

THE MCCROCKLIN AFFAIR: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PRESIDENTIAL
PLAGIARISM AT SOUTHWEST
TEXAS STATE COLLEGE

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Dedicated to Gene, Aaron, and Matthew, because without your patience, love, and understanding, I never would have started this endeavor, much less finished it.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Caught in the midst of the most turbulent year in the Sixties – 1968 – a seemingly small and insignificant incident occurred on the campus of Southwest Texas State College (SWT) in San Marcos, Texas. The president of the college, James Henry McCrocklin, stood accused of plagiarizing his Ph.D. dissertation. He refused to answer the charges for over six months, and when he did, he created more confusion and resentment. Eventually he resigned and the University of Texas Graduate School declared his Ph.D. null and void within the university system. For the faculty and students of SWT, the event was anything but insignificant. In fact, it was an all-out crisis.

The reaction of faculty, students, and community to this episode reveals much about the times and how SWT fit into the larger issues taking place across the United States. Amidst nationwide protests for civil rights and freedom of speech, and demonstrations against the Vietnam War, the students and faculty at SWT faced this more localized, personal dilemma. Their cause might not have been national in scope and their reaction might have seemed conservative compared to the dramatic activities on other campuses, but they did react. Rejecting the acquiescence expected by the McCrocklin administration, a significant portion of the student body and faculty rose up and demanded justice. Even as the controversy threatened to divide the community,

faculty and staff proved that some liberal ideas and actions had permeated the campus. “The Sixties” arrived in San Marcos in more conservative clothing.

San Marcos is a small town situated in Central Texas, approximately twenty-five miles south of Austin and forty-five miles northeast of San Antonio. The area flaunts rolling hills and crystal clear waters. A group of springs, known as Aquarena Springs, “flow from the Edwards Aquifer . . . to form the headwaters of the San Marcos River.” These springs are located in San Marcos and provide a major tourist draw to the area. Additionally, “several plant and animal species, such as Texas wild rice and the Texas salamander, are unique to the San Marcos River.” The clear waters provide recreation, though most of the property is privately owned. However, the city’s beautiful surroundings and ideal proximity to two major cities are not its only features. The small town also plays host to a major university and a private boarding school. Later, after Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency, it would add the Gary Job Corps to its list of educational facilities. Education played a key role in the economics of San Marcos.¹

Always significant, the university’s importance to the town increased dramatically during the Sixties. Its expansion both in enrollment and physical size was the most significant transformation. The Texas legislature had authorized the founding of Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1899. The school opened its doors to the first students in 1903 with only one building and eleven acres. Constant growth and change became its hallmark. In fact, the record enrollment of 1968 “led to construction of a new Administration Building.” By the school’s centennial in 1999, it had undergone four

¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “Aquarena Center,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/dua2.html> (accessed 18 November 2007); *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “San Marcos River,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/rns.10.html> (accessed 18 November 2007).

name changes and had expanded to encompass over 400 acres. Between the school years of 1963-64 and 1968-69, student enrollment more than doubled, going from 3,850 to 8,406. Coupling this growth with the opening of the Gary Job Corps Training Center in 1965, “made education the single largest employer” in San Marcos and “accoun[t]ed for a 48 percent increase in population” between 1962 and 1972, according to the *Handbook of Texas Online*. This helps explain why the crisis at SWT was such a crucial concern for the community.²

Additionally, the McCrocklin scandal also highlights the confusion associated with plagiarism, a topic that many people outside of academia either know nothing about or simply do not understand. In the McCrocklin case specifically, most of the town understood that he was being accused of lying about his credentials. What they probably did not know or possibly did not care about were the specifics behind the allegations that made it so terrible to the campus community.

Complicating the situation further, people within the academic world have difficulty defining plagiarism. In the most basic form, plagiarism is the passing off of someone else’s work as your own. The idea of borrowing from someone else goes back to the ancient Greeks. Only after the development of printing, though, did people begin to see writing as a trade and “literary borrowing” as a form of theft. Thus, plagiarism came to be considered a “crime” during the seventeenth century when printing became more common. However, novelist, critic, and English professor Thomas Mallon, who has studied the topic extensively, suggests the difficulties associated with the idea of

² Ronald Brown, *Up the Hill, Down the Years: A Century in the Life of the College in San Marcos, 1899-1999* (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1999), 25-156 passim; Barbie Rhines, “Past decades reflect changing times,” *College Star*, 08 November 1968; *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “San Marcos, Texas,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/hes2.html> (accessed 27 October 2007).

plagiarism stem from how people have viewed language, specifically the written word, and literary imitation. Similarly, Darsie Bowden, an associate professor of English, claims that “the traditional Western view of language connects authorship with ownership,” thereby creating a contradictory value system. As Bowden points out, one side sees plagiarism as a crime, while the other does not because “sharing and borrowing is inherent in the nature of language.” It is through these types of disagreements on the nature of plagiarism that people find it difficult to discuss the problem.³

Despite the difficulties associated with plagiarism, members of the university community take it very seriously. In fact, academic honesty is a cornerstone of educational institutions for students, faculty, and administrators, even with the difficulties it entails. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a national organization dedicated to “developing the standards and procedures that maintain quality in education and academic freedom in this country’s colleges and universities,” approved a Statement on Professional Ethics in April 1966. The statement attributes a number of responsibilities to professors and others in the academic professions. Among them is the notion of practicing intellectual honesty. In the world of academia, students caught plagiarizing face severe penalties, such as a failing grade or even expulsion from school. For that matter, anyone within the academic community risks facing ridicule and even legal action if caught plagiarizing.⁴

³ Thomas Mallon, *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), 1-40; Darsie Bowden, “Coming to Terms: Plagiarism,” *The English Journal* 85, no. 4, Literary Festival (April 1996), 82-83.

⁴ For more information on the AAUP’s policies and standards, see the AAUP website at <http://www.aaup.org/aaup> (accessed 05 April 2007); also, “Statement on Professional Ethics,” American Association of University Professors, Norman Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 1, Special Collection, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Hereafter cited as Peterson Papers.

By the time the McCrocklin scandal became public, historians had not dealt with the subject of plagiarism in their writing. English or education professors wrote most of the articles focusing on the matter. Recently, though, historians have been forced to confront this issue because of the publicized cases of Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin. Both were accused of plagiarizing passages in their books and both endured blows to their reputations as a result. Goodwin suffered the most, it would seem. “NewsHour,” where Goodwin was a commentator, asked her to take a leave-of-absence, the University of Delaware “withdr[ew] an invitation to . . . be the commencement speaker,” and she resigned her position on the Pulitzer board.⁵

Plagiarism remains not quite a true crime, but not a totally forgivable action either, and the uncertainty of how to punish plagiarism continues. Mallon further states it is “the inability of the literary and academic worlds adequately to define, much less reasonably punish, instances of plagiarism” that adds to the confusion. Bowden agrees. She states, “Given the entrenchment of value systems, plagiarism will undoubtedly remain a topic about which we . . . remain confused, combative, and litigious.” The battle that ensued at SWT over plagiarism generated various degrees of anger and ambivalence precisely because of plagiarism’s ambiguous nature.⁶

Despite the ambiguity of the “crime” at the heart of the drama, members of the San Marcos community took the situation very seriously. The SWT campus divided over

⁵ In my research, I have been unable to find any historians who have written about plagiarism. For more information on Stephen Ambrose, see David D. Kirkpatrick, “2 Say Stephen Ambrose, Popular Historian, Copied Passages,” *New York Times*, 05 January 2002, A8; David D. Kirkpatrick, “As Historian’s Fame Grows, So Do Questions on Methods,” *New York Times*, 11 January 2002, A1 and A19; David D. Kirkpatrick, “Historian Says Publisher Quickly Settled Copying Dispute,” *New York Times*, 23 January 2002, A10; David D. Kirkpatrick, “Historian Says Borrowing Was Wider Than Known,” *New York Times*, 23 February 2002, A10; and David D. Kirkpatrick, “Writer Leaves ‘NewsHour’ in Furor Over Book,” *New York Times*, 28 February 2002, A23.

⁶ Mallon, xi-xii; Bowden, “Coming to Terms,” 83.

the issue. People who had been friends prior to the McCrocklin affair refused to speak to each other. Years later, many still found it difficult to talk about. Part of the division resulted for reasons similar to those described by Bowden. Some found the alleged plagiarism a minor offense compared to the benefits they believed McCrocklin had brought to the school. Many also considered him an exemplary administrator. In opposition, a few faculty members viewed the alleged plagiarism as a punishable act and pushed for academic honesty and integrity. Students got involved over this aspect of the issue. Fearing their degrees and the school's reputation were at risk, they spoke out and challenged authority. Perhaps taking their cues from uprisings against old guard administrators across the country, both faculty and students continued to push the matter until an agreeable solution could be reached.

No one has written about the McCrocklin situation except with a passing mention. Because of this, in the chapters that follow I hope to show clearly how important this event was as part of the university's history by utilizing first-hand accounts of people involved and analyzing newspaper articles, military documents, and archived personal papers. More importantly, though, I intend for this work to shed light on the McCrocklin affair as a case study that occurred both outside and, at the same time as part of, the larger issues of the 1960s. Student uprisings and unrest permeated the United States and seemed to be shifting ideologies from a conservative view to a liberal one. This, however, did not affect SWT as one might think. SWT's students learned from the demonstrations taking place on the larger university campuses, but like most of the smaller colleges and universities during the 1960's, SWT maintained its subdued and somewhat conservative position, not even becoming directly involved in the anti-war

demonstrations until late 1969. The response of students and faculty to the McCrocklin affair, however, indicates that the liberalism and antiestablishment attitudes evident on other campuses affected even Southwest Texans.

CHAPTER II

ACCUSATIONS AND CONTROVERSY

The scandal began as a rumor, a rumor that turned out to be true. Gossip had circulated among the academic communities in San Marcos and Kingsville for several years regarding the “his and hers theses” of James and Harriet McCrocklin, but no one acted upon it until the mid-1960s. Then it took another two years before the public became aware of what some faculty members and students already knew. Once this occurred, a full-blown scandal erupted on the Southwest Texas State College (SWT) campus, pitting professors against each other and some faculty members against the administration. According to one former SWT graduate student, “Lifetime enemies were made, and lifetime friendships were destroyed.” The crisis rocked the campus community in such a way that people coming to work at the college several years later could still feel the residual tensions.⁷

How did idle gossip shift to a community scandal? What exactly was the scandal? What prompted someone to follow up on the rumors? Political differences and personality conflicts certainly played a role in initiating the actions leading to the crisis. However, as will be seen in the next chapter, academic integrity replaced those issues by

⁷ For reference to rumors, see “The McCrocklin Dissertation,” *Texas Observer*, 09 August 1968, Everette Swinney Personal Papers, Special Collections, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Hereafter cited as Swinney Papers; for reference to the “‘His’ and ‘hers’ theses,” see the *Washington Post*, 12, 13 September and 18 December 1968; Dennis Kriewald to author, electronic mail, 26 March 2007.

becoming the overriding theme throughout the affair and thus precipitated the crisis that polarized the campus between August 1968 and April 1969.

James McCrocklin became SWT's president in 1964. In the sixty-one years of the college's history prior to McCrocklin's appointment, there had only been three others. Even with such a short list, however, McCrocklin was not the first to lose his job. Thomas G. Harris, first president between 1903 and 1911 of what was then known as Southwest Texas Normal School, lost his position after only eight years for his strong support of the temperance movement and his outspoken opposition to O.B. Colquitt, the "wet" gubernatorial candidate in 1910. Colquitt won the election and soon after "notified Harris – by what means is not known – of his dismissal." The two succeeding presidents were a different story. Cecil Eugene Evans and John Garland Flowers both retired after long distinguished careers. Therefore, it was with high hopes that McCrocklin assumed the post. Unfortunately, he "inaugurated" what Ronald C. Brown's history of the university refers to as "a quarter century of turmoil on the Hill."²

Prior to becoming president, McCrocklin seemed to embody the academic ideal. He had served in World War II and Korea as part of the U.S. Marine Reserve and had been a member of their Policy Board in 1955 and 1956. During the academic year 1960-1961, he served as state president of both the Texas Association on College Teachers and the Texas Municipal League. At the time of his appointment, McCrocklin was chair of Texas A&I University's Government department and completing his third term as Kingsville's mayor. His scholarly credentials seemed impressive with several books and articles on government and the Marine Corps to his credit, along with a number of

² Ronald C. Brown, *Up the Hill, Down the Years: A Century in the Life of the College in San Marcos, Southwest Texas State University, 1899-1999* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 1999), 128-133; Tom W. Nichols, *Rugged Summit* (San Marcos: SWT Press, 1970), 1-2.

student textbooks. With such a resume, he seemed destined to move up within the hierarchy of academia. Trouble would follow McCrocklin from Kingsville to San Marcos, however, and the ideal persona that surrounded him would give way to show a person lacking integrity.³

Rumors began circulating around Texas A&I in Kingsville, sometime after 1954, regarding the similarity between McCrocklin's 1954 University of Texas doctoral dissertation, "A Study of the Garde d'Haiti, 1915-1934," and his wife's 1953 Texas A&I master's thesis, "American Intervention in Haiti, 1914-1934."⁴ The same whisperings followed McCrocklin to SWT. Charles Chandler, a sociology instructor at SWT in the mid-1960s, had heard the rumors. He also had friends at Texas A&I. In the summer or fall of 1965, Chandler received a copy of Harriet McCrocklin's thesis via his friends while in the Kingsville area doing interviews for his own dissertation. Chandler then used his library privileges at UT to check out a copy of McCrocklin's dissertation and conducted a comparison. Upon completion, he claims he found "many long sections of supposedly original text that were identical." Seeing the obvious plagiarism and, thus, truth in the rumors, he "held an open house at [his] home," with the documents on display for "anyone and everyone to view and make up their own minds as to whether plagiarism had occurred." In an interview with this author, he noted how surprised he was by the "steady stream of viewers" who consisted of "not only my friends and associates, but

³ Biographical sketch on James H. McCrocklin, March 1968, James H. McCrocklin file, News Service Morgue files, File 13, Marketing Department, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Hereafter cited as Morgue Files.

⁴ The exact time frame for the beginning of the rumors is unknown for sure; James H. McCrocklin, "A Study of the Garde d'Haiti, 1915-1934" (Ph.D. diss.: University of Texas, 1954); Harriet McCrocklin, "American Intervention in Haiti, 1914-1934" (Master's thesis: Texas A&I University-Kingsville, 1953). I made attempts to obtain copies of McCrocklin's dissertation, but have not been able to do so. The University of Texas has taken their copies off the shelves and I have been unable to locate a copy elsewhere.

people from all parts of the college, including some who I was sure represented McCrocklin's interests." Chandler maintains he did not have any further part in the "campaign to bring McCrocklin to task for his plagiarism."⁵

According to Chandler, however, he did feel a backlash from his investigation into the theses. His SWT contract was up for renewal after the spring of 1966, but the administration chose not to renew. Chandler assumed then, and continues to believe, that he was let go because of the investigation. Without more evidence, such as departmental budgets or teaching evaluations, there is no way to prove or disprove his supposition. However, the McCrocklin administration's retaliation against later investigators seemed to validate Chandler's assumptions. Because instructional contracts came with provisional employment, Chandler "had no recourse." So he started looking for work elsewhere. He applied for a teaching position at Texas A&I, but his application was rejected. Considering McCrocklin's former connections as Government department chair and Kingsville mayor, this seems a little too coincidental. Chandler finally landed a job at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. He asserts, however, that "one of McCrocklin's minions," attempted to have him fired from this position by claiming he "was 'a dangerous communist.'" Chandler says that, luckily, the Dean of Arts and Science at Texas Tech found this "highly comical and laughed it off."⁶

Why did Chandler find it necessary to pursue the rumors? According to him, there were a few complex reasons. Most important was the idea that, "if [the rumors] were true, for a college President to be a plagiarist and an academic fraud, would be an outrage and

⁵ Charles Chandler to author, electronic mail, 09 April 2006.

⁶ Charles Chandler to author, electronic mail, 25 January 2007.

an affront to the very soul of an institution of higher learning.” Additionally, McCrocklin and a few others left some of the faculty feeling as if SWT was simply a stop on the way to attaining a higher political career. Chandler does not say that McCrocklin and his followers offended him personally for using the college in such a manner, but he does indicate that other people resented the fact.⁷

Information obtained during interviews conducted by the author reinforces the idea some people shared at that time that McCrocklin wanted to use SWT as a means to achieve higher political offices. A rumor circulated that he considered running for Texas governor. Another claimed he wanted to be Chancellor of the University of Texas. Of course, there may have been some truth to this gossip, but there was not any substantive proof to support it. However, stories like this explain why some people perceived McCrocklin as one who cared only about where his position at SWT could take him and his connection to President Johnson supported the view that he sought higher political positions.

McCrocklin had a dynamic personality that allowed him to do good things for the college. However, he did not deserve as much recognition for these acts as he received. He managed to acquire the fish hatchery property, a feat his predecessor could not accomplish. This achievement was a source of pride for McCrocklin. He also raised large amounts of money for SWT that the school may not otherwise have received, changed the classes from a six-day to a five-day schedule, and helped to establish direct deposit for faculty and staff to eliminate long wait times on paydays. Many people within the San Marcos community even went so far as to attribute the growth of the college to

⁷ ‘Plagiary’ means the same as ‘plagiarist’; Chandler to author, 25 January 2007.

McCrocklin. This argument became part of his supporters' defense later on. In opposition to this view, however, is the argument that, if looked at on a national level, college enrollment was already rising in the late Sixties and it just happened to be during his presidency that such expansion at SWT became noticeable. The fact that Johnson became president and brought national attention to his alma mater played a significant role in raising enrollment as well. Therefore, it is difficult to give McCrocklin credit of that magnitude.⁸

McCrocklin's personality played a large role in the perception people had about him and cannot be overlooked when analyzing his relationship to the campus community. In addition to his dynamism, McCrocklin had a presence about him. He was physically large and had a domineering character. He often visited the faculty coffee lounge and would laugh and joke with many of the people present. Sometimes, though, his stories came across as demeaning, especially when the subject of the joke was present. He also shared a common mindset held by many people – if you were not with him you were against him. For this reason, some people feared McCrocklin. Jim Green, history instructor at that time, says McCrocklin “could get things done because he intimidated people.” He was not afraid to let people know he was “running the ship.” Perhaps maintaining tight control over his administration made McCrocklin unpopular with some of the faculty, but it also permitted him to run a competent administration. Everette

⁸ Jim Green, interview by author, 09 February 2007, San Marcos, TX, digital recording; Jo Snider, interview by author, 31 January 2007, San Marcos, TX, digital recording; Everette Swinney, interview by author, 28 March 2007, San Marcos, TX, digital recording.

Swinney, who was chair of the history department in the 1960s, recalls McCrocklin as “one of the most efficient administrators that I’ve ever encountered.”⁹

Perhaps because of these ambivalent feelings among the faculty on campus, the first public attack on McCrocklin came from outside San Marcos. The *Texas Observer*, a liberal bi-monthly paper printed in Austin, knew of the ‘his and hers’ theses situation in 1966. The *Daily Texan*, UT’s campus newspaper, quoted Gary Olds, editor for the *Observer*, as saying “a few dissident members of the Southwest Texas faculty brought this matter to the attention of the *Observer* in the fall of 1966.” The *Observer* did not print the story, though, because the editors were waiting for the academic community to take action. When they did not, the *Observer* released an article on 9 August 1968 leveling charges of plagiarism against President McCrocklin. The expose discussed the similarities between McCrocklin’s and his wife’s theses. At this point, the rumors moved beyond simple gossip and became allegations. After discussing the two works, the story suggested the possibility of political differences between Chandler and a few other faculty members as a basis for the initial investigation. The *Observer* went on to say that Chandler’s wife had worked for the *Citizen*, a weekly newspaper that had “been highly critical of McCrocklin and his administration at SWT,” thus indicating another potential reason for the initial inquiry.¹⁰

The *Observer* reported that there was a “strikingly close resemblance” between the two theses. According to the account, the editor chose fifty paragraphs throughout each work for comparison and concluded, “Of the 50 thesis paragraphs checked, 35

⁹ Green interview, 09 February 2007; Don Graham, interview by author, 14 February 2007, Austin, TX, digital recording; Snider interview, 31 January 2007; Swinney interview, 28 March 2007.

¹⁰ “Supposed Similarities in McCrocklin Dissertation Raise Important Questions for University Students,” *Daily Texan*, 19 September 1968, 4, Swinney Papers; “The McCrocklin Dissertation,” 1, 3-4.

appear in the dissertation virtually word for word or in a few cases precisely word for word.” The article goes on to mention several more “virtually identical” passages, phrases, organization, and content. Another analysis, prepared by an unidentified source a few months later, claimed that fifty-one percent of the thesis appeared in the dissertation with no word deviation. That equals 907 out of 1765 sentences in the thesis. Looking at it from another angle, only twenty-nine percent of the thesis sentences, or 512 total, did not appear in the dissertation (see Table 1).¹¹

Table 1. Sentence by Sentence Analysis of McCrocklin Papers

Identical with no word deviation	907	51%
Same with one word deviation	95	5%
Same with two word deviation	56	3%
Same with three word deviation	36	2%
Same with more than three word deviation	159	9%
Did not appear in the dissertation*	512	29%
Total	1765	99%

* Many of the sentences that did not appear in the dissertation in the same form were summaries of several paragraphs in the dissertation or were “connecting” sentences providing continuity to the discussion.

No consideration for punctuation was given in the analysis. At times what appeared as two or three sentences in the thesis would appear as one compound sentence in the dissertation.

One page of the thesis was not available and, therefore, was not analyzed.

Source: “An Analysis of the McCrocklin Papers,” Campus Handout, December 1968, Everette Swinney Papers, Special Collections, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX.

In addition to the alleged plagiarism, the *Observer* story questioned McCrocklin’s academic integrity. The article stated that, in 1953, while still a Texas A&I government

¹¹ “The McCrocklin Dissertation,” 9 August 1968, 3; “An Analysis of The McCrocklin Papers,” Campus Handout, December 1968, Swinney Papers.

instructor, he became a member of his wife's thesis committee. Even though the administration allowed McCrocklin to sign the thesis, the situation presented a clear conflict of interest and he should not have served in this capacity. McCrocklin claimed that one of his wife's original committee members had retired and that the graduate dean assigned McCrocklin to replace him, as "no other faculty member was available."¹²

As would be the case throughout the crisis, McCrocklin underestimated the seriousness of the situation and so made things worse. In this instance, he compounded his troubles by making contradictory statements regarding the connection between his own work and his wife's thesis. Norman Peterson, English professor at SWT, reported that McCrocklin asserted in a confidential meeting with a few select groups of people that he had finished his paper before his wife, but due to residency regulations at UT, actual receipt of his Ph.D. did not occur for another year. Yet, in a later statement, McCrocklin claimed that he did not receive his degree until 1954 because he did not complete the final typing in time. He further maintained that his wife, with permission from her advisor at Texas A&I, utilized his work for her research because she did not have the ability to view the original Marine Corps documents pertaining to the Haitian intervention.¹³

At the time the story broke in August 1968, McCrocklin was in Washington, D.C., serving as Under Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

¹² "Statement of James H. McCrocklin to the General Faculty Meeting," 24 February 1969, 1, Morgue Files, File 14.

¹³ Norman Peterson, "Scholarly Plagiarism and the College President: A Study of the McCrocklin Case," incomplete and unpublished manuscript, 3, Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 2; "Statement of James H. McCrocklin," 30 September 1968, James H. McCrocklin file, White House Central Files, Box 237, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, University of Texas, Austin, TX. Hereafter cited as LBJ Library; and "Statement to General Faculty," 24 February 1969, 2.

(HEW). President Johnson, SWT's most famous alumnus, had appointed McCrocklin to the post two months earlier. Differences in opinion arise as to whether Johnson and McCrocklin were friends prior to McCrocklin's appointment to the SWT presidency. Some people claim they were, while others believe they only became acquainted when the Board of Regents of State Senior Colleges appointed McCrocklin to the position. Whatever the case, Johnson attended McCrocklin's inauguration in 1964, and between 1966 and 1968 appointed him to several presidential committees before making him an aide. One of these early assignments was the National Advisory Committee on Selective Service in 1966. *Newsweek* insinuated that "everyone laughed" because Johnson appointed McCrocklin to HEW based on his affiliation with SWT. Referencing the crisis developing in San Marcos, the story concluded, "Now that everyone knew their Under Secretary better – they were still laughing." Making matters worse, when McCrocklin agreed to join LBJ's administration, he vowed "to take the assignment in Washington as an honor bestowed upon" SWT and to "bring that honor back to this campus" when he returned in January 1969. As events turned out, it was a promise he was unable to keep.¹⁴

In 1964, after the board of regents named McCrocklin president of SWT, he had written, "The role of a new president will be to bring into focus upon each problem that presents itself all the available intelligence and to marshal and coordinate this valuable resource toward the solution of those problems." Now that he was the center of attention, McCrocklin sought to evade the allegations of plagiarism by refusing to acknowledge the problem. When confronted with proofs of the *Observer* article prior to printing, "no

¹⁴ Biographical sketch, March 1968; "The Administration: A Family Resemblance," *Newsweek*, 30 September 1968, James H. McCrocklin file, Special Collections, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Hereafter cited as JHM file; "McCrocklin Plans Return to Post As SwTSC Head," *San Antonio News*, 11 June 1968, 10A, JHM file.

comment” was McCrocklin’s only response. He also failed to offer an explanation to the faculty, staff, and students at SWT. The *Cedar Chopper’s Almanack*, self-proclaimed as “Hays County’s Only News Magazine,” reported, “McCrocklin, who is known around the Southwest Texas State College community as an outspoken, boisterous voice, has refused to comment on the matter.” Students began to question the validity of their degrees from a college whose president’s integrity was in question. The same *Almanack* article went on to say that McCrocklin’s silence “is damaging to the college.” This would become another source of contention as the crisis continued to mount.¹⁵

The faculty senate, a group representing the faculty and charged to act as its voice in university governance matters, met within a week after the story broke. It agreed to ask the board of regents to “make a statement about the matter and . . . to select a group of outstanding authorities outside the college to study the two documents in question in order to exonerate Dr. McCrocklin or confirm the allegations.” Apparently, McCrocklin had requested that no one take action until he returned in January, and the senators met again four days after their first meeting to vote on delaying the letter. Voting four to five against suspending the investigation, the senate instead decided to press forward but agreed that “any action regarding the matter should go through Acting President Derrick” before submission to the board.¹⁶

¹⁵ “Statement of James H. McCrocklin,” to Board of Regents, 1964, Morgue Files, File 13; David Bernard, “Explain or Resign,” *Cedar Chopper’s Almanack*, 24 October 1968, 3. The *Cedar Chopper’s Almanack* became the *Hays County Citizen*.

¹⁶ Southwest Texas State College Faculty Handbook, [1969], 28; “Minutes of Faculty Senate,” 15, 19 August 1968, Minutes and Agendas 1968 file, Faculty Senate files, Faculty Senate Office, Floor 8, J.C. Kellam Building, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Hereafter cited as Senate Files.

One day after the 19 August meeting, before the senate could compose the letter, the board issued a statement of confidence in McCrocklin. In the resolution, the board asserted:

Basic research on the part of the author of the article would have revealed the fact to him, as it has to members of this Board, that James H. McCrocklin and Harriet McCrocklin researched different aspects of the same broad subject with the knowledge, consent, and encouragement of the degree committees under which each studied.

This Board expressed confidence in the scholastic integrity, honesty, administrative ability, industry, and loyalty of Dr. James H. McCrocklin when it selected him as president of Southwest Texas State College, and the facts revealed in an investigation of the questions raised and charges made in the article referred to above have justified that confidence.¹⁷

According to a 19 September 1968 article in the *Daily Texan*, the investigation performed by the board was actually a two-man committee that included J.C. Kellam, “Southwest Texas graduate and long-time personal and business acquaintance of President Lyndon B. Johnson,” and Regents’ Chairman Emil Rassman. The story quoted Kaye Northcott, associate editor of the *Observer*, as stating, “‘at the Regents’ meeting, it was said that the committee of two had read McCrocklin’s dissertation and a summary, but not the full text, of Mrs. McCrocklin’s thesis.’” If this was true, the committee’s research does not appear to be thorough enough to support their resolution. Since the senate was not aware of the minimal research performed by the committee, and with such honest conviction from the board, the senate members agreed not to proceed further or send the letter.

¹⁷ “Resolution of the Board of Regents, State Senior Colleges in Regard to Dr. James H. McCrocklin,” 20 August 1968, Presidential Papers, 1963-1969, FG 165 09/13/68-09/30/68, Box 242, LBJ Library.

Nevertheless, it did pass a motion to inform the faculty of its actions and decision regarding the matter.¹⁸

In the meantime, the situation moved beyond central Texas. In September 1968, Colonel R.D. Heinl, military analyst for the *Detroit News*, joined the fray with his own accusation. On 13 September, Heinl disclosed that the two McCrocklins' works were also similar to an obscure 1934 Marine Corps report, known as the Hart Report, and to Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf's *History of the United States Marine Corps* published in 1939. No longer was the affair simply a matter of his and hers theses. Now it was something much more. Accusations began to focus less on the parallels between the dissertation and thesis and more on McCrocklin's over-zealous "borrowing" of military records. A 28 September 1968 statement by Colonel Frank C. Caldwell, head of the Marine Corps Historical Branch, pointed out that McCrocklin acknowledged his debt to the Hart Report in the preface to his book that he had compiled, not authored. McCrocklin contradicted this position by claiming he did not have anything to do with the manuscript once he submitted it to the Marine Corps. In addition to McCrocklin serving in Washington, D.C., Heinl's revelation broadened the scope of interest in the plagiarism accusation. Regional news expanded into a national story picked up by several large papers and a couple of the news magazines. It is possible, had it not been for Heinl, the situation may have passed with little interest in or penalties for McCrocklin.¹⁹

¹⁸ "Supposed Similarities in McCrocklin Dissertation," 19 September 1968; "Minutes of Faculty Senate," 22 August 1968, Minutes and Agendas 1968 file, Senate Files.

¹⁹ According to Jim Green, Heinl told him that he felt bad about not making UT aware of the dissertation earlier and then, when he saw that Johnson had appointed McCrocklin as Under Secretary to HEW and McCrocklin had become a college president, he felt impelled to do something. That is why he printed the column making the similarities between the dissertation and the Hart Report known. Green interview, 9 February 2007; "Statement by the Head, Historical Branch, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps,

Due to Heinel's article, members of the faculty and some students did a side-by-side comparison. They concluded that McCrocklin had not only failed to cite his sources but that he had copied the Hart Report almost verbatim. In fact, McCrocklin left very few details from the report out of his own dissertation. Just as with the two McCrocklins' works, a group of people completed a sentence-by-sentence analysis comparing McCrocklin's dissertation with the Hart Report. Their findings were highly suggestive. Over 40 percent of the sentences were identical with no deviations in words, while another 18.9 percent were the same but with one or more word variations (see Table 2).²⁰

Concerning the Book *Garde D'Haiti* Compiled by James H. McCrocklin," 28 September 1968, James H. McCrocklin Biographical file, Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA. Hereafter cited as JHM Bio File; "Statement of James H. McCrocklin," 30 September 1968, White House Central Files, Box 237, LBJ Library.

²⁰ See Colonel R. D. Heinel, Jr., "The strange case of a Cabinet 'egghead,'" *Detroit News*, 13 September 1968, 1A and 4A, JHM Bio File; and "An Analysis of the McCrocklin Dissertation," Campus Handout, undated, Swinney Papers. Notes on the same handout in the Peterson Papers say the "analysis was done by Braffett, Graham, Farlow, Wilson, and others" with the "key and compilation by Pickle."

Table 2. An Analysis of the McCrocklin Dissertation and the Hart Report

	<u>Sentences</u>	<u>%</u>
Duplication of the Hart Report:		
Identical sentences (no deviation)	1344	40.4%
Sentences with only one-word deviation	293	8.8%
Sentences with only two-word deviation	153	4.6%
Sentences with only three-word deviation	73	2.2%
Same but with more than three-word deviation	111	3.3%
Total	1974	59.3%
Duplication of Other Sources:		
Direct quotations from other sources	532	16.0%
Sentences (exclusive of the Hart Report) duplicated from Mrs. McCrocklin's "American Intervention in Haiti, 1914-1934" (May 1953)*	328	9.9%
Subtotal	860	25.9%
Sentences not found in the above sources	494	14.8%
Total number of sentences in the dissertation	3328	100.0%

*A major portion of Mrs. McCrocklin's thesis (signed by James H. McCrocklin) is a direct duplication of the Hart Report.

Source: "An Analysis of the McCrocklin Dissertation," Campus Handout, undated, Everette Swinney Personal Papers, San Marcos, TX.

Heinl was at the U.S. Naval Institute in 1955 while publication of McCrocklin's manuscript was in process. In his article on 13 September, Heinl pointed out that the Naval Institute "reluctantly" decided to continue publication of the book, but listed "McCrocklin as 'compiler' rather than author." "At the time it was first discovered, Heinl said, 'All felt that this is a ---- of a way to earn a Ph.D., but what was the point in doing anything?'" The Naval Institute then published and released *Garde d'Haiti, 1915-1934*, apparently without further incident. What no one ever mentioned was that it was not simply the Hart Report that caused all the publishing problems, because if it were, "it would be easy to remedy the defect by simply crediting the proper source and enclosing the quoted material in quotation marks."²¹

²¹ Jean M. White, "Origins of a Thesis: 'His' and 'Hers' and -'Theirs'?", *Washington Post*, 13 September 1968, A1 and A4, JHM File; "The strange case of a Cabinet 'egghead,'" 4A; Bob Denman,

Unfortunately, the solution was not that simple. McCrocklin had utilized extensive amounts of copyrighted material without crediting the authors, and the Marine Corps personnel pushing to get the manuscript published were scrambling at the last minute to obtain the necessary permissions before printing. In fact, the Naval Institute mailed letters to six different publishing companies requesting consent in June 1956. All responded favorably, but a couple came at a cost, that is, the Marine Corps had to pay a “nominal fee” for using two of the works. Managing Editor Roy de S. Horn, Commander, USN (Ret.), wanted to recommend dropping the project altogether in 1954. The Naval Institute knew from the beginning they would not make a profit from the book. In fact, they may have even taken a small loss, but hours and money already invested made the option of canceling the printing difficult. Furthermore, Horn felt the venture “would be of great benefit to the Marine Corps and to the nation as a whole.”²²

With the United States thoroughly ensconced in the Cold War and committed to the policy of containment in the mid-1950s, the Marine Corps pushed for publication of *Garde d’Haiti* for two reasons. First, according to U.S. Navy Commander Sheldon H. Kinney, it was “the only account we know of that covers this interesting and unusual American activity.” Second, and more important, he continued,

The book offers a splendid showcase exhibit of American assistance to backward nations, with no thought of profit or even getting back the money expended. It is

²² Letters from C.W. Harrison, Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps, Head, Historical Branch, G-3, to The American Society of Political and Social Science, World Peace Foundation, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, Dial Press, Rinehart and Company, Inc., and Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 8 June 1956, U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD; Susan Beere, Dial Press, to Col. Harrison, 2 July 1956, requiring a \$25 fee and Florence K. Riddle, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, to Col. Harrison, 3 July 1956, requiring a \$50 fee; all located at U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD; Letter from Roy de S. Horn, Commander, USN (Ret.), Managing Editor, to Lt. Col. H.W. Edwards, USMC, Head, Historical Branch, G-3, 5 May 1955; Commander Sheldon H. Kinney, “Memorandum to Board of Control,” 12 May 1955; and Sheldon H. Kinney, Commander, U.S. Navy, Secretary-Treasurer, to Lt. Col. H.W. Edwards, USMC, Head, Historical Branch, G-3, 18 May 1955; all located at the U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD; Horn to Harrison, 1 May 1956.

an excellent refutation of any charges of Colonialism or imperialism that the Communists might make against the U.S.²³

Therefore, *Garde d'Haiti* served a beneficial purpose for the Marine Corps. In an era of Cold War tensions, any opportunity to portray the U.S. and democracy in a positive light was a good opportunity. So the manuscript was published and McCrocklin's "borrowing" was forgotten, except for the rumors.

Rumors may or may not be true, but they have a way of drawing a distinct line between the people who believe them and those who do not. An "immediate taking of sides" in the McCrocklin affair increased tensions among the SWT community.

According to Norman Peterson, the development of two opposing "camps" was not shocking. The realization that "opinions [were] already hardened when the rumor of plagiarism became public for the first time" was much more surprising. This revelation revealed just how many people were already aware of the rumors by 1968. The split occurred primarily between various faculty members or faculty and administrators. Some of these divisions show obvious differences in opinion.²⁴

A scathing letter to the editor of the *College Star*, SWT's campus newspaper, attempted to defend McCrocklin and divert attention toward the accusers "who perhaps are afraid to come out into the open." Yet signing the letter as "A Concerned Member of the Faculty" made the author seem a bit nervous about sharing his or her own identity. Furthermore, "Concerned" also declared those seeking the truth had to have an ulterior motive. While there were definitely underlying reasons causing people to pursue the matter, academic honesty and integrity became the primary reason for continuing the

²³ Memorandum to Board of Control, 12 May 1955.

²⁴ "Scholarly Plagiarism and the College President: A Study of the McCrocklin Case," [5].

investigation. McCrocklin's plagiarism went against the standards of higher education. One of the prerequisites to earning a graduate degree is conducting one's own research that culminates in an original thesis or dissertation. While McCrocklin may have made the Hart Report more available to students and the public, his work did not meet the necessary requirements of originality.²⁵

A number of instructors and professors responded to "Concerned." History instructor William A. Emory questioned the stance "Concerned" would take if it were one of his or her own students doing what McCrocklin had done. Similarly, Assistant Professor of English J.M. "Max" Braffett asked how a faculty member could be unconcerned about plagiarism. Finally, a group of ten professors and instructors signed a letter to the editor announcing a forum "for examination and discussion" as a means "to put to final rest these rumors and gossip." Some, if not all, of the ten signers were undoubtedly part of the group "Concerned" accused of "fanning the flame" and with that letter, they stepped out into the open.²⁶

The arranged forum took place on Tuesday, 17 December 1968. Various newspaper accounts said approximately 600 people attended what one article claimed was an "electric-charged" meeting. English instructor Ben Archer chaired the forum where various people in the audience would call out a page number. On side-by-side

²⁵ "Prexy's defense stands on record," *College Star*, 6 December 1968, Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 8; For more on availability of the Hart Report, see "Statement of Colonel Frank C. Caldwell, USMC, Head, Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.," White House Central Files, Box 237, LBJ Library; For lack of originality in McCrocklin dissertation, see "Statement and Recommendations of the Chancellor's Office, The University of Texas System on the Review of the James H. McCrocklin Dissertation," 31 October 1969, James H. McCrocklin Biographical File, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, TX. Hereafter cited as CAH.

²⁶ "Profs hit McCrocklin defense," *College Star*, 13 December 1968, Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 8, 2. The ten signers (as printed in the paper) were William C. Pool, Allan K. Butcher, Mel Jordan, Robert T. Smith, Walter A. Winsett, Hal B. Pickle, Daniel E. Farlow, D.B. Graham, Steve Marshall, and Patricia Green Harris.

overheads, Archer would turn to that page in the thesis and dissertation in an attempt to show the similarities. The primary reasoning behind the forum was to get things out “into the open,” but people supporting McCrocklin said it was either to embarrass McCrocklin or for political reasons. What those “political reasons” might be is unclear, however.

Several sources referred vaguely to political undertones. Unfortunately, except for the suggested connections first printed in the *Observer*, most newspaper articles and people who suggested the link to politics were very unspecific. Existing tensions on a local level between liberal activists, like the Chandlers, and the “established oligarchy” might have fueled the conflict. Certainly, McCrocklin’s appointment to HEW by Johnson raised what started as a local concern to the national level. No one, however, made any specific allegations of political intrigue or collusion. Nevertheless, the rumors continued.²⁷

Most accounts of the forum suggest that the discussion began cordially enough but then quickly dissolved into a chaotic mix of “cheers and jeers” both for and against McCrocklin. Such an outcome simply proved “that this campus is evenly divided on the McCrocklin ‘issue.’” Empress Zedler, a speech therapist at SWT, compared the attack on Harriet McCrocklin to that on Rachel Jackson, Andrew Jackson’s wife. According to Zedler, the prosecution of McCrocklin was via the slander on his wife in the same manner as the Jacksons. Zedler claimed to have attended the meeting to “defend the wronged.” In her opinion, the wronged was Harriet McCrocklin. No one attempted to defend James McCrocklin, but English Department Chair Robert Walts and Joe Wilson, dean of the college, reading a statement by Acting President Leland Derrick, implored the

²⁷ Chandler to author, 25 January 2007.

crowd to wait until McCrocklin returned and could defend himself. As arguments over these suggestions continued, Archer explained that the meeting was simply an open forum and “not a decision making group.”²⁸

Since the *Observer* first exposed the similarities between the works to public scrutiny, many faculty and students alike demanded an answer to the charge. Letters to the editors of newspapers show that a large majority simply searched for the truth and/or an end to the situation without further damaging the school’s reputation. All McCrocklin needed to do, according to some, was issue a statement, but he continued his silence. This annoyed many people. For instance, English instructor Don Graham wrote a letter to the *Star*’s editor on 18 October 1968 explaining that a reply was necessary as “the only way to salvage a regrettable situation.” Another opinion written by an anonymous student expressed dissatisfaction with McCrocklin’s delay in offering an explanation. Other forms of information sharing occurred as well. Various printouts circulated on campus as handouts and inserts in the newspaper. Faculty and students met in open discussions. Students organized a sit-in that some say was SWT’s first ever protest on campus. The longer the situation went on without resolution, the more questions arose regarding the integrity of SWT.²⁹

McCrocklin’s return in late January 1969 did not bring closure to the tense situation. His long-awaited public statement on 24 February 1969 was anti-climactic and

²⁸ As far as can be ascertained, no one bothered to mention that Harriet McCrocklin either plagiarized her husband’s dissertation or allowed him to plagiarize her thesis; Ken Armke, “McCrocklin Charge Aired at Meeting,” *San Antonio Express*, Tri-County Edition, 18 December 1968, 8E; “College Forum Airs McCrocklin Papers,” *San Marcos Record*, 19 December 1968, 1; and Kaye Northcott, “A Forum on McCrocklin,” *Texas Observer*, 27 December 1968, 3-4. All located in the Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 8.

²⁹ “Prexy’s reply demanded,” *College Star*, 18 October 1968, Swinney Papers; also “Waiting annoys student,” *College Star*, 22 November 1968, Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 8.

only confused the issue, bringing about another wave of protests and disagreements. Rather than addressing the accusations, he viewed them as a personal attack by radicals trying to smear his name. He came across as arrogant and unconcerned with academic policies. In fact, his attitude indicated that he thought the situation would pass, allowing him to get back to business as usual once the situation “blew over.” Unfortunately, he underestimated the concern several students and faculty members had regarding the school’s integrity.

Upon first inspection, politics and personality conflicts appear to be the impetus for the push to find truth in the rumors about McCrocklin’s dissertation. These factors definitely played a key role in the initial comparisons between Harriet McCrocklin’s thesis and his dissertation. Had this been all that he had to hide, he possibly could have survived the situation. Some of his defenders even suggested that he was simply being a dutiful husband by assisting his wife. However, once Heintz made McCrocklin’s blatant plagiarizing of the Hart Report and Metcalf’s *History of the United States Marine Corps* public, the matter escalated into more than a local problem. National news agencies picked up the story, partly because McCrocklin was a member of Johnson’s administration.³⁰

All of this aside, the primary underlying factor was the question of academic integrity. None of the other issues mattered regardless of how important they seemed on the surface. McCrocklin had done it. He had plagiarized his dissertation and then advanced his career with a fraudulent degree. The case, however, raised two major areas of concern. First was the matter of academic integrity. How could a college administrator,

³⁰ “College Forum Airs McCrocklin Papers,” 1.

one who was supposed to stand up for academic policies, misuse the system? Second was the reputation of the college. *Newsweek* had claimed that employees of HEW were laughing at McCrocklin. After this, the nation was laughing at SWT. Students worried that their degrees would lose value over the crisis. Worse, people feared the quality of professors would decline because of the poor reputation. These were the issues most important to the students and faculty members searching for the truth, and once they knew what that truth was, they felt McCrocklin had committed the worst crime in academia.

CHAPTER III

SILENCE AND PROTEST

McCrocklin never fulfilled his promise to explain everything upon his return to campus. Instead, he tried the patience of both faculty and students with further delays and obfuscation. When he finally addressed the accusations, he left the university community more confused than ever. Tired of the tension, embarrassment, and uncertainty, various groups across the campus attempted to take matters into their own hands and force some kind of resolution. They did not succeed in pushing him into an admission of guilt or a true defense of his work. In the end, then, no one was satisfied and everyone lost. McCrocklin's tactic backfired, and he lost his position and his reputation. He was not the only one to pay for his mistakes, however. The ramifications of the controversy rippled throughout San Marcos.

While they awaited McCrocklin's return to campus, various university groups attempted to come to grips with the seriousness of the charges. The forum that had taken place in December 1968 showed that Southwest Texas faculty wanted the truth. Proving the national interest in the case, the *Washington Post* covered the meeting, referring to it as "an embarrassing pre-homecoming ceremony."¹

Faculty members in San Marcos were not the only ones unsure of how to respond to the unusual circumstances. In December 1968, Heinel published a story claiming that

¹ "HEW's McCrocklin Facing a Quiz At Texas College on 'His, Her' Theses," *Washington Post*, 17 December 1968, A1, A3, JHM file.

the national American Association of University Professors chapter had “referred the matter to its committee on professional ethics.” The national chapter asked the local organization to submit all available information to them for review. Heidl did not have much faith that the inquiry would result in any significant action. He claimed that AAUP’s examination would likely only “amount to a confidential slap on the wrist” since the results of such investigations were usually kept private.²

According to one member, the local AAUP chapter had been a “comparatively obscure campus organization until the McCrocklin matter.” Once the chapter found itself embroiled in the situation, its membership decided to take a stand. Consequently, the chapter held elections at its semi-annual meeting on 18 December 1968, the day after the public forum. Government instructor Allen Butcher, who had been a critic from early on, won election as chapter president. According to *San Antonio Express* reporter Ken Armke, “charges followed” Butcher’s election claiming that an “anti-McCrocklin group” attended the meeting and “had ‘taken over’ the chapter in order to take action unfavorable to McCrocklin.” Both Butcher and former chapter president, Donald Tuff, insisted that Butcher won the election fairly, not because of his perceived stand on McCrocklin, but because of his role in trying to keep the organization from disbanding.³

In a memo to AAUP members at SWT, Butcher called a special meeting for 9 January 1969 to discuss two major issues. First, he explained that he had received a call from T.J. Truss, of the AAUP national office, who voiced his concern over “the impact it [the McCrocklin controversy] is having on the college and the faculty.” He asked what

² Col. R. D. Heidl, Jr., “‘His-and hers’ theses under AAUP probe,” *Detroit News*, 29 December 1968, 12A, JHM file.

³ Ken Armke, “McCrocklin Controversy May Flare Up Again Today,” *San Antonio Express*, 9 January 1969, Swinney Papers.

the local organization was planning to do about it. Butcher suggested designating an executive committee to issue a statement on the matter. The committee could investigate what responsibility the chapter had regarding the situation. If they did have a responsibility, committee members should examine what alternative courses of action existed, and decide which one would best suit the present circumstances.⁴

The second issue focused on Butcher's election as president. Butcher claimed after having "occasion to carefully read the Constitution and Bylaws of the Chapter," that it was "necessary to hold new elections" because many of the people who voted him in were not eligible to do so. Association Bylaws stated that "members must have paid both their National and Local dues by May 16 of the year in which they were voting." According to Butcher's memo, at least half of the members that joined in December were not eligible to vote because of this reason. However, since the new election was being held in January 1969, anyone who paid his or her 1969 dues prior to that meeting would be eligible to participate in the election.⁵

The meeting did not last long, and the members re-elected a reluctant Tuff after Butcher declined the nomination. According to a statement printed in the *San Antonio Express*, Butcher declined because he found himself "uncomfortable because I'm so closely identified with the controversy." He did accept nomination, however, as the fifth member of the five-person executive committee. During the meeting, one member asked if someone at SWT had instigated "the national office's request for a statement." Tuff responded that it was "initiated at the national level." Later correspondence received from

⁴ Memo to AAUP Members by Chapter president Allen Butcher, Peterson Papers, Box 7 File 3.

⁵ Ibid.

Truss reinforced Tuff's reply. Truss urged the SWT chapter to "refer the entire matter and all information it or its members may have to the General Secretary for the deliberations." Unfortunately, Heinel's earlier conclusion of an obligatory "slap on the wrist" proved prophetic. Less than two weeks after the initial request for information, Truss sent a second letter that appeared to contradict the initial request. Without offering any reasons, Truss "suggest[ed] at this time that the Chapter or its instruments not conduct investigations or attempt rendering a judgment with reference to allegations of plagiarism as a question of professional ethics in the case at hand." The national office wanted to wait for McCrocklin's defense.⁶

McCrocklin had promised a reply when he returned to SWT in late January. He then backed that date up to 24 February when he was to address the faculty at the general faculty meeting. According to McCrocklin, he would then "make a statement 'through regular channels.'" Apparently, he meant the brief news conference that was to follow the faculty meeting. Interestingly, this new schedule would allow him to learn the outcome of the planned meeting of the Board of Regents of State Senior Colleges. The agenda of the regents' meeting, scheduled for 21 February, would include a renewal of college presidents' contracts. For McCrocklin, postponing until after the regents met would be beneficial. He could then base his response on the outcome of their meeting.⁷

This did not sit well with many of the students who had their own reasons for concern. Led by John Pfeffer, Jr., they began planning a peaceful sit-in for 20 February, the day before the regents met. Pfeffer, among others, understood the significance of the

⁶ "Professor Group To Draft Statement on McCrocklin," *San Antonio Express*, 10 January 1969, JHM file; Letter, Truss to Tuff, 14 February 1969, Swinney Papers.

⁷ Derro Evans, "McCrocklin Vows Reply to Charges," *The Austin American*, 12 February 1969, JHM file.

regents' meeting. He worried that if the board renewed McCrocklin's contract, McCrocklin would never respond to the allegations and the charges would go unanswered. Like many of his fellow students, Pfeffer believed that McCrocklin's guilt or even the lingering suspicion of guilt would cause lasting damage to their future careers. They were concerned about the integrity of the college, their degrees, and the administration. They stressed that they were not attacking McCrocklin; they were attempting to "emphasize their request" for the regents to postpone renewal of McCrocklin's contract until he provided an adequate explanation and "the charges cleared."⁸

The group of students planning the sit-in worried about the school's integrity. Their handbill emphasized that "the students and faculty are under a cloud of doubt and are being disturbed by his [McCrocklin's] refusal to clear the issue." The handbill continued:

This matter has divided the faculty and may cause an exodus of good teachers; it may discourage new professors from seeking positions at SWT; and it may cause students to change to other colleges in fear that their degrees will have little value upon graduation.

Even though the sit-in was a protest, the group requested there be no singing or chanting that would interfere with classes, that only SWT students participate, any signs remain free of obscenities, and the participants should not block the sidewalk and should conduct themselves "in an orderly," peaceful manner.⁹

⁸ Bob Heaton, "McCrocklin Controversy Opinion Spectrum Is Full," *San Antonio News*, 20 February 1969, JHM file; Bob Denman, "SWT Students Plan McCrocklin Sit-in," *San Antonio Express*, 16 February 1969, JHM file.

⁹ "SWT Students Plan McCrocklin Sit-in," 16 February 1969; Handbill distributed around campus, 17 February 1969, JHM file.

A letter by an anonymous writer addressed to the board of regents circulated among the faculty on 17 February, the same day as the handbill for the sit-in. The letter, reportedly signed by at least seventy faculty members, also asked that the regents withhold McCrocklin's contract. The reasoning was similar to that of the students. "In view of the continuing questions and crises arising on our campus, in view of President McCrocklin's failure to reply to any of the serious charges leveled against him, we strongly urge that the board, in the interest of truth, investigate thoroughly before it extends President McCrocklin another contract in his present position." The letter's author claimed that it "would be a mockery" to attempt to maintain the standards of academic integrity to the students "without some satisfactory, academically acceptable explanation from President McCrocklin." Even former students had contacted members of the board to get them to "delay consideration." The SWT community wanted McCrocklin to speak up on his own behalf.¹⁰

In another effort to get the regents involved, Everette Swinney wrote the board a letter on 18 February asking them to launch an investigation since McCrocklin answered only to them. Swinney argued that the only way to clear up the situation and achieve "academic due process" was to submit the matter to a panel of unbiased experts, thereby, "taking the issue out of the popular forum and press." He was attempting to allay some of the tensions by getting someone who could do something involved. As it was, the

¹⁰ Dana Friedel, "McCrocklin Case Action Deferred," *Daily Texan*, 23 February 1969, JHM file; Letter circulated among the faculty, 17 February 1969, JHM file; Bob Denman, "SWT Exes Contact Regents on Dispute," *San Antonio Express*, 19 February 1969, Box 7 Folder 9, Peterson Papers.

students and faculty could continue to debate the situation, but that was all they could do. Only the board had the power to make a decision.¹¹

As they waited, questions surrounding the McCrocklin scandal rippled throughout the entire university community. Just as some students prepared to participate in the sit-in, the *San Antonio News* reported that others preferred to “sit back and watch developments as they occur.” The story claimed there was no one on campus who did not know about the controversy. Yet, while some risked voicing their opinions, others were either afraid to risk being labeled “anti-McCrocklin” or wanted to stay out of the situation altogether. Some students feared repercussions from professors in class should they participate. The issue divided faculty and community members just as much as the students. The pro-McCrocklin faction insisted the attacks were political. Opposing this were the people speaking out for deferring the contract. They were adamant that academic integrity was the grounds for their stance. Some faculty members remained silent because they were apprehensive over possibly losing their jobs. Others remained loyal and “signed petitions supporting ‘the outstandingly constructive administration and policies’ of Dr. McCrocklin.” The crisis was tearing the campus apart.¹²

The afternoon of the sit-in turned out cold and misty, but this did not keep 125-300 students from joining the peaceful protest. Some participants carried signs reading, “What Is Our Degrees Worth?”; “Academic Integrity?”; “Is the Truth Too Much To Ask For?”; “Don’t Sell the Reputation of SWT.” As promised, however, the demonstration

¹¹ Letter, Swinney to Rasmann, 18 February 1969, Swinney Papers.

¹² “McCrocklin Controversy Opinion Spectrum Is Full,” 20 February 1969; “Sit-In Expected On Controversy AT SWT Today,” *San Marcos Record*, 20 February 1969, JHM file.

was peaceful and “sedate,” leaving Floyd Martine, the dean of students, ‘highly impressed’ with the demonstrators’ conduct.¹³

The sit-in was not the students’ only attempt to have their opinions heard. A group of four graduate students met with some members of the board, including J.C. Kellam, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s friend and business manager. According to Joleene Snider, one of the four, a few people asked them to be student representatives because they were not undergraduate students, but they were also not part of the faculty group “out to get McCrocklin.” The meeting took place in Austin at the Driskill Hotel on Thursday, 20 February, the night before the regents’ were to vote on contracts. The board chairman, Emil Rasmann, was curious about how the situation affected the campus atmosphere. The students mentioned the negativity among the faculty. Dennis Kriewald, English major, then spoke up and said, “as an English graduate assistant I found it difficult explaining to students about the evils of plagiarism when the university president had apparently plagiarized.” According to Kriewald, Kellam defended the notion that citation styles for military documents were different than what is used in the Modern Language Association style. However, when Kriewald countered with the question, “Why did not Dr. McCrocklin at least inform those who questioned his use of materials?” Kellam “had little response.” To this day, Kriewald believes that Kellam had expected him “to accept that explanation at face value.” Under the circumstances, the students could not do that because they were there to argue that the situation “placed a cloud on their degrees and reduced their value.” For this reason, they stood their ground against the

¹³ The number varies depending on the source; Jerry Veidt, “Protests Peaceful At SWT,” *Austin American*, 21 February 1969, 1, 6, JHM file; “Students Show Regents Views on McCrocklin,” *San Antonio News*, 21 February 1969, JHM file; and Bob Denman, “San Marcos Sit-In Gets 250 in Mist,” *San Antonio Express*, 21 February 1969, 1, 16, Swinney Papers.

questions of the present board members and pleaded for them to withhold their decision on McCrocklin. The group of four did not know the board's decision when they left.¹⁴

The next day, Bob Walts, English department chair, called Kriewald in to ask why he had signed a petition against McCrocklin, not knowing that Kriewald had met with a group of regents the previous evening. Once again, Kriewald defended himself by standing his ground, this time against the chair. He asked the chair the same question he had asked the regents: How were English professors and assistants "supposed to explain and be harsh against plagiarism when the President had abused it?" The chair's only response was that Kriewald "needed to know that both sides of the story had not yet come out." Upon leaving the meeting, Kriewald found out that the board had decided to postpone their decision on McCrocklin's contract.¹⁵

The regents chose to defer their decision on McCrocklin until 9 May, their next regular meeting, in order to give the three new board members a chance to become familiar with McCrocklin and the situation at SWT. This delay, however, might have been a way for the board to wait and see what UT's graduate school was going to do regarding the matter. According to a *Daily Texan* article, "the response of the University of Texas to the McCrocklin controversy is of paramount importance." After the regents released the results of their meeting, Gordon Whaley, dean of UT's graduate school,

¹⁴ Jo Snider, typed statement to author, 31 January 2007. Jo Snider was known then as Joleene Maddox; Kriewald to author, electronic mail, 26 March 2007.

¹⁵ Kriewald to author, 26 March 2007. As a side note, Kriewald experienced a situation similar to Charles Chandler when it came to obtaining a teaching position after his contract at SWT expired in the spring of 1970. According to Kriewald, he had applied for "one sure job" at San Antonio College where he had attended 1963-1965. After a long period had passed without hearing anything, he contacted "the aunt of the English Department chairman" whom he knew rather well. He says "she was full of encouragement about my job interview, etc., but then she added, 'But, Dennis, you did speak out against Dr. McCrocklin.'" He does not claim that his views regarding the McCrocklin situation kept him from getting the position, but the administration at San Antonio College were definitely aware of them and he apparently never got the job because he took a position in Laredo.

announced that an investigation, began in October 1968, had been completed and the results shared with McCrocklin. Whaley would not release those results, however, until presented at the UT graduate faculty meeting on 9 April. At that time, McCrocklin would have a chance to speak on the matter. UT president Norman Hackerman said he formed a five-man committee to investigate questions that continued to circulate, but stressed that “the question must be looked at soberly” because “both the University and this man (McCrocklin) deserve a sober judgment.”¹⁶

What neither the regents nor UT released at that time, and what one can only speculate played a major role in the regents’ decision to delay, was the fact that the advisory committee had filed their report on 3 February unanimously concluding “there was ‘probable cause to believe’” McCrocklin had violated regulations. Heintz, writer for the *Detroit News*, reported, “A Graduate faculty committee at the University of Texas notified McCrocklin that – subject to any convincing rebuttal he might make – his dissertation represents a clear case of plagiarism.” This might have been to add to the drama, but Hackerman denounced the reports as being “woven of rumor and such things.” However, Hackerman had informed McCrocklin that UT was investigating to determine whether he had violated University regulations regarding plagiarism and a hearing would follow.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bob Denman, “Board Delays McCrocklin Decision,” *San Antonio Express*, 22 February 1969, Swinney Papers; “Regents Postpone McCrocklin Vote,” *Austin American*, 22 February 1968, JHM file; “McCrocklin Case Action Deferred,” 23 February 1969; “Prexy To Face SWT Faculty; UT Probe Seen,” *Austin American*, 24 February 1969, JHM file.

¹⁷ Record of Sequence of Events and Correspondence in the Review of the James H. McCrocklin Dissertation, James H. McCrocklin Biographical file, CAH; Col. R. D. Heintz, Jr., Story draft, *Detroit News*, 23 February 1969, Peterson Papers, Box 7 Folder 9; “Prexy To Face SWT Faculty; UT Probe Seen,” 24 February 1969.

With all of his options for delay exhausted, six months after the *Observer* leveled charges against McCrocklin, he finally spoke about the “his and hers theses.” McCrocklin began his speech to the faculty by saying that the delay in his response came from taking time to gather the necessary “documents and correspondence.” McCrocklin’s statement to the faculty on 24 February acknowledged that his wife had used his material, but “only with my permission and the permission of the government graduate faculty members.” He only made a few other minor references to Mrs. McCrocklin’s thesis and then moved on to his use of the Hart Report.¹⁸

McCrocklin’s discussion of the Hart Report, the publication by the Marine Corps, and his dissertation confused the issue even more. He was vague in his allusion to the Report and his dissertation, only calling them monographs. This made it difficult to distinguish which he was referring to at any given time. For example, he stated, “The monograph was presented to the Marine Corps and published after clearance was accomplished by the Department of Defense.” He then referred to the monograph again when speaking of crediting the Hart Report. McCrocklin said, “On page VII and VIII of the Haitian Monograph I stated, ‘This work was largely prepared from material contained in the Historical Archives of the United States Marine Corps; Mainly on a report dated 31 July 1934 by a board headed by Major Franklin A. Hart, Garde D’Haiti. (Now General USMC Ret.)’” This single statement contains two major inconsistencies. The first has already been mentioned – it is unclear to which paper he is referring when he says “Haitian Monograph.” Second, evidence presented in chapter one of this thesis has already shown that his acknowledgement of the Hart Report came only after editors

¹⁸ Statement of James H. McCrocklin to the General Faculty Meeting, 24 February 1969, 1, Morgue Files.

found discrepancies while preparing the material for publishing. McCrocklin himself admitted that he had nothing to do with the “monograph” once he turned it over to the Marine Corps. Therefore, his “long admitted fact” was added not to his dissertation but to the book being printed and not by McCrocklin but by the Marine Corps.¹⁹

The rounding up of supporting evidence became a regular delay tactic for McCrocklin. He closed his speech by announcing Hackerman’s invitation “to appear before a faculty committee” at UT and he responded “that very little time will be needed for me to be ready to accept his invitation.” If he had been gathering materials for his defense over the previous six months, and that was the reason for his delay in providing a statement, he should have been prepared. Aside from attempting to explain the reason for the delay and briefly mentioning his wife’s thesis and the Hart Report, McCrocklin did not offer any real explanation at all. In fact, the situation became more complicated and left the faculty and students more confused.²⁰

McCrocklin’s statement did little to answer the questions or quell the controversy. Instead, his defense created new ones. Initial reports of McCrocklin’s comments chose to reprint all or portions of the statement with very little editorializing. Discrepancies in the reports arose not from the content of the speech itself, but from the reaction of the audience. Although the *Austin American*, the *San Antonio Express*, and even the *Washington Post* mentioned the fact that McCrocklin received a standing ovation at the end of his speech, they disagreed on what exactly constituted a “standing ovation.” For example, the *Austin American* reported “some” people gave him a standing ovation,

¹⁹ McCrocklin Statement, 24 February 1969, 3; Statement of James H. McCrocklin, 30 September 1968, LBJ Library.

²⁰ McCrocklin Statement, 24 February 1969, 4.

while the *San Antonio Express* claimed he received one “from most,” and the *Washington Post* journalist said McCrocklin himself claimed to have received a standing ovation. The *Post* went on to print, however, that an attending faculty member disagreed, pointing out that “some stood and applauded, some sat and applauded, and some just sat there.” This same faculty member made the first statement of dissension as well when he said that McCrocklin did not address the pertinent issue and only “spoke of matters that were irrelevant.” Both Swinney and history instructor Bill Liddle attended the faculty meeting and they agreed that the group sitting closest to the stage stood and gave McCrocklin a cheering ovation. Liddle had gotten to the meeting late and was forced to sit in the front section of the auditorium. He could not see the back area. Swinney, however, supports the newspaper account that the majority of people in the back simply sat there without even applauding.²¹

By 26 February, criticisms of McCrocklin’s statement appeared in most of the newspapers. Butcher pointed out that the Hart Report was credited “two years” after McCrocklin received his Ph.D. “and only at the insistence of the Naval Institute.” Butcher also reportedly claimed that several professors were considering leaving SWT if McCrocklin remained as president. Pfeffer emphasized that McCrocklin’s statement was “calculated to mislead the public in general, contained a series of ‘half-truths,’ and was ‘vague.’” Pfeffer also noted that McCrocklin refused to speak to him and three other students about his statement the day after it was given, but Pfeffer was later notified that

²¹ Derro Evans, “McCrocklin Defends Paper,” *Austin American*, 25 February 1969, JHM file; Bob Denman, “McCrocklin Tells Of Dissertaion, *San Antonio Express*, 25 February 1969, JHM file; “Texas U. Panel to Hear McCrocklin on Thesis,” *Washington Post*, 25 February 1969, JHM file; Everette Swinney to author, electronic mail, 12 October 2007; Bill Liddle to author, electronic mail, 18 October 2007.

he could meet with McCrocklin if “accompanied by the dean of students and the college financial assistance officer.” Nothing shows that Pfeffer ever met with McCrocklin.²²

History instructor Jim Green also criticized McCrocklin’s statement. Green pointed out that the permission granted by Hart was “general authorization for all writers,” not specific authorization for McCrocklin to use the report verbatim in his dissertation. Furthermore, Green agreed with Butcher that the reference for crediting the Hart Report was not in the dissertation but only in the published work. Green wrote an analysis of the statement that was printed in the *Cedar Chopper’s Almanack*. In that piece, Green claimed that McCrocklin’s speech was “a studied attempt to bypass any mention of the central issue in the controversy.” Agreeing with Pfeffer and many others, Green argued that McCrocklin included irrelevant facts to “serve no other purpose except to further confuse the issue.” McCrocklin’s attempts to supply explanations disappointed many people and, as Green stated, “The faculty, students, and press have every right to expect more than McCrocklin gave them.”²³

Green also found fault with McCrocklin’s claim that the classification status of the Hart Report and the other military documents required clearance for use accounted for the discrepancy in citations. Green took it upon himself to contact Col. Frank C. Caldwell, director of Marine Corps History at the Naval Archives, who “told Green that,

²² Bob Denman, “Instructor, Student Leader Hit McCrocklin Statement,” *San Antonio Express*, 26 February 1969, Swinney Papers; “M’Crocklin Explanation Is Disputed,” *Austin American*, 26 February 1969, JHM file; “Dissertation of SWTSC Head Inadequate, Claims Instructor,” *Daily Texas*, 26 February 1969, JHM file.

²³ “Instructor, Student Leader Hit McCrocklin Statement,” 26 February 1969, Swinney Papers; Jim Green, “An Analysis of the McCrocklin Statement,” in *Cedar Chopper’s Almanack* 1, no. 11, 05 March 1969, 5-6, CAH.

to the best of his knowledge, the Hart report never had been classified.” This was just another in a series of conflicting facts.²⁴

People closely associated with the situation were not the only ones unsettled by McCrocklin’s remarks. Paul Thompson, “Top of the News” column writer for the *San Antonio Evening News*, reported, “Meanwhile there was a vast deal of head-scratching in local university circles as to just what McCrocklin’s statement of Monday really meant. Nobody knew.” Coming to similar conclusions reached by Pfeffer and Green, Thompson said, “Sources checked by this column for the most part regarded the statement as a classic piece of obfuscation.”²⁵

On the other hand, Terry Collier, *College Star* editor, did not seem to find McCrocklin’s speech to be vague or misleading. In an article, “McCrocklin gives reply to doubters,” Collier wrote, “Overall, the long-awaited statement was a clear attempt to discount previously-aired criticisms of his academic integrity.” Perhaps this claim came because of his position on the college newspaper, which as a university publication, may have been censored by administrators. Apparently, a story in the *Almanack* made similar accusations because the editor of the *Star* found it necessary to deny such charges. An editorial on 1 November 1968 insisted that, “In no way is this newspaper edited, checked or examined as means of censorship by anyone other than the editorial staff. It has been this way for the past two years.” Regardless, Collier was in a minority when it came to publicly defending McCrocklin at that point and the reasoning behind Collier’s statement

²⁴ Dana Friedel, “McCrocklin Defends Paper; Many Remain Unsatisfied,” *Daily Texan*, 28 February 1969, JHM file.

²⁵ Paul Thompson, “Top of the News,” in *San Antonio Evening News*, 26 February 1969, JHM file.

is not known. It does go to show that people obviously remained split on the subject, though.²⁶

Regardless of the criticisms of McCrocklin's statement, the outcome depended on the decisions of SWT's board of regents and the UT Graduate School. As a newspaper pointed out, "The decision on the integrity of James H. McCrocklin's doctoral degree is back where it started: Before a faculty committee of the University of Texas." Their findings bore the most weight in the issue since they might have the ability to strip McCrocklin of his degree.²⁷

The hearing committee investigating McCrocklin's dissertation had a very specific task. Whaley established exactly what question the committee was examining: "The only question before the University is: is this a valid PhD dissertation and does it satisfy the requirements upon which the rewarding of the degree is based." Deciding the extent to which McCrocklin had or had not plagiarized would help ascertain if he had met the minimum research qualifications required to earn the doctoral degree.²⁸

In limiting their goals so specifically, the committee ignored what many students felt was the heart of the whole sordid affair: integrity. A group of twelve history graduate students submitted a letter to the *Daily Texan* proclaiming their concerns. "The issue is his record for integrity . . . As graduate students in the Department of History, we are concerned about the announced purpose of the current investigation. We want to know if it will focus on the real question of integrity or if it will sidestep the problem with evasive

²⁶ Terry Collier, "McCrocklin gives reply to doubters," *College Star*, 28 February 1969, JHM file; "Star not censored," Editorial, *College Star*, 01 November 1968, Microfilm, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX.

²⁷ "McCrocklin Case In Proper Hands," *San Antonio Express*, 26 February 1969, JHM file.

²⁸ Karen Elliott, "SWTSC Head Cites Sources," *Daily Texan*, 25 February 1969, JHM file.

ambiguities about research abilities.” These UT students echoed the concerns made earlier by SWT students. The students at SWT feared their degrees would lose value if nothing was done to McCrocklin for his plagiarism. At the same time, they also worried that the college would be unable to obtain and keep good professors due to the school’s reputation. Thus, issues of integrity and academic honesty were the primary concern for both SWT and UT students. The focus shifted to UT when the graduate school developed a “vital interest in the degree because that school awarded it.”²⁹

Similar letters appeared in other newspapers, one of which voiced a similar concern: “Have times changed or do different standards apply to college presidents?” Yet another claimed the authors “deeply deplore[d] academic dishonesty in any form, especially plagiarism.” Finally, another letter agreed that McCrocklin’s integrity was questionable, but insisted that the faculty committee at UT could only base its decision on McCrocklin’s “research” because there was no way for society to enforce integrity and “no public yardstick by which a man’s integrity can justly be measured.” In other words, the committee members could continue to argue the point of whether or not McCrocklin should be judged on his honesty and integrity, but when it came down to it, the only judgment would be a moral one and not one from which to base a decision of such magnitude as removing one’s degree.³⁰

McCrocklin’s subsequent behavior invited further criticism. Whaley hoped to meet with McCrocklin sometime in March, but in the latter part of the month,

²⁹ “Real Question,” letter to the editor, *Daily Texan*, 2 March 1969, JHM file; “McCrocklin Case In Proper Hands,” 26 February 1969.

³⁰ “Different Standards,” letter to the editor, *San Antonio Express*, 6 March 1969, JHM file; “Graduate Concern,” letter to the editor, *San Antonio Express*, 21 March 1969, JHM file; “Integrity vs. Rules,” letter to the editor, *Daily Texan*, 6 March 1969, JHM file.

McCrocklin requested a delay in meeting with the graduate committee, claiming that he needed “additional time and indicated that he could not be ready before the early part of May.” The committee granted him a delay until 3 May. This brought a new round of criticism since McCrocklin had stated in his 24 February speech that “very little time will be needed for me to be ready.” He had claimed earlier that he had remained silent for over six months in order to gather the pertinent documents for his defense, but now he asserted that he needed an additional month and a half. Critics questioned McCrocklin’s motives. Just as he attempted to delay making a statement in February until after the board met, some critics suggested he was now possibly trying to wait again until after the regents had their meeting on 9 May. Pfeffer weighed in, insisting that there could only be two reasons why McCrocklin was delaying – McCrocklin was either planning to resign before the May meeting and “thereby removing SWT from a state of hypocrisy,” or he was hoping “that Mr. Kellem (*sic*) can swing the board members . . . to change their vote in his favor.”³¹

This was not the first time critics had raised the issue of McCrocklin’s resignation. As early as January 1969, a rumor circulated that McCrocklin would resign. Even Heintz printed an article saying as much, which, quite possibly, may have been what started the rumor in the first place. So, from early on, many students and faculty saw his resignation as an option. Though many people heard the rumor of McCrocklin’s

³¹ “McCrocklin Hearing Set In Early May,” *San Antonio Express*, 21 March 1969, JHM file; “Delay Is Sought In Thesis Probe,” [no paper listed], 21 March 1969, JHM file; Karen Elliott, “McCrocklin Probe Set For May,” *Daily Texan*, 21 March 1969, JHM file; Derro Evans, “M’Crocklin Postpones UT Talk,” *Austin American*, 21 March 1969, 1, 6, JHM file; and “Hearing Delayed On McCrocklin Doctoral Papers,” *San Marcos Record*, 27 March 1969, JHM file; McCrocklin Statement, 24 February 1969; “More Time Not Necessary,” letter to editor, *College Star*, 4 April 1969, JHM file; “Protestors defend issue,” letter to editor, *College Star*, 11 April 1969, JHM file.

impending resignation and had accepted it as a viable option, it nevertheless came as a surprise on 19 April.³²

In a special meeting before the board of regents, McCrocklin read a prepared statement requesting to be “relieved immediately of all duties.” He claimed in his resignation that “destructive elements” had launched a “personal attack” on him. In the process, McCrocklin said “these forces” sought not only to discredit him and SWT, but also UT and higher education. He also asserted that he wrote his dissertation under “unique” circumstances and that he was now having difficulties locating the documents necessary for his defense. Therefore, McCrocklin claimed that he “must resign for the good of this great institution and in order that I may devote my full time and efforts to dispelling the false smear upon my personal integrity, the quality of a degree from the University of Texas and upon this institution.” His resignation became national news.³³

McCrocklin’s resignation brought relief for many faculty and students on the SWT campus whether they supported the president or not. His stepping down helped remove SWT from the “cloud of doubt” it had been under since the story broke eight months earlier. Leland Derrick, vice president and dean of the graduate school, assumed the duties as temporary president while the board searched for a replacement. Derrick

³² Heintz, Story draft, 23 February 1969.

³³ Karen Elliott, “McCrocklin Resigns SWTSC Presidency,” *Daily Texan*, 20 April 1969, JHM file; Statement of James H. McCrocklin, 19 April 1969, Box 7 Folder 10, Peterson Papers; A brief sampling of the newspapers include: “McCrocklin Resigns College Position,” *Houston Post*, 20 April 1969; “College Head Quits in Plagiarism Controversy,” *Seattle Times*, 20 April 1969; “McCrocklin Quits College Post In ‘His-Hers’ Thesis Controversy,” *Washington Post*, 20 April 1969; “Texas college head resigns,” *Arizona Republic*, 20 April 1969; and “President Resigns At Southwest Texas,” *Dallas Morning News*, 20 April 1969. All found in the JHM file.

believed that the SWT community had “enough momentum to carry on until we have a new president.”³⁴

The crisis may have been over for SWT, but not for McCrocklin. His resignation brought further criticisms, and he still had to face the UT hearing committee. A letter to the editor of the *San Antonio Express* sarcastically concluded that McCrocklin should be given some credit because “from first to last, he stuck with those red herrings.” Another article published in the *Daily Texan* complained that McCrocklin’s latest statement “was only a little less vague than” the one before and that he “still makes little attempt” to address the plagiarism charges. “Instead [McCrocklin] commences with a sea of rhetoric.” Another letter writer disapproved of some of the faculty’s allegiance to McCrocklin: “Many apparently wished that he [McCrocklin] had not resigned at all, urging that personal loyalties supercede (*sic*) recognized principles of academic integrity.” Even still, some people did try to give McCrocklin the benefit of the doubt. One article stated, “His move to divorce himself from this college, partially to prevent any further tension against the school, is a noble one, regardless of whether or not the charges against him are valid.”³⁵

Criticisms aside, McCrocklin had to defend his dissertation to keep his doctoral degree. His scheduled hearing date was 3 May, but McCrocklin displayed his usual tactics – he delayed – saying he still was not prepared. This came as no surprise to Hackerman. He had supposed as much upon hearing about McCrocklin’s resignation. In a

³⁴ “Derrick Urges SWT ‘Back to Education,’” *Austin American*, 22 April 1969, 1, Box 7 Folder 9, Peterson Papers.

³⁵ *San Antonio Express*, 26 April 1969, 1, JHM file; Dana Friedel, “Students, Educators, Citizens Await Explanation of McCrocklin Dissertation,” *Daily Texan*, 25 April 1969, JHM file; “Restrictions disturb profs,” Letter to editor, *College Star*, 25 April 1969, JHM file; “Resignation-a definite loss,” *College Star*, 25 April 1969, JHM file.

letter to Hackerman on 1 May, McCrocklin claimed “he had not been given adequate time,” and if he did appear on 3 May, it would create “the impression that he had been given a fair opportunity.” He apparently believed he had not. His declaration came three months after Hackerman informed him that a hearing would be set and nine months after the 9 August 1968 article. This did not stop the committee from meeting and reviewing the case without McCrocklin’s appearance on his own behalf. According to Whaley, “No announcement of the faculty committee’s findings would be made ‘until the committee, the president’s office and probably the dean’s and chancellor’s offices review the details of the hearing.’” Further delays would follow.³⁶

In the meantime, an incident stemming from the McCrocklin affair would yet again bring rounds of petitions, a sit-in, and unfavorable criticisms of SWT’s administration. The administration gave four instructors, Y.K. Malik, Steve Marshall, Robert Smith, and Allen Butcher, terminal contracts to expire in May 1970, purportedly because of their role as critics of McCrocklin. The *San Antonio Express* reported that acting president Derrick, in an interview with the Associated Press, readily acknowledged that “two of the four had been given the terminal contracts because of their activities in the McCrocklin controversy.” Three of the four had been part of the ten who signed the initial letter calling for a forum to discuss the similarities of the McCrocklins’ theses. Derrick claimed Butcher’s termination came because he had not completed his Ph.D. after six years, not because Butcher had long been associated with the “anti-McCrocklin group.” Butcher, however, said he would receive his degree in August. According to

³⁶ “McCrocklin Resigns SWTSC Presidency,” 20 April 1969; Record of Sequence of Events and Correspondence in the Review of the James H. McCrocklin Dissertation, James H. McCrocklin Biographical file, CAH; “U of T Panel Reviews Dr. McCrocklin Case,” *San Antonio Express*, 5 May 1969, JHM file.

Butcher, the administrators fired everyone involved who was not tenured or had already resigned. An anonymous printout circulated around campus called this action by the administration a “political purge,” while another letter to the *San Marcos Record*’s editor sarcastically pointed to the firings as “the rewards of academic integrity.” Another hailed the original ten professors who spoke out, emphasizing that “organized society must defend integrity, honesty, and ethics at any cost if it is to perpetuate itself.”³⁷

McCrocklin informed the committee that he could not attend a scheduled meeting in August because his lawyer would be out of town. This delay, in the long line of others, would postpone the decision until 12 September. The *Houston Post* claimed one regent reported that the committee would recommend withdrawing the degree at that time. The committee members, however, were unable to come to a decision at the September meeting either. This time, the delay came because the committee had requested an opinion from Texas Attorney General Crawford Martin on the matter of removing McCrocklin’s degree. He had issued his opinion on 11 September 1969, but the committee needed time to discuss Martin’s ruling. His opinion was that only a court of law and not the university could annul the degree. This meant the graduate school could not take the degree away from McCrocklin. However, the attorney general did say that the graduate school could void the degree as fraudulent within the UT system. This was exactly what they did.³⁸

³⁷ Bob Denman, “Dropped Profs To Appeal,” *San Antonio Express*, 18 May 1969, JHM file; “3 SWT Profs To Lose Jobs,” *Austin American*, 18 May 1969, JHM file; Anonymous printout, JHM file; “Terminal Contracts Attract Comments,” letter to editor, *San Marcos Record*, 22 May 1969, JHM file; “Past pupil praises profs,” letter to editor, *College Star*, 9 May 1969, JHM file.

³⁸ “McCrocklin Case Delay Probable,” *San Antonio Express*, 1 August 1969, 16A, JHM file; “McCrocklin Degree May Be Removed,” *Houston Post*, 2 August 1969, 2, JHM file; Board of Regents of The University of Texas System, Minutes, 31 October 1969, Swinney Papers.

The hearing committee had advised the graduate school that “McCrocklin’s dissertation was not original material.” After reviewing the dissertation and the military documents, William S. Livingston, one of the committee members, found the “results devastating.” Based primarily on this counsel and the attorney general’s decision, the UT board of regents adopted a resolution on 31 October 1969 that “there was probable cause to believe that the regulations of the University were violated in the submission and approval of the dissertation offered by James H. McCrocklin.” Therefore, the board officially declared McCrocklin’s Ph.D. “null and void,” and then ordered the “appropriate officials” to “strike” his name “from the list of Ph.D. recipients for 1954” and reduce the number of doctoral degrees awarded that year by one. The resolution also noted that McCrocklin had been aware of the complete proceedings and had the opportunity on several occasions to defend himself, but “consistently failed or refused to appear, either in person or through his representative, and has failed or refused to present any evidence or argument in his behalf.” When the committee did interview McCrocklin early in the investigation, Livingston found him to be “impervious, imperious, and unashamed.” Ironically, but not surprisingly, his tactics had eventually backfired. In one last act of defiance, he was not even present when the board cancelled his degree.³⁹

McCrocklin had tested everyone’s patience. In his refusal to provide any form of public response, he had abused their patience and, in doing so, caused several faculty members and students to continue pushing for an answer. The atmosphere across the nation during the late 1960s made it possible for shifts to take place on SWT’s campus.

³⁹ “Dr. Whaley Says Study Found Errors,” *Austin American*, 5 November 1969, JHM file; Letter from William S. Livingston, to Teresa A. Sullivan, Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Texas, 28 May 2002, James H. McCrocklin Biographical file, CAH; Board Minutes, 31 October 1969; “Dr. Whaley Says Study Found Errors,” *Austin American*, 5 November 1969, JHM file.

While change to long-standing customs came slowly, they did come. The student unrest spreading across the United States provided the backdrop for SWT students to challenge such traditions. It is under these conditions that circumstances came together to bring about McCrocklin's resignation.

CHAPTER IV

CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

Nearly forty years after the controversy at SWT, we still do not know why the McCrocklin situation played out as it did. Nor can we explain with certainty why McCrocklin thought he could get away with plagiarizing his dissertation, but it is important to examine the scandal in the context of established traditions and how challenges to those traditions in the upheavals of the 1960s provided the atmosphere in which faculty and students felt empowered to mobilize against him.

A convergence of forces collided in the Sixties that challenged long-standing traditions. Until then, colleges maintained a policy of *in loco parentis*, based on the assumption that college administrators should take on certain aspects and responsibilities of a parent over students. As student unrest grew during the 1960s, *in loco parentis* was a policy students attempted to eliminate. In *Up the Hill, Down the Years*, Ron Brown says, “By the 1970s, SWT had virtually abandoned the concept.”² Another accepted, but unspoken tradition was the “old boy network.” This is usually defined as an informal association of a particular group of people within a society who assist each other through “favors.” Most commonly, however, the term is directly associated with powerful businessmen and politicians. Being one of the “old boys” himself, it is likely McCrocklin assumed this “network” would prevent any real reprisals against him. The atmosphere

² Ronald Brown, *Up the Hill, Down the Years: A Century in the Life of the College in San Marcos, 1899-1999* (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1999), 34.

that developed, especially after 1964, made it possible for faculty and students at SWT to defy such customs.

In this era of tremendous turmoil on college campuses, the McCrocklin crisis mirrored many of the changes taking place around the country. When the crisis developed, younger faculty members were willing to continue pushing the issue, even at the risk of losing their jobs. Students joined in later when they felt their education was being threatened. One can only assume that their challenge to authority fell in line with what was occurring nationwide. McCrocklin's plagiarism and the effect it had on the SWT community gains importance not only as a part of the school's and San Marcos's history, but also because it serves as a local case study of some of the larger issues of the 1960s. The students and faculty in San Marcos might not have consciously adopted tactics and attitudes from the national student movement, but their actions nonetheless mimicked the new willingness to challenge authority. Similarly, McCrocklin did not anticipate that the constant complaints about "the establishment" might limit his options and threaten his comfortable position. SWT students were not marching in the streets, but obviously, they and the faculty were watching their televisions and reading their papers.

The challenges to authority were hard to miss and had been going on for almost two decades by 1968. Beginning with the African American civil rights movement during the 1950s and continuing with the student uprisings during the 1960s, Americans had grown accustomed to watching televised news reports of protests and demonstrations. Everywhere they looked—from popular culture to religion—"the establishment" faced criticism and rejection.

Many white students learned about nonviolent direct action and the power of civil disobedience by first watching and then participating in the early Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s. In 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized a group of Northern whites and blacks to go south to test a Supreme Court ruling that stated bus terminals could not discriminate based on race. Angry mobs of Southern whites attacked the Freedom Riders in Anniston, Alabama, burning one of the buses. The riders met more violence in Birmingham and Montgomery, where many suffered beatings. Though several participants met with severe violence, they did attain some success. According to journalist and author Godfrey Hodgson, the “one specific achievement” of the Freedom Rides was the “ordered desegregation of bus and train stations” by the Interstate Commerce Commission.²

Both CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) utilized direct action during Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. A significant number of white students went to Mississippi as volunteers to initiate a voter registration program and hold Freedom Schools within the black community. Again they faced white violence, but this time they “did draw the media spotlight.” Through the television and newspaper reports, the rest of the nation became aware of the violence in the Deep South. Two volunteers that summer, Mario Savio and Jack Weinberg, took what they learned back to Berkeley, not realizing that they would put that knowledge into effect that same year, but for something other than black civil rights.³

² Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time: From World War II to Nixon What Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1976), 189-191. For a good overview of the early Civil Rights Movement, see Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (NY: Simon and Shuster, 1988).

³ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 151.

When students returned to Berkeley in the fall 1964 semester, they found that an area on campus previously open for “political advocacy and fundraising” was now prohibited from such activity. “Certain that the ban was directed against them, campus civil rights groups decided to fight oppression at liberal Berkeley as they had fought it in racist Mississippi,” determined historian Allen J. Matusow in his history of 1960s liberalism. Methods used by civil rights activists were now being used on college campuses. As suggested by Bret Eynon, Research and Education Director for the American Social History Project of the City University of New York, not only had “the civil rights movement served as a model for all other movements of the period,” but activists also expanded upon the concept of politics and turned the same tactics toward other issues.⁴

Students at Berkeley led the way and served as a model for many other campuses. On October 1, 1964, campus police arrested Weinberg for setting up a CORE recruiting table against university rules and the situation escalated. Almost immediately, students sat down around the police car. By the end of the sit-in that lasted thirty-two hours, there were more than 3,000 students involved. Savio participated in the event and became a leading spokesman for the Free Speech Movement that developed as a result. A last minute agreement between student leaders and the university president brought the demonstration to an end. Later that same year, Savio led more than a thousand students in a sit-in inside Sproul Hall. He had reintroduced a long-standing feeling held by many students for decades – they were considered numbers rather than people in an institution that had grown too large and bureaucratic. This is what Matusow referred to when he

⁴ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 316-317; Bret Eynon, “Community in Motion: The Free Speech Movement, Civil Rights, and the Roots of the New Left,” *The Oral History Review* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1989).

claimed the students were “acting less to achieve free speech than to protest the oppressiveness of the liberal university.” He went on to say that “they were the first students of the decade to commit civil disobedience against their own campus.” By utilizing those methods, Savio and others had reestablished a long tradition of campus protest.⁵

The mid-1960s also saw the United States’ escalating involvement in Vietnam. President Johnson expanded the conflict when he used the Gulf of Tonkin incident to convince Congress to grant him broad war powers. Basically, the congressional resolution granted the president the authority to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” Although the Gulf of Tonkin incident created initial public support for the war, the increasing cost in dollars and American lives raised questions and concerns among various segments of the population. In particular, college students rejected a war that they opposed for ideological, political, and practical reasons. Once again, activism shifted, as white college students moved from protesting for the rights of African Americans to demonstrating against a war they believed threatened to destroy their generation.⁶

Protests increased dramatically during the last half of the 1960s. According to political scientist and sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset and sociologist Todd Gitlin, the sheer number of students and their ability to mobilize allowed for major demonstrations. In 1965, approximately 25,000 students marched in Washington against actions in

⁵ Matusow, 316-318; Gitlin, 164; Eynon, “Community in Motion,” 40, 44, 46. For a complete discussion on the “alienation” of students in bureaucratized universities, see Seymour Martin Lipset, *Rebellion in the University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

⁶ Mary Beth Norton et al., eds., *A People and Nation: A History of the United States, Volume Two: Since 1865*, 7th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 842.

Vietnam. Although Lipset claims it took three more years for the “proportion of students who thought that the United States had made a mistake in getting involved in Vietnam” to reach 50 percent, the vocal and persistent minority of antiwar movement leaders succeeded in keeping the issue alive on campuses across the country. For example, “there were forty large campus demonstrations against military and Dow recruiters” in the fall of 1967 and, by the spring of 1968, “up to a million college and high school students took part in a national student strike,” reports Gitlin.⁷

The increase in violence accompanied the increase in numbers of protestors. As Lipset asserts, students learned from the civil rights movement that peaceful methods did not work. Black radicals moved “toward racial separation” and “black power.” They, like other factions in the new left, moved from “liberal hope to radical disillusionment.” As Matusow writes, “As liberal accomplishment in racial reform fell short of expectations, an embittered minority of black Americans commenced the journey from civil rights to black nationalism.” According to Matusow, parts of the new left, such as SDS, began to shift from civil disobedience to more militant tactics as the idea spread that participatory democracy could not work “because it fostered manipulation by elites, ‘long formless mass meetings,’ and sloppy strategic thinking.” In both cases, participants began to attempt a “show of power” through guerrilla-style demonstrations. Protestors increasingly risked violence from police who willingly wielded billy clubs and tear gas against demonstrators. One altercation at the University of Wisconsin in 1967 sent seven policemen and 65 students to the hospital. By 1968-69, the violence had grown to include

⁷ Lipset, 36-37, 41; Gitlin, 214-293 passim.

campus bombings, arson, and building takeovers. In fact, three hundred universities in the spring of 1969 alone saw demonstrations that included these types of behavior.⁸

The activism at colleges and universities even hit conservative places like Texas. As politically conservative as the state was, however, there were pockets of liberalism. The University of Texas had a very liberal reputation. In fact, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had direct ties to UT. SDS began in response to concerns on university campuses, according to Tom Hayden, author of the “Port Huron Statement” and one of the early leaders. Hayden said the university itself played the largest role in the formation of SDS. He argued that “SDS could not have been founded without the civil rights issue . . . But the thing that was the most immediate source of alienation in the environment of my generation, what we were concerned with, was the campus.” Students at UT, who started a local SDS chapter, shared these concerns. Three early members in particular, Sandra Cason, known as Casey, Dorothy Dawson, and Robb Burlage, became part of SDS’s “inner circle.” Hayden met Casey at a convention and the two eventually married, as did Dawson and Burlage, providing a link between UT and the early origins of SDS.⁹

The liberal nature of UT can also be seen in Norman Hackerman, university president between 1967 and 1970. According to an article printed years later in the *Daily Texan*, Hackerman said that the university administration promoted and welcomed free speech. An article from 1968 acknowledged that Hackerman refused to reverse a decision that allowed SDS to continue to hold demonstrations on UT’s Main Mall. The same

⁸ Matusow, 330, 345; Lipset, 9; Gitlin, 254, 342-342.

⁹ Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 192-193; Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 40. See also Gitlin, *The Sixties*.

article stated, “This would seem to reflect a general willingness of the administration to permit student opinion to be voiced.” He allowed demonstrations for various reasons, including many against the Vietnam War and, in the 1960s, “anti-war protests raged” on campus.¹⁰

In 1968 alone, the *Daily Texan* printed articles almost weekly pertaining to pickets, demonstrations, and rallies. SDS and another group called the Committee to End the War in Vietnam (CEWV) planned most of these. Reports told of UT students being involved in the picketing of recruiters, specifically naval recruiters, on campus; in demonstrating against the war during an unannounced visit by President Johnson; and in holding rallies in support of free speech and against the draft. Some demonstrations did not directly protest the war, but they did focus on issues affected by the war and many observers thus classified them as “anti-war.” Two specific examples include the picketing of LBJ’s campus visit that resulted in the arrest of two students and a demonstration planned to show sympathy for Dr. Benjamin Spock that expanded to support “increased draft resistance, black power, and opposition to the *Daily Texan*.”¹¹

Protestors took advantage of an opportunity to show their disapproval of the war when they suspected Johnson would attend Governor John Connally’s private birthday party held in the Gregory Gym on the UT campus. The *Daily Texan* reported that “more than 200 anti-war demonstrators” waited two and a half hours for Johnson’s arrival.

¹⁰ Alicia Dietrich, “Old, New Activists Speak on Anti-war Protests,” *The Daily Texan*, 22 November 2002, LexisNexis Academic (accessed 2 November 2007); “SDS Members’ Protests Lose Appeal,” *Daily Texan*, 02 May 1968, Microfilm, CAH; “Struggling To Be Heard,” *Daily Texan*, 24 April 2001, http://tspweb02.tsp.utexas.edu/webarchive/04-24-01/pf2001042404_s01students.html (accessed 02 October 2007).

¹¹ Lucy Horton, “President Met by Hecklers In Campus Visit Tuesday,” *Daily Texan*, 28 February 1968, 1, Microfilm, CAH; Patty Burnett, “UT Students Released On Bail in Protest Case,” *Daily Texan*, 29 February 1968, 1, Microfilm, CAH; Patty Burnett, “Dr. Spock Supported: Rally Attacks Texan,” *Daily Texan*, 14 January 1968, 7, Microfilm, CAH.

According to Lucy Horton, staff writer who covered the incident, the anti-war protestors chanted and carried signs with such sayings as “No Escalation without Representation” and “Billions for Bombs, Pennies for the Poor.” At the same time, Horton reported that a counter protest began and that faction “hoisted banners reading ‘Winning in Vietnam,’ and ‘Only True Americans for Victory.’” Not surprisingly, arguments arose between the two groups. The problem, however, came over the fact that sometime during the demonstration, “a bottle was reported thrown at the President’s car, and two University students were arrested during the confusion which ensued.” Both were eventually released on bail after one spent the night in the county jail and the other spent four hours.¹²

In January, one month earlier, SDS and CEWV held a rally to show support for “Dr. Spock, William Sloane Coffin, Jr., and three others” who had been indicted under accusations of “conspiring to counsel, aid and abet those who wished to refuse service with the armed forces and to comply with other duties required by the draft law.” One of the speakers at the rally was a faculty member, Richard R. Beard, assistant professor of business communications, business administration. Beard’s speech made the connection between free speech and the draft. Patty Burnett, *Daily Texan* journalist, covered the demonstration and stated, “Dr. Beard concluded that through limitations on such things as free speech, the country is ‘building institutions’ that could ‘move us’ in the direction of fascism.”¹³

¹² “President Met,” 1; “UT Students Released,” 1.

¹³ “Rally Attacks Texan,” 7.

While the two aforementioned incidents are only a brief indication of the protests taking place on the UT campus, one can simply scan the 1968 *Daily Texas* headlines to see the various forms of protest taking place. A short list includes “Hecklers Encounter Hershey,” “Anti-War Parade for Peace Climaxes in Capitol Rally,” “Fifteen Arrested in Demonstration,” “Boycott Today,” and the list goes on. It seems many students used any reason to demonstrate and they could usually find support from some faculty members.

Faculty backing of student activism was not new. In fact, the faculty’s relationship with both students and administration had been undergoing changes throughout the twentieth century and climaxed during these years. At the turn of the twentieth century, the administrators’ push for faculty to lean more towards research rather than teaching was strong and caused friction between the administration and some faculty members. In 1900, the editor of *The Nation* published an editorial claiming that faculty only gained reward through their research and publishing, not their ability to teach students. This problem continued into the 1920s. Students and many faculty members complained about inadequate teaching and blamed much of this on the university governance, primarily the power of the trustees and the president, whom they appointed. Even Calvin Coolidge, while vice-president, acknowledged his concern for how the faculty members’ “rebel[ed] at the authority of presidents and trustees.”¹⁴

In some cases, the collaboration between professors and students made it possible for students successfully to attack the president. Lipset points out that Lewis Feuer explained how students, with faculty support, were “sometimes instrumental in naming new presidents.” In one example at the University of Illinois in the late 1880s, students

¹⁴ Lipset, 145-177 passim.

protested on two different occasions against military drills on campus and both times ended with the presidents' resignations.¹⁵

Escalation of Cold War fears after World War II wreaked havoc on the academic profession. University administrators dismissed many professors, both tenured and not, under charges of communist activity. This repression of faculty led to a blacklist that kept many people out of the academy. The universities let professors go whom they considered to be members of the Communist Party, or at least sympathetic to communism, but this reason encompassed other activities considered "subversive," including participation in civil rights. According to historian Ellen W. Schrecker, "Teaching jobs did exist," but they were peripheral jobs consisting of part-time, "off-the-ladder appointments, or one-year visiting professorships." Eventually, many were able to return to full-time teaching in mainstream colleges and universities, but not until well into the Sixties. This return came later for "people in the humanities and social sciences" than it did for scientists because, as Schrecker notes, scientists were able to "ease themselves in with research appointments." Even after regaining teaching positions, few were able to attain tenure and they "sometimes had trouble bringing their interrupted careers up to the level they would have reached had they not been evicted from academic life." During the height of McCarthyism and the blacklisting, Schrecker claims that "sources of support" came from "families, friends, and former students" who helped the blacklisted professors find other forms of work. The connection between liberal professors and students continued during the student activism of the 1960s.¹⁶

¹⁵ Lipset, 137-138.

¹⁶ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & the Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 288, 298.

Many professors supported the student movement. According to Lipset, there was a close relationship between students and faculty in values and political concerns, partly due to the “liberalizing effect” colleges tend to have. He goes on to show the participation of faculty in the student movement. Using an analysis by the American Council on Education, Lipset concludes, “A comprehensive analysis of demonstrations which occurred at 181 institutions during 1967-68 found that faculty were involved in the planning of over half of the student protests which occurred.” Other forms of involvement can be seen in cases already discussed. For instance, Richard Beard’s speech during the UT rally for Dr. Spock and by the very fact that it was faculty members who originally started the push against McCrocklin for the truth. The cooperation between faculty and students served as an impetus to remove McCrocklin from the presidency just as it had at the University of Illinois in the late 1880s. However, the convergence of other forces also contributed.¹⁷

National politics also played a role. It is possible that Johnson unknowingly played a role in McCrocklin’s downfall as well. The previous chapters of this work discussed McCrocklin’s desire to attain higher political positions. Through his ties to SWT and Johnson, he did receive a Washington appointment. When Johnson announced in 1968 that he was not running for re-election, McCrocklin lost his political base and was forced to return to San Marcos and confront the plagiarism charges. Had circumstances been reversed and Johnson had campaigned for and won re-election, it is likely McCrocklin would have resigned his position as SWT’s president and remained in Washington. Thus, the situation would likely have dissolved rather than becoming a

¹⁷ Lipset, 32, 198.

major controversy. With his connection to the college would have been severed because he remained in D.C., he would have removed the “cloud of doubt” over the campus community. Unfortunately for both McCrocklin and the students and faculty at SWT, the latter did not occur.

Still, McCrocklin might have felt secure in returning to San Marcos since the area evidenced few of the radical tendencies characterizing campuses across the nation. In fact, for all the protesting going on across the nation, SWT remained a bastion of conservatism. While many students probably sympathized with their protesting peers, neither civil rights controversies nor the Vietnam War were enough to cause protesting on the SWT campus. When SDS members from UT distributed draft resistance literature in San Marcos, SWT students responded unfavorably by burning the handouts. Just scanning *College Star* articles during 1968, one of the most controversial years of the Sixties, one can see that campus life focused more on local activities. In fact, one letter to the editor claimed that the *Star* and many people in the SWT community were “apathetic” to what was going on across the nation and in Vietnam. This charge was not without warrant. No articles in the *College Star* directly addressed major controversial issues or protests on other campuses until late 1968. Then, it was only in relation to the situation with McCrocklin. A letter to the editor in May 1968 mentioned the social disorder at Columbia University, but the gist of the author’s purpose was “the dehumanization and impersonality of the multi-university system have placed strains on the human faculty that question the basic goals of the present system.” As late as September, the closest a story came in the *Star* to focusing on protest was an article that reported on a rider that a House/Senate conference committee added to a “higher

education bill that would allow school administrators to deny federal financial help to students taking part in campus disorders.” This article was not political in nature either, it simply reported on the bill without support or objection.¹⁸

Obviously, however, SWT students were not sheltered from the ongoing protests either. The news media, especially television, brought the stories and violence occurring around the nation right into their own houses. As previously mentioned, even UT, just thirty minutes north of SWT, had its own fair share of demonstrations. But this radical mood seemed not extend to SWT.

If students in San Marcos had not stood up in response to racial injustice or the war in Southeast Asia, they must have absorbed some of the attitudes of their compatriots who were challenging the system. When they were confronted with an issue that directly affected the students and their community, they did not question their right or ability to reject the status quo. Acting to protect their education, students found McCrocklin’s plagiarism important enough for them to finally protest. Then they used the methods learned from other student movements to challenge McCrocklin and the administration, thus aligning SWT with the changes taking place nationwide. Only after this particular affair ended did students at SWT get involved in the other issues outside of San Marcos,

¹⁸ Mary Ann Teat, “SDS Members Plan April Protest Period,” *Daily Texan*, 01 February 1968, 3, Microfilm, CAH; “SWT, College Star apathetic?” Letter to the editor, *College Star*, 15 March 1968, Microfilm, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX; Thomas Wilson, “Impersonal colleges breed irresponsibility,” letter to the editor, *College Star*, 10 May 1968, Microfilm, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX; “Student protestors denied financial aid,” *College Star*, 20 September 1968, Microfilm, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX. Wilson’s letter reminds us of what he called the “cumbersome academic bureaucracy” mentioned earlier in the discussion of the shift toward faculty research rather than teaching and again when Savio used the idea from earlier in the century that students were becoming simply numbers. With this in mind, it is not difficult to assume that students at SWT were beginning to feel the same way even if they were not reacting in the same manner.

namely the anti-war demonstrations. Even still, they never fully reached the level of protest as that going on across the rest of the United States.

A collision of forces allowed for changes to occur in the Sixties. Long-standing traditions crumbled under spreading liberalism and a growing willingness of people to question authority. Following the lead of the civil rights movement, and borrowing its tactics, various groups formed their own movements. Students who had participated in civil rights brought the knowledge they gained back to university campuses and used it to fight for or against issues that meant most to them, primarily freedom of speech and the Vietnam War. SWT and the McCrocklin affair occurred in this tumultuous period. However, the SWT community maintained its conservative demeanor long after other campuses saw serious protests, yet they, too, had picked up some of the liberal ideas. What mattered most to them was the integrity of their school and degrees. This is what brought protest to San Marcos and led the way for involvement in later anti-war demonstrations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

McCrocklin's plagiarism caused a major crisis on the SWT campus, even though it was a minor incident in comparison to the uprisings across the nation. Yet the situation in San Marcos and antiestablishment attitudes evident on other campuses were inextricably linked. As young people increasingly challenged the authority of time-honored traditions throughout the 1960s, they unwittingly laid the foundation for McCrocklin's downfall. He had "gotten away with" his plagiarism for nearly fifteen years, but his luck ran out. Timing played a crucial role in the unmasking of his "crime." Had the scandal broken years earlier, the old boy network or his political connections might have allowed him to avoid losing his job. Similarly, if the situation occurred a few years later, when the student movement had begun to quiet down, he might have successfully survived the crisis. As it was, though, the timing was perfect in that the story broke in the midst of nationwide turmoil and while McCrocklin was a member of a controversial president's administration.

True to form, McCrocklin never appeared remorseful or embarrassed by the voiding of his degree. He remained in the San Marcos area and became very successful in real estate, though he never ventured further into politics. He also maintained ties with the college. According to an article printed in the Spring 1990 edition of the *Hillside Scene*, McCrocklin "remain[ed] proud of" SWT, "continued to support it," and "in 1988,

the McCrocklins donated a valuable collection of pre-Columbian artifacts to the university.”³

Unfortunately, while he seemed unscathed, the campus community remained deeply wounded. The scars caused by the whole affair took a very long time to heal for many and never did for others. In attempting to present both sides of the story, this author tried to interview McCrocklin supporters. One had initially agreed, but after further consideration, declined. He explained that he still found it too difficult to discuss. Conversely, a few people who had been “anti-McCrocklin” and had refused to give interviews in the past, agreed to provide their story for this work simply because of the passage of time. The hesitancy on both sides is a good indication of just how significant the ordeal was to faculty, staff, and students at SWT.

McCrocklin’s case was not the only one of this nature, but it did set something of a precedent. Not quite a decade later, the University of Oklahoma faced a similar situation. In a letter addressed to Gordon Whaley at UT, Beverly E. Ledbetter, legal counsel at OU, thanked him for sharing with her the actions taken by UT against McCrocklin. Using this information as guidance and for comparison between Texas and Oklahoma statutes, Ledbetter was able to “issue an opinion to our administrative officers on the authority of our Board of Regents” for a resolution to their problem. She acknowledged, “Certainly, the information provided by you has made my task less formidable.” McCrocklin’s plagiarism case had left a lasting impression on many levels.⁴

³ Scott Ritter, “McCrocklin’s Defrocking,” *Hillside Scene*, Spring 1990, 18, Swinney Papers.

⁴ Letter from Beverly E. Ledbetter, Legal Counsel, to Gordon Whaley, UT vice-president of finance, 01 November 1977, W. Gordon Whaley Papers, CAH. I do not know the outcome to this particular circumstance, but for purposes of this work, it was important to show how another institution was willing to use the McCrocklin case as a means to help resolve their own similar situation.

Although McCrocklin's resignation brought an end to the immediate tensions on the SWT campus, several questions still surface when one considers what occurred and the aftermath. Why did McCrocklin think he could get away with the plagiarism? Could he have avoided the crisis on campus by addressing the issue early on? Answers to these may never be known. More important, though, are the larger concerns that arose regarding the Ph.D. system. A *Wall Street Journal* article in particular related the problem back to an issue discussed in the previous chapter. The push for faculty to focus on research carried over into Ph.D. programs. The aforementioned article discussed "skepticism" of a Ph.D.'s value, partly due to the involvement of "pointless research on frivolous subjects." It goes on to mention that critics claimed "the exclusive emphasis on research turns out Ph.D.s who are ill-equipped to teach, although teaching is clearly the main goal." The story indicated a few alternatives being offered at certain universities in place of a dissertation, however, to date, the dissertation still continues to be the main requirement to earning a doctoral degree.⁵

Students are still required to complete original research for both dissertations and theses. The deficiencies within the system or the feeling of being rushed through the program do not give a student cause to resort to shortcuts such as plagiarism. Nor did extenuating circumstances, such as being in the military and working with "classified" documents, give McCrocklin the right. Academic integrity exists within the educational system for administrators as well as faculty and students. By taking actions from the wide-ranging protests of the era and scaling them down to suit their own situation, SWT

⁵ "Flunking the Ph.D.: More Critics Charge Doctoral System Has Serious Shortcomings," *Wall Street Journal*, 08 September 1969, JHM file.

faculty and students asserted that they would not stand for McCrocklin's dishonesty. Nor would they sit by idly and accept "no comment," as was apparently expected.

The reaction of the SWT community to the crisis was typical for the time. What many people would consider not typical was that it remained quiet as long as it did. Perhaps the timing was not as atypical as one might believe, though. Even with the vast number of riots taking place at larger campuses in the first half of 1968, the smaller colleges did not seem to be reacting the same way. It took much longer for the protests to reach them. Take, for instance, Berkeley and SWT. The issue at SWT came nearly five years after the first wave of student activism at Berkeley. This leaves one to speculate just how many of the smaller college campuses did wait and then took the information learned from the larger universities and adapted it to their local situations. Therefore, SWT's delayed reaction was more common since, in comparison, only a small number of university campuses were actually facing widespread protests.

The stance the students took in defending their college opened the way for protests on SWT's campus against other issues. The same year McCrocklin resigned, a group of students peacefully held Vietnam War moratorium. The students held the demonstration without prior consent from the college administration and Floyd Martine, dean of students, told them to disband. All but ten did. Those who refused came to be known as the San Marcos 10 and were ultimately suspended from school for an entire year and lost their credits from that semester. The students filed suit, but lost their case when a district court claimed the college had acted in a legal manner without violating students' freedom of expression. The case made it all the way to the Supreme Court, but

the court denied certiorari in 1972. Eventually, most of the students returned to college, but not all returned to SWT.⁶

The student movement, though a bit conservatively, had arrived full-force at SWT, fitting both San Marcos and the college into the larger issues occurring in the United States. As more and more Americans willingly challenged established authorities, SWT could not avoid the changes taking place. The McCrocklin affair began outside of those changes, but eventually became a part of them. As with most Americans, faculty and students in San Marcos absorbed some of the rhetoric of the student movement but adapted it to fit their particular circumstances. McCrocklin's misfortune was that his errors proved to be the catalyst for bringing "the sixties" to central Texas.

⁶ Bayless et al., v. Martine et al., 430 F.2d 873 (5th Cir. 1970). LexisNexis Academic (accessed 02 December 2007); Bayless et al., v. Martine et al., 406 U.S. 930, 92 S. Ct. 1775, 32 L. Ed. 2d 132 (1972). LexisNexis Academic (accessed 02 December 2007); see also, Polly Ross Hughes, "'We Were Right': Expelled group holds firm to 1969 beliefs," *Houston Chronicle*, 28 October 2001, 1; Erik Rodriguez, "'The San Marcos 10': The power of protest; '69 protesters examine past, present at free speech forum, Expelled protesters return to SWT campus," *Austin American-Statesman*, 24 October 2001, B1.

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