REFLECTIONS ON MY YEARS AS PRESIDENT OF WINTHROP COLLEGE

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The vigorous social and political changes in the middle years of the twentieth century were destined to have an effect upon American institutions in existence or brought into being in that turbulent era. Of all the institutions devised by man, none is more susceptible to such external forces than colleges and universities because they are fundamentally fragile and relatively defenseless entities, dependent as they are on the human beings who comprise them. Further, when major societal changes are in process and the political system is trying to render an accommodation, the college is very likely to be one of the battle arenas. As one of the elegant stars in the crown of a free society, our colleges are so often treated as innocent virgins in need of protection by the politician, the religious zealot, or the all-knowing alumnus. Yet amazingly, they survive, sometimes chastened, sometimes bruised, occasionally battered, but always ready to go ahead.

This is the story about a college which has known it all. Through a lens of time we shall examine not the hundred-year history of the institution but a brief interval which changed its destiny. Our story does not have a happy ending, at least for the central figure, but that may be the primary reason for telling it. There were critical accomplishments and much gratification, yet ironically the seeds were being planted for the ultimate rejection of the person in charge. It is probable many of the principals will never acknowledge the accomplishments if, indeed, they ever understood them, and the rejected will never know the reasons for his removal.

THE BACKGROUND

1973 "I've never seen a college presidency I would have..." was a line used all too frequently during a span of some eight years I spent as staff officer with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and as the Arts and Sciences dean of Georgia State University. This was not an idle comment derived in sour grapes or discovered through murky glasses. I had visited scores of colleges and universities and had spoken with the presidents in almost all. I was a trouble shooter and consultant on matters related to accreditation and substantive transitions. I saw institutional troubles and I knew of presidential woes. I wanted none of them.

"Can you talk?" was the inquiry of a male voice I had never heard. "Why yes, but about what?" Winthrop College was looking for a president (I knew that! I would have known that about most any Southern College) and here someone was asking if I might be interested. This was not the first such call, but always before I could say "no" without hesitation. Here was an exception: I would not have to eat crow because I had never seen the institution or its presidency (although I did know the outgoing president). "I'll call you again next week to find if you are interested," said Bill Grier, the board chairman.

He did call back; I was interested; and in July of 1973 I became the 6th president of Winthrop College. If this hiring procedure seems a bit unusual it is only because presidents are not recruited in that way today. Affirmative Action, sunshine laws, and a host of other factors have conspired to change the process of selection, and we are too close to know whether the result is good or otherwise. I was not the only candidate for the post at Winthrop; there was a search but not one to resemble the searches of the early twenty first century.

Why did I violate my announced reluctance about presidencies and why Winthrop? Why does anyone want to be president? Each of us is entitled to a little craziness, and I was but one among a host of observers who had seen so many incompetents in the job. Instinctively I knew I could be a better leader (Isn't that the common plea?).
I chose to go to Winthrop because of personal "pushes" which made me want to leave Atlanta and Georgia State University and "pulls" derived from the conditions of the college at that time. The pushes can be ignored since they made leaving easier, but the pulls must be understood because they comported with my administrative philosophy and activity. Winthrop was in trouble and I was a trouble shooter. Winthrop sat in a large metropolitan region (greater Charlotte, N. C.) but was uninvolved, a condition totally alien to my philosophy about public higher education. I had published one of the few pieces ever written on institutions in substantive change and here was an institution easily ready for a substantive change. The "pull" was overwhelming. I should add I believed South Carolina to be one of the few states which yet enabled a president to be a president.

In my zeal to take on the leadership of the institution, I underestimated the magnitude of the problems (I did know the problems, nonetheless). Winthrop was in serious trouble twice or three times over. The public knew its enrollment was declining, residence halls were empty and it despaired any hope of the legislature devising a new charter which was considered essential to correct the enrollment issue. Winthrop had always been viewed as a "safe place" for women students and that folly appeared to nurture an attitude that the college was safe as well from institutional mismanagement.

The months of that first summer were consumed in getting acquainted with the community and the depth of problems. By early autumn I knew that this would be no ordinary first year for a new president. Drastic action was necessary.

In detail which will be given later, we ignored old-hand advice and set about to earn a new charter from the legislature; we adopted coeducation as the mantra. A campaign by a president who knew not one single legislator, knew relatively few alumni, and brought no political experience was, to state it mildly, audacious. This could have been one of the shortest presidential tenures on record. But we had no choice since most other problems hinged on the charter of the college--or so we believed. Clearly, Winthrop needed a clearer definition of what kind of college it would be.

We won the desired legislation in March of 1974 and the Board used its revised charter to launch a new era for the college. A few days later a planned celebration in the president's garden was rained out (in). Surely the Lord was christening a new institution.

There was no inauguration of the new president of Winthrop that year. The new charter for the college was sufficient celebration, and what kind of inauguration could there have been if the quest for coeducation had failed? The Governor in his elected role and as titular chair of the Winthrop Board delivered the commencement speech that May and effected an "installation" of the new president. That was enough.

A whole year had gone by before there could be the conventional beginnings of a new administration. It was too late to search for the "dowry" often negotiated by a new leader; the coveted legislation would have to suffice. There would be no honeymoon. Enrollment decline had stopped but half the residence halls were still empty and the image of the college was about the same. Legal coeducation would not be the magic some had expected.

THE COLLEGE IN 1973

Winthrop College was organized in 1886 and became a public college for women in 1892. It has had a long and grand history based largely on the genius of its founder, D. B. Johnson, and the inventions of a
noteworthy benefactor, Governor (later U.S. Senator) Benjamin (Pitchfork Ben) Tillman. The College Historian may be able to differentiate the roles of these men, but here it is important only to note that from the two of them came the basic principles which guided the institution through several decades. I hold the firm, albeit contentious, view that none of Johnson's successors challenged the philosophy of the founder nor did they seek to keep it relevant. More importantly, none introduced a replacement set of principles. Accordingly, the rudder of the ship called Winthrop had steadily eroded away. By the late 1960's the college was adrift among treacherous institutional reefs and could have "gone down" but for a strange configuration of external forces.

Several buildings including residence halls had been built in the 1960's, despite the protest of some legislators who doubted an enrollment to fill them. The legislators would be proven right, but at the time the college was growing and all indications hinted at more growth, at least to the casual observer. No one knows the kind and quality of information available to college authorities in that era which led them to want more residence space, and no one knows why legislators felt as they did. The fact remains that the growth pressure was illusory and the new residence halls would not be filled as had been predicted by members of the General Assembly.

Winthrop appears to have been the victim of a cruel trick perpetrated by national events beginning in the early 1960's. The College was not specifically targeted for such treatment, but the result was just as significant. Beginning with events at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964, student militancy (student unrest) was born. The deep South, if it knew of this event, initially saw no significance to the region, but as the months went by and "free speech" was joined by "civil rights" and finally "Viet Nam," the South took note. College-bound students and more particularly their parents were aware and some apparently did not like what they saw in the colleges of their choice. Winthrop, on the other hand, was seen as a "safe place." Enrollment data including application rates jumped each time there was a crisis, particularly a bloody or destructive one. We are driven to the conclusion that Winthrop was chosen because it was a place where student militance and violence were unlikely. Pride would preclude admission by any alumna of the period that fear of other places motivated her to come to Winthrop, but that is an almost inescapable deduction. A significant development in the early 1970's adds credence to this interpretation.

For reasons that may go well beyond the tragedy of the killings at Kent State University in 1970, student unrest markedly declined at about that time. Coincidentally, the applications to Winthrop dropped sharply in the same 1970 period. Whether the implied cause and effect relation is valid--certainly the time correlations are correct--Winthrop simply had failed to recognize that it was riding a wave of popularity which was illusory. The institutional characteristics of a safe place which underwrote that deceptive popularity were not attractive to young women of the time. Sooner or later the College would have to face harsh reality: it could not sustain enrollments achieved in times of personal fears once the cause of those fears had diminished or vanished.

At the turn of the 1970's, Winthrop enrolled approximately 1400 new students each autumn. To greet a new president in 1973, the college matriculated 700 new students. Three residence halls were closed and others were only partially filled. The older of two dining halls was in use but with none of its charm of past years. The Office of Admissions advised the new president that prospects for the autumn of 1974 were gloomy and might not involve more than 350 new students. Extrapolating these figures into the late 1970's leads to the harsh conclusion that there might be no Winthrop by the end of the decade. Was there an obvious answer to the enrollment dilemma?

In the first months, new presidents call on all kinds of constituents and groups in quest of the recognition factor and latent supporters. It is common for them to visit alumni groups, potential benefactors, influential
legislators, *ad infinitum*. I followed the norm but had the unplanned opportunity of meeting with a group of high school women in Florence, South Carolina, who were perceived as typical of the college-bound young women of that year. I haven't the slightest idea of what I said to these young ladies, but at the conclusion my hostess--a Winthrop alumna--asked the group if any was going to Winthrop. There was not a single affirmative; there was a most audible snicker. That noise made an indelible mark on my memory. It affirmed my belief that the college was out of step with the times and could not survive without drastic surgery. But what kind of surgery?

Public colleges and universities have constraints which differ from those of private institutions, and substantive changes may not be made without public authority and backing. The classical Winthrop was (and is) dear to the hearts of thousands of alumni who comprise an important part of that public which would have to approve major changes. The recent--if deceptive--highs in enrollments combined with the inertia of antiquarians who loved the college as they knew it led some to postulate that the sudden enrollment decline was the fault of administrative neglect and was correctable. Many of them disliked intensely the outgoing president. Others suggested that the college had failed to present itself to prospective students with effective sales techniques. Almost everyone had some theory about the sudden decline but not all rooted their persuasions in the coeducation issue. But coeducation was an issue in this particular time.

Winthrop had been created to prepare teachers--women teachers. The statutes which formed and enabled the college made no allowance for men other than in hastily drawn amendments of recent times which sought to intercept legal action that almost assuredly would be lost. The full story of the coeducation issue is a book in itself, but salient points are necessary to understand the college of 1973.

Early in the twentieth century, Winthrop sought to help in-service teachers even as it prepared new teachers. In-service personnel, both male and female, came to the college in summers for workshops and graduate courses. This pattern was sustained into the 1960's and beyond. This service to the school teachers (and others) was good politics and it was appreciated, although there was no clear legal basis for admitting the men. After a half century of such service who would question the propriety or legality? And what was wrong with allowing a few local male students to take classes in the regular sessions since they knew they could not seek a baccalaureate or graduate degree?

No one anticipated that a man who used summer opportunities to take graduate courses in biology would discover, one day, that he had met all requirements for a master's degree. It is true that he had not been "admitted" to the graduate school, and it was true that he was a "he," but these seemed irrelevant to him (he was right, of course). Failing in his quest of a graduate degree he sought legal relief. His first attempt failed but his second teased the legislature into passing a bill which authorized Winthrop to grant him his degree. The legislature eventually said that Winthrop could admit men provided they had earned two years of college credit elsewhere and would not live on campus.¹ This action was paired with a plan for a referendum in 1976 which "...would settle the question once and for all." The question, of course, was would Winthrop be for women only or as the hybrid that it had become. More on this later.

¹There is a curious parallel to this legislation found in actions by the general assembly in the 1890's. At that time South Carolina College, the precursor of the present University of South Carolina, stubbornly refused to admit women. The governor demanded and got backing from the legislature that the college admit women but only if they had done two years of work elsewhere and would not live on campus.
In 1973 there were other factors to be considered relative to coeducation. Prime among them was the position of the U. S. Government under mandate of the Congress. Civil rights legislation spoke to the issue of gender as well as to race and religion. According to extant interpretations by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare a college which had preserved its "purity" with respect to one sex would not be in jeopardy, whereas one which pretended to be for one sex while occasionally admitting persons of the other gender would not be approved for federal funding. In short, Winthrop was in trouble because it was a college for women but it was accepting men in a limited way. HEW said that condition discriminated against men and warned the college that all federal funds (perhaps one dollar in ten) would be cut off unless a suitable remedy was found. A pending referendum was too far in the future and meant nothing to HEW. A deadline was imminent.

Through decades of debate, South Carolina had insisted that it maintained a cluster of colleges which adequately served all comers. It had a coordinated system: a military college (The Citadel), a land grant college for men (Clemson), a college for women with a land grant function (Winthrop), a college for Blacks (South Carolina State), a general purpose university (The University of South Carolina), and a medical center (the Medical College of South Carolina). In the 1960's other colleges were added, and Clemson broke the sex line by opening its doors to women. With encouragement from the Federal Government, doors on all campuses were opened to persons of all races. The perceived "coordination" came to an end and institutional competition took its place. Winthrop had lost its special place in the South Carolina sun and became a kind of stepchild among state colleges. No one could or would help.

The Board of Trustees was powerless to effect change which might clear up the dilemma brought on by the lawsuit and by the demands of HEW. The Trustees were bound by legislation which created Winthrop and by all the amendments made to that original act. The charter, or aggregate of acts which prescribed Winthrop, was most imprecise--an ingenuous term at best. In more inelegant language, the charter was a veritable mess. Through decades of name changes and other modifications. The legislature had placed "patches on patches" without making appropriate revisions of the whole. A careful reading would have disclosed that the General Assembly had imposed initial requirements on the college and its students which had not been fulfilled in decades. The fact is the college did not even have elements of curriculum to meet those requirements. Had students been graduated illegally? There was no way to amend this monster; it had to be re-written altogether for the college to have any clear idea of what it was to be. With or without the resolution of coeducation, the Board of Trustees and the College needed a new charter.

A compromise written in 1972 which some legislators thought might end or postpone the debate over coeducation was a referendum scheduled for 1976. How this flawed piece of legislation could have been approved by the General Assembly remains a mystery beyond the obvious fact that some wanted a hiatus in the rancorous debate on this subject. The referendum would have sought from the voters a decision on whether Winthrop would be for women only or would remain as it then was. Then, it was a hybrid--is it conceivable that anyone would want to sustain that condition? The referendum would not be necessary because it was cancelled in legislation approved in 1974. The new legislation erased all the patchwork and prescribed more appropriately the mission of the college.

In 1973 the Board of Trustees did not meet until four months after its new president took the office. Some of the Board members were unhappy about past roles and relationships of board and administration, but there was little noise about reform. But reform was in the air.
Prior to the formal assumption of duties, as the new president, I visited the campus for the occasion of the final board meeting under the leadership of the outgoing president. Several observations made in that occasion led to some early actions. One noticeable flaw was the communication between president and board; the president gave an oral report to the board but no manuscript or summary in writing. Board members had to trust their memories on what was said if there were to be any reflections afterwards. A second feature of board organization seemed cumbersome: there were entirely too many committees for a Board of eleven people. Another troublesome issue was the practice of “naming” the Governor of the State as chairman. This last item was believed to be law but in fact was only a tradition whose origin had long since been forgotten.

Conspicuously missing from trustee meetings was any evidence of a policy manual and other reference material. Clearly the Board was kept blind to the critical past and was permitted to know about the present only as the president wanted it to know. Observers of the scene knew that the president used the board as a rubber stamp of his administration; and the board members, in turn, grew steadily more hostile to the president. And "president" had become a pejorative term which gave the new president many moments of grief almost from the very first day.

Having visited many colleges and universities and believing that the fundamental strengths of American higher education lay with the concept of a lay board of trustees, I resolved to help the Winthrop Board of Trustees fulfill its rightful authority. The first attempt at this mission was now clearly defined.

Prior to coming to Rock Hill, as the president-elect, I asked the vice president for Business and Finance for a copy of the budget. The one-page summary which came in the mail was little more than a summary of current funds expenditures; there was absolutely no detail. In no position to press the issue, I determined to wait until I could visit the campus. On campus I could gain little more. Finally, after July 1, 1973, I insisted on a copy of the budget. There, to my amazement, was the response, "We do not have a formal budget." Payrolls were fixed, of course (sadly the process for faculty salaries came from a textbook on the spoils system). Other expenditures responded more or less to caprice and were pre-designated only as necessary. Conscientious people such as the comptroller were forced to invent budget formats in order to carry out their fiscal duties, but it was evident the "front office" neither knew nor cared about these proceedings.

An inquiry about the internal auditor evoked the look of hurt feelings and mystery (what is that?). There was no internal auditor and none had been considered. It is probable that those who understood the function of such an office wanted no part of it because fiscal discipline is one of the primary missions of the auditor; and the casual attitude of state auditors to institutional finance provided no push for that kind of discipline. It is patently true that had the state auditors worked over Winthrop in 1973 as they had a decade later the outcry would have been scandalous.

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]

2It would become evident later that the outgoing president seldom took action items to the Board but chose, instead, to do what seemed appropriate to him with the expectation that the Board would ratify his actions later. Needless to say this practice was abhorred by some, perhaps all.

3As will be explained later Minutes of the Board had been written and preserved assiduously from the beginning, yet no one had ever analyzed, codified, or even surveyed the minutes to know what was active, what was contradictory or what might exist that was actually illegal in the contemporary world.

4A former vice president insists that there was a formal budget at the time of his service with Winthrop, but its existence can be assumed only as a matter of history, not current operations.
The faculty expressed its will through the organization called The Faculty Conference. Composed of all full-time faculty, this assembly was important because it was for the faculty the only medium of corporate expression, yet it was the locus of much displeasure because the outgoing president had wielded a heavy gavel in his role as the presiding officer; faculty were not permitted that role. Faculty morale was not good, and there were noisy expectations about reorganization to exclude the president. Moreover there were other reasons for poor faculty morale, at least one of which had all the earmarks of a lawsuit in federal court.

Under a policy of the Board of Trustees and with apparent sanction of the State, the college had denied full appointments to a number of able faculty members simply because they had spouses with full appointments. In less elegant terms, the old rotten prejudices of anti-nepotism held sway. Here were excellent people teaching full loads but hired as "part-time" and declared ineligible for tenure because husband or wife held tenure. In most instances the part-timer was in a discipline different from the spouse and no logic justified the system other than the quaint customs of anti-nepotism in its raw form.

When decisions on tenure were pending, a final review was conducted by a secret committee named by the Vice President For Academic Affairs. This was not the invention of the incumbent vice president, and there were arguments for the concept. But the faculty smarted under this rule for they perceived it as more of a controlling mechanism rather than protection of the tenure process. Because no one could interrogate the secret committee, it was believed, "...the administration could always have its way." Implicit in this process was administrative distrust of faculty judgment even though the tenure process began by faculty decisions and recommendations.

There were numerous neglects. There was no formal affirmative action program despite federal and state mandates; the announcement of a program early on had sought to conceal a mockery which could and would do nothing to achieve equal opportunity in employment. Thus the institution was susceptible to inquiry, sanctions or worse, and there was apparently no sensitivity to the potential for lawsuits. The personnel function was carried out by two clerical people without a professional leader. There was no day-to-day legal assistance, although there was recourse to the office of Attorney General and to a local attorney who was paid a retainer. No one had reviewed the college catalog and other public documents for internal consistency and outright compliance with the law. The College was a legal nude.

The College had no development program and no organized foundation. There was someone who bore responsibility for development as part of a cluster of published duties, but there was no disguising that this officer was parked in an office and salaried as a kind of pay-off for other favors (his wife’s submission to the president). He was to do institutional research, among other things, and was on record as the "affirmative action" officer. (The college community including the Board of Trustees was not naive and the Board was quick to erase this post as the outgoing president departed.)

The students had a center, a building dedicated to their needs: recreation space, an auditorium, lounges, a book store and snack bar, and offices for the S.G.A. Most of the time the building was more reminiscent of a mortuary for there were so few students in evidence. Probably that condition was to be expected, for there was no staff employed in the center other than clerical assistants and no one was there to "make things happen." The S.G.A. met with diligence but for most of the year they were busy trying to re-write the rules for governing student life. These rules were of a different generation and were strikingly unreal for the 1970’s, but their

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5The chairman of the board of trustees, a textile executive, had asked that the building not be called the "student union." Collective bargaining held sway at his mills, and he did not appreciate the second word.
piecemeal revisions kept student leaders very busy for weeks on end. Sadly, no one seemed interested enough to help the students even to the end of streamlining their procedures. Students kept busy at their legislative benches working on petty or meaningless rules do not cause much trouble to college officials but neither do they enjoy any sense of pride about this aspect of their college experience. How dull! It is little wonder that high school seniors were looking elsewhere for college.

The citizens of the town felt a sense of pride about the College but the origin of that pride was not always certain. For some, the existence in earlier decades of the Winthrop Training School, a K-through-12 operation, evoked fine memories for it was a good school. For the majority, Winthrop was "our college" as it occupied prime real estate and fed money into the cash registers of the city. Nonetheless, aside from the cultural menu which the community people enjoyed and the payroll which made a difference, there were few benefits which the public could have identified.

Over time the College had provided some types of continuing education and been involved in community projects, but there was no organization to discover community needs and none to respond to needs when they were noted. Relative to the town and county, Winthrop was little more than a corporate visitor who spent a lot of money and brought some attention to the town. The recent presidents and other staff members had belonged to the proper service clubs and had been participants in the local Chamber of Commerce, but it is probable that these activities were more self-serving than to the credit of the college. Even the public school leaders felt a measure of isolation from the college (more on this later). In 1973 the decipherable message was "a college secure from any entangling alliances was least likely to cause problems for the institutional leaders." A conceptual chain-link curtain was in place.

The college as a visitor in the community is one of several origins of my contention that none of the presidents who followed the founder sought to keep his philosophy alive and relevant. D. B. Johnson was responsible for the invention of home demonstration, a concept which guided the training of countless agents who worked alongside agricultural agents in upgrading the quality of rural life. While administering a tightly controlled college for girls, Johnson sought to have his girls trained to make a difference in the rural communities where some--perhaps most--would work following graduation. It is not difficult to believe that had he lived to the era when the women's campus was no longer so controlled, Dr. Johnson would have found the means to use the college more directly to enhance the quality of life in its own community.

The marvelous opportunity for Winthrop to be a vital force in its community went unrealized or stubbornly ignored even as the federal government and many organizations were beginning to give meaning to the urban university (analogous to but distinct from the traditional land-grant university). Yet here was a state-run college sitting at the boundary between a rural, under-developed region and a booming metropolitan region.

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Footnote: The Winthrop Training School was created as an early version of the laboratory school often found on university campuses formed to facilitate the practice teaching of students who would be teachers. In Rock Hill the Training School was considered to be much better than the public schools, and the closing of the WTS (other than the pre-school components) in the 1960's was not well received. In point of fact the Board of Trustees had ordered the closing of the School and a timetable for closing out the kindergarten and nursery school because these operation were a financial burden to the college for which the State gave no support. Despite this authority, the outgoing president had been scorned for the closings, and into 1973 there were yet public pressure to re-open the WTS. This pressure greeted the new president.
centered in nearby Charlotte, North Carolina. It had the best of both "worlds" and a public whose needs and latent interests were profound. Beyond the neglect of the community, prior college leaders apparently failed to comprehend the impact of community involvement on the vitality and tone of the regular educational programs offered enrolled students.

The educational fare at Winthrop in 1973 was distinguished by few unusual features and was about what any competent observer would have expected from the organization. The five constituent schools--Arts and Sciences, Home Economics, Education, Music, and Business Administration--made the college into small university which offered associate, bachelor's and master's degrees. From its inception, the college had favored teacher training and home economics; the arts and sciences fields were necessary but not center stage as they would become later. Music was small and destined to remain that way, while Business Administration, the "new boy on the block," was trying to divorce itself from the lesser fields of business education. There was little to crow about and almost nothing to earn public acclaim for uniqueness or great quality. In fact, the conventional yardsticks of program accreditation was absent except in music and social work.

It is mysterious that Winthrop, a once proud star in the galaxy of teacher-training institutions, had never held recognition from the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) whereas many lesser colleges were so favored. It is less mysterious that the School of Business Administration was unaccredited because the school was new and far from developed.

There was much to do and there was much to work with. Harnessing the intrinsic strengths of the College and making it attractive to students became an obsession. But first the charter of the college had to be rewritten, and only the legislature of the state could do that. Everything had to wait on the battle for coeducation.

THE BATTLE FOR A NEW CHARTER (for Coeducation) 1973

The official title of the college was Winthrop College, The South Carolina College for Women. This was not the original name but only the latest revision among many. Each revision had some logic in time and cause, but none dealt the institution any privilege relative to men, despite the long-standing practice of admitting men into the summer programs. This was the college for South Carolina's young women and seemed destined to remain that way.

The restrictions imposed on the girls from the beginning was not unlike that of most colleges for women in the east with the possible exception of the Seven Sisters in New England, but those restrictions, or discipline, usually thought of as parietal law, persisted much longer at Winthrop because the college was in South Carolina (the deep south) and because there was no compelling reason to give into modernity. In fact, the girls were required to wear uniforms into the mid-fifties, following a tradition which dates to the founding in 1886. Remnants of the strict discipline were still evident in 1973 although they were more nuisance than substantive.

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As a general rule there were few colleges for women established west of the Mississippi River, and those that were formed tended to have fewer restrictions. It is probable that the women who followed migrations to the west were hardy stock and, by terminology of the present, liberated; they would have nothing to do with the protective atmosphere of eastern colleges.
The persuasion of Winthrop for women only was not universal, and there were parties seeking a change as early as the beginning of the 1950's. For some people, the public utterances and private sentiments might not have been in agreement; and there is no way to ascertain whether the interest in serving men was predicated on more than a practical desire to accommodate men living in the commuting range of the college. Some private communications would suggest there was early recognition that public higher education cannot fulfill its total responsibility if there are non-educational limitations on who can enroll. Publicly the forces for change had to be discrete because the 30,000 alumnae were dominated by active women who wanted no change. Politicians, even in this male dominated society, were careful to respect the power of their female constituents.

There was a bit of irony in store for South Carolina and specifically for Winthrop in the early 1950's. A prominent member of the South Carolina Senate, one who was to become President Pro Tem of the Senate in later years, was chair of the Education Committee which placed him ex officio on the Winthrop Board of Trustees. By his own admission he sought to cultivate interest among the Board members in making Winthrop coeducational, for he seemed to know that the college had one arm tied down by the women-only rule. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court issued the Brown-vs-Board of Education decision. While the "Board" was the board of Topeka, Kansas, one of the other two litigants was Clarendon County in South Carolina. The shock wave which hit the South had a double punch for South Carolina, and political leaders quickly began to close ranks. Among those leaders was L. Marion Gressette, the Winthrop Trustee and future senate leader. Mr. Gressette became not only the architect of resistance to integration in the state but specifically reversed his stand on Winthrop, thus becoming the leader of opposition to coeducation. The man who was among the early proponents of this change at Winthrop became the principal impediment to the change after the 1954 court decision. Mr. Gressette took his true feelings to his grave, but there was speculation that the male-female mix turned unacceptable when it became male-female/white-black. Statesman that he was, Mr. Gressette would not have uttered such a thing publicly.

Winthrop people tried over and over again to gain approval for coeducation but always in vain. While the House would give approval, the Senate was the graveyard of every bill introduced in the General Assembly. The lawsuits of the 1960's shook the state and prompted tentative legal steps, but these acts were merely carbuncles on an already flawed "charter" of the college; they made matters worse. An Act of 1972 was a partial victory for the college in that it authorized the admission of men under very limited circumstances, but the same Act imposed a referendum for 1976 which would have done no more than make permanent the uncertainties of the previous 20 years.

In 1973 a new president found:
1) A threat from the Federal Government to cut off all federal assistance unless a workable plan was forthcoming on equal access as prescribed by federal law;
2) A dispirited group (faculty and community people) who were weary of investing their time and personal resources in a futile effort (more than $25,000 had been raised by contributions of the people who saw most of it spent without satisfactory results);
3) An enrollment decline which was treacherous;
4) A financial decline proportional to the enrollment decline;
5) No formal budget structure in place;
6) Empty dormitories for which debt service was due;
7) A multitude of legal questions unattended

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8 A letter written by the founder, D. B. Johnson who died in 1928, suggests that the time would come for Winthrop to open its doors to men. One may infer that Johnson would have advocated coeducation, although he never stated this explicitly.
8) A notable absence of any new strategies for gaining the revised charter or even the understanding that a totally new charter was needed.

The state of the College in the summer of 1973 was bleak. The only surprise for the new president was the extent of trouble and not its form. Clearly, this would not be an auspicious beginning and there was little time to unpack. A remedy for the perceived troubles was necessary and in a hurry, but how can you be in a hurry when you do not know where to go? What can a new person do that old hands had not been able to do.

Drawing upon a little Old Testament theology, the first order of business seemed to be to "sit" at the table of the opposition--the power which could make or break legislation. That power was quickly identified as President-Pro-Tem of the Senate, L. Marion Gressette. On appointment, Mr. Gressette sat with me in the conference room of his law offices in St. Matthews. He was courteous and told me of his early days on the Winthrop Board. Neither of us mentioned coeducation; I knew better and he was too canny. At the conclusion of this interview, I said, "Senator, we have a serious problem at Winthrop." "Yes," he said, "and when you have a solution to that problem, come back to see me." "I will!" We parted company with a friendly gesture little knowing that such a visit was never to be repeated. A long time would pass before I could even guess as to why he would never allow that return visit.

Mr. Gressette was the first legislator I met in South Carolina ahead, even, of the delegation from York County. That was not accidental nor a function of my reticence. I knew from the outset that he was a formidable foe, and it was important to meet him and discover what I could about his current thinking. I achieved the former--we talked--but I came away with no more than the taunting, "...come back to see me." Stories about this man were legion and I would grow to have enormous respect for him as a legislator. He was honest and forthright and he was powerful; I believed his support was indispensable to the legislation I had to have. I was too naive in matters of politics to suspect his strategy, if it can be called that, to enable me meet the basic problem of Winthrop.

Back home in an action which had become routine, the Greater Rock Hill Chamber of Commerce announced its goals for the 1973-1974 year including a determination to gain coeducation. The Chamber saw this goal as an economic issue (Rock Hill was losing money not spent at and by the college, and its young men were deprived of the advantages of a local college). The Chamber had taken a stand before in favor of coeducation and had used its good offices to assist in various campaigns, but it is unlikely that any member of this important organization could have anticipated the kind of role it was to play.

Recognizing the devastating trends of enrollment and financial support--all downward--and the many other problems besetting the College, the commitment to find a new charter displaced all other priorities of the new administration. We had no choice. Yet the advice of veterans of the political wars in South Carolina was consistently in the negative. Said one, a legislator-turned-judge, "You would be wise to allow the 1976 referendum; South Carolinians always approve such matters." Others hinted that South Carolina people were slow to embrace outsiders, especially on matters as sensitive as this one. "Alumni," we were told, "have their powder dry."

Undertaking this foolhardy project necessarily meant a strategy which we could control. We needed to know what others had done and, if possible, why they had failed. We needed Merlin! In our analysis we found that virtually every attempt at new legislation had been conducted with a direct approach to important legislators but with little or no back-up from the local constituents of those legislators. Extensive use had been made of prominent people (industrial executives, for example) as symbols of powerful support for the cause.
There had been a great amount of lobbying, both by the friends of coeducation and, on one occasion, by a professional lobbyist. The news media had been drafted into service whenever possible. Why had so many efforts been unsuccessful? No one explanation will suffice for there were many issues all of which could have been important, and the judgment would have to be that some combination of them always came into play. No one orchestrated these blocking issues but neither did anyone make a systematic effort to eliminate them.

Some of the negative issues in the quest for coeducation have been alluded to previously in this text: an intense dislike for the outgoing president by some who would oppose coeducation simply to oppose him (such parties confided in me); legislators knew the outgoing president as one who had espoused the college for women but later sought coeducation—right or wrong they spoke of this as duplicity; legislators with no persuasions about Winthrop's officers, nonetheless, had political debts to constituents who opposed coeducation; some legislators were worried about racial issues which they perceived as exacerbated by coeducation; a few legislators were married to alumnae who were reluctant; some truly did believe in the traditional college for women; some of the uncommitted simply did not know what to believe. . . . .

The strategy came into being very simply. We needed the help of those forces who could make things happen in the political arena, and our task was to find those agents. At that moment I recalled a 1960's conversation with a prominent figure in Atlanta, Georgia, to whom I had addressed a question. "I grew up in the Birmingham, Alabama, area," I said, "and I have always wondered how Atlanta became a metropolitan city while Birmingham was a small town which merely kept growing larger. What is the secret?" His answer intrigued me and prompted inquiry in other places. "A cluster of powerful men determined to make Atlanta work," he said. "It did not matter whether they held political office for they knew how to make things happen in financial and political arenas. They "assembled" the power of money, real estate, and other resources and made them work together for Atlanta instead of separately for their own purposes." From this response and other inquiries, I adopted the assumption that in every community or region there are powerful people who can make things happen if they so choose. Here was the foundation of our strategy.

It occurred to me that I did not need to know who these powerful people were and I never did. But I felt confident they could be found. Thus, drawing upon the goal and commitment of the Rock Hill Chamber of Commerce, I turned to the Chamber executive and president to enlist their assistance. "I need you to prepare me a list of one-to-two hundred men and women of this county to include leading industrialists, business men, lawyers, bankers, clergymen and others and be absolutely certain that you include the names of people (those powerful people) whose influences are always felt in the halls of the government regardless of whether they are dirt farmers or wealthy retirees. I want names and addresses only." I went further to explain my objectives particularly with respect to the special inclusions. I felt certain these two men knew those powerful people but I was equally certain that it would be indiscreet of me to probe. "Just be sure they are on your list."

The carrot for the Chamber was the promise that we would meet a Chamber goal--a big one; and the president, George Hearn, would get his moment of glory. He was not a vain man, but it is natural that any leader of such an organization would like to be successful. This President of the Chamber in 1973 was our good fortune for the task ahead.

The Chamber met our request in a timely fashion. With this initiative, we approached another person, John Hardin, to serve as chairman of our campaign. A banker, past president of the Chamber, and officer in a national organization of Savings and Loans, Mr. Hardin was not without prestige, but we chose him because of his flair with people. He never met someone he didn't like. Initially, John reacted negatively to our request, primarily, I suspect, because he knew well the long history of failures. But he listened to our plan and without
much hesitation agreed to serve. We could show him that we not only had a promising strategy but already had in place enough of the process that he could serve as "chair" and not as ramrod.

The concept behind our strategy acknowledged that each legislator (we concentrated principally on senators) had a unique reason for believing and voting as he did. We had to build a multi-layered process which would gather intelligence information about each one and garner assistance from local people. On this latter point we felt the Chamber's list would be the key to our success. As the strategy began to take shape, it was even more apparent that the new president of Winthrop would not be seen on campus as much as he needed to be, for he would have to be the continuity link in the whole process.

The Chamber's list was divided into four sub-lists, and the people on each sub-list were invited to the Winthrop President's home on a specific day at the cocktail hour. Attendance was nearly perfect. On the occasions John Hardin explained the strategy which called for each person to do some letter writing according to drafts distributed. The targets of this writing were to be professional or business counterparts in other parts of the state; that is, lawyers were to write to lawyer friends across the state, automobile dealers were to write to auto dealers, bankers to bankers, physicians to physicians and so forth. Each letter would explain the tragic situation at Winthrop, always with indisputable facts, and urge the reader to contact the local senator to one end only: "Know that President Vail will come to see you and should be accorded a fair hearing." We thought it wise to have only one spokesman for the situation at the college in order that the "opposition" would have no discrepancies to play on, and it was for this reason that we asked the letter writers to say to their correspondents "...listen to Vail only."9

Once the four sub-groups were armed with their assignments, assignments which they seemed to accept with alacrity, the next phase was begun. Intelligence gathering was vital, not only because the Winthrop president was new to the state and had no need of making uninformed steps, but the soft spots of legislators needed to be known if early successes were to be possible. At that moment we were confronted with the news of a tragic illness about to crush our distinguished history professor, Mary Elizabeth Massey. She did not want to quit but she was hardly able to teach, a condition which prompted me to invite her to a special assignment in my office. Dr. Massey studied the personal and legislative record of every senator and built a "book" for me which qualified me to meet these people on informed terms. Almost immediately, her work permitted me to score a victory.

An alumni meeting at Myrtle Beach fixed the time for my first encounter with the chairman of the Senate Committee on Education, Senator Gasque of Horry County. In addition to his education role he chaired a special committee which was investigating no-fault automobile insurance; and, according to Dr. Massey's "book," he was not making the progress he wanted. Mr. Gasque did not appear to be a friend of coeducation and events later would prove his uneasiness about it, but he did appreciate political favors. "I understand you are searching for a suitable plan for no-fault automobile insurance," I observed. "Yes," said he, "and it is a difficult search." "Well, I happen to have a friend who is a nationally-recognized authority on this subject, and I

9 Sometime in the autumn a report came to me that a member of the faculty with family connections to high places of state government attended a Clemson football game and talked with government leaders about the coeducation issue. Censorship was neither possible nor desirable, yet it was necessary for me to call together the faculty and ask their restraint. It was urgent that neither faculty nor other administrators speak on this subject in public circles in order that there be no inconsistency for the opposition to use. This request was honored.
am sure we can get him to South Carolina for consultation if you should wish." It was but a matter of time until Senator Gasque announced that he would support a bill to make Winthrop coeducational.

As I was completing my work at Georgia State University, various friends presented me with some token by which they bade me bon voyage. Kenneth Black, dean of the School of Business Administration, said simply, "I have no gift, but instead I want you to call on me if I can ever be of help." The dean had built his career as a leader in the insurance industry and edited the leading journal of that profession. His colleague, John Hall, was that authority on no-fault insurance and it was time to cash the blank check from the dean. John came to South Carolina, Senator Gasque got his no-fault bill, and Winthrop got a key vote in the Senate.

The background research included a careful compilation of all acts of the legislature which impinged on Winthrop. It was a reading of this compilation which persuaded me that a simple bill to amend the Winthrop charter would not suffice, for there was too much verbiage inappropriate to a modern college. The politic thing to do, I assumed, was to call on the local senator and seek his help in re-writing the whole (I intended that he write the new bill). I did just that only to be rebuffed. Senator–later Judge–Mendenhall politely declined and merely nodded when I suggested that it would be a favor to us all if he would lead the fight in the senate. I have never known whether he had no stomach for coeducation or merely felt too junior to tackle an issue which his predecessor had used so often as a banner. The senator would be helpful in only one occasion and that would earn him our gratitude.

Writing a bill for the General Assembly was not among the roles expected of a college president; that is the job of legislators and the staff of the Assembly. Nonetheless, the best way to communicate the concepts I thought appropriate was to write the bill myself. I wanted to eliminate all that did not belong (curriculum matters, for example), I wanted to cancel the referendum scheduled for 1976, and I intended no reference to gender. A clean new charter would remove the patches on patches which distinguished the extant charter and would erase from the code all ragged points on which amendments might be hung now or in the future. I wrote the bill and took it to Representative Harold Brazeale, chair of the House Education and Public Works Committee. Mr. Brazeale who, by virtue of his office, sat on the Winthrop Board and had shown early his skill and support for our efforts. "Put this in your drawer and keep it there until I can report our readiness to proceed," I begged. He did just that.

The Chamber groups began their letter writing. As the time approached for me to hit the road, I sat at my typewriter one night trying to polish the fact sheets and other materials destined to be used in the campaign. My telephone rang. The voice on the other end was unknown to me then and now, but the message was that Congressman William J. Bryan Dorn had been forced to cancel a speaking engagement for the next day at a Kiwanis Club in Columbia. Someone had told the caller that I probably had a speech in readiness and might take Mr. Dorn's place. Indeed I would. The public knew that Mr. Dorn was about to announce his candidacy for governor, hence the press and television cameras would be present for that Kiwanis meeting. Just before noon, I rolled into the restaurant meeting site and quickly addressed the reporters with my identity as substitute for Mr. Dorn's place. Some called their editors about closing up or staying; most or all stayed. I made my pitch for the "liberation" of Winthrop. At any price the College and I could not have purchased the level of publicity which followed this meeting, and the timing could not have been more critical.

There were many other speeches. Civic clubs always want speakers and we quickly had contacts that booked me. In Fort Mill, I addressed a men's organization with some reporters present. Among other points I suggested that we should not let the antiquarians restrain us in our efforts to make Winthrop into a modern college. A reporter, suspecting that word to have pejorative meaning, asked me if I intended so harsh a
comment. Rather than chide, I suggested that he consult his dictionary. Apparently he did for he used the word in his most supportive story.

A civic club in Orangeburg invited me to speak at their luncheon meeting. In this address, I made reference to the state technical colleges in words which a reporter chose to use (out of context) to suggest that I opposed these colleges. The reporter acquired my manuscript and apparently believed it to be the only copy, for his writing was critical and an irritation to the governor. The governor and I made peace when he saw that my remarks had been distorted, although he had expressed early on a mild disappointment since the technical colleges were his pride.

In an organized way, steered by Mike Brownley and others, I toured South Carolina in search of senators. Unless restrained by my host I kept the visit with each senator to a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes. Beyond introductions and appropriate pleasantries, I explained the plight of the college and handed over a one sheet summary of the conditions—all bad. I said to each one, "When the Board of Trustees interviewed me for the position of president and later offered me the position, there was no mentioned of coeducation by trustees or me. I accepted the position without a commitment on the issue. What I am here to tell you is my discovery that the college is in trouble. We need your help!" Often the legislator would say, “I’ve heard from (a local citizen) who urged me to listen to you.”

As I toured the state in quest of legislators, I could feel the effects of the letter writing campaign and of the special events such as the Kiwanis Club meeting in Columbia. We were making an impression. My log book would show from day to day the tallies of "for" and "against," together with those who might change. By Christmas I knew we could win, although there was yet the power of L. Marion Gressette. His close friend and fellow leader of the Senate, Rembert Dennis, had told me in private that he would vote for my bill even if he had to go against his great friend.

The time had come to seek that return visit with Senator Gressette. He declined to see me. I sought help, but in vain. His near neighbor and a member of the Commission on Higher Education (later chair of the board of the University of South Carolina) Mr. Othneal Wingess, tried to arrange an appointment. He had to report, "I have egg on my face; I cannot secure the appointment...."

In the meantime, the General Assembly gathered in Columbia to begin a new session. A regular visitor to these proceedings I saw a great number of senators in the course of the first weeks. One by one, I could add names to the "for" list, sometimes at the conclusion of a sequence in which began, "I am talking with those to whom I have a commitment..... I am making progress..... I now have a release from my commitment and can vote for your bill." That sequence might have taken six weeks.

With a comfortable majority in our camp and being unable to gain an audience with Senator Gressette, I called Harold Brazeale and asked him to pull the bill from his desk and begin House action. I was not uneasy about the House, but it was critical for me to be there for most hearings. Just prior to one reading of the Bill I was hailed by a member of the House who said he felt an amendment necessary. Stunned by this possibility I listened as he said that his amendment would simply retain in office the existing Board of Trustees. My relief must have been palpable. The bill was never in jeopardy in the House, but there was debate. Principal among

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10 We will never know why the trustees said nothing to me about the coeducation issue, and I cannot explain why I asked nothing of them. These omissions would prove to be powerful assets, because I could say that "... I came without a commitment but this is what I have found."
the arguments was the contention that making Winthrop coeducational would lead to legislation to make the Citadel coeducational, an idea which was pure anathema to the legions of supporters for this state financed military college.  

The bill quickly passed the house and headed for the senate. The bill was read and went to a second reading "with notice" which meant there would be debate on the third reading. For that final session I found a seat at the rear of the Senate Chamber and sat with uneasy respect for this body and its processes. There was no uncertainty about the vote--we had an overwhelming majority on our side--but we knew nothing of the intent of the President Pro Tem who would not see me. At that moment I did have a visitor in the person of Senator "Son" Roddey who chose or was chosen to be floor leader. He was to be our only speaker in the debate and he needed some prep. After eight months of well planned effort, was this final and decisive act to be determined by an impromptu speech built of whispered information? I shuddered then and now at the irony. How could I have overlooked the preparation of our "leader"?

Lt. Governor Earle Morris was not in the chair; in his place sat Rembert Dennis. Senator Gressette sat in his usual place down front and just to the right of the podium. He spoke first. In what must have been the worst speech he ever made before the Senate, Mr. Gressette lamented the fact that his "old friend" (former Senator Wallace from York) was absent but if he were there he would "...join with me in opposing this measure because it does away with the referendum we worked so hard to plan." Senator Wallace had represented York County for many years and had regularly built his platform on rhetoric about coeducation for Winthrop. He enjoyed sparring with Mr. Gressette over this topic, and was never on the same side with him. To suggest that had he been present for this third reading he would have sided with Mr. Gressette is nothing more than humorous political license. Mr. Gressette sat down at the conclusion of his speech and Senator Roddey started for the well, detouring by my seat for one more quick point or two.

As Senator Roddey stood in the well, a page entered the chamber and approached Mr. Gressette with a note. The note--a slip of white paper--was held aloft for the presiding officer to see and in a sweeping way for the senators to see. He promptly left the chamber. Mr. Gressette did not return to the chamber in time for the vote on our bill which was passed unanimously. I left the chamber at once to greet reporters and to call Winthrop with the news. A twenty-year campaign was over.

I was never able to make my peace with Mr. Gressette. He died shortly after I departed South Carolina and I shall never know just why he declined to see me even after inviting me to come back. Many years ago I greeted him at the conclusion of a ceremony which was in his honor but felt rebuffed when his countenance suggested displeasure. I sincerely wanted an audience with him and sought the intervention of mutual friends, but we never found a clue as to his reluctance ever to see me again. This situation was particularly troublesome because I refused to believe that he was angry over losing the coeducation issue; he was too successful as politician to harbor such emotions for long. The distressing thought persists that I unknowingly committed a political sin.

Realizing that I would never know why Mr. Gressette declined to see me, I have resorted to a fantasy--a theory--which may, in fact, hold some strong elements of truth. I view this theory as a compliment to the

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11 As time unfolded I was called as a witness in the trial in Federal Court which ultimately caused the Citadel to admit women. I was subpoenaed by the defense team of the Citadel who had misread a speech of mine. In the deposition the attorney blushed on discovering his mistake and then in the trial declined to examine me. The judge said he wanted to ask me questions but did not.
Senator; in no way can it be seen as critical of him. From the moment of our first meeting in his St. Mathews office, Mr. Gressette had no way of knowing just how trustworthy I would be if brought into his confidence. This is important to note because I firmly believe that he had determined the time had come to abandon his opposition to coeducation at Winthrop. Yet had he revealed this to an unknown\textsuperscript{12} his political role might have been jeopardy, for who knows how the news would be used. It would appear that his best strategy was to say nothing and let events unfold as they would. He surely knew of our general strategy.

The theory comes together at the bitter end of the legislative fight. On the occasion of the third reading in the senate, Mr. Gressette exercise his seniority to speak first. In some way (I believe) he had contrived to have his good friend, Rembert Dennis, to be in the chair hence non-voting to spare any embarrassment one friend to the other. The slip of paper delivered by the page which I have suspected to be blank could not have come at a more propitious moment--mere minutes away from the vote--and his sweeping gesture before the chair and chamber was a little too ostentatious to be routine. He intended to be out of the chamber at the time of the vote and thus unrecorded. In a review I could find no evidence that the Senator had used his good office in any way to interfere with our drive for legislation. Senator Dennis in the chair did not have to show his hand in the matter, although he had told me he would depart from his old friend, and all others among those who might have stood with Mr. Gressette openly supported our bill. Such unanimity is unthinkable except as a consequence of passive neglect on the senator's part.

The theory had not taken shape in the moments following the final senate vote or my horror at the next event would have been even more pronounced. Minutes after the vote, Senator Roddey came to me and said that he intended to seek out Mr. Gressette to get the bill--now passed--ratified. In the absence of the Lieutenant Governor, the president of the senate, the President Pro-tem may ratify legislation after which it is sent to the Governor. My instinct was to stop Senator Roddey but I did not (perhaps could not). The ironic twist of fate for Mr. Gressette is that he was called upon to ratify--to sign--the very bill he had always opposed and contrived to be unrecorded at the vote. Ratification could have awaited Lt. Governor Morris, and I have wondered if the Senator could have thought me responsible for his unwanted role.

While the bill met little or no resistance in the House, it almost hit a snag in the Senate. Once again Winthrop was confronted with external events which could have been disastrous. The year 1973-4 was the time of streaking, nudity in haste. An episode of streaking at the University of South Carolina got out of hand, brought some bad publicity, and seriously upset the conservatives across the state. Informed of this by reporters in Charleston where I had gone for a speaking engagement, I announced that I knew of no streaking on the Winthrop campus. Silently I resolved to have some streaking even if I had to do it myself. This was not the time for us to give new meaning to the old sawbuck about Winthrop as a "safe place."

One of those affected by the University episode was Senator Gasque from Horry County, chair of the Education Committee and my first big "win." Standing in the floor of the Senate, Mr. Gasque denounced this

\textsuperscript{12}I was not totally unknown in quarters of the state, for I had exercised influence over several educational developments, not always to the pleasure of state officials. My office with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools required that I investigate the centers and branches of the University of South Carolina. Following Association rules I had to insist that the University redefine its operations and correct some deficiencies, obligations that were not necessarily pleasing to officials. When the College of Charleston, a quasi-public institution, fell on hard times, the intent of the Citadel to intervene was not met with enthusiasm by the Association: it became my duty to advise restraint. There were other incidents. I do not know whether Mr. Gressette knew of any of these.
"animal" behavior of the students and said, "...if this is what coeducation means, perhaps we should keep Winthrop safe by maintaining the women-only status." It was obvious he was serious! The day was saved by Senator Mendenhall. Rising to the occasion the York County senator declared, "...I live across the street from the Winthrop campus, and as I sat on my front porch recently, I witnessed some streaking at Winthrop." The tension dissolved into humor and there was nothing further heard from Senator Gasque or any other.

From the outset of the campaign for a new charter, it was quite necessary not only to win supporters but to silence or soften the cries of the opposition. Early in the process I spoke to a gathering of alumni leaders and likened the College to a teenager, "...the one who says to his parents or the adult past, 'I want your love and I hope you know that I love you; but I am part of the now generation and I must forge my own experience with beauty, truth and meaning; I cannot inherit your experience.' In a stubborn and determined way," I said, "we have to make our own way at Winthrop even at the risk of displeasing you, for we cannot inherit the world you knew at Winthrop." The associated plea for understanding of the things we had to do to assure a strong and healthy college seemed to work with this group of alumni which included the wife of the governor, and in the weeks that ensued I felt a comfortable level of support. I learned of no residual opposition from those who were pivotal among alumni. It should be noted, however, that no word of my speech even hinted at the drive for a new charter--for coeducation. As often as possible we tried to avoid direct reference to that issue.

While the meeting of alumni leaders might be seen as an occasion to win supporters (perhaps to soften opposition of a few) there were centers of discontent which had to be silenced. One of these was near Greenville, S. C., where two women had built reputations for themselves by their vendettas against Winthrop leaders. These two were identified and portrayed as being without scruples or conscience as they pursued their long battle to unseat the previous president. 13 In my first weeks at the college, I was in the office of one of our deans when. My secretary called to say that these women were on campus visiting and asking questions about the new president. "Do you want to remain out of reach?" my secretary asked. "Oh no, let them come to me." When we met in my office they concealed the inquiry just the n completed and pretended to be freshly arrived on campus. We exchanged pleasantries and they asked some questions, including one about a possible program for "their" alumni chapter. Of course I would visit with their chapter.

I fulfilled that commitment and following some introductions, we proceeded to the buffet luncheon and took our places at the end of a large table. I was presented and given the opportunity to speak to the group. Afterwards as we finished the dessert, one lady spoke of my predecessor and began a tirade that filled the air with rancor. Realizing what was underway I stopped her with a gentle "...But he is not president; I am, and I see no point in pursuing history that is concluded." A stunned silence was followed by, "We will begin our business meeting in a few moments and would be glad for you to stay or depart as you might wish." Sensing that the option to depart was her preference--it clearly was mine--I made the appropriate greetings to facilitate my departure and drove away.

This story would not be complete without acknowledging that never again did anyone hear from the two ladies.  I fully expected to see or hear from them again, especially in the legislative hearings on our bill, but that was not to be. I am constrained to the belief that their vendetta was with the former president, and their opposition to coeducation was no more than a convenient weapon by which to flail their enemy.

13Mrs. L. had employed the services of a private detective to investigate practices of the previous president. A typewriter thought to have been used in some improper political activity was examined by an expert as she spared no effort to prove malfeasance. Whether she ever believed she had legitimate facts to indict the president or merely hoped to embarrass him into resignation is not known.
The quest for a new charter (clearly it was more than for coeducation) was not without irony, for there were parts of my past which might seem betrayed by the effort. In the early 1960's while I was dean of Hampden-Sydney College I wrote an essay for the Small College Annual on the virtue of single-sex colleges. Hampden-Sydney was a men's college and I had been a faculty member at Agnes Scott College which is a woman's college. I believed in what I wrote. Later my older daughter attended Wells College in New York, a women's college, and boldly declared its merits. I respected her views! Later my granddaughter attended Bryn Mawr College, also a women’s college. Was there duplicity in my efforts to make Winthrop coeducational?

Fortunately, no one knew of my earlier writings and views, but it would not have mattered. My conscience was clear, for I was now working with a public institution which, I knew held responsibilities more far reaching than is ever true of the independent colleges. The public colleges, I maintain, cannot fulfill their implied obligations if they are constrained to serve only one segment of the population. Anyone should be free to seek admissions, subject only to academic qualifications. Further, beyond the formal academic programs the public colleges have an obligation to assist in the improvement of the quality of life in the regions which they serve. On the other hand the independent college of necessity should seek a unique role which sets it apart from others--to offer options that may not be permissible in the public sector. A sure recipe for failure among the independents is competition with the public colleges on terms of the latter. Thus single-sex colleges in the world of the independents make sense, because they do provide an option to those like my daughter who might wish a special environment. I know of no argument which supports the existence of single-sex colleges in the public arena.

The campaign was not without its glitches and humor; some tasks were never completed, but in retrospect we did all that needed to be done. The College had to go on as in the past, since I had to be in the field and could not be there to give day-to-day leadership. Ross Webb, the vice president for academic affairs, continued to function as senior officer of the academic community, but under the "ship's orders" of the previous administration. Mike Brownley, the vice president for development, was new to the college and not yet clearly in an assigned role but he was no stranger to South Carolina, having spent many years at Clemson University. It was logical, therefore, that Mike should be "chief of staff" for the legislative effort. While I traveled the state, Mike telephoned ahead for appointments and made such other contacts as were deemed useful.

At least two of the senators failed to make their appointments. Twice I drove out of my way to meet one but in neither case was he nor any member of his office staff present. Later, and for a period of years, he sat on the Winthrop Board as the senate representative, but he never explained his absence from those two appointments. A senator from the area which borders Georgia could not be found on any of my visits to his town. Somehow he got the message I intended, and to my last day in South Carolina he was an outspoken supporter.\textsuperscript{14} Another senator from the low country was not in his office for an 8:30 a.m. appointment. His secretary found him at home and incredulous of an appointment "before dawn." We never knew how that glitch developed. Nonetheless he dressed and talked with me.

As I left the office or home of a senator I used my battery-powered recorder to make notes. Beyond relieving my uncertain memory of details, I could propose steps to hasten the conversion of the solon. One night, parked in a motel for the evening, I checked out some details from the tapes and then retired. Later

\textsuperscript{14}His support was so vital that at the time of my departure from South Carolina as prompted by the Board of Trustees he is alleged to have said in criticism of the Board that I was the only president the General Assembly could trust.
(although only minutes away since I tend to fall asleep quite quickly) I was jolted awake by a male voice. Inadvertently, I had rewound the tape and depressed the "play" button; I was hearing me debriefing me. How revolting!

On the insistence of a member of our Board of Trustees, I called upon the professional lobbyist who had been employed two years earlier to "win coeducation." He had mounted a successful political campaign for the incumbent governor and was considered quite effective. I accomplished the visit but departed none the richer, for his understanding and strategy seemed almost irrelevant to the task ahead for us. The time with him was a gesture of good will but otherwise of no value whatsoever other than the reassurance that we had been wise to plan our own strategy.

The entire effort of lobbying for our bill was governed by the determination to create trust among the legislators. At each encounter I spoke briefly, succinctly and then departed with no "hail-fellow-well-met" interactions. The brief fact sheet left in their hands augmented what I said. I wanted their attention to a critical problem free of clutter produced in reference to anything else. Further, it was clear to me that this seemingly awesome task had the latent potential for splendid public relations. I was new to the state and in large measure the state was new to me, but here in a few weeks I would travel into every corner, meet virtually all the political leadership in their own territories, and pave the way for a new view of Winthrop.15 How many new presidents would have the occasion--the obligation--to do as much in so short a time?

Was this project an obligation? Is it ethical or even legal for a president to lobby so intensively on company time? I found answers to these questions only in the conviction that the college was headed for conceptual and financial ruin. Was it not my duty to take any reasonable steps to salvage, indeed restore the institution? Although the use of my time on the project was never in question, I did have some qualms about using state funds to finance the chase after legislators. Accordingly, I tapped an old and dormant fund assembled in an earlier fight for coeducation. These funds were held by a local banker and had never passed through the hands of the college treasurer, hence were strictly private. With these funds I rented a car when my state-owned car could not be justified because of state business, and on one or two occasions I hired a motel room if a return to Rock Hill was not feasible. Questions about my activities were never raised, hence the precautions on expenditures were probably unnecessary, but the story might have been different if the quest for a new charter had failed.

Support among alumni was not universal. The objections had been softened by the pleadings of a new president: "give me a chance." But the concept of a "new" college to serve its region was one of several that displeased women who would never surrender their belief in the classic women's college. A college recognizing and attending to the needs of its community could be regarded as a "community college," a pejorative term to these women, and one in particular, a former president of the Alumni Association, renounced forever her support of the college.

Another alumna with strong ties to the college was embittered over the admission of men. In subsequent years, she opted for the free tuition granted senior citizens and enrolled in a course taught on campus. Her actions surprised us because of her dissension and the commuting distance (she lived in the next town), but

15Unbelievably I found people across the state who still thought students wore uniforms (abandoned 20 years earlier), who knew nothing of the size and scope of the college, and who didn't even know that Winthrop is and always has been a public college.
what surprised us most of all was the complete reversal of attitude when she discovered how pleasant it was to have men in her classes.

The reaction of students was predicted by earlier polls which showed a majority wanted men admitted but feared the consequence of a man-dominated campus. Would the men seize the top positions in the SGA, the student newspaper, the student center...? How would men deal with the ageless traditions of Classes Night, Senior Follies, and the women's sports? It is not possible to know whether these fears were predicated on men or on the intuitive recognition that these traditions were stale and about to expire whether or not there were men on campus. We saw in this anomaly a just cause to begin serious planning for post-coeducation student life activities.

WAS THERE MAGIC IN COEDUCATION? 1974

The campaign for coeducation was rooted in the facts that dormitories were empty and potential students were turned off by the anachronism that was Winthrop. Surely, with a new charter, men--and women--would flock to the college. They did not!

In the afternoon that the legislature completed its work, the press did its job and a few young men drove to the campus to enroll. This was symbolism only: we were not ready to accept men because the act had to be signed by the governor and the Board of Trustees had to authorize the new admission policy. The act passed by the General assembly--the new charter--was free of all references to gender and conferred upon the Board of Trustees the authority to determine who would be admitted. The Board would have to declare the college open to men and women on an equal basis.

When the Governor was ready to sign the Bill, the Board of Trustees assembled in his office and watched this final act in the long struggle for coeducation. The Governor applied his signature and then, as Chair of the Board, called for a motion to declare Winthrop open to admission for all who qualify academically. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned for a photo session. The date was March 19, 1974.

Back home, a new president in office for nearly nine months could finally attend to the duties for which he had been appointed. Those nine months had been of little value to the day-to-day operations of the college and it is probable that some slippage occurred in the management processes. Once again we needed Merlin!

The college was not instantly well simply because we had won an important legislative battle; the dormitories were still empty and actions were underway to close the older of the two dining halls. Admission application rates merely stopped declining; they did not soar. In early speeches I had declared that achieving coeducation would not solve the problems of Winthrop, but the new charter would clear away uncertainties that stood in the way of solving the problems.

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16John West was the governor. In 2004 at his death, a reporter from the Rock Hill Herald, attempted to reach me for comments about Governor West and his role in the coeducation issue. I was out of town undergoing cataract surgery, and did not respond until a week later. The reporter meanwhile wrote that West had been pivotal in the legislation for Winthrop. The fact is, Governor West, as his only known contribution, had signed the legislation. I know of nothing else he had done.
An early task was to reform the admission process, an office regarded as less-than-favorable to applicants. The director of admissions was reassigned and a new person was appointed—Connie Lee who was working on her doctorate at the University of South Carolina. Upon her arrival a breath of fresh air was felt immediately.

Another task was to create a student affairs division. A woman in the School of Education, Dr. Mary T. Littlejohn, had caught my eye. Would she accept an administrative internship in my office, the sole purpose of which was to create an appropriate concept of student affairs? She accepted and with a reduced teaching load went to work. As with all interns, I spent time with her talking about concept and strategy. In her case the issue was a pro-active student affairs program. The Student Center was an inactive facility; I wanted a charged atmosphere which made student want to be there. And as with all interns this one was privy to virtually everything I did so as to gain some understanding of the administrator’s role.

Direct contacts with students were necessary, despite limited time. As mentioned earlier the SGA spent too much time legislating revisions of old legislation. Also there were bills that made little sense. A rule in place enabled the president to veto any legislation, a rule I deplored. But I used the veto power once! A bunch of bills landed on my desk and I saw that the power of veto enabled me to select what I wanted from among the legislation. A storm of protest arose. I sat in the student center for an entire day dealing one after another with protesting groups. To each, I said my purpose is to help you achieve a better organization. The students cautiously responded, particularly one feisty girl who went for my jugular. In the end, when she saw that my purpose was to help them achieve a better SGA, she became a good friend.

In the same time frame I called together the various leaders of the student government, and suggested to them that many of their old traditions, e.g., classes night, had probably run their course and new ventures should be sought. The suggestion was not well received. But my prediction was on the mark; all of those old patterns, legacies of an old girls school, died very quickly.

Relations with the general community were basically undefined. Some events were open to the public but there was no corporate effort to involve the people of the area. A building with a unique history (formerly a residence for faculty members) stood vacant; and I saw it as a possible center for continuing education. But a director for that activity would be necessary. In past consulting missions I had come to know a number of persons holding duties in continuing education, and most were without educational backgrounds that gave them parity with the regular faculty. I asked if there were a senior faculty member who might be up to the challenge of a new position. Indeed, Miriam Williford, a historian of Latin America, was primed for a change and she became the Director of the Joynes Center for Continuing Education. Following visits to other centers and to Princeton University Miriam was ready to oversee the development of the Joynes Center. Quickly a long list of programs, conferences and workshops invited the public to the campus.

In that first year, Jack Boger, the dean of education, spoke to me about the school superintendents of the region. They were asking “what kind of man was this new president? Was he interested in public education?” “Bring them together,” I said, “and let them decide.” We met for lunch and there began a working relationship that was to blossom into a fine device for school-college cooperation. We called it the Super’s Club initially but formed other titles in time. I insisted on being part of the group with the education dean as a kind of secretary. It was true, I maintained, that some of those leaders managed budgets and personnel rosters as large as mine and we were all chief executives. I could not designate the role to a dean.
The principle work of this group would be accomplished by networks which paired college faculties with school faculties; that is, English teachers with English teachers, math teachers with math teachers and so on. As the school teachers brought forth problems they experienced, we probed college personnel for answers. Finding the sources of answers the superintendents would release teachers to the workshops and the college provided staff and a place for the meetings. Some examples. This was an era when the importance of expository writing was proclaimed yet no high school teacher had any training in this field. The college faculty were not experts but they could help....and did. Virtually all disciplines in the school curriculum needed help and if sought the teachers received it. A reason the networks succeeded was that when the superintendent authorized teachers to attend the special workshops they did so at the school’s expense, whereas if the teachers had elected to attend a workshop on their own they would have borne the expense of a substitute teacher.

Noted above was the appalling fact that a college with historic successes in teacher education was not and had not been recognized by NCATE, the basic accrediting organization for that discipline. Ironically a visit by a team from NCATE was scheduled for the very first year. The committee came, did its work, and submitted a report which was calculated to deny accreditation. As I read the draft of the report I was infuriated, because I saw “reasons” for denying the recognition as present at Georgia State University from which I had just come. Georgia State received its accreditation; Winthrop might not. I made an appointment with Ralf Larson, the Executive officer of NCATE in Washington, DC. In his office I tried to be considerate with Mr. Larson but I left no doubt with him that his organization would hear from our attorney if we were denied accreditation on grounds that had been ignored at Georgia State. Further the grounds were specious. Having served as an executive officer of a regional accrediting association, I knew that whereas ultimate decision for and against an institution are made by board members, the staff officer can exert influence when his knowledge is critical. In some magical way Winthrop received its recognition by NCATE. Not without significance, Ralf Larson and I became good friends.

In that first spring we received word from the Council on Social Work Education that our social work program was in jeopardy of losing its accreditation. I made my way to New York and called on this organization. The conversation was civil but unproductive because of the traditional response, “Why our council members make the decisions; we don’t do that here in the staff.” I decided to keep my counsel even as I explained the major changes that were taking place.

Later we were informed that if certain changes didn’t take place we would be placed on probation, a condition difficult to lift. Meanwhile the State of South Carolina had imposed a freeze on program changes, and I so informed the Council office in New York. Unimpressed the threat of probation remained in the air. I returned to the New York offices to be greeted by a lot of buck passing behind doors not yet opened to me. I could hear staff members “handing me off” to one another with no one too anxious to see me. But eventually I was greeted probably by a junior staff person, I applied a bit of verbal muscle, and I departed confident that we would not be placed on probation. We were not. Once again experience in the accreditation business proved beneficial. Further I was aware that offices of that nature rarely see a president, especially one who understood their business as well as them. Once the “freeze” was over we made the changes recommended by the Council and all were happy.

It was time to talk about accreditation of the School of Business. I visited with Jerry Padgett, the dean, and talked of the problem. In that conference I suggested to Jerry that we would have a long hill to climb in seeking accreditation if our goal was to achieve the recognition as a traditional school. Take the time to investigate special areas of business administration and discover, if possible, an area not well treated in this region of the nation. In South Carolina we had “competition” from Clemson and the University of South
Carolina; in North Carolina we looked right across the state line to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte along with programs at Chapel Hill, Wake Forest, and Duke: formidable competition.

Jerry later returned and reported that an under-served area of Business Administration was personnel administration. The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and Virginia Commonwealth were the nearest programs and the latter was not so great. “Could we pursue that field?” he asked. We made the commitment and he went to work finding faculty and shaping the program. Once the human and program element were in place Jerry turned to AACSB, the accrediting body for Business Administration. In contrast to most applications for this recognition which usually required several years of appeals, Winthrop was accredited on the first attempt (of course not in 1973-74). Officials of other institutions were stunned. Jerry went on to become a consultant for AACSB and we won recognition from various business interests for the competence of our program.

While the above activities were in progress, I instructed Mike Brownley to explore the formation of a foundation. In time he had the outline of one and we proceeded to seek Federal recognition of the Winthrop College Foundation. As luck would have it, an old friend of the College died and left us a legacy which quickly put first money into the Winthrop College Foundation.

With authority from the Attorney General of the state I appointed legal counsel with instructions to read every publication with special attention to the catalog. The purpose was to protect us from questionable statements. I had experienced some lawsuits at Georgia State and knew the terrible investments (wastage) of time in legal actions. Preventive law made sense. Counsel was told to explore remedies to the extensive problems arising out of the nepotism mess and a plan was invented to erase the basic liabilities of the nepotism threat. Pertinent faculty members seemed pleased. The new catalog was cleared of suspect items. No law suit was ever filed.

A student affairs division was organized and Dr. Littlejohn was made vice president for that area. Staff were recruited to plan and execute programs. Where there had been a dreary building for student life, now there was active facility. Somewhere in the Board of Trustee minutes I found an action authorizing the food management company to sell beer in the student center but a parallel action said “not now.” Privately a number of trustees acknowledged the action and told me to go ahead. With no publicity, beer appeared for sale in the center, much to the pleasure of students.

An English professor, Les Reynolds, deeply involved in human rights issues, quickly accepted the appointment as Affirmative Action Officer. Suddenly we had a formal procedure for appointing faculty and staff. While some do not approve of the principle of Affirmative Action I saw it as a plus to keep us honest and free of deadly legal actions. I did not believe that affirmative action precluded vigorous searches for competent faculty as long as all who applied were given fair hearings. The academic deans were told that I would cover travel expenses any time they went out in quest of top people.

A faculty task force was created to form a new definition of the Faculty Conference and I shared in their labors. Having been down that path many times before, I wanted to help—not hinder—their efforts. The results appeared to be salutary. With the approach of the new academic year, the revised Conference was ready for action.

Two additional appointment were made in the year. One was an informed officer to manage the personnel area, and the other the assignment of an internal auditor.
On a broader scale, I gained admission of Winthrop into a consortium of colleges spread across the adjoining region of North Carolina. We were part of the greater Charlotte region, and found advantageous the participation in the programs of this group.

The first year came to an end with little to show other than that the primary barriers to progress had been eliminated. The Chamber of Commerce had met its first goal (coeducation) and was proud of its role. City and county governments were taking stock of the “new” college and showing a willingness to help out. On the other hand the legislature showed little inclination to do more; it had handed Winthrop a great prize but had no intention of granting a bounty and yet it did make one concession. The years of endless debate about Winthrop’s charter even as the enrollment declined had left the college unable to meet debt service on the residence halls. The legislature appropriated funds to cover the debt service for one year.

As the first year ended, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences submitted his resignation. I had stressed to the deans that it was important to me that I could confide in them as we proceeded to solve our many problems but that I expected them to use some discretion in the regard to that information. This dean declared that he could not work among his colleagues bearing information he could not reveal to all. Curiously the dean had been portrayed by my predecessor as “a jewel of a dean.” In my view he was little more than a conduit to his faculty. Finding a new dean for this critical unit was no small task.

Whereas I began administrative work as a rookie and made all the mistakes in the book, I resolved that I would never appoint a rookie to a deanship. The institution deserved something better. Thus experience at the level of dean or associate dean was mandatory. We began our search and finally chose William Moran, Dean at Berry College in Georgia. But Bill withdrew his name believing that he had an unbreakable commitment to his president but his president, a friend of mine, on his own initiative, called Bill and urged him to re-open the option with Winthrop. Bill became our Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Another personnel issue rose to the surface. Ross Webb, wonderful guy that he was and special friend to the day of his death, was Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs. He was installed in that post by my predecessor who had done a miserable–even negative–job of indoctrination. The former president had used the college to gain his personal ends and had allowed the infrastructure to disintegrate. In this process he had “used” Ross Webb in his nefarious schemes, and there was created thereby an image greatly disturbing to those who answered to Ross. Ross recognized his dilemma and opted to resign the post; I made sure he was given a senior professorship where he excelled.

The appalling conditions of the central administration caused me to postpone the appointment of a new vice president and dean of faculty, choosing instead to wear that “hat” myself. I didn’t need the added duties, but considering the economic and practical solution to our long list of problems this seemed the efficacious action. Working directly with the deans I had an excellent opportunity of helping them grow into their jobs, something my predecessor had neglected altogether. As time would reveal, I wore that second hat for most of the remaining years at Winthrop. Near the end of my term I elected to open the office of provost (the principal vice president) and in due time appointed Glen Thomas to the office of provost.

A condition reported earlier in this text was the absence of any kind of manual for the Trustees which would collect together all pertinent facts, legal features, and record of past actions by the Board. Fortunately, the board’s secretaries had been diligent in maintaining full and accurate minutes from the very beginning of the college. Yet no one knew what was in those minutes which is to say that the Board never knew whether an action under consideration reinforced or contradicted past actions. The Board responded favorably to a proposal
that under supervision of a Trustee committee, the college staff would index all Board actions from Day One and would prepare (1) a summary of policies to be sustained and (2) a list of actions to be cancelled. From this effort there evolved a handbook for the trustees. From that time forth, the policy manual was always before the board members as they assembled for business. This manual was the first measure intended to enhance the role of the trustees. Since leaving Winthrop I am led to believe that the Manual may have been abandoned.

Along with the manual I began the practice of writing a report for the board which was distributed at the quarterly meetings. (This was the second measure to strengthen the role of trustees) While in practice the Manual was to be retained at the college, the report went home with the members. With the election of new board chairman many changes ensued, one of which was the report to the board, or at least the timing of the report. The report was my invention and was intended to give the board members a careful briefing of recent developments. But with the new Chairman the report became part of the whip the chairman used to demean me. First he wanted the report sent out with the agenda for the next meeting, which meant a less than up-to-date document. The agenda always went out at least ten days before the meeting. Then he wanted the report sent even earlier thus erasing any hope of a contemporary report. Recalling that prior to my coming to Winthrop the board received nothing in writing before or after the meetings, it was now clearly the intent of the Chairman to defeat the purpose of the report and to embarrass me because I could not recount in writing pertinent matters related to the operation of the college except as old history. It was now evident that the Chairman did not like me and was creating a negative environment, ultimately to have me removed as president.

The manipulation date line of the report to the board was but one of many tactics the Chairman employed to diminish me as president. He manifestly didn’t trust college presidents and specifically me. He held some mistaken notion of the accrediting business and placed me in a diminished light despite the fact that I had once directed the Commission on Colleges. Once at an alumni meeting in his part of the state, I happened to say something about our pride in having acquired NCATE accreditation, a long overdue recognition of Winthrop. He rose to the occasion to dispute–even to refute–my claim. Had I not known what he was up to I might have been embarrassed, but I wrote this off as a measure of his devious attempt to seize all credit for the improved state of the college for him and his board.

Routinely I called on the Chairman some ten days or two weeks before a board meeting for review of the agenda. These were awkward moments because he deliberately worked over every item with no intent to understand. For example, the college held rights to something called \textit{institutional bonds} which increased as receipt of tuition funds increased. Time after time I interpreted for him the meaning and significance of these bonds, and time after time I realized that he had not been listening the previous time nor would he hear me this time. Scornful of me he simply didn’t want to hear. As our meetings would come to an end, usually at the end of a day, we might head out for dinner always to some fast food place. Not one time did I ever darken the door of his palatial home or a decent restaurant. In retrospect I should have resigned, but I had not finished the restoration of the college.

Back home on the campus I learned of a federal program that might be useful to us. The program called for the creation and operation of a center to be of service to the developmentally disabled. Knowing of one such center at Johns Hopkins University I chased off to Baltimore for an on-site investigation. Excited by what I saw I returned to Winthrop and charged the interested parties to proceed with an application to HEW.

\textsuperscript{17}Burns was quoted as having lost faith in me when I divorced Emily. I doubt that allegation because his actions consistently pointed to a distrust of me, of presidents. He really wanted to run the college, I believe, and saw me in his way.
Meanwhile we learned that the University of South Carolina was also interested in the program and might be in competition with us. Knowing that the competition was a sure defeat for both, I approached Pat Patterson, the president at USC, with the idea of a joint proposal with Winthrop being the clinic center and USC being responsible for exportable and more corporate activities. He agreed, and the proposal went to Washington. The proposal was approved and the development of the center at Winthrop was initiated in one of the vacant dormitories. We called it the Human Development Center.

From the outset this was seen as an interdisciplinary project. Consistent with what I saw at Johns Hopkins the success of any diagnostic work would depend on the contribution of various academic experts. It was true, as well, that special education students from Winthrop and other colleges could intern in that center. Believing the project was too complex and precarious I determined that the director of the HDC would answer directly to me. Any academic dean, Education, Arts and Science, or other, would be under stress to bleed the HDC of resources in favor of more traditional programs. Further, I saw the HDC as a fine outreach to the greater Rock Hill area. For the remainder of my years at Winthrop the HDC continued to report to me.  

The HDC performed diagnostic and prescriptive services to the developmentally disabled of all ages. I felt a genuine warmth as I saw people entering the Center for the services it alone could provide in that region. York County provided some financial assistance to the Center as recognition of its contributions to the health of the county’s citizens.

As the Congress would begin debate on new funding for the general program there was always a problem: this was a rare program in which the federal funding was for administrative, not operating support. This unique feature put the program in jeopardy. Invariably an officer at the national level responsible for coordinating the activities of the program would call me to speak to Senator Hollings, and that necessitated a trip to Washington. Rarely seeing the Senator, I did have time with the appropriate staff member who heard and intervened for the Senator who saw to the renewed funding.

The Human Development Center was one of a score of activities created to enable Winthrop to be a change agent in the lives of people of that region. The Joynes Center, the Supers Club, the Small Business Development Center and numerous other activities permitted the college to make a difference in the community it served. It was my theory that a public college should mean much more than a place for students to be educated and a source of revenue for the local economy. A good college is remarkable for the scope of talent found in its faculty and students, and it is mandatory that some of that talent should be liberated to serve the greater good.

In the days before the internet, achieving communications with the campus community was not easy. In a partial solution to that problem I had installed a series of glass bulletin boards all across the campus. These locked units were sized to accommodate an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper. When there were items I wanted the community to know about I sent a person with the notices printed on yellow paper to do the installation. Word on the campus was “yellow is showing.”

Borrowing an idea from an older colleague among college presidents, I regarded commencements--graduation exercises--as a time to honor graduates and not a time to gain some publicity for the college with noted speakers. There are some 3500 colleges in the nation all of whom have commencements at the same time.

18A few years after I departed Winthrop one of my successors transferred the HDC to a school dean, Education, I believe. Predictably the HDC was starved and eventually closed.
and rarely does any get much attention by the press. Thus I resolved to deliver the commencement speeches and always addressed the graduates with 12 to 15 minutes of comment. Controlling the platform in this way, our commencement programs lasted no more than one hour which permitted each graduate to cross the platform to receive his or her diploma, be congratulated and be photographed. But this practice did not please the Chairman who frequently carped at me while admitting that he had never been to a commencement exercise in his life. But it should be noted that I received not one complaint about my practice from faculty or students. At my final commencement at Winthrop I was awkwardly pushed around by that man who was finally participating in such a ceremony.

One commencement proceeding will not be forgotten: December, 1974. As usual the December event was not well attended and the balcony was empty—or so we thought. Preliminaries out of the way I began my speech only to be greeted by explosive sounds that could have been gunshots. Petrified I held onto the lectern, went silent, but resumed the oration as soon as the sounds died. Deans sitting to my right and behind said they thought of diving under something fearing that the shooter might miss his target and hit them. No one knew the target. There was no panic and the remainder of the service was completed as planned. Once I was home, my legs turned to rubber, a delayed consequence of a terrifying moment. Later it was established that some youngster had set off some “lady” fire crackers in the balcony. Why was there no panic in the audience? No one knows. Yet that was a rare occasion in which I had printed in the official program a topic for my speech which was *Sash and Clatter*. Taken from Clement Moore’s *Twas the Night before Christmas*. Perhaps some of the audience instantly assumed that the noise was my poor effort at sound effects for the speech. We will never know.

During the first 15 months of time at Winthrop, finding that no formal budget structure existed, I began working on such. Securing all information I could from the business office, I translated the data into a workable budget spending many late hours at the task. These were days when it was not comfortable for me to be home, my wife being in such a state, and in retrospect Winthrop was the beneficiary of a tragic situation at my home. To escape the confrontations at home I spent time working on that very large document which became the formal budget.19

My wife’s mental illness was so acute that legal separation and finally divorce became necessary. Persuaded that the community and college leaders would have to know of this development and would be supportive if informed, I called on leading personnel of the college, both professional and student, and of the town to explain what was happening. I went to the chair of the Board of Trustees, then Bill Grier, and said, “I want you to know, and if there are trustees who will be uncomfortable with the development I will resign my position.” There was no response. I spoke to every dean and other senior officers; visited with the student leaders and went into the community in search the president of the chamber of commerce and others. My hope was to head off rumors and it is apparent that I succeeded.

The separation occurred in the summer of 1975. It was a most uneasy summer for me, although I felt some security, yet it was not a time of rejoicing. By plan I opened the autumn term and then departed in my car for Philadelphia and from there to Maine where friends had offered me the use of their cottage which overlooks Frenchman Bay. I needed time alone and away from everything familiar, time to “discover” who I was and intended to be. Almost at once I realized how close I was to a breakdown. The stress of a dual life had me so close.

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19Years after I departed the college, I learned that the financial officer was able to deal with mini-crises caused by his president because he had the use of that budget structure.
At Winthrop I had a telephone installed in my bedroom that was a “secure” telephone which I promised to answer whereas I was often unwilling to answer the regular phone. My daughters, security, and certain others knew of this phone. In some way a college coed discovered the special phone and called me one night. Snow was predicted. “Dr. Vail, please don’t cancel classes tomorrow,” she said. “Repeat that,” I responded. “Well Sir, my boyfriend and I had a fight and if you cancel classes tomorrow he won’t come to the campus and we won’t be able to make up.”

The College Entrance Examination Board invited me to join a national committee charged with reviewing the activities of several components of the Board, including CLEP, AP and some others. The Committee met in the Board Headquarters in upper Manhattan once or twice a year, and of course the Board paid my expenses with little regard for how I got to New York. Accordingly I would fly to Philadelphia for a weekend with my children and then travel by train to New York in time for the Sunday night convening. After a year I was made chairman of the committee.

At Winthrop with men arriving on campus and other changes taking place, I proposed to the Board of Trustees that pressure for fraternities and sororities was inevitable. A well defined policy was desirable in advance so that a response to the pressure would be on hand rather than to be confronted with a petition forcing a policy development. The Board agreed, and almost exactly one year later we installed the first of the social organizations.

Winthrop had several dormitories essentially moth balled and others put to non-instructional use. One housed the Human Development Center and another held faculty offices. Two others remained empty. With the approval of the Board of Trustees, we converted those two empty dorms into small apartments for students. The project was accomplished by the in-house staff which meant it was most cost efficient. We purchased special apartment-size units that combined sink, refrigerator and range in one and set these into the reconfigured dorm rooms, thus making few structural changes in the buildings. Although not modern in any sense, these units were quite popular and were rather quickly filled with students, married couples being given priority. The important consideration was that these building were restored to use at trivial cost and a new form of residence living was introduced. The State of South Carolina was quite stingy toward Winthrop and we had to do most everything on a shoe string.

With no wife in the house I had to invent alternate methods of entertaining. The college supplied a maid to clean but she could not cook. The catering firm which handled the food service and student center snack bar, employed a couple who came to the president’s house on request and served up dinner parties and special events.

The scope of my duties made occasional forays into student centers for bull sessions nearly impossible; there simply wasn’t time enough in a typical week. To hear student view, however, I organized an advisory group consisting of leaders from all quarters of the campus. The vice president for student affairs and the dean of students joined this group and we met at the president’s house, usually on Sunday evenings. These meetings began with a buffet supper. In these meetings we listened to one another and focused on big problems. I shared budgetary and other kinds of issues, believing that an open book made good sense. Once when the costs of operating the dormitories, including the debt service, strongly argued for an increase in the dormitory fees.

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20 In more recent times apartment buildings have been built on land just south of the campus and the fate of the two converted dormitories remains unknown to me.
The students had other ideas. Said they, there are too many custodial people in the dorms and too little for them to do. I investigated, found them right, and made plans to reduce the staff, thus saving enough to avoid a fee increase.

Faced with the need to release staff, and in recognition that all to be laid off were black, a careful plan was needed to avoid bad publicity and even law suits based on racial considerations. A plan was devised based on seniority and promises of re-hire priorities, I called for a meeting with the press to explain the plan. Thus the newspapers and TV stations were given the details in advance and we were insulated from the consequences of rumor and false claims. The dismissals were accomplished, the budget affected, and the dorm fees did not have to be increased.

Away from the campus I was drawn into a small group charged with reviewing applications for health care facilities, but this group did not survive because new federal legislation called for the creation of health system agencies. In South Carolina, the state was divided into three regions and I became a charter member of the Board of the Three River Health Systems Agency. Our assignment was to do the investigating and recommendations for new health care facilities and new hardware for those facilities. I chaired the Project Review Committee. We met periodically in Columbia, hired a staff, and began our work, the object of which was to effect control over the expansion of new facilities and the purchase of expensive equipment. It was our responsibility to examine applications by hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes for more facilities or equipment, and to recommend that a certificate of need was or was not merited. Our report went to the constitutional body in the state where the ultimate decision for or against was made. The Three Rivers Agency was, in my opinion, a model organization.

In the law which established the Health Systems Agencies, there was a requirement that the rural areas should be adequately represented on the boards. In no way could this be interpreted to say that the urban area should be “adequately” represented. It was in the nature of our organization that the rural area was quite well represented, and we were confident that our well-run organization could do its work. We followed good parliamentary rules and committees such as mine worked as required and reported back to the Board for final action.

It was conspicuous that the federal Department of Health Education and Welfare, HEW, did not like this program and sought ways to diminish the agencies. In our case they proclaimed that we needed adequate representation from the urban areas. We protested this ruling but to no avail. The only alternate was to enlarge the board with city dwellers. Not only did this yield a much larger and unwieldy board but it stacked the board with people who cared nothing about normal parliamentary processes. My committee could report out a finding after suitable hearings only to find that the “new” members of the board insisted that the issues be studied all over again in full board meetings. Seeing this pattern as unavoidable, I presented my resignation from the board. I did not have the time to devote to such a losing proposition.

Most of my inspirations affecting administration occurred in unlikely moments, and that truly was the case of an idea for faculty development. En route to Rock Hill from some place, I began to think of the SACS Self Study Program and the routine benefits found by the visiting committees; they often said they learned more than they gave. Why not, I thought, create a situation comparable to that encountered by a visiting committee but without all the paraphernalia of a self study program? I needed two other institutions to join with Winthrop and a neutral organization to monitor. Thus was born the program which later gained some national attention.
At an annual meeting of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities I approached the representatives of two member institutions in states not too remote from South Carolina—Western Kentucky University and Shippensburg State College in Pennsylvania. We agreed to meet in Washington in the offices of AASCU for a planning session. Agreement was found at remarkable speed and we set forth on the experimental year. An officer of AASCU agreed to join and monitor the whole, finding if it could be a program that the Association could eventually sponsor. At home each of us appointed or elected the seven member teams and plotted the home-institution preparation. For the program to succeed we felt the need of an orientation session conducted on some neutral site. The campus of Emory and Henry College in southwest Virginia was chosen (the college welcomed us) and the three teams assembled there merely to get acquainted.

It was agreed that no part of the respective institutions would be off-limits, except perhaps the treasury. In the first day on the host campus, a carefully prepared program (video or otherwise) would introduce the visitors to the high points of the institution. Each participant would be permitted to visit and talk with any counterpart at the home institution. The object was to find how the host institution met particular problems or issues. The visit would last three days. In succession the three teams would meet on first one and then the other of the three campuses. By the end of that academic year some 21 faculty members would have been in position to compare activity on the home campus with that on two other campuses. Finally the agreement called for the three colleges to repeat the program with new teams in a second year. After the two-year cycle was completed a second grouping included Rhode Island College and Jersey City College began another two year cycle.

From my perspective, the program served its purpose and AASCU adopted it as a program of its own. A manual was developed and AASCU held special sessions during and away from the Annual Meetings to advertise and explain the program. In one of those special meetings, I arrived at the session to be questioned by a participant, “What’s the gimmick?” He was sure there was some administrative mischief. Apparently others felt the same way, because the program faded from the scene and died. But some faculty at Winthrop and at other colleges told me that the program was of enormous value to them and in some instances shaped their careers. For Winthrop the overall cost per year was about the salary of one semester of sabbatical leave for one faculty member, yet all seven profited.

And speaking of sabbatical leaves, I persuaded the Board to allow such leaves to be instituted. But the debate in the Board was not simple. Various board members argued vigorously against the concept, maintaining that there was something religious about “sabbaticals” This debate occurred before the sunshine laws went into effect or I probably would not have succeeded with the effort. We had long followed the practice of an informal meeting of the board—no minutes, no record, only a time when I could explain the agenda items away from the press. It was a time for board members to make fools of themselves as in the instance of sabbaticals being religious. But when the new sunshine law went into effect, we could no longer hold those informal meetings and the quality of our relationships began to deteriorate from that time forth.

My work at the college was an endless commitment often long hours seven days a week. Eventually I began to look for a place to escape for the weekend. My wife and I had talked of buying land outside Rock Hill or somewhere in the distance, but we never saw anything we liked. Now alone I happened upon the Inn at Mt. Pisgah near Asheville, which had a restaurant and wonderful views from its peak location. With some books in hand I would chase there on Fridays and spend the weekend in my own version of R & R. These weekends were salutary and I began to wonder if a place of my own would be an even better idea. A search began.
Unexpectedly, I was informed that my brother in Spain with his wife had fallen and was in a hospital suffering from a subdural hematoma. His wife was frantic. The time was just before Christmas, 1978. A second phone call alerted me that she needed help. I called her son and daughter to say that if neither would go I would and I gave them 24 hours to respond. At the end of that time, I found that by default it was my call. I arranged for Mike Brownley to do the winter commencement. In Malaga, Spain, I saw my brother in intensive care at the hospital but only through a window. We were not permitted to visit him. I said to his wife that my knees nearly collapsed at the sight of Bill in that condition and would not return. She concurred and said we should seek some diversion pending the final outcome of her husband and my brother.

On Christmas morning we were summoned to the hospital at Malaga. On arrival the surgeon said my brother had died. Not wishing to see him (a conclusion I was later to regret) we made haste to various offices to conclude the event. Brother’s passport had to be surrendered and the mortician took our orders for cremation. In a couple of hours we had completed all arrangements, easily done despite the fact that this was Sunday and December 25. We returned to our apartment. Stunned we hardly knew what lay ahead and I began to beg her to join me on a trip home. She declined; I made plans to return home alone.

On the day of my departure, I went to the airport to find that fog had closed the place. I rescheduled for the next day. That night my throat became quite sore and I felt miserable. In the morning I went to the airport and boarded a flight to Madrid where I approached the agent in quest of a window seat. I thought she complied. On boarding the airplane I was angry because I found that my seat was an aisle seat. The anger melted when I realized that the agent had not only given me an aisle seat but two others as well. She must have recognized that I was sick. I stretched out on the three seats for most of the trip. Somehow I got to Charlotte although I do not recall how. I called my secretary for a ride home and gave her instructions to get me an appointment with my physician.

Next morning the physician got no closer to me than three feet and said take this prescriptions and get home and to bed. I did I had to recover quickly because I had a commitment to lead a bunch to London for a conference with officers of the BBC. Together with an officer of the South Carolina Educational TV Network we sought to discover some of the processes of the BBC in its production of major television programs. I had floated an idea with the faculty of Winthrop.

It was clear to me that the TV production facilities in the US, especially on public TV were staffed by experts who knew how to make films when they had a good script. The research to produce good scripts would not be found among the talents of such staff people. On the college campus there were faculty fully capable of doing research on most any topic. Yet the faculty in general would have no idea how to produce a film based on the products of their research. My idea was to meld the two groups and initiate a broad program of cooperative efforts that would have a salutary effect. South Carolina ETV was a willing partner. Pertaining to the faculty, I argued, there are two pronunciations of the word research. Emphasis on the first syllable implies a new look at an old issue, whereas emphasis on the second syllable suggests plowing new ground. In my idea, for purposes of tenure and promotion, I would recognize both as legitimate.

In London I proposed that we approach the BBC with a simple question, knowing that a complex answer would be necessary. Jake Bronowsky came to you, I said, with the idea that became the marvelous series called The Ascent of Man. How did you proceed with that idea? I hoped for story of how they proceeded with his concept to make the series would help us to launch our project. We had productive days in London but my health was a problem. While the others were having fun at night I was in bed, trying to recover from the strep throat I brought home from Spain. I was weak. But we accomplished our mission and returned to Rock Hill
ready to prepare a proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts. As a joint venture of the College and the SCETV, we shipped the document to Washington having first had the assistance of a field officer of the NEA. We received a negative reply and were crushed.\textsuperscript{21} I had too much on my plate at that time, and had to set the idea aside. It would never surface again.

The College Board was interested in the nature of high school education and invited a bunch of us to a conference at St Louis. The object was to create a kind of matrix for the high school curriculum. Later I took the matrix to the Super’s Club and found their ready endorsement; in fact most were already working toward the very same set of goals. The College Board invited a very few of us to New York to review the findings of the project. I arrived quite sick and hardly up to a dispute, but in that meeting Diane Ravich of Columbia University’s Teacher College cynically tried to shoot holes in the project. I was furious and knew she was dreadfully wrong, but I felt so bad I could not rise to the occasion. The project went nowhere so far as I have known.

Our enrollment at Winthrop was climbing fast and we were running out of space, a huge contrast to the conditions seen when I arrived there. The owner of a motel just one long block off the campus had indicated to me that he wanted to get out of the business. “Was Winthrop interested in purchasing the motel?” We were, and in time made arrangements to buy the motel for use by resident students during the regular academic year and by the continuing education program in the summer.\textbackslash

The Winthrop library was (and is) housed in a fine building and has been fortunate with good leaders. The advent of computer services has been a revolution to libraries but Winthrop had not been a beneficiary of that revolution. When I found resources adequate to equip the library I called on the librarian and instructed her to purchase what she needed to transform the library. She was ready and fulfilled that task. For some unknown reason I never mentioned this development to the board chairman.

Across the street from the main campus there was a residence built for the widow of the first president of the college. Mrs. Johnson was approaching her 100\textsuperscript{th} birthday. She was not in the best of health and it was clear to me that she would not last much longer. In consultation with people we knew to have an interest in Mrs. Johnson, we made certain that last rights would be ready at her death.

In the process of building a budget, I discovered that Mrs. Johnson was still on the payroll, a clear violation of state policy. I chased off to Columbia and to the offices of the state personnel. Speaking to the director, I asked him to close the door and then explained what I had found. He summoned an associate and with the door closed told him of my discovery. It was easy to convert employment to a pension, but the change had to be made discretely for we dare not arouse any publicity. I so informed the family friend who managed Mrs. Johnson’s affairs. It was not long until Mrs. Johnson died and due honor was bestowed at her funeral.

Her residence appealed to me as a future honors house for superior students and I began planning for that application. Then I was told that the house had major problems which were scarcely solvable. Trustees were invited to enter the building and take note of the conditions. General agreement was reached that the building could not be salvaged. The Board of Trustees authorized the demolition. One the process of demolition began it was discovered that the bricks of the walls were held together by sand and lime rather than mortar and were not stable; the bricks were easily recovered free of substitute mortar.

\textsuperscript{21}Years later I spent some time with Alex Lacy who had been with NEA at the time of our proposal. He made snide remarks about the proposal which made me suspicious of his role.
Our venture into intercollegiate athletics was launched by the basketball team. With Board support I recruited a coach and told him to build a team and play unofficial games the first year. I suspected that a new team without a history would look terrible so in effect the entire team that first year were a red shirt team. After that the team gave a good showing in the first year of conference play. I had the privilege of tossing the ball to open the first game.

We had no basketball court suitable for men. The short court we had would have too many crashing into the brick wall. A new court was needed. I talked with the mayor about the need and found his support, but his legislators did not like the gamble. Finally I negotiated with the state government for support to build a stadium. We owned some fine property in Rock Hill and I bargained with the state to take that property at a price. Together with other means of financing the issue went to the Budget and Control Board. I was at the meeting which was to approve our plan. The executive in charge outlined the plan for the Board but turned to me to ask if that crazy scheme as outlined was presented correctly. I said yes. I doubt that most understood the plan—my crazy scheme—but approval was granted and we went out for bids.

At Georgia State University I was aware of the effort to obtain a coat of arms for the institution. Such an effort seemed appropriate to Winthrop and I initiated the process. That kind of recognition is best obtained from the College of Arms associated with the royal establishment in England. Negotiations led to the creation of our coat of arms which was delivered in person by John Brooklittle an officer of the College of Arms who gain permission to wear the special costume for the occasion. It is unclear what use of the Coat has been made in subsequent years.

Winthrop College would know better days. In succeeding years the enrollment would return and exceed all previous records. The college would prosper even as state appropriations declined. Public and private recognition helped to restore the “step child” to its rightful place among institutions of higher learning. Sadly an observation of the author of a published piece on substantive change “...presidents of institutions beginning substantive change are seldom around to see the conclusion” knew of what he wrote.

A MATTER OF POLICY 1979

The perennial debate or charge focused on the issue of management vs. policy in regard to the Board. The depth of that debate can be seen in a “policy” adopted by the Board in 1979 which stated that “anything out of the ordinary should be presented to the Board or at least to the chairman.” Responding to the policy statement, the president stated that his work would be hamstrung because the whole of his work was to deal with the out-of-ordinary. The ordinary was reserved for the subordinate personnel. Under the new policy why is a president even needed?

There is no holy writ which distinguishes policy from management which lie close to the management-policy border. Actions on the part of administration which build on a perceived need but require long time and elaborate negotiations may creep close to that border, or even cross it, without there being an intent to invade board prerogatives. In the two examples which follow there is a serious question of Board authority because neither would seem to be policy issues. Further, the two examples represent accomplishments which should bring pride to the institution and its board. The exact opposite was true.

The Business School dean discovered a program nearing public attention in Washington which might give South Carolina an edge if we moved at once. The program called for the signatures of participating college
presidents. The courier arrived on the Winthrop campus while a board meeting was in session. Excusing myself I went to the lobby to sign the document. Returning to the committee meeting I explained my brief absence, saying that South Carolina might be No.1 in the nation when the federal program was launched (actually we would be No.2 because of congressional license) Here was something to be proud of because we had achieved a working relation with other state universities that was almost without precedence in South Carolina. At Winthrop we were the originator and principle operative.

Was there any sense of pride? Not unless two hours of harsh censure can be called pride. The allegation was made in dozens of angry ways that I had stepped into the policy-making role and should have had trustee approval. The condemnation was so profound—all from the chairman—that another trustee who suffered from embarrassment came to my home after the meeting, strolled into my bedroom where I was dressing for dinner and apologized in behalf of the Board.

This event was never mentioned again but clearly lingered in the background to cause anger and difficulty. But what was the program that evoked the outburst? The Business Dean had learned that new legislation called for the development of small business development plan for the state to involve the major schools of business across the state. The legislature had to be supportive. An immediate call to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking and Industry brought forth enthusiastic support. The next effort was to get the universities involved, a feat not difficult because of the good relations of the business deans.

A fine plan was devised which would enable the deans to divide up the state into three parts each institution being assigned to a particular part. The fourth institution—the public college traditionally for black youths—was invited in to confer minority benefit. As the plan was moving to completion, the president of one of the universities began dragging his feet. Without his support the plan would go nowhere. In a confidential message to a leading legislator, one who could turn the hesitant president around, we sought his help. Soon the reluctance vanished.

In the meantime, the Governor and the General Assembly had high praise for the plan. The Governor said this was the finest thing he has seen from higher education. The General Assembly on its own initiative appropriated $100,000 to launch the program and help it get underway.

Before submitting the proposal to the Federal Government, a pact of the presidents was necessary. The document was drafted and sent by courier to each of the campuses for signatures. It was my signature on that document that I had to be excused from the board meeting. It is beyond irony that a program that evoked such praise from the Governor and the General Assembly led to harsh censure of me by the board Chairman. One is tempted to ask if every grant application should be cleared with the board Chairman

A COMPUTER FOR BUSINESS OPERATIONS 1981

As computers became important in the daily conduct of college financial operations, we failed to gain a computer owned but not in use by the local bleachery. Desperate we negotiated with the University of South Carolina to piggy back on their computer center to do our work. Desperate we lived with that arrangement for a time but soon came to the conclusion that USC treated us a step child and gave us no priority of time on the computer. Then I search the College financial resources and order the purchase of a computer to do our own work. In place the machine gave us prompt results. At the next meeting with the board chairman in the usual updating of business, I told him of the purchase. His face turned red and he blasted me right out of his office.
Such a purchase, he said, was a matter for the board to approve. Never again would he indulge me with a civil word.

There is no doubt in my mind that the purchase of the computer—a matter I considered as a management decision—convinced the chairman that he now had the just cause for my removal.

With a classy stadium and a good team there begin to be calls for us to join a division of the NCAA. I was quite reluctant for a variety of reasons. There was talk about an NCAA listing. I was not enthusiastic. The Chairman summoned me to Columbia, I was told, to talk of NCAA business. In his casual way he said the Board desired a different kind of administration. In short he asked for my resignation.

The “action” of the Board of Trustees at Winthrop to seek my resignation was a profound blow although I should have seen it coming. For some months I had been in a “boiler” which was a known technique (I had employed that to get someone to leave his post) but in my own way I chose not to recognize what was happening to me. Later I wrote a detailed accounting of the boiler which helped to ease the pain but the consequences were never erased.

The wish of the Board that I leave was made known to me on my birthday, a most timely event. Because it was so late in the academic year, I chose to reveal the action to no one other than Glen Thomas until I could get my thoughts organized. I considered a demand that they show cause, knowing that they had no reason for my removal that they would make public; I felt I could win in such an encounter. Good advice given me was that such a victory would be pyrrhic at best; I could not expect support of the board on any matter and any retirement privileges might be sacrificed. The advice prevailed as it should. I began to inform the deans and my office staff. But the general announcement was not made until after commencement.

Meanwhile I negotiated a year’s leave with a professorial appointment which would provide some time during which I could try to relocate. After all I was given almost no notice. With anger, the Board consented and demanded reports on my activities. I prepared for departure before the end of June, the destination of my household things being the house in the mountains.

Early in the process of notification and planning it became clear to me that Mary T. Littlejohn, vice president for Student Affairs, and Connie Lee, vice president for development, were a part of a conspiracy to get rid of me. Mary T. had been heard to say to the telephone operator in the outer reception space to hold things together until she was able to move in. I doubt that the operator understood, but I did. Mary T. and some number of the Board had conspired to place her in the office as acting president once I was removed. I then confronted Connie Lee with my knowledge of her role: she resigned on the spot and left.

When I confronted Mary T. with what I knew she left my office and immediately applied for early retirement. I informed one member of the board I could trust of what went on and he vowed that neither of the women had a prayer to ascend to power; he fulfilled his promise.

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22There was irony in this development. In 1977 I had talked at length with Howard Burns about the five-year term under which I was appointed (one year to go). “I do not wish to wait some years in the future and find the board wanting me to leave when I am too old to find a other position. I would prefer to leave at the end of five years,” I said. Burns scoffed at the matter. Told me to go to back work It was only years later that he confessed to me that he thought that I was seeking a sinecure, even as he was now telling me to leave.
As we entered the commencement season, I acted as host to Benjamin Mays who was to receive an honorary degree. This was the usual procedure. He spent the night at the President’s house but not one of the board members came to the dinner. Although I was embarrassed I could offer him no explanation. I simply hoped that he did not assume a racial problem.

At the commencement ceremony the board chairman was on the platform along with some other board members none of whom bothered to speak to me in the preparation time. For the occasion of the honorary degree, the chairman revealed the amazing fact that he had never been to a commencement, even of his own. Quite literally I had to push him away from the lectern for the presentation of the degree and the hooding of the recipient.

But speculation there would be! Knowing that I would have no access to the press I had contacted a reporter for the Columbia State Newspaper—a man I had come to know otherwise—and arranged to have lunch with him in Columbia. I told him what was going to happen and that I would let him know when it was to break. I wanted someone to know that the Board’s planned claim that Vail wanted to be re-assigned was a lie. I wanted him to know that the board in effect fired me.

Later I carried out my part of the deal and called the reporter from my place in the Mountains. He heard me and “scooped” the story, much to the chagrin of the Chairman who was furious. Just how much good that accomplished I will never know, but at least someone heard my side.

During these times a small drama was developing that caused me to chuckle. On behalf of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities I had written to Strom Thurmond to urge that the Association be represented on some critical group being assembled. The president Pro Tem—that was Strom—had the opportunity of appointing some of the members of that critical group. Strom evidently thought I wanted to be appointed. He wrote that he regretted that all posts were filled but he wanted to see to my appointment to the Advisory Board to the Center for the Study of Vocational Education at Ohio State University. In announcing the appointment Thurmond issued a statement to the effect that “…all who know Dr. Vail hold him in high respect.” He was unaware that the Board was causing me to walk the plank and I debated declining the appointment. I chose to let it go ahead as a “wet noodle” in the face of Howard Burns. I served my full three year-term with the Center.

Being fired from the position of president was a bitter indictment from which I would not recover through many years. The apparent injustice heaped on eight years of apparent success in the transformation of the college would not leave me alone. People of the college community did not stand up to defend me, although do they ever in such circumstances? Ultimately I have had to look for other avenues of peace to learn to live with the memories. Hasn’t been easy.

Every academic position I was fortunate to hold was brought to me; I never applied for any one. I did not apply for the post of president of Winthrop College. Perhaps it is some inverted form of justice that I was told to leave that post with no just cause being cited.