

Integration

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War II veteran who applied to the USC Law School in 1946. Wrighten was denied admission, but took the school to court. A federal judge gave South Carolina three options: admit Wrighten to USC's Law School, provide him legal education somewhere else in the state or close down the law school altogether. So USC decided to create a black law school in Orangeburg.

West said there were other cases of blacks applying at USC, but that they didn't go to court. USC was forced to face integration, however, on Oct. 31, 1962, when Henrie Montieth Treadwell, a Columbia native, sued the school in federal court after her application was rejected.

"It was really the result of a meeting at a church and listening to more of the senior people speak about the importance of my attendance," she said.

Treadwell studied biology as an undergraduate at USC and is now program director of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a nonprofit service organization.

A court order for integration followed on July 10, 1963.

"There were some who were friendly, and there were others who probably just did not know how to respond, so they did nothing," Treadwell said.

In the meantime, two other black students, Robert Anderson and James Solomon, applied to USC and enrolled in September 1963 with Montieth.

"You felt in some ways as if you

were on an island, in the midst of a big sea, not knowing which way things were going to go," Treadwell said.

At the same time, she said the experience was calm, and "there was no fear or anxiety, just cautious optimism."

James Solomon, who was studying for his graduate degree, said his experience was probably different from that of the undergraduates. He was 33 years old at the time, he said, and in a relatively new graduate program that involved about 11 other students.

"I did not live on campus, so most of my contact with persons on campus was with the professors and these students in my classes,"

Solomon said. "I had no problems really with any of those groups."

With the exception of a student protest in May 1963 that included a cross burning, there were no ostensible outbursts of violence — an atmosphere which both the state government and the administration wanted to maintain.

"There was a strategy made and a commitment on the part of some of the state officials that you did not want to have a situation similar to what happened at Ole Miss, in which a lot of people were shot and wounded" and even killed, said Sellers. "USC found itself on the other end of the extreme, and that is civility and law and order prevail."

Thorne Compton, who was a freshman at USC in 1963, said that everybody was worried about violence to some degree.

"People didn't want Carolina to look bad, and so people were concerned, I think," said Compton, who is now the interim associate

dean of the College of Liberal Arts at USC. "There were people who were unpleasant and people who were racist and people who behaved very badly, but after the first semester, it sort of settled down."

Treadwell said it's difficult for her to put into words how the experience helped her, but that it was worth the effort.

"I cannot imagine my life without it," she said. "Whatever personal sacrifices I made, the choice was the right one to attend."

And now, she will be in attendance Thursday, 40 years after she first enrolled on USC's campus, part of a ceremony that is planned to look ahead as well as behind.

"It celebrates the fact that after years of denying equal opportunity to African Americans, the University of South Carolina decided that the era of segregation needed to be put behind us," USC President Andrew Sorensen said. "We need to remind ourselves that it wasn't always the way that it is now, and we also have to remind ourselves that the job isn't done yet, that we still have more hurdles to clear."

Sellers said he agrees that there is still work to do, but he stressed the importance of remembering.

"The University of South Carolina has had a unique role in developing a diversity in its student population, and I think that that has been very beneficial," said Sellers, who attributes much of this to Sept. 11, 1963. He said it "sets a tremendous example" for students trying to make their way today "when you go back and see that young people in another era stepped onto the stage of history and actually brought about change."

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockdesk@hotmail.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF USC ARCHIVES

From left, Anderson, Montieth-Treadwell and Solomon walk out of the Osborne administration building as registered USC students.

Events Sept. 11, 2003

1 P.M. TO 3 P.M.

A panel of scholars from universities nationwide will discuss "The State of African American Studies" in Lumpkin Auditorium on the eighth floor of the Darla Moore School of Business.

6 P.M. TO 8 P.M.

The first three black students who integrated USC in 1963, Henrie Montieth Treadwell, James Solomon and Robert Anderson, will discuss their experiences as part of a panel including Sen. Fritz Hollings and Judge Matthew Perry. This event will be held in the Campus Room of Capstone House. A reception with jazz music will be held afterward.



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