

What's in a name?

When I started this quest it was hard for me to understand why my classmates from the 1964 Nathan Bedford Forrest graduating class wouldn't share by interest in "celebrating" the name change and finding a way to thank the students at the school who had helped accomplish it.

Chronology

Early e-mails from me:

MAY 4 to Duval County Schools

My name is Ann Withorn. I graduated from Nathan Bedford Forrest High School in 1964. I am so proud that the school name has been changed. And I am especially pleased that, as far as I can tell, it was current students who played a major role in this important accomplishment.

I write for a few reasons:

1. I just donated \$50.00 to the Jacksonville Public Education Fund for the transition to the new name. I would like to be sure that my fellow alumni know about this Fund and, if possible, that members of our class can make a contribution as a class. We may not be able to do this "officially" because I am late to the process of communicating with my classmates and the Reunion Committee. But I hope, at least, to ask others in our class to join the effort in some collective way.

2. Personally, I would like to interview people (staff, faculty and students) from the school who were part of the change process and to write something up to distribute to our reunion alumni group and maybe to the Chronicle of Higher Education or some NEA publication. I could conduct these interviews over the phone anytime between now and August.

I am a Professor of Social Policy, Emeritus, from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a published writer. I can promise do this respectfully. (I also hope to interview some of my classmates for the article).

How do I find the correct person to speak with about such interviews?

Calling the phone numbers at the school itself has so far not been very fruitful. I think they were protecting people's privacy. I understand this but I would really like to help -- not hurt -- the newly named school.

2) MAY 4 to coordinators of Reunion committee

I just cc'd you on an email that I sent to folks in the school system about how to honor the long overdue name change. After thinking about it, I decided that the original hope I had discussed -- to prepare a letter for our class to sign -- just felt too presumptuous. It dawned on me that I needed to be a lot more respectful of you and Melanie, and the rest of the Reunion Committee, and the process you have established over the years.

Thanks for all your amazing work keeping up with our very large class.

PS I hope to write something up about the name change, based on interviews with a range of people. Does this sound ok? If I do so, is there any time over the two days where some folks can engage in a conversation with each other about the meaning of the name change?

...I'm yearning for some serious, even critical, collective reflection on ourselves fifty years later. It seems that we might benefit from finding some larger perspective on the fact that we blithely graduated in 1964

from a segregated high school named after a founder of the Klu Klux Klan, and that we were the Forrest "rebels" commemorating ourselves in the "Confederate" yearbook. Personally I'm shocked by my own cluelessness.

Now I hope that such a conversation might help us be better able to follow Mr. Meister's admonition in our yearbooks: to *KTLOIP*-- "Keep through Life One Increasing Purpose."

What do you think?

3)MAY 6 from RICKYE

I can't believe it after all these years. I can't tell you how often I have thought of you and what you must be doing. You were always the person I thought about when I was faced with a decision --- How would Ann handle this? You seemed to have clear goals and a plan for getting there, never just stumbling along. I tried to see what you were up to and only found something that seemed like it might have been you raising a fuss at Harvard (at least I think it was Harvard). It sounds like you migrated into the liberal camp, but that may be my misinterpretation. I never knew anything about history or politics until well after college, but I now find myself solidly Libertarian (not conservative Republican). If that is not your thing, I hope it won't prevent us from making contact and becoming friends. Where are you these days? It sounds like we are all pretty scattered and it would be hard to get together. At least the internet makes it easy to stay in touch.

4)MAY 6 from BECKY

This is all fantastic! I would be happy to be interviewed I should warn you that I have seen comments on "Classmates" from a few people -- all male -- who didn't want the name changed and were infuriated by the change. Primarily they felt that their prized school was being in some way harmed and challenged. You might run into this attitude occasionally. All the more reason to pursue your project!

When I left Boston and moved to Durham, NC, I was shocked, too. I am continually amazed to be in Alabama, though it's important for us to be near family and help my aging mom.

The Reunion Committee did not want me to solicit contributions to the Community fund from alumni, ultimately informing me clearly that "my cause has no place at the reunion."  
MAY 16 FROM THE COMMITTEE

*I've shared your email with the reunion committee, resulting in the following thoughts.*

*Each of us have projects and interests that we consider important. However, because a reunion is a special time for classmates to renew old friendships and reminisce about a special time in our lives, we don't think other issues should be on the agenda. We've already denied one effort to collect for a charity during the weekend, believing it to be an inappropriate venue. As a committee representing all, we must do the same with your request.*

*As a writer and educator, we understand your passion to investigate the story of the Forrest name change, but I hope you understand our responsibility as a committee.*

MY REPLY MAY 19

Thanks for getting back to me. Sure, I understand. It's too late and not enough

of a base for collective action in the name of the "class".

But as I understand it, I can still personally e-mail individuals from our class, tell them about the fund and ask them to join me in contributing, right?

Just not in the name of the Reunion committee?

Below is an updated copy of what I posted on the "classmates" site and plan to send individually to others. Any one of you is also free to forward this to people who you think would want to know what I am up to, or to contact me yourself.

I also have begun interviewing people in Jacksonville about the background and process that produced the name change. I have a few ideas about where to publish and would appreciate more. (I do plan to ask other classmates to be interviewed, especially those who wrote in opposition to the change).

Thanks to all. It should be interesting in August.

PS

*Chris, I do respect that this is a "special time for classmates to renew old friendships and reminisce about a special time in our lives," AND I hope that others may want to ponder how all of us were so clueless in our senior year. Our school's namesake was just part of it, the Kennedy assassination, civil rights activism in Jacksonville and St Augustine, Why didn't I/we notice our rebel flag symbols? or the fact that our Yearbook was "the Confederate?" what were we (not) thinking?*

I will be coming to the Reunion for the first time exactly BECAUSE of the name change. I am proud of the students for making it possible, and of all the others in Jacksonville and elsewhere who pushed for it

By the way, there is a "Jacksonville Public Education Fund for the transition to the new name." I sent money' as a member of the 1964 NB Forrest graduating class and spoke with the coordinator of the fund about why I was so pleased with the change.

If anyone wants to do likewise you can contact me or just do it.

Trey Csar is the name of the contact person

I do recognize that the purpose of the reunion is to celebrate our 50 years.. So I am not pushing any agenda, But I think the name change is worth talking about.

Anybody else who wants to do so, please contact me

MAY 29 FROM THE COMMITTEE

Ann,

Once again, let us be perfectly clear. There is no place for your cause at our reunion. To pursue this during the planned weekend would be an intrusion. The committee is busy planning the reunion and respectfully requests no further contact on this matter.

Forrest Class of '64 Reunion Committee

HOWEVER ALL THIS JUST STRENGTHENED "My cause"

My on-going efforts to write an article about the change anyway, and to find a way to thank the students for their efforts in the name of "members of the 1964 N.B.Forrest graduating class" led me to contact several local media people. I told Denise Amos from the *Florida Times Union* about the Reunion Committees' response to my quest. In an article on the renamed school's opening, she quoted me about the opposition I had encountered from the Reunion Committee.

RESPONSES from classmates re MAY 30 MY NOTE TO BECKY ETC

I am still going forward as an individual, contacting classmates on the list myself and doing interviews with folks in Jacksonville. I still think that it is a good thing to

do. I am more committed than ever to writing something for some local press and maybe other alternative press outlets.

And I am trying hard not to get reactive, not see folks' desire to "celebrate" the 50th reunion of our class outside of broader context as a tacit acceptance of the old order. But it is hard. I don't know these folks at all. But I really don't understand this.

Do any of you have any ideas about how to proceed?

Do any of you know anybody in our class who is in Jacksonville, closer to the scene there, that I could speak with?. When I spoke with Chris months ago she seemed more supportive than neutral. Now she seems to see my "cause" as a threat.

I have attached a pdf of all my e-mails regarding this. I really welcome honest feedback here. THANKS in advance,

PS The sad thing is that the more I pursue this, the better I feel about doing something that says that along with the school's name, many things have changed for the better. And thanking the current students for finally acting.

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a terrible man, and certainly no namesake for any school in 2014, or ever.

JUNE 5

From another classmate, Chip:

After Duke, the Army and my surgical training took me away from Jax until I was in my early 30's, and now I've lived in Louisiana for 35 years, where I'm retired.

I will be unable to attend the reunion, not because of any agenda, but because of a conflict. Were I attending, it would be to have a good time, tell lies, drink, and mis-remember our exploits, rather than for any political issue, which by definition is divisive, as politics always are.

That's not to say I discourage your efforts. I never find fault with folks who throw their energy behind their beliefs. The school we attended literally has nothing to do with the recently renamed school, so it's not an issue for me. It's not the same building, it's not the same land, it's student population is unrelated in almost every imaginable way to the one we knew, and the faculty are all gone. I think the people whom it serves should choose a name that makes them comfortable, as apparently they have.

When you and I roamed the halls, NBF was the top-ranked public institution in Duval County, and we all got into the prestigious institutions of higher learning that we chose. As I understand it, today the school has the lowest ranking possible on the Florida School Accountability Grading Scale: "F".

I am, by way of description, not a supporter of historical revision. As Chuck Meister taught us in CORE, those who do not recognize the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them (realistically, they probably will anyway□). Evolution, by its very nature, leads to improved chances of survival. I find the study of how we got to be who, what, and where we are to be an important pursuit. That pursuit applies to all of us equally, across all social and ethnic boundaries, I think.

As I dig into my memories of high school times, I cannot recall any instance in which my single working mom, nor any of my classmates'

parents, were asked to contribute to special funds to support the public schools, although I assume they all paid their taxes, as we did. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, the schools performed their function at a high level. If Duval County is no longer able to offer a quality educational product without charity, perhaps they need to get out of the education business, much like the recent stories of the VA suggest maybe the feds need to get out of the healthcare business.

Back when I actively blogged, our school, and Dr. Ray Stasco in particular, was the topic of one of my favorite posts: <http://drchip.wordpress.com/2008/08/22/69/>

One paragraph addresses the school's name: Those "baby boomer" times almost cannot be compared with the correlative experiences of Generation Y. When my high school was opened in 1959, a progressive idea was proposed: the students would choose the name and the mascot. Votes tallied, the winner was "Valhalla Vikings". "Oohhh," thought the school board, "maybe not. Too insulting to Christians. Let's go with the safer choice of a Confederate war hero: [Nathan Bedford Forrest](#). We can borrow 'Mr. Reb' from Ole Miss as the mascot, and use the Stars 'n Bars flag. Shouldn't offend *anyone*." Somehow, it slipped through the background check that ol' Nathan, while indeed "fustest with the mostest men", was also the post-war founder of the Ku Klux Klan, a social organization which some elements of society find offensive.

First you've got to please the Christians, then you've got to please the liberals. What's a school board gonna do?

Although I have a vivid imagination, I think, I can't imagine myself giving my money to such a cause. However, I will fight for your right to do so, and wish you well while doing it.

By the way, I love your letter to the Harvard establishment. That's the kind of stuff NBF formerly produced, and which I feel certain that Westside High never will. I hope you and our classmates have a wonderful time at the reunion. Raise a margarita and think of me; your thoughts will produce a far prettier picture than would my physical presence!

Best wishes, and congratulations on a meaningful career.

JULY 26 Yet another classmate, Hal:

I have friends who teach at Forrest/Westside, so I have a little different perspective. They both favored the change, but found the controversy a distraction. It was also a locus of racial tension within the student body. Because of the changing demographic of the area, the school is divided between disadvantaged black kids and white rednecks of a vicious kind, just as disadvantaged, I don't think you are likely to have encountered. They make the kids we grew up with from Wesconnett and the Heights look like choir boys. Sadly, neither group really knew much of the history of the name or the namesake and cared less - it was just another point of disagreement among many. They, like many in other places around the world hate each other because that is just the way things are. Logic has nothing to do with it, just the tradition of distrust and hatred.

I read something you wrote to the effect "how could we (the class of 64) been so blind to what was going on around us." Easy. We were simply products of our contexts. Until you can escape that cultural context, stand outside it with a

perspective you will never have while within it, you will simply repeat what you absorbed as a child. That is exactly why kids grow up speaking a particular language - they are immersed in it and it becomes second nature.

On Fri, Jul 25, 2014 at 11:18 PM, Ann Withorn <[withorn.ann@gmail.com](mailto:withorn.ann@gmail.com)> wrote:

I will be at the reunion BECAUSE finally the name has changed. I hope we can find ways to talk about lots of things, including what it means that finally the name has been changed. I've been inquiring around the city about how this Great Thing finally happened -- interviewing lots of the actors and people involved. It's a fascinating case study of how change occurs.

When I wrote to all classmates I on August 11 I included a copy of the Certificate of Appreciation

*As some of you know, I have been in contact with many people in Jacksonville in an effort to find a way for members of our class to thank students of Westside High School for their part in the name change. It was not easy because the [Classmates.com](http://Classmates.com) site is not too user friendly, and (I must admit) because many folks probably didn't want to respond to my comment about contributing to the fund to support the change.*

*But now, with lots of help from local educators, civil rights, and community leaders, we have a simple chance to do so without giving money. On the Saturday morning of our 50th Reunion event, August 23, 2014, any members of our class who wish to do so will be able to gather outside Westside High to help present the attached certificate to the students. I have invited members of the school community and other local friends of the change effort to attend this small but meaningful event. I think it is a Good Thing*

*I hope some of you will join us, or lend your name to the effort. If any of you wish to speak with me about this, please contact me. On Friday night of the reunion, August 22, I will have copies of the Certificate available for folks to see. If any of you wish to be interviewed about the name change for the longer article I am writing about it for an educational journal for the National Educational Association, please let me know.*

*Thanks in advance.*

*Ann Withorn, NB Forrest Class of 1964*

*PS because of my research for the article, I have been in touch with local Jacksonville media people. I was open about my support for the name change and my feelings of frustration that, according to the committee, my "cause would have no place at the reunion." This story made the Times Union recently, with Chip quoted against the idea of the public/private fund.*

*I actually hope that this story allows some of us to talk about the name change at the gathering, whether it is "my cause" or not. It seems important. But I do know that some folks will be unhappy with me for speaking to the media, and continuing to bring this up. I'm not, but I thought you should know about the story before next week's events.*

I would appreciate your comments, even if they are critical.

Four days after this article and my letter appeared, and less than a week before the Reunion, on August 13, I received the following warning from the Organizing Committee:

"The goal of the NB Forrest Class of 1964 Reunion Committee is to sponsor a 50th reunion as a joyous event to celebrate our high school years and fondly recall old times. The Committee has been working hard on reunions for many

years. The reunion committee is apolitical and specifically rejects leveraging reunion sponsored activity for any other purpose. The school's name change has nothing to do with our reunion.

The reunion committee hopes that, as a member of our class, you will attend the reunion, enjoy seeing old friends and have fun. As an invitee to the 50th reunion of the Nathan Bedford Forrest graduating class of '64, you have been notified twice by e-mail that any political agenda is not welcome at this reunion and will not be tolerated. The Committee has tried to handle this diplomatically but you do not respect our decision. Your persistence and repeated attempts to use our reunion to promote your agenda has compelled us to make certain that any and all unwanted intrusions of our festivities are prevented.

The Marriott at Sawgrass protects the rights and privacy of not only their guests but also anyone invited to attend an event on their property. They do not allow soliciting and your intentions are classified as such. Therefore, do not bring copies of your Certificate to hand out, nor conduct any interviews for your educational journal for the National Education Association at the reunion.

As for the Certificate you intend to present to Westside High School Government Association on Saturday, August 23, 2014, we insist that you remove the "Thank You from Members of the National Bedford Forrest High School 1964 Graduating Class". An attorney has advised us that your proposed Certification may not be signed as stated above, as you do not represent the members of the entire class. Respect the rights of your classmates.

If you persist in pursuing your agenda at the reunion, you will be asked to leave. If you do not leave, you will be escorted off the property.

The Committee encourages you to come and see old friends but keep your political agenda separate from any reunion activity.

If you decide not to attend, we will refund your \$275.

Respectfully,

The NB Forrest Class of 1964 Reunion Committee

My August 14 reply was

Whoa, folks. Relax.

We disagree, about a lot of things. I will not do anything overtly provocative at our reunion. My intentions are not to "solicit" anyone about anything. And you will have no reason to escort me from the property -- even if some of you would like to.

I, and my husband, will attend the Friday and Saturday night events, for which I have paid our fees. And I, like any other member of the class, is free individually to chat about anything I wish with any other classmate. No one has to have a conversation with me, so I won't be "interviewing" anyone.

Otherwise, anything I do or say away from reunion events, as a private citizen who happens to be a member of the 1964 Nathan Bedford Forrest graduating class, is NOT your business.

So, respectfully, stand down.

Ann

I'm sorry it had to get to this point, but that's what happens in an open society.

I forwarded both their threat, and my response, to everyone I had interviewed.

The reaction from local activists was strongly supportive, including such comments as:

My hope to present our Certificate of Appreciation to the students government on Saturday morning was verbally approved by the Superintendent on August 16, But after

I arrived in Jacksonville, it became clear it could not be pulled off, due to 100+ degree heat, and to logistical problems with getting students there that were beyond anyone's control. Nevertheless, I presented to the Advisor of the Student Group and the Principal at Westside High School on Thursday, August . SEE PICTURES

I was granted an interview with the Superintendent of Schools, which was completed on the Friday afternoon two hours before the start the kickoff to two evenings of Reunion celebrations.

The first night there were no general introductions, just name tags distributed along with a nice Reunion booklet of presenting participants written forms that we had submitted when we registered. (Of our class of 600+ graduates, almost 500 could be located, and or were known to have died.)

In addition to the booklet, the only other effort to contextualize the occasion was a small two screen monitor showing streaming slides of popular music, clips from the 1964 Yearbook -- "The Confederate." In this stream there was a picture of N.B. Forrest and a brief text celebrating about his civil war record of accomplishments. (but. of course, no mention of the KKK, Fort Pillow, or his roots as a slave trader.)

In my effort to keep an individual profile, and avoid the Committee whom I had so offended, I picked a place to sit at one of the few tables with chairs, and had my husband pick up the name tags, booklet. Since there was no way to recognize anyone after fifty years, I just chatted with my never-known table mates, waited for the one person from the class who was a newly found Boston area neighbor who I could recognize. I had brought a Yearbook so could at least connect with folks by looking at pictures and exchange short comments about the name change.

My standard line, after introductions, was that "the reunion committee were unhappy with me because I had wanted to talk about the name change," but that I was attending my first reunion exactly because of my approval of the change. Everyone I met had attended earlier events, but a few of us vaguely remembered each other. Most the conversations with those I hadn't known were pleasant enough. The five people who did respond at all to my introductory comment said something like that that they "didn't want to get involved," or that they "didn't see why it had to happen," but two said that if "that's what the students now wanted, then they didn't care."

Only one man, a spouse, wanted to talk, once I promised him I just wanted a conversation not an argument. So did he, and we had a wide ranging discussion beginning with the Sixties, and ranging over many topics including immigration, "foreign aid", the differences between the North and the South (he and his wife had lived all over the world and the US due to his work in the military and then the defense industry), welfare, poverty, work, government, libertarianism etc. We disagreed about most things, but listened to each other. He kept saying "you are really going to hate this, but I think...." I would say that, yes I disagreed, but why did he think..." We both agreed that the conversation was better than "chit chat."

In short, the conversation was interesting and altogether "normal" for both of us, as self-acknowledged "curmudgeons." Maybe I am paranoid, but I kept feeling that some of my classmates were watching warily, perhaps making sure that I didn't try to push "my agenda." Anyway, for me this kind of talk is what makes life interesting. I don't know how to reminisce just about good times and have fun.

Saturday night was harder. It was a fancier sit-down buffet, and I was seated (because I came late, probably because I was even more reluctant to attend again and push my luck with the Committee) at a table with people who had been married to each other since high school, stayed in Jacksonville, and had attended every reunion. People were friendly, but clearly into their own things. Again there was no program, but the Committee did introduce themselves, and thank each other. Those of us (it looked to be six or eight people) who had never attended a reunion before were asked to stand -- but not identify ourselves.

But then there was "trivia" contest where as a table we were asked to answer 20 questions which were, well, trivial, about what happened at High School, who was the Dean of Boys, the price of gas in 1964, etc. The Bonus Question, was "in what year was Nathan Bedford Forrest born", when I joked that "whatever year it was a bad year" the woman across the table, who had not said anything much glared at me and said, "now that's enough, no more." I said to my husband that maybe they should have asked about Hitler's birthday. I shut up but walked over to someone else whom I had been in contact with who had also supported the name change and contributed to the fund. But by then my husband, ever the social butterfly, was talking to the chair of the committee.

A week after it was over I sent the following e-mail to the committee

I have felt sad since we finished driving back to Boston this past Thursday, Chris.

When you and I spoke originally about the idea of honoring the students and having some kind of historically reflective dialogue associated with the reunion, I felt that we were making a good connection. If you look back at all my e-mails to you, and the committee, I hope you will see that I wasn't trying to be provocative, but to help something happen that could have been have been positive for anyone who wanted to participate -- even if they were not "fun," as such.

The decision to change the name of the school had already been made when we first spoke. Many people across the City were very pleased about it. Honestly, I originally thought it would not to be such a big deal to celebrate the change as part of our Reunion.

But when you wrote later that "my cause had no place at the reunion," that hurt.

And it pushed me to pursue my writing about it more forcefully, and to pursue others in Jacksonville who might be more interested in "my cause" -- including folks who had written about the story before, or whom I had interviewed about how the change came about. That's how the story about our reunion got in the paper, a story that Denise Amos was scheduled to write anyway. I knew it would not please you folks, but I hoped you could be cool about it.

But when the last e-mail came, threatening to escort me from the premises if I pursued my agenda, and to bring in a lawyer to keep me from presenting the certificate of Appreciation, I was, as you could see from my response, pretty angry.

But on the Thursday before the reunion, I visited the school anyway. And that was really Good. It put things in perspective.

A woman whom Hal Hunter had connected me with at Westside teaches journalism there, and after we had spoken about her experiences last year, I had told her that George, my husband, had, for 20 years, been the advisor to the student newspaper at his public high school. She invited him to speak at her class at the same time I was coming to give a framed copy of the Certificate to

the advisor of last year's student group, and to Principal Bostic. Logistically, it turned out not to be possible to have a little event with the students. But pictures were taken. And I got to see a well functioning school whose students seemed not much different from us, fifty years ago, except that most were African American. Class-wise, they seemed much like the grandkids of so many of our classmates.

And on Friday of the reunion, I spent an hour and a half with Superintendent Vitti, asking him to tell me what he thought of the whole effort, and especially, why he thought it mattered so much to so many people. His answers were thoughtful and, again, might have been interesting for many of us "members of the 1964 class of NB Forrest High" to hear. He was not angry nor hostile to alumni from any prior classes of the school; mainly he was sorry that it had not been very possible to sit down and talk comfortably during the process. I liked him a lot. The reunion itself showed how hard you and the Committee had worked. The food was good and people seemed to be having fun. There was a little too much Nathan Bedford Forrest for my taste. It felt to me that, by including that stuff about Forrest himself on the slide show and in the trivia question, you were trying to ignore something big that HAD occurred. It made me sad that you could not see how much your act of continuing to celebrate such a person is hurtful to so many African American and white people today. You could have just ignored him, and had your fun. Why not?

Anyway, I write to say that I won't be attending any more reunions. And, that I am still writing several articles about the name change and what it means today for people in Jacksonville. I will send copies for you to do with what you will. I will send drafts to people I interviewed to be sure I have represented their comments properly. If now you, or anyone on the committee, wishes to be interviewed, I can still do so. If anyone wants to send me any written comments about the process or the issue, I will be happy to include them, where it makes sense. My phone number is below if anybody wants to talk. In any case, I will be quoting your e-mails to me because your responses -- especially, in the end, as the whole thing was happening while the Ferguson events were occurring -- have become part of a bigger story.

I really wish it had been different, Of course, I haven't stayed connected to Jacksonville or to our class, but I do remember you with affection, as much as anybody from those years. I was not socially comfortable back then, and I am still not good with social contacts without a deeper purpose. For most of my life since high school, that seriousness has served me well. Indeed, students and colleagues often say they even admire me for it. So I wish we could have talked seriously about why my efforts generated such strong, negative reactions. But I guess it didn't work this time.

Good luck

I received the following replies from classmates and new friends in Jacksonville.

"You can only make a change from the inside. We need to move forward with our books. Our story must be told."

On Tuesday, September 2, 2014 5:43 AM, Opio Sokoni, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Council in Jacksonville FL

[<sclcaction@gmail.com>](mailto:sclcaction@gmail.com) wrote:

"Ann,

You are a shining light from the class of 64'. So many choose to stay in the dark and place their offspring there as well. The evil that continues to engulf our society is because too many people subscribe to that evil with a wink and a nod. It takes courage to fight for what is right. We won this battle together while many remained either silent or spoke up as sympathizers for the KKK terrorists. You speak loud because of the light. You are the queen of that class and we thank you for speaking up for the good that was done."

That made me proud, and feeling good about it all.

Was the August 22/23 reunion itself anti-climatic? or a fitting end to a nine-month process of response to the name change? In any case, I'm glad the reunion event -- held not on the poorer Westside of Jacksonville where the school itself is, but at the Sawgrass Marriot hotel in Ponte Vedra Beach -- is over. And I am grateful to so many in Jacksonville for teaching me why changing the name of the school mattered to so many people. Through it all I learned a lot about myself, about what matters to me, about who I was in 1964, and about who I am in 2014.

Today I understand far better, for sure, why the name change mattered so much to so many people.