

A Walk Through the History of Southern Miss

Part 8

usmnews.net continues a new series revisiting nationally embarrassing events in the history of Southern Miss. The incident we address today is not merely embarrassing, it is disgusting and despicable.

During the late 1950's, Aubrey K. Lucas was the Director of Admissions at Mississippi Southern College, later named the University of Southern Mississippi, when Mr. Clyde Kennard applied for admission. As a matter of fact, Mr. Kennard wrote a letter to [Director of Admissions Aubrey K. Lucas](#) seeking admission to the school. Among other accomplishments, [Mr. Kennard](#) was "a former sergeant and paratrooper in the U.S. Army." Mr. Kennard's clearly met all conditions for acceptance, except for one insignificant thing: he was black.

Mr. Kennard wasn't just rejected, he was punished for his efforts to become the first black to be admitted to MSC-USM. He was falsely accused of a crime, prosecuted, and jailed.

Mr. Lucas blamed "the governor, J. P. Coleman, who decided against admitting Mr. Kennard." Although Mr. Lucas said, in 2006 – long after Mr. Kennard's death -- "[it was a mistake](#)," he did not stick his neck out to prevent the injustice. Let there be no mistake that the behavior of Mississippi officials was disgusting and despicable. Their behavior was so disgusting that no one, much less one who professes to be a devout Christian, could have perceived what was done to Mr. Kennard was anything other than an appalling injustice.

Mr. Lucas did then what he continued to do over many years. He sat back and watched injustice be perpetrated against others.

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[The Shrouded History of College Campuses](#)

By JAMES W. LOEWEN

Only one American in six ever takes a course in American history after high school. But colleges and universities do teach history in other ways -- via their historical markers, the statues on their greens, and the names on their buildings.

What do Americans learn from such lessons? Mostly that colleges and universities don't take history seriously...

The University of Southern Mississippi provides still another way that an institution can deal with past dishonor. It recently renamed a building to honor

Clyde Kennard, an African-American born in Hattiesburg, home of the university. After earning medals for duty in Korea, Kennard attended the University of Chicago for two years before returning to Hattiesburg to seek admission to the then-all-white university there. While he was in the admissions office applying, illegal whiskey (Mississippi was a “dry state”) was planted under the front seat of his car. Later, he was also charged as an “accessory to burglary,” for allegedly buying five bags of stolen chicken feed. He was sentenced to the state penitentiary, where he developed stomach cancer, was denied medical attention until too late, and was finally released to die in a Chicago hospital in 1963.

“By placing his name on this landmark building,” the university’s president, Aubrey Lucas, said in a 1993 ceremony honoring Kennard, “we’re saying to the world we apologize for the indignities he suffered...”

President Lucas might more accurately say, *I [Lucas] am saying to the world, I apologize for the indignities he [Kennard] suffered.*

As usmnews.net has previously reported: “A brief history of mobbing in Mississippi is instructive because we are still living in an environment of supremacist mobbing today. Some of the past mobbers are still with us in key administrative roles.

USM Interim President Aubrey Lucas knew Clyde Kennard. Not too long ago, USM administrators and Mississippi officials insisted on purity of race at USM. Aubrey Lucas was director of admissions at USM (then-Mississippi Southern) when Mr. Kennard applied for admission. Mississippi officials and USM administrators were not satisfied with rejecting Mr. Kennard’s application to USM, they banished and punishment him. That’s their modus operandi: false witness-for Kennard, stealing \$25 of chicken feed; banishment-rejection of Kennard’s USM application; and punishment-jail to make sure he never returned to apply for admission again.”