C.U. Integration

Tiger
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Gantt Says Laws Are Passed— Now It's A "Personal Thing"

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"The laws have been passed —it's up to the individual now."

Harvey B. Gantt, relaxed and comfortable in his attractive duplex in Charlotte, N. C., talked recently of his dreams and his life in an integrated world.

"We're over the hurdle of segregation," Mr. Gantt said. "Now integration is a personal thing."

Four years ago this man Gantt became the first Negro to break down the segregation barrier in a South Carolina college—enrolling at Clemson University for the second semester, 1962-63.

Now Harvey Gantt is a designer for the predominantly white architectural firm of A. G. Odell & Assoc. in Charlotte. He lives with his wife, the former Lucinda Brawley of Hopkins, S. C.—the first Negro coed at Clemson—and their daughter, Sonja Adele, 19 months, in a Negro subdivision in what was a predominantly white neighborhood.

"I wanted to work in the South, so I decided to be educated here, too—that's what I was talking about four years ago when I went to Clemson."

Now he dreams of passing the state examination for architects in about a year, and eventually, of operating his own firm in the South..

After his graduation from Clemson in June, 1965, he began placing building specifications on original drawings for A. G. Odell. "This gave me experience in putting a building together," he said.

For the past year Mr. Gantt has worked at original design. "The people at Odell take you seriously—they pay attention to your ideas," he said.

"I am presently serving what we call an internship until I pass the state exam," Mr. Gantt said.

But what does he remember of his stay at Clemson?

It was..."a pleasant experience...good times in the architecture department...a damn good education."

There were..."nice guys...bad guys...and a general pattern of tolerance."

Mr. Gantt said, "There was a progressive lessening of the feeling against me. After a while I felt fairly natural, and by the end of my two and a half years I felt I was accepted."

The one sore spot with Harvey Gantt from the beginning of his entrance into Clemson—and it remains with him today—is the charge of others that he was "put up" to entering a white school.

"I have always resented statements like that," he said. "I don't think I could be bought."

People who make this kind of accusations "don't understand the depth of the Negro's feeling" on integration, he said.

He said that he hoped the Negro student in South Carolina would eventually feel no different about attending Clemson than about attending any other state university—white or Negro.

"Some of that spirit rubbed off one me, too," he said. "I consider myself a Clemson man."

Does he think the attitude toward the Negro in the South is changing?

Yes. "I think people are more tolerant now," he said. "They no longer talk about keeping the Negro down."

He said he felt the current battle over state or feveral control had racial overtones, but that the Negro faced an even greater problem.

"I'm afraid the whole civil rights movement will stop," he said. "I'm afraid that people will be satisfied with the progress already made."

The gap between token integration and real integration is still large, Mr. Gantt feels. And he worries about the average Negro looking for a job or a house. The Negro who doesn't get fanfare when he attends a white college, how will he be treated?

"If he has to be a super-duper guy, then we've missed the boat," Mr. Gantt said. "I could say I was just another student, but I wasn't. The first never is."

All Harvey Gantt wanted was respect as a man—not a Negro man—just a man, and he got it.

He was a first. The walls are down, the laws have been passed, and as he said, "It's now a personal thing."

At Home

Relaxed and comfortable in his apartment in Charlotte, Harvey Gantt recalls his two and one-half years at Clemson. Gantt is now a designer for an architectural firm in Charlotte.