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Our Roots Run Deep: Reflecting on *Vickers v. Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Board of Education*



What does it mean to be the first? Neil Armstrong, Rosa Parks, Charles Lindbergh, Barack Obama, and Amelia Earhart are names that spring to mind at the mention of the phrase “the first” ...certainly few would associate it with a 12-year-old boy. But Stanley Vickers was one of the many “firsts” to make a lasting impact on the Civil Rights Movement, and at that young age of twelve. In 1959, Carrboro residents Lee and Lattice Vickers requested that their son Stanley attend the then all-white Carrboro Elementary School, rather than the more distant Northside Elementary School. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board voted to deny the Vickers request. Two years later, Judge Edwin Stanley ruled that the constitutional rights of Stanley Vickers had been violated solely because of his race. Vickers then began attending Chapel-Hill Carrboro High School, making him the first African-American student at the school.

The decision helped advance school integration in North Carolina, but it was far from easy for young Stanley. In an interview with *The Daily Tar Heel* several years ago, Vickers recalled the challenges he

faced by being the first: “You have to find the strength within you. Someone can make the way for you, but you have to walk the path.”

Being the first takes courage, sacrifice, conviction, and commitment. This Black History Month, the Town of Carrboro would like to recognize Stanley Vickers for his perseverance and audacity on overcoming discrimination and being a trailblazer in the Civil Rights Movement.

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