continued in their quest to end segregation and racial violence. Little did they realize, however, that rather than breaking down the walls of segregation, their successes during this era only caused white supremacists to reinforce the color barriers they had so carefully erected and maintained for years.

It was during Harry Truman’s presidency that a flurry of activity regarding race relations took place. Historians continue to debate whether Truman was motivated more by humanitarian or political reasons, but he nonetheless implemented policies that demonstrated to the world the inaccuracy of communist accusations regarding prejudice within the United States. In 1946, Truman established a presidential committee on civil rights, and two years later he issued two Executive Orders: 9980 which established a Fair Employment Board to promote nondiscriminatory employment practices in the federal civil service, and 9981, which initiated the process of desegregating the United States armed forces. Such significant pieces of federal authority reflected the government’s overtures toward protecting the civil rights of all Americans and caused segregationists to step up their efforts to maintain the status quo.

Indeed, the 1948 Democratic presidential campaign platform with its numerous civil rights planks was the catalyst for the Dixiecrat revolt and broke the party's long-held political hold on the "solid South".

Angered by their party's acquiescence to a new political climate favoring increased racial accommodation, the delegates from Mississippi and Alabama walked out of the 1948 Democratic National Convention and formed a separate political unit. Calling themselves the States' Rights Party, they became known as the Dixiecrats and proffered their own candidates for the presidential election, South Carolina governor J. Strom Thurman and his running mate Fielding Wright, governor of Mississippi. Both outspoken segregationists, Thurman and Wright favored preserving the "Southern way of life," of white supremacy, segregation, and continued disfranchisement for blacks. The party intended to draw enough votes away from Harry Truman to foil his election, but his victory and the fact that only four of the southern states firmly supported the Dixiecrat candidates indicated a clear shift in the political winds toward advancing civil rights.⁵²

Outside of the political arena drastic changes were occurring within the nation as well, such as in the very public and very segregated venue of professional and collegiate sporting events. In 1946, professional football became integrated when both the Cleveland Browns and the Los Angeles Rams added two African American players to their rosters. A year later, Harvard's

⁵² Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 25-26. See also Kari A. Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

African American tackle, Chester Pierce, took the field against the hosting University of Virginia team in what became the first integrated college football game at a southern school. Interestingly, it was at this historic game that Virginia fans revived a practice they began in the early years of World War II as a sign of “American” patriotism: unfurling the Confederate flag during athletic events.⁵³ Also in 1947, Jackie Robinson stepped onto the hallowed ground of Ebbets Field as a Brooklyn Dodger, becoming the first black player in major league baseball since Reconstruction. A veteran of World War II, Robinson leveled the playing field both literally and figuratively through his athletic prowess and grace under pressure as an African American player in an all-white organization. Eleven weeks after Robinson’s debut with the National League, the American League was integrated when Frank Doby played his first game as a member of the Cleveland Indians. Robinson and Doby gave the “all American” game and the nation itself a new look, but many in Dixie chose instead to look away.⁵⁴

The University of Mississippi celebrated its centennial year in 1948, and to mark this milestone, two new traditions that reflected the school’s antebellum roots were adopted to demonstrate Rebel pride. Like the University of Virginia, Ole Miss students began waving the “Stars and Bars” of the Confederate flag as

⁵³ Christopher C. Nehls, “Flag-Waving Wahoos: Confederate Symbols at the University of Virginia, 1941-51,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 110 (2002): 473-76.

⁵⁴ A vast assortment of books have been written about Jackie Robinson, including several volumes written by or contributed to Robinson himself. For a historical overview of Robinson’s story see Jules Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and his Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Jules Tygiel, *Extra Bases: Reflections on Jackie Robinson, Race and Baseball History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). For an examination of minor league integration see Bruce Adelson, *Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor League Baseball in the American South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

a symbol of school spirit, and “Dixie” was selected as the university’s anthem.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, the Dixiecrats also chose it as the official theme song of their new States’ Rights Party that same year. Intentional or not, these actions conveyed a message: that Ole Miss was taking a stand against the nascent civil rights movement. Regardless of these actions, however, nothing could forestall the imminent changes in race relations that were slowly but steadily occurring.

As the 1940s drew to a close there was no hint of the extent to which civil rights activities would fracture the nation in the coming years. Great changes would occur in the next decade, both in the world at large as well as in Jim Silver’s private sphere. The most profoundly influential event in the country would be the Supreme Court’s *Brown v Board of Education* decision deeming public school segregation unconstitutional. With this ruling, southerners rightfully feared the inevitable racial integration of American society, and, as they had done nearly one hundred years earlier, they would fight to preserve their existing way of life. Philosophical, political, legal, and physical battles would ensue as Dixie’s stronghold on segregation was pried loose by government legislation. Eventually the University of Mississippi’s efforts to defy federally mandated integration would establish it and the Magnolia State as the epicenter of white supremacy, but it was what transpired during the years leading up to this event that had the most impact on Jim Silver. Throughout the 1950s, Jim Silver would

⁵⁵ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 255. See also Nadine Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie: Race and the Liberal Conscience at Ole Miss* (New York: Free Press, 1997). Even in this current era when institutions ranging from high schools to state governments are removing any antebellum remnants that might invoke controversy, the image of Colonel Reb endures at the University of Mississippi.

bear witness as the forces of the civil rights movement opposed the bulwark of Mississippi's closed society and would himself be transformed from an "Optimistic Moderate" to a "Quiet Reformer."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Silver, *Running Scared*, 47, 58.

CHAPTER 4

LOOKING FORWARD, BACKWARD AND AWAY, 1950-1960

The decade of the 1950s was a pivotal era in American history and in the life of Jim Silver as well. A period of prosperity and growth was beginning for the nation, although the heady times were tempered by the continuing Cold War and accompanying Red Scare. Still, after sacrificing so much during the war years, Americans eagerly looked to the future to replace their memories of deprivation and loss with new images of suburban housing, shiny automobiles, and marvelous technological innovations. The country experienced unprecedented economic growth and all Americans, regardless of race, held hope in the promise of upward mobility during this era. Consumer confidence and a booming economy also brought about a population explosion, but societal changes were brewing that would significantly alter the dynamics of traditional American values and beliefs. As the decade commenced, cultural and sexual barriers were loosened or outright broken by the new generation that was coming of age. However, it was the increasing destruction of racial barriers that caused the most concern, particularly in the American South. It was here that blacks had the most to gain, and white supremacists had the most to lose. Both sides would wage a tenacious battle in their pursuit to either eliminate or maintain the status quo of both de jure and de facto segregation as it had existed for decades.

Jim Silver was a middle-aged man as the twentieth century reached its midpoint. At forty-three years old, he had spent fourteen years and nearly a quarter of his life as a member of the Ole Miss faculty and had chaired the history department since 1946. His off hours were spent in pursuit of fish from nearby Sardis Lake, a hole-in-one on the local golf course, or a winning hand at a friendly poker game. Life was comfortable and steady, just as one would hope it to be in one's middle years. Indeed, the family's financial position was sufficient to subsidize the scholarships that provided for Bill and Betty's college educations at Ivy League schools during this decade. But just as Jim and Dutch were adjusting to life as "empty nesters," they contributed to the nation's "Baby Boom" with the arrival of their third child, Margaret Gail in 1954.

Dutch was barely thirty-nine years old and Silver, nine years older than his bride, was forty-seven when Gail was born. There is no evidence to suggest that they were surprised by the pregnancy, yet as middle-aged parents whose children were leaving home for college it also seems unlikely that the Silvers intended to have another child. Still, they delighted in their new baby, and it is clear that becoming a father at a later age had a profound impact on Silver. It is evident in his writings that he undertook his role as a parent much differently than he did with Bill and Betty. Family took on a greater significance for Silver during this time, perhaps as a result of a visit in 1952 with his own children to Rochester, New York, and the house that his father, Henry Silver, built at 527

Lexington Avenue. It may also have been compounded by a series of additions and losses that began shortly after that sojourn.

Gail's birth coincided with a virtual rebirth of Silver's father in the guise of Henry's diaries, which at this time Silver edited for publication. However, just as Silver rediscovered in words the father he lost twenty years earlier, he suffered the loss of his mother, Lizzie. All of these personal changes in conjunction with those occurring within the nation clearly affected Jim Silver and influenced his future actions.

Reflecting back on his life, Silver believed that the Meredith incident in 1962 was a defining moment for him, that before that point he had "been running through life scared," fearing failure in his personal, professional, and financial spheres.¹ Such motivation is not uncommon; indeed, it is a very basic part of human nature. But if this were true, Silver hid his fears behind a stoic façade of bravado, conviction, and oratory. He was confident in his assertions, unafraid to speak his mind, unconcerned with the threat of physical injury or punitive action, and undeterred by potential repercussions from organizations such as the Citizens' Council or the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. This is hardly the depiction of a frightened man.

The integration of Ole Miss may indeed have ignited a newfound confidence in Silver and unleashed him from his inhibitions, but these feelings had been quietly building up within him for at least ten years prior to the campus

¹ Silver, *Running Scared*, x, 137-38.

riot that erupted as a result of Meredith's admission to the university. The decade of the 1950s was Jim Silver's chrysalis, the period in which his true self was formed prior to its full public emergence in 1964, with the publication of *The Closed Society*.

The Silver family rang in the new decade while in Great Britain and within the year they traveled from the Oxford and Cambridge area of England to their American counterparts: Oxford, Mississippi, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. They arrived back at Ole Miss in the late summer of 1950, just in time for the fall semester, but a year later the family was once again on the move. Silver was awarded a Ford Fellowship which he chose to complete on the austere campus of Harvard University for the study of economics. Enjoyable though the experience was, he found the subject matter was less than stimulating. "About all I learned," he lamented, "was that one could believe whatever he wished and find a leading authority for that point of view on the Harvard faculty."² Outside of the classroom, however, he exercised his own personal economic theory with Waldo Dodge, the landlord of the furnished house the Silvers had rented for the duration of their stay in Cambridge. Having found the accommodations not as described by the owner of the property, Silver attempted to cajole him into fulfilling his obligation as outlined in the rental agreement. As time went on, both parties grew less conciliatory, and when Silver refused to pay for "damages" to the property, outlined in great detail by Mr. Dodge and countered in more detail

² Silver, *Running Scared*, 53.

by Silver, the situation escalated. The disagreement continued even after the Silvers returned to Oxford and Jim prepared for the possibility of legal action that never came to pass.³ Still, the incident somewhat soured Silver's Harvard experience and demonstrated again his willingness to stand up for his convictions, regardless of the possible consequences.

Upon leaving New England for their return to Mississippi, the Silvers took a meandering route back through the Adirondack Mountains and paid a short visit to Jim's sister, Margaret, and her husband in Watertown, New York. Against his better judgment they then traveled on to his old hometown of Rochester. Silver believed it to be "the sheerest folly to return to the scenes of your childhood," because the passage of time generally does little to enhance an environment that one's memory and imagination had so carefully preserved.⁴ Nevertheless, he wanted his children to learn a bit more about their father's childhood and see the home that their grandfather had built. After the disappointment he suffered upon his previous homecoming in the 1930s, Silver was pleasantly surprised to find the Silver family homestead at 527 Lexington Avenue meticulously maintained and the elderly Italian matron of the residence more than happy to open her doors for a family tour. Standing with his own children inside the tidy house that had been constructed by his father's own hands, Jim straddled the boundaries of time and space. Within this tangible relic

³ Documents pertaining to this dispute can be found in the folder labeled "Waldo Dodge, Landlord/Tenant Dispute, 1951-52". Box 87-25, Silver Collection.

⁴ Silver, *Running Scared*, 53.

of the Silver family's past, an adult Jim shared memories of the child that he was with his own offspring who, in turn, would forge the future. This nostalgic visit made during Silver's own middle-age years may have been the catalyst for what became a very reflective period in his life.

This decade found Silver situated squarely within the boundaries of what constitutes middle age, a period of distinct sociological and psychological changes for both sexes. Silver was facing many of the most common life-altering events that affected a majority of men of his socio-economic stature at this juncture in their lives.⁵ With his children poised to leave for college he faced dramatic changes in his home life as an empty-nester. His wife's increasing involvement in her own interests and pursuits left him feeling disconnected to his marriage. In addition, once Bill departed for Harvard, Silver's position as the sole male in a majority female household left him feeling somewhat alienated and out of touch at home. He also was contending with noticeable physical changes associated with aging, such as acquiring his first pair of bifocals which, combined with his already existing health issues, served as reminders of his own mortality. Personal satisfaction with his job was flagging due to what he viewed as a

⁵ "The middle-aged male has determined that there is a disparity between "what I've reached at this point" and "what I really want...At mid-life the male is often confronted with the shrinking of career options, the shortening of time left before retirement, and perhaps, the feeling that he has not been a success...he is faced with the independence and departure of his children...and the growing assertiveness of his wife...and he often encounters an isolation (at home) not unlike the isolation that he increasingly sense at work." Jessica Field Cohen, "Male Roles in Mid-Life." *The Family Coordinator*, 28 (October 1979); 465-71. Lois M. Tamir, "Modern Myths About Men at Midlife: An Assessment," in Ski Hunter and Martin Sundel, editors, *Midlife Myths: Issues, Findings, and Practice Implications* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications 1989), 157-79. See also Michael P. Farrell and Stanley D. Rosenberg, *Men at Midlife* (Boston: Auburn House, 1981).

growing sense of apathy among his students and internal clashes with the university's governing body. Having already served as chair of the history department for several years, he had reached his professional peak at Ole Miss and retirement was the next rung to climb on the professional ladder. This fact also reinforced the importance of achieving financial success during the remaining years of his employment.

Silver was no different than other men in their forties who, as studies have shown, are prone to increased introspection and self-assessment. Experts also note that men at this age pay less attention to the "demands of society and its prescribed role behaviors" in favor of personal reflection.⁶ Here, however, is where Silver was the exception rather than the rule. As a long-standing protagonist for racial equality, Silver could not ignore or remove himself from the political and social arena at a time when so many favorable advancements in civil rights were taking place. Instead, he would need to determine his new role as a man who, personally and professionally is "pretty much over the hill" and yet who still can play an important part in society and leave his mark on the world.⁷

Silver was well-regarded within the academic sphere. He was a fairly popular professor among the students and a respected instructor among his peers. He achieved a modicum of success with his submissions to historical

⁶ Cohen, "Male Roles in Mid-Life," and Tamir, "Modern Myths About Men at Midlife." Both of these sources utilize a number of standing sociological and psychological determinations as well as previously published findings as evidence of their assertions. Michael P. Farrell and Stanley D. Rosenberg, conducted their own extensive case study and reached similar conclusions. Their findings in were presented in *Men at Midlife* (Boston: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1981).

⁷ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, Tuesday, February 24, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

publications, and his personal communications, when not engaged in editorializing, were enjoyably read by their happy recipients. He was often a guest speaker or panel participant at events ranging from Rotary Club meetings to annual conferences for local and national historical organizations. But commercial and financial success eluded him. There existed within him a growing need to achieve some type of broad recognition outside of his professional realm to serve as a legacy, as evidenced by several attempts to have works published that would appeal to a wider audience. It is worth noting that Silver included in *Running Scared* the comment made by a “segregationist friend” of his who stated that since Silver “found it impossible to achieve eminence as a historian, (he) decided to become notorious.”⁸ Perhaps it was his desire to leave a legacy for perpetuity that prompted him more than anything to take the greatest risk of his life early in the next decade not only by writing but also by ensuring the publication and widespread distribution of, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. The result of internal motivations in conjunction with external influences, this carefully crafted and presciently-timed work served as his rebel yell, the culmination of a lifetime of personal experience, professional knowledge, and desired recognition.

Jim Silver may have reached a phase of personal introspection at this time but he could not escape domestic and international events that were occurring as well. While the family was still enjoying life in the British Isles at the beginning of

⁸ Silver, *Running Scared*, ix.

the decade, Cold War tensions escalated when the Soviet Union demonstrated its own nuclear power in a successful test of its first atomic bomb on August 29, 1949. Two months later, China became a Communist nation with the establishment of the People's Republic of China led by Mao Zedung. On June 25, 1950, China's neighbor, North Korea, sent its Soviet-led Communist forces beyond the 38th Parallel and into the southern portion of the country, the pro-Western Republic of Korea. United Nations forces, heavily comprised of American troops and led by General Douglas MacArthur, were called in to defend South Korea against the invaders in what would become known as the Korean Conflict.

Domestically, a different kind of battle ensued in 1950, when Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy sparked a new "Red Scare" by declaring that various politicians and government employees were members of the Communist party or outright Soviet spies. The era of McCarthyism coincided with the Communist push into South Korea and fueled the fires of Cold War hysteria that had been sparked in the previous decade. McCarthy's accusations came on the heels of two high profile investigations of treasonous activity involving the reputed passing of classified information by United States government workers to Soviet agents: those of Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Accused of spying for the Soviets while working at the State Department in the 1930s, Hiss was tried for perjury since the statute of limitations for his supposed espionage activity had expired. The trial began on June 1, 1949, but a

deadlocked jury resulted in a second trial that commenced in November. On January 21, 1950, Alger Hiss was found guilty of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison.⁹ The trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, however, was significantly more damaging to the nation's morale and inflamed the fears of Communist aggression toward the United States. The pair was found guilty of passing atomic secrets to the Russians and were executed on June 19, 1953, the only Americans to receive the death penalty for espionage in a period of peacetime.¹⁰

After serving forty-four months of his sentence, Alger Hiss was released from prison on November 27, 1953, just five months after the tragic end of the Rosenberg case. The death of Josef Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union and a former U.S. ally in World War II, on March 5, 1953, fueled the hopes of both nations for a thawing of political relations. However, despite the ascendance of Gregory Malenkov as the new Soviet premier and the formal end of the Korean War on July 27, 1953, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union remained frosty. But Malenkov's control of both the Soviet Union and the Communist party was short-lived, and Nikita Khrushchev assumed power in 1955, bringing the promise of reform to his country. Khrushchev denounced Stalin's

⁹ Susan Jacoby, *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 9. Also <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/docs/v44i5a01p.htm> (accessed February 16, 2010).

¹⁰ John F. Neville, *The Press, the Rosenbergs, and the Cold War* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1995), 133. Also http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/rosenb/ROS_ACCT.HTM (accessed February 16, 2010).

tactics of repression but still strongly adhered to Communist doctrine, causing America to remain wary of the Soviet Union and its political motives.

Within the United States, however, the “Red Scare” was diminishing after having built up momentum for more than three years. Joseph McCarthy, wielding great power with his lists of supposed Communists but unable to offer verifiable evidence against those whom he accused, resorted to badgering and bullying tactics. Gradually his supporters and credibility waned and by the end of 1954, he was no longer a serious threat. McCarthy’s career ended that December after he was censured by the Senate, and three years later the man himself was dead. Like the Cold War, however, McCarthy’s tactic of discrediting through baseless accusations would continue for years. Indeed, detractors of Jim Silver likewise hurled epithets at the professor, including the charge of being a Communist, in their attempts to disavow him.

In the meantime, a new threat was emerging in the country as the Red Scare gave way to “Black Monday.” The United States Supreme Court had been debating the case of *Oliver L. Brown et al v the Board of Education of Topeka (KS)* and their unanimous decision on May 17, 1954, put an end to segregation in public schools and instilled fear in the southern states, where Jim Crow reigned. Faced with compliance to court- mandated integration and the infringement of the federal government in their preferred way of life, Mississippi’s response to the

Brown decision was swift.¹¹ Within weeks both the state government and the populace rallied together to combat the infiltration of blacks within the lily-white enclaves they had so painstakingly preserved since Reconstruction.

The Mississippi State Legislature had held special sessions in the months leading up to the *Brown* decision, where plans for a response were devised depending on the Supreme Court's verdict. Should the ruling be in favor of maintaining segregation, the state decided that it could forestall any further attempts at integration by implementing a plan calling for a more comparable dual education system than what currently existed. By equalizing teacher pay, school busses, learning aids, and school buildings, it was hoped that Mississippi would be seen as proactive in redressing the disparity that existed between black and white educational facilities. If, on the other hand, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of integration, the state would install a Legal Educational Advisory Committee (LEAC) to determine by what lawful methods it could circumvent the federal mandate, including closing Mississippi's public schools if necessary.

¹¹ For a detailed account of Mississippi's response to the *Brown* decision and its implications see Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870 – 1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), 2005. Neil R. McMillen's *The Citizens' Council* is the premier source on the subject and remains the most comprehensive evaluation of the organization. See also chapter three in J. Todd Moya's *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945-1986* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 64-86. A definitive study of the history of the Sovereignty Commission is available. See Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2001). See also the memoirs of Erle Johnston, *I Rolled With Ross: A Political Portrait*, (Baton Rouge: Moran Industries, 1980), as well as his later volume, Erle Johnston. *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary With Personal Experiences* (Forest, Mississippi: Lake Harbor Publishers, 1990). Johnston served as director of the Commission from 1963 to 1968. See also Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Also Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, and George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

While the politicians in the Magnolia State were preparing for the possibility of forced interracial education, white Mississippians were gearing up to oppose such action. A mass resistance movement began shortly after the announcement of the *Brown* decision when whites formed the first White Citizens' Council in Indianola, Mississippi, a Delta town where "organized segregation would flourish nearly as well as premium staple cotton."¹² Its founder was Robert B. "Tut" Patterson, a former Mississippi State football star and World War II veteran who now managed a plantation in Leflore County, Mississippi. At least six months before the *Brown* decision was handed down, Patterson unsuccessfully attempted to unite like-minded white men in solidarity under the aegis of preserving the southern way of life. After the Supreme Court's edict, however, his idea took root and on July 11, 1954, fourteen of Indianola's most prominent men, including the mayor, met to discuss the foundation of a resistance organization. A short while after, the men held a town meeting attended by an estimated seventy to one hundred white male citizens who voted in favor of the formation of the Indianola Citizens' Council.¹³ Unlike the Ku Klux Klan, the Council's stated intent was to avoid violence and instead offer white resistance to segregation. Instead, they employed methods of financial, legal, and physical intimidation to keep black citizens from overcoming white supremacy. The Citizens' Council saw rapid growth. Within three months a state

¹² McMillen, *The Citizen's Council*, 19.

¹³ *Ibid*, 16-19; Moya, *Let the People Decide*, 64-65.

association had been formed, and by 1956, the Citizens' Council of America was a national organization headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi.¹⁴

On March 20, 1956, the state government created a new executive branch with the establishment of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission with a carefully worded statement of purpose that could be loosely interpreted to apply to many situations. The Commission was given broad powers "to do and perform any and all acts and things deemed necessary and proper" in order to protect Mississippi's sovereignty as well as that of her "sister states from encroachment of" or the "usurpation of the rights and powers" of these states by the Federal Government."¹⁵ It was, in essence, designed to monitor the activities and comments of any individuals or groups considered to be subversive, meaning those that were not opposed to upholding federal regulations regarding civil rights. As the years commenced and the civil rights movement dominated daily life in Mississippi, the Commission reached its zenith, collecting every scrap of useful evidence that might be used against a vocal opponent of the state. This included individuals such as Jim Silver who had the audacity to speak out against

¹⁴ John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 60.

¹⁵ Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission*, 6. See also Sarah Rowe-Simes, "The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: An Agency History," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71 (Spring 1999): 29–58. The Commission was in operation until 1973, although it was not formally disbanded until four years later.

Mississippi politicians intent on steamrolling the state down a path of destruction from which it might never recover.¹⁶

From the time of the Sovereignty Commission's inception, Silver must have been conscious of the fact that he was the type of individual that would be a person of interest and who should be carefully watched for "treasonous" words or deeds. But there were things taking place in Silver's personal life that precluded his concern with any activity being conducted by the Commission. It was a period of change for the family, and for Silver in particular, prompted by the departure for college of their eldest child, Bill. Having been awarded a scholarship to attend Harvard University, Bill was not only leaving home but was also relocating to a different part of the country. The physical distance between Massachusetts and Mississippi meant that Bill would not often venture home to visit, and his placement in New England meant that he would be exposed to the world at large to navigate on his own. The prospect must have seemed both exciting and daunting to Bill, but the absence of his son introduced a new chapter in Jim Silver's life as well.

When Bill departed for Harvard in 1957, Silver was left as the sole male in an otherwise all-female household that spanned every age category: a middle-aged wife, a teenage daughter, and a toddler. Dutch, still very much involved in the affairs of the AOPi sorority, was frequently away from home as a result of her

¹⁶ Commission files on James Silver mostly contain newspaper clippings of his speeches or letters from Mississippi residents who disliked Silver's actions and were seeking intervention by the state to quash his activities and/or job.

work, but their competent housekeeper, Thera, was there to tend to the children in her absence. Betty, in the full flowering of teenage girlhood, was abuzz with tales of her latest crushes, girlfriend gossip, football games, and dances. Not surprisingly, Silver felt removed from this sphere and chose to remain an outsider in most of Betty's affairs with the exception of her college and scholarship applications. Meanwhile, Silver's letters to Bill reveal that Gail was happily involved in her own childhood concerns.

Silver turned to Bill as something of a confidante during this period, perhaps for a number of reasons. As a father he would naturally wish to remain connected to his son and to provide wisdom and guidance as needed while Bill navigated his own fledgling adulthood. Having spent his year as a Ford Fellow at Harvard, Silver was as familiar with the campus as Bill was and could vicariously enjoy some of his son's experiences as a result. In addition, Silver had connections with several faculty members who could prove helpful in getting Bill acclimated or could introduce him to other students and assist in his assimilation. It is probable that in Bill he saw some semblance of himself at that stage of life and, recognizing the same insecurities that inhibited him in his own youth, sought to assuage them through his letters to his boy. Silver's own insecurities may have resurfaced at this time as well, with his family scattered about tending to their own needs and leaving him feeling isolated. Indeed, many of his letters were written from his office, where he seemed to spend a great deal of his non-working hours. He often retreated to the serenity of the history department to

escape either the commotion or solitude at home, remaining at his desk in lieu of supping at his house or returning there after dinner.

Long distance telephone calls were the exception rather than the rule at this point in time, and letters were the most common and cost-effective method of communication. Silver frequently chided Bill for not writing home more frequently, if not a full letter then at least a postcard. If necessary a telephone call should be made in lieu of a weekly missive from Cambridge, so long as they received some notice of his continued existence on earth. “Glad to get your letter and to know that as of Monday night you were still among the living,” he chided his son in one letter. In another he noted Dutch’s concern for Bill during lapses in his communication. “Hope that we hear something from you tomorrow – partly because your mother thinks that you are 1) freezing to death, 2) in the hospital, 3) not in the hospital.”¹⁷ When Bill first started to stretch his wings by serving as a senatorial page in Washington for six weeks in 1955, Silver angrily reminded him that writing to his parents, particularly his mother, was an obligation he could not shirk. “I want you to write your mother every few days and, by God, I mean just that,” he scolded. “I’ve been writing my mother every week since 1923 and you might as well plan to do the same thing. I don’t give a damn as to what you do where I’m concerned but you do have a duty where she is concerned.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, Silver clearly relished receiving Bill’s letters but couldn’t resist providing editorial commentary as well, pointing out grammar,

¹⁷ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 17, 1957. Bill Silver Collection.

¹⁸ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, Sunday, June 12, 1955. Bill Silver Collection.

spelling and punctuation errors. “I don’t think you made a single mistake in spelling in your letter. That really is something,” he remarked in one reply to Bill. “I’m glad that you heard from [Eric] Sevareid (his name is spelled with an “a”),” he corrected in another.¹⁹

Bill was a good student, as evidenced by his being awarded a scholarship to attend Harvard in the first place. Still, high school and college, let alone an Ivy League school, are not the same thing, and Bill apparently struggled through some of his courses. His grades were a constant source of worry and may have undermined his health to some extent. He was frequently ill, plagued by a “nervous stomach,” and both Jim and Dutch felt that fretting over his courses was a significant factor in triggering these episodes. Again Silver could empathize with his son, having struggled with his own health issues for most of his life. Silver distinctly noticed a correlation between his eczema outbreaks and periods of stress and did his best to make Bill less concerned about his academic performance. “For God’s sake stop worrying about your grades,” he instructed. “In ten years it won’t matter anyway.”²⁰ Dutch’s advice was more pragmatic. “You just mustn’t worry about the grades, son. Do the best you can and then to heck with it. I won’t have you making yourself sick. Harvard isn’t worth it – you can get a good education too many other places.”²¹

¹⁹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, February 4, 1955, and June 12, 1955, Bill Silver Collection. Similar comments can be found in other letters, particularly in the early years of Bill’s independence.

²⁰ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, February 24, 1959.

²¹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, November 23 (1957). Bill Silver Collection. Dutch added a footnote at the end of the letter. “I feel sure I know what caused your illness,” she surmised. “You

Bill's social calendar at Harvard apparently had much room for improvement as well. At one point he must have hinted to his father that he lacked much experience with women, and again Silver was able to relate to his son the similar situation he had during his own college days. "I more than made up for it afterwards and had a hell of a time doing so..." he bragged. "My only hope is that you don't get married just as you begin to find out what this side of life is all about."²² Indeed, there is evidence to indicate that Silver's enjoyment of female company continued throughout his life.

In 1954 the Reverend Will D. Campbell came to Ole Miss as Director of Religious Life, and a friendship quickly developed between Silver and the like-minded minister. Mississippi born and raised, Campbell graduated from the Yale School of Divinity in 1952, and was established at a church in Louisiana before accepting the position at the University of Mississippi in 1954. A year after his arrival, Campbell inadvertently caused an imbroglio that temporarily took the focus off of Silver and instead placed the reverend under the scrutinizing eyes of the state's ever-watchful authorities.²³ Campbell made what many deemed to be an egregious error by inviting Reverend Alvin Kershaw to speak during the university's annual Religious Emphasis Week. Kershaw, an Episcopal minister

were worried about your grades – that trouble comes from nerves and worry." Bill Silver Collection.

²² Jim Silver to Bill Silver, February 24, 1959. Bill Silver Collection.

²³ Will D. Campbell, *Brother to a Dragonfly*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 112-124. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 117-38. Also Charles W. Eagles, "The Closing of Mississippi Society: Will Campbell, 'The \$64,000 Question,' and Religious Emphasis Week at the University of Mississippi." *Journal of Southern History* 67 (May 2001): 331-72. See Peter Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30-32, also Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 273-74 and Silver, *Running Scared*, 65-66.

and well-respected expert on jazz, appeared on the television show “The \$64,000 Question” prior to his scheduled arrival on campus. In an interview after his stint on the show, Kershaw surmised that he and his wife would donate his winnings to their favored charitable causes, one of which helped to fund the NAACP legal fund for cases involving desegregation. Such statements did not endear Kershaw to the people of the Magnolia State and the propriety of his impending visit to the state university was in question.

A year earlier, a speaker with unfavorable views on segregation spoke at Mississippi Southern College and the Institution of Higher Learning sought to preempt any similar situation from occurring in the future by mandating that any potential orator be screened by the board. Not surprisingly, Kershaw did not pass muster and, under pressure from the board, Ole Miss Chancellor J.D. Williams rescinded the reverend’s invitation. Students, faculty, and others raised objections but their entreaties and the ensuing controversy would not alter the chancellor’s decision. At Campbell’s urging, the other participants in Religious Emphasis Week bowed out of the event, but this was not the university’s only loss as a result of this episode of academic censure. The Kershaw episode revealed the increasing closure of academic freedom on the Ole Miss campus, and the moderate faction of instructors understood the implication. Foreseeing a difficult future in Mississippi academia, Sociology professor Morton B. King resigned, and a year later Campbell departed as well after receiving a fortuitous

job offer from the National Council of Churches.²⁴ This was the beginning of a slow but steady exodus of instructors from the university.

Within the climate of these perceptible changes, Silver did his best to ensure that the minds of Ole Miss students remained open. As chairman during the 1954-1955 academic year, he oversaw the ten individuals who comprised the history department: six full professors (including one woman), one associate professor, two assistant professors, as well as a Miss Raymond, who presumably served as the department secretary.²⁵ In addition to his duties as chairman, Silver also taught two sections each of three upper division courses. "The Rise of Southern Nationalism," was described as an "intensive study of the period in American history from 1830 to 1865." "Recent United States History" focused on the period since Reconstruction "with an emphasis on politics, the rise of concentrated control in American industry, and the relationship between government and business." The second section of this course also included an examination of issues involving agriculture and labor. "The World Today" was taught in conjunction with two other professors, one a scholar of European and Russian history, and another who concentrated on southern and Mississippi history. The course focused on "contemporary social, political, and economic problems of the United States and the rest of the world, with emphasis on events within the United States and the relations of the United States with other

²⁴ Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 117-138.

²⁵ *Bulletin of the University of Mississippi*, Announcements 1955-1956 and General Catalog Issue 1954-1955, p. 211. Miss Raymond's name does not appear as an instructor for any courses listed in the catalog which indicates that she was staff personnel and not a member of the faculty.

countries.”²⁶ Certainly Silver’s recent Fulbright and Ford Fellowship experiences were parlayed into the curriculum.

Interestingly, neither section of “The World Today” was open to history majors. It was perhaps meant to serve as a survey class for students of all disciplines in an attempt to apprise them of global issues and current history outside of their principal area of study. If so, the curriculum underscores a long-held belief of Silver’s that the main purpose of historical study is to “gain social experience,” that is, it trained one to learn to live within the larger society. Consequently, he argued, knowledge of the past becomes more important as the world becomes more complicated.²⁷ Such study was much needed by the mid-1950s, for indeed the world at that time had become quite complicated in the wake of a recent world war, an escalating Cold War, and continuing skirmishes over civil rights.

White Mississippians were determined to preserve their way of life and were taking drastic measures to ensure that they prevailed. Mysterious deaths and unprovoked assaults were a regular part of life for blacks in the Magnolia State, but more visible action began occurring against those who dared to deviate from the standard code of white supremacy. Blacks were shot, beaten, or killed while attempting to register to vote or to cast their ballots. Incidents occurred in broad daylight and in front of numerous witnesses, yet arrests were few. Citizens who were thought to be conspiring to exercise their right to school

²⁶ Ibid, 211–13.

²⁷ Undated course outline titled “History.” Box 24.7, Silver Collection.

integration were awakened in the night to find their homes on fire or their windows smashed in. Many were arrested, heavily fined, or held in jail on fabricated charges. Intimidation was a well-exercised tactic in the South, and Mississippi used it to great success.

One of the most disturbing cases, however, occurred in August 1955, when fourteen-year-old Emmett Till was brutally murdered for allegedly flirting with a white woman who worked at a local store.²⁸ The Chicago youth was spending the summer with his great-uncle, Moses Wright, in rural Money, Mississippi, and after a day of picking cotton in the hot sun, he and some others stopped at Bryant's Grocery to purchase some refreshments. Feeling brazen and in an attempt to show off in front of his friends, Till acted too friendly toward the white store clerk, Carolyn Bryant. It was reported that Till either directed a wolf whistle in the woman's direction or exited the store by exclaiming, "Bye, baby."²⁹

Unaccustomed to the mores of Mississippi, Till's seemingly benign actions were reprehensible in this southern state and particularly to the woman's husband, a known white supremacist named Roy Bryant. On August 28, 1955, four days after the incident, Bryant and his half brother, J.W. Milam, came in

²⁸ Carolyn Bryant also claimed that Till grabbed her around the waist. See Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy, *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008); Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003); Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

²⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/index.html> (accessed February 20, 2010). An accurate account of what transpired in the store cannot be ascertained since no one else was in the store with Till and Bryant.

search of the boy and took him from his uncle's house in the middle of the night. Three days later his body was found in the Tallahatchie River, shot, battered, and weighted down by a cotton gin fan that had been wrapped around his neck with barbed wire. Although Bryant and Milam were soon arrested and tried for the murder of Till, the twelve white men who comprised the jury deliberated for only an hour before finding the two not guilty. The verdict would have been returned sooner, one juror explained, but they took the time to enjoy a soda pop before announcing their final decision.³⁰

Six weeks after being acquitted of murder, Bryant and Milam were completely free of the Till case on November 9, 1955, when a grand jury refused to indict them on the charge of kidnapping. With no fear of legal reprisal under the protection of double jeopardy, Bryant and Milam collected \$4,000 for an interview with *Look* magazine in which the men confessed to killing Till. The boy, they claimed, refused to show any fear or acknowledge the superiority of these white men. "Well, what else could we do? He was hopeless." Milam explained. "I'm no bully; I never hurt a nigger in my life. I like niggers -- in their place -- I know how to work 'em. But I just decided it was time a few people got put on notice. As long as I live and can do anything about it, niggers are gonna stay in their place."³¹

³⁰ Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta*, 42, and <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/index.html> (accessed February 20, 2010).

³¹ "The Shocking Story of Approved Murder in Mississippi," *Look* (24 January 1956), 46–50.

The murder of Emmett Till and the subsequent acquittal of his confessed killers gained worldwide attention and sparked a global scrutiny of race relations in the United States. Emmett's mother, Mamie Till Bradley, allowed photos of her son's corpse to be revealed in two popular African American publications, *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender* newspaper. The gruesome images caused outrage in the black community, the nation as a whole, and beyond. As a result, Mississippi's reputation as a bastion of white supremacy was confirmed by this unfathomable act of racially motivated violence inflicted upon a child, as well as in the mockery made of the American judicial system during the trials of the killers.³²

While a grand jury in Greenwood, Mississippi, was deliberating the kidnapping charge against Bryant and Milam, Jim Silver was making history in Memphis, Tennessee, at the annual convention of the Southern Historical Association. Silver was in charge of organizing the program for the event, which was taking place at the Peabody Hotel. On December 1, 1954, Silver crafted a request for suggestions from his contemporaries on topics to be discussed at the various sessions, but there is no hint at what controversial subject would be the focus of the program's opening banquet.³³ Ironically, exactly one year later Rosa Parks would be arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to relinquish her seat on a city bus to a white man. Clearly the ramifications of the

³² Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta*, 46. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 113-114.

³³ Memorandum for Members of the Southern Historical Association, December 1, 1954. Silver Collection, File 6.2.

Supreme Court's ruling in the *Brown* case would be broadly felt and it was this topic that was the focus of discussion during the opening session of the SHA Conference. The previous year, Silver's proposal to present a similar panel at the ODK Mortar Board Forums was not accepted. As the SHA program chair, he now had a renewed opportunity to offer such a forum.³⁴ None of the speakers selected to expound upon "The Segregation Decisions" at this event were historians. Prominent Nashville attorney Cecil Sims provided a "Lawyer's View", Morehouse College president Benjamin Mays discussed the "The Moral Aspects of Segregation," and Nobel laureate William Faulkner, who was persuaded by Silver to participate, offered a broad view of "American Segregation and the World Crisis."³⁵

The presentation drew a sizeable crowd, many of whom came primarily for the opportunity to see the elusive Nobel-prizewinning novelist although the intention had been for Mays to be the featured speaker.³⁶ But the conference

³⁴ Memorandum for Chancellor Williams on ODK-Mortar Board Forums for 1953-54, January 26, 1954, Silver Collection, folder 6.2.

³⁵ *The Segregation Decisions: Papers Read at a Session of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, Memphis, Tennessee, November 10, 1955*, (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1956). See also Benjamin E. Mays, "The Moral Aspects of Segregation Decisions," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 29 (May 1956): 361-66, and James W. Silver, "The Twenty-First Annual Meeting," *Journal of Southern History*, 22 (February 1956): 60-61. The 50th anniversary of this meeting was commemorated at the 2004 Annual Conference, also held at the Peabody Hotel. See John C. Inscoe, "Forum: Memphis, the Peabody, and the SHA: A Fifty-Year Commemoration," *Journal of Southern History*, 71 (November 2005): 831-32. In the same issue see also Thomas D. Clark, John Hope Franklin, and Anne Firor Scott, "Comments," 853-64.

³⁶ Mays was himself a last-minute substitute for Charles S. Johnson, a sociologist and president of Fisk University. Bell Wiley, in the Foreword to the pamphlet of speeches puts the total attendance at 500 persons. In a 1961 letter, Silver puts the crowd of attendees at 700. See Item #1264d in Louis Daniel Brodsky and Robert W. Hamblin, editors, *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), 290.

was historically notable for being the first integrated event held at the Peabody Hotel. After much deliberation the management allowed Mays, an African-American, to join the other white men at the head table, but no photographers were to be let into the banquet hall to record the integrated event.³⁷ Furthermore, although the hotel reluctantly agreed to have Mays and the other black attendees as guests at the function they could not be overnight guests of the Peabody and were denied accommodations. As a result of this stipulation, eminent historian John Hope Franklin chose to boycott the conference.³⁸ Regardless of the divisiveness, the conference and its opening session were deemed a great success. So “profoundly influenced” was Silver by what he heard at the event that it influenced his later actions as a Mississippi moderate.³⁹

In what little press the conference received, it was Faulkner’s softly-spoken words that were repeated while those of Sims and Mays were largely ignored. Conference-goers and others requested copies of the speeches and the idea was raised of publishing them in some format. The logical source was to include them in the association’s periodical, the *Journal of Southern History*, but Editor J. Merton England felt that would be unwise. “I am proud of Jim Silver for arranging the program where these papers were given,” he informed SHA

³⁷ Manuscript entitled “Faulkner and Civil Rights,” hand dated 1981. Box 16.6, Silver Collection.

³⁸ In 1949, Franklin became the first black to present a paper at an SHA meeting, but by 1955 he was weary of remaining on the fringe of such events and so agreed to be a member of the program committee so long as he would not be obligated to attend. See Fred A. Bailey, “The Southern Historical Association and the Quest for Racial Justice, 1954-1963,” *Journal of Southern History* 71 (November 2005): 837-41, See also Silver, *Running Scared*, 60.

³⁹ Silver, *The Closed Society*, xii.

President and former Ole Miss faculty member Bell I. Wiley. “It was a fine session – the best we have ever had, I think. A great many of our members, though, would not agree. I heard several comment that it wasn’t ‘history,’ it was ‘propaganda’ or ‘crusading.’” England felt it important that the association maintain a neutral position in the desegregation argument and that the *Journal* stay focused on its primary task of publishing scholarly historical articles. Printing the speeches, he believed, would open a veritable Pandora’s Box and result in arguments, dissention, and a loss of membership. “(H)aving a program on an important Southern problem of current interest is one thing, and quite justifiable, I think; for the Association to publish the paper, which many don’t regard as ‘history,’ is another.”⁴⁰

In the spring of 1956, Wiley managed to have the three speeches published as a pamphlet by the Southern Regional Council, with financing provided by the Fund for the Republic.⁴¹ Silver was already being harangued for having been involved in organizing the event and so did his best to keep his name from being associated with the publication. In this he succeeded, but his

⁴⁰ Letter from J. Merton England to Bell I. Wiley, November 30, 1955, item # 1264c in Brodsky and Hamlin, eds. *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection*, 202-03.

⁴¹ Endowed by the Ford Foundation and incorporated in December 1952, the Fund for the Republic was conceptualized in 1950 in response to the threat against civil liberties during McCarthyism. Its intended purpose was to support programs and activities that countered such restrictions and, in turn, promote the founding principles of the nation as outlined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The bulk of the collection is now held in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library on the campus of Princeton University. A catalog and finding aid can be accessed at <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dn39x1531> (accessed February 22, 2010). See also Thomas C. Reeves, *Freedom and the Foundation: the Fund for the Republic in the Era of McCarthyism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

involvement in organizing the program did not go unnoticed, nor were his motives unquestioned.

Silver hailed the pamphlet's publication as a "moderate reply" to those who "had become exhilarated" by the acquittal of Emmett Till's murderers.⁴² Perhaps it also served as a harbinger of future protests to those opposing the desegregation of city busses in Dutch Silver's hometown of Montgomery, Alabama. Sparked by the arrest of Parks and overseen by Dr. Martin Luther King, a boycott of the city transit system was already several months old and showed no sign of ending. Indeed, it was December 1956 before Montgomery busses would again transport black passengers around the city, seated wherever they pleased as mandated by the U.S. Supreme Court.⁴³

Silver refers to himself as a "Quiet Reformer" during these years, and while he attempted to limit the exposure his words and deeds received he certainly did not completely remove himself from the gathering storm. Instead he went underground. Beginning in 1956, Silver was invited to contribute articles on Mississippi's situation to *The Economist*, much as he had while on his Scottish sojourn.⁴⁴ His work occasionally appeared in the publication for the next several years, each with an anonymous byline. While these commentaries were serious

⁴² Silver, *Running Scared*, 60.

⁴³ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 143-205. See also Douglas Brinkley, *Rosa Parks* (New York: Viking, 2000); Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 369-73; Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, ed. *Women and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 37-40. For firsthand accounts see Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper, 1958).

⁴⁴ Nancy Belfore to Jim Silver, January 24, 1956, Box 6.3, Silver Collection.

works, he also clandestinely participated in the creation of a lighthearted publication with a serious purpose, the *Southern Reposeure*. His collaborators in the project were William Faulkner and newspaperman P.D. East.

Percy Dale (P.D.) East was the owner and publisher of a small Mississippi newspaper, the *Petal Paper*, which focused primarily on the local events of the city of Petal, situated just across the Leaf River from Hattiesburg. East bought the paper in 1953, and set about establishing a fairly strong base of subscribers and advertisers from the surrounding area. He had a successful first year but longed for his weekly publication to report on more than just the events and accomplishments of the people of Petal. When the state implemented its resistance campaign against the impact of the *Brown* decision, East began proselytizing against such tactics and those perpetuating them. As owner, editor, and publisher of the *Petal Paper*, he was beholden to no one and used the pages of his publication as a personal pulpit from which to belittle the establishment. Employing an arsenal of witticism, wry humor, and farce, his attacks on the state's adherence to white supremacy were open and unabashed, yet so intricately did he weave his words that his readers often failed to recognize the satire. Not surprisingly, as East's admonitions increased his advertiser and subscriber base shrunk. He also became subject to the watchful eyes of the Citizen's Council.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See P.D. East, *The Magnolia Jungle: The Life, Times and Education of a Southern Editor*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1960) for an autobiographical account of his life. For a critical biography of East's years as owner and editor of *The Petal Paper* see Gary Huey, *Rebel*

Sometime around 1956, East's humorous diatribes caught Silver's attention and he signed on as a subscriber to the *Petal Paper*, although doing so was bound to raise eyebrows amongst the segregationist organizations that monitored such subversive action. "As I also receive the AFL-CIO News, I don't see how I can be any worse off, when the investigation of the ants comes," he surmised.⁴⁶ The men exchanged correspondence and that relationship quickly developed into a friendship. The two shared a similar sense of humor and enjoyed a convivial relationship involving much jovial bantering. East was fifteen years younger than Silver, but the men bore many resemblances to each other. Both were of similar stature, and like Silver, East had a strong desire for acceptance but often found himself an outsider as a result of his preternatural actions. East, too, was driven to achieve an indefinable level of success, but unlike Silver he later abandoned his quest for financial riches, instead equating success with personal happiness.

East bore similarities to a younger and somewhat more brazen version of Silver, willing to rebel against the status-quo with little fear of the consequences. While Silver's liberal views often left him singled by the heat of his detractors, he consciously maintained a distance from the flames in order to protect his job at Ole Miss. East, on the other hand, due to naiveté, bravery, or a desire for martyrdom, walked boldly through the fires unconcerned with the consequences.

With A Cause: P.D. East, Southern Liberalism and the Civil Rights Movement, 1953-1971 (Washington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1985).

⁴⁶ Jim Silver to P.D. East, July 8, 1956, Jim Silver Folder, Box 25, P.D. East Papers, Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University (hereafter cited as P.D. East Papers).

“You have more guts than brains,” Silver told his friend, “and that is certainly priceless these days, especially in the Magnolia state.”⁴⁷ Ultimately the end result for both men was the same: eventually they were forced to leave Mississippi as a result of their outspokenness.

Their mutual disgust over Mississippi’s staunch adherence to Jim Crow led to their collaboration on a project which they hoped would help create a grass-roots support base for political moderates in the state. Both men recognized that there were residents of the Magnolia State who were neither ardent segregationists nor outright integrationists. These individuals simply believed that the time had come for the state to move forward with regard to race relations but had no public forum in which to express their opinion without fear of retribution. For some time Silver had been discussing with Faulkner the possibility of establishing a public organization to promote the agenda of moderate liberals, thereby providing that segment of the population with a political voice. The project, however, brought with it many personal risks and would require more capital than the men could provide so it failed to move beyond the discussion stage. But there remained a desire to do something favorable for the state’s moderates and East’s like-mindedness made him a perfect adversary. Shortly after Silver introduced the newspaperman to Faulkner, the three were scheming over a new project that best utilized their

⁴⁷ Jim Silver to P.D. East, dated only “Tuesday,” Jim Silver Folder, Box 25, P.D. East Papers.

talents: a satirical publication that poked fun at the fears and fallacies of white supremacy. Thus the *Southern Reposure* was born.⁴⁸

The newspaper was meant to be a continuation of a tongue-in-cheek broadside put out by some Ole Miss students called *The Nigible Papers*. Employing the same ideology used by segregationists, the authors of this periodical mocked the current racial climate by lampooning the morals, values and physical appearance of the state's dominant population: whites of Scottish-Irish heritage. Silver and his two literary cohorts decided to expound upon this concept and extensively distribute their work so that Mississippi liberals who quietly hid within the shadows of state political and ideological machinations might feel a sense of unity knowing that others shared their beliefs. Their use of humor was a non-threatening means of publicly acknowledging the collective voice of liberal moderates. Nevertheless, all three men recognized that if their names become associated with the publication the repercussions could be severe. It was therefore agreed that the work be conducted as clandestinely as possible so as to maintain the anonymity of all parties involved. "I'm going to try to keep my skirts pretty clear of the whole business, officially." Silver informed East. "If this works as we hope, there is bound to be an investigation, and I want

⁴⁸ For details regarding the *Southern Reposure* see Silver, *Running Scared*, 60-61; Huey, *Rebel With A Cause*, 106-108 and East, *The Magnolia Jungle*, 191-206. See also Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), 1607-09. Ironically, Blotner failed to realize that East, in his autobiography, used as a pseudonym for Silver the name of Dr. Josh Bross. While he acknowledges that Silver was involved in the creation of the *Southern Reposure*, Josh Bross is mistakenly credited with having initially written to East and introducing him to Faulkner. Silver makes note of the error in *Running Scared* but refrains from stating the author in question.

to be able to laugh at the investigators. That is one reason I tear up your letters and keep nothing on hand that anyone could find.” East was encouraged by Silver to do the same and to avoid making telephone calls regarding the project.⁴⁹

Silver’s enthusiasm for this creative yet purposeful endeavor is evident in his letters to East and the swiftness in which the *Reposure* went from concept to publication. East provided the bulk of the copy and arranged for the paper’s final printing. In addition, he volunteered to absorb the associated expenses when their fundraising efforts fell flat. Silver provided a lengthy list of recipients, both within and outside of Mississippi. Some would be mailed a single copy for their personal use while others were to receive multiples meant for further distribution. Although Faulkner offered suggestions and assisted in the initial planning of the paper’s inception, the novelist apparently contributed little else to the final project. Will Campbell, however, donated a lengthy list of 500 sympathetic clergymen who, it was believed, would pass on copies of the paper to other like-minded individuals.

In late July 1956, the first edition of the *Southern Reposure* was ready. Ten thousand copies were printed and distributed to recipients within and outside of the state and the creators took pleasure in the results of their fruitful venture. Under the alleged editorship of Nathan Bedford Cooclose, the newspaper championed the rights of all non-Scotts-Irish to remain separate from the

⁴⁹ Jim Silver to P.D. East, July 8, 1956, Jim Silver Folder, Box 25, P.D. East Papers. In the same folder, see also the letter from Jim Silver to P.D. East dated August 2, 1956.

unsavory influence of the tartan-wearing, clan-centric people within Mississippi. The masthead proclaimed that the publication was a member of the “Confederate Press Association” and news stories possessed bylines from such places as “Corn Pone,” and “Crawdad, Miss.” Headlines revealed plans for “AT&T To Segregate Party Lines” and announced that “Terror Strikes Lelli White, Miss.” Society news was reported as well, and the paper noted the election of “Johnny Fred Dudley, III,” as head of the “recently organized Campus Conservative Club” which “will meet on alternate Black Mondays...with provisions for special sessions, if required.” Dues were set at two bales of cotton per year and applicants for membership “must be able to prove by birth certificate that they are white, Protestant, and native born.” When asked why the club was being formed, Mr. Dudley’s supposed reply was that “there has been too much progress in this state. The Scotch-Irish are getting the upper hand. We don’t like this filthy jazz music which is ruining our nervous systems, disintegrating our morals, and leading to juvenile delinquency and flagrant communism. It is a down right sin and we want it stopped.”⁵⁰

So successful were the three collaborators at maintaining their anonymity, there remain questions as to which man contributed what material to the final publication. Silver was credited with the article entitled, “The Editor Makes Three Points to the Pointless,” and he identifies Faulkner as the author of the

⁵⁰*The Southern Reposeure*, 1, no. 1 (Summer 1956). A full non-circulating copy of the document can be found in the Special Collections of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library at Vanderbilt University, Nashville TN. The first page of *The Southern Reposeure* can be viewed in Brodsky and Hamblin, eds., *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide*, 254-55. In addition, excerpts can be found in the *Magnolia Jungle*, 197-198.

“Publisher’s Introduction.” In it, Nathan Cooclose relates some “confirmed facts” about Mississippi’s Scottish and Irish descendants: that they smelled like smoke, roll their “R” when speaking, “breed like turtles,” and have “repulsive” habits such as breaking into an impromptu highland fling in the middle of any main street, and “expecting to be served oatmeal in our finest restaurants simply because they have the required fifteen cents.” The editor noted that the purpose of his paper was, “to maintain Segregation of the Scotch Irish, no matter what the cost!” and proposed that the offending group of persons be sent back “to the bogs from whence they came.” Barring the feasibility of that solution, however, he advised his readers to “stick together in an all out effort to make it clear to the Scottish [sic] that we will treat them kind, but they MUST stay in their place.”⁵¹

As expected, the paper succeeded in raising the ire of some readers and the spirits of others. Silver, East and Faulkner were delighted with their work and the feedback it garnered. They had anticipated publishing the *Reposure* on a quarterly basis, but it soon became evident that no future editions would be forthcoming. Faulkner expressed little interest in continuing the operation, and by November Silver was once again embroiled in another episode of academic turmoil that threatened his job. But it was P.D. East who suffered the greatest fallout from his involvement with the *Southern Reposure*.

East was strongly suspected as the creator of the satirical paper due to the striking similarities between his writings to those of Nathan Bedford

⁵¹ Ibid.

Cocclose. As a result, subscription and advertising sales to the *Petal Paper* fell dramatically when pressure from the local Citizens' Councils resulted in an effective boycott of East's newspaper. Though he could ill-afford to do so, East had absorbed much of the costs associated with the *Reposure*, and this calamity worsened his already precarious financial situation.⁵² Indeed, money woes would plague him for the rest of his life, compounding the other personal difficulties he endured in his later years. In 1963, a beleaguered P.D. East left Mississippi for Alabama, resettling in the aptly named town of Fairhope. Although the *Southern Reposure* lasted only one edition, East continued to publish the *Petal Paper*, albeit sporadically, until his death in 1971.

In late October 1956, Silver gave an address to the Rotary club in Jackson, Tennessee, entitled "The Lunatic Fringe and the Moderates." The speech was a minor version of one he would give at a Civil War conference at Gettysburg College in 1961, in which he blames the legislators of Mississippi, representing all Confederate states, for creating an environment of hostility through misinformation and by stifling any opposing views. In many ways this was the genesis of his *Closed Society* speech. Not surprisingly, his Rotary speech caused controversy and once again placed Silver under the scrutiny of the university's administration. The Associated Press picked up the story and it circulated among various newspapers including the Hederman- owned *Jackson*

⁵² A price increase for the *Petal Paper* and his own busy schedule had Jim reconsidering renewing his subscription. In a letter to Bill Silver dated November 1, 1959, he notes, "Got a bill for the *Petal Paper* today. PD has gone up to five bucks a year and I may stop subsidizing his worthy efforts. I hardly read the paper anyway."

Daily News, which Silver and some associates came to refer to as “The Coon Hunter’s Journal.”⁵³ Under the headline, “A Professor’s Crackpot Talk,” the lead editorial on November 1, railed against Silver and his comments⁵⁴

Former Ole Miss faculty member Joe Matthews wrote from Emory University of his surprise at discovering an article on Silver’s speech in the *Atlanta Constitution*. “Pretty obviously you made quite a hit with the Associated Press,” he commented. “I hope that the Ole Miss administration was properly impressed and in the right direction.”⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the opposite occurred, and Silver was once again forced to defend his words. Four years later, Matthews himself would experience firsthand the University’s intolerance toward purported agitators when his invitation to speak on the campus was rescinded after it became known that he participated in interracial activities in Georgia.⁵⁶

The Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning felt an inquiry into the Rotary speech was necessary and Silver justified the content of his talk in a lengthy and pointed reply, copies of which he also sent to Governor James P. Coleman as well as friends and associates. While Silver admitted to the controversial nature of the material he presented, he emphasized that it was also historically accurate. His intention was to make “a plea for freedom of thought, backed by sound historical fact” and that as a historian, he had an obligation “to

⁵³ Henry Fly to James Silver, November 22, 1963. Box 35.9, Silver Collection.

⁵⁴ Silver, *Running Scared*, 151.

⁵⁵ Joe Matthews to Jim Silver, October 30, 1956. Box 6.3, Silver Collection.

⁵⁶ Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 155-57.

get these ideas before intelligent people.”⁵⁷ A few years later he employed this same rationale in defense of the *Closed Society*. Silver’s heavy campaign for absolution was successful, for the Board dropped its inquiry after the intervention of several of his proponents.⁵⁸

At this time, Silver was also at work on the preface to his book, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, which would be published the following year.⁵⁹ Although he tempered his remarks, Silver emphasized much of the same information that had been recycled most recently as his Rotary speech, including overt finger-pointing at Mississippi’s “secessionist fire-eaters” whose actions led to “tragically inept” results. Silver stated that the sources for this monograph were collected over a period of twenty years, which indicates that a good portion of his later work, such as this volume, were the results of information gleaned during his years as a graduate student. Already evidence of his future writings can be found here as well. He proposed that the South acquired a “closed mind” by 1860 due to its belief in the numerous Confederate myths being bandied about prior to the start of the war and warned that “[i]n view of the heated agitations of this day it might be well for Southerners to ponder the course of action of their section a century ago. At least,” he added, “it should be possible to avoid some of the same mistakes, although the present writer is not

⁵⁷ Silver, *Running Scared*, 153.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 151.

⁵⁹ James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957).

bold enough to point them out to those who will not see.”⁶⁰ Silver would gradually grow that bold in the coming years as his audiences turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to his warning that history seemed to be repeating itself.

In late 1957, a year after the publication of *Southern Reposeure*, Silver and P.D. East were in collaboration again. Unable to totally abandon their goal of giving a voice to Mississippi moderates, the two men formed a group intent on putting a “reasonable candidate” on the ballot for the 1959 governor’s race. Other members at the inaugural meeting included future governor William Winter and Charles Fortenberry, chair of the Ole Miss political science department, but Faulkner’s presence was not assured. Regardless, Silver held little hope in their group’s success. “I expect this meeting to end in nothing but frustration,” he told his son. “We’ll see.”⁶¹

Silver did not wait long to have his fears confirmed. A week later the group’s meeting at the Faulkner home resulted in the virtual disbandment of the fledgling political organization. William Winter and another member failed to attend, much to East’s consternation. In addition, some promised funds were also not delivered which further hindered the hopeful band of politicians. “Our little party...almost collapsed – as probably will any political movement we may try to get started,” Silver lamented. “I suppose we’ll go along with some of the regular candidates when the time comes.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid, 8.

⁶¹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 12, 1957. Bill Silver Collection.

⁶² Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 22, 1957. Bill Silver Collection.

In addition to his concerns for Mississippi's political future, Silver paid careful attention to the unfolding drama taking place in Arkansas during this period. On September 4, 1957, nine black students arrived at Little Rock High School for the start of the new school year only to be met by angry mobs of white integration opponents as well as 270 members of the Arkansas National Guard who had been mobilized by Governor Orville Faubus to ensure the sanctity of segregation. Ironically, while the clash outside of the school continued for several days, Congress was taking further measures to protect the enfranchisement of black citizens by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1957.⁶³ After meeting with President Eisenhower on September 23, Faubus agreed to reverse his stand and utilize the National Guard troops to protect rather than repel the black students seeking admission to the high school. Reneging on the promise, however, Faubus removed the troops altogether, thereby leaving the nine youths vulnerable to the verbal and physical abuses hurled at them by the violent white mob. A furious Eisenhower responded by sending 1100 paratroopers and placing the Arkansas National Guard under federal control. It was the first time since Reconstruction that U.S. military forces were in the South to protect the rights of blacks.

⁶³ Senate confirmation of the bill occurred on September 9, 1957. It upheld and reinforced the voting rights of citizens by establishing a Civil Rights division of the U.S. Justice Department that gave federal prosecutors the ability to obtain court injunctions in instances of interference with the voting process. See http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/Digital_Documents/Civil_Rights_Civil_Rights_Act/New%20PDFs/Civil_Rights_Bill.pdf (accessed March 22, 2010).

News of the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Russians soon eclipsed the activities taking place in Arkansas, but for those few weeks the events in Little Rock dominated the headlines. “There may be some news from this part of the country but at the moment I don’t know what it is,” Silver revealed to Bill, who was settling in at Harvard. “Except for the first time, I’m beginning to feel sorry for the President.” It was Silver’s belief that the situation in Arkansas demanded Eisenhower’s intervention but that the president acted too quickly by sending in federal troops to enforce the admission of the black students. He also felt sure that what transpired in Alabama would not result in the acceleration of integrated schools in Mississippi, though it might “knock a little sense into some of the citizen council element.”⁶⁴ It was clear, however, that in time Mississippi, too, would inevitably face the prospect of having black students cross the threshold of the state’s educational institutions. “Some people think that we’ll now have Negroes showing up with the 10 bucks for late registration, accompanied by a paratrooper or two,” he prophesized. “There can only be one result; the only question is the number of heads that will have to be bashed in in the process.”⁶⁵

The question of his own children’s scholastic potential surely fueled Silver’s growing concern over integration attempts at southern schools and the increasing restrictions being placed on Mississippi’s academic institutions. The

⁶⁴ As if to test this theory, Silver attended a Citizens’ Council meeting a month later, at which Little Rock attorney Amos Guthridge spoke. “After mixing up history irretrievably,” Guthridge “offered nothing more than emotionalism,” Silver related to Bill on October 26, 1957. “He didn’t exactly incite to violence but I don’t know what else could result from his speech.” Bill Silver Collection.

⁶⁵ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 25, 1957, Bill Silver Collection.

future of the state's educational system had been uncertain since the *Brown* decision and political tensions continued rapidly to increase as a result. It was clear that the stability of Mississippi schools would be in question for some time yet, and Jim and Dutch were no doubt relieved to know that their two eldest children would not be subjected to any academic upheaval that might ensue. Bill left for Harvard in 1957, and chances were good that any drastic changes to the state's public school system would occur after Betty had departed for an East Coast college as well. Although an in-state education would have been significantly less of a financial burden, Jim and Dutch did little to dissuade their daughter from pursuing admittance to universities above the Mason-Dixon Line.⁶⁶ But the Silvers' youngest child was not yet of school-age, and it was for her future that Silver must have worried.

Born in 1954, the year of the *Brown* Decision, Jim and Dutch had to wonder if Gail Silver would have the option of attending a public elementary school in their state when she was ready to begin first grade. As opposition toward desegregation continued to grow, many local and state school boards favored closing their doors rather than see mixed races in the classroom. Yet closed schools must have been deemed the safest option by some southerners, considering the violent clashes that occurred when attempts were made to

⁶⁶ Jim was told that at a football game in the fall of 1959 an Ole Miss cheer included a rhyme involving the word "integrate" which Jim correlated to the fact that Memphis State had four black players on its team that year. In a letter to Bill Silver dated October 3, 1959 he states, "This lack of anything approaching decency or humanity is one of the reasons I think it a good idea for Betty to get out of the state, for good I rather hope. But the kids do nothing than ape their parents." Bill Silver Collection.

integrate. Those wishing to cross the color line did so at great peril, as evidenced in 1955 when Autherine Lucy sought admittance to the University of Alabama, and the recent debacle at Central High School in Arkansas.⁶⁷ By 1958, the University of Mississippi was taking extreme measures to rebuff the efforts of potential integrators.

Earlier attempts to integrate Ole Miss had been easily circumvented by the board in the same way that Meredith's would be later: by changing or reinterpreting the admissions requirements as needed. But Clennon King's situation was different. Unlike Charles Dubra and Medgar Evers, who sought admission to the law school, King sought a Ph.D. in history even though one was not yet offered at the university.⁶⁸ In addition, King was already a controversial figure within the state, having been fired from Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College after students at the historically black school boycotted his classes due

⁶⁷ Clark, E. Culpepper. *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71-80. Autherine Lucy and Pollie Ann Myers were accepted for admission to the University of Alabama in 1952 but were refused the opportunity to enroll in classes when they appeared in person for registration and their race was revealed. Backed by the NAACP, the women waged a legal battle for the next three years and the final ruling in June 1955, found in their favor. However, the university refused admittance to Myers on moral grounds after it was revealed that she had been pregnant and unmarried prior to her application for admission. On February 1, 1956, Lucy attended her first day of class but was expelled three days later under the pretense of her physical safety after a growing mob of protesters turned violent. Although she appealed the university's decision, her case was not resolved in her favor. The university would remain segregated until 1963, when Vivien Malone and James Hood became the first African Americans to successfully matriculate.

⁶⁸ Charles Dubra sought admittance to the University of Mississippi Law School in 1953, and Medgar Evers in 1954. Dubra's application was denied on the basis that his undergraduate degree was from an unaccredited institution. Evers was denied admission for not providing proper letters of recommendation, a tactic also employed to prevent Meredith's admission in 1962. The requirements of these letters were ambiguous at best, and were constantly modified at the whim of Board of the Institutions of Higher Learning, precisely for the purpose of nullifying the admission paperwork submitted by African Americans and other "unusual" applicants. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 70-76.

to his outspoken support of segregation and the Sovereignty Commission. On June 5, 1958, King appeared on campus to complete the necessary paperwork and found state law enforcement agents placed at the entrances. Also present was Governor J.P. Coleman, who had been made aware of King's intentions by the registrar. After being escorted into the Lyceum and left in a room alone, King panicked and began calling for help. Governor Coleman determined that King was mentally unsound and had him removed from campus and evaluated by a judge, who concurred with the assessment. Rather than being admitted to the state university, King instead was admitted to Whitfield, the state's mental hospital where he remained for twelve days.⁶⁹

By this time, Silver had stepped down as department chair, having endured some serious health issues for weeks prior to relinquishing the position early in 1958. Silver's letters reveal that the Silver family was often battling some form of cold or flu in the latter half of 1957. In autumn Silver notes the prevalence of the Asiatic flu around campus, which he apparently contracted in October. He was sick for a week but not ill enough to stay home in bed. Still, the episode was no doubt a contributing factor to his lengthy hospitalization a month later with pneumonia and other complications. The seriousness of his condition was purposely withheld from him until his recovery had begun, but after at least a week in Oxford's hospital Silver's strength was returning, as was his

⁶⁹ Eagles devotes a full chapter to the King episode in *The Price of Defiance*, 80-98. See also Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie*, 61-63; William Doyle, *An American Insurrection: The Battle of Oxford, Mississippi, 1962* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 28, also Frank Lambert, *The Battle for Ole Miss: Civil Rights V. States' Rights*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 60-61, and Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 276-7.

cantankerousness. “Sat up for 15 minutes yesterday & the same today and after a 4 day verbal battle, I have also been allowed to walk to the bathroom (25 ft) once a day,” he related to Bill. “In this God damned hospital they not only put one flat on his ass but apparently try to humiliate him too. Such is a world run by women.”⁷⁰ Even after his return home, his recovery was slow and his energy quickly depleted. “I have been home since Sunday and sit up some each day,” he relayed to his son, “but have about as much energy as a mosquito who has eaten his fill. I have work here and plenty to read but I just don’t feel up to it.”⁷¹

Silver later learned that at the same time he was battling his illness, Bill had suffered another bout of the stress-induced ailment that plagued him, possibly colitis or Crohn’s Disease. “Looks as though you will have to learn to live with your nervous indigestion or whatever it is that you have,” he told his son. “If anything is ever done about it you will be the one to do it. Wish I had a suggestion but I don’t.” He then imparted a few words of wisdom gleaned from his own life experiences. “I know it is easy to say not to worry about grades, etc. I have been telling myself things like that all my life but I still have the itch (eczema)...You’ll have problems all your life, even though none may be bigger than the ones you are confronting now.”⁷² This, however, was not true for Silver, whose problems would continue to mount in the coming years.

⁷⁰ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, November 23, 1957, Bill Silver Collection.

⁷¹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, dated only “Wednesday,” with a later notation of “Nov. 1957,” Bill Silver Collection.

⁷² Ibid.

Silver's case of pneumonia was severe enough to keep him out of the classroom for several weeks, and such comments suggest that he spent a portion of his convalescence in contemplative reflection. Weakened to the point where a few moments sitting prostrate was considered a great accomplishment, Silver had clear evidence of the frailty of his health and as well as the effects of age. He had turned fifty that June, a significant milestone, and in late October he had another, albeit minor, age-related experience when he began wearing his first pair of bifocals. He also received a slight shock a month earlier when he visited an old beau, a woman near his age but whom he "remembered as a girl (with whom I dated slightly and sporadically in 1929) but who turned out to be grey-haired and seemed to have other disabilities." Although not an incident of significant importance, the timing of the reunion may have reinforced Silver's own worries about aging and its accompanying physical decline. Silver, however, jokingly relayed it to Bill so that he may learn a lesson. "This experience convinced me that no man should ever marry a woman of his own age," he lightheartedly advised his son. "Get one ten years younger they wear better."⁷³

By mid-December of 1957, Silver was back in the classroom and resuming his activities but relapsed a short time later and was hospitalized again. He returned home on the first day of the new year, still uncertain as to the nature of his illness. "God knows what was wrong with me," he wrote to a colleague, "although the medicos claim that at various times I had double pneumonia,

⁷³ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 27, 1957, Bill Silver Collection.

asthma, and my old skin trouble.” Still in a precarious physical state, Silver had time to reflect on the various aspects of his life and determined that the time he spent on department paperwork was “downright silly.”⁷⁴ Rather than focus so much energy on the burdensome duties associated with his role as department chair, Silver decided to free himself up to spend his time on family and personal pursuits. In the first semester of 1958 he stepped away from the position but still devoted many hours to the department as a result of the additional workload caused by the university’s increasing enrollment.

By late February, Silver was feeling better than he had in months, although he was disturbed by his neglect at home. Dutch’s involvement in the preparations for an AOPi installation dinner was taking up much of her time and, in Silver’s opinion, causing her to somewhat shirk her housekeeping responsibilities. When he voiced his discontent, Dutch proved to be no shrinking violet. “Your mother is right sensitive on the subject these days,” he informed Bill, “in fact she almost blew her top this morning and let me know in no uncertain terms that AOPi had not caused her to lessen her attack on her home duties.”⁷⁵ Clearly Dutch possessed a strong independent streak, honed through years of being left alone for lengthy intervals while Jim pursued opportunities outside of Mississippi.⁷⁶ Such experiences would have strengthened her sense of self-

⁷⁴ Silver, *Running Scared*, 66

⁷⁵ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, February 21, 1958, Bill Silver Collection.

⁷⁶ For eight months, Dutch was left alone to tend to six-year-old Billy and two-year-old Betty when Silver volunteered for service with the Red Cross in 1945. In addition, her husband accepted numerous out-of-state summer teaching appointments and it is unknown on how many Dutch and the children accompanied him. However, it can be safely assumed that in most

reliance and self-worth and, as this incident exemplifies, Dutch obviously had no intention of letting her husband impose a sense of guilt upon her for being involved with activities outside of the house. It can be safely assumed that Dutch was not the type of reader for whom Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*.⁷⁷

As Silver's health improved he also lost some of his sympathy for Bill's worries over his grades. Naturally Silver and Dutch wanted Bill to be successful at Harvard, and they had a vested interest in his work, for they were financially supplementing what the scholarship did not cover. When no notice of Bill's academic performance was received after a reasonable amount of time, Silver grew agitated and insinuated that his son was purposely withholding the information. "It is all very well to say that you will do better this semester but such a dangling comparative is meaningless to those of us down here who are in total ignorance of what you made," Silver admonished his son. "Apparently Harvard University has run out of stamps," he wryly noted. "By the time the grades do get to us they will be ancient history, and that may well be what you

instances he would spend the six or eight-week semester alone on whatever campus hosted him, particularly while the children were very young. Dutch may have taken the children to visit her family in Alabama for all or part of her husband's absence, but the experience of being solely responsible for house and family for any extended length of time would surely result in a strong sense of confidence and self-sufficiency.

⁷⁷ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963). In this groundbreaking work, Friedan addressed the latent discontent of many white, suburban housewives in the post-war era of the 1950s who felt trapped by role of wife and mother as imposed upon them by the mores and expectations of society. Friedan exposed the need for women to be involved in activities outside of the domestic sphere and participation in the larger world. While Friedan did not speak for all women, she nonetheless gave a voice to the multitudes who struggled with the conflict of their repressed desires for more than wifehood and motherhood in a male-dominated society that celebrated and expected these roles for women.

have in mind.”⁷⁸ Although Silver more often than not tempered Bill’s fears by insisting that his grades did not matter, the occasional biting comment must have stung deeply.

Overall the year 1958 proved a favorable one. Jim and Dutch had an active social life, enjoying their share of entertaining and being entertained, and any engagements involving a steak dinner always garnered more praise than others. For several weeks they hosted John Osborne, an editor for *Life* magazine and a former Mississippian who came to conduct research on the situation in the Magnolia State. Although he left armed with plenty of material, no article resulted from Osborne’s research. Considering the gracious hospitality he received from the Silvers, the journalist felt the need to explain the absence of a published account of his investigation. “No matter how I went at it, I wound up in the odious posture of an ex-Mississippian telling present Mississippians what fools they are,” he stated. “(I)t was rather like going home and learning that your mother was a whore.”⁷⁹ Silver, on the other hand, had no reservations about chastising his fellow citizens.

During his numerous poker games, Silver had many successful hands and often passed on a portion of his winnings to Bill. Although he had a heavy teaching load he also found time to work on a new manuscript, “Mississippi in the Confederacy,” as part of the Civil War Centennial Commission.⁸⁰ Silver also

⁷⁸ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, February 21, 1958.

⁷⁹ John Osborne to Jim Silver, November 6, 1958. Box 6.5, Silver Collection.

⁸⁰ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, August 9, 1958, Bill Silver Collection.

received some discretionary income by giving speeches and, on at least one occasion, for writing a book review. He also enjoyed business-related trips to Minnesota, New Orleans, and other locales, but he was not inclined to accept every invitation or attend every conference. One such event in Galveston the following spring was rejected on the basis of its locale. "Traveling may be broadening but I think Texas is an exception to that rule," he opined.⁸¹

However, an invitation for Silver to teach at Harvard in the summer of 1959 was met with great enthusiasm for a number of reasons. Not only would it provide him with employment between semesters and give the family an opportunity to vacation in a new locale, it could also lead to opportunities for similar work at other northern universities. "I suppose that the main thing is that it puts me into a stronger position in the academic world, and that is good in view of what may happen in Mississippi at any time," he told his son. "I've never felt too secure here."⁸² Given his previous experiences, Silver had reason to question continually the stability of his position at Ole Miss. Indeed, by the spring of 1959, more accusations regarding his political leanings were being hurled and his job was once again at stake.

Silver began the new year with health issues that continued to plague him throughout 1959, although none were as serious as he had experienced the previous year. He was hospitalized again in February for what was suspected to

⁸¹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, August , 1958. Bill Silver Collection.

⁸² Jim Silver to Bill Silver, dated only "Friday" but with a later notation indicating "Nov. 1958," Bill Silver Collection.

be mononucleosis but was later believed to be bronchial pneumonia; he had another stay at a medical facility in autumn, this time due to asthma. To ensure that he got some mild exercise and outdoor activity, Silver took up golf, playing fairly regularly except for times when even this proved to be exceedingly strenuous. But ill health did little to slow him down. Life moved at a fast pace and Silver did his best to keep up with it. He maintained a full schedule of instructing, grading papers, writing book reviews as well as his book manuscript, and attending various university functions. His off hours were spent training the family's new dog, playing poker, and fulfilling the obligations of his busy social calendar, many of which concluded in the wee hours of morning leaving Silver cranky and sleep-deprived the following day. Jim and Dutch also attended cultural events like Betty's local high school theater productions, and blockbuster movies of the time including *South Pacific*, the "nicest bit of integrationist propaganda to hit Mississippi in years." "Wonder what the Citizens Council is doing about it," Silver pondered.⁸³

The various members of the Silver family kept the household awhirl as well. Betty celebrated her sixteenth birthday in January 1959, and was actively involved in many high school functions that, much to Silver's dismay, kept her from completing the college applications that he found himself tending to in her stead. Gail eagerly began school that fall, attending morning kindergarten classes. With her youngest child away from home for half of the day Dutch had

⁸³ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 20, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

more free time for her own pursuits, although the late-night social gatherings left her languishing in the mornings as well. "(S)he has to get up in time to get Gail to school at 8:00," Silver relayed to Bill, "and this morning it almost killed her." Rex, a four-month-old German police dog, joined the family in September and often accompanied Silver on his evening sojourns to his office. It was mainly during these nocturnal forays that Silver wrote to his son, who was undergoing another crisis of self-doubt early in the year.

Although Bill seemed to struggle at Harvard, he was rewarded for his efforts with high marks, inclusion on the Dean's List, and continuing financial aid in the form of scholarships. Nevertheless, Bill apparently had difficulty finding his niche. Early in the year he was vacillating between two extremes: considering dropping out of college while at the same time plunging into a variety of extracurricular activities. Bill's restlessness and insecurity were reminiscent of Silver's own struggles during his young adulthood, and he waxed philosophical to his son while recuperating from his hospital stay. "Your present status is not nearly as important as the direction in which you are going," he advised. "You will never be satisfied with what you know or at least I hope you won't...I'm afraid it is true that the more aware you are of the world around you the more dissatisfied you will be with your part in it." Clearly Silver still wrestled with his own purpose in life, the role he was destined to play, and the legacy he was to create. "The truth is," the fifty-three-year-old professor confided, "that I'm not quite sure what I'd like to do with my life and I'm pretty well over the hill."

Unbeknownst to him at the time, however, Silver's fate would very soon be revealed. Even with bifocals, Silver's eyes were opening upon a new world, where race relations in Mississippi brought clarity to his vision of the closed society in which he was living.

By March, Silver was well enough to respond to a list of "ten specific and stupid charges" made against him by three "citizen's councilors," two of whom were former Ole Miss students now serving in the state legislature. These men, R.L. Thorn, Edwin White, and W.M. Ellis, believed that the University of Mississippi was promoting integrationist, socialist, and communistic doctrines through lectures given by faculty members who were known proponents of such beliefs. "I don't teach the sound southern way of life, it seems, and I hope to God they are right," Silver related.⁸⁴ What began as verbal accusations against several instructors had been put in writing in November 1958, and the Board of Trustees asked for Silver's reply to a document containing the detailed allegations against him. Silver responded with a point-by-point refutation of each "absurd statement" and summarized his feelings to the dean by proclaiming, "I would be delighted to appear with my "accusers" before any responsible body of men. As a matter of plain fact, I believe that my "accusers" must know that in such an instance they would appear as foolish as indeed they are."⁸⁵ The

⁸⁴ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, March 9, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

⁸⁵ "Memorandum for Dean A.B. Lewis," March 9, 1959. Silver Collection, Folder 6.6. See also Silver, *Running Scared*, 66-68, although Silver errs in stating that his memo was delivered to the Dean in April 1959. Silver was not the only Ole Miss faculty member against whom accusations were made, and he downplays the incident in his book (as well as commending the actions of the Board). The controversy involved members from various departments, as well as

controversy did not end quickly, but it did end favorably. After the Board of Trustees quietly concluded its inquiry and found no wrongdoing on the part of the university or the other named faculty members, the accusers went public with their charges and included a demand for Silver's termination. Once again the allegations were successfully refuted by the trustees, but it was not until early 1960 before the drama completely ended.

While this controversy was still swirling around him, Silver delivered an address at the annual conference of the Arkansas Historical Association, the "same old speech" on "the mistakes of the South in getting into the Civil War," and for which he was paid one hundred dollars.⁸⁶ Silver feared that his comments would appear in the newspaper and he worried about the repercussions, particularly since he was still under scrutiny by the Board of Trustees. "I'm not quite sure why I do these things, but I am determined that a lot of idiots in the state of Mississippi are not going to keep me from saying what I damned please," he boldly asserted. "Whether I can keep my job is something else but I rather think I can. If not, what the hell?" As always, he countered any negative attacks on his speech by attesting to the historical accuracy of its content. "The trouble is," he noted, "that the politicians and crackpots don't know what the historians have been writing, ever."⁸⁷

Dean R.J. Farley and the university itself. For a detailed account of this, and other instances of such controversy see Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 160-198.

⁸⁶ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, Bill Silver Collection. The annual Conference of the Arkansas Historical Association was held May 1 -2, 1959, in Monticello, Arkansas.

⁸⁷ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, May 3, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

Around this same time Silver received a letter from Betty Milburn, an innkeeper from Scotland with whom the family had become friendly during their 1949-1950 residence in Aberdeen. Mrs. Milburn's husband had died suddenly and she wished to relocate to Mississippi and live with the Silvers while she sorted out the future for herself and her daughter, Caroline. Jim and Dutch had habitually opened their doors to guests ranging from ODK Mortarboard speakers or other campus visitors needing only overnight lodging, to researchers such as *Life* magazine editor John Osborne or photographer Martin Dain, who stayed for several weeks conducting research. It is no surprise, then, that they had few reservations to the idea of the Milburns residing with them while the widow and her daughter sorted out their new station in life.

Silver sent a letter to Betty Milburn relaying their eagerness to host the visitors but also explaining to her, albeit against Dutch's wishes, some of the logistical issues to be contended with such as the proposed living arrangements within their three-bedroom house, their summer stay in Cambridge, their financial situation, and the political tensions within the state. "The thing that bothers me most of all is the state of affairs in Mississippi," he confided. "The people here are determined to keep segregation and I'm afraid that there is a determination to risk violence to keep it." The bulk of Silver's letter, however, was something of a disclaimer, a cautionary notice advising her of his controversial reputation and the precarious status of his employment at Ole Miss:

I can't read the future, at least not exactly, but I honestly believe that there is considerable possibility in the next months or years (I certainly can't name the time) that old man Silver, in spite of the fact that he has been teaching here for 23 years, may be out of a job. You see I just don't go along with prevailing opinion and it seems in time of crisis the extremists get control. Of course I don't know that this is going to happen (sometimes I think we can weather the storm and sometimes I think we can't)...This thing will go on and will get worse, but I can't change my views and have no intention of doing so. I guess that I'm trying to say [*sic*] is that the Silvers are not a particularly good risk in Mississippi, and if we were to lose out here, God knows what we will do or where we will go. I'm not frightened by this, personally, but I think that you ought to know of the possibilities."⁸⁸

Despite his pessimistic outlook, Silver hoped that Mrs. Milburn would not misconstrue his intentions for writing and, citing a genuine concern by the Silver family, closed by reiterating that they looked forward to their arrival.

Silver presented to Betty Milburn a more dire prediction for his future than he had hinted at to Bill in a letter following his speech in Arkansas. Given Bill's inclination to worry, Silver likely exercised caution when writing to his son so as not to induce an episode of nervous indigestion caused by unnecessary anxiety. A few months earlier Silver downplayed an incident that he obviously had not intended to relate to Bill but that he feared had been revealed by his sister, Betty. A "crude cross (which looked more like a swatika [*sic*])" had been set afire on their front lawn one evening and quickly extinguished. Obviously hoping to diffuse any elaborate recounting of the event that Betty or Dutch may make, Silver casually dismissed the action and any version of the event that the women may present. "When your mother tells the above story she strings it out for an hour or so, with

⁸⁸ Jim Silver to "Betty" (Milburn), May 8, 1959. Box 6.6, Silver Collection.

considerable elaboration and imagination,” he relayed. “I’m only sorry that the boys were so inept – but maybe they’ll come back.”⁸⁹

The Silvers spent the summer of 1959 in Massachusetts, and unlike their previous sojourn to Harvard, there was no dispute with the landlord of their rented housing during this stay. Dutch managed to run the household without Thera’s helpful hands, but they had planned to send for her if she was needed. It is somewhat peculiar that Silver had no qualms about how he and his white family from Mississippi would be perceived by his Harvard colleagues for having his black housekeeper accompany them. As the Silvers made their way to Boston they stopped to visit the various members of the McLean clan in Alabama and the Silver family in North Carolina. After stopping first in Birmingham they headed to Roper, North Carolina, to visit Silver’s brother, Henry, and mother, Lizzie. Lizzie had been in poor health and Silver felt it important that they take advantage of the opportunity for a family reunion. He felt it particularly important that Gail spend some time with her grandmother.⁹⁰

Bill, now serving in the U.S. Army, could not reconnect with the family until later in the summer. Dutch cried when Bill left, and the poignant scene reminded Silver of his mother’s distress at Henry’s departure in 1917 for military service. As Henry went off to war, Lizzie was certain she would never see her son

⁸⁹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, March 6, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

⁹⁰ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, April 7, 1958, Bill Silver Collection.

again.⁹¹ Silver must have found solace in the fact that his family was able to enjoy a last visit with her.

His mother's death coincided with his son's position on the cusp of adulthood, and in the aftermath of their family-filled summer Silver reflected upon his life both past and present. He also looked ahead, at the world his children would inherit and how well-positioned they would be to handle the trials and tribulations of life. After some months of showing little concern for her post-high school future, Betty was finally settling down scholastically and focusing on preparing for college. Currently experiencing the discipline and training of the armed services and with two years at Harvard under his belt, Bill was well on his way to independence. His future looked promising, but Silver still worried over how his son's sensitivities would influence his later years, particularly in light of his own similar circumstances. "I know that in the age period you are just finishing I went through a really terrible existence in many ways, and no one ever knew what was going on in my mind except myself, and I didn't understand that," he revealed to Bill. "I believe that you have escaped some of the inhibitions of my younger days but apparently not all of them." Praising Bill's good character and belief in his ability to sort out for himself whatever issues plagued him, Silver

⁹¹ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 3, 1959, Bill Silver Collection. Contemplating the mother/son bond so soon after the death of his own mother, Silver expounded on that dynamic as it related to Bill and Dutch. "I suppose it is difficult to imagine what is in the mind of [a mother] when her only son leaves or she leaves him, as in this case. I know that you get put out with her every once in awhile and God knows that I do – but, on the other hand, she has given her all to you and for you and she has been a damned good mother to you. And I suppose she is also the only one you have as you are her only son. Why I write this stuff I am not sure – except perhaps it might cause you to take your resolution to write more often more seriously as I really think that you should. We are curious as to what has happened and will happen to you, regardless of what you may think."

also warned his son that he may always find himself wrestling with issues as a result of his mild demeanor. "I think you are a sensitive, intelligent person and that kind of guy is really in trouble all his life," he advised. "You will probably always be wondering what life really means, what is worth doing and what is not worth doing, what is worth fighting for, etc."⁹²

Silver may have been writing as much about himself as he was his son. It is apparent that even in his later years he was still questioning his own composition, his actions, and motivations. Silver asserts that the bravado he displayed in his youth masked a lack of self-confidence that stifled him throughout his years at UNC and Vanderbilt. Later, his cockiness was tempered by the responsibilities of adulthood, such as maintaining steady employment to provide a comfortable life for himself and his family. Yet almost from the outset of his arrival to the Oxford campus, Silver's beliefs ran counter to those of the majority, and he did not hesitate to vocalize his opposing opinions. Silver argues that he was "running scared" through most of his life because he feared failure, but his compunction to participate in controversial events, particularly while maintaining only a tenuous hold on his position at Ole Miss, often runs counter to this claim. Indeed, his convictions were so strong that he risked his livelihood and, at times, perhaps his very life. "I don't think...that I have ever really had any worries about the courage to do the right thing in any case," he claimed in a

⁹² Jim Silver to Bill Silver dated only "Day after Labor Day." Bill Silver Collection.

period of self-reflection, "but I have always been concerned about what might be the intelligent thing to do."⁹³

These comments imply that any inhibitions Silver might have had when clashing with opposing views came only from the fear that his statements would be proven false. He was unafraid of the confrontation itself and was willing to act upon his own convictions, but he needed to ensure, as he did with his speeches criticizing the Confederacy as well as the *Closed Society*, that he could back up his arguments with indisputable evidence. To this end, Silver conducted meticulous research before producing any speech, article, or book. In doing so, Silver was assured that anyone in disagreement with him could not object to the facts he presented, only to the fact that he was presenting them. In other words, they might want to shoot the messenger but the message itself was bulletproof. Silver's fear, then, was not of failure but rather of being perceived as ignorant of any subject on which he spoke. It is worth noting that although the details presented in the *Closed Society* were painstakingly verified, Silver omitted all but a few explanatory footnotes or citations. By the early 1960s, then, Silver was essentially daring his detractors to prove him wrong by placing the onus on them to uncover any errors he might have made.⁹⁴

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Jim Silver to Bill Goodman, February 2, 1964, Silver Collection, Box 5.13. Silver tells his publisher, "I know that you are going to talk about footnotes, etc. to explain some of the men involved, incidents, etc. I'm willing to go ahead with this, though I am not sure any but the most essential need this kind of treatment. It won't hurt to let the reader do a little guessing, it seems to me." And later, "I still defy the opposition to point to error in *The Closed Society*." Silver, *Running Scared*, xi.

The University of Mississippi was poised to enter the new decade with increased enrollment and an inaugural Ph.D. program in the history department which Silver had been instrumental in establishing. Of the eight students enrolled, two had their master's degrees and four seemed to have the potential to be good students, a ratio which surprised Silver. Still, he jokingly questioned the necessity of the program itself. "If I were chairman of the dept. I would worry about what will happen to anyone who accidentally or otherwise comes up with a Mississippi Ph.D. in history," he mused. "What would he do with it?"⁹⁵

The last year of the decade proved to be a fairly peaceful one for Jim Silver. Although he still had some lingering maladies, he was in better general health than he had been the year before. Stepping down as department chair had provided Silver with more free time and less stress. Aside from his Rotary Club speech and his inclusion in the blanket attack on Ole Miss faculty members by White, Thorn, and Ellis, Silver managed to avoid being involved in any major controversy as a result of his actions or speeches. Indeed, his professional role was enhanced with the publication of his book, *A Life for the Confederacy*, and his summer stint at Harvard.⁹⁶

The political situation in Mississippi was foremost in Silver's mind as the decade came to a close. The possibility of racial equality within the state became more elusive as opposition grew increasingly violent, and Silver was not certain

⁹⁵ Jim Silver to Bill Silver, September 29, 1959, Bill Silver Collection.

⁹⁶ James W. Silver, *A Life for the Confederacy: As Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi*. (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959).

of his role in the unfolding drama. Silver was at a crossroads and his instincts reflected this. The subconscious voice of the youthful and fearful Jim Silver urged him to flee while the situation remained relatively calm. But the older and wiser Jim Silver, frustrated by the recalcitrant stance taken by the state and its citizenry, promoted a Br'er Rabbit-like compulsion to brazenly confront his foes and reveal the idiocy of their segregationist ideals, as he did with the *Southern Reposeure*. "Sometimes I have the notion that the bright thing is to get out of this benighted area," he surmised, "and most of the time I think it is something of an interesting game that ought to be played up to the hilt."⁹⁷ Silver would eventually do both. He clearly enjoyed his role as a Mississippi "irritant," and in the years leading up to his final departure from the state, Silver gradually became unfettered by the fears that he believed had kept him 'running scared.'⁹⁸

By 1959, white Mississippians recognized that the pressure to conform to national civil rights legislation was going to weigh heavily upon them. The firmly entrenched belief in state sovereignty was their best defense, and they needed a governor who would be willing to stand up against those who persisted in forcing the federal laws upon the citizens of the Magnolia State. They chose a man who was "prepared to defy the federal courts," the "stubborn and calculating" Ross R.

⁹⁷ Jim Silver to Bill Silver dated only "Day After Labor Day," Bill Silver Collection.

⁹⁸ After Jim had left the state in 1965, he maintained his public flogging of Mississippi and the members of its population that held to its belief in white supremacy. In an article published in December 1965, Jim said, "I know I was an irritant, but I think Mississippi was better off with me. In some ways, I regret leaving. It was a damned exciting experience and I guess I enjoyed it." See the Online Archives of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, , article from *Newsday*, "Southerners in Exile", dated December 2, 1965. SCR ID#3-9-2-35-1-1-1 found at http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/imagelisting.php (accessed November 23, 2009). The previously referenced quote also indicates that Jim was, to some extent, relishing his controversial status.

Barnett, who served as Democratic governor of Mississippi from 1960 to 1964, during which time both Barnett and his state would come to symbolize for the nation the “closed society” that existed below the Mason-Dixon Line.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ James W. Silver in the foreward to the abridged edition of *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) vii.

CHAPTER 5

THE BOOK OF JAMES, 1962 – 1964

Ross Robert Barnett was a true son of the South who proudly touted his heritage as both a Confederate rebel and an Ole Miss Rebel. Born on January 22, 1898, in Leake County, near Carthage, Mississippi, he was the youngest of ten children. His father and grandfather had been soldiers for Jefferson Davis, and young Ross grew up listening to tales of valiant Confederate battles against the Union foe. From humble beginnings picking cotton, working as a school janitor and as a door-to-door salesman, the enterprising Barnett saved his earnings for his education, first at Mississippi College and later for studying at the University of Mississippi School of Law. After receiving his law degree in 1926, Barnett hung out his shingle in Jackson and built up a successful practice specializing in personal injury lawsuits against corporations. His success with salesmanship served him well, for his carriage was dignified and reserved, and the sincerity with which he tried his cases resulted in his having considerable sway with trial juries. He cajoled with a soothing southern cadence that could quickly erupt into a thunderous roar, a tool he employed to great effect when necessary¹.

¹ “Ross Barnett, Segregationist, Dies; Governor of Mississippi in 1960’s,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1987 section 1, p. 35, Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 49-56. For more on Barnett, albeit a biased account of his years as governor, see Erle Johnston, *I Rolled With Ross: A Political Portrait*. (Baton Rouge: Moran, 1980). Surprisingly, no biography of Barnett currently exists.

After two failed attempts, Barnett campaigned for governor a third time in 1959.² Pinch-faced and bespectacled, with thinning hair and thin lips, the Democratic candidate possessed the appearance of a kindly grandfather, yet Barnett's six-foot-plus frame was imposing. His physical stature coupled with his strong beliefs in states' rights and white supremacy made him the human manifestation of the strength of Mississippi against encroaching federal legislation. Standing firm on a strict segregation platform, "Ole Ross" was strongly championed by the state's Citizens' Council, of which he was a member. He made no secret of his position regarding the supremacy of the white race, and found many supporters by clearly noting to his audiences the physical inferiority of African Americans. "The Negro is different because God made him different to punish him," he noted. "His forehead slants back. His nose is different. His lips are different. And his color sure is different."³ Mississippi voters demonstrated their faith in Barnett's ability to maintain their segregated

² Numan V. Bartley and Hugh D. Graham, *Southern Elections: County and Precinct Data, 1950 – 1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 141-42. Barnett first ran for governor in 1951, placing fourth out of the eight candidates whose names appeared on the ballot during the primary: Paul B. Johnson, Sam Lumpkin, Hugh White, and four others. Barnett earned 20 percent, or 81,674 of the 407,695 votes. In the regular election Hugh White received 51.2 percent of the votes as opposed to Paul Johnson's 48.8 percent. In his second attempt in 1955, Barnett was fourth out of five candidates in the primary, including former governor Fielding Wright (1946-1952), as well as J.P. Coleman, Paul D. Johnson, and Mary D Cain, who received only 5.2 percent of the votes. Fielding Wright became governor that year, defeating Paul D. Johnson by 11.2 percent. Barnett's victory finally came in 1959, He was the clear victor in the 1959 primary, receiving the most votes, 35.5 percent, of the four candidates, with Lieutenant Governor Carroll Gartin a close second at 34.3 percent. In the regular election, Barnett won with 54.3 percent of the 441,047 votes cast, with Gartin securing 45.7 percent of the votes. More voters were lured by Barnett's bombastic pro-segregationist stand in the highly emotional environment of this gubernatorial campaign, but his Publicity Manager, Erle Johnston, is also credited as being a driving force in Barnett's successful run for the state's highest office. Johnston had done the same for Hugh White in 1951.

³ "Mississippi Mud," *Time*, September 7, 1959, 13.

society by electing him as the state's fifty-second governor. He was sworn in only three days before his sixty-second birthday.

The use of poll taxes, literacy tests, residency, character assessments, and other such methods were heavily employed to disfranchise blacks and some poor whites in the southern states. In some states, the registration process involved a combination of these tactics, and Mississippi was the worst offender.⁴ Those in charge of Magnolia State politics had reason to fear the enfranchisement of the African American population, for their numbers were strong enough to have a major impact on election outcomes. Blacks comprised 42 percent of Mississippi's total population, the highest of any state in the nation.⁵

Barnett's gubernatorial victory came just months before the 1960 presidential election, and in his new role Barnett worked behind the scenes with other Mississippi and southern politicians in an unsuccessful attempt to throw the Democratic nomination to Harry Byrd of Virginia rather than Massachusetts senator John F. Kennedy.⁶ The nomination went to Kennedy, and that November he narrowly defeated the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, to become president. The "Solid South" may have rejoiced at having a Democrat in

⁴ Bartley and Graham, *Southern Elections*, 3, 29, 59, 93, 121, 141, 169, 201, 217, 241, 325. The authors presented their findings in a separate section for each state and remark on page 141 that "(n)o other state in the union erected such stringent barriers to voting as did Mississippi."

⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1964*, 26. Mississippi's population in 1960 was 1,257,546 white, 915,743 "Negro," and 4,852 members of other races. The black population had declined by 7 percent between 1940 and 1960.

⁶ Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 36.

the White House for the first time in eight years, but Kennedy's Catholicism, and more importantly his stance on civil rights, raised the ire of many southern voters.

On January 21, 1961, the day after Kennedy assumed the presidency, and just two weeks after the integration of the University of Georgia, James Howard Meredith, a twenty-seven-year-old Air Force veteran and student at all-black Jackson State University, sent for an application of admission to the University of Mississippi for the semester beginning February 6, 1961. He was aware that at some point during the admission process it would become necessary for him to alert the university to the fact that he was an African American. To help make this determination, Meredith paid a visit to Medgar Evers, Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP, seeking advice regarding how best to pursue admission to the state university. Evers understood only too well the precarious nature of Meredith's situation. Evers had been the second African American to apply for admission to Ole Miss in January 1954, a year after Charles Dubra's failed attempt.⁷ Evers suggested that Meredith contact Thurgood Marshall, director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, who eventually agreed to support this latest effort to integrate the university.⁸

⁷ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 272-73; Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 60-79; Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 31; Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie*, 65. Most historical accounts of Meredith's case rely solely on his own retelling of the event. Russell Barrett provides a legal chronology of *Meredith v Fair, et al* as an appendix in *Integration at Ole Miss*, 247-251. In addition, a chronology of NAACP activities, including the Meredith case, can be found in the organization's annual reports during this period.

⁸ James Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1966), 56-57. Also Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 225.

On January 31, 1961, James Meredith returned the completed documents for admission and included a letter informing the registrar of his racial status. “I sincerely hope that your attitude toward me as a potential member of your student body reflects the attitude of the school, and that it will not change upon learning that I am not a white applicant. I am an American – Mississippi – Negro citizen,” he revealed.⁹ Meredith also expressed hope that his request for admission would be handled tactfully, “in a manner that will be complimentary to the University and the state of Mississippi,” while acknowledging that it was he who “will, no doubt, suffer the greatest consequences of this event.”¹⁰ The registrar, Robert Ellis, responded five days later with a Western Union telegram informing Meredith that applications received after January 25 were not being considered for the coming semester. He was also advised not to appear on the campus for registration.¹¹

With his hopes dashed for admittance by the spring semester, Meredith looked toward the future. Under the guidance of his NAACP Legal Defense attorney, Constance Baker Motley, he maintained communication with the university for the next three months in an attempt to secure admission for the summer or fall semesters. The registrar’s office, however, remained frustratingly mute until May 25, 1961, when Meredith received word from the university that his application for admission had been denied. Citing numerous reasons,

⁹ Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 57. While not photocopies, various correspondences are reproduced as part of the narrative of Meredith book.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 223.

including transfer credits from an unrecognized institution and inadequate letters of recommendation, the university felt well justified in refusing him admission and saw no reason “for mentioning any other deficiencies.” The registrar returned the money orders Meredith submitted to pay for application and dorm fees and his file, he was told, was closed.¹² Six days later, Meredith, Motley, Evers, and R. Jess Brown, a local black attorney who agreed to take Meredith’s case, made the ninety mile trip to Meridian to see Judge Sidney C. Mize of the Mississippi Federal Court to file suit against Ole Miss.¹³ For the next eighteen months, Meredith’s fate was bandied around by the judicial system in Mississippi and the U.S. Supreme Court. Convinced that the registrar had followed the proper procedure, Mize did everything in his power to delay action on the case and succeeded. While Meredith waited for a resolution, he missed the registration deadlines for the fall 1961 and spring 1962 semesters.

Meredith’s integration attempt, however, was not an isolated incident during this period, for others were taking up the mantle of civil rights as well. On March 27, 1961, nine students from Tougaloo College, another of Mississippi’s all-black institutions, held a sit-in at the Jackson Public Library which was reserved for use by white patrons only. Refusing to leave the premises, the students were arrested and jailed for more than thirty-two hours. A throng of supporters attended the trial of the “Tougaloo Nine” the following day, where they were convicted, fined, given suspended sentences and quickly released. The

¹² Ibid, 77.

¹³ Ibid, 105-107. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 281-84.

library sit-in, however, inspired others to attempt to integrate other city facilities such as public parks and the zoo.¹⁴ The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) announced preparations for an extensive voter-registration project in the southern states. The organization's efforts in Georgia sparked a massive response by black groups throughout the area that combined their forces in an attempt to integrate the entire city piece by piece. Between November 1961 and August 1962, the Albany Movement, with the assistance of Martin Luther King, Jr., struggled against the forces of police chief Laurie Pritchett and his men, as well as conservative blacks and white opponents.¹⁵

At the same time, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) sent thirteen Freedom Riders on a bus trip between Washington D.C. and Birmingham, Alabama, with a planned destination of New Orleans. They sought to determine if the southern states were complying with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on *Boynton v. Virginia* that banned segregated interstate travel not only on buses and trains but also in the terminals, including related facilities such as rest rooms and dining areas. Throughout the month of May 1961, Freedom Riders in Alabama were met by angry mobs of Klansmen and other citizens who beat the volunteers and firebombed the buses. In Jackson, Mississippi, violence was eschewed in favor of incarceration. At the bus station, city police and state

¹⁴ Dittmer, *Local People*, 87-89

¹⁵ Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 66-77. See also Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 31-44 and Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 524-61. Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 256-69.

highway patrolmen simply arrested disembarking bus passengers and escorted them into the waiting law enforcement vehicles.¹⁶ “When they didn’t obey the officials here...we just simply put them in jail,” Governor Barnett later recalled, “and when the jails were all filled and the mayor’s chicken coops down on the fairground were all filled, there were thirty-two of them left, and it was my happy privilege to send all of them to the State Penitentiary at Parchman and put them in maximum security cells...so they would be protected, you see. He then smugly reported, “You haven’t heard of any more freedom riders in Mississippi.”¹⁷

Meanwhile, members of the Citizens’ Council were increasing their efforts to educate the southern masses on the legitimacy of their cry for segregation. They had found a new hero in Carlton Putnam, whose 1961 book, *Race and Reason*, presumably gave white supremacists evidence of black inferiority.¹⁸ Proclaiming himself and the others cited within his work as experts on the biological weaknesses of the black race, Putnam employed generalizations as proof with which to debunk the sociological and anthropological studies that showed otherwise. The Council invested some of its funds in purchasing copies of the volume, which were distributed to various recipients with a plea to read it,

¹⁶ Hogan, *Many Hearts, One Mind*, 45-55. Dittmer, *Local People*, 90-9; Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, with Sarah Flynn, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 73–96. See also Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 412-491, and Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 229-255. The definitive source for this massive endeavor is Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Ross R. Barnett, recorded interview by Dennis O’Brien, May 6, 1969, p. 18. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, http://www.jfklibrary.org/NR/rdonlyres/A6EC14C6-ADAA-4F4D-8D92-A56180C26AD0/43850/BarnettRoss_oralhistory.pdf (accessed September 14, 2009).

¹⁸ Carleton Putnam, *Race and Reason, A Yankee View*, (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

discuss it with friends, and lobby bookstores to order more copies, thus assuring the successful distribution of Putnam's book. Accompanying each complimentary copy was a letter from Council Secretary Robert B. Patterson enlisting the assistance of the "Dear Friend" who received the volume. "Will you help by starting a run on the bookstores today?" he cajoled. However, he also asked that they do so politely and not "antagonize the bookstores by harassing them. Enlist their cooperation by making your efforts profitable to them without becoming an annoyance."¹⁹ Segregationists felt strongly that Putnam's work was irrefutable evidence in the validity of white supremacy that would silence their opponents forever. Silver viewed it as making a "false case for existing racism." The Citizens' Council and Governor Ross Barnett also helped expose the state's citizens to Putnam's "scientific evidence" by sponsoring a "Race and Reason" rally in Jackson that fall, where the author was hailed as the guest of honor. It was Silver's belief, however, that the rest of Mississippi did not share the governor's obvious enthusiasm for the author and his work and his appeal quickly waned.²⁰

While James Meredith was awaiting word regarding his admission to Ole Miss, James Silver was already immersed in the university's integration battle. Silver accompanied Will Campbell as part of a small group of Ole Miss faculty members invited to Washington D.C. He spoke with John Doar and Burke Marshall of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice regarding

¹⁹ Robert B. Patterson to "Dear Friend," July 10, 1961. Box 21.6, Silver Collection.

²⁰ Silver, *Running Scared*, 72.

Meredith's application and inevitable admission to Ole Miss and, more important at this point, sought to define how it would affect Mississippi. Silver recalled that the contingent met for the better part of a day, and the conference resulted in a consensus of opinions that a show of force would be all the action necessary for Meredith's successful registration.²¹ A few months later, their estimation of the amount of resistance by Mississippians to the forced integration of their schools would prove profoundly naïve.

Since the middle of the previous decade he had been immersed in researching Civil War history, the result of which was the publication of a new book every two years: *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (1957), and *A Life for the Confederacy* (1959), and *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As Seen in Retrospect* (1961).²² While the volumes themselves may not have proved controversial, writing them armed Silver with more ammunition to direct at the recalcitrant Mississippi society that failed to see the correlation between the state's actions in 1861 and 1961. In addition, for over two years he published a total of twenty-two essays on the Civil War for a monthly publication, *The New Mexico Electric News*.²³ His books and speaking engagements provided him with a public forum in which to present his findings. He toiled for many hours on

²¹ Ibid.

²² See James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda*, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957); James W. Silver, ed., *A Life For The Confederacy, As Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co. G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi*, (Jackson, Tennessee: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959); James W. Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As Seen in Retrospect*, (Baton Rouge: Published for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, by Louisiana University Press, 1961).

²³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 73. The articles were written between April 1961 and September 1963. Silver received twenty-five dollars for each installment.

a speech given at the Fifth Annual Civil War Conference on the Pennsylvania campus of Gettysburg College on November 19, 1961. In his address, "The Tragedy of Southern Leadership (1820–1960)," an expanded version of his 1956 Rotary talk, Silver concluded that:

southerners since the Civil War, for all their flamboyant dedication to the Lost Cause, have subsequently repudiated the extremists who led them into three generations of tribulation, for the South's authentic heroes are those who offered their lives on the field of battle, the Lees and the Jacksons and the Johnstons, the ones who had overwhelmingly opposed secession as the proper course of action.²⁴

To imply that secession was not the proper response by the South was a newsworthy statement during a time when the battle cry of states' rights was being elicited once again. The Associated Press picked up the speech, and a few newspapers ran items on its "controversial" argument. Silver declined an offer to have his speech printed in a local weekly publication after recalling the reaction of the Board of Trustees to his Rotary talk. He was unwilling to risk encountering opposition that could result in the possible loss of his position at Ole Miss. Still, he toyed with the idea of turning an expanded version of his essay into a book "partly because of the influence it might have on the situation in Mississippi."²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, 175. The entire speech is reprinted on pages 155-75.

²⁵ Ibid, 77, 175. Silver took a leave of absence for 1962-1963 to pursue this endeavor. Silver states that at the time he gave this address he "had no notion of being elected to the presidency of the Southern Historical Association, yet he must have considered the possibility since he had been elected as vice-president at the group's annual conference only a ten days earlier in Chattanooga, Tennessee, November 9-11, 1961. See "Historical News and Comments," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 48 (March 1962): 760-778.

In retrospect, Silver labeled himself a “Paper Radical” during this period.²⁶ Clearly he felt more confident in his public statements, buoyed by the accumulated knowledge acquired during his lengthy career as a historian, yet he claimed that at the time he gave his address at the Civil War Conference, he did not possess enough confidence in his work to have it published.²⁷ It is also evident that he was fearful of public reaction to *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, published for the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, by the cautious remarks found in his introduction. Relying on a quote by historian James W. Garner, who argued that Southern history should be written by a southerner but not from a southern perspective but rather only as the truth, Silver “set forth his findings without fear or favor.” As editor of the anthology, he hoped that readers would recognize that the volume was comprised of the work of “many people secure in their knowledge of a great and cherished heritage.”²⁸ Once again he stood firm in his convictions regarding the accuracy of any material that a reader might find offensive. He also cleverly deflected any criticism that might be directed at him by reminding the reader that the words contained within the book are not his.

During his current research, Silver was cognizant of the parallels between the Confederate Mississippi of a century ago and its present militaristic stance in favor of states’ rights and white supremacy. The possibility of expanding his essay into a book began to formulate, since its timeliness was appropriate and

²⁶ Ibid, 69.

²⁷ Ibid, 73.

²⁸ Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, x.

the information contained within might help influence some citizens who were open to logical thinking. The project, however, was put on hold as once again the duties of his teaching position required his attention. Adding to his already busy agenda were the responsibilities accompanying his new role as vice president of the Southern Historical Association.

While Silver was studying Mississippi's history of a century ago, the state was on the brink of instigating another historical crisis. Meredith's trial continued its progression through the court system, causing tensions to escalate within the state and on campus as the integration of Ole Miss appeared inevitable. In January 1962, eight months after the filing of his suit, Judge Sidney Mize of the district court ruled against Meredith and determined that the university held no policy regarding segregation. The case was dismissed, but an appeal was immediately filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals, which reversed Judge Mize's decision. The matter was not resolved, however. Appellate Judge Benjamin Franklin Cameron of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a stay against the decision, meaning that there would be no further action until the U.S. Supreme Court returned its decision. On September 10, 1962, Justice Hugo Black, who had written most of the *Boynton* decision, overruled the state's objections and mandated that Meredith be admitted to the university. Fourteen long months since the initial lawsuit was filed, Meredith had a seemingly indisputable answer.

Governor Barnett, however, refused to let federal legislation interfere with his control of the state. Meredith would never be admitted, he confidently asserted. Instead, Barnett threatened to close the university system before allowing integration.²⁹ Declaring the state's sovereignty over its public educational facilities as defined in the Tenth Amendment, the governor resurrected the doctrine of interposition, which essentially granted authority to the state in a situation where federal mandates were deemed unconstitutional. The same tactic had been unsuccessfully attempted in Virginia and Arkansas, yet Barnett possessed unwavering confidence in his ability to exercise such authority. "I believe in the tenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States," he stated in a later interview, "and I thought that the leadership in Washington would have a little respect for the tenth amendment, which clearly and unmistakably provides that the powers not delegated by the Constitution to the federal government and when not prohibited by the Constitution to the states belong to states or the people thereof."³⁰ The university's board of trustees, unwilling to place themselves at personal risk and under great pressure by the governor, transferred to Barnett the full authority to act on their behalf on all matters concerning the Meredith case. Thus armed, Barnett assumed the role of registrar of the university and personally served Meredith with official notification denying his admission because it would "lead to a breach of the peace and be

²⁹ Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie*, 74-76.

³⁰ Ross R. Barnett, recorded interview by Dennis O'Brien, May 6, 1969, p. 6.

contrary to the administrative procedures and regulations of the University of Mississippi and the laws of the state of Mississippi.³¹

Barnett's defiant stance was quickly challenged by the federal government. President Kennedy and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, engaged Barnett in a series of telephone conversations attempting to convince him to capitulate to the Supreme Court ruling and avoid what was sure to become a very ugly and very public confrontation. Ever the politician, Barnett granted the Kennedys their appropriate deference while politely holding firm to his own unwavering stance. Insisting upon his need to continue to show a stoic public appearance in the face of federal intervention, Barnett attempted to convince the president to engage in a charade in which he would step aside and allow Meredith to enter the registrar's office only under the threat of a weapon wielded by a federal enforcer. The Kennedys agreed to allow Barnett some public posturing, but when the governor failed to follow through with his own promises to the administration, the president and attorney general dispensed with diplomacy. A much-publicized half-time address in Jackson, Mississippi, by a fist-raising Barnett at the football game between Ole Miss and the University of Kentucky on September 29, 1962, reinforced in the Kennedys the need for stronger action by the federal government.³²

³¹ Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 189. See also Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 75; and Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 283.

³² Numerous accounts of the standoff between Barnett and the Kennedy Administration in any of the previous referenced accounts of the Meredith incident including Lambert, *The Battle for Ole Miss*, 108-110 and 114-115 and Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 290-336. See also Doyle, *An American Insurrection*; Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie*; and Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss*.

In the end, the words and deeds of Ole Ross were not enough to keep Ole Miss from being integrated, but not without a fight. Barnett's speech had stirred up the emotions of his constituents, and with Meredith scheduled to register on campus the following day, it soon became evident that not every car arriving in Oxford and the university campus on September 30 was full of spectators returning from the football game. By mid-afternoon, military transport planes carrying members of the U.S. Department of Justice and over 500 federal troops arrived at the municipal airport and were soon being dispatched to the campus, where they surrounded the Lyceum building in which the registrar's office was housed. With the battle lines drawn, reinforcements from the opposing side began pouring into the area. Tensions and emotions were high as night fell and anticipations mounted about how the drama would unfold.

The exact number in the crowd and the percentage of non-residents in attendance is not known, but it is estimated that at its peak a mob of 4,000 persons were on the campus, some of whom came armed. An accurate version of that night's events cannot be fully ascertained, as well, as confusion and pandemonium reigned once the throng's verbal taunting of the federal troops escalated into physical violence. Any item at hand was used as a weapon and thrown at the law enforcers, ranging from innocuous things like cigarette butts to bricks or rocks that could inflict serious harm. When the marshals preemptively applied their gas masks the crowd temporarily retreated, but by 8:00pm the

situation was deemed serious enough to warrant the use of tear gas and an all-out riot ensued.³³

The crisis continued throughout the night and eyewitness accounts vary greatly. What is known, however, is the end result of Mississippi's attempt to thwart integration at its revered state educational facility. The battle of Ole Miss claimed the lives of two persons, resulted in at least seventy-five arrests and countless injuries, saw the town of Oxford become synonymous with hatred and violence, and stopped Jim Silver, who beforehand had been running scared, dead in his tracks.³⁴

On the morning of October 1, 1962, James Howard Meredith enrolled for the fall semester, and from the beginning, Jim Silver was one of his supporters. Silver was one of the few faculty members to sit with Meredith in the cafeteria; he advised him in his studies, and did his best to befriend the lone black student. Still, the two men hardly experienced anything outside of a mentor/student relationship. Meredith makes the occasional reference to Silver in his memoir of his Ole Miss experience but in the same context with which he writes of other faculty members.³⁵ Indeed, Silver was not even teaching on campus at that time,

³³ The events surrounding Meredith's integration of the University of Mississippi are well known and many volumes exist which afford a detailed account of the actions leading up to the riot as well as the aftermath. The most recent and comprehensive narrative is Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*.

³⁴ Weill, *In A Madhouse's Din*, 81. Also James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 207-208.

³⁵ Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 259, 282-85. Silver's interactions with Meredith obviously had a greater affect on him than on Meredith. In some of his writings Silver implies that he and Meredith had a rather close relationship considering the circumstances, Meredith viewed it differently. "Remembering his promise to do something to make life more wholesome for me at the university during the second semester," Silver asked Meredith to join him and political science

having requested a leave of absence for the 1962–1963 academic year to focus on his writing.³⁶

By Christmas of that year, Meredith's academic performance was threatening his success. His grades were poor and his champions on campus and in the nation's capital worried that Mississippi's integration experiment would prove to be a failure. There was more at stake than Meredith's degree, of course, for his expulsion or self-imposed removal from Ole Miss would bolster the arguments of those who sought a return to the lily-white composition of their schools and society. Meredith was seriously considering not returning to campus for a second semester, and in their occasional meetings Silver attempted to persuade Meredith to continue his education. He also kept the White House advised of the crisis through frequent correspondence with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Special Assistant to the President.³⁷ Meredith ultimately decided to continue on his present course and in time his situation on campus improved slightly. Still, until his graduation he remained under the protection of armed guards courtesy of the federal government. Although he was never formerly welcomed by the student body, the palpable hatred of his classmates eventually diminished. In

professor Russell Barrett in a game of golf. On the scheduled day, Barrett did not appear but an Ole Miss chaplain rounded out their threesome. Of course, Meredith's security contingent followed along, and soon other spectators came to witness the event. After managing to play seven holes in two-and-a-hours, Meredith suggested they quit. "Silver seemed relieved and jumped at my suggestion," Meredith states. "I think he had second thoughts about endeavoring to change Mississippi's social patterns in such an openly exposed arena." The two men played again "maybe two more times, but the initiative was all mine." Meredith found a frequent partner in an unnamed department head who, "(u)nlike Jim Silver, Russell Barrett" and a handful of others "who played with me occasionally to fulfill some sort of obligation that they felt they had, the professor played with me because he liked the game."

³⁶ Silver, *The Closed Society*, 76.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 171.

August 1963, in front of a large contingent of supporters, James Meredith made history a second time by becoming the first African American to graduate from the University of Mississippi. Among the crowd was Meredith's three-year-old son who, he noted, was "not yet aware of the existence of the system...that would seek in every possible way to render him less than human."³⁸ Yet evidence of Meredith's own success in breaking that system came nearly forty years later when his middle son, Joseph Howard, followed in his footsteps and beyond, graduating from Ole Miss with a Ph.D. in Business Administration and with the honor of being the Distinguished Graduate Student of 2001-2002.³⁹

Three months after Meredith's departure from the campus, Jim Silver assumed Meredith's position as the scourge of Ole Miss. During his academic leave, Silver's intention was to expand his lecture from the Civil War Conference into a book and to focus on his role as president of the Southern Historical Association. Ironically, he was the first Mississippian to hold that position. As his term was drawing to a close, he pondered more seriously the contents of his

³⁸ Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 326.

³⁹ Lambert, *The Battle of Ole Miss*, 171. Tragically, Joseph Howard Meredith died at age 39 on February 8, 2008 from complications of lupus. See Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 308-311, for African American students who followed Meredith's integration of Ole Miss. Cleve McDowell became the second African American admitted to Ole Miss during Meredith's last semester in the summer of 1963 and the two men shared a dormitory room. McDowell was expelled the following year for carrying a handgun that he purchased following Meredith's departure left him the sole black student on campus. The following February, Cleveland Donald enrolled, albeit at the order of a federal court. Donald followed up his undergraduate degree in history from the University of Mississippi with graduate work at Cornell. In 1979 he became the first director of the African American Studies program at Ole Miss. The first black student admitted without a court order was Irwin Walker in 1964, and two years later there were fourteen black students enrolled. William Doyle notes that the school was not "all-white" prior to Meredith's attendance, for yearbooks prior and up to 1962 show students of "every color except black," Doyle, *An American Insurrection*, 328.

presidential address to be given at the organization's annual conference in Asheville, North Carolina, in November 1963. Abandoning his original plan to revise his Civil War Conference speech on *The Tragedy of Southern Leadership*, he chose instead to "tell the truth" regarding the circumstances of Meredith's integration of Ole Miss, "to relate in plain fashion what had taken place, and then to put it all in historical perspective."⁴⁰

The events surrounding the university's integration affected Silver profoundly. He was disgusted to "watch practically all state agencies – and some brought into existence for this express purpose – undertake studied campaigns to distort the truth about the entrance of Meredith to Ole Miss."⁴¹ Silver concluded that what was occurring in Mississippi at the time was identical to that which took place on the eve of the Civil War, that once again citizens were being led down a path of destruction based upon misinformation. He made it his mission to expose the facts, but his attempts at reaching the masses through the editorial pages of the local papers were met with a mix of accolades and harsh criticisms. They also garnered Silver some unwelcome notoriety but reinforced his belief that the true story must be told. This story, this truth would be the basis of Silver's presidential address to the SHA and his own rebel yell to the closed minds of Mississippi.

Determined to deliver a purely historical account of Mississippi race relations, Silver spent the majority of 1963 conducting research for the contents

⁴⁰ Silver, *The Closed Society*, ix.

⁴¹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 76.

of his speech as well as preparing for the possible consequences of his comments. By keeping his comments in an academic format, he recognized that his assertions would be difficult if not impossible to refute by the segregationists who were sure to pounce upon his words. Still, there existed a very real threat of personal harm as a result of his remarks. Those who chose to speak in favor of integration and civil rights faced the loss of their jobs, their houses, and indeed their very lives. In May 1963, the world watched in horror as police officers in Birmingham, Alabama, responded to peaceful protesters with water hoses and police dogs.⁴² What became known as the “Jackson Movement” was well under way by this time and in late May 1963, black students from Tougaloo College began a sit-in at the Woolworth’s lunch counter in downtown Jackson, Mississippi. Angry white mobs harassed the demonstrators in full view of law enforcement officials who offered no interference. On June 12, Medgar Evers’s life was tragically cut short after being shot in the back by a sniper in the driveway of his home in Jackson. Although his assassin, a known white supremacist named Byron De La Beckwith, was quickly arrested, in his two subsequent trials the all-white juries failed to reach a verdict.⁴³ A conviction and life sentence for Beckwith would not come until 1994, thirty-one years after Evers’s death. On Sunday morning, September 15, 1963, a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four girls

⁴² Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 758-61.

⁴³ Dittmer, *Local People*, 157-69. See also Erle Johnston, *Mississippi’s Defiant Years: An Interpretive Documentary With Personal Experiences*, (Forest, Mississippi: Lake Harbor Publishers), 1990, 171-87.

aged eleven to fourteen. Again justice was late in coming. Unlike the Evers murder, no investigation was conducted at the time. Robert Chambliss, who was identified by an eyewitness as having put dynamite under the church steps, was arrested in the immediate aftermath but was convicted only for illegal possession of 122 sticks of the explosive. In 1977, Chambliss would be tried and convicted for the murders of the four Sunday school students but a full inquiry and further charges were not made until the next millennium.⁴⁴

Despite the escalating casualties of the civil rights movement, some positive events occurred at this time to spur on the legions who struggled for equality. In May 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court reinforced the meaning of its directive in the *Brown* case and called for no further delays in implementing public school integration “with all deliberate speed.” A month later two black students, Vivien Malone and James Hood, were admitted to the University of Alabama under circumstances similar to those in Mississippi only nine months earlier. Alabama Governor George Wallace, like Ross Barnett, physically blocked the entryway doors and capitulated only after federal intervention by the Kennedy White House. On August 28, nearly a quarter of a million people showed their support for federal civil rights legislation by participating in the March on Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King delivered his stirring “I Have A Dream” speech.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 571-587.

⁴⁵ The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom started at the Washington Monument and ended at the Lincoln Memorial, where King delivered this, the closing speech, which was

In 1963, Silver again left Mississippi to teach a summer session elsewhere, this time at Emory University in Atlanta, the home base of the Southern Regional Council (SRC). As he had done previously for Bill, Silver actively campaigned to find employment for his daughter Betty during her summer break from Wellesley. With his extensive list of connections, he managed to secure for her a job conducting research at the state archives in Jackson, Mississippi, on behalf of John Doar of the Justice Department. Jim and Dutch were naturally concerned for her safety as a young, white, unaccompanied female residing in a Mississippi motel for an extended period. The fact that she was Jim Silver's daughter would seemingly increase the chances of being harassed but she remained unscathed during her employment period.⁴⁶

Aside from instructing classes, Silver found time for some interesting extracurricular activities as well. Soon after his arrival he was invited to speak to a group of university faculty, staff, and students to discuss his views on the events that had recently transpired in the Magnolia State. It became clear that Silver's pro-integrationist views were nearly as unwelcome in Georgia as they were in Mississippi, for he faced down some outspoken members of the audience and afterward received some uncomplimentary telephone calls.⁴⁷

televised live. King's stirring speech and inspired delivery resulted in more pressure on the government for civil rights action, as well as a Nobel Peace Prize for King in 1964. See Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 846-87.

⁴⁶ Silver, *Running Scared*, 84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 83.

A week later, Silver and five other men, including his son, Bill, and *Newsweek* reporter Karl Fleming, attended a rally of the Ku Klux Klan. Although the men recognized the danger in appearing at such an event, the entourage returned from their expedition unimpressed by the organization, its leaders or supporters.⁴⁸ In August Silver accepted an invitation to speak to a SNCC training group at Atlanta University. Intending to use the opportunity to give an outline of the speech he planned to deliver to the SHA, Silver instead found his words continually drowned out by the impromptu refrain of “We Shall Overcome.” Later, when answering questions from the audience, Jim commented on his personal vulnerability should any of his enemies redirect their anger toward him by inflicting injury upon nine-year-old Gail Silver instead. When asked if he was unwilling to sacrifice his daughter to the cause, Silver instinctively responded as any father would. Commenting “to the effect that I wouldn’t sacrifice Gail for all the Negroes in America, and I may have added Africa to boot,” he noted a palpable change in the audience. “The room temperature dropped to the point of refrigeration,” he noted, “and I was later told that occasionally thereafter I was referred to as “Uncle Tom Silver.” The entire experience “only added to my perplexity as to how to get along with blacks.”⁴⁹

Toward the end of the term at Emory, Silver approached the Southern Regional Council to discuss the possibility of publishing his forthcoming SHA

⁴⁸ Ibid, 83-84. Curiously, Karl Fleming doesn’t mention this event in his memoir, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Essay* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

⁴⁹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 85.

speech as a pamphlet following its delivery. That spring he had made arrangements with Ira Harkey, the outspoken editor of the *Pascagoula Chronicle*, to do this very thing, but Harkey sold his newspaper and left Mississippi that July. After fourteen years of castigating the “goons” who perpetrated the oppression of blacks in his state, Harkey was simply unable to bear any longer the “vacuum of an ostracism” that surrounded him.⁵⁰ Fortunately, Silver found an advocate in Leslie Dunbar, executive director of the SRC, who agreed to assume the role Harkey had abandoned as distributor of the pamphlet. However, after reading a draft of the first twenty pages, Dunbar reconsidered. He felt that Silver’s writings appeared better suited to publication as a book, where it had the potential to reach a larger audience.⁵¹

A proposal to Harcourt, Brace and World brought an interest from the publishing firm, but Silver’s first obligation was to Dunbar and the Southern Regional Council. Publication by the SRC, however, could never match the distribution or public relation abilities of Harcourt Brace. Silver recognized that, regardless of which organization published his work, his goals had only a minimal chance for success. He explained to Dunbar that his “major concern is to set the record straight and to have some impact on Mississippi thinking. The 1st I have largely done and the second is damned unlikely.”⁵² In the end, Dunbar offered Silver his blessing to sign with Harcourt, Brace, but the contract did not include a

⁵⁰ Ira B. Harkey, *The Smell of Burning Crosses: An Autobiography of a Mississippi Newspaperman*, (Jacksonville, Illinois: Harris-Wolfe and Co, 1967), 18.

⁵¹ Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, xviii. See also Leslie Dunbar to James Silver, October 24, 1963. Box 12.5, Silver Collection.

⁵² James Silver to Leslie Dunbar, October 22, 1963. Box 12.5, Silver Collection.

date of publication since a book would need to be significantly longer than the proposed speech. Silver felt that the momentum generated by the speech should not be allowed to fade before the book's release and hoped for a relatively quick publication. "The story as I have written it will erode in some degree with the lapse of time in spite of the fact that it is a historical document and from that standpoint will be discussed ten years from now," he informed his publisher, Bill Goodman.⁵³ Silver was shortsighted in his forecast, however, for nearly a half-century after the book's release it remains a must-read volume for anyone studying civil rights or Mississippi history.

To restrict the use of Silver's speech following his November delivery to the Southern Historical Association, Bill Goodman advised his client to obtain a copyright that would prohibit publications from reproducing his presidential address without the author's approval. Silver arranged with Leslie Dunbar for the SRC to distribute a limited number of pamphlets of his speech, and the SHA was granted the authority to sell copies as well, but only a book could have the far-reaching audience that Silver sought. If publication occurred while interest was still high, the book would be assured a large readership. "I want this material, in whatever form, widely distributed in Mississippi," he instructed Dunbar, "even if it is a sort of last will and testament."⁵⁴

In Asheville, North Carolina, on November 7, 1963, James Silver stepped down as president of the Southern Historical Association on the last night of its

⁵³ James Silver to Mr. William Goodman, October 24, 1963. Box 12.5, Silver Collection.

⁵⁴ James Silver to Leslie Dunbar, October 22, 1963. Box 12.5, Silver Collection.

annual meeting.⁵⁵ The audience responded to his presidential address, “Mississippi: The Closed Society,” with thunderous applause and publicity surrounding his speech was swift. Silver’s scathing rebuke of his adopted state was prominently noted in newspapers throughout the country after wire services picked up the story. Within days, the mailbox at Faculty 6 and in the Ole Miss Department of History was overflowing with correspondence from friend and foe alike. They ranged in emotion and intensity from anger to jubilation, were written on everything from embossed stationery to scraps of paper, sealed in personalized envelopes or ink-stamped with slogans such as “mailed in occupied Mississippi” or the Citizens’ Council tagline, “Brotherhood by Bayonet.”

Historian Eugene Genovese was quick to offer his compliments, as did John Hope Franklin, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who passed his copy of the speech on to President Kennedy. Not surprisingly, derogatory comments from American citizens were plentiful. “I don’t address you as Professor because to me you aren’t even in that category,” wrote one, while others were more accusing. “You’re no man, you’re a traitor,” claimed another. Some encouraged him to relocate. One helpful writer advised, “if your heart is bleeding so profusely, I suggest that you transfer to some institution catering to oppressed groups,” while another instructed Silver to “pack your bags and go to where you are wanted, like Washington or Moscow.” Some writers ranted through multiple pages while others proved eloquently succinct such as the typed index card

⁵⁵ Silver, *Running Scared*, 90-1. (Cite JHS and newspaper articles)

reading, "Dear Sir, In this area you are considered a real screw ball that should be make [sic] to work for a living. Sincerely, James W. Chappel." Clearly, Silver's speech had struck a nerve within southern society and, as predicted, the majority of his correspondents were unable to intelligently refute his assertions.

Some of Silver's mail was imprinted with slogans such as, "K.K.K. Kennedy Kosher Cabinet." or "Kennedy Kids, King (Martin Luther), Kruschev." "Kick the Kennedy Clan out of Washington, Rid the Nation of the Kennedy Disease" instructed one, while others found a different analogy and proclaimed, "The Three Stooges!! Bobby-Teddy and Jacky, Lunatics on the loose."⁵⁶ Liberalism in any form was hardly tolerated in the Magnolia State, and many segregationists had their hopes renewed when John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, just three weeks after Silver's speech at the SHA. Even after the president was killed, the surviving Kennedys remained a popular target of the Citizens' Council and like-minded individuals.

Silver hoped for a spring release of the book and immediately following the conference in Asheville he set about completing the manuscript, working feverishly for four months. In February 1964 he sent the completed work to Harcourt, Brace, and at the same time his original speech appeared in the *Journal of Southern History*.⁵⁷ An initial publication date for the book was set for May 10, but circumstances arose that resulted in the postponement of its public

⁵⁶ Box 10.35, Silver Collection. Several folders of letters can be found in the collection, both positive and negative.

⁵⁷ James W. Silver, "Mississippi: The Closed Society." *Journal of Southern History*, 30 (February 1964): 3-34.

release. While Mississippi grappled with the accusation of its status as a closed society and the publicity machine of the publisher was preparing its media campaign for the book, Jim Silver was contending with the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Higher Learning one final time.

The “Closed Society” speech raised the ire of many southerners, but Silver’s detractors were far more prominent than those citizens who merely wrote to call him names such as “a vile minded, mulatto loving falsifying character assassin name calling hypocrite [*sic*].”⁵⁸ The Board of Trustees once again called for an inquiry and began a lengthy investigation into the professor’s activities, but that did not mark the plateau of disdain for Silver or his ideology. The Mississippi legislature entered the fray in March 1964, when two state legislators introduced initiatives to silence the tenured professor, one demanding his dismissal from the faculty of Ole Miss and the other seeking to prohibit Silver from speaking on specific topics. If the university was unwilling to act to remove Jim Silver, the senator concluded, then the legislature should.⁵⁹ In the end, they did nothing.

Silver received from the Board of Trustees a four-page letter dated April 27, 1964, citing fifteen points of inquiry concerning his “fitness as a member of the faculty of the University of Mississippi,” and informing him that he was required “to state under oath before a stenographer or reporter” his comments on

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 201.

these matters at a hearing before the Board. Although there were no formal charges listed, Silver was invited to bring any reference material he might need as well as a counselor or attorney, if desired.⁶⁰ Recognizing the serious intent of the Board to take some type of drastic action, Silver enlisted the assistance of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Association of American University Professors, the American Friends Service Committee, and the law office of Teller, Biedenharn & Rogers. The Board had no legal grounds for Silver's termination and the attorneys agreed to defend him against the present charges while "strongly suggesting that [he] curtail any activity which would jeopardize [his] primary objective" of maintaining his position at Ole Miss.⁶¹ After several months of posturing by both sides, the matter was essentially resolved when the Board approved Silver's request for a leave of absence for the coming academic year.⁶²

At approximately the same time that the Board of Trustees notified Silver of their extensive inquiry into his activities, he also received an inquiry from Vincent DeSantis, head of the department of history at the University of Notre Dame, asking if he would be interested in serving as a visiting professor for the 1964-1965 year.⁶³ Silver was eager to accept the offer for a number of reasons

⁶⁰ E.R. Jobe to James W. Silver, April 27, 1964. Box 20.4, Silver Collection. Silver, *Running Scared*, 96-9. See also Appendix F, "Correspondence Related to James Silver and the Board of Trustees (1964)," 183-205, where many of the documents have been reproduced.

⁶¹ E.R. Jobe to James W. Silver, April 27, 1964.

⁶² Silver, *Running Scared*, 99.

⁶³ Silver, *Running Scared*, 103. Vincent P. DeSantis to James Silver, April 1, 1964. Box 19.16, Silver Collection. The Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame, was also a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Silver may have

but withheld submission of a formal request to the Board once he had been notified that they requested a hearing. Silver feared that the Board would either outright refuse the request or worse, interpret it as an attempt by him to flee the state in fear. As the proceedings continued, however, Silver eventually was assured by a reliable source that the Board would be receptive to his request for a leave of absence. He submitted the necessary papers to Chancellor John D. Williams on May 31, 1964, two years after James Meredith filed his lawsuit for admission to the University of Mississippi. Silver received notice of the Board's approval of his request on June 19, 1964 – three days before *Mississippi: The Closed Society* was released to a public reeling from even more racially motivated violence in the Magnolia state.⁶⁴

Mississippi: The Closed Society was released on June 22, 1964, one day after the disappearance of three civil rights workers in nearby Philadelphia, Mississippi. Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney were canvassing remote areas of the state on behalf of CORE to register African Americans to vote. The young men were participants in the massive voter registration drive in Mississippi organized by CORE and SNCC in which hundreds of mainly northern white college students volunteered to infiltrate the

accepted this appointment knowing that it would be a refuge from the “closed society” of Mississippi and where he would experience more academic freedom.

⁶⁴ Letter from J.D. Williams, Chancellor, University of Mississippi to Dr. James W. Silver, dated 19 June, 1964, Box 14.29, Silver Collection. The Reverend Theodore Hesburgh was also a member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. With Hesburgh at the helm of the University of Notre Dame, Silver may have accepted this appointment knowing that it would be a refuge from the “closed society” of Mississippi and where he would experience more academic freedom.

Magnolia state to work with local activists and others for the purpose of instructing the disfranchised masses on how to prepare for qualifications of voter registration.⁶⁵ Mississippi posed the greatest challenge due to the stringent regulations it imposed upon its citizens of voting age, a combination so restrictive that only 6 percent of Mississippi's black population qualified.⁶⁶ The search for the three men became a national obsession and Mississippi's shame throughout what was known as Freedom Summer, particularly in light of the passage on July 2nd of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁶⁷ Due to the lackadaisical attitudes of the local law enforcement agencies, President Lyndon Johnson sent in the FBI to investigate the situation while 400 Marines scoured the swampy lands for any sign of the young men. White Mississippi locals resented the intrusion of federal authority into what they considered to be a local situation. Most tended to agree with Mississippi Senator James Eastland's claim that the whole thing was a hoax.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Hogan, *Many Hearts, One Mind*, 155-84. Dittmer, *Local People*, 242-71. Moya, *Let The People Decide*, 119-47. Also Bradley G. Bond, *Mississippi: A Documentary History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 252-74. See as well Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, ed., *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), and Doug McAdams, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Bartley and Graham, *Southern Elections*, 141.

⁶⁷ Passed on July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination in public accommodations, forbade unequal application of voter registration procedures, authorized the U.S. Attorney General to implement lawsuits to facilitate the integration of public schools, gave greater power to the Civil Rights Commission, and forbade discriminatory hiring practices based upon race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

⁶⁸ Weill, *In a Madhouse's Din*, 125. For an in-depth account see Seth Cagen and Philip Bray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi*, (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 1988) or Nicolaus Mills, *Like a Holy Crusade: Mississippi 1964 – The Turning of the Civil Rights Movement in America*. (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1992).

Due in great part to the tragic circumstances of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* sold quickly, debuting as ninth on the *New York Times Best Seller List* just one month after its release. On August 4, the bodies of the young men were uncovered in an earthen dam after the FBI received tips regarding their whereabouts. All three had been shot in the head, but an autopsy would later reveal that Chaney, who was black, had been brutally beaten as well. Silver's book moved to the number seven spot on August 9th, and to sixth position by August 16th as the nation sought to understand the state that was the site of such hatred and violence.⁶⁹

Book reviews and newspaper articles also helped spur public interest in both the author and his controversial book, which sold over 30,000 copies that first year. Requests for speaking engagements came pouring in, as did a great deal of mail. As expected, there was an outpouring of negative letters but they were countered by a substantial number consisting of praise. Expanded versions of *The Closed Society* in late 1964 and again in 1966 brought a resurgence of correspondence. Among the many thousands of letters he received, surely one of the most poignant and gratifying letters was from Carolyn Goodman, mother of slain civil rights worker Andrew Goodman, who wrote:

During that long and painful summer of 1964 I read and reread your book as if by doing so I could unlock the secret to the whereabouts of my son. Later, I went to it again to search for more understanding of the society which forces men to kill to preserve a way of existence which itself is destructive to

⁶⁹ "Best Seller List," *New York Times Magazine*, July 26, 1964; August 23, 1964.

humanity. I learned not only from your insights but from your courage as well.⁷⁰

It was that courage and insight that caused Jim Silver to leave behind the state where he had raised his own children and head north to Indiana and to a new beginning. As Jim, Dutch and Gail drove away from the Magnolia State at the end of summer of 1964, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was challenging the state's all-white delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, a clear sign that there were now significant cracks in the closed society.⁷¹

In a form letter he devised to respond to the more than 600 letters received following his SHA address in 1963, Silver advised the reader that "the speech itself was the outcome of at least two years of thinking and perhaps brooding, with the determination to have my say crystallized after that famous night of the insurrection at Ole Miss."⁷² He may have believed his statement at the time he made it, but he held a different opinion by the time *Running Scared*

⁷⁰ Letter from Carolyn Goodman to James Silver dated March 23, 1966. Box 17.3, Silver Collection.

⁷¹ The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was established by COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) in April 1964 to challenge the current state Democratic party which afforded no opportunity for black participation. Fourteen delegates attended the 1964 Democratic National Convention, held on August 24 - 27 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and attempted to displace the regular delegates who, it was claimed, were there illegally having obtained their positions through the disfranchisement of blacks. The televised proceedings brought the MFDP sympathy and an offer to seat two of their delegates in "at large" positions that did not include a vote on party issues. The MFDP refused the seats but their presence at the convention brought the plight of black voters to a national audience as well as the federal government. In addition, it was a public stand to southern white supremacists indicating a shift in black acquiescence to their power structure. See Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 83-102.

⁷² Form letter from Jim Silver to be sent in response to correspondence after his "Closed Society" speech. Box 11.35, Silver Collection,.

was published in 1984. Reflecting on those years, Silver believed that writing his “Closed Society” speech had been his destiny and that his entire life was spent in preparing for its creation. It was not just the speech but its timing that proved prescient, for it is doubtful that *The Closed Society*, if written when Silver had been a younger man, would have made as great an impact for a number of reasons. Jim Silver’s life experiences, the good and bad, were necessary for him to produce a work with so much intensity and emotion. Likewise, his professional experiences may have stimulated his interest in certain areas of study and provided a new perspective with which to view the past and the present. His professional credentials and long association with both Ole Miss and the state itself attested to his knowledge of the subject of which he wrote and provided him with great credibility. He was not an outsider to Mississippi but rather an insider for over a quarter of a century, making his words all the more effective. After the publication of *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, however, he was an insider no more. Due in part to his own contributions to the cause of justice and racial equality in the Magnolia State, the door to Mississippi’s closed society was now ajar and Jim Silver slipped out, no longer the rebel at Ole Miss, but simply a rebel.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

By 1968, James Wesley Silver had become an anachronism, a relic of another era. In the four years since the publication of his bestselling book, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, the world that Silver knew had undergone dramatic changes that left the sixty-one-year-old professor as fatigued, bewildered, and disillusioned as a Confederate soldier returning home after the Civil War. He was navigating a strange environment and was unsure of his place within it, feelings which Silver had successfully managed before. But at his current age and station in life, he was at an uncomfortable crossroad. As always, Silver's fear of failure, of not being accepted, worked on his conscience but this time, unlike in the past, he chose the safe route. Rather than move forward into the brave new world of black power and post-civil-rights activism (as he had known it), Silver instead retreated to the past, to subjects that he knew well and could discuss with some authority. The courageous southern white liberal, whose book exploded with the intensity of a nuclear bomb in 1964, discovered that for him starting anew was not an option. He was a product of his time, and like previous generations of Mississippians before him, he elected to focus on the past rather than accommodate the present. The future was not for him to determine, but for others.

For a short while at least, Jim Silver had his shining hour. With the publication and wide circulation of *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, Silver became a celebrated author whose book at one point surpassed William Faulkner's last novel on the *New York Times* Bestseller List. He was considered a voice of authority on the subject of Mississippi race relations and was deluged with invitations to give interviews or to lecture at various locales around the country. As usual, those offers for which he would be financially rewarded were the first to receive a positive response. With this literary and monetary success, Jim Silver temporarily shed the insecurities and fears of failure that had accompanied him throughout his life. More importantly, however, Silver finally had a widespread audience receptive to his words. Although it was the closed minds in the closed society of Mississippi that he most wished to reach, his prophetic message permeated the nation and indirectly put pressure on the leaders of the Magnolia State to submit to the mandates of the federal government.

A year after the book's publication and Silver's voluntary exodus from what he considered his home state, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965. With the provisions of this piece of legislation in conjunction with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it appeared that freedom had come at last to the disfranchised masses in Mississippi and elsewhere. However, the nation could not yet rest easy.

In February 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated, and the following year a group intent on advocating his beliefs united into the Black Power Movement. Shunning the nonviolent methods fostered by Martin Luther King, the movement instead engendered a more militant stance in its activism and encouraged blacks to embrace their African heritage and racial pride. It also promulgated the belief that white voices were not needed to speak for blacks, which essentially rendered mute Jim Silver and others like him, particularly following the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Two months later, the nation lost another beacon of hope when Senator Robert Kennedy was gunned down following his victory in the California Presidential Primary. By summer's end, a fractured American public, weary of the racial violence inflicted upon its own soil and in the jungles of Vietnam, looked for solace.

Jim Silver was one of the weary, and Notre Dame offered no sanctuary from the nation's turmoil. Silver was flustered and frustrated by the ideology of the black power movement, and as a result he once again found himself overcome with a sense of incompetence. Indeed, he was positioned on the opposite side of the spectrum than he was at Ole Miss. Rather than advocating equality for blacks, at Notre Dame Silver was left to defend the actions of whites (as well as historians) from the disparaging remarks of black power proponents. A "debate" with black activist Ron Karenga in 1968 left Silver bitter and somewhat bested by the "unpleasant and rather stupid" comments issued by the

“cultist leader from the West Coast.” When it became obvious that Karenga was not interested in a true dialogue, Silver essentially shut down rather than be reduced to employing racial stereotypes by pointing out that his opponent was hardly a strong representative of the black race given the “large number of white genes” he apparently inherited.¹

Silver was further disillusioned after attending lectures by participants in a week-long campus event that offered a forum to black speakers. Silver objected less to the obscenity-laden speeches and “derogatory references by practically every performer to those “mother-f***ing whites,” than he did to their inference that whites contributed nothing of value throughout history.² Likewise, at the annual conference of the Organization of American Historians in 1969, Silver was bewildered by the audience’s overwhelmingly favorable response to an address by writer Julius Lester, who asserted that blacks were denied the ability to do great things, and that what accomplishments they had made were dismissed by historians. As he did with the Karenga debate, Silver chose not to engage in a conversation based upon “historical nonsense.”³

Since leaving Mississippi, Silver had repackaged himself as a Faulkner scholar, perhaps because it was safer to lecture about the writings of a deceased novelist with whom he had a personal friendship than about the changes that had occurred in the civil rights movement in the ensuing years. Whereas in 1964 he

¹ Silver, *Running Scared*, 117.

² *Running Scared*, 118.

³ *Ibid.*

was considered an authority on Mississippi race relations and the “closed society” that promulgated the oppression of blacks, he suddenly discovered a significant deficiency in his scholarship. He lacked knowledge of African American history, current or past. Silver’s work had always been from the perspective of a white man addressing a white audience. In his histories of Mississippi, blacks existed as they did in real life: on the fringe and in the background. Blacks were something he wrote *about* but not *to* or *for*. Although he advocated for equality on behalf of this large portion of society, Silver understood almost nothing about their plight on a personal level because conditions within Mississippi while he lived there prohibited him from having much interaction with blacks outside of their traditional subservient roles.

As a result, Silver requested the opportunity to teach a summer session at Tougaloo College in 1969. He intended for the class to serve both as research for a book he hoped to write as well as to fill in the vacancies of his knowledge of black history. “I feel so damned ignorant about so many things I would like to be informed about, and this summer should help greatly,” he revealed.⁴ “I need more than anything else to have long talks with older Negroes,” he advised Tougaloo’s president, George Owens. “I am not thinking of a current, civil rights book, but one which would tell the real story of Mississippi, let’s say from 1890 to 1940.”⁵ Silver envisioned a book “primarily on Mississippi in the days of Faulkner, including my own theories and findings.” He anticipated that such a

⁴ Jim Silver to John Dittmer, March 29, 1969, Box 22.11, Silver Collection,

⁵ Jim Silver to George Owens, February 21, 1969, ,Box 22.11, Silver Collection.

work would be a popular success in the commercial and academic arenas, something to which he continued to aspire. “I think that what I have in mind could be something of a minor classic, perhaps optimistically like Cash’s *Mind of the South* though on a lesser scale,” he projected. “It doesn’t hurt to dream.”⁶

Silver’s dream, however, never reached fruition. His experience at Tougaloo was not only a disappointment with regard to research but also fraught with anxiety and illness. Silver “tried quite gingerly” to navigate his way around the personalities and views of the eleven students in his one class that summer but the ten blacks and one white “seemed out to embarrass me before they had an inkling of what I would teach.” They proposed that Nat Turner replace Thomas Jefferson in the history books due to Jefferson’s liaison with Sally Hemmings. Silver, on the other hand, “could not understand why this might not be glorified as a great American romance.” When he remarked to a “handsome Negro woman” student his assumption that she believed in integration on account of her marriage to a white civil rights lawyer, she “exploded at the intemperance of the notion and later that year seemed to vindicate her outburst by getting a divorce.”⁷ Silver’s tentative foray at Tougaloo was also marred by health issues that saw him hospitalized for a period and unable to completely fulfill his obligation. The stress of teaching under such conditions, where he was not the authority, and where he did not have control of his classroom, may have

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Silver, *Running Scared*, 127.

contributed to his frailties that summer.⁸ From all appearances, Silver's experiment with black history as well as his proposed book ended before they really even began.

By 1969, Silver had tired of dealing with the impact of Indiana's long, harsh winters on his health and relocated to Florida's sunny clime to teach at the University of South Florida in Tampa, from which he retired ten years later. Dutch became active in the local Democratic Party, eventually becoming executive director for the county. As a pensioner in Florida, Silver spent his days in the much same way as he had his off-hours in Mississippi: fishing, prolifically writing letters, pondering the meaning of his life and, despite his successes, still running scared. Even in his comfortable retirement, the same nightmares that had haunted his younger years occasionally disrupted his peaceful slumber:

While I make no profession of understanding the intrusions of the dream world, it could be of some significance that often over the years while I sleep, my mind has come up with graphic pictures – failure in the classroom, losing my job, joining the unemployed, not being able to feed and educate my family, and living in cabins with dirt floors without the usual facilities, and more. These visions still trouble me once in a while.⁹

It is hoped that these were not Jim Silver's dreams when he departed this world on July 25, 1988.

The visions that haunted Silver are understandable for one who endured the hardships of the Great Depression, although Silver had been safely

⁸ Silver himself correlates his health problems with stressful periods in his life, much like Bill. Stressful times seemed to bring about outbreaks of eczema, but he notes that during the period in which he was writing *The Closed Society*, when he was under "what might be considered enormous stress," his health "was close to perfect," because we was not consumed with guilt or anxiety. Silver, *Running Scared*, 138-39.

⁹ Ibid, 138.

ensconced at Peabody College and Vanderbilt University during the worst years. Still, this fear of failure was deeply embedded in Silver's psyche and it drove his aspirations of economic, academic, and professional success. It is also what prevented him from becoming fully engaged in resolving the injustices that he saw in Mississippi until sometime after the riot that erupted on the eve of Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss. By the time Silver publicly entered the fray it was almost too late. Blacks were populating the areas that whites like Silver had previously occupied. They were taking ownership of their rights, using their own voice to demand change, and leading their own charge into battle. As a result, Silver became lost in the ensuing shuffle of advocates, leaders, and actions of the civil rights movement.

Silver contends that until "some moment in the Meredith crisis" he had been "running scared," afraid to take a public stand and voice his views for fear of reprisal. While this is true to some extent, he fails to understand himself enough to recognize what it was that made him find his voice. After all, almost since his arrival on the Ole Miss campus, Silver was a controversial figure whose words often ran counter to popular opinion and resulted in some type of backlash, particularly with the university administration. Each time, however, he managed to avoid any serious consequences and did little to suppress activities he knew were bound to create controversy and possible repercussions detrimental to his employment or his person.

In truth it was not the violent insurrection over Meredith's integration that unleashed his years of pent-up repression, but something indirectly related. Face-to-face at last with the white supremacists that had previously remained an anonymous entity, the rioters that night shattered Silver's long-held ideology that people were inherently good and would on their own come to do the right thing. Faulkner, too, believed that southerners would straighten out their racial situation once blacks were given the opportunity to prove themselves on a level playing field. However, the opportunity first had to be made available, and as the mob on campus demonstrated white Mississippians would employ violent tactics to preserve their long-held racial advantage over blacks. This previously unfathomable scenario is what Silver witnessed, a nightmare that had come true. Silver was awakened to the harsh realities of the real world outside of the enclave of the university campus and the bucolic town that surrounded it, the area that he inhabited for over a quarter of a century. It was a frightening world, full of physical violence, angry and ignorant people unwilling to forego their past and enter into the twentieth century. Even the most educated man could not penetrate the mindset of people such as this; there was no way to reason with the unreasonable. As a result, Silver determined to drop the "plain decency" and white glove treatment he typically employed in his attempts to point out the shortcomings of the South and instead adopt harsher tactics.

“I believe what small reputation I have rests with *The Closed Society*,” Silver correctly determined shortly before his death.¹⁰ Though steeped in historical fact it was not an academic history book. Silver intentionally wrote it in a manner that would appeal to the non-academic reader in order to reach a wider audience. Likewise, although he included only a handful of explanatory footnotes Silver was too conscientious a historian to substitute hearsay for substantiated fact. He recognized that it would be an important work and therefore made it the best that it could possibly be. His reputation was on the line and he would not have his integrity impugned. That was one of his hallmarks.

“Why did I put together this book?” Silver ponders in *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi*, his 1984 memoir published just four years before his death. “Basically, to help straighten me out on the life of Jim Silver in Mississippi. And, I suppose, to rationalize the experience.” As he sifted through the reams of papers he had hoarded over the years Silver relived his experiences and attempted to explain to both himself and a larger audience the story behind *The Closed Society*. What he determined was this: “My entire life had unquestionably been a preparation for my ‘Mississippi: The Closed Society’ speech in 1963,” and this paper reveals the historical fact of that statement.

¹⁰ Ibid, xii.

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