

MARSHALL DOSWELL: It would be a gross ingrate not to appreciate the fact that people remember that there was a time in the world when Rock Hill was different, and back in those days, I had, along with a lot of other people, I had a hand in changing things. I had an enormous advantage because the press-- I learned many times ago if I saw my best friend and tell him something at a dinner table, he wouldn't pay any attention to me. But if I went down to the office and wrote an editorial, he would say, you know, I read the editorial the other day. He pays attention to the written word.

NARRATOR: Doswell came to Rock Hill as the managing editor of the "Evening Herald" in 1957. After living in South Carolina for a short time, he was made aware of the racial division and tension that existed here. Knowing the power of the press, Doswell felt called to use his position to advocate for equality and change.

MARSHALL DOSWELL: Sometime during the first month in Rock Hill, I was going from the newspaper office, up Main Street toward the hotel. And, all of a sudden, I saw a guy coming straight toward me, in front of Freedom's department store, which no longer exists, and he had on a Ku Klux Klan uniform, white with a big white-- and I said, I don't believe this. God, right in the middle of the broad day? We didn't have the Klan in Richmond.

NARRATOR: At the time, Doswell's belief in equality was not commonplace. His advocacy for racial justice was perceived as progressive and radical.

MARSHALL DOSWELL: People did say that I was a radical. People did say that I overstepped my bounds. So if I was going to write about the importance of us learning to live together, listening to each other, and live with each other, you have to find out the hard way, how does that work? It ain't easy. You have to reluctantly realize that your way of looking at something is not the only way to look at it.

One of the first meaningful editorials I wrote laid it on the line, and I had to submit it to Mr. Patrick, and he said, Marshall, we can't run that. And I was madder than hell. And he said, let me tell you why. If we run that editorial, it will make everybody in town mad as the devil. And when you make people mad, they don't really think like they ought to. And so we will be creating a problem, rather than solving a problem. So what we're going to do, he said, is approach it very softly and tenderly. And as we go along, maybe we'll step it up a little bit

more, you know, a little bit more. And so that's the policy that we felt would be useful and hopefully, would make some headway.

TERRY PLUMB: I think Marshall, in many ways, was typical of progressive newspaper editors throughout the South. When you read their editorials today, you think, oh, boy, that's kind of mamby pamby, it wasn't that hard-hitting, but at the time it was.

ROBERT THOMPSON: He was a member of the white establishment at the time he was doing these things, and leading this charge, that's an important memory. It wasn't left entirely up to the black community to lead the charge. They knew that this member of the establishment who had a public forum was willing to step out on a limb with them, and I think that's the important part. Marshall is one of the few people I know who have lived the social justice that a lot of people preach.

NARRATOR: As a result, Doswell was honored as a Freedom Walkway Local Hero by the city of Rock Hill this past November. Aside from honoring new local heroes every year, the Freedom Walkway memorializes the Friendship Nine, whose sit-in was a staple in Rock Hill civil rights history. Their conviction for their related arrest was only overturned recently.

TERRY PLUMB: We had a situation where the mayor publicly apologized to the Friendship Nine students. And today, it seems like, well, that was a long time coming. But if you look back from the early 1960s, I don't think many people, white or black, would have ever thought that would happen. I think people like Marshall hoped that it would happen, and they never lost faith with the good people of Rock Hill and the belief that Rock Hill will, eventually, do things right, and I think history sort of proves that they did.

ROBERT THOMPSON: The current political climate is on the cusp of slowing down or even reversing some of the gains in racial justice that have been made over the last 30, 40 years. I think it's important that we understand where we came from.

MARSHALL DOSWELL: It's imperative that we learn how to talk with other people who don't look like us, who don't think like us, who don't worship like us. And we have to realize that what was right when we were kids really isn't germane anymore, because not only have you changed, but the world has changed, and the world will be different tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

As a newspaper man, you know, you meet an awful lot of people, and you talk to an awful lot of people and sometimes they break down and just tell you what they think. And I realize, that

an awful lot of people don't think the same way I did. I also realize that I am not always right. But I did come to the conviction if my life is going to be valid, if I am ever going to measure up to what some people who went before me expect of me, it's got to be doing the right thing. If you want your life to mean something, and you only go around one time, then do what you think is the right thing to do and do it because it is the right thing to do.