Neal-Marshall Clubs
Louisville
July 31, 1982

It is a great pleasure for me to join you this evening at the fourth national reunion for black alumni and the first since the founding of the Neal-Marshall Alumni Clubs. I became acquainted with the Neal-Marshall concept, as some of you in this room know, in the early summer of 1981 when, with Frank Jones, I stopped by a meeting in the Union Building in Bloomington simply, as Frank had instructed me, to say hello. I had only been at that meeting for a few minutes when I became aware that the issue of even having Neal-Marshall clubs as part of the larger Indiana University Alumni Association had not satisfactorily been resolved; indeed, it did not take much insight to notice that considerable tension existed between those at that meeting and Indiana University. I stayed, like a relative who comes to visit and spends longer than he or she perhaps is welcome, far beyond the time allocated; but I learned a great deal and I became persuaded of the importance of the Neal-Marshall concept and of the depth of feeling which those in the Union on that hot day in June had towards it. This evening, therefore, I feel I am participating in one of the successful evolutions out of that depth of frustration.
Most of you probably know about Neal and Marshall. I did not. Since that day in 1981, however, I have, to my pleasure and interest, learned about Marcellus Neal, a graduate from Indiana University in 1895, having come to Bloomington from Greenfield, Indiana to which his family moved from his Tennessee birthplace. For a good part of his life, Marcellus Neal was responsible for the Science Department of a large high school in Dallas; he also worked for the Civil Service and wrote a valuable treatise on science for the young. He was, as you know, the first black male to graduate from Indiana. Frances Marshall Eagleson was the first black female to graduate, with an A.B. in English in 1919, having come to Indiana via Rushville where her family had moved from her birthplace in a small town in Kentucky. She too was a teacher, and a distinguished one who entered administration and later became Registrar and Admissions Officer at North Carolina Central University. A dormitory at that school is named in her honor; it was my pleasure to get to know her last year when she received one of the University's coveted Distinguished Alumni Service Awards.
The successes of Marcellus Neal and Frances Marshall should not make us forget the considerable difficulties which blacks have had at Indiana University in Bloomington. That record, similar to records like it throughout the United States, is one that we must keep before our young people as we challenge them by reminding them of the prejudice which brought discredit to the past of I.U. and of this country. There is little that I can tell you that most of you in this room are not in some way aware of, that you did not at some time in Bloomington or elsewhere experience for yourselves. Bloomington, for example, was one of the major locations for the Klu Klux Klan which, by 1923, had organized in all of Indiana's 92 counties. Hooded klansmen walked through the streets of Bloomington for decades, the hood protecting those under it from the shame which public knowledge we hope would have directed towards them.

The City of Bloomington, as George Taliaferro reminded all of us at the meeting I referred to a few moments ago, was not hospitable to blacks throughout most of the history of Indiana University. And this despite the significant efforts made by Herman B. Wells, who points out in his autobiography that one of his most difficult tasks involved "an effort to
shake off our previous university practices that discriminated against black students." When Herman Wells became President, blacks could not use the University swimming pools, could not participate in the ROTC program, could not sit where they wished in the cafeteria, could not live in the campus' regular dormitories. Wells in his quiet and dignified way eliminated these restrictions during his presidency. He writes in Being Lucky: "One of the earliest steps we took was to remove the reserved signs from certain tables in the Commons. Everyone knew that these reserved signs . . . meant that the black students were to sit there. One afternoon when the place was deserted . . . I turned [to the Manager of the building] and said "Pat, I want you to remove all those signs". . . It was two weeks before anyone discovered that the signs were gone and then, of course, the absurdity of the previous situation was apparent." To deal with the restriction on the swimming pools, Wells asked the Athletic Director the name of the most popular black athlete of the time and then instructed through the director that athlete, one Rooster Coffey, to go swimming at the busiest time of pool use. He did so and that, as Wells points out, was the end of the restricted swimming
facilities. Wells was also the first President in the Big Ten to recruit a black basketball player. It took only one school to break the vicious cycle. Wells further writes, "We had similar experiences in other sports with the same happy outcome . . . in golf and baseball as well as in basketball, we were the first Big Ten school to have blacks on the team." Not everything worked out as quickly as Wells might have wished or as you and I might today have expected. Discrimination in housing took considerable time to break. The discrimination in Bloomington restaurants took some time to break also and actually required a marvelous threat from Wells at a meeting called by the restaurant owners who indicated to him that he would have to stop faculty and student pressure to open restaurants to blacks or they would close all restaurant facilities in Bloomington. Wells pondered for a moment and then began to wonder (out loud) how extensively the Union facilities would have to be expanded in order to take up the slack if the Union provided the only restaurant option in the City. It took only a short time before Bloomington restaurants opened their doors to blacks as well as to whites.
Chancellor Wells was not the only force trying to effect change. In the mid 1930's, a Commission was formed by black and white students to examine problems of race relations. Surely that must sound familiar. The Commission did, however, arrange exchange services between local churches and establish successful discussion groups. The Commission in a report to then President Wells pointed out that blacks were denied the full use of the Union Building and that black speakers had not appeared in the convocation series and that blacks were excluded from honorary and professional societies and that blacks could not attend campus dances and social functions. None of this came as any surprise to black members of the academic community; nevertheless, the information presented provided an important first step and led to the inauguration of what was then called Negro History Week in 1941. During the 1940's, in fact, the first black students were admitted to the Medical School and near the end of that decade President Wells, to whom we return so often in order to understand how Indiana University came to be where it is today and to appreciate his enormous and frequently courageous contributions to its development, President Wells declared publicly, "we must prepare to
renounce prejudice of color, class, and race. For this renunciation of
class, color and race prejudice... where? In England? In
China? In Palestine? No! We must renounce prejudice of color, class
and race in Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana. Our renunciation must
be personally implemented by deeds. Our actions will be the measure of
the sincerity of the words." I wonder how many university presidents in
a state with a powerful klan organization made such a statement in the
1940's. Wells knew, of course, that he was working uphill. The first
record the University has of the number of blacks comes from 1920 in
which year 19 students of 2356 were black. By 1928, the number was 71
out of 3493; 17 years later, in 1945, the campus had nearly 4500 students
and 143 blacks. Ten years ago 4% of the 31,000 students on the campus
were black; last year that percent had risen to a little over 5%, with
1659 black students in a total student population of 32,229. That may
not seem like much progress. But I might, at this moment, quote from
John Stewart's autobiography, an account which details the challenging
and frequently painful experiences of being a young black student at
Indiana in the 1930's. After describing those experiences, he writes the
following about his reactions after a visit some 20 years later.
"On a visit, some twenty years hence, to the campus to attend an annual meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, my wife, Alice, and I were housed in the elegant Smithwood Residence Hall where facilities and services were ultramodern. After dinner one evening in the magnificent dining room of Smithwood, Alice and I took an elevator to the roof of the building where we stood in panoramic view of campus and town from all directions. In this setting and knowing that I could go to any food service establishment on campus or in town and be served, I gazed over the Gamma Gamma Sorority house where I once worked for my meals, over the Phi Gamma Fraternity house where I once worked, over the Second Baptist Church where I once carried on activities for the National Youth Administration, over the Commons in the Memorial Union Building where I was not welcomed to eat, over the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity house where I once lived and served as polemarch, over the Dargan house where I used to date coeds, over the Woodburn House on College Street where I once worked and lived, over the various and sundry eating places in Bloomington where I could not eat because of my skin color.
over the University fieldhouse swimming pool where I dared not swim, over the University School where I could not do student teaching, over the Business Administration Building and the Bryan Administration Building where Herman B Wells' office doors were always open to me, and over other familiar landmarks. Turning to Alice, I related it would be impossible to describe to her the wonderful progress in human relations, and in other fields of endeavors that the University and the City of Bloomington have made during the past twenty years."

The 1960's brought even more dramatic changes than John Stewart probably envisioned when he wrote those words. In 1968 a group representing many black students confronted then President Elvis Stahr with a list of demands which that group, a group including many faculty, staff and students believed was necessary to correct decades of discrimination and what in those times -- the year of the democratic convention in Chicago some of us remember, seemed too slow progress towards achieving appropriate and necessary goals. The group asked President Stahr to abolish the Committee on discriminatory practices
because it was too passive and urged him to create a joint committee of representative black students and faculty to assume a more active role on campus. The group also wanted from the University a strong plan and statement which would end discrimination in the community and on the campus and which would establish courses in black history, art, and literature to be open to all students. Initial progress was slow, as the office of Afro-American Affairs reported several months after this confrontation to the Faculty Council by noting, "the response of the University Community to these demands has been significant to some degree. The University community as a result has become somewhat sensitized to the needs of black students and to the general nature of conditions that alleviate racism in our society. But sensitivity is not action." I felt a year ago June that those of you who were attending that meeting in the Union Building and discussing the establishment of the Neal-Marshall clubs might have echoed that last sentence: sensitivity is not action.

During the past dozen years, I believe that significant steps have been taken on campus to respond ambitiously and aggressively to the
concerns voiced by those students, faculty and staff in 1968. We are very proud on the Bloomington campus of the strengths of our academic program in Afro-American studies, a program now chaired by Herman Hudson and chaired in the past by Joe Russell; we are proud of a comprehensive tutorial program; we are especially proud of the activities of the Black Culture Center and the Afro-American Arts Institute, with its nationally known dance company, Soul Revue, and choral ensemble. The University pays significant attention to the recruitment of black students; has established a Dean for Afro-American Affairs who reports directly to the Chief Executive of the Bloomington campus. There is certainly major awareness among many of us of the importance of the sense that each individual has of ethnic heritage, pride in the development of that heritage, commitment to its continuation and communication to all members of our society. I have written on more than one occasion about what I believe has been the collapse of what is so often referred to by conservative journalists in this country as our "common culture", by which is meant the culture emerging from our western heritage, a culture dominated by the Greek and Roman past. That is not the common culture
which will enable American society to work together to achieve its goals in the 21st century. A new common culture was pointed out to us by the various movements of the 1960s, and we in Higher Education must acknowledge that these were not aberrations, not perversions, but a recognition that the western heritage, though still obviously an extremely important part of America's past, could no longer be the sole basis on which America might build a successful future. The frontier in this country is gone. For years that frontier held out the hope that each of us could change, that each of us could enter into a new identity, that each of us could make of ourselves whatever we wished, simply by moving west. That frontier is gone. The new frontier may be around the corner from where we live, across the street, or across town or in the next county -- it is the frontier we need to cross between ethnic heritages which make up this great country. At times we seem more concerned about discovering about people in a far away country than we do about knowing how our neighbors think and feel and live, about where they have come from, what they believe in, why they are what they are. That
may be the most difficult frontier for any of us to cross because it is so close, because it is in some ways like looking into a mirror which does not reflect in quite the way we had anticipated.

Your presence here tonight indicates that you are eager to help advance this new frontier. Some of you are aware that the University has recently been making plans for a major fund drive to take place in the mid 1980's. Items for that fund drive were described by schools and units on the Bloomington campus, compiled into a long list of possibilities, surveyed by a Committee of the Faculty Council, discussed by the Council and ranked in priority order by the Council. One of the items submitted, and unfortunately receiving little support, was a new building for the black culture center. The present building, as some of you know, has been the Black Culture Center since 1973. If you have visited it, you are aware that it is overcrowded, not in the best repair, too hot on warm days and sometimes too cold on cold days. For those not familiar with the proposal, the plan calls for a building of approximately 25,000 assignable square feet; the building will be divided into three parts, one for rehearsal and performances; one for academic
activities, including the library and the National Council for Black Studies office; the third for campus - community programming. Nothing would change in the mission of the Center which has always been to support the teaching, research, and service missions of the Bloomington campus by providing a positive environment for Black faculty, students, and staff. The Center fosters creative activity and scholarship, encourages classes which build ethnic pride in the accomplishments of blacks. The building would include small and large dance studios, offices for the Afro-American Arts Institute, dressing rooms, meeting rooms, recreational rooms, space for the tutorial program, the film archives, the black faculty caucus, and so on. The proposal is to build a new Center to be called the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, in honor of the first black woman and the first black man to graduate from Indiana University. The Faculty Council ballot to determine the overall list of priorities ranked this proposal very low. Of seventeen priorities on the list, in fact, the Center was ranked last. One message I want to leave with you tonight is that the ranking was wrong. It is my intention, as Chief Executive of the Bloomington campus, to present to
the President and to the Foundation as a major priority for the campus the request that a fund raising effort be undertaken to construct the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center.

My support for the Neal-Marshall project is part of a larger commitment, a commitment to the principles on which a great and diverse university must be based. Let us make it known that blacks are not only encouraged to come to the Bloomington campus, but that they are vital to the success of that campus; together, let us make it known that the Bloomington campus of Indiana University has the finest facilities for the advancement of Black Culture of any university in the United States; let us make it known that the Bloomington campus of Indiana University is to become a center for the development of the arts as they relate to the traditions of the heritage of blacks in this country and elsewhere; let us make it known that the Bloomington campus of Indiana University intends to support the development of individual talent through its Afro-American Arts Institute; let us make it known that the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University will not discriminate against non blacks, that it will join with all parts of the community to spread and to share its message.
During the past decades Indiana University and this country have presented you with an enormous challenge; the fact that you are here tonight suggests to me that you have successfully met that challenge. Tonight, on behalf of the Bloomington campus of Indiana University, I would like to challenge you in a new way. The success of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center will be directly related to your commitment to it. Whatever emerges on the final list of priorities for the University's major fund drive will have a group of supporters who will in some way have assured the University that they will do everything they can to achieve the goal established. The challenge to you is to assure me tonight that you believe, as I believe, in the importance of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, not only for blacks at Indiana University, but for all students at Indiana University. If you are willing to share my belief in that conviction and if you are willing to take up with me that commitment to arriving at the proper goal, then we will see before the end of this century on a campus which only in this century had its first black graduates and in a state which within this century had one of the strongest Ku Klux Klan organizations in the
United States, we will see a national center for the enhancement of black culture. I pledge to you my support; my only request from you is that you agree to share with me my aspiration.

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