

Editor
News & Record
Greensboro, NC

Dear Editor:

The interview with Ms. Nancy McLaughlin of the News & Record was done with the notion that proper recognition would be given to some of the participants of the February 1 Sit-In Movement and that we could stem the tide of some of the revisionist history so frequently presented to us. Two examples of this revisionism were presented to her - (1) the elevation of Woman's College (WC), now UNCG, to equal status as sit-in participants and (2) a posting in Wikipedia about a person who claimed to be "in company throughout the entire protest with his best friends" the A&T Four. That person was never a part of the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro. I shared with Ms. McLaughlin my disappointment that these two historically inaccurate portrayals of the sit-ins are perpetuated, while the defining roles played by students from Bennett College for Women and Dudley High School are downplayed or simply ignored.

Likewise, I shared with Ms. McLaughlin, a timeline of the first week's events and important dates through July 25; a synopsis of events 1960 (Sit-Ins), 1961 (Movie Theaters), 1962-63 Mass Demonstrations) because of peoples present confusion about these events; two articles that I had written previously about my concerns; and the full text of Woman's College Chancellor Blackwell's speech "Responsibilities At The Lunch Counter" (printed GDN March 27, 1960) to students at WC following the February 6 demonstration asking them not to get involved and the *Greensboro Daily News* (March 17, 1960) editorial defending Chancellor Blackwell's speech to the WC student body. Despite making available all of this rich information, the story repeated the same long-standing inaccuracies.

The article "Fifth Men" by Ms. McLaughlin begins with the involvement of the three women students from WC who appeared on February 4 (GDN) and did not return for subsequent demonstration at the lunch counters. Ezell Blair (Jibreel Khazan), in a letter to Eugene Paff, oral historian for the Greensboro Library, wrote "there were several Caucasian American Students who were active on Wednesday, February 3, 1960 – but were forced out by university officials". Though it is accurate to say that three WC students participated - though only one time - this act did not rise to the level of school involvement by WC.

However, Bennett College students did join in the demonstrations on February 3 as did three Greensboro College students (Lowell Lott, Ed Bryant and Rick O'Neal of Greensboro). Guilford College had several students to participate on February 5. While the other college students did not return to the demonstrations, Bennett students returned repeatedly, and their involvement continued until the summer break. Bennett's SGA president, Gloria Brown, became co-chair with Edward Pitt, of A&T, as leaders of the Student Executive Committee for Justice – the joint coordinating committee that oversaw the operations of the demonstrations by A&T and Bennett students. Bennett's participation included two white students (Mary Bender and Jean Neff) who were among the 13 Bennett students arrested on April 21, 1960. After the interview, an e-mail was sent to Ms. McLaughlin containing an article from the "Greensboro Champion" naming students arrested, a list of participating Bennett students now living in the Greensboro area, a photograph containing photos of William "Bill" Thomas, the Dudley HS student who led demonstration after A&T and Bennett students left for summer vacation and his sister, Anthanette (Bennett alumna). Bill Thomas led the mass demonstrations of 1962-1963 as the Chairman of the Greensboro Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

What is most disappointing in the ongoing discourse about February One is that even after accurate historical information is provided, is the persistent failure of those seeking the information to give Bennett College for Women and James Benson Dudley High School their historical significance in the Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro.

On a personal note, I never indicated that I was a former high school athlete – I was not. My comment about my semi-pro baseball team was made merely to illustrate a contradiction in the Jim Crow south. Despite the fact that athletic teams were segregated, on occasion our team used players from a white working class community to supplement our team roster.

Lewis A. Brandon, III
336 230-0001 (office)