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3. "I Love Colored People, but in Their Place": Segregation at Ole Miss

Ole Miss had no black students in the 1940s and 1950s, but black workers on the campus nonetheless interacted in limited ways with white students, faculty, and staff. A complicated combination of customs, habits, rules, and laws regulated their contacts. Written rules and laws governed many aspects of race relations in post–World War II Mississippi, as they had for generations. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the state enacted laws to control relations between whites and Negroes. A series of statutes starting in 1888, for example, required racial segregation in transportation, and in 1922 a new law forbade taxis from carrying blacks and whites at the same time. An 1878 law and the 1890 state constitution barred integrated public education, and other statutes kept the races apart in hospitals and jails. The legislature in 1920 also formally prohibited anyone from writing anything in support of racial intermarriage or social equality between the races. One historian has suggested, however, that Mississippi may have had fewer laws mandating segregation than did other southern states because Mississippi whites had more confidence that "the forces of social habit and white opinion were in themselves usually sufficient to ensure that the races knew their places."[1]

Among Mississippians and other southerners, black and white, a sometimes subtle and informal code continually confirmed the superiority of whites and enforced Negroes' deference. The etiquette included customs and habits that did not have legal sanction but nonetheless governed racial relationships. Intricate, informal standards forced blacks to concede their inferiority, and whites constantly monitored the actions and demeanor of blacks to detect deviations from the accepted order. Whites also watched each other for any breach in the established relationship with Negroes. Mississippians did not openly discuss, much less debate, most racial conventions because whites generally assumed, and even some Negroes acknowledged, their importance. In the 1930s sociologist Bertram Doyle suggested that blacks willingly accepted the etiquette as a way to accommodate whites and smooth black-white relations, but Gunnar Myrdal argued that "the majority of blacks are at bottom embittered by the performance of these actions and keep it up only to avoid violence and greater humiliation."[2] Although attitudes toward the customs

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undoubtedly varied among Negroes, depending on the situation and the issue, blacks generally conformed.

Mississippi's racial practices applied to Ole Miss, but they had a limited impact at the all-white university because whites and blacks had so few contacts. Race did not affect relations among the students and between students and faculty because all were assumed to be white. Racial standards applied only to people identified as African American. Other persons who might have been suspected of being racially different coexisted with white students without incident. In the spring of 1962, for example, the front page of the student newspaper ran a photograph of several Iranian students who participated in a beard-growing contest. Later that year, Peter, Paul, and Mary performed on campus, and their group included a bass player who was "a light-skinned Dutch Negro"; not only did he play without incident, but he ate dinner in the Phi Mu sorority house and spent the night in the Alumni House because nobody recognized his African origins. The student body also included "dark-skinned Hindu students from Bombay" who reported a friendly reception at Ole Miss. Foreign students also came from Taiwan and other Asian nations, but the prevailing racial customs did not apply to them. As one northerner observed, "It is not dark-skinned people but dark-skinned citizens of Mississippi who are objected to."[3] The etiquette did, however, govern how white professors and students interacted with black university employees and with black visitors to the campus, especially black entertainers who performed on campus. It also influenced white attitudes toward blacks.

Black workers on campus filled only menial positions and always under the supervision of whites. Black men and women performed the physically arduous, dirty, or unpleasant tasks that whites did not want to do. They cooked and served meals to the white students in the university cafeteria, and they washed the dishes after they ate. The cooks, servers, and dishwashers, however, could not eat in the cafeteria where they worked. Others tended the campus grounds by cutting grass, raking leaves, and trimming shrubbery, but they did not later enjoy strolls across the campus. They moved furniture, mopped and swept floors, emptied trash cans, washed windows, and cleaned bathrooms, but they could not use the restrooms or water fountains reserved for whites; they had their own segregated toilet facilities, usually in the basements. (Fraternities and sororities employed blacks for similar tasks in the Greek houses.) At the same time, no black held any white-collar position as secretary, clerk, supervisor of any kind, professor, or professional staff member. Subordinate jobs reinforced their inferiority in the segregated southern society of which Ole Miss was definitely a part. The system's oppressive work environment did not provide for or encourage black occupational development but instead kept

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workers in low-paying positions without any chance of advancement. Like the rest of the white South in the postwar era, Ole Miss endorsed black inferiority and capitalized on it.

Although relations between white supervisors and black workers varied, whites customarily treated them disrespectfully and sometimes malevolently. For example, in the mid-1950s one black worker, frustrated with his low wage and the general treatment of the university's black employees, wrote officials in Washington to protest. When the man's superior learned of his impertinent letter, he fired him. The example had a debilitating effect on other blacks. After a warning from a boss that the same thing would happen to him if he made any protest, one of the fired man's coworkers quit and escaped to work in a fraternity house. Even when blacks more innocently breached the racial rules, the repercussions could be rough. One summer while cleaning and repairing dormitory rooms, a black maintenance worker sought relief from the heat by taking a drink from a dormitory water fountain. When his white supervisor realized what he had done, he berated him and threatened to fire him. Black employees continually experienced such indignities. Despite such outrages, black workers endured because university jobs were nonetheless good compared to other work available in Oxford and Lafayette County, and the other employment opportunities would have involved similar treatment.[4]

Three exceptional stories in the 1950s demonstrated the complex and contradictory nature, the benefits and limitations, of everyday race relations at Ole Miss. Even within the strict limitations of segregation, white paternalism did sometimes help blacks. One janitor developed as an artist under the informal tutelage of an art professor. A dean befriended another custodian and helped him further his education. The third even more unusual example of a black person who benefited from white indulgences involved a man who was not actually a university employee. The three cases' remarkable and atypical characteristics reveal the narrow options open to blacks and whites under the constraints of segregation.

The most persistent presence on campus during the first half of the twentieth century was James E. Ivy. An Ole Miss institution by the 1920s, Jim Ivy became known to thousands of students and alumni, but his true personal story became partly shrouded in myth. Born to a former slave in 1872, Jim Ivy grew up in Alabama and moved to Mississippi as a young man. He worked on river boats and picked cotton in the Delta before settling in Oxford. While working in 1894 painting a bridge over the Tallahatchie River, Ivy got paint or creosote in his eyes and completely lost his sight. For a short time he tried to support himself by singing for pennies on the streets of Oxford, but by 1896 he began selling candy and peanuts to students on the campus. Ivy later recalled,

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"They didn't like me much when I first came here," and, according to another account, he initially "met much sarcasm and ill-treatment from the boys as a result of their not accepting him." In the spring of 1896, however, Jim Ivy won acceptance among the students.[5]

In a baseball game against the University of Texas, Mississippi fell far behind and seemed sure to lose when Jim Ivy emerged from behind the stands and began cheering for the home team. Cheering louder than anyone else, he stirred the crowd, the students bought all of his peanuts, and together they inspired the team to a comeback victory. In succeeding months and years, the tall and mustachioed Jim Ivy and his cry of "Come on, Miss'ippi" became increasingly popular, and college students began affectionately to call him "Blind Jim." A few years later Blind Jim designated himself the "Dean of Freshmen."[6]

As unofficial adviser and counselor to freshmen, Blind Jim often spoke to them at pep rallies and at the welcoming party at the beginning of the year. "I'se the dean and about the first thing I'se going to do is to make my speech to the freshmen Thursday night," he explained. "I'se going to tell them just exactly what's expected of them, so they won't get in any trouble." More informally the ordained Baptist minister regaled freshmen and other students with stories about Ole Miss, shared his own life's experiences with them, and made regular predictions about the athletic teams. Wearing a one-foot-square sign around his neck identifying himself as "Blind Jim, Dean of Freshmen," he attended football, basketball, and baseball games with the first-year students. In return for his support, freshmen took turns guiding him around campus, escorted him to the games, and bought him a new suit of clothes each year. Students also helped him navigate the changing campus when the university constructed buildings and added sidewalks.[7]

Blind Jim became known as the Rebels' most devoted supporter and traveled to many away games. In 1942, for example, the *Mississippian* announced that "Blind Jim Ivy will lead the freshmen of Ole Miss in a counter-attack against all Georgia cheers at the Rebel-Bulldog encounter at Crump Stadium in Memphis tomorrow." For fifty-nine years he never missed a homecoming game, and he boasted, "I've been to more Ole Miss games than anybody else, and I've never seen the Rebels lose yet!" He often sat on the sidelines and, just as at his first baseball game, led the fans in cheers. He reportedly invented a popular cheer used at Alabama games—"Ramma Tamma, Yellow Hammer, Down with Alabama."[8]

To support himself, Blind Jim initially sold peanuts and candy around campus. He parched the peanuts himself at his home and brought them to campus to vend. By the late 1940s he had set up a stand inside the Lyceum

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building not far from the chancellor's office where he sold candy and other refreshments. Such employment for the blind was not unusual; in fact, a federal law passed in the 1930s promoted concession stands operated by the blind in federal office buildings. By the early 1950s, Blind Jim had transferred his operation to the foyer of the campus cafeteria.[9]

Students helped Blind Jim when he had problems. During the 1930s, like so many other Americans, Jim Ivy encountered financial difficulties. In the fall of 1936, he could not repay the five-hundred-dollar debt he had incurred two years earlier when he purchased his one-room shanty just south of the campus. The student newspaper appealed for students, alumni, and others to help Blind Jim. In the midst of the Great Depression, students pitched in but could not raise the money alone. After articles appeared in Jackson and Memphis papers, alumni sent donations. Seventeen years after graduating, one alumnus sent a note with his check: "I shall not forget the joy I had in knowing you Blind Jim." After several weeks, Blind Jim was able to keep his small home largely because well-to-do alumni in New York sent enough to help him meet his obligation.[10]

During World War II, Ivy's modest business suffered from the shortages and high prices common in the national economy. Wartime restrictions made it impossible for him to buy candy to sell, and the price of peanuts was so high that he could not afford them. In October 1942, the *Mississippian* announced, "So bad as Jim hates it, he has had to place himself open for donations in order to keep his usually thriving enterprise from going into receivership."[11] With the help of Ole Miss students and alumni, Ivy did survive his wartime economic crisis.

In the early 1950s, the white-haired and elderly Blind Jim slowed down but continued to hold the students' respect and affection. For example, the student body in the spring of 1950 honored him during Rebelee party weekend by staging a "Blind Jim Parade." He rode on the student body float in the parade that also included bands, student government officers, and candidates for Miss University. When able, he continued to attend Rebel sporting events, and his home was painted Rebel red and blue. By the summer of 1954, however, he visited campus less frequently because his doctor had ordered him to avoid the overexertion of yelling or getting into large crowds. At the opening of the fall term, he predicted the football team would win the Sugar Bowl but indicated that he would not be traveling with the team to games. A year later, an adopted son took Jim Ivy to his home in Chicago where he could take better care of his aging father. A special university committee announced it would raise funds at the Arkansas game to help pay Ivy's medical and living expenses. During a brief hospitalization, Blind Jim died of tuberculosis on October 20, 1955, at the age of eighty-three.[12]

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Two days later his beloved Rebels defeated Arkansas in the annual homecoming game in Oxford, and his friends collected donations to help with his funeral. Flags at Ole Miss flew at half-staff in his honor. On the day of the game, the alumni association's regular meeting adopted a resolution honoring Blind Jim, who, of course, would never have been allowed to come to one of the meetings. In sorrow, the resolution recognized him as "a colorful figure" who had "won the love and affection of generations of Ole Miss students since 1896." The alumni praised Blind Jim's "spirit of cheerfulness, good humor, dignity, and independence" and the courage with which he lived a life in blindness. In thanking Jim Ivy for his "substantial and valuable contribution to school spirit," the alumni never mentioned that he was a Negro.[13]

Immediately after Ivy's death, an ad hoc committee, including Athletic Director Tad Smith, Provost Alton Bryant, and Financial Secretary W. C. "Chuck" Trotter, continued to raise money. Organized to solicit contributions to provide for Ivy's final needs, it announced after his death that it would continue to seek donations to pay Jim Ivy's remaining bills but also to erect a memorial to him on the campus. In Jackson, meanwhile, the *Daily News* and WJTV launched a campaign to establish in honor of Blind Jim a college scholarship for Mississippi Negroes at one of the state's black colleges. The IHL board unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed the effort to raise funds for both a memorial and a scholarship. In supporting the plan, J. Oliver Emmerich claimed that Blind Jim "was as well known in Mississippi as either candidate for the presidency in the last election." Another trustee insisted that the university memorial "should be a life size statue just as 10,000 Ole Miss students remember him." The chancellor commented blandly, "We think the plan is just fine and will cooperate fully in the matter."[14]

Ten days after Jim Ivy's death, Ole Miss students, faculty, alumni, and staff filled the Second Baptist Church in Oxford for a thirty-minute memorial service. George Street, university director of placement and an alumnus, conducted the service. Calling Blind Jim "an integral part of the life of the University of Mississippi," Street remembered that "Jim's life was marked by perseverance, optimism, and humor (how many have heard him say 'I've never seen the Rebels lose a game'), loyalty, and finally by a deep religious faith." Ole Miss and Blind Jim had had, according to Street, an "astonishing association" for sixty years, and he suggested that Blind Jim had embodied the sentiments in the alma mater. After a minute of silent prayer the memorial service ended. Later in the same church, Ivy's Negro friends and family gathered for his funeral. He was buried in the Negro section of St. Peter's Cemetery in Oxford.[15]

At the time of Jim Ivy's death, a *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* editorial summed up his importance for Ole Miss and, perhaps unintentionally, explained how the

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racial etiquette functioned in the early postwar period. "The aged Negro," according to the newspaper, "could well serve as an inspiration to his own people as well as to the multitude of whites who knew and loved him." Not only had he "earned the affection and respect of untold thousands over the state of Mississippi and elsewhere," but he "never had cause to resent the fact he was a Negro." According to the Jackson editor, "He showed the students and faculty how a Negro can live as a Negro without resentment or jealousy or inferiority or loss of self-respect."[16]

For whites in segregated Mississippi, Blind Jim had seemed the model Negro—content, humble, and friendly in his assigned place of inferiority. Students had often described him as "this lovable old Negro" or "darkey" and an "ever-lovable" and "faithful Negro." Two decades before his death, one observer had described Jim Ivy as "a harmless, inoffensive, lovable old darkey" and as the "perfect proto-type" of a southern Negro. At the time white Mississippians were raising money to help Ivy save his home, a Jackson journalist declared, "Listen all ye white folks who dwell above the Mason and Dixon Line: Down here we love our negroes and our negroes love us. We are willing and ready to go to the limit for them and they are ready and willing to do the same thing for us. . . . Yankees can't understand that. No use for any Yankee trying to understand."[17] Nonsoutherners could not appreciate fully the wonders of southern race relations as represented by Blind Jim and as celebrated by Mississippi whites.

Jim Ivy personified the Negroes' acquiescence in racial segregation and in their own inferiority. While others, especially outside the South, denounced the southern way of life, Blind Jim's day-to-day pursuits seemed to validate and justify the white defense of southern racial mores because he showed that race relations could be peaceful and harmonious. In Ivy's case, southern paternalism simply seemed to work. In exchange for his acceptance of a subservient role, the superior whites took care of him by supporting his business, providing him clothes, taking him to the Rebels' games, and helping him in personal financial emergencies. But whites also controlled him and their interactions. Even within Ivy's close relationship with whites, he did not breach or even challenge the racial barriers. He ate his noon meal, after all, not with students in the cafeteria, but in the back with the black cafeteria workers. When he went to out-of-town football games with students, he had to stay in the black section of town, not with the students.[18]

For some observers, the happy Blind Jim embodied Uncle Remus. The *Oxford Eagle* once claimed that "Joel Chandler Harris' 'Uncle Remus' practically comes to life in Blind Jim. He not only tells tales equally as well as 'Uncle Remus,' but he actually resembles the character created by Harris." Like Uncle

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Remus, Blind Jim passed his wisdom on to young whites by telling them stories. In Jim Ivy's case, his stories helped the new freshmen adjust to Ole Miss. Unlike Uncle Remus, however, Blind Jim's tales never had any underlying message even slightly subversive of the racial status quo. His stories instead confirmed his white listeners' racial stereotypes and reinforced the prevailing racial mores. On one occasion, for instance, Blind Jim shared some "niggerology" with his freshmen. He asked, "Did you ever see a tub full of crabs? You don't have to put a top on to keep 'em in. No, sir—when one climbs nearly to the top the others will yank him back. Niggers just that way."[19] His story verified the whites' view that blacks could not see their own best interest, that they could not make progress on their own.

Ivy's blindness strengthened and softened his role as a black racial prototype, though few whites probably ever considered the effects of his blindness on their relationship with him. Sighted people typically respond to blind individuals such as Blind Jim with pity. "The blind are forever preoccupied with pity," according to two scholars of blindness, because "the environment of the blind is so saturated with pity." People fear the misfortune of blindness, but instead of striking out against the blind, sighted people out of a sense of guilt react with pity that marks the blind as inferior to themselves and works to keep them isolated, even while coming in contact with them. Hector Chevigny and Sydell Braverman have argued that "pity is the perfect excuse, for it cloaks its purpose in what seem the highest of social sanctions."[20]

Visual differences, therefore, reinforced the relationship between the Negro Blind Jim and his sighted, white Ole Miss friends. Blindness buttressed race. The treatment of both the blind and racial minorities involved ostracism, inferiority, stereotypes, and the fear of integration.[21] Blind Jim was, therefore, doubly inferior because of his color and his handicap. The pity of the sighted for the blind reinforced the paternalism of whites toward the black man, and pity combined with paternalism to prompt whites to take care of the dependent Blind Jim. The barrier between the blind and the sighted became greater when compounded by Blind Jim's race at the same time that pity brought the white students closer to him.

Jim Ivy's blindness also made him less of a threat to whites than other sighted black males. Whites had long feared black men as sexual aggressors. Just months before Blind Jim died, the lynching of Emmett Till in Mississippi demonstrated the white fear of black males; the Chicago youth had not actually raped a white woman but ostensibly had only made inappropriate sexual remarks to her, and angry whites responded by killing him in the name of protecting white womanhood. Sighted people commonly perceived the blind as less sexually powerful, perhaps unsexed, even castrated. Jim Ivy had twice

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been married, once to a blind woman and once when he was nearly eighty to a sixty-four-year-old woman, but he had no children. Unlike Emmett Till and Mack Charles Parker, who was later lynched for allegedly raping a white woman, Blind Jim seemed to pose no sexual threat to white female students and could be trusted on the Ole Miss campus. He could not even look at a white woman. As a blind man, Blind Jim was safe, especially in his later years.[22]

If any death can be considered timely, Blind Jim's death in the fall of 1955 may have been. The civil rights movement's challenge to white supremacy, segregation, and discrimination had begun. Barely six weeks after his demise the Montgomery bus boycott accelerated the movement. The role of a lovable darkey who confirmed the prejudices of whites would become increasingly untenable and anachronistic, even in Mississippi. By the spring of 1955, the white segregationist reaction against *Brown* and the civil rights movement may have even affected the relationship between students and Blind Jim. Paul Baccaro, a student, complained about "sadistic tendencies" of some students who persecuted Blind Jim. After seeing the elderly Jim Ivy on campus for the first time in months, Baccaro inquired about his recent absence, and Blind Jim told him that he thought students did not want him around because they had been verbally abusing him and harassing him when he did come to the university. Blind Jim's increasing irrelevance in the 1950s became even more apparent after his death in the fate of plans to honor him. After paying for Ivy's funeral and gravestone, the fund in his honor had a balance of less than ten dollars, which was turned over to the Mississippi Vocational College in Itta Bena. The funds raised by the Jackson newspaper and television station amounted to slightly more than one thousand dollars, and that also went to the vocational college. No scholarship was ever named in honor of Blind Jim, and no memorial was ever constructed on the Oxford campus in his memory.[23]

The story of another Negro revealed how, even under strict segregation and the prevailing paternalism before the civil rights movement, whites and blacks could interact in a meaningful and significant way at the university. In 1949, Stuart R. Purser moved to Oxford to found an art department. As he drove through rural Pontotoc County that summer, Purser noticed some impressive artwork on a front porch. Intrigued, he stopped at the farm house in the small community of Ecru, about thirty miles east of Oxford, and inquired about the creator of the two striking busts on display. An older black woman told the professor that her son had made them, and she introduced Purser to a young man named M. B. Mayfield.[24]

One of the busts that Purser saw on the porch was a self-portrait that Mayfield sculpted by looking in a mirror. He based the other, of boxer Joe Louis, on a newspaper picture of the Brown Bomber. Mayfield had made his

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own bust out of clay, but it kept cracking, so he fashioned the boxing champion out of cement; he shined both of the busts with brown shoe polish. "I had never seen a real statue," Mayfield later confessed, "until I made the ones of Joe Louis and myself." Purser admired Mayfield's accomplishments, especially because he had made them without any artistic training. Before leaving Ecru, Purser gave Mayfield some art supplies and then made him an astounding offer: he would arrange a job for Mayfield as custodian in the art department.

Forty-two-year-old Stuart Purser had long had a keen interest in blacks and southern race relations. He had grown up in mill towns in Arkansas and Louisiana where his father worked as a skilled foreman in sawmills. From a young age Purser had learned the complexity of southern race relations, in part because his parents frequently disagreed about it. Purser's father, who came from the Tennessee hills and once served as the head of a local Ku Klux Klan, usually treated individual blacks decently but was prejudiced against the race. On the other hand, Purser's mother was a devout Christian who discreetly opposed the KKK and supported instead duly constituted law and order; she believed that whites should help and encourage blacks through love and understanding. Stuart Purser's closest boyhood friend in Good Pine, Louisiana, had been a Negro his own age named James Jackson, called "Applehead" or just "Ap." Together Stuart and Ap played sports, roamed the creeks and woods, and hunted and fished, at least until Ap in 1927 had to flee after accidentally injuring a white boy with a baseball bat.

After graduating from Louisiana College in 1928, Stuart Purser studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and received a master's degree in 1933. After one year at Washington State University and a decade at his alma mater, he taught for four years at the University of Chattanooga, where he stayed until moving to Oxford. In his art Purser sought to depict "the existing conditions and the social and economic conditions that are taking place in the South." He painted the world he knew, especially southern biracial communities. One critic noted that "central to the artist's vocabulary is the visual metaphor of rural Black America."[25] That a white artist such as Purser painted blacks at all demonstrated his sincere interest in them, and his works reveal a genuine respect and affection for them as fellow human beings.

M. B. Mayfield and a twin brother, L. D., were born in Ecru in 1923. By 1949 M. B. had lived all his life in the small rural community where his father had grown cotton. The family of twelve suffered many losses early in Mayfield's life: his father died when M. B. was not quite three years old, and five siblings died of tuberculosis before he was grown. After his mother married a man with five children from his first marriage, M. B. Mayfield grew up in a large family. Issues of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* covered the walls of his house, and

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the young M. B. spent many hours copying the colorful comics. The introverted and antisocial Mayfield avoided farmwork whenever he could and hid in the house and drew. At school he began to draw and color with crayons, but he never went to the local Negro high school.[26]

While farming in Ecru in 1941, Mayfield suffered a bout of fatigue. A local physician found a spot on one of his lungs, suspected tuberculosis, and prescribed extended rest. While self-treating the dreaded disease at home, Mayfield suffered a nervous breakdown. For several years he fought to regain his physical and mental health. Throughout the 1940s, he passed the time by drawing, writing, and listening to music on the radio. He also developed several pen pals through the *Pittsburgh Courier*. During his convalescence, Mayfield began to take his art more seriously. When he met Purser toward the end of his recuperation, his life took a dramatic change.

After settling into the university, Purser sent Mayfield the promised bus ticket to Oxford. After riding behind a curtain at the back of a segregated bus, the young black man arrived at the campus on October 3, 1949, to begin working as a janitor. He divided his duties between the art department's classrooms and studios on campus and the department's off-campus art gallery, where he also had a small apartment. Though frightened by being away from Ecru for the first time, Mayfield found a warm reception at the university and quickly felt at home.[27] His job involved more than cleaning and sweeping because Purser and his art students took an active interest in Mayfield's development as an artist.

In addition to his janitorial duties, Mayfield set up art materials for the students and operated the art gallery. In his activities Mayfield had an opportunity to learn by watching; for example, he learned art history when he operated a slide projector for Purser's art history and art appreciation classes. His custodian's closet, located just off an art classroom, permitted him to sit and observe everything in the class: he, in effect, took art classes at a distance in his own cramped studio. Neither professors nor students objected to his passive participation in their classes. On occasion, Purser, who helped local blacks by hiring them to model for his classes, also asked Mayfield to pose for his students.[28]

More important than Mayfield's peripheral involvement in the art classes was Purser's nurturing of the black janitor's artistic talent in individual lessons in drawing and painting. Mayfield had his own private tutor. Many art students also took an interest in his development by giving him their leftover art supplies, encouraging his artwork, and inviting him to display his work at their Christmas auction. Others also knew of Purser's tutelage of the janitor, especially after a positive article on Mayfield appeared in the student newspaper in

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the spring of 1950. The dean of liberal arts approved of Mayfield's unusual relationship with the art department, and an education professor and his wife provided Mayfield with art supplies. As a result of his art "lessons," Mayfield later claimed that he became "Ole Miss' first black student."[29]

Purser believed that "with the proper training he [Mayfield] could become one of the outstanding colored artists in the South," but his concern for Mayfield extended beyond his development as an artist and included his growth as an individual. Purser frequently asked Mayfield to accompany him on short trips. From the lectures he overheard and from their conversations in the car, Mayfield was always learning from his mentor. When Purser made art presentations in other Mississippi towns, for example, Mayfield went along. Once they arrived at their destination, Mayfield helped set up the art displays and then sat behind the curtain to listen to the presentation. On their overnight trips, Purser always arranged for Mayfield's accommodation at black hotels and paid all of his expenses. One afternoon Mayfield visited Tennessee for the first time when he went with Purser to Memphis to pick up office and art supplies. From radio and newspapers when he was growing up and from conversations at Ole Miss, he had heard about the city and its Brooks Art Gallery, and for years his family had ordered out of the Sears catalog by using a mail order form that had a Memphis address. After they got their supplies, Purser took Mayfield sightseeing. They drove by the Peabody Hotel and the Sears store, and then to the Brooks Art Gallery. Though closed to blacks except for one day a week, Purser prevailed on the director to give Mayfield a special tour, his first visit to an art gallery.[30]

In the spring of 1951, Purser again surprised Mayfield by sending him to Jackson to take the GED exam at Jackson College for Negro Teachers. Both men, but especially Purser, must have known that passing the high school equivalency test would help Mayfield obtain a better job and follow his artistic talent. Purser made all the arrangements, including the bus ticket, a hotel room on Pearl Street, and an appointment to take the test. Mayfield apparently passed.[31]

The highlight of Mayfield's time in Oxford came in the late spring of 1951. Again at Purser's instigation, professors, students, and friends, including William Faulkner, raised the money and made the arrangements to send Mayfield to Chicago to see a Van Gogh exhibit. Mayfield rode a bus from Oxford to Batesville, where for the first time he boarded a train. In several days in Chicago, he saw the spectacular exhibit and toured the city. From his YMCA hotel, he wrote to his mother in Ecru, "I am having a WONDERFUL time here in Chicago. Wish I could stay." Chicago even more than Jackson or Memphis, and Van Gogh more than the Brooks, opened the world and the world of art to Mayfield.[32]

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M. B. Mayfield worked at Ole Miss for another year and a half, but for the last six months life around the art department was not the same, because his mentor had left. In 1951, after two years in Oxford, Stuart Purser moved to the University of Florida. At the end of the same year, Mayfield also decided to leave his job and to return to Ecru to care for his sick mother. When she recovered, he returned to the university for several months in the spring of 1954 but again found the situation different without Purser; when his mother had a stroke he moved back to Ecru to care for her. After she died, Mayfield moved to Wisconsin for half a dozen years before returning to the South. From 1967 to 1979 he worked at the Brooks Art Gallery as a custodian and later as a security guard. After other jobs in Memphis, he returned to live and paint in Ecru. In the forty years after he left Oxford, Mayfield exhibited his artwork in galleries from Texas to Massachusetts; his first show appeared in Starkville, Mississippi, in 1955. He attributed much of his success, personal as well as artistic, to Stuart Purser, his "long-standing friend and art instructor."[33]

Purser indeed had a profound impact on Mayfield. The art professor could work with the black janitor because he did it so casually and subtly that many did not even notice and few would have objected to their exceptional relationship. As an experienced observer of southern racial practices, Purser knew better than to challenge segregation overtly, so he worked for tolerance and equality by nurturing the career of his black employee. For all of his thoughtful deeds on behalf of Mayfield and other blacks, Purser never discussed race with him and was always careful that Mayfield never violate racial taboos; Mayfield may have always ridden in the front seat of a car on trips, but Purser insisted that he ride in the back seat on errands in town with the department secretary. Instead of launching a futile assault on racial prejudice and discrimination that would have jeopardized Mayfield's position as an unconventional student, Purser and Mayfield worked within the prevailing system of segregation to undermine the racial status quo.

The Purser-Mayfield relationship differed significantly from Jim Ivy's association with Ole Miss. Though each man worked within a tightly segregated university, Blind Jim humbly benefited from the kindness and generosity of whites while never threatening white superiority. Ivy apparently accepted his subservient status and did not expect his situation to improve, but he cultivated white sympathy for his own benefit. Mayfield also did not question Mississippi's racial mores and used the opportunities presented to him. The development of his artistic talents under Purser, however, confused accepted racial distinctions more than Blind Jim ever could. By demonstrating a black man's talent, Mayfield defied white condescension toward blacks. Whites had long recognized black achievements in the arts and explained them as a func-

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tion of the emotional and nonintellectual character of blacks, so Mayfield's accomplishments only slightly jeopardized white confidence. Granting M. B. Mayfield's artistic achievement also involved only one individual, not an appreciation for the entire race.[34] If Ivy and Mayfield found space under white supremacy to eke out limited personal success, a third African American university employee in the 1950s followed a different route toward achievement in Jim Crow Mississippi.

In the early 1950s, Ernest McEwen Jr. worked as a janitor in the Lyceum. Born in Lafayette County in 1931, McEwen grew up just west of Oxford in the Spring Hill community where he went to school. Each of his parents had only an eighth-grade education. His father was a sharecropper but in 1944 bought land from a friendly white man and became an independent farmer; his mother taught school for a few years. The family was a mixture of white, black, and Native American. The elder Ernest McEwen had such light skin that he could have passed for white, but his son had very dark skin like his mother's. Though the McEwens went to Oxford frequently on weekends, they never attended a Rebel football game but from their farm could see cars going to Oxford for games. In the eleventh grade, McEwen married and began working at the university. On a night crew that started a daily eight-hour shift at 3:00 P.M.., McEwen cleaned the Lyceum. The popular, well-spoken, and handsome young black man's enthusiasm and ability impressed people. An Ole Miss student who learned that McEwen wanted to go to college introduced him to L. L. Love, the dean of student personnel who had an office in the building.[35]

Though Love was a native of Oregon, his parents' families came from Tennessee and Kentucky, and he thought of himself as partly a southerner. He joined the university in 1949 after teaching in Oregon, serving in the navy, and working as a dean at Ohio State University, where he had received his doctorate in 1932. The father of four grown children, Love took an interest in Ernest McEwen. He appreciated McEwen's intelligence and his interest in college. The dean and the janitor got to know each other when McEwen visited in Love's campus home. As a result of conversations over coffee and Cokes, Love concluded that McEwen was not a member of the NAACP, did not advocate integration, and had the potential to become the kind of black leader Mississippi needed.[36]

When McEwen told Love he wanted to study engineering at a northern college, Love initially tried to help him gain admission to Howard University in Washington. The dean did not consider suggesting Ole Miss, but after corresponding with officials at Mississippi's black colleges, Love proposed that McEwen consider staying in the state. The dean persuaded him to attend

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Alcorn A&M College, and he arranged for a scholarship, a job as foreman on a custodial crew, and a married-student apartment. In the fall of 1953, the twenty-two-year-old McEwen moved to Alcorn with his wife and their three children. McEwen and Love maintained contact; on visits to Oxford, McEwen sometimes called on his mentor, and Love and others at Ole Miss occasionally gave him clothing and money. In McEwen's third year at Alcorn, he was elected president of the student body. Love's interest in and concern for one of the Lyceum's custodians had paid impressive dividends.[37]

Racial customs at Ole Miss extended beyond Ivy, Mayfield, and McEwen to include campus visitors. After World War II no blacks came with visiting athletic teams or as speakers to university audiences; such appearances would have suggested equality with or even superiority to Ole Miss audiences. Black entertainers, however, did frequently perform at concerts and at fraternity parties.[38] In the antebellum South, slave singers and musicians often performed for whites, and Ole Miss continued the tradition after World War II when black performers remained common. Without causing any controversy, fraternities often hired African American musical groups for their parties and dances. In the 1950s the university also featured concerts by jazz musicians Lionel Hampton, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington.

In February 1952, the student body hosted the renowned vibraharpist Lionel Hampton. With the state's general assembly in its biennial session, the chairman of Ole Miss's social committee advised the student government sponsors not to use photographs of Hampton in their concert publicity and suggested that they tear the pictures from already printed posters. Earlier the committee had bowed to administration pressure and canceled an appearance by Count Basie and Billy Eckstein at the students' major winter dance, but it decided to proceed with Hampton's visit. Paul Pittman, the editor of the *Mississippian*, suggested that the university administration feared "repercussions" if the legislators knew "a Negro band would play for Ole Miss students." According to Pittman, "The result: Supreme Idiocy."[39]

Despite the concerns about embarrassing publicity, "The Hamp" and his eighteen-piece group presented, according to the student newspaper, a "sensational performance" that the "audience loved." The band "blew and blew, played and played, and the audience loved it" for three and a half hours; students "stood and yelled, clapped and stomped, and crowded to the front" of the auditorium. "Stupendous," declared the *Mississippian*. One student called it the most powerful performance in the twenty-five years of the Fulton Chapel auditorium. A letter to the editor condemned the "perverted" "blockheads" who had opposed the black artist's appearance and claimed that even "racial prejudice" cannot "crush art." Despite the concerns of the Ole Miss admin-

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istration, the event stirred no controversy, and two weeks later the legislature increased appropriations for the state's institutions of higher education.[40]

Hampton returned in April 1954 for a repeat performance, but without many of the worries about publicity. Coming later in the year, his concert posed less of a threat to legislative appropriations, and the lack of attention in the state's press reduced the fears of administrators. On a Thursday evening more than one thousand students crowded into Fulton Chapel and turned into a "mass of feverish, screaming humanity, waving their arms and stomping their feet" in response to the jazz. The orchestra included a white pianist, a Japanese saxophonist, and several musicians from Europe, but the hysterical all-white audience paid no attention to the racial mixture. Overly enthusiastic students in the standing-room-only crowd climbed on stage to dance with the band, and only an intermission calmed the students. After three encores, the concert ended, and Hampton declared Ole Miss audiences among his more enthusiastic from all over the world, and he intimated he might write a song and call it "Ole Miss." Hampton later fondly recalled drinking and dancing with the students after the show and remembered that fifty cars of Ole Miss students drove to his concert the next evening in Nashville.[41]

When Louis Armstrong came to Ole Miss the following spring, engineers feared that a reception similar to Hampton's would threaten the safety of the Fulton Chapel audience. A special notice warned that "structural engineers have advised us that demonstrations, such as jumping up and down and unnecessary stomping of feet, are not to be permitted in the interest of safety." When the great trumpeter and his All-Stars performed, engineers enforced the decree. Though the spectators were "unusually reserved," perhaps because of the warning, the auditorium "rocked in the spring heat to the hot music." Like Hampton's earlier concerts, Satchmo's appearance at Ole Miss gained little attention outside Oxford and caused no controversy. With the general assembly not in session, the March 1955 appearance worried administrators far less than concerts when the legislators were meeting in Jackson.[42]

Duke Ellington, the third major African American musician to appear at the university in the 1950s, played for the students' major spring dance in 1956. Though acclaimed as a composer, pianist, and bandleader, Ellington in the mid-1950s had reached a fallow period and struggled professionally. Trying to keep the band together, they played at places that would not be able to afford them after Ellington's renaissance at the Newport Jazz Festival in July 1956, which came soon after his appearance at Ole Miss. Coming in May, his orchestra's performance fell safely after the close of the legislature, and it too attracted little statewide publicity and elicited no criticism from the state's white segregationists.[43]

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As the experiences of Hampton, Armstrong, and Ellington testified, Mississippi whites in the postwar era accepted blacks as entertainers. They could appreciate the unique gifts of individual blacks without undermining their basic belief in the superiority of the white race. Black performers on stage remained removed from whites, and their presence before whites did not imply social equality. Blacks may have succeeded more in the music industry than in any other because whites, even in the South, accepted them more as singers, musicians, dancers, and actors than as any other professionals. Blacks also routinely performed before all-white audiences in both the South and the North without challenging segregation. Hampton, Armstrong, and Ellington had roots in the South, understood the region's racial mores, and did not crusade for integration. More than two years after Armstrong's appearance at Ole Miss, he caused a public controversy during the crisis over integrating the schools in Little Rock by criticizing the Eisenhower administration's actions. His comments in the fall of 1957 startled people because he had been so quiet on civil rights. According to a biographer, even after Satchmo's outburst, "if Louis had any policy on race, it was still, basically, not to rock the boat." Economic and professional needs forced black performers' acquiescence, which made them more acceptable to white segregationists.[44]

Unknown to many at the university, Armstrong's concert attracted one unusual observer, Robert Patterson, the founder of the Citizens' Council. He observed with "pleasure(?)" Satchmo's "inter-racial orchestra consisting of two blacks, two whites, and two yellows." The next day he reported to Edwin White of Holmes County and half a dozen other business and political leaders, "You should have heard the co-eds shriek when the yellow boy soloed on his slide trombone." He expressed dismay that Armstrong used first names to address his white colleagues and "hugged them affectionately." Even in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, however, Armstrong's behavior did not trigger in Patterson any fear for the southern way of life; he did not sound the alarm for retaliation against Ole Miss or for a tightening of racial segregation. Though he disliked aspects of Armstrong's behavior, even Patterson apparently accepted black musicians' performances before white audiences.[45]

While students cheered black performers and befriended Blind Jim, they retained a powerful commitment to white supremacy and the southern way of life. Two polls of student opinion in the mid-1950s revealed overwhelming support for segregation. A small minority supported admission of blacks, but most favored integration. One compared the inevitability of integration to the cooling of the sun: "Both of those events are a long way off." Among the small minority favoring immediate integration, realism forced one student to con-

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cede, "It is impossible to believe that the University can buck the Supreme Court." A majority opposed any integration at Ole Miss, and nearly half were certain that blacks would never attend the university. As one student commented, "I love colored people, but in their place." And their place did not include Ole Miss, unless they worked in menial capacities, because, as one freshman declared, "Negroes have been out of the jungle and have worn clothes instead of loin cloths for only 200 years." Segregation's defenders agreed that separate but equal educational facilities for the two races provided the only solution to the problem.[46]

Student social activities more indirectly revealed racial attitudes. In November 1950, Ole Miss students initiated an annual Dixie Week that celebrated the Old South and the Civil War. It sought to "please the whims of every Southern Belle and Confederate Gentleman." Culminating with a home football game, often against archrival Mississippi State, the festivities included replacing the U.S. flag with the Confederate flag, reading the state's Ordinance of Secession, honoring a surviving Confederate veteran from Alabama, a memorial service for Confederate soldiers, and the chancellor's wreath-laying at the Confederate monument. With no concern for the feelings of Jim Ivy or M. B. Mayfield, students made clear their political preferences and racial values with the assassination of Lincoln in the student grill, the sale of cheerleaders in a "slave" auction, and the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1953 the student senate endorsed the "doctrines of the Southern Confederacy," particularly "the principles of States' rights," and it deplored "the impositions, arrogancy and abominations" of the federal government that had committed "unbearable transgressions of our sacred rights" and "despoiled our traditions." The racial mores allowed the white students to be outspoken and insensitive toward an entire race. When Dixie Week moved to the spring, it continued to celebrate white supremacy, slavery, and the Lost Cause. Fondness for Blind Jim and an appreciation for Louis Armstrong's jazz did not mitigate the students' love for the Old South and their disdain for blacks in general.[47]

Fraternities and sororities frequently demonstrated racial prejudice in their party themes. Identified closely with the Old South, Kappa Alpha typically had social affairs that emphasized the antebellum South, plantation life, and the Confederacy; at a 1948 dance, two KAs dressed as "happy, cheerful slave servants" of Robert E. Lee to greet the guests. Using similar themes, Kappa Sigma fraternity staged a Plantation Ball in 1946 and Phi Kappa Psi an Old South party in 1954. Delta Psi's men had a jungle party in 1952, and the next year a voodoo party. Though perhaps thoughtlessly, the students endorsed the prevailing racial stereotypes of African Americans.[48]

The most prevalent racial theme at Greek events in the postwar years in-

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volved blackface worn in minstrel shows. Sigma Alpha Epsilon, for example, had a minstrel party in 1947 that featured an interpretation of Al Jolson's "Mammy." The next year in a charity stunt, Delta Gamma sorority contributed a "Musical Minstrel of Magnitude" in which young women appeared in blackface to sing songs and tell jokes. At the same fund-raiser, the men of Sigma Nu parodied Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Phi Delta Psi fraternity presented "life in a colored beauty salon" in "The Beale Street Beauty Salon." Three years later in another stunt night, Delta Delta Delta acted out "Coal Black and the Seven Spades," a takeoff on "Snow White," and women from Chi Omega wore blackface in another minstrel act. Tri-Delta in 1955 and Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity in 1956 featured minstrel shows.[49]

Minstrelsy extended beyond the Ole Miss students. In 1951 the Oxford Lions Club presented a minstrel show at the local grammar school, and the blackface performers included several Ole Miss professors and Robert B. Ellis, the university registrar. The following year, the Lions staged another minstrel show that featured a "Negro Zuzu Zuzu Dance."[50] Rather than being atypical, the Ole Miss students' actions reflected the larger culture.

For whites, the minstrel shows confirmed everyone's status in the segregated South. By donning blackface, students could assume the role of blacks and act as they expected and wanted blacks to behave; the "black" performers personified the white stereotypes of blacks. The characters reminded the students of the inherent inferiority of blacks but also reassured whites that blacks were happy and contented, that they willingly conformed to the southern way of life. What troublesome outsiders interpreted as discrimination and oppression was, according to the minstrel shows, the natural and accepted order. Exceptions such as M. B. Mayfield and Ernest McEwen confirmed the larger rule of black inferiority as exemplified by Blind Jim and the minstrel show characters. Whites could, therefore, believe that blacks did not want integration or equality and, indeed, that they knew their proper place, which did not include being students at Ole Miss.

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