

CHAPTER 11

CONFLICT, CHANGE, AND CONTINUITY, 1960–1968

The quiet, peaceful way of life we had known was shattered. But still in our minds are memories of those wonderful days given only to college students at Ole Miss.

OLE MISS, 1963

In a speech at Greenwood in early July 1962, Chancellor J. D. Williams asked Ole Miss alumni to help him preserve academic freedom at the university. Six months later he was asking them to help him save the university itself. Ten days before his Greenwood speech, the fifth circuit court of appeals had ordered the admission of James Howard Meredith, an air force veteran from Kosciusko who was then enrolled at Jackson State College. Chancellor Williams and other university officials accepted the verdict of the court and began preparations for Meredith's admission in the fall of 1962.

Important though it was, breaking the color barrier at Ole Miss was only a part of Meredith's larger plan. He came back to Mississippi, he wrote, "to accomplish my divine mission." Meredith's mission was to change the system, to open the closed society that had shut him and other blacks out for so long. He began his assault on the closed society in September 1960 when he enrolled at Jackson State College. The election of President John Kennedy triggered his resolve, and, on January 21, 1961, the day after Kennedy was inaugurated, Meredith wrote to the University of Mississippi requesting a catalog and application forms. A week later he received a letter from registrar Robert B. Ellis saying, "We are very pleased to know of your interest in becoming a member of our student body. . . . If we can be of further help to you in making your enrollment plans, please let us know."

Before returning his application, Meredith wrote the NAACP Legal Defense Fund requesting legal assistance in the event a costly court case was necessary to gain admission. Without waiting for a reply, Meredith

returned his application and added a historic postscript: "I sincerely hope that your attitude toward me as a potential member of your student body . . . will not change upon learning that I am not a white applicant. I am an American-Mississippi-Negro citizen." James Meredith genuinely hoped his admission could be achieved without violence and turmoil. In a letter along with his application, he wrote, "With all of the [changes] taking place in our country in the new age, I feel certain that this application does not come as a surprise to you. I certainly hope that this matter will be handled in a manner . . . complimentary to the University and the state of Mississippi. . . . I am very hopeful that the complications will be as few as possible."

Meredith informed the registrar that he had not complied with the requirement of five letters of recommendation from Ole Miss alumni because the university's alumni in his home county were white and he did not know any of them personally. Since 1954 in-state applicants to Mississippi institutions of higher learning were required to furnish five letters of recommendation from alumni of the institution to which they were applying. In lieu of those letters, Meredith included five letters of recommendation from black citizens in his community. In the meantime, he asked the colleges he attended while in the air force to send his transcripts to the University of Mississippi.

Meredith's application triggered a mechanism that had been in place since the late 1940s. In accordance with an unwritten policy, the university sent copies of his application and other correspondence to the board office and six copies to the state attorney general's office. The board of trustees and state officials, in consort with the university, implemented a strategy to dissuade Meredith from his bid to break the color barrier at Ole Miss. Based on the surmise that Meredith would go away if they did not admit him, as Charles Dubra and Medgar Evers had, the strategy was set in motion with a February 4, 1961, telegram to Meredith from the registrar:

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE IT HAS BEEN FOUND NECESSARY TO DISCONTINUE CONSIDERATION OF ALL APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION . . . RECEIVED AFTER JANUARY 25, 1962. YOUR APPLICATION WAS RECEIVED SUBSEQUENT TO SUCH DATE AND THUS WE MUST ADVISE YOU NOT TO APPEAR FOR REGISTRATION.

After receiving this initial rejection, Meredith wrote the justice department to inform the civil rights division that Ole Miss had denied his application. The opening sentences of that letter illustrate Meredith's frustration with the indignities that he and "his people" experienced: "It is with much regret that I present this information to you concerning myself. Whenever I attempt to reason logically about this matter, it grieves me keenly to realize that an individual, especially an American, the citizen of a free democratic nation, has to clamor with such procedures in order to try to gain just a small amount of his civil and human rights."

On the day Meredith wrote to the justice department, he received a letter from Thurgood Marshall, director of the NAACP defense fund (and future justice of the United States Supreme Court). Marshall asked Meredith for a copy of his transcripts and a university catalog, and said in closing, "I think it should go without saying that we are vitally interested in what you propose." Neither Meredith nor Marshall had any way of knowing that the admission requirements listed in the catalog Marshall requested were being revised on that very day.

At a called meeting on February 7, 1961, the board of trustees designed a new set of entrance requirements that would make it more difficult for Meredith to gain admission to Ole Miss. The new admissions policy stated that a student could not transfer from one state institution to another unless "the student's work is acceptable to the receiving institution and to the Board of Trustees." The new policy also stated that "applications which present . . . questionable or uncertain data . . . shall be rejected or referred to the Board of Trustees." The trustees seriously misjudged Meredith's determination to negotiate those minor hurdles. Even more so, they miscalculated the effectiveness and constitutionality of the measures.

After Marshall examined Meredith's transcript and other credentials, the NAACP offered him legal assistance and assigned Constance Baker Motley to the case. On February 16, 1961, Meredith received a letter from Motley advising him to make certain that all his transcripts and other papers were in order and to apply for the summer term beginning June 8. As he was preparing his application for the summer term, he received a letter dated February 21 from the registrar that read: "Since we are unable to accept your application for admission, I am returning

your . . . room deposit." Meredith immediately returned the deposit with an application for the June 8 summer term. After he received no response concerning his summer application, he asked about its status in a letter on March 18. In the meantime Meredith maintained an active correspondence with Constance Motley. After almost two weeks without hearing from the registrar, Meredith again wrote and inquired about the status of his application. He closed this letter, "However, realizing that I am not a usual applicant to the University of Mississippi, and that some timely items might need to be considered, I certainly hope that the entire matter will be handled in a manner complimentary to the University of Mississippi."

When Meredith heard nothing from the university for almost two more weeks, he wrote the dean of the college of liberal arts, asking him to evaluate his transcript, review the application, and advise him if he had met all admission requirements. On May 9 Meredith finally received a letter from the registrar informing him that the university would accept only forty-eight of the ninety hours he had earned. The university would not accept the credits from Jackson State College, which was not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges. The presumption, or perhaps the hope, was that Meredith would be so discouraged by the loss of almost half of his college credits that he would abandon his effort to gain admission to the university. The registrar emphasized that the evaluation of Meredith's transcript did not in any way indicate approval or disapproval of his application, and wrote in closing, "In view of the foregoing [the loss of 42 hours of credit] please advise if you desire your application to be treated as a pending application." After conferring with Constance Motley, Meredith informed the university that he would accept the evaluation of his transcript and wanted his application to be considered for the summer term. He also applied for married-student housing for the summer.

On May 15, the day Meredith advised the registrar that he wanted to keep his application active, a campus committee revised the university's entrance requirements to conform to the board's new admission policy. The new policy stated that Ole Miss would not accept transfer students from unaccredited colleges or students who withdrew from their institutions "in the midst of a quarter, or tri-semester." These two new provisions were adopted to preclude Meredith's admission. Jackson State

College, where Meredith was currently enrolled, was not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and was on the quarter system. Meredith could not transfer to Ole Miss without withdrawing "in the midst of a quarter," which would make him ineligible to enter Ole Miss. The new standards also included a statement that the university would reject applications "containing false, contradictory, questionable, or uncertain data." These requirements first appeared in the 1962 catalog. Also appearing in that catalog was a notation of astonishing candor: "Changes or revisions [in admission requirements] are sometimes made without prior notice in order to cope with changing conditions."

In a letter dated May 25, 1962, ten days after the adoption of these new admission standards, the university registrar formally rejected Meredith's application. The registrar informed Meredith that he rejected his application because the university did not admit transfer students from unaccredited institutions and because he did not present five letters of recommendation. The letter concluded: "I see no need for mentioning any other deficiencies. Your application file has been closed."

After this formal written rejection, James Meredith filed a law suit on May 31, 1961, in the federal district court. Constance Motley favored appealing directly to the board rather than filing suit. Meredith, however, preferred a suit, because he believed the courts would decide the issue quickly. Judge Sidney J. Mize set a hearing on Meredith's suit for June 12 at Biloxi. After much legal wrangling the district court rescheduled the hearing and transferred it to Jackson. Finally, on December 12, 1961, six months after the hearing on the preliminary injunction began, the district court ruled in favor of the university. Judge Mize held that Meredith had not shown that he was denied admission solely on the basis of race. The ruling was based on the registrar's testimony that "he gave no consideration whatsoever to the race or the color of the plaintiff." Judge Mize further ruled that the admission policies adopted by the board of trustees, even those enacted after Meredith filed his application, were not designed "in any attempt direct or indirect, to discriminate against anyone solely on the grounds of race and color. . . . The testimony shows, and I find as a fact, that there was no discrimination against any student . . . solely because of his race or color."

Two days after Judge Mize's ruling, Meredith asked the fifth circuit to grant his request for a preliminary injunction so he could enroll for

the spring semester beginning February 8, 1962. A three-judge panel consisting of Elbert Tuttle, Richard T. Rives, and John Minor Wisdom denied Meredith's request. In unusually pointed language, however, the panel reversed Judge Mize on several points and admonished him for his conduct of the hearing. Judge Wisdom was baffled by the record of the hearing, which he said was argued "in the eerie atmosphere of never-never land." Judge Wisdom also took judicial notice that Mississippi "maintains a policy of segregation" and that is "a plain fact known to everyone." The panel struck down the requirement of five letters of recommendation because that requirement was "a denial of equal protection of the laws in its application to Negro candidates."

The fifth circuit's response was favorable to Meredith, but the court ruled that he had not conclusively proven that he was denied admission because of race. Judge Wisdom, therefore, sent the case back to the lower court and ordered a full trial on the merits of the case. That trial opened on January 16, 1962, only to be delayed another week due to the illness of an assistant attorney general. The trial finally began in the last week of January 1962. University officials testified that they handled Meredith's application in the same way as all other applications. Constance Motley asked the registrar to explain specifically why he rejected Meredith's application. The registrar responded, "It struck me . . . that he was trying . . . to make trouble at the University." The registrar also testified that there was "questionable or uncertain data" on Meredith's application. Meredith, for example, claimed to be a resident of Mississippi, but the registrar considered him an out-of-state student.

Members of the board of trustees testified that they had never held any "formal" discussions regarding Meredith's application, and that he had not been treated any differently from other applicants. After this testimony, Motley attempted to introduce into evidence several newspaper articles that referred to James Meredith's effort to enroll at the "all white University" and "to break the color barrier" in Mississippi. After Judge Mize did not allow Motley to admit the news stories, the plaintiff rested.

When court resumed on Friday morning, January 26, the registrar was the final witness called by the state. After a lengthy discussion of

Meredith's moral character and his mission in life, the state's attorney asked the registrar:

Q. What did the race or color of James Meredith have to do with any action you have ever taken . . . with regard to his application?

A. Meredith's race or color has had no influence on the decisions which I have taken.

In its closing argument on Saturday morning, January 27, the state asserted that James Meredith was a troublemaker who was lacking in good moral character, and it was for that reason, rather than race, that the university denied him admission. Judge Mize took the case under advisement and announced that he would issue a ruling before February 8, the start of the spring semester. On February 3, he found that Meredith was not denied admission on the basis of race. In his ruling, Judge Mize stated:

[T]he Board of Trustees . . . testified unequivocally [that] all policies and regulations were adopted without regard to race . . . and that at no time was the application of James Meredith . . . discussed by any members of the Board of Trustees.

The registrar . . . testified . . . that the question of race of the Plaintiff was not discussed or considered in any way whatsoever when his application for admission to the University was being considered. All of the other officials of the University testified to substantially the same thing.

The proof shows . . . and I find as a fact that there is no custom or policy now, nor was there any at the time Plaintiff's application was rejected, which excluded qualified Negroes from entering the University. The proof shows, and I find as a fact, that the University is not a racially segregated institution.

A week after Judge Mize's ruling, the *Mississippian* ran a front-page story entitled "Meredith — the Man." Written by editor James Robertson, a future member of the Mississippi supreme court, the article reported that Meredith was from Kosciusko, that his parents owned land in Attala County, and that the Merediths were "good, solid, substantial citizens." The article concluded, "A history major, [Meredith] plans to enroll — if admitted — in the College of Liberal Arts." The article was a straight news story without a hint of advocacy, yet it provoked an angry response because Robertson had referred to Meredith as a history

major, not a troublemaker, as a transfer student, not an outside agitator, and as a man, not a Negro. The *Rebel Underground*, an anonymous and irregular mimeographed ledger, countered the article with one of its own, "Meredith—the darkie," and accused Robertson of degrading "the great trust and faith given him by his fellow students." A resolution to reprimand Robertson was introduced in the student senate but was defeated in favor of a "watered down" statement that the student lawmakers were "not in complete agreement" with his editorial policies.

That was the second time in two months that Robertson's editorial policies had landed him in trouble with lawmakers. In a January editorial, Robertson criticized the State Sovereignty Commission for its surveillance of Pulitzer Prize-winning editor Hazel Brannon Smith of the *Lexington Advertiser*. The day after that editorial appeared, a seventy-four-year-old unreconstructed representative from Copiah County took to the floor of the house of representatives to inform his colleagues that someone named Robertson "up at Ole Miss" had criticized the Sovereignty Commission for spying on Hazel Smith. "We will run that school as it ought to be run," he said, "or I am for closing it down even if it is the principal school in the state." The *Clarion-Ledger* also scolded the student editor for harping on civil rights rather than states' rights and for criticizing the Sovereignty Commission while ignoring Meredith's suit for the "right" to attend "our University," which was the "real danger" confronting Mississippi.

At a called meeting on Saturday, February 10, 1962, the board of trustees discussed the "real danger" confronting Mississippi and unanimously adopted a statement entitled "Findings of Fact . . . As to the Application of James Meredith." The "Findings of Fact" reiterated the board's assertion that Meredith was denied admission for several valid, nonracial reasons and directed Chancellor Williams not to admit Meredith. Symbolic of those topsy-turvy times, the page containing the "Findings of Fact" was inserted upside-down in the bound volume of the board minutes.

On February 12, 1962, James Meredith appealed Judge Mize's ruling and asked the fifth circuit to order his immediate admission, but a three-judge panel did not grant the order. Elbert P. Tuttle, a member of the panel, urged his fellow judges not to wait but to act immediately to grant the injunction while the appeal was pending. Judge Tuttle

argued that the probability of the court's final verdict in favor of Meredith was so overwhelming that any further postponement would be unfair to him. More importantly, he said, a long delay would encourage the "rise of massive resistance." The judges of the fifth circuit, correctly called "unlikely heroes" by writer Jack Bass, may have missed an opportunity to prevent the violence that occurred in the fall by not admitting Meredith in the spring.

On June 25, the fifth circuit reversed the district court's decision and directed Judge Mize to order Meredith's admission for the fall semester. Judge Wisdom's sharply worded opinion criticized the procedural and legal delays and pointed out numerous errors in Judge Mize's conduct of the trial. "A full review of the record," Judge Wisdom wrote, "leads the court inescapably to the conclusion that from the moment the defendants discovered that Meredith was a Negro they engaged in a carefully calculated campaign of delay, harassment, and masterful inactivity. It was a defense designed to discourage and defeat by evasive tactics which would have been a credit to Quintus Fabius Maximus." At Tuttle's insistence the court order stated that anyone acting to thwart, obstruct, or otherwise prevent the admission of Meredith would be in contempt of the fifth circuit. James Howard Meredith had finally won his case in court. "In every other state but Mississippi that would have solved the matter," wrote Russell Barrett, a professor of political science at the university who advocated Meredith's admission, and author of *Integration at Ole Miss*. "Instead," he wrote, "it soon became clear that he had reached but one more detour of the many that remained."

At a called meeting in early September, the board of trustees divested Chancellor Williams and other university officials of the authority to act on James Meredith's application. According to the board's directive all "authority . . . relating to action on the application of James Howard Meredith is withdrawn from every official of the University of Mississippi . . . and the same is hereby expressly reserved exclusively unto this Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning, effective immediately." The board directed the executive secretary to obtain Meredith's application file and "keep the same in his possession until the Board makes final disposition of this matter."

A week after the board divested the university of its authority to act on Meredith's application, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black vacated

all legal stays and objections and ordered the admission of James Meredith. On September 13, 1962, three days after Justice Black's decree, Judge Mize directed the university to admit Meredith. On the evening of Judge Mize's order, Governor Ross Barnett, on a statewide television network, informed the people of Mississippi that they had only two choices: "We must either submit to the unlawful dictates of the federal government, or stand like men and tell them NEVER!" In a veiled threat to close the university, Barnett promised the people who had elected him that no school would be integrated as long as he was governor. Under a 1960 constitutional amendment Governor Barnett had the authority to close a public school to prevent its integration, and his oblique reference to that authority startled many Ole Miss alumni, who feared Barnett's counselors might induce him to close the university. A few days after Barnett's speech a group of prominent alumni organized a secret committee. The committee's singular purpose was to keep the university open, even if it meant admitting Meredith.

The day after Governor Barnett's televised address, the board of trustees met at Jackson to review the court orders pending against them and university officials. There were two significant features of those orders. First, the trustees and university officials were specifically named in the fifth circuit's injunction and would be in contempt if the order was not carried out. Second, the injunction would apply to their successors should the existing board of trustees resign or be impeached. After the board reviewed the various injunctions, Attorney General Joe Patterson and special counsel Charles Clark met with the board and discussed their options. It was evident early in the discussion that the board's only choices were defiance or compliance. Patterson and Clark advised the board that the state had reached its legal limits of resistance, they were under direct orders to admit Meredith, and the failure to do so would likely result in contempt citations. Following Patterson's dismal assessment, Governor Barnett's executive assistant assured the trustees that the governor was formulating a new legal strategy and asked them to take no formal action until they heard from him. The board did not adjourn on that Friday but recessed until Monday and invited Barnett to meet with them and explain his new strategy. Over that weekend Governor Barnett began a series of secret telephone con-

versations with Attorney General Robert Kennedy and other officials in the justice department.

On Monday, September 17, the trustees reassembled at Jackson for a meeting with Governor Barnett, Attorney General Patterson, and Charles Clark. Barnett briefly outlined his options in the continuing legal battle with James Meredith. A special session of the legislature, which had been called several weeks earlier, would convene the next day, and the governor anticipated legislation that would give him new options for dealing with the crisis. Barnett also told the trustees that Hinds County authorities had charged Meredith with false voter registration, and that it might be possible to arrest and incarcerate him on those charges. When Meredith enrolled at Jackson State in 1960, he registered to vote in Hinds County. State officials claimed he was a legal resident of Attala County, where he owned property, and filed the charges against him. Governor Barnett raised two other options that startled some of the trustees. First, he mentioned the possibility of closing the university. Second, he asked the trustees if they would be willing to accept contempt citations and go to jail.

After Governor Barnett left the meeting the trustees had a lively discussion about contempt of court. Registration was the next week, and, if the university did not admit Meredith university officials and the trustees would be in contempt. Several members of the board stated bluntly that they were not going to be in contempt, which prompted M. M. Roberts, a lawyer and Barnett's most stalwart supporter on the board, to argue that "contempt of court means nothing" and that the federal courts would not cite the trustees. After that hagggle, the board reluctantly agreed to give Governor Barnett more time to find a legal means of keeping Meredith out of the university.

As the meeting adjourned, a Jackson reporter asked Verner S. Holmes, vice-president of the board of trustees, if he was willing to go to jail to prevent the integration of his alma mater. Holmes responded, "I have always said that I am willing to go the last mile to preserve the integrity of the University of Mississippi . . . but . . . I am not willing to go to jail . . . and . . . I will not vote to close the University." Holmes's statement angered Barnett's supporters but encouraged Ole Miss students who wanted to keep the university open at almost any cost. Jackson news-

papers had already complained that students were more concerned about keeping Ole Miss open than keeping Meredith out.

The day after Holmes stated he would not vote to close the university, Chancellor Williams announced that James Meredith would come to the campus to register on September 20 and he would be treated like any other student. The chancellor's statement was a severe blow to the popular notion that Governor Barnett had the unanimous support of university officials. As it became increasingly apparent that the university would admit James Meredith, the legislature passed Senate Bill 1501, which prohibited the admission of any person to an institution of higher learning who was convicted of a certain class of offenses that included, specifically, false voter registration. The plan, which required the complicity of a large number of public officials, was to convict Meredith on this charge. His conviction would then trigger the provisions of Senate Bill 1501, referred to on the day of its passage as the "Meredith law."

As the legislature was crafting the Meredith law, a Jackson television station challenged the trustees to do their duty. "These men are to be envied by all," an official spokesman said, "for the heroic opportunity that comes to a man only once in his lifetime, whereby he can, if necessary sacrifice his life for his State and, in turn save his country. . . . Their decision is one of not just preventing a negro from entering the University. It will be one to set the precedent that Mississippi is a State of integrity." On the day this editorial aired, Ira Harkey wrote, "In a madhouse's din, Mississippi waits. God help Mississippi." Harkey was the Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of the *Pascagoula Chronicle* and one of the few editors who criticized Governor Barnett's policy of defiance.

On Thursday morning, September 20, the board of trustees convened for its regular monthly meeting in Jackson. The president of the board announced that Meredith would be on the campus later that day to register. A motion directing the chancellor to register Meredith failed by one vote. Then, on a motion by M. M. Roberts, the board of trustees appointed Governor Barnett registrar of the university "with the . . . authority, right, and discretion of this Board to act upon all matters pertaining to . . . James H. Meredith at the University of Mississippi." As the board debated Roberts's motion, Governor Barnett was on his way to Oxford. The governor was armed with an injunction issued earlier

that morning by a Hinds County justice of the peace prohibiting the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. The injunction read in part: "It is against the public policy of the state of Mississippi as well as its laws for a colored person to be admitted as a student at said institution and his enrollment and entry therein would be in violation of the laws of the state of Mississippi." The injunction ordered the board of trustees to carry out a public policy they had sworn under oath did not exist. But it no longer mattered, because by mid-afternoon on September 20, 1962, the board of trustees had relinquished its governance over the University of Mississippi.

At approximately four-thirty, Meredith and a small escort of federal officials arrived on the campus and walked through a boisterous but not unruly crowd to a small auditorium in the Yerby Center where Governor Barnett was seated at a table. As they approached him, the governor asked, "Which of you is Mr. Meredith?" When Meredith identified himself, he was invited to sit at the table. Governor Barnett then read a statement interposing his authority as governor between the United States Supreme Court and the sovereign state of Mississippi and officially denied James Meredith admission to the university. Following a brief but polite exchange, Meredith and his escort returned to Memphis.

After Meredith's departure, Governor Barnett and a few "insiders" celebrated at the alumni center. Many years later, Thomas Turner, one of the celebrants, remembered the conviviality of that occasion. As he and the governor were enjoying the triumph of the moment, he asked, "Ross, how far are you going to go with this thing?" The governor asked Turner how far he would go, and Turner responded, "I'd make them point a gun at me and tell me to move over. Then I'd move over and say come on in." To peals of laughter, the governor said, "That's exactly how far I'm going." Though he spoke in jest in an unguarded moment, Governor Barnett unwittingly scripted the scenario he would later suggest in seriousness as a resolution to the deepening crisis.

Because the university had now officially denied Meredith's admission, Chancellor Williams and other university officials were in contempt and the fifth circuit ordered them to appear in federal court the next day. While the chancellor and several lawyers were preparing his defense in a downtown Jackson office the next morning, Governor Barnett appeared. The governor asked the chancellor to stand firm and go to jail if

necessary. Barnett promised to double his salary, but Chancellor Williams refused even to discuss any further resistance, and the matter was dropped. Later that afternoon Judge Mize dismissed the contempt charges against all university officials, because the board of trustees had divested them of the authority to act on Meredith's application. Still later in the day, a three-judge panel issued contempt citations against the board of trustees and ordered the trustees to appear in New Orleans on Monday, September 24, to show cause why they should not be cited.

In the fifth circuit courtroom at New Orleans on Monday morning, the board of trustees heard the plain and simple facts of the case against them. If the trustees did not direct the University of Mississippi to enroll James Meredith, they would be removed from office, fined, imprisoned, and replaced by court-appointed trustees who would order Meredith's admission. After informing the trustees of those facts, the court took a fifteen-minute recess to allow them to confer among themselves and with their counsel. After the recess, the board announced to the court that all trustees present had voted to register James Howard Meredith at two o'clock in Jackson the next day. The one absent member was polled by telephone, and he also agreed.

The board's unanimous vote stunned Governor Barnett. "That's really shocking," he told Attorney General Robert Kennedy when Kennedy called him on Monday night to arrange for Meredith's registration the next day. "I heard it a little while ago," he told Kennedy, "I'm surprised at that, really. They were so firm about it two days ago. They changed their minds mighty quick." Barnett was so shaken he could not carry on a coherent conversation and frequently interrupted his telephone conversation with Kennedy to confer with his advisors. Meredith's safety was uppermost in Kennedy's mind, and he pressed Barnett for assurance that state authorities would maintain peace and order. The governor finally ended the conversation, "I am in a big hurry here now. I appreciate your calling. I will let you know tomorrow whether or not I can advise you of our proceeding and," Kennedy interrupted, "And work out his protection?" Barnett answered, "I will let you know what our proceedings will be." Kennedy said, "Thank you, Governor."

Robert Kennedy's fabled skills for problem solving failed him in the Meredith crisis. Both President Kennedy and the attorney general were extremely reluctant to use federal troops to force Meredith's admission.

“As smart as they were,” Governor J. P. Coleman observed, “they let Ross Barnett finally drive them . . . into a corner where they finally had to [use troops] anyway.” Robert Kennedy basically agreed with Coleman’s assessment, though he used a different metaphor. “What I was trying to avoid,” he wrote several years later, “was having to send troops and trying to avoid having a federal presence in Mississippi. In my judgement, what [Barnett] was trying to accomplish was the avoidance of integration at the University of Mississippi, number one. And if he couldn’t do that, to be forced to do it by our heavy hand; and his preference was with troops. . . . He had people pulling and pushing him from so many different directions that I think he just got himself into a bigger and bigger box. He eventually pulled me in with him.” If there had been any way to avoid the use of troops, and if Kennedy could have done anything to prevent Barnett from pulling him into that box, it had to happen on Tuesday, September 25, because, after that, the drama would play itself out.

When the board of trustees convened in Jackson on Tuesday, September 25, they found their offices in the Woolfolk state office building overrun with legislators, Barnett’s counselors, highway patrolmen, and the media. When E. R. Jobe finally got to his office, he found Barnett sitting at his desk talking on the telephone. It was shortly after one o’clock and the governor was talking to Robert Kennedy, who told the governor that Meredith would be at the Woolfolk building within an hour. Barnett was evasive and ambiguous about what might happen when he arrived, which made Kennedy uneasy. He would not put Meredith at risk.

Shortly after that conversation, Burke Marshall of the justice department called Thomas Tubb, the president of the board of trustees. Tubb told Marshall that Robert Ellis, the university registrar, was testifying before a legislative committee that “would use police if necessary to prevent him from leaving the room where he was being questioned.” Charles Clark, who was in the board office when Marshall called Tubb, advised the justice department that the board of trustees would “stick to the letter of the court’s order,” which required that Meredith appear at the board office by two o’clock to register. If Meredith was not there by two o’clock, Clark said he would have to “be registered . . . at Oxford at some time in the future.” Burke Marshall telephoned Judge Tuttle

and asked him to extend the time during which Meredith's registration could take place. Tuttle did so, but Robert Kennedy was still concerned for Meredith's safety. At four o'clock Kennedy called Barnett and again pressed for an assurance that Meredith would be protected, and that state police would maintain order. Governor Barnett assured him that everything was under control.

At about four-thirty, John Doar of the justice department and Chief U.S. Marshal James McShane arrived at the Woolfolk building and escorted Meredith through a large crowd to the board office. As they arrived, a Barnett aide rapped sharply on the closed door. The governor appeared and asked, as he had at their meeting on the campus, and now for the bank of television cameras, "Which of you gentlemen is Mr. Meredith?" The governor then read a proclamation denying Meredith admission to the university, adding "I do so politely." The federal officials, mocking the governor, agreed to leave politely. As they walked down the corridor, Governor Barnett called out in a practiced afterward, "Y'all come see me at the mansion." He turned back into the crowded office amid cheers, Rebel yells, shouts of "Yea, Ross," "You told 'em, Ross," and the popular strains of his theme song, "Roll with Ross."

Most people in that restive crowd of two thousand milling around the Woolfolk building were caught up in the emotion of the moment. Some had come to berate the board of trustees, others to support another lost cause. A few had come to stand, quietly across the street, in the eye of history. As Meredith and his federal escort were leaving the Woolfolk building, their car stopped at a traffic light. "Just as the light was about to change," Meredith remembered, "Marshal McShane asked me if those were some of my friends, indicating a group of six or seven Negroes standing on the corner. I suppose they had been waving at us, but I hadn't seen them. I waved at them as we pulled away from the light. They were all common folk, my people, maids still in uniform and common laborers, but the enthusiasm, the friendliness, and above all the pride they displayed [was] overwhelming. This is what I was fighting for, and I had my reward in the brief seconds that I saw my unknown friends on that corner."

Early the next morning, Wednesday, September 26, Burke Marshall called Tom Watkins, one of Governor Barnett's most trusted advisors. Watkins agreed that the "matter had gone too far" and told Marshall

that "if there is to be any school integration in Mississippi it would have to be done forcibly." Watkins suggested that on the "next effort to escort Meredith into the University" federal officials "should 'gently' attempt to push the Governor aside [but] should use the mildest kind of force." Watkins explained, "This would make the Governor's point, and give him an out because the federal government would have forcibly brought about desegregation." Marshall passed that information on to McShane and Doar, who put the thesis to a quick test.

When Meredith and his escort arrived at the university later that morning, Lieutenant Governor Paul Johnson and a phalanx of highway patrol blocked the entrance. Barnett remained in Jackson in case Meredith tried to register at the board office. Doar and McShane were instructed to "gently" muscle their way through the line. Not privy to the plan, Johnson jostled McShane and Doar as they tried to break through, and "a ridiculous pantomime" rippled up and down the line. The *Mississippian* was bemused by the "comic elbowing and shoving." James Meredith enjoyed the scene, admitting, "I could not pass up this golden opportunity to get in a little elbowing." He elbowed a representative of the Citizens' Council. After a few minutes McShane doubled up his fist, shook it in the face of the lieutenant governor and said, or perhaps he was asking, "You understand that we have got to break through." Apparently Johnson did not understand or, more likely, he did not want to be remembered as the "one who stepped aside." "The Little General," as Meredith called him, balled up his fist and shook it at McShane. When all the fist shaking and shoving was over, Doar, McShane, and Meredith left Oxford and returned to Memphis. And the telephones started ringing.

On the morning of this "ridiculous pantomime" the *Mississippian* printed the following telegram:

Dick Wilson, President
Student Body
University of Mississippi

Students at Mississippi State University have watched with concern your grave situation. On behalf of our student body we send our concern and hope that the students and the University will not be seriously injured. Sincerely,

Robert L. Taylor, President
Student Association
Mississippi State University

After Paul Johnson blocked Meredith from the campus, Burke Marshall called Watkins and asked him what had gone wrong. Watkins explained that the federal authorities "had not used enough force." How much force is enough, Marshall asked. Watkins suggested that the next escort should include "marshals with sidearms." Marshall agreed to send Meredith back to the campus the next day, Thursday, September 27, with an escort of twenty-five armed marshals "if it were clearly understood that the resistance to this amount of force would be token." Watkins told Marshall that he would talk to the governor and get back with him.

Over the next several hours Barnett and justice department officials discussed a most bizarre arrangement. They first agreed that the lead marshal would draw his gun, but Governor Barnett later decided that a single gun was not enough show of force. They then agreed that the lead marshal would draw his gun and the other marshals would slap their holsters as if ready to draw. That was acceptable, at first, until Governor Barnett had second thoughts and said to Robert Kennedy, "I was under the impression that they were all going to draw their guns. This could be very embarrassing. We got a big crowd here and if one pulls his gun and we all turn it would be very embarrassing. Isn't it possible to have them all pull their guns? . . . They must all pull their guns. Then they should point their guns at us and then we could step aside." As this haggling continued, Robert Kennedy pressed the governor for a guarantee that he would keep the peace and protect Meredith and the marshals. When Barnett wavered, Kennedy called the whole deal off and directed McShane and Doar not to take Meredith to the campus Thursday afternoon. He told Governor Barnett they would try again next week, maybe Monday or Tuesday.

After this impasse developed, President John Kennedy called Governor Barnett on Saturday morning, September 29, to join the search for a peaceful resolution of the Meredith crisis. The affable young president from Massachusetts and the wily old governor of Mississippi had a pleasant talk. President Kennedy assured the governor, however, that he would use all the resources of his office to carry out the court order. The governor explained to the president that Tom Watkins was at that moment trying to work out a plan to resolve the situation. Within less than an hour the president and the governor were back on the telephone.

The president called Barnett to discuss a proposal Tom Watkins had just made to the attorney general. President Kennedy put Robert Kennedy on the line to explain the plan. Watkins suggested a “hidden ball trick.” The plan was for federal authorities to announce that Meredith would go to Oxford on Monday, October 1. On the basis of that information, Governor Barnett and Lieutenant Governor Johnson would both be at Oxford to block his admission. In the meantime Meredith would actually go to Jackson where he would be registered in the board office. Governor Barnett could claim the Kennedys had misled him. President Kennedy even agreed to let Barnett scold him in the sternest language if that would serve his political interest in Mississippi. With Meredith registered, Barnett would then declare that the battle was lost and would allow Meredith to attend the university. Governor Barnett was enthusiastic about the proposal and saw it as a solution to the impasse.

To President Kennedy the one remaining but most important consideration was Meredith’s safety, and he was relieved when Governor Barnett called him at five o’clock Saturday afternoon. Barnett assured the president that the diversion plan was the best possible solution and he would see to it that the highway patrol maintained order. Governor Barnett spent the rest of the afternoon trying to persuade his counselors to accept the agreement he made with the president. By half time of the Ole Miss-Kentucky football game that night, the governor, known fondly as Ole Ross, had lost his own resolve to honor the agreement. As the Ole Miss band unfurled the world’s largest Confederate flag on the playing field and the stands were awash in a sea of Rebel flags, Governor Barnett stood at the fifty yard line. One of Mississippi’s last great stump speakers, Ole Ross, in his raspy voice, his right fist clinched, circling in rhythm with his words, proclaimed:

I love Mississippi . . .
I love her people . . .
I love her customs . . .

The words ricocheted through Mississippi Memorial Stadium as forty thousand fans erupted in thunderous ovation and hailed their leader and lofted their Rebel flags into a night sky.

After the game, Governor Barnett called a justice department official, who forwarded the call to the attorney general at his home. Gov-

ernor Barnett told Kennedy he wanted to call off the deal. That unexpected turn of events angered Kennedy and he accused the governor of breaking his word to the president. The two men ended the conversation amicably with Barnett agreeing to keep working on the situation. Governor Barnett also promised to call Kennedy early Sunday morning to let him know if the situation changed during the night. Robert Kennedy called the president at the White House and told him the deal was off. The president reluctantly signed the documents federalizing the Mississippi National Guard and authorized the secretary of the army to send troops to Oxford if it became necessary. It did become necessary, and, over the next few weeks, several thousand troops went to Oxford to enforce the court order admitting James Meredith to the University of Mississippi.

On Sunday morning, September 30, 1962, Governor Barnett called Attorney General Kennedy. That disjointed conversation dragged on for thirty minutes, with the governor making one last desperate effort to postpone the whole affair. Failing at postponement, Barnett and Tom Watkins proposed another mock confrontation between federal and state authorities.

Governor: We will have about 175 or 180 highway patrolmen in there—unarmed; no guns, no sticks of any kind. We will have quite a number of sheriffs unarmed—probably 75 or 100 deputy sheriffs. . . . Then they will form this second line. The highway patrolmen will form the first line; the sheriffs the next. The sheriffs will have probably 200 or 300 soldiers behind them. No one will be armed. I will be in the front line and when Meredith presents himself, I'll do like I did before. I will read a proclamation denying him entrance. I will tell the people of Mississippi now that I want peace and we must have no violence, no bloodshed. When you draw the guns, I will then tell the people. In other words, we will step aside and you can walk in.

Kennedy: I think it is silly going through this whole facade of your standing there; our people drawing guns; your stepping aside; to me it is dangerous and I think this has gone beyond the stage of politics, and you have a responsibility to the people of that State and to the people of the United States.

Governor: I have said so many times—we couldn't have integration and I have got to do something. I can't just walk back.

This latest suggestion was fraught with such calamitous potential that Robert Kennedy finally rejected it and threatened to expose the governor's secret deal with the president:

Kennedy: The president is going on TV tonight [Sunday]. He is going through the statement he had with you last night. He will have to say he called up the National Guard; that you had an agreement to permit Meredith to go to Jackson to register, and your lawyer, Mr. Watkins, said this was satisfactory. . . .

Governor: That won't do at all.

Kennedy: You broke your word to him.

Governor: You don't mean the president is going to say that tonight?

Kennedy: Of course he is; you broke your word; now you suggest we send in troops, fighting their way through a barricade.

Governor: Don't say that. Please don't mention it.

Kennedy: The president has to say that. You said we would fly him to Jackson and register him while you had everyone in Oxford. . . .

Governor: Why don't you fly in this afternoon—please let us treat what we say as confidential?

Kennedy: You talk to Watkins and call me back this afternoon. I have discussed this with you before; I want to know specifically the plan you have and how it is going to work. I want to maintain law and order.

Governor Barnett was startled to learn that his conversation with federal authorities had been taped, and that President Kennedy might reveal those negotiations on national television. Bobby Kennedy realized that he had finally gotten through to the governor, and he took advantage of Barnett's fear of exposure. Tom Watkins and Burke Marshall quickly worked out a plan to bring Meredith to the campus later that afternoon.

Since university officials were not expecting Meredith to return to the campus until Monday or Tuesday, Tom Watkins asked Burke Marshall to call Chancellor Williams and tell him that Meredith was coming in that afternoon. Anxious to get one more assurance that state authorities would maintain order, Marshall replied, "We are not going to put Meredith in until the situation is physically stabilized." Watkins told Marshall that the highway patrol had already been sent to Oxford, and he assumed the situation was stable. Marshall then agreed to call Williams.

A few minutes after three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, Hugh Clegg, Chancellor Williams's administrative assistant, answered the downstairs telephone in the chancellor's residence. It was Burke Marshall. Chancellor Williams, L. L. Love (the dean of students), and Clegg were making

preparations for Meredith's arrival, which they thought would be on Monday or Tuesday. The three men were stunned when Marshall told them that federal marshals would bring Meredith to the campus within the hour. Clegg told Marshall that the university could not get ready for Meredith's arrival on such short notice and pleaded for a delay, but Marshall replied, "They are coming this afternoon." A short time later Marshall called back and said, "Mr. Clegg, the highway patrolmen have just admitted the U.S. marshals on to your campus." After a brief discussion with Chancellor Williams, Clegg went to his office in the Lyceum. Unaware of the deal between Barnett and Kennedy, Clegg called the governor to tell him that federal marshals were already on the campus and that Meredith was on his way. A secretary in the governor's office told Clegg that Governor Barnett had gone fishing and would not be back until Monday.

Through the late afternoon and into the early evening, a milling crowd of students gathered in front of the Lyceum building, which was surrounded by marshals and other federal officials. Meredith would register in the Lyceum the next morning. The crowd, having been gradually augmented by "outsiders," was by nightfall much larger and more rowdy. At seven-thirty Governor Barnett announced on a statewide radio and television network that Meredith was on the campus. He explained that he had been forced to yield to the "armed forces and oppressive power" of the United States and that he was allowing Meredith's admission to avoid violence and bloodshed.

After the governor's speech, federal officials became increasingly uneasy about the potential for a large-scale riot. The crowd was no longer hurling epithets; they were throwing brickbats, lead pipes, and Molotov cocktails. A bulldozer was driven toward the line of marshals around the Lyceum. Tires on army trucks were slashed and canvas truck tops were set afire. Gunfire could be heard sporadically and rumors circulated through the mob that a coed and a highway patrolman had been killed. At about eight o'clock, just moments before President Kennedy went on national television to announce that Meredith was safely on the campus and would register the next morning, the crowd surged toward the marshals and the order to fire tear gas was given. As the marshals fired the gas into the surging mob, several people, including some highway patrolmen, were hit by the canisters and suffered fractures and

broken bones. The pep rally atmosphere was gone, and most of the college students, who had come to see what was happening, went with it. Only the real resisters, the true believers, remained to fight what Willie Morris has called an "echo of the Civil War's last battle."

"We all [sat] on the Chancellor's porch," Hugh Clegg wrote of that long dark night, "watching the sickening scene from a hundred yards away. Automobiles were afire. We feared the Lyceum Building would be burned." One of the men on the chancellor's porch said, "There goes the University." "Just when things seemed the gloomiest," the first contingent of soldiers moved onto the campus. "We almost shouted with joy," Hugh Clegg remembered. The situation stabilized gradually and at six-fifteen in the morning General Charles Billingsly reported that the campus was secure. During the riot Meredith was under guard in his dormitory room in Baxter Hall.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Sunday night riot, in which two people were killed, was the debate over who started it. In the immediate aftermath, most of the Mississippi press, the highway patrol, and some university officials blamed the riot on the "trigger happy" federal marshals who "jumped the gun" and prematurely fired tear gas into the crowd in front of the Lyceum. To counter those charges, sixty-five Ole Miss faculty and staff issued a signed, public statement. The document, which took no little courage to sign, especially for the untenured, exonerated the marshals and blamed the rioters. At the request of university officials, Senator James Eastland, chairman of the judiciary committee, was putting together a subcommittee chaired by Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina to investigate the riot when Governor Barnett's emissaries asked Eastland to quash the federal inquiry. Barnett and other public officials preferred an investigation by the state legislature or by a Lafayette County grand jury. Both entities conducted investigations, and both blamed the riot on the marshals and the justice department.

Just before eight o'clock Monday morning, October 1, 1962, James Meredith, in the company of federal marshals, entered the Lyceum. Meredith completed a registration form, paid his fees, broke the color barrier in Mississippi, and hurried off to an eight o'clock American history class taught by Professor Clare Marquette. As Meredith left the Lyceum, he was asked if he was now happy to be a student at the Univer-

sity of Mississippi. Meredith looked around at the battle-scarred campus and said, "This is not a happy day."

Sidna Brower, editor of the *Mississippian*, now published daily, also found little to be happy about. On September 21 she complimented Ole Miss students for their good behavior, especially those who prevented a small group of students from taking down the American flag and raising the colors of the Confederacy. On October 1, however, Brower was disappointed in the "students who started out yesterday by shouting slogans of pride in Mississippi and ended up with nothing to be proud of."

As Brower expressed her disappointment in the behavior of Ole Miss students, William H. Mounger, an Ole Miss alumnus and president of Lamar Life Insurance Company, communicated the same sentiment to a much larger audience. Early that morning, Mounger appeared on a Jackson television station owned by Lamar Life and made an impassioned plea for law and order and for public support of the university. The next day Mounger and 127 other business leaders met in Jackson and issued a statement urging all Mississippians to accept a "sane [and] sensible" approach to the social and racial changes taking place. The peaceful acceptance of those changes was absolutely necessary, they said, if Mississippi was to "march forward with honor, dignity and respect." Though it might seem mild from the perspective of nearly forty years later, it was a bold and significant statement for that time and place. The import of the statement was that Governor Barnett could no longer count on the business community's support in his defiance of the United States Supreme Court. It was also a public pronouncement that the University of Mississippi should and would remain open, even if integrated.

While Chancellor Williams was surveying the extensive damage early Monday morning, campus security informed him that only one professor was unable to get to the campus. The army had cordoned off the campus and severely restricted access. Williams was also relieved to learn that about 60 percent of the students were in class, though some classes were cancelled because of the tear gas. By week's end most of the students who had been called home by their parents were back on campus, and the predicted exodus did not occur. The spring enrollment of 4,280 was down less than 500 from the 4,770 fall enrollment.

In the weeks following Meredith's enrollment, Chancellor Williams's greatest challenge was to keep the university open. In the early fall,

history professor James Silver wrote his daughter that the “chief desire now of the extremists is not to *get* Meredith but to provoke an incident [that] Barnett would use to close the school. Closing the school is now their aim.” The homecoming football game with the University of Houston on October 6 was an opportunity for just such an incident. Early in the week Robert Kennedy called Coach John Vaught and asked him to do what he could “to keep the situation calm.” Vaught recalled in his memoirs, “I said I would, but by Tuesday our Homecoming game with Houston had become a pawn between state and federal forces. . . . It took a tremendous fight to keep the game . . . from being canceled. I felt it essential that the game be played, that it might be the key to getting the campus to settle down.” Through the early part of the week it was uncertain if, when, and where the game would be played; the only thing for sure was that it would not be played in Oxford, a decision Vaught said was “made in Washington.” By mid-week the game had been moved to Houston, and Vaught told his players to be ready to fly to Houston on Friday. However, after “much maneuvering by Chancellor Williams and Tad Smith, the Justice Department and the Army agreed to let the Homecoming game be played in Jackson” on Saturday afternoon.

Vaught kept his pregame pep talk before the Houston game brief and simple. He said, “It is very important that we play this game, boys, and we have to win it.” Ole Miss did win, and, according to Relman Morin, the Pulitzer Prize-winning associated press sportswriter, Ole Miss’s 40-0 victory over Houston “temporarily dulled the anguish of racial strife.” The Houston victory was the second win of a ten-win perfect season, but on that cool autumn afternoon in Jackson’s Memorial Stadium, the only other game Ole Miss fans cared about was the Michigan-Army game. Ole Miss fans greeted the announcement that Michigan defeated Army with thunderous applause.

The Houston victory was crucial, according to Coach Vaught, for the 1962 season and for the university. “Boys became men that [day],” he wrote, “and I think then and there they sensed that no one would be able to stop them, and that a university rode on their shoulder pads.” Coach Vaught may have overstated the importance of football when he titled the chapter in his memoirs on the Meredith crisis “Football Saves a School,” but maybe not. The 1962 team was the only undefeated and untied team in the university’s history, and produced two All-Americans,

lineman Jim Dunaway and quarterback Glynn Griffing. The 1962 team won the Southeastern Conference championship and defeated Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl. That level of success created an enormous interest and pride in the Ole Miss football program and generated strong public support for keeping the university open.

As Coach Vaught and his assistants were preparing for the Mississippi State game, Chancellor Williams and other university officials were preparing for the annual meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in Dallas. On the agenda of that meeting was the accreditation of Mississippi's institutions of higher learning. This was the third time in thirty years that the issue was before the association, and there was strong support for the expulsion of Ole Miss. Even though the board of trustees had transferred its authority to admit or reject James Meredith to the state's political establishment, the Southern Association did not expel the university. Instead, it placed Ole Miss on "extraordinary status" and warned Mississippi officials that the institution would remain under "close observation" until the 1963 annual meeting, at which time its status would be reviewed.

At the association's next annual meeting in December 1963, Chancellor Williams reported that the university's academic integrity was not compromised during the last year and that a second African American student had enrolled at Ole Miss without incident. The College Delegate Assembly accepted Williams's report and returned the University of Mississippi to full and unqualified membership. Following that action, the chancellor reported to the board of trustees that the university survived the Meredith crisis and retained its accreditation. He also assured the board that good order and student discipline were being restored on the campus.

During the Sunday night riot, federal authorities apprehended approximately 160 rioters, 25 of whom were Ole Miss students. An additional 25 students from other southern colleges were also taken into custody. Of the 25 Ole Miss students, 8 appeared before the student judicial council and were subjected to varying degrees of disciplinary action, though Russell Barrett wrote that "outside pressure prevented any expulsions." When it became known that several Ole Miss students were taken into custody, Governor Barnett appointed "a nine member Legal Committee to protect the rights of the students at the University

to practice freedom of speech and freedom of assembly." The Jackson press warned university officials that the legislature and the governor would "watch with a jaundiced eye any attempt to apply punitive action against [student] patriots."

Although there was tremendous off-campus pressure not to discipline Ole Miss students, the administration was severely criticized for not taking stronger action against students who harassed Meredith and the white students who befriended him. One of the administration's severest critics was Sidna Brower, editor of the *Mississippian*. Although nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and praised by the faculty, who said her courageous editorials "significantly contributed to the University's integrity," Brower was formally reprimanded by the campus senate for her criticism of student behavior.

Sidna Brower was also one of the strongest defenders of Raymond Kerciu, an Ole Miss professor of art who became entangled in a legal dispute. In several of his paintings depicting the riot, Professor Kerciu used the Confederate flag as a backdrop; across it were scribbled racial epithets he had heard during the riot, one being "Kennedy's Koon Keepers." A law student charged Kerciu with violating the state's desecration statute, a law that makes it illegal to deface the Confederate flag. The university defended Professor Kerciu's right of free speech and offered to provide him with legal counsel, but the charges were eventually dropped.

A student demonstration in late October finally prompted university officials to adopt a "get tough" policy regarding student discipline. On Monday night, October 29, 1962, students bombarded Baxter Hall with cherry bombs for about an hour and threw eggs and bottles at Meredith and his escort as they left the building. Two days after this incident, Chancellor Williams assembled the male students and announced the new policy. The chancellor told the students if they could not support "peaceful and orderly conditions, be advised that I am prepared to see us part company." Chancellor Williams's announcement was followed by the arrest of seven of the Monday night demonstrators and the expulsion of four of them. Students, faculty, and even the general public, which was weary of the continuous reports of disorder at the university, welcomed the new restrictions on student behavior. In a Jackson speech defending the policy, Vice Chancellor Alton Bryant accused "faceless

and nameless . . . adult agitators” of being “moral and physical cowards” who used students as “pawns” to further their aim of closing the university. Bryant called on “responsible citizens” to offset the influence of such people and to support “order and sanity” in Mississippi.

The “get tough” policy announced in November 1962 was followed in January 1963 by the “gag rule,” which prohibited inflammatory statements or speeches by university students, faculty, and staff. Sidna Brower saw good results from the new disciplinary policy and reported in early January 1963 that things were almost back to normal. As the campus was returning to normal and Ole Miss students were celebrating the 1963 Sugar Bowl win over Arkansas, James Meredith made an announcement that “stunned most of his friends and delighted his enemies.”

At a Baxter Hall press conference on January 7, 1963, Meredith announced, “I have decided not to register for classes during the second semester . . . unless very definite and positive changes are made to make my situation more conducive to learning. . . . As to what I will do, I am not prepared to say at this time.” Meredith’s announcement, and the increased harassment that immediately followed it, brought renewed pressure on the university from the justice department and others to make Meredith’s “situation more conducive to learning,” which may have been the intent of his announcement. Meredith’s supporters on the campus (especially James Silver and Russell Barrett), President Kennedy, and the attorney general all urged Meredith to remain at Ole Miss and complete the requirements for graduation.

At a press conference in Jackson on January 30, Meredith announced that “the Negro” was not returning to Ole Miss. After a brief pause, he said, but “I, J. H. Meredith, will register for the second semester.” Meredith concluded that Ole Miss students were “basically good people” and that there were indications that he could remain at the university “under adequate, if not ideal, conditions.” During the spring and summer sessions, conditions improved significantly, and, by the late spring, most of the troops were gone. In the summer Meredith’s family visited him, and he gave them a guided tour of the campus. When they dined with him in the cafeteria, there was none of the “table banging” that had often greeted Meredith when he entered the cafeteria during the fall semester. The admission of Cleve McDowell in the summer of 1963 was also accomplished without incident. McDowell, the university’s second

African American student, was admitted to the law school under court order, though the law school had already notified him that he would be accepted. Meredith and McDowell roomed together that summer in Baxter Hall. McDowell's first semester at Ole Miss was Meredith's last.

In early August, Meredith took his final exams and completed the requirements for a bachelor of arts degree in political science. On the last day of final examinations, he wore a lapel pin that was popular during the weeks before his admission. On the pin, against a black background, was the word NEVER printed in white. Meredith wore the pin upside down. Even though Meredith had met the requirements for graduation, he had one last hurdle to overcome. Several members of the board of trustees accused Meredith of violating the chancellor's "gag rule" against inflammatory statements. They cited his speech following the assassination of Medgar Evers and moved to deny him his diploma. A few days after Evers's murder on June 11, 1963, Meredith had condemned "Southern governors . . . blind courts and prejudiced juries" for creating a climate of hate that produced the murder of his good friend. The motion to deny Meredith his diploma lost by a six-to-five vote.

On August 18, 1963, James Meredith and other candidates for graduation wound their way from the Lyceum through the tree-shaded campus to the Grove where approximately fifty of his friends and family took their places among the hundreds of other friends and families of the graduates. Among Meredith's guests were Mrs. Medgar Evers, Aaron Henry, state president of the NAACP, and R. Jess Brown, one of Meredith's Mississippi lawyers. The "carefully planned ceremony went off with deceptive simplicity." The thought occurred to Russell Barrett, "how easy it all could be."

Nearly a month before Meredith's graduation, the few remaining federal troops moved off the campus, and by July 24 they had left Oxford. After Meredith's graduation, the marshals were also gone, which made Cleve McDowell uneasy. When he returned for the fall semester in September 1963, he brought a small handgun to the campus, a violation of university policy. On September 23, McDowell was returning from a meeting with the United States attorney in Oxford, where he had gone to ask for protection, and was running late for class. As he hurried into the Lamar Building, he dropped his sunglasses. When he leaned over to pick them up, the gun fell out of his pocket. Two students who wit-

nessed the incident called the Lafayette County sheriff, who arrested McDowell after class. The student judicial council eventually expelled McDowell. University officials regretted his expulsion, because, after going through so much travail, the university was again "an all white school," a condition that delighted a Jackson newspaper, which hailed McDowell's expulsion because it erased the "ONLY MIXING BLOT IN STATE."

If the board of trustees had its way, Ole Miss would have remained an all-white school. In late February 1964, Cleveland Donald, a seventeen-year-old honor student from Tougaloo, applied for admission to the university. In May the university informed Donald that his application was in order and mailed him a certificate of enrollment for the summer session. When the trustees learned of Donald's application, they filed a motion in federal court to deny his admission because of the "exploding tensions" associated with Mississippi's impending "Long Hot Summer." The federal court denied the board's motion and ordered Donald's admission. Cleveland Donald was admitted and received his undergraduate degree from Ole Miss with a major in history. He later earned a Ph.D. at Cornell University. In 1979 Professor Donald returned to his alma mater to become the first director of the university's African American Studies Program.

In the fall of 1964, Irwin Walker became the first African American student admitted to Ole Miss without a court order. Following his enrollment, the number of black students increased gradually, and by the spring semester of 1966 fourteen African Americans were enrolled at the university. Among them were Reuben V. Anderson, the law school's first black graduate and the first black justice of the state supreme court, and four coeds, Joyce Jones, Verna Bailey, Billie Joyce Ware, and Patricia Anderson, a law student. In a candid discussion with Marshall Frady in the spring of 1966, several African American students talked about their collegiate experience. The conversation inevitably turned to symbols. Irwin Walker asked Frady to imagine what it was like to go to a football game with all those white folks singing *Dixie* and waving Rebel flags. Earnest Watson said he wished Ole Miss had a song he could sing and a spirit symbol he could wave at football games, but he just could not sing *Dixie* and wave the Rebel flag. In a moment of comic relief, Walker said, "Next year, you watch, I'm gonna have me a Rebel

flag to wave and I'm gonna stand up for *Dixie*." Verna Bailey added, seriously, that it would "be 20 years before things are normal" for black students at Ole Miss. In the summer session following this interview, black enrollment more than doubled, from fourteen to thirty. The *Mississippian* noted that the registration of those thirty African American students attracted "no attention."

The lack of attention given to those thirty students was in striking contrast to the interest generated by Robert Kennedy's visit to Ole Miss earlier that spring. The law school speakers' bureau invited Kennedy, who was then a senator from New York, to address Ole Miss students and faculty on March 18, 1966. His appearance created so much interest that his speech was moved from a small auditorium in the law school to the coliseum. As Senator and Mrs. Kennedy entered the coliseum, more than five thousand people greeted them with a standing ovation. Mary Cain, the fiery lady editor of the *Summit Sun*, cited this ovation as positive proof that the University of Mississippi was a "hotbed of liberalism." In his introduction of Senator Kennedy, Ed Ellington, chairman of the speakers' bureau, cited Kennedy's appearance as proof that the University of Mississippi was a place where all views and opinions are freely expressed. "After this day," he said, "never again let it be uttered that this is a closed society."

Like Mark Twain's comment that the reports of his death were greatly exaggerated, Ellington's remark was a bit premature. Aaron Henry's lecture to an Ole Miss law class in November 1966 prompted the board of trustees to adopt a policy requiring board approval before any person could be invited to speak on campus. When Professor William Dellinger announced that Henry would speak to his class, a white student informed the professor that he would not sit in the same room with Henry, but he would like to hear what Henry had to say. The professor agreed to leave the classroom door open and allow the student to sit in the hallway to listen to Henry's lecture. The same terrible complexities of race that kept the artist M. B. Mayfield inside the broom closet kept this law student outside that classroom.

William Dellinger, Michael Horowitz, George Strickler, and Michael Trister were among a group of Yale-trained law professors Dean Joshua Morse brought to Ole Miss in the late 1960s. Their "liberal leanings" and their participation in the Legal Services program, especially after

they filed a school desegregation suit in Holly Springs, provoked the wrath of several legislators, who introduced several resolutions to move the law school to Jackson. Three law professors — Stickler, Trister, and Luther McDougall — became casualties of the closed society after they refused to discontinue their association with Legal Services. They were not actually dismissed but were “removed from the payroll.”

Other casualties of the closed society were Robert Farley, William P. Murphy, Russell Barrett, and James Silver. When Dean Farley reached the mandatory retirement age for administrators, the university did not offer him the customary opportunity to remain on the teaching faculty. “Gentleman that he was,” James Silver said, “Farley left quietly” in 1962. Law professor William P. Murphy was denied tenure and left that same year. After the *Brown* decision in 1954, Farley and Murphy stated publicly that Mississippi must obey the orders of the United States Supreme Court based on the Fourteenth Amendment. The Sovereignty Commission and the Citizens’ Council accused the two professors of teaching legal heresy and demanded their dismissal. Nearly a century earlier, another University of Mississippi law professor, Thomas Walton, had been excoriated for saying the same thing. Professor Russell Barrett remained at the university until his retirement, though he did not receive the salary increments a full professor would have normally received.

The most celebrated casualty of the closed society was James Silver, the Ole Miss history professor who coined the phrase. In the fall of 1963 Professor Silver was president of the Southern Historical Association. His presidential address, which he expanded and published as a book titled *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, created a firestorm. The state’s power structure was in nearly unanimous agreement that Silver was a threat to “our way of life” and that he should be dismissed from the university. Following his presidential address, the board of trustees appointed a special committee, chaired by M. M. Roberts, to gather evidence of “contumacious conduct” necessary to dismiss Silver from his tenured position as professor of history, which he had held since 1936. To gather information that might be useful in their case against him, the board of trustees hired private detectives to spy on Professor Silver and to follow him to speaking engagements around the country.

While the board of trustees was conducting its investigation, the Mississippi legislature also took up the Silver issue. On March 25, 1964, a

state representative demanded Silver's dismissal and pledged himself to any course of action short of violence to oust the professor. A state senator introduced a bill to restrict Silver from speaking on certain topics, but as he warmed to the idea, he decided Silver should be fired. The senator conceded that Silver's dismissal would enhance his reputation in the North, but that should not be a consideration because "it is better," he said, "that he get national fame than for us to receive social death." The senator concluded that if the university would not fire Silver, the legislature should. As the board of trustees was investigating and the legislature was fulminating, Professor Silver took a year's leave of absence to serve as a visiting professor at Notre Dame University. Following that year, Silver did not return to Ole Miss, although he wanted to very much. University officials indicated to him that it would be best if he did not return to Oxford, his home for the last thirty years. Gentleman that he was, James Silver did not return.

Although the University of Mississippi suffered, still suffers, from the Meredith crisis, Ole Miss has endured and flourished because of the change that conflict engendered. The admission of African Americans enlarged, enhanced, and enriched the university. In time James Meredith would call himself a loyal son of Ole Miss and his alma mater now houses his personal papers, along with those of James Eastland, J. D. Williams, Verner Holmes, James Silver and Russell Barrett. Future generations of students and scholars who study the contours of American race relations will come to Ole Miss and consult these papers. If the history of the University of Mississippi were to be written in one word, it would be continuity.