The War in Vietnam : the view from a Southern community : Brownsville, Haywood county, Tennessee

Voogt, J.

2 *BROWNSVILLE, HAYWOOD COUNTY, TENNESSEE, AND ITS NEWSPAPER*

Setting the Scene

In more senses than one, Tennessee divides into three parts.[77] Geographically, the long rectangular state is mountainous in the east, while middle Tennessee is characterized by foothills. The Mississippi river is the natural border of the low plain of west Tennessee. For many years highway signs read: "Welcome to the Three Great States of Tennessee."[78] The geographical differences within the state are reflected on a historical and political level. Historically, the natural boundaries explain the settlement pattern from the eastern highlands to the Mississippi lowlands.

Situated in the low plain of West Tennessee, on the bank of the Hatchie River, Brownsville is a blend of the old South and the new.[79] Haywood County is in the center of one of the richest agricultural areas of the South.[80] The distance to Brownsville, situated in the center of the county, naturally led to the development of a considerable number of communities. These were each like smaller towns themselves, with blacksmith shops, grist mills, cotton gins, general stores, and even their own doctors. These communities were usually built near churches and schools which had already been established.[81]

Haywood County is situated on the west Tennessee plateau which slopes gently toward the Mississippi river. The South Forked Deer and Hatchie rivers flow into the mighty Mississippi, thus facilitating travel by flatboats and small crafts.[82] Before 1835 Haywood County covered an area of approximately 575 square miles. In 1835, and again in 1870 the county's area was slightly reduced. From the first settler in the county in 1821 the population increased to 20,318 in 1996. The Treaty of 1818 by which the Chickasaws lost their interest in the land of Tennessee, was instrumental in the settlement of Haywood County. It triggered the great migration, particularly from North Carolina, which followed. But settlers also came from South Carolina and Virginia, the journey from North Carolina to West Tennessee taking about a month. The new settlers came floating down the rivers, in covered wagons, on horseback, or walking, frequently following the trails or traces snaked out by the Indians years before.

At the time when the first settlers came to West Tennessee (1821-1826), the difference with other frontier communities was that the settlers who moved to Haywood County were "educated, godly people", who were already involved in organized religion.[83] Most of them were Baptists and Methodists, although other denominations were represented as well.

Cotton first made its appearance in Haywood County in 1828. The land was fertile and its proximity to the Mississippi enabled the cotton to be transported to Memphis by riverboat. Cotton has remained the most important agricultural source of income in the county to the present day.

In 1846 the first trains appeared; there were several narrow gauge railroads running in different directions out of Brownsville. The trains carried freight as well as passengers. River traffic was effectively ousted by the new, faster railroads by 1856. In 1968, however, the L&N (the Louisville and Nashville) ceased to operate passenger trains through Brownsville and the Depot was demolished.

The folklore of the first settlers reveals their European - predominantly British - past.[84] Each spring they would choose a May Queen, for example. Their folkways included logrolling, house raisings, quilting parties, corn huskings, fish frys, shooting matches, hunting and barbecues.[85]

Brownsville was named for general Jacob Jennings Brown of Pennsylvania, a hero of the War of 1821; it was designated the County Seat by the legislature in 1823-1824.

Politically, the different parts of Tennessee had divergent allegiances in the Civil War; the east was for the Union, while the middle and the west, with their plantations, supported the Confederacy. Initially, most Tennesseans were reluctant to break away from the Union. In February 1861, fifty-four percent of the state's voters were against sending delegates to a secession convention. The turning point, however, was the firing on Fort Sumter in April, followed by Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to coerce the seceded states back into line.[86] This provoked a major shift in Middle Tennessee: from fifty-one percent against secession in February to eighty-eight percent in favor in June. Tennessee became the last state to leave the Union.

Although West Tennessee was Confederate, still there were about sixty men in Haywood County who, in 1863, formed a company to serve with the Union Army. No major battles were fought in the county, but there were several skirmishes. On 29 July 1862 four soldiers were killed and six wounded, distributed evenly over the Blue and the Gray. The war seriously affected the lives of the people of Haywood County and the economy. Food became a scarce commodity; slaves ran off, yet some returned, presumably after hostilities had ended; Northern, white, bands roamed the county. Some stores were burned and most businesses were closed.[87] After the Civil War, white Southerners were obliged to sign a Pledge of Allegiance to the United States in order to be able to vote. The state of Tennessee was readmitted to the Union in 1866.

The era of Reconstruction (1865-1877) made life difficult for white Southerners, who were faced with the presence of "organizations such as the Freedman's Bureau, the American Missionary Association, the northern Protestant denominations, the Republican party, and the Union League".[88] The South was divided into five military districts under the Reconstruction Act of 1867, and Union soldiers enforced government decisions. In the middle of the period of Reconstruction, hard times hit West Tennessee, when yellow fever appeared in the area. It also came to Haywood County. When it returned "in epidemic proportions" five years later, many people left Brownsville for the country (*History of Haywood County, Tennessee, 1989,* p.236).[89] Everything that could be used as a

mode of transportation was used. "Nightfall did not check the exodus." All night long the cracking of whips, the rumble of wagons emphasized the desperate rush to escape the fearful epidemic (*Heart of the Tennessee Delta: A Historical Guidebook to Haywood County*).[90] Not everybody left, however. People mistakenly believed that blacks were immune from yellow fever.[91] Many of them died, as did some of the whites who had decided to stay. It was not until winter made itself felt in November that people began to flock back to town. It is reported that approximately 375 people died as a result of the epidemic.

Despite the short duration of the American involvement in World War I, some twenty young men from Haywood County and Brownsville lost their lives, or were disabled. During World War II, fifty-one men from Brownsville and Haywood County were killed (*Brownsville States-Graphic,* July 1997). For the state of Tennessee the total numbers are four thousand and seven thousand respectively (*Tennessee Blue Book 1995-1996,* pp.399, 404*)*. In the Korean War, three local servicemen lost their lives (*Brownsville States-Graphic,* July 1997). For the entire state the total number of war dead was eight hundred and forty-three. The War in Vietnam took the lives of one thousand, two hundred and ninety-two servicemen (*Tennessee Blue Book*, p.416). The war monument in Brownsville displays the names of eighteen local men who died in Vietnam. The relatively heavy losses, locally as well as statewide, tie in with the high representation of Southerners in the armed forces (Cf. *List of Casualties Incurred by U.S. Military Personnel In Connection With The Conflict in Vietnam, by Home State of Record: Deaths From 1 January 1961 Thru 31 March 1973*, Directorate For Information Office, Assistant Secretary of Defense, April 25, 1973). A comparison of Vietnam War casualties and the population by state, as established in the 1970 census, shows that the Southern region was hit harder than the rest of the U.S. by the War in Vietnam. The pertaining statistics for some Southern states are as follows: Alabama: Vietnam War casualties 1,207; population 3,444,165; Georgia: Vietnam War casualties 1,582 ; population 4,589,575; Louisiana: Vietnam War casualties 882; population 3, 641, 306; Mississippi: Vietnam War casualties 637; population 2,216,912. These figures compare to the following statistics for some non-Southern states: California: Vietnam War casualties 5,573; population 19,953,134; Connecticut: Vietnam War casualties 611; population 3,031,709; New York: Vietnam War casualties 4,121; population 18,236,967 (Center for Electronic Records - NWME -, The National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001; www.nara.gov/nara/electronic/vnstat.html#state; www.census.gov/population/cencounts/(state)90090.txt).

There has always been a high representation of Southerners in the armed services. Alexis de Tocqueville noted that Southerners liked hunting and war. The martial spirit of the South was noticeable in the state of Tennessee even before that date. In 1780 colonel John Sevier called for "100 good men", and 200 answered. Stories like this are

remembered and are a source of pride to the present day, and help to explain why Tennessee is called the volunteer state. During the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, enthusiasm for the war in the South contrasted with the lack of it in the North. During World War II, British author D.W. Brogan, in explaining to his countrymen their wartime American allies claimed that "in the South, the heroes were nearly all soldiers".[92] At the start of the Korean War, forty-six percent of the American military elite still had Southern affiliations, although the population of the South at the time was only twenty-seven percent of the country's total. When the U.S. armed forces started fighting in Vietnam in earnest, the top army and air force commanders were Southerners, and later anti-war activism was much less on white Southern campuses than on their non-Southern counterparts.[93] Similarly, on black campuses, few and far between in the South anyway, protests were less vociferous than in other regions.

The question why the South is so well represented in the armed forces may be answered, first, by pointing to the agrarian nature of the South, which, traditionally, has harbored "elements of romanticism, fostered by a concern for the past, a reverence for heroes, and an allegiance to a code that emphasized honor".[94] Secondly, regardless of the outcome of the Civil War, the Southern military made a great impact on the imagination of white Southerners during the Confederacy. The Confederate generals, Robert E. Lee first and foremost, were the true cultural heroes of the period in the South.[95]

In *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (1964. Reprinted, New York, 1971), Morris Janowitz, an authoritative sociologist, shows a continuing military tradition in the South. He has found that "officers with Southern affiliations of birth, schooling, or marriage, during the 1950-1971 period researched, continued to be represented disproportionately in America's military".[96] Janowitz also points out that, during the War in Vietnam, ROTC continued to attract large numbers of students on Southern campuses, and that the Virginia Military Institute and South Carolina's Citadel continued to do well. Respect for the military and an almost lifelong participation in it comes natural to both whites and blacks in Southern communities and as the interviews will show, Brownsville is no exception.

Recently Brownsville has moved with the times, along with other Southern towns in what is now often referred to as the Sunbelt. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* provides a typical example of the new prose that is a mixture of community pride and self-advertising. "Isn't it wonderful to live in Brownsville, especially this time of year? If you are an out-of town reader, just picture brilliant red-buds, luxuriant azaleas in pink, red and white, tulips in a rainbow of colors, an abundance of dogwoods, spiraea sprinkled throughout, and the happy faces of pansies in vivid yellow, pink, red, white, and deep purple smiling at every passerby. Now, you have it, the Heart of the Tennessee Delta in springtime, a lovely sight to see." The town has a City Beautiful, a new bypass has been constructed, a hotel, and fast food restaurants have been

built at the I-40 junction, while the city authorities and the Chamber of Commerce make constant efforts to attract new business. The mayor, the county commissioner, and the Chamber of Commerce, have joined forces to build a visitors center in an effort to attract white and black tourists to the area. The center is to provide visitors with information varying from the ante-bellum homes in Brownsville, nearby Reelfoot Lake and its wildlife population, fishing and hunting opportunities in the area, the Tina Turner museum, and the annual blues festival, with its memories of Sleepy John Estes, whose music influenced the legendary Bob Dylan. The Confederate soldier can still be found in the town center.

Southern Newspapers

Many early newspapers in the South assumed names ending in *Gazette*, such as the *South Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, founded in 1732). The designation *Gazette* was used for the first newspapers in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas.[97] In the revolutionary period some Southern newspapers, such as the *South Carolina Gazette*, were firmly behind the patriot cause. Others, however, supported the British. The *Georgia Gazette*, for example, changed its name to *Royal Georgia Gazette* during the British occupation of Savannah.[98] Similar changes occurred in other states in the Old South. During the Civil War, Southern daily newspapers virtually disappeared as a result of a serious lack of ink, newsprint, labor, and military censorship, and only 182 weeklies survived.[99] Yet the Southern country press re-emerged to serve its region as a unifying element.

"To an extent seldom found elsewhere in the world, country newspapers in the post [Civil] War American South reflected an intimacy with their readers and a profound identification with the region's culture."[100] This is an important comment on the *Brownsville States-Graphic*. In the words of Paul Sims (19 January 1962), who wrote the editorials in the 1960s,

> your home town newspaper is a bulletin board which is community wide . . . your newspaper brings you the facts about what is taking place in your community. There are editorials, the only items that contain the opinion of the writers, special columns, news events, on a hometown level, visiting, marriages, the passing of friends and loved ones, and other features so personal in their nature that they are not found anywhere except in your home town newspaper.

> Most people will agree that the greatest strength in America today lies in having a strong and well informed people and newspapers are playing a major role in bringing this about.
>
> . . . [T]he home town newspaper is the only publication in the world which devotes its total energy to its own community.

The Southern country newspaper identifies with the culture of the region. It publishes all the facts and points of interest relevant to city and county; it prints local news items that do not appear in any other newspaper. Since the end of the Civil War and the days of Reconstruction, however, Southern country newspapers have been faced by the enduring problem of publishing "a balanced community newspaper in a multiracial environment" (Wilson, p.936). The changed race relationship on a national level initiated by legislation in the early 1960s by the Johnson administration, is reflected in the pages of the local *Brownsville States-Graphic* (Cf. Wilson, p.936). A comparison of local newspaper issues of 1959 and 2001 demonstrates that, whereas forty odd years ago blacks were virtually non-existent in the *Brownsville States-Graphic*, today their pictures are printed in the social column, in announcements from the local schools, and their names are mentioned in other reports published in the newspaper. Although news items about local blacks were minimal in the past, certainly in the early 1960s, yet news about local black soldiers related to Vietnam was always published. News about the Vietnam War was widely covered by radio, television, and the national press. Therefore the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* contained articles on the war only as it affected the lives of the local servicemen and their family. In this way the community was kept informed of the men's movements and experiences. All of this justifies my analysis of the *Brownsville States-Graphic.*

The Public Record: The Vietnam Years, Civil Rights, and the Local Newspaper

The Vietnam War Years

Life in the heart of the Tennessee Delta went on very much as usual during the years of the Vietnam War, judging by the newspaper. Even today news about the U.S. beyond the local area takes up only one column consisting of brief items in the major regional newspapers.[101] In order to obtain a clear picture of the local news between 1960 and 1973 I will examine the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic.*

Within Brownsville city limits there were two separate entities, one white, one black, during the 1960s. This could also be perceived in the segregated city and country schools. The gap that existed between the two groups was further made clear and commented on in my interviews with Leon King (black), Earl Rice (black), Christy Smith (white), and others. Its full extent was perhaps best explained by Leon King who argued that during the Vietnam War, blacks would often be unaware that a white soldier had been killed. Yet whites and blacks had lived together peacefully for many years. This leads to the conclusion that, certainly during the Vietnam era, the local community was segregated.

The newspaper reports that dominated the front page during the period had to do with the struggle for civil rights, the Vietnam War, and their interaction. On 23 July 1965, "the shooting war in Viet Nam" and the battle going on "here on our home front in Haywood County", were mentioned in one breath. The problem involved a black youth who had escaped from local police officers. The civil rights issue started locally with the attempt on the part of blacks to be registered to vote and escalated to the stage where black families were evicted and moved to a Tent City. A related issue was the integration of the schools in both city and county. This developed into a long drawn-out battle in the federal court in Memphis and the court of appeals in Cincinnati. It only came to an end when the new, integrated, Haywood High School was constructed in 1970.

During the 1960-1973 period, the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reflected a profound identification with the white Southern culture of West Tennessee and its people. The paper followed the cotton crop, crucial to area farmers, through the seasons and reported all the important stages in great detail, so that farmers' sons fighting in Southeast Asia were able to follow the life cycle of the main crop in their native county, so to speak. (There is evidence of some soldiers receiving the *Brownsville States-Graphic* in the mail; on one occasion it had been used to wrap up some gifts from home).The community's fascination with its ante-bellum past and the Civil War showed through news reports on the project aimed at planting magnolia trees along the four-mile stretch connecting the city of Brownsville with the new I-40 highway; references to the beautiful ante-bellum homes in Brownsville; fieldtrips by local schools to the site of the battle of Shiloh; the celebration of the Civil War centenary; a reference to January 19 as the birthday of general Lee, and so on.

Civil War

The Civil War centennial was the central political event in 1961. It generated a large number of stories, varying from an account of the experiences of a cavalry company composed of men from Haywood County to a reminder of the Battle of Brownsville, in which only 6 or 8 people were killed. "Speakers Will Honor Lee On His Birthday: County Schools to be Visited in Observance Of 100th War Anniversary" (13 January 1961). The chairman of the Haywood County Centennial Committee for commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Civil War had said that a group of speakers would visit the schools of the county on January 19, the birthday of general Robert E. Lee, commander-in-chief of the Confederacy. It was announced (3 March 1961) that there was a new book in the library, called *We Whipt 'em Everytime: Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, the diary of Bartlett Yancey Malone, of Co. A, 5th North Carolina Regiment, who fought in most of the battles in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. The dust jacket was drawn by Morton Felsenthal of Brownsville. Editor Owen Burgess of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* said (April 14), "During this year when we celebrate the centennial of the Civil War, I think it in order to point out local folks whose relatives were Civil War heroes."

The names of the Confederate soldiers from Haywood County, as indeed the names of all the soldiers of the Union and Confederate Armies, are recorded in *The Official Records of the Union & Confederate Armies* (125 volumes) at the Goodwyn Institute in Memphis. These official records were compiled by the federal government shortly after the Civil War. The Civil War centennial gave rise to the publication of interesting stories like the one about the Haywood Rangers who "did their part in [the] War between [the] States" (May 12):

> Sometime during the early summer of 1861, a cavalry company composed of men from Haywood County was organized by captain Robert Haywood of Brownsville, and [this came to be] known as [the]Haywood Rangers.[102] All of its members were skilled horsemen. The company was later designated as Co. D, 7th Tennessee Calvary, C.S.A. In September, 1861, a small skirmish was fought near Mayfield Creek, where a Union unit was camped near Blandville, Ky. Here sergeant Mike McGrath of the Haywood Rangers had his horse shot out from under him. (Notes of a Private, by John M. Hubbard, 1909, member of Co. D, 7th Tennessee Calvary C.S.A.)
>
> Sergeant McGrath was a native of Ireland and enlisted in the Haywood Rangers at the time captain Haywood organized the Company. He served throughout the war in Co. D, 7th Cav. After

> his Civil War service, sergeant McGrath returned to Brownsville where he was engaged in the saloon business.
>
> During the terrible yellow fever scourge of 1878, McGrath rendered what services he could to yellow fever victims. While other citizens were fleeing the town, McGrath and a negro named Bob Hoyle went through town in a mule-drawn wagon every day calling out to bring out those who had died during the night and these they interred in the local cemetery. In 1880 there was a recurrence of the yellow fever and [this time] sergeant McGrath [himself] was stricken and soon died. His fellow comrades of Co. D, 7th Tenn. erected a monument to his memory in the local cemetery and on it inscribed his heroic deeds during the epidemic of 1878.

The Civil War past was also evoked more playfully. When some forty feeder cattlemen from Iowa and Illinois visited Haywood County this was reported in the newspaper with the headline, "Yankee Invasion Pleases Cow Folk" (25 August 1961). In the article the joke was elaborated upon: "These are not the blue clad shooting variety but the dressed-up kind with money in their pockets looking over our calf crop."

On 3 August 1962, Owen Burgess reminded the readers of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of the Battle of Brownsville, which had been fought in the area during the Civil War. Further information on the battle was printed in the issue of 24 August 1962. "Seems that there is a bend in Hatchie river up this side of Estaunala that is known as Battle Ground Bend. According to Chancellor John Gray, the Federal troops captured one of the Confederate soldiers and took him to a nearby home. While they were eating dinner the Confederates regrouped and took the prisoner from the Yanks." In the official records the battle of Brownsville is listed as a guerrilla raid.

War and Remembrance

The front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* announced the time and place of scheduled commemorative activities. On Friday 8 May 1964, for example, a Memorial Day service was announced and its history was emphasized: "Memorial Day services have been held at Trinity cemetery (in the Nut Bush community) since the Civil War, when members met to honor their war dead." Closely connected with the observance of Veterans Day is the sale of red poppy flowers during the preceding Saturday, when elementary school students sell them on the square for the American Legion Auxiliary's annual scholarship and their projects with veterans. This ritual originated in WW I. The poppy flower attained its present symbolic value through the Canadian physician John

McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields". Today the red paper poppy is used in Britain and America to commemorate the dead soldiers of all past wars.

On Friday, 13 November 1964, the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* had a brief article entitled "Veterans Day Observed Here". It reported in detail the events of Veterans Day on Wednesday, November 11, in the court yard at the monument to "our war dead". It reported extensively on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. In 1972 the only reports on the front page of the local newspaper were about Vietnam veterans: James Bryan Edwards, 22, of Route 2, Whiteville had died in a road accident. He had only just returned from service in Vietnam. Russell Taliaferro, a retired Air Force officer was appointed director of the ambulance authority. (An interview with colonel Taliaferro can be found in a following chapter).

News of the War in Vietnam

When we look at it in retrospect, an originally inconspicuous line stands out on the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 29 December 1950. In a review of the events of the past year we find, "February 7 - Western powers recognize pro-French Vietnam". This first reference to Vietnam in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* was a brief statement made during the Korean War. A first indication of the deployment of Haywood County soldiers in the future conflict appeared on 23 February 1961. "Pvt. Robert S. Parks . . . 203, East Main, Brownsville, has been assigned to Company F, 399th Regiment, at Fort Chaffee, Ark. . . . The 399th Regiment is part of the 100th Division, an Army Reserve unit from Kentucky. The 100th was the first Division called to active duty in the current military build-up."

Yet it would not be until 1962 that the local newspaper reported on a local serviceman in connection with Vietnam. The first reference to combat experience in Vietnam was printed by the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 7 September 1962. The front page had a story about lieutenant William Arthur Rose, who was home on leave after a four-month tour of duty as a helicopter pilot for the U.S. Marine Corps. The Marine helicopter unit flew the troops into battle, with each helicopter carrying 11 to 15 soldiers. Most of the fighting was along the Mekong River, in the Mekong Delta. When asked if helicopter pilots received combat pay, lieutenant Rose smiled and said: "No, it is not a war." But he added that sometimes it was hard to realize that it was not a war, with bullets whistling around. A year later lieutenant Rose was presented the Air Medal with Gold Star. He was cited for his aerial flight operations as a crew chief with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 362 during combat trooplift missions in support of Vietnam forces against communist guerrilla groups from April to June 1962. He completed more than 40 missions during the period, often exposed to hostile fire at close

range. Staff sergeant James W. Shelby of Memphis, who with his family used to live in the Tibbs community, Haywood County, and attended school there, received the Silver Star, (31 July 1964). Sergeant Shelby, while wounded, made four separate trips under heavy fire, to carry four wounded men to safety in the jungle of Vietnam in January.

During the mid-1960s, the years when the Vietnam conflict was steadily escalating, reports mentioning local servicemen leaving for Southeast Asia began to appear with a certain regularity. "Corporal Franklin H. Jones, son of Mrs. Walter Jones, is en route to Vietnam" (5 November 1965). Later, in December 1966, the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that a soldier from Brownsville was leaving for Vietnam for his second tour of duty after a three-month leave. Corporal Jimmy Stewart of the U.S. Marine Corps had completed a year in Vietnam in the spring.

When one of the local men, Captain Jack Banks, a career Army officer, returned from Vietnam, the local newspaper published the account of his experiences and his views on the war in general, on the front page. The Army officer had a positive story to tell: there was no shortage of supplies, morale was better than in the United States. Banks also claimed that things were much better than they sounded (in the United States). However, it appears very likely that his attitude had to do with his deployment as an adviser to a Vietnamese ordnance unit, stationed two hundred miles due north of Saigon, in a relatively quiet area.

Soldiers from Haywood County continued to be sent to Vietnam. Pfc. Joseph Welch arrived there February 4 (10 February 1967).[103] Barney R. Garrett, who graduated from Haywood High School in 1965, was injured when struck by fragments from a hand grenade (17 February 1967).

Lieutenant-commander James L. Griffin, 35, was reported missing on 26 May 1967. He had been shot down over North Vietnam. Commander Griffin was flying from the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk*. Squadron mates reported seeing two parachutes descending from Griffin's plane, and later Hanoi radio announced that Griffin was one of the captured airmen. Sergeant James Emerson was reported wounded (2 June 1967). The Army report received by his mother, Mrs. Bernice White, stated that he had received wounds in the arm and hand and that he was to receive a Purple Heart for injuries sustained in fighting the Vietcong. Sergeant Emerson had been in Vietnam since November 1966. On 9 June 1967 an article entitled "Young Army Officer Outstanding" reported that captain Larry S. Banks, "now serving in Vietnam" (with the 308th Supply and Service Battalion), was among the Outstanding Young Men of America. Captain Banks was graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1963.

There is no point in listing all the notices about individual soldiers that appeared in the local newspaper during the Vietnam War era. Therefore I will briefly consider the experiences in Vietnam of the

soldiers from Brownsville and Haywood County who did a tour of duty there, and demonstrate, I hope, that the resulting image emerging from this constitutes a broad panorama of America's involvement at close range.

Local soldiers, then, took part in fierce fighting in the Mekong Delta (1967); they were injured while fighting in Cambodia (1970), or flew dangerous re-supply missions in bad weather, as in the case of captain Martinez (1970). Not all local servicemen survived their tour of duty. The first Vietnam War related death was reported on 26 November 1965. Sergeant William A. Ferrell, was killed in action on November 17. Ferrell, a member of the 3rd (Indian head) Division, was killed along with his entire company. Sergeant Ferrell [of Crockett County] was raised in Haywood County, where at one time he lived near the Koko community. On the same front page it was reported that captain Samuel Spencer Sanford visited his family in Brownsville en route to the West Coast from where he would leave for Vietnam to serve with special forces for a year. The December 3 issue of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* was published with a picture of William A. Ferrell and the word KILLED printed over his portrait. Ferrell had been an honor guard at president Johnson's inauguration.

Other local soldiers were killed in Vietnam. They were killed through gun shot wounds suffered in combat operations (sergeant Nathaniel Merriwethers in 1966; pfc. Larry McCoy in 1968); pfc. Paul T. Wittington was fatally wounded while treating a fallen comrade during a battle (1966). Corporal Larry G. Land was killed by a sniper's bullet (1967). Serious accidents also claimed the lives of local servicemen in Vietnam: Willie Coleman was drowned while crossing a river during a patrol (1967), while sergeant James E. Young was killed when an artillery tank exploded (1968). Sometimes there would be no information available on the cause of death, as in the case of pfc. Billy Wright, who was reported "killed in action near Hue" (1968). Corporal Jeffrey Woodrow Norvell died after getting severely wounded in a tank (1968). One casualty that many local people still remember is lt. Norman Lane, an honor graduate of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, who had studied at the university of Aix and attended law school at Vanderbilt. Lt. Lane went to Vietnam as a volunteer; he was killed by shrapnel three months after he had arrived in Vietnam (1968). Danny Overton likewise was killed by shrapnel (1970). The circumstances surrounding the death in Vietnam of crew chief Richard Keith Johnston as a result of a helicopter crash (1970), have remained a mystery.

The *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 17 May 1968 reported two casualties: Tom Boyd, Jr., a helicopter pilot from Corpus Christi, Texas, and nephew of the late Homer Rainey, died in action on Sunday, 12 May 1968. While stationed in Millington in 1966, he had attended First Methodist Church, where he had been active in the affairs of the church. The second death reported in the newspaper that same day was corporal Tyrone Austin, 23. Corporal Austin was killed while serving with the U.S. Marines. He was a 1963 graduate of Carver High School and

attended Tennessee A & I University and Washington University in St. Louis.

In the beginning of 1968 the war was escalating and the number of casualties involving Haywood County soldiers was increasing accordingly.

Memorial services honoring soldiers of six wars were planned at the Stanton cemetery for Sunday June 2 (May 31, 1968). The parents of Billy Wright, who had been killed in Vietnam on February 1, were presented with two awards: the Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal with "V" device. Owen Burgess added a personal note to the awards ceremony for Billy Wright in his editorial column which I will quote in full here, because it sheds some light on feelings about the Vietnam War in Haywood County at the time:

> Old memories flooded back, almost to tears when the colonel read the orders of commendation, . . . "his display of personal bravery and devotion to duty". We refer, of course, to the awards ceremony when Pvt. Billy L. Wright was honored posthumously at the home of his parents, who live in Stanton. Our memories went back to Hiram C. Skogmo of Milwaukee, Wade Hampton Sneed of Georgia and Merle C. Cloud of Rule, Texas, and many many more comrades and friends of the 390th Bomb Group, whose families surely experienced similar ceremonies a quarter of a century ago. Back then we had a cause. Now, Billy and the thousands of others who will not return from Southern Asia have only an intangible uncertainty as to why they were there. They only knew that their country called. They went. They died. They are honored. The small bits of ribbon and the bronze medals are left. That . . . and the memories.

Why did editor Burgess use this solemn occasion connected with the War in Vietnam to look back at his own past war experience? What light, if any, do his remarks shed on the local Southern attitude to the Vietnam War? Before commenting on the awards ceremony that posthumously honored a local soldier, Burgess offered a brief, personal, account of mind and memory that takes the reader back to the editor's combat days during World War II. Interestingly, the editorial compared the underlying objectives of World War II and the War in Vietnam: during the 1940s war, all Americans had a clear understanding of the reason why America was involved and why American soldiers were sent into battle. It transpires from the above editorial that, in the late 1960s, that certainty was lacking in rural West Tennessee with regard to the Vietnam War. Typically, the editorial reflects the Southern attitude of the Vietnam War era: the South was a little more patriotic than the rest of the country; and

therefore it continued to support the military in spite of serious doubt as to the justification of the American presence in Vietnam.

A few weeks later (2 August 1968) Burgess expressed his sorrow when he reported the presentation of another posthumous award. "We were deeply touched again last week," he wrote, "when we accompanied a member of the military to the home of the Isaac Youngs for the purpose of making a posthumous award to their son, James E. Young, who was killed in Viet Nam last winter." The Bronze Star Award and various other ribbons were given to the bereaved mother by the colonel.

The soldiers from Brownsville and Haywood County were not forgotten by the home front. Haywood County Pin Stripers made Santa Claus ditty bags for the servicemen in Vietnam (21 October 1966). The girls filled the bags with fourteen comfort items, such as detective and mystery novels, cigaret lighters, nail clips and foot powder.

Captain Samuel S. Sanford wrote from Vietnam (1966), "I am still reading a hometown newspaper of two months ago. A friend of mine received it wrapped around a package." The letter inspired the American Legion Auxiliary to announce "Operation Home Town Newspaper", which would ensure that local servicemen would receive the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on a regular basis. There is no evidence to suggest that the plan was put into effect at any point in time during the remainder of the war, however.

During the War in Vietnam the local Red Cross chapter was actively involved in keeping in touch with the soldiers of Haywood County in Southeast Asia. On 13 October 1967, for instance, Mrs. Phil Williams, the new executive secretary, urged that Christmas cards, letters, and boxes to servicemen in Vietnam be mailed immediately. A successful initiative was the idea to record the voices of loved ones and family members for the servicemen in Vietnam. The local Red Cross chapter furnished "tapes of Voices from Home for servicemen in Vietnam and other bases overseas" (3 November 1967). A picture of Mr.and Mrs. W. T. Marbury of Route 2, Brownsville, listening to a tape sent to them from Vietnam by their son Richard Payne Marbury (16 February 1968) illustrated the success of the Red Cross initiative.

As far into the war as 1967, with very nearly half a million U.S. servicemen in Vietnam, and, perhaps even more significant, approximately 19,000 servicemen killed (Maurice Isserman, *Witness to War: Vietnam*, p.114), the Vietnam War was not regarded as a real war in Brownsville, Tennessee. The Vietnam War was not included in the annual poppy drive of 1967. An explanatory article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* demonstrated this: "By buying and wearing a red poppy Saturday, Nov. 11, victims of the past three wars [World War I, World War II, and the Korean War] are honored."

Postmaster Curtis Lowery, in his capacity as president of the Chamber of Commerce asked for the names of all the local soldiers serving in Vietnam. Parents and relatives were urged to convey the information to Mr. Lowery for Chamber of Commerce information. Mr. Lowery at that time was postmaster and commander of the VFW post in

Brownsville. According to Ray Dixon, Lowery needed the names for inclusion in a roster or mailing flyer inviting those veterans to join the local vets organization. He gave the names to the local chapter and "doesn't know what ever happened to them".[104] An important source of information needed to trace the movements of local servicemen in Vietnam as well as the names of local soldiers killed during the war, was lost when Lowery transferred his records to the VFW.

Burgess reminded his readers to purchase a 3x5 American flag and pole from the American Legion Auxiliary. He added that the ladies of the D.A.R. were urging all citizens to fly a flag on the fourth [of July]. Their note quoted Byron's line, "He who loves not his country and loves not his country's flag can love nothing."

What particularly mortified Americans during the Vietnam War was that the North Vietnamese showed captured American pilots in degrading positions for propaganda purposes. By 1970 the North Vietnamese were holding many prisoners of war, although it was difficult to determine how many exactly due to the unwillingness of the North Vietnamese to publish the names of their POWs. The Jaycees of Haywood County sponsored a drive to persuade the North-Vietnamese prime minister to release the names of POWs.[105] In addition they asked North Vietnam to provide better care and treatment while it was keeping them imprisoned.

In true Southern style the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported the news about servicemen with regard to Vietnam, even if they did not have a Haywood County address. What mattered was that their relatives lived there, or that they themselves had lived there or were known to the community through frequent visits. The "With Our Servicemen" column using information provided by the Armed Forces to keep track of the soldiers, traditionally printed on an inside page, was published on the front page (19 July 1968) to report that Marine corporal Allen M. Willyerd of Route 5, Brownsville, was serving with the Third Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment, Third Marine Division, in Vietnam. The article outlined the purpose of corporal Willyerd's presence in Vietnam. First, he helped to capture or destroy enemy forces. Secondly, his unit was also involved in a civic action program. Under the program, American soldiers assisted the Vietnamese to complete self-help projects such as the building of wells, culverts, small bridges and schools.

Owen Burgess informally passed on an interesting Vietnam experience. "Saw another article from a Bolivar paper about a young soldier in service in Vietnam. His name is Cecil Jeter, who is the son of the late Cecil Jeter of Brownsville, and who has many relatives in this county. Seems the young soldier was a member of an ambush party that knocked off a bunch of Vietcong, who were making a night invasion up a canal. The ambush was referred to as an 'aqua bush'" (17 January 1969). Sergeant Aaron Kincaid, Jr., 20, was awarded a Bronze Star for meritorious service during the period May, 1968 to January, 1969. He joined the Army June 3, 1967 and went to Vietnam 12 May 1968. In Vietnam he served with the 101st Airborne Division. In a sense news

about the Vietnam War had become so engrained in people's lives by 1969 that sometimes tragic news affecting a Haywood County family was condensed into a few brief lines in Owen Burgess' weekly column. As in the case of an MIA: "Sorry to hear that Dick Ross has a son-in-law missing in Vietnam. The young man, who married Mr. Ross' daughter, lives in Denver, Colorado" (11 April 1969).

On 19 September 1969 the *Brownsville States-Graphic* had heard from the secretary of the Red Cross chapter that patriotic women of Haywood County had made eighty ditty bags. What makes this item in the local news paper significant is that it may be inferred that at the time mentioned eighty Haywood countians were serving in Vietnam. The bags would be filled with gifts for the soldiers in Vietnam at Christmas: "You can help brighten Christmas for the servicemen in Vietnam by contributing [the following] items: ballpoint pens, plastic soap cases, small address books, wash cloths, nail clippers, plastic cigaret cases and tooth brush holders, gum, vacuum packed tins of nuts and candies." A News Flash on the front page reported that Danny P. Presley was in hospital in Vietnam. A telegram sent to his parents informed them that he had received chest injuries from a booby trap on October 7 (10 October 1969).

Veterans Day Observance on 11 November 1969, for the first time in Haywood County history, emphasized Vietnam.The local men involved in that war were given full recognition. Gold Star Mothers of sons lost in Vietnam would light an "eternal flame" on the northeast corner of the courthouse lawn, just in front of the monument of the Confederate soldier. In his weekly column Owen Burgess wrote: "Can you imagine how happy Mrs. Charles Presley is over the fact that she is not one of the mothers who will light the eternal flame at the Veterans monument next Tuesday? Danny, her son, was recently wounded in Vietnam and will be one of the spectators at the lighting ceremonies." By celebrating the day, the paper wrote on 7 November 1969, leaders of the veterans groups hoped to show that Haywood Countians supported the president's policy and opposed the recent moratorium. ("A one-day moratorium of customary activities was planned throughout the country for October 15, to be followed by another moratorium each succeeding month with one day added to the moratorium activities each month.")[106] The commemoration activities thus served a dual purpose: the members of the community assembled in front of the courthouse and the statue of the Confederate soldier honored all the local men who died in America's past wars as well as in the ongoing Vietnam War. At the same time, the whole event was a clear demonstration of patriotism.

The patriotic nature of Brownsville and Haywood County transpires also from the mayor's proclamation in the same issue of the *Brownsville States-Graphic*:

> WHEREAS, Many young men of this community have fought for our nation, and some have sacrificed their lives, through services with the United States Armed Forces, in combat against many enemies, and
> WHEREAS, The war veterans of our country, have earned the respect and the tribute of every citizen who is today enjoying the freedoms of our [l]and because of the defenders' loyalty, courage, service and sacrifices, and
> WHEREAS, We can best acknowledge our appreciation and recognition of those brave men through full participation in the special day and week dedicated to all the defenders of our land, now
> THEREFORE, I, Julian K. Welch, Jr., mayor of the City of Brownsville, do hereby urge all my fellow citizens to fly their Stars and Stripes flag proudly and to participate in, or observe, the public Veterans Day and Veterans Week program which is to be held in our city on November the eleventh and during the week of November 9 to 15, 1969. Furthermore, I do recommend that all of our schools, churches, business establishments and other organizations assist the veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and its many co-sponsors, toward making Veterans Day and [V]eterans Week a truly outstanding patriotic observance in this year of 1969.

The effect of the mayor's proclamation was twofold: on a national level it linked Brownsville and Haywood County with the rest of the country, while on a local level it urged everybody in the community, white and black, to be actively involved in the observance of Veterans Day.

One week later the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that 3,500 persons gathered on the court square to celebrate Veterans Day. Danny Presley, who had just recently returned injured from Vietnam performed the lighting of the flame duties, as Gold Star mothers of the Vietnam Conflict stood by. All eight mothers were listed.

As in any war, there were troops unaccounted for during the Vietnam War era: servicemen taken prisoner and not accounted for by the enemy for whatever reason; servicemen involved in such fierce fighting that no remains could be recovered, and servicemen operating in small units on special assignments who perished in remote areas.

> Two decades after all U.S.troops were withdrawn from Vietnam the issue of Americans still listed as prisoners of war (POWs) or missing in action (MIAs) remained controversial and unresolved . . . The POW/MIA issue, given new momentum by president Reagan

> in the early 1980s, reemerged in 1992 when the Senate Select Committee on PWO/MIA Affairs began an investigation into the possibility that some Americans were not returned in 1973.[107]

The MIA problem also affected Brownsville and Haywood County, West Tennessee. An instance in case is the following: an article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 23 October 1970 reported that Mrs. Sylvia Jefferson of Denver, Colorado, who was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dick Ross of Brownsville, and whose husband Perry had been missing in action in Vietnam since April 1969, was granted a 30-minute visit with president Richard Nixon to hand him a petition signed by 100,000 Coloradians for Prisoners of War in Vietnam. The headline to another article of the same day broached a similar subject: "Hope to Free lt. cdr. Griffin - Citizens Urged to Write Letters". Lieutenant-commander James L. Griffin, born Dec. 27, 1932, a native of Forked Deer and a graduate from Haywood High School, had been shot down over Hanoi in May 1967. The only information received was a brief message over radio Hanoi giving his name, rank and serial number. Commander Griffin's mother, who at the time lived in the Forked Deer community, asked the readers of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* to write a letter to Xuan Thuy, North Vietnam Delegation, Paris Peace Talks, Paris, France, in order to obtain information concerning her son. Commander Griffin's wife, who lived in Albany, Georgia with her children, would try to deliver the letters to Paris in December.

The American Legion (20 November 1970) asked the *Brownsville States-Graphic* readers to write letters to Fon Duc Thang, the president of North Vietnam, asking him to uphold his country's signature on the Geneva Convention mandate to: 1. Release names of all men being held captive. 2. Release all sick and wounded. 3. Allow communication among prisoners and between prisoners and their families. 4. Allow periodic inspections of camps by an International Agency such as the Red Cross. The American Legion planned to write a letter to the congressmen and senators representing Tennessee, requesting their views on prisoners of war. The Auxiliary further planned to write a letter specifically asking for the release of lt.cdr. James L. Griffin.

On Christmas Day 1970 the *Brownsville States-Graphic* ran the headline "Cdr. Griffin Believed Dead". A list of POWs released by the Vietnamese delegation at the peace talks in Paris indicated that lt.cdr. James L. Griffin had died two days after his capture. The POW/MIA problem has continued to haunt the American psyche to the present day.

The Draft and Deferments

One striking fact about the soldiers from Haywood County is that they were so young when they were sent to Vietnam. While it is true that a number of career soldiers from Haywood County went to Vietnam, the majority of the men who went there were barely out of high school. Christy Smith (an interview with her will follow in a later chapter), who served as a volunteer in an American military hospital in Japan which treated soldiers flown in straight from the theater of war in Vietnam, emphasized that what was so tragic was that these soldiers were so young. (Information received from the Center for Electronic Records indicates that of the 58,193 servicemen who died in Vietnam, 3,103 were eighteen at the time of death, 8,283 were nineteen, while 14,095 were twenty). In most cases they were young farm boys who had never planned to extend their education, and therefore as a rule were not eligible for a deferment. Because of the serious nature of their war wounds - they often had lost limbs - they would have a hard time finding suitable work once they returned to civilian life. Christy's experience ties in with what colonel Oliver North argues in *One More Mission: Oliver North Returns to Vietnam*, a professional and personal memoir of Vietnam:

> . . . the deep divisions over Vietnam were not only the result of fifty or sixty thousand young people's going to Canada or Sweden to avoid serving their country. The anger over Vietnam that cut so deeply into America's conscience and split our society so severely also had much to do with the disastrous outcome of the war, the way it had been prosecuted, and the grossly unfair process by which people were "selected" to participate in it. If you were in college or graduate school you could get a deferment. If you became a divinity school student you got a deferment. If you were an upper-middle class young man in America there was a very strong likelihood that you could get a deferment. And yet poorer Americans universally served when drafted because they did not have the right social or economic status to be deferred.[108]

It was true: the Vietnam War was basically fought by poorer Americans irrespective of class or race. Poorer Americans generally did not stay on beyond high school and as a result they could not get a college deferment. Neither did they have the means to escape to Canada. Some well-known Americans, among whom Paul Theroux, the author, found a safe haven in Europe. Nor did America's poor know anybody who had political influence, as in the case of the governor of Tennessee, whose son served in the National Guard in Memphis. It also took money, which they did

not have, to hire an attorney. For all these reasons it was primarily the poor, uneducated, Americans, that were drafted and that served in Vietnam. The unfairness of the draft system based on a variety of deferments was recognized by the federal government: in 1969 the lottery system was introduced, which virtually ended the unfair deferment policy.

Philip Caputo, in his battlefield autobiography *A Rumor of War,* is even more caustic than colonel Oliver North in his remarks about those who served and those who did not in the War in Vietnam. Commenting on the men of a Marine rifle platoon that he commanded, he said:

> Most of them came from the ragged fringes of the Great American Dream, from city slums and dirt farms and Appalachian mining towns. With depressing frequency, the words *2 yrs. high school* appeared in the square labeled EDUCATION in their service record books, and, under FATHER'S ADDRESS, a number had written *Unknown.* They were volunteers, but I wondered for how many enlisting had been truly voluntary. The threat of the draft came with their eighteenth birthdays, and they had no hope of getting student deferments, like the upper-middle-class boys who would later revile them as killers.[109]

The soldiers who served in Vietnam were very young. All the evidence points to the fact that the men were drafted or enlisted straight from high school, which meant that they were usually eighteen years old. It is also made plain by Christy Smith, Philip Caputo, and colonel Oliver North that those sent to Vietnam had a background marked by hard work and poverty.

The American president responsible at the initial stage for sending these young Americans from the lower strata of society to Vietnam, was John F. Kennedy. His assassination in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963, barely three weeks after Diem was assassinated in South Vietnam, remains one of the twentieth century's baffling mysteries.

The *Brownsville States-Graphic* looked at the national news through the eyes of the citizens of Brownsville. On Friday, 29 November 1963 the local newspaper reported that the president's death shocked the nation and that church services were held as a memorial to president Kennedy. Elementary and high schools of the county were closed on Monday, November 25, in observance of the national day of mourning, as were federal offices and county offices. All other business in the community ceased between the hours of eleven and one so that everyone could watch the funeral on television, or hear it on the radio. In a second front page article, "Three Brownsvillians See; A Day in Dallas Prove[s] Historic", Susan Sharpe described the experiences of Dale Thornton, Amy Floyd, and herself, in Dallas on the day president Kennedy died there. Susan wrote that before they went to bed on Thursday they had

decided to go and see Kennedy's plane come in at Love Field. However, they woke up about eleven o'clock Friday morning. As they were hurrying to go out a friend called and told them that Kennedy had been shot. They immediately took a cab downtown. They went to Neiman Marcus, where a microphone was set up while they were there. Everyone was gathering in the store lobby on the main floor and Mr. Stanley Marcus, president of the store, told everyone to bow their heads in silent prayer. "The president was dead!" In the street everyone was asking "WHY? Who was it? and Why did they pick Dallas?"

Patriotism and the War in Vietnam

In 1965 the debate about Vietnam in national politics also made headlines in Brownsville's local newspaper. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that president Johnson was expected to compromise on the situation in South Vietnam sometime during 1965 and move toward neutralization, by which the editor meant that the president would refrain from any action that would escalate the conflict. On Christmas Eve 1965, however, the American presence in Vietnam increased. Even in Brownsville, in the traditionally patriotic South, there was a notable lack of enthusiasm about the war. The editorial, entitled "War and Christmas", had this to say about Vietnam:

> This is a land of jungle, marshes, hills and foreign customs; land inhabited by people who know not of Christ and his teachings; a land where we are not wanted, a land in which we know not why we are there, a land of sudden death and torture, a land unknown to Santa Claus . . . We here at home find the threat of the Vietcong only as blackened print in our newspaper, but to our boys, it is the constant shadow of death or torture.

A few years later, student protests to American involvement in Vietnam were the subject of debate. An article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 24 March 1967, commenting upon an anti-Vietnam War meeting in neighboring Shelby County the previous week, is proof of the patriotism of the local paper. It condemned the demonstrators for being undemocratic: individuals who did not agree with the demonstrators were barred from the discussion.

The impression of the patriotic stance of the Brownsville paper is solidified by quite diverse matters: for example, an editorial in the same issue praised Ronald Reagan, who, as governor of California "ironed out" the student uprisings at UCLA, Berkeley. The newspaper even argued that it was too bad that Reagan was not omnipotent, "as many

states could use his whip cracking policy". In another example, in the summer of 1966 the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported: "Christmas for Vietnamese Kids Planned by Special Forces". Captain Sanford wrote to the editor of the newspaper about a Christmas party for the children near his camp in Kontum, Vietnam. He wanted to show them how Americans celebrate Christmas. He asked the people of Brownsville and Haywood County to send clothing, toys, soap, candy, gum and other things such as children like. Yet another example reported in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* was a pro-South Vietnam rally held at Haywood High auditorium on September 26. Guest speaker was Rev. James Colbert, vice-president and International Director of Missions for the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. He spoke about the subject "Should America Be Involved in South Vietnam[?]." The question was rhetorical and the meeting at Haywood High School was really a patriotic pep rally. The Vietnam War even invaded the business section of the *Brownsville States-Graphic.* In the business forecast for 1967 it was felt that the Vietnam War would continue after 1967, although the good news was that the tide of the battle was swinging in America's favor. At the same time, the paper argued, American commitment would have to be increased in order to achieve a victory. Patriotism is the driving force behind Independence Day also. Traditionally July 4 is a time for reflection on war and peace. Appropriately, the local newspaper published an editorial that placed the Vietnam War in the larger perspective of all the wars the United States had fought and won since 1776. "We are presently involved in a war. A war in a distant land. A war being fought to protect a similar occurrence on our own soil. We hear complaints from a small minority clamoring for the cessation of this conflict . . ." It argued that the right attitude for Americans was to volunteer and to give their lives to protect their deeply cherished freedom and liberties. Patriotism rather than protest is the distinctive feature that characterizes most Americans. It is this attitude that is illustrated in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 7 November 1969 in an article entitled "The Silent Majority". The article expressed the essential need for people to speak out, by writing their congressmen or senators on the issues which confronted the country. Ideally the silent majority, by expressing their views, could drown the voices of the vocal minority "[who] . . . carry on demonstrations and literally tear down our country". Publication occurred just a few days after president Nixon's important speech on Vietnam on 3 November 1969, in which he first had used the term "silent majority".[110] The televised address described the history of American involvement in Vietnam since 1954. It was in this speech that president Nixon restated his Vietnamization policy, which enabled the U.S. to gradually withdraw its troops from Southeast Asia. In January 1973 president Nixon announced the Vietnam Peace settlement (28 December 1973) and the return of all American POWs.

Civil Rights

The *Brownsville States-Graphic*, during the Vietnam War era, was a white, conservative paper. The growing assertiveness of blacks in the United States after 1945 was not a chance development. The sacrifices of black servicemen during World War II had made discrimination in the United States an issue. The mood in Washington had changed: president Roosevelt's overtures to black leaders had encouraged government protection for civil rights. Also, by 1960 two-thirds of Tennessee blacks lived in towns or cities, creating the proximity and numbers for collective action. Interestingly, Brownsville and Haywood County constituted a rural area in West Tennessee where a major part of the population was black, but because the black population was spread out over a large area, local civil rights activities in some instances only occurred because they were initiated by such out of state activists as Eric Weinberger, for example, a 31-year-old resident of Norwich, Connecticut, who was arrested in Brownsville on 9 March 1963 for marching without a permit. At the same time organization and discipline among blacks had been nurtured in places like the Highlander Folk School in Grundy County, Tennessee. During the 1950s Highlander became a training center for community activists and civil rights leaders.[111]

The struggle over civil rights in Brownsville and Haywood County was to increase considerably in the first half of the decade. On 24 June 1960 the local paper contained the following news: "The first negro registrant in the City of Brownsville, the Rev. Hiram Newbern, was arrested here Tuesday afternoon for disturbing the peace. In his possession was literature from the Highlander Folk School which to our way of thinking is strictly a communist organization. We are sorry to hear that any of our local people are interested in organizations of this sort." The use of the term "communists" was quite effective. The memory of senator McCarthy's crusade against communism during the previous decade was still fresh in the national memory. Its use by conservative white Southerners to fight change was totally unjustified, of course. But it was the first indication of the gathering storm.

Its overture was as inevitable as it was sudden: it came with the apprehension of the first black registrant in Brownsville. Rev. Hiram Newbern was arrested for disturbing the peace - he carried with him literature from the Highlander Folk School, considered a communist organization by white conservatives at the time. What is surprising is that this major local news story, was not published in a main article, but referred to in the editor's weekly column of news, gossip and humorous stories. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* toned down the incident, almost to the extent of ignoring it. This is in fact what the paper was to do

routinely with eruptions of racial tension. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, when the struggle for civil rights taxed interracial relationships in Brownsville and Haywood County severely, the *Brownsville States-Graphic* consistently reported local developments in a subdued way. The daily newspapers published in Memphis, Jackson, and Nashville, or elsewhere reported on these matters in much greater detail.

The fight for civil rights escalated to such an extent that, in the summer of 1961, national television and the national press descended on Brownsville to report on the plight of the blacks living in Tent City. The civil rights movement of the 1960s deeply affected the multiracial community in West Tennessee. At the end of the summer of 1960 race ceased to be a problem that could be controlled or settled on a local level. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 16 September 1960 appeared with the banner headline "Federal Injunction Sought Against 27 White Persons and Two Banks in Haywood County". The article referred to a federal civil rights suit filed against local banks and citizens. The accompanying anti-civil rights editorial also printed on the front page was entitled "Whither Headed". It is worth noting that the editorial was not by the editor of the *Brownsville States-Graphic*, but was in fact the editorial printed in *The Commercial Appeal* published in Memphis the previous day. The editor of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* thus avoided the difficult task of having to write his own editorial. Printing the editorial of *The Commercial Appeal* had both the advantage of authority and a distancing effect.

The suit charged the defendants with conspiring to prevent voting registration of blacks and threatening and taking economic action against blacks. The serious nature of the economic action was specified as follows in the editorial: ". . . terminating sharecropping and tenant farming relationships with negroes . . . refusing to sell necessaries, goods and services for either cash or credit . . . refusing to lend money to some of the negroes . . . circulating lists of names of negroes who were leaders in registration and voting activity ... inducing suppliers of merchants not to deal with such merchants . . . inducing merchants, landowners and others to penalize economically the negroes; inducing wholesalers not to deal with negro merchants." The editorial denied that the federal government had the right to tell citizens and financial institutions whom they could do business with. The fact that the local weekly printed the editorial of the major regional daily newspaper indicated that the view there expressed reflected current opinion in West Tennessee. The civil rights suit was to develop into a continuing story.

In its next issue (23 September 1960) the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that the serving of subpoenas on Haywood County citizens for violations of civil rights had caused considerable editorial comment from the nation's newspapers. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* ran an editorial similar to that of *The Commercial Appeal*, while that in *The Washington Post* took the opposite side of the question. *The Commercial Appeal,* a Memphis-based regional newspaper, took the view that the white merchants, landowners, and bankers from

Brownsville and Haywood County should insist that the accusations be proved in court. The paper denied that the federal government had the right to tell financial institutions and private citizens "to whom they shall lend and sell, whom they shall house and feed, and whom they shall employ". The editorial in *The Times-Picayune* expressed the same conservative opinion. Both Southern newspapers sided with the white conservatives of Brownsville and Haywood County, but the non-Southern *Washington Post* did not and discussed the violations of the civil rights of the black population.

The following legal move was announced in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 21 October 1960. The twenty-seven citizens and the two banks referred to were scheduled to appear at the U.S. Post Office the following Monday to make depositions before a representative of the United States Justice Department. At the same time it was announced that the trial would be set at a later date in the U.S. federal court in Memphis. On November 11, it was reported that the twenty-seven defendants had made a motion for the government to be more specific in its complaints and allegations. One week later, on 18 November the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that another 34 white citizens and two additional business institutions had been charged by the civil rights division of the Department of Justice. The charge was that they had acted to prevent Haywood County blacks from voting. On 25 November the paper matter-of-factly reported that the Haywood County defendants were taking the Fifth Amendment. The questions which the defendants refused to answer were about the alleged lists of negro voters and civic leaders. On 9 December it was reported in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* that thirty-nine Haywood Countians had been ordered to appear in federal court in Memphis on 19 December to defend themselves against charges made by the civil rights division of the federal government. The thirty-nine defendants were charged with interfering with the rights of others to register to vote.

The civil rights problems of Haywood County gained national attention when NBC and CBS television news showed an interview with Dr. T.C. Chapman, the then mayor. The mayor came to the defense of the accused white persons, saying that he knew credit was being extended to Haywood County blacks "the same as always, depending upon whether or not they are good credit risks". The *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 16 December 1960 published an article on this; the paper also reported that the mayor received a letter from someone in Iowa "who was very much interested and favorable to segregation. He stated that in his part of Iowa, they received a very one-sided view of the situation, and wished to know the South's side of the Question." In a leading article on 23 December the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that thirty-seven Haywood Countians had been defending themselves in federal court against the civil rights division of the United States Justice Department. The defendants claimed that the 1957 Civil Rights Act was unconstitutional with modern farming methods creating changes. Increased mechanization

was the cause for the dismissal of blacks by the landowners. On December 30, it was reported that judge Boyd in the federal court in Memphis claimed that he lacked authority under the 1957 Civil Rights Act to stop the evictions by ordering the renewal or continuation of sharecropping and tenant agreements. Hence the ruling in the negro eviction case would move to a higher court: the United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati.

The *Brownsville States-Graphic* meanwhile reported on 13 January that sixteen more landowners in Haywood County sought evictions. In federal court they asked to evict black sharecroppers for legitimate reasons. On 17 February a leading article on the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* was headlined "U.S. Court of Appeals to Hear Landlord-Tenant Case on Monday". The judges' decision would be anxiously awaited by some seventy-five Haywood Countians under a restraining order forbidding them to evict negro tenants from their farms. One of the consequences of the eviction policy in Brownsville and Haywood County was that many blacks now lived in Tent City. (An encampment on donated land in Fayette County owned by Shephard Towles, a black man; a white merchant, whose name has been kept secret to the present day, donated the tents. Another camp was set up off Tennessee 57 near Moscow on land owned by Gertrude Beasley. - *The Jackson Sun, special issue on the 40th anniversary of Jackson's civil rights movement,* October 2000). Here they lived in all weathers for a two-year period under primitive circumstances.

The federal government stepped in when it became apparent that many of the poor blacks lacked proper food. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* wryly commented "Plenty of Takers As Crowds Swarm Armory for Handouts of Free Surplus Government Food" (14 July). Hundreds of blacks came to the Armory each day to receive free government surplus food ordered to the area by president Kennedy. According to reports twelve carloads of food were sent to Memphis for distribution in Haywood County and adjacent Fayette County. From the tone of the article it was clear that the local people resented the action taken by Washington. "Local officials, familiar with the situation in Haywood County said there was no apparent need, and that any isolated cases that came up were well protected by government agencies for such purposes." No explanation was received from Washington for declaring city and county a disaster area and sending the food to Haywood County and neighboring Fayette County, with their heavily black population.

As a result of the evictions and the subsequent lawsuit brought against the leaders of the white community and its leading institutions, the relationship between blacks and whites in Brownsville and Haywood County was approaching its nadir. This was reflected by a *Brownsville States-Graphic* front page editorial with the unambiguous headline "Much Ado About Nothing". It expressed the anger of the white community with phrases such as: "disgust for our national leaders", and: "pity for the negro race caused by their eager acceptance of gifts, which,

when given without justification, tends to kill the incentive, which has been created since the negro's emancipation from slavery".

Direct Action: Sit-Ins and Freedom Rides

Following the move towards desegregation in Nashville, which became the first major city in the South to begin desegregating its public facilities, student activists in several Tennessee cities (Nashville, Memphis, Jackson, Chattanooga) increased the pressure on restaurants, hotels and transportation facilities that refused to drop the color barrier. But it was the "direct action" by four black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, really, that marked an awakening from the rigid bonds of segregation in the South: on 1 February 1960 these four black students sat down at a F.W. Woolworth's lunch counter and remained seated until the store closed. Two weeks later mass sit-ins began in Nashville, Tennessee. "A revolution was under way," said John Seigenthaler, editor and publisher of *The Tennessean*, the most liberal of Tennessee's major newspapers. When 1960 arrived, *The Tennessean* had already editorially endorsed school integration *(The Jackson Sun,* October 2000). A group of students from Nashville, Tennessee, in 1961 participated in the Freedom Rides, in which groups of black and white passengers tried to integrate bus terminals in the South. (The group of Nashville students travelled to Birmingham, Alabama, to continue the Freedom Ride which left Washington D.C. on 4 May 1961 and had stranded as a result of hostile action in Birmingham some ten days later: the freedom riders, fearing for their safety, flew to New Orleans. On 17 May the Birmingham police arrested the Nashville freedom riders and placed them in protective custody. The police drove them back to Tennessee and dropped them off at the state line. After they reached Nashville, they went straight back to Birmingham. This time the head of the state highway patrol agreed to protect the freedom riders, after a meeting between governor Patterson and John Seigenthaler, who represented the Justice Department. The Freedom Ride left Birmingham on 20 May 1961. However, police protection disappeared as the freedom riders entered Montgomery city limits. The latter were beaten by an angry mob. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., flew to Montgomery and held a mass meeting to support the freedom riders. Thousands of white demonstrators surrounded the church so that nobody could leave. Robert Kennedy called governor Patterson, who declared martial law. The freedom riders continued to Mississippi; at the bus terminal in Jackson the police tricked them into a police vehicle by marching them through the white terminal. They were tried by a local court on 25 May 1961 and sentenced to sixty days in the state penitentiary).

All these activities were the prelude to the attempt on the part of blacks to be registered to vote. The white, conservative, population of the Southern region was aware that the sheer number of the blacks (in West Tennessee, for example, blacks heavily outnumbered the white population), should they all be registered to vote, would unavoidably introduce political change. Basically, it was this fear of potential political change that motivated the white merchants, farmers, and bankers in Brownsville and Haywood County to act the way they did.

Civil Rights in Brownsville & Haywood County

On 21 July 1961, it was reported that federal district judge Marion S. Boyd had dismissed a suit seeking an injunction barring the Haywood County, Tennessee, Election Board from discriminating against blacks seeking to register to vote. Judge Boyd stated that blacks in Haywood County had no difficulty in registering.

An out-of-court settlement between attorneys for seventy Haywood County landowners and the Justice Department of the federal government was reported in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 4 May 1962. The settlement legally ended an almost two-year conflict over the interference of the white population with the rights of the black population to register for the vote. A further indication that the worst of the racial strife was over and that city and county were sailing into quieter waters was the announcement on 12 July 1963, that the city was hiring "two negroes as policemen here". The city police commissioner stated that the two men were the first blacks to be hired as policemen in the city's history. The editorial in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* called the news sensational. But the added explanation that the two new officers were assigned to the black business district of the city and possibly the black residential area made it clear that full integration was still a long way off. Another sign of racial integration in Haywood County was reported on the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 28 May 1965. For the first time in the twentieth century "a negro citizen of the county" ran for public office. His name was Joe S. Taylor of the 9th District and he had entered the race for road commissioner.

On 2 August 1965 an important editorial on race relations appeared in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* It carried the headline "Times That Try Men's Souls" and was inspired by the demonstrations that were taking place all over the country. The editor urged members of both races in the community to keep their heads cool and to use their judgement before resorting to actions that they would later regret. The editorial strongly disapproved of the organizing and functioning of "Bi-Racial" groups, pointing out at the same time that the *Brownsville States-Graphic*

in the past had avoided controversial news regarding race relations, precisely because the two races had lived harmoniously in Brownsville and Haywood County for many years. On 16 August 1965 it was reported in the newspaper that the members of the Haywood County and Brownsville School Boards had received registered letters from the NAACP members and parents of children who wished to integrate the white schools of city and county.

Freedom marchers reached remote Haywood County in October 1965. It was reported (11 October 1965) that Eric Weinberger, "racial agitator", who had been charged with assault and battery during a freedom march in Brownsville several weeks earlier, had been surrendered to the circuit court of the 13th judicial circuit that week by his attorney, R.B. Sugarmon, Jr., of Memphis. "The bearded Weinberger, who was out on $1500 bond, was scheduled to appear before the court last week, failed to show up until early this week, and at his request his charges were retired from the docket on his promise to vacate himself from the jurisdiction of this court and payment of court cost. Should he return, charges will reappear on the docket." Weinberger led an anti-segregation demonstration in Brownsville in 1963. He had been a frequent visitor to Brownsville for two years. On 6 August 1963, (black) Brownsville undertaker Al Rawls told judge Dickinson that Weinberger had married a few days earlier and that the married couple had been staying in Brownsville with colored people "living over the B&S Laundry". Interestingly, Rawls went on to say that Weinberger was a foreigner (meaning that he was a non-Southerner), who marched without a permit and that nobody knew anything about him.

On 8 May 1964 an article in the Local News Briefs column of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* demonstrated that the civil rights battle was not over yet. According to this news story three hundred Haywood County negroes listened to a speech on the subject of "How Goes the Fight for Civil Rights" by Alfred Baker Lewis, national treasurer of the NAACP at Good Hope M.B. Church. In Haywood County as indeed elsewhere in the United States the black churches played a vital part in the struggle for civil rights. Black churches everywhere functioned as safe havens in the on-going battle. The churches were the headquarters of the black protest movement. All the action, whether this took the form of peaceful demonstrations or political speeches emanated from the church, for the simple reason that the black churches were the only places where the blacks were really free from the interference of the white authorities. Here they were out of the white public eye.

The free food plan (an opportunity of sorts for the government to get rid of its surplus stock of food) alluded to earlier, and initiated by the Kennedy administration in 1961, caused much social unrest in Brownsville and Haywood County. It was replaced by a program of a more permanent nature that came as a result of new legislation and that, moreover, did not antagonize the whites of the community because it benefitted local white merchants. The *Brownsville States-Graphic*

reported on 1 January 1965: "County Court To Meet Monday With Food Stamp Plan Scheduled". The editorial expressed the view that this was a business opportunity which should be secured by Haywood County merchants. On 2 April the newspaper reported that "the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food stamp program for needy families got underway Thursday, April 1, in Haywood and Fayette Counties". From the point of view of race relations in both city and county the new food stamp program was a marked improvement, because it did not require the offensive sight, to some whites, of big trucks off-loading free food parcels and poor blacks standing in line to receive them. The food stamp program for needy families filled a real need: the county offices of the Tennessee Department of Public Welfare received applications from 247 households with 1.517 persons in Haywood County. The new program was discreet. It allowed recipients to be treated with dignity, and because the food stamps were spent locally, all groups in the community stood to gain.

Integrating City and County School Systems

Schools constituted another area that separated the white and black communities, but here too the time for change had come. On 7 May 1965 it was reported that members of the Haywood County School Board in a meeting at the courthouse had formulated plans for the compliance of school integration as set forth in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the free choice plan, which was explained in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* by the Board of Education as follows:

> All citizens of Brownsville and Haywood County, Tennessee hereby are notified that the Congress of the United States of America passed a law entitled The Civil Rights Act of 1964. We are informed that this Act applies to schools operated by the Brownsville City Board of Education, and that said Act requires the assignment of students to public schools and within such schools without regard to their race, color, religion or national origin. Pursuant to and in compliance with said Act, the City Board of Education submits the following plan: students attending the schools operated by the City Board of Education, and all parents and guardians of students attending said school system, hereby are notified that students will be assigned to schools operated by the City Board of Education on a FREEDOM OF CHOICE plan.

The times and places where students must be registered, as well as the date "when the choice of schools must be exercised" would be announced in the local newspaper. The ostensible move by the Board of

Education towards full integration of the school system was apparent in the text of the public notice in the newspaper: "All students will be assigned to the school of their choice as herein-above designated insofar as possible. Said assignment will not be made on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin of the student concerned . . . From and after this date, teachers will be hired on the basis of ability and to the best interest of the school system, and without regard for the race, color, religion or national origin of said teacher, or of the pupils to be taught." On May 28, the paper reported that, taking advantage of the freedom of choice law, 37 black children were enrolled at formerly white elementary schools, while the county superintendent of education stated that some black children had signed up to attend the till then white Haywood High school.

Integration of the schools operated by the Haywood [County] Board and the City Board did not come about easily though, because it slyly was resisted. The Haywood Board received a letter from the Department of Justice which mentioned that complaints had been received from negro parents in Haywood County (*Brownsville States-Graphic*, 26 August 1966). These parents complained that their children had been deprived of equal protection of the laws, on account of their race, in the operation of the public schools in the county. In his letter the assistant attorney-general pointed out that in the 1965-1966 school year there were 4,354 negro pupils out of a total enrollment of 5,533 in the Haywood County school system, with thirty-six black students attending schools with whites. The projected figures for 1966-1967 showed that there would be 4,293 negro pupils in the system, with forty-four of them attending schools with whites. The assistant attorney-general stated that the Board would need to take steps to make the freedom of choice plan more effective. In its response the Board argued that it had offered a freedom of choice plan to every student in the county, regardless of race, color, creed or national origin.

The federal government applied further pressure when Justice Department attorneys "filed in federal court a list of cross and house burnings of negroes which are part of the government evidence in the Haywood County, Tenn., schools desegregation suit" (*Brownsville States-Graphic*, 26 May 1967). The trial seeking the shutdown of the Brownsville school system and putting its operation under the Haywood County School Board was due to start 12 June 1967. The attorneys for the Justice Department's civil rights division listed the following incidents:

> July 20, 1966 - cross burning at home of Annie Lee Jackson, candidate for public office, and her home burned to the ground. June 1966 - threatening letters regarding their civil rights activity received by "Mr. Bullock", B. Forrest and Henry Anthony. May 16, 1966 - following a Klan meeting, the home of negro leader, Odell

> Sanders, dynamited. In October, 1965, a cross was burned at Sanders' home, following enrollment of Sanders' children in former all-white school, threatening phone calls received. Fire set to store of Mrs. Manon, negro active in civil rights; shots fired and crosses burned near homes of Robert Mathis, Jr., and William Hays. May 11, 1966 shots fired into home of Charles Rogers, negro active in civil rights. May 4, 1966 - shots fired into home of Dave Mike Jones. April 23, 1966 - about 400 persons attended Klan rally in front of the courthouse in Brownsville where speakers objected to desegregation. December, 1965 - two carloads of white men visited home of L.N. Evans, negro with children in previously all-white school, threatening him about his complaint about treatment of his children on white school bus; cross burned following night in front of his home. Oct. 16, 1965 - crosses burned on high school football field and at junction of Highway 70 and West Main in Brownsville.

Members of the Haywood County Board of Education and the Brownsville City School Board were to appear in federal court in Memphis on 12 June 1967 (9 June 1967). The charges brought against them by the Justice Department specified that the "Freedom of Choice plan of school integration has not been successful here due to the dual school system and the hostility of the community". The leading article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 16 June 1967 was about the Freedom of Choice law suit. The federal court room in Memphis was "jammed" with Haywood Countians when the case was heard by judge Bailey Brown. The Justice Department was seeking "merger of the city system into the county system", along with complete desegregation of the schools. E.D. Thompson, the superintendent of the city schools testified that the City Board felt that its freedom of choice plan was in compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Kirby Matherne, chairman of the County Board told of how the Board felt that zoning of the county with its pockets of negro population, would undoubtedly lead to segregation all over again. He testified that his feeling was that if zoned, white citizens would merely re-distribute themselves in other communities, leaving the negro population in all-negro schools. Testimony before the court revealed that many negroes had not filed choice forms for the 1967-1968 school year. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* concluded that the government was attempting to prove that fear had prevented the freedom of choice plan from being effective in desegregating the schools. Attorneys representing the federal government continually questioned witnesses about telephone calls, burning of crosses and one incident of firing into a house. The defense had attempted to prove that such incidents were provoked by white civil rights workers living in homes of negroes. Witnesses testified that since Rights workers were gone their troubles ended.

Two mysterious explosions which caused severe damage to a house and a garage, were reported on 20 May 1966: "The first explosion damaged the west side of the home of Odell Sanders and family, located on the northwest corner of Margin and Russell streets, and the other blast, which occurred some 11 minutes later, practically ruined a new, concrete, block building which was soon to be the location of Bill Harmon's repair shop. This building is located on the Alamo road, adjacent to the Fairgrounds." The explosions were related to the civil rights activities that were causing commotion at the time. Although Mr. Sanders had been active in civil rights activities, he could offer no explanation, while Mr. Harmon stated that as far as he knew, he had never bothered anyone, white or colored. Yet the explosions appeared race related; just before the first explosion "at 10:46 p.m. police received reports of gunshots and cross-burnings just outside city limits on Jefferson street. It is in this neighborhood that a white man and woman are said to be staying with a negro family. This couple Shoshana Levenberg of New York and Jim Amery of Pennsylvania were interrogated by local officers concerning the report of cross burning; they reported seeing a 1966 Cadillac automobile in front of where one of the crosses was placed. Doyle Ellington, local cyclops of the Brownsville Klavern of United Klans of America, told officers that 'it was not done by any of our members.'"[112] In the next issue the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that there was no truth in the rumor that the FBI had arrested two individuals in connection with the explosions.

Civil rights and Vietnam were the subjects that on a national as well as on a regional and local level caused much pain and controversy. Both issues dominated the news in the United States for the better part of the decade. It is important, however, to distinguish between the South and the rest of the United States in any discussion of the struggle for civil rights or the Vietnam War: anti-war demonstrations in the South never reached the momentum that could be observed in other regions of the United States. There was an entirely different war going on in the South, though; in West Tennessee, as indeed in the entire Southern region, this war partly consisted of a series of legal battles aimed at maintaining the status quo, or delaying change. But it entailed much more, as reports in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* clearly demonstrate. The civil rights issue caused much unrest and affected both blacks and whites in the city as well as in the county: evictions, demonstrations, and thwarted attempts by blacks to be registered to vote, added up to much unpleasantness, especially when the national press, radio, and television arrived in rural West Tennessee to report on this domestic war. It is plain that the civil rights issue, which, for obvious reasons was mainly concentrated in the South, was a much more important fight for many white Southerners than the War in distant Vietnam, affecting as it did practically the whole community. What makes the 1960s such an interesting decade for all those intrigued by the Southern perspective is that, by and large, the Vietnam War and the other war, the struggle for racial equality,

coincided. This is reflected on the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 23 June 1967, where they appear side by side. A picture of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Land showed them receiving posthumous rewards - the Purple Heart; the National Defense Service Medal; the Viet Nam Service Medal and Republic of Viet Nam Campaign Ribbon Bar and two lapel buttons - in memory of their son. A solemn moment of the war in Vietnam condensed to the loss made visible in the lives of one family in rural Tennessee. Next to this picture appeared the headline, "Federal Judge With[h]olds Decision Until School Boards Submit Plan". During the trial which centered on the failing integration of black and white schools in Brownsville and Haywood County, and took place in judge Bailey Brown's courtroom in Memphis, U.S. attorneys constantly sought to connect the bombing of negro houses, telephone threats and cross burnings to school desegregation in the county. The local Boards tried to prove that Freedom of Choice was working in Haywood County. Government witnesses testified that they had seen crosses burned and that they had received threatening telephone calls; they also reported one house bombing.

The leading article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 11 August ran "School Board to Comply with Judge's Decision on Integration of Faculties". This court order in effect set the integration of city and county schools in motion. As a first step, so ordered by the court, at least three black teachers would each be assigned to the all white Haywood High and Anderson Grammar Schools, two black teachers to the also white Haywood Elementary School, and one black teacher each to the white Bradford and Holly Grove Schools. At least three white teachers were to be assigned to the all black Carver High and East Side Elementary Schools and two white teachers each to the also black Bailey and Douglas Schools. Furthermore, the court order specified that race could not be a factor in the planning of school bus routes. Moreover, it was stated that in each school all curricular and extra-curricular activities were required to be completely desegregated. The policy of closing inferior school buildings was to be continued so that by 1970-71 there would be no elementary school in the county attended only by blacks and therefore equipped poorly. On top of all that the School Board were ordered to file a report with the [court] clerk each year prior to October 15th indicating the racial composition of the pupils in each grade and the racial composition of the faculty. Finally, the court would retain jurisdiction pending the further implementation of the plan. Judge Bailey Brown's decree thus effectively put an end to segregated schools in Brownsville and Haywood County. So the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 25 August reported "Faculties For City And County Schools Named For Fall Term", specifying teachers' names for the different schools without any reference to race. It was the sort of information that had great significance for the local population. It also was a very important step towards full integration.

The road to full integration was a long one and was taken by the white conservative population with great reluctance. The reason why they moved towards integration at all was because they were forced to by court orders. The legal battles inexorably forced the white population to accept full integration, but the fact that every move had to be fought over in court also implied that the process was slow and because of that emotions often ran high. As pointed out above, the struggle for civil rights, of which the fight for the full integration of the black and white schools was an integral part, was a war whose battles were fought in the courts of Memphis and Cincinnati, Ohio (Court of Appeals). All the legal battles that were to result in the fully integrated Haywood High School in 1970 were reported in the local newspaper. In order to fully comprehend the struggle over civil rights we will trace the most significant moves as they were reported by the local newspaper. The next legal battle, then, was described on 13 October 1967 in an article entitled "County Court Names Committee To Work With Local School Board". The members of the committee were C.H. Stuart, Hubert Barcroft, Malcolm Smith, Dixon Hood, Dr. Byron Cochran. (There was no reference to the racial composition of the committee.) The committee would work with the County School Board in planning adequate schools to replace eighteen rural schools recently abandoned. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 27 October, reported that a public auction had been held at the courthouse the preceding Saturday, when the Haywood County Department of Education disposed of twenty-four rural schools that had been closed as a result of the county's school consolidation program. Meanwhile, the School Boards were confronted with an appeal from the Justice Department. According to Lyle Reid, attorney for Haywood County, the notice of appeal would probably be heard in Cincinnati. He also stated that apparently the Justice Department thought that the court had failed to give sufficient consideration to charges of intimidation and harassment.

On 26 January 1968 the headline read: "Haywood Negroes Protest Lack of Service on Local Juries." The article, citing *The Commercial Appeal*, reported that a suit which charged discrimination in the selection of jurors in predominantly black Haywood County had been filed in a Memphis federal court. The action was brought by Odell Sanders, a civil rights worker whose Brownsville home had been bombed, and Mrs. Nola W. Bond, a Brownsville grocery store owner. They asked the court to order that existing jury rolls be discarded and new ones assembled, with the six-to-five ratio of blacks to whites in the county used as a basis for the new venue list. The suit charged that blacks were systematically excluded from grand and petit jury lists, although there were 6,295 blacks of voting age and 5,497 whites 21 years or older according to the 1960 census list of Haywood County.

The recommendation from the state department of education, long-awaited by both groups of the community, reached the School Board in

the summer of 1968 (July 5). It entailed a long-range program of development of the county educational system. This involved the decision to either close or retain existing schools. Plans also foresaw the building of new schools, notably a new school in the Sunny Hill community and a new High School. When the schools opened their doors again after the summer, the new school year started with closer integration of pupils and faculty as decreed by the court. The closing of four rural schools caused overcrowding in the remaining school buildings. Another initial problem was a shortage of teachers. Increased integration among pupils and faculty members also created its share of the opening hysteria, but, as the local newspaper reported on 30 August 1968, by midweek rough spots began to level off.

The Brownsville City School Board, then, was involved in a continuing legal battle with the Justice Department in Washington D.C. In November 1968 federal judge Bailey Brown decreed that local officials must file a plan with the court containing a provision permitting children to transfer from a school with their racial majority to a school with their racial minority. The plan was to eradicate the dual school system in Haywood County. The Haywood Quarterly Court met in regular session on Monday, 13 January 1969. An important issue was the School Board's request for issuance of additional bonds as part of the previously court-authorized million and a half dollar educational improvement program. The Justice Department rejected the plan of school integration, which had been submitted by the local School Boards. "According to county attorney Lyle Reid a hearing before judge Bailey Brown of the U.S. federal court in Memphis was imminent." The local School Boards contended that only by a process of gradual integration could the public school system be preserved in Haywood County (May 9). The federal court, however, ordered complete school integration (May 16). In response a group of citizens, including county attorney Lyle Reid, would go to Washington, seeking help on the local integration problems.

Owen Burgess offered the following comment on the same front page: "Judge Brown's decision was only a few hours old when reports were out that drives were on to establish private schools. We have heard of one such project and to date several thousand of dollars have been pledged to the project. As we understand it, proper procedures are being taken to secure proper housing and teachers for the proposed school. We feel sure that there will be others with similar plans, too." Members of the Haywood County School Board (which by then included the former City School Board) finalized plans to comply with a federal court order. Plans of the School Board were "to request an appeal of judge Brown's order of complete school integration. This appeal was to be based on plans to construct a new, centrally-located high school to accommodate all the students of Haywood County" (May 30). Acting on the Haywood County court's resolution to build a new high school, a firm of architects from Nashville was selected. The School Board also appointed colonel Lloyd White, a retired Air Force colonel, as principal of Haywood High School (June 6). Judge Bailey Brown granted a year's extension in

complete integration of Haywood County High Schools. The reason why judge Bailey granted the extension was that it would take a year to construct the new school (June 13). Bids for the construction of the proposed new Haywood High School were opened on August 28. The school would be ready by 1 September 1970. Judge Brown in the other Haywood County case in federal court refused to order Haywood County jury commissioners to include blacks on jury list in proportion to population. The judge refused to hold that blacks were systematically excluded from serving as jurors in Haywood County. Yet he did order commissioners to consult tax records, telephone directories and other reliable sources of names, in addition to voter registration records, in selecting jurors.

The School Board meeting of 15 December was attended by five members of a Haywood County Quarterly Court appointed committee, six NAACP members and four members of the present School Board. The composition of those present at the meeting demonstrated that times were changing and that Brownsville and Haywood County ultimately complied with court decisions. "There was agreement that the negro community should have representation on the Board and that the superintendent of education should be appointed by the Board" (19 December 1969). The involuntary integration of the school system in Haywood County, as elsewhere, led to the establishment of private schools, such as the Volunteer State Baptist Academy in Brownsville. Funds were found in traditional ways. On 4 September 1970, e.g. the announcement in the newspaper: "New Academy to Have Sale" caught the eye. "Sponsors of the Volunteer State Baptist Academy will conduct an 'Old Country Store' sale this Friday and Saturday in the downtown shopping center across from Kroger's . . . . Proceeds will go for needed supplies for the new school, which opens Sept. 8."

In December 1970 the Tennessee Academy, as it was also called, had a faculty of 14 with 283 students in grades one through ten and kindergarten. There were plans for further growth; by next fall grades 11 and 12 were to be added. Tuition was $ 400,- per year per student in the elementary grades and $ 500,- for high school students. The first graduation ceremonies at Tennessee Academy took place on 26 May 1972. Tennessee Academy had twenty-four seniors, while Haywood High School had two hundred and ninety. In 1973 twenty-seven students graduated from Tennessee Academy. At that time the school had approximately 400 students. Ultimately, however, the private school was to close and the modest number of Haywood countians wishing to attend private schools went to Jackson, which was twenty-seven miles away, or to more distant Memphis. The Tennessee Academy, which had been organized in an attempt to resist desegregation, failed because most white parents changed their minds about integration when they saw the newly developed Haywood High School operating successfully.

School integration paved the way for further integration in the community. The appointment, for instance, reported on 9 September 1973, of Will Batchelor was an indication that Haywood County was steadily moving towards public integration. “For the first time in modern day history, a negro has been employed to serve as deputy sheriff of Haywood County,” said a front page article in the *Brownsville States-Graphic*.

The local newspaper, then, covered the development towards integration of the black and white schools in city and county extensively. School integration was an aspect of the struggle for civil rights that concerned a large section of the community. In 1968, in the middle of the battle for integration, the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported on the consequences of an event related to civil rights: the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported on April 12, that the local unit of the Tennessee National Guard had been called to Memphis on March 28 to put an end to riots that had broken out after the civil rights march in Memphis. The unit stayed there until March 31. “On April 4, after the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Company B of the 230th Signal Battalion, composed of the headquarters unit in Brownsville and another in Alamo, were again rushed to Memphis.”

During the early days of the Vietnam War, before civil rights became a major issue, the South was still predominantly associated with the Democrats.[113] In the 1960s the dividing line between the two political parties still had its roots in the Civil War. Therefore, the report in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* on 31 May 1968, “Negro Republicans Form Club for County Political Purposes” signified a development in Haywood County’s race relations. The club’s chairman, Aubrey J. Young hoped to create a strong two-party system in order to find political solutions for existing problems that otherwise would not go away.

For white Southerners the Republican party, since the Civil War, had been the party associated with the North. This explains why they all voted Democrat. The blacks who had registered to vote initially favored the Republican party. Ever since president Johnson introduced new legislation aimed at improving the quality of life for the colored population, however, many Democrats turned Republican in frustration.

The fight for civil rights in Brownsville and Haywood County, which had initially evolved round the eviction of black tenants following their registration for the vote or activities related to the civil rights movement, had started out as a local affair. Before long, however, it was something that could not be contained. The reason was that it was a matter that affected a far larger area. What was happening in the heart of the Tennessee delta was of national importance. Everywhere in the United States and particularly in the Southern states, where communities consisting of mixed white and black populations abounded, the changes required by federal law were actively resisted. This, however, attracted the media to trouble spots. The press flocked to Haywood County and the

news about developments in Brownsville and Haywood County was reported in Memphis, New Orleans and beyond. The incidents in Haywood County spread even further: television channels in Iowa, for instance, also reported on the situation. In another development the front page of the *States-Graphic* of 4 June 1965, stated that the "northern white trash" would soon be in Brownsville. Civil rights sympathizers from outside the South started to arrive in Brownsville to help advance the cause of the blacks.

The Columnists, 1960-1973

The *Brownsville States-Graphic* published a weekly column on subjects that mattered to its white readers in particular, until 1969; in the course of that year the paper's policy changed and from then on the subjects dealt with were meant to appeal to both its black and white readers. During the Vietnam War years the columnists featured in the paper were North Callahan, Thurman Sensing, and Ed Jones. North Callahan was a syndicated columnist whose column "This is New York" appeared in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* from 1960 through 1971. In 1969 Thurman Sensing introduced another column: "Sensing The News". Sensing was executive vice-president of the Southern States Industrial Council and his Southern conservatism permeated every page he wrote for the newspaper. The third columnist was Ed Jones, representative of the 8th District of Tennessee (D) who inaugurated a weekly column in the local newspaper in 1969.

I will discuss the contribution made by each of these columnists as they bear on my subject chronologically. I will therefore first examine North Callahan's columns, followed by Sensing's, although during 1969 - 1971 their comments appeared in the paper simultaneously. Finally, I will turn to the columns of Ed Jones.

North Callahan

North Callahan often turned to the past. On 8 July 1960, for example, reflecting on the Civil War, he first repeated the stereotypical expression that it was a war of brother fighting against brother, which he elaborated on by informing the readers that that "was the way it was with my grandfathers in Tennessee". He then went on to say that this had also happened this far north, citing the following example: "Elias and William

Poole lie in adjacent graves just across the river in Springfield, New Jersey. They were brothers, and Elias was a lieutenant in the Confederate artillery, while Bill was a Yankee private who was present at the Appomattox surrender." Until July 1960 the Northern veteran's grave was adorned with flowers each Memorial Day, whereas sticks would be piled on the one who had fought for the Southern cause, then burned. To find so much bitterness on such an issue in the North as late as 1960 was quite unusual. On 4 July 1960 a red geranium was placed on each grave, with a Confederate flag beside that of Elias and a new 50-star flag of the United States alongside that of William, symbolizing reconciliation.

On 1 March 1963 "This Is New York" returned to the subject of the Civil War to commemorate the battle of Vicksburg, Mississippi "a hundred years ago", again in a spirit of reconciliation: "On July 4th of this year, two men will visit Vicksburg . . . They are general U.S. Grant III and John C. Pemberton III, grandsons of the opposing commanders of the Union and Confederate forces there."

The election of Henry David Thoreau, who "died just a hundred years ago", to the Hall of Fame of New York University inspired a column on famous men of the past. Callahan characteristically turned to the nation's Civil War heroes and observed that Stonewall Jackson was recently elected and Jefferson Davis nominated to the NYU Hall of Fame. Robert E. Lee, he added, was already a member (27 April 1962).

In 1963 Callahan often turned nostalgically to the past. He welcomed the revival of an Ohio riverboat race. The organizers had remembered that in Mark Twain's opinion "a horse race was tame compared to that between riverboats".

> The Delta Queen and Belle of St. Louis, both sternwheelers, will race on the Ohio River, the first such contest in 35 years, and many Americans with a sense of history and romance will be there to witness the event - and they are to be envied. The most famous such race took place in 1870 between the Robert E. Lee and the Natchez between St. Louis and New Orleans. The Robert E. Lee won, as crowds along the way cheered the showboats on, and since then has been enshrined in song and story.

In the summer of 1965 (July 2) he noted that echoes of the Civil War Centennial were dying away. According to the New York column, by then Americans should have learned the lessons of that war. The column concluded that perhaps the best postscript could be seen on the sides of the trucks of a shipping line cleverly named *The Mason and Dixon Lines*, showing U.S. Grant shaking hands with Robert E. Lee and underneath the legend *Now joining the North and the South.*

The first time that Vietnam was mentioned in North Callahan's column was as a footnote to a meeting he had with Henry Cabot Lodge,

Jr., who was to become the American ambassador in Saigon (17 May 1963).

> About 15 years ago when we were both en route to England aboard the Queen Elizabeth, I had a nice visit with Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. We had not been out of the World War II Army very long, both had the same rank, and I had written a history of the armed forces in which colonel Lodge was interested. He had taken an admirable step when he entered the war, voluntarily resigning as United States senator from Massachusetts to go on active duty as a reserve officer and take up the fight for his country . . . Recently major general Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., - who has risen markedly as a reserve officer - visited the Pentagon and spent two weeks on active duty . . . The former ambassador [to the United Nations] went on to say it is impressive that when times get dark in Berlin, the president orders out the Army Reserve, or that when Communism threatens in Southeast Asia, Army personnel go to Vietnam.

Inadvertently, Cabot Lodge here laid bare one of the problems of the Vietnam War: during World War II, the National Guard and the Army Reserve took part in the fighting. This meant that, politically, the country was united and approved of government policy on the war. The National Guard and the Army Reserve were not called upon to fight in Vietnam, however. The explanation is that although the conflict developed into a fully fledged war, it remained undeclared; the Johnson administration did not go to the American people to set out government policy. As the war escalated, Americans lost faith in the government. If the war was going well, why was it necessary to send an increasing number of troops to Vietnam? Callahan's suggestion that America could lose the Vietnam War (12 March, 1965) should be seen against this background. It was uttered in a mood of frustration caused by a lack of trust in the Johnson administration. The idea that America could lose the war was immediately qualified as follows: "Although this should probably be mentioned with one's fingers crossed, we have never lost a war. In our present perplexity over the situation in South Viet Nam, it is heartening to see Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, a symbol of our survival in a time of dark misfortune." (Valley Forge is where the Army of the newly formed United States of America was encamped from 19 December 1777 to 19 June 1778 under the command of general George Washington).

Callahan reacted critically to the student protests against the War in Vietnam on June 11, 1965. "Among students I have noticed that there is a considerable amount of sentiment against our fighting in Vietnam. Plausible arguments are presented, facts related, comparisons made to earlier wars in which we have become entangled, and many angles

brought up which might be convincing if one were inclined to listen only to youthful exuberance. Yet I note that most such arguments come from those who are eligible for the draft." The readers of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* agreed with Callahan's analysis. The students' reasoning was interesting as an intellectual exercise, but the bottomline was that when your country called you went. What was wrong with the students was that they did not want to fight for their country. This, at least, is how the local people felt about it.

The reports about casualties from the Vietnam War front in 1966 were put in perspective by a World War I veteran listening to a young man who was relating excitedly the results of a recent battle. The elderly veteran said that the U.S. Army was more experienced and had much better weapons than in 1917 when the initial thought was that war was a glorified picnic. But he had found out the hard way: "There is nothing nice about war, you know. You think 83 men is a lot to lose in one fight. Why in the battle of Verdun one million men were killed before it was over." On a surface level the outcome of such an incongruous comparison, to the readers of the local newspaper at the time, was that the War in Vietnam was not going so bad after all. The idea of America losing the war was gone.

Callahan again focused on the problems of young men who tried to stay away from Vietnam on 23 September. In the early years of the war students would automatically be deferred on condition they did well in their studies. According to the New York column, "Now that schools are resuming, the military status of the young men is uppermost in many minds." On the campus of George Williams College, for instance, there is a sign all too remindful of this. It says, "Study each day or you may become 1A." Another sign of the times: "There are only three college grades now: A, B and Viet Nam."

On the first day of the New Year, North Callahan continued the themes of the Civil War and Vietnam. He listed some of the things president Johnson and all Americans could look forward to: "the end of the Civil War Centennial celebration...hopefully a turning of the bad fortunes in Vietnam where we are certainly in a war, if not undeclared . . . ."[114]

North Callahan frequently showed a sense of humor. Many of his columns contained funny stories about widely different subjects, including the draft during the Vietnam War and the Civil War. On 6 January 1967, for example, he wrote: "During his first winter in northern Vermont, a tourist remarked to an old farmer about the great number of Civil War memorials in the area. Every little village seemed to have a statue dedicated to a veteran of that conflict. 'Yes,' the old man replied. 'Vermont sent a large[r] percentage of her boys off to the Civil War than any other state in the Union. Yup, anything to get South for the winter.'"

Thurman Sensing

Whereas North Callahan tended to focus mainly on history, Thurman Sensing was primarily concerned with the here and now in the South. His first contribution was on civil disobedience (28 April 1967). He reported on Stokely Carmichael speaking at Vanderbilt University, Nashville. (Carmichael made the phrase "Black Power" famous. He was critical of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s peaceful approach. He was arrested as a Freedom Rider in 1961 and spent seven weeks in a Mississippi jail for violation of segregation laws. Stokely Carmichael became the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1966. When he denounced U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, his passport was confiscated). Callahan wrote: "Following his inflammatory talk, this Tennessee city . . . was torn by riots. . . Roaring marauders, many of them screaming 'black power' struck through a 30-block area, shooting, looting, destroying cars and trucks and setting fire to stores with flaming Molotov cocktails." Sensing strongly objected to Carmichael's provocative language to the student body, "Refuse to serve in Viet Nam". The students' response was, "Hell no, [we] won't go." The debate on Vietnam was continued in an article entitled "Westmoreland's Impact" (12 May 1967). General William C. Westmoreland appeared before the Congress and the American Newspapers Publishers Association and conveyed the feelings of the soldiers in Vietnam, who were disturbed by what they saw as unpatriotic acts of demonstrators against the struggle in the Far East. Westmoreland's strong and confident performance effectively counterbalanced the Johnson administration's credibility gap. The senators "who are making careers of being 'doves', J.W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y) and Charles Percy (R-Ill.)", came in for severer criticism than the demonstrators, because their attitude was beneficial to the enemy, he argued.

All over the United States, in California, New Hampshire, Kentucky, and South Carolina civil disobedience was on the rise (26 May 1967). "A band of ruffians who call themselves Black Panthers knocked over sergeants at arms and invaded the California legislature while it was in session." At Dartmouth College governor George Wallace of Alabama, who had been invited to speak, was forced off the speaking platform, while in Kentucky demonstrators threatened to disrupt the Kentucky Derby. At the University of South Carolina demonstrators interrupted the ceremony during which general Westmoreland received an honorary degree. The atmosphere of the nationwide demonstrations against the War in Vietnam, as Thurman Sensing saw them, emerged clearly from the column "Storming the Pentagon" (17 November 1967). Conservatives such as Thurman Sensing, had an innate mistrust of communism: all anti-war and anti-government demonstrations had been carefully plotted by communists, they opined.

> The horde of anti-Vietnam demonstrators that invaded the nation's capital Oct. 21 and attempted to storm the Pentagon could have been visitors from another planet. To those who saw the demonstrators close up, the mob of protesters was indeed a strange and disturbing sight. Many of the male marchers had long hair and were attired in beatnik or hippie costumes. In the line of march were individuals with Vietcong flags or buttons proclaiming their hatred of the United States. One of the marchers openly termed the president of the United States the real enemy. In an excess of tolerance [the government] permitted the demonstrators to swarm across government property, to carry their Vietcong flags up to the Lincoln Memorial, and, in a variety of ways, to paralyze large areas of the nation's capital . . . . There should be no misunderstanding of the meaning of the Oct. 21 demonstration around the Pentagon. It was a dry run, which enabled the communists to test their ability to disrupt the capital of the United States . . . The assault group of demonstrators, which initially overran a thin line of defending marshals and soldiers at entrance No. 7 to the Pentagon, were using railroad flares in a regular assault operation. What the public needs to appreciate is that the anti-Vietnam demonstrators . . . are conducting war from within. They are working hand-in-hand with Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam and his Russian supporters. It is noteworthy that Ho Chi Minh sent a message of sympathy to the demonstrators in Washington. Around the world, communist front groups coordinated sympathy marches.

Sensing continued his rightwing reporting when he criticized the World Council of Churches. He viewed the organization as a mask for political activity: its president, the Rev. Dr. Martin Niemöller had been awarded the Lenin Prize. "Americans will recall that last year Dr. Niemöller went to North Vietnam and fiercely condemned the United States for its aerial attacks on Ho Chi Minh's bastion."

In "Real State of the Union", (9 February 1968) president Johnson was accused of not giving the American people the needed data on the state of the nation's affairs. The only thing the president had said about Vietnam was that the American will to persevere would not be broken. Thurman Sensing: "What he failed to say is that the United States will move with determination to win a victory over the forces of communism that are taking so many American lives and so much of our national wealth. Missing from the address was a clear-cut statement of a victory goal . . . ." On 29 March 1968 the White House came under attack again for its apparent lack of a winning strategy for the War in Vietnam. The situation in fact looked grim. At Khe San American fighting men were in a siege position along the Demilitarized Zone. "They are being bled

mercilessly by troops that emerge from the still privileged sanctuaries of the communists."

President Nixon would have to get the country out of the mess into which it was plunged by presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Thurman Sensing thought that the negotiations in Paris would benefit from a renewal of U.S. air and sea bombardment of North Vietnam. "The Nixon administration . . . has an opportunity to remind the American people and the world that the only language the communists understand is the language of force." President Johnson had made a mistake when he halted the bombing at a time when it was doing the most good and the communists were really hurting.

Liberals insisted on saying that the cold war was over, "But that's a cruel joke on the 500,000 Americans fighting in Vietnam" (8 November 1967). The Vietnamese war effort was continued by a massive Soviet sealift to Haiphong and because of Soviet air defense missiles and anti-aircraft artillery sent to North Vietnam. "If that is not evidence of cold war - or hot war - it is hard to see what the Great Society dreamers want as evidence."

The increasing campus disorders all over the country were noted and commented on in the spring of 1969 (4 April 1969). The situation at San Francisco State University had deteriorated to such an extent that virtual guerrilla warfare was in progress. At the campus of the University of California at Berkeley a large contingent of riot police was on stand by. But that was not the whole story. Trouble was taking place or brewing at a wide range of institutions, ranging from new urban colleges to famous old universities.

During these turbulent years when the War in Vietnam was gradually reaching its climax, the civil rights struggle within the continental United States was having a noticeable impact on everyday life. The Vietnam War and the fight for civil rights coincided and mutually influenced each other. A visible sign of change was that a "black" mathematics course was taught at Federal City College, while new professors were being recruited, not on the basis of academic credentials but on their records of involvement with black power groups.

Thurman Sensing approvingly reported on the measure taken by the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors against the Students for A Democratic Society (4 July 1969). The SDS was formed in 1962. According to Thurman Sensing it was the spearhead of revolutionary action from coast to coast. In the early years of its existence the SDS had no difficulty in finding a campus on which to hold its annual national convention, but in 1969 it was turned down by thirty-seven colleges and universities and at least twenty-five meeting halls, parks, and camps. The Board of Louisiana State University effectively banned the SDS from all campuses within the LSU system. At Harvard and Yale, however, SDS spokesmen were allowed to speak, although the speaker at Harvard was removed from the platform for pouring abuse on the United States. At Yale a member of the graduating class, Sensing complained, rejected

America's involvement in the Vietnam War. At the same time "no one was given an opportunity to speak in behalf of the Yale alumni proudly serving in Vietnam or who rendered loyal service to their country in past wars in defense of freedom." A hardening of attitudes clearly showed.
The Vietnam Moratorium (the stoppage of school and college classes) and other "Vietnik" demonstrations, according to Sensing, did not merely aim at immediate American withdrawal from Vietnam. Its ultimate objective was the defeat and humiliation of the United States (24 October 1969). He commented on the Kent State tragedy in his weekly column on 22 May 1970: while leftists and liberals in the United States and elsewhere saw the students killed at Kent State as heroic workers for peace, he considered them an ugly and brutal mob engaged in transforming a university into a scene of anarchy and bloodshed. Sensing felt the time was past for half-way measures. The country was on the verge of crisis; therefore, every effort should be exerted to crush the criminal leftists who sought to paralyze the country.

The sectional bias at the root of Sensing's politics can be clearly discerned. In October 1967 he wrote:

> When Stokely Carmichael was raising the roof earlier this summer, triggering violence around the country, Mr. Clark and his associates apparently could not find a law to cover his un-American activities. When the South was going through some turmoil a decade ago, the Justice Department always seemed able to find some obscure post-Civil War statute that effectively shut up people the Department did not favor. Now that the Black Power movement is busy burning cities and causing r[i]ots, the Department is strangely helpless.

An interesting word here is post-Civil War. The legacy of the defeat of the South was still having an effect, he suggested. The positive discrimination that transpires from Sensing's article also harbors implied criticism of president Johnson, who was strongly disliked by many white Southerners.

Unfortunately, according to Sensing, there were elements in the nation with a profound sectional bias against the South who wished to punish it for not taking the ultra-liberal tack. Thus school systems in the South were treated unfairly by being ordered to meet disruptive and virtually impossible timetables which were not imposed elsewhere in the nation. Several Southern governors therefore pleaded for equal justice, saying that if one type of school system was to be made mandatory for the South, the same system should be ordered for Massachusetts, Illinois, California and the other states. Sensing felt that, economically, ever since the end of the Civil War, the South had lagged behind the rest of the nation. In his treatment of this and other subjects in his weekly column,

he showed himself to be a conservative, white, Southerner. It was what he had in common with the predominantly white readership of the *Brownsville States-Graphic*.

Ed Jones

The "Reports from Washington" column (commencing in the course of 1969) by Ed Jones was very different from Callahan's or Sensing's columns. Subjects were closer to home and focused on the concerns of the Congressman's constituents in Haywood County. Thus on 31 October 1969, when Jones discussed the draft, he showed sympathy with the young men confronted with it.

> More young people of our district have expressed to me their concern with the draft law than with any other issue. They feel almost unanimously that our present system is not quite fair. They do not object to serving their country - they know someone has to do it - but they are deeply disturbed over the method of selecting who will serve and who will not. From the day a boy has his eighteenth birthday until he is twenty-six, he is liable to the draft. If he is deferred during this seven-year period, he becomes liable until he is thirty-five . . . . Whether a young man is drafted or not often depends on where he lives and the policy followed by his local Draft Board.

Jones went on to explain that other than in World War II when the military needed every man they could get, the country now had more young men than it needed. Hence, there was a draft law with loopholes. "And it is understandable that our young men resent this." While agreeing that the American forces should have all the men they needed, he felt that the nation had an obligation to make the draft "as fair to our young men as we know how". On 9 July 1971, "Reports from Washington" again focused on the draft. Jones reported that he had voted against the Nedzi-Whalen amendment to the military draft law, because it would have bound the United States to withdraw all of its troops from Vietnam by a specified date. The cost of the War in Vietnam in human life by the summer of 1971 had very nearly reached its climax. "Over fifty thousand of our young men have already died in this conflict." Although reluctant "to see one more of our boys give his life in Vietnam", he felt that it would be a mistake for the U.S. to bind itself to a withdrawal date, because there were at least 1,600 servicemen listed as missing in action or held prisoner in North Vietnam.

In a philosophical mood Jones discussed Veterans Day (1971) and the veterans of America's past wars. Distinguishing between the return of the veterans of World Wars I and II - "those were times of great jubilation" - and the return of "our boys from Korea" which was not quite the same sort of occasion because of the nature of that war's end, he went on to ask the question that was on the minds of many young men, their friends, and family:

> What awaits the young man who in the future will be coming home from Vietnam? He will find his nation divided over the issue of the war in that distant land. He will find his nation in the midst of an emotional, sometimes violent debate over its future course in that war. Sadly, he will find a nation so involved in discussing the overall conflict that it may have overlooked the sacrifices he has made. In fact, many of our returning Vietnam veterans already have met with this attitude.

Without going into U.S. Vietnam policy, Ed Jones argued that Americans should honor American servicemen who fought in the undeclared war. His words suggested that he knew what the people of Brownsville and Haywood County thought of the war and the local soldiers who still were or had been part of it.

> It is not necessary for us to endorse Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon's foreign policy to appreciate the efforts of these fighting men. On this Veterans Day, I urge everyone to seek out our boys who have served in Vietnam and let them know that we understand and appreciate the sacrifices they have made.

In the spring of 1971 Washington D.C. was flooded by demonstrators, who attracted attention by their method of staging mock battles in conspicuous places and sit downs at the Justice Department and at the Capitol (14 May 1971). They tried to bring Washington traffic to a standstill. The disruptive demonstration had an immediate effect on the bill that placed a 31 December 1971 deadline on the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam. A congressman from the Midwest informed Ed Jones that he had almost made up his mind to vote for the bill. But now, he said, he was afraid that such a vote would associate him, in the minds of his constituents, with the disrupters who tried "to shut down our national government". Clearly, Jones was aware of the complexity of the issues, in contrast to Sensing.

On 2 February 1973 "Reports from Washington" elaborated on president Nixon's peace announcement on the night of 23 January 1973.

> When the war had finally come to an end, all of Washington gave a sigh of relief. The effect of the Vietnam War on America at this point was quite significant. The war tested the strength of the nation's fiber and strained every traditional institution from universities to Veterans Day. The television pictures of dead bodies every night had hardened our compassion for suffering. Strong men had died in the unpopular war because their country had asked them to fight. Others had left the U.S., severing family ties and a way of life, because their consciences told them to.

Ed Jones, as indicated before, focused on the subjects that were of immediate concern to his constituents. In effect his columns can be regarded as open letters or public answers to private questions. In the 1960s congressman Jones received many letters from young constituents who worried about the draft, but people of all ages wrote to him on the other subject that frustrated many people at the time: the forced way to put an end to racial imbalance in schools. The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the practice of school busing in order to achieve a racial balance in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina, gave a green light to this practice all over the South (18 June 1971). "Southern people, by and large, are law abiding people, both blacks and whites. For this reason we have moved to desegregate our schools. However, in other parts of the country, the trend has been toward segregation. For example the public schools in Washington, D.C., are now almost totally black, while many of the schools in the surrounding areas are almost totally white, in spite of the 1954 court decision. The same trend is evident in many of the large northern cities," argued Jones. Since he took office the congressman had received thousands of letters that voiced objections against busing. He, too, felt it was wrong to force certain school children against their will to ride buses to schools out of their own neighborhoods.

The three columnists of the *Brownsville States-Graphic:* North Callahan, Thurman Sensing and Ed Jones, informed the local people of Brownsville and Haywood County about subjects of national and international importance. They wrote in particular about the things that Southerners were interested in: the Civil War centennial celebrations, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War. An important issue related to the Vietnam War was the draft, which was especially dealt with by Ed Jones, who, of the three columnists, was closest to the people of Brownsville and Haywood County. As their representative he knew the city and the county, and more important, the people he represented and their concerns.

Summing up, we find that between 1960 and 1973 there were very different columnists who found their way into the paper of Brownsville

and Haywood County, Tennessee. In the 1960s North Callahan sent his columns focusing on the Confederate past from distant New York City. Columns airing conservative views followed on current developments in the South by the Southerner Thurman Sensing in the late 1960s. In the same period Ed Jones wrote comments on political developments in Washington D.C. as they affected the people of West Tennessee, whose representative he was. Each of them represented a particular strain of Southern white sensibility.

With Our Servicemen

In the early 1960s, at the start of the conflict in Southeast Asia, the servicemen who went to Vietnam were few and far between. News about these men was reported in individual articles. The "With Our Servicemen" column first appeared in the paper on 11 August 1967. By then, the increasing number and frequency of news items about local servicemen merited a weekly column. The information reported in "With Our Servicemen" was received from the military authorities, many of which are traditionally based in the South.

"With Our Servicemen" appeared in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* during the years when the Vietnam War called for massive troop movements (1967-1971), which also affected Brownsville and Haywood County. The frequency of news items about local servicemen received by the newspaper from the Military, led to the introduction of this special column, which exclusively reported on local soldiers involved in the Vietnam War. The advantage of having a special column for news about Haywood Countians in Vietnam was obvious. Readers could check the column at a glance. The importance of the column is that it chronicled the Vietnam record of the servicemen of Brownsville and Haywood County from 11 August 1967 to 17 December 1971.

In language and style the "With Our Servicemen" column differed from other articles about local servicemen in the newspaper. The column contained very brief news items, stating the event that was newsworthy, detailed information about the branch of the Armed Services which the serviceman was part of, his age (usually), and his home address or that of his parents. For example, "Pleiku, Vietnam - Army specialist four George W. Bowers, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Bowers, Route 5, Somerville, Tenn., was assigned as a mortarman in Troop C, 2nd Squadron of the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Calvary [=Cavalry] Regiment near Pleiku, Vietnam, Nov.20. Specialist Bowers' wife, Laura Jean lives on Route 4, Brownsville." The *Brownsville States-Graphic* printed the news it received from the Military verbatim in its "With Our Servicemen" column. The standardized texts of the items in the column point to the fact that thousands of such texts were written by a military

source and sent on to the home communities of the servicemen concerned. A comparison of the news items in the "With Our Servicemen" column over the years shows no noticeable change in language or style. Articles written about local soldiers not published in the "With Our Servicemen" column were different in language and style. A passage from the article written about corporal Mike Turner's return home in January 1968 makes this clear:

> Corporal Turner flew from Da Nang to Okinawa and on into El Toro, Calif. His parents had been "sitting by" the telephone for days, awaiting his call, and when it came, they immediately drove to Memphis Metropolitan Airport to welcome their son.

Instead of the detached, factual, clipped, military style of reporting, the front page article about the return to his home town of Mike Turner is a human interest story, focusing on the return of a son whose return had been hanging in the balance.

For various reasons, then, the local newspaper was a mix of widely different linguistic styles. It is important, however, to note that throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the majority of the articles printed in the local newspaper were written in an informal style and language. The columns and articles written by military sources and syndicated journalists found in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* show off the newspaper's own use of language to good advantage.

As said before the historical explanation for the proportionally large number of armed services installations in the Southern states is that during the colonial wars the main contenders acted on the conviction that control of the Southern coast lines and rivers was essential.[115] Many forts date from that time. After the War of Independence the United States further fortified the Southern coasts. Montgomery, for example, had five military companies in 1885, when its population was less than 25,000.[116] The Southern martial spirit and tradition further appear from the statistics of West Point and Annapolis. In 1910, 93 percent of U.S. Army general officers had Southern affiliations.[117]

As American military power increased in the course of the twentieth century, the need arose for more and larger military installations. The favorable climate was a decisive factor in Washington's choice for the South.[118] The first special warfare groups to go to Vietnam in 1961 were the army's Green Berets from Fort Bragg, situated in North Carolina. This did not come as a surprise.[119] Perhaps one of the main reasons why so many Southerners, and the people of Brownsville and Haywood County are no exception, choose a military career today is that in a predominantly agricultural region, there are few career opportunities. For

blacks and poor whites a military career is attractive. The incentives of a military career are an opportunity to see the world. It offers excellent medical care and early retirement. Thus Webb Banks, the mayor of Brownsville today, is a retired Air Force colonel, while another resident, colonel Russell Taliaferro is a retired (test) pilot and air base commander.

Sociologist Morris Janowitz found in 1950 and 1971 that officers with Southern affiliations of birth, schooling, or marriage continued to be represented disproportionately in America's military.[120] He also established that during the Vietnam War, "when there was a national backlash against the military", ROTC remained a popular choice on campuses in the South. Janowitz pointed out that the Southern small-town armories and American Legion posts functioned as social clubs for old boys. This was precisely the situation found in Brownsville, Tennessee, during the years of the Vietnam War.

My research of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* shows that the first reference made to Haywood County servicemen in connection with Vietnam, was on November 5, 1965. During the years of the conflict in Southeast Asia the total number of times servicemen were reported in the newspaper in connection with Vietnam amounted to one hundred and thirty-three. The final item in this context was published on February 16, 1973.

Vietnam veterans were younger on average by seven years than their World War II counterparts.[121] Christy Smith, whom I met in Brownsville in 1986 and again in 1995, served as a Red Cross volunteer in one of the hospitals in Japan, where wounded soldiers were flown in straight from the battlefield in Vietnam. She remarked that almost all of the severely wounded soldiers "were so young". Most servicemen from Brownsville and Haywood County were between twenty and twenty-three years old when they were sent to Vietnam. Sometimes they were only nineteen: Marine lance corporal A.C. Greer, Jr., for example, and Army private first class Leburn D. Barnes.

The "With Our Servicemen" columns during the most intense years of the Vietnam War (1967-1970) mention a large number of young local servicemen. Many local servicemen in Vietnam were career men. Records show that out of 111 servicemen that served in Vietnam, sixty-one were drafted by local Draft Board No. 41, but fifty were career men, volunteered, or joined elsewhere. Careers would be advanced by active service in a war zone. For that reason career servicemen were eager to be part of the war effort. Colonel Russell Taliaferro, for instance, told the author in an interview that he was at West Point during the end of World War II but graduated too late to fight in it. He was quick to volunteer for the Korean War, however, where he flew 125 missions as a fighter pilot. During 1966-1967 he served as an advisor to the Vietnamese Air Force, and as such flew 84 combat missions in Vietnam.

Colonel Webb F. Banks is another example of a career officer who welcomed the war as an opportunity to show his professionalism.The *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported in March 1969 that major Webb F. Banks, a career soldier from Haywood County, had completed a tour of duty in Vietnam. Webb Banks, who was promoted to lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force in 1972, was elected mayor of Brownsville and has held the position to the present day (October 2001). His career followed a typically Southern pattern, starting in the ROTC while he was at college. As a 2nd lieutenant he specialized in supply and logistics in the Air Force. In 1966, while stationed in France, he was sent straight to Vietnam to set up Phu Cat Air Base, situated on the 14th parallel. It was the largest air base set up in South Vietnam. Phu Cat was in the Korean sector, which meant that the Koreans, "who were tough fighters", protected it. To illustrate this point, mayor Banks told the author in an interview (Cf. chapter 3) that he remembered the Vietcong attacking the Korean base, which could be clearly seen from the American position. "[The Koreans] shot about seven [Vietcong]. And they were on the wire. They would not remove the men from the wire. And, of course, this was totally adverse to us. Finally, our medics went over to the base and asked them to move them and they did, but they had a different outlook on life than we did." Mayor Banks stressed the difference between officers like himself and the men who were drafted. He felt a professional; for him the war was a chance to see if he could really do what he had been trained for. All the officers around him felt the same. He also emphasized that in 1966-1967 they were "on the uphill" and morale was good. They all had a sense of accomplishment when the planes came in on April 17 and flew a mission, after Banks and his men had worked twenty-four hours a day from January onwards to complete the air base. Mayor Banks claimed that Vietnam had been a good experience.

Throughout the war years the newspaper reported on the heroism of the men deployed in the theater of war in Southeast Asia. "With Our Servicemen", for instance, reported that Army sergeant Nathaniel Boyd (21), of 1001 E. Jefferson St., Brownsville, took part in Operation Pershing in Vietnam "with other members of the 1st Air Calvary [=Cavalry] Division (24 November 1967). During the search and clear operation, he had been engaged in dragging the VC from their vast network of tunnels and bunkers." The tunnels were especially concentrated in the Iron Triangle region and near Cu Chi. They were one meter high by 0.75 meters wide.[122] Entering tunnels to look for the enemy carried a high risk, which was well recognized, and explains why the so-called Tunnel Rats received extra hazard pay.[123] The exchange of letters between congressman Ed Jones and SP/4 Max A. Nash, who wrote from Vietnam to ask for a Tennessee state flag so that his state might be represented at his duty station, is another example of the patriotic tone found in the *Brownsville States-Graphic*.

The weekly news about Haywood Countians in Vietnam in the local newspaper regularly featured promotions earned by the soldiers while they were away in Southeast Asia. In the 10 October 1966 issue, for instance, it was reported that James R.L. Hay (23), of Route 3, Brownsville, had been promoted to Army specialist fourth class in Phu Lam. William F. Allen was promoted to Army staff sergeant in August near Qui Nhon (22 September 1967). Marine lance corporal Ernest R. Norvell of Route 2, Bells, was "promoted to his present rank" while serving with the 11th Motor Transport Battalion in Vietnam (20 October 1967). Clarence A. Porch III, "whose parents live on Route 3, Brownsville", was promoted to Army sergeant in May, while assigned to the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam (21 June 1968). Archie D. Williamson (22), of Route 1, Stanton, was promoted to Army sergeant near Saigon (15 August 1969). Later that year the *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported that Marine sergeant Gary K. Brookshire from Memphis, the husband of the former Miss Jane L. Lominac of Route 2, Ripley, had been promoted "to his present rank while serving with the First Marine Aircraft Wing in Vietnam" (3 October 1969). Later, in January 1970, it was reported that Marine lance corporal Fletcher R. Parrish, "husband of Mrs. William B. Parrish of Route 3, Ripley, was promoted to his present rank while serving with the First Marine Division in Vietnam;" Marine corporal James W. Woodland, Route 1, Stanton, "was promoted to his present rank while serving with the First Marine Aircraft Wing in the northernmost provinces of Vietnam" (19 June 1970). On 30 July 1971, the local newspaper carried the following standard "With Our Servicemen" item:

> Chu Lai, Vietnam. Lonnie L. Landreth, 21, . . . recently was promoted to Army specialist four, near Chu Lai, Vietnam. He is serving as a radio operator in Battery C, 1st Battalion of the 23rd Infantry Division's 82nd Artillery.

Despite its brevity, the news item provided the soldier's family and friends, and the community back in the US with important and interesting information. The significant part played by an individual soldier in the war was recognized.

"With Our Servicemen" also informed the local community where the soldiers from Haywood County were deployed and how they were occupied. On 11 August 1967, for example, it was reported that Airman Apprentice Aaron D. King was serving with Patrol Squadron Nine, homebased at Moffett Field, California. Many members of VP-9 completed a tour of duty in Vietnam. They were instrumental in preventing infiltration of enemy supplies and troops into South Vietnam. To do this, squadron aircraft patrolled the coastal waters of South Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin.

At first sight it is surprising that several servicemen from such a landlocked state as Tennessee served with the US Navy. Yet, it should be remembered that there was a naval base at nearby Millington, Tennessee. Another explanation, offered by Ray Dixon from Brownsville is that Navy recruiters were very active at Haywood High School. This explains why the local newspaper's report on 25 October 1968 did not seem unusual when it referred to electrician's mate first class McLennan (29), the son of Mrs. Hattie M. McLennan of 701 Hatchie Ave., Brownsville, as serving aboard the destroyer USS Blandy in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The servicemen from Brownsville and Haywood County were deployed throughout South Vietnam, from the Mekong Delta to the northernmost provinces, occupied with a vast array of tasks, ranging from cook or steward to rifleman or mortarman. In a number of cases the "With Our Servicemen" column in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* mentioned that local men were in Vietnam, or were headed there, sometimes indicating their Division, sometimes not. The *Brownsville States-Graphic* also reported news about servicemen from other counties or states, who qualified as local through their marriage to local women. Thus, on 27 December 1968 it was reported that U.S. Air Force captain Edward J. Conrad, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Conrad of 4036 Baskel, Memphis, had completed his 100th combat mission in Southeast Asia. Captain Conrad's wife, the former Benita Reeves, was from Brownsville.

The professional soldiers, who were sons of Brownsville and Haywood County, were not mentioned in the "With Our Servicemen" column, because they had lived out of state for quite some time before they went to Vietnam. The events marking their careers, including their tour of duty in Vietnam, were reported elsewhere in the local newspaper.

Hierarchy in the military is based on rank. Medals, however, constitute a secondary type of hierarchy. Within this secondary hierarchical structure it is especially those medals that can be earned in time of war that mean more than anything. The validity of this point was demonstrated in May 1996 when Admiral Jeremy M. Boorda died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, hours before he was to have met with *Newsweek*'s bureau chief in his Pentagon office to discuss questions about his Vietnam combat medals. *Newsweek* was investigating whether Admiral Boorda had worn a combat "V" decoration that he was never officially awarded. Ironically, it was later (June 1998) confirmed by the civilian head of the Navy that Admiral Boorda had been entitled to wear the two Vietnam-era combat decorations for valor that were challenged just before his death. The chief of naval operations during the Vietnam War, Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., asserted that it had been "appropriate, justified and proper" for the Admiral to attach the small bronze combat Vs to the ribbons on his uniform.

During the war, the "With Our Servicemen" column in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* provided detailed information about the medals conferred on local servicemen in connection with their service in

Vietnam. Thus, it was reported in October 1967 that major Webb F. Banks, of Route 5, Brownsville, had received his second award of the U.S. Air Force Commendation Medal at Phu Cat AB, Vietnam. Later that same month Marine major William L. Ball, son of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin F. Ball, of Route 1, Gates, was awarded his fifth Air Medal. He earned the award for outstanding achievement in aerial flight and for courage and devotion to duty in the face of hazardous flying conditions while serving with the First Marine Aircraft Wing in Vietnam (27 October 1967). Bronze Star Medals were received by Army staff sergeant James M. Mize, for outstanding meritorious service in combat operations against hostile forces in Vietnam from January 1967 to January 1968, and Army specialist four George W. Bowers, Route 5, Somerville, who received his award near Pleiku, Vietnam (24 May 1968). On 2 August 1968 the column reported that Army sergeant Harry E. Walton, Route 1, Gates, Tennessee, had received the Army Commendation Medal in Vietnam on June 11, 1968, for heroism in action while engaged in ground operations against a hostile force in Vietnam. A typical instance of such reporting is the following, concerning SP/4 Charles R. Simmons, who was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam (28 August 1970). Specialist Four Simmons on 2 March 1970 had been serving as a Rifle Team Leader with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry. At that point in time

> the company was in a night defense position west of Tam Ky when it came under a mortar attack by an unknown size enemy force. With complete disregard for his personal safety, Specialist Simmons led his gun crew through the barrage of hostile mortar rounds to a strategic position where he directed them in engaging the insurgents. Repeatedly exposing himself to the concentration of enemy rounds, Specialist Simmons skillfully directed his gun crew in placing 90 MM recoilless rifle rounds onto the hostile emplacements until they were completely silenced. Through his timely actions, Specialist Simmons was highly instrumental in thwarting the determined enemy attack. His personal heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, the American Division, and the United States Army.

The *Brownsville States-Graphic* reported the news it received from the Military about medals received by local servicemen for a variety of feats and achievements. What the paper did not report on was the frustration felt by family members, who in vain attempted to get a posthumous medal for their loved ones who had died in Vietnam.[124]

"With Our Servicemen" news items about departures for Vietnam were few and far between. The transfer from the training facility to Vietnam was not routinely reported. It cannot be established whether this was caused by inconsistencies in the flow of information from the military authorities or not, but it was the newspaper's policy, so I was informed, to publish every available news item on the local servicemen. An example of such reporting occurs in December 1967 when the paper contained the news that Pvt. Harold Marlar, had completed his jungle training at Camp Campbell, Kentucky and had now left for Vietnam. In August 1970 it was reported that Lonnie Lynn Landreth left for Vietnam, after a 14-day leave spent in Stanton with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Landreth. Similarly, though the return of local servicemen from Vietnam was not reported regularly by the "With Our Servicemen" column, the return of sergeant James Emerson after two years service in Vietnam (5 December 1969) was reported on. Later, in August 1970, followed the news that sergeant George E. Duncan, son of Mr. and Mrs. G.O. Duncan of Somerville (formerly of Haywood County) had returned home after a year's tour of duty in Vietnam. The first Haywood County soldier to return from Vietnam was captain Jack Banks who, on 17 June 1966 was reported back by the paper from a year at Qui Nhon, two hundred miles north of Saigon.

Compared to the early stages of the war when the information on local servicemen focused on their responsibilities and the units they served in, the typical news in 1971 was about promotions and medals received. After the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, the predominance of Vietnam in the "With Our Servicemen" diminished. Career soldiers were reported to be deployed in Korea, after a tour of duty in Vietnam. For example,

> OSAN-NI, Republic of Korea, master sergeant Dewitt C. Webb, Jr., son of Mrs. D.C. Webb, Sr. of 1119 Watkins St., has arrived for duty at Osan AB, Republic of Korea.
>
> Sergeant Webb is an air freight supervisor with a unit of the Pacific Air Forces, headquarters for air operations in Southeast Asia, the Far East and Pacific area. He previously served in Vietnam.
>
> The sergeant is a 1950 graduate of Jackson High School and his wife is the former Joan Mellere.

As suddenly as the "With Our Servicemen" column with news items about local servicemen going to or serving in Vietnam had started in the course of 1967, so abruptly did it cease in 1971. The Vietnam War continued for another two years, but due to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam the "With Our Servicemen" was discontinued.

As said before the local newspaper published every news item about the local men in Vietnam that it received from the Military. Consequently, relatives, friends, and other readers were kept informed about the soldiers' progress. The local newspaper played a key role in keeping the community together. All sorts of activities initiated with a view to keeping in touch with Haywood Countians serving in Vietnam, and sponsored by the Red Cross, the churches, and the local schools, were published by the *Brownsville States-Graphic.* In response the soldiers in Vietnam sent letters to the editor, or to a son or daughter still at school in Brownsville, answering questions about Vietnam. These letters were published in the paper. The unifying part played by the local newspaper during the years of the Vietnam War was as obvious as it was important.

On Local Servicemen

Earlier I have examined discussions on Vietnam on the front page of the *Brownsville States-Graphic*. In this section I will focus on articles about Haywood countians in Vietnam, printed on inside pages. The articles are of a rich variety. Thus, on 17 December 1965 a letter to the editor of *The Commercial Appeal* (the Memphis newspaper) was reprinted under the headline "Marine in Vietnam Is Caustic". It was a letter from corporal Jimmie L. Stewart, a brother of William and Dezert Stewart, Mrs. Maurice Tritt and Mrs. Roland Cozart, all of Brownsville. At this relatively early stage in the war the letter's critical attitude vis-à-vis the anti-war demonstrations in the United States, shifting from a teach-in on the campus of the University of Michigan during the night of 24-25 March 1965 (Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975*, p.227) to the disorderly demonstrations involving radical pacifists in October 1965, (Schulzinger, p.234) was unprecedented:

> I am a Marine in Vietnam. I have heard about the people in the United States and all of the demonstrations they are putting on there. I think it one of the worst and most downright ridiculous things that I have ever heard in my life. We are over here giving our lives in a war and the people of the United States are saying and calling us women and children killers.

The tone of the letter is one of angered surprise. In corporal Stewart's view the world is turned upside down. He has found that his fellow-countrymen, instead of giving him and all American servicemen risking their lives for their country their wholehearted support, instead accuse the

American soldiers in Vietnam of despicable atrocities. This Marine, however, does not take this kind of what he believes to be senseless criticism lying down, which is why he decided to write the letter.

The letter also serves a didactic purpose. He tells his fellow-Americans what is really going on in Vietnam:

> I tell you, and I tell America, if they could, come here, join with us, and see for themselves what is taking place, they would change their minds. We here are fighting a war where everyone here is a suspected Vietcong. Where you never know when one is going to shoot you or say hello, where one is going to wave his hand to say hello or throw a grenade at you.

The Marine corporal turns the tables on the people who criticize soldiers in Vietnam, and participate in anti-war demonstrations. He argues that they are as bad as the Vietcong and are in fact the enemies of the American soldiers in Vietnam.

> I think that the people that start all of these demonstrations are not better than a Vietcong communist himself, and in my opinion, that is all he is.

Not content with just airing his grievances, corporal Stewart wants the anti-war demonstrators to be dealt with. "There should be something done about this." Interestingly, the Marine distinguishes between his native state of Tennessee and the rest of the United States, which is where the anti-war demonstrations take place. For that reason he can end his letter to the readers of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* with a sense of pride:

> Thank God that the people of Tennessee are a proud people and that they will stand behind the old boys that are in Vietnam fighting for our Tennessee and the United States. When I read . . . of the other states and what outlandish things they are doing, I am very proud of our old state, Tennessee. I am proud to fight for my people in my home state. I know if I give my life, that [it is] not given for a hopeless cause, because the people of Tennessee are behind all of the soldiers in Vietnam. I am proud to be from the Volunteer State.
> CPL. JIMMIE L. STEWART
> 3rd Bn. 12th Marines

Bty.G., 3rd Mar.Div. (Rein)
FMF
c/o FPO San Francisco
Calif. 96601

Marine corporal Stewart's letter suggested that the attitude in his native state of Tennessee was different from that found elsewhere in the United States.

Indeed, West Tennessee and the entire South have traditionally been more patriotic that the rest of the nation. The interviewees echoed the view expressed by corporal Stewart (Cf. chapter 3). In referring to Brownsville and Haywood County and its inhabitants, interviewees used the designation "the South", thus implicitly stating that for them West Tennessee was an integral part of the region. The view expressed by corporal Stewart therefore may be Southern rather than just typical of West Tennessee. The point is further illustrated by an interview with Ray Dixon of Brownsville, who responded to student protests against the war in Vietnam as follows:

> I think generally Southern people felt during those protests that those kids had no right to be there challenging the military in the first place. Most people in the South looked at the protests as strictly anti-American.

"The Story of the Viet Nam Widows" was published in the local newspaper on 14 January 1966. Jere Hooper, a native of Brownsville, had sent his local newspaper this story which had first been printed in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. It was about the wives of men who had given their lives in Vietnam. One of the wives, living in Columbus, Georgia, home of the Army's Cavalry division, was Mrs. William A. Ferrell. (It is a conservative custom in the South to refer to a married woman by her husband's full name preceded by "Mrs."). She read in the newspaper of a fierce battle which her husband's outfit had been in. The next day a cab driver arrived near midnight with a telegram. "It was almost a relief to get it. It was like peace had settled. I could stop worrying. But it is hard to understand he is gone." Three weeks later the flag-draped casket of sergeant William A. Ferrell was carried from a hearse to a gravesite in Columbus. Mrs. Ferrell watched with dignity. "He wanted me to be a good soldier," she said. At the end of the burial ceremony she received the tightly folded stars and stripes that had covered the casket. She held it tightly and wept. "When the 1st Calvary shipped out in August [including sergeant Ferrell], 7,000 military families were left behind. About 3,000 decided to stay in Columbus. To help ease the burden, the non-military families made the welfare of the

soldiers' wives their project. And Columbus has made old-fashioned neighborliness the usual thing."

The women whose husbands were in Vietnam were so nervous that visitors were expected to telephone ahead, because they could not stand hearing the door bell. The explanation for this was that it was standard procedure for the Armed Services to send two officers to the house of the serviceman killed while serving his country.

In the last issue of the *Brownsville States-Graphic* of 1967, a letter to a young girl in Brownsville from her father (major Webb Banks) in Vietnam, was published as a letter to the editor. The letter provided the readers of the local paper with information about the distant country where local soldiers were fighting for their country. Of equal importance was the fact that the information came from someone they could identify with. The letter was also highly unusual in that the author's fascination with the beauty of the country, its culture, and its people, clearly transpired. The war and the stereotypical thinking in terms of friend and foe, good and evil, are absent. There is only the sheer wonder at the beauty found in Southeast Asia. The letter reads like a page from the diary of a traveller in an exotic country. The images of Vietnam evoked, and the language they are couched in turn the letter into a literary document. Yet it was written by a high-ranking American soldier in a war zone.

Major Banks' letter exuded the spirit of president Kennedy's Peace Corps. In 1961 this kind of writing could have won the hearts and minds of Vietnamese peasants threatened by communist insurgents. On 1 March 1961, in fact, a cable went out from the White House to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon that read like *The Ugly American*, the novel by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick (1958), referred to as "a strong warning in prose fiction of what American cultural innocence and ignorance would lead to in Southeast Asia" (Thomas Myers, "Art and Literature: American Cultural Images of the Vietnam War" in Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, 1996). The novel was taken very seriously by some. In September 1959, for example, John F. Kennedy was one of four senators who handed to each and every member of the U.S. Senate copies of this novel. (Schulzinger, p.98). The senators did so because *The Ugly American* carried the message (intended to make an impact on foreign policy makers in Washington, D.C.) that American diplomats stationed in a Southeast Asian country with a strong resemblance to Vietnam had no understanding of the country or its people. In the cable referred to before, Americans in Vietnam were advised to emphasize contacts with peasants and study the work of general Lansdale in the Philippines (Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, 1993, p.69). Lansdale had been in the Office of Strategic Services in World War II and later, in the Philippines had helped president Ramon Magsaysay suppress the Huk rebellion (George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 1986, p.51). President Kennedy also issued an executive

order creating the Peace Corps (1 March 1961). Its objective was for young Americans to "fan out over the world to live in mud huts and shanties, doing good" (Reeves, p.69). They were to live at the same level as the citizens of the countries which they were sent to, doing the same work, eating the same food, speaking the same language.[125] President Kennedy's Peace Corps came in for high praise in the local newspaper in November 1962. Reports from a number of developing countries showed that the natives of these countries believed the Americans working there to be sincere and dedicated. Despite teething problems at the beginning the Peace Corps was expanded: ". . . more and more Americans are spreading out all over the world in an effort to help the peoples of the various countries of the world". The commercial advantage of the Peace Corps was in particular that the United States could cut down on the traditional foreign aid program.

Major Banks' letter read as follows:

Dear Tina,
You asked me to write you about Vietnam so that you could read it to your class. I hope I will be able to give you and your classmates an idea of what Vietnam is really like.

Vietnam is a beautiful and fascinating country in spite of the ravages of war. It has dense jungles, beautiful coastlines, waterways, and many rugged mountains. The peasant farmers can be seen everywhere tilling their rice paddies, plowing with water buffalo or laboring in the cane fields. These people have become so accustomed to war that they seldom look up at the jets overhead or toward the explosions of heavy shells a short distance away.

Along the waterways there are thousands of fishermen in their bamboo boats working their nets or fish traps.

In the hills and mountains the various tribal people in their scanty clothing can be seen going about their daily lives. They hunt game with crossbows and arrows. These people hunt tigers, elephants, and other jungle animals which are plentiful in the deep mountainous jungles.

In the cities and surrounding areas, things are somewhat modern. In this country there is so much contrast of the new and the old, of the beautiful and the unsightly that it will be a country I will never forget.

The Vietnamese language sounds funny to us. The meaning of words are different when the tones in which they are spoken are changed. As a result, there is a strange musical quality in the Vietnamese speech. Vietnamese can be written in either Chinese characters or the more popular national script, which is like we write. The Tribal people in the Highlands speak a variety of languages. Some of these Tribal languages can be written and some cannot.

Vietnamese food consists of rice, shrimp, bean sprouts, shredded banana stalks, and a type of seaweed. Along the coast and in the Delta area, pineapples, watermelons, tangerines, oranges and bananas are available. The Vietnamese national dish is a fish sauce called "nuoc-mam". With the exception of rice no other food is more popular. This fish sauce is made by placing fish and salt in a vat with pressure applied to mash the liquid from the fish. Six pounds of fish will produce one pint of "nuoc-mam". This process is continued from four months to a year. When the bacterial fermentation has completed its action, the liquid is drained off, strained and placed in containers made of clay. I have never eaten any of this, but I sure have smelled it - and what a smell!!

The Vietnamese people are small and generally very nice. You must understand that there have been relatively few years that the Vietnamese have not been dominated by a foreign power. The people in the South want freedom and have asked the Americans to help them.

I hope this will give you a little understanding of the people of Vietnam.

Your Father,
Follin Banks

This letter from a soldier-father in war-torn Vietnam to his young daughter in Brownsville is unique for several reasons. Firstly, it is a sweet, beautiful letter from a father to his daughter; it is as if he is in the same room, quietly sharing his knowledge with her about a subject unfamiliar to her. It is hard to tell from the tone of the letter that ten thousand miles separate Follin Banks from his daughter Tina. Secondly, Banks' letter was written in response to his daughter's request to write her something about Vietnam. What strikes the reader in the American serviceman's letter to his child is that he discusses Vietnam favorably: "the Vietnamese people are small and generally nice". He gives a detailed description of the country's sheer beauty. In discussing its geography, he mentions mountains, rivers, jungles, and the seaboard. He mentions peasants and fishermen, and the exotic ways of the tribal people in the mountainous part of Vietnam. Major Banks gives a lucid description of the Vietnamese language, pointing out that Vietnamese can be written in either Chinese characters or the more popular national script, which is the way Americans write. He mentions the tropical fruit grown in the Mekong Delta in the South and claims that the favorite Vietnamese food is a fish sauce and proceeds to describe its preparation in great detail.

The attitude to Vietnam emanating from the letter is unusual; on the brink of 1968 American involvement in Vietnam was still increasing and

the horror of the war in terms of American soldiers killed and wounded was something that all Americans were aware of, which makes major Banks' letter all the more remarkable. His letter does not ignore the war, rather it is something mentioned in passing, as a fact of life for the Vietnamese. The letter does not mention his duties or experiences in Vietnam. The justification for the American presence in Vietnam as he sees it and passes on to his daughter is that the people in the South want freedom and have asked the Americans to help them.

Thirdly, the letter that major Banks sent to Tina served several purposes. Basically, it was, of course, a letter from a father to his daughter. The letter was also intended to be read to Tina's class in school. Indirectly, the audience in the school would be larger than Tina's class. A number of students were bound to discuss what they had heard in class at home or with other people in the community. Finally, the letter was printed in the *Brownsville States-Graphic*, which was read by many in the local community. The importance of the letter therefore exceeds the level of a father-daughter communication. In effect, the letter looked beyond the war and showed an interest from which military rhetoric is lacking.

The articles about local servicemen in the *Brownsville States-Graphic* during the years when they were involved in the Vietnam War, are a window on the war. The view they offer to the community is limited, which follows from the fact that a limited number of men served in the war. Despite this restriction, the view of the War in Vietnam offered in the local newspaper ranges from the picturesque and the sublime in the letter from major Banks to his daughter to the heart-rending uncertainty of the fate of soldiers in Vietnam or the survivors' exasperation with the military bureaucracy when it came to the awarding of the Purple Heart.

The death of a Rick Johnston, a young soldier from Brownsville who went to Vietnam as a volunteer illustrates this final point. Rick Johnston's death has been painful for his family to the present day. His parents have been trying in vain to get a posthumous Purple Heart for their son for many years. The military authorities responsible have so far denied their request for the award on the basis that there were no witnesses to the helicopter crash and that it could therefore not be determined whether the death was an accident or not. In a written response the military authorities stated in 1996 that the request for closer investigation was one of approximately 10,000 suggesting that a definitive decision would not be made in the foreseeable future.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) sent the following information on Specialist Johnston:

--- General / Personal ---
Last Name: JOHNSTON
First Name: RICHARD KEITH
Home of Record (official): BROWNSVILLE

State (official) : TN
Date of Birth: Friday, December 23, 1949
Sex: Male
Race: Caucasian
Marital Status: Single

--- Military ---
Branch: Army
Rank: SP4
Serial Number: 354404967
Component: Regular
Pay grade: E4
MOS (Military Occupational Specialty code): 67N2F

--- Action ---
Start of Tour: Wednesday, May 6, 1970
Date of Casualty: Monday, August 17, 1970
Age at time of loss: 20
Casualty type: (C1) Non-hostile, died of other causes
Reason: Air loss - Crashed on land (Crew member - Helicopter)
Country: South VietNam
Province: Binh Dinh
The Wall: Panel 08W - Row 118

On the basis of this information, Richard Johnston's death has been ruled as non-hostile. Army Regulation 600-8-22 Par 2-8a (5) states that the Purple Heart award can only be made as the direct result of an act of any hostile foreign force. The official reason for the crash is *air loss*. No explanation is given for this, however. The logical follow-up question would be, "Was the *air loss* the result of engine failure or hostile fire, or was there any other reason for the crash?" Helicopters do not just drop out of the sky. The official reason stated for the crash remains unsatisfactory.

The Vietnam veterans organization has indicated that the only thing the family can do if they disagree with the Army's decision not to award the Purple Heart, is to petition the Board for Correction of Army Records and ask that the records be corrected to show that Richard Johnston was awarded the Purple Heart. For almost thirty years the family has been trying in vain to get the posthumous Purple Heart, and all this time the pain has endured.

Susan K. Johnston Pettigrew, Richard Johnston's sister, in a letter to the author, said:

> My older brother, Rick, was a helicopter gunner in 1970 when his helicopter went down near the Cambodian border. According to the

U.S. Army, all on board were killed. They said that the group was on some sort of early morning mission and they struck "something" in the fog, which caused the crash. He went to Vietnam of his own free will, after attending University of Tennessee at Martin for one year.

It has been twenty-five years since Rick was killed and besides the void in all of our lives because of his absence, the Army has yet to provide my parents with the Purple Heart. They say there is a backlog of about 10,000 requests and the last time I spoke with them they could not even find the paperwork regarding our request. I am working on other routes to get the Army to take some action on this. I would like my parents to have Rick's Purple Heart before they die.

A letter bringing the matter to the attention of vice-president Al Gore, was passed on to the Military Awards Branch of the Department of the Army, U.S. Total Army Personnel Command, Alexandria, Va., and yielded the following reply:

In order to qualify for an award of the PH, two requirements must be met. First, the individual must have been wounded or injured as the direct result of enemy action. Second, the wounds or injuries must have been serious enough to require medical treatment that was recorded in official Army records.

Based on these criteria, we are unable to confirm Specialist Johnston's entitlement to an award of the Purple Heart. The documentation required to support this request should be available in Specialist Johnston's Official Military Personnel File (OMPF), which is maintained at the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Center (ARPERCEN), 9700 Page Boulevard, ATTN: ARPC-VSA-I, St. Louis, MO 63132-5000. Therefore, your correspondence has been forwarded to them so that a review of his OMPF can be conducted.

Additionally, we have asked ARPERCEN to review all Morning Reports and Hospital/Clinical records to help in determining if an award of the PH is authorized. If medical documentation can be located to substantiate an award of the PH, ARCERPEN will provide this office with the necessary information so that orders, citation, and medal set can be prepared and forwarded to his family.

I regret that my reply could not be more favorable. The fact that we cannot confirm Specialist Johnston's entitlement to an award of the PH in no way detracts from his meritorious service to our nation during a time of great need.

Sincerely,
John R. Osweiler
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Chief, Personnel Service
Support Division

The letter is a clear example of the bureaucratic way of dealing with what quite obviously remains a family tragedy; it lacks the kind of empathy the military invariably demonstrates in the days immediately following the death of a soldier killed in the line of duty, when a serviceman stays with the family until the day of the funeral.

Editorials[*]

The editorial columns of Southern country newspapers reflected, and often gave direction to, the conservatism of their predominantly white audiences. But the region also produced a number of spirited editors who spoke out, often in strong terms, against the prevailing climate of opinion.[126] The history of Southern journalism contains stories of country editors who risked their lives by speaking out against racism. P.D. East, for example, founded the *Petal Paper* (1953) in Petal, Mississippi, "and made it into an institution of small-town racial liberalism" (Charles Reagan Wilson & William Ferris, *GCCCCGpCCG Of GCCGCCG GCGGG*, 1989, p.937). The *GCGGCCGGG GGGGGGCpCG*, however, showed itself to be a traditional, conservative white newspaper throughout the decade of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. For example, the editorial on 29 April 1960 focused on the aftermath of the civil rights bill; it emphasized that senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia, one of the Southern Democrats who opposed the bill, said that, in the end, the result was a victory for the South, for most of the bill's objectionable provisions had been eliminated.[127] Senator Strom Thurmond phrased it even more strongly, saying that if it had not been for majority leader Lyndon Johnson, the South would have not been saved from a viciously punitive civil rights law.[128]

The conservatism of the local newspaper is born out by the editorial "Did The Red Star Shine?". Published on 10 February 1961, it focused on civil rights. Five young students from the University of Michigan appeared before General Sessions judge Lyle Reid on a minor traffic violation charge. Judge Reid dismissed charges with the admonition that they leave town immediately. The students were said to be members of a campus political organization known as The Voice. They stated that their

---

[*] All references giving dates placed in brackets are to the *Brownsville States-Graphic*

business here was to deliver food and clothing to needy blacks of this county. The editorial doubted whether this was the sole purpose of their visit. "We . . . concur with the thinking of the local police, who arrested them, that the packages of food were just blinds to admit them to mingle with local Negroes and add fuel to the smoldering fire that, if fanned enough by outside agitation, will burst into a flame that will consume white and black alike." The editor added suspiciously that the FBI should investigate The Voice, because it was feared that it might be a communist organization.

Concern about race relations transpired from the editorial headlined "Let Us Not Be Consumed". Throughout the United States race relations were strained and the media reported trouble spots on an almost daily basis (28 June 1963). Serious trouble in Haywood County had so far been avoided due to level-headed black leaders of the community, who had successfully influenced the more impatient members of their community. Quoting the Supreme Court, which had said that "in our democracy change must come in an orderly manner", the editorial again focused on race relations on 6 September 1963. It expressed the view that "the danger in official support for illegal mass demonstrations is just now beginning to be appreciated outside the South," and that racial groups and in fact any other group could cause chaos and trouble, because they were convinced that neither the federal government nor the federal courts would convict them for violating local laws.

Set against this suspicion of federal power, the editorial in the local newspaper on 4 October 1963 condemned a serious incident in Birmingham, Alabama (on 15 September 1963 a bomb killed four young girls at Sunday school in the 16th Street Baptist Church) in the strongest possible terms:

On Killing Children

> One can think of nothing more barbaric, and nothing designed to do more harm to the United States, and the South, than the bombing of a church and the killing of four negro children - an event which recently occurred in Alabama.
>
> It is difficult to conceive of a mentality that would have planned such an attack. . .
>
> One of the great traditions and heritages in the United States is the freedom of speech and the freedom to exercise the religion of one's choice. When an attack on a church is committed, ostensibly because of the expressions of leaders of members of that church, it is a threat to every American citizen, for it is an attack on democracy itself and on the freedom of the individual.
>
> Acts such as the murder of innocent children in Birmingham are so repulsive, however, and so inexcusable and damning, that if they are repeated or continue, the result can only be fatal to the cause of