

Civil Rights and the Press Symposium
Speaking Out: Voices of Conscience in the Movement and
in the Press

Saturday, April 24, 2004

Panel: John Seigenthaler, Paul Delaney, Earl Caldwell, Gene Patterson

Professor Francis Ward: Voices of Conscience in the Movement and in the Press. I'm going to introduce the four panelists beginning with the gentleman on my far right, who is to your left. The first speaker in this order, beginning to my far right, to your left, is John Seigenthaler, who is the director of the First Amendment Center of Vanderbilt University; one of the founders of the Freedom Forum; the first editor of USA Today; a former editor of The Nashville Tennessean. During the course of his remarks, I hope he will tell you about the conversation he and I had about five years ago, when he talked about how the Tennessean, the paper he edited during the 1950s and '60s, contrasted with the other paper in Nashville called The Nashville Baron. I'll let him tell you about the difference between the Tennessean and The Nashville Baron.

Next to John Seigenthaler's left is an old friend, Paul Delaney, whom I remember working with at the Dayton Daily News, one of the first African-American reporters with that newspaper. Formerly, he worked with the Atlanta Daily World, which I once worked for myself. Delaney and I got to know each other extremely well when he was with The New York Times and I was with the LA Times bureau in Chicago. We shared many a story and many a contact while he was based in Chicago.

Third is Earl Caldwell, a friend from our days among the co-founders of the National Association of Black Journalists in Washington, D.C. in 1975. Caldwell and I first met in 1969, when a group of journalists – even six years before the forming of NABJ – when we got together in Jefferson City, Mississippi, the home of the Lincoln University School of Journalism, to see what support we could give to the young West Coast bureau reporter for The New York Times who was under assault from the Nixon Justice Department. I promise you this – no matter how much he tries to get us to talk about it, we're not going to talk about the incident involving my wife. We'll talk about that later.

The final speaker will be this gentleman right to my immediate right, Eugene Patterson, who is a former editor of the Atlanta Constitution and whom I – at least, I knew him by reputation, when he was editor of The St. Petersburg Times. I read in the program that that was where he won his Pulitzer Prize with the Atlanta Constitution. I have a story that I will share with you later on if time permits about when I, as a young college student in Atlanta – because I'm from Atlanta, I was born and reared there – when my mother took me down to the

Atlanta Constitution and introduced me personally to a gentleman named Ralph McGill, who is also a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial writer with the Atlanta Constitution. That was one of the first inspirations I ever had to go into the field of journalism. So, let's begin with comments from John Seigenthaler.

John Seigenthaler: First of all, I want to say, as others have before me, what a great privilege it is to be here. I looked around the room at lunch and looked around my table at lunch, and it was not like Cooperstown, but it was like old home weekend. It was enough to just wash, really, baptize yourself in the memories of the past. So I'm honored to be here and to be part of this gathering.

I listened to Hodding at lunch. It occurred to me as I looked at our table and at other tables that so many of us of white Southerners came to where we were or where we are without really understanding where we were and how we are. For those of you who are very young and some of you are still here who are very young, I'd just like to take a moment to talk about that South, in which I was raised. It was a South in which, if you were an African-American, there is no place you needed to go or might wish to go that you could go because our city, like every city in the South, was as separated by race as any city in South Africa at the heart of apartheid. You went to the hospital, the hotel, the motel, the swimming pools, the health clubs, the doctor's office, the restaurant, the rest room, to a park, to a movie, to a bowling alley; you could not go because of those laws that were accepted from the theory that you could be separate but equal.

I grew up in that environment, and I cannot for the life of me, as I think back on it, imagine where my head was or where my heart was, or where the heads and hearts of my parents were. I can't tell you how many times I sat on a trolley car or bus and watched the counterparts of Rosa Parks board that bus, pay a fare, many of them struggling on, taking some White woman's wash, ironing, home to work at night on uncompleted chores. They struggled on, struggled in the back. I watched them go, sat there. I'd been taught to stand when a woman didn't have a seat. Never once did it occur to me that I should stand for a black woman. What could we have been thinking? (Ralph) Ellison's "Invisible Man" – they were invisible people, God help me, they were invisible. I think back on it, there's no road to the mask of enlightenment. No boats, struck us from a horse, showed us this was the wrong way. Somehow, somehow, somehow, along the way we found our way.

I always knew at the time I went to work for that paper that Francis Ward talked about that race was an issue and that this paper was going to do its best to be on the cutting edge of change. Hodding said something today very close to something he said during that gathering in Mississippi. "If you read those editorials that appeared in our papers, they really weren't – in any sense if you read them today – courageous. They were enough; they were laced with rationality, and reason and good sense. It was enough to result in cancellations of subscriptions because it was a racist society. I remember going to work for

that newspaper – great editor, had hired a great staff. Some of you who are young won't recognize some of these names. Creed Black was there, Richard Harwood was there, Tom Wicker was there, David Halberstam was there, and Wallace Westfeldt was there. I was there, Fred Graham was there.

There came a time in 1959, when that editor was fired, and the new editor came in. I had just come back from my Neiman Fellowship, and I was sitting on the city desk of the editor that day. He told the staff, "Look, I think members of this staff have been manipulated by what David Halberstam said in his book called 'The Children.' Those young black students, those students out there at Fisk, at East Tennessee and American Baptist; they've really been manipulating you all. If we have some violence and somebody winds up in the hospital or in jail, a lot of people wind up in jail, we'll cover it. By the way, I used to be with The Associated Press. They can do a good enough job in covering civil rights outside our city." Creed and Harwood had gone at that point. Wicker went within six weeks. I went into the Kennedy campaign within three months. Halberstam left immediately after the election to go to work for The New York Times. Westfeldt tried hard to get out. NBC hired him, but there was a six-month delay. He wrote the Civil Rights Commission Report of 1961. There were others that would have left if they could have left.

I went to work at the Kennedy Administration, stayed for 18 months, and then was given the opportunity to come home as, Francis said, as the editor. The other paper in town, The Nashville Banner, we did have a joint operating agreement with them. Their position was negative. They were hostile to the idea of change. They thought Earl Warren was sort of the front for the conspiracy Jack Nelson was talking about. There came a moment when I appeared on a platform with the publisher of that paper, old Jimmy Stahlman. It was before a group of students. This will sort of cap what I'm going to say, Francis, because this makes the point that you wanted to make. Mr. Stahlman and I appeared before a statewide convention of high school editors. Each of us spoke for a few minutes, after which there were questions. One young man said, "I can't figure out what's going on there. You operate in the same building. The same people deliver our paper at home. My dad runs this small store. He buys ads in the same paper. What really is the difference here?" I said, "Well, since 1937, when our paper was bought out of receivership, in every presidential election, we've supported a Democratic candidate. In every presidential election, Mr. Stahlman's paper has supported a Republican. It's a different philosophy."

He put his arm around my shoulder and said, "I make it a policy never to correct my young friend except on the editorials of our newspaper." He wrote editorials on the front page, by the way. He said, "But I have to correct him on this – he's right, they have supported the Democrat every year since 1937. We have supported the Republican in every year since 1948. In 1948, we supported Strom Thurmond." I said, "Mr. Stahlman has just explained the difference better than I have."

Paul Delaney: I also am very pleased to be here among my colleagues and with the student, faculty, staff of Syracuse University. I guess I'll give you the other side of the coin. I'm from the South as well. In fact, my life has been one foot in the South, one foot in the North. I was born in Montgomery, Alabama, where a lot of mention and attention have been in the conversation quite a bit here. Montgomery was extremely harsh. We in Montgomery felt it was better to live in Birmingham than Montgomery, that Birmingham was better. Mobile was nirvana compared. I was shaped by my memories of growing up in Montgomery. This was a good thing – I had very little contact with whites. I knew what segregation did. I knew the feelings of whites. I remember stares, and I witnessed police action against blacks. But I never sensed not having direct contact – friends, etc. I didn't develop the real strong anti-white feelings that friends and others, especially later, had. I was lucky, too, that my family escaped and moved to Cleveland, which was the best move at that point. You can say that my views and background have been kind of moderate but strong feelings.

When I moved to Ohio, I eventually graduated from Ohio State University in journalism. Before that, on May 17th, 1954, I was in the military. I was stationed in Bordeaux, France, with an outfit. One of my duties was informational. Every Saturday morning, right before noon, there was a program, an event, that probably all over Europe – I think I remember them at bases in the U.S. – something called Character Guidance that was a sendoff when you're going into town for leave. The chaplain would lecture you. The most important thing that happened was somebody handed out condoms to the guys heading out to the city. I guess that was the idea of character building. My function at these weekly gatherings was read the latest news from home. On May 17th, the Saturday after May 17th, I stood there and read that the Supreme Court had overturned "separate but equal." This was read to a room full of mostly Southern white soldiers. That was the end of it. No discussion. They took their condoms and ran into town.

Gene Roberts mentioned that he quoted Gunnar Myrdal as saying, "The future of race relations in the U.S. is in the hands of the media." I got into journalism quite deliberately. Growing up, I could never remember wanting to do anything other than write. I decided not to major in literature or English because I might have ended up in school for years and years. Plus, I might have ended up teaching, which I didn't want to do. So I majored in journalism, figuring I would always be guaranteed a job at a newspaper somewhere in the country.

Lo and behold, my first major job brought me back South, after graduating, to The Atlanta Daily World. I started working for The Atlanta Daily World in September, 1959. The movement started February 1, 1960. Another part of the story of my life, which is a story of coincidences, I happened to be in the right place at the right time for the movement to start. Working at the World on

Auburn Avenue, two doors from the paper, Dr. King set up at CLC headquarters. Diagonally across the street, SNCC set up its national headquarters.

Atlanta was kind of a staging area. First of all, it was headquarters for everything that happened in the movement. Second, it was a staging area for all of the events when the kids were going to go sit in, demonstrate, etc. They would come through Atlanta. It was also R&R. Kids who had been on the firing line in the various places in the South would come to Atlanta to rest. We reporters at the World had access to the leaders, to the followers, to the hangers-on, to everybody who was drawn to the movement. Great position to be in.

I left Atlanta and moved to Dayton, Ohio, as a reporter for The Dayton Daily News. Another coincidence: for the training for the kids before they went to Mississippi in 1964, was right outside Dayton, 1963, at Oxford, Ohio. I covered those training sessions and met a couple of the kids who were killed – (Michael) Schwerner, (Andrew) Goodman, and, of course, (James) Cheney was the third. That was my next contact with the movement.

I moved to Washington. I was hired by The Washington Star, covering City Hall but doing a lot of civil rights. Covered the riots after Dr. King's death. Covered the tension in D.C., which, as a young reporter, I had never experienced anything like when I got to Washington the summer of 1967. Tension. I had never witnessed tension. You could really feel it. It was a very hot summer. There were minor clashes between police and youngsters in D.C., but I had never experienced anything like the feel of the tension of that summer.

I then joined The New York Times in Washington. I was part of what was called "The Times' Urban Team." There were four reporters: Jack Rosenthal, James Naughton, John Herbers, and myself. We had the run of the country to cover everything urban in America. I did that.

The rest of my career spent on The New York Times, I eventually became an editor. It turned out, John, that I spent more time as an editor, than as a reporter, which I rued because reporting is where it's at. Looking back, I wish I had remained a reporter. Nothing against editors, I think I was a good one. Eventually I worked for the Times in Chicago, I worked for the Times in Madrid in my 23 years at The New York Times.

Earl Caldwell: People who know me say, "Earl sure loves to talk." I have a radio show in New York that's called "The Caldwell Chronicle." One day a guy calls in, he says, "I really like your show, I just got one complaint." I say, "What's that?" He said, "You talk too much." I told him, "You must remember, this is 'The Caldwell Chronicle.' And I'm Caldwell."

However, today, I really feel that I'm in a bind. Because when I sit here and look over to my right, I see Claude Sitton, who knew me in those first days when I

came to The New York Times and gave me an enormous opportunity. And things we did, and Claude knows me. I look over to my left and I see Gene Roberts. In the summer of 1967, in my life – and I'm listening to people tell these stories today – I don't know when I've ever heard someone speak so openly and honestly and frankly about one's own experiences. Hodding Carter did today at lunchtime.

In my life, I never really knew a white man who was a Southerner, to know well until the summer of 1967. I came to The New York Times. It was riots developing all across urban America. The New York Times decided to say, "We're gonna send two reporters. You're gonna go everywhere, you're gonna do everything." They paired Earl Caldwell with Gene Roberts. I come from way back in the mountains of Pennsylvania. I tell people I grew up in an all-white town – there was a black over there, one over there. People used to come to visit us. They'd say, "The people here sure are nice. They would just stop us and say, 'Well, who you looking for?' The Caldwells. 'They are right over there.'" What they did not know was that no black people from around here want to know what are you doing here? And you must be looking for one of those three.

My parents were Southerners. I knew so little of this movement that people are speaking so eloquently of. When they had the March on Washington, I was working for a newspaper in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I didn't know what was happening. I got in my car and drove back to Clearfield to watch it in the living room with my dad and my mom.

Gene Roberts really taught me about the South. When we go across America in that summer of 1967, all those nights, all those hotel rooms, all those cigarettes, and all that liquor – we'd be drinking at night, we'd come back to the room, trying to unwind and figure out and to get prepared to go another day. Gene used to come up – I got mine here today – Gene say, "There'll be a lot of stuff you're not going to understand. Put it on that 3 and 4 ¼ card. Some nights you just get in your room, lay them cards out. Study them. They'll tell you things about a bigger story that you're on to. You'll catch up with it. You'll see it.

These people know me. So I got to watch my language. Watch my mouth. To be sitting here opposite ends of this table with people like Mr. Patterson, Mr. Seigenthaler, true giants. People tested under fire. You can say these things. You can believe them. But they don't mean anything because they're just words. It's what you do when you're tested. These are people who have been tested. It's truly humbling for me to be in this company. When I sit here and look over here and see Dorothy Gilliam, a legendary woman of The Washington Post in newspaper journalism. And Paul here, I did Paul's oral history. I have another hat now. I have a lot of hats now. One of them is oral historian. I'm at Hampton University, started with the Mandarin Institute, I did Paul's oral history the other day. At the end of the oral history, we just sat there. It's a draining experience. I'd been listening to 37 black journalists from my generation. Those who came

into these big-league newsrooms in the mid-1960s, the newsrooms that came before us, we were not the first blacks ever to set foot in them.

But we were that generation that came into these newsrooms and had a huge story in our hands because there came this time in the mid-1960s – if you look at Malcolm X's last speech, which he made in Rochester, and the way he talked about the media. They had these things – white reporters out in the '60s, the riots, this movement and the corner that it turned, and the way that it went. That was our story. I'm listening to these journalists and I said, "You know, my God. In journalism, this was the greatest generation of black journalists." I was convinced of it. I said to Dick Reeves at a party in New York for Arthur Gelb and his book. I told him what I was doing. "Dick, for the black journalists, this was the greatest generation." Dick Reeves said, "No, no, no. For journalism, this was the greatest generation." And I believe it. I believe it's true.

People say, "How did it happen that you were there when Martin Luther King got killed?" Because Claude Sitton saw it. He didn't see King dying, but he told me, "There's going to be a bloodbath if this thing goes the way it's going to go." Claude saw what happened in Chicago before it happened. He said, "If King goes to Washington, and that would have been the confrontation." I never saw anything like Chicago in my life. These were police and white kids. Supposing that confrontation would have come to Washington in that environment of the 1960s. You never can tell.

I'd just like to say, King in that summer of '67 on one side, and the Black Panthers on the other side sort of frame the heart of my newspaper years. Probably it was with the Black Panthers when I was truly tested. What I learned, it's not what you can do by yourself, it's what you gather, the strength you gather from other people. The thing that was so great was, we stood as one. It was Richard Nixon, and J. Edgar Hoover, and John Mitchell, and their Justice Department against reporters' rights, and we stood as one. People say, "Yes, but you didn't prevail at the Supreme Court level." I say that we did. People have argued about whether they ought to be participating in cases now. William Rehnquist had no right to participate in *United States v. Caldwell*. I say because of Fred Graham. Fred Graham was covering the Justice Department for *The New York Times* then. I remember Fred calling me on the phone saying, "Earl, you will not believe what this lawyer of the Justice Department said about you today." The lawyer was Rehnquist. The name meant nothing. But when he got on the high court, he put those ethics questions aside, and he cast that deciding vote. They didn't win it, they stole it.

I would like to say with my closing moment, and yet another hat I wear now, I am the Scripps Howard Professor down at Hampton University. It's been a wonderful experience. It's a wonderful school. I'm having a wonderful time. Every day I go to school. I was in New York before this. My arthritis was killing me. I used to like to sleep until noon. The little window in my life was so tiny.

I'm up at the crack of dawn. Sometimes I'm in the office until two o'clock in the morning. These young people have totally energized me. It has been a remarkable experience. At this university, their commitment is to build a top-10 journalism school. And at one of the nation's historically black colleges. I think this is fantastic. All of these folks that I see here today, I hope that I can talk them into coming. I have this package for you, John. My dean handed me that package. He said, "You give this to Seigenthaler." There's another. He said, "You give that to Hodding," which I got from Talia Buford, who is the editor of our student newspaper at Hampton University. I wish you'd just stand up and take a bow. Two other students from Hampton – Darryl and Thea – I wish you guys would stand up, take a quick bow.

I want to tell you. When I went to Hampton University, I think the school started in the fall, in September? In October? The acting president took the papers and said, "You don't put on the paper what I told you, and I'm going to burn them." And she did! The president said, "Earl, maybe you can mediate this." I went over and said, "You don't know what's going to happen if you burn those papers." She said, she looked right past me and looked at Talia and said, "You're Hampton, and I'm Hampton. Some people here are not Hampton, and they should leave." I'm out in the hallway. I went out that hallway, I went to the airport, I got on AirTran and came to New York, and I said, "All hell's gonna break loose down here," and indeed it did. But what I saw, and what I've learned, and what I believe is the good news is, this is a generation of young people who believe in this. They are serious. They stood up to that university. Where the university said no, they made them say yes. I was put in charge of the task force. I said, "We'll just write four or five little broad statements. Let it go." "No, we're not going to do that, Earl. We're going to take this student handbook and policies and we're going to rewrite every single sentence." "We can't do it." "Yes, we're going to do it." They made me do what I didn't want to do either.

This is what it's about: a generation of young people rising up to take charge, to bring these standards back to where they ought to be. The bottom line is the reporters. It's you, it's the young people. The ball is in your court. Maybe we didn't give it to you the way we ought to. But you've got it. And you've gotta do it. I'm so proud tonight because of these Hampton kids.

Ward: Now we know what fires Earl Caldwell up.

Gene Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to complain, but the rest of us were not informed that Earl was bringing his own cheering section. Gene Roberts reminded us this morning that humor sometimes has to be used as the only antidote for absurdity. He mentioned Hodding Carter taking on the Mississippi House of Representatives. He mentioned Ralph "Rastus" McGill, my dearest friend and mentor, training his little dog to bark into the telephone.

There's another story I'd like to tell you. Hodding would remember. There was a

small Mississippi town named Petal. A publisher named P.D. East, who published a little scrawny weekly called The Petal Paper. He dared to be a little modern in his racial views. Instantly, all of his advertisers – all two or three of them – withdrew their ads. Cut off his revenue completely. Everybody canceled their subscription. AP picked up the story and carried it around the country. Suddenly, hundreds of subscriptions to The Petal Papers came pouring in from all over the country. They wouldn't get much news coverage in Petal, Miss., but they were trying to give him some encouragement. He stayed in business for a little while, and then went under.

So he wrote a book about his journalistic experience. He included in it a trip he made to a shop in Hattiesburg one day. He was driving an old beat up car. It was old, it had these old window ventilators on the sides. He had the doors locked. He was stopped at a stop light in Hattiesburg, and some big bruiser of a white segregationist recognized him. He came wading out through the traffic and banging on his window, "East! Get out of the car, I'm going to stomp you into the pavement." P.D. cracked the ventilator and said, "You'll have to make me a better offer than that."

All of us have been "back-patting" ourselves considerably today. But I think we should remember the priorities of the time. The bravest people in America in that period – '54 to '64 – were black. They had the courage to get out, lay their lives on the line, take terrible risks up against people who did not understand, who did not have the education or the political preparation or the journalism to explain that this was an historic checkpoint turning in the road, and it had to be turned. They laid it on the line, and you'll hear from one of the bravest of them tomorrow – John Lewis, United States Congressman, who was beaten nearly to death in Alabama, but here he is. Of course, there was Martin King, who was shot to death by a white hater. But the bravery still impresses me enormously.

The second bravest people we're talking about here today were represented by Charles Moore and those photographs he took, and by Herb Kaplow, and Richard Valeriani, who had to be with their camera crews and readily identifiable in these crowds. When you take pictures like Charles Moore took, you have to be right in the middle of the action. You got to be there when the people are getting beat up. They don't like you any more than they like the people they're beating up. So sticking his camera in to make those magnificent pictures produced the show that – Hodding, like you – I had a tear in my eye.

Third, on the pecking order, we'll come third or fourth, these were brave people. They had to be there. Claude Sitton, Gene Roberts, Jack Nelson, my friend Karl Fleming. They took enormous risks.

Finally, fourth, down the pecking order, were the editors sitting comfortably back in their chairs. Nobody was going to threaten to hit us over the head with a Coke bottle, three dozen nasty letters, and mean phone calls. We had to endure the

advertising and circulation department's warnings that we were breaking the paper. Basically, our job was to pontificate and bloviate and do so in relative safety. Let's keep it in perspective.

What was the point of the editorial pages? They took what the reporters brought in and tried to make some sense of it for their readers. As Jack Nelson mentioned, we had an administration at The Atlanta Constitution that tried to offset mine and Mr. McGill's liberalism or race by not covering much of the racial story in the news pages, and thought maybe that would balance. I had, and Mr. McGill had, very few firsthand accounts coming to our desks. But every time Gene Roberts, Jack Nelson would go out on the road and come back into their Atlanta bureaus, they would come by mine and Mr. McGill's offices and fill us in on what they've seen, what it smelled like, looked like, sounded like, felt like, tasted like. And they gave us a lot of the information that we operated on. It was teamwork, and we were all friends no matter how competitive.

The editor's job then began in a certain order: first, to speak to our white Southern kinsmen, who saw Dr. King as a threat, not as a liberator; to try to translate his dream to them and make it theirs, too. How do you do that? You look for the stories that enable you to write a powerful piece. Dawson, Georgia – Tyrell County: three black churches were burned down. Just little plank shanties. Because kids were using them to try to register voters among the sharecroppers and tenants. So, nightriders burned down three of those churches. We knew that this was a powerful piece because this is the "Bible Belt."

So I wrote a column – let's rebuild those churches. I don't want to hear from any black folks, I don't want to hear from any rich folks. Just people who believe. Well, \$10,000 floated in – nickels, dimes, scotch taped to a piece of tablet paper, and we rebuilt the churches. The story was more important than rebuilding the churches. The story was the lesson that carried those people themselves and they hit home. Or when the bombers blew up the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham and killed those four little girls. It was a chance to write a powerful piece because what mother or father can defend what happened? You made them ashamed. We used every trick that we had in the writer's bag to turn these dramas, these real life dramas, into lessons.

Second, we had to expose the misrule of racial demagogues, who pandered to the prejudices of the ignorance of the voters to win the public offices they corrupted. They were the true enemies because they were white, and we were white, and we could talk straight to them and to their supporters and say, "Look what they've done to you."

Finally, you had to champion and support the courageous politicians – few as they were – who dared to speak truth to the misled, and who most often, at the cost of their political careers, took action of a positive nature. They committed

political suicide doing it. You had to ask a man to commit suicide. But Lyndon Johnson knew that he had lost the South to the Democratic Party in 1964, 40 years ago, when he pushed through those civil rights bills, which Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate that year, voted against. That was enough said in the South. They've been Republican ever since.

There was a marvelous governor of Florida named LeRoy Collins, who even in the 1950s was going on television to explain to the people of Florida why he was vetoing the bills passed by a segregationist legislature because they were wrong. And he would be governor of a state so much led. Ernest Vandiver, governor of Georgia, desegregated the University of Georgia, against every part of the majority's wishes because he believed in the law and he believed in keeping order on the campus. He put the state troopers in there after a riot. They didn't allow a second riot. He put his own troopers in. Carl Sanders, the governor who followed him, who raised and supported Lyndon Johnson in the year that he was defeated by the Civil Rights Act as well as Vietnam – or it was to be defeated – he supported him in '64. When he ran for governor again in 1970, he had no chance of winning. He was defeated by a peanut farming state senator who said, "Elect me, and I will invite George Wallace to come address the Georgia legislature." This was the code word. Sanders had prevented Wallace from addressing the Georgia state legislature.

So Sanders went down to a resounding defeat and left politics. Vandiver tried to run for the Senate four years after he left the governorship. Traveled the state and found he had "no support." LeRoy Collins, in Florida, the greatest of the Southern governors, tried to run again for the Senate, did run again for the Senate, and was defeated by a now-forgotten Republican, who circulated pictures, which defeated Collins, showing him walking alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., at Selma. He had been sent there by the president, as director of the Federal Community Relations Service to try to stop people from getting hurt. But that picture indicated that King and Collins were walking down the road together. And so in Florida, which was still segregationist, they defeated Collins.

Johnson, Collins, Vandiver, Sanders – if anywhere in the South that you ask a politician to take these stands, he did so at the cost of his political life. And yet there were men who were brave enough to do it. I think the short-term popularity goes to the Madduxes, the Wallaces, the Barnetts and the Joneses in Louisiana, and the Faubuses in Arkansas. Everybody gives them big hoorays. Now they're presented and forgotten. The people have moved beyond them. The people who once cheered them on. The people who will be remembered in the history books – and by their children and grandchildren – are the Johnsons, the Collinses, the Vandivers, and the Sanders. There's a lesson in this, and it is: In the political leadership of this nation, a journalist should remind politicians of this – there is a more important thing than winning.

Ward: A Congressman from Atlanta by the name of Charles Weltner voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Would you add him to your list?

Patterson: Yes, of course. Charles Weltner ran for Congress and defeated an old segregationist conservative and went to Washington, and took a liberal position on race and a modern position on many issues. He was dumped out of office immediately. Yes, he was one.

Ward: Let's have some questions, please, from the floor.

Patterson: First question. I'd like to ask John Seigenthaler, who appeared with me a few weeks ago on the Stetson University Law School panel of this type, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Brown. To repeat to you that he told there, that I think is indicative of where we stand now and what lies ahead, would you tell the story of your grandchild?

Seigenthaler: Yes, thanks, Gene, very much. My grandson, Jack – the third John, but called Jack for identification purposes. Jack is 6, and last Thanksgiving, when he was 5, I visited them. My job when I'm there is to read to him two or three or four stories every night. On the night before Thanksgiving, I went up with him, and my son came in and he said, "Grand, tonight, long night. Tomorrow is a long day. One story, read one story, Grand." So, I read a chapter from Harry Potter. Jack said, "Grand, you know, Dad said you could read me one story, but you could tell me one story, too." The kid may turn out to be a journalist after all. I said, "Fine, Jack, what would you like me to tell you about?" "I would like for you to tell me the story about you getting hurt in Montgomery, Alabama." I said, "Where in the world did you hear about that?" "Well, we were watching a documentary, and I saw it, and I asked Dad and Mom. They said to ask you."

I should say that I had taken Jack to kindergarten earlier in the week and had noted that he was in an integrated class with two young African-American lads. I had asked his mother about that, and she said, "We haven't brought it up. He hasn't raised questions about black or white." I forgot that. I said, "Jack, it's a quick story. I was in Montgomery, Alabama, and there were some mean, angry, hostile white people who didn't want to let black people ride a bus. I tried to help them ride the bus. These white people beat up these black people, and one of them beat me up. We all went to the hospital, but we weren't hurt bad. When we got out of the hospital, this is a story with a happy ending, the black people and the white people were able to ride the bus." There was a pause. Jack said, "Grand, are you black?" I'll tell you, it took my breath away. My first thought was "I betrayed my daughter-in-law who told me that he didn't know, and it had not dawned on him." I said, "Jack, you know, it really doesn't make a difference, does it?" He said, "No." When I got home to Nashville, I wrote him a letter and said, "Jack, someday you'll read this. I said it didn't make any difference, and I wish it did not, but I'm 76, you'll soon be 6. I hope that by the time you're 76, it

really doesn't make any difference anymore." When I think about that panel in Stetson, and I think about this meeting here today, and how so many different places are helping rediscover the movement, and what the thrusts and drives and meaning of it was and is, I think maybe Jack won't have to wait so long after all.

Audience Question: I'm from Nashville, Tennessee, and I'm one of the persons that was involved in 1961 over those lunch counters. As you will remember, going to Centennial Park, and closing up every swimming pool in Nashville, Tennessee. I also was part of the Freedom Riders, the group that went from Montgomery to Jackson, Mississippi, the first group. My question is, just for research purposes, I need to talk with you afterwards about how I can gain access to the archives of The Nashville Tennessean and The Nashville Banner, which is now defunct.

Seigenthaler: Sure, fine, thank you. I look forward to talking with you.

Audience Question: Yes, to Mr. Delaney. Back to Atlanta, and that famous Auburn Avenue. What are your recollections of WERD Radio, which was the first African-American-owned radio station in America that was in that same play where SELC and all of you were located at the beginnings of the movement in 1960?

Delaney: I did a lot of things in Atlanta, besides work for The Daily World. One of the things I did was, I was a member of NAACP, I was on the board of NAACP, I was chairman of the publicity committee of the Atlanta branch. And the NAACP had a weekly Sunday program, half hour, that I hosted, interviewing community leaders, etc. on WERD. ERD was a major, major media company in Atlanta in the black community. I think it was a daytime. It provided access to leaders in the movement. It was instrumental as part of the voice for the movement.

Ward: I'd like to add to that, Rick. Having grown up in Atlanta, I remember WERD quite well. It went on the air in 1948. It was the first time I think I heard some real blues and jazz on the air. It was one of these disc jockeys of WERD was a man by the name of Jackie Jack Gibson, who was quite a popular DJ at the time.

Audience Question (Karl Fleming): Some of the people are talking about, the not timidity, but reluctance of some of the media to do, perhaps, what they wanted to do because of fear of intimidation. Do you see any parallels between that and what's going on now in the media's posture toward this administration and the Iraq War, or have our policies changed?

Patterson: Yes. Direct correlation. When the public has strong leaders, as the Bush movement has, and waving the flag and leading the way, it's very hard for

the present day American, any more than it was the Southerner of the 1960s to go against the prevailing opinion of the powerful, the governor, the legislature says, "Segregation is all right." The president, the Republican Congress, they say, "The Iraq War is all right; it's going to be fine. The economy is all right." Who wants to stand up and say, "I question that" because you're going to be extremely unpopular if you do. Maybe that will change as this campaign year goes along, but, yes, you've got a direct correlation with what happened in the South. Nobody wanted to offend his neighbor. Nobody wanted to get into a political argument. Nobody wanted to take the unpopular side of a popular president's position or a popular governor's demagoguery. Yes.

Delaney: I think that timidity started before Iraq and has all kinds of things to do with what the media have become today – you know, economics, etc. One example, if you remember in the good old days of television, local television – they had an editorial commentary daily, just about every station. That disappeared. That was, I think, an example of the beginning of television in particular being timid about everything around it.

Audience Question: In 1994, Byron de La Beckwith was finally convicted of the death of Medgar Evers. Since that time, there have been 18 or so people in the South who have been convicted of civil rights crimes that happened 30 or 40 years ago. Part of the reason that these crimes have come to light are due to investigative reporting – people like Jerry Mitchell of The Jackson Clarion-Ledger. Are you aware of any other pending civil rights cases that journalists are still looking into that might involve future prosecution, or have these pretty much run their course now?

Patterson: We're seeing history catch up with the facts. It's not so much that investigative reporters kept pressing the Medgar Evers case or the others, it's that the prosecutors in those areas can survive now by doing justice, by charging the guilty. And juries are liberated enough now to vote the guilty, guilty. We have made that progress as a society. Somebody, Hodding, I think, was saying this morning that the old argument was that law can't change the heart, law can affect behavior. I've got a better construction, Hodding. I remember there was a Harvard professor called Paul Freund, a very wise man. Way back in the early '60s, he said, "I've heard the arguments that law cannot change human nature, but human nature can change with the help of law." We've seen some of that, and I don't think we're there yet.

But you ask about other examples. Florida. Early in this century, white people of the Cedar Key community, a very isolated pencil factory area on the west coast of Florida, staged a terrible murder of the little town of Rosewood, all black. The town was burned; it no longer exists. The Florida legislature a couple of years ago voted to pay reparations for all the surviving kin of the blacks who were burned down in that town.

Delaney: There is, I think, a reopening of the investigation into the Philadelphia, Mississippi, killings. Something is going on right now. New evidence, I think. There is, at the moment, either the investigation has been reopened or it's under consideration.

Ward: Gene, I just wanted to add to your point about Rosewood. Did you know that John Singleton made a film about Rosewood, and it was a popular distribution a few years ago? As a matter of fact, it's run on cable television a couple of times.

Audience Question (Bob Lissit): I wonder what you think the country might have looked like in the '70s and '80s if we had been able to skip the year the world went bad, and gone from 1967 directly to 1969 – no death of Martin Luther King, no death of Bobby Kennedy. Do you think the world would look any different? Or not?

Caldwell: I really don't know. I think it's a very good question. I would tend to say this: I think these horrible things that happened, that we got something out of it. It's changed us in certain kinds of ways, and makes us look at things in ways, and makes us look at ourselves. I know I'm not really dealing with your question because I don't want to skip it. These things happened, and I say we have to deal with these things that have happened. They've changed us in significant ways. I think it gives us a better understanding of our history, who we are, and a lot of things. If we go over top of it, I don't know.

Audience Question (Jack Nelson): I was just going to take slight issue with something that Gene said. I think that Jerry Mitchell of The Clarion-Ledger did have an awful lot with the reopening of some of these cases because he has just persistently gone after records that expose some of the older cases, including the three civil rights workers in Philadelphia. I don't think any courts or prosecutors would be doing anything in Mississippi were it not for Jerry Mitchell.

Ward: Courageous reporter with The Jackson, Mississippi Clarion-Ledger. My understanding is that he was also a reporter who covered and uncovered some facts which led to the public disclosure of the infamous Mississippi Sovereignty Commission. Now, Ernest Withers.

Audience Question (Ernest Withers): I just think that we, in the collective body here today, have enough common sense to know the Constitution of the United States says to all of us: "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense." The people that dig up all this garbage of yesterday only do it for commercial purposes – to do documentaries and to publish books. That man came back here from London, got a lawyer and did all of these statements about Martin King, and that James Earl Ray didn't kill him all of that. It was all not about justice, it was about making some money. It was a commercial venture.

Now there's a new movement that I don't get involved in in the Emmett Till trial. The two brothers-in-laws that killed Martin Luther King didn't kill Martin Luther King because they got an endorsement from the organization. They killed because two brothers-in-law, who were married to two sisters, were angry because one sister was flirted at by one boy. And so now they want to draw it into a big commercial venture. I was there longer than anybody at the Emmett Till trial – from the beginning to the end.

Seigenthaler: You know, somebody might have said this this morning – those two killers accepted a thousand dollars a piece, given to them by William Bradford Huey, to confess. They had been acquitted, knew they couldn't be tried because of the double jeopardy rule, and they took a thousand bucks apiece from Huey, confessed. He wrote the story of their confession, which I think made the killing all the more outrageous.

Withers: But, Mr. Seigenthaler.

Seigenthaler: Mr. Withers.

Withers: I was with the group of both African-American and a few white press members that went out in the bushes, and found Willis Reed and the four witnesses that never testified against these men that saw J.W. Milam in the barn on a Sunday morning, and somebody hollering and screaming and him beaten to death. We knew there was a black press, The Chicago Defender, with L. Alex Wilson, my boss, picked up "Too Tight" Collins, a black fellow who wasn't so much about justice, but was working for his boss named J.W. Milam. Held Emmett Till on the back of the truck until they took him and beat him to death.

Seigenthaler: And the 12 men on the jury knew damned well who the killers were. When "Dar He," you talk about courage, you talk about courage; "Dar He" was (from Emmett Till trial).

Audience Question (Hodding Carter III): This is a question, statement or an answer. At the time of the '54 decision, a majority of the states that had segregated schools were not Southern. Half the states which had certain kinds of restrictions on housing were not Southern. The Rosewood story is the underneath part of a very large iceberg about history, which has been almost deliberately written out of history. One of the reasons why the problem of solving the South by making the South get better is that it allowed almost the rest of the country to come off the hook of ever coming to grips with a thousand Rosewoods that are out there – and they are. Whether it's Tulsa, whether it's Rosewood. There's a story up in Portland, Maine, for God's sake, which they've just now begun to unearth.

Going on and beyond there, I want you all to comment on this, that the Florida legislature decided it wouldn't take up the repeal of what was a commonplace

constitutional provision, that Asians could not own property. Provisions that are still in the constitutions of a number of states. If you want some missions, which no longer look backward, look forward – it seems to me there's some fairly good stuff to be done for journalism, for history, and for a generation of young people who have no idea that you didn't have to wear a Ku Klux Klan sheet to be racist and you didn't have to be a Southerner to be a segregationist.

Audience Question (Karl Fleming): A little known piece of history – one reason Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California and went on to be president was that Governor Ed Brown, a Democrat, had led legislation have an open housing law in California, and that was one of the wells of white resentment that made Ronald Reagan popular.

Audience Question (Claude Sitton): Chicago, I covered the Willis Wagon Dispute in Chicago.

Ward: Willis Wagon is referred to the little parts that were put there by Benjamin Willis, the former superintendent in Chicago.

Sitton: And I covered a news conference by Dick Daley.

Ward: The infamous Richard J. Daley.

Sitton: And I said, "Mr. Mayor, when are you going to solve your racial problems in Chicago?" He said, "As soon as all you agitators get out of town." I'll tell you another thing. When my family moved to New York, we were told by a real estate agent, "If you move here, you'll buy 10 years of protection." Protection from what? From a desegregated neighborhood.

Seigenthaler: Hodding's right. We forget Brown was not Southern. Topeka. The case came from there. It didn't have its roots. I know there were five. But you forget. That's exactly right. You forget there was all sorts of stuff going on in those law schools in the Midwest. Let's just have a partition and have black students sit on one side, and the rest of the class on the other. Crazy stuff. It was not Southern, it was in the Midwest.

Delaney: It was about every other area, too: education, transportation, housing. Whatever the issue was in the Northern states and cities, there was a racial component or racial floor that it started from. With de facto segregation, if not, in fact, laws.

Audience Question (Rick Wright): As we get to the closing out today's seminar, there's one county and one name I must mention. I think the biggest story crime – I was telling Hodding. But, as a young kid growing up, I must mention Prince Edward County, Virginia, this afternoon. To not integrate the schools, they shut the entire school system down. Those schools were closed

for close to seven years. I think the big story is that whole generation of African-Americans who didn't go to school. I'm hearing some movement now from the state of Virginia to offer some scholarships or whatever to some of the generations that were able to survive. The racism of that level was so incredible and dynamic, I mean to close a whole school system down in order to not integrate. I was in that generation, and I remember two of my good friends – Dr. Wilbur Edgerton and Brady James, who basically were trying to devise a system of using audio-visual technology to try to teach the African-American kids to keep school and education alive. A lot of our teachers in that era. We're talking a whole generation. I mean, seven years of kids that didn't go to school.

Ward: That generation of white Southern politicians adopted a theme they called "massive resistance," and they tried every form of resistance they could, including what you talked about – closing out the entire school system.

Audience Question (Dorothy Gilliam): I just wanted to add, in terms of Rick's point, that once again the black community came up with a response to at least try to ameliorate that situation. The AME church provided scholarships to about 50 of those students to go to Kittrell College, which was an AME college. I'm not even sure where (North Carolina). There were many young people who did get an education. It doesn't change your point, but it changes only the sense that there were all these efforts being made trying to ameliorate this terrible condition that had been foisted upon them.

Wright: Because of Prince Edward County, what happened to the white kids, they set up private schools. They shut down, but they set up schools to educate the white schools. Of course, we had to come up with backups. Horrible times.

Patterson: I think it's fitting to close a media conference by reminding you, as earlier speakers have, that not all Southern editors agreed with those present here. The "massive resistance" in Virginia, that our chairman has alluded to, was championed and, in fact, led intellectually by the editor of the Richmond News Leader, James Jackson Kilpatrick. Like George Wallace, he said he's sorry.

Seigenthaler: Can I just add one closing note? I'd say to the young person who asked me the question earlier, "What can we do?" "Where have all the flowers gone?" There is still an awful lot to be done in race relations. It's been complicated by infusion of Hispanics and Asians. But beyond that, I think any civil rights conference that meets this year should recognize the prejudice and the discrimination that now exists, and is going to grow, directed at Muslims and Arab-Americans. There is going to be a hell of a lot of work for the press and for civil rights activists to take care of as this war goes on.

Ward: Thank you very much. And I think on that note -

Professor Charlotte Grimes: Thank you very much for being with us. I want to thank Francis for doing such a superb job. Thank you, Francis.