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# Integration and Athletics: Integrating the Marshall University Basketball Program, 1954-1969

George M. Reger  
regergeorge@msn.com

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INTEGRATION AND ATHLETICS:  
INTEGRATING THE MARSHALL UNIVERSITY  
BASKETBALL PROGRAM, 1954-1969

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A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of History  
Marshall University

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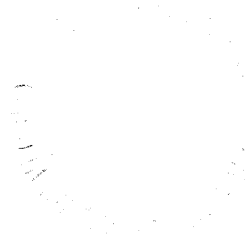
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Master of Arts

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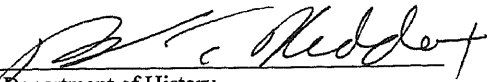
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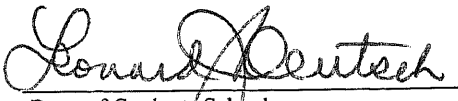
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Adviser   
Department of History

  
Dean of Graduate School

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## Chapter I Introduction

In 1954, Marshall College followed the national law that banned segregation in the school systems of the United States. The law included the integration of athletic programs. While only a small part of the process, athletic programs often presented integration on a more visible stage than the integration of classrooms.

Many colleges and universities located in the North and in the Midwest had integrated their athletic programs before the 1954 Supreme Court ruling barring segregated schools. African-American athletes who wanted to participate in collegiate athletics had to travel North or go to traditionally Black colleges in the South. Although the African-Americans could participate in athletics while earning a college education, college life offered little social activities and interaction with whites on campus. Colleges often passed African-Americans in the classroom in order for them to keep their playing eligibility, however, many of the African-Americans took advantage of the opportunity to further their education.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, with the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court ruling, Southern schools began to comply with the new law. Not all schools complied with expediency; in fact numerous schools fought hard to keep African-Americans out of their classrooms, and did not begin to integrate until well into the 1960's.

As a border state, West Virginia, although segregated, did not fight the court order and allowed schools to begin the integration process. One of the first African-Americans to enroll at Marshall College and probably the most visible was Hal Greer. A

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Ashe, *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete Since 1946* (New York: Warner Books, 1988) 57-62.

native of Huntington, West Virginia, Greer soon broke the state's color barrier in collegiate athletics and paved the way for other African-Americans to attend Marshall.

This thesis will explore the integration of Marshall's basketball program. It does not intend to present the reader with a look into the integration of the state's school system or the Civil Rights movement in West Virginia. However, this study does attempt to furnish evidence to illuminate the successes and the failures of integration that occurred on a very visible stage. To understand the importance of the basketball program to Marshall, and just how visible basketball athletics can be, the first chapter is a study of the Marshall basketball program from its inception in 1906 to the end of the 1969 season.

## Chapter II Marshall Basketball 1906-1969

In 1891, Dr. James Naismith invented the game of basketball. Eight years later in the first intercollegiate game, Yale defeated the University of Pennsylvania, 32-10.<sup>1</sup> Basketball arrived on Marshall's campus in 1902 as a recreational sport for the women of the school. The women were enthusiastic about the sport and eventually two separate teams were formed to accommodate the number of participants.<sup>2</sup> Although the women did not participate in any sanctioned collegiate games, they did inspire the men of Marshall to form their own basketball team.

On 14 December 1906 a team of boys from Marshall traveled to Charleston, West Virginia, to play their first official game. Led by Luther B. Crotty, a junior at the school, the Marshall team lost to the Taw Club Athletic Association, 13-6. An account in the Huntington Advertiser stated, "The game was witnessed by about three hundred people, and was interesting from start to finish."<sup>3</sup> With that game, the history of Marshall University's men's basketball program had begun.

Though only in its infancy, Marshall quickly added basketball to the list of sports at the school along with football and baseball. In October of 1907 the Marshall College Athletic Association's financial statement included the basketball team. The statement

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<sup>1</sup> Neil D. Issacs, All the Moves: A History of College Basketball (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) 21.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Joston, "A History of Women's Intercollegiate Athletics at Marshall University," Masters Thesis, Marshall University, 1974, 13.

<sup>3</sup> "Marshall Lost," Huntington (West Virginia) Advertiser, 15 December 1906, 2.



showed a deficit of eighty-eight dollars and sixty cents, with an additional fifteen dollars added to the statement after the basketball team purchased new goals for the upcoming season. At the same time the Parthenon printed the financial statement, the Athletic Association adopted rules for the government of school athletics.

The new regulations stated, "No ringers will be played on athletic teams. All teams should be composed of active members of the school. Players deficient in scholarship render themselves ineligible. Any player indulging in intoxicants will be removed from the team and the managers shall keep his books open for the inspection of all interested."<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the Association wanted to keep things under control and not let the athletic programs become bigger than the academic programs. During this time coaches of the teams were elected by the student body and not signed to contracts by the school.<sup>5</sup> By being elected as the coach, the student accepted additional responsibilities along with traditional school work.

Another notable event during the early years of 1906-1910 include the first student athletic fees. This occurred in 1908 when the athletic department received a portion of the entrance fees paid by the students.<sup>6</sup> In that same year, the Marshall administration called for a new gymnasium. In the November issue of the Parthenon, William Vinal, a biology professor, stated, "We have not even a gymnasium, for no one supposes that the basement room-small [sic], old, damp and dark, with four pillars occupying a large part of

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<sup>4</sup> "The Athletic Association," Parthenon, October 1907, 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> "Marshall College," Huntington (West Virginia) Dispatch, 13 September 1908, 6. The newspaper failed to specify the amount of the athletic fee. However, on page eighty-four of the Marshall College Catalog of 1910 the athletic fee was noted as being seventy-five cents per term or three dollars per year.

the space would be counted as such."<sup>7</sup> Of course Vinal was speaking of Old Main when talking of the basement.<sup>8</sup> The cry for a campus gymnasium would arise often during the next decade and would not be silenced until a gymnasium was built in the 1920's.

During these early years the team played their home games in a variety of places. The first home game was played at the Majestic skating rink in 1908.<sup>9</sup> However, in 1909, the college spent money on remodeling the gymnasium on campus. In a feature titled "Basket-ball," the Parthenon reported, "Lights have been put in the gymnasium so that games can be played at home without paying an enormous price for the rink. It has also been slightly remodeled in order to accommodate more spectators."<sup>10</sup> Although the team encountered trouble finding a home, it did not affect their play. After the 1906-1907 season, when the team lost its only game, the boys of Marshall represented their school in fine fashion. The 1907-1908 team won five games while not submitting to defeat. The following year the team managed a 6-2 record, beating Morehead Normal School (Morehead State University), and Davis and Elkins College. Thus, the first three seasons did not bring much glory to the Big Green, then the nickname for Marshall College athletic teams, but they did bring the sport of basketball to the Marshall campus. The beginning of a new decade brought both success and frustration to the Marshall basketball program.

Boyd Chambers coached the Big Green during the 1909-1910 season, and he guided

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<sup>7</sup> William G. Vinal, Parthenon, November 1908, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall College Catalog (Huntington, WV, 1908) Insert.

<sup>9</sup> "Marshall College Defeated Charleston," Huntington Dispatch, 25 February 1908, 1.

<sup>10</sup> "Basket-ball," Parthenon, February. 1909, 20.

the team to a 5-3 record. Two of those victories came against the arch rival from Barboursville, West Virginia, Morris Harvey (now the University of Charleston, West Virginia). That season was one of the few bright spots for the basketball program during the decade from 1910-1919.

During the 1910-1911 season and the 1911-1912 season the team participated in only six games. Due to the lack of a proper playing facility, the team could not schedule many home games and the road trips were usually only a short distance from Huntington. The students still paid their seventy-five cents per term athletic fee,<sup>11</sup> and according to the Marshall yearbook of 1913, the Mirabilia, the school was basketball crazy.<sup>12</sup> The team also received support on the road. Marshall traveled to Ashland, Kentucky by train for a 1910-1911 contest with the Ashland YMCA. A large number of supporters from Huntington accompanied the team on the trip.<sup>13</sup>

Coach Chambers decided to secure the proper playing facility for the 1912-1913 season and contracted the Biggs Armory, located at 115 Fifth Avenue,<sup>14</sup> as the home court.<sup>15</sup> The team could only garner two victories against six defeats that season. The lone highlight of the season came on 8 February 1913 when the University of Notre Dame

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall College Catalog (Huntington, WV: 1911)110.

<sup>12</sup> Mirabilia (Huntington, WV: 1913) 134.

<sup>13</sup> "Marshall Lost," Huntington (West Virginia) Herald-Dispatch, 21 January 1911, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Polk's Huntington City Directory (Pittsburgh, Pa.: R.L. Polk and Co., 1930)129.

<sup>15</sup> "Will Revive Basketball," Parthenon, 12 December 1912, 1.

visited Huntington for a game against the Big Green. Marshall lost the game, by the score of 27-9; however, it marked the first time the school played a major university in basketball.<sup>16</sup> The team was applauded for its effort against Notre Dame when the Huntington Advertiser reported, "The development which the Marshall boys have made this year is remarkable, and it has been accomplished by hard work and steady training."<sup>17</sup> Even with the hard work and steady training the team could only break even the next season with a 4-4 record.

Once again the problems of not having a suitable place to play disrupted the next two seasons. After just one game into the 1914-1915 schedule, the team voted to cancel the remaining games due to the lack of an adequate gymnasium.<sup>18</sup> The Mirabilia added, "The school needed a physical training building . . . With the proper training facilities and with the many athletes in school at this time, a fast quintette [sic] could have been produced."<sup>19</sup> The team canceled the 1915-1916 season, again because of inadequate playing facilities. The school then decided to pay for a home court, and Vanity Fair, located at 625 Fourth Avenue,<sup>20</sup> became the home of the Big Green for the next two seasons, 1916-1917 and 1917-1918.

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<sup>16</sup> Early Notre Dame teams were often ranked among the nation's elite in basketball. Mike Douchant, Encyclopedia of College Basketball (Detroit, MI.: Visible Ink Press, 1995)18-19.

<sup>17</sup> "Strong Showing with Notre Dame," Huntington Advertiser, 10 February 1913, 8.

<sup>18</sup> "Lack of Gymnasium Causes Team to Abandon Basketball," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 12 January 1915, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Mirabilia (Huntington, WV: 1916) 146.

<sup>20</sup> Polk's Huntington City Directory, 615.

World War One halted the basketball program for the 1918-1919 and 1919-1920 seasons. The years of 1910-1919 saw little advancement on the part of the school's basketball program. The steady influence of Coach Boyd Chambers stood as one of the few positive things to occur during this time. Chambers coached the basketball team for eight years, from 1908-1917. Two notable players from this era of basketball were Bill Strickling and Harry "Cy" Young. Strickling played for three seasons, 1909-1912, and then went on to the University of Virginia where he became an All-American basketball player.<sup>21</sup> Young, not to be confused with the famous baseball player, was an all-around athlete competing in football, baseball and basketball. Later, he transferred to Washington and Lee University, where he was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1958.<sup>22</sup> The next decade for basketball, 1920-1929, brought rule changes to speed the game along, successful seasons for Marshall College, and the long anticipated on-campus gymnasium.

As early as 1915 the college received funds for the construction of an on-campus gymnasium. The \$45,000.00 appropriated during that year was used for the completion of the science building and the beginning of the gymnasium.<sup>23</sup> However, the only thing the \$45,000.00 appears to have bought was land, because in 1919 the Parthenon related a story about the construction of the physical education building. The story revealed the cost of the building to be \$90,000.00. The structure stood on land next to where the present day student

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander M. Weyand, The Cavalcade of College Basketball (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960) 64-65.

<sup>22</sup> Charles H. Moffatt, Marshall University: An Institution Comes of Age, 1837-1980. (Huntington, WV: University Alumni Association, 1981) 32.

<sup>23</sup> Robert C. Toole, "A History of Marshall College," Masters Thesis, Marshall College, 1951, 113.

union now stands. Presented as a multi-purpose facility, the building included a basketball court on the first floor, and a swimming pool in the basement. The second floor consisted of a running track that doubled as a balcony for spectators during the basketball games.<sup>24</sup> Construction of the physical education building was a major breakthrough for the basketball program and the school. The new facility provided a home for the Big Green without incurring the cost of renting a gymnasium, and it provided the students with a much needed physical education facility. However, during the following years the team needed to play at the Vanity Fair gymnasium if an exceptionally large crowd was anticipated.

With the help of the on-campus gymnasium and student fees, the Marshall College basketball program helped the athletic department stay out of a deficit.<sup>25</sup> In fact the monthly gate receipts for the basketball team averaged around \$1,000.00 per month during the 1922-1923 season.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1920's, often referred to as "Sports' Golden Age," college basketball did not share in this great period of sports because of growing pains. College basketball during this period just began to blossom on the campuses of schools around the nation. Unlike baseball with Babe Ruth and college football with Red Grange, college basketball did not have a star that transcended the sport. Other sports had true superstars who brought their

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<sup>24</sup> "Construction of Physical Education Building Begins, to Cost \$90,000." Parthenon, 7 November 1919, 4.

<sup>25</sup> "Marshall College Treasurer Ledger" receipts tabulated for the months from July 1926 to December 1929. The citation was listed under the book tab titled Athletic Fees, Marshall University Archives, Huntington, WV. (Here after to be abbreviated as MUA).

<sup>26</sup> "Marshall College Treasurer Ledger" receipts tabulated for the months from January 1922 to October 1923. This citation is listed under the heading, Athletic Gate Receipts, MUA.

activities to the forefront of the nation's sports pages. Jack Dempsey, a boxer, saw his fame reach its peak during the twenties. Bobby Jones took golf to new heights during "Sports' Golden Age." College basketball had no such person and the game had not matured to the point that it had uniform national regulations. Thus, teams often would not play by uniformed rules making the games uninteresting for the fans and difficult for the players. Teams often played in less than adequate facilities with schedules that frequently included many local club teams.<sup>27</sup> Marshall College followed the national trend and like so many other colleges, experienced first hand those growing pains. Although they finally had stability with a playing floor, they did not have such success with coaches. The years from 1920-1929 saw eight coaches at the helm of the basketball team. This, however, followed a national trend when many schools would change coaches from year to year. Indiana University had nineteen coaches over a twenty-four year period, and Northwestern University had a different coach for seven straight years.

Even with the revolving door of coaches, the Marshall teams managed to play quite well. Their combined record for this period was eighty-nine wins and seventy-one losses. Not bad considering many schools would not venture away from their home courts and the "home cooking" they received during the twenties.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Marshall had to play a considerable number of games on the road. The team's schedule also became stronger with such notable schools as the University of Kentucky, Virginia Tech, Xavier (Ohio), West Virginia University, University of Virginia and the always competitive Davis and Elkins

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Brandwein and Allison Danzig, ed., Sports Golden Age: A Close-Up of the Fabulous Twenties (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers Inc., 1948) 270-271; Isaacs, All the Moves, 31-32.

<sup>28</sup> Brandwein and Danzig, Sports Golden Age, 270.

College squad coached by Cam Henderson. With the addition of these top notch schools to the schedule, the Marshall basketball team attempted to gain respect in the collegiate ranks.

In this decade, Marshall also saw one of its first true sports heroes in Frank "Red" Crist. From the small town of Colcord, West Virginia, Crist played six seasons at Marshall College. He started with the model or prep school at Marshall and continued with his secondary education at Marshall,<sup>29</sup> thus allowing him to play six seasons at the College. Frank Crist was a four-sport star at Marshall playing football, baseball, basketball and running for the track and field team. In his six seasons with the basketball team Crist scored one-third of Marshall's points. In an article in the Huntington Herald-Dispatch, sportswriter Duke Ridgley declared Captain Frank "Red" Crist the greatest star of all.<sup>30</sup> Ridgley was the originator of the nickname, "Thundering Herd." Even after the nickname had been used in the local newspapers, the official nickname remained the Big Green. Many people, including the school newspaper used the "Thundering Herd" in their columns. Finally in 1964 the school changed the nickname to "Thundering Herd."<sup>31</sup>

The twenties also saw the introduction of new rules for college basketball. Prior to 1923, free throws had become the curse of the game. Games were stopped constantly while teams went to the foul line to shoot free throws for what today seem ridiculous fouls. The rules committee tried to remedy the matter. Certain fouls such as running with the ball, kicking or batting it, and violation of the jump or dribble rules were removed from the list of

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<sup>29</sup> "Crist, Center," Parthenon, 12 January 1923, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Duke Ridgley, "Red Crist will Close Colorful Cage Career with Marshall Team," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 28 February 1926, 26.

<sup>31</sup> Marshall University Basketball Media Guide (Huntington, WV., 1977) 130.



fouls in 1923 and were called violations. The penalty was to give the ball to the other team from out of bounds.<sup>32</sup> Games continued to have frequent stoppages for free throws but the changing of the regulations in 1923 led to newer styles of offense and more consistent play from the competing teams. At Marshall College those rules were accepted as a changing of the system and did not appear to affect the team's play.

The establishment of the West Virginia Athletic Conference looms as an important development for Marshall. In 1925 this conference consisted of eleven state institutions, and it created guidelines for college athletics in the state. This action by the West Virginia schools to set regulations for its institutions attempted to keep athletics within proper bounds. It made them an incidental rather than a main feature in college life. The four year eligibility rule affected Marshall basketball. It declared, "No student shall play on a college team for more than four years as a student."<sup>33</sup> This meant the end of the Frank "Red" Crist's, who played for six years for Marshall. The college also changed the rules for its coaches and by the end of the twenties, coaches were being contracted by the school for a full-time position. Coaches in this decade were hired as assistant football coaches with head basketball coaching duties added to their job description along with teaching duties, usually in the physical education department.

John Stuart, a Huntington native, left the St. Louis Cardinals when he sustained an injury to his pitching arm. Upon his return to Huntington he was active initially in the Starr-Stuart Sporting Goods company but in 1927 Marshall hired him as the baseball and

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<sup>32</sup> Weyand, Cavalcade of Basketball, 82; Laurie Bollig ed., NCAA Basketball. The 1996 College Basketball Records Book (Overland Park, KS.: National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1995) 188-189.

<sup>33</sup> "College To Put Athletics On New Basis," Parthenon, 5 February 1925, 2.

basketball coach with his other duty being the assistant football coach.<sup>34</sup> He would lead the Marshall basketball program into the next decade.

The 1930's proved to be a major leap forward for Marshall basketball. John Stuart coached Marshall for three years in the late twenties, compiling a 38-19 record. However, for the 1930-1931 season the team could only win nine games while losing eight and Tom Dandelet replaced Stuart as head coach.

Dandelet, a highly respected coach, came from Ceredo-Kenova (West Virginia) High School. Like many of his contemporaries, he coached two sports, basketball and football. Roy "Legs" Hawley, the Marshall Athletic Director, stressed the point that Dandelet was added to the coaching staff to help with the growing athletic program. During 1930, Coach Dandelet's first year with the program, he assisted Stuart with the basketball team,<sup>35</sup> and then became the head coach for the 1931-1932 season.

Unfortunately for Tom Dandelet, the Marshall boys could only manage to win thirty-three games while losing thirty-five during the next four years. The record reflected stronger competition which the team faced after joining the Buckeye Conference in 1933. For the first time, Marshall became involved with a truly organized conference. Earlier attempts by the school administration to form conferences with local colleges met resistance from the other schools. As early as 1907 the school called for the formation of a conference for inter-collegiate sports.<sup>36</sup> Lawrence Corbly, the school president, in a November 1910 editorial in the Parthenon, proposed that Marshall, Morris Harvey, Ohio University, Georgetown

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<sup>34</sup> "Stuart Is Big Green Mentor For Baseball," Parthenon, 17 March 1927, 3.

<sup>35</sup> "Well Known High School Mentor Signs," Parthenon, 26 March 1930, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Parthenon, October 1907, 6.

(Kentucky) and a few other schools within a one hundred fifty mile radius of Huntington form an athletic league.<sup>37</sup> These attempts did not come to fruition. Although the school followed the rules of the West Virginia Athletic Conference, Marshall's first organized conference was the Buckeye Conference.

Coach Dandeleit's teams had to meet annually stronger competition from the conference schools. The team played conference games against the University of Cincinnati, University of Dayton, Ohio University, Miami of Ohio and Ohio Wesleyan University. This competition, coupled with a schedule that included Kentucky, Virginia Tech and Indiana University brought the demise of Dandeleit coached teams. Indiana made the trip to Huntington in January of 1934 and defeated the Big Green by a score of 36-20, in front of approximately 1,200 spectators at the Vanity Fair court.<sup>38</sup>

Marshall had switched to the Vanity Fair court during this period to accommodate the large number of supporters who came to the games. The team practiced in the campus gymnasium, but they needed more seating capacity for the games.<sup>39</sup> Once again the basketball team had out-grown its gymnasium. Starting in the early 1930's, Morris P. Shawkey, the president of the college, requested funding for a local field house. In his 1931-1932 budget proposal, he asked for \$250,000.00 to be supplied for the building of an athletic

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<sup>37</sup> Lawrence J. Corbly, Parthenon, November 1910, 1.

<sup>38</sup> "Big Green Bows To Indiana," Parthenon, 10 January 1934, 4.

<sup>39</sup> "Seven Veterans Form Nucleus of 33-34 Team," Parthenon, 6 December 1933, 4.

field house and gymnasium.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, the state did not allocate the proposed money in the approved budget. The dream of a field house would not be realized until the 1950's.

The sport of basketball grew rapidly at Marshall College. Morris Shawkey had the foresight to see even bigger growth in the future. Though his request for funding did not meet with approval, President Shawkey attempted to advance the program. Unfortunately for both Shawkey and Dandeleit they did not get to see this growth first hand.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-five brought change for the administration of Marshall College. Morris Shawkey had presided over the school from 1923-1935, and created many improvements at Marshall. However, citing failing health, Shawkey resigned as president of the school, and the new president, James Allen, came from Davis and Elkins College.<sup>41</sup>

Tom Dandeleit remained as the head of the physical education department, and that left the athletic department without a head coach for the football and basketball teams. The opening in the athletic department allowed President Allen the opportunity to bring in an old friend, Cam Henderson.<sup>42</sup> Henderson, the most promising coach in West Virginia received backing from the Marshall supporters. A new era in Marshall athletics dawned.

Eli Camden Henderson towered above the sporting landscape of West Virginia. The six foot six inch Henderson, already a legend in the state's athletic circles, was born in tiny

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<sup>40</sup> Morris P. Shawkey Papers, Budget proposal of the college president for the years of 1932-1933. This dollar amount appears on page 6. MUA.

<sup>41</sup> Shawkey later taught at Morris Harvey and appeared to recover from his bout of bad health. Others in the state have said that Shawkey was the victim of politics and was forced out by a vindictive Republican governor. With the exception of the participants, the whole truth may never be known. Whatever the reason for the Shawkey resignation, the end result was the coming of a new president and the coach the Marshall supporters always yearned for, Cam Henderson.

<sup>42</sup> Moffatt, Marshall University, 106.

Joetown, West Virginia. He began his coaching odyssey at Bristol (West Virginia) High School and continued to coach at Shinnston (West Virginia) High School, Muskingham (Ohio) College and finally at Davis and Elkins (West Virginia) College. He developed the football and basketball teams of tiny Davis and Elkins into state powers, albeit not without controversy.<sup>43</sup> Henderson brought innovation to basketball, and he gets credited for the development of the zone defense and the fast break.

Coach Henderson came to Marshall with great fanfare, and he promised not to disappoint the Big Green faithful. At a welcome to Marshall dinner, Henderson told the crowd of Marshall supporters, "I am not doing any bragging here tonight, but I'll give you the best I have toward giving Marshall College a winner."<sup>44</sup> The first season of the Henderson era, 1935-1936, did nothing to make that promise a reality. The team played only sixteen games, compiling a 6-10 record, an inauspicious beginning for a man who was hailed as the savior of Marshall athletics.

The disappointment did not last long for the Marshall fans. After Henderson's first season, Marshall was no longer the conference weakling. The following season, Henderson and the team began their conquest of the Buckeye Conference. In Henderson's second season as coach, the Big Green tied for the conference championship with a 23-8 record.

All-Buckeye Conference forward Bill Vest and second team selections, Chub Watson and George Ayersman, led the team to their most victories to date.<sup>45</sup> During the

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<sup>43</sup> Sam Clagg, Cam Henderson Story (Parsons, WV.: McClain Printing, 1981) 238.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>45</sup> "AP Selects Vest Forward On All-Buckeye," Parthenon, 12 March 1937, 6.

season the team won nine conference games and scheduled a road trip to New York to play City College of New York (CCNY), St. Francis (NY), and Long Island University (LIU). Although they did not beat these New York City powers, the games helped prepare the squad for the conference schedule. After the 1936-1937 season, basketball at Marshall would be different.

Marshall College experienced change in the fall of 1937. The landscape of the college changed with the occupancy of three new buildings, and the transformation of Marshall continued with changes to the Marshall basketball program. The national rules committee discontinued the jump ball after each basket, which helped speed the game along - good news for Cam Henderson and his fast paced Marshall offense. His fast breaking offense would excite the Vanity Fair crowds and a newcomer to the team would lead the Big Green for the next three seasons. The 1937-1938 season began the "reign of Rivlin" that would last until the end of the 1940 season.

Julius (Jule) Rivlin came to Marshall in 1936 after spending short stints at West Virginia University (WVU) and the University of Pittsburgh. Rivlin went to WVU on a track scholarship but left when the University's athletic director refused to allow Rivlin to play basketball. Cam Henderson, on the other hand, scouted Rivlin as a basketball player and invited him to join the Marshall basketball squad.<sup>46</sup>

Rules prohibited Rivlin from playing during his freshman year at Marshall, thus, he had to watch from the sidelines during the 1936-1937 basketball season. When Rivlin finally donned a Big Green uniform all expectations were exceeded. The "Wheeling Whiz" led

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<sup>46</sup> Jule Rivlin, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 23 May 1996.

Marshall in scoring as the Big Green rolled to a Buckeye Conference championship.<sup>47</sup>

With Rivlin leading the way, the 1937-1938 Big Green stunned the Long Island University Blackbirds, ending LIU's thirteen game winning streak. Later in the season, LIU came to Huntington to play Marshall and a record crowd of five thousand people attended the contest. The team also topped nationally known University of Tennessee and the University of Cincinnati. Jule Rivlin earned the captain's title on the All-Buckeye Conference team, after ranking second in the nation in scoring. The invitation to play in the first national tournament organized for college basketball stood as the highlight of the season.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) organized a tournament in Kansas City for college basketball teams and they invited Marshall to participate. Called the National Invitational Tournament, it was the equivalent of today's National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) tournament and not the National Invitational Tournament (NIT) of New York. The team won its first game against Peru (Nebraska), but it lost the next game to Washburn College (Kansas). The Marshall team ended the season with twenty-eight wins and only four losses, the most successful season in school history.

After the extremely successful debut of Jule Rivlin, the following season promised to be even better. However, the season proved to be successful on the court but a disappointment off the court. Trouble brewed in the Buckeye Conference even before the season began. On 10 December 1938 the Buckeye Conference members met in Columbus, Ohio, to discuss the future of the conference. By the meeting's end the Buckeye Conference

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<sup>47</sup> "Cagers Set New Point Record," Parthenon, 8 March 1940, 4.

had dissolved. The Parthenon reported that Miami (Ohio) and Ohio Wesleyan withdrew because of conference scheduling regulations that restricted outside moneymaking opportunities.<sup>48</sup> However, the Marshall faculty representative, Robert Britton, remembered the meeting and the reason for the withdrawal differently:

We had no sooner sat down, when the coach of Ohio Wesleyan started talking about some ineligible person playing for Marshall. Well, Cam got up and told them that they did not have to worry about that fellow, because he would not play much for Marshall, and besides that he was not ineligible. Soon, they all started arguing. Then the Athletic director of Miami got up and officially withdrew his school. Ohio Wesleyan also withdrew, and the conference was disbanded.<sup>49</sup>

Huntington rumors held that the other conference members took action because of Cam Henderson and his winning football and basketball teams. Word of secret meetings between conference schools spread throughout the sports pages of Huntington newspapers.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately for the newspaper scribes the rumors of conspiracy were never substantiated.

Although many in Huntington wanted to believe the Buckeye Conference members were jealous of Marshall's success, things may have been different than they appeared. As early as February of 1937, the conference questioned Marshall's commitment to ethics. Allen Conger, president of the Buckeye Conference, wrote to President Allen of Marshall about a "boost Marshall" letter. Apparently it encouraged Marshall boosters to put money together to help student athletes who were in need. In the letter, Conger stated, "Since Marshall was admitted to membership, there has been a complete change of administration in the

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<sup>48</sup> "Conference Is Disbanded At Columbus," Parthenon, 13 December 1938, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Crabtree, "Cam Henderson's Marshall Years 1935-1955," Masters Thesis, Marshall University, 1975, 32-33.

<sup>50</sup> Clagg, Cam Henderson, 265-266.



institution and several athletic directors felt that it would be altogether desirable if you would place yourself and institution on record as wholeheartedly supporting the ideals of our organization."<sup>51</sup>

President Allen defended the athletic department in a return letter dated 26 February 1937, "I do not think Coach Henderson was present at the time of this address. I do not think you or your associates need to have any fear of the failure of Marshall to carry out the spirit of the Buckeye Conference."<sup>52</sup> President Allen attempted to allay the fears of the conference members, but by 1938 a number of the colleges wanted to dissolve the Buckeye Conference.

For the team, the 1937-1938 season still had to be played, and they closed the conference out by winning twenty-two of twenty-seven games and a third consecutive conference title. Once again Jule Rivlin remained the star and captain of the All-Conference team. Jack Morlock joined Rivlin on the first team from Marshall while the Big Green's Yost Cunningham earned a spot on the second team. While Marshall and the conference were going separate ways, the Big Green left with its head held high knowing that it had taken the last three conference championships in basketball.

Marshall now prepared to move forward and not dwell on the past. The 1939-1940 season ended with the team winning twenty-five while losing only four games. Once again the team traveled across the United States to play games. The Big Green defeated the City College of New York (CCNY) 60-26 and followed that big win with another against the west coast power, University of California (Berkeley). However successful the season had been,

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<sup>51</sup> Allen Conger to James Allen, 23 February 1937. Papers of President James Allen, Athletics File, 1936-1937. MUA.

<sup>52</sup> James Allen to Allen Conger, 26 February 1937. Papers of President James Allen, Athletics File, 1936-1937. MUA.

the "Reign of Rivlin" ended with Jule Rivlin being named to the Associated Press Little All-American team.<sup>53</sup>

Cam Henderson called Rivlin "the greatest" player to ever wear the green and white.<sup>54</sup> Not only an exceptional athlete, he became an outstanding student and member of the community. Jule Rivlin, the son of Jewish immigrants, provided a rallying point for Huntington's Jewish community. Huntington sportswriter Ernie Salvatore explained the situation, "What Rivlin did was help bring the community together because most of the leading businessmen in town at that time were Jewish, Lebanese, or some other minority. If anything he acted as sort of a cohesive."<sup>55</sup> In the future Rivlin used his experiences of being an outsider to help another athlete at Marshall who would be looked upon as different.

After losing his great leader, Jule Rivlin, Cam Henderson worked to rebuild his team. A 14-9 record for the 1940-1941 season failed to live up to Henderson's standards, but outside forces worked against "the Old Man."<sup>56</sup> The war in Europe occupied the minds of most Americans, and it affected the lives of everyone including college athletes.<sup>57</sup> A visit from the defending NCAA national champion, Indiana University, highlighted the 1940-1941

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<sup>53</sup> "Cage Stars Brighten Marshall's History," Parthenon, 29 May 1963, 14. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was divided into two categories, big and small schools. Marshall was considered by the organization as a small or little college.

<sup>54</sup> "Co-Captains Named For Herd Cage Crew," Parthenon, 8 March 1940, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by Jerry Gargus, Huntington WV., 6 April 1994.

<sup>56</sup> "The Old Man" was the nickname given to Henderson. The origin is unknown and was used by his players only if Henderson was out of ear-shot. It was a common reference and used by many of the local newspaper sportswriters.

<sup>57</sup> Douchant, Encyclopedia of College Basketball, 25-26.

season. However, the Marshall team did not have the talent to compete with the Indiana team, losing by a score of 53-22.

The war years at Marshall were difficult times for the students and faculty. Though Henderson experienced some trouble rebuilding the Big Green, off the court trouble brewed. Early in January 1940, a letter from Leonard Riggleman, President of Morris Harvey College, accused Marshall of changing the grades of athletes to keep players eligible. In the letter, Riggleman stated, "We have also had information to the effect that while our eligibility was being questioned, credits are being changed in the Registrar's office of your institution in order to keep players eligible."<sup>58</sup>

The Marshall administration replied quickly to Riggleman's charges. President Allen's reply to Riggleman:

It is true that certain grades, not all athletes, were changed in the Registrar's office at Marshall College in the second semester of the session 1938-1939. This was not discovered until late November, 1939. Dean Wilson became suspicious and I appointed a committee of five representative members of the faculty to go over the records. Mr. Betham, the Registrar, stated that it could not have happened and thought it was due to a professor changing his grade after a student had made up some work. The result of the investigation was that the grades of eleven students had been changed, and as stated above, it was not confined wholly to athletes.<sup>59</sup>

Allen completed his letter by informing Riggleman of changes being made at the Registrar's office, including putting new locks on the door. Apparently, the grade changes were, "expertly done with the use of chemicals."<sup>60</sup> The uneasiness of those outside of the

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<sup>58</sup> Leonard Riggleman to James Allen, 10 January 1941. Papers of President James Allen, Athletics File, 1939-1940. MUA.

<sup>59</sup> James Allen to Leonard Riggleman, 16 January 1941. Papers of President James Allen, Athletics File, 1939-1940. MUA.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Athletic Department persisted throughout the Henderson era, continually raising questions about the coach's methods and motives.

From 1941-1945 the Marshall athletic department, like many other colleges and universities, suffered from a student body depleted by the draft. After the 1942 football season the school dropped that sport and did not field a team again until 1946. However, like many schools, the basketball program continued even though players were leaving to fight in the war. Unlike football teams, a basketball team needed only a few players at a minimal cost. This allowed Marshall to continue its program throughout the war years. Travel restrictions kept the Big Green from its annual east and west coast trip, but the team continued to play schools from the region. Teams from Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia continually showed up on the Marshall schedule, along with the Army War College and a team from Fort Belvoir (Washington, D.C.).

The Big Green continued to win games during the war years even with the abbreviated schedules and a rotating roster of players. Marshall's record from the 1941-1942 season to the 1944-1945 season stood at fifty-seven wins and thirty-two losses. During that four year span a total of thirty-eight different men took the court for the Big Green. On the 1944-1945 team alone, sixteen different players were on the squad, with only Dick Bias, Don Brown, Bill Hall and Andy Tonkovich completing the entire season.<sup>61</sup>

World War II created problems for Cam Henderson and his basketball team, and it hurt Henderson's bank account as evident from this memo, dated 7 May 1943 from John D. Williams, president of Marshall College. "I am advised by Ms. Staat's office that there is no

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<sup>61</sup> "1944-45 Big Green Quintet Was High Scoring Machine," Parthenon, 20 April 1945, 11.

money in the athletic fund. Therefore, your salary for May, June, July, August and part of September cannot be paid."<sup>62</sup>

Also during the war years, tensions between Henderson and the faculty appeared to heat up again. Otis Wilson, dean of the Teachers College, emerged as the faculty member who would question the Athletic Department. Wilson served as the guardian of academic standards of athletics at Marshall during most of Henderson's years at the school.

In a 25 November 1944 letter to President Williams, Wilson showed his reputation as the academic guardian. The letter concerned Frank Ballengee and Richard Bias, two basketball players. Wilson wrote:

These two boys cannot afford to be absent from eight days class work on a basketball jaunt, even though Coach Henderson had told them the time missed would not count against them. Henderson has a long consistent record of advising athletes that their college records are of little consequence. If Ballengee and Bias at the end of the semester fail to indicate that they cannot become teachers with an average of "C" they will be shown no favors because they are athletes.<sup>63</sup>

President Williams passed the Wilson letter on to Henderson along with his own memo. In his memo, Williams expressed his concerns by stating, "It is my hope that these boys will take whatever steps are necessary to bring their grades up so that they will all be eligible next semester. I am sure you share this hope with me. If there is anything that the deans or I can do in any of these cases to bring about improvement, please let us know. You have our full cooperation."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John Williams to Cam Henderson, 7 May 1943. Papers of John Williams, Athletics File, 1942-1943. MUA.

<sup>63</sup> Otis Wilson to John Williams, 25 November 1944. Papers of President John Williams, Athletics File, 1944-1945. MUA.

<sup>64</sup> John Williams to Cam Henderson, 27 November 1944. Papers of President John Williams, Athletics File, 1944-1945. MUA.

Henderson in turn, accused the faculty of wrongdoing. Using the Athletic Board as his channel of communication, Coach Henderson's accusations became known to President Williams. The secretary of the Athletic Board, Richard Beck, wrote:

In a meeting of the Athletic Board on February 9, 1945, Coach Cam Henderson submitted certain charges: First, that athletes have been unfairly treated, and the selection of their course of study, by those who have authority to approve their schedules. Second, that certain instructors have made statements implying that they are not free to handle their students and courses in a manner consistent with their own dignity and responsibility. Mr. Henderson has indicated that he is prepared to offer evidence for these charges and wishes an investigation.<sup>65</sup>

Apparently Henderson stood up to the charges of wrongdoing brought about by Dean Wilson. Later that year a couple of athletes went to see the president and discussed their inability to enroll in courses of their choice. President Williams looked into the accusations and decided to let things settle before taking action. Cam Henderson had taken action previously in 1941 by not allowing any of his incoming scholarship freshmen enroll in the Teachers College. After their freshman year they could do as they wished. Many would enter the college because teaching proved to be the profession of choice of many athletes.<sup>66</sup> Wilson's charges could have been in retaliation to the 'freshmen edict' of Henderson but Wilson and Henderson would feud until Wilson left Marshall.

The war ended in August of 1945 and Cam Henderson wasted little time in increasing the number of games on the schedule. The team played a thirty-four game schedule winning twenty-four and losing ten. The 1945-1946 season set the stage for what would be the most rewarding and prestigious season the school had ever seen.

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Beck to John Williams, 10 February 1945. Papers of President John Williams, Athletics File, 1944-1945. MUA.

<sup>66</sup> Clagg, Henderson, 243.

The 1946-1947 Big Green captured the hearts and minds of Huntingtonians and many outside of the city. Led by "Little" All-American Andy Tonkovich, the Big Green rolled to a 27-5 regular season record. The squad defeated Louisville, Hawaii, Creighton and an Indiana State team coached by John Wooden.<sup>67</sup>

Marshall's excellent record garnered an invitation to participate in the NAIB tournament in Kansas City. Henderson had taken the 1937-1938 team to the same tournament, losing in the second round. This time around his team would not be denied the championship. With only eight players on the roster, the Big Green dazzled the Kansas City crowd and soon became the fan favorite. In a Huntington Herald-Advertiser article, John Brown wrote, "Kansas City went wild over Marshall. Never had the fans there seen such a fancy-dribbling, fast running, wild-passing team."<sup>68</sup> Even Coach Henderson said, "After that first night the crowd was 75 percent for Marshall every night."<sup>69</sup>

Marshall needed five victories to win the title and they dispensed with the opposition in fine fashion. Although three of the five games were won by a total of ten points, the team beat Wisconsin State in the first game, 118-80 and topped Mankato State (Minnesota) in the finals, 73-59. The Marshall College Big Green won the NAIB national championship but had little time to celebrate the victory. The team had only forty minutes to get their belongings together because their train for Huntington was leaving Kansas City shortly after

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<sup>67</sup> Wooden was an All-American at Purdue University and would later coach at UCLA where he would lead the Bruins to ten NCAA national championships during the 1960's and 1970's.

<sup>68</sup> Clagg, Henderson, 290.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

the game. They traveled back to Huntington and were greeted by 15,000 people waiting at the Chesapeake and Ohio railway station.<sup>70</sup> The NAIB championship would be the high point of Cam Henderson's coaching career at Marshall.

The following season the Big Green compiled a 22-11 record, winning the Los Angeles Invitational and went back to Kansas City to defend the NAIB championship. This time around the team lost in the second round to San Jose State, by a score of 74-72.

The 1948-1949 season proved to be the worst for the team since World War II. Winning sixteen of the scheduled twenty-eight games, Marshall played its last season as an independent before entering the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC). At the conclusion of the 1948-1949 season an interesting letter arrived on the desk of Athletic Director, Luther Poling. The letter, from William Nellons Jr., proposed a game between two of the state of West Virginia's better college basketball teams. The proposal was intriguing but at that time may not have been feasible under the current school system. Mr. Nellons wrote:

The Sportsman's Club is an organization to create a better understanding between the people of Huntington, morally and socially. Since Marshall College is one of the many great institutions in our country that is teaching our youth the American way of life, this organization thought it might be possible to get Marshall College's Big Green basketball team to play a post-season exhibition game with the outstanding negro team in our State, the West Virginia State College Yellowjackets [sic]. It would be a great attraction, and would do much to better race relations between the sports loving fans of this city.<sup>71</sup>

In 1949, a game in West Virginia between an all white school and an all African-American school would have been a breakthrough in race relations. Marshall had played

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<sup>70</sup> Crabtree, Henderson's Marshall Years, 50.

<sup>71</sup> Williams Nellons to Luther Poling, 1 March 1949. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1948-1949. MUA.



teams that had African-American players but this would have been different. The previous two seasons West Virginia State produced some of the best basketball teams in the nation. For the 1947-1948 season the Yellow Jackets went undefeated with a 23-0 record, and in 1948-1949 they continued their winning ways by keeping intact a twenty-six game conference winning streak.<sup>72</sup> The fact is, that a mediocre Marshall team might have had a hard time beating West Virginia State, which could possibly have been the reason for the reply sent by Luther Poling on 3 March 1949:

We have your letter of March 1 relative to a post-season basketball game. Our basketball season officially closes with the Mount Union game scheduled for March 3. We have been approached by tournament officials and others to extend participation; however, in each instance we have declined bowing to the fact that our basketball schedule for the 48-49 season was very strenuous and lengthy.

The West Virginia State College Yellowjackets[sic] have an excellent team and a splendid record. We have followed the prowess of their athletic teams for many years and know well that they are continuously making good records; however, as arrangements for school are established for negroes and whites in our state, we do not feel that it is our privilege to attempt an athletic contest.<sup>73</sup>

Before sending the letter to Mr. Nellons, Poling sent the reply to President Smith and asked for Smith to help with the wording because it was "a ticklish question and we tried to be very careful not to leave the way open for further similar requests."<sup>74</sup> Poling sent the letter to Nellons and with that the 1948-1949 season came to an end.

The 1949-1950 season would be a pivotal one for Marshall. The school worked to

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<sup>72</sup> John C. Harlan, History of West Virginia State College 1891-1965 (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Book Company, 1968)136.

<sup>73</sup> Luther Poling to William Nellons, 3 March 1949. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1948-1949. MUA.

<sup>74</sup> Memo attached to the letter from Luther Poling to William Nellons, 3 March 1949. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1948-1949. MUA.

improve its image by joining the Ohio Valley Conference and trying to gain admission into the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). For years Marshall athletics operated under the rules of the West Virginia athletic board, but generally outside the realm of the NCAA. In order for Marshall to upgrade its athletic programs, it felt it had to join a nationally recognized conference and apply for membership to the NCAA.

Beginning in 1905 the NCAA created and enforced the rules of intercollegiate sports. Until 1905, rules for intercollegiate sports were often varied and developed by different organizations like the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) or the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). After a meeting of the governing organizations, the NCAA emerged with the power to set the rules and enforce them upon the member schools. At first the NCAA could do little to member institutions, but by the 1940's and 1950's the NCAA had "gained the right to punitive action."<sup>75</sup> For Marshall, President Smith believed that joining the NCAA would be beneficial for the following reasons:

1. Such membership would help us maintain higher standards in administering our athletic activities;
2. It would give prestige to our college through affiliation with other colleges and universities that agree to high standards of athletic control;
3. We would receive assistance in scheduling athletic contests. We would be able to schedule games with member schools;
4. We would participate in the continuous study of competitive athletics physical training and allied problems that we would participate in setting up desirable rules and regulations for amateur sports;
5. Membership would place our college on the list of institutions that subscribe to sensible intercollegiate athletic competition; and
6. Our team would be eligible to participate in NCAA playoff competition.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> John Lucas and Ronald Smith, Saga of American Sport (Philadelphia PA.: Lea and Febiger, 1978) 294.

<sup>76</sup> Stewart Smith memo, 6 September 1950. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1950-1951. MUA.

Thus, the College's administration believed Marshall would enter the realm of "big time college basketball" by joining the OVC during the 1949-1950 season.

In the second year of existence the OVC proved to be a formidable conference for Marshall basketball. The OVC of 1949 included Eastern Kentucky, Western Kentucky, Morehead State, Murray State, Evansville, and Tennessee Tech. But, for Marshall, joining the Ohio Valley Conference did not fully satisfy the thirst for bigger and better things.

At the beginning of the new season the Marshall athletic board talked with members of the Mid-American Conference (MAC) about joining their conference. This revelation would surprise many who had just read President Smith's statement for the new season's athletic programs. Smith, in a 16 August 1949 letter stated, "Marshall College is glad to become a member of the Ohio Valley Conference. We have entered into our conference agreements with enthusiasm and sincerity."<sup>77</sup> But Smith had reservations about the new conference, and after the athletic board inquiry into the possibility of entering the MAC, Smith wrote to Luther Poling about the Ohio Valley Conference. "My observations while in Louisville on December 19, and the proposed amendment to the Ohio Valley Conference, tend to confirm some suspicions which I have had recently . . . the proposal to honor correspondence work for the purpose of athletic eligibility is ridiculous, in my opinion."<sup>78</sup> However, Marshall would be a member of the Ohio Valley Conference for at

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<sup>77</sup> Stewart Smith letter 16 August 1949 for athletic programs for 1949-1950 school year. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1949-1950. MUA.

<sup>78</sup> Stewart Smith to Luther Poling, 22 December 1949. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1949-1950. MUA.

least the next few years.

The 1949-1950 season proved to be historic. Not only did the school enter a new conference, but earlier in the athletic season, WSAZ televised a Marshall football game, the first such contest to be televised in the state. Soon they televised the first basketball game in West Virginia. The historic event occurred on 3 December 1949, with Jack Bradley at the microphone doing the play-by-play. Marshall played Concord College at Radio Center and the Big Green won the game 84-45.<sup>79</sup> Television was still in its infancy and only a limited number of licenses were granted for broadcasting. WSAZ radio received one of the few television licenses, and became the only television station in West Virginia. Like most of the nation, the Marshall athletic staff saw television's potential, but before televising a game WSAZ had to follow a few rules developed by the athletic director. The rules were intended to discourage people from sitting at home and watching the game on television. WSAZ would not advertise the broadcasting of a game until the day of the contest so that ticket sales could be maximized.<sup>80</sup>

The excitement regarding the new conference and the telecasting of games on television, ended when the team struggled to a 15-9 record. In the first season in the OVC the Big Green won five games and lost four. The team received a first round bye for the conference tournament; however, Eastern Kentucky surprised Marshall in the semi-finals by besting the Big Green 66-62. As the season came to an end the school said good-bye to Bob Wright, one of the last links to the 1946-1947 NAIB Championship team. Wright captained

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<sup>79</sup> Fred Burns, "Marshall Routs Lions In Opener, 84-45," Huntington Herald-Advertiser 4 December 1949, Sec. 3 p.1.

<sup>80</sup> Luther Poling to Lawrence Roger, 15 November 1949. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletics File, 1949-1950. MUA.

of the 1949-1950 squad and provided solid play for Marshall throughout his career.

The following season, 1950-1951, was the worst for Cam Henderson since his first year as coach at Marshall. The team ended the season with a 13-13 record posting a 2-6 record in the conference. However, Henderson could look forward to brighter days, especially after watching the next Marshall star shine at the end of the 1950-1951 season. After being named All-State in basketball his junior and senior years at Logan (West Virginia) High School, Walt Walowac, enrolled at Marshall in the fall of 1950. Playing as a reserve, Walowac, standing only five feet eleven inches, scored 157 points his first season. Over the next three years Walowac proved to be an outstanding scoring threat.

Another bright spot for Henderson and the Big Green was the opening of the Memorial Field House as the new home of Marshall basketball. For years Marshall unsuccessfully attempted to secure funding for an on-campus facility. Thus, they continued to play in the physical education building, but it did not have the needed seating capacity.

After Marshall won the 1946-1947 NAIB Championship, the county government and officials of Huntington decided to raise the funds for a new sporting facility.<sup>81</sup>

At a cost of around \$850,000.00, the building located at Twenty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue had a seating capacity of nearly 7,000.<sup>82</sup> The construction of the Field House had often been credited to the 1946-1947 team and the local newspaper reporters dubbed it, "the house that Henderson built."<sup>83</sup> Henderson described the new building as "Just about the

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<sup>81</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 15 February 1996.

<sup>82</sup> Clagg, Cam Henderson, 332.

<sup>83</sup> Fred Burns, "Gamboling in Sports," Huntington Advertiser, 3 December 1950, Sec 3, p 1.

answer to any coaches' prayer. We have waited a longtime for this but it was worth it."<sup>84</sup> If only the 1950-1951 team had answered the coaches prayers.

However, as the new season opened, the college made a major announcement. On 20 December 1951 Marshall officially withdrew from the Ohio Valley Conference. Dr. Smith's official explanation appeared in the local newspapers:

Although we are not in athletics primarily to make money, we find it is awfully hard to compete in a conference in which we have no natural rival. As a result of that fact our attendance has been off both at home and on the road. Furthermore, we have to travel extremely long distances to play some of the conference teams and that aggravates the financial situation. At home, alumni and downtown interest has faltered because the lack of that natural rival, especially in football.<sup>85</sup>

The withdrawal from the OVC surprised few especially since Marshall tried to gain admittance into the Mid-American Conference beginning in 1950. The college hoped to be admitted during the 20 January 1952 meeting of Mid-American officials; however, if turned down, they were prepared to play as an independent until the school joined the MAC. While waiting to hear from the MAC, the team had to forge on into the new season.

Even with Walt Walowac breaking the single season record, the 1951-1952 Big Green won only fifteen of the twenty-six games played and only five conference games. The lone highlight came with a victory over Wake Forest with Walowac scoring thirty-six points in the win. By the end of the season Walowac set the single season scoring record of 579 points, and he appeared on the All-OVC team and became a first team member of the Helms Athletic Foundation's Little All-American team.

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<sup>84</sup> Fred Burns, "Marshall Has 1st Drill at Field House," Huntington (West Virginia) Advertiser, 29 November 1950, 15.

<sup>85</sup> John R. Brown, "Green Quits O.V. Circuit," Huntington Advertiser, 20 December 1951, 1.

The Helms Athletic Foundation bestowed another honor upon a member of the Marshall family that year. It inducted Cam Henderson as a charter member of the NAIB, Helms Hall of Fame, as one of the top coaches in small college basketball. Likewise, five other coaches, ten players and the inventor of basketball, Dr. James Naismith received the honor.<sup>86</sup> In typical Henderson fashion, "the Old Man" remained soft-spoken and unassuming about the honor. "I am not just sure what it is they want with me, but they are going to give me some kind of an award. The Helms Athletic Foundation is a pretty big outfit in the Athletic world and they have joined with the executives of the NAIB to present some awards to a few coaches. I am not the only one, there are three or four others."<sup>87</sup> Henderson finally received recognition for his contributions to the game of basketball and just as the coach gained recognition so too did the school.

Marshall finally received good news from the Mid-American Conference in November of 1952. During the fall meeting the MAC members selected Marshall for an invitation to join the conference. The school enthusiastically accepted and would begin play in the conference in 1953. A big step for Marshall, the OVC remained a small college conference. However, the NCAA rated the MAC as a "major college" conference.

Marshall's entrance into the Mid-American Conference would have to wait until after the 1952-1953 season. Not knowing if it would be a member of the MAC, Marshall's basketball schedule for 1952-1953 could not be changed. For the Big Green, the new season was a return to form on the court. Walt Walowac, once again led the team in scoring,

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<sup>86</sup> "Cam Henderson is Honored as Charter Member of NAIB Helms 'Hall of Fame'," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 14 March 1952,44.

<sup>87</sup> Fred Burns, "Gamboling in Sports," Huntington Advertiser, 9 March 1952, Sec. 3, p. 1.

averaging twenty-nine points per game and earned recognition on the first team Helm's Little All-American squad. Other members of the 20-4 Big Green that saw the majority of playing time included Sid King, Dave Robinson, Herb Morris, Jack Ferguson and a freshman from Pomeroy, Ohio named Charlie Slack. Slack led the team in rebounding, averaging sixteen per game, which would be his lowest total in his four years at Marshall.

After losing only two of five starters from the previous season, the 1953-1954 team appeared ready to enter the Mid-American Conference with a good opportunity to challenge for the conference championship. The team, however, playing a more difficult schedule, struggled to win twelve of its twenty-one games. In his final season, Walt Walowac led the team in scoring while being named to the All-Mid American squad and Helm's All-American third team for major colleges. Slack received honorable mention on the All-Mid American team after averaging twenty-two rebounds per game.

Walowac ended his career at Marshall holding ten scoring records including most career points (1,982) and points in a single game with forty-four. The school also retired Walowac's number twenty jersey, the first to be honored in such a manner by the athletic department. Henderson credited Walowac's accomplishments to his hard work, saying, "He is always the first player on the floor for practice and the last one to leave."<sup>88</sup>

For the team the highlight of the season occurred with a trip to New York City to play against Iona at Madison Square Garden. Marshall went to New York as decided underdogs, but returned to Huntington with a 93-81 victory over the strong Iona team. Walowac gained great praise from the New York press and the team received compliments with the exception

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<sup>88</sup> Duke Ridgley, "Diamond Dust," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 11 March 1954, 15.



of the New York Daily News. The Daily News headline after the game read, "Iona Beats Marshall 93-81." After reading the headline Henderson wryly commented, "They probably had it set ahead of time and didn't bother to change it."<sup>89</sup> It was the first time a Marshall team played at Madison Square Garden and afterwards, the city of Huntington went wild by sending victory telegrams to the team. After the Iona victory the team would finish the final fifteen games with an 8-7 record, never being able to gain momentum from the win over Iona. The 1953-1954 season ended the storied career of Walt Walowac, but the following year would be the most significant season in Marshall basketball history.

In 1954 a landmark court case made it to the United States Supreme Court that changed American society. The Supreme Court upheld *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* and effectively ended segregation in American schools. That case affected Marshall College, allowing African-Americans to join the undergraduate student body for the first time in the school's history. Among those African-American students could be found the first African-American athlete recruited by Cam Henderson.

Harold (Hal) Greer played basketball for the segregated Douglass High School in Huntington, West Virginia. Henderson recruited him to Marshall, and thus he broke the West Virginia color barrier in basketball. While many African-Americans played for the historically black, state supported school, West Virginia State College, no African-American athlete had played for any of the all white institutions. Greer would have to wait to play for Henderson because of the freshman eligibility rule.<sup>90</sup> So while Henderson made the historic

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<sup>89</sup> "N.Y. Newspaper Errs; Says Iona Beat Marshall," Huntington Advertiser, 4 January 1954,1.

<sup>90</sup> In 1953 as Marshall entered the MAC the school no longer allowed freshmen to participate in varsity sports.

decision to sign a African-American athlete to a scholarship, the 1954-1955 season would be played without Greer.

Charlie Slack returned for another year of intense rebounding. Helping to fill the void left by Walowac were the "Gold Dust Twins" from South Charleston, West Virginia, Cebe Price and Paul Underwood.<sup>91</sup> Slack, brilliant under the boards, grabbed an NCAA record of 25.6 rebounds per game, and Cebe Price led the team in scoring with a 23.6 point average. The team played excellent basketball and had an opportunity to tie for the conference championship with a victory over Western Reserve in the last game of the season.

Marshall had beaten Western Reserve earlier in the year, 90-84 in Huntington. The two teams were to play in Cleveland, Ohio, and if Marshall could win the game, they would have played Miami (Ohio) in a playoff game to decide the winner of the conference. Unfortunately, Marshall not only lost the game, 70-58, but much more in the process. The team arrived at the arena without their coach but proceeded to complete the pregame preparations. Henderson finally made it to the game and by some accounts had imbibed a little too much. Western slowed the pace of the game which upset "the Old Man," and the team blamed the coach for not devising a plan to overcome the slow pace of the game.<sup>92</sup>

After the loss the team traveled back to Huntington without their coach. A few days later, Henderson would return to the city amid controversy. A possibility Marshall might play in the National Invitational Tournament (NIT) in New York City, ended when the players voted not to participate in the event. Disgruntled with the coach, some of the team

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<sup>91</sup> Clagg, Cam Henderson, 360.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 362-363.

members were summoned by President Smith to report about the "incident" at Western Reserve. The president allowed Henderson to present his side of the events, and then Henderson resigned unexpectedly.<sup>93</sup> He ended his career at Marshall with a coaching record of 362 wins and 160 losses. He still holds the record for the most victories by any coach in the history of the school.<sup>94</sup>

The resignation of Henderson shocked the community. Immediately speculation about a successor began, with Jule Rivlin being mentioned prominently. Of the thirty or so coaches who applied for the vacancy, many were former Marshall players who were high school coaches and wanted to follow in their mentor's footsteps. The search took a little over one month to complete and it was officially announced on 23 April 1955 that Jule Rivlin would be the new coach.

While Cam Henderson came close to winning the Mid-American Conference championship in his last year, Jule Rivlin would succeed where his mentor failed. With the nucleus of the previous years team coming back, Rivlin added Jack Freeman, Hal Greer and Dave Kirk to the squad.

Rivlin's first game as coach proved historic, in that Hal Greer became the first African-American to play basketball for Marshall. By breaking the color barrier at Marshall, Greer also broke the state's color barrier of traditionally white colleges.

After beating Spring Hill College in the first game of the season the team went on to win seventeen more games while losing only four. The Big Green finally won the Mid-

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>94</sup> Marshall University Men's Basketball Media Guide 1995-1996 (Huntington, WV: Marshall University, 1995)13.

American Conference championship by boasting a 10-2 record in conference play. In his last season with the team, Charlie Slack averaged 23.6 rebounds per game, good enough to rank fifth in the nation in that category. In his first season, Hal Greer finished second in the nation in field goal accuracy, making over sixty percent of his shots.<sup>95</sup>

For the season the team averaged 93.3 points per game, second in the nation, and became the first team in NCAA history to have three players average more than twenty points per game.<sup>96</sup> Besides these superlatives the team also scored a first by playing in the NCAA tournament for the first time in school history. Unfortunately, the team faced Morehead State in the first round and lost to the Eagles for the third time that season.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the defeat in the NCAA tournament, Jule Rivlin's successful inaugural season boded well for the future.

Entering the 1956-1957 campaign, Jule Rivlin would have the services of one of the most sought after high school basketball players to enter Marshall College. Leo Byrd was a local kid from Huntington High School, whose services were sought by over seventy colleges and universities. After his senior year in high school, Byrd was named "Mr. Basketball USA" after winning the most valuable player award at a national high school all-star game. Leo Byrd finally chose Marshall and played for the freshman team during the 1955-1956 season.

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<sup>95</sup> Douchant, Encyclopedia of College Basketball, 76.

<sup>96</sup> The three players were Charlie Slack, Cebe Price and Paul Underwood. Douchant, Encyclopedia of College Basketball, 562.

<sup>97</sup> Marshall played without center Charlie Slack, who had to sit out the game because of NCAA regulations. The NCAA did not permit players with four years of varsity experience to participate in NCAA sanctioned events. At the time Slack entered Marshall the school was not observing the freshman ineligibility rule.

Even with Leo Byrd on the squad, joining Greer, Price, Underwood and Freeman the season proved a disappointment. Once again the team possessed a high scoring average ranking third in the nation in scoring averaging 86.3 points a game, but it managed to win only fifteen of the twenty-four games on the schedule. It was the last year for Price and Underwood and the two would end up in the top ten of scoring in Marshall history.

The following year ended the Hal Greer era at Marshall. The team responded by improving to a 17-7 record and by winning nine of twelve in the conference. Greer finished his career with over 1,350 points and over 750 rebounds, but he did more than succeed on the court: Greer won the hearts of the Marshall faithful.<sup>98</sup> After being selected twice to the All Mid-American squad, Greer left Marshall for the National Basketball Association (NBA) and a Hall-of-Fame career.

It was as if the dam had burst and Marshall was losing its star players in a steady flow beginning in 1954. Starting with Walt Walowac the flow was ending with Leo Byrd. Byrd's senior year was a personal success, especially after being named to the All Mid-American team for the second year in a row and being named second team All-American behind Jerry West of West Virginia and Oscar Robertson of Cincinnati.

For Jule Rivlin the joy of coaching Byrd was tremendous, but the season was a disappointment ending with a 12-12 record. The 1958-1959 season was the last non-losing season for a Rivlin coached team. As the new decade opened, Coach Rivlin would be at the helm of Marshall basketball for another four years managing to win only thirty-eight of ninety-three games.

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<sup>98</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Down In Front," Huntington Advertiser, 26 February 1958, 12.

The defeats were hard on Rivlin and midway through the 1962-1963 season he announced his resignation effective at the end of the season. Rivlin cited three reasons for his move: personal, policy and philosophy. Although he did not elaborate on the reasons, Rivlin's lack of a recruiting budget has been cited as the main reason for his resignation. But many in Huntington welcomed the coach's decision to leave the program. For Rivlin, the end may have come with an unfavorable student poll and an effigy hanging.<sup>99</sup> The final edition of a Jule Rivlin coached team ended with a last place finish in the Mid-American Conference, after winning only one conference game.

Because of the early resignation of Rivlin, a search for a new coach began immediately. As the season ended the search was complete and on 2 March 1963, Ellis Johnson became the fifteenth head coach of Marshall's basketball team. The former University of Kentucky All-American and head coach of Morehead State definitely had his work cut out, and it would take patience on the part of the supporters before he could produce a winning team.

The Marshall basketball program hit rock bottom during Johnson's first two seasons as head coach. Winning only ten games in two years, the team would start to build upon three future stars during the 1965-1966 season. Bob Allen, Bob Redd and George Stone would be the foundation of Ellis Johnson's greatest Marshall squads. The trio would lead the Thundering Herd to a 12-12 season in 1965-1966 and take the team to its greatest heights since the 1946-1947 NAIB championship.

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<sup>99</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "No Martyr Is He," Huntington Advertiser, 8 January 1963, 8.

Stone came to Marshall from Covington, Kentucky, and immediately established himself as one of the great scorers in Marshall history. Possessing what appeared to be an unlimited shooting range, Stone led the 1965-1966 team in scoring with eighteen points per game. The six foot eight inch Allen arrived in Huntington from Port Huron, Michigan, and quickly became the rebounding leader of the team averaging seven per game during his first year and then following that with averages of thirteen and fourteen per game the next two seasons.

Bob Redd took a more circuitous route to Huntington, joining the Thundering Herd after a four-year stint with the Marine Corps. Redd soon proved to be the last piece of the puzzle for Ellis Johnson. He could score and rebound and because of his military service was the mature leader the team needed.

After playing together for the first time during the 1965-1966 season, the three were joined by a fine point guard, Danny D'Antoni and an excellent athlete from Logan, West Virginia, Jim Davidson. The 1966-1967 season was one of the best in years. The team finished second in the MAC and secured an invitation to play in the NIT in New York City.

In the first game of the NIT, Bob Allen sank a free throw in overtime with the clock expired to beat Villanova. Nebraska was the next opponent for the team, and George Stone tossed in forty-six points for a new Marshall single game scoring record. The Thundering Herd moved into the semi-finals to face Marquette University. Unfortunately, the team ran out of steam and lost to Marquette 83-78. In the consolation game the Thundering Herd played Rutgers and went down to defeat by a score of 93-76. Playing mostly with only five starters, the squad could not sustain the hectic pace for four games.

With all five starters returning for the new season, prospects were high for the 1967-1968 season. Once again, the team got to display their talents on the national level by being invited to face the number one ranked team in the nation, the University of Houston, at Madison Square Garden. The Thundering Herd played brilliantly but could not overcome the Cougar attack and lost 102-93. Elvin Hayes, the star of the Cougars, called Marshall the second best team they had played behind the great UCLA Bruins.<sup>100</sup> That season the team placed second again in the Mid-American Conference and advanced to the NIT. This time around the team was upset in the first round by St. Peters. Ellis Johnson stood at the peak of his Marshall career.

Following the graduation of the three stars, the 1968-1969 team dropped to nine wins and fifteen losses. Losing Allen, Redd and Stone left too much of a void that Johnson could not fill with the returning players. As the new decade began, allegations of illegal recruiting by the football and basketball programs surfaced and forced Ellis Johnson to resign his post as head coach. Johnson was cleared of any wrongdoing but it was too late and he could not retain his job as head coach of the Thundering Herd.

The decade of the 1950's was a golden era in Marshall basketball. During that ten year span the team was coached by the immortal Cam Henderson, saw the return to campus of one of the great stars of the past, Jule Rivlin, and watched an abundance of talent play on the Field House hardwood. The 1960's were an up and down decade for the school. Jule Rivlin left the school under pressure from the students and the Huntington community. Ellis Johnson helped bring the team back to national prominence only to lose his job under a

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<sup>100</sup> Greg Carannante, "Bob Redd Nearing End as MU 'Great'," Parthenon, 27 February 1968, 5.



cloud of controversy.

As with many college programs the fondest memories are from on the court. For Marshall the 1950's and 1960's were, overall, a good pair of decades of basketball. But, like so many other colleges and universities, Marshall faced many new challenges during these two decades. The pressure from the fans to win was always a constant but something new was added with integration.

Chapter III  
The First Generation: Hal Greer, 1954-1958

World War II proved to be a watershed event for African-Americans. During the war over 700,000 African-Americans served in the Army, with an additional 187,000 African-Americans enlisted in the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps. African-Americans demonstrated in every way that they were the equals of whites during the war. They distinguished themselves on the battlefield, and also on the home front.<sup>1</sup>

Before World War II a great migration occurred when Southern African-Americans moved North to work in factories. While the jobs in the North were plentiful, the treatment was often the same as in the South, hostility and prejudice. The war galvanized the African-American community, bringing the people together to wage the "Double V" campaign, victory at home and victory abroad. Thus began in earnest the African-Americans quest for equal rights in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

After the war ended, President Harry S. Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights. In 1947, the Committee delivered its report titled, *To Secure These Rights*. The Committee's report recommended, among other things, laws to guarantee voting rights, equal employment and a permanent civil rights commission. *To Secure These Rights* became the blueprint for the civil rights movement for the next twenty years. While Truman moved the government on the civil rights issue, other sectors of society started

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and A Nation: A History of the United States*, vol 2: Since 1865, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986) 802-803.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

integrating on their own.<sup>3</sup>

In 1946 a major league sport's franchise took the lead in the fight for integration. Major league baseball had long been a segregated sport with one league for whites while African-Americans had to form their own league. The segregation policy of baseball changed in 1946 when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson, an African-American from California, to play for its top minor league franchise. The following year, 1947, Robinson became the first African-American to play major league baseball since the late 1890's.<sup>4</sup> Other professional sports soon followed the lead of Major League Baseball. The National Football League (NFL) integrated in 1946, and the National Basketball Association (NBA) followed in 1950.<sup>5</sup>

Integration of sporting teams caught the attention of the national news media. However, it was the years of patience and legal action that truly began the initial integration of society. Court battles that began in the 1940's set the stage for the breakthrough during the 1950's. Beginning with court cases that involved professional and graduate schools, minorities gained admittance to previously all-white institutions. All of the legal action finally culminated when the Supreme Court ruled segregation unconstitutional. The now famous court case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, meant changes for the nation's school systems.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 839-840.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Seymour, Baseball: The People's Game (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 557.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, Saga of American Sport (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1978) 390-391.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Beth Horton et al., A People and A Nation, 860.

Not only were the school systems changing, so too were the local communities. In 1954 Huntington, West Virginia, was a segregated city. Two distinctive communities formed the city of Huntington, each possessing their own leaders and businesses, with segregation being practiced by many of the downtown businesses.

More than 4400 African-Americans constituted Huntington's African-American community. The community was bound on the North by the Eighth Avenue railroad tracks, on the South by Thirteenth Avenue, on the East by Twentieth Street and to the West by Thirteenth Street. Most of the African-American businesses were located on Eighth Avenue and along Sixteenth Street. The community had very few professionals, doctors and attorneys, and was primarily blue collar. Douglass High School was the focal point of the African-American community. Because of the pride within the community, especially for the high school, the members of the community reluctantly accepted integration. Huntington's African-Americans knew their school eventually would close, and they would lose a source of their community pride.<sup>7</sup>

Marshall College began integrating students in the early 1950's. African-Americans were allowed to enroll in the graduate school; however, only a few African-Americans took advantage of the school's policy.<sup>8</sup> Marshall complied with *Brown v Board* when the school admitted African-American undergraduate students in the fall of 1954. Local African-Americans took advantage of the new admission policy, not because they believed Marshall

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<sup>7</sup> Ancilla Bickley, interview by the author, Huntington, WV, 15 March 1996; Jim Venable, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 20 March 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Slash was one such individual. He finished graduate school at Marshall in 1952, and later became the Cabell County School Superintendent.

College to be the greatest institution, but because it decreased the cost of a college education by allowing them to live at home.<sup>9</sup>

Until the integration of schools began, local African-Americans had to travel out of state to school, or enroll at West Virginia State, located in Institute, West Virginia, or Bluefield State College, in Bluefield, West Virginia. Taking the trip down Sixteenth Street in Huntington would be easier for local African-American and less expensive. The new ruling would benefit the African-Americans but also the Marshall athletic programs.

Cam Henderson challenged the state segregationist beliefs, while he was the coach at Davis and Elkins College. In 1929, Henderson brought three Native Americans to Elkins to play on his football team. Although he brought the young men to play football, all of the Native Americans worked hard on their academics and eventually all three left Davis and Elkins with a college education. However, competing schools complained about the Native Americans, accusing Henderson of bringing in "ringers" to help his football team. Henderson tired of the accusations and never recruited another minority person while at Davis and Elkins.<sup>10</sup>

Once he arrived at Marshall, Henderson could only sit idly by and watch as the athletes from Huntington's Douglass High School left the city to play basketball elsewhere. When the Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board* case ruled school segregation unconstitutional, Henderson could pursue talented African-American athletes. The coach, more a practical man than a social leader, decided to take advantage of the new laws that would help his team.

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Venable, interview by the author, 20 March 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Clagg, Henderson, 203-213.

Marshall's first step toward integrating the basketball team occurred when Henderson went to Douglass High School and offered Harold (Hal) Greer a scholarship to play basketball at Marshall. Greer, a three-sport athlete at Douglass, gained all-state honors in basketball during his senior season. The last of six brothers to play at Douglass, Hal wanted to play basketball at Elizabeth City (North Carolina) State Teachers College where his brother J.D. had played. All of Greer's older brothers appeared talented enough to compete at Marshall, but segregation prevented them from even being considered to play at the local college. Fortunately, Greer possessed the talent to play at Marshall, and he saw the walls of segregation come tumbling down.

After discussing the proposition with his high school coach, Zelma Davis, and his family, Greer reluctantly accepted Henderson's offer. Greer may have felt uneasy about the new world that he planned to enter. He grew up in the African-American section of Huntington, and attending an integrated school was a new and uncomfortable situation. The white students were not the only people on campus feeling uneasy about integration. Quiet and unassuming, Greer's personality made him the ideal person to break the color barrier in West Virginia sports. Hal's reputation for dedication to basketball and his studies preceded him to Marshall. Zelma Davis described Hal as, "One of the finest boys I have ever coached. He was cooperative at all times, both in class and on the basketball court."<sup>11</sup>

Once Greer chose to attend Marshall, the local press decided to downplay the historic event. Ernie Salvatore, the sports editor of the Huntington Advertiser, explained,

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<sup>11</sup> "Greer Drawing Raves From Rivlin; Soph May Win Starting Position," This article was found in a newspaper scrapbook in the Marshall University sports Information Department office. No identification was on the clipping. A similar article ran in the Pittsburgh Courier without the quote from Zelma Davis.

I had just become evening sport's editor and I was very much aware of that stuff. I was determined I wasn't going to make him a big celebrity on the fact that he was black. He was to be treated as normally as possible. Not that we were going to ignore him, but I could just imagine that if we went overboard on this thing, what would have happened.<sup>12</sup>

True to their word, the local scribes did not go overboard with the "Jackie Robinson of West Virginia" story. A review of the area newspapers revealed very little about the beginnings of Greer's career at Marshall. In fact, the writers were very careful about describing Greer without using offensive adjectives that were common for the era. During his first year of varsity basketball the most frequent comment dealt with Greer being the first "Negro" to play at Marshall.<sup>13</sup>

Fortunately for Greer the freshmen were not eligible, so he could practice but not participate in varsity games. This, in turn, permitted the local Marshall followers to become used to the idea of having an African-American playing for the Big Green. The extra year also allowed Greer to adjust to campus life and collegiate studies.<sup>14</sup>

On the court, the adjustments were easy as Greer made immediate impressions upon his new coach. Anticipation was high for the first practice of the 1954-1955 season. As the first practice in the women's gymnasium commenced, the extra large crowd waited to view the new kid from Douglass. For Greer, the first practice went off without a hitch, "I can't

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<sup>12</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996.

<sup>13</sup> After reviewing many of the newspaper clippings in the Marshall archives I arrived at my conclusion that the sportswriters were careful not to be offensive. The most offensive writing may have been a comment about Greer's "cat-like" quickness. In general, the first year was handled with grace on both sides.

<sup>14</sup> In the interview with Ernie Salvatore, he observed that the freshmen ineligibility rule was a "god-send" for Greer. He also believed that this rule helped the white community to come to terms with the integration of the basketball team.

recall an awful lot really, but I was probably a little nervous. I was always a quiet person anyway. I was probably quiet and just went along trying to do my job."<sup>15</sup>

But for others, the day loomed large in their memories. Ernie Salvatore recalled Henderson's reactions and comments from that first day in a gym crowded with all white faces except Greer's and the janitor's.

Everytime Hal whizzed towards the basket, skinny legs a blur, Henderson would smile and the crowd would buzz. Every time Hal stopped and popped in that little jumper which would become his trademark, Henderson would smile and wink at a sportswriter next to him. 'Before that young man is through here he'll become one of the greatest players in Marshall history and one of the greatest in the country.'<sup>16</sup>

After the first practice, Henderson did not see Greer and his freshmen teammates on a consistent basis throughout the year. Under the guidance of the freshman basketball team's coach, Dr. Michael Josephs, the freshmen practiced and played their games separately from the varsity. The team played its games locally around the Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia in order to avoid overnight travel. Staying away from overnight travel resulted from budgetary constraints, and not a result of potential problems involving Greer. Quite the contrary, the freshmen team experienced few problems regarding the integration of the squad. Both Greer and the white players meshed on the court and respected each other off the court.

While Greer and the others enjoyed a fine freshman year on the court, Greer's adjustment to college life proved difficult. Hal spent his first year on the Marshall campus going to classes and playing basketball. The campus offered little social activities to the African-American students during the first years of integration. The African-American

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<sup>15</sup> Chuck Landon, "King's Day Honor for Court King," Charleston (West Virginia) Daily Mail, 16 January 1990, sec. C, p1.

<sup>16</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Hurryin' Hal," Huntington Quarterly, Summer-1994, 31.



students spent most of their time in their dorm rooms or, if they were from Huntington, at home away from the campus. The adjustments were difficult for the African-American students who usually considered themselves a majority at school, not the minority.<sup>17</sup> Just because Greer played basketball and baseball, that did not keep him from feeling as if he were on the outside looking in. Hal's grandmother, Tula Greer, remembered that first year:

That poor boy. My heart used to go out to him. He'd come home at night too tired and too upset to eat and he'd tell me he didn't want to go back 'over there,' that he felt like an outsider and that he wished he had gone to Elizabeth City Teachers College like he planned. But I'd say to him 'Harold, don't be foolish. You've got to go back tomorrow. If you don't you'll be making a big mistake.' And so he'd get up in the morning, eat his breakfast, and I'd hurry him along through the door to make sure that he got 'over there' on time. That's how he got his nickname in the papers, 'Hurryin' Hal Greer.'<sup>18</sup>

Greer persevered his first year at Marshall, but in his second year he would jump into the spotlight of Marshall basketball.

Taking some of the glare from the spotlight was new head coach Jule Rivlin. Cam Henderson, the man who brought an African-American athlete to Marshall, retired following the end of the 1954-1955 season. In his coaching chair the Marshall faithful wanted and received the coach's star pupil, Jule Rivlin.

Rivlin's presence as the head coach helped Greer during his first varsity season. When Rivlin, a Jew, played at Marshall he gained acceptance into the Huntington community, and his experiences allowed him to be sympathetic to Greer's position. When speaking of Rivlin, Greer remarked, "Good old Coach Rivlin. I owe a lot to him."<sup>19</sup> Clearly

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<sup>17</sup> Jim Venable, interview by the author, 20 March 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Hurryin' Hal," 30.

<sup>19</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "New Page Added to Greer Chapter," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 14 January 1990, sec. C, p. 1.

Greer understood Rivlin's role as coach, confidant and father away-from-home. The first test for both coach and player came during the preseason.

After averaging eighteen points per game on the freshman team, Greer appeared ready to challenge for a starting spot on the varsity squad. When Coach Rivlin put his first Marshall team through preseason practices the big question was whether Hal Greer, an African-American, would start for Marshall. Hal Greer and Jack Freeman dueled for the last starting position. Both players showed great promise on the freshman team, with Freeman averaging twenty-three points per game outscoring Greer by five points per game.<sup>20</sup>

Ironically, the two players could have been teammates at Huntington High School if the local school system did not have separate schools for the African-Americans and the whites.

However, they were teammates at Marshall and challenging each other for a starting job. All eyes were on Rivlin, who had to make a difficult choice between two Huntingtonians, one an African-American and the other white. For Rivlin it was a true dilemma; Marshall had integrated but was the college and city ready for an African-American to represent them in the starting lineup? Freeman injured his hand and could not start the season with the rest of his teammates, making the decision for Rivlin easier. Once Greer made the starting lineup he never left it, proving with his knowledge of the game and physical talents that he belonged in the starting rotation from the beginning.

The next big event in Greer's career was opening night. Blessed with understanding teammates, who were mostly upperclassmen, it went without incident. On 3 December 1955, a large crowd packed the Memorial Field House to watch Greer's every move. Jim

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<sup>20</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by author, Huntington, WV, 11 April 1996.

Venable, a friend of Greer's, recalled the first game,

The night of the first game that he played, people were just hanging over the banisters at the Field House. Just wondering how he would do, because he was carrying the weight of this community, as far as integration was concerned, on his shoulders. From day one he fit the picture.<sup>21</sup>

Greer did not disappoint the crowd at the Field House. He led the team in scoring, tossing in twenty points helping the Big Green to a 83-69 victory over Spring Hill College. His performance helped him take great strides toward becoming an accepted member of the Marshall team, especially by those in the white community.

Ernie Salvatore and his newspaper colleagues kept their promise by emphasizing the return of Jule Rivlin and not the integrating of the basketball team. The Sunday edition of the Herald-Advertiser barely mentioned the historic moment, "Greer became the first Negro to perform for Marshall in intercollegiate athletics and he covered himself with glory as he proved to be a good scorer and his performance on defense was just about all you could ask for."<sup>22</sup> Other than that one paragraph, the mention of Greer being the first African-American to play for Marshall was non-existent.

The African-American press also started to write about Greer during his first year. The weekly paper, the Pittsburgh Courier, reported Greer's success with Marshall in a story titled, "Marshall College Happy with Grier [sic]." The story gave some background information about Hal and the coach's pleasure with Greer's performance at the beginning of

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<sup>21</sup> Jim Venable, interview by author, 20 March, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Fred Burns, "Big Green Goes All Out to Top Spring Hill, 83-69," Huntington Herald-Advertiser, 4 December 1955, 33.

his sophomore year.<sup>23</sup>

Greer's statistics from his initial season were above average for a first year player. He averaged 15.5 points per game, 6.6 rebounds and ranked second in the nation in field goal percentage, shooting sixty percent from the floor.<sup>24</sup> While those numbers did not lead the team, they were excellent considering Greer's burden.

Like other African-American athletic pioneers, Jackie Robinson in baseball and Marion Motley and Bill Willis in football,<sup>25</sup> Greer carried himself with dignity in the face of hostile crowds and still played excellent basketball. Not only did these men have to remain reserved off the field, they also had to prove to the white community that their race belonged on the field. Greer's teammates did not need to be convinced that he belonged on the team. However, his play on the court definitely made believers of the white community, and he cleared the way for other African-American athletes to play at Marshall.<sup>26</sup>

During his first year, Marshall's membership in the Mid-American Conference also helped Greer. Unlike West Virginia University, a member of the Southern Conference,

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<sup>23</sup> "Marshall College Happy with Grier [sic]," Pittsburgh Courier, 24 December 1955, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Marshall College Press and Radio Guide 1956-57, Huntington, WV, 1956. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson was the first African-American baseball player of the modern era and started his career in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers gaining Rookie of the Year honors in his first season with the team. Marion Motley helped integrate professional football in 1946, playing for the Cleveland Browns and later becoming the second African-American elected into the Football Hall of Fame.

<sup>26</sup> Ernie Salvatore concurred with this idea in his interview. Many of the trailblazing African-American's felt the need to produce better than average numbers in order for others to be allowed to play. For more information about this type of thinking see Jules Tygiel, Baseball's Great Experiment, pp. 72,217,257-258,289,321.

Marshall played most of its games in the North, where integrated teams already played. Ironically, the only place Greer and the team encountered discrimination was in Charleston, West Virginia, when the team went to play against Morris Harvey College.

The problem occurred when Marshall traveled to Charleston and went to a hotel for the pre-game meal. Coach Rivlin called ahead to reserve a restaurant, failing to mention Greer's presence on the team. When the team arrived for the meal, the restaurant manager refused to serve the team because of Greer. Rivlin immediately pulled his team out of the establishment and searched for a new place to eat. Jack Freeman recalled the incident years later:

We went into the restaurant where we had our reservations for our pre-game meal. The next thing we knew we were back on the street and Coach Rivlin looked upset. Nothing was said. Nothing was brought up. And there wasn't much written about it. We were just kids. We didn't realize what was going on, although Hal did.<sup>27</sup>

Sonny Allen, Greer's former Marshall teammate, remembered the incident and said he did not realize what was happening because he was just "naive" about those types of situations.<sup>28</sup> The white members of the team did not have the experience to recognize what was happening, but Hal knew, "I might have run into a couple of situations in Charleston, of all places. But other than that . . . You might hear the catcalls and all the things like that, but I had tunnel vision. I knew what I wanted to do and my mind was right on what I had to do."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Salvatore, "Hurryin' Hal," 32.

<sup>28</sup> Sonny Allen, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 17 February 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Landon, "King's Day," sec C, p. 1.

Marshall won the 1955-1956 Mid-American Conference title, winning eighteen games and losing only five, with Hal Greer an integral part of the winning formula. Although shy and introverted, he began to spend some time with his teammates away from the court by going to local sporting events. The night the team learned of their MAC championship, Greer, Dave Kirk and John Mayfield attended the Golden Gloves tournament at the Field House. Greer's comments about the championship reveal his competitive nature. The team won the title because the University of Miami (Ohio) lost to Kent State University, thus clinching the crown for the Big Green. Kirk and Mayfield both were happy that Marshall had won by default. However, Greer's opinion differed from his teammates. "Aw, no, I wish Miami had of beaten Kent so we could win the title by beating Bowling Green Monday night. I like to win."<sup>30</sup>

Marshall's initial season of integration ended with its first trip to the NCAA tournament. The team faced Morehead State, losing in a high scoring affair, 107-92. Thus, Marshall's first year as an integrated team closed with Greer being accepted as a member of the school and team.

However, the gauging of Greer's acceptance into the community as a person is much harder to define. While members of the white community quickly adopted Greer as a favorite son on the court, not many people were going out of their way to make him feel welcomed into their community. The local theaters and restaurants still remained segregated closing off social activities for African-Americans. The proprietors of these establishments did little to open the doors of integration in the downtown area of Huntington. On campus

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<sup>30</sup> Lou Sahadi, "Rivlin, Players, Fans Celebrate 'Redskin Defeat'," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 18 February 1956, 9.

the school administration did not make life easy for the African-American students. Exerting little effort, the administration failed to introduce African-American students into the extra-curricular social activities of the school and into the restricted world of the fraternities and sororities.

Nevertheless, his fellow students could not help but like Greer, even though he preferred to keep to himself and stay at home most of the time. Greer's teammate, Jack Freeman, recalled, "He was such a likable person. All the athletes liked him and the other students liked him. He just was a role model. There was no way you could have any hard feelings towards him."<sup>31</sup> Freeman also remembered Greer's off-court demeanor, "He usually kept his feelings to himself. I guess he figured he had to. But, as far as I know, he didn't date anyone. And he wasn't close to anyone. Besides, he was too concerned with fulfilling his life's ambition which was to play professional basketball."<sup>32</sup>

While his Marshall teammates and fellow students began to feel more comfortable around Greer, the athletic department continued to struggle with the idea of having an African-American on the basketball team. Even though Greer was a junior, the athletic department still faltered with their description of him in the 1956-57 media guide. In an attempt to compliment Greer on his talents as a player, the authors of the media guide unintentionally insulted him. The description in the media guide reads:

Had great year as Sophomore . . . was a regular the entire campaign . . . uncanny accuracy, making good on 60% of shots to lead conference and finish second in nation . . . extremely agile . . . can play all positions with equal finesse . . . one hand jump and driving lay-up from left side are best shots . . . averaged 15.5 points a game as soph . . . tremendous competitor . . .

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<sup>31</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by author, 11 April, 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Salvatore, "Hurryin' Hal," 32.

never quits . . . cat like reflexes and good spring make him a defensive ace . . . has distinction of being first Negro to play for Marshall . . . may end up at center before year is up . . . panther-like legs make him potential to become one of the all time greats . . .<sup>33</sup>

Of all the player sketches in the media guide, Greer was the only one described with animal characteristics. Leo Byrd possessed the "potential to go down as one of the school's all time greats."<sup>34</sup> However, Byrd apparently was able to become one of the all-time greats without possessing panther-like legs.

Surprisingly, the athletic department did not realize the offensive nature of the description in the media guide. For it was common practice during the early years of sports integration for sportswriters to use color descriptive and animal-like adjectives to characterize African-American athletes. Even established athletes had to endure the problem of insensitive sportswriters.<sup>35</sup> The stereotyping of African-American athletes in the media guides and in the Huntington newspapers disappeared during the Greer years. Also, after Hal's sophomore year, the local sportswriters stopped defining him by his race.<sup>36</sup>

When his second year of varsity ball began, Greer's ability to adapt to unusual

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<sup>33</sup> Marshall College Press and Radio Guide 1956-57, Huntington, WV, 1956. 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> In the early years of baseball integration Jackie Robinson was often called the "dark dasher" while Satchel Paige was described as having "ape-like" arms. These stereotypes persisted until the late 1950's. For more information on this subject see Tygiel, Baseball's Great Experiment, pp. 6,72,190,252,306.

<sup>36</sup> I arrived at this conclusion by checking the Marshall media guides for the following years and found nothing that would be considered offensive to the African-American athlete. Another check of the sports pages allowed me to determine that the writers stopped identifying Greer as a "Negro" after his sophomore season.



situations arose once again. Coach Rivlin, after losing star center Charlie Slack, asked Greer to fill the void left by the all-conference center. Greer's capability to adjust and comprehend the new position, enabled him to make an easy transition as the team's new center.

Greer entered his junior year as an established star on the court. Unfortunately, for Greer, sophomore Leo Byrd appeared as the new star on the basketball horizon. Byrd was the most heralded player to enroll at Marshall, and in the end he lived up to his advanced billing. After his senior season in high school Byrd became "Mr. Basketball USA" by winning the Most Valuable Player award in a national all-star game. His senior season at Marshall led to him being named on the second team All-American squad behind Oscar Robertson and Jerry West. Besides adding Byrd and his sophomore classmates, the Big Green returned with Paul Underwood, Cebe Price, Jack Freeman and high expectations.

Greer's own expectations were also high that year. Not only did he anticipate an exceptional year on the court, he continued his progress toward a degree in Business. Obtaining his degree from Marshall ranked as important to Greer as basketball. Greer's teammate, Sonny Allen, remembers the importance to athletes of attaining a degree, "I wanted to get my degree. I mean it was a priority. I wanted to play basketball but everybody felt the same way. Greer, I mean everybody wanted to get a degree. That was just as important as playing the game."<sup>37</sup>

Doing his best at juggling classes and two sports, basketball and baseball, Greer entered his junior basketball season ready to help the Big Green defend its Mid-American Conference championship. As with the previous year, the Marshall schedule allowed the

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<sup>37</sup> Sonny Allen, interview by the author, 17 February 1996.

team to play without many problems. Rivlin scheduled twenty-four games for the 1956-1957 season, mostly in northern cities. Except for a game in Morehead, Kentucky, the only other games played in the South was in a tournament in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Both cities posed lodging problems for the Marshall team, Morehead on an annual basis and Johnson City during the 1956-57 season. East Tennessee State College invited Marshall to participate in the Watauga holiday tournament in December of 1956. Marshall could not stay in the same hotel as the other teams in the event, simply because of Greer. "We ended up staying in a place that looked like the past. It was just an old run-down motel. We knew immediately it was because of Greer. But nobody said anything about it. We just took it in stride,"<sup>38</sup> Jack Freeman recalled of the Johnson City incident. The team finished second in the tournament, losing to East Tennessee State in the finals.

Morehead was an entirely different situation. On a yearly basis, Marshall scheduled Morehead State and on a yearly basis the team stayed in a "second rate" hotel. Sonny Allen remembers the team accommodations in Morehead, "We'd go to Morehead and play, we'd stay in a horrible hotel down there, just horrible. And I always wondered why, but you know there was one other. I just assumed it was booked. But then I found out later, they wouldn't let us stay there because of Greer."<sup>39</sup> Jack Freeman also recalls the situation in Morehead, "We stayed in some little ol' place outside of town. It was kind of a low end deal. But that was one of them things that probably, we shouldn't even have been down there to start, with that situation."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by the author, 11 April 1996.

<sup>39</sup> Sonny Allen, interview by the author, 17 February 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by the author, 11 April 1996.

The white players said nothing about the poor quality of the lodging. While not forcing the hotels to allow the entire team to stay, they stood beside Greer and went to the hotels that allowed him to stay. Members of the team did not ask questions or hold resentment toward Greer, mainly because of his attitude and personality.

Despite the problems on the road, the Big Green fared well during the 1956-57 season, posting a 15-9 record. Marshall placed second in the conference with Greer earning second team All-Conference honors. The success of Greer during his first three years at Marshall opened the doors for other African-Americans to play basketball at the school.

Entering his senior year, Greer finally could see the other African-American athletes come through the doors he opened at Marshall. Three African-American players joined the 1957-58 freshmen team. Bruce Moody, Charles Gordon and Charles Griffin became the second generation of African-American basketball players at Marshall. On the court, Greer's leadership was unquestioned. However, off the court leadership was something new to Greer. As his white teammates already knew, Greer's shyness did not allow him to express his emotions and experiences to the new group of African-American players. Bruce Moody recalled his time with Greer, "I always had a lot of respect and admiration for him. He kept mostly to himself. I can only remember a couple of conversations with him about then. I guess we would have probably welcome a little more."<sup>41</sup> Still, Greer's personality would not allow him to open up to the new players.

The 1957-58 season began with another first with the naming of Greer as a Co-Captain of the team. Selecting Greer as a captain, Rivlin proved the program moved a long

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<sup>41</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 5 February 1996.

way toward accepting African-American athletes as leaders and not just players. Although not a vocal leader, Hal's on-court leadership was unquestioned. "Hal just kept getting better and better and more consistent. I mean he just never had bad games. He just always was consistent," said co-captain Jack Freeman.<sup>42</sup> With Greer and Freeman as co-captains, the team was ready to begin the new season.

Marshall's success in 1957-58 depended largely upon Greer and Leo Byrd. Both played to their potential; however, the team fell short in their attempt to win the conference championship, finishing second with a 17-7 record. Nonetheless, Byrd and Greer gained all-Mid-American Conference first team honors.

Greer completed his career at Marshall as the seventh all-time leading scorer and the second leading rebounder. However, his greatest moment came on 24 February 1958. Senior night at the Field House was special in 1958. Four thousand five hundred fans watched as Greer and Jack Freeman competed for the last time as members of the Big Green.

Finally Greer opened up and showed his emotions. "It was very emotional," Freeman recalled. "My parents were there and Hal's parents were there. It was a very emotional time. This was two seniors that went through from Huntington. That kind of made it special."<sup>43</sup> Freeman also observed, "That was one of the few times I remember Hal showing his emotions."<sup>44</sup> When Greer left the court with ten minutes and fifty-seven seconds to go in the second half, the crowd showed their appreciation of Greer.

Lou Sahadi of the Herald-Dispatch wrote,

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<sup>42</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by author, 11 April 1996.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Salvatore, "Hurryin' Hal," 32.

In a split second, the crowd rose to its feet in unison and echoed its sentiments for the brilliant career of Marshall's first Negro athlete. It was by far the greatest ovation ever accorded a local player . . . The partisans voiced their feelings for well over a minute and caused Coach Rivlin to affectionately hug his three year star.<sup>45</sup>

Later, after Jack Freeman left the game to another standing ovation, the game was stopped for almost three minutes so the crowd could settle down after Rivlin and his two captains posed for pictures. At half-time of the game, Greer and Freeman were presented certificates of appreciation from The Robe, Marshall's men's leadership society. This was another first, as Greer was the first African-American honored by the organization.<sup>46</sup>

After the game, Rivlin proclaimed Greer as "the easiest kid I ever coached." Greer remarked that the game was the high point of his collegiate career.<sup>47</sup> Marshall's first attempt at integrating its basketball team proved successful. The majority of the success of integration belonged to Greer. His inner-strength and determination to prevail allowed for a smooth transition period. However, the efforts of his coach and teammates also helped ease the situation.

Coach Rivlin's sensitivity toward circumstances surrounding Greer, undoubtedly helped him throughout his varsity years. Rivlin tried to shield his team from awkward situations, through his scheduling of mostly northern teams and advanced scouting of

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<sup>45</sup> Lou Sahadi, "Big Green Gains Revenge on Rockets," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 25 February 1958, 10

<sup>46</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Fans Give Hal, Jack Sendoff," Huntington Advertiser, 25 February 1958, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

restaurants and hotels.<sup>48</sup> However, avoiding the uncomfortable situations was not always possible. John Milhoan, a sophomore during Greer's senior year, recalled two incidents that occurred during the 1957-58 season. Both happened while the team was traveling in the South, once in Virginia and another time in Kentucky.

Another experience occurred on a road trip into Virginia . . . As we were looking for a motel on a cold January night, we jokingly told Hal to slump down in the car so the motel manager would let us stay there.

Sure enough, the motel manager looked us over, did not see Hal, and agreed to let us stay. As we were getting out of the cars to enter the motel, he spotted Hal and immediately told Coach Rivlin that we could not stay there because they did not serve blacks.

Rivlin told him if that's the way it was to be, then we would take our \$300 business elsewhere. As we were leaving he changed his mind and told us we could stay, but to stay in our rooms as much as possible. He did not want to lose \$300 on a cold January night.<sup>49</sup>

The other incident occurred in Kentucky when the team was searching for a place to eat. After stopping at a hotel in downtown Lexington, Kentucky, the manager asked if Greer was with the team and they replied yes. The manager then preceded to lead the team through the dinning room to an elevator that took the team to the second floor dinning room. "I'm sure Hal knew why we were taken to the second floor, but no one said a word about it." Milhoan remembered.<sup>50</sup>

The efforts of Greer's teammates also played an important part in the success of the integration of the basketball team. In an era when many whites would have nothing to do

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<sup>48</sup> Stacey McKenzie, "Bitter to Sweet Memories," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 15 April 1996, 4.

<sup>49</sup> John Milhoan, "Greer victim of racism, ex-MU teammate recalls," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 28 April 1996, sec B, p 9; John Milhoan, interview by author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 29 April 1996.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

with African-Americans, Greer's teammates treated him as just another guy playing basketball. Averting potential problems occurred early during the integration process. Having Greer on the team did not pose a problem in the rooming assignments. What might have been an embarrassing situation did not develop at all. Sonny Allen remembered the rooming with Greer on the road, "He and I were roomed together on the road . . . I'm sure that Rivlin realized that it wasn't a problem between us and I didn't even think anything about it at all."<sup>51</sup> Finally in his senior season, Greer received a permanent traveling roommate. John Milhoan, a sophomore from Gallipolis, Ohio, asked Coach Rivlin if he could room with Greer on the road. Rivlin was pleased that one of his players stepped forward and solved one of his problems of constantly rearranging rooming assignments.<sup>52</sup> The coupling of Greer and Milhoan was a perfect fit. Milhoan ate a vegetarian diet and Greer liked meat, and on the road they would trade food in the restaurant so they could each enjoy their meals to the fullest extent.<sup>53</sup>

In the end the final success always lay with Greer. His ability to put his teammates at ease while in his presence and avoiding potential problems helped the situation. Jack Freeman recalled how Greer handled the predicaments:

We'd journey out for a little fun at nighttime. We'd always try to get everybody to go along, whoever wanted to go, not everybody went, Hal would never go. We really didn't think about it at the time. Obviously he was way

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<sup>51</sup> Sonny Allen, interview by author, 17 February 1996.

<sup>52</sup> Milhoan, "Greer victim of racism," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 28 April 1996, sec B, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> John Milhoan, interview by author, 29 April 1996. This fact was also confirmed by Ernie Salvatore in the author's interview of 15 February 1996.

ahead of us, he didn't want to get himself into any kind of situation.<sup>54</sup>

Greer was way ahead of his teammates when it came to recognizing potential problems. After the way Greer handled the initial integration with the basketball team the program was ready to move forward. However, the second phase of integration would progress slowly and be more trying than the primary phase of integration.

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<sup>54</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by author, 11 April 1996.



## Chapter IV The Second Generation, 1958-1964

By the time the second generation of African-American basketball players arrived in Huntington, the Civil Rights movement slowly made progress. In 1957, three years after the *Brown v. Board* court decision, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered National Guard troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to enforce the integration of a Little Rock High School. Six years later 250,000 people marched on Washington, DC in hopes of gaining support for a national Civil Rights Bill. On 28 August, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered an inspiring speech outlining his "dream" for equal rights for all people of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Finally in 1964, ten years after the Supreme Court decision, the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill. The bill outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations and by employers, unions and voting registrars. However, integration continued to move at a snail's pace, especially in the South.<sup>2</sup>

Like the rest of the nation, Huntington slowly moved toward an integrated society. In 1961, Douglass High School closed, leaving the city's high schools integrated. However, the local downtown businesses still practiced segregation, and needed a push into the world of desegregation.

The push came in the form of a group of Marshall students calling themselves the Civic Interests Progressives (CIP). The biracial members of the CIP staged non-violent protests at local theaters and restaurants, meeting resistance from some of the businesses. Through a few court battles and much publicity the CIP started to challenge the status quo.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Beth Norton, *A People and A Nation*, 860-861, 943.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 945.

Finally the businesses acquiesced and started changing their policies. The CIP brought the civil rights movement to Huntington and Marshall University. Their efforts to secure civil rights at Marshall coincided with its efforts in Huntington.<sup>3</sup>

Even with the efforts of the CIP, Marshall University moved slowly on integration. While the school allowed African-Americans to register for classes, President Stewart Smith stood idly by as the members of the CIP protested the segregationist practices of the city's businesses. The lack of inaction by the Marshall administration did not please the African-American students or the members of the African-American community.<sup>4</sup>

In 1961, at the same time Douglass High School was closing, Marshall College gained University status. In February of 1961 the state legislature decided to grant the Huntington institution the status of University. During 1964, Marshall also expanded its physical plant by adding Gullickson Hall, a gymnasium built for the men on campus. Marshall did move slowly with integration but progress occurred.

From 1958 to 1965 Marshall's basketball program experienced a decline in victories, but an increase in the number of African-American athletes. The initial success of Hal Greer shadowed the newcomers throughout their careers at Marshall. On the court, Greer's sensational play, gained him national recognition and an opportunity to fulfill his dream of a professional career. Off the court, Greer's demeanor and experience of living in Huntington, allowed him to fit neatly into the segregated world of Huntington, West Virginia. Unlike

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<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth analysis about the Civic Interests Progressives see Bruce Thompson, "An Appeal For Racial Justice: The Civic Interest Progressives' Confrontation With Huntington, West Virginia and Marshall University, 1963-1965." Masters Thesis, Marshall University, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Venable, interview by the author, 20 March 1996.

Greer, the new generation of African-Americans would not see the success on the court and would have to depend upon their athletic peers and the African-American community of Huntington for emotional support. Comprised of players from outside of Huntington, the new group of players arrived at Marshall with different agendas and high expectations. Each of the incoming African-American players handled the situation at Marshall differently.

The group of African-American who followed Greer took a different approach to being a part of the Marshall basketball scene. Three of Marshall's more prominent African-American basketball players were Bruce Moody, Charles Gordon and Phil Carter. They represented the "next generation" of African-American basketball players at Marshall. They underwent more scrutiny and experienced turbulent and trying times as members of the Marshall basketball program. Their basketball careers occurred during Jule Rivlin's coaching tenure, and while their experiences dealt mostly with race, they were not immune to the problems associated with losing.

Rivlin's first three seasons as the head coach at Marshall provided many memorable moments and exciting victories. From the 1955-1956 season to the 1957-1958 campaign, Rivlin's basketball teams won fifty games while losing twenty-one. The city of Huntington witnessed one Mid-American Conference champion and two second place finishes. The Big Green received great support from the school and the community, as they played in front of capacity crowds at the Field House. However, after the 1957-1958 season, Marshall's success began to decline and so did the favor of the supporters.<sup>5</sup>

After the 1958-1959 record of 12-12, Rivlin's teams failed to produce another

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<sup>5</sup> "Dr. Smith Promises Decision On Rivlin 'Within a Few Days'," Huntington Advertiser, 16 March 1962, p.26.

winning season. For the first time in twenty-four years a Marshall team, the 1959-1960 squad, lost more games than it won. Soon after that season internal problems arose on the team.

The decline in victories from 1959 to 1963, Rivlin's last year, coincided with the recruitment of more African-American athletes. A total of five African-American players joined the basketball team during those years, and while not exactly a deluge of players, it opened the doors for more African-Americans to follow. Rivlin's success in working with Greer, brought added pressures to both the coach and the new African-American players.

When the team stopped winning the majority of its games, the pressure mounted for the coach and the players. Rivlin now had to deal with more than coaching the squad. The pressure came from community supporters, the school administration, the student body and a divided team. In two separate instances the students of Marshall voiced their displeasure with Rivlin. The first occurred in May of 1960, when Rivlin suspended and then asked that Tex Williams's scholarship be revoked for violating team rules. One of Rivlin's rules was a policy concerning marriage. Rivlin expected his players to respect his rules and he wanted them to inform him of their marital status. Williams failed to notify Rivlin of his marriage and falsified his registration card concerning his marriage. When Rivlin decided to take action the students expressed their opinion by hanging Rivlin in effigy.<sup>6</sup>

The second time the students voiced their opinion occurred in March of 1962. At the conclusion of the 1961-1962 season the student newspaper, the Parthenon, conducted a poll concerning the schools possible retention of Rivlin as the coach. The majority of students

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<sup>6</sup> Ron Hutchinson and Joe Workman, "Williams May Lose Scholarship," Parthenon, 20 May 1960, p. 1.

who answered the poll's question, "Should Jule Rivlin be retained as basketball coach?" responded with a negative answer.<sup>7</sup>

As Rivlin struggled to control the situation, the African-American players began to succumb to the pressures of the community and the school. Looking for support and guidance, the African-Americans found little help on campus outside of the other African-American athletes. Bruce Moody, one of the second generation of African-American basketball players, recalled his perception of Rivlin and the hardships of the African-American players. "From a racial standpoint, I think that he acted as if he were oblivious as to what was going on. There were things that were going on with the team. There were things that were going on with Huntington. There were things that were going on with the school. It seemed as if he either didn't know or didn't care."<sup>8</sup> Phil Carter also believed that Rivlin did not deal with "reality" concerning the situation the African-Americans were experiencing.<sup>9</sup> The African-American's inability to receive support from their coach deepened their feelings of isolation.

However, all of the African-Americans agreed that Rivlin also dealt with prejudice. Charles Gordon remembered the sniping that began when the team started to lose. "When Rivlin stopped having all this success that he had had in the previous three or four years, we heard some comments about his ethnic background. You know, as long as you're on top

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<sup>7</sup> George Arnold, "Opinion Poll Against Rivlin," Parthenon, 16 March 1962, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by the author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Phil Carter, interview by the author, Huntington, WV, 22 April 1996.

you're fine and you're Jewish. Then when you get down, you're that 'no good kike.'"<sup>10</sup> Even Rivlin admitted that before he resigned, he received a phone call at his home. "About two weeks before I resigned I did get a telephone call and they called me whatever they call the Jewish people."<sup>11</sup> So, while the African-Americans would have preferred more guidance from the coach, they also understood the position of Rivlin.

After the 1962 season, President Smith asked to meet members of the team to discuss their problems. The meeting included all members of the team and in a 20 March 1962 letter to Rivlin, Smith informed the coach of the team's concerns.

Because of many contradictory reports of dissension and dissatisfaction among the players, I asked Dick Wildt to bring this group to the council room at 4:30 p.m. on Monday. Most of this years players agreed that they did not have complete confidence in you. The chief complaint was that team regulations were not uniformly enforced. They admitted that they were not well disciplined. Undoubtedly, a firm consistent enforcement of regulations would resolve much of the existing dissatisfaction.<sup>12</sup>

Although he accepted a contract extension for the 1962-1963 season, Rivlin felt cautiously optimistic about the upcoming season. Shortly after the season began, Rivlin stepped down as coach of the Marshall basketball team. On 5 January 1963 Rivlin handed Smith his resignation.

I have given many hours of thought to your letter last and worked conscientiously to answering the problems. I feel that I have accomplished every objective except winning games. Therefore, with the greatest regret and with

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 17 May 1996. Both Phil Carter and Bruce Moody conveyed the same message about Rivlin. They began to hear anti-Semitic remarks around campus and the city.

<sup>11</sup> Jule Rivlin, interview by the author, 23 May 1996.

<sup>12</sup> President Stewart Smith to Jule Rivlin, 20 March 1962. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletic File, 1961-1962, MUA.

tears in my eyes, I tender my resignation as basketball coach and physical education instructor for Marshall University effective June 30, 1963.<sup>13</sup>

During Rivlin's tenure as coach at Marshall, 1956-1963, his teams finished with an overall record of one hundred wins and eighty-eight losses. He finished with the second most victories for a Marshall coach, falling behind only his mentor Cam Henderson.<sup>14</sup>

Jule Rivlin's eight years as Marshall's coach brought many changes to the basketball program. He coached the team to its only Mid-American Conference championship and more importantly helped integrate the Marshall program. After he experienced initial success with Hal Greer, Rivlin found that integration proved difficult.

The new group of African-Americans lived in obscurity on campus even though they were athletes. Their obscurity resulted from the fact that the freshman team received little attention in the press, but also because Hal Greer received much attention his senior season. Greer cast a long shadow over the Marshall basketball landscape that the second generation of African-Americans found hard to escape. Like most people, the new group looked to Greer for answers to the many questions that surrounded them. However, getting to know Greer proved a difficult task for everyone on the Marshall campus; Gordon and Moody were no different from the rest of the student body.

Although the young men talked with Greer on occasion, Greer could not help prepare them for the hardships they would encounter. Unlike the new group, Greer did not have to

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<sup>13</sup> Jule Rivlin to President Stewart Smith, 5 January 1963. Papers of President Stewart Smith, Athletic File, 1962-1963, MUA.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall University Men's Basketball Media Guide, Huntington, WV, 1995. 13. Rivlin held the second position on the coaching victory list until Rick Huckabay left Marshall in 1989 with 129 wins. Rivlin is currently ranked third among Marshall basketball coaches. See Appendix B for Rivlin's complete record.

face the discrimination of Huntington. Greer's shyness and inability to counsel the incoming African-American athletes taught Bruce Moody and the others a lesson. Later in their careers this new group of African-Americans would help their African-American brethren that followed. However, before they would become leaders of African-American athletes at Marshall, they encountered good times and bad, hardships and shattered expectations.

Bruce Moody, an all-city selection from the Bronx, New York, accepted a scholarship offer from Marshall because, "Marshall accepted my grades as they were. Some of the other schools had said that I would have to do some more work academically and all because of my standing in my graduating class. At that time, being a young fellow, I wanted to get right into basketball as soon as possible and not have any waiting around. I decided to go to Marshall, not knowing very much about West Virginia, Marshall or anything."<sup>15</sup> However, Moody did not come to Marshall without discussing the situation with his high school coach, Arthur Goldstein. "He clearly pointed out some of the things, 'If you're going to go into this, you can't expect certain things.'"<sup>16</sup> Moody never did. He would never expect someone to smooth the path for him. Conversely, Moody would smooth the path for others.

Moody enrolled at Marshall in the fall of 1957 with two other African-American basketball players, Charles Gordon and Charles Griffin. The three athletes played exceedingly well on the freshman team and were ready for the move up to the varsity club for the 1958-1959 season. Being from New York and coming from an integrated high school, Moody became accustomed to interacting with the white members of his teams and school.

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<sup>15</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by the author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



Huntington and Marshall College were very different situations. When the varsity began to lose games, the tensions on the team made life difficult for all involved with Marshall basketball. Moody remembered his teammates while at Marshall:

We got along pretty well on the court. I can only think of maybe, within a three year period as a varsity player, there may have been about two or three times that we went anywhere together. We definitely were not close. There were some of them that I respected very much, and I think some of them respected me. But we were not friends. I don't think there were ever any attempts to go out of the way to find anything out about me.<sup>17</sup>

Tensions on the team did nothing to help ease the burden the African-American players carried. Whether the tension was intentional or not, they did not go unnoticed by some of the local sportswriters. Ernie Salvatore recalled the habits of the white players when it was time to practice at the Memorial Field House:

There was an odd dichotomy there that existed. They practiced at the Field House and that's on 26th street. And they'd go back to the Marshall campus. That's sixteen [sic] blocks away, at least to the Fourth Avenue end. So the guys would plow out of the Field House, here they just practiced together and so forth and so on. White teammates would jump in a car, in their cars and drive off. And here the two or three black guys would have to walk back to the campus. Once in a great while, one of them got a lift.<sup>18</sup>

Road trips were similar to life in Huntington. Moody remembered, "I think I went to the movies once on a road trip one time. Other than that, I went my own way when I was there by myself. Or the other times that I was there with other African-American players, I went with them. But we were not readily invited along anywhere and I never pushed it."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by the author, 15 February 1996; Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by the author, 5 February 1996.

The lack of communication really affected Moody during his junior year, since Charles Gordon, Moody's roommate, could not play because of medical reasons.

Gordon's absence left Bruce Moody alone and the feeling of isolation overtook him. "One of the problems I had was isolation. Especially the junior year, the only African-American on the team. I never went anywhere with those guys. Once we played and it came time to socialize, everybody went their own way. I was basically left to fend for myself."<sup>20</sup>

The team's poor record added to Moody's pain of isolation. A 10-13 record for the year, made the 1959-1960 team the first in twenty-four years to lose more games than it won. For the first time in many years pressure to win started to surface from the Marshall supporters. The pressure from the supporters and the disappointment of not winning, pushed the team into dissension. The players began questioning their roles on the team and the coaching decisions made by Rivlin. Moody recalled the feeling of disappointment, "Whatever I was asked to do, I did. But I was never happy with my role as a Marshall athlete, and I really can think that a lot of other fellows were not happy with their roles."<sup>21</sup>

Thoughts of leaving Marshall started to enter Moody's mind. Frustrated over the lack of playing time and the social situation in Huntington, Moody felt "ready to chuck it."<sup>22</sup> However, the African-American community kept Moody in-line by letting him know that he was at Marshall to help his own race.

Socializing in Huntington stood in contrast to Moody's New York experiences. The

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

fact that an athlete obtained certain liberties while with the team and denied those same opportunities while away from the team brought the athletes face to face with the realities of segregation. The policies of the local restaurants and theaters galled the African-Americans. Moody remembered the situation with the downtown establishments, "I can think of a couple of incidents where I'd gone to eat with the team and came back and couldn't eat. In other words, going with the team was one thing, but coming back afterwards was another thing. In uniform, or out of the uniform, or traveling with the team, or being with the team, there were certain liberties that we had. But when we were not with the team, those liberties were denied."<sup>23</sup>

That type of discrimination not only prevented the African-American athletes from expanding their social life, but also hampered the possibility of whites and African-Americans getting to know each other on a more personal level. The discrimination of the white establishments forced the African-Americans to migrate to the African-American community. " I lived on Eighth Avenue. I lived there because there was nothing on campus for us. We were on Eighth Avenue every weekend, every night that we could."<sup>24</sup> However, the support of the African-American community did not come without high expectations.

Normally, athletes must endure the expectations from the community to perform at the highest levels and win games. For the white athletes the pressure to win was high, but the African-American athletes experienced the pressure from two different communities. The African-American athletes believe they were brought to the school to perform on the court

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Moody also related other instances that occurred while he was at Marshall in an article he wrote for the Parthenon. For more on the subject see: Bruce Moody, "Negro Student Looks At Discrimination," Parthenon, 11 May 1962, p.5.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

and then behave off the court. Bruce Moody explained how he viewed the situation with the white community, "They expected us to produce at the highest level without giving us the highest level of support. The support that was given was minimal. The expectations were maximum. Either you produce or you go. It was a very clear thing."<sup>25</sup> Former Marshall player, Sonny Allen, concurred with the assessment of the white community, "The whites expected the same thing out of him they expect out of me. Get your degree and help us with the basketball."<sup>26</sup>

While Allen and the rest of the white athletes had only to deal with the pressure from the white community, Moody and Gordon dealt with the pressure from the African-American community as well.

The expectations, whatever the expectations there are for the white community, the expectations for the black community were even worse. And there was very little sympathy. You come into a situation like Marshall, and you come there to play, it doesn't make any difference what the problems are, there are no excuses accepted. They want to see you playing. And from the time that I wasn't playing, I caught hell. I mean they were OK socially, but people weren't happy about the fact that I wasn't playing. (They) never blamed the coach. At that particular time you had to produce. When an African-American got a shot at something, there are no excuses. Racism was never something that you could turn around and say, 'Gee, I can't make it because it's too tough, and these guys are doing this and these guys are doing that.' That was unacceptable. It didn't make any difference how difficult it was. Nobody wanted to hear that. Because once you go into a situation like that and you don't succeed or you don't produce, it just means that the next guy catches more hell.<sup>27</sup>

The pressure felt by Moody was not unusual for the first wave of African-American athletes who broke the color barriers in most sports. Jackie Robinson often commented about

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Sonny Allen, interview by the author, 17 February 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

the pressure the African-American community laid on him to succeed.<sup>28</sup> These young men took on other responsibilities in addition to the thoughts of winning. For these young men succeeding on the court and in the classroom was the burden they had to carry for the African-American community.

Moody described his years at Marshall as "just a tough time."<sup>29</sup> However, he did accomplish the goal of getting a degree, and he became a leader of the African-Americans on campus. After his playing eligibility ended, Moody stayed at Marshall and graduated with a degree in education.<sup>30</sup> Later, he inspired the protests of the Palace theater's discriminatory seating practice.<sup>31</sup>

Once he attained his degree, Moody wanted to leave Huntington and Marshall behind. "At that time you're just so glad to get away. You don't want to come back and you've been subjected to so much that you just don't want to bother any longer."<sup>32</sup> Disappointed with the Marshall administration Moody felt it failed to provide guidance given to those seeking an improvement of civil rights in Huntington. "We sort of put ourselves on the line in doing certain things, and I just wanted to see other people do the same thing."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tygiel, Baseball's Great Experiment, 115.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall University Alumni Directory, (White Plains, NY.: Bernard C. Harris Publishing Co. Inc., 1994) 263.

<sup>31</sup> Phil Carter, interview by the author, 22 April 1996. Carter discussed the theater protests and although Bruce Moody was not the front man in the demonstration, it was conducted by the group of demonstrators for Moody's benefit.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Moody, vowing to never return to Marshall, went back to his home in the Bronx, New York, and began teaching at a local high school. During the 1980's, Moody finally changed his mind and returned to Huntington and the Marshall campus. He became a founding father of Marshall's Black Legends<sup>34</sup> group and has retired from high school teaching. Charles Gordon, Moody's roommate in college, viewed his time at Marshall differently than Moody.

Charles Gordon chose Marshall because he wanted to join his friend, Wilson Lathan, who planned to attend Marshall on a football scholarship. Gordon first attended the segregated Lincoln High School in Wheeling, West Virginia, and then went to the integrated Wheeling High School beginning in his junior year. He turned down a scholarship at the University of Pittsburgh to stay in state and join his friends at Marshall. "They played such exciting ball, there was a tradition at Marshall that we knew about and felt as soon as we got there. The basketball program was really at the top and we were all anxious to be a part of it,"<sup>35</sup> recalled Gordon, plus he figured to receive more playing time at Marshall than at Pittsburgh.

Gordon, joined the varsity for the 1958-59 season. The 1958-59 team centered on All-American, Leo Byrd. Thus, Gordon and his roommate Moody played sparingly. At the beginning of the season, Gordon believed he would challenge for a starting position at guard. The competition was strong especially with Sonny Allen returning from the previous

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<sup>34</sup> The Black Legends is a group of former African-American Marshall athletes that want to help current African-American athletes at Marshall understand the importance of gaining a college education. They also meet with the current athletes to discuss the problems of the past and try to help the athletic administration understand the African-American athlete. The legends would also like to become a mentor-like program for the African-American athletes at Marshall.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996.

campaign. The two fought hard for the starting position with Allen winning the spot.

Charles Gordon remembered the battle for the starting position:

Some of the tensions I thought, existed not necessarily because of color, but because right away when I came on campus I was a threat to start my sophomore year. One of the guys that I was going to beat out was Sonny Allen. I think he was particularly wary because I was sort of a flashy ballplayer and that got the attention. So we had a couple of run-ins on the court but I thought that was just strictly competition, whether I had been white, pink or orange. It was just a threat to him loosing his position after being in the program. That's the way I viewed it.<sup>36</sup>

In the end, Allen retained his starting role on the squad and Gordon waited his turn to start. Unfortunately, Gordon injured an ankle shortly after the Virginia Tech game and played little after sustaining the injury. However, the injured ankle did not stop Gordon from practicing with the team and he also remembered the sessions at the Field House. "We started practicing at the Field House, no longer on campus and every day we had to get a ride up there. Well the white guys would always have rides with each other. Moody and I, being two blacks were without a car. Some times it was a problem. Of course my attitude was, I would walk up there if I had to. But Moody's attitude, and he pointed this out early on, we can't get a ride like our teammates."<sup>37</sup> Bruce Moody may have felt anger towards his teammates, but Charles Gordon just thought of the situation as one more obstacle to overcome. Clearly the two had different opinions about the situation at Marshall. Whereas Moody saw discrimination in many things, Gordon did not.<sup>38</sup>

Just because Gordon possessed a different personality did not mean that he could not

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

recognize tensions on the team. He believed that the tensions arose because of the losing which then led to the prejudice. "There was tension on the team because for the first time Marshall didn't have an outstanding record. So when we started having troubles in that regard, some of the ugly monsters started rearing their heads. Even though I was young, I think I understood those things."<sup>39</sup>

Gordon's personality may have been the overriding factor for the help he received during the summer between his sophomore and junior years. Two members of the Marshall football team, Wilson Lathan and Larry Jarrett, along with Gordon stayed in the garage apartment that belonged to Marshall President Smith. He reserved it for the more respected members of the athletic teams. Players such as Walt Walowac had been privileged to stay in the president's apartment.<sup>40</sup> Gordon remembered the help he received from the school administration, "We stayed at Marshall free at the President's apartment over top of his garage. All we had to do was wash the porch off every Saturday. It was just nice. The President was nice to us. I mean, because Wilson and I aren't the kind of hostile personalities. I mean both of us were top athletes. But we didn't have a lot of conflicts."<sup>41</sup>

Gordon appreciated the help he received from the administration, but he also admired what Moody represented. "I was always labeled a "good black." But more than being a good black, I think it was just a smart black due to the time and the situation. Whereas I think

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Walt Walowac, interview by the author, Tape recording, Huntington, WV, 6 February 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by the author, 17 May 1996.



Bruce and probably for the good of me and everyone else, refused to adjust."<sup>42</sup>

Unpleasant news arrived for Gordon early during his junior year when his health prohibited from playing due to an enlarged heart.<sup>43</sup> Gordon's medical problems and subsequent removal from the team hurt him both on and off the court. Not playing for an entire season devastated Gordon, and he dropped twenty-nine quality hours falling behind schedule to graduate within four years.<sup>44</sup>

However, things were not always unpleasant in Gordon's mind. Unlike Moody, Gordon never had to travel alone and therefore his memories of traveling were different from Moody's:

On the road, I didn't think we had any particular problem. I thought it was pretty classy. We always ate meals at downtown restaurants before we went away and before we had a home game. We all sat together and we all ate. But I don't think Rivlin ever did anything to embarrass us, like say 'You guys have to eat over here. You've got to ride in this section of the airplane.' I don't remember any instances like that.<sup>45</sup>

By the time his senior season came around, the physicians gave Charles Gordon medical clearance to play basketball again. He finished his eligibility at Marshall and moved to New York to earn money so he could return and complete his education at Marshall. Once back, Gordon joined with Phil Carter to initiate local civil rights protests on his way to a degree in education. Currently he teaches at Wheeling (West Virginia) Park High School.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Fred Burns, "Cincinnati Crushes Big Green, 102-61," Huntington Herald-Advertiser, 6 December 1959, p.37.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by the author, 17 May 1996.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Gordon never vowed to stay away from Marshall and remembers his time at the school fondly:

Some of the guys felt stress and all that. I didn't feel very much. But I had lived in West Virginia. I kind of knew what the situation was. My four years at Marshall were very pleasant and in a way that I didn't expect to, I grew. I mean socially I grew. I didn't become a better basketball player, and I didn't reach the standards academically that I should have. But my awareness of real life and becoming a man and understanding what responsibility was, that did happen.<sup>46</sup>

The third of the most prominent African-Americans during the early 1960's was Phil Carter. A native of Clarksburg, West Virginia, Carter arrived at Marshall with two objectives; obtain a college degree and secure a scholarship to play basketball.<sup>47</sup> As a freshman at Marshall, Carter decided to participate in basketball as a walk-on. Soon he accomplished one of his objectives after Coach Rivlin offered him a scholarship. The second objective would eventually be achieved but only after some trying and turbulent times.

Carter played one season with both Moody and Gordon, and then he played his junior and senior years with another African-American, Willie Tucker. By the time Carter established himself as one of the better players on the Marshall squad he also established good relations with his white teammates. In particular, he became well aquatinted with Dick Wildt and Mickey Sydenstricker. This group of athletes would bridge the gap between the races and after the 1962-1963 season, relations between the whites and African-American players would improve.

While the players still faced segregation in the dormitories, travel for the team was another story. The players roomed together while traveling, and because they were in the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.

Mid-American Conference it meant that they traveled mostly in the North and faced little discrimination. Segregation in Huntington was still the main problem for the African-Americans, and only one thing could solve the problem.

Carter believed the African-American players must educate the white players and students about the prejudices that surrounded Huntington and Marshall. The white players received a first hand look at the segregation practices of the local business establishments when they decided to see a movie at one of the downtown theaters. Carter recalled the eye-opening incident:

The whites wanted to go to a movie and they wanted us to come along. We told them we wouldn't be able to sit downstairs with them and they didn't believe us. They thought because we were with them that the theater people would make an exception, especially because we were athletes. When we got to the theater we were told to sit upstairs in the black section. The whites couldn't believe it, but they decided at that time that they would join us in the black section rather than be separated during the movie.<sup>48</sup>

Carter saw the need for the African-Americans to enlighten the whites on the team. The task of education became easier, because the white players were willing to listen and work toward better relations on and off the court with the African-American athletes. As the civil rights movement in Huntington picked up momentum, the athletes, African-American and white, moved to the forefront of the cause.<sup>49</sup>

Carter's involvement in the civil rights movement presented a dilemma on campus. Marshall's athletic director, Whitey Wilson, called Carter into his office to express his concerns about Carter's involvement in the demonstrations around Huntington. According to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. For more information about the student civil rights movement, see Bruce Thompson, "An Appeal For Racial Justice"

Carter, Wilson handled the situation in a manner that did not upset him and allowed him to retreat into the shadows of the movement until his athletic eligibility ended. The athletic director let Carter know that, "Some people were concerned about the demonstrations, especially the ones before games, and the possibility of Carter and the other players getting arrested. Those same people were paying for the athletic scholarships and were making it increasingly difficult on Wilson."<sup>50</sup> Carter respected the way Wilson handled the situation without threatening to withdraw his scholarship.

Meanwhile, the situation on campus was infuriating at times especially when a particular instructor decided to use the word, "nigger" during a lecture that included African-American students. Phil Carter took offense to the incident but he did not judge the entire faculty because of one teacher's fault. Carter actually credits three of his Marshall instructors for opening his mind and teaching him about African-American culture, music and about democratic participation.<sup>51</sup>

Like those who preceded him, Carter appreciated all the assistance he received. He particularly valued one of his summer jobs while at Marshall. Normally the African-American players did not receive the best of the summer jobs. Summer jobs were crucial for the players because they did not receive any financial help during the season. Carter's first summer job was with a laundry store on Eighth Avenue. However, during the summer between his junior and senior seasons, Carter served with the Capitol Hill Police Force

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<sup>50</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.; Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 3 June 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996. The three professors mentioned by Carter were, Bill Cook, Simon Perry and Jerald Coomer.

in Washington (DC).<sup>52</sup>

The job helped him become more aware of the growing civil rights movement in the nation. He returned to Huntington ready to lead the movement among the students at Marshall. However, shortly after the public demonstrations began, Carter met again with Whitey Wilson, thus ending his outward involvement with the civil rights movement in Huntington. Carter continued his involvement in the civil rights movement from behind the scenes and then openly after he completed his athletic eligibility.

During his last year on the varsity squad, the coach relegated Carter to the role of sixth man, but he still led the team in most offensive categories and was named to the all Mid-American Conference second team.<sup>53</sup> He received his degree from Marshall and is currently an associate professor of Sociology at Marshall University. Carter's years at Marshall were often difficult and trying but he believed they were some of the most important years in his growth as a person.<sup>54</sup>

Although each of these African-Americans exhibited different personalities and opinions about their years at Marshall, they did agree that they could find solace nearby. All of the players agreed that on a city level, campus level and a personal level they could find someone or someplace to go to express their feelings. On a city level the players went to the African-American community that centered on Eighth Avenue. Around campus the players

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<sup>52</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996. Carter was thankful to Ken Hechler, the man who made the appointment for Carter.

<sup>53</sup> Danny Barber, "Carter, Francis Honored On All MAC," Parthenon, 27 March 1963, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.

found comfort in their dorm, Hodges Hall, and on a personal level, local sportswriter, Ernie Salvatore provided an outlet for player frustration.

The Eighth Avenue community offered a much needed night life for the African-American student enrolled at Marshall. Unable to frequent the downtown establishment where their white teammates socialized, the athletes truly enjoyed their experiences on Eighth Avenue. Charles Gordon remembered the African-American community of Huntington:

We stayed over on that block. To this day some of my best friends in this world, Bill Walker and Wayne Hollis, are from the other side of the tracks. Now one thing you should be aware of, we weren't interacting with the elite of the neighborhood. I mean we weren't going to church. I mean every weekend we stayed there. I didn't have time to think about not having activities on campus because I was too busy dating those girls over there. I never thought about it until I got older.<sup>55</sup>

Marshall athletes especially enjoyed the Bison's Club. A fraternal organization for the African-American community, it helped the athletes adjust to Huntington and provided a social life for the African-Americans. However, it was much more than just a place to get a drink and meet people. Young African-Americans that went to the Bison's Club were "socialized into appropriate behavior" with a dress code of a coat and tie and the application of proper manners.<sup>56</sup>

The Bison's Club served as a place where the athletes could take the visiting teams to socialize and bond with the players from other schools. Marshall players could also talk to a familiar person, Hal Greer, and learn about life apart from Huntington. Returning to the Bison's Club with some of his friends from the National Basketball Association (NBA),

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.

Greer offered advice and guidance for the college athletes.<sup>57</sup> Apparently, after experiencing life away from Huntington, Greer became the leader and advisor, the players had hoped he would become.

Unlike Greer, the second generation of African-Americans could not go home every night to get away from the uneasy life on campus. Campus life for this group of African-Americans centered on Hodges Hall, the dormitory for the athletes. Hodges Hall, was the one place where the African-Americans could go and not feel out of place. Still segregated, whites living with whites, and African-Americans rooming with African-Americans, Hodges Hall served as the sanctuary for African-American athletes.<sup>58</sup>

They could discuss the racial situation on campus and in Huntington, their social lives and other topics of interest, with a group of people that could understand the difficulties of being an athlete and African-American. By this time the athletic programs at Marshall increased the number of African-Americans on scholarship and this meant more people to lean upon when the turbulent times arrived. Both Moody and Gordon agreed that the African-American members of the Marshall athletic family were good men. Gordon remembered the atmosphere at the dorm:

All the athletes, football and basketball, stayed in the same wing of Hodges Hall. And the reason why my experience was not nearly as tough as people had thought, it just seemed like we all hit it off real well right at the start. It was like a security for the blacks because there wasn't too much messing around. I mean nobody was calling us nigger or anything. At least they weren't in that wing. And then there were some white guys that just had an affinity. You know, that got along pretty good. I bet thirty-eight out of forty guys I have nothing but fond memories of the blacks and about seven or eight whites.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 20 June 1996.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996.

More than any other African-Americans enrolled at Marshall, the athletes saw the discrimination of Huntington up close and very personal. Thus, Hodges Hall provided a place to unload the anger and frustration of the problems the African-Americans encountered.

The group support the African-Americans received in Hodges Hall was countered by the individual support given by one member of the local news media. Ernie Salvatore came to Marshall during the 1940's and graduated with a degree in journalism. Being from the New England area of the United States, Salvatore was familiar with African-Americans. He had African-American friends in his hometown and often played sports on the same teams with African-Americans. Therefore, Salvatore possessed an understanding of the frustrations the African-American players.<sup>60</sup>

Salvatore provided another outlet for the African-American players. Bruce Moody remembered Salvatore's importance to him, "Ernie Salvatore was really instrumental in allowing me to say and do a lot of things to let the public know how we felt about certain things."<sup>61</sup>

Salvatore remembered Moody's emotional state during that time:

He was frustrated, more so about the atmosphere of living in Huntington. The cultural things he was running into. These fellows had solace in their own back channel networks, social acquaintances that they made. They were leading two separate lives mostly. He was discouraged, I think one reason was the fact he wasn't getting much playing time. I think I talked to him at Madison Square Garden one time when we were back home. I remember several instances of trying to talk him into staying because he was a good ballplayer. Eventually he started to get some playing time, but that's when the social pressures started to get to him. I know he was terribly bitter about the lack of communication with his own teammates.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>62</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by the author, 3 June 1996.



As Salvatore provided an outlet for Moody's frustration, he recalled that "very little of that got out in the sports page. We were not doing social tracking and I don't think much of it got into the newspapers."<sup>63</sup> While the sportswriters were not tracking the social issues of the day, Salvatore tried, by inference, to inform people that racial problems existed on the Marshall basketball team. Besides stating the obvious, losing games, Salvatore indirectly wrote of team problems. In a September 1961 column, Salvatore described Rivlin's challenge for the upcoming season, "He's on the spot to come up with his first, solid, well balanced team in four seasons- one without disunity, discontent, or disenchantment."<sup>64</sup> This may have not been the type of social awareness many involved with civil rights would have liked, but the African-American players certainly appreciated the opportunity to release their frustrations.

Salvatore also treated the African-American players with respect and often humanized them in his columns from the sports pages. During the early days of sports integration, sportswriters often wrote extensively about the white players and if the African-Americans were the subject of a story it would usually include the stereotypes about the African-American. As integration became more prevalent the stereotypes slowly declined. To his credit, Ernie Salvatore did not use stereotypes from the beginning, when Marshall started integration. Salvatore's humanizing the African-Americans led to a trust and confidence that only existed between the African-Americans and the writer. Phil Carter remembered

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<sup>63</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by the author, 15 February 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Down In Front," Huntington Herald-Advertiser, 15 September 1961, p.9.

Salvatore as "very fair when dealing with the African-Americans on the team. He was someone we trusted and he gave support to us that was hard to find."<sup>65</sup>

Salvatore's support of the African-American players was commendable and did not go without appreciation from the players. Ultimately, however, the African-Americans had to struggle with the early integration of Marshall University's basketball program. The three African-Americans discussed in this chapter, along with Willie Tucker, George Hicks and Charles Griffin represented the transition between initial integration and acceptance of the African-Americans on the basketball team.

By overcoming many of the prejudices they encountered, the second generation of African-American basketball players smoothed the way for the next generation of African-American athletes. Not only did these men lead on the court, but they were also leaders off the court. They may have looked at their experiences at Marshall differently but they all left the school with a college education and a stronger bond among themselves.

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<sup>65</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.

## Chapter V Third Generation, 1965-1969

After the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, minorities did not rest, and kept fighting for a more complete Civil Rights legislation. Dr. Martin Luther King continued to lead the way for the Civil Rights movement. Along the way several additional pieces of legislation passed including the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. However, the movement lost its leader in 1968, with the assassination of Dr. King in Memphis, Tennessee. Other members of the movement stepped forward to carry on with the cause, but none of them possessed the magnetism of Dr. King.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time King moved forward with his "dream," the landscape of college athletics began to change. In college basketball, the all African-American starting five of the Texas Western University team made a big statement about the abilities of African-Americans. In the 1966 NCAA tournament Texas Western defeated the all-white University of Kentucky squad to capture the NCAA Championship. Texas Western's victory proved that five African-Americans could play as a team, and defeat an all white group of players. Previously many believed that African-Americans were "uncoachable" and only played as individuals. The Texas Western African-Americans disproved those theories with their resounding victory.<sup>2</sup>

However, there was a dark side to the Texas Western victory. The school came under scrutiny when the news media discovered that many of the African-Americans were failing their classes or in some cases, the school just carried them to keep them from being

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Beth Norton, A People and A Nation, 948,956.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Olsen, "In An Alien World," Sports Illustrated, 15 July 1968, 30-43.

ineligible. People began asking questions about the intentions of many colleges and universities around the nation.<sup>3</sup>

Huntington continued to move slowly with integration. The CIP helped African-Americans gain access to many of the downtown businesses but wanted more progress toward integration. The African-American community of Huntington still remained reserved about the CIP and the progress of Huntington and Marshall University.<sup>4</sup> Marshall followed the pattern of Huntington and continued a slow movement toward total integration. In 1966, the university hired its first African-American professor, Emory Carr, to teach in the language department. The school continued to increase the number of African-American students, but problems still remained. Marshall continued to struggle to find the proper course of direction to follow concerning integration.

The third generation of African-Americans to join the Marshall University basketball team began arriving on campus in the Fall of 1965. These new players possessed more advantages than the previous group of African-Americans. After experiencing six seasons of losing records, the new group of African-Americans helped bring back the winning tradition to the basketball team. Helped by the winning of more games than they lost, the unity of the team, and playing for a new coach, the third generation of African-American basketball players completed the initial years of integration for the Marshall basketball team.

Marshall University hired Ellis Johnson as the head basketball coach immediately

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<sup>3</sup> Nelson George, Elevating the Game: Black Men and Basketball (New York: Harper Collins, 1992) 136-138; Jack Olsen, "In An Alien World," 30-43.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Venable, interview by the author, 30 March 1996; Bruce Thompson, "An Appeal For Racial Justice," 20-21.

following the 1962-1963 basketball season. From the time Jule Rivlin resigned in January of 1963, speculation on the part of the Marshall supporters was rampant around Huntington. However, it was almost a foregone conclusion as to who would become the next coach of the basketball team. Local sportswriter, Ernie Salvatore, remembered the hiring of Johnson, "They had their eyes on Ellis Johnson who had coached at Morehead and who had been a great high school star there and then a great star at Kentucky. People wanted to get him in there. They would talk about getting Rivlin out and getting Johnson in here. It was a done deal."<sup>5</sup> Ellis Johnson was the overwhelming favorite to become the next head coach of the Marshall basketball team, and Marshall president, Stewart Smith did not disappoint the supporters.

Prior to accepting the coaching position at Marshall, Johnson sold insurance in Ashland, Kentucky, and had served as the head coach at Morehead State University. People in Huntington remembered Johnson from his playing days as an outstanding high school athlete from Ashland and his All-American years at the University of Kentucky.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson felt confident that he would help Marshall improve from a last place squad to an upper echelon team in the Mid-American Conference. His first two seasons as coach were less than spectacular as his teams won a total of ten games during those years.<sup>7</sup> Still the people of Huntington supported Johnson and his team. His six year record of 68-80, ranks

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<sup>5</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Burns, "Ellis Johnson New Marshall Cage Coach," Huntington Herald-Advertiser, 3 March 1963: p. 1.; Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996; C. Robert Barnett, "The Champs," River Cities Monthly, March 1980. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall Basketball Media Guide, Huntington, WV, 1996. p. 74.

him fifth on Marshall's coaching victory list.<sup>8</sup> Johnson's third season was the turning point for the team and the supporters. The 1965-1966 version of the Thundering Herd won half of its twenty-four games.

Johnson's rebuilding of the basketball program began by recruiting athletes from outside West Virginia and the recruitment of more African-American athletes. Phil Carter recalled Johnson's philosophy, "He realized that in order to win he needed more black athletes."<sup>9</sup> Ellis Johnson's teams reached their peak during the 1966-1967 and 1967-1968 seasons. These two teams featured fast-break basketball, trapping defenses and the "Iron Five."<sup>10</sup> The "Iron Five" was the nickname given to the team's starting five because they played the majority of minutes. They only received relief if the team was winning by a large margin or if a player was in foul trouble. Marshall's teams during these years not only featured a style of play that was exciting and pleasing to the supporters, but also featured an unusual camaraderie among the players. The "Iron Five" included Bob Allen, Dan D'Antoni and three African-Americans; Jim Davidson, George Stone and Bob Redd.

Ellis Johnson's personality allowed the African-American players to feel comfortable at Marshall, often acting as a father figure for the players. They described him as easy-going and laid back.<sup>11</sup> Jim Davidson remembered how Johnson treated him:

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B for Ellis Johnson's complete coaching record at Marshall.

<sup>9</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996.

<sup>10</sup> The origin of the nickname, "Iron Five" is unknown, but the student newspaper, Parthenon, and the local Huntington newspaper's sportswriter all used the nickname for this group of Marshall players.

<sup>11</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996; Jim Davidson, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 8 February 1996.

He was a coach, but he was also like a father figure to me. My dad died when I was going into my junior year. And losing my dad was really hard. I remember when they got the call. And they came in and we were practicing. He called me over to the side and said, 'Well you have to go home. Your dad's in bad shape in the hospital and you've got to go home.' I went home and my dad passed shortly after I got there, we had the funeral and everything. I came back and it was really tough for me. But he was always there for me. He impressed upon me the importance of not just playing ball, but getting that degree. I promised my father I'd get that degree. Ellis reinforced that to me all the time. Anytime I felt like I needed any help with anything all I had to do was say, 'Coach can we talk?' and he was always there.<sup>12</sup>

One reason George Stone chose Marshall was because, "it looked like Coach Johnson was becoming a member of my family. Gosh, he almost moved in with us."<sup>13</sup>

However, Johnson's emphasis on academics loomed large. In a February 1968 article in the Parthenon Bob Redd stated, "The only thing that made me come here is that he told me that he wanted me to get my grades first and then he wanted me to play for him, because you can't even play without good grades. This made me feel good-- important, because no one wants to be exploited fully because of one particular ability."<sup>14</sup>

Coach Johnson's concern for his players helped the third generation of African-Americans be successful at Marshall. Likewise, the diverse personalities of the African-Americans and their white teammates combined to form friendships and respect that would last for years.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the bonds between coach and team members as well as their

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<sup>12</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996.

<sup>13</sup> George Rorrer, "Lines By Rorrer," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 5 March 1967:32.

<sup>14</sup> Greg Carannante, "Bob Redd nearing end as MU 'great'," Parthenon, 27 February 1968: 5.

<sup>15</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 11 February 1996.

own friendships created a winning combination.

Like the other African-Americans who played at Marshall, the third generation endured some isolation off the court. However, because of the efforts of the previous group of African-American athletes, Redd, Stone, and Davidson had many more doors open to them and more access to the community. Their road proved easier because they won games and they got along exceptionally well with their teammates.

Jim Davidson, one of the top high school athletes in West Virginia, had his pick of colleges to attend including Ohio State and the University of Kentucky. However, because of his father's poor health, the Logan native decided to stay close to home and enrolled at Concord College in Athens, West Virginia. After a year at Concord, Davidson wanted out of the isolated school and called Ellis Johnson to ask if he still had a scholarship to offer. Johnson jumped at the opportunity and Davidson soon enrolled at Marshall. Though not eligible to play during his first year at Marshall, he joined the varsity for the 1966-1967 season.<sup>16</sup> His first season with the team, Davidson, began the year on the bench for the first game of the season. When the team played at Eastern Kentucky in the second game of the year, Davidson came off the bench to score twenty-nine points.<sup>17</sup> Davidson's scoring outburst placed him in the starting lineup following the Eastern Kentucky game for the remainder of his Marshall career.

George Stone played his high school basketball at Grant High School in Covington, Kentucky. Stone chose Marshall over several other schools because, "It was a

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<sup>16</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996; Robert Borchert, " 'Crowd makes difference'---Davidson," Parthenon, 12 March 1969:2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



small school and all of the seniors were moving out and I'd have a chance to play."<sup>18</sup> He came to Marshall in the fall of 1964 and joined another African-American, Bob Redd, on the undefeated 1964-1965 freshman team. Stone, personable and gregarious, made friends easily with his teammates.<sup>19</sup> On the court, Stone's spectacular shooting made him the major scoring threat for the team. Off the court he kept the squad loose with his jokes and easy-going personality. His African-American classmate, Bob Redd, took a more circuitous route to get to Marshall.

Bob Redd graduated from Fern Creek High School near Louisville, Kentucky, in 1959.<sup>20</sup> After he graduated, Redd did not receive scholarship offers to play basketball, so he joined the United States Marine Corps. Near the end of his tour of duty, Redd met Doctor Ray Hagley. Hagley, a Marshall alumnus, served in the Navy as a medical doctor. He persuaded Redd to visit Huntington and Marshall after seeing Redd play on the Marine Corps basketball team. Grateful for Hagley's help Redd recalled, "He is the one that gave me this life that I have."<sup>21</sup> Hagley would offer help to more than just Redd, becoming a fixture on the Marshall athletic scene.

Redd's military background helped him become a leader of the team. "I had a few years on them. I was about four years older than my teammates. I had already had some responsibilities being in the Marine Corps, so that calmed me down a little bit. I was pretty

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<sup>18</sup> Tim Murdock, "George Stone, Who Is He?," Parthenon, 21 March 1968: 2.

<sup>19</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.; Bob Redd, interview by the author, tape recording, Huntington, WV, 24 January 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Carannante, "Redd nearing end," p.4.

<sup>21</sup> Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996.

much disciplined when I got out of the Marine Corps."<sup>22</sup> Jim Davidson remembered Redd's leadership of the team, "Bob Redd helped me tremendously. He is the type of player that would go out and really play a ball game. He was so dynamic and so moving that he hustled all the time. He was really somebody to look up to. I know that many nights when I didn't feel like playing, I'd go out and he would talk to me and really make me go."<sup>23</sup> Redd knew that leadership not only meant scoring and rebounding but doing the little things on the court. Diving for loose balls and playing strong defense were Redd specialties.<sup>24</sup>

Eighth Avenue remained the center of the African-American community in the late 1960's. However, since campus life improved this group of African-Americans did not spend as much time on Eighth Avenue as their predecessors. Jim Davidson remembered the Eighth Avenue community:

On Sundays, your evening meal, you went out into the community. All of us black kids went over to people over on Eighth Avenue. That was difficult. It wasn't everybody together like it should have been. But there was a lot of support from that community. These people out of the community, Eighth Avenue, they knew who I was. With me playing at Logan, being a West Virginian, Huntington was always our big rival. So they knew me. They were very supportive when I came here. I didn't feel like they put any undue pressure on me to succeed, but they were all pulling for me.<sup>25</sup>

Although they had the support of the African-American community, Davidson did not feel confined to just Eighth Avenue. "I spent a lot of time downtown at the Hub and at the Arcade because I was a pool player, and I was accepted to come in and play. I didn't feel as

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Borchert, "'Crowd makes difference'," p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996.

much the isolation as maybe some of the other players. But I've always been more or less a free spirit. I never really had a lot of trouble."<sup>26</sup>

Bob Redd regretted not spending enough time on Eighth Avenue, "Thinking back, I wished that I had participated more in the Eighth Avenue adventure of life. There were many times that I should have gone over on Eighth Avenue. Went to the Junior High School. Because at this time, I was pretty well-known in the city. I should have gone and participated in the social programs."<sup>27</sup> Redd would spend much of his time on campus either at school, practicing basketball or at his fraternity. Unlike the preceding African-American athletes, this new group of players did not have to spend all of their time socializing with the other African-American athletes in Hodges Hall. Redd joined the Kappa Alpha Psi, an African-American, fraternity and found a place of much appreciated solace outside of the Eighth Avenue community and Hodges Hall. However, Redd acknowledged that Huntington, while supportive of the players, was still a segregated city.<sup>28</sup>

Davidson's only racial trouble came on the court. While the other African-Americans who preceded him at Marshall may have heard racial slurs from competitors, Davidson took action against his antagonist. The incident occurred during the 1966-1967 season in a game played at the Memorial Field House with Mid-American Conference leader and then undefeated University of Toledo as the opponent.

Davidson guarded Toledo's Willie Babione so successfully the incident began, "Early

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996.

<sup>28</sup> Carannante, "Redd nearing end," p.4.; Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996.

in the game I blocked one of his shots and he called me a 'black son of a bitch.' Which shocked me, you know. And when the game went on, I got in foul trouble and I ended up fouling out of that ball game."<sup>29</sup> Babione's words did not sit well with Davidson and as he sat on the bench during the second half of the game his anger began to swell. Then with two minutes and twenty-eight seconds remaining in the game, Davidson's opportunity for retaliation occurred.<sup>30</sup>

Marshall's Park Beam threw the basketball at Toledo's John Brisker hitting him in the face. Beam turned around and ran down the court leaving the Thundering Herd's Dan D'Antoni alone next to the Toledo bench. Davidson remembered what occurred next, "Their bench was there and they surrounded Dan. Well, we were sitting there, and we all fly that way. A little scuffle ensues. But the only person I could see on that team was Babione. So I hit him. I went straight for him and I knocked him out. That was important."<sup>31</sup>

Dan D'Antoni also remembered the Toledo fight.

He hit Babione. I swear it sounded like a shot gun went off. I was sitting there waiting for them to throw it in bounds and they surrounded me. The next thing I know somebody's got me in arm locks and then here comes the troops. Then all of a sudden this shot gun went off and Davidson hit Babione and everybody quit. That was it. Everybody turned around and said, 'What the hell was that?' When Davidson hit him, he cracked.<sup>32</sup>

Davidson's revenge was the only time an African-American player from Marshall took extreme physical action against a white athlete. However, by this time the newspapers

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<sup>29</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996. .

<sup>30</sup> Ernie Salvatore, "Green Should Be Tied For Lead," Huntington Herald-Advertiser, 5 February 1967: 28.

<sup>31</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

reported the incident as just a fight between two players. There was not any mention of the player's race in the newspapers.<sup>33</sup> Davidson and Babione may have been the only people that knew that race was the motivating factor behind the knockout punch.<sup>34</sup>

The February fight with Toledo was the only on court incident of such magnitude that involved an African-American individual.<sup>35</sup> Yet, prior to the Toledo fight, the team faced a racial incident in Florida. In January 1967, the team traveled to Tallahassee Florida to play Florida State University. Marshall won the contest seventy-seven to seventy-one, but after the game, Coach Johnson and some of the players stopped at a fast-food restaurant to get food for the team.<sup>36</sup> The problem occurred while the Marshall players waited in the restaurant for the food. Dan D'Antoni recalled what happened as they waited:

When we went in there, we were a mixed group. White and Black. And these guys started hurling racial slurs toward us. Between them being 'niggers' and being 'nigger lovers.' We left and got back in the cars. They got in two cars and followed us. Eventually one of them pulled up in front of us and kind of started going real slow and then the one behind would come up real fast. Coach Johnson finally found a road and sped out and got away from them and got up to the motel. We pulled into the motel and they pulled into the median. They started yelling things and finally, I guess, Davidson had had enough and he said, 'Why don't you all just come on over here and do all that crap.' And so they did. And when they did, they

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<sup>33</sup> In some areas race may have shown up in the newspapers but in Huntington, the newspaper, Huntington Herald-Advertiser, printed two stories about the game and when the columns mentioned the fight race was not reported.

<sup>34</sup> Dan D'Antoni, Davidson's teammate, did not know about Babione's racial remarks. Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

<sup>35</sup> In interviews with the members of the second generation of the African-Americans, some of the people eluded to the ways they retaliated against those people who made racial remarks. It usually involved an elbow or an undercut during play but nothing as serious as the Davidson fight.

<sup>36</sup> George Rorrer, "D'Antoni Ailing," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 27 January 1967: 19

got their butts beat. Because by that time, the rest of the players came out. But the team stuck together-Black and White. There was no separation with our team.<sup>37</sup>

Finally the Florida youths piled into their cars and left. Later the Tallahassee police took action against the youths and arrested them.<sup>38</sup>

The Florida State incident exemplified the 1966-1967 team's unity, a unity unequaled on previous squads.<sup>39</sup> Like the African-American athletes who came before the third generation, the school's administration segregated the athletes in Hodges Hall. However, the administration could not stop the individuals from overcoming the segregation practices. Dan D'Antoni remembered how he and George Stone would find a way to circumvent the segregation policy. "George and I were probably the closest. We would room together at times. What happened was, his room would be so dirty that he would come up and stay in my room, until I went down and helped him clean. He would always come up and stay with me for a while."<sup>40</sup>

As for the rooming situation on the road, the Marshall team's had always integrated their players on the road. This group enjoyed each others company so much, they often spent their summers together. Dan D'Antoni remembered the summer trips with his teammates, "In the summertime we'd get in cars and travel around the state and play teams on the playgrounds. We'd go together and played together. Of course that just made us more close.

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<sup>37</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

<sup>38</sup> George Rorrer, "D'Antoni Ailing,": 19.

<sup>39</sup> After interviewing both African-American and white athletes from previous teams, the author found that, while not all of the teammates held animosity toward each other, in fact many were friends. However, they did not express the type of feelings that the members of the "Iron Five" had toward each other.

<sup>40</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

We were on the road together. We lived together. We played together. We socialized together. It was a very close team."<sup>41</sup> D'Antoni even spent some of his summers at the Stone household in Covington, Kentucky, playing basketball on the local playgrounds with George Stone and Stone's friends. Although it was an African-American neighborhood, D'Antoni never felt out of place, because of his friendship with Stone.<sup>42</sup>

This closeness translated into victories on the court. Jim Davidson recalled the team's unity, "My teammates? We were a real tight knit group. Though we had various different interests, but when we came together on the floor, we were one."<sup>43</sup> Davidson also stated, "We played hard and practiced hard, and we were a family. That first five was as close as could be."<sup>44</sup> The core group, Bob Allen, Bob Redd, George Stone, Jim Davidson and Dan D'Antoni were together for two seasons, 1966-1967 and 1967-1968, and they won thirty-seven while losing only sixteen.<sup>45</sup> The "Iron Five" helped renew the enthusiasm of the Huntington community and that enthusiasm was no more evident than when the team played in the 1967 National Invitational Tournament (NIT).

Played in New York City, at the famed Madison Square Garden, the Marshall Thundering Herd quickly became the crowd favorites of the NIT. Marshall's fast-break style of basketball and high scoring pleased the New York crowd, but the team also enjoyed the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996.

<sup>44</sup> "Former MU great, George Stone, Dies," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 1 January 1994, Sec. B, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall Basketball Media Guide, Huntington, WV, 1996. p. 74.

support of the large contingent of Huntingtonians. Ernie Salvatore recalled the enthusiasm of the Huntington community. "They were very excited. I mean, I was up there and there were at least a couple thousand people from Huntington up there."<sup>46</sup> Davidson also remembered the crowd in New York, "It was fantastic. We had great support here. But when we go play in the old Garden, we're there two or three days before we played. Practice and everything. In the meantime, as it gets closer and closer to the game, I get to seeing more and more Marshall people. Come the night of the game, we had a good contingent of Marshall people there. It was great. I was amazed when I looked around the Garden."<sup>47</sup> Bob Redd remembered the NIT, "Participating in the event itself was an experience that I don't think I could ever forget. The way the school rallied around us. I thought we were the guiding light for Huntington and West Virginia in the sports world. There were people who came to New York to see the game. I really felt like the school stopped. There were a lot of people in New York to see the game. It was a big holiday."<sup>48</sup> Marshall finished fourth in the NIT and the community and school continued to give their total support to the basketball team after the tournament.

Dan D'Antoni recalled the support of the community, " People got in behind you. You had Doc Hagley, Dr. Proctor, prominent people within the community who were very enthusiastic. They were young and they were enthusiastic about the program and it was catching."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996.

<sup>47</sup> Jim Davidson, interview by the author, 8 February 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996.

<sup>49</sup> Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.



The support from the Huntington community covered all of the players, both African-American and white. Bob Redd remembered the treatment he received from the community while he was at Marshall. "When I think back, I think that people thought that I was exciting to see. So being in a sports town, on campus, I didn't have any trouble. Surely we had a lot more advantages playing sports. Not only me. There were quite a few black athletes that had some advantages."<sup>50</sup>

Even George Stone admitted the support was nice, however, in a Parthenon interview Stone talked about the community and the racial situation as he viewed it. "By being an athlete people look up to you and they respect you for what you are. After they get to know you, if there's any prejudice, it's mostly race. As for Huntington, I can't speak for the city. I know it's here-- it's everywhere."<sup>51</sup> As for the students of Marshall, Stone said, "The people here . . . I can usually get along with. If I can't get along with them I just don't associate with them."<sup>52</sup>

Davidson also enjoyed the support of the community and he summed up his feelings about the students of Marshall in a Parthenon interview, "I haven't been confronted with too many racial incidents. I think most kids at Marshall are pretty level headed. They can take people for what they are and not by the color of their skin. I have experienced a few stares, but you're going to get this any place you go. Everybody here has treated me fairly."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996.

<sup>51</sup> T.M. Murdock, "Stone Who Is He?" p.2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Borchert, "'Crowd makes difference'---Davidson," Parthenon, 12 March 1969:2.

Some of the fair treatment disappeared the year after Allen, Redd and Stone graduated. The 1968-1969 edition of the Thundering Herd began to lose more games than previous teams finishing with a record of nine wins and fifteen losses.<sup>54</sup> When asked about the 1968-1969 season, Davidson recalled the effect the losses had on the crowds at the Marshall games. The Marshall fans actually booed Davidson and this affected him greatly. "It was a real bad experience. To me, it's the worst thing that's happened to me since I've been playing athletics. I know I got to the point where I felt that no matter what I did, I couldn't do the right thing. . . . This was something that I hadn't been accustomed to. It really hurt."<sup>55</sup> Davidson was not the first player to be booed at Marshall, nor would he be the last. However, the difference between winning and losing games became evident to Davidson.

After their playing eligibility ended, Davidson, Redd and Stone all eventually graduated from Marshall. Thus continuing the trend of high graduation rates among the basketball players from the 1950's and 1960's.<sup>56</sup> Davidson resides in Logan, West Virginia, where he teaches at Logan High School. Bob Redd currently resides in France. Stone played four seasons in the American Basketball Association (ABA) and on 30 December 1993 Stone died in Columbus, Ohio, at the age of forty-seven.<sup>57</sup>

As the 1960's came to a close, so to did the initial phases of integration of the

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<sup>54</sup> Marshall Basketball Media Guide, Huntington, WV, 1996. p. 74.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Borchert, " 'Crowd makes difference'," p.2.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix A, for graduation information regarding Marshall basketball players from the 1950's and the 1960's.

<sup>57</sup> "Former MU great, George Stone, dies," Huntington Herald-Dispatch, 1 January 1994, Sec. B, p. 1.

Marshall basketball program. With the help of many people, the third generation completed their time at Marshall successfully. Their coach, Ellis Johnson, emphasized personal growth through education, and athletic growth through teamwork. Johnson acted as a father-figure for some of the African-Americans but Dr. Ray Hagley and others in the Huntington community also stood ready to help.<sup>58</sup> The support of Huntington's African-American community was available, although the players with some regret did not always utilize the African-American support. In part, this reflected the relaxing of the segregation policies of Huntington. For this they could thank the students of Marshall, many of whom were former Thundering Herd athletes, who helped break the segregation policies of the local businessmen.<sup>59</sup>

However, the third generation could also credit themselves for their own popularity by being a part of winning teams. Winning can be a great elixir, especially after a number of years of losing, and this group of African-Americans played an important role in winning games and the surge of popularity for Marshall basketball.

The Marshall basketball teams of 1966-1968 experienced a tremendous sense of camaraderie. Although they possessed different personalities and came from different backgrounds, these athletes connected on an athletic level and a social level. Bob Allen remembered that it was "fun going out and goofing around with the guys on the team."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Bob Redd, interview by the author, 24 January 1996; Dan D'Antoni, interview by the author, 11 February 1996.

<sup>59</sup> Phil Carter, interview by author, 22 April 1996; Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996; Bruce Moody, interview by author, 5 February 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Tim Bucey, "Bob Allen: Big center talks on past, future," Parthenon, 6 March 1968, 4.

Not that the preceding African-Americans did not get along with their white teammates, but this group possessed an unusual closeness with their white teammates. This group of players roomed together, played together and stood together in the face of hostile groups of people, like those at Florida State.

Marshall's third generation of African-American basketball players succeeded in bridging the racial gap and showing the way for more African-Americans to play basketball at Marshall. Like the African-Americans who preceded them, the third generation provided one more reason for the total integration of the athletic programs and the university.

## Chapter V Conclusions

Nineteen hundred fifty-four looms as a pivotal year for many schools throughout the United States. Marshall College followed the national trend admitting African-Americans to the undergraduate student body for the first time in the school's history. One Huntington, West Virginia, native came to school not only for educational purposes, but also to integrate the college's basketball program.

Hal Greer changed the athletic landscape of West Virginia by joining the Marshall basketball team for the 1954-1955 season. Prior to Greer enrolling at Marshall, not a single African-American had ever played for one of the state's all-white institution. Greer succeeded on the basketball court, and also in the classroom. His quiet demeanor made him the perfect person to break the state's athletic color barrier.

Greer's four years at Marshall were relatively easy with few incidents of racial prejudice being reported. However, Greer often kept to himself never revealing his true feelings about his stay at Marshall. Greer's exceptional talent on the court and his off court demeanor earned him the respect of his teammates and the people of Huntington.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Greer, the second generation of African-Americans to play basketball at Marshall faced problems that Greer could avoid. None of the second generation African-Americans were from Huntington, therefore they could not go home every night to escape the realities of living in a segregated world. African-American players like Bruce Moody,

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Freeman, interview by the author, 11 April 1996; Ernie Salvatore, interview by author, 15 February 1996; John Milhoan, interview by the author, 29 April 1996.

Charles Gordon, and Phil Carter faced additional pressures because the team began losing games, and with the losses came internal dissension along with the usual high expectations of the community. These men persevered the hardships of the social environment to finish their college playing careers and earn their degrees.

The second generation not only played basketball but eventually became involved in a social movement in Huntington that changed many of the segregationist policies of the local businessmen. Because of the efforts of the second generation the men who followed them to Marshall had an easier path to travel.

When George Stone, Bob Redd and Jim Davidson arrived at Marshall the basketball team had a new coach, Ellis Johnson, and one of the worst records in the school's history. The three men helped rebuild Marshall's basketball tradition along with earning the respect and friendship of their teammates and the Huntington community. Stone, Redd, and Davidson ended the initial integration of the Marshall basketball program on a high note. All of the African-American men who initially integrated the basketball program were successful in their endeavor. They proved to everyone that they could play as well or better on the court as their white counterparts. Off the court they proved to be intelligent, socially minded young men who gained the respect of many throughout the community.

Fully integrating Marshall's basketball program took several years and plenty of sacrifice on the part of many people. Rightly or wrongly, integration moved slowly, not only at Marshall but elsewhere around the nation. However, Marshall moved faster than many colleges following the *Brown v. Board* decision.

Marshall was the first of the state school's to integrate its athletic programs. Hal Greer entered Marshall in 1954, ten years before the first African-American earned a basketball scholarship at West Virginia University.<sup>2</sup> After the initial phase of integration from 1954 to 1969, Marshall hired Ed Starling, an African-American, as an assistant basketball coach long before it became the norm to do so. Starling also moved from an assistant coach to the interim athletic director after the 1970 plane crash that claimed the lives of seventy-five Marshall football players, coaches, athletic staff and school supporters.

As time went by, Marshall's basketball roster began to see an increase in the number of African-Americans. In 1981 the African-Americans on the Marshall basketball team out-numbered the whites for the first time in school history. The 1980's also saw Marshall finally start five African-Americans.

At the beginning of the 1990 basketball season, Marshall finally employed its first African-American head coach. Dwight Freeman became the first African-American to lead the Thundering Herd as head coach. Freeman also was the first African-American named to a head coaching position in the Southern Conference, and the first at one of the state's collegiate institutions that was not a traditionally all-black school.

Finally, Marshall's attempt at integrating its basketball program needs to be put into a national context. During the 1960's African-American athletes around the nation expressed their disenchantment with college athletics. Their displeasure came in the

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<sup>2</sup> West Virginia University first integrated its basketball program in the late fifties when Robert Parker played as a walk-on. However, West Virginia did not offer scholarships to African-American basketball players until 1965.

form of several grievances, that the athletes believed hampered their growth athletically and personally.

In a five part series of articles published in Sports Illustrated, titled "The Black Athlete," the grievances were spelled out as follows:

1. Stacking- The process of putting all of the African-Americans in the same position.
2. Quotas- Having a set number of African-Americans on a team.
3. Clash of Culture- Infrequent interaction on a social basis with their white teammates, isolation of campus life, moving from a "ghetto" to a white middle to upper-class setting.
4. Non-support of the Administration- Lack of help by the school's administration regarding player housing, summer jobs and player education.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of the Marshall basketball program shows that in some ways the school forged ahead of the other colleges during the 1950's and 1960's, and in other ways Marshall reflected the status quo.

Marshall did not stack its African-American players, if only because there was not enough African-Americans to stack. The teams from 1954 to 1969 never had more than three African-Americans on a single squad, and usually those on the team played different positions. For example, on the 1960-1961 team Charles Gordon played at the guard position, Phil Carter at the forward spot, and Bruce Moody played forward, guard, and center. Marshall's 1966-1967 team followed a similar pattern with George Stone at forward, Bob Redd at the other forward spot and Jim Davidson playing guard. As it stands, the evidence suggests that stacking was not evident at Marshall.

The quota grievance is more difficult to determine. If Marshall did have a quota

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Olsen, "The Black Athlete: Pride and Prejudice," Sports Illustrated, 8 June 1968, 20-31.



system, like most other schools, it remained unspoken. Just because Marshall did not recruit many African-American players, does not mean the school had a quota system in place. However, maybe Marshall did have a quota system and that is the reason few African-Americans played at the school. A quota system is hard to pinpoint and none of the people interviewed for this thesis gave any evidence of such a system. Evidence of a quota system is not prevalent and therefore it cannot be determined if one existed at Marshall.

Of all of the grievances, the clash of culture is the most discernible. Any time two different cultures come together problems arise. The problem at Marshall concerned the lack of social activities for the African-Americans. A word often used when discussing the early years of athletic integration is "isolation," and at Marshall many of the African-Americans felt isolated. In some manner most of the African-Americans felt isolated. Be it with room assignments or the inability to go to downtown business establishments. However, not all of Marshall's African-Americans felt isolated, some just handled the situation differently.<sup>4</sup> The school's inability to provide the African-Americans with appropriate social functions forced the them to seek social activities in the African-American community of Huntington. While most of the African-Americans enjoyed their evenings on segregated Eighth Avenue, many still wished for integrated activities on campus.

At first the interaction with the white players appeared minimal, usually restricted to going to a few local high school games. Life on the road consisted of a rooming

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Gordon, interview by author, 17 May 1996.

assignment with a white player, but little activity other than staying in the room and talking to the roommate. The situation began to change in the mid-sixties when African-Americans began to educate their white teammates about segregation in Huntington. Shortly after educating the whites about local discrimination the African-American began bridging the gap of isolation with their teammates. Assessing the grievance of culture clash is fairly easy. Marshall did not have anyone take the lead in the integration of social activities on campus, leaving the African-Americans feeling isolated and without support. However, as the decade of the sixties moved forward so did the players on the basketball team. Taking the lead, they forced change in Huntington and on campus while extinguishing their feelings of isolation from their teammates.

Most of Marshall's African-Americans came from West Virginia. They understood the situation in Huntington and knew the ground rules of a segregated city. Bruce Moody may have had the hardest time of all of the African-Americans, because he came from New York City, where he attended an integrated high school, and interacted with whites on a regular basis. The other African-Americans knew the situation in West Virginia, not that they believed it was acceptable, but they did know the local beliefs and practices. This may have helped them maneuver better in the segregated society.

The final grievance concerns the lack of support from the school's administration. While it is true that the school did little in the way of social functions, the administration did help in other ways. Off campus housing during the school year was usually not permitted, so the athletes had to stay in Hodges Hall, the athletic dormitory. Summertime, though, was a different story. Some players went home for the summer,

while others stayed in town. Charles Gordon, for example, received prime summer housing when he stayed in the garage apartment of President Smith. Other players like Bob Redd received help, when in Huntington during the summer, from local Marshall supporters. Marshall appears to have played a significant role in securing the summer boarding for the athletes.

Summer jobs were a different story. Most of the summer jobs for the African-American athletes were not on the same level as the white players. However, some of the African-Americans did secure decent jobs. Charles Gordon remembered having a decent job and his roommate, Wilson Lathan, had a job at a local market that enabled them to eat well during the summer.

Phil Carter also received one of the better summer jobs. He served as a Capitol Hill police officer in Washington, DC. The appointment came from Congressman Ken Hechler with the school possibly having some influence upon Hechler to make the appointment. Evidence suggests that Marshall played some role in setting up some of the African-Americans with decent summer jobs. However, not all of the African-Americans stayed in Huntington during the summer, and it is also true that not all that did stay in Huntington received the quality jobs of their white teammates.

When discussing graduation rates, two things must be remembered. First, the school possess an obligation to see that the individual receives a quality education; second, that the student has to put forth the effort to graduate. On both of these points Marshall and the African-American athletes did their part. Marshall still did not have the

multi-cultural education that the African-Americans desired, however, the education they received allowed them to succeed in their chosen professional fields.

The African-American athletes heeded the second point. In the period from 1954 to 1969, the African-American basketball players who completed their playing eligibility by 1969 did an outstanding job in the classroom. Ten of the eleven (90.9%) of the African-American basketball players meeting those requirements earned their degrees. Their graduation rate ranked fifteen percentage points higher than the white basketball players during that time.<sup>5</sup> Considering the low graduation rates of today's basketball players<sup>6</sup>, all of the players from the 1950's and 1960's did quite well.

The credit for the success of the African-American players should be placed squarely upon the shoulders of the players themselves. While the coaches encouraged the players to keep their grades in good standing, a prerequisite for staying eligible to play, the players were the ones who actually did the school work. Unlike today's athletes, the men from the 1950's and 1960's did not have the amount of support from the school in regards to tutors and special programs like Higher Education for Learning Problems (H.E.L.P.). Additional credit should be given to those who came back after completing their eligibility, and returned to earn their degrees. Concerning the graduation of players, Marshall fared pretty well. Especially with the players taking control of their own destiny and earning their degrees.

In the final analysis, the evidence suggests that Marshall successfully integrated

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for more information regarding graduation rates.

<sup>6</sup> The most recent graduation rates obtained through the offices of the NCAA, shows that the Marshall basketball programs players graduated at a 50% rate. Both white and African-American players graduated at the same rate, 50%.

its basketball program. The University appeared to be ahead of most of the Southern colleges when it came to athletics. However, socially, the university lacked the leadership to fully integrate they campus. Unlike the deep South, where the African-Americans were openly discriminated on the campuses of universities and colleges, the African-Americans of Marshall were the victims of subtle forms of racism. Marshall University's lack of administrative leadership left scars on many of the African-Americans that are only just beginning to heal today. The questions still remain, Could the school have offered more to the African-American players? The answer is yes. Did the school absolutely destroy the lives of the African-American players? The answer is no. These men who paved the way for future Marshall African-American players, withstood adversity and isolation eventually earning their college degrees and becoming successful members of society.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Graduation Rates of Marshall University

#### Basketball Players, 1950-1969

Based on available information obtained from the Marshall University Registrar's Office and the Marshall University Office of Alumni Affairs.

Requirements for data: Any player whose four years of playing eligibility was completed from 1950-1969.

Data is separated by coaches who recruited the players.

<b>Cam Henderson</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Graduated</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
African-Americans	1	1	100%
White Athletes	32	25	78%
Total	33	26	79%
<b>Jule Rivlin</b>			
African-Americans	6	5	83%
White Athletes	40	29	73%
Total	46	34	74%
<b>Ellis Johnson</b>			
African-Americans	4	4	100%
White Athletes	10	8	80%
Total	14	12	86%
<b>Total: 1950-1969</b>			
African-Americans	11	10	91%
White Athletes	82	62	76%
Total	93	72	77%

Appendix B

Marshall University basketball records: 1954-1955 season to the 1968-1969 season.

**1954-1955 (18-4)****Coach: Cam Henderson**

MU		Opponent	
91	Republic of China	58	
90	Western Reserve	84	
95	Colorado	55	
105	Ohio University	85	
103	University of Virginia	98	
101	Carnegie Tech	82	
89	Washington and Lee	79	
74	Miami, OH	89	
79	Western Michigan	50	
82	Xavier	59	
68	Toledo	56	
86	Kent State	59	
73	Kent State	92	
75	Western Michigan	89	
108	Morris Harvey	94	
84	Ohio University	73	
90	Toledo	74	
91	Bowling Green	89	
91	Bowling Green	69	
89	Miami, OH	77	
103	Morris Harvey	92	
58	Western Reserve	70	

**1955-1956 (18-5)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
83	Spring Hill	69	
115	Washington and Lee	83	
87	Ohio University	71	
70	Western Michigan	80	
89	Morehead State	102	
130	Boston College	69	
79	Denver	78	
99	Miami, OH	93	
85	Western Michigan	72	
72	Ohio University	63	
92	Toledo	53	
115	Morris Harvey	76	
91	Baldwin-Wallace	87	
97	Kent State	83	
110	Kent State	108	
103	Morehead State	108	
85	West Virginia Wesleyan	64	
87	Bowling Green	85	
78	Toledo	70	
82	Miami, OH	103	
95	Bowling Green	91	
109	Morris Harvey	91	
92	Morehead State- NCAA	107	

**1956-1957(15-9)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
74	Spring Hill	55	
69	Morehead State	71	
101	St. Francis, PA	89	
103	Western Michigan	75	
61	Austin Peay	60	
71	East Tennessee State	81	
98	Arizona State	73	
77	Miami, OH	93	
99	Morris Harvey	75	
77	Ohio University	71	
76	Toledo	74	
75	Bowling Green	80	
77	Morehead State	81	
108	Kent State	67	
76	Kent State	60	
74	Ohio University	103	
97	Murray State	88	
102	Baldwin-Wallace	80	
87	Bowling Green	66	
79	Morris Harvey	82	
91	Toledo	82	
96	St. Francis, PA	99	
91	Miami, OH	96	
101	Western Michigan	85	

**1957-1958 (17-7)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
85	Morehead State	77	
78	St. Francis, PA	86	
87	St. Bonaventure	68	
68	Xavier	70	
97	Miami, OH	106	
113	Morris Harvey	86	
86	Western Michigan	69	
80	Morehead State	93	
69	Kent State	49	
99	Morris Harvey	88	
81	Ohio University	78	
100	St. Francis, PA	96	
109	Florida State	68	
98	Ohio University	89	
76	Bowling Green	74	
70	Toledo	72	
99	Xavier	87	
101	Bowling Green	87	
92	Murray State	98	
70	Kent State	52	
92	Toledo	69	
73	Miami, OH	82	
93	Western Michigan	80	
97	Washington and Lee	73	

**1958-1959 (12-12)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
84	St. Joseph's, IN	75	
78	Virginia Tech	70	
88	Eastern Kentucky	82	
78	Western Michigan	63	
86	Cincinnati	106	
69	Miami, OH	73	
96	College of Pacific	71	
72	St. Francis, PA	74	
80	Seattle	91	
84	Ohio University	88	
89	St. Francis, PA	81	
80	Virginia Tech	93	
91	Western Michigan	65	
84	Kent State	83	
61	Kent State	79	
86	Morehead State	83	
85	Bowling Green	88	
75	Ohio University	73	
86	Toledo	74	
77	St. Bonaventure	90	
91	Morehead State	92	
81	Bowling Green	94	
60	Toledo	67	
90	Miami, OH	79	

**1959-1960 (10-13)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
92	St. Joseph's IN	65	
61	Cincinnati	102	
82	Pepperdine	76	
82	Eastern Kentucky	90	
85	Virginia Tech	80	
93	Miami, OH	77	
90	Western Michigan	81	
78	St. Francis, PA	86	
92	Kent State	75	
72	Virginia Tech	79	
77	Ohio University	87	
51	Toledo	63	
74	Western Michigan	81	
70	Kent State	101	
100	Western Kentucky	97	
80	St. Bonaventure	93	
85	Bowling Green	75	
72	Portland	60	
82	Ohio University	86	
78	Miami, OH	86	
48	Toledo	65	
86	Eastern Kentucky	79	
86	Bowling Green	90	

**1960-1961 (11-13)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
78	Marietta	59	
67	Eastern Kentucky	84	
82	Clemson	65	
57	Miami, OH	64	
53	Ohio University	71	
78	George Washington	76	
79	Ohio University	88	
73	Kent State	72	
68	Miami, OH	71	
55	Toledo	60	
76	Western Michigan	69	
68	Morehead State	70	
64	Bowling Green	58	
106	Morris Harvey	87	
93	Western Michigan	68	
77	Western Kentucky	100	
91	St. Francis, PA	70	
74	Morehead State	78	
66	Toledo	79	
67	Bowling Green	60	
58	Eastern Kentucky	70	
81	Kent State	83	
78	St. Francis, PA	76	
57	Cincinnati	69	

**1961-1962 (10-13)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
68	Marietta	66	
57	Ohio University	68	
80	St. Francis, PA	86	
49	Cincinnati	77	
57	Miami, OH	77	
89	Western Kentucky	84	
63	University of Virginia	65	
90	Clemson	75	
55	Bowling Green	68	
81	Kent State	61	
58	Toledo	60	
89	Western Michigan	76	
67	Miami, OH	59	
89	Morris Harvey	83	
70	Bowling Green	73	
77	Ohio University	72	
80	Loyola of Chicago	88	
74	Western Michigan	78	
75	Morehead State	80	
65	VMI	76	
75	Morehead State	80	
79	Kent State	77	
89	Toledo	83	



**1962-1963 (6-16)****Coach: Jule Rivlin**

MU		Opponent	
72	Morris Harvey	76	
69	Morehead State	81	
48	Miami, OH	67	
71	Ohio University	72	
71	Citadel	69	
65	Penn State	75	
84	Morris Harvey	80	
58	Loyola of Chicago	103	
59	Toledo	63	
66	Morehead State	80	
109	Morris Harvey	85	
77	Bowling Green	93	
98	VMI	82	
82	Western Michigan	95	
69	Kent State	73	
100	Tampa	88	
73	Ohio University	93	
61	Kent State	52	
59	Miami, OH	66	
58	Toledo	63	
86	Bowling Green	114	
81	St. Francis, PA	71	
78	Western Michigan	82	

**1963-1964 (6-17)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU		Opponent	
78	Morris Harvey	71	
73	Eastern Kentucky	85	
69	Ohio University	85	
83	Morehead State	103	
102	St. Francis, PA	91	
73	Toledo	84	
60	Miami, OH	75	
81	Morris Harvey	90	
64	Ohio Wesleyan	70	
81	St. Francis, PA	72	
65	Kent State	70	
87	Western Michigan	82	
82	Ohio University	98	
85	Eastern Kentucky	73	
55	Miami, OH	95	
74	Kent State	76	
102	Morehead State	110	
83	Toledo	112	
87	Bowling Green	106	
71	Steubenville	56	
63	Loyola of Chicago	117	
86	Western Michigan	93	
72	Bowling Green	106	

**1964-1965 (4-20)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU		Opponent	
78	Steubenville	85	
96	Morris Harvey	98	
66	Eastern Kentucky	94	
81	Ohio University	106	
90	Miami, OH	114	
84	Citadel	96	
93	West Virginia Wesleyan	74	
109	Morris Harvey	76	
73	Miami, OH	86	
90	Loyola of Chicago	98	
110	Florida Southern	81	
82	Morehead State	84	
89	Kent State	91	
110	Western Michigan	99	
94	Morehead State	103	
71	Toledo	78	
85	Ohio University	103	
72	Kent State	80	
75	Steubenville	83	
76	Toledo	82	
93	Bowling Green	114	
85	Western Michigan	100	
92	Eastern Kentucky	94	
94	Bowling Green	98	

**1965-1966 (12-12)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU		Opponent	
83	Morris Harvey	84	
88	Eastern Kentucky	75	
95	Kent State	103	
93	St. Francis, PA	81	
118	Richmond	103	
104	Kent State	87	
101	Ohio Wesleyan	70	
82	Morris Harvey	79	
79	Ohio University	68	
83	Bowling Green	90	
68	Loyola of Chicago	92	
57	Miami, OH	74	
89	Western Michigan	80	
79	Morehead State	94	
69	Toledo	70	
86	Eastern Kentucky	93	
94	Steubenville	82	
52	Miami, OH	71	
68	Toledo	76	
78	Ohio University	92	
86	Morehead State	83	
70	Western Michigan	69	
95	Bowling Green	105	
105	St. Francis, PA	68	

**1966-1967 (20-8)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU	Opponent	
110	Morris Harvey	87
99	Eastern Kentucky	88
70	Ohio University	68
77	Morehead State	84
91	Toledo	103
85	Steubenville	81
67	St. Francis, PA	73
105	Old Dominion	103
112	Eastern Kentucky	83
79	Bowling Green	74
79	Morris Harvey	86
93	Ohio University	94
101	St. Francis, PA	83
97	Loyola of Chicago	81
77	Florida State	71
73	Western Michigan	61
96	Toledo	81
98	Morehead State	112
65	Kent State	61
89	Bowling Green	85
66	Miami, OH	61
77	Miami, OH	62
68	Western Michigan	67
77	Kent State	76
70	Villanova-NIT	68
119	Nebraska- NIT	88
78	Marquette- NIT	83
76	Rutgers- NIT	93

**1967-1968 (17-8)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU	Opponent	
83	Morris Harvey	69
79	Morehead State	78
73	Eastern Kentucky	76
81	Kent State	65
97	University of Virginia	89
85	Manhattan	78
82	Morehead State	83
87	Toledo	101
83	Miami, OH	63
57	Bowling Green	61
101	Morris Harvey	93
94	Ohio University	69
86	Eastern Kentucky	71
82	Ohio University	73
92	Western Michigan	93
93	Houston	102
75	Bowling Green	62
69	Miami, OH	68
93	Toledo	89
93	Loyola of Chicago	109

80	Northern Illinois	72
98	Western Michigan	81
131	Old Dominion	91
90	Kent State	75
93	St. Peter's- NIT	102

**1968-1969 (9-15)****Coach: Ellis Johnson**

MU	Opponent	
81	Morris Harvey	82
85	Morehead State	82
95	Eastern Kentucky	100
107	St. Peter's	94
92	Morehead State	89
80	Maryland	89
77	Yale	72
85	Toledo	98
70	Miami, OH	78
70	Morris Harvey	71
78	Western Michigan	100
70	Northern Illinois	75
82	East Carolina	85
78	Loyola of Chicago	76
100	Bowling Green	98
81	Eastern Kentucky	79
94	Ohio University	110
55	Miami, OH	83
61	Kent State	78
74	Western Michigan	85
80	Bowling Green	101
85	Toledo	83
80	Ohio University	86
65	Kent State	60