

# Newsletter

January 2013

## SALUTE TO '63, SATURDAY FEB. 2ND

Amazing stories continue to emerge about the momentous events of April-May 1963 when thousands demonstrated for freedom and first-class citizenship. Join us on Saturday, the second of February, from two to four at the Birmingham Public Library to celebrate two fascinating

accounts: the publication of *MINUTES: The Central Committee, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1963* and the opening of an exhibition of civil rights photographs of *The Birmingham News*.

### Revealing the Record

During a recent interview, octogenarian Mrs. Ruth Barefield-Pendleton, suggested she had something the Historical Society might like to see: handwritten minutes she had made long ago. In spring 1963, the young mother answered a call in her church bulletin to participate in "the Movement," as the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement was known. She, and her good friend and neighbor, Addine Drew, headed to Room 30 in the Gaston Motel on April 9.

Mrs. Barefield-Pendleton was elected Secretary of what became the Central Committee, the group of citizens and students, members of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) staff, and their lawyers who met throughout the April-May demonstrations to coordinate the campaign. Her remarkable front-row seat to history makes for a thrilling telling of the events.

In the spring of 1963, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC staff came to Birmingham to help stage demonstrations, to challenge the City of Birmingham's practices of racial segregation. SCLC came to Birmingham at the behest of the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, SCLC Secretary and the only SCLC officer who directed a local movement. Shuttlesworth served as president of the ACMHR, co-sponsor of what became the massive demonstrations of April-May 1963.

A careful reading of the *Minutes* of the joint ACMHR-SCLC Central Committee reveals the behind-the-scenes story of the campaign's demands and their implementation in the months following the demonstrations.

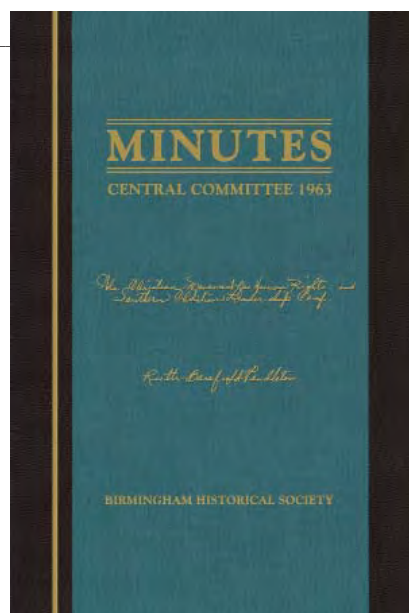
While historians now generally acknowledge the national significance of the 1963 events in Birmingham as leading to the introduction and passage of the Civil Rights Act of

1964, the local outcomes are less well understood. They include the immediate removal of all segregation ordinances from the City code and the establishment of the City's first biracial committee,\* formed to "consider the difficulties which confront us as a community, and to study and recommend steps that may lead towards their successful solution."

Carefully recorded by its Committee Secretary, the *Minutes* of the Central Committee meetings provide a lively account of the committee's activities, deliberations, negotiations, and decisions made during this momentous period. Her "you-are-there" reporting describes getting everyone involved, making the retail boycott 100 percent effective, scrounging for bail bond money, searching for people summoned to court, and amending the terms of the negotiations.

Mrs. Barefield-Pendleton's historical record includes the official *Minutes* as well as documents she attached, such as a request for a parade permit, statements of the Movement's demands, and statements by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Fred Shuttlesworth at the termination of the demonstrations on May 10, 1963. To these, the editors of *MINUTES*, Julius Linn Jr., Katherine Tipton, and Marjorie White, have added photographs, a timeline, information on those involved, and copies of pertinent City of Birmingham ordinances and resolutions, establishing and abolishing segregation by law.

\*The still extant Community Affairs Committee, currently functioning within REV Birmingham (formed by the merger of Operation New Birmingham and Main Street Birmingham), was established on May 24, 1963. Legal segregation by city ordinance was abolished on July 23, 1963. Following this action, in Birmingham, both races could sit and talk together in private and public places, without the police breaking up the meetings. As hard as it may be to believe, this was a revolutionary victory in 1963!



L to R: Mrs. John (Deenie) Drew, Miles College President Dr. Lucius Pitts, Mrs. Tyree (Ruth) Barefield-Pendleton at Miles College, c. 1963. Photograph courtesy Mrs. Barefield-Pendleton.

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## Seeing the Scene

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“Putting flesh on the bones of Birmingham’s civil rights history.” That’s how Marjorie White, Birmingham Historical Society director, describes the exhibit of 41 photos from the archives of *The Birmingham News*. Each depicts the turbulent and emotional events sweeping our city during the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibit, entitled “Unseen ... Unforgotten Civil Rights Photographs from *The Birmingham News*,” runs February 2-March 28 in the Library Gallery of the Birmingham Public Library.

The photos, shot by *News* photographers, reveal gripping and telling moments such as:

- A child bearing a sign reading “Can a Man Love God and Hate His Brother?”
- Mayor Albert Boutwell following the news of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing
- A youthful and determined Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth counseling Freedom Riders
- A pensive, brooding Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Police Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor directing arrests of marchers
- The arrest of high-school student Mattie Howard, demonstrator in the Children’s Crusade
- Calming the crowd after a house bombing

“These are extraordinary portraits of real people who lived this Movement,” says White of the collection drawn from the *News* archive of more than 5,000 unseen civil rights era images. “They are the people, the places, and the action—what you expect from good photojournalism. Thousands of words fill history books, yet, in these few photos, *this* is the story of the Birmingham Movement.”

A *News* photo intern named Alexander Cohn discovered the negatives filed by year and photographer during his summer employment with the paper. He digitized 2,000 of the images and interviewed living photographers and Movement participants for background.

“Each photo in the Library exhibit is captioned, placing it in the context of its part of the story,” says White. “Seeing the exhibit shows you the power of the photographs—and you better understand what took place.

“All these years later, the history is still painful,” she continues, “but as Reverend Shuttlesworth himself concluded, ‘*Let it never be forgotten that the Birmingham Movement provided the vehicle and the shock force that shook the nation’s moral conscience.*’”

The events in Birmingham directly resulted in the removal of segregation laws from the City of Birmingham’s books and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legislating equal rights for all Americans.



*Al Hibbler leading demonstrations in the retail district, April 10, 1963. Photograph by Norman Dean. Courtesy The Birmingham News.*

### SOCIETY CALENDAR

- **Saturday, Feb. 2, 2-4 p.m. Autograph Party** for Ruth Barefield-Pendleton and MINUTES: Central Committee, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1963, Birmingham Public Library Gallery and Board Room, 2100 Park Place.
- **Saturday, February 2, 2-4 p.m.** Opening Reception, *Unseen ... Unforgotten Civil Rights Photographs of The Birmingham News*, exhibit runs through March 28, Library Gallery.
- **Sunday, Feb. 17, 3-5 p.m., Annual Meeting of the Society and Election of Officers and Trustees**, a Valentines’ Tea, at the historic Hassinger-Daniel Mansion at 2028 Highland Avenue, the soon-to-open bed and breakfast of Sheila and Ira Chaffin.
- **Sunday, April 7, Noon-3**, Spring Equinox **Plowing Party**, Grandmother’s Garden, Sloss Furnaces.
- **Sunday, April 21, Noon**, The Annual **Heritage Society Gathering** at the Hassinger House, Carlisle Rd. (Heritage Society Membership required).
- **Saturday, May 11, 9-Noon**, **Rain Barrel Workshop**, Grandmother’s Garden (fee charged).

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