



STAFF ARCHIVE PHOTO

One of several sit-ins during February 1960 at the all-white lunch counters in downtown Chattanooga.

# Race relations in Chattanooga

**1906 ED JOHNSON**, a 23-year-old black man, was lynched on the Walnut Street



"County Bridge" (now Walnut Street Bridge) on March 19, 1906.

Bridge by a white mob. He was convicted of the rape of a white woman and given the death penalty. Mr. Johnson's death occurred shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered a stay of execution. In 2000, Hamilton County Criminal Court overturned Mr. Johnson's rape conviction.

**1958** On May 3, **JOHN LARRY BOLDEN**, a black 15-year-old, was shot to death by white police officer W.H. Taylor, who was answering a disturbance call in housing projects. A preliminary police investigation found Mr. Taylor acted in self defense after John Bolden threw a garbage can at him, but the policeman was later charged with murder. The final outcome of the case is

**1960** The downtown lunch counter sit-ins started on a Friday afternoon, Feb. 19, when **12 BLACK HONOR STUDENTS** from Howard High School took stools at whites-only lunch counters. It was the first sit-in demonstration in Chattanooga. The crowd of protesters grew daily until Wednesday, Feb. 24, when more than 1,000 people gathered downtown. Authorities turned fire hoses on the crowd, both black and white, to disperse them. Six months later on Aug. 5, downtown lunch counters served black customers for the first time.

**APRIL** Longtime NAACP president **JAMES MAPP** filed a federal school desegregation lawsuit against the Chattanooga Board of Education. The Supreme Court had declared school segregation illegal in 1954, and Mapp estimated the local schools would be segregated within 48 hours. Instead, he was back and forth in court for 26 years.



James Mapp

Someone put sugar in his gas tank in 1960; his house was bombed in 1970. However, the lawsuit led to desegregation among students and teachers.

**MAY MATTIE GREENE**, 32, was killed in Ringgold, Ga., when a bomb exploded under her house while she was sleeping.

**1963** When **RALPH KELLEY** was elected mayor of Chattanooga, he and Alton Park Junior High School Principal John P. Franklin started working together with others to desegregate movie theaters and restaurants. When Mr. Kelley died in 2004, he requested to be buried at Mr. Franklin's funeral home. The selection of the black-owned funeral home by a prominent white Chattanoogaan emphasized one of the remaining divides between blacks and whites.

**1963 THE UNIVERSITY OF CHATTANOOGA** (now UTC), once a private school, did not admit blacks until 1963. By 2005, it was leading the UT system in its percentage of black students in its freshman class.

**1971 John P. Franklin Sr.** was elected to the city commission as the commissioner of health and education and served four terms as the vice mayor of Chattanooga. Mr. Franklin is recognized as the city's first black elected official.



John Franklin Sr.

**1978 RHEUBIN TAYLOR** and the **REV. PAUL MCDANIEL** were the first blacks to serve on the Hamilton County Commission. Mr. McDaniel was re-elected four times, and his colleagues named him chairman more often than any other commissioner.

**2005** Black city councilmen **YUSUF HAKEEM** and **JOHN TAYLOR** organize the African American Summit to discuss ways to combat racial disparities in the city.



Yusuf Hakeem John Taylor

**2006** The **OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS**, a result of the summit, is opened with \$500,000 in city funding. The office seeks to promote equality and inclusion for all ethnic and religious backgrounds in Chattanooga.