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Freedom Ride Resonates
60 Years Later

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Freedom ride resonates 60 years later
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Sixty years have passed since members of a civil rights group were arrested in Chapel Hill for demonstrating against segregated busing on April 13, 1947.

White residents assaulted members of the group, who were on a 14-day journey through the upper South to exercise rights secured by a 1946 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that said segregation laws did not apply to interstate bus travelers.

That afternoon, a Sunday, they boarded a Carolina Coach bound for Greensboro. They took their seats up front and refused the driver's order to move until Chapel Hill police arrested four of them for disorderly conduct. They were released after paying \$200 in bond money.

White passers-by, including taxi drivers that observed the incident, menaced the riders and struck one of them, James Peck, on the head.

Tension grew following the arrival of a group of students, summoned by Presbyterian minister Charlie Jones to protect the riders.

Manny Margolis, member of the University's class of 1947, recalled standing with the riders and about 12 to 15 other students as the group of residents continued making threats and shouting insults.

"We had several cars down there to get those guys to a place of refuge," he said. "I recall there was a baseball bat or two, and whether it was in their hands or ours, I couldn't tell you."

Students drove the riders to the pastor's home and were chased by men who hurled rocks at the house and epithets at those inside.

Margolis, a Brooklyn native, said the racial attitudes he encountered in Chapel Hill troubled him, and he became involved in liberal activist groups on campus.

"Many of us were unhappy to be attending an all-white university."

Several years before the civil rights movement really took off, there already was an atmosphere of change on campus.