

WILLIAM HENRY OLIVER "FOUNDED UPON A ROCK"

MEMOIR

OPHELIA DALE EDWARDS

WILLIAM HENRY OLIVER

"FOUNDED UPON A ROCK"

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Ophelia Dale Edwards

August 1975

ABSTRACT

William Henry Oliver was born on November 4, 1903 to Rev. and Mrs. James Harrison Oliver in Indian Mound, Tennessee. He attended elementary schools in Stewart and Montgomery Counties and graduated from Dover High School in 1922. After spending three years at Southwestern Presbyterian University in Clarksville, he transferred to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, graduating from college in 1926.

William Henry Oliver's first position after college was at Jere Baxter High School in Nashville, Tennessee. He taught English there one year. He moved to Ayden, North Carolina in 1927 where he taught Math and English at Eureka College, then the educational institution for the Free Will Baptist denomination. In May of 1928, he married Pauline McCall in Nashville and they returned to North Carolina to stay until Eureka closed its doors in December of 1928. Mr. Oliver returned to Nashville to become a salesman for Nashville Life and Accident Insurance Company.

William Henry Oliver has had many experiences as a Free Will Baptist minister. He began preaching in 1923 at the First Christian Church in Dover. He spent several summers thereafter in evangelistic work. He became an ordained minister in October, 1924. He helped to establish and pastored for two years the East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church. Other pastorates have included the Ayden Free Will Baptist Church in North Carolina, Bethel, Bethlehem, Olivet, and Dunbar's Chapel Free Will Baptist Churches in middle Tennessee.

William Henry Oliver has spent thirty-five years of his life as a public educator. In 1929, he became both a teacher and the principal of Kingston Springs School in Cheatham County. In 1930, he taught at Hume-Fogg in Nashville. From 1932-1937, he taught and was the Activities Manager at East Nashville High School. He served as assistant principal for two years and held the principalship at East for eighteen years. World War II was fought during this time. He wrote Dear Joe, which was dedicated to his former students and one teacher who died in that war. The Board of Education elected him as assistant superintendent in 1957. In December of that year, he became the superintendent and retained the position for seven years until Nashville City Schools and Davidson County Schools merged into Metro.

William Henry Oliver retired on one day in 1964 and went back to work the next, this time to become a college professor at Belmont College. He remained there until 1970, teaching in the English and Education Departments. In the fall of 1970, he joined the faculty at Free Will Baptist Bible College, teaching English and Education courses. He remains in that position at the present.

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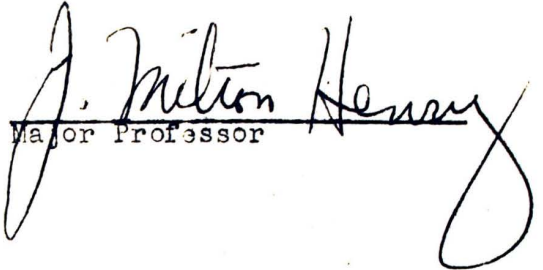
by

Ophelia Dale Edwards

August 1975

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Ophelia Dale Edwards entitled "William Henry Oliver: 'Founded upon a Rock'." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Social Studies.

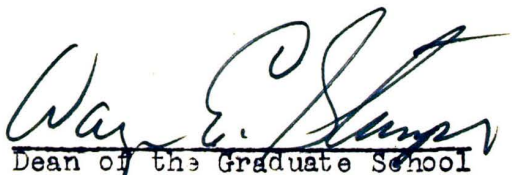

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:


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Dean of the Graduate School

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Chapter 1

THE FOUNDATION IS LAID (1903-1926)

William Henry Oliver was born on November 4, 1903, in Indian Mound, Tennessee. Indian Mound is a small village in Stewart County, about twelve miles from the county seat of Dover. His parents were James Harrison Oliver (Jimmy) and Frances Lavonia Hembree Oliver.¹ He was named William for his grandfather, William Harrison Oliver, and Henry for his uncle, Henry Oliver.²

James Harrison Oliver was born on April 6, 1882, near Cadiz, Kentucky. His parents were William Harrison Oliver and Susan Litchfield Oliver. They moved to Tennessee when James was about two years old. J. H. Oliver's father was a very versatile person - a carpenter, a timberman, a farmer, and even a writer of poetry. His mother was a homemaker who was especially fond of flowers. This couple had eleven children, ten of whom lived to reach adulthood. They were very devout Christians. Like most Southerners after the Civil War, they were poor, hard-working people. The Olivers are buried in

¹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

²Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

the Hayes Cemetery, near the Montgomery-Stewart County line in Stewart County.

Frances Lavonia Hembree was born on October 23, 1884, near Liberty, Tennessee. She was the youngest of six children born to David Anderson Hembree and Ephelda Hembree. She was really just a little mountain girl. She knew the old ballads and most of the wild flowers, which she loved very much. Her parents moved from East Tennessee to Middle Tennessee when she was about thirteen years old. They lived in the Montgomery and Stewart County areas. Her parents were also devout Christians with some musical ability. Her father was a Civil War veteran, probably on the side of the North, since he was an East Tennessean. This family was of the pioneer type. The Hembrees had lived in Missouri for a time, which was then rather wild. The Hembrees are buried in the Moreland Graveyard, an old Cherokee graveyard, near Indian Mound. No one is buried there except the Morelands and William Henry Oliver's maternal grandparents.³

The children of James Harrison Oliver and Frances Lavonia Hembree Oliver were seven. William Henry was the firstborn. John Anderson Oliver was born on May 12, 1906. He presently resides in Nashville, Tennessee, after giving many years to education in that city. Dovie Frances Oliver was

³ William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

born on March 1, 1908.⁴ She died with whooping cough.⁵ She lived just over a month, dying on April 8, 1908. James Herschel Oliver was born on November 18, 1910. He now lives on a farm in Robertson County near Springfield, Tennessee. Myrtle Mae Oliver, now Mrs. Eddis Stanley, was born on August 27, 1914. She and her husband live in the Sango Community near Clarksville, Tennessee. Bessie Pearl Oliver, now Mrs. Henry Bates Miller, was born on February 1, 1917. She now resides in Nashville, Tennessee. Ruby Bernice Oliver was the youngest, born on December 23, 1919. She died from an accidental rifle wound.

The Olivers lived in a house owned by Dr. J. B. Lahiff when William Henry was born. The house was near the present site of A. C. Moore's home. Shortly thereafter, they moved to a house on the T. W. Seay farm near Indian Mound. It was here that their second son, John, was born.

Little Henry's first memory dates back to about the time of John's birth. He remembers seeing a cow jump over a paling fence to get to her young calf. Included in his early memories are those of his first school days. The Olivers were living near Dick's Fork, which was up the hollow from what is now the Indian Mound United Methodist Church. He

⁴Ibid.

⁵Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

started to school at Indian Mound in 1909 in a building which is now the Masonic Hall. James Harrison Oliver was proud of his oldest son as he took him to school that first day. He did not accompany him later, but he usually sent his son in the care of one of the neighbors. Hayden McGregor was a faithful companion to little Henry. Later, Hayden's younger sister, Clarice, also accompanied Henry to school. For a time, the Olivers lived on the Wilson Farm near the Rories. The Rorie children and William Daley proved to be friends who could watch out for Henry. Those were the days of the one-room school when one walked to school with no concern about busing.⁶ William Henry's first teacher was a Mrs. Fonnice (Sally) Spiceland. Indian Mound had two teachers that year. Mr. and Mrs. Fonnice Spiceland both taught and he was the principal. That first year there was not a seat of his own for little Henry. Little first graders sat with the big girls way back in the room. When Henry tried to be creative by drawing, his teacher thought he was wasting time. That was before the day when teachers looked for creative children. Even in those days there was "individualized instruction." During this time, each student was at work on his studies while the teacher went around the room to help any individual who needed it. Henry remembers one day when

⁶Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

this was in progress. All was quiet. Henry had to sneeze and, as was his custom, he said "Scat" afterwards. Fortunately, no disciplinary action was taken on this little fellow who had disturbed the quiet of an individualized learning center.⁷ Thus began what was to be the polestar, the consuming interest of William Henry Oliver - education.

The years of 1910 and 1911 were filled with events that would stand out in the mind of William Henry Oliver for years to come. Herschel was born in 1910 while the Olivers were still living on the Wilson Farm. Sometime during the year, they moved to the Flem Smith Place which was a little closer to Indian Mound. Henry was now all of seven years old.⁸ The house on the Smith Place had running water on the back porch. It was piped in from a spring which was located a short distance up a hollow from the house. This was of real interest, for Henry had never seen anything like it previously. It was during 1911 that Henry began that great sport of fishing. He could always make hooks out of straight pins and look forward to using real fishing hooks when his uncle, Bill Hembree, came. On his walk to school, Henry had to cross Dick's Fork Creek twice. The oldtimers said it was ten degrees below zero that winter. Little Henry slipped

⁷Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

and fell into the icy waters of the creek. Half-frozen and crying, he finally reached the school. Some of the big girls rubbed snow on his hands, as this was the remedy prescribed to keep cold hands from hurting. It would take more than this to keep William Henry Oliver from school, although he had thoughts of going home that day. School was out for the year at Christmas time. Henry and his friends and relatives enjoyed firecrackers that Christmas. Henry would have liked to have continued his education for more than the five months term. There was a subscription school with tuition of one dollar per month. James Harrison Oliver would have liked for Henry to have taken this work also. However, there was one hindrance. He did not have the dollar.⁹ Thus, Henry, along with most of the children in the community, put school aside until the next fall.

James Harrison Oliver had been a sharecropper, a preacher, and had made cross ties. He now decided to invest in some farming equipment of his own and to rent a farm. Thus, he and his family rented and moved to the Cherry Farm in Cherry Hollow. This was later known as the Lewis Farm. It is today the home of Everette Grizzard and is located between Red Top on Highway Seventy-nine and the village of Indian Mound. Henry's father bought some mules and the

⁹Ibid.

necessary farm implements. He rented about one hundred and fifty acres of land for one hundred and fifty dollars a year. The Olivers remained in this place for three years. James Harrison's parents and two of his brothers, Alfred and Porter, lived on the place, too. Eventually, still another brother, Billy, came to the Cherry Farm. He died with tuberculosis, leaving six children for his parents to lead to maturity. Those were three dry years and money was tight. Hard worker though he was, J. H. Oliver could not get ahead on his rented farm.

The Olivers were as close to the McGregor School now as they were to Indian Mound. Having no school zoning laws, they chose to attend McGregor.¹⁰ The school building was a fairly new, one-room school then. It had been named for Manson McGregor, a leader in the community. He was a member of the school board who wanted a good school in his community. The building also served as a meeting house for a Sunday School on the first day of the week. The school was in a wooded area. The McGregor School burned many years ago, but the old cistern is still located on the site. As one goes from Indian Mound toward Red Top, one may turn right about one-half mile past the Cross Creek Baptist Church. One will come within a half mile of the old school site. No road leads

¹⁰ Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

to the actual site on the hill. Those people who once attended McGregor can still spot those trees they climbed.¹¹ Is that really the hum of recitation? No, it is only memory's imagination of some sixty or more years ago.

No longer did Henry have to walk to school by himself. His brother, John, now accompanied him. Iron ore had been taken from pits in many parts of Stewart County. The Oliver boys went near several abandoned pits as they journeyed to McGregor School each day. Henry and John were calmly walking along one morning when they suddenly heard a frightening noise, apparently coming from one of those old pits. Was it a bear? Was it a wolf? The boys' hearts beat faster and faster! The nearest way to school lay right by where that noise originated. The two boys ran all the way home, never stopping to think that the noise could have been only a stray dog. What that noise was remains one of those childhood mysteries. It was enough to cause Henry and John to go back to Indian Mound to school on the well-beaten path.

Dogs have always been special to William Henry Oliver. It was on the Cherry Farm that he acquired his first very own dog at the age of nine. It was a little black shepherd puppy. Henry's stories, sermons, and lectures have always contained his beloved dog stories.¹²

¹¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

¹²Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

Ten years old and time for Henry to learn to plow came in 1913. The mules did not pay attention to Henry's "Whoa." He set about to find something that they would heed. The magic word proved to be "Wee." Thus, a small boy of ten could be seen plowing on the Cherry Farm using "Wee" as he commanded his mules to halt.

After three years on the Cherry Farm, moving day arrived for the Olivers again. This time it was a move to the Wright Moreland Property which was still near the present Cross Creek Baptist Church. The stay there was rather short. Henry's uncle Alfred Oliver's second marriage was to influence the Olivers' next move. Alfred married a widow, Mary Bryant, and they soon separated. Alfred continued to live on her farm, near Red Top, in Montgomery County. The J. H. Oliver Family moved there to farm. This land is now a part of the Fort Cambell Military Base. It was then near Clinard's Store.¹³

The year in Montgomery County contained some memorable events in the life of William Henry Oliver. Henry began shooting a gun there. Henry's father had bought a breech-loader from Bill Hembree for three dollars. Henry and John took turns shooting it when they went hunting. Of course, the boys needed a gun for each. They bought a muzzle-loader for one

¹³Ibid.

dollar.¹⁴ When Henry was not working on the farm, he worked for Tom Vaughan for a nickel an hour. In one day, he could make fifty cents with which he could buy a box of shells or a twenty-four pound bag of flour. These wages were greater than the pennies his father had paid him for catching tobacco worms. The year was not all work as Henry did go to school when the term began. This term found him in the Plain View School. The only thing recalled from that year was a yell the teacher taught. It went like this:

Re mo ri!
 Ke mo ki!
 Polly wants a zigzag!
 Polly wants a ki me!
 Sis boom bah!
 Plain View! Plain View!
 Rah! Rah! Rah!

The teacher's name has long since been forgotten.¹⁵

None of these events are the most important ones of Henry's twelfth year. It was during this year that he read the Bible through for the first time and also became a Christian. He was attending a revival that was being held in the blacksmith shop at Needmore. Needmore is on the Lylewood Road which runs from Highway Seventy-nine to the Cumberland River at the point of the ferry crossing to Cumberland City. It is in Montgomery County. Henry's father and Bill Hembree

¹⁴William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, September 21, 1974.

¹⁵Ibid.

were preaching that week. Henry says, "I think that Dad was preaching the night of my conversion."¹⁶ The Holy Spirit convicted young Henry that night, and he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. That same summer, he was baptized in nearby Blooming Grove Creek by his father. He then joined Dunbar's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church which had been dedicated in May of 1914. The church was full in those days with wagon loads of young people coming to the services. Henry recalled many times when he had to sit on the edge of the platform as all the pews were filled with adults.¹⁷

The Oliver Family came back to Stewart County after just a year in adjoining Montgomery County. It was a return to the Moreland Place and McGregor School. Miss Virgie Butts (later Mrs. Angers Seay), Miss Clarice Tucker, and Miss Hattie Wallace (later Mrs. Robertson) were three of the young ladies sent to McGregor to teach. McGregor was evidently considered one of the least desirable positions in the entire county. More than knowledge of subject matter and professional ability was needed by teachers at McGregor. The enrollment was approximately sixty students with as few as four coming on bad weather days. The teacher's salary was thirty dollars a month, and it took ten dollars of this

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("One Great Gathering") at Dunbar's Chapel (Indian Mound, Tennessee), July 28, 1974.

amount for room and board. Miss Butts received a raise, bringing her salary to thirty-two dollars. One must certainly say, "Hats off to those girls who taught there."¹⁸ One year, they had to try out three teachers before they found the one who would stay at McGregor.¹⁹

The students at McGregor hardly lacked amusement. The students enjoyed such games as "Two-Eyed Cat" and "Fox in the Morning, Goose in the Evening." Their most enjoyable sport, however, was that of catching mice. Timber had been cut around the school building, and stumps abounded on the grounds. Mice could usually be found between the outer and inner layers of bark. Yes, the boys were known to bring mice inside to amuse the young ladies. A pond near the school was surrounded by cattails. There was nothing like blowing cattails into the air. The boys also visited a cave down on the bluff. Henry and Pete Terrell wandered off to this cave on one occasion. Pete got scared because he thought a bear might appear on the scene. The cave expedition was halted.²⁰

William Henry Oliver took his first trip to Dover, the county seat, at the age of twelve. His uncle, Frank Hembree, was preaching at a revival being held in the McGregor School. Some of the rowdy boys in the community

¹⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

¹⁹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

²⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

became angry when Brother Hembree called attention to their misconduct during the service. These fellows took revenge by assaulting the minister on his way home. As Henry heard the shots and was near the scene, he was called as a witness when the case was tried in court.

It is rather difficult for one to imagine what Indian Mound looked like some fifty to sixty years ago. Its one real street was lined with businesses then - not houses as it is now. There were some four or five stores there, plus the grist mill. This mill was owned and operated by "Fur" Vaughan. Henry Oliver took corn there many times. Mr. Vaughan would have Henry pour water in the engine so that he could get the mill started. Henry could make five cents this way, and he considered that reason enough to be the first one at the mill.²¹

The Olivers lived on what was then known as Harrison Hill for about a year. It was later the site of Jack Ford's home and is today the site of the Bob Lewis home. It was there that Henry Oliver got his dog, Keno. He described this dog simply as a wonderful dog. This was about the time of Henry's seventh or eighth grade year, and Keno was to live until about the time of Henry's college graduation. Among the teachers at Indian Mound in those years were Flossie

²¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

Wolfe, a Miss Gunson, and Grace Coppedge.

William Henry Oliver next moved with his family to the Charlie Blane Place. It was about one-fourth of a mile from Indian Mound. The family lived there about a year. It was here that Henry's youngest sister, Ruby, was born in the middle of the night on December 23, 1919. Henry was now sixteen and old enough to go for the doctor. He rode his mule as fast as possible to get Dr. C. N. Keatts, who lived up Dick's Fork. Dr. Keatts had one of the first automobiles in the area. Thus, he arrived at the Oliver home before Henry got back.²²

In December of 1919, Henry had finished the first half of the ninth grade at Indian Mound. The four members of that class were Elva Moore Atkins, Oscar Vaughan, Gilbert Stalls, and Henry Oliver.²³ Mrs. Eunice Coppedge was their teacher.

James Harrison Oliver was concerned about Henry's education. When school was out at Christmas, he decided it might be best for his eldest son to continue his high school education at Dover. Two former Indian Mound residents had moved to Dover since their marriages. They were daughters of Tom Seay, namely Lillian (Mrs. John Bruton) and Lora (Mrs. Harvey Bruton). William Henry Oliver was to board at Lillian's and attend Dover High School. On January 5, 1920,

²²Ibid.

²³William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, September 21, 1974.

he and his father walked to the Cumberland River and crossed at a ferry at what was then the Cross Creek Landing. It was approximately three miles from Indian Mound. By noon, they had reached the Long Creek Community. They had lunch with their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Wallace, and continued their journey to Dover, taking most of the afternoon. It had taken the better part of a day to go a distance which now takes fifteen or twenty minutes.

Having arrived at the Brutons, Henry saw the nicest house he had ever seen. It was a two story, white frame house that sat across the street from the Fort Donelson Methodist Church. The house is no longer standing, but the church is still there and in use. William Henry Oliver knew he could stay in school at least one month. He had sold a raccoon skin for four dollars and fifty cents and an opossum skin for two dollars and twenty-five cents to Angers Seay before leaving Indian Mound. He had purchased his first pair of long pants, other than overalls, for fifty cents from a cousin who had outgrown them. His father had done his part by selling a calf for eleven dollars. Thus, the ninety-nine pound, sixteen year old William Henry Oliver arrived in Dover to further his education.²⁴

Professor R. E. Gorham was the principal of Dover

²⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

High School.²⁵ The first day was certainly a new experience to Henry Oliver. The boys and girls lined up separately and marched into the school. The students were allowed an hour for lunch. As Henry started to the Brutons, he some way made a wrong turn, but he did find his way back to their home in time for lunch. Dover High School was then in the white frame building still standing and now in use by the B and M Furniture Store. Although Henry had purchased one pair of long pants, he wore them only that first day. He went back to his usual knee length pants and long stockings.

Henry Oliver's education did not terminate at the end of one month. When his father came to pay his room and board, the Brutons would not take anything. Henry worked around the house and in Bruton's Drug Store on Saturdays in return for his room and board. This establishment is still the only drug store in Dover and now operates as Bruton and Webb Drugs. Henry was treated as one of the family by the Brutons. During the summers, he worked in the drug store for twenty-five dollars a month plus his room and board. He also continued his studies in the summers to be able to finish high school in three years. Henry enjoyed his school work and always made good grades.²⁶

²⁵William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

²⁶Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

Henry Oliver attended both the Methodist and the Christian Churches while living in Dover.²⁷ He also attended prayer meeting on Thursday night at a mission with the Brutons. It was at one of these that he awoke to hear Mr. Bruton call on someone else to pray "because Henry's asleep." He did not attend any more as he was usually tired from studying and prone to fall asleep when he was still.²⁸

During his Senior year, William Henry Oliver was the chairman of the first Stewart County Historical Committee. John Trotwood Moore was chairman of the Tennessee State Historical Committee and notified Henry of his appointment. "You have been made chairman of your County Committee, the personnel of which is as follows: Prof. R. E. Gorham, W. C. Howell, Hon. N. A. Link, L. S. McElroy, J. T. Reynolds, Hon. Joe W. George, H. H. Bruton."²⁹ Senate Bill Number one hundred and sixty-four provided for such committees to collect county records "to be preserved forever for the inspection of future generations. . . ."³⁰ The Stewart County Historical Committee was actually organized on July 21, 1921. Mr. L. S. McElroy of

²⁷William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

²⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

²⁹John Trotwood Moore to William Henry Oliver, June 22, 1921, William Henry Oliver Collection, Nashville, Tennessee. Hereafter cited as the Oliver Collection.

³⁰
Ibid.

Dover was the secretary.³¹ This committee chose five sites to be marked in Stewart County for their historical significance. These were: Fort Donelson, Fort Henry, Forrest's Crossing, Grant's Headquarters, and the Gunboat Landing.³²

The Dover High School opened its doors in 1917. The first graduating class in 1921 had only four graduates. The faculty had four teachers through the twenties.³³ One teacher during those days was a Mr. Oakley Shelby.³⁴ In 1949, Dover High School became Stewart County High School when the facilities were moved to the brick structure still serving the youth of Stewart County.³⁵

Twelve graduates comprised the 1922 Class of Dover High School. They were: Emmie D. Joiner, Elva Moore, Helen Brandon, Lydia Brandon, George Brandon, "Judge" Brandon (uncertainty about his real name exists), Ezra Goforth, Rena Lancaster, Lewis Rumfelt, Corinne Marlow, Katie Lee Thompson, and William Henry Oliver. "We did not have a valedictorian,

³¹William Henry Oliver to John Trotwood Moore, July 21, 1921, Oliver Collection.

³²Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 14, 1974.

³³Dixie Parker Gorham, "History of Dover High School and Stewart County High School, 1917-1971" (Dover, Tennessee; Alumni Association, Stewart County High School, 1971). (Mimeographed.)

³⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

³⁵Gorham, op. cit.

and the students were not ranked. Unofficially, my rank was either one or two. . . . There was never any official averaging of grades."³⁶ Elected representatives then, as now, sent letters of congratulations to graduates. Joseph W. Byrnes, a Congressman from the Sixth District, received an announcement of the commencement exercises from Henry Oliver. He sent "a heart full of good wishes for you in your every undertaking. . . . " to Henry Oliver.³⁷

In the meantime, James Harrison Oliver had been continuing his own education. During 1921, he had attended school at Indian Mound. He then moved to Dover and graduated from the eighth grade in 1922, the same year his eldest son graduated from high school. He took the teacher's exam at that time, passed, and received a teacher's certificate. J. H. Oliver contacted the superintendent of schools in Montgomery County, A. W. Jobe. He secured a position at the Briarwood School.³⁸ Thus, the Oliver Family moved from Stewart County back to Montgomery County in the fall of 1922. They lived slightly up the Cumberland River from Clarksville, as it was then. The large brick house they occupied was on a bluff very near where the south end of Cunningham Bridge is now. The

³⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

³⁷Joseph W. Byrnes to William Henry Oliver, May 17, 1922, Oliver Collection.

³⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

bridge was in the process of being built at that time.³⁹

James Harrison Oliver next proceeded to enroll his son, Henry, at Southwestern Presbyterian University in Clarksville. Austin Peay State University is now on the same campus. Dr. Charles Diehl was the President of the college. J. H. Oliver inquired as to any special instructions Dr. Diehl might have for Henry. His reply was to urge him to wear long pants. Now, here was a young man who had graduated from high school in knee length pants, part of a suit the Brutons had so graciously given him. Thus, J. H. Oliver bought his son a new suit with the required long pants so that his son might enter college appropriately dressed.⁴⁰ What a contrast to present day dress codes on most college campuses!

Henry Oliver entered college in the fall of 1922 and lived with his family. He returned to Dover to work in the drug store for the summer of 1923. One account is given of a boat ride from Clarksville to Dover. "I left Clarksville yesterday about 12:00 o'clock, and reached Dover about 6 p.m. . . . I had a big time coming down on the boat. I steered the boat myself. . . . I got off at Lock C and stayed a little while."⁴¹ During the summer, Henry was the superintendent of the Sunday School at the First Christian Church. It was here

³⁹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, September 21, 1974.

⁴⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

⁴¹William Henry Oliver to Herschel Oliver, June 20, 1923, Oliver Collection.

that he preached his first sermon. In appreciation of his work, the people gave him a pair of gold initialed cuff links at the end of the summer.

Time came for Henry's return to college. His father was teaching at Shady Grove and had moved to that community. Henry and his brother, John, lived in the house the family had occupied the year before. John was attending Clarksville High School. The boys had only one bike between them. Thus, one left early enough to reach his destination by walking. The other washed the dishes, cleaned the house, and rode the bike into town. John was walking down beside the railroad track one day when he fell on the track and was struck by an oncoming train. This ended the boys "batching." They moved into Clarksville with Aunt Eliza Daley.⁴²

William Henry Oliver was in need of financial assistance if he were to continue his education. "The Free Will Baptist Educational-Orphanage Campaign of Tennessee" was able to loan him some money. J. L. Welch was the President of this organization, G. W. Fambrough its Secretary-Treasurer, and W. B. Davenport its Financial Agent. The Board of Education consisted of J. L. Welch, J. E. Hudgens, G. W. Fambrough, J. H. Oliver, and G. T. Harris. On September 8, 1923, Henry received one hundred dollars from this organization. He also

⁴²Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

received these words of admonition from Brother Fambrough. "All a boy has to do is to get the will power and push his case. It all is worth the price. Set your mark high and go to it."⁴³ On November 27, 1923, the Educational-Orphanage Campaign sent Henry another check in the amount of one hundred and fifty dollars.⁴⁴ The next time Henry requested money, there was none available. Brother Fambrough said he was sorry to say that they had no money for students:

We have been collecting both the Educational and Orphanage funds together, and have been keeping the funds together and several have been subscribing and paying exclusively to the Orphanage funds and a few days ago the Ladies Aid called for their part of the funds and it nearly left us blank for the present.⁴⁵

William Henry Oliver had seemingly reached an impossible hurdle.

Henry Oliver took his finals at the end of the first semester thinking that he would soon be leaving college. Upon his completion of high school, he had received a teacher's certificate in both English and Latin. The time had come for him to use it, or so he thought. No money was available for that second semester's tuition.⁴⁶ "I was trying to prepare myself to teach ministers and other church workers at

⁴³ G. W. Fambrough to William Henry Oliver, September 8, 1923, Oliver Collection.

⁴⁴ Ibid., November 27, 1923, Oliver Collection.

⁴⁵ Ibid., December 20, 1923, Oliver Collection.

⁴⁶ Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

our F. W. B. college, Eureka, at Ayden, N. C."⁴⁷ God knew that was Henry's goal. In the mail, he received a check for one hundred dollars from G. W. Fambrough, who did not know how badly Henry needed the money. This was a gift - not a loan.⁴⁸ Henry's education was not to be interrupted.

On March 14, 1924, G. W. Fambrough sent Henry twenty-five dollars, another loan from the Educational-Orphanage fund. This letter was written on his stationery. He was a dealer in "general merchandise, garden and field seeds."⁴⁹ Seven days later, he mailed Henry thirty-five dollars to buy a new suit. Apparently, this was a gift. He thought the young minister would be going out among the people and "If you go out before our people they will expect you to be neatly dressed."⁵⁰

Henry's parents would have liked to have been able to have helped their son financially:

Son it makes us both feel sad to know that you need money and we are not able to give it you, but I think there will be some way prepared for us if we do our part and put our trust in the Lord. . . . Yes son I know that God will care for us and I know that he has cared for us through the past and I believe he will continue to care for us if we will only trust him.⁵¹

⁴⁷William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹G. W. Fambrough to William Henry Oliver, March 14, 1924, Oliver Collection.

⁵⁰Ibid., March 21, 1924, Oliver Collection.

⁵¹Mrs. J. H. Oliver to William Henry Oliver, March 12, 1924, Oliver Collection.

Is there any better way to show that the Olivers gave Henry something more vital than money? Trust in the Lord was to see him through life's rough spots long after those godly parents had gone to be with the Lord.

William Henry Oliver went to Dover for the graduation exercises in 1924. He was the only graduate of Dover High School in college at that time. Professor Gorham asked him to speak to the graduates and to present the diplomas. In the audience sat "Grandma Bruton" listening proudly as Henry spoke. At her side, one of Henry's favorite dogs, Ole John Craig, also heard that familiar voice. The dog ran and leaped onto the stage to greet a friend come home. It took some effort to remove the dog and to continue with the proceedings.

At the end of his second year in college, William Henry Oliver received an appointment to West Point from Joseph W. Byrnes.⁵² Immediately, the mail began bringing to him letters from various preparatory schools seeking to get him to enroll so that he would pass the entrance exam. Among these were: the National Preparatory Academy, Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York; Marion Institute, Marion, Alabama; and the U. S. Hall West Point-Annapolis Coaching School, Columbia, Missouri. The latter seemed to exert the most outstanding means of persuasion. Included in the material mailed to

⁵²Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

Henry Oliver were letters from U. Sebree, Rear Admiral U. S. Navy, E. H. Crowder, Judge Advocate General of the War Department, and John J. Pershing, Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces. All of these, of course, praised U. S. Hall for the excellent work he was doing as President of the Coaching School.⁵³ All these efforts were in vain, however, as Henry Oliver did not accept his appointment to West Point. Henry was preparing for the work he felt God had for him to do. He saw no point in his going to West Point. Robert C. Davis, Major General, the Adjutant General, sent Henry Oliver a letter:

The receipt of your letter of November 5, declining appointment as a candidate for the Military Academy at West Point is acknowledged. Accordingly, your conditional appointment as principal candidate from the sixth Congressional district of Tennessee has been cancelled on the records of the Department.⁵⁴

William Henry Oliver spent the summer of 1924 in evangelistic work. He was also the President of the State Convention of the Free Will Baptist League.⁵⁵ During his last two years of college, he served as the first pastor of the East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church. These are simply mentioned here for the sake of chronology. The details are to be found in a later chapter.

⁵³U. S. Hall to William Henry Oliver, September 22, 1924, Oliver Collection.

⁵⁴Robert C. Davis to William Henry Oliver, November 11, 1924, Oliver Collection.

⁵⁵Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

The 1924-1925 term was Henry Oliver's last at Southwestern Presbyterian University. He attended George Peabody College during the summer of 1925 because Vanderbilt would not give him credit for the two years of Bible he had taken at Southwestern.⁵⁶ In the fall, he went to Vanderbilt. He lived with Mrs. Fannie Polston, a leader of the East Nashville Church, at 318 Woodland Street for a time. He lived in Kissam Hall at Vanderbilt about half of his Senior year.⁵⁷ He was graduated from Vanderbilt in the spring of 1926. He had triple majors: namely in Latin, Greek, and English, plus education courses which constituted essentially another major. His rank in his class was not especially high as he was pastoring the East Nashville Church. "This affected my grades in college. I have never regretted this, however. The work at East Nashville was important."⁵⁸

⁵⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

⁵⁷Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 14, 1974.

⁵⁸William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

Chapter 2

BEGINNING TO BUILD 1926-1930

William Henry Oliver spent the summer of 1926 in evangelistic work. Another chapter will provide a sketch of those activities. Oliver also spent some time trying to find a teaching position for the fall. Among others, the Battle-ground Academy in Franklin, Tennessee, Trevecca College in Nashville, and various public schools were considered.

The fall of 1926 found Henry Oliver teaching English and Latin at the Jere Baxter High School in the Inglewood section of Nashville. His salary for that year was one hundred and thirty dollars a month. In addition to his teaching duties, he coached the girls in basketball and the boys in football and baseball.¹ His comment on his first day as a teacher holds a sober thought. "Today I began my career as a school teacher. I am reminded of . . . 'Today we launch. Where shall we anchor?'"² During this year, Henry was again living with his brother, John. They lived in a dormitory at

¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

²William Henry Oliver to Ethel Walker, September 1, 1926, Oliver Collection.

Trevecca where John was a student.³

The spring of 1927 witnessed Henry receiving a letter from R. B. Spencer, President of Eureka College in Ayden, North Carolina. This brought an offer to coach and teach Latin and Greek there for the next term. The offer was accepted.⁴ Oliver was to attend George Peabody College during the summer before moving to Ayden.⁵ This work was his first attempt at graduate education. He dropped out of school before the summer ended to do evangelistic work. He did not finish or get credit for any of the courses in which he was enrolled.⁶

It is necessary to give a thumbnail sketch of Eureka College in Ayden, North Carolina. A Free Will Baptist Seminary was founded in 1896 with its first building completed in 1898. A College campaign was begun by Free Will Baptists in 1920. Eureka College was founded on September 8, 1925 and the buildings occupied on the same date. The purpose of the school was to offer orthodox instruction in line with the Bible for ministers, missionaries, Sunday School Superintendents and teachers, and those intending to engage in church

³Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 14, 1974.

⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

⁵Sunday School Department, The Free Will Baptist, XL (June 15, 1927), 12.

⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, October 24, 1974.

auxiliary work. Other denominations were cordially invited to send students to Eureka. Eureka maintained a standard high school and a two year college program offering courses in Bible, church history, doctrine, and missions. Other courses related to church work were offered.⁷

"Rev. William Henry Oliver of Nashville, Tennessee will teach science and coach athletics."⁸ What had happened to his offer to teach Greek and Latin? Not enough students were interested in Greek for it to be offered. He did not teach Latin because it became necessary for him to take the math and English classes. He did coach boys' and girls' basketball and boys' football. Mr. Oliver also directed a music group and taught "Rudiments of Music" in the evenings. He did not feel well qualified for this, but he had done a little work like this for Mrs. Eva Thompson Jones, his voice teacher in Nashville, on radio station WDAD. "I guess my teaching was better than nothing."⁹ Eureka paid Mr. Oliver one hundred and fifty dollars a month for his services. Though the work proved to be neither what the first offer was nor what it was published to be, young Oliver knew Eureka was where the Lord wanted him in the fall of 1927. This was the end toward which he had prepared himself. A dream was now

⁷"Eureka College," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (August 8, 1928), 10.

⁸"Eureka College News," The Free Will Baptist, XL (August 24, 1927), 6.

⁹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, October 24, 1974.

realized.¹⁰

When one goes to a new place, first opinions of that place are of interest. Henry wrote home and said that Eureka was not much school, in a way, but he gave ample hope that it would become a great one. There were about sixty-nine students and eight teachers. The Administration building was good enough for "Peabody or Vanderbilt, far better than anything at S. P. U." The work done was good. The foremost point though was the place young Oliver thought Eureka should take in the Free Will Baptist denomination.

If the FWB denomination fails to support Eureka, . . . I think that the entire church should be absorbed by other churches. . . . It seems that this is the time God has planned for a nationwide FWB awakening. If we fail to wake now, we ought to sleep forever.¹¹

This chapter will finish the story of Eureka, but not of the Free Will Baptist denomination. Nearly a half century later, Oliver was to again find himself writing on education and this denomination.

Henry's duties in North Carolina were to include more than just his work at Eureka. For the school year, he was to have "some church work convenient to Ayden." President Spencer found it gratifying to find a young man who was willing

¹⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, Personal interview, July 5, 1974.

¹¹William Henry Oliver to Rev. J. H. Oliver, September 13, 1927, Oliver Collection.

"to serve in a double capacity."¹² Rev. Oliver preached at the North Carolina State Convention on "Christian Duty" based on Christ's words to Peter, "Feed My Sheep." It was at that same convention that President Spencer gave a forceful address telling about what Eureka College really was.¹³ On at least one occasion, Professor Oliver went to Kinston to¹⁴ preach. In the spring of 1928, his duties involved using his music ability. The Woman's Auxiliary Convention of the Central Conference met on March 28, 1928 at Spring Branch in Greene County, North Carolina. The special music was "directed by Rev. W. H. Oliver of Eureka College."¹⁵ He also wrote for the denominational paper, The Free Will Baptist, as he was the reporter for the college.¹⁶ Henry was a member of the Eureka College male quartet. They sang at many churches in Eastern North Carolina. A highlight for them was their performance at a Billy Sunday Revival in the spring of 1928. The other members of the quartet were R. E. Tripp (North Carolina), J. R. Davidson (Georgia), and I. J. Blackwelder (Florida).¹⁷

¹²R. B. Spencer, "Eureka College," The Free Will Baptist, XL (August 31, 1927), 4.

¹³"The Recent State Convention," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (September 21, 1927), 8.

¹⁴College Reporter, "Eureka," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (October 5, 1927), 11.

¹⁵"Auxiliary Convention of the Central Conference," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (March 7, 1928), 10.

¹⁶William Henry Oliver to Rev. J. L. Welch, October 11, 1927, Oliver Collection.

¹⁷William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, February 23, 1975.

Rev. Oliver was active in promoting Eureka not only in North Carolina but in his home state as well. He was elated when his church in East Nashville was among the first to respond to a request for supplies for Eureka. "September 19 the express agent here at Ayden announced that a large box had made a successful journey all the way from Nashville . . ."¹⁸ Rev. Oliver was present at the Cumberland Association's Ministers Conference on December 28, 1927. This was held at Cofer's Chapel in Nashville and Rev. J. L. Welch was its chairman. Rev. Oliver is reported to have made an interesting talk there.¹⁹ Professor Oliver and D. B. Sasser left for Tennessee on February 10, 1928. They arrived in Nashville the next night. They visited several rural churches in their "four day drive for Eureka." Among these were Bethel, Brandon's Chapel, Mt. Zion, Oakwood, Rock Springs, and Shady Grove. The name of G. W. Fambrough appeared in the list of contributors to the college. The total cash received during the drive was two hundred and twenty-two dollars.²⁰ In the spring, the Bethlehem Ladies Aid in Cheatham County was to send food to Eureka. The Heads Church in Robertson County

¹⁸"Eureka," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (September 28, 1927), 9.

¹⁹"Cumberland, Tenn., Association Ministers Conference," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (January 18, 1928), 5.

²⁰D. B. Sasser, "Our Tennessee Trip," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (March 14, 1928), 13.

also sent food, "including a ham of meat."²¹ And is it little wonder that a Tennessean delivered the baccalaureate address at Eureka? Rev. J. L. Welch was to speak at this function on May 27, 1928. "Rev. Welch . . . has been secured as speaker . . . and those who know Mr. Welch can assure you that his message will be inspiring and uplifting indeed."²² Graduation came and with it the end of the 1927-1928 term at Eureka.

It appears from what has been written thus far that William Henry Oliver was completely absorbed in his school and church work with no time to think of love. This is hardly the case. It is true that he once wrote "I seem to be looking . . ., not for love, but for a life of service."²³ He was putting God first and trusting Him to take care of the details. He knew that if it was God's will for him to love and marry that God would supply the right one. He corresponded with and dated many girls over the years. He still states that no one could have asked for a nicer group of girl friends than he had, Then, there came the one who took the "place of all of them and then some."²⁴

Henry Oliver met Pauline McCall at Heads Church in

²¹William Henry Oliver, "Eureka," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (May 2, 1928), 7.

²²William Henry Oliver, "Commencement Notice!," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (May 9, 1928), 7.

²³William Henry Oliver to Catherine Trotter, April 29, 1926, Oliver Collection.

²⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, November 29, 1974.

the summer of 1926 when he was conducting a revival there. She was visiting country cousins. As he approached the church for the eleven o'clock service one day, he heard someone playing the piano. The music was far superior to what he had been hearing there. Upon entering the building the two were introduced. There was, however, no romance for several months. John dated her for a while before Henry did.²⁵

Pauline was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Bruce McCall. Mr. McCall was a victim of the flu epidemic of 1918. The McCalls were among the original settlers of Smith County. They were professional people, people with more than ordinary culture and refinement. Mrs. McCall was the former Mattie Haynes. The Haynes Family were builders of roads, engineers, and construction workers who had little interest in formal education.²⁶

Pauline graduated at the head of her class of about four hundred at Hume-Fogg in 1927. She took a business and secretarial course at Fall's Business College, finishing with high honors and a teacher's certificate. She was very talented in music, especially in piano and organ.²⁷

"Dad, Pauline and I are planning to be married next June, if I can get your consent and Mother's. . . . I love

²⁵William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, October 24, 1974.

²⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

²⁷William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

Pauline, -- I'm willing to stake my life on the proposition-- and I want her with me."²⁸ Thus, the first plans for a wedding were revealed.

The sunrise of May 22, 1928 was to shed its glow on the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Oliver. Henry and Pauline were married at her home in a "sunrise wedding" ceremony performed about six o'clock by his father. Only a few close friends attended. Mrs. Eva Thompson Jones and Mr. Joe Carnbron sang, accompanied by Miss Amanda Cunn. The couple left immediately for North Carolina. One of Pauline's friends took them to Murfreesboro. They met Rev. J. L. Welch there and these three plus Herschel Oliver made their way to Ayden. Of Pauline, Henry says, "What a girl! What she gave up to become my wife! We really went through some rough times together, but she never complained. She loved me."²⁹

The Olivers were in Ayden for the graduation exercises at Eureka. In an account of "Commencement at Eureka" we find, ". . . there is Prof. and Rev. W. H. Oliver, . . . He has since his stay with us this year won the hearts, not only of our own people, but the entire community . . . He is a worker, . . . interested in the cause of the Master and

²⁸William Henry Oliver to Rev. J. H. Oliver, October 26, 1927, Oliver Collection.

²⁹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, October 24, 1974.

yet free from ostentation. He wins by his humble Christian walk."³⁰

Henry and Pauline spent the summer of 1928 in North Carolina. He did some evangelistic work, mostly by using his music for God's glory. He also hauled barnwood in a Reo speedwagon at twenty-five cents per hour. He worked for a time as a carpenter's helper for Mr. E. W. Braxton at the same wages. Thus, the summer of 1928 rolled along.³¹

Printed material listed William Henry Oliver as the principal of the High School and Instructor in mathematics for the opening of Eureka in the fall of 1928.³² He found himself living in his third home since arriving in Ayden. He had lived in the boys' dormitory the previous year. He and Pauline had a room with Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Braxton for a time. The third home was a furnished house in Ayden which he rented. Mrs. McCall, Pauline's Mother, came to live with the Olivers. She took charge of the food program at Eureka at the beginning of the fall term.³³ Professor Oliver continued duties other than those at Eureka during this term also. This is evidenced by a report of the Union Meeting of 1928. "W. H.

³⁰"Commencement at Eureka," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (June 6, 1928), 9.

³¹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, February 23, 1975.

³²"Eureka College," The Free Will Baptist, loc. cit.

³³William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, October 24, 1974.

Oliver, Director of Vocal Union" is listed under "Election of Officers." He also sang in a quartet and rendered a "very impressive solo, 'The Lost Sheep'" at the same meeting.³⁴

Eureka sought for but never attained a secure financial base. The struggle for survival was a valiant one but it was destined for defeat.

Due to the lack of funds . . . the High School Department has been indefinitely suspended. The Bible Department, however, through the courtesy and favor of Rev. L. R. Ennis, will operate through the spring months without cost to the school. This is made possible by the unsalaried services of brother Ennis.³⁵

Various attempts were made to secure sufficient funds to prevent "indefinitely suspended" from becoming permanently closed. W. G. Asher solicited the support of the ministers. He was not a Free Will Baptist but a very "sympathetic outsider." He believed that if ministers had the work at heart that the people could be led in real giving to the Lord.³⁶ The women of the Little Rock Church of the Western Conference in North Carolina called the women to arms. "To our minds the loss of Eureka College means the death of our denomination.

³⁴"Union Meeting," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (December 5, 1928), 10-11.

³⁵"Eureka College High School Suspended," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (January 9, 1929), 12.

³⁶W. G. Asher, untitled article, The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (January 2, 1929), 4.

Can't we women save it?"³⁷ The sad answer coming from posterity was to be no. Eureka was permanently closed. The administration-classroom building later burned.³⁸ What was the boys' dormitory still stands in Ayden as a private residence with of course several changes. The curtain had come down on Eureka's role in the drama of a denomination. Was this to be the final act of the Free Will Baptists as several had predicted that the closing of Eureka would bring? Writing in 1971, William Henry Oliver said that the stream of Free Will Baptist education simply flowed underground when Eureka closed.³⁹ God, in His Providence, gave the Free Will Baptists another golden opportunity to flow as a mighty river. That opportunity continues as Christian young people are trained at Free Will Baptist Bible College and in turn go forth to make a mark for Christ in this age.

The closing of Eureka brought real disappointment to young Henry Oliver. Funds were not available to pay his salary. He took an old typewriter and a violin as partial compensation. These had been given to Eureka by a student as tuition because the student had no money. With these items, his wife, a heavy heart, and shattered dreams, Oliver

³⁷Mrs. Wiley Lamm and Mrs. E. F. Phillips, "A Call to the Women of the F. W. B. Denomination," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (February 13, 1929), 10.

³⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, August 6, 1974.

³⁹William Henry Oliver, "Flowing and Growing," Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin, March/April, 1971, p.1.

returned to Nashville, Tennessee. Forty-one years later he would again become a part of the main stream of Free Will Baptist education.

On December 10, 1929, Henry Oliver became a salesman for the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. He did not especially enjoy this work. He felt that he was persuading people to buy something they really did not want. Henry's health was not good; so he took his doctor's advice and quit the job to travel some. The travel came in a rather unusual way.⁴⁰ He sold candy, papers, magazines, and drinks to passengers on trains that traveled to such cities as Atlanta and St. Louis. Such a person was a newsboy, but on a train one was known as a news butch. The railway employees addressed one as "Butch." Henry saw a lot of interesting people and enjoyed the travel.

By the end of the summer, Henry Oliver was able to resume his work as a teacher, having secured a position in Cheatham County. He was the principal of Kingston Springs and also taught all seven high school classes. The school had five teachers and ten grades. Oliver's salary was one hundred and fifty dollars per month.⁴¹ Mr. Oliver boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Alton Mayes in this small town some twenty miles from

⁴⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

⁴¹William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

Nashville. Schools there had wonderful support from the citizenry. During the year, electric lights were installed in the school. Mr. Oliver coached both boys' and girls' basketball. The teams won most of their games, and the boys won the county championship trophy. Mr. Oliver enjoyed the year in Kingston Springs for personal reasons as well as for the accomplishments made at the school. "There were fields and forests and streams a plenty and I did a lot of hunting and hiking and rambling through fields and woods. Sometimes I hunted for Indian arrowheads in the fields."⁴² He regained his health completely which had been considerably impaired by disappointment, illness, and overwork. Pauline usually came for him on Friday afternoons, and he stayed in Nashville until Sunday afternoon.⁴³

⁴²William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, February 23, 1975.

⁴³Ibid.

Chapter 3

THE MARCH OF A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER 1923-

This chapter is an endeavor to recapture the experiences of William Henry Oliver as he went about as a minister. The time span extends from his first sermon in 1923 into the present. Being a Christian has permeated all areas of his life. For the purposes of this paper, though, it seems best to devote a separate chapter to his Christian service.

Henry Oliver preached his first sermon at the Christian Church in Dover, Tennessee during the summer of 1923. His first sermon at a Free Will Baptist church came in the fall of the same year at the Cumberland Association when convened at Brandon's Chapel in Bumpus Mills, Tennessee. The next few summers were to be devoted to evangelistic work.

His first revival in the summer of 1924 was at Emanuel's Chapel in Dickson County. W. T. Hagewood was the pastor of the church. A number of people were saved. Bro. Oliver's pay was good for the times; he was paid seven dollars for this revival. He was just a licensed minister, but this did

not affect his work for the rest of the summer.¹ The meeting at Heads closed July 26, after eight conversions and seven additions to the church. The next week found Bro. Oliver at Oaklawn in Cheatham County helping Bro. D. T. Armstrong in a meeting. It was from there that he went home to Clarksville for a week to be with his Dad in a revival at Shady Grove. Next, he was in a revival at Indian Mound. The Free Will Baptist Church there was across the road from the present Methodist Church. It no longer exists. He received five dollars from T. W. Seay, Jr. who was not a member of the church. This was a super-generous contribution for that day.² Beginning August 24 he was with Bro. W. B. Davenport at New Hope in Cheatham County.³ He went to Ashland City on a train and had to walk almost all the way to New Hope. The first night he used as his text Isaiah 53. There were about twenty decisions that night.

During this time Henry was serving as President of the State Convention of the Free Will Baptist League, the youth organization. It was through this work that he became acquainted with the Free Will Baptists in East Nashville. This group rented the upstairs of an Odd Fellows Hall at Twelfth and Woodland Streets on August 1, 1924. For the next

¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

²William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, March 13, 1975.

³William Henry Oliver to Fannie Polston, August 5, 1924, Oliver Collection.

two years Henry Oliver was their pastor. He was paid four dollars a week for his services. Since he still lived in Clarksville during the first of these years, he had to travel by train to Nashville each weekend. If he rode the Tennessee Central, he had fifteen or twenty cents left of his four dollars. If he took the Louisville and Nashville, the four dollars was not quite enough. He stayed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Polston at 318 Woodland Street on weekends. She was a leader in the East Nashville Church, and is usually known in Free Will Baptist history as Fannie Polston.⁴

A rather important month in Henry Oliver's life was October of 1924. At the Cumberland Association in session at Oaklawn he preached the introductory sermon, "Christianity's Conquering March," based on Acts 1:8. He was also re-elected as Clerk of the Association. He was ordained on October 24. The Annual Presbytery met at the end of the Association. Rev. D. T. Armstrong was elected Moderator and Rev. J. H. Oliver Clerk. The Ordaining Council consisted of Rev. J. E. Hudgens, Rev. A. D. Duncan, Rev. J. L. Welch, Rev. W. B. Davenport, and Bro. G. W. Fambrough. It was recommended that Brothers John W. Boyte and William Henry Oliver be ordained to the full work of the ministry. They were then ordained by praying and laying on of hands, after which there was a season of great

⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

rejoicing.⁵ In the same month the East Nashville Church was organized with eighteen members other than their pastor. The official organizing ceremony was on November 2, 1924 with Bro. Welch in charge. Here is a list of the original members; the asterisks indicate those deceased:

Mrs. O. C. Briley*	Mr. William D. Ray, Jr.
Mrs. Curtis Cantrell	Mrs. Alexine Black*
Mrs. Irene Polston Coville	Mrs. J. B. Smith
Mrs. Eva Drake*	Mrs. Joe Smith*
Mrs. Dona Layne*	Mrs. Ruth Stewart Edmundson
Mrs. Fannie Polston*	Mrs. Martha Stewart*
Mrs. J. P. Polston*	Mr. D. E. Teasley*
Miss Candis Puckett	Mrs. D. E. Teasley*
Mrs. Eva Ray*	Mr. Jess Wheeler* ⁶

There was an average attendance of forty-five for preaching.⁷

Mrs. Polston and Rev. J. L. Welch were perhaps Henry's dearest friends in Nashville at that time. He wrote home that his Nashville friends, especially Bro. Welch and Mrs. Polston, had been extra nice to him. He did not have any money, but Bro. Welch gave him all he needed. "His lessons, and his advice, too, are very valuable."⁸ Although Mr. Fred Polston was not a Christian or church member, he was also very good to Henry. One Saturday he bought him a pair of shoes, two

⁵Minutes of Cumberland Association of Free Will Baptists (Historical Collection, Moyer Library, Mt. Olive College, Mt. Olive, North Carolina. Also, Welch Library, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, Tennessee), October 22-24, 1924, 3-6, 16.

⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 24, 1974.

⁷Minutes of Cumberland Association, loc. cit.

⁸William Henry Oliver to Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Oliver, July 19, 1924, Oliver Collection.

shirts, a forty-five dollar suit, and a hat. On Sunday night he went to church for the first time in six years.⁹

It is to be remembered here that Henry moved to Nashville in June of 1925. He attended Peabody for the summer and enrolled at Vanderbilt in the fall where he remained until his graduation in 1926.

East Nashville had twenty-six members by the summer of 1925, but some of them seemed to have almost superhuman energy and zeal. In the month of May they had raised over two hundred and twenty-five dollars.¹⁰ It seemed, too, that the young pastor had almost superhuman strength and zeal. His prayer was to do God's will regardless and for a closer spiritual walk with God. Crowds were sometimes slim but God does not bless according to numbers. "Only 19 at church to-night, but the service was good. All Christians after the service seeking fuller consecration. Two at altar wishing to be reclaimed, one hand raised wishing conversion."¹¹

Henry Oliver worked with Bro. Welch that summer also. Bro. Welch was the pastor of the Cofer's Chapel Church in North Nashville. "I am conducting the singing for Bro. Welch's revival at Cofer's Chapel. There were about 6 conversions last

⁹Ibid., April 6, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁰William Henry Oliver to Alberta Tippit, June 8, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹¹William Henry Oliver to Catherine Trotter, June 9, 1925, Oliver Collection.

night."¹² This was only one of many times when these two soldiers of the cross would be found on the field together fighting God's battles. On July 15, 1925, Henry held prayer meeting at Cofer's Chapel although he had three exams the next day.¹³

Bro. Oliver was at Bumpus Mills in Stewart County in September of 1925 for a revival at Brandon's Chapel with Bro. D. T. Armstrong. The problems that an evangelist encounters weighed heavily at the time. He felt rather weak for the responsibilities he had to assume. "Please pray that God may help me to preach the way of salvation in such a way that the people will understand. There was only one profession last night although three more came forward for prayer."¹⁴ Later in the month Bro. Welch was in a revival at Ashland City. Henry went to direct the song services and to render special music each night.¹⁵ The Ku Klux Klan was represented by a delegation on Saturday night, clothed in their hoods and robes. At their request Henry sang one of their songs, "The Bright Fiery Cross."¹⁶

¹²William Henry Oliver to Rev. J. H. Oliver, June 17, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹³William Henry Oliver to Mrs. J. H. Oliver, July 15, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁴William Henry Oliver to Charlie Mai Swan, September 1, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁵William Henry Oliver to Alberta Tippit, September 21, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁶William Henry Oliver to Ethel Walker, October 4, 1925, Oliver Collection.

And what did they do for church social then? The League at East Nashville had a "possum hunt" on November 19, 1925. About forty people, including the pastor, seemed to have a good time. They caught one 'possum.¹⁷

Henry Oliver pastored at Bethel in Cheatham County from 1925-1927. He preached there only on the second Sunday of each month. The church address was Neptune, Tennessee, and was located about fifteen miles from Ashland City. Many times John Oliver filled his brother's pulpit at East Nashville on these Sundays.¹⁸

William Henry Oliver was actively engaged in evangelistic work again in the summer of 1926. In July he walked ten or twelve miles of the way to Oakwood Free Will Baptist near Cedar Hill, Tennessee.¹⁹ The next week found him at Dunbar's Chapel near Indian Mound. On August 4, he witnessed eight decisions for salvation. The home of Mr. and Mrs. John Summers, Sr. was his abode for these days.²⁰

The young minister did not just pastor and preach in other churches. He had a part in almost all of the Free Will Baptist work in his area and part of the state activities. The

¹⁷William Henry Oliver to Catherine Trotter, November 20, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁸William Henry Oliver to Ethel Walker, December 15, 1925, Oliver Collection.

¹⁹William Henry Oliver to Catherine Trotter, July 20, 1926, Oliver Collection.

²⁰William Henry Oliver to Alberta Tippit, August 5, 1926, Oliver Collection.

Tennessee State Convention of Sunday Schools met at Bethel on May 29, 1927. Bro. L. O. Burroughs was secretary of Sunday Schools and Bro. Oliver was elected recording secretary and treasurer.²¹ Some months later, he had published "Suggestive Notes for Sunday School Board, U. S. Conference." He listed twelve suggestions. Included were: (1) Unity in the work; (2) Pastors organize and encourage the Sunday School; (3) Gather information about every Free Will Baptist Sunday School possible; (4) Improve the literature used; (5) Train the teachers; (6) Build Sunday School rooms; (7) Promote the Sunday School by speeches and written articles in the Free Will Baptist.²² It is of note that some of these are currently being emphasized in the denomination.

The Seventh Annual Convention of the Ladies Aid Society met during the first week of August, 1927, at Rock Springs near Neptune, Tennessee. "A splendid address on Temperance" was given by William Henry Oliver on the first day.²³ This is cited as another example of his varied activities.

Never did the young man forget his Christian parents and the significant role they played in his life. Writing his

²¹G. W. Fambrough, "State Sunday School Convention of Tennessee," The Free Will Baptist, XL (June 15, 1927), 12.

²²William Henry Oliver, "Suggestive Notes for S. S. Board, U. S. Conference," The Free Will Baptist, XLIV (November 2, 1927), 14.

²³Mrs. W. D. Ray, "Annual Convention of Ladies Aid Society in Tenn.," The Free Will Baptist, XL (August 24, 1927), 11.

Mother, he said, "I know you wish you had a chance to do more. Well, whatever I do, a large share of the credit belongs to you and Dad."²⁴

Recall that Henry Oliver moved to Ayden, North Carolina in the fall of 1927. He resigned as pastor of Bethel Church to go to Eureka College. On October 9, 1927 he was elected without opposition as pastor of the Ayden Church. He was recommended by the pastoral board and favored by the former pastor. He felt it was a good opportunity as the people were most enthusiastic. The pay was about eight hundred dollars per year.²⁵ He attended the 1928 meeting of the General Conference of Free Will Baptists while convened in Ayden. Young Oliver served as chairman of the Education Committee and made a brief report to the meeting.²⁶ Henry Oliver's work in North Carolina has been thoroughly investigated in Chapter two. One remark made in those years remains to be quoted. It was on his twenty-fourth birthday and on that occasion he wrote to his grandfather, William Harrison Oliver, Sr.

You are 56 years older than I. The line of Christian service has been unbroken for 120 years, you say. If I can live to be 80 years old and can work from now until then, the line will have been unbroken for 176 years . . . I'm glad to do my part . . . God has been good to me . . . I want to serve Him to the best of

²⁴William Henry Oliver to Mrs. J. H. Oliver, March 20, 1926, Oliver Collection.

²⁵William Henry Oliver to Rev. J. H. Oliver, October 9, 1927, Oliver Collection.

²⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, May 1, 1975.

my ability. ²⁷

Upon returning to Tennessee he again became active in Free Will Baptist circles there. Attention now focuses on facts gleaned from those years.

It was in 1930 that the Cumberland Association voted unanimously to begin an institute to train Christian workers. It was their decision to meet at the East Nashville Church. J. L. Welch was its first director and William Henry Oliver was selected as his assistant.²⁸ A report of this institute appears in the minutes of 1931. The session, held in January, was not largely attended but hopefully some accomplishments were achieved. Courses studied included Homiletics, Sunday Schools, Leagues, Ladies Aid, Church Administration, Music, and Helps in English. The teachers were Mrs. J. E. Frazier, Rev. and Mrs. J. L. Welch, Mrs. Fred Polston, Mr. Burnett, Mr. Madison Waggoner, and Rev. Henry Oliver.²⁹

"On motion Rev. Henry Oliver was elected Supervisor of the quarterly meeting . . . On motion Rev. W. H. Oliver be reimbursed for his services."³⁰ Thus began Rev. Oliver's work

²⁷William Henry Oliver to Rev. W. H. Oliver, Sr., November 4, 1927, Oliver Collection.

²⁸Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 22-24, 1930, 4.

²⁹Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 14-16, 1931, 9.

³⁰Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 17-19, 1934, 7.

to organize the Cumberland Association's churches into districts for quarterly conferences. There was a called meeting on December 1, 1934 at Ashland City, Tennessee. Three districts were formed composed as follows:

Western Group: Brandon's Chapel, Dunbar's Chapel, Gorman, Pleasant Hill, Scott's Chapel, Union Hill.

Central Group: New Hope, Ashland City, Miller's Chapel, Bethel, Mt. Zion, Bethlehem, Oak Grove, Emanuel, Friendship Chapel, Oaklawn, Good Springs, Oakwood, Hage-wood Chapel, Olivet, Heads, Rock Springs, Shady Grove.

Eastern Group: Cofer's Chapel, Craigfield, East Nashville, 1st F. W. B. Church of Columbia, Fredonia, Mt. Pleasant, Oakland, Spring Hill, Starky's Chapel, West Nashville.

W. R. Carroll was elected chairman of the Western Group.

W. B. Davenport was elected chairman of the Central Group.

J. H. Oliver was elected chairman of the Eastern Group.³¹

This basically comprised the 1935 report of the supervisor.

Rev. Oliver was retained as the supervisor for the ensuing year at the 1936 meeting of the association. Included in the minutes that year is a report of his work. Quarterly meetings had been held regularly in all three districts, with a good response from the people. William Henry Oliver had personally visited fifteen of the association's approximately forty churches. Some of the recommendations made in the report resulted in practices still in existence in the association. For example the minutes should contain a tabulated report of the work of all the ministers. This would save space and give

³¹Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 16-18, 1935, 13.

a more complete record. The form to be used was also submitted. It is still being used. The statistical record at the end of this chapter was compiled from these forms. The recommendations were not relegated just to the local sphere, but reached out to encompass the entire denomination.

That this association . . . inform our National Board of Education and the Free Will Baptist Denomination at large as to . . . the attitude of the people of this vicinity . . . toward the selection of Nashville as a location for our national school.³²

The scope of Oliver's interest was shown in the report. He suggested that the association have a Supervisor of Music to promote better singing, that requirements for ordination be strictly adhered to, and that the Board of Education make plans for correspondence courses for the coming year.³³

At the same associational meeting a committee composed of Rev. W. B. Davenport, chairman, Bro. W. E. Coville, and Rev. William Henry Oliver was appointed to work to organize the Tennessee Free Will Baptist Convention.³⁴ It took time to lay the groundwork to accomplish this task. It was not until May 1, 1938 that it was organized and then convened as a body in September of that year. The first State Association met at the East Nashville Church with Henry Oliver present to represent his association. The State officers

³²Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 14-16, 1936, 10-11.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 6.

were as follows: George Dunbar, Moderator; J. L. Welch Assistant Moderator; William Henry Oliver, Secretary-Treasurer; G. W. Fambrough, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer. Rev. Oliver was also the chairman of the committee to revise the Constitution and bylaws of the said association. Revisions were made and accepted.³⁵ Henry Oliver served on the Tennessee Home Missions Board from 1939 until 1941.³⁶ In 1948 the State Association convened at New Hope. Rev. Oliver was present to render special music.³⁷ No other references were found of his state associational work.

It is here necessary to go back to Rev. Oliver's interest and connection with the establishing of the denomination's school in Nashville. He did not serve officially on any board or committee that had to do with the founding of this school, Free Will Baptist Bible College. His dear friends, Mrs. Polston and Rev. Welch, were the principal representatives of the Cumberland Association in connection with starting the school. Rev. Oliver was in close contact with them. These three talked about the school together, and they were in agreement with his thinking. All three felt that a new school was needed, primarily for the training of ministers.

³⁵Minutes of the Tennessee State Association, (Historical Collection, Moye Library, Mt. Olive College, Mt. Olive, North Carolina. Also, Welch Library, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, Tennessee), September 1, 1938.

³⁶Ibid., 1939-1941.

³⁷Ibid., 1948.

The school should serve the entire denomination and to do so, it should be centrally located. The city of Nashville was a central location, in a fairly good nest of Free Will Baptist churches, and was a center of schools, colleges, and libraries. When it came time to locate in Nashville, the West End property was priced right and was in a good community.

I think God has been leading . . . that He is still doing so and will continue to do so . . . We have many college-trained persons in our denomination; but, at the time plans were being made for our new school, I was about the only one . . . ³⁸

From the foregoing paragraphs is gathered a partial picture of Henry Oliver's faithfulness to his God, his churches, and his denomination. Faithfulness had certainly been a trait of the Olivers for years. In the "Obituaries" of the 1939 minutes it is stated that Rev. J. H. Oliver, Henry's father, had attended twenty-nine out of the last thirty associations. It is little wonder that "we never had a man that we missed more . . . than dear Brother Oliver . . ." ³⁹ J. H. Oliver had suffered a stroke and lived about three or four days afterwards. He was at that time pastoring Dunbar's Chapel in Stewart County. His son, Henry, was to faithfully pastor that country church for the next ten years, where both the crowds and the offerings were slim. ⁴⁰

³⁸William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, May 1, 1975.

³⁹Minutes of Cumberland Association, October 11-13, 1939, 8.

⁴⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

Even in the years when William Henry Oliver was in the full-time employ of a public school system, he was involved in church work. This is evidenced by the information above and the statistical report given at the close of this chapter. He took time to speak at the Commencement exercises of Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1957. The school was in its fifteenth year of operation in Nashville. Henry Oliver was then the principal of East Nashville High School with nearly thirty years of experience as an educator. He gave the graduation address on Thursday night, May 30.⁴¹

Henry Oliver has his share of stories to relate about incidents in his years of ministering to various congregations. There was the day he decided to preach a long sermon at Bethlehem Church. The crowd was accustomed to long sermons, and he did not wish to disappoint them. He had preached only twenty minutes according to his watch. He reviewed his sermon simply to learn that he had still spoken only twenty minutes. Yes, his watch had stopped. The moral of this story is "Stop when you're finished regardless of what your watch says."⁴²

There were difficulties that arose as he tried to fill his preaching appointments. He was provoked during World

⁴¹"Oliver and Miley Will Speak at Commencement Exercises," Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin, V (May, 1957), 3.

⁴²Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("One Great Gathering") at Dunbar's Chapel (Indian Mound, Tennessee), July 28, 1974.

War II because beer trucks could get gas when he could not. He was pastoring Dunbar's Chapel, about seventy-five miles from Nashville. He sometimes had to go on the train. Mr John Summers, Sr. usually met him, and then occasionally they had to use a canoe to cross the backwater. On other days they would get stuck in the mud on Hayes Ridge. Was such to stop the march of this soldier in God's Army? Assuredly, not. Not one appointment at Dunbar's Chapel was ever missed.⁴³

Retirement for some comes at age sixty-five or even earlier. Would one expect the usual from William Henry Oliver? Not exactly. He is not yet eighty, and he has not completed his part of the unbroken chain of 176 years that he wrote about to his grandfather in 1927. He has become the annual speaker for the Homecoming service at Dunbar's Chapel. In 1970 he spoke on the many changes that have occurred, but in 1971 he preached on "God Doesn't Change." In 1973 it was a sermon on "God's Judgment." "One Great Gathering" was his topic for 1974 with his text taken from Matthew 25:31-46.⁴⁴ Nor has his message changed in the last fifty years. His theme is still "Jesus Saves," and he does not fail to call sinners to repentance. Surely, this man is a continuing blessing to all with whom he comes into contact.

⁴³Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

⁴⁴"One Great Gathering," loc. cit.

As a conclusion to this chapter, the author has compiled a statistical record of a portion of the last fifty years of the minister's work. This record plus the written record above can give at best a glimpse of the life and work of this man of God. Only eternity shall reveal what God has wrought through the life of this soldier marching under the banner of the cross.

Sermons Preached	Prayer Meetings Conducted	Funerals Conducted	Marriages Performed	Special Services Held	Revivals Conducted	Revivals Assisted In	Conversions Witnesses	Received Into Church	Baptisms Witnesses	Homes Visited	Miles Traveled	Received From Church	Received From Other Sources
125	15					10	140						
108	9		3			6	36	8		20	500	\$196.00	\$ 20.00
87	4	1	1		1	7	67	39	43	86	3180	\$120.00	\$183.78
76	2	1			2	3	21	16	10	213	3440	\$289.00	\$ 47.69
33		1	9		1	1	20	11	11	186	3000	\$180.46	\$ 62.00
28		4	7	16	1		11	1	1	100	3000	\$165.83	\$ 70.00
35		12	5		1		12	1		100	2000	\$187.12	\$ 60.00
12		3	8				5			50		\$ 65.00	
16	2	3							1	75	2000		
4	1	1					6			30			
4		1											
10		2	2				10			45			
10		4	4				10			40			
3		6	4				6			50			
9	2	8	4				4			25			
7	1	10	1				4			50			

Chapter 4

THE LARGEST SECTOR IS BUILT (1930-1957)

The curtain rose in the fall of 1930 to reveal William Henry Oliver back in the city that was becoming home, Nashville. Despite the fact that there were four vacancies and four hundred applicants that year at Hume-Fogg High School, he found a position there with a salary of one hundred and forty dollars a month. His teaching was in the areas of English and Algebra. He coached the baseball team in the spring of 1931 and led them to the city championship. He was paid twenty-five dollars extra for this coaching. This was not the extent of his coaching. For one season he coached boxing, and he was also the assistant football coach.¹ "I received no extra pay from the Board of Education for this."²

The current shifted Mr. Oliver to still another school in September, 1932. This time it was to the newly completed East Nashville High School near his home in East Nashville. He taught English and Algebra, but was soon to drop the latter.³ By this time he had enough experience to draw the

¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

²William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

³Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

maximum salary in the system, one hundred and seventy dollars per month.⁴ There were those students who arrived early. They were to be found singing under Mr. Oliver's direction in the auditorium. Professor J. J. Keyes was the principal of East during these years. Shortly after going to East, Mr. Oliver became the Activities Manager which was almost equivalent to an assistant principalship. He received an extra thirty dollars per month. Certainly, he was the principal's right hand man.

East High had originally been erected to accomodate twelve hundred students. The Junior High addition was constructed in 1937; thus, the total capacity was increased to seventeen hundred. Professor Keyes died in December, 1936. W. P. Fisher became the principal of East High while H. S. Lipscomb served in that position for the recently opened Junior High. William Henry Oliver was the registrar, or assistant principal, for East High until 1939, at which time Mr. Fisher retired. Mr. Oliver became the acting principal, and it was but another step and one year to the principalship. Having reached that step on the ladder, he retained the post for seventeen years until he went up another step in 1957.⁵

⁴William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

⁵Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

William Henry Oliver received his M. A. from Peabody College in the summer of 1939. All of the work toward this graduate degree had been done in summer sessions.⁶

The curtain rises on the auditorium of East High on December 8, 1941. Assembled there are about eight hundred and fifty students plus the faculty who are intently listening to President Roosevelt call upon Congress for a declaration of war. It came and with it a new stage on which William Henry Oliver was to act.⁷

Like so many other Americans of the era, Henry Oliver searched for his place in the saga known to history as World War II. He tried to volunteer for the chaplaincy, but was not accepted because his training was not in the proper areas. Later, he tried to enlist as a soldier, but he was turned down again. This time it was because of his worth as the principal of East High.⁸ Several of the teachers from East and approximately eighteen hundred students and former students of the school were enlisted in the Armed Forces. There were fifty-eight of these boys and one teacher killed in that struggle.⁹

"Mr. William Henry Oliver started writing a new

⁶William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

⁷William Henry Oliver, Dear Joe, (Nashville: Eagle Staff, East Nashville High School, 1946), p. 57.

⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 12, 1975.

⁹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

column in the school paper, calling it 'Dear Joe'." Those words in the Foreword of Dear Joe preface the eighty-eight page book which contains most of the letters William Henry Oliver wrote to the soldiers in those columns during the war years.¹⁰ These letters show vividly the warmth, the love, and the concern of Professor Oliver for his students. Assuredly, it is this facet of his personality that has made him the educator long remembered by former students. The letters also reveal facts about the war itself and the activities of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver during those years. Excerpts and summaries of some of the letters are included here to illustrate the above statements.

East High's principal led in a collection of scrap metal at the school. He, along with many others, promised to bring what they could. His contribution was the barrel of the old twelve-gauge breech-loading single-barrel shotgun his father bought for John and him when he was twelve. It held personal, priceless memories, but it was given for the common good. That night, October 30, 1942, William Henry Oliver went to the railway station to bid his brother, John, Godspeed as he left for naval training in Norfolk.¹¹

We firmly believe that the best men are the best soldiers. . . . You can not be as good a soldier if you

¹⁰Oliver, Dear Joe, op. cit., p. 6.

¹¹Ibid., p. 13.

drink. . . . There are four names who lead our foes. Hitler, Tojo, and Mussolini are three. The other is John Barleycorn. All are deadly enemies of the ideals for which you fight. And of these four, Barleycorn has probably . . . filled more graves than all the other three combined. . . . he is a demon. . . . Beware of him!¹²

Was this a speech by some local chairman of the Temperance Committee or a sermon from a fundamental pulpit? No. It was the urgency of a high school principal conveyed to those young men he sought to educate - intellectually, physically, spiritually, and morally. One can not help but think how different education is in today's average high school!

It was in the week of February 22-27 that more than 7,000 people registered at East High for ration book Number Two.

. . . the people . . . were the nicest, finest, most cooperative large cross-section of the human race that I have ever seen . . . I look at my girls and my boys . . . I watch them . . . laugh and sing and play together. And I wish fervently that I could keep them as happy as they are now.¹³

Through these excerpts shines Henry Oliver's optimistic outlook on life and his heartfelt concern for his students.

Mr. Oliver was in a soldier's tent in November of 1943 with his ROTC boys who were encamped at Percy Warner Park. He was identifying with his students although it may have been before the days when educators proclaimed from their ivory halls of learning that to teach one must be

¹²Ibid., p. 21.

¹³Ibid., p. 22.

identified with one's students. But what was sleeping in a tent one night compared to the sacrifices of those enlisted? ". . . I was ashamed of myself and of many of my fellows who sacrifice so little while you and your buddies sacrifice so much."¹⁴

One could say that a high school principal preached a sermon entitled "Christmas, 1943 - The Christian Way." The message had a three point outline, based upon the three principles of the Christian way of life. The first was that God is the loving Father of all mankind. The second was the golden rule with its purpose of guiding men in their dealings with others. The third and last principle of this way of life was that the human soul is immortal. This was intended to comfort the fellows who had watched their buddies die. Mr. Oliver's Christmas message ended with "And may this be the last one that you must spend away from home."¹⁵

The letter of May 15, 1944 shows the humility and real depth of unselfishness that is possessed by William Henry Oliver.

If only I could feel that I am helping you, I should not feel so tired and useless at the close of each day. What have I done today? I've seen a score of teachers and hundreds of students. With many of them I've exchanged greetings and smiles. Some I've talked with. Some I've reprimanded. Some I've praised. Are they any better for

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 38-39.

our association? Am I? I was not working for my benefit. Or was I? After all, why do I spend my time trying to get the loafer to study, . . . the quitter to stick, . . . boys and girls to build character and get an education? The public pays me well . . . I wonder whether I am worth the pay.

To me every individual seems precious; and the worst scalawag worth saving, . . . What can man do for youth? Youth who thinks that he himself knows everything and that he is quite capable of making his own decisions - all decisions?

. . . Friends have helped me all my life, not because I could offer them anything, but because I needed help.¹⁶

He in turn seemed to be striving to do the same for others.

It did not matter that it took hard work to do that. "We need not ask for lighter labor but for greater strength."¹⁷

"Not even war has stopped the music of young America."

Thus ends Henry Oliver's account of the annual marching contest for Middle Tennessee high school bands held in Keyes Stadium at East High on April 21, 1944. Approximately seven hundred students from twelve schools composed one giant band to render a magnificent rendition of the "The Star Spangled Banner."¹⁸

Overall, the youth at East had practically the same educational opportunities as they had before the war. Few classes failed to meet due to lack of teachers, and there was no scarcity of the essential materials. Extracurricular and inter-school activities were not curtailed. "We still

¹⁶Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 48.

have our clubs, our athletics, our dramatics, our chorus, our school paper, our lunch room." There was more emotional stress than in normal times. Home life had been disrupted with fathers and brothers off to war and mothers working in defense plants and elsewhere.¹⁹

School was over for April 12, 1945 and many were gathered in the stadium for a baseball game between East and M. B. A. Over the radio came the startling news that Franklin D. Roosevelt was dead. The game was stopped momentarily for prayer before proceeding. The next morning saw the student body in the auditorium for songs, Bible reading, and prayer in honor of the deceased President. One former student then out on the front wrote his former principal that he was proud just to have lived in the same generation with so great an American as President Roosevelt. Such were the sentiments of many young Americans of the era.

It was on May 11, 1945 when President Truman made the formal announcement that the war in Europe was over; the German armies had surrendered unconditionally. The few teachers and students already at East High that morning went to the auditorium for Bible Reading and prayer. They were then sent home as the day was proclaimed a holiday. Many Nashville

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 55-56.

churches held services of thanksgiving. Henry Oliver attended one at St. Ann's Episcopal Church.²⁰

Mr. Oliver's Thanksgiving Day of 1945 was full of varied activities. He was at a breakfast at the First Church of the Nazarene, where he gave a devotion. At ten o'clock he attended a Holy Communion service at St. Ann's where he sang in the choir. Along with thankfulness he felt unworthiness. In the afternoon he and Mrs. Oliver attended the all-star football game at Vanderbilt University in Dudley Stadium. That evening at eight p.m. they went to the Ryman Auditorium to hear the Russian Cossacks sing. The music was performed magnificently and feelingly. This one day clearly shows the broad interests of Henry Oliver and his ability to thoroughly enjoy them all.²¹

Some who had not graduated have re-entered school at East, others at Hume-Fogg Tech . . . Many . . . who had graduated are now in college, some have gone back to their old jobs, others are . . . taking a . . . much-needed rest. Comparatively few have been badly crippled by injuries received in service. Some, however, have; and some - too many - are still in military hospitals. . .

When you get home, Joe, you must get the past off your mind . . . past is past. Only in the future is there hope . . . You will find America, though full of problems still a land of opportunity.²²

With this optimistic advice for the resumption of peace time living William Henry Oliver closed his letters to "Dear Joe."

²⁰Ibid., pp. 67-69.

²¹Ibid., p. 82.

²²Ibid., pp. 87-88.

And what were the years after the war like? What progress was made at East Nashville High School? As the principal of East High, Mr. Oliver was very dedicated to his task. A history of the school will in a very real sense be a history of those years of his life.

"We love you, . . . for what you are making of us. . . . You have done it by being yourself. Perhaps, that is what being a friend means, after all." Thus, the staff of the 1946 Grey Eagle, East High's annual, expressed their thoughts about William Henry Oliver. In the "Class History" in the same book one may note several items of interest. Teen-Town, which proved to be of great recreational value to the school and community, was organized during the 1943-1944 term by the Young Women's Christian Association.²³ East High had asked for Teen-Town. It proved to offer good, wholesome fun for the young people. It met in the basement of the library.²⁴ The 1944-1945 term introduced several new organizations to East Nashville. These included a religious program, "Going Our Way," the School Spirit Club, and the Vocal Ensemble.²⁵ "Going Our Way" was used in the homerooms. Mr. Oliver played a large part in organizing the material. They prepared a book of programs which were highly devotional in nature. Mr.

²³Nancy Gossage, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1946), No pagination.

²⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

²⁵Gossage, loc. cit.

Oliver's indelible mark was made when a number of poems were included. This book of programs was made available to all the city schools.²⁶ The Ensemble was one of the best vocal groups in the city. Baseball was reintroduced in the spring of 1945 to the delight of East High's fans. The 1945-1946 term was ushered in with the return of three faculty members who had served in the Armed Forces. W. Carman (Willie) Campbell, Harwood Tilton, and Watson Magee were welcomed back by Principal Oliver, the faculty, and students. Dr. John L. Hill, editorial secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, gave a speech. Coupled with music by the Ensemble and a talk by George Cate, the Alumni Association's President, this provided a fitting memorial to the boys who had given their last full measure of devotion during the war.²⁷

Elizabeth B. Browning's Sonnet XLIII is usually thought of in connection with romantic lovers. Yet, it was deemed a fit selection for Mr. Oliver by the students of the Class of 1947. Therefore, under his picture in the annual we read "How do we love thee? Let us count the ways. . . . " During the 1946-1947 term the Eagle Staff sponsored the publication of Dear Joe, a compilation of the letters Mr. Oliver had written to service men for the school newspaper. In the same year the Dramatic Guild held its first musical in the

²⁶Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

²⁷Gossage, loc. cit.

school's history, "A Date With Judy."²⁸

The history of the Class of 1948 reveals facts about life at East that depict change and progress at the school. In their Sophomore year (1945-1946) ROTC was made compulsory for all Sophomore boys with two units required for graduation. The Alumni Association had by then erected a clock on the top of the school as a memorial to the boys who lost their lives in the war. By the fall of 1947 the Hunting and Fishing Club and the Camera Club had been organized. Also, the boys division of the Boy-Girl Friendship Club finally came into existence, and the joint groups held forums on boy-girl relations. Nashville schools organized bowling teams, and East was well represented among the city's teams.²⁹

The Class of 1949 expressed their gratitude for one who has planned for, prayed for, inspired, and trusted in them. That one had strength and beauty of character along with being the ideal of Christian living. "His life of purity and virtue has woven itself into the heart of every East High Student." That one was no other than William Henry Oliver. The scene was in the fall of 1946, and it was Inauguration Day for Student Council officers at East High. The Class of 1949 sat as "silly" Sophomores to listen as Mr. Oliver sang

²⁸ Betty Anne Cavender, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1947), No pagination.

²⁹ Peggy Fuson, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1948), No pagination.

"My Task" so seriously that they were not to soon forget it. During the 1946-1947 term East was represented for the first time at the Columbia Scholastic Press Association's Annual Convention held at Columbia University in New York City. In May of 1949 the Allied Youth Club was organized.³⁰ The Allied Youth Club is an anti-alcohol club. Its purpose is to inform young people as to the evils of beverage alcohol and to protect them from its use.³¹ With the fall of 1948 the Fishing Club came to East. The 1949 annual has a snapshot of "Hank the Harmonica Player." No, it was not a student but just Mr. Oliver playing that instrument that he had played for years!³²

Mr. Oliver received a Masters in Education in 1949 from Peabody College. He had majored in Educational Administration. The degree he obtained then was the same as the Education Specialist degree today. All of the work had been done in the summer sessions or on a part time basis during other sessions.³³

Then came the Class of 1950. They recalled the new constitution for school government that was instituted in the 1947-1948 school term. There were a number of highlights

³⁰Mary Ann Stevens, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1949), No pagination.

³¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

³²Stevens, loc. cit.

³³Statement by William Henry Oliver personal interview, June 18, 1975.

in the 1948-1949 term. The girls basketball team won the Eighth District Championship. The Chorus rendered Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" for the first time, a rather unique accomplishment for any high school group. The school's paper, The Eagle, rated second in the Banner's Mid-State Newspaper Contest. The National Forensic League from East had first and second place winners in All-State Competition. The Inner-City Student Council was founded during the 1949-1950 term with the East Nashville Council playing a major role. The "Last Will and Testament" of the 1950 Class left Mr. Oliver with a few more gray hairs, for which they were sorry. They went further and thanked him for patience, kindness, and unforgettable love.³⁴

The Class of 1951 classified William Henry Oliver not only as their beloved principal but as the beacon-light of their hearts. "May we, in the faithful living of our lives, give back to him some part of that which he has given to us in inspiration, devotion, and guidance." This class remembered distributing fifty-two Christmas baskets in 1948 to needy families. In September, 1949 new fluorescent lights, filing cabinets, modern chromium kitchens for home economics, and an electric score board for the football field were installed. The Journalism Club of 1950-1951 was awarded one of the

³⁴Evelyn Louise Stevens, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1950), No pagination.

highest honors given to a high school paper, a first from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. In the spring of 1950 a much anticipated course was added, that being Drivers Training. The Student Council of 1950-1951 was most active. They had the sidewalks repaired, the tennis courts finished, bought a new curtain for the stage, organized a Pep Club, and began work on a school handbook.³⁵

The Grey Eagle in 1953 was dedicated to Mr. Oliver for his Christian leadership, patience, understanding, and willingness to help. The yearbook had a new section as the Sophomores and Juniors were pictured for the first time. The "Class History" mentioned the Evaluation by the Southern Association for Accreditation in 1951-1952 which made the school fully accredited for nine more years.³⁶ This was the result of the Self-Study that the Association requires of its members every ten years.³⁷

The 1954 edition of the Grey Eagle was also dedicated to the principal. This time it was for his individual companionship with "his children" and wholeheartedly supporting all their endeavors and for constant guidance. The "Last

³⁵Mindel Gardenshire and Elizabeth McKnight, editors, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1951), No pagination.

³⁶Katharine Bryan, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1953), No pagination.

³⁷Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

"Will and Testament" of the Class of 1954 left gratitude to Mr. Oliver for just being a "regular guy." Their "Class History" told of the Tennessee Association of Student Councils meeting at East Nashville in the 1951-1952 term. The students had kept the delegates in their homes.³⁸

The 1955 Class of East Nashville High School could talk about the fire in the lunchroom in their Junior year. It was not serious, causing damage only to kitchen equipment. The school had its first Career Day that same year. In the 1955 yearbook the rifle, track, golf, and tennis teams are seen. "Miss East High" was pictured for the first time, beginning a practice followed for years.³⁹

The Beta Club at East High was organized in 1955-1956. The National Honor Society continued to exist. The bowling team got their picture in the 1956 annual for the first time.. Nor did the 1956 Class forget to mention Mr. Oliver. They left him an abundant supply of patience as they had used all of the last supply!⁴⁰

The 1957 Grey Eagle Staff called Mr. Oliver "the guiding hand, the kindly sympathizer." Again, focus is turned on the "Class History." The 1954-1955 football team

³⁸Ida Jo Simpson, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1954), No pagination.

³⁹Barbara Davis, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1955), No pagination.

⁴⁰Marjorie Haden, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1956), No pagination.

became the first Nashville Interscholastic League team to go by plane to another city to play. Teen-Town was permanently established at East. During the 1956-1957 term the Civinette and Civitan Clubs' float won first prize in the Fire Prevention Parade. It was in the spring of 1957 that an honor came to the Male Chorus as they were chosen to sing for the Southern Music Educators Conference in Miami Beach, Florida. The Art and Science Clubs were added as well as the Quill and Scroll.⁴¹

And lo, it was in the Spring of the year that the multitude was told by our beloved William H. Oliver, that he had been promoted and there were many tears spread throughout the kingdom and many grieved over the lose of our great leader.⁴²

The 1958 Grey Eagle was dedicated to him as past principal. He was said to be more than a principal or even a close personal friend. He was more like a father. One always came from his office strengthened and encouraged. Mere words could not express the deep feeling or repay the debt of gratitude.⁴³ This feeling of his being like a father still persists in 1975 as he received Father's Day cards from some former students. Among these were Barbara Morgan, Geraldine Heidbreder, and Betty Grice Bibb.⁴⁴ Nor has gratitude ceased to

⁴¹Anita Farrar, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1957), No pagination.

⁴²Helen Gibson, editor, Grey Eagle, (Nashville: East Nashville High School Grey Eagle Staff, 1958), No pagination.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

exist on the part of students at East during his years as principal there.

Just a note to let you know how much your influence . . . has meant to me. . . . Almost daily I see cases of young men with no guidance who are going down the wrong path and think that 'There but for the grace of God' and Mr. Oliver goes I.⁴⁵

This fellow graduated in 1952 after Mr. Oliver had patiently disciplined him many times and wondered what he would ever amount to. He is now President-Treasurer of the Tennessee Adjustment Service. Yes, that is the joy of teaching!

It would be in order at this point to glance at some of the things Mr. Oliver did during the summers in the time span being dealt with here. One year he worked for the Washington Manufacturing Company. His job was manual labor in the shirt department. He filled orders and various other things. His rate of pay was one dollar per hour. For a number of summers he taught in the Peabody Demonstration School. This is Peabody's Elementary and Secondary school and a place where they try a variety of new methods of teaching. Mr. Oliver taught English to grades ten, eleven, and twelve at different times. For one summer he taught "Child Development and Guidance" in the college.⁴⁶ In 1931 Mr. Oliver and other educators organized a private summer school in

⁴⁵Dickie Fuqua to William Henry Oliver, June 10, 1975, Oliver Collection.

⁴⁶Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 12, 1975.

Nashville. They used the city's books and buildings. This group charged tuition and this was divided among those teachers working. After some years, the Board of Education decided to take over the summer school program. Mr. Oliver did not work in it after that.

Mr. Oliver served on the Accreditation Board of the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. He was one of three members from the state of Tennessee. He was on the committee that considered the applications for membership in the association that came from junior colleges and special schools. These men studied the reports and records sent by these schools and made recommendations back to the board as to whether or not accreditation was recommended. Each committee member was given from six to ten schools to review. Mr. Oliver recalls passing on Mt. Olive College in Mt. Olive, North Carolina, and on a small school in Lebanon, Tennessee. He considered schools in Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana, as well as those in the states just mentioned. Mr. Oliver also served as chairman of three evaluation committees at schools in his area. This had nothing to do with his being on the above mentioned board. Twice he was the chairman at David Lipscomb and once at St. Bernard's, both private, church-related schools.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

William Henry Oliver has been the guest speaker at numerous functions in different areas for most of the years of his adult life. Chapter 3 did not even attempt to cover the many times he was a guest in some church. Thus, here it becomes necessary to briefly give an account of some of his speaking engagements during the years 1930-1957. Included will be speeches to a variety of audiences in various circumstances with various interests.

The notes from Mr. Oliver's speeches and sermons are indeed interesting. Some of his notes have been used on twelve or fifteen different occasions. Some have been used as much as fifty years after the notes were made. General observation of his **notes** shows his wide span of interests, his broad knowledge gained from reading in many fields, and his love of poetry.

A theme William Henry Oliver often took was "God's Way or Mine?" It might have had another title and might have been called something other than a sermon but the central thought was God's way is wise; **man's** is foolish. In addition to using these thoughts in many churches or their functions, he spoke on the topic at the Reformatory School in Bordeaux on October 14, 1934.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address("God's Way or Mine?") at Bordeaux (Tennessee) Reformatory School, October 14, 1934.

On at least two occasions and those over twenty years apart, he talked on "Take a Lead and Keep It." One time he was at the Lockeland Church's Basketball Banquet in April of 1935. On December 5, 1959 he spoke before the North Nashville High School Honor Society. He compared life to a game to be played. Youth were in the first inning. Thus, the admonition to "Take a Lead and Keep It" with the added thought "Don't go out on fouls."⁴⁹

To Christians, Easter signifies new life through the redemption of Jesus Christ. It holds the blessed hope that the dead in Christ shall live again. These thoughts were proclaimed on April 14, 1935 as Henry Oliver spoke at the Tennessee State Training School (Reformatory for Boys) on Hydes Ferry Pike near Nashville.⁵⁰

The time was November 14, 1946, the place was Bailey Junior High in Nashville, and the occasion was the Parent Teacher Association's Annual Father's Night. Mr. Oliver selected "Is the Young Man Absalom Safe?" as a topic. It was based on the father, David, and his son, Absalom. David loved Absalom, but he neglected part of his training. The importance of teaching sons how to live was emphasized. As recently as

⁴⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Take a Lead and Keep It") at Nashville (Tennessee) Lockeland Baptist Church and North Nashville High School, April, 1935, and December 5, 1957.

⁵⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Meaning of Easter to You") at Nashville (Tennessee) Tennessee State Training School, April 14, 1935.

Father's Day, 1974, Brother Oliver used similar thoughts at East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church.⁵¹

On February 25, 1949 Professor Oliver spoke to fathers again, but this time it was the Parent Teacher Association's Father's Night at Glenn School, also in Nashville. He talked of his own father who had been a living example to him, who had given him the ideals by which he still lived. Some of these same thoughts were used on Father's Day, 1963 at the Madison Church of God.⁵²

"Victorious Living" weaved its way into the addresses given by William Henry Oliver. In 1950 he stated that man was not made for slavery. It is glorious to feel victorious, but where lies the difference? It is in the attitude of the mind and heart - in faith. He was speaking at the Junior-Senior Banquet at the Free Will Baptist Bible College.⁵³

The James Robertson Hotel housed the Workshop of the Tennessee Teachers Association of Business Colleges in 1951. On May 12 Henry Oliver spoke on "What a High School Principal

⁵¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Is the Young Man Absalom Safe?") at Nashville (Tennessee) Bailey Junior High School and East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church, November 14, 1946 and June 14, 1974.

⁵²Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) Glenn School and Madison Church of God, February 25, 1949 and Father's Day, 1963.

⁵³Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Victorious Living") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, Spring, 1950.

Expects of a Business College." He listed good courses of study, good equipment and teachers, and some supervision of conduct.⁵⁴

Belmont College asked Professor Oliver to speak in chapel on September 24, 1951. He put his ideas about choosing into words as he mentioned right choices that need to be made during the college years. He challenged his listeners to make their college years a time of strengthening religious faith.⁵⁵

The First Lutheran Church Banquet for Youngsters, or Luther Leaguers, was held on May 23, 1952 at the church. They were admonished by Professor Oliver to beware of bad company and not to be a smart Alec or a quitter. Can one be a Christian and still be one of the crowd? If not, one should get out of the crowd. The "shoulds" were to have a purpose in life and to take time to prepare for life.⁵⁶

The keynote speaker for David Lipscomb High School's 1953 commencement was the public educator, Henry Oliver. He plainly said youth were not going to the dogs and if some did, they were often dragged there by their elders. All

⁵⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("What a High School Principal Expects of a Business College") at Nashville (Tennessee) James Robertson Hotel, May 12, 1951.

⁵⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("If You Would Listen") at Nashville (Tennessee) Belmont College, September 24, 1951.

⁵⁶Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) First Lutheran Church, May 23, 1952.

generations have prodigal sons, but there have always been great youngsters, too. He admonished youth to live independently, acknowledging one Master - God Himself.⁵⁷

The curtain opens on Trevecca College's Junior - Senior Banquet on May 22, 1954. The special speaker rises and begins his comments. The banquet's theme was "Pioneering New Frontiers," and Mr. Oliver spoke accordingly. He spoke on kinds of frontiers and what was needed for any new frontier. He used Columbus, the Apostle Paul, Lindberg, and Edison as examples, using the poem "Sail On, Sail On!" for effect.⁵⁸

Gallatin Road Baptist Church hosted a Basketball Banquet for their church team on April 25, 1955. East High's principal chose an appropriate subject for his part of the program, "Don't Go Out on Fouls." He answered two questions. (1) What constitutes a foul? (2) What causes a foul? Then he discussed the results. Yes, life is like a game, but it has no seasons; it is played the year round. It is not divided into eight minute quarters, but it is for life. The audience was left with the question, "What will spectators say at the close of the game?"⁵⁹

⁵⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Commencement Address) at Nashville (Tennessee) David Lipscomb High School, May 28, 1953.

⁵⁸Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Pioneering New Frontiers") at Nashville (Tennessee) Trevecca College, May 22, 1954.

⁵⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Don't Go Out on Fouls") at Nashville (Tennessee) Gallatin Road Baptist Church, April 25, 1955.

Twice in May of 1955 Mr. Oliver spoke on "More Abundant Living in a Democracy." The first was when he addressed the Inter-High Student Council at Donelson; the second was at a service honoring the graduating Seniors at the First Church of the Nazarene. "It lies within each individual with God's help, to make glorious and rich and beautiful and abundant his or her own life. . . . "60

On March 11, 1956 Mr. Oliver had another opportunity to speak at a Basketball Banquet; this time it was at Belmont College. Two main ideas were presented. (1) You are fortunate. (2) You are important. "Tomorrow awaits you; humanity needs you; God is counting on you. Get in there and fight. You can win. . . . "61

On May 30, 1957 graduation assembly was held at Free Will Baptist Bible College. The principal of East High, Mr. Oliver, came to speak. His title was "The Old Rail Fence." This title came from a story he related from his boyhood. He once lived on a very steep hill near Indian Mound; often he had to carry water from the valley below. He would pause to rest at an old rail fence. He then compared this to graduation. The graduates had come a long way up the hill; it was

⁶⁰ Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("More Abundant Living in a Democracy") at Nashville (Tennessee) Donelson High School and First Nazarene Church, May 2, 1955 and May 22, 1955.

⁶¹ Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Lucky and Important") at Nashville (Tennessee) Belmont College, March 11, 1956.

appropriate to pause for rest. In that pause Mr. Oliver sketched part of the past for the graduates and then reminded them that the rest of the hill remained to be climbed.⁶²

"Strange to say, when I went to F. W. B. B. C. as a teacher five years ago, I discovered that some of the folk still remembered 'The Old Rail Fence'."⁶³ Perhaps, the last statement has something to say about the way Mr. Oliver's words have lingered in the minds of his hearers down through the years.

"You and Your Bible" appeared to be just the topic when William Henry Oliver spoke to the Gideons on July 3, 1957. It has since been used as a sermon at East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church. The "Kick-Off" Sunday for the church's golden anniversary was on September 14, 1973. As Bro. Oliver was the first pastor, he was asked to bring the message. The thoughts were mainly on how to study the Bible and the results of the study.⁶⁴

The Nashville Boys Club was assembled at Montgomery Bell State Park. Mr. Oliver came on July 7, 1957 to talk

⁶²Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Old Rail Fence") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, May 30, 1957.

⁶³William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, June 18, 1975.

⁶⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("You and Your Bible") at Nashville (Tennessee) Gideons' Meeting and East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church, July 3, 1957 and September 14, 1973.

to them about courage. He advised them to have the courage to take correction in the right spirit, to do right, and to be reverent toward God.⁶⁵

Previous paragraphs are a very slim sampling of the speeches given by Mr. Oliver during these years. A glimpse through his notes shows that he spoke before these clubs: the Kiwanis, Civitans, Optimists, Exchange, Scottish Rite, and Men's Clubs. Other groups included were the Young Men's Christian Association and the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Alpha Beta Chapter. Though a Free Will Baptist minister, Rev. Oliver spoke to many denominational groups as evidenced above. Other than those mentioned, he spoke to these denominations: Cumberland Presbyterian, Christian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and various Negro churches. It will be recalled that David Lipscomb Schools are Church of Christ and Trevecca College is affiliated with the Nazarene Church. This does not include the numerous branches of Baptist churches he spoke before. Certainly, William Henry Oliver was not reduced to the narrow bounds of any group, be it religious or otherwise.

Glancing back at the time spanned by this chapter, it is impossible to entirely cover the activities of those years.

⁶⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Courage") Dickson County (Tennessee) Montgomery Bell State Park, July 7, 1957.

Picture a man going to the various functions of a big city high school in addition to fulfilling the duties of the principal of that school. Then in his spare time, imagine him preaching almost every weekend in a church within a seventy-five mile radius of Nashville. And in between these, intersperse addresses given to various groups, attendance at local functions of interest, and the few activities indulged in for his personal life. Hopefully, one will have a fairly accurate image of William Henry Oliver's life from 1930 through 1957.

Chapter 5

SEVEN YEARS AT THE HELM 1957-1964

It was 1957 and by this time William Henry Oliver had to his credit a wide range of experience. He was respected as an educator with high standards who expended a great deal of personal concern on individual students as well as teachers and other fellow workers. His years of experience well-qualified him for the vacancy created when W. A. Bass stepped down from the position of Superintendent of Nashville City Schools. Little did Mr. Oliver realize that he would be the last man to fill that position due to the creation of a Metropolitan Government from the merging of the city and county governments. Thus, not only would he be at the helm when desegregation came to this Southern city, but he would also work diligently toward an effective merger between the Davidson County and Nashville City Schools.

"Mrs. Bland moved that the Board elect Mr. William Henry Oliver as Assistant Superintendent effective July 1, 1957 through December 31, 1957 at an annual salary of \$9,000 per year." This passed and the School Board proceeded to elect him as Superintendent effective January 1, 1958 for one year

at a salary to be negotiated.¹ The salary later agreed upon was \$12,000 a year. The public announcement of his appointment came on his twenty-ninth anniversary, May 22, 1957. This launched Mr. Oliver's seven year trip into the realm of head of a large city school system. In a manner characteristic of him, he entered into this new job seeking God's help. After thanking the Board for placing their confidence in him, he said the Lord being his Helper, he would do his utmost to justify that confidence.²

So many items of note crossed the Superintendent's desk during the next seven years that it is indeed difficult to sift through the events to glean those that need to be included herein. The two matters that have had the most far-reaching effects were those pertaining to desegregation and the merging that formed what is commonly known as Metro. Therefore, the first section will concern itself with desegregation; the second part will be an overview of the activities of the years 1957-1964; last, a portion will be devoted to the work that paved the way for the Metropolitan Board of Education.

The reader should remember that it was in 1954 that the Supreme Court passed down its decision that was to bring

¹Minutes of Board of Education, City of Nashville
(Metropolitan Board of Education Office, Nashville, Tennessee)
May 21, 1957.

²Minutes of Board, June 12, 1957.

sweeping reforms in the area of desegregation. Before the fall of 1957, the Nashville Board of Education had been challenged as to its position on the issue. There had been a request for an injunction against the Board for refusing admission of Negro students to white schools and vice versa. Before a course of action was determined, the Board assured the judge that it was planning to submit a plan for desegregation. The court declined to issue the injunction. The first grade was integrated that fall and the School Board was required to submit a plan for all grades before December 31, 1957.

The school term began on September 9, 1957. Disorder was prevalent at all white schools where Negro students enrolled. This action was caused by organized efforts. Persons congregated on school grounds and molested Negroes trying to enter and solicited whites to withdraw from the school. Disorders continued all day and into the night. That night one inflammatory meeting was held on at least one school campus and in one public square where agitators attempted to arouse listeners to prevent the court order from being enforced. At 12:30 a.m. September 10, Hattie Cotton Elementary School on West Greenwood Avenue was badly damaged by a dynamite blast. Disorders continued throughout the next day. Arrests were made. The Police Department was mustered out in force to protect lives and property and to maintain law and order. The School Board viewed all of these actions as a defiance of the U.S. District Court at Nashville and of the law of the land. They requested the U.S. Attorney to investigate and determine

who was responsible and to take prompt injunctive action or whatever was necessary to restrain such future action.³ Mr. Oliver and Mayor Ben West spent much time in the U.S. Attorney General's office in an effort to begin measures to restore peace and order. Federal Judge William E. Miller issued an order restraining twelve segregationists from interfering with desegregation in Nashville. This temporary order was the first step toward securing a permanent injunction.⁴ These were the beginnings of desegregation in Nashville. No, it was not in perfect order. However, the situations arising were handled wisely. These and future incidents were to reflect the fairness to all demonstrated by William Henry Oliver.

The Instruction Committee presented its plan for desegregation to the School Board on December 4, 1957. "No compulsory integration or segregation shall be required in any grade of the Nashville Public School System." The plan basically consisted of two elements. (1) Desegregation of one grade at a time was to take place. The first grade was desegregated in 1957, the second grade was to be desegregated in 1958, and so on. (2) Any parent who had a child in a school or class in which the majority of the students were of another race could request a transfer to another school. Many school systems in other states were to follow this plan used in

³Minutes of Board, September 10, 1957.

⁴Minutes of Board, September 12, 1957.

Nashville. The second element would be struck down by the court later. Parents had to give reasons other than racial for a transfer. They started then to give "acceptable" reasons although race may have been a major one. Mr. Oliver personally decided on every transfer requested.⁵ Three groups of schools with equal standards, opportunities, and facilities were to be provided. These were schools for Negroes whose parents preferred that they be educated with members of their own race exclusively; schools for white students whose parents preferred the same; integrated schools for those whose parents preferred schools available to both Negro and white students.⁶ The attorneys for the Nashville City Schools were Edwin Hunt and Reber Boulton. At a hearing on April 14, 1958, the District Court in Nashville approved the plans as set forth.⁷

On March 5, 1959 Mr. Oliver went before the Civil Rights Commission. This conference, he stated, was conducted on a highly professional and dignified basis. The opportunity to sit down in conference with a number of leading educators to discuss the problems involved in school desegregation was worthwhile. Mr. Oliver felt that his report on Nashville's desegregation was received with interest and respect.⁸

⁵Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

⁶Minutes of Board, December 4, 1957.

⁷Minutes of Board, April 9, 1958.

⁸Minutes of Board, March 12, 1959.

It was in the next month that Mr. Oliver and Board members A. B. Gibson, M. H. Pilsb, and T. C. Young attended a hearing before the U.S. District Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, Ohio with regard to the desegregation suit.⁹ The NAACP had appealed to this court when the District Court in Nashville approved the desegregation plans in that city. This court upheld the decision made in Nashville. The NAACP then attempted to appeal the case to the Supreme Court, but it refused to review the case.¹⁰ Attorney Hunt received a letter from the Supreme Court dated December 14, 1959. "The petition for writ for certiorari is denied." This meant that the suit could not be appealed to a higher court. This was judged to perpetuate rather than limit racial discrimination.¹¹

At the April 5, 1962 Board meeting Mr. Oliver stated that he had been invited to attend the Civil Rights Commission's Fourth Annual Conference on "Problems of Segregation and Desegregation of Public Schools." The Civil Rights Commission would pay his expenses to come to Washington, D.C. on the third and fourth of May. This would make the third time for Mr. Oliver to attend their conference. No other school system had been so honored to Mr. Oliver's knowledge. He went

⁹Minutes of Board, May 14, 1959.

¹⁰Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 9, 1975.

¹¹Minutes of Board, January 21, 1960.

with the intention of conducting himself in a way that would reflect continued credit upon the Nashville City Schools and its methods of desegregation.¹²

Members of the local NAACP did attend the Board meetings on several occasions with requests or petitions. One time was on February 8, 1962. They brought with them a request to remove barriers that prevented Negroes from attending Hume-Fogg Technical School. It was the only such school in the city at that time. They petitioned the Board to admit all qualified students without regard to race as of September, 1962.¹³ At the August 16 Board meeting the Instruction Committee and the Recreation and Vocational Committee presented their recommendations after having studied the request along with Mr. Oliver. "It is the judgment of your Superintendent that the court-approved plan of desegregation . . . applies to the Hume-Fogg Technical and Vocational High School also and that we should adhere strictly to this plan." Therefore, he recommended a denial of the request. The denial was granted. In the letter requesting desegregation at Hume-Fogg, there was an implied request for desegregation of evening classes for adults. The Superintendent felt that the evening program was not included in the plan. Thus, nobody would be excluded from such classes because of race. As far as he knew, no one

¹²Minutes of Board, April 5, 1962.

¹³Minutes of Board, February 8, 1962.

had been excluded at any time for this reason.¹⁴ Mrs. C. M. Hayes, a NAACP representative, came before the Board on March 21, 1963 asking for integration of Hume-Fogg; but it still was not granted.¹⁵

During the period of the Transitional Board of Education which governed both Nashville and Davidson County Schools there was a revision of the Desegregation Plans. The revision struck from the books racial qualifications as a reason for transfer of a student to another school zone.¹⁶

Certainly, Mr. Oliver was the guiding force behind the Desegregation Plan. Mr. Bass was ill much of the time and even as Assistant Superintendent, Henry Oliver was in essence acting Superintendent. Thus, from the first he dealt with the issue. But even a study of the plan and the events over the years leaves one without a thorough understanding of how Mr. Oliver really felt about the issue. He was called upon a number of times to speak on the subject. One of these speeches is used to give a picture of his opinions and feelings about desegregation. This address was entitled "Registration, Transfers, etc. as Christians." This speech was apparently made to a group of concerned citizens from several organizations, some of which had the word Christian in their name. Thus, he spoke as a Christian to other Christians. He stressed that the

¹⁴Minutes of Board, August 16, 1962.

¹⁵Minutes of Transitional Board, September 12, 1963.

¹⁶Minutes of Transitional Board, June 13, 1963.

people had to obey the edicts of the court.

I do not make the laws. I do not render court decisions. I work under them. My business is education, - not primarily segregation or desegregation, but education . . . for all the children of all the people of our city.

He talked about avoiding disorder and confusion and praised the Police Department for helping restore and keep order. He thought it very important that the parent have the right to decide where his child would attend school.

The person most vitally concerned with a child's welfare and happiness is the parent. . . . With the parent, the child comes first, or should, I think, always. The question which each parent should try to answer is "What is best for my child?"

Henry Oliver stressed one of his paramount rules, that being to treat everyone with fairness, kindness, respect, and consideration. He cited the Biblical teaching that God is no respecter of persons. Among Christians there is a common spiritual kinship which transcends differences of race, ancestry, nationality, or opinion.¹⁷ Again, a question runs across one's mind. What would desegregation have been like with a lesser man at the helm of Nashville City Schools?

Attention is now turned from desegregation to the other incidents of Mr. Oliver's years at the Superintendent's post of duty. Selections included are varied in an attempt to give the whole picture.

¹⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Registrations, Transfers, etc. as Christians") at Nashville (Tennessee) Clark Memorial Methodist Church, August 24, 1958.

Many major decisions had to be made by Mr. Oliver to say nothing of minor ones. A glance over just a few pages of the Minutes of the Board will show him considering anything from replacing old desks and cloth shades to hiring, firing, or retiring certain teachers. Again and again, Mr. Oliver opened the meetings with prayer and if he did not, someone else did. Mr. Oliver's Superintendent's Report was a part of every meeting. His reports usually included the Superintendent's Snapshot, something he had initiated. The Snapshot briefly presented a picture of something of importance from one or more of the schools. It was intended to inform or entertain. Students were featured often while at other times teachers or guests were featured in this portion of the report.¹⁸ After the Snapshot, Mr. Oliver's report listed personnel to be hired, those leaving, or retiring. He reported on the use of school buildings for other than school functions, on the status of school funds, and on school break-ins. Nashville City Schools had their own bookbindery; so Mr. Oliver reported on the work done there. Along with this report, he attached reports on the School Health Service, Visiting Teacher and Attendance, and the Division of Vocational Education.

William Henry Oliver was faithful in attending any meetings that would assist him in doing his job or in helping

¹⁸Minutes of Board, May 14, 1959.

the schools. He attended the Regional Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators in 1958, when convened in St. Louis, Missouri.¹⁹ In the same year he went to Indianapolis, Indiana to the Convention of the Regional Association of Secondary School Principals. On March 21 and 22, 1958, there was held in Nashville the Governor's Conference on Education Beyond the High School. Attendance was by invitation only. Mr. Oliver went as an invited participant and as a representative of Mayor West. On March 24, the Superintendent went to a meeting of a sub-committee Study Council of the Tennessee Superintendents' Conference. Mr. Oliver served as chairman, and this sub-committee studied the question of merit raises as they affect teachers' salaries. On March 25, he was present at a conference held at A and I State College to study plans for an expanded urban renewal program. If expanded, urban renewal would affect a number of students. An In-Service training meeting for teachers of the severely mentally retarded was held on March 28 and 29. Mr. Oliver went as an observer in an effort to learn as much as possible about the program. On March 31-April 2, In-Service training days were held for Nashville City Schools; thus, Mr. Oliver was again out of his office for meetings.²⁰ Mr. Oliver went to the Annual Tennessee Superintendents' Conference in Gatlinburg in September of

¹⁹Minutes of Board, January 6, 1958.

²⁰Minutes of Board, April 9, 1958.

1958.²¹ A conference for Tennessee public school superintendents was sponsored by the University of Tennessee in Knoxville on July 30 and 31, 1959. "Your Superintendent had the honor of being the presiding officer during the final day of the program. Copies of the program showing the topics discussed will be made available to the members of the Board on their request."²² Governor Buford Ellington's White House Conference was held in October, 1959 in Nashville. Mr. Oliver was present and heard reports on youth work and problems throughout the state.²³ Two years later, Mr. Oliver was to serve as a member of the host committee for the White House Regional Conference on Education held in Nashville. He took to the February, 1962 Board meeting copies of the report made to the President concerning the conference.²⁴ In February, 1960 Mr. Oliver attended the American Association of School Administrators in Atlantic City, New Jersey.²⁵ The Superintendent of Nashville City Schools made a report dealing with the use of the National Teachers' Exam at the Tennessee Superintendents' Conference in 1960. He said, "We are the only city in the state using the examination."²⁶ It was April 15, 1960 when Mr. Oliver

²¹Minutes of Board, October 9, 1958.

²²Minutes of Board, August 13, 1959.

²³Minutes of Board, November 5, 1959.

²⁴Minutes of Board, February 8, 1962.

²⁵Minutes of Board, January 21, 1960.

²⁶Minutes of Board, October 13, 1960.

met with Mr. Brown, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor, at the U.S. Courthouse in Nashville. They discussed the changes in employment, population, and manpower for the next decade and the vital part education would play in meeting the needs. At the next Board meeting, Mr. Oliver showed the charts Mr. Brown had used.²⁷ William Henry Oliver was invited by the National Education Association to be one of twenty-five school men to go to West Africa. As he was a member of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges' Accreditation Board, he declined to go as the meeting dates conflicted.²⁸

In addition to attending such meetings as those above, Henry Oliver was present at many local functions in the educational world. These are too numerous to mention. He spoke at a wide array of educators' meetings, or ones connected with education in some way. An attempt will be made to give a sampling of these addresses.

William Henry Oliver talked to a Negro City Council Parent Teacher Fellowship at Head School in October of 1957. Recall that this was shortly after desegregation began. He pointed out that education was not integration or segregation and that desegregation was a fact. He then discussed buildings,

²⁷Minutes of Board, April 21, 1960.

²⁸Minutes of Board, December 14, 1961.

teachers, equipment, and what students were learning.²⁹ He again talked about desegregation to the Community Relations Council at the Christ Episcopal Church in November. His emphasis was much like that in speeches already mentioned.³⁰

During 1958 two speeches were given which shall serve our purposes herein. In January, Mr. Oliver spoke to the Music Teachers' Guild about "The Place of the Private Music Teacher - In Education and Life." He felt that place was rather important.³¹ Three months later Henry Oliver spoke to the Nashville Teachers' Association on the "Privileges of a Teacher." "I almost asked for the privilege of appearing before you today. . . . I wished to bring you a word of greeting." Certainly, what followed placed the teacher on a high plane and reflected the high standards this Superintendent wanted in his teachers.

You are the finest people that many of your pupils know. . . . You will teach them to be good and upright, self-respecting and respectable. . . . that every privilege has an accompanying responsibility. . . . to be reverent, God-fearing, religious in the truest sense of the word . . . to judge wisely among the voices that call and the hands that beckon to them to follow. . . . to be

²⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Education") at Nashville (Tennessee) Head School, October 2, 1957.

³⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) Christ Episcopal Church, November 19, 1957.

³¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Place of the Private Music Teacher") at Nashville (Tennessee) Music Teachers' Guild, January 19, 1958.

The date was January 26, 1959, the place was Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee, and the occasion was Kappa Delta Pi's Annual Banquet. After being introduced by Mr. Earl Sexton, Mr. Oliver gave the address on "Courage." He spent some moments in reminiscing about his years at Southwestern Presbyterian University which occupied the present Austin Peay campus. He recalled wrestling matches and cross country runs of the track team in which he participated. He inspired and challenged his audience to overcome disadvantages and to stand for the right.³³

"The Challenge of Better Education in Today's World" was Mr. Oliver's topic at the Stewart County Educational Association's meeting in Dover in 1959. He began with "You had no way of knowing how much, wherever I have gone and whatever I have done, my heart has always been in Stewart County." He later talked about improvements in education and what a challenge it was to teach in the era already being called the Space Age. He advised the teachers to adjust to the speed and to use, not abuse, power.³⁴

³²Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Privileges of a Teacher") at Nashville (Tennessee) Nashville Teachers' Association, April 18, 1958.

³³Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Courage") at Clarksville (Tennessee) Austin Peay State University, January 26, 1959.

³⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Challenge of Better Education in Today's World") at Dover (Tennessee) Stewart County Teachers' Association, August 25, 1959.

It was back before the Negro City Council Parent Teacher Association on November 24, 1959. Mr. Oliver talked about "What is Our Community Doing to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency?" He mentioned the home, school, and church as well as law enforcement officers and juvenile courts. He ended by speaking of exemplary living and prayer.³⁵

Mr. Oliver spoke on "Beverage Alcohol" before the City-County Parent Teacher Association in 1960. He had been very concerned about the teenage drinking problem for years; so he was not taking on a new topic. He was thankful for the concern of the group, and reviewed some of the steps they had taken in trying to protect youth from the greatest threat of all -- beverage alcohol. He then made suggestions for further action.³⁶

Mr. Oliver gave the commencement address at the third graduation of the Pearl High Evening Vocational School. His topic was simply "Work." One should work though tired and faced with impossibilities and handicaps. One should work even if betrayed as Jesus was.³⁷ Surely, Mr. Oliver knew the value

³⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("What is Our Community Doing to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency?") at Nashville (Tennessee) City Council Negro Parent Teacher Association, November 24, 1959.

³⁶Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Beverage Alcohol") at Nashville (Tennessee) City-County Parent Teacher Association, April 5, 1960.

³⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Work") at Nashville (Tennessee) Pearl Evening School May 25, 1961.

of work.

Many times Mr. Oliver spoke to inform groups of what was going on in the schools. Once, he spoke to a group of executives at the Third National Bank. Nashville had 44 schools, over 30,000 students, and 1,200 teachers in 1961. He mentioned desegregation, educational television, federal aid, civil defense, and the future Metropolitan government. On another occasion he spoke at Napier Elementary School. They were celebrating American Education Week and the Superintendent spoke on "Your Schools - Time For a Progress Report."³⁸ Henry Oliver went on WSM radio in 1963 to inform the public. This time he talked about Metro which was little more than a year away. The matter of utmost concern at the moment was the school budget for 1963-1964. It was an appeal for education to go forward, not backward, and it could do that only if the people voted for the increased budget, which was \$240,000 more than the current one. This program was sponsored by the Civic Committee on Education, and he commended this group. He reminded his audience that "The curse of public education in America is mediocrity and our greatest peril is public apathy. Our greatest need is for real concern, support, action on the part of the citizenry. . . ."³⁹

³⁸Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Your Schools - Time For a Progress Report") at Nashville (Tennessee) Executives at Third National Bank and Napier School, November 1, 1961 and November 8, 1961.

³⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Financial Support of Education") at Nashville (Tennessee) WSM Radio, May 23, 1963.

Sometimes, Mr. Oliver had the opportunity of speaking to student organizations. In 1963 he addressed the Interhigh Student Council on "The Value of Student Leadership."⁴⁰ He spoke at the Metropolitan Nashville Future Teachers' Association's Awards Banquet in 1964. He called to his listeners' attention the personal satisfaction that comes through service that a teacher renders.⁴¹

Three new programs were introduced in Nashville during Mr. Oliver's time at the helm. These were to continue for years to come and are considered major advances in education. These were the tuition-free summer school, kindergarten, and educational television.

Tentative plans were made for a summer school, without tuition, for 1958. However, one did not materialize. The program would have offered refresher courses in English and mathematics. Due to developments in connection with the budget, the Superintendent did not ask the Board to approve the plan. The Davidson County Schools had a similar program with financial assistance coming from the Ford Foundation. Mr. Oliver asked the Board for authority to work with the Superintendent of county schools in an effort to allow a limited number of

⁴⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Value of Student Leadership") at Nashville (Tennessee) West End High School, January 14, 1963.

⁴¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("A Poem, A Picture, and A Purpose") at Nashville (Tennessee) Tennessee Educational Association's Building, April 30, 1964.

city school students to participate in the county's program. This was approved.⁴²

The Instruction Committee considered the Superintendent's request for an expanded program of summer school work in the spring of 1959. Such a program would prevent a waste of time by both students and teachers. The plan, hopefully, would involve remedial work for elementary schools as well as make-up work for high school students. Opportunity would also be provided for enrichment programs for the gifted and ambitious student. The committee approved Mr. Oliver's request, asked the concurrence of the Board, and saw the Board grant approval.⁴³ Tentative plans were then drawn up. The Superintendent asked for permission to employ about fifty teachers with a budget of \$20,000. More than 11,000 students would and should attend the session. This number could not be provided for at that time. Thus, some priorities were set. Remedial high school work was given first priority with enrichment on that level rating second. Remedial work on the elementary level was given third priority while enrichment at that level was last on the continuum. Remedial work would be mainly in basic academic areas like English, social sciences, and mathematics. The enrichment courses would probably be in typing, art, and foreign language. No tuition charge existed for bona fide residents of the city. The Board approved the plan as

⁴²Minutes of Board, May 8, 1958.

⁴³Minutes of Board, March 12, 1959.

described.⁴⁴ However, they were unable to have a summer session in all four areas as listed. The Superintendent was authorized to permit summer programs to be carried on for the first three grades where requests were made and where circumstances justified a program. Tuition was to be charged.⁴⁵

The summer school of 1960 was an improvement over that of 1959. Tuition-free summer school was open for grades one through twelve with over 2,400 students in attendance. In the first six grades, the program was entirely one of remedial work. Grades seven through twelve were both make-up and enrichment classes. A large percentage of the summer students had perfect attendance and more than ninety-five percent of them passed their work. Scores were able to finish high school a year earlier because of this summer session. Mr. Oliver personally visited every classroom in the program. "We know that good work was done." Music was also offered that summer but on a tuition basis.⁴⁶ The program was much the same in 1961. There was one change noted. Three full-time teachers were employed for driver training to put on as full a program in this area as possible.⁴⁷

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Nashville Board

⁴⁴Minutes of Board, April 9, 1959.

⁴⁵Minutes of Board, May 14, 1959.

⁴⁶Minutes of Board, August 11, 1960.

⁴⁷Minutes of Board, May 11, 1961.

of Education in regular session January 9, 1958 memorializes the Tennessee School Boards' Association to request the State to set up similar funds for kindergartens and to formulate a plan by which local Boards of Education may use these satisfactorily.⁴⁸

The State was not to heed this resolution for several years. It was four years later that Nashville had a somewhat limited summer kindergarten program and in the fall established some Pilot Kindergartens.

The time has come, . . . when the City of Nashville should undertake some sort of kindergarten. . . . except at Oak Ridge, . . . there are no public kindergartens in Tennessee. . . . no State funds are available . . . we should consider inaugurating such a program on our own. Nashville has long led the State . . . and the South, . . . and our school system has been an outstanding one.

Mr. Oliver expressed his appreciation for the Mayor's interest shown by this letter.⁴⁹

The "Proposed Plan for a Summer Kindergarten Program" was presented by the Instruction Committee at the February Board meeting and passed as submitted. It was to be of eight weeks duration, to employ teachers already in the system, and to be under the supervision of Dr. L. J. Willis, the Supervisor of Elementary Education. It was on a tuition-free basis and open to those students eligible for first grade in the fall of 1962. A teacher's salary would be \$400 for the session, with double pay if one taught a class in both the morning and afternoon. The size of a class was to be held to

⁴⁸Minutes of Board, January 9, 1953.

⁴⁹Minutes of Board, January 13, 1962.

twenty or twenty-five. The estimated cost was \$12,000 which was to be included in the Summer School Budget.⁵⁰ Enrollment of a child was voluntary with classes held in all elementary schools in the city. Enrollment was approximately 1,600 with 68 teachers on hand to teach them.

At the March Board meeting members voted to put into effect a Pilot Kindergarten Program for the 1962-1963 term.⁵¹ These were at the following schools: Hattie Cotton, Meigs, Buena Vista, Sylvan Park, and Clemons.⁵²

William Henry Oliver first mentioned educational television in 1958. It was his opinion that it had great possibilities. He asked no action from the Board then; he only asked them to consider the factors involved.⁵³ Three years later, the Instruction Committee after careful consideration made a recommendation on the matter. Recognizing television as an important medium of education, they stated that if a station was to operate successfully, it must be largely supported by public funds. Rather than to subsidize a program it was thought best that a station be owned and operated by the Board of Education.

We recommend that the Board . . . make application as

⁵⁰Minutes of Board, February 8, 1962.

⁵¹Minutes of Board, April 5, 1962.

⁵²Minutes of Board, August 16, 1962.

⁵³Minutes of Board, April 9, 1958.

soon as is practical for a license to own and operate an educational television station on Channel 2. We also recommend that the Davidson County Board . . . join us in this application in order that the two Boards . . . may own, support, manage, and operate the station jointly. We recommend too that local educational institutions such as Vanderbilt, Peabody etc., as well as other school systems within the area . . . be participants . . .⁵⁴

There was appointed a City Committee and a County Committee to work on educational television plans. The City Committee consisted of Mr. Elmer Pettit, Mr. Gibson, and Mr. Oliver, while Mr. Olin White, Mr. Ed Chappel, and Superintendent Moss were on the County Committee. The costs of installation was to be borne by the two Boards on a 50-50 basis with operating costs divided on an Average Daily Attendance basis. An earnest effort was made to secure donations and contributions from commercial television stations and groups of citizens or individuals.⁵⁵ Vanderbilt gave \$50,000 toward the construction and installation of Channel 2. The Nashville Board had on hand funds available for the purchase of equipment and the construction of facilities. The results of a study of the Atlanta educational television program were made available to the members of the committees. Channel 2 was not to compete with the commercial stations, but it would make available to them programs to be re-broadcast. There was to be no advertising, no religious services as such, no political

⁵⁴ Minutes of Board, January 19, 1961.

⁵⁵ Minutes of Board, February 23, 1961.

broadcasting, and no fund-raising.

Mr. Oliver gave a report on educational television to the Board at the April, 1961 meeting. Progress was satisfactory, though not quite as fast as he would have liked. The legal services of Kirkland, Ellis, Hodson, Chaffetz, and Masters of Washington, D.C. had been secured. Attorneys had drawn up a legal agreement between the city and county to show joint ownership and operation. Request had also been made to WSIX for land on their hill for locating a tower and transmitter.⁵⁶

The Joint Committee on Educational Television chose Mr. Andrew McMaster as Chief Engineer at a salary of \$8,000 per year, effective November 1, 1961. The Board passed on this and also on the proposed offer of \$150,000 to WSM for facilities located near Belmont College. This included the tower, the building, and the grounds. After some discussion terms were reached and the WSM property was purchased.⁵⁷ The following list of suggested call letters were included on the application for a construction permit that was sent to the Federal Communications Commission: WNDC, WDCN, WAOS, WMTE, and WEND.⁵⁸ Hart, Freeland and Roberts were selected as the architects for the transmitter.⁵⁹ Mr. Robert Glazier was the first

⁵⁶Minutes of Board, April 17, 1961.

⁵⁷Minutes of Board, July 27, 1961.

⁵⁸Minutes of Board, November 9, 1961.

⁵⁹Minutes of Board, December 14, 1961.

station manager with a salary of \$11,000 per year.⁶⁰

The Board of Education acted on several recommendations concerning educational television on March 8, 1962. Two will be mentioned. They voted to become an affiliate of the National Educational Television network and paid the \$9,000 annual fee. The main benefit brought by this affiliation was a \$60,000 videotape recorder. The affiliation also made available programs from the sixty-two educational television stations across the country. The other interesting item approved was the plan to invite outlying school systems to participate in educational television by contributing fifty-five cents per pupil Average Daily Attendance, toward the first year's operating budget of Channel 2.⁶¹

Again attention goes back to the Joint Committee on Educational Television. Their report in April of 1962 stated that the application to the Federal Communications Commission had been approved. By flipping a coin it was decided that the call letters would be WDCN (Davidson County-Nashville) instead of WNDC (Nashville-Davidson County).⁶² In June, "installation of transmitter and master control equipment is nearing completion, and the old WSM-TV Channel 4 antenna will be replaced by a new WDCN-TV Channel 2 antenna atop the 500 foot tower at 15th and Compton this weekend." Experimental

⁶⁰Minutes of Board, August 10, 1961.

⁶¹Minutes of Board, March 8, 1962.

⁶²Minutes of Board, April 5, 1962.

test telecasts were on the air during the week of June 24. This qualified WDCN for \$50,000 in state matching funds for 1961-1962.⁶³

Other moves affected the educational world during 1957-1964, but did not continue into the present. Briefly, space is devoted to some of these. One readily recalled is the Civil Defense Program. In 1957, Miss Kathryn Millsbaugh, Dr. L. J. Willis, and Mr. John Oliver had gone to Atlanta to observe the evacuation of students as directed by the Civil Defense Authorities.⁶⁴ In 1958 and 1959 the Nashville Schools participated in the planned pupil evacuation directed by the Nashville-Davidson County Civil Defense.⁶⁵ Mr. Robert Dunkerley had represented the City Schools at a discussion of proposed plans for civil defense as related to schools in early 1962. He reported to the Board shortly thereafter, and this marks the passing from the scene of civil defense as a part of the school program.⁶⁶ Another such item was the setting up of a special adjustment room designed to keep boys from becoming dropouts. The courses were determined by the practical, by their interests, and aptitudes. The boys were fifteen and sixteen year olds. This program was set up for the 1960-1961 term and apparently worked for the limited number of boys put

⁶³Minutes of Board, June 14, 1962.

⁶⁴Minutes of Board, November 14, 1957.

⁶⁵Minutes of Board, September 10, 1959.

⁶⁶Minutes of Board, February 8, 1962.

into the class.⁶⁷ However, the Transitional Board on September 12, 1963 eliminated this special adjustment class for maladjusted boys to alleviate overcrowded buildings and to adjust the budget so as to provide more free lunches.⁶⁸

There was an item that could not be called a new program, nor could it be classified as a move that passed off the scene. It was a Supreme Court ruling concerning Bible reading and prayer in the public schools. In 1963, a special committee was appointed by the Transitional Board to study the ruling. It was composed of Superintendents Oliver and Moss and Attorney Merritt. The first statement drawn up by this committee did not exclude prayer. Mr. Oliver felt that he could not exclude it. His feelings were that the government could just put him in jail or whatever, but he would pray. However, the Board did not pass on it as written and asked that the statement be rewritten because they were afraid of the consequences of not complying completely.⁶⁹ A second statement was made and adopted by the Board. The most direct legal interpretation they could obtain said that the Supreme Court had ruled against State-required Bible reading or prayer. There had been a State law requiring the reading of a certain number of verses from the Bible each day. The ruling

⁶⁷ Minutes of Board, August 11, 1960.

⁶⁸ Minutes of Transitional Board, September 12, 1963.

⁶⁹ Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 9, 1975.

of the Court made this law null and void. The Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, permits voluntary or individual prayer by students. Teachers should not conduct or supervise public prayer in public schools, although periods of meditation or silent prayer would be permissible. There was nothing in any law that forbade the reading of inspirational literature, including the Bible, for educational or moral purposes. "The teacher should not, however, read any literature as a part of a religious exercise or worship service in the public schools."⁷⁰ It was difficult for a Christian of the stature of William Henry Oliver to submit such a statement and to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. Yet, there really was no other course of action available.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Oliver spoke at the Free Will Baptist Pastors' Conference on the "Implications of Supreme Court Ruling on Bible Reading and Prayer." This speech is the true gauge of his opinions on this ruling. He stated that it was inconsistent with American ideals as well as being a misinterpretation of the Constitution. He went further and said it was a victory for communism and that it reflected a lack of dependence on God plus no belief in prayer.⁷¹

The changes brought about by the new programs may not

⁷⁰Minutes of Transitional Board, September 5, 1963.

⁷¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Implications of Supreme Court Ruling on Bible Reading and Prayer") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Pastors' Conference, January 20, 1964.

have been any more noteworthy than the improvements in already existing programs, namely those of guidance and special education. Following is a review of changes that took place in these areas.

It was in 1959 that the high school principals were notified that they were at liberty to have programs planned by the Middle Tennessee Mental Health Association during Mental Health Week.⁷² Soon, the Psychology Department at Tennessee A and I University offered three well-qualified students to administer individual intelligence tests at certain Negro schools. As the school psychologist already had too much work, this was accepted with appreciation.⁷³ It was also in 1959 that the Superintendent was authorized to proceed to use the financial assistance available in the field of guidance through the Federal Defense Act.⁷⁴ All in all, three counts for guidance could be seen in 1959.

The next year brought the remodeling of the guidance rooms at West, North, and Howard Schools. This involved private rooms for guidance counselors for the first time. Equipment for the rooms was obtained through the National Defense Educational Act.⁷⁵ A few months later, the Board voted to grant the Superintendent the right to look for a person to

⁷²Minutes of Board, March 12, 1959.

⁷³Minutes of Board, April 9, 1959.

⁷⁴Minutes of Board, June 11, 1959.

⁷⁵Minutes of Board, January 21, 1960.

coordinate the guidance program and for three secretarial workers for the program.⁷⁶

Benjamin Allen was the school psychologist and Director of the Student Testing Program for Nashville City Schools for most of Mr. Oliver's years as Superintendent. In March, 1961, he came before the Board as the Snapshot to discuss and illustrate his program.⁷⁷ Surely, advocates for the guidance program were glad to have their program before the Board.

Special education here refers to any instruction provided other than that for the average child in a typical classroom. Attention first is focused on the gifted child. Only one reference was found regarding the gifted. Two classes were set up in the fall of 1963 for the most gifted from all the elementary schools. The size ranged from twelve to eighteen per class. Two different plans were practiced. In one plan, only fourth graders enrolled in this particular class were involved. In the other class, students from the third through sixth grades were involved. Those of each grade reported to the special teacher one day each week for enrichment instruction.⁷⁸

The program for the mentally retarded and/or the physically handicapped brought some changes and the addition of several classes between 1957-1964. The program for the severely

⁷⁶Minutes of Board, December 15, 1960.

⁷⁷Minutes of Board, November 9, 1961.

⁷⁸Minutes of Board, April 5, 1962.

retarded children was moved from the Vine Hill Housing Project (Edgehill) to the Buena Vista School in the fall of 1958.⁷⁹ The Buena Vista School had a physical therapist provided for the cerebral palsy students by the next fall. The Parents' Council for Cerebral Palsy paid for this. At that same time, one finds some figures as to the size of these classes. The maximum number of pupils permitted in a severely retarded class was eighteen. The average number of pupils in an educable mentally retarded classroom was twenty. There was a backlog of twenty to thirty children who needed to be in the severely retarded class and about forty who should have been in the educable mentally retarded classes. The latter were in regular classes. The program at that time had seven divisions:

Educable Mentally Retarded	29 teachers
Speech and Hearing	7 teachers
Homebound	4 teachers
Partially-Seeing	3 teachers
Cerebral Palsy	3 teachers
Severely Mentally Retarded	3 teachers
Hospital	2 teachers

A considerable part of the special education program was carried on in cooperation with the Davidson County Schools. This was true of the cerebral palsy and the sight-saving classes.⁸⁰ In 1960, two teachers were provided for emotionally disturbed children in Vanderbilt Hospital. Their salary was paid by the State Department of Education.⁸¹ It was a year later when a

⁷⁹Minutes of Board, September 11, 1958.

⁸⁰Minutes of Board, October 8, 1958.

⁸¹Minutes of Board, June 9, 1960.

program for this group was instituted as a Pilot Project at Warner School. It was a cooperative effort between the school systems, the State, and the Mental Health Center.⁸² Plans were soon made to open two more classes for elementary educable mentally retarded students. On March 13, 1961, one opened at McKissack and the other at Murrell.⁸³

Something perhaps needs to be said about modern equipment which naturally brought changes in education. These extended from the Superintendent's office to many classrooms. Mr. Oliver's office was to be properly furnished and decorated in early 1958.⁸⁴ This included a beautiful new desk, but Mr. Oliver declined the offer of a carpet. He did not want to have things better than the rest of the staff. Nobody else was offered a carpeted office.⁸⁵ The Board authorized the purchase of a portable dictaphone for the Superintendent's office.⁸⁶

The National Defense Educational Act of 1958 brought much new equipment to the Nashville City Schools. In May of 1959, the Finance Committee recommended that the Board authorize the Superintendent to file application for participation in the expenditure of funds made available through this Act. The

⁸²Minutes of Board, April 17, 1961.

⁸³Minutes of Board, March 9, 1961.

⁸⁴Minutes of Board, February 13, 1958.

⁸⁵Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 9, 1975.

⁸⁶Minutes of Board, February 9, 1960.

Board so voted. The application, after approval by the State Department of Education, made available about \$17,500 of federal money which had to be matched from city funds. The funds at first were used to purchase equipment and materials in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages.⁸⁷ The grand total spent for equipment that first year was just over \$33,000 which went mostly for audio-visual equipment and materials, work tables, and storage cabinets.⁸⁸ The total for the first three years of the program was \$224,576.75.⁸⁹

The U.S. Department of Commerce even installed some equipment in three Nashville schools. These were triangulation stations at Caldwell, Howard, and Ford-Greene. These were used in connection with the coast and geodetic survey.⁹⁰

In the last month of 1960 the City School System purchased an electronic stencil cutter for \$1,800, half of which came from federal funds.⁹¹ Two years later the first twenty electric typewriters were bought for use in typing classes.⁹² Many more advances were made in this area during the transitional years. Included in the recommendations for Metro was a plan to establish a modern system of data processing in the

⁸⁷Minutes of Board, May 14, 1959.

⁸⁸Minutes of Board, June 11, 1959.

⁸⁹Minutes of Board, March 9, 1961.

⁹⁰Minutes of Board, June 11, 1959.

⁹¹Minutes of Board, December 15, 1960.

⁹²Minutes of Board, October 11, 1962.

Business Affairs Office. This was carried through. The initial equipment consisted of these: key punch, verifier, sorter with counter, accounting machine, and interpreter.⁹³ Indeed, the computer era had arrived.

Plans were made in 1961 to have language laboratories in two of the senior high schools. Teaching of foreign languages at the elementary level was encouraged as far as the capabilities of the teachers permitted.⁹⁴

The reader is asked to imagine for a moment that he is a teacher in Nashville during these years. What added benefits came to a teacher? How were the classes and methods of instruction changed?

First, the benefits to Nashville teachers are considered. These teachers were eligible to participate in social security benefits in 1958.⁹⁵ Teachers were able to retire with a pension after twenty years of service instead of twenty-five in that year.⁹⁶ Vocational teachers were employed on a ten calendar months basis.⁹⁷ An efficient curriculum department provided some notable resource units for Nashville teachers. One such was "The Beginnings of the Space Age." The Superintendent received a complimentary letter from the U.S.

⁹³Minutes of Transitional Board, February 25, 1964.

⁹⁴Minutes of Board, May 11, 1961.

⁹⁵Minutes of Board, December 16, 1957.

⁹⁶Minutes of Board, August 14, 1958.

⁹⁷Minutes of Board, June 11, 1959.

Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lawrence Derthick, regarding this unit. He was particularly pleased with the approach.⁹⁸ Consultants, or roving teachers, were provided to assist teachers in all subject areas. The teacher-pupil ratio was a little below thirty in 1959.⁹⁹ The community resource program gave teachers ample opportunity to enrich their classes. Mr. Oliver had a tape recorded interview with the editor of School Management concerning this program in 1960. It was later used in an article in the magazine to communicate these valuable ideas to other school systems. The article was entitled "How to Tap Community Resources for Your Schools."¹⁰⁰ The music teachers had something unique. Nashville was one out of eleven school systems in the country that was chosen by the Ford Foundation's National Music Council for the placement of a young composer. This individual worked closely with music supervisors and teachers.¹⁰¹ Special assistance was given to primary teachers in the teaching of reading. Outstanding teachers of reading served as roving teachers for the first eight weeks of school to assist teachers in grades one through three.¹⁰² A glance is cast at the salary schedule approved by the Board in 1962. The scale began at \$4,000 for a bachelor's

⁹⁸Minutes of Board, October 8, 1959.

⁹⁹Minutes of Board, November 5, 1959.

¹⁰⁰Minutes of Board, January 21, 1960.

¹⁰¹Minutes of Board, May 11, 1961.

¹⁰²Minutes of Board, August 10, 1961.

degree and reached a maximum of \$5,940 after fifteen years experience. Differentials of nine points or \$360 were maintained for each succeeding degree through the Ph.D. Supplements for teachers of special subjects were increased ten percent over the existing supplement.¹⁰³ And a special incentive was offered to those teachers who had a student teacher during the school term. An agreement existed between Peabody College and the City Schools for tuition-free courses for these teachers.¹⁰⁴ At the last meeting of the Nashville Board of Education, Mr. Oliver mentioned many of these benefits. He also spoke of the life insurance and hospitalization provided for teachers. Both sabbatical and professional leaves were granted teachers.¹⁰⁵ Also, military service time could count toward teacher retirement as of 1960.¹⁰⁶ These are representative of the benefits Nashville teachers had.

Only two factors will be mentioned in connection with methods of instruction. It would be good to recall the facts already stated about new equipment, especially audio-visuals, because these are related to the methods of instruction. So are resource units as mentioned in the last paragraph. From 1958-1961 Warner had a non-graded primary unit program. This began as a Pilot Study. The principal, R. N. Chenault, made a

¹⁰³Minutes of Board, July 17, 1962.

¹⁰⁴Minutes of Board, July 19, 1962.

¹⁰⁵Minutes of Board, October 11, 1962.

¹⁰⁶Minutes of Board, September 8, 1960.

report on this program which pleased Mr. Oliver.¹⁰⁷ The other method of instruction was team teaching. Whereas the non-graded classroom has continued to gain favor, the team teaching approach lasted only a few years. East Nashville Junior High had an experimental project in team teaching when school opened in the fall of 1961.¹⁰⁸ In October, a modified team teaching project was established in the sixth grade at Wharton.¹⁰⁹ For those teachers involved in any of these experiments, there were changes in methods of instruction.

After a summary of disciplinary measures, the discussion of teachers from 1957-1964 will end. Teachers were urged to discipline through kindness and persuasive means, but if these failed, there was an alternative. If a teacher had the written permission of the parent and the principal, corporal punishment could be administered. When administered, it was to be promptly reported to the principal and he in turn had to include it in his monthly report to the Superintendent. Self-discipline was also expected of teachers. They were to abstain from using tobacco in the presence of their students. School parties, games, or any school sponsored function had to be properly chaperoned. Mr. Oliver was complimented very highly on the way he handled teacher conduct.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷Minutes of Board, August 10, 1961.

¹⁰⁸Minutes of Board, July 27, 1961.

¹⁰⁹Minutes of Board, October 12, 1961.

¹¹⁰Minutes of Board, January 19, 1961.

It would be of interest to see what changes students would have noticed from 1957-1964. All of the things already discussed in some way affected students. In addition to these there are others that may be listed. Changes were made in graduation requirements and in diplomas. At the Superintendent's suggestion, one unit of science was required beginning in the fall of 1958. Effective in June, 1959 was a diploma showing the subjects in which the work was done. This plan was chosen instead of issuing a college preparatory and a non-college preparatory diploma. The expressions "cum laude" and "magna cum laude" were also added.¹¹¹

Fifth graders in the spring of 1959 received New Testaments from the Gideons for the first time.¹¹² This same class participated in a "Learn-to-Swim" program that year. These lessons were given during school hours at pools provided by local agencies. About 250 students were involved.¹¹³

If you were a musically inclined student, you were fortunate to be in Nashville. "Your Superintendent feels that music is a very important part of the curriculum . . ." It was not considered just a "frill." The Board of Education owned a rather large number of musical instruments. The Superintendent could remember when there was not a single horn nor one band director employed in the city. Every student was

¹¹¹Minutes of Board, May 8, 1958.

¹¹²Minutes of Board, April 9, 1950.

¹¹³Minutes of Board, May 14, 1959.

given an opportunity to be involved in the music program. The system was one of the few that also had string instruments. Nashville City Schools was cited as having a "balanced music program."

Married students had certain rules to obey. A husband and wife were not to attend the same school. They could not take part in interscholastic competitive activities including athletic contests. Within one week after the wedding, the student had to report to the principal or guidance counselor for counseling and a discussion of rules applying to them. Failure to do so could result in immediate dismissal from school.¹¹⁴

What about the younger students? They certainly should have profited from the emphasis placed on the reading program. Mr. M. D. Neely, Assistant Supervisor of Elementary Education, brought some Negro first graders to the Board meeting in July of 1960. They demonstrated the success of concentrated efforts to improve the teaching of reading in the primary grades. Mr. Oliver states that "nothing else is so vital in formal education as the teaching of reading. The ability to read is the key which unlocks the door to the future in the scholastic career of every boy and girl."¹¹⁵

Look back at the high school students now. From the

¹¹⁴Minutes of Board, August 13, 1959.

¹¹⁵Minutes of Board, July 14, 1960.

students' standpoint, a significant course was added in some schools and expanded in others during this time. This course was Drivers' Education. The Superintendent said "The time is ripe for the launching of an all-out effort . . . to make Nashville the safest city in America . . ." Ample funds were made available by the Mayor and City Council for the course.¹¹⁶ The best equipment was obtained. Drivotrainers were purchased, and an article appeared in the Drivotrainers Digest in 1961 about Nashville's program.¹¹⁷

Sixth graders saw some excitement in 1960. The Superintendent made arrangements for twenty-eight sixth grade classes to take part in a television science program made available through the County School System.¹¹⁸ They, along with other elementary students, also took part in a plan to improve penmanship.¹¹⁹ Beginning in the 1960-1961 term, they received certificates for successfully completing the sixth grade.¹²⁰

One of the changes that had its effect on some students at all levels was the free lunch program. In 1962, the School Board provided \$460,000 to pay for lunches for children

¹¹⁶Minutes of Board, September 8, 1960.

¹¹⁷Minutes of Board, April 17, 1961.

¹¹⁸Minutes of Board, October 13, 1960.

¹¹⁹Minutes of Board, November 17, 1960.

¹²⁰Minutes of Board, March 8, 1962.

unable to pay for their own.¹²¹ Applicants were to be rigidly screened and rigid economies were to be practiced in the managing and operating of school lunchrooms. It was strongly urged that schools go under the National Lunch Program.¹²² Another project which all students could participate in was helping to select a flag for the city of Nashville.¹²³

The Manpower Development and Training Act affected older students as well as some adults. The Superintendent recommended that Nashville take part in this program which provided training for the unemployed and under-employed. The local school board made available buildings while the State Department of Education purchased all necessary equipment and supplies as well as paying the instructors and the operating costs of the program. The first course set up was mechanical drafting.¹²⁴

In early 1964, steps were taken to initiate classes for the illiterate, expenses of which were borne by the State. Class size ranged from ten to thirty. The Board elected the teacher who served at five dollars per hour for about three hours a week. This was for illiterates over eighteen.¹²⁵

Time has come to close this section on the activities

¹²¹Minutes of Board, October 11, 1962.

¹²²Minutes of Transitional Board, September 4, 1963.

¹²³Minutes of Board, April 21, 1960.

¹²⁴Minutes of Board, June 14, 1962.

¹²⁵Minutes of Transitional Board, December 9, 1963.

of these years although much has been left unsaid. In talking to the last city Board of Education, Mr. Oliver himself gave a concise summary of these years. This Board had opened Wharton, McKissack, Murrell, Johnson, and perhaps other schools. They had closed Knox, Lipscomb, Lockeland Annex, Tarbox, and Ford-Greene Annex. They had expanded the technical and vocational program.¹²⁶ The other items in his summary will not be mentioned as they have been covered in the foregoing pages. A few months later that Board met for the last time. Mr. Oliver reported that the contract was being let for the West Nashville Junior High. He expected that one would be let within three weeks for the Rose Park Junior High. The addition to Highland Heights was nearly completed and plans were definite for an addition to West End Senior. He asked that he be authorized to prepare, immediately, plans for additions and new buildings to relieve the overcrowded conditions at Pearl Senior, Wharton, Washington, Ford-Greene, and McKissack. In a summary at the same meeting he talked of the fine vocational programs at Pearl and Hume-Fogg. These schools had a fine practical nurses program. Library services were outstanding in the system. They were spending \$100,000 for guidance that year. The system had a professional library for its teachers.¹²⁷

¹²⁶Minutes of Board, January 18, 1962.

¹²⁷Minutes of Board, October 11, 1962.

The Commissioner of Education called a meeting early in 1961. Mr. H. H. Turpen, Assistant Superintendent in charge of finance, attended. The discussion concerned bills to be introduced regarding consolidation of the City and County School Systems. Seven members from the city and seven from the county were to serve on a committee to study the school situations and make recommendations. Before these could become law, they would be subject to approval by the City Council and the County Court. The bill was to be submitted to a referendum of the people.¹²⁸ In a little over a year, copies of the charter proposed for the metropolitan government were available to school Board members. They were instructed by their Superintendent to take particular note of transitional provisions as to public schools.¹²⁹ The machine for Metro was well-oiled and going strong. The City School System, after having existed for over a hundred years, would cease to exist.

Space will now be devoted to the work of the Transitional Board of Education, or the Interim Metro Board as it was sometimes called. It existed from October of 1962 until July of 1964. Its first meeting was held on October 13 with Dr. Henry Hill serving as chairman. Other members were Mrs. Tom Bland*, Mr. E. C. Carman, E. D. Chappel, Dr. Walter S. Davis, A. B. Gibson*, Elmer Pettit*, Frank P. White, and S. L.

¹²⁸Minutes of Board, February 9, 1961.

¹²⁹Minutes of Board, April 5, 1962.

Wright. At these meetings separate city and county reports were given by the Superintendents on many matters. Joint reports were given whenever possible.¹³⁰ The Board rotated its meeting place between the county's headquarters on Bransford Avenue and the city's headquarters in the Hume-Fogg Building on Broadway.¹³¹

One of the major jobs of the Transitional Board was to have a comprehensive survey made of the two school systems. After other offers were made, the contract was given to Educational Research Services of White Plains, New York. Dr. Francis G. Cornell was the Educational Consultant. This cost \$36,000. Four hundred copies of the complete survey were printed and 20,000 copies of a summary were published.¹³² Much of this survey is presented in this paper when recommendations for Metro are discussed.

In October of 1963 a progress report was given on the efforts toward merging the two systems. Supervisors were urged to think of the school systems as one. The Superintendents had tried to lay the groundwork for a spirit of unity among all the employees. Everyone in both systems was working together looking toward the merger to be complete by July 1, 1964.

An important part was played in merger plans by the

¹³⁰Minutes of Transitional Board, October 18, 1962.
Asterisks appear by former members of Nashville City Board.

¹³¹Minutes of Transitional Board, March 21, 1963.

¹³²Minutes of Transitional Board, June 25, 1964.

Steering Committee. This was composed of A. E. Wright, F. A. Detchon, J. K. Brown, R. F. Gruber, and Dr. A. K. Klein.¹³³ The Policies Committee was appointed by the two Superintendents to compare the policies of the two systems. The Superintendents usually met with these committees and the other ones working toward the merger.¹³⁴

Time will not be taken here to discuss the many decisions of this Board concerning general matters. It is to be kept in mind though that all the usual details of a large school system had to be handled even though the Transitional Board spent much time working on the merging of the two systems. This should give one a greater appreciation for those individuals involved in the work of these years.

By February, 1964, recommendations for Metro were ready. The Board adopted an administrative organization which had a Director of Schools as the chief administrator. He should have an academic background showing breadth and depth. "The doctorate is desired." He must have had experience in being a teacher and a superintendent. The budget allotment for salary of the Director was \$20,000. There would be four major administrative divisions, each under an Associate Director of Schools. These were the Divisions of Instruction, Professional Services, Business Affairs, and School Transportation and Physical Facilities. The Division of Instruction

¹³³Minutes of Transitional Board, October 24, 1963.

¹³⁴Minutes of Transitional Board, October 10, 1963.

had these departments: General Education, Special Education, Adult and Vocational Education, and Educational Television. Within the Division of Professional Services were the departments of Personnel, Research and Development, Instructional Materials, Pupil Personnel Services, and Public School Health Services. The Division of Business Affairs was to be made up of the departments of Accounting and Finance, Purchasing and Supply, Data Processing, and School Lunch Services. The three departments of the Division of School Transportation and Physical Facilities were School Transportation, Building Construction, and School Plant Operation and Maintenance. A strong recommendation which passed was for an administrative Assistant to represent the Director on many occasions. He should be sensitive to public concerns and capable of explaining all phases of the school system to groups and individuals.¹³⁵ A month later the Board voted for the 1964-1965 Metro operating budget to be \$33,607,008.

One act of the Transitional Board had nothing to do with Metro, but it is pertinent. At the May meeting they voted unanimously to name East Nashville High School's new gymnasium the William Henry Oliver Gymnasium.¹³⁶

It was now June 25, 1964 and the Transitional Board assembled for the last time. William Henry Oliver presented a report which he and Superintendent Moss had prepared. He

¹³⁵Minutes of Transitional Board, February 25, 1964.

¹³⁶Minutes of Transitional Board, May 28, 1964.

commended the Board members sincerely for a job well done. "Any certificate or diploma that you may receive as you complete your task would bear the inscription 'summa cum laude'." The 300 page Comprehensive Survey of the Metropolitan School System had been completed and accepted by the Board in October, 1963. When the Board began to implement the Survey recommendations, it became clear that the Steering Committee and the various sub-committees needed professional help in resolving knotty problems. Dr. E. C. Merrill, Dean, University of Tennessee, was employed as a Consultant. In addition, four well-qualified educators were chosen as special consultants for merging the systems. These were Dr. Ben Carmichael, Superintendent of Chattanooga Schools; Dr. John Letsen, Superintendent of Atlanta City Schools; Dr. James Whitlock, Associate Director, Division of Surveys and Field Services, Peabody College; and Dr. E. C. Stimbert, Superintendent of Memphis City Schools. These specialists, the Board, the Superintendents, the Steering Committee, and the some thirty odd sub-committees resolved many of the problems connected with merging. And so it was that the Transitional Board turned over to the Metro Board and Metro Director on July 1, 1964 a 90,000-pupil school system with personnel and physical facilities consolidated.

Chapter 6

THE APEX 1964-

William Henry Oliver retired from public education in the fall of 1964 at the age of sixty. He had decided that he wanted no position in Metro. Hanging in his hall is a large framed certificate of appreciation that the office staff presented to him upon his retirement. It attempts to describe the attributes of this man who had given thirty-four years to education in the city of Nashville. It was signed by all members of his staff. Mr. Oliver and Mr. Moss actually had to act as Co-Directors of Metro for about a month because as of July 1 there had been no Director to take charge. He retired one day and went back to work the next in the fall of 1964. Professor Oliver taught in the Education and English Departments at Belmont College in Nashville, Tennessee and was in charge of the secondary student teachers until the spring of 1969. He was an Associate Professor of Education.

During Mr. Oliver's last year at Belmont, he was the General Chairman for the Self-Study, but he stated that each department was so cooperative in preparing its report that his task was much easier.¹ This Self-Study was the regular ten

¹Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 5, 1974.

year study required of all colleges accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Belmont had already been accredited.² All of Belmont's faculty and twenty-eight students were involved. There were eight committees who worked on the study, which when completed was 281 pages in length.

According to Belmont's President, Dr. Herbert C. Gabhart, Mr. Oliver had expressed an interest in coming to Belmont as early as 1960 or 1961. Professor Oliver brought prestige to Belmont's Education Department. He had strength of character, and he was diligent and dependable. He was a good organizer, as evidenced in his capable direction of Belmont's Self-Study in 1969-1970. Mr. Oliver understood the administration and was always most cooperative with it. Many times he placed himself in a position to assist, that is, he volunteered to do whatever he could to help. He was respected by his students. Mr. Oliver was always trying to learn more in order to do more. He took Education 520 at Peabody during the summer of 1964. Assuredly, William Henry Oliver was a senior statesman in the area of education.³

Professor Oliver of Belmont College was often heard speaking on education. Mr. Oliver spoke on "Religion and the

²William Henry Oliver to Dale Edwards, July 25, 1974.

³Statement by Dr. Herbert C. Gabhart, President of Belmont College, personal interview, November 29, 1974.

Public Schools" to the Baptist Student Union at Peabody College on July 21, 1964. He spoke as an individual American Christian citizen, not as a representative of Metro Schools, which he was leaving, nor of Belmont College, to which he was going. He reviewed the history of religion and its involvement in education. He brought up the Supreme Court's ruling concerning religion in public schools. This was covered in Chapter 5. He closed with "Obey the law as long as it is law; change it if you desire."⁴

In the spring of 1965 and at the request of Dr. John Harper Harris, Director of Metro Schools, Mr. Oliver spoke before the Metro staff on the sales tax issue. He had told Dr. Harris that he would stay out of his way, but would be anxious to help him if he needed his assistance. He did not tell others how to vote. Because of his deep interest in public education and the urgent need for additional funds, he was for an increased sales tax which would go to education.⁵

At the time, Henry's wife, Pauline, found that she possibly had a tumor on the front part of her brain. After two or three weeks of tests, the doctors decided on surgery. Mr. Oliver had noticed that Pauline's memory was failing and she had always had a quick memory. The surgery revealed no

⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Religion and the Public Schools") at Nashville (Tennessee) Baptist Student Union, Peabody, July 21, 1964.

⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Sales Tax Talk") at Nashville (Tennessee) Metro Staff at Lentz Health Center, May 10, 1965.

tumor. Shortly, the doctors diagnosed Mrs. Oliver's condition as Alzheimer's Disease which is a gradual deterioration of the central nervous system.⁶ Thus, Mrs. Oliver's condition did not bring sudden death, but it began a long period which called for a great deal of patience and understanding on the part of her husband. Though Mrs. Oliver is unable to talk any longer or to recognize others, she still seems to recognize her husband. Her husband has not lost that love for her that he wrote his father about so many years ago.

The dedication of the William Henry Oliver Building at East High School was, of course, a great occasion for Mr. Oliver. He gave a short response after G. H. Waters gave the Dedication Address. He was surrounded by friends and overwhelmed by memories.

Most men to whom buildings are dedicated are dead before the dedication ceremonies take place. So I'm thankful to be here, Alive. I am thankful also that Mrs. Oliver is able to be here. Six months ago the doctors would not have predicted that she would be. . . . People are always saying nicer things about me than I deserve. I wish that I could be worthy of them all.

He was thankful for twenty-five wonderful years at East and his seven years as Superintendent.

I take little credit for the progress that was made. . . . Finally, my friends, let me express again my deep, humble and sincere thanks for the special honor which is

⁶Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 9, 1975.

mine tonight in having this beautiful building bear my name.⁷

Perhaps, no other speech is more representative of William Henry Oliver's character. This response shows so clearly his humility, his sincerity, and his appreciation for life with all its variety. And as the dedication caption said, he was "one whose Life Has Been Unusually Blessed and Unselfishly Useful."⁸

"Speaking on television is not a new experience for me, but speaking, for what might be considered a political purpose is new for me -- completely new." Mr. Oliver thus opened his part on a live television show in the summer of 1966. The speech, "Ben West and Education," was given on WLAC when Ben West ran for Mayor of Metro. Mayor West's attitude toward schools had been one of interest, concern, and support; not one of interference or control. "He consistently supported me and the Board of Education financially, approving each year additional expenditures for education from local funds." He gave to them consistent confidence and support and to him "I shall be eternally grateful."⁹

⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Response to Dedication of WHO Building") at Nashville (Tennessee) East Nashville High School, December 3, 1965. Underlining by Mr. Oliver.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Ben West and Education") at Nashville (Tennessee) WLAC-TV, Summer, 1966. Underlining by Mr. Oliver.

"Improving Student-Faculty Relations" was the topic of Mr. Oliver's speech to the Belmont faculty in January of 1963. Generally speaking, the relationship between teachers and students was good at Belmont. This was due to the fact that both faculty and students were, for the most part, fine, Christian individuals. The value of communication was emphasized.

Whatever ideas I may have . . . are of little, or no, value, unless I can communicate them to my students. . . . Between us and today's college generation there is a gulf which can not be removed. The best we can do is to try . . . to bridge it with kindness, concern, and understanding.

Teachers should show their concern for students' activities. This is done by showing up at student functions.¹⁰

William Henry Oliver spoke at a Six County In-Service meeting at Waverly, Tennessee in August, 1968. The counties represented were Humphreys, Hickman, Houston, Dickson, Perry, and Stewart. Mr. Oliver gave the keynote address at the General Session on August 22 after being introduced by Mr. Lathan Keatts from the State Department of Education. He entitled his comments "Teaching is Living." Yes, his comments had been used before because this thought was the most important thing in the whole realm of education as far as William Henry Oliver was concerned.¹¹

¹⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Relationships: Teacher-Student") at Nashville (Tennessee) Belmont College Faculty, January 15, 1963.

¹¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Teaching is Living") at Waverly (Tennessee) Six County In-Service Meeting, August 22, 1968.

Mr. Oliver presented his request to retire from Belmont in 1970. He thought Belmont was a good school and he had been happy there. But just as his retirement from public schools had not been final retirement, so his retirement from Belmont was not to be his final retirement either.

. . . As prospective teachers from Free Will Baptist Bible College kept coming to . . . Belmont to complete their requirements for teacher certification, there began to grow . . . a feeling that the teacher training program at Free Will Baptist Bible College ought to be expanded and that I might be a part of it. So I wrote Dr. Johnson a letter offering my services and here I am.¹²

Many years had passed since William Henry Oliver had taught in a Free Will Baptist school, but the pendulum had swung back and in 1970, he was "back where he started." In the announcement of his appointment to teach in the fields of Education and English, these facts are found. He is an ordained Free Will Baptist minister. He had worked for thirty-four years as a teacher, a principal, and superintendent of schools in the Nashville public school system. He had been an Associate Professor of Education at Belmont College.¹³ Shortly after school opened, he spoke in chapel about his experiences "From Eureka to F.W.B.B.C."¹⁴ He had told Dr. L. C. Johnson,

¹²William Henry Oliver, "Called To Teach," Lumen, ed. Jean Picirilli, (Nashville: Free Will Baptist Bible College, Lumen Staff, 1975), p. 14.

¹³"Oliver, Baerg, Griffith Join College Faculty," Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin, (August, 1970), 3.

¹⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("From Eureka to F.W.B.B.C.") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, September, 1970.

President of the College, that it was a fulfillment of his original dream.¹⁵ It will be recalled that this dream was to serve his denominational school. On January 8, 1971 Bro. Oliver spoke in chapel to the student body, entitling his remarks "Reflections, Comparisons, and Impressions." He first took a backward glance at his sixty-one years of school experience before coming to Free Will Baptist Bible College. He commented on the modest dress of the students, the fact that the school had a purpose, and that the faculty was a team that loved God.¹⁶

Who could speak at the faculty meeting on "Teacher-Student Relationships?" If anyone was qualified, it was certainly William Henry Oliver. Thus, it was he who talked to his fellow workers in April of 1971. It sounded like some of his former talks to teachers when he mentioned that they were leaders and probably the best persons some students had ever known. It was different though when he referred to seeking always the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Teachers in Christian schools should be called and commissioned by God Himself.¹⁷

¹⁵Statement by Dr. L. C. Johnson, President of Free Will Baptist Bible College, personal interview, June 12, 1975.

¹⁶Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Reflections, Comparisons and Impressions") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, January 8, 1971.

¹⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Teacher-Student Relationships") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College Faculty, April 12, 1971.

It was also in the spring of 1971 that Mr. Oliver's article, "Flowing and Growing" appeared in the school's Bulletin. Chapter 2 of this paper told of the closing of Eureka which Mr. Oliver referred to as "the stream of Free Will Baptist education running underground." He wrote,

I have again found at least a part of the main stream of Free Will Baptist education. It has surfaced magnificently and is now a steady river, not as big as it will someday be, but growing constantly as it makes its way on down the valley of Christian service. I have returned to the work to which I have always felt that God originally called me.

He described the students, the teachers, the curriculum, and the facilities at the college. In conclusion,

We have not yet become all that we hope to be. We want to reach more students. We want to train more Christian workers. There are still other courses to be added and perhaps higher plateaus of accreditation to be reached, but Free Will Baptist Bible College is a good school, worthy of the prayers and support of all Christians. . . .

The stream of Free Will Baptist Christian education hardly deserves even yet to be called a mighty river, but it has surfaced and it is flowing and growing. I do not believe that it will ever go underground again.¹³

With a chuckle, Mr. Oliver says "they have even asked me to speak at graduation once since I've been back." The date was May 14, 1971. He talked about the world the graduates were going into. The Vietnamese War was being fought. There were fears of inflation, unemployment, and economic depression. "We are becoming a bureaucracy controlled by boards and committees with a tendency toward socialism and an apathy even toward creeping communism. . . ." He called the new morality

¹³Oliver, "Flowing and Growing," op. cit., 1-3.

a reversion to immorality, which is not new. "Religion is the mother of education; the church is the parent of the school. And now education, like a rebellious teenage child, is saying to religion, its parent, 'we have no further need of you'." He then mentioned the taking of Bible reading and prayer out of the schools. He stated that he was thankful for the Christian schools springing up all over the country. With homes, schools, and churches, the foundations on which America was built, crumbling, one could no longer say the U.S. was a God-fearing, Christian nation. But he went further to challenge his listeners.

Please do not go into this world with a feeling of . . . defeatism . . . for this world which has so much wrong with it is also a world of great opportunity. . . . Ours is the great commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded you and He has promised to be with you even to the end of the world. . . . be of good cheer. Christ, Your Christ, has overcome the world. Be of good cheer!¹⁹

Mr. Oliver's third year at Free Will Baptist College was the 1972-1973 term. He was the sponsor for the Freshman Class that year. In speaking to them, he mentioned all those things any class sponsor would. These included extracurricular activities, school work, finances, and future plans. He also spoke of the importance of a strong faith, their prayer life,

¹⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Be of Good Cheer") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College Commencement, May 14, 1971.

William Henry Oliver gave the opening address on October 5, 1972 at the Principals' Conference held at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Present were principals of Free Will Baptist elementary and secondary schools from several states. The address was entitled "Private Church Related Schools in American Education - Past, Present, and Future." Church schools were nothing new on the American scene. Religious motivation brought about the first legislation requiring schools. This was done in the seventeenth century by the Puritans in Massachusetts. So education was born in America, the child of the church. Professor Oliver then summarized the fight for public education, the progress and success of public schools. For years, these schools still emphasized Biblical principles. When such ceased to exist, though, reasons became evident for church schools again, and the present Christian education movement blossomed. Mr. Oliver listed the following reasons under "Why Christian Day Schools?": Public schools are without religion, they have loose morals, permissive conduct, lack of discipline, superficial work, loss of school pride, non-Christian teachers, and they are ignoring the wishes of the parents. Difficulties of the church-related school include competition of affluent public schools, finances,

²⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, Freshman Class, Spring, 1972.

buildings, equipment, teachers (well-qualified and available), and accreditation. And what of the future? Mr. Oliver stated "I just don't know. Only God knows." In 1973, Mr. Oliver used this material in a class at the College.²¹

His topic the next morning at the Principals' Conference was a familiar one, "Teaching by Example." He called teaching by personal example the most effective method of teaching, whether inside or outside the classroom. The object of a teacher is the development, improvement, education, and progress of human beings. It is not the dissemination of subject matter. Whether it be to the advantage or disadvantage of their students, every teacher teaches by example. What one professes is of little importance compared to what one practices. "Strive to make as effective as possible your personal influence, and make sure that your example will be a safe one to copy." He then called to their attention some specific aspects in which they were to be examples. Listed were scholarship, citizenship, optimism, moral and spiritual living, and philosophy of life. The following April Mr. Oliver used these same notes at Woodbine Christian Academy when he spoke at one of their In-Service days.²²

²¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Private Church Related Schools in American Education - Past, Present, and Future") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Principals' Conference and class at Free Will Baptist Bible College, October 5, 1972 and April 18, 1973.

²²Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Teaching by Example") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Principals' Conference and Woodbine Christian Academy, October 6, 1972 and April 17, 1973.

In November of 1972, Mr. Oliver was again called upon to speak in chapel at Free Will Baptist Bible College. His title was "Facing the Future." Students were challenged to face it unafraid, walking close to God. "Advance in the future with the idea of serving rather than being served."²³

The editor of the 1973 Lumen, Free Will Baptist Bible College's yearbook, asked the right person to write about the Christian virtue of gentleness. The Lumen featured articles about a number of virtues. Professor Oliver wrote that the word "gentleness" is one of the most beautiful and poetic words in our language. The "gentleness of Christ" is referred to in II Corinthians 10:1. It is listed as one of the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22. Mr. Oliver then wrote about the words "gentle and gently." He closed with "Gentleness, I repeat, is derived from love and is kindness in action."²⁴

In April, 1973, and again in August of 1974 Professor Oliver spoke at Woodbine Christian Academy's In-Service sessions. He entitled his remarks simply "Discipline." The three main areas he covered were the causes of misbehavior, achieving classroom control, and creating self-discipline. His advice was to have a few definite rules and enforce them.

²³Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Facing the Future") at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, November 3, 1972.

²⁴William Henry Oliver, "Gentleness," article prepared for Lumen, Free Will Baptist Bible College Yearbook, November 15, 1972.

punishment should be rare but when necessary, swift and certain.²⁵

Again in January of 1974, Mr. Oliver spoke in chapel. He again commended the students and faculty. He stated that "I am a judge of schools and teachers."²⁶ That certainly is not to be doubted. He challenged the students to prepare for the work God had for each to do.

In November of 1974, Professor Oliver from Free Will Baptist Bible College went to the National Free Will Baptist Headquarters, also in Nashville, to speak. His devotional thoughts were on "Man's Refuge - Trusting in Time of Fear." Scripture references were several passages in Psalms including 102:25-27.²⁷

The most vital link in Free Will Baptist Bible College's chain is her teachers. Teachers dedicated to God - their students - education - right. One such man has dedicated his whole life to education. And why? He loves God - his students - education - right.

Because of this love, dedication and loyalty exemplify his life as an educator. The 1975 Lumen staff wishes to recognize such unfailing loyalty to God and education in the only way we know how.²⁸

²⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Discipline") at Nashville (Tennessee) Woodbine Christian Academy, April 17, 1973 and August 29, 1974.

²⁶Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) Free Will Baptist Bible College, January 24, 1974.

²⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Man's Refuge - Trusting in Time of Fear") at Nashville (Tennessee) National Free Will Baptist Headquarters, October 9, 1974.

²⁸Jean Piccirilli, editor, Lumen (Nashville: Free Will Baptist Bible College, Lumen staff, 1975), pp. 12-13.

So reads the dedication of the 1975 Lumen to Professor William Henry Oliver. Jean Picirilli, editor, made the presentation of the first copy to Mr. Oliver in chapel shortly before the closing of the spring semester. Mr. Oliver had been known to serenade his English classes on the harmonica. Thus, the Lumen staff presented him with a new one. To show his appreciation, he performed on it for the faculty and student body.²⁹ As one student put it, we had an unusual chapel. "Everybody loves that man."³⁰

Included in the Lumen was Mr. Oliver's article on "Called to Teach." He stated that he believed that just as surely as God called him to preach and sing, He called him to teach. Having done all three, God has graciously blessed in all three activities. In conclusion, "The students at Free Will Baptist Bible College are the finest group of young people that I have ever known. I hope that God will call many of them to teach."³¹

Little has been said about the classes Mr. Oliver has taught at the college or his actual work. What have his contributions in the education department been? He has helped in developing the Teacher Training Program and many more courses are now listed in the college catalog. "We have used his

²⁹Editor Presents Lumen, "Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin, (May/June, 1975) 1.

³⁰Rick Rasberry to Dale Edwards, April, 1975.

³¹picirilli, op. cit., p. 14.

experience, his judgment, his strengths, and the weight of his own personality . . . He is popular with the students and respected highly."³² In Mr. Oliver's own words,

There has been great expansion of our program in teacher training . . . both in courses offered and in faculty members. I am proud of our department of education and of our entire faculty and staff. . . . we are preparing, . . . workers for a field in which the demand for Christian service is especially great at the present time and in the immediate future. Very many of our students are . . . the kind of Christians, whom God can use in the profession of teaching.³³

Professor Oliver has not finished his work at Free Will Baptist Bible College. He will return to teaching duties there for the fall semester, the Lord willing.

Thus far, this work has largely been a summary of William Henry Oliver's life's work with occasional references to other activities. Though Mr. Oliver has gone beyond the call of duty in his vocation, he has also found time to devote to several worthwhile causes and organizations. One will be examined and others will only be mentioned in passing.

The one to be examined is Mr. Oliver's contributions to the YMCA. He was the father of the YMCA Branch idea in Nashville and was instrumental in organizing the East Center. He was a charter member of the East Center Board, which was the first center in Nashville. He was among the group that conceived of Community YMCA Programs. The group interviewed

³²Statement by Dr. L. C. Johnson, President of Free Will Baptist Bible College, personal interview, June 12, 1975.

³³Picirilli, loc. cit.

and employed Comer Teal as Nashville's first Community Program Director. He served on many of his Board's committees and was Chairman of the Board for two terms.³⁴ He was Chairman during the second and third years of its existence, and he had been the Secretary-Treasurer during its first year.³⁵ He was the principal speaker at East YMCA's First Annual Progress Report Dinner Meeting.³⁶ Mr. Oliver was a strong supporter and worker in the Capital Funds Campaign leading to the construction of the new Family YMCA Building on Gallatin Road. The East Center, under his philosophy, became the first Family YMCA in Nashville and was among the first in the country. Each year a Special Community-YMCA Service Award is given to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the Nashville Community and the YMCA. "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that WILLIAM HENRY OLIVER be awarded the YMCA'S SPECIAL SERVICE PLAQUE." The plaque was presented on May 13, 1975 at the Hillwood Country Club on the occasion of the Association's 100th Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet. The presentation was made by George H. Cate, Jr., a former student of Mr. Oliver's and a Nashville attorney. As an admirer said, "Mr. William Henry Oliver has indeed left a great mark

³⁴"William Henry Oliver Winner 1974-1975 Nashville's YMCA's Special Community-YMCA Service Award," 100th Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet, May 13, 1975, Hillwood Country Club.

³⁵ Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, June 18, 1975.

³⁶Program, East YMCA's First Annual Progress Report Dinner Meeting, East Nashville YMCA Building, February 7, 1958.

for good on his community and is highly deserving of this Award."³⁷

In 1975, Mr. Oliver received his twenty-five year pin from the American Red Cross. He is a past President of the Nashville Civitans. He is also a thirty-third degree Mason, one of only about fifty in the state.³⁸ There are in his notes many accounts of his speeches and other activities as a Mason. At the invitation of Fulton Edwards, Worshipful Master, he spoke at the Masonic Centennial at Indian Mound in 1966. In talking of "The Masonic Home," he made it exceedingly clear that the home is the key to a nation's greatness. Mr. Oliver had served as chapter advisor for De Molay. He had also participated in many programs of the Rainbows. Several times he had spoken to the Eastern Star.³⁹

Chapter 3 made note of Rev. Oliver's speaking regularly at the Homecoming at Dunbar's Chapel. He has also been a guest speaker at various other churches for their Homecomings. In 1964 he spoke on "What is Your Relationship to God?" at the Indian Mound United Methodist Church.⁴⁰ East Nashville

³⁷"William Henry Oliver Winner . . .," loc. cit.

³⁸Statement by William Henry Oliver, personal interview, July 9, 1975.

³⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Masonic Home") at Indian Mound (Tennessee) Masonic Centennial, October 8, 1966.

⁴⁰Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("What is Your Relationship to God?") at Indian Mound (Tennessee) United Methodist Church, Summer, 1964.

Free Will Baptist Church had a "Beginners' Homecoming" in 1958. The theme was "Train the Child." Those who had been in the Beginners Class many years ago participated as well as some present Beginners. Since Rev. Oliver was the pastor when the class was organized, he gave devotional thoughts on "Training the Child."⁴¹ Horton Heights Free Will Baptist Church had their 1965 Homecoming on September 12. Rev. Oliver delivered the morning message on "Three Kinds of Homecomings."⁴² Bethlehem Free Will Baptist Church near Ashland City asked the pastor of the church in 1953 to come preach at their 1972 Homecoming. Rev. Oliver used John 3:16 and Luke 15 for his Scripture text as he brought the message.⁴³

It would involve considerable effort to cover Mr. Oliver's speaking appointments at East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church. Instead, the author has chosen some remarks about East's "Golden Anniversary." Chapter 4 stated that Bro. Oliver brought the message on September 14, 1973 as that day was the "Kick-Off" date for the year long anniversary celebration. It was only natural that William Henry Oliver became the Chairman of the "Golden Anniversary" Committee. This

⁴¹Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("Training the Child") at Nashville (Tennessee) East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church, February 9, 1953.

⁴²Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("Three Kinds of Homecomings") at Nashville (Tennessee) Horton Heights Free Will Baptist Church, September 12, 1965.

⁴³Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon (Untitled) at Ashland City, (Tennessee) Bethlehem Free Will Baptist Church, May 7, 1972.

committee compiled the Golden Memory Book in an effort to recapture the first fifty years. They dedicated it to the memory of Fannie Polston's undaunted faith, personal dedication and love for the Lord. William Henry Oliver is listed as the pastor from September of 1924 until October of 1926 and again from October of 1934 until May of 1935. W. H. Oliver wrote an article, "A Note Concerning Our Music," which portrayed the music program over the years. "Occasionally Brother William Henry Oliver, first pastor and charter member of the church sings a solo, as he has been doing for fifty years." On "Anniversary Sunday," September 8, 1974, it was the task of the charter members to blow out fifty candles on a huge birthday cake. Rev. J. L. Welch, former pastor and organizer of the church, was the speaker for the day. Special music was provided in the evening by Henry Oliver, John Oliver, and L. G. Ennis.⁴⁴

On at least three occasions since Mr. Oliver was principal at East High, he has delivered the Baccalaureate sermon at that school. On June 1, 1958, he spoke on "Faith," as there was no topic which could be more profitable to think on for that hour.⁴⁵ "Putting First Things First" was his

⁴⁴"Golden Anniversary" Committee, Golden Memory Book, (Nashville: East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church, 1974) pp. 1, 8, 14-16.

⁴⁵Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("Faith") at Nashville (Tennessee) East Nashville High School, June 1, 1958.

topic in 1961. A few months later, he used these notes when he preached at the Negro Church of God Convention.⁴⁶ It was two years later when William Henry Oliver came to East as the Baccalaureate speaker again. He used a favorite address on "What is Your Relationship to God?" The Students at Hume-Fogg's Baccalaureate in 1964 heard the same question, and it was a year later that the address was given at Cumberland High School.⁴⁷

"Success in Any Career" seemed an appropriate title for a Commencement Address. Professor Oliver had earlier used these notes at Austin Peay State University's Career Day. He used the speech for commencement at W. T. Thomas High School in 1965, at David Lipscomb High School a few days later, and at Mt. Olive Junior College in 1966. Mr. Oliver was especially glad to go to Mt. Olive as it took him back to Eastern North Carolina where he had spent some time in the early part of his teaching career. He had declined the offer to become the Dean at this college when he was at Belmont because of so many ties in Nashville. Mr. Oliver's words there varied some from his usual "Success in Any Career." His key words were man, heroes, giants, and God. Among his notes were found

⁴⁶Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("Putting First Things First") at Nashville (Tennessee) East Nashville High School and Negro Church of God Convention, May 29, 1961 and August 26, 1961.

⁴⁷Statement expressed by William Henry Oliver in a sermon ("What is Your Relationship to God?") at Nashville (Tennessee) East Nashville High School, Hume-Fogg High School, and Cumberland High School, June 2, 1963, May 31, 1964, and May 31, 1965.

these poems: "If" by Rudyard Kipling, "Excelsior" and "A Psalm of Life" by Henry W. Longfellow, and "God, Give Us Men" by Josiah Gilbert Holland.⁴⁸ Henry Oliver was present at Stewart County High School's graduation in 1969. He was asked to make a few remarks and graciously did so.⁴⁹

Dedications are invariably occasions for speakers to wax eloquent. William Henry Oliver has been on hand to make remarks at several. The Reed-Cox Memorial Chapel on the campus of Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, was dedicated on December 13, 1959. This chapel is a part of the Wesley Foundation Methodist Student Center and was named in honor of Mr. James Hugh Reed and Mrs. Ethel Reed Cox. Mr. Oliver was one of three people who gave "Personal Tributes."⁵⁰ Bellwood Elementary School in Murfreesboro was dedicated in 1963. Superintendent of Nashville Schools, Mr. Henry Oliver, presented an appropriate Dedication Address. It was indeed a long way from McGregor School to Bellwood, in many respects, as Mr Oliver pointed out, but

⁴⁸Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Success in Any Career") at Clarksville (Tennessee) Austin Peay State University, April 27, 1961, at Cumberland City (Tennessee) W. T. Thomas High School, May 21, 1965, at Nashville (Tennessee) David Lipscomb High School, June 4, 1965, and Mt. Olive (North Carolina) Junior College, June 5, 1966.

⁴⁹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Graduation Remarks") at Dover (Tennessee) Stewart County High School, May 22, 1969.

⁵⁰Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Dedication of a Chapel") at Cookeville (Tennessee) Tennessee Tech, December 13, 1959.

the essential elements of learning were still the same.⁵¹ The W. H. Yarbrough Gymnasium at West High was dedicated in 1964. John Oliver, Henry's brother, was the principal there. Professor William Henry Oliver of Belmont College delivered the Dedication Address. The opposing team to play that night was East High's Eagles. It had been twenty-five years earlier when Henry made some remarks at the dedication of the football stadium at West. Ironically, East was the opposing team then. His wish had not changed. It was that good sportsmanship prevail always and that "may you never be beaten . . . by an inferior team. It is no disgrace to lose to a team that is better . . ."⁵² "Greatness" was Mr. Oliver's topic at the dedication of the John F. Kennedy Band Room at the Washington Junior High School.⁵³

Mr. Oliver is first an American, but he is also a Southerner. At least twice he has addressed the Daughters of the American Revolution. He talked about "The Constitution" in 1968.⁵⁴ In 1973, he gave a talk on the "Difficulties of

⁵¹Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Murfreesboro (Tennessee) Bellwood Elementary School Dedication, May 26, 1963.

⁵²Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address (Untitled) at Nashville (Tennessee) West End High School, Dedication of W. H. Yarbrough Gymnasium, November 23, 1964.

⁵³Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Greatness") at Nashville (Tennessee) Washington Junior High School, Dedication of JFK Band Room, May 3, 1965.

⁵⁴Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Constitution") at Scott's Hill (Tennessee) French Lick Daughters of the American Revolution, September 14, 1968.

War for Independence."⁵⁵ The United Daughters of the Confederacy met at the Sam Davis Home in 1958. Mr. Oliver spoke in memory of Sam Davis.⁵⁶ The Vanderbilt Dames heard Henry Oliver speak on "The Face of the South," a beautiful, sad, sweet, and happy face.⁵⁷ Professor Oliver addressed the Mt. Olivet Confederate Circle. It was a Memorial Service to honor all Confederate dead and to pay special tribute to Jefferson Davis.⁵⁸

The Jaycees, the Lions, Business and Professional Women, Senior Citizens, and Breakfast Clubs have heard Mr. Oliver speak in the last few years. Once, he even spoke to the Tennessee Bureau for Lathing and Plastering. Twice he addressed Beta Club Conventions. An observation of Mr. Oliver's speech notes is an experience.

During the last eleven years, Mr. Oliver has been honored and praised by many groups as well as individuals. The final chapter of this work has presented a number of these. It is needless to comment further on Henry Oliver's accomplishments. The evidence has been presented to verify the fact

⁵⁵Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Difficulties of War for Independence") at Nashville (Tennessee) Daughters of the American Revolution Luncheon, February 22, 1973.

⁵⁶Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Sam Davis") at Smyrna (Tennessee) United Daughters of the Confederacy, May 31, 1958.

⁵⁷Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("The Face of the South") at Nashville (Tennessee) Vanderbilt Dames, February 8, 1961.

⁵⁸Opinion expressed by William Henry Oliver in an address ("Jefferson Davis") at Nashville (Tennessee) Confederate Memorial Services, Mt. Olivet Cemetery, June 6, 1965.

that his life is "liken . . . unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."⁵⁹

⁵⁹Matthew 7: 24b-25.

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