

W. Dewey Tullis – In His Own Words

I was born on December 4, 1926 in Headland, Alabama and my mother named me Willie Dewey Tullis. I met my wife, Kittle Collins, at West Virginia State University. I am the father of two sons, Dewey E. and Rodman C. Dewey, the eldest, is a graduate of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX and the Guyton-Jones School of Mortuary Science, Atlanta, GA. He was the vice-president and manager of Collins Funeral Home in Spartanburg SC. Dewey passed away on September 12, 1995. Rodman, the youngest, is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Winston Salem, NC and the School of Law at University of South Carolina School of Law. Rodman, practiced law and currently operates the funeral home along with his mother.

I have always acknowledged the presence of God in my daily life and I have served the Deity in many capacities. I was a member of Epiphany Episcopal Church of Spartanburg where during the 20 years of my membership I served as a Senior Warden, licensed Lay leader and a member of the vestry. I also was a member of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, and finally at the Episcopal Church of the Advent where I have been an usher and choir member.

This is my personal and professional life, which in 46 years I have made an effort to expand my educational horizons. Initially, under parental and institutional requirements, I attended the public schools in Headland, AL and Miami, FL. I received a diploma graduating with honors

from Booker T. Washington High School, Miami, FL in the Class of 1945.

At an early age, my mother divorced my father. She was carrying my brother when she went back home to her father. There we lived in what must have been poverty, but nobody told us that fact. We got water out of a well. The outhouse in the dead of winter was a cold adventure. The school did not go any further than the eighth grade. There were holes in the floor and the roof leaked in a rainstorm, but it was clean. At home, we had to scrub the wooden floor. Oh yes, we ate out of the garden, and from the hog pen and chicken coop.

On Sunday, the big time, my grandfather sat at the head of the table and nobody moved until he finished the blessing. Heck, I love chicken wings now because the wings, the neck and yes, the feet—yes, we ate the whole chicken. We went to school, church and yes, that cotton field! All day long 50 cents a hundred. It was a hard life. You say we were poor, hell no! We were not poor. Maybe low income, maybe poverty, but poor? No. You see we had love. We cared for each other and we looked out for each other. The girls slept at the head of the bed and the boys slept at the foot of the bed. Later my mother moved my brother and I to Miami, FL and there we first lived down in a small room where we, my brother and I slept on a pallet on the floor, our mother on a couch. We all had a common kitchen and bathrooms with about four or five families. However, my mother, who was a maid, taught us, my brother and I, the things that she saw that made for the good life—later, we moved to a small apartment. We had our own kitchen, a bathroom with a tub,

beds, but no hot water. My mother kept us in school, she kept us clean, taught us how to work--took us to church.

It was about the eighth or ninth grade or so, that I received the first jolt of how to reach the good life, for I sometimes call it a Torch or Torches of Liberty, a Light of Freedom. I met Mr. Patterson, a young science teacher who showed me that all things on God's Earth had their own identifying features; the leaves on the trees were not all the same, that you could recognize the difference by the margin and number of veins. He made me to realize that knowledge; to know, to learn, to understand was a valuable, beautiful thing. Yes, it was through his guidance that I realized and understood that knowledge was part of the fabric of freedom. Also, it was about that time I learned that my inability to talk high like the other boys was something called, bass. Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Williams, chorus directors in the school, showed me that the thunder and roaring, the smooth, cooling rapture of music, Brahms, Handel, Dawson, Robeson, Marian Anderson was a source of joy, wonder, and a blessing to behold. When I polished and used it right, it provided the foundation for the joy found in Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, or the sheer majesty in the rendition of Old Man River by Paul Robeson in the musical, Showboat. Yes, they passed me the torch of joy, wonder and love found in the music, poetry and literature of our being...living with each other...it was there. I was about 13 years old when I knew I wanted to be like these people, they gave me hope.

But, now I knew that I did not want to live at the bottom of the heap, so to speak, I had to have a college education. My mother, a beautiful woman, my granddaddy, a

man of principle and source of guidance, just did not have the finances at the time, I learned that football players went to college on scholarships—I had never played football. Heck! In Alabama, we could not play ball in the cotton patch, but in Miami, FL I had to try. I went to the library, got Pop Warner's book on football and learned that men of my weight and size, lack of great speed, etc. were best on the line. It was there that I received another torch-- I met Coach Brown, the line coach, who made me understand that you must take care of your body, eat right, sleep right—no smoking—practice hard, if everybody ran ten laps-- the best man ran 15, 20—be first on the field and the last to leave. He made me realize if I wanted a scholarship I had to be willing to "shake and bake" and practice hard—for when the going got tough, the tough got going. I graduated from Booker T. Washington High in June 1945 and I received a scholarship to Bethune-Cookman College (now, Bethune-Cookman University) to play football. It was during the forties, a war was being fought—the football season was over in October — November. I needed \$95 to complete the semester. Where was I going to get \$95? But what I had learned was that in the Army, a soldier upon discharge could get the GI Bill and go to college. Needless to say, by Christmas I was in the Army.

And there ladies and gentleman, I got the final jolt from Sergeant Green-- who said, "Stand tall, eyes straight ahead, be a man! If you are going to make it in this Man's Army, you have to go! Your fore parents came here as slaves and they fought in the Confederate Army, they slaved so you can be a man. Be one—accept the challenge! Accept the discipline respect yourself! Respect your country. Toe the mark!" I served in the Army for two years (1945-1947). The veteran's status

ensured me a four-year study on the college level. Therefore, I went on to West Virginia State College and received a B.S. Degree in Chemistry with a minor in Math in June 1952.

I have worked from early youth to the present. I believe in the old adage that work is honorable and that idleness is the workshop of evil. My employment record is arranged in three general areas and is presented in a chronological order from my graduation from West Virginia State College to the present.

Under Grad 1948 -1952

I entered West Virginia State College in Institute, WV. I selected W. Va. State because my high school choral director was a graduate and recommended me to the choral director at the college. At W. Va. State, I entered the science discipline with a major in Chemistry and minor in Math. In addition to the prescribed course of study as designated by the discipline, I attended summer school sessions and completed the course of study for a teacher's certificate. I graduated from W. Va. State College with a B.S. in Chemistry and a minor in Math along with a teaching certificate.

The four-year period between my undergraduate study and my graduate study, I continued my educational pursuits by joining and participating in Great Books Society. In this organization using seminars, workshops, lectures and group discussions we studied the Great Books of our times.

Graduate 1953 - 1958

I entered the graduate school of Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ and received a Master's Degree in Science in May 1958. I was able to apply the knowledge gained in my major field of study during my employment as a chemist as Picatinny Arsenal, in Dover, NJ. Picatinny Arsenal is an American Military research and manufacturing facility. It is the internationally acknowledged hub for the advancement of armament technologies and engineering innovation. My primary responsibilities in the Picatinny General Lab included the analysis research and development of solid propellants. These duties also included the performing of a variety of wet analysis to determine the feasibility of propellant storage.

I developed a technique of rapid analysis that reduced the man-hour rate of 50% resulting in considerable savings for the department. Subsequently, I presented a paper on this subject to the New York and New Jersey chapter of the American Chemical Society. On this job, I was promoted from a lab aide to GS-9, top step in system.

Teacher 1958-1968

I continued my graduate studies at American University (1963), North Carolina A&T University (1965) and College of St. Theresa (1967). Following my relocation from New Jersey to South Carolina, I was seeking employment as a chemist; the only positions available were in the field of education. Anticipating this inevitability, I took the NTE and prepared myself to teach.

I was employed at Lincoln High School in Taylors SC. In the decade spent in this school, I performed many duties among them were: chemistry, physics and mathematics

teacher; head of the faculty (two years); chairman of the steering committee for accreditation, assistant coach (five years); head coach (five years); chairman of the junior class (eight years); assistant chorus director (one year) and I prepared the justification of the school educational grant.

Administration 1968-1969

During this period, I served as an Assistant Principal of George Washington Carver Senior High (now, Carver Middle School), Spartanburg SC. The year spent in the school gave me an opportunity to expand my direct relationship with students. My duties consisted of the following: I was in charge of student activities, planned, supervised the design and assisted in the preparation of the school's first handbook; serves as the mediator for the Administration between students and parents; designed and implemented the school's basic approach to student's unrest due to racial tension; established a rapport between administration and student body to ensure safe and orderly student assemblies, sports events, etc. and developed the model for integration of Carver with Spartanburg High School. I served on an administrative team that maintained a year of respite from students' unrest and strife.

During my eight-year period following my year at Carver High School, I was employed in management and federal funded service programs. These positions gave me opportunities to develop the systems and the methods and techniques utilized by governmental bureaucrats.

Assistant Director 1969-1973

In 1969, I became the Deputy Director of the Model Cities program in Spartanburg, SC. My responsibilities included planning, preparation of proposals and reports; mentoring

progress of all projects; established and maintained a rapport with the Model Neighborhood Authority, assisted in the organization and coordination of citizen's community groups and organizations; monitored and assisted in the directing of all facets of the total program. Supervised all planning and activities of the Neighborhood Operation Unit, NOU, staff of nine people; assisted in the promotion, coordination, and monitoring of all projects; supervised and assisted in the project's progress status reports.

The model cities program existed for five years. Prior to the phase out of the program, I was offered an opportunity to become the Executive Director of a statewide program. Since I have always strived for greater challenges, I accepted and began building a statewide organization without office space and staff. Only a plan on paper.

Executive Director 1973-1977

In 1973, I became the Executive Director as the Senior Administrative Officer of the South Carolina Resource Development Corporation of an organization responsible for all phases of management-fiscal, personnel, programmatic, etc., and operation of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker

programs located throughout the State provides services and projects for all low-income target area residents who qualify for the services. Organized, directed, supervised, planned, and coordinated the activities of thirty-one staff members, located in five Regional Offices in the state. Supervised the preparation of a statewide million dollar budget; designed and supervised the preparation of a multi-volume comprehensive plan for the fiscal years 1974-1975, 1975-1976, 1976-1977; designed and assisted in the preparation of programs proposals; designed and prepared a series of workable programs; designed and implemented Management and Evaluation Systems; prepared and conducted staff seminars on Management by Objectives, MBO; prepared and supervised the preparation of monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports; prepared staff manuals; developed and maintained coordinated linkages between the Corporation and pertinent agencies on all levels in all fields. Served as the primary public relations, community relations officer, and grants man.

Technical School 1979-1980

After a ten-year period, I returned to the classroom on a post high school level. I taught mathematics: algebra and trigonometry on a temporary basis at Spartanburg Technical College (now, Spartanburg Community College), in Spartanburg SC. Also, during the winter quarter at Spartanburg Tech, I taught a special industrial group blue print reading and precision instruments applications.

Education Administrator 1980-1981

As the Chief Administrative Officer in the Greenville TCC Juvenile Prevention Program. I was responsible for the daily operation of a program designed to provide an alternative school experience for youth 15-17 years old. I was responsible for the preparation of a plan of action including the utilization of the regular developments studies curriculum, coupled with the Adkins Life Skills Employability Series. Developed academic and social changes on the students reformed in this program. In addition, I prepared the program budget, the quality reports, the annual reports and the evacuation and assessment instrument.

Executive Board Member 1994-1995

I was elected to the Board of Directors at Spartanburg General Hospital (currently known as Spartanburg Regional Hospital System.) My work on the board had a direct impact of the location of the ReGenesis program on the South Side in Spartanburg. Yes, it was during this time that I lead the integration of organizations like the Civitan Clubs et al. Yes, we continued to the integration in 1971 of the YMCA, met the mayor and police and was able to march downtown, the Klan members were there.

Family Business 1959 — present

I have been involved in private business for over 25 years and I am the Vice-President of the Collins Enterprises located in Spartanburg SC. Collins Enterprises is a small multi-facet family incorporation. In this incorporation, I am assigned duties on a limited part-time basis. I perform these duties in addition to my regular daily employment. The duties consist of directing funeral services and the operation of a small motel; operation of a small package store and involvement in real estate and land purchase transactions.

Outstanding Achievements and Awards

Omega Man of the Year (1976, Epsilon Nu Chapter, Spartanburg SC)
Omega Psi Phi Citizen of the Year (1973, Phi Alpha Chapter, Greenville SC)
Mr. Executive of the John S. Woodward Secretaries Association (1973)
Star Teacher Award (1968)
Student 1st Place State Science Fair Award in Chemistry (1965)
Coach of the District (1964)
Coach Baseball State Championship (1962)
Clubs and Civic Organizations (Past and Present)
Member of the Mayor's Human Relations Committee
Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina – Bishop's Council
Spartanburg Progressive Men's Club
Spartanburg's Citizens Committee for Progress
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Council - Spartanburg County

The State of South Carolina Order of the Silver Crescent
Sunrise Civitan Club
32 Degree Mason, Shriner
Spartanburg County Subdivision Regulations Committee
Board of Director, OIC, Spartanburg
Member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes
Member of the Youth Advisory Committee
Spartanburg Symphony Chorus
Spartanburg County Selective Service Board
South Carolina State Board of Funeral Service
Board of Trustees, Voorhees College
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
University of Spartanburg Regional Campus
Booster Club
South Carolina Black Hall of Fame

Looking Back

I recalled my life and the real assistance I received surges. The new respect and love of knowledge I received from Mr. Patterson, appreciation for music and the love expressed by it from Mr. Jenkins and Mrs. Williams. The recognition that in order to succeed one must be willing to work hard, to sacrifice, to think from Coach Brown and yes, the discipline and pride from Sergeant Green. I believe this force provided by jumpstarting—from this, we developed the Jump Start, Restart Program. Our goal was to make young people understand that freedom is not free, you must work for it. We will make them realize that for every miracle Christ performed for an individual, that individual had to do something for himself-herself. Lazarus had to come forth, the woman had to touch the hem of his garment, the blind men had to go and wash. We will remind them that they cannot sit on their butts and blame others. We will make them understand that to be and remain free they must register and vote. We will make them understand that your rights end where mine begin. We need to help each other.

Someone needs to let our young people know not all the drugs in the world will take them out of the slums. Do not lie about the virtues of being high. We advised them that the feeling can come from achievements, of doing a job well, or helping others, but you must be truthful. The truth of the matter is you must be willing to be the Torch of Truth for our young people. Trust; be willing to walk in the light in Spartanburg. We are preparing our people for jobs, positions. People will always use the power of dreams and surrealistic

trances brought on by drugs and alcohol unless they come to grips with the truth. Sure, this is the greatest country in the world.

I am 85 years old, I am a testimony to it, but it only works if all of our torches are raised together in a system where opportunities are made to our youth.