

“To Kathy and to David”

The Memoir of Faburn E. DeFrantz

I put your name first, Kathy, because you came first. You were pappy's first grandchild and for more than six years his only one. Then, David, you came. You two were born even farther apart than your dad-dies were. Five and a third years separated their birthdays.¹

Growing up at a time when it is common to find grandfathers in the heyday of their careers, you might wonder why you joined your pappy so near the end of his.

You will know, David, that I was already retired when I met you.

You, Kathy, will remember seeing your pappy in his work; visiting him in his office. You will remember seeing him preside at Monster meetings, but you won't remember the afternoon when, as he stepped to the microphone to open the meeting, you delighted the audience by calling out in clear, round, baby tones: "That's pappy!" Yes, you will remember some of that activity but not much of it.

A copy of the original 152-page typescript is in the files of the IMH. The sections which appear here have been transcribed into digital form by the editorial staff of the IMH. We have maintained the original punctuation and paragraphing, except for eliminating the ellipses which DeFrantz sometimes used at the beginning or the end of a sentence. We have silently corrected the few typographical errors; lower-cased words that were spelled out in capitals; standardized the format of section titles; and indicated the places where we broke off from one section and picked up in another.

¹Editors' note: Faburn DeFrantz (1885-1964) and Myrtle Summers DeFrantz (1891-1989) had two sons. Faburn DeFrantz Jr. married Flora Turner and their children were Kathryn D. Gibson (the "Kathy" of the title) and Janis D. Rames; Robert David DeFrantz married Anita Page and their children were R. David DeFrantz (the "David" of the title), Anita DeFrantz, James E. DeFrantz, and Thomas F. DeFrantz.



Faburn DeFrantz at his desk at the Senate Avenue YMCA, c. 1950. DeFrantz came to the Y in 1913 to serve as its physical director and in 1916 became the branch executive secretary, a position which he would hold until 1952.

Courtesy, Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society

Pappy was born to scantier opportunity than were your dads—or you. He wasn't his parents' first child as you are, Kathy; or you, David. There were six children before him. And he wasn't their last—there were six after him.

When you were born your dads were in their middle twenties, college degreed, and employed in their chosen professions. (Twenty-five isn't too young to know your vocation and to be active in it, Kathy and David.) But at 25 your pappy was casting overboard four years of medicine and, with them, his intention of becoming a doctor and was striking out for employment in a different field. And he had not even met the girl who was to become your Nana.

Medicine, however, had not been the only profession that had appealed to me. Or the first. In fact, abandoning it was a step toward work which had stirred my imagination when I was a boy of 13: the YMCA. Does that surprise you? In a few minutes I will tell you the incident which challenged me to become a YMCA executive.



Acquiring techniques for a profession in the YMCA began inadvertently. When I was 9 I was afflicted with a malady which doctors diagnosed as tuberculosis of the hip joint. The treatment prescribed was “rest and fresh air.” For me that meant no school (I was out a year) and a pallet on the porch.

Take a situation where there isn’t enough money for food and clothing and none for entertainment. Where there are seven boys—rough, imaginative, and crowded. And you’ve got mutiny. And that’s what we had in the five-room frame house on Hancock Street in Topeka Kansas, in the year 1895. There were no shows for us; no radio. (This, indeed, was the year Marconi invented the aerial and development of radio communications began.) No television set. The amusement we had we ourselves provided. We foraged, wrestled, boxed, tumbled, slugged each other in tough-boy abandon. I, ailing, had to look to my wits. I tripped, stiff-armed, elbowed, shoulder-punched; composed a jiu-jitsu system my very own. I had to fight to live and I wouldn’t die.

Athletic skills I learned in self-defense paid off later when I directed physical activities in the YMCA and at other times. (That is not unusual, Kathy and David. Sometimes you learn what you must and later find it is what you need.)

Literally, I healed myself and when I went back to school I found that I had a raft of skills that many of the other fellows lacked. Green Scales, who was also a top bracket baseball player, and I organized a baseball team which we ambitiously labeled “The Topeka White Sox.” We got uniforms for the players too!

Boys on our team came from two rivaling sections of Topeka: Mudtown, where I lived, and ’Dition. (The name was “Addition,” but we ignored the first syllable.) Fellows from ’Dition and Mudtown were to each other as were the proverbial cat and dog. To meet was to fight. But their common baseball team transformed hostility to esprit de corps to a major degree. “Art” Hardy, who lived in ’Dition, was the pitcher and Bennie (“Peanuts”) Thompson, of Mudtown was catcher for the imposing Topeka White Sox.



During our boyhood (and it is still the practice) Topeka public schools segregated Negro and white pupils in the first five grades. In other ele-

mentary grades and in high school pupils were integrated. (Segregated and integrated. Words I hoped you never would know in the sense I have used them: as they indicate separation and mixing of so-called races. I still hope they will never have for you the caustic connotations they have had for me.) From the sixth grade on my schoolmates included white boys—Art Griggs, Frank Griggs, Bottles Hope, and others. We played together on the school grounds and, after school, on vacant lots, streets, parkways, back yards. Between some of us there came to be genuine comradeship. (And to this day we exchange Christmas greetings and an occasional letter.) Often they would invite me to play with them on the YMCA gym floor.

There was no integration in the Topeka YMCA. In fact, Negroes were not admitted by way of the front door. I knew this. The white boys knew it. So they would parade through the front entrance to the gym and there raise a back window for me to climb through when no Y official was around. Several times I did this without incident.

But one day after I had made my furtive arrival and was completely absorbed in a rocketing game of basketball the secretary came in, recognized the variant, and called out, “You, there! What are you doing in here?” And forthwith he yanked me off the gym floor and booted me out of the building.

I don’t know why I didn’t turn on him and break his nose, Kathy and David. I could have. But I didn’t. I offered no resistance to his indecorous attack. And after being shoved onto the street, I looked back at the building and said: “I’ll run a YMCA myself someday, and nobody’ll yell at a boy or knock him around in my Y—whatever his color or race.”

(Years later, after I was executive of Senate Avenue YMCA in Indianapolis, I related the incident to a National YMCA Conference in the Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago. George E. Lerrygo, the secretary referred to, was present and afterwards came to me and said, “We never know . . . we just never know.” Both of us felt that the end results had been rewarding although the means had been very questionable.

Between my impulsive resolve “to run a YMCA myself” and the first indication that it would be fulfilled were many years and many contacts. High school, college, and a lot of football came first.



ARRIVING IN INDIANAPOLIS—1913

I remember the day I came to Indianapolis. I had worked in Washington only a year, but I felt that more than a year's challenge faced me in the Hoosier Capitol.

Physical activities at Senate Avenue had been scanty and haphazard. Understandably so. The Branch had been organized for about a dozen years but was just getting permanent headquarters and full equipment. Nevertheless, I found a colony of boys who had their own pet ideas of a reception for a secretary, especially for a physical director. They intended to "call the tunes" in the physical department and delighted in letting a newcomer know it. Today they will tell you:

Back there we had a way of testing a guy, of seeing if he could take it—if he could *qualify*.

Some of our milder initiation included tying a fellow's pants in hard knots while he drilled in his gym shorts; throwing his clothes into the pool while he was in swimming; of rolling a guy up in a gym mat, then taking off his shoes and beating the soles of his bare feet.

Well, it didn't take us long to find that a new kind of guy had moved in on Indianapolis. That 'Chief' could play rough too!

We had our sessions. I lived in the building and my hours were from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Some of the fellows got their full share of my time, too: Otho Pettiford, Everett Artis, Charles Bybee, Robert Buckner, John Edelin, Elbert Gardner, Arnold Bryant, Dave Venerable, Howard Dangerfield—and we made some champions too. Dangerfield, Gardner, and Bybee in track; Artis, Bryant, George Hazzard, Arthur McGuire, and Mitchell Gilmer in basketball.

Never have I seen youngsters more eager for gym. Junior, intermediate, and high school gym classes were organized, and they elected officers as if they were boards of directors—naming presidents, vice-presidents, treasurers, and secretaries. (Hobson Zeigler, at one time the physical director and now the business secretary at Senate Avenue, was president of one of those junior gym classes.) Indoor baseball and basket ball leagues chalked their percentages as precisely as though they were playing for nothing less than an American League pennant.

Cadet gym classes had popular appeal. Todd Duncan was in one of these, and while he was playing in “Lost in the Stars” on the stage in New York in the summer of ’50 he included this bit of reminiscence in a letter to me:

I remember how you asked for precision, insisted that we master routine . . . and how my little white gym shorts had to be sparkling and my shoes without a smudge because ‘Chief’ said it had to be so.

And men played like boys. They came for gym classes, volleyball, factory night programs. They came to swim and to help in the boys’ learn-to-swim campaigns.

We built a tennis court across from Bethel A.M.E. Church and organized a YMCA Tennis Club. Its first members were J. F. Johnson, Thomas Henson, C. I. Singleton, Ernest Washington, Lionel Artis, Milton Stevenson, Thomas E. Taylor, Arthur Dodson, Jesse Martin, James Martin, Walter Price, C. W. Anderson, Ted Cable, Joseph Black, Samuel Givens, J. C. Patton, Bill Grizzle, William Walker, and I. In 1915 the club held its first annual tennis tournament.

In the men of the club was pride and eagerness and a certain relish. The same was true of the doctors who gave physical examinations without charging a fee and volunteered to give health talks to the men’s gym class: Ernest N. Perkins, Mark Batties, W. E. Brown, Aldridge Lewis.

It was encouraging to laymen when activities had full staff participation (that I remained insistent upon), and the staff cooperated: Taylor, the executive; Johnson, boys’ secretary, S. S. Booker, educational director.

Most of those fellows aren’t around anymore. But in the three years I was physical director I met men who were to become my friends and some who were to work with me to the end of my YMCA career.

It was in this period, too, that I met the girl who was to become my wife—Myrtle Summers. She had finished training at Indiana University, Bloomington, (where she had lived with her parents—Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Summers) and had come to Indianapolis to begin a profession in podiatry. (Myrtle. Slight, tranquil. Nothing in her manner suggests the fervid devotion with which she has shared my lot.)



the nine Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, every Negro playing football with not only the Big Ten but with every big University team neatly written in his daily reminder opposite his Y committee.

I never wanted to embarrass the men of the staff merely to observe their embarrassment. But I did want to increase their awareness of things outside Senate Avenue YMCA, outside Indianapolis—things to which they owed intelligent concern. When we discussed racial discrimination and segregation—America's most serious derangement—we were discussing practices which mocked the Association's attempts at fellowship.

I wanted them to grow spurs. I knew they would need them.

One secretary said of me: "At one time I hated his guts, but I came to respect him more than any man I know." Another claims that he was never more surprised than when he heard me huskily say to a secretary who had yelled at a boy in the Y lobby, "Don't do that. Just don't do *that*."

This Tuesday morning we were in the Central Y building in a metropolitan staff meeting discussing a recognition program for volunteers. The program director passed out a sample of the cards that he had provided for presentation to volunteers who were to be honored in the program. Looking at the card, I realized it was not representative of our regard for the service of volunteers. I said, "This is cheap. We have volunteers who have worked in Senate Avenue fifteen and twenty years. We can't give them anything like this. Better to give them nothing at all." And, thereupon, I tore the card into bits which I threw out of a window. The program director was "burned up." But he provided a better card for the recognition service. Later, in a written comment, he said of me:

On methods of procedure and action we frequently could not agree, but we have profound respect for his sincerity of purpose and his ability to get results even though the road was very rough and the way hard.

The secretary "on the hot seat" one morning was really in a dither. His answer average to assorted questions had been zero, straight across the board. I asked him to lead the staff in prayer. He fell to his knees.

"Oh Lord," he began, "help us."

"Help us in what we are facing here.

"Oh Lord— (silence) (silence)

"Oh Lo-ord!

"O HELL!"

We could all pull together, though. In the early Thirties retrenchment was the order; "Reduce staff" was the suggestion from every side. Jobs were tight and I knew that a man dropped from the staff meant a man without a job. In a conference, I said to the men, "Let us all take a cut in salary," and suggested the cut the executive would take first. Seven full-time secretaries worked for half pay. None was dropped.

One might have been puzzled by the sound of voices lifted in song at odd times of a staff meeting. But when tempers flared or probing became too pointed, a staff member—any member who felt the need to do it—began to sing, "Je-sus, Keep Me Near the Cross . . ." and the rest of the staff would join in. Every one of us—that was our code. A few lines of the hymn cleared the tension and discussion was resumed in an easier mood.

This Friday morning in May 1944 the staff called itself putting me on the "hot seat."

"You should have been at the banquet Wednesday night when Chief received the Indianapolis Church Federation's Interracial Merit Award," Ralph Smith opened.

"We know about it," chorused others.

"I still say you should have been at the banquet," Smith contended.

"What happened?" Starms wanted to know.

"Mrs. Hudelson made the presentation speech and gave Chief the scroll," Smith told them. "Chief took his applause, then turned and introduced the Little Chief. The crowd liked that. But Chief didn't sit down. He had noted the absence of the signature of the Church Federation president—Dr. Ellis Walker Hay—and with pen and scroll in hand, Chief marched over to the speaker's table and got his Award signature there and then."

"They really didn't want him to have it!" Starms said.

"How did you know that?" I cut in.

"Things get around," Starms confided. "I was told that some of the members of the Race Relations Committee of the Federation went right down the line for you though, refusing to hedge." Then, pretending to quote a member of the Committee, Starms went on, "With race riots breaking out over the country last summer—in Detroit, in Harlem—why, we've got to recognize the action that builds better race relations in Indianapolis, from WHATEVER source it comes!"

"All right, all right now," I cautioned, "But that's just about it. Some didn't want me to have the award on account of my rough personality."

"They probably gave it to you because you didn't START a riot," Zeigler suggested.

“Je-sus, keep me near the cross . . .” Smith led the “truce” hymn.

A letter which was as gratifying to me as was the Award is the following from an executive officer of the Church Federation:

I am glad to know you and I thank you for all your punches and for your challenges in our work. I am a better man because you have been frank and fair and I thank you for this.

A metropolitan secretary who had suggested that the program at Senate Avenue was “subordinated to agitation about racism” wrote me, on the eve of my retirement, “I hope Senate Avenue will not lose your crusading spirit.”



MONSTER MEETINGS

It was a Monster meeting beginning a two-day appreciation program for my thirty years’ service to Senate Avenue. The YMCA Band² was playing and the gym was packed. Ransom, Stuart, Reverend Bell, Artis, Gilliam, Brokenburr, Hummons, Dr. Johnson, Reverend Moore³ and I were on the rostrum.

It was one of the few times I did not occupy a chair at the right end of the platform group, for usually I presided at the Monster meetings—and liked to do it. (Besides, I learned early that some of the most important things that occurred in a meeting were not on the agenda.) I wanted

²DeFrantz’s original footnote reads: “Was one of 37 bands to participate in a parade which preceded the driving of the 500-mile race in Indianapolis May 30, 1925.”

³DeFrantz’s original footnote reads: “F. B. Ransom, was chairman of the Branch Committee of Management from 19 -19 . Dr. W. W. Stuart, Committee of Management Chairman, 19 -19 . The Rev. Charles H. Bell, pastor Mt. Paran Baptist Church; Lionel F. Artis, formerly of the staff; Robert Gilliam, a Branch Founder; Dr. H. L. Hummons, a Branch Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Committee of Management; Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, President of Howard University, Washington, D.C., Monster meeting guest speaker—opened Monster meeting series times in its 45-year history; the Reverend I. Albert Moore, pastor Jones Tabernacle AMEZ, Church; R. L. Brokenburr, Chairman Branch Membership Department.” According to the list compiled by Stanley Warren, “The Monster Meetings at the Negro YMCA in Indianapolis,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 91 (March 1995), 66-80, Johnson spoke fifteen times at the Monster Meetings from November 1926 to November 1961.

to preside this day but was denied with, "DeFrantz, you'll want to preside at your own funeral!" Ransom had the job. I sat at his left and looked over the audience.

Myrtle sat in a chair in the center section, front row. Brother Rob had come from New York, and my boys were there. One, recently married, came with his wife from Chicago; the other, by special leave, came from Camp Claibourne, La., where he was doing his U.S. Army basic. Myrtle's brother Frank Summers and his wife from St. Louis, Mo., were there.

The YMCA Quartet occupied front seats at the right of the rostrum. Looking at them—George Robinson, Wallace Wolfolk, Edward Hammonds, Clarence Hicks—I thought of the Christmas days we had toured the city—they singing carols; I, chauffering.⁴

Here and there in the audience were members of the Prayer Band, the embryo of Senate Avenue YMCA. I looked at them all—and remembered many things.

This meeting opened the 1943-'44 series. Dr. Johnson was the speaker, and it was the one time he came and was not the "star of the show." His subject this afternoon was "He who is diligent in his work shall stand before kings." Artis discussed "Thirty years with F. E. DeFrantz," and Gilliam, "F. E. DeFrantz as a Friend." Little Julius Rhodes presented roses to my wife.

The meeting was, for the most part, a tribute to my work. Similarly, Monster meetings honored others, including Dr. Johnson, Percy L. Julian, Brokenburr (when, in 1940 he became the first Negro to be elected to the Indiana State Senate), and to the 4 men given the Branch racial amity award.⁵

⁴DeFrantz's original footnote reads: "Organized in 1922. Caroled 32 consecutive Christmas Days for YMCA friends, including Arthur Jordan, Wm. H. Remy, Frank Jordan, Harry W. White, Arthur Baxter, B. W. Duck, Earl Beck, J. W. Esterline, Eli Lilly, Charles J. Lynn, F. M. Ayers, Nicholas Noyes, F. A. Stalnaker, J. H. Aufderheide, J. K. Lilly, Jr., Dr. Frank Hamilton, Austin Brown, W. H. Coleman, Barrett Moxley, Paul V. McNutt, Samuel Dugan, Fred Gardner, Roy Adams, Ray Adams, J. P. Frenzel Jr., John Pearson, Keifer A. Mayer, David Liggett, James Stuart, Irving Lemeaux, Mrs. K. A. Mayer, J. M. Drake, Walter Marmon, Arthur Wolf, Lucian Wainwright, J. W. Fesler, Norman Perry, Mrs. John N. Carey, John A. Patton, Arthur V. Brown, Herbert O. Willis, Dr. LaFayette Paige, Boyd, Rudolph Aufderheide, Ralph M. Gates, Henry F. Shricker, Hugh McKay Landon, J. J. Daniels, John S. Wright. Sang also at the city prison and the Marion County Jail."

⁵DeFrantz's original footnote reads: "The Racial amity award is given annually by the Branch Emblem Club to persons in Indiana adjudged to have made the greatest contribution toward easing racial tensions and making possible the advance in understanding and equitable

Primarily, however, the Monster meetings are a community educational program, planned to meet a mission I realized Senate Avenue had. In them—and here I quote one of the Monster meeting speakers:

the redcap and the lawyer, the laborer and the doctor seek,
together to find answers to social and political questions . . .
herein is the very genius of Christianity.⁶

Scientists, artists, ministers, bishops, editors, governors, musicians, writers, personnel manager, school superintendents, a vice-president of the United States, United States Senators and Representatives, labor organizers, professors, and university presidents have lectured in Monster meetings and answered questions from the audiences. They have come from every part of the country and have discussed many things: isms, ideologies, philosophies, controversies; strikes, riots, lynchings, elections, and inventions.

They have come to expand the circumference of community knowledge, thought, and action.

Perhaps the youngest to address a Monster meeting was J. Ernest Wilkins, Jr., who described how “naïve, at least” it was to suggest that any kind of missile crossfire could prevent an atomic bomb attack.

I was proud this Monster meeting (I hope pardonably so) for [illegible] Fay was on the platform with me—to introduce the speaker. Wilkins and Fay had been classmates in the University of Chicago, the one majoring in physics; the other chemistry. Fay, who had begun his career in the Glidden lab there had been transferred to the Glidden plant here and was on hand to introduce his school friend to his home town audience. And he gave the group an intimate glimpse of the young genius Wilkins—from his adroit performance of dance steps to his precise record keeping for the Kappa Alpha Psis to his brilliant execution of problems in math.

treatment between the races. Those who have received the award are: H.B. Snyder, editor, the *Gary Post-Tribune*; Dr. Herman B Wells, president Indiana University, Bloomington; Dr. Merril B. McFall, pastor First Methodist Church, Bloomington; and Jimmie Angelopolis sports writer *Indianapolis Times*.

⁶DeFrantz's original footnote reads: “Dr. Mordecai Johnson.”

Similarly, others having mutual associations with monster meeting speakers have shared the platform with them: Paul Jewel with W. E. B. DuBois, Julian Coleman with Dr. Bennie E. Mayes, Bennie Smith with A. Philip Randolph.

Speakers have come to tell of new trends in Government.

I can see Channing Tobias describing sessions of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. "I was prepared to go down the line alone for integration in the armed services," he said, "but young Franklin Roosevelt helped me carry the ball." And he went on to quote from the Committee's discussion: "Prejudice in any area is ugly, but in the armed services, where all men run the risk of death it is particularly repugnant."

I can hear A. Philip Randolph telling an audience about the conference with President Roosevelt that led to the issuance of Executive Order 8802. "I had to abandon protocol," said the suave Mr. Randolph, "and raise my voice above the President's to insist on the urgency for an order prohibiting discrimination in plants handling government contracts."

Some of the speakers came at sacrifices to themselves. There was the occasion when illness struck suddenly keeping a speaker in New York. I called John Eubanks who was in Chicago working on his dissertation for a doctorate in History of Culture. He laid aside his manuscript: "I wouldn't do it for anyone but Chief," he said. But he came—and the Monster meeting audience was not disappointed.

Eugene Pulliam faced an audience with, "I've got an awful cold and should not be here. But this damn DeFrantz—if you made him a promise he expects you to keep it!" Then discussed, as if he never felt more vigorous, "The Menace of Socialism."

Of course there have been disappointments, too. We had scheduled Julian for the closing meeting in '51—but a fellow can't leave a crucible of B12 on a bunsen burner—or can he? I'm trying to say that the man was up to his eyebrows in technical research in his own job—director of research for the Glidden Company.

The YMCA as a National Movement officially endorsed and recommended to local Associations the principle of the open forum in 1931. Senate Avenue had been hammering away on the thesis since 1905. Through the Monster meeting the Branch was one of the first to recognize the coming to power and prominence of the labor movement and to recognize the importance of that power.

Monster meeting audiences have had books recommended to them, and, in the meeting, bought them: Lillian Smith's *Killers of the*

Dream and *Strange Fruit*; Langston Hughes' *Freedom's Plow*; Roi Ottley's *New World A' Coming*; Huel Gallagher's *American Caste and the Negro College*; Margaret Halsey's *Color Blind*; Shirley Graham's *There Was Once a Slave*; and others, and others.

The meetings were free and public. Collections were taken as an educational part of the program. To have audiences realize that the programs were valuable to them; to stimulate pride in the group; to train in "paying without being taxed" were goals sought in the collection method. Often the Branch budget sustained a deficit for one program until it was made up at a later meeting when the collection exceeded the cost of the program.

MONSTER MEETING EPILOGUES

"In a program of integration in education such as you are discussing, Dr. Johnson, what happens to Howard University? What happens to your job?"

"There would be no Howard University principally for Negroes as there is now. Perhaps no president's job for me. Perhaps no job for me there at all. But we must work as hard for integration as if it could come tomorrow; yet, at the same time, be as efficient in our segregated positions as if they were to be maintained forever."

We were in my home in one of those after-Monster-meeting sessions, where groups with somewhat focused interest ventilated details and made more exacting analyses of situations than had been feasible in a Monster meeting. To such a session I always invited some who had been challenged by ideas expressed in a Monster meeting. Some whom I hoped had been challenged—or would be. Tonight the rooms which accommodated these Monster meeting epilogues, the dining and living rooms, were filled.

These rooms join in L fashion, and folk seated in the lower half of the living room cannot be seen by those seated in the back half of the dining room. Usually, therefore, I was careful to place the Monster meeting guest's chair in a position from which he easily could see everyone in both rooms.

I gave the matter no thought, however, when Percy Julian was the major guest. He crossed to the sofa, squared his shoulders against an end section where he had full view of both rooms and the stairway—which caught any overflow. There he talked tersely of cortisone; hailed new policies ending segregation practices at Eli Lilly's; lamented the dearth of Negroes majoring in chemistry.

Lillian Smith, too, quickly accommodated herself to the floor plan. On sofa or pull-up chair, she talked easily about the South and its "Three Ghost Stories;" its "velvet glove pressures;" about killers of the American dream everywhere.

Max Yergan accepted the chair I gave him—straight and firm cushioned. And, sitting well against its back, or leaning forward over his knees, he answered questions about Africa, ("I was working under the leadership of the Christian religion. Every time I would try to do something to change the structural condition that affected the life of the African native, I was told . . . I couldn't do that; I couldn't go that far. I began to feel that I was doing next to nothing . . . I wanted to get away."); about India. Paris. Confusion in New York.

Walter White was at once all over the place. Setting off a discussion, he would leave for his room up stairs as it progressed, to return, sometimes, with a message from Kathy. "Yes. Colored people the world over have made the problem of the American Negro their own," he would affirm. "You must get tired of 'the race problem.'"—"I do enjoy discussing the jitterbug."

But Dr. Johnson. Some called the big barrel back wing chair "his chair" and suggested that he "would have, with mitred dignity, ensconced himself in it even at the risk of having his back to everyone in the rooms."

He sat in it this night and everyone in the dining room was behind him when the question above was asked him. (Including the person who had asked the question.) Dr. Johnson had tilted his head back as he listened and, without the slightest hesitation, gave the reply.

"But what can we do," another had wanted to know—"what specifically can we do to hasten the integration in which we believe."

"Don't discount the thing you are doing," was the answer. "Establishing thought patterns and attitudes toward a goal is often more important than one might assume."

"I find nothing so objectionable in the Taft-Hartley Law," a top-bracket Republican suggested.

"It must be a good feeling to know you have a collar with sliding chain on a dog and can choke him to his knees if his barking becomes too annoying."

Frieda Neugabauer, a circle of eager faces around her, told of Africa's potentialities in material and human resources. Reminded the group of the black engineers from West Africa who helped build the Pyramids.

“How imperialism could be destroyed and pent-up national energies released was the question to which many seek an answer,” she said.

Many a Monster meeting Sunday was rounded with such a session. The night Ted Cable came with Uta Hagen and Jose Ferrer—when they were in Indianapolis to play *Othello* with Paul Robeson—the session lasted well into the morning. And guests left knowing that Paul, due to certain pressures, would be accommodated in the bridal suite of the Claypool during his stay here.

Often a dinner in honor of a Monster meeting guest preceded a session at the house. One Sunday morning before such a dinner Bob confided to his friend that “Mom already has me and Fay and Flora eating in the kitchen and Dad’s still inviting people. Mom calls out, ‘But, Dad, there isn’t space at the table for a single other plate!’ and Dad says, ‘Hooh!’ and rings up another guest.

This Sunday the Marshall Stearnes and Bess Owens were coming up from I.U. to meet Dr. Johnson and there were some folk here I wanted to meet Miss Robins and the Stearnes. I invited all I wanted to invite. I knew Myrtle wouldn’t let me down. She would put the leaves in the dining room table and if a leaf was lost, she improvised with magazines.

Often at the end of a Sunday—a Sunday that had included dinner guests, Monster meeting, and its epilogue, we have had an epilogue of the epilogue after guests were gone. Especially if Monster meeting guests were our house guests—as was Dr. Johnson and (sometimes) Mrs. Johnson; as were Walter and Poppy, Max and Lena.

THE PEOPLE SPEAK

On two occasions and by different groups I have had opportunity to consider analyses and evaluations of the work of the Senate Avenue Branch YMCA.

The first was in the second part of the appreciation program that marked the thirtieth anniversary of my association with the Branch. It was a Monday night (Nov. 8, 1943), and the gymnasium that had held the Monster meeting audience the day before had been converted into a gala banquet hall. Dinner was over, and the candles out. Lights from the electric globes were softened by extravagant arrangements of red, white, and blue bunting.

The master of ceremonies stood and tapped for attention. I looked at the program.

A dozen people were listed—each to give a personal reaction to a different phase of my life in Indianapolis: What about DeFrantz and the community? DeFrantz and the social agencies; and the public schools; and the press? What about DeFrantz as a friend, a fratman, a builder of goodwill? What about DeFrantz and the YMCA? DeFrantz and Senate Avenue Branch?

What, indeed?

I had wanted Senate Avenue to illustrate (1) that the “little fellow” *belonged*. (2) That the needs of the people it served, the world outlook, and the urgencies of the times determined the core and fibre and direction of its activities. (3) That its philosophy was based on the individual worth of every man. My feeling that “nobody should kick a boy around in my Y whatever his color or race” long since had expanded to insistence that nobody should kick anybody around anywhere. In results, had these tenets been indicated. Were they reflected beyond any doubt?

The Branch had made contacts with obvious personages. Was it understood that they had been enlisted not to *show off* but to serve.

Bible classes, recreation classes—classes in elementary and high school subjects, in crafts, arts, and trades were sanctioned in YMCA programs. We had sponsored such classes at Senate Avenue. But inquiry into cases of bias in employment; insistence on welcoming organized labor; urgency of adequate hospitalization; open opposition to the Ku Klux Klan were by many considered far beyond the *business* of a YMCA. We had been a part of such action too.

Since the Branch was organized the population of Negroes in Indianapolis had increased from 15,934 to more than 52,000. The decades between 1920 and 1940 had witnessed a migration from the South, with attendant problems of adjustment, that strained relations between whites and Negroes here. In this period the Branch had offered classes in automobile mechanics, upholstery, hotel service, bricklaying, electricity, radio, barbering, custodial service, tailoring, and the like. In these, Negroes were taught to handle a tool, but he was cautioned not to become a tool. Consistently, attempts were made to stimulate his incentive, to have the Negro look beyond his immediate horizon—to do something about expanding it.

In this, the Monster meetings, carried the ball. But in the educational department, in recreation, in special and non-registered activities the theme was hammered.

Located in the very heart of the Negro community, the Branch building had become *home* to many who did not find cordiality elsewhere. There had been more emphasis on creating an atmosphere in which the lesser privileged relaxed than in polishing brass and shining mirrors to win the plaudits of the pompous.

These things I pondered as the people spoke. A man stood and read a list of names. They were of young men whom the Branch had helped to train. He called them “tangible results,” “immortal monuments” of its service.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE HONORS BRANCH

The foregoing comments had come from local people and almost exclusively from laymen. The second appraisal of the Branch was by secretaries and came in a conference on “The Role of the YMCA in Intercultural and Interracial Advance.” It was the second annual conference on the subject, incidentally; was sponsored by the Program Services Department of the National Board of the Young Men’s Christian Associations of America, and several areas and states cooperated. The Indianapolis YMCA was host to the project.

In the conference some 90 odd delegates, including secretaries, laymen, students of George Williams College who were studying for YMCA secretaryships, and guest speakers took an objective look at what we called “blocks to interracial advance.” It was pointed out that there were “blocks” in YMCA secretaries, in YMCA boards and committees, in local and State laws.

It was interesting to me to listen to quotations on segregation in religious organizations from the laws of several Southern states. From the laws of North Carolina, the following was quoted:

This state does not have any segregation laws regulating the activities of religious organizations, including YMCAs and YWCAs, or similar religious and private organizations, such as educational classes, recreational classes, forums, and similar activities and their membership.

Quotations from other state laws were—

from Kentucky;

There are no statutes which deal with interracial programs by religious or private organizations. Private organizations, such as the YMCA or YWCA should adopt their own policies in this respect.

from Texas:

Have no statutes regulating interracial activities in churches or YMCAs No statutes regulating religious groups.

from West Virginia:

We do not have any law restricting interracial activities in religious organizations, such as the YMCA.

The conference held that the existence of a legal statute which restricted expression of Christian principles represented a challenge to the moral leadership of the YMCA. It was a predominating opinion of the conference that "YMCA practices in any area generally reflected the professional status, personal attitude, and leadership of the professional staff." On staff was placed the maximum responsibility for intercultural and interracial advance.

We suggested ways to remove blocks to interracial advance.

Platform speakers reminded us of the serious urgency to remove such blocks; of the need to be guided by one principle—"*Is it right? Not Is it expedient?*"

Definitely, the conference was a good thing for Indianapolis. And because Senate Avenue was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, the conference program included a feature in recognition thereof.

The seven years between this anniversary and the evaluation of the Branch work recorded above had been years of emphases on integration.

To seek integration and oppose a metropolitan YMCA had seemed to some entirely contradictory. And that had been my position. I did not believe that metropolitan and integration were synonymous terms. Or synonymous intentions. I had wanted to keep Senate Avenue independent of a central board's authority—not because the Branch in the beginning had been rejected by the city Association and organized as a part of

the State YMCA—but because I doubted that Branch needs would be given the consideration they deserved; I doubted that Branch men would have the right of self expression. And they had earned the right.

Others had insisted that the trend toward forming metropolitan associations should be followed here in Indianapolis; that integration would come faster if we adopted the symbol. I had put up a fight—and had lost it.

Indianapolis Y had gone metropolitan. The board had elected two Negroes to its membership. Laymen from Senate were on metropolitan committees, including personnel, camp, and public relations—one each. A city YMCA camp site had been purchased at a price of some sixteen thousand dollars, of which Senate had raised five thousand. The Branch camp sessions were held at the metropolitan camp under the direction of a metropolitan Y staff. (Previously, the camp periods had been held in various locations—from the Samuel Welch farm to the Salvation Army Camp, the Boy Scout Camp, Camp Riverdale, to Camp Bedford—and under the direction of Senate Avenue staffmen and volunteer laymen.)

From the Branch membership two secretaries had been added to the Association Movement since the former review of its work. The Branch fifty-year record, bits about its organization, tributes to its founders and supporters had been compiled and printed in bulletin form and titled *People Are Our Business*.

Copies of the bulletin were being distributed to the conference. We were in an evening session in the auditorium of the Central YMCA and Dr. Channing Tobias was the speaker. Again, he called Senate Avenue his “Ideal Branch.”

Friends in the fellowship presented to me a volume of tributes to the Branch and myself which I treasure.

In a lifetime of public work a man reads much that is written about him and to him. A lot of it is formal, or trite. Some contain a newsgatherer's overtones. Occasionally words touch the heart and produce a brief flash of the meaning of true brotherhood. Some such words were contained in expressions that came from YMCA secretaries in California, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, Georgia, Florida—and states between:

Indianapolis could not be the city it is had not Senate Avenue
Branch been such a beacon light.



BEYOND THE JOB DESCRIPTION

I did not spare myself in attempting to have Senate Avenue Branch YMCA become—in membership, program, policy, and spirit—a number one Association. Some say I succeeded; that in these it ranked second to no YMCA Branch in the city of Indianapolis. And some well-travelled, national figures claim that in these it ranked second to no Branch in the United States.

During the years of my executiveship of the organization (1916-1951) however, other ventures, too claimed segments of my time, energy and resources. I tangled with the Ku Klux Klan, the Indianapolis Public Schools, Indiana University, the Indianapolis press.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, the Episcopal Church, the Mme. C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company, the Masonic Lodge, the Indianapolis Church Federation, and Howard University, (Washington, D.C.) have had a share, in varying degrees, of my abilities and my devotion.

I have found pleasure in studying people and movements and in relating them to change and progress. I have observed outward behavior which camouflaged inner attitudes for security reasons. And have seen efforts to compensate for that behavior when security no longer was a consideration. I have seen guilt complexes rolled away and that has been rewarding.

I have noted affects of defeatism. (Never have I accepted defeat as final—lost battles, yes. But never considered that I had “lost the war.”) I have seen confidence grow with success. My greatest joy has come in spotting men with talent and seeing them get a chance to develop it.

All I have attempted, all I have accomplished with individuals and in movements has been motivated by the theme, I WANT TO BE FREE. With the desire is the knowledge that I cannot be free unless all men are free.

VERSUS THE KLAN

A letter from a friend reminds me of an incident I had forgotten.

Twenty-eight years ago the Ku Klux Klan was having a field day in Indiana, and the voices protesting its lawlessness were few and feeble. “When Bishop Joseph Francis refused to issue a public denunciation of the Klan,” the friend writes, “you went up to him and, clutching the lapels of his coat, said: ‘Bishop, silence is connivance!’”

I remember the day and how I felt. The man was a Bishop in the Episcopal Church. He was my spiritual adviser. And for him to withhold rebuke of a force notoriously opposed to the doctrine he upheld was more than I could absorb sitting down.

In Indiana the Klan made all Protestant ministers honorary members, and while all of them did not take advantage of the "honor," it was a small minority who publicly denounced the Klan. That my Bishop was not willing to be one of the minority was disappointing.

I was aware that the "Hooded Order" had ridden to power in Indiana on the [discretion] of a governor; taken control of a political party; recruited throngs by piping tunes on thriving prejudices against the Jew, the Negro, the foreigner, and the Catholic; that it wielded power and influence which had multiple and, often, dire consequences for those who opposed it.

It threatened to beat the Negro back into the Republican Party, which it claimed he was deserting, and employed outrageous tactics to do it. In October (1924) the Klan had planned to intimidate the Negro population of Indianapolis by staging one of its awesome parades through the heart of the Negro district.

Of course, the parade route led through Indiana Avenue – which was the toughest in the Negro district. Down this Avenue life was the cheapest commodity.

Strategic contacts were made. Word reached the Klan leaders that Negroes were armed and waiting. The route of the parade was revised suddenly: West on Washington to Capitol and North on Capitol.

The hottest years of Klan rule in Indiana were '23-'24. Pitiable were the retrenchment of convictions and the swiveling of powers under the opposition which seethed with cunning, mystery, and flagrant violation of decency!

All were not afraid, however. Some clamored as they worked against the Klan and some worked against it without clamor. A group of us, composed of men whom I proudly call Friends, collected thousands of dollars to fight it.

OPPOSING SEGREGATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When I came to Indianapolis public elementary schools of the city were operated on a policy of racial segregation, separation, and discrimination. The high schools were integrated.

The move for a separate high school for Negroes was inspired by the Klan. (The slander that Negro leaders *agitated* for the establishment of a segregated high school was never true.) I, with others, opposed it from the outset. And fought it all the way. In committee, conference, interview, petition, mass meeting we fought it. And lost. But continued to condemn it, even in the dedicatory ceremonies. A fellow opposer quotes from my talk at the dedication the following: "Now that you've got your damn Negro school, for God's sake make it a good one." I knew it could never be good—truly good, for it had been planned and established in opposition to a cardinal right of the individual: the right of equality of treatment.

Crispus Attucks High School, *the* high school for Indianapolis Negroes, opened in September, 1927. Nineteen-hundred-twenty seven: 9 years after a World War "for democracy" which America, with its Allies, won.

I was not proud of Crispus Attucks High School; or of the segregated elementary schools in the city. I knew their kind would go. Some day.

And I knew that day was approaching when, in the early morning of January 8, 1946, a public school building burned leaving 350 Negro children overnight without classrooms in a neighborhood where white schools had classroom space to spare. How would the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners resolve the situation? What use would it make of the opportunity? I wondered. And did not have to wonder long:

The Negro children were transported by bus daily across town to a public school building which had been reopened, as the Commissioners put it, "to keep the children and their teachers intact." Notwithstanding the fact that three neighboring schools, white, had expressed willingness to take in the Negro pupils if permitted to do so; notwithstanding the fact that the transportation for the rest of the school term would cost seven thousand dollars.

I read the account of the Board's decision, backed the DeSoto out of my driveway, and took a trip.

To a Senate Avenue Monster meeting audience this afternoon (February 10, 1946) I made the following report:

This morning I drove from School 63 (the school burned) to School 55 (the one reopened). It took me exactly 27 minutes. I clocked it. Now, that is what our School Board is doing with the

children who were burned out of classrooms by fire at School 63 last month. Why, if Crispus Attucks burned, they would take us to CHICAGO!

Response was immediate and condemning. We organized a Committee Against Segregation in the Indianapolis Public Schools, which, Tuesday night (Feb. 12) presented to the School Board an argument against the transportation of School 63 children across town to classrooms; against all segregation in the Indianapolis Public Schools.

I recall that Carl Brandt, then president of the Board, opened the meeting with a comment that the Board had a heavy agenda and its time was *at a premium*. He had called on one of the most important mechanisms of social interaction – suggestion. He might as well have said, “Make it snappy, for we have some important matters to consider.”

I sought to offset Brandt’s intimation by saying that time was valuable but that its value was reflected in what was accomplished with it – not in the quantity available. I suggested that the situation we had come to discuss was not a minor detail and proceeded to introduce F. B. Ransom (as public-spirited a man as Indianapolis can boast and a member of the Senate Avenue Committee of Management) enumerated our Committee’s objections to the Board’s handling of School 63 children and made a terse appeal for change in the Board’s segregation policy.

Never in all my remembrance have I heard one man give such an eloquent appeal for decency in the democratic process as did Ransom this evening!

Representatives of the State CIO, a Civic League, a labor committee, a church, a synagogue supported his appeal. The Board was asked to “take a step toward ending segregation in the public schools by distributing the pupils of 63 among other schools.” The Board had authority to do it. Then existing Indiana law gave it the authority.

But the Board suggested no change. We read its answer in the city newspapers the next day:—“Pupils of school 63, which was destroyed by fire recently, will continue to be transported across town to attend classes.”

We hadn’t won. We didn’t give up. Dissatisfaction with segregation in the Indianapolis Public Schools became a tight spiral of protest.

Committees continued to meet and plan and in December (1946) resolutions to abolish segregation in the schools were drawn up and signed by representatives of 10 organizations and sent to the Board.

Newspapers carried the resolutions and comments supporting them. But few were surprised when a city morning daily, December 31, '46, reported:

The Board of School Commissioners last night rejected a demand to abolish racial segregation in Indianapolis public schools . . . it would be unwise at this time to make any material change in the well-established policy of our community in this matter.

The “well-established policy” was to segregate except in schools where it was necessary to accommodate one or two, or, at best, only a few pupils of a race different from the majority enrolled. Negro and white pupils were enrolled in 7 of the city’s 88 public schools at the time.

The Board’s answer continued:

It has been, and is the constant aim of this board to provide the best possible education facilities for all of the children of the city of Indianapolis. . . . Every possible effort is made to give equal educational opportunity to each pupil without regard for his race, color or creed and we believe this objective is being achieved under the present plan of administration in our schools.

I was among the unsurprised. But I groaned as I read the Board’s explanation. Such inanities! “all of the children . . . Every possible effort . . . without regard for his race.”

(It was at the end of 1946. *After* two World Wars . . . Two A bombs . . . The United Nations Organization.)

A strike of pupils in Gary (Indiana) in '45 over a segregation issue in the public schools of the city had aroused opinion throughout the state. The Indiana Legislature was poised for assembly, the first after the Gary strike, and we decided to try to get a bill prohibiting racial segregation in public schools of the *state* passed in the assembly—a bill which would take from the local school Board the authority on which it continued its “well-established policy.”

Such a bill was written in my office and was introduced in the House in February (1947) by Representatives Wilbur H. Grant and William L. Fortune, both of them Democrats from Marion County. The bill was referred to the Education Committee and there held. And held.

Other civic groups joined forces with those who sponsored the resolutions to the Board in December (1946) and the Committee Against Segregation in the Indianapolis Public Schools became a movement state wide. One city editor announced that his newspaper “would back the bill to the hilt.” (And it did.) A sorority and a fraternity supplied lobbyists. I was one of a delegation to make a personal appeal to the Education Committee to bring the bill to the floor.

Although a sprinkling of letters-to-editors opposing the bill appeared, public opinion was predominantly favorable.

Following are quotes from letters objecting to the passage of the bill:

I am raising a family and I do not teach hate, but I don't believe in mixing races. Let's let God take care of the hereafter. . . . Let's quit stirring the pot.

(2) I have only the kindest feeling for colored people of this city and think their children should have all the educational advantages afforded others . . . But . . . it would seem that the colored students would be happier and make more rapid progress among their own people and under the teaching and guidance of their own leaders who understand them and their particular problems.

(3) I surely would not want my son going to school with any other than his own race, which is very white. . . . Would you settle an argument by answering, please, are you white, Negro, or Jew? (The question was to the editor and his note read: “Yes, we are white, Negro or Jew.”)

An anonymous circular carrying a prejudicial appeal, “Do you want colored children in your school with colored teachers and principal? Then read and help defeat this bill that comes up for approval of education committee” was circulated near public school buildings and given to parents at their homes.

Letters backing the bill poured into editors' offices, and the city papers, without exception, editorially supported it. A lead editorial that cheered all who were working for the bill, said:

Indianapolis is one of the few places in the state where school board policy separates white and Negro pupils, regardless of inconveniences caused to them and to their parents.

Reps. William L. Fortune and Wilbur H. Grant, both of this county, have introduced house bill 406 to prohibit such discrimination from kindergarten through college. The school board no longer could continue its present policy if and when this measure becomes a law.

House bill 406, in our opinion, should be brought out of the education committee where Mrs. Nelle C. Downey and Mrs. Margaret Wyatt, also of Marion county, are members of that committee.

Enactment of such a law would result in greater understanding between whites and Negroes, would work hardship on no one . . . Legislation won't cure prejudice but knowledge of the other fellow usually will.

In spite of supporting editorials, letters to editors, letters to the Education Committee members, and countless conferences and appeals to state senators, representatives, and the Governor, house bill 406 died in committee. It was a personal defeat: to me and every Negro and every white person who supported passage of the bill. Nevertheless, I knew there would be another year; another opportunity.

That opportunity was not long away.

September 17, 1948, parents of approximately 150 white grade school pupils ordered their children to stay from classes in protest against the school Board's decision to enroll 90 Negro children there.

The enrollment of the Negro children in this white school was no democratic asseveration on the part of the Board. It was a case of lebensraum for the Negro pupils. And the parents' reaction to the Board's decision could hardly have been more helpful to the anti-segregation movement. The spiral against segregation in the city public schools, formed in 1946 with the burning of School 63, increased in dimensions.

Parents of pupils of the school in which the Negro children were enrolled declared:

It isn't that we don't want our children to go to school with colored kids, we just don't like the idea of our children being used as guinea pigs. If they (school board members) are going to end segregation, we insist they end it in all the schools at the same time.

Editorially, September 26, 1948, the Indianapolis Star explained:

A policy of segregated schools in Indianapolis was brought into existence during the Klan era, an era that still leaves a stain upon our reputation for fairness and justice . . . Most reasonable white persons in this city know that the mixing of races in our schools is the just and economical way to run the school system. Unfortunately they have not had all the facts showing the heavy costs, the hardships, the resentments caused by keeping up separate schools.

In a school Board hearing two days later patrons of still another school asked for a “definite committed and declared policy of non-discrimination. This was the third school from which appeals came for total integration since the school burned in ’46. And since that time the number of schools in which both Negro and white pupils were enrolled had increased from 3 to 14. However, the school Board refused to alter its policy of segregation in part of the system.

We were not discouraged. We knew we were gaining influence. A survey of the school system sponsored by the Indianapolis Community Relations Council supported total integration. Interest in the issue had trebled since the 1947 General Assembly. And I knew that one of the huskiest contests in the 1949 State Legislature would be over an anti-segregation school bill.

Such it was. The pro forces won. The bill to end segregation in the public schools of the state, introduced by Hunter and Binder (James S. Hunter, Lake County, East Chicago; George M. Binder, Marion County – both Democrats) was passed by the House February 17, by the Senate March 3, and promptly was signed into law by his excellency—and I say “his excellency” advisedly—Henry F. Shricker, governor of the State of Indiana.

Here I want to pay tribute to Henry J. Richardson, Jr. for it was due to his indomitable will and courageous action that the powers to change the status quo from undemocratic to democratic were brought forward. In fact, it was he who wrote, in essence, the bill which was, of course, modified and supplemented by representatives of the NAACP, the CIO, the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council, and the Indianapolis Community Relations Council.

It was a victory for numerous individuals; for many groups who had worked and argued and hoped, who had petitioned, harassed, and prayed. It was a victory for the State.

To me it was wonderful. At last. I had been a part of the opposition to segregation in the public schools before my first boy was born. I had seen him and his younger brother attend segregated elementary schools and graduate from a segregated high school. Now, my son's daughter, Kathy, was four—and a term-and-a-half from kindergarten. I thanked God that she would not have to begin her school life under the old stigma.

I wasn't grateful for Kathy alone—but for my neighbor's children and his grandchildren; for all the boys who crowded our Branch Y lobby before busses came to take them to summer camp; for those who came for gym classes, for crafts, for swimming.

I was grateful for every Negro parent in Indianapolis. And for all the other parents who had fought with us for a common good. Large is the Negroes' share of the blame for lack of democratic dealings in our Land of the 'Free'. I am aware that many people must be ashamed of the Negro's patience in bearing indignities that scar us all; indignities that make liars out of the Country's most famous statesmen and flatten the Voice of America.

Who, indeed, respects those who, like frightened canine, tuck their hurts beneath masks of "underprivileged minority" and refuse to combat unfairness?

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR OF IHSAA

With the opening up this year of the membership of the IHSAA to colored, parochial and prep schools of Indiana, Marion County's sectional list was boosted to 19 teams. Due to the fact that each sectional is limited to 16, 3 squads have been dispatched to other sectional centers.

The above item was conspicuously displayed on page 12 of the *Indianapolis News* of February 24, 1943. It was boxed and in boldface type. It was a vital statistic in the record of concessions to decency and fairness in the State of Indiana.

It carried no implications of what denial of membership in the Indiana High School Athletic Association had cost some schools in money (which was considerable). It did not reflect the scars of rejection.

The statement gave no indication of the suggestions, the appeals, the obtrusion which had preceded its authorization. And, as these relat-



Crispus Attucks basketball fans, 1950s. DeFrantz was among the community leaders who worked to obtain full IHSAA membership for the school's athletic teams.

Courtesy, Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society

ed to the “colored” schools, I had been anxiously involved for more than a decade. Almost as long, in fact, as the establishment of Crispus Attucks gave Indianapolis its “colored” high school. Even as protests against its erection were being muffled by the buzz of activity in and about the new building, inquiries on the subject of the school’s possible membership in IHSAA began.

Rejection by IHSAA deprived Crispus Attucks of competitive opportunities in track and field, baseball, football, and basketball, but it was on the subject of basketball that the more strident objections came. Basketball was (and is) the most popular and profitable activity of the Association. It has been described as the game to which “IHSAA owes its power and magnificence,” as the game that “pays the freight for the rest of the IHSAA program.” And, of the basketball program, it was exclusion from state tournament play that was the most galling to Negroes, generally. They applauded the skill of Negro boys who played on high school teams from other Indiana cities and could be found in the fan sections of these schools. But—“If we have to tolerate an all-Negro high school,

please,” they asked, “do not deny the boys of that school opportunity for state tournament participation.”⁷

In many ways we said to IHSAA “Open the door, Richard!” Not facetiously, though, as that once-popular jumble goes, but in grim seriousness. Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendents Charles Miller, Paul Stetson, and DeWitt Morgan heard our requests. To IHSAA Commissioner Arthur L. Trester and members of the IHSAA Board of Control; to state legislators and school Board members we appealed. Where there was authority, where there was influence we petitioned.

In 1929 IHSAA opened “limited” membership to “colored” high schools. We didn’t want that. Limited membership specifically denied participation in sectional or state tournaments and play in these was high on our list of objectives.

The letter, quoted in part, below reveals the thoughts of one man on the eve of a state basketball tournament in March, 1934. Undoubtedly thousands were disturbed by similar thoughts.

To the Editor of the Indianapolis Star:

I read with a good deal of interest your very fine editorial in Friday morning’s *Star* under the caption “Welcome Basketball Fans.”

Everybody knows that this is a great occasion for every high school student in the state, whether they happen to be the fortunate ones or not. It is the ambition of every high school athlete to, at some time during his high school career, have the honor and pleasure of participating in the state basketball tournament and to be a member of (one) of the successful teams that participate in the finals. I wonder if it has occurred to you just what this must mean to the basketball team of Attucks High School—the . . . school . . . that hasn’t a chance nor a ghost of a show, to participate in these finals or to be in any way identified with the state basketball tournament.

⁷DeFrantz’s original footnote reads: “Limited membership may be extended to colored high schools desiring to join the IHSAA with the understanding that limited membership shall extend...the privilege of participating in single athletic games and contests with other high schools belonging to IHSAA but not in meets and tourneys in which more than 2 teams participate except in meets and tourneys in which only the teams from the high schools of the same city participate.” —IHSAA Handbook, 1929 (Constitution).

The chief objection that colored people had and have to a separate high school is that the students in such a high school are not accorded all the rights and privileges or opportunities that students of other high schools enjoy. They are pushed aside and set off in a corner, so to speak, as . . . different. In the state basketball tournament here we have a glaring example of this very thing.

A colored boy who happens to attend a high school in some small Indiana town may have a chance to reach the state finals, but not so with the colored boy attending Attucks. I would not write this, but to my mind, there is no excuse for such discrimination against the team of Attucks High School. A little while ago a famous Eastern colored team played an Indiana white professional team here and the Butler Bowl was packed to capacity. Colored teams are brought here from time to time to play on Sunday afternoons our professional local team. Everybody goes out and has a good time. So why this attitude toward Attucks High School? Who is it that has a right to say that Attucks High School shall not participate in the state basketball tournament?

You spoke of sportsmanship in your splendid editorial. It seems to me that there ought to be enough sportsmanship in the citizens of Indianapolis and Indiana, regardless of race, to see to it that the students of Attucks are not thus discriminated against.

—F. B. Ransom

Ransom's sons Frank, Fred, and Willard played a brand of basketball that would have delighted any IHSAA tournament coach, any IHSAA tournament crowd. But they never played for either. They were pupils of Crispus Attucks who were graduated prior to 1943.

When Ransom wrote the above letter he was chairman of the Committee of Management of Senate Avenue Branch YMCA, and the organization boosted circulation of his letter by publishing a reprint of it in the editorial column of the *Y's Man*. When, later in the same month, Stetson—then superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools—addressed the Monster meeting on “The Schools and Public Welfare,” the opportunity to remind him of Negroes' ambition to have Crispus Attucks in IHSAA was not wasted.

Apparently public discussion and publicly stated objections produced some concern in IHSAA but changed no opinions there. For, in a

meeting of the IHSAA Athletic Council, (October, '34) the sections of the Constitution regarding membership in the Association were considered, but the unanimous decision was to leave them as they were worded.

It is interesting to note this wording:

Section 1 limited membership in the Association to "public high schools of the State"; Section 2 declared that "Any public high school in Indiana may become a member"; Section 3 offered limited membership to colored high schools. Yes, the colored high schools to which limited membership was offered were public high schools of the State. "Any" carried a traditional connotation of "*any white*", with which we were desperately familiar.

In Monster meetings when Paul V. McNutt, then Indiana's Democratic governor, was the guest speaker, insistence on the democratic right of Crispus Attucks to membership in the State high school athletic association was carefully included in the programs. When Morgan (who succeeded Stetson as superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools) addressed the Y Monday Luncheon Club the matter again was reviewed. Discussion of modified membership for prep schools of the state at this time increased general interest, and clamor for full membership for colored high schools offering four years of work spread.

When Brokenburr was elected to the State Senate in 1940 our efforts were extended and supported in State legislative groups. The steadfast refusal of the officials of Crispus Attucks to have the school accept limited membership in IHSAA left our forces with a whole argument against membership denial.

Senate Avenue YMCA, in its role of character and fellowship agency for men and boys, was proud to give the forces leadership, and its advice was against the involvement in committee responsibility of those professionally related to Crispus Attucks High School. And when—on October 28, 1940—a committee on "Negro High School Participation in Athletics" was appointed to make what was hoped to be a final drive for membership in IHSAA, those named did not include any person employed by the Indianapolis School Board.

The committee was appointed in a Y Monday Luncheon. Blaine Patton, then sports editor of the *Indianapolis Star*, had talked to the men on "Unfair and discriminatory practices of IHSAA relating to Negro and Catholic High Schools," and the discussion which followed climaxed in the appointment of the committee.

In one of its meetings with Superintendent of Public Schools Morgan present, reference was made to the fact that Crispus Attucks had

not taken advantage of the limited membership opportunity which had been available for some eleven years. I supported Attucks in this, saying that an Attucks team should have opportunity to play in sectionals, regionals, and semi-finals and to vie for the state basketball crown. Morgan looked at me, levelly, and predicted: "DeFrantz, neither you nor I will live to see that!"

But we did. Both were around February 20, 1943, when, in the gymnasium of Technical Arsenal High, Crispus Attucks and Shortridge trotted out on the hardwood to play the second match in a Marion County Sectional.

Sport notes on the Sectional read: best ticket sale in history of the tournament...

Some of the tickets dated back to '41 and '43 as only 4,000 had been ordered printed this year.

5,400 in the tech gym . . . at 7:35 there were about 2,500 persons outside trying to get in the gym. It was unfortunate that it was a first experience for many of them.

Lon Watford, the C.A. Coach was all smiles. He sat with the C.A. fan delegation

And Watford's smiles were symbolic. All over the State devotees of the democratic ideal smiled with him. That Shortridge drubbed Crispus Attucks 44-22 was of no significance to most of us. Mothers and fathers and fans toasted the new acceptance; embraced a new relationship to State athletics. Conflict was changed to cooperation.

Green and gold pennants proudly waved in the hands of Crispus Attucks pupils. Service flags—some with white stars, some with gold—proudly hung in front windows of the homes of many an Attucks grad.

Yes, Morgan saw Crispus Attucks entered and eliminated in two sectional tournaments before he died, and I have lived to see her cop sectional, regional, semi-final crowns. And when—in Atherton Center Monday evening, March 20, 1951—I saw a Crispus Attucks senior, Robert Jewel, pick up a hand mike and tell how he felt when presented the Arthur L. Trester medal I was jubilant. I thought of Ransom. I looked back at his son Willard who sat a couple of tables

behind me. "One for the Gipper", a line from "The Four Horseman" came back to me.

The thrill of the occasion matched one I had experienced about a month before.

In the I.U. stadium I had seen Bill Garrett, first Negro to star in Big Ten basketball, play his last game for Indiana University—a game that had a three pronged appeal. (1) I.U. stood second in the Big Ten championship, with Illinois in first place. If Illinois, playing the same night, lost and I.U. won, I.U. would be tied with Illinois for first place. A play-off would be in order. Hopes for championship. (2) Bill Tosheff of Gary, senior, was playing his final game for I.U. and was out to increase his consecutive free-throw record for Big Ten. (3) Garrett, senior, was out to boost the new all-time Indiana University record he had set with 771 points in three years of play. (A record that surpassed the 757 points set by I.U. Lou Watson over 4 seasons of play.)

The stadium was filled to standing room capacity. It was a great game. Indiana won. (so did Illinois, and I.U. remained runner-up for the Big-Ten championship.) Tosheff increased his consecutive free-throw record to 28. Garrett boosted his point record to 792.

But most impressive was the 90-second standing ovation the stadium crowd of some 10,500 fans gave Garrett when he left the game. Less than a minute afterwards Tosheff joined him. Another ovation. The brown boy and the white boy were embraced in an aura of sportsmanship glory.

Things less dramatic have happened through the years. I say "happened" and realize at once the verb is wrong. Little progress "happens." Usually it must be wrested from influences that—either belligerently or indifferently—deny it.

REFUSING I.U. "HOSPITALITY"

Indiana University housing for its Negro male students was inadequate and segregated until 1946. Then an "experiment" in interracial housing was made in a quonset hut with World War II veterans.

Students who were a part of the "experiment" worked out a plan by which to present an incident of interracial housing in a University hall the next year. It was arranged for a couple of Negro students to get housing registration cards meant for white students only. The Negroes filled in requests for rooms in a University hall and had the cards turned into a housing director's office. Assuming the students to be white, the

director assigned them rooms. When attempts to renege on the assignment became overwhelmingly embarrassing, the director “let it pass,” insisting only that they be roommates.”⁸

With the one example established, efforts to reverse the policy of segregated housing intensified. Campus organizations, the State NAACP, objectors to all racial segregation at the Hoosier State University kept up a constant attack until non-segregated housing for male students became a policy. A student who entered the University with an address of Mayes house (in 1943) was graduated from New Men’s Hall—after time out in the Navy—in 1950. My Bob lived in a quonset hut—Hoosier Hall—in North Hall, and in West Hall. Others had similar experience.

The change in housing for Negro male students turned a spotlight of opposition on housing for Negro women students. The accommodations for them were not only segregated and unbeautiful but bristled with inconveniences. A new policy was achieved in 1948. In the fall of ’48 my brother-in law, Frank Summers, who had wanted his daughter to attend Indiana University but who refused to have her live in segregated housing there, saw her assigned a room in Smithwood Hall—a University sponsored hall of residence. Non-segregated.

I have shared experiences at Indiana with my family, with Senate Avenue committeemen, with men of Senate Avenue staff—and some of the experiences are revealing.

It was lunch time and we were on campus this day, a staffman and I. We went to the Commons, got trays, selected food. A supervisor hastened forward to lead us to a table. A table where 7 chairs were turned down and on which was a sign: “RESERVED.” I looked at the sign, “I don’t want this kind of hospitality,” I told the supervisor. “I haven’t ordered any table *reserved*! This must be for somebody else!” Forthwith and conspicuously, I led the way to another table—right in the middle of the Commons—where the men and I sat down and ate.

Another day we were at I.U. and work was in progress on the new Union Building Club. I looked up at the scaffolding and told the fellows with me, “As soon as they’re through I’m coming down and stay all night in it.” And I did.

In the early ’30s we took boys down for Cream and Crimson Day festivities and found they could participate in other activities but not in

⁸DeFrantz’s original footnote reads: “Robert DeFrantz, ‘Mechanisms Employed in the Elimination of Segregation at Indiana University,’ master’s Thesis, unpublished.”

swimming. One day we carried some boys down early and they got to swim, but when others came up to follow suit they were stopped. When we could not get that privilege opened to them we stopped carrying them down. We did not need to take them that far to get them embarrassed.

Two men and I went down to see a Texas U.–I.U. football game one day. At the stadium entrance we saw a group of students in cowboy boots and ten-gallon hats. “Let’s go in with Texas,” I suggested. One of the men—himself a Texan, demurred, but we took seats in the Texas fan section.

In the game I.U. had Archie Harris, all-round Negro athlete (once world discus champion), and Texas had its starring Bobby Lane. When Harris was on the offense, some Texas fan yelled, “Stop that ‘nigger!’” I began telling the men with me about a dog show.

“Do you know,” I said, “I was at a dog show last night and there was a dog there that looked exactly like that guy down front yelling ‘nigger’.” The fellow looked back at me, but didn’t say anything. (One of the men with me said, “The guy’s confused about your race, Chief—take your hat off.”)

In a few minutes Harris was off again and again the yell from below, “Get that ‘nigger!’” The other man with me took the big cigar he was smoking out of his mouth and hurled it hard against the neck of the fellow who had yelled the insult. A student beside him looked back at us, but the one hit did not.

By this time my Texas friend was sure that we were going to get him killed, he said. He didn’t have a knife or anything to fight with, so he ordered colas and kept the bottles.

After the game, the fans who had been insulting to us beat us out of the stadium.

Today no such incidents mar a football game. No boy is barred from the swimming pool because of his race. Negroes eat anywhere on campus anyone else eats. The University barber shop, its shows, its Union Buildings—all may be used by any student. Practices have changed. Policies conform to the modern up-curve in democratic regard.

None of the changed policies were conferred as are honorary degrees.

Why were University presidents invited to address Monster meetings? Why, governors? Senators? Editors?—To bring a message. Yes. And to get a message.

Audiences have spoken their reactions, objections; their ambitions and their hopes in these meetings. They have spoken them from prepared copy; impromptu; in song. In financial contributions to struggling students. They have spoken by simply being present – silent witnesses to a crusade for inclusion in every facet of American opportunity.

I think of the visits to Indiana University campus by Dr. Johnson. He had work enough in Washington, but he visited groups at I.U. to inspire and inform by example and by word. He has “stayed over” even as he begged, “I should be getting back to Howard, DeFrantz,” because he—well, the man understood our needs; our hopes. He knew what we were pressing to achieve.

Of Walter White, I say the same.

Campus student groups and their professor sponsors placed their knowledge, nobility, and advantage of proximity to problems on the lines – the front lines. Trips have been made from the capitol city by individuals, by groups of two, three, and four to “call to the attention of authority”—whether athletic director, housing director, basketball coach, football coach, professor, or president—situations that needed revision, persons that merited opportunity.

In Indiana University’s President Herman B Wells democracy found an ally. No overhaul of policy such as that accomplished at Indiana University could have been possible without the cooperation he gave.

Senate Avenue YMCA’s racial amity award was never more fittingly given than when, in 1948, it was presented to Dr. Wells.

TAKING ISSUE WITH PURDUE UNIVERSITY HOUSING

Something of the effort and result of conflict with housing policy at Purdue University, West LaFayette, Indiana, is told in the news release below:

WEST LAFAYETTE – April, 1947 – Miss Winifred Parker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick A. Parker of...Indianapolis, was recently elected secretary of the governing board of women’s residences at Purdue University.

This event marked the climax of a battle for equal rights on the campus, which began when Miss Parker and her sister, enrolled at Purdue last fall.

Up to that time, Negro students had not been admitted to the residence buildings on the campus, but had been compelled to live in segregated quarters far across town.

The young women's father, former head of the mathematics department at Crispus Attucks High school and now a consultant for the Indianapolis public school system, objected to the proposed segregation of his daughters. He carried the matter to President Frederick L. Hovde of Purdue.

When favorable action was not forthcoming, Parker recalled that F.E. DeFrantz, . . . had been confronted with a similar problem when his son . . . enrolled at Indiana University.

In answer to Parker's appeal, DeFrantz took the lead in calling together a group of Indianapolis citizens. . . . They arranged for . . . a student at the University, to bring the matter to the attention of Governor Ralph F. Gates.⁹

As the group in Indianapolis conference with the Governor, organizations of Purdue joined efforts on the Purdue campus to oppose segregated housing. The Board of Trustees of Purdue took a favorable action toward the democratic moves, and the net result was that the Parker girls were assigned to rooms in a dormitory on the campus – Bunker Hall. They were treated cordially there, and Winifred was elected secretary-treasurer of the governing board of Bunker Hall. The office automatically placed her on the governing board of women's residences of the University.

At the time men students on the campus were mostly veterans living in government houses. A couple from Indianapolis lived in a cooperative interracial dormitory, the International House. They were permitted, however, to eat in the University's Union Building.



⁹DeFrantz's original footnote reads: "The *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 26, 1947."

LOCAL POLICY UPHELD

My retirement upheld local policy. There is no universal policy of retirement in the YMCA. Each local Association decides its own, and the Indianapolis Association policy calls for retirement of professional personnel reaching the age of 65 years. My retirement was legalistic. One hundred percent. But realistically, it didn't have a limb to hang on.

The metropolitan personnel committee and the metropolitan board, by whose authority the policy had been approved, had authority to relax it. But some wanted a clean break with my regime, and this was their happy opportunity. Arguments that "He has served well; is needed now; is capable; it's going to be difficult to find someone to take his place" ricocheted off adamantly drawn decision.

"If we break policy for him," averred the rebuttal, "we shall set a precedent and can be expected to do the same for every secretary who might object to retirement when his time comes. Nobody ever want[s] to retire."

The reasoning was neat enough but not deceiving. I had not angled for favors or sought to "protect my position." Literally, I had risked losing my job continuously and was retired in a situation, that was, to say the least, unflattering.

To say I wasn't hurt would be to lie. I was. Not as much for myself as for the work I loved. Which had been my life. Never could I have left without feeling deep regret, even if it had been adequately staffed and without a problem. But I had to leave it in an hour of its need.

It didn't kill me. It won't. Although my family wasn't sure I would survive the separation. I am told that one of my boys said to a member of the staff, "To give up the Y will kill Dad quicker than anything else."



The press was good to me, considering my intransigence. In editorial and feature the papers carried the story of my work. They praised my effort and accomplishment. So did those who spoke the evening of my retirement program:

“He could have done a lot less and still have been outstanding.”

“A very top grade guy.”

“He helped many whom he knows and we know, but I think tonight of those—and there are thousands—whom the man has helped without knowing it; I think of those who have been helped by men DeFrantz inspired.”

They called it a party. But for me it was no party. It was more like a ceremony in which a man gives up his first offspring.

And it was just that, in a sense. For I had been the head of a professional family at Senate Avenue before I was a husband or a father.

My personal family was present at the “party.” The Little Chief, weighing 110 and standing heart high to me; Fay, his wife, Flora; Bob; and the Little Chief’s brother Frank. They were there—sharing my emotions, listening to the praise.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE REQUESTS NEW EMPHASES

In the twenty-fifth annual conference of YMCA Laymen and Secretaries, held in Harlem Branch YMCA, June, 1952, requests came that the conference membership be integrated; that a study be made of the progress of integration in the Associations to date and of future indications in this direction. The Hardy article, mentioned above, was of tremendous significance and inspirational value as the conference deliberated on the requested emphases. I was elected president of the conference for the ensuing year. It extends my opportunity to keep on “raising hell” with YMCA practices which *follow* community patterns when they should form new ones; that continue to “pitch in” with an unwholesome status quo.

We must not deceive ourselves. Without democracy there can be no fellowship. It is not “maintaining the brotherhood” to accept docilely whatever deal comes up.

Can we learn the hypocrisy of inaction? The faithbreaking in letting events and situations run against us without lifting our voices and our courage and our energies to divert their flow?

Negroes—in the YMCA and out of it—will be cursed by others as long as they curse themselves by remaining tight-lipped when they should be crying “Treason!”

By wearing out their trouser seats instead of their shoe soles.

The YMCA is potentially power and magnificence. God help us not to let it miscarry.

