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"A Veritable Refuge for Practicing Homosexuals": The Johns Committee and the University of South Florida

by Dan Bertwell

On April 24, 1963, University of South Florida president John Allen stood before the State Legislature determined to defend his school from the Johns Committee. The previous week, Mark Hawes, an attorney for the committee, had made disparaging comments toward USF. In his rebuttal, Allen described Hawes's statement as "a skillful blend of truths, half-truths, and omissions." In a written transcript of Allen's words, sandwiched between two pages defending the school from charges of being "soft" on Communism and two pages refuting the assertion that USF's faculty was "anti-religious," are three paragraphs describing "the area of homosexual behavior" and related allegations levied against the university and its faculty.¹

Allen asserted that the Johns Committee's investigation had uncovered just one case of homosexuality among the school's five hundred staff and faculty members. Administrators accepted the gay man's resignation and reported the case to the Board of Control, a statewide governmental committee that oversaw university matters. Allen claimed that while charges were made against

Dan Bertwell is an M.A. student in History at the University of South Florida. He thanks Dawn Flood and David Johnson for their critiques, and Troy Thompson, Jared Toney, and Kelley Cason for their insightful comments.

1. John S. Allen, "Address to the State Legislature," 24 April 1963, Box 34, Folder 22: "John S. Allen: Speeches," 1, 4, Papers of Dr. John Allen, Special Collections, University of South Florida Library, Tampa, (henceforth referred to as SCUSF).



President John S. Allen defending the University of South Florida before the state legislature on April 25, 1963. *Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection, Tallahassee.*

two other employees, both had left the school for unrelated reasons. The administration had also found two students with “homosexual tendencies,” both of whom had since left school and were undergoing psychiatric treatment. Allen cited these results as “an indication of our careful screening.”² USF had become the latest in a long line of Johns Committee victims.

2. *Ibid.*, 4.

Founded in 1956 and officially named the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, the Johns Committee was just one of many southern committees, influenced by McCarthyism and designed to undermine the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other groups that supported school integration. Historian Jeff Woods referred to them as "mini-HUACs," an allusion to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Committee investigators searched for a "conspiratorial web uniting Communists with political liberals, civil rights activists, and integrationists"; by 1958, members of the committee were trying as well to establish "a causal link between homosexuality and political subversion." This transition did not go unnoticed; the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that the committee's focus had changed from race to sex within a mere two years.³

In the late 1950s, FLIC became most commonly associated with state senator and committee chair Charley Johns, and became a powerful example of state-level McCarthyism. Investigators scrutinized the morals and loyalty of state employees, particularly at secondary schools and public universities. In Florida, the moment of transition came in the summer of 1958 at the University of Florida, where the committee encountered difficulty uncovering Communists but had little trouble finding allegations of homosexuality. According to historian Bonnie Stark, the committee's initial report on homosexuality at UF was "well received by the legislature," and members were "praised for doing a fine job of investigating and cleaning up the problem." The legislature increased funding and expanded the committee's powers to include investigating charges of "sex deviance," meaning that after 1959 the Johns Committee searched for homosexuals.⁴

Johns Committee investigators employed heavy-handed tactics in their search for homosexuals. In describing the committee's work at UF, historian John D'Emilio wrote that investigators "appropriated police functions and spearheaded sensationalistic

3. James Anthony Schnurr, *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine: The John's Committee's Assault on Civil Liberties in Florida, 1956-1965* (M.A. thesis, University of South Florida, 1995), 4; Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge, 2004), 119; *St. Petersburg Times*, 24 May 1962, 11A.

4. Bonnie Stark, *McCarthyism in Florida: Charley Johns and the Florida Legislative Investigative Committee, July 1956 to July 1965* (M.A. thesis, University of South Florida, 1985), 88, 93, 94, 111-12.

investigations of homosexuality.” The Johns Committee “collected several thousand pages of testimony, grilled hundreds of witnesses, and exhibited little compunction about releasing information based on hearsay and unsubstantiated accusations.” Significantly, the connection between Communism and homosexuality was foremost in the committee’s collective mind: “left wing teachers poisoned the minds of their students” while “lesbians and homosexuals corrupted their bodies.”⁵ In Washington, D.C. this type of persecution took place under the auspices of national security; similar events in Florida were portrayed as protecting children from the dangerous influence of homosexual educators since university administrators were expected to act *in loco parentis*, almost as surrogate parents for the students. For investigators, protecting the nation’s youth, even those in college, was just as important as defending the nation’s shores.

Ostensibly fearful for the morality and safety of the state’s children, Cold Warriors focused investigative energy toward homosexual and allegedly homosexual educators. Even thirty years after the fact, supporters of the committee understood their past actions as a defense of students rather than an attack on educators. During an interview in 1977, Charlie Johns proclaimed that he wished he had “been naïve and never knowed all that about homosexuals.” Johns Committee investigator R.J. Strickland was “very pleased” with “the service [he] did for the people,” specifically children, feeling that he was “a part of exposing a serious problem in the school system.”⁶

Lack of public and administrative support for persecuted professors demonstrated the isolation of homosexuals during the Cold War era, which allowed the Johns Committee to pursue easy targets at a time when the committee was up for funding renewal. Allegations of homosexuality successfully exposed “guilty” parties, and those accused of “sex deviance” were particularly vulnerable to charges of moral turpitude. Furthermore, the investigations revealed that university administrators and the public considered the school, and not the accused, as the victim. University administrators, rather than advocate for accused faculty, worked with the committee to expunge suspected homosexuals whenever possible,

5. John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, 1983), 48.

6. “Florida’s Own Inquisition,” *The Oracle* (Tampa), 8 July 1993, 4.

recreating the school to meet supposed standards of a safe and healthy learning environment. The Johns Committee hoped to shield students from the influence of homosexual educators, and internal USF investigators sought to protect the school from damaging charges.⁷

As outsiders considered ill by the psychiatric establishment and the general public, homosexuals had little support within Cold War society. By the 1960s, the homosexual status as a "deviant" was firmly entrenched in American popular consciousness. Historian George Chauncey argued that sexual restrictions—as a response to the openness of the 1920s and the precariousness of the 1930s—portrayed gay men and women as dangers to social institutions, as figures "whose defiant perversity threatened to undermine the reproduction of normative gender and sexual arrangements." Over time, gay culture moved into the shadows (or more appropriately, into the closet). Consequently, the advent of a "gay" subculture facilitated the rise of a dichotomous world consisting of "straights" and "gays," definitions that had been more fluid in the past. Straight-laced Cold War Americans viewed homosexuals as symbolic of "dangers posed by family instability, gender confusion, and unregulated male sexuality and violence." The image of an underground subculture of homosexuals who were "capable of committing the most unspeakable crimes against children" empowered the Johns Committee.⁸

As a threat to America's children and, therefore, its future, homosexuals became associated with the "Red Menace." Historian David Johnson described how the "containment of sexuality was as central to 1950s America as containing Communism." Yet, while many Americans viewed the presence of homosexuals in the federal government as a greater threat, historians have relegated the persecution of gays to the background. By looking past Joseph McCarthy and the Red Scare, one can uncover the perceived threat gays posed to national security, which provoked their removal from federal positions and state universities.⁹

7. Schnurr, *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine*, 320-21; Stark, *McCarthyism in Florida*, 231.

8. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York, 1994), 353-54, 358-60.

9. David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, 2004), 2, 9.

Despite their persecution and probably because of it, gays attempted to organize politically in the 1950s. Though limited in their scope, homophile movements were first attempts to seek equal rights after the Second World War. Generally, leaders in these communities turned to society's "respectable" members to advocate on their behalf. Activists argued for recognition of homosexuality as a psychological disease and the necessity to treat the problem rather than attack the "sick" individual. Therefore, many homophile groups, rather than espousing pride in their identities, attempted to work within a system that entrenched their otherness and perversity.¹⁰ Consequently, changes in perceptions of homosexuals were limited, perpetuating societal beliefs that homosexuals were "immoral" and mentally ill, and allowing the Johns Committee to attack gay professors while eliciting little public support for its targets.

In many ways, the University of South Florida offered little challenge to Johns Committee investigators. Established in 1956 and opened for classes in 1960, USF had no alumni or established reputation, important sources of support for older institutions. Community members viewed the new school, situated miles north of downtown Tampa, as far outside the city. Alice Murray, who was a small child when the university opened, remembered it as in the "boondocks . . . literally out in the middle of nowhere." Furthermore, the University of Tampa had been in the city's downtown for thirty years, and many Tampanians viewed it as the area's primary university.¹¹ Damaging allegations of harboring sexual deviants, Communists, and atheists could have been devastating to USF. As a result, the school's administration did not wish to defend homosexuality or homosexuals for fear that the presence of "sex deviants" would be harmful to students and to the school's reputation. The belief that gays were "sick" and would try to recruit young men and boys, combined with the vulnerability of a new school establishing itself, made USF an easy target for investigation.

USF had been conducting classes for little more than a year when, in November 1961, Johns wrote a letter informing President

10. For more information on the homophile movement, see D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.

11. Interview with Alice Murray, 27 May 2003; interview with Dr. Richard S. Dutton, 13 March 2003; interview with Mary Lou Harkness, 10 June 2003, all in USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project, SCUSF.

Allen that the fledgling institution would be under investigation "in regard to the infiltration into state agencies by practicing homosexuals." The committee would ascertain "the extent of this problem" rather than attack or identify specific people on campus, hoping to gather information on the administration's policies for dealing with the presence of homosexuals on campus, determine avenues for removing them from employment, and establish legislative guidelines to discourage them from further state employment. He promised to run the investigation with "a very high level of dignity." In the two-page letter, the Senator never mentioned Communism or religion; homosexuality remained the only issue officially discussed. Investigators genuinely believed that "queer" professors were a danger to students, and were easy targets who did not enjoy support from mainstream society.¹²

In a more general report to the legislature in 1961, the Johns Committee asserted that homosexuals working at Florida's universities represented a problem that was both "shocking" and "appalling." The report claimed that homosexuals "almost invariably" attempted to recruit young people as sex partners. Because of the influence a teacher held over many students, educators could do "tremendous damage" to their young charges. Yet, despite the perceived danger to young adults, a combination of "administrators ignoring the problem" and "lenient dealing with the individual when caught" made "the public educational system in Florida a veritable refuge for practicing homosexuals." Some of these men apparently acted as organizers of "call rings," convincing young boys to convert to their lifestyle (usually with the aid of pornography, liquor, and drugs), "training" them in homosexual acts, and finally, passing the boys from man to man, treating them "the same as female prostitutes."¹³

Without the knowledge of the school's administrators, the Johns Committee turned its attention to USF on April 10, 1962, targeting the school based upon an accusation by USF instructor Thomas Wenner that the school was a "campus of evil." Students were taken to a room in the Hawaiian Village Hotel on Dale Mabry

12. Charley Johns to Dr. John S. Allen, 9 November 1961, Box 4, Folder 13: "Johns Committee Investigation, 1962: Comments from the Public Concerning," 1, Papers of Dr. John Allen.

13. "Report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee to the Florida Legislature, 1961" Tallahassee, 1961, in Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Investigation Committee, 1962," 18, 21, Papers of Dr. John Allen.

Highway and asked about “alleged wrongdoing” at the school, without a university representative present. On 28 April, the committee also questioned forty-five students at Wenner’s home. When Allen learned of the investigation, he portrayed Wenner as a “prejudiced mind” and confronted the committee, forcing it to move on May 16th to a room on campus and question students “in the presence of a Board of Control observer and a University employee who would tape record all proceedings.” For the next two weeks, investigators interrogated twenty faculty members and ten students.¹⁴

Allen assured USF students, staff, and faculty that, since a majority of the university population would be asked to testify, no individuals were necessarily being accused of anything. Furthermore, the committee’s attorney had guaranteed Allen that the investigation would be “fairly and impartially conducted.” Those questioned had a right to request a tape recorder, their own legal counsel, and a witness to view the proceedings. They could refuse to answer any question. They were not required to go off-campus or to be called to testify “at night or at odd hours.” And, if asked a “series of rapid questions” requiring yes or no answers, they should answer one at a time and elaborate wherever necessary.¹⁵

All the while, the president received letters of encouragement from around the country. University professors and presidents, ministers, bank presidents, and citizens sent letters. Over a thousand USF students signed a petition of support. The USF Chapter of the American Association of University Professors wrote a letter praising Allen for his defense of academic freedom. Expressions of support took many forms, but invariably touted academic free-

14. Interview with Dr. Jack E. Fernandez, 4 March 2003, USF 50th Anniversary Oral History Project, SCUSF; “Untitled,” Box 4, Folder 14: “Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962”; John Allen, “Memorandum to the College of Basic Studies,” 17 May 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: “Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962,” both in Papers of Dr. John Allen; “‘Prejudiced Minds’ Sparked Probe, School Head Says,” *Miami Herald*, 27 May 1962, 2B; “So the Campus is not Evil . . .,” *Tampa Tribune*, 8 June 1962, 10B; Stark, *McCarthyism in Florida*, 150.
15. John S. Allen, “Talk to Faculty, Staff, and Students,” 21 May 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: “Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962,” 2, Papers of Dr. John Allen. Page three of this speech is located in Box 4, Folder 12: “Report of the President of the University of South Florida to the Board of Control on the Johns Committee Investigation,” Papers of Dr. John Allen.



Senator Charley Johns (standing second from left) and Governor Farris Bryant (seated) at the signing of the Obscene Literature Bill in 1961, just one of many efforts to regulate morality in the early 1960s. *Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection, Tallahassee.*

dom not civil rights for gay men. Specifically, none of the letters of support defended the rights of homosexuals.¹⁶

Television station WTVT issued two editorials attacking the Johns Committee, proclaiming that “a committee on higher learning, and not a committee looking around for targets” should have been searching for Communists and “sex deviants” on USF’s campus. The editor worried that “loose, not fully specified charges of homosexual activity” and other “highly undesirable characteristics” would have a permanently detrimental effect on the institution. The university itself, not the accused, became the victim of the investigations. When describing troubling aspects of the inves-

16. Considering data from the fall 1961 and fall 1962 enrollment, it is safe to assume that somewhere between 28 percent and 34 percent of the enrolled student body signed the petition; *USF Fact Book* (Tampa, Fla., 1970), “Table 1: Total University Enrollment, Fall Term.” For all letters of support, see Box 4, Folder 13: “Johns Committee Investigation, 1962, Comments from the Public Concerning,” Papers of Dr. John Allen.

tigation, the *St. Petersburg Times* argued that the state needed to establish a reputation as an educational center and that destroying academic freedom would not accomplish this goal. The editorialist maintained that charges of pornography, Communism, homosexuality, and liberalism on USF's campus were unsubstantiated and undermined that academic freedom.¹⁷

Initially, Senator Johns focused public comments on the search for "anti-religious" faculty members and "pornographic" literature assigned at the school, but he also found "some truth" to the charges of homosexual educators at the university. In time, Johns would concede that the school was not a "campus of evil," but there were areas that required disciplinary action.¹⁸

Johns Committee investigations led to accusations of "sex deviance" being leveled toward four men: educational resources staff member James Teske and professor John MacKenzie were accused of performing homosexual acts on students; theater professor John Caldwell and music professor R. Wayne Hugoboom were accused of less concrete charges. Teske and MacKenzie were fired. Caldwell appealed his suspension and returned to teaching briefly. Hugoboom successfully regained his position and taught again.

Believing Teske's "manner and bearing" during his interrogation formed the basis of a strong case against him, the Johns Committee accused Teske of taking USF student Michael Winn to his apartment where he provided alcohol and performed "oral copulation" on the student. Investigator H.F. Stallworth, Assistant Director to the Board of Control, could not make an official suggestion to President Allen, but did recommend "for your information only" that Teske should be fired immediately.¹⁹

17. Crawford Rice, Director of Programs, "An Official Expression of Opinion by Television Station WTVT," 17 September 1962, Box 4, Folder 15: "Johns Committee Investigation, 1962: Newspaper Clippings Concerning"; idem, "An Official Expression of Opinion by Television Station WTVT," 21 May 1962, Box 4, Folder 15: "Johns Committee Investigation, 1962: Newspaper Clippings Concerning," both in Papers of Dr. John Allen; Schnurr, *Cold Warriors in the Hot Sunshine*, 91, 106; "Preserving Our Academic Freedom," *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 May 1962, 2D.

18. Steve Raymond, "'Some Truth' in charges at USF, Sen. Johns Says," *Tampa Tribune*, 24 May 1962, 1:3; idem, "Johns Says Probe Finds USF Needs Corrective Action: But Not 'Campus of Evil,'" *Tampa Tribune*, 8 June 1962, 1:7.

19. H.F. Stallworth to John S. Allen, 4 June 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," 1, Papers of Dr. John Allen.

Teske was a staff member over the summer of 1962, most likely a teaching assistant who worked in a course teaching visual aids to schoolteachers. USF administrators were not sympathetic to his plight, claiming that protection of students remained their reason for cooperating with the investigation. In a report to the Special Committee of the Board of Control, Allen dedicated just one sentence to the case, stating that Teske "was discharged at the end of the summer session." Specifically, the administration fired him on August 11, 1962.²⁰ Teske's teaching of high school teachers not underclassmen, however, suggests that proclamations of protecting children sometimes rang hollow, and that accused professors were not necessarily investigated because they were a danger to students but because society viewed homosexuals as a cultural threat.

In July 1962, three months after the Johns Committee began its investigation, USF administrators created "University Policy Statement No. 45," declaring that any non-tenured faculty member could be fired by the president, and any tenured faculty member could be suspended for "behavior involving moral turpitude." Allen now had a means of controlling "problem" cases internally. Teske, because he was not a faculty member, had no legal recourse for appeal, making Allen's goal of protecting the school's reputation much easier as he could sweep the Teske case aside. While being interviewed in conjunction with another investigation, student Michael Winn specifically inquired about Teske and, upon hearing that the instructor had left the school, reportedly said that "I'm sure glad to hear that."²¹

Accusations toward John MacKenzie were similar to those leveled against Teske. The committee charged he took nineteen-

20. John S. Allen, "Report to the Special Committee of the Board of Control," 25 July 1961, Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," 1; idem, "Report from the President of the University of South Florida to the Special Committee of the Board of Control on the Findings of the Legislative Investigating Committee in the Spring of 1962," 11 September 1962, Box 4, Folder 12: "Report of the President of the University of South Florida to the Board of Control on the Johns Committee Investigation," 1, both in Papers of Dr. John Allen.

21. "University Policy Statement No. 45," 10 July 1962, Box 34, Folder 26: "University Policy Statements, 1959-1962"; John S. Allen, "Third Report from the President of the University of South Florida to the Special Committee of the Board of Control on the Findings of the Legislative Investigation Committee in the Spring of 1962," 15 October 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," both in Papers of Dr. John Allen.

year-old Harry Peterson Jr. to his apartment and performed "the homosexual act of oral copulation on Peterson." McKenzie's "performance on the witness stand did not do anything to indicate innocence of the charge" as he refused to answer questions, reminiscent of various accused subversives investigated by the House Committee of Un-American Activities in Washington D.C. during the early 1950s. When a suspect invoked the Fifth Amendment, committee members assumed that he or she had something to hide. Refusal to speak aroused suspicions of guilt.²²

Still, MacKenzie must have come to some understanding with the committee. In John Allen's report to the Board of Control, he was listed as "Terminated" on June 6, 1962, not specifically because he was gay but "for conduct connected with a psychological disorder." It was wordplay: homosexuality was understood to be a psychological disorder, and University of Florida's law department had recommended application of the term "psychological disorder" in order to "avoid possible future legal complications." Senator Johns approved the phrase for use in the record at USF as well.²³ Presumably, those who felt particularly confident of their own innocence could appeal, but the school's administration made the final decisions. It is unclear whether Teske and MacKenzie were denied appeal or simply decided not to pursue that option. Most likely, the accused had little clout on campus and did not want the public shame of being outed.

Allen formed internal committees to determine the validity of Johns Committee charges levied toward six other professors accused of crimes which fell under the rubric of "morals issues," unrelated to religious and political persuasion. His directives stated that the university must develop a procedure to deal with faculty members who announced their atheism in the classroom, find a way to build public confidence in the school, encourage more effective lines of communication, and deal with the case of Dr. D.F. Fleming, who had been accused of being overly critical of the United States' role in the start of the Cold War and overly sympa-

22. Stallworth to Allen, 4 June 1962. For a more detailed analysis of the effects of McCarthyism nationwide and in Washington D.C., see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, N.J., 1998).

23. Allen, "Report from the President to the Special Committee of the Board of Control on the Findings of the Legislative Investigating Committee in the Spring of 1962," 1.

thetic to the Soviet Union. Two of the six—Caldwell and Hugaoboom—were accused of homosexuality and determined to clear their names.²⁴

Charges against Professor Caldwell were multifaceted: he was accused of heavy drinking, belligerence toward a police officer, and playing a role in the attempted elopement of two students. But those specifically related to homosexuality were two-fold: first, Caldwell allegedly "received a direct complaint from a student [Michael Winn] charging an overt homosexual act on a student by James Teske," yet he did not report the incident; second, many students had informed Caldwell of former food services employee Charles Hadley's homosexuality, and in response, Caldwell had told Hadley to "stay away" from the theater because the professor "did not want any 'fairies'" around it. Not long after this exchange, however, during a school theater trip to Tallahassee, the two spent the night together in a motel room during which Caldwell allegedly said that, "If a homosexual friend of mine came to me for homosexual action, I couldn't turn him down."²⁵ Administrators suspended Caldwell, despite his denials of the charge.

Review of Caldwell's suspension focused on two major dimensions of the allegations. First, Hadley maintained that he was straight. He and USF student Judy Graves had gone to Dr. Margaret Fisher and complained about "gossip that labeled them both as homosexuals," even though the two had married before the trip to Tallahassee. Hadley claimed he did not "engage in homosexual practices, was not a homosexual, and was offended by the accusation." His declaration specifically separated partaking in homosexual activities from actually being a homosexual, insinuating that, although sometimes permeable, boundaries existed

24. "Matters Relating to the University of South Florida Requiring Action by President Allen and a Report to the Board Special Committee," Box 4, Folder 12: "Report of the President of the University of South Florida to the Board of Control on the Johns Committee Investigation," 4, Papers of Dr. John Allen. The committee also charged Professor Roger Lewis with pornography and Professor Henry Winthrop with using profanity in the classroom. Professor Max Hocutt's name appears on lists of those charged, but he was never formally accused.

25. The Committee for Evaluating Mr. John Caldwell's Suspension, "Report to President John S. Allen," 9 August 1962, Box 4, Folder 12: "Report of the President of the University of South Florida to the Board of Control on the Johns Committee Investigation," 1-2, Papers of Dr. John Allen.

between the two categories. Second, Hadley had been encouraged by other theater students to make the trip to Tallahassee, and Caldwell could have feasibly shared the room with Hadley in order to keep the student "under surveillance and away from other students."²⁶ It is difficult to ascertain who, if anyone, was actually gay. Regardless, administrators focused on the issue closely, hoping to reach some conclusion and move on from the episode.

The Committee was also interested in the "moral tone" of Caldwell's theater. He claimed to have been "constantly vigilant to keep his drama work free from homosexuals" and believed "his theatre to be the cleanest theatre in the United States in this regard." This point, and the possibility that Caldwell roomed with Hadley in Tallahassee to keep him away from other students, suggested that the professor might have been protecting impressionable students from a potentially dangerous homosexual. Hadley was considerably older than the average college student, and the committee would have viewed the presence of an accused homosexual student (and older peer) as a grave threat to the student body. In keeping his theater "clean" of homosexuals and keeping a watchful eye over Hadley, Caldwell appeared to have been fulfilling his duty of protecting students from a corruptive influence.²⁷

Caldwell also had an interesting character witness. Student Paul Morton had some "harrowing experiences with homosexuals" and "abhor[ed] them," and he claimed that Hadley had approached him sexually. Still, he told the president that, during the Tallahassee trip, Hadley and Caldwell shared a room because everyone else had previously chosen roommates and these two "were left over." And he did not "believe that Caldwell had had

26. James A. Parrish, "Confidential Report to President Allen From James A. Parrish on the John W. Caldwell Hearing," 28 August 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "The Johns Committee Investigation, 1962," 2; Margaret B. Fisher, "Interview With Charles Hadley," 14 September 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," 2, both in Papers of Dr. John Allen; Committee for Evaluating Caldwell's Suspension, "Report to President John S. Allen," 2. Fisher was the Director of Student Personnel for the university.
27. Committee for Evaluating Caldwell's Suspension, "Report to President John S. Allen," 3. Although Hadley's age does not appear in the records, during his interview with Dr. Fisher he mentions that he had been withdrawn from a management-training program because "he was too old" and they preferred to hire people under the age of 25. It is reasonable to assume that Hadley was over the age of 25, and could have been significantly older than that; Fisher, "Interview with Charles Hadley," 1.

homosexual relations with Hadley." Along with Morton, Father Fred Dickman and USF faculty member C. Wesley Houk also spoke on Caldwell's behalf.²⁸

The student accusers—Charles Hadley and Michael Winn—did not evade judgment either. The committee considered that Dr. Fisher had described Hadley as "unsavory," "irresponsible," and "inconsistent." Though Hadley believed that the Johns Committee had brokered his termination from the campus food service, Fisher claimed that Hadley's poor academic standing and outstanding debts led to his release. She also reported that Winn had difficulties with his grades ("all F's"), had stolen school property, and was a liar. He was "an unreliable witness" with "no appreciation for the truth" and in serious need of psychiatric counseling. It disturbed administrators that the Johns Committee accepted "at face value the statements of two unsuccessful students" who were both "probably disgruntled."²⁹

Complicating the administrations' review was Hadley's own actions. The Johns Committee had asked him about Frank Wright, a foreign correspondent in Miami and "the ringleader of a homosexual group." Hadley admitted to having met Wright once at a party, but was not aware of "any homosexual activities either in the community or on campus." When questioned earlier about several professors and administrators (including President Allen and Professor Caldwell), Hadley claimed that he had no knowledge of any past homosexual behavior on either's part.³⁰ There is no evidence as to why Hadley changed his story about Caldwell, although Hadley might have lied to the committee because he felt pressured and then told the truth to USF investigators.

In August 1962, the committee evaluating Caldwell's suspension concluded that he had not acted "irresponsibly" in not repeating unproven allegations leveled against Teske, and taking into

28. John Allen, "Report on Investigation Conducted by President Allen Personally on the John W. Caldwell Case," 11 September 1962, Box 4, Folder 12: "Report of the President of the University of South Florida to the Board of Control on the Johns Committee Investigation," 2, Papers of Dr. John Allen; Parrish, "Report on Caldwell," 2; Allen, "Report Conducted by Allen on Caldwell Case," 1.

29. Committee for Evaluating Caldwell's Suspension, "Report to President John S. Allen," 2; Fisher, "Interview with Charles Hadley," 1-2; Parrish, "Report on Caldwell," 1-2; Allen, "Report Conducted by Allen on Caldwell Case," 3.

30. Parrish, "Report on Caldwell," 2.

account the reputations of Hadley, Winn, and Caldwell, the committee recommended to Dean Sidney J. French (Allen being on vacation) that Caldwell's suspension be lifted. Upon learning of Caldwell's reinstatement, Senator Johns told reporters that the university obviously "intended to resist the taking of any corrective action," and that its stance was a "public nullification of the Board of Control's announced policy on morals and influences."³¹

Members of the Johns Committee had assured President Allen that he would receive the findings of their investigation, but after returning from vacation in late August 1962, Allen "was shocked to find that the Committee had given its report to the public through the press." Newspaper headlines reported the findings of a "Red Menace" on campus, and the presence of professors who were "anti-religion," but there was far less explicit mention of alleged homosexual relations between faculty and students.³²

Despite his vindication, Caldwell did not appreciate his treatment during the ordeal. Having been returned to teaching duties, he resigned from the faculty because of the committee's "extended and continuing harassment." Caldwell decried the "police state methods" of the Johns Committee, which made faculty at the school "almost physically ill." As a native Floridian, the prospect of leaving the state upset Caldwell, but after considering legal action against Senator Johns, the professor tendered his resignation at the University of South Florida. While speaking to reporters, Caldwell commented, "I can't take any more. . . . I won't subject myself to further indignities from that man [Johns] and what he's doing to destroy teacher morale at the university." In Caldwell's opinion, Charlie Johns and his committee would "never give up, but keep on hurting people to save face politically," targeting homosexual activities because of their inability to find Communists.³³

31. Committee for Evaluating Caldwell's Suspension, "Report to President John S. Allen," 1, 5; "Confidential Matters Handled by Sidney J. French during Dr. Allen's absence from campus," 24 August 1962, Box 34, Folder 17: "Memos, 1962," Papers of Dr. John Allen; newspaper accounts from the *Tampa Tribune*, 10 and 18 September 1962, *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 September 1962, *St. Petersburg Independent*, 17 September 1962, *Tampa Times*, 17 September 1962, can be found in Scrapbook 1: "Johns Committee USF, 1962," SCUSEF.

32. John Allen, "Letter from the President of the University of South Florida," 27 August 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "The Johns Legislative Investigation Committee, 1962," Papers of Dr. John Allen, 1; *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 and 28 August 1962, *Tampa Tribune*, 25 and 28 August 1962, *Orlando Sentinel*, 25 August 1962, *Tampa Times*, 28 August 1962, all in Scrapbook 1: "Johns Committee USF, 1962."

Caldwell's departure was well timed. Allen made it clear in his confidential assessment of the case that Caldwell would not receive tenure and his reinstatement would only last until the end of the professor's current contract (about six months later). His reasoning was transparent: the questionable circumstances surrounding Caldwell's case tainted the university's reputation. Even the Johns Committee admitted that Caldwell displayed "excellent qualities related to theatre arts." His abilities as a teacher were not in doubt, but Caldwell was an easily eliminated reminder of the investigation.³⁴

Music professor R. Wayne Hugoboom was the only professor to successfully appeal for and keep his job. He was also an early victim of the Johns Committee, having suffered a heart attack the night prior to appearing before the committee. Dean Sidney French and Dr. A.A. Beecher led the internal investigation of the Hugoboom appellate case.³⁵ Although some of the specifics were disputed, all parties agreed on some basic points. After leaving a position at Manatee Junior College to come to USF, Hugoboom rented a house in Temple Terrace until his house in Carrollwood was finished. Gary Crist, a USF student and son of the couple who owned Hugoboom's rental house, lived there as well. Hugoboom's wife worked at a bank in Bradenton and did not move to Tampa until the Carrollwood house was completed in August of 1961.³⁶

Charges against Hugoboom related to an evening spent with students Michael Winn and Glenn Tarris. On the day school dismissed for Christmas vacation in 1960, Hugoboom invited Winn

33. *Tampa Times: Campus Edition*, 24 September 1962; *Tampa Times*, 21 September 1962; Scrapbook 1: "Johns Committee USF, 1962." The *Tampa Times: Campus Edition* was the early incarnation of the school newspaper that became *The Oracle* in 1966.

34. Allen, "Report Conducted By Allen on Caldwell Case"; Scrapbook 1: "Johns Committee USF, 1962"; Stallworth to Allen, 4 June 1962, 2.

35. John S. Allen, "Second Report from the President of the University of South Florida to the Special Committee of the Board of Control on the Findings of the Legislative Investigation Committee in the Spring of 1962," 8 October 1962, Box 4 Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," 1, Papers of Dr. John Allen; Stallworth to Allen, 4 June 1962, 2. Investigators encountered difficulties from the outset. Besides having to wait for Hugoboom to get out of the hospital, the four students involved in the case were no longer USF students. Two of the four students resided out of state and were difficult to contact.

36. Allen, "Third Report to the Special Committee of the Board of Control."

over to the rented house. Winn agreed but asked if his friend Tarris could also come. Hugoboom drove the young men from the University Center to his home sometime between 7:00 and 7:30 p.m. The three stopped to pick up a bottle of vodka along the way and drank, talking into the night. Crist returned home and stayed up with the three for about an hour, but then went to bed around 11:00 p.m., the same time Hugoboom took Winn and Tarris back to their dormitories.³⁷

Winn had been the accuser in the Caldwell, Hugoboom, and Teske cases. While testifying before the Johns Committee, he claimed that Hugoboom interacted with him in an "improper way," suggesting that the professor "was lonely" and his wife was out of town, so the two decided to get together for some drinks. Winn told the committee that while the three were drinking, Hugoboom "started getting too friendly," putting his arm around them and trying to hold their hands. At one point, the professor allegedly tried to kiss both students on the neck. After this, they decided to ask for a ride home.³⁸

The Johns Committee charged that Hugoboom attempted homosexual advances toward Winn and Tarris, and kissed another USF student named Melvin Reese on another occasion. Reese's accusation supposedly came out during Charles Hadley's testimony before the Johns Committee, although, when contacted by Beecher, Hadley claimed that "If that [the accusation] is in the report it is wrong." He referred to Hugoboom as "a second father" and discussed his admiration for the professor, claiming that there was "no truth" to the accusation of a kiss between Hugoboom and Reese. Reese did not respond to the inquiries of USF administrators.³⁹

Later that year, Beecher contacted Winn about the internal investigation, explaining that he did not "want any homosexuals on our faculty, or in our student body." The internal investigation, then, was meant not only to redeem the university's reputation, it was also seeking out homosexuals so as to deal with the issue in a manner consistent with contemporary social practices. After reminding Winn that they were deciding on "a man's professional life," Beecher asked if the student thought Hugoboom "was a homo." Winn responded, "not at first. I guess he was just lone-

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 4-5.

39. Ibid., 2-3; Stallworth to Allen, 4 June 1962, 2.

some for his wife." He wavered on whether or not Professor Hugoboom was gay, claiming, "I kinda think he is." Winn's testimonies embodied the boundaries between homosexual acts and homosexual tendencies, believing that Teske was gay but not being certain about Hugoboom's actions. Admitting to hearing rumors about Hugoboom, Winn believed that the professor deserved "a second chance" and should not be fired. He and Tarris agreed that Hugoboom was probably "overly friendly," but they "couldn't really decide whether or not he was a homo." Tarris claimed that during the night at Hugoboom's house "nothing happened that could actually condemn the man." He agreed with Winn that there was not enough evidence to fire Hugoboom.⁴⁰

When contacted by USF officials, Gary Crist was working for a book company selling Christian children's books. He was unaware that the three had been drinking that night and saw "no evidence of any strained or unusual relationships." He praised Hugoboom as being "very friendly" and claimed to have "always felt at ease in his presence." Crist never saw anything in Hugoboom's conduct to cause "the slightest suspicion" of homosexuality. Furthermore, although he admitted that students occasionally came by the house with a message for the professor, Crist recalled no other situations similar to the one under investigation. Explaining that he admired and respected Hugoboom, believing him to be "a person of great integrity," Crist suggested that Hugoboom's "sincere friendliness" had been "mistaken for something else." He offered to testify under oath on Hugoboom's behalf.⁴¹

Hugoboom himself admitted to buying liquor for the students and having them over to his house. He claimed that he sat with his arm draped over the back of the sofa and, over the course of the night, would occasionally tell a joke, "put his hand around the shoulder of a boy," and pull him "slightly." The professor admitted that some of the jokes he told were about homosexuals, but argued that nothing sexual happened. He also denied kissing Melvin Reese or having any "personal interest in homosexuality." He claimed to never "have had the question of homosexuality raised with him before."⁴²

40. Allen, "Third Report to the Special Committee of the Board of Control," 15, 16, 19.

41. Ibid., 12-13.

42. Ibid., 10-11.

Hugoboom also received extraordinarily strong letters of recommendation and support from Professor David L. Wilmot of the University of Florida, Dean David G. Robinson of Edison Junior College, President Samuel R. Neel Jr. of Manatee Junior College where Hugoboom had served as chair of the music department from 1958 to 1960, and President Stewart H. Smith of Marshall University where Hugoboom had taught from 1951 to 1959. French and Beecher concluded that the issue was an "isolated incident," that there was no evidence to "substantiate any homosexual acts or tendencies" on Hugoboom's part. His problem, according to the investigators, was that "Professor Hugoboom is known as a very friendly person," most likely "this friendliness could have been mistaken for homosexual advances." President Allen agreed that Hugoboom was not gay and recommended that the professor receive a "presidential reprimand" for serving liquor to students.⁴³

The Johns Committee had found enough evidence against four faculty and staff members to mount strong cases for dismissal. In the cases of Teske and MacKenzie, the men were accused of performing homosexual acts on students. Caldwell and Hugoboom were indicted by rumor, augmented by the fact that both professors worked in fields traditionally associated with homosexuality: theater and music. The men accused of actual homosexual acts were summarily fired; the two accused of possible homosexual tendencies successfully petitioned to retain their jobs.

At the close of the investigation of USF, the Johns Committee produced 2,500 pages of testimony. Homosexuality was the first topic in the response report of the Board of Control's Special Committee, which found that the issue was not a "problem" of "great magnitude" at the university. The report praised USF as showing "the beginnings of a great university," but administrators

43. Ibid., 1-3. Hugoboom's case bears striking similarities to George Chauncey's discussion of an investigation into homosexuals at the Naval Base in Newport, Rhode Island. Chauncey described the attempts of clergymen to establish a boundary between homosexual attraction and close, brotherly friendship. These boundaries "between 'sexual' and 'nonsexual' relations are culturally determined," and while Hugoboom's actions could have been perceived as friendly, the question about his sexuality indicates that the boundaries between nonsexual brotherhood and sexual attraction were permeable; Martin Baum Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr., eds., *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York, 1989), 317.

were encouraged to remain vigilant and take action in response to future morals charges.⁴⁴

After the Johns Committee finished its investigation, it published "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida," a comprehensive pamphlet describing gay culture in the state. Because of the color and subject matter, it became known colloquially as "The Purple Pamphlet." The publication contained an essay on "The Special World of Homosexuality," copies of laws pertaining to "sex deviance," a glossary of homosexual terms, a bibliography on "sexual deviations," and risqué photographs taken from the private collections of homosexuals. According to *Tampa Tribune* staff writer Vernon Bradford, the Purple Pamphlet "with its lewd and vulgar pictures" did not address how law enforcement officials could "rout the distasteful practice of homosexuality" in Florida. It simply provided "little more than a one-two-three pictorial and word explanation of every conceivable form of sexual perversion." Within months of its publication, the Purple Pamphlet was being sold nationwide for two dollars. Ironically, the pictures, glossary, and bibliography made the pamphlet a hot commodity among homosexuals. Suddenly, the pamphlet became more controversial than the committee. John Evans, staff director for the Johns Committee, defended the publication which, while a subject of some "valid criticism," was also a source for "progressive action to halt homosexuality." St. Petersburg House of Representatives candidate John Ware replied that the pamphlet's publication by the Florida government could not be "morally justified," and that the publicity the writing had received would draw more "undesirable persons" to the state. While Ware thought strongly that Florida's children needed protection, he did not believe Florida would benefit from being associated with homosexuality.⁴⁵

Florida's "Statement of Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities," adopted in December 1962, insisted that univer-

44. Frank M. Buchanan, Gert H.W. Schmidt, and Wayne C. McCall, "Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Control," 14 September 1962, Box 4, Folder 14: "Johns Legislative Committee Investigation, 1962," 1, 2, 6, Papers of Dr. John Allen.

45. Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida: A Report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee" (Tallahassee, Fla., 1964), SCUSF; Vernon Bradford, "Purple Passion Book Causes Uproar," *Tampa Tribune*, 22 March 1964, 4E; "Homosexual Pamphlets Sell Nationally for \$2," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 September 1964, 1: 5.

sity administrators “guard against activities subversive to the American democratic process and against immoral behavior, such as sex deviation” as necessary “to assure a wholesome educational environment.” In May 1963, Allen sent a memo reminding faculty members of the guidelines for tenure and termination at USF established in “Policy Statement Number 45,” reiterating that “conduct, professional or personal, involving moral turpitude” was “justifiable cause for disciplinary action.” Allen also sent an internal memo to the deans of the school’s various colleges, reminding them that all personnel files were confidential and any “requests for these files by government agencies and other accredited investigators should be channeled through the President’s office.”⁴⁶ Allen hoped to avoid problems, institutionalizing a protective measure to keep the university safe from outside committees.

Still, amid the homophobia of the Cold War era, the right to appeal did not secure jobs without tenure or save the accused from social condemnation. At the national level, investigators maintained that homosexuality among federal employees was a threat to national security. In Florida, the Johns Committee sought to root out Communists, atheists, and homosexuals who could exert a dangerous influence on young people in the classroom. Homosexuals made particularly attractive targets because the background of the accused counted for very little when confronting allegations of sexual “deviance,” and the lack of public support for those charged with homosexual acts made their careers and lives precarious.

46. State of Florida Board of Control, “Statement of Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities,” 7 December 1962, Box 34, Folder 21: “Policy Statements,” 2; memo from the Office of the President of the University of South Florida, 20 May 1963, Box 34, Folder 16: “Memos, 1963”; memo from the Office of the President of the University of South Florida, 26 July 1963, Box 34, Folder 16: “Memos, 1963,” all in the Papers of Dr. John Allen.