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MY UNC JOURNEY  
OLD STUDENTS CLUB  
MAY 11, 2018  
WADE SMITH

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RELATE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY PATHWAY AND MY TIME AT OUR UNIVERSITY.

THE TRUTH IS THAT MY JOURNEY TO THIS UNIVERSITY BEGINS 80 YEARS AGO AT MY BIRTH BECAUSE ALL THE FORCES IN MY UNIVERSE WERE DIRECTNG ME TO THIS PLACE AND I WOULD BE FOOLING MYSELF IF I THOUGHT OTHERWISE.

LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING. WHEN I WAS BORN THE GREAT DEPRESSION WAS SLOWLY ENDING. IT WAS OCTOBER 9, 1937. AS THE DEPRESSION WAS ENDING, THE DOGS OF WAR WERE HOWLING. MY PARENTS WERE COTTON MILL CHILDREN IN RICHMOND COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA. THEY HAD TO STOP SCHOOL IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TO GO TO WORK TO HELP THEIR FAMILIES. THEY TOOK JOBS AT THE COTTON MILL IN ROCKINGHAM. THERE THEY DID THEIR COURTING. AFTER A WHILE THEY MARRIED AND MOVED TO STANLY COUNTY, ALBEMARLE, LOOKING FOR A BETTER LIFE. THEY GOT JOBS IN THE TEXTILE MILL AND GOT A HOUSE ON A MILL VILLAGE CALLED NEW TOWN.

WE LIVED ON THIS MILL VILLAGE CALLED NEW TOWN. LIFE WAS PRETTY PLAIN. MOM WASHED CLOTHES IN A BIG WASH POT OUT IN THE YARD. THIS WAS A YEAR-ROUND PROCESS. WE GOT WATER FROM A NEARBY PUMP. THERE WAS NO IN-HOUSE RUNNING WATER. WE ATTENDED A LITTLE BAPTIST CHURCH AT THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE AND WE WENT TO THE CHURCH EACH TIME THE DOORS OPENED. LIFE WAS SIMPLE BUT GOOD ON THE MILL VILLAGE.

CHILDHOOD GAMES ON THE VILLAGE WERE VERY ROUGH INDEED. TACKLE FOOTBALL ON GRAVELS WITH NO PADS. BASEBALL WITHOUT GLOVES. AND A VERY ROUGH GAME CALLED HALLIE OVER. YOU CAN JUST IMAGINE THAT ONE.

JUMPING OFF THE BARN ROOF WAS A FAVORITE SPORT, FOUR KIDS AT A TIME EACH HOLDING THE CORNER OF A BED SHEET HOPING IT WOULD MORPH INTO A PARACHUTE, WHICH IT NEVER DID.

ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1944, MY MOTHER TOOK ME BY THE HAND AND WE WALKED TOGETHER TO CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ABOUT A MILE AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE. I WAS ENROLLED THERE IN THE FIRST GRADE. THIS WAS MISS PAULINE WHITLEY'S FIRST GRADE CLASS ROOM.

A LARGE AND VERY STERN LADY ENTERED THE ROOM. I LATER LEARNED THAT THIS WAS MISS B.C. PARKER, PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL. SHE BECAME THE FORCE WHICH DIRECTED ME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA. HENCE, THE REASON SHE IS A PART OF MY STORY.

MISS PARKER PLACED A LARGE SHEET OF NEWS PRINT PAPER IN FRONT OF EACH CHILD AND A CARTON OF TEMPERA PAINTS ON EACH DESK AND SHE SAID WE COULD DRAW AND PAINT ANYTHING WE WISHED. THIS BEING WAR TIME, 1944, EACH BOY DREW PLANES DROPPING BOMBS ON SHIPS. THE GIRLS DREW LITTLE STICK FIGURES SWEEPING AROUND LITTLE HOUSES.

I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I DREW A HUGE RABBIT. IT FILLED THE ENTIRE SHEET OF PAPER. I PAINTED THE RABBIT WHITE, THE SKY BLUE, THE GRASS GREEN, THE SUN ORANGE, THE EYE PINK, AND I WAS FINISHED. IT FILLED THE WHOLE PIECE OF PAPER. MISS B.C. PARKER CAME OVER TO MY DESK AND LOOKED AT THE RABBIT AND SHE SAID: "MY OH MY, WHAT A WONDERFUL RABBIT. I WANT YOU TO HOLD IT UP FOR THE WHOLE CLASS TO SEE." I DID THAT. THEN SHE SAID: "I WANT YOU TO GO WITH ME AND WE WILL TAKE YOUR PAINTING AND HANG IT IN THE HALLWAY SO EVERYONE CAN SEE IT." AND WE DID THAT.

AT THAT MOMENT I WAS MAGICALLY TRANSFORMED FROM A LITTLE SHY MILL HILL KID TO A CHILD WHO LOVED SCHOOL. DURING THE NEXT DECADE MISS B.C. PARKER SENT NOTES HOME TO MY PARENTS CONSTANTLY. "I WANT THIS BOY IN THE SCOUTS." MY PARENTS GOT ME INTO SCOUTS. "I WANT THIS BOY TO SEE THE MOUNTAINS, HE HAS BEEN PAINTING PICTURES OF THE MOUNTAINS."

WE WENT TO THE MOUNTAINS. AND THIS WENT ON AND ON. I LEARNED MUCH LATER IN MY LIFE THAT MISS B.C. PARKER WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN MY NOMINATION FOR THE MOREHEAD SCHOLARSHIP.

IT IS NO STRETCH TO SAY THAT I AM HERE TODAY BECAUSE OF THAT RABBIT AND MISS B.C. PARKER.

THE WORLD TURNED AND THE SUN ROSE AND SET AND 1956 CAME AROUND. I BOUGHT A 1937 CHEVROLET FOR 125.00 FROM MY OLD HIGH SCHOOL COACH AND ON AUGUST 15, 1956, I DROVE THAT CAR TO CHAPEL HILL, LEAVING HOME AND SAYING GOODBYE TO MY FOLKS. I ENTERED THE FRESHMAN CLASS AS A MOREHEAD SCHOLAR.

IT HAD BEEN MY DREAM, FOR ALL MY LIFE, TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA. I KNEW THE NAMES OF ALL THE PLAYERS AND FOLLOWED THE TEAMS FAITHFULLY. BY SUMMER, 1957, MY SOPHMORE YEAR, IT WAS LOOKING LIKE MY DREAM MAY COME TRUE. I WAS AT HOME IN ALBEMARLE WORKING OUT AND GETTING FIT AND HOPING SO MUCH TO MAKE THE TEAM.

WE HAD A NEW COACH FOR THE FOOTBALL TEAM AT CAROLINA. HIS NAME WAS SUNNY JIM TATUM. HE HAD BEEN NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR AT MARYLAND AND HE HAD COACHED AT OKLAHOMA. HE WAS A HUGE MAN WHO, TO ME, DWELLED IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT.

IT WAS A WEEK NIGHT IN EARLY AUGUST. I WAS AT HOME WITH MY FOLKS. THE PHONE RANG. IT WAS MY OLD HIGH SCHOOL GIRL FRIEND, DOTTY WALKER. SHE WAS A GREAT GIRL. VERY IMPORTANT TO ME.

"GUESS WHAT!"

"WHAT!"

"I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO MAKE MY DEBUT AND I WANT YOU TO BE MY MARSHALL."

"WHAT'S YOUR DEBUT?"

"IT IS A DANCE OVER IN RALEIGH."

(I KNEW I DID NOT WANT TO GO.)

"WHEN IS IT?"

"IT IS SEPTEMBER FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD."

I WAS SAVED. I HAD THE PERFECT EXCUSE. THAT WOULD BE IN THE MIDDLE OF FOOTBALL PRACTICE. I COULD LAY MY DISAPPOINTMENT ON PRETTY HEAVY.

"OH, GOSH, I AM SO SAD. I COULD JUST CRY. I CAN'T GO BECAUSE THAT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF EARLY FOOTBALL PRACTICE AND YOU KNOW HOW IT WOULD GO OVER IF I SAID I HAVE TO MISS PRACTICE TO GO TO A DANCE."

SHE WEPT AND HUNG UP THE PHONE.

FIFTEEN MINUTES PASSED. THE PHONE RANG. IT WAS MY GIRL FRIEND, DOTTY WALKER AGAIN.

"GUESS WHAT!"

"WHAT?"

"MY MOTHER CALLED COACH TATUM AND HE WANTS YOU TO GO TO THE DANCE. AND HE IS GOING TO CALL YOU."

I SAID: "YOU HAVE RUINED MY LIFE."

IN 15 MINUTES THE PHONE RANG. SURE ENOUGH, IT WAS SUNNY JIM TATUM, NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR. HE SAID:

"WADE, A MRS. WALKER HAS CALLED ME."

I INTERRUPTED HIM: "COACH, THANK YOU SO MUCH, BUT I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF THAT. I HAVE EXPLAINED THAT THE DANCE IS IN THE MIDDLE OF EARLY FOOTBALL PRACTICE."

HE SAID: "NO WADE, THIS IS THE KIND OF THING WE WANT OUR YOUNG MEN TO DO."

I HAD ONE LAST CARD TO PLAY: "WELL, COACH, I WOULDN'T HAVE ANY WAY OVER TO THE DANCE. YOU KNOW THEY HAVE THAT THING IN RALEIGH. "

"WELL, WADE, MRS. WALKER AND I HAVE WORKED THAT OUT. YOU WILL TAKE YOUR TUXEDO TO THE DRESSING ROOM AT KENAN FIELD HOUSE AND EVERY DAY AT 4:30 I WILL ANNOUNCE ON THE PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM, WADE SMITH, WADE SMITH, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO GO TO THE DEBUTANT BALL."

"BUT COACH, I WON'T HAVE ANY WAY OVER TO RALEIGH."

"MRS WALKER AND I HAVE AGREED THAT YOU WILL DRIVE MY NEW OLDSMOBILE TO THE DEBUTANT BALL."

AND THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED. EACH DAY HE ANNOUNCED: "WADE SMITH, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO GO TO THE DEBUTANT BALL." AND I WOULD GO AND PUT ON MY TUXEDO AND DRIVE HIS NEW OLDSMOBILE TO RALEIGH.

WELL, I MADE THE TEAM THAT YEAR ANYWAY, AND WE HAD A GOOD SEASON. ONE GAME DESERVES SPECIAL MENTION.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II, THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND WAS VISITING AMERICA AND SHE WAS IN WASHINGTON. SHE WANTED TO SEE A FOOTBALL GAME. OUR GAME WITH MARYLAND WAS CHOSEN. WE WERE NOTIFIED THAT SHE WOULD BE THERE AND FOR WEEKS WE LOOKED FORWARD TO PLAYING A GAME BEFORE THE QUEEN. WE PRACTICED HARD AND WORE OUR BEST UNIFORMS. OUR SHOES WERE ALL POLISHED UP AND WE HAD GOOD HAIRCUTS AND LOOKED LIKE NICE YOUNG MEN. THE DAY ARRIVED AND THERE WAS GREAT POMP AND CEREMONY. AND THERE, RIGHT DOWN AT THE FRONT ROW OF THE FIELD, WAS THE QUEEN, IN ALL HER GLORY.

THE QUEEN WASN'T THE ONLY REASON THIS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT GAME OF THE YEAR. THIS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT GAME OF THE YEAR FOR OUR TEAMMATES FROM NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA BECAUSE IT WAS AS FAR NORTH AS WE WOULD GO IN 1957. MOMS AND DADS AND ESPECIALLY GIRL FRIENDS CAME DOWN TO MARYLAND. WE WOULD SPEND THE NIGHT AND THERE WOULD BE MUCH JOY. AND HAPPY REUNIONS. ALL THAT, AND THE QUEEN TOO.

WE PLAYED THE GAME ON OCTOBER 19, 1957.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WE LOST THE GAME. COACH TATUM WAS FURIOUS. WE WERE USHERED ONTO THE BUS FOR THE TRIP OVER TO THE DRESSING ROOMS WHERE WE WERE TO SHOWER AND GET DRESSED.

COACH TATUM GOT ON THE BUS.

"WE ARE GOING HOME. WE ARE NOT STAYING TONIGHT. YOU LOST THIS GAME AND WE ARE GOING HOME TO CHAPEL HILL. NO MOMS AND DADS. NO GIRL FRIENDS. WE ARE GOING HOME. YOU MADE ASSES OF YOURSELVES BEFORE THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND. IF YOU MAKE ASSES OF YOURSELVES BEFORE THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND, YOU ARE GOING HOME."

A GREAT GNASHING OF TEETH ENSUED. THERE WAS WEeping AND WAILING. PARENTS AND GIRL FRIENDS REACHED DESPERATELY TREMBLING HANDS UP TO THE BUS WINDOWS TO TOUCH THE HANDS OF BELOVED BOYS. NO MATTER. WE GOT ON THE AIRPLANE AND WE WENT HOME. AND THAT NEXT WEEK OF PRACTICE WAS SO ROUGH, I AM JUST GETTING OVER IT.

THAT WAS 1957.

THE NEXT YEAR, MY JUNIOR YEAR, WE HAD A GREAT SEASON AND BEAT SOUTHERN CAL OUT THERE, WE BEAT TENNESSEE AT KNOXVILLE AND WE BEAT MIAMI AT MIAMI. IT WAS A VERY HEADY TIME.

1959 CAME, AND IF I MAY SAY SO, I WAS ELECTED ONE OF THE CO-CAPTAINS OF THE TEAM ALONG WITH MY TEAMMATE JACK CUMMINGS, THE

QUARTERBACK. WE WERE NUMBER THREE IN THE NATION PRESEASON FOR MY SENIOR YEAR.

NOW IT WAS EARLY AUGUST. I WAS HOME AGAIN. WORKING OUT AND GETTING READY FOR MY LAST SEASON AS A FOOTBALL PLAYER AT UNC. IT WAS EVENING. OVER THE NEWS CAME WORD THAT THE GREAT SUNNY JIM TATUM, NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR, WAS DEAD. IT COULDN'T BE TRUE. BUT IT WAS TRUE. HE DIED OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER.

WE GATHERED THE TEAM IN CHAPEL HILL AND WE WEPT AT HIS DEATH AND AT OUR GREAT LOSS. OUR GREAT SEASON, WE KNEW, WAS GONE. THERE WAS A MASSIVE FUNERAL AT UNIVERSITY METHODIST CHURCH. WE LAID HIM TO REST IN THE OLD CEMETARY ACROSS FROM CARMICHAEL. YOU CAN SEE HIS MARKER TODAY IF YOU WISH. IT READS: JIM TATUM, NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR. I WANTED TO ENGRAVE ON IT ALSO THESE WORDS: HE HELPED A SMALLTOWN GIRL HAVE A DATE FOR THE DANCE.

WE DEDICATED THE LAST GAME OF THE SEASON THAT YEAR TO SUNNY JIM TATUM. IT WAS PLAYED ON THANKSGIVING DAY, ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, 1959. WE PLAYED OVER AT DUKE. DID WE WIN THAT GAME? WE BEAT THEM 50 TO NOTHING. THEY ARE STILL ANGRY ABOUT IT.

IN THE MONTHS AFTER THE DEB BALL, MY GIRL FRIEND, DOTTY, DRIFTED AWAY SEARCHING FOR A BETTER DANCER, MAYBE FOR A BOY WHO HAD HIS OWN NEW OLDSMOBILE, OR SEEKING A MORE RADIANT AND HANDSOME COMPANION. SHE MOVED TO CALIFORNIA, MARRIED AND HAD MANY CHILDREN. SHE DIED A FEW YEARS AGO. I SPOKE AT HER FUNERAL AND TOLD THE STORY OF DOTTY, HER MOTHER AND COACH TATUM, TO THE DELIGHT OF HER CHILDREN.

ON A BEAUTIFUL OCTOBER EVENING IN 1958, I MADE MY WAY OVER TO GERRARD HALL FOR A MEETING OF CANDIDATES FOR VARIOUS OFFICES IN THE STUDENT BODY AND THERE I WAS MADE NUMB FROM HEAD TO TOE BY THE BEAUTY OF A YOUNG WOMAN WHOSE FATHER HAD BROUGHT HER ACROSS THE

MOUNTAIN FROM BRISTOL, VIRGINIA. HER NAME WAS ANN. WE GOT MARRIED SOON AND WE HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR 58 YEARS DURING WHICH WE HAVE HELPED TO REPLENISH THE EARTH. MANY WONDERFUL THINGS HAPPENED TO ME AT CAROLINA. NONE COULD COMPETE WITH MY LUCK AT FINDING HER.

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY YEARS AT CHAPEL HILL. I WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THEM. BUT, I MUST TELL YOU ABOUT THE 1957 BASKETBALL TEAM COACHED BY FRANK MCGUIRE. IT WAS A ROUND BALL YEAR TO REMEMBER FOREVER. 32 GAMES IN A ROW WE WON. THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE LOSS. AND WE PLAYED KANSAS FOR THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP AT MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM, IN KANSAS CITY. KANSAS HAD A LITTLE FELLOW NAMED WILT CHAMBERLAIN. IN A GAME ON MARCH 23, 1957, THROUGH THREE OVER TIMES, UNC BEAT KANSAS, 54-53. THAT TEAM WAS MADE UP OF STARTERS, LENNY ROSENBUTH, PETE BRENNAN, JOE QUIGG, TOMMY KEARNS AND BOB CUNNINGHAM.

THERE WERE SO MANY GREAT PROFESSORS DURING MY TIME AT UNC. I WILL REMEMBER THEM FOREVER. TO NAME A FEW OF MY VERY FAVORITES, DR. BERNARD BOYD TAUGHT IN THE RELIGION DEPARTMENT, DR. HUGH TALMADGE LEFLER IN HISTORY, DR. LYMAN COTTON IN ENGLISH, DR. J PENROSE HARLAN IN CLASSICS. MY CHANCELLOR WAS WILLIAM BRANTLY AYCOCK, A MAN FOR THE AGES.

WHEREEVER STUDENTS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER, ONE COULD FIND FORMER CHANCELLOR ROBERT HOUSE PLAYING HIS HARMONICA. HE HAD TWO SONGS. ONE WAS TITLED: ROLL ON BOYS, DON'T YOU ROLL SO SLOW. THE SUN'LL GO DOWN AND YOU'LL ROLL NO MO.

THE OTHER WAS: PEEKABOO YOU RASCAL YOU, GET OUT FROM BEHIND THAT CHAIR.

ON MAY 9, 1960, ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE MY GRADUATION, DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING CAME AND SPOKE ON OUR CAMPUS. THIS VISIT CHANGED MANY



OF OUR LIVES. I WAS DEEPLY MOVED BY HIS SPEECH. LATER IN MY LIFE, I ENTERED POLITICS, SERVED IN THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND DID MY BEST TO ADVANCE DR. KING'S DREAM.

I WAS AN ATHLETE AT CAROLINA AND I WAS A VERY SERIOUS STUDENT. I TOOK MY STUDIES VERY SERIOUSLY. I WAS A MOREHEAD SCHOLAR. A FEW TIMES PROFESSORS TREATED ME WITH MODEST DISDAIN, EXPECTING ME TO BE A JOCK AND NOT INTERESTED IN ACADEMICS.

I NEVER FELT I WAS DISADVANTAGED BY THIS. AND ONLY ONE TIME DID I EVER GET A BREAK BECAUSE I WAS AN ATHLETE.

I TOOK A CLASSICS COURSE UNDER THE WONDERFUL AND UNFORGETTABLE DR. J. PENROSE HARLAN. A GREAT TEACHER AND A SAINT.

WE WERE TO PLAY NOTRE DAME ON SATURDAY AND DR. HARLAN ANNOUNCED OUR MOST IMPORTANT MID TERM EXAM ON THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE GAME. I EXPLAINED TO DR. HARLAN THAT I WOULD HAVE TO MISS THE EXAM BECAUSE WE WOULD BE IN SOUTH BEND.

"WADE", HE SAID, "DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU CAN TAKE A MAKE UP EXAM ON MONDAY." "GREAT", I SAID.

WE PLAYED THE GAME. I STUDIED ON SUNDAY AND ON MONDAY AFTER THE CLASS WAS OVER I SPOKE TO DR. HARLAN AND TOLD HIM I WAS READY TO TAKE THE MAKE UP EXAM.

"WHAT MAKE UP EXAM", HE SAID.

I PANICKED. "SIR", I SAID. "REMEMBER YOU TOLD ME I COULD TAKE A MAKE UP EXAM TODAY."

DR. HARLAN LOOKED AT ME WITH THE KINDEST EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE AND HE SAID: "WADE, YOU TOOK THAT EXAM AND MADE AN A".

I DIDN'T TAKE THAT TOO SERIOUSLY. I KNEW EVERYBODY IN THE CLASS MADE AN A WITHOUT REGARD TO WHETHER THEY TOOK THAT TEST.

MAY GOD BLESS AND KEEP DR. J. PENROSE HARLAN! BEAUTIFUL MAN. BEAUTIFUL UNIVERSITY.

THANK YOU.