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## Shaking Up The Powerful Academics

### College President, Student Daughter Discuss Campus Protests

*In his first year as president of Bowie State College at Laurel, Dr Samuel L. Myers has been faced with a student boycott, occupation of buildings and the presentation of grievances ranging from termite-infested buildings to poor plumbing. Since a protest temporarily closed Bowie in April, \$335,000 has been allotted by the State to improve conditions.*

*Before assuming the presidency, Dr Myers held a high-ranking State Department position, prior to that, he taught for thirteen years at Morgan State College.*

*His daughter, Tama, graduates in June from Morgan State College. In March, as student council president, she led a student body protest in demanding twelve changes at the school, including abolishment of compulsory ROTC and an increase in Afro-American culture classes. The following week all but one of the demands, dealing with elimination of final exams for seniors, were granted.*

*Because of this unique combination of college president and campus leader in one family, The Sunday Sun asked Dr Myers and Miss Myers to discuss aspects of the present wave of student protest and rebellion.*



Each is on a campus, each a president. At left, Dr. Samuel L. Myers, president of Bowie State College; below, his daughter, Tama, president of the Morgan State College student body. Father and daughter have different views of what campus protest is all about and what devices students should employ.



By PAUL WILKES

**WHAT** would you define as responsible protest?

*Dr Myers:* Starting at the left, at one unacceptable extreme is burning buildings, threats to human life. A little further to the right, the obstruction to the orderly operation of the college is unacceptable. Sit-ins which prevent other students from attending classes is objectionable.

Going far to the right, discussions of issues with college officials are acceptable. Presentation of a list of demands, even though to many presidents demands given in an almost-insolent manner may be offensive, are all part of an act. But to me those demands are acceptable—the students are young and I'm not offended.

If students come together in a group and insist upon knowing the details of the college's operation in a public meeting and I am asked to stand before them, this too is acceptable to me. Now I've gone from left to right.

If a conscious effort is made to meet student demands, I consider picketing

unwarranted. Sometimes students want to picket just for the sake of picketing. But if demands are not met, sit-ins such as we had at Bowie where students did not obstruct, would be all right.

### *When Others Fail*

*Miss Myers.* It is necessary sometimes, if other methods fail, if the administration won't even listen, for the students to do something stronger. Not to the extent of burning buildings or endangering people's lives. It's the administration attitude that dictates what means the students will use. At Morgan, we were fortunate. The administration was eager to listen. But if they won't listen, disruptive action is not only legitimate, it's necessary.

*Dr Myers.* On the occupation of buildings during a protest, I can say that that was a wise tactic in the past, but very unwise now. In the past, the youngsters had to have something that would attract attention, something dramatic, something that would bring the local, indeed the national press to the campus.

At Bowie, the students occupied buildings, took over the switchboards, blocked off roads, and this was dramatically successful. It attracted attention—from that

point of view it was wise. I can't condone it—it runs counter to my feeling that students should not obstruct the orderly running of a campus, but as a tactical device, I can understand why it was done and it was successful.

But now it's unwise to occupy. There's been an adverse reaction to this, public sentiment is against it. Instead of getting the sympathy of the public, it will attract unfavorable attention. Students still have to do things to attract attention. It's like advertising, to shock without offending. Like the preacher who found the lady sleeping in church and hollered "HELL" and continued "Hellenic philosophy teaches " and she stayed awake for the rest of the sermon. I don't oppose protest, but I do feel this student involvement is going to do serious harm to our whole educational system. High quality people come to colleges at a sacrifice to teach, they are becoming disgusted, and we are not going to attract them any longer

### *Making It Expedient*

**How much should students be involved?**

*Miss Myers.* I feel students are really concerned with the changing times—a lot of the traditions of the schools are

held just because they are traditions, like mandatory swimming at Morgan. Even if you knew how to swim you had to take it. This was one of our demands. We just wanted to make the curriculum more expedient.

And standing before the faculty and listening to our grievances being debated, I found the ones who objected the most to change were the faculty members who had been there the longest, the real oldies. Their argument was that we shouldn't change it because it has been the tradition for years. Students want an education relevant to the times. Students don't want to memorize and then regurgitate on a test.

While I was sitting in a faculty meeting an older professor sitting next to me said indignantly "Miss Myers all you're trying to do is to make Dr Jenkins (Morgan's president) resign, but you forgot to recommend that there be a committee of students to help me write my lesson plans, a committee to help me teach my class. And you forgot to demand that students be on the board of trustees."

I can understand why he was shaken out of a seat he has been so comfortable in, but students have to have represen-

tation on faculty committees, to have a say in what goes on at the college. Like the student union committee, our student union is not a student union, it's an administration-faculty union. They don't use it, but they control it.

### 'We Are Concerned'

When student demands are immediately met, what does this indicate? For example, where compulsory ROTC was dropped at Morgan upon students' demand.

*Miss Myers:* To the public this looked sudden, but it wasn't. Compulsory ROTC has been hashed over for years. On the administration's part, it was a strategic move at this time, an illustration that the administration is interested in an entire program. To me, the administration was saying "We're not concerned in bending when you say bend," but they also were saying "We are just as much, if not more concerned in getting a more effective program."

*Dr Myers.* When we talk about students, we are not talking about a homogeneous group. There's a militant subgroup which endures violence and which is looking for provocations to serve their psychotic ends. In addition, you have a group of passive people, not concerned one way or the other. In the middle are the responsible group. In our case, the student government was the responsible group. How you deal with them is a matter of strategy. The violent group would like to see the administration oppose very fair and legitimate demands and thereby win over this mass of students to serve their ends. One has to be careful to meet legitimate demands.

The demands will come as one list of demands from the student body but you know that there is not unanimous agreement. Sometimes it is almost a case of insolence. The students come at midnight and demand that by eight o'clock the following morning certain things must be done. It appears one is knuckling under if they are met. But one must take it with humor and recognize that a group [the militants] wants you to be bottled up. I was lucky to have responsible leaders who came to me and said, "We're under tremendous pressure from the militants and if we can get some concessions to take back to the student body this will strengthen our position."

### Forgets Pride

So the concession is made to those who are earnestly concerned with the good of the college. The administrator forgets about pride, false pride, and looks at the list of demands. It intrigues me many of them are reasonable. We say "Why didn't we think of these." But you get demands you couldn't grant in just conscience. So when you get to that point, you just say no. Even if everything falls in on you, you say no.

One of the key demands at Bowie was that a professor who was very popular with the students be granted tenure. In just conscience, I could not tell them why we wouldn't and of course this did not satisfy them. And this is the point when the students came closest to hooing me.

*Miss Myers* But don't you think students have the right to evaluate a teacher?

*Dr Myers.* I don't think so. The Agency for International Development made a study and found students like those professors who are eloquent, who give them a lot of what they think they should know. Fifteen years later, the former students were interviewed

again and completely reversed their ratings. I think students are too close to the situation. When I was young, I was more impressed with the form of presentation than with the substance.

I realize that somebody has to evaluate. Perhaps boards could travel to campuses and do this. Students have prodded us to realize evaluation is needed.

*Miss Myers:* I definitely feel students have the right to evaluate. And they are going to evaluate—whether it be at registration or some other time. A student who is there to learn something knows if he is learning. If he isn't, why shouldn't the teacher know?

### Creditability Gap

Is there a creditability gap between administration and student body?

*Dr Myers.* There certainly is. As you look at society as a whole it's apparent we adults have failed in many ways. There is a distrust on the part of the students. They see Vietnam, the crime rate. The world is a mess. They just don't believe anymore. We are the managers of this broader society and we're not doing a good job.

*Miss Myers.* In our grievance we found ourselves bogged down in red tape, meetings were canceled. Every time a problem came up the administration said, "We'll get a committee working on that." Students get impatient. Sometimes things are being done slowly but the lines of communication are so poor students don't know

### Students' Side

On whose side—student or administration—should the faculty be in time of campus unrest?

*Dr Myers* You make a serious mistake in asking them to take sides. But if I must answer, I'd say they should be on the students' side. Many of the basic decisions of the college should be made by the faculty. It's unfair to make this tricotomy—students, faculty and administration.

Increasingly administrations are losing power the faculty is making the decisions and the students want to be involved in all matters concerning their lives. The administration existed before as a center of power, but it no longer is.

Presidents and their administrative officers are those at whom the fingers are pointed. When demonstrations are held, one of the first tactics is to overthrow a prestige symbol. that's the president. He is there as the figure. In reality the substantive power in the college is either going to be the faculty or the students.

### Power's Not Theirs

But aren't many administrations and boards of trustees unwilling to yield any control?

*Dr Myers.* Yes, and this is a serious mistake. It isn't going to continue. The power is leaving their hands whether they want it to or not. The faculty and the students are taking over this power in certain areas, such as determining curriculum and tenure.

### Faculty Involvement

In this revolutionary process, isn't it uncomfortable on some campuses, especially with the pressure from activist, militant groups?

*Dr Myers* Yes, but faculty should be more involved with students to see to it that these very militant groups do not take over. But the students are really afraid of the faculty because the faculty members grade them. If faculty do not become involved as a whole, a very dan-