

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)

Recently I met Rachael Colby as I was asked to give her a tour of Oak Ridge history. In our communication prior to the tour, she mentioned being the daughter-in-law of Rev. Roy D. Colby Sr. who was co-minister of Chapel on the Hill along with his best friend, Dr. James Spicer. This excited me greatly as I have a treasured notebook given me by John Job titled *An Oak Ridge Story*, written by James Spicer!

So, when we met at the Oak Ridge History Museum, I was anxious to open the discussion about her connection to the person who wrote the great story of the 1960's in Oak Ridge. Yet, I did not mention my interest right away, wanting to see what her interests were in coming to Oak Ridge and learn what she understood about our integration history.

I was amazed by her keen insights and intent interest in learning about the smallest details of our history. It was an amazing tour as she asked so many excellent and penetrating questions. What a joy to give her a tour of our city!

I am pleased to share this unique integration story from the perspective of a young woman who has personal connections with James Spicer. You will enjoy reading her perspective on the 1960's integration efforts in Oak Ridge.

\*\*\*

Beneath Dr. James Spicer's charming drawl and calm demeanor lies a steely resolve, a fiery soul with a heart for fellow man. Best friends and lifelong civil rights activists, Dr. Spicer, and my father-in-law (Rev. Roy Colby) co-ministered at Chapel on the Hill in Oak Ridge, Tennessee in the 60s. A shared passion to see equal rights established and justice served made them a well-matched team in their work to aid integration.

Over the years, my in-laws occasionally mentioned their past involvement as civil rights activists. The vignettes of their stories intrigued me, but they didn't go into detail, and I didn't press.

The first story of Dr. Spicer's and my in-laws' time in Oak Ridge to catch my attention was his account of the integrated children's summer camp they hosted while ministers at Chapel on the Hill. He told the story at my father-in-law's funeral in 2002 and it never left me.

I'm an immigrant turned American citizen, born and raised in Jamaica, a country of mixed ethnicities, as am I. I believe in the power of story to help build bridges, shape minds and character, stir hearts, and provoke positive action. Therefore, I was intentional in the books I read to my children. Dr. Spicer's story held the ring of some of those books.

I've written intermittently since I was nine years old when I penned my first words by moonlight from my bedroom windowsill. But I didn't recognize and embrace my call to write until 2016. The following year, I posted my in-laws' account of the Civil Rights 1966 March Against Fear to my blog in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Disturbed by the rattling of unrest, division, the rise of racial tensions and injustices, and moral decay in our nation, I journaled my observations and concerns. And Dr. Spicer's story of the integrated church camp in Ozone, Tennessee, continued to tug at me.

Finally, in 2018, I called. "Dr. Spicer, can you tell me the story about the summer camp again? I think it would make a great children's picture book." We talked for a while and other stories tumbled out. Dr. Spicer mused he wasn't sure how much his children remembered or if they even knew of some stories and the part he and Rev. Colby had played in Oak Ridge's integration. I sent him questions—thirty-seven of them, to consider when recounting his recollections. A few weeks later, I received Dr. Spicer's accounts entitled, *An Oak Ridge Story*.

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)

"My dear Rachael," Dr. Spicer inscribed on the first page, "... The principal themes imposed on us were the dark, limiting, and dehumanizing rules and practices of Jim Crow. Our hope and task was to provide a small space where these themes did not exist, where children could be children. But they had been in place in the two hundred years of slavery and the 100 years after the Civil War. The story of Oak Ridge in the 60s was the struggle to get out from under that blanket of perpetual terror... If you can write a children's book on that, have at it!"

"Thanks for the challenge." I wrote back. "By the grace of God and with your help I will 'have at it!'" But now what? The one story had grown into several accounts.

The following spring in 2019, I attended my first writers' conference, the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference in Black Mountain, NC. I pitched the idea of a children's book based on the camp story to the managing editor of a publishing house and told her of the others. She asked me to write an adult book based on all the accounts. Interestingly, I'd emailed Dr. Spicer the night before and asked him about working together on an adult book based on his stories. I intend to write both children's and adult books on these stories.

My friend and I backtracked from the conference to visit Dr. Spicer in Tennessee and shared the editor's request for a 50,000-word book. He said he'd recorded his memories in the collection of stories he'd given me and granted me permission to use them to create books and other derivative works. We delighted in our gracious host. We talked about our families, and I soaked up his wit and wisdom while he shared more memories and history of Oak Ridge and Scarboro.

I returned home to Massachusetts and continued to converse with Dr. Spicer and my in-laws, but their stories didn't amount to 50,000 words. Besides, a vital viewpoint was missing—Black voices. This historical account needed to include perspectives, from both Black and White people, and from adults and children with accounts of Jim Crow and integrating Oak Ridge in the 60s. I needed to go to Oak Ridge! But the pandemic delayed the journey.

"Start with the town historian, my fellow writer and friend said." En route to this year's writer's conference in May, I returned to visit Dr. Spicer and his family and traveled on to Oak Ridge and Scarboro to gain a better understanding of the history and hoping to find others with stories to share.

The altar at Chapel on the Hill remained unchanged from the photo of my father-in-law and Dr. Spicer standing beside it in the 60s. Pastor Randy Hammer and Helen, the church secretary, kindly welcomed and pointed me toward people who could help in my quest.

We toured the Oak Ridge History Museum and the display at the Scarboro Community Center with the engaging and informative Mr. Ray Smith, Oak Ridge's own town historian and Mrs. Rose Weaver, African American historian. I shared my efforts to write the book and my search for more voices to include. "I know what you should do," Mr. Smith said as we departed. It took a while, but here I am.

Apparently, Mr. Smith found Dr. Spicer's account of the Davis Brother Cafeteria's integration fascinating (as do I) and included it in his excellent video presentation, *Brief History of Integration in Oak Ridge, TN*. (this presentation can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82yI2YHlb2c&t=939s> - Ray) I've read and heard some speak of the exemplary customer service and good food offered at the Davis Brothers Cafeteria then in the Downtown Shopping Center on Main St East.

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)

Oak Ridge's restaurants in the 60s hired African Americans to cook, clean, serve, and maintain their establishments, but enforced Jim Crow laws which prohibited Black citizens from being customers. Jim Crow laws allowed towns to deny access to public facilities such as restaurants, barber shops, grocery stores, roller skating rinks designated for "Whites only." Drinking fountains, bathrooms, and doctor's offices had separate entrances marked "Whites" and "Coloreds."

Some were intentional in their evil exclusion of Black people. Others shared they were sincerely not racist, but regrettably unaware of inequitable access to some places. Dr. Spicer and Mayor McNeese, Rev. Colby, the brave citizens of Scarboro, and others took action to expose the injustice and take action to implement integration of the Davis Brothers Cafeteria.

Though segregation was unconstitutional, and President John F. Kennedy had ordered Oak Ridge rid of Jim Crow laws and desegregated, the manager of the Davis Brothers Cafeteria refused to comply when approached by Mayor McNeese and Dr. Spicer.

So, Dr. Spicer and Mayor McNeese flew to Atlanta to meet with the Davis brothers at their headquarters, intent on persuading them to integrate their restaurant. The Davis Brothers' cool reception quickly turned to a heated declaration that they would never integrate and an abrupt ejection of Mayor McNeese and Dr. Spicer from their bare, backside of a warehouse office.

Mayor McNeese hollered his frustrations all the way onto the homebound plane and took a seat across the aisle from Dr. Spicer. A young man sat next to Dr. Spicer and inquired where he was from. He listened intently as Dr. Spicer expounded on their failed mission. I marvel that Dr. Spicer shared his frustration with the stranger, especially given the prevailing culture of Jim Crow in the South. Dr. Spicer later learned that the young man was the son of Mr. Guilford Glazer, the owner of the buildings which housed the Davis Brothers' cafeteria and their bowling alley. While the cafeteria was profitable, the bowling alley was losing money. Mr. Glazier offered to let the Davis Brothers run their bowling alley rent free for the remaining six years on their lease (a price tag of \$48,000) in exchange for integrating their cafeteria in Oak Ridge. The Davis brothers accepted the offer. They went on to integrate their chain of restaurants and influence all the members of the Southern Restaurant Association (of which one brother was President) to integrate their restaurants also.

What were the chances of this young man being on that flight seated next to Dr. Spicer? Some would call this coincidence. I call it Providence.

I admire Dr. Spicer's and Mayor McNeese's tenacity to not quit at the first "no." However, Dr. Spicer is quick to say he's no hero, neither my father-in-law. But rather, the heroes were the people of Scarboro who persevered through much oppression and opposition, the mayor, police, members of the Human Relations Committee and the young man from Brown University representing the Student Nonviolent Committee, and others who stepped up to the battle to help establish civil rights for African-Americans in Oak Ridge.

I'm struck at the stark contrast of what motivated the Davis Brothers and Guilford Glazer. The Davis Brothers, resistant at first, were motivated to do right when it benefited them financially. Whereas Mr. Glazer came swiftly to the defense of others oppressed by Jim Crow at personal cost to himself. Are we willing to do likewise as called? If we say nothing and do nothing when called to stand and speak, we become part of the problem. I must check myself lest I become unaware of others' pain and travails because I'm not affected or have never walked their road. God, help us. May we as a nation train our eyes to see and hearts to listen and learn and take appropriate action for needed change.

I'm looking for you with your untold stories of life, and segregation and integration in Scarboro and Oak Ridge to share. Can you hear me?

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)

I believe it is critical at this juncture in our nation for people to see that Black and White people have helped each other in the past, and continue to do so, to work together for good, for the betterment of each other and our nation.

I'm compelled to address these and other tough issues, to pursue and write these stories because I love truth and I hate injustice. Because truth chases the night of ignorance and hate into the dawn of understanding and positive change. It's crucial we remember and learn from history, use it as warning and instruction for present situations and as a beacon for the future. And then there's that call to love one another.

\*\*\*

Thank you, Rachael Colby, for your willingness to share your perspective on our city's history of integration efforts in the 1960's. Looking back on that time is painful as it is hard to understand the existence of such barriers to simple interaction between human beings. Her call for loving one another rings true!

Let me give you a bit more detail about this lady who seeks to write about our history. Rachael was born and raised in Jamaica. She is an award-winning writer who resides in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. She describes herself as a "wife, mom, beach bum, artist, work in progress, and avid Tweeter."

Rachael writes to glorify God, encourage believers, and reach the lost. She connects culture's questions with Christianity's answers, inspires faith, and motivates through articles, devotions, poetry, and interviews.

She has a heart for racial reconciliation and to uplift those who serve in tough places. Her work has appeared on *Southern Ohio Christian Voice* and *Inkspirations Online*. She says she "runs on copious amounts of coffee and chocolate."

You can connect with Rachael on her website, [TattooltOnYourHeart.com](http://TattooltOnYourHeart.com) and on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/RachaelColby), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RachaelColby), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/RachaelColby), and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/RachaelColby).



Rachael M. Colby, writer, and daughter-in-law of Rev. Roy Colby

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)



Dr. James Spicer, author of *An Oak Ridge Story*, an insightful account of the integration efforts in the 1960's in Oak Ridge



Rev. Roy Colby Co-minister with James Spicer at the Chapel on the Hill during the 1960's

## A Unique Perspective of Oak Ridge Integration - Part One

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of October 18, 2021)



Co-ministers Rev. Roy Colby and Dr. James Spicer shown in the Chapel on the Hill