Dr. Ed Peeples: A Tribute in Photographs

Compiled by Ray Bonis, Special Collections and Archives, VCU Libraries
SCALAWAG

A White Southerner's Journey through Segregation to Human Rights Activism

EDWARD H. PEEPES

With Nancy MacLean
Dr. Edward H. Peeples Jr., in his office on the MCV Campus of VCU, 1990s.
Ed Peeples, #32, and his fellow Green Devils – the basketball team of Richmond Professional Institute, late 1950s.
Ed Peeples receives his undergraduate bachelor’s degree from Dr. Henry H. Hibbs Jr. in 1957. Hibbs Hall is named for Dr. Hibbs, the longtime head of Richmond Professional Institute. On the right, Dr. Margaret Johnson, Dean of Students, calls out the names of graduates. VCU’s Johnson Hall is named for her. Ed travelled in good company.
Ed Peeples, 1950s.
Ed Peeples, center, with Encampment for Citizenship campers in Kentucky, 1960s.
June Shagaloff of the national NAACP, Ed’s inspiring and civil rights workshop leader at the Encampment for Citizenship, New York City, Summer 1957.

VCU Libraries offers a complete online exhibit about The Encampment, a pivotal experience for Peeples
Edward Harwood, William Henry Brisbane and Levi Coffin, prominent abolitionists and Underground Railroad conductors in Ohio, 1853. Brisbane was Ed’s great, great uncle and a South Carolina slaveholder who in 1835 turned abolitionist.
VCU Libraries offers a digital collection of images of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia taken by Ed Peeples in the early 1960s. These images and other materials collected by Peeples document how public funding for schools for white students was vastly different then the funding of schools for African-Americans in Virginia.
Schools for African-Americans in Prince Edward County were often wooden buildings with outdoor plumbing while schools for whites were brick buildings with indoor plumbing and proper heating.

First Rock Elementary School, for Africa-Americans. "Temporary" building in foreground on the left was used for grades 2-3. Photographed by Ed Peeples, 1963.
Doctor’s office in Farmville, Virginia.
Congressman John Lewis and Ed Peeples at the commemoration of the long struggle for equality in Farmville, Prince Edward County, April 2006.
Opening attraction for “Good News!”, a week of events organized by Ed Peeples under the auspices of the Richmond City Human Relations Commission, aimed at exhibiting and affirming examples of positive race and other intergroup relations in the city, 1983.
Virginia Governor Tim Kaine and Ed Peeples at the July 21, 2008 dedication of the Civil Rights Memorial in Capital Square.
Ed Peeples’ papers are housed in Special Collections and Archives in the James Branch Cabell Library. The finding aid, or guide to the collection, is available online from the Virginia Heritage site.
Ed Peeples was co-editor of a short-lived alternative Richmond newspaper *The Ghost* from 1960 to 1961. This “proto counterculture” magazine railed against police brutality and institutionalized racism. Readers were most likely students at Richmond Professional Institute (RPI) – the forerunner to VCU on the Monroe Park campus.
Ed Peeples says that he considers the folk song “How Can I Keep From Singing” – made by popular by Pete Seeger in the 1960s - as the music for “my book - a hymn to the longings for universal social justice.”

My life flows on in endless song, Above earth's lamentation.
I hear the real, thought far off hymn, That hails the new creation

Above the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul, How can I keep from singing?

What through the tempest loudly roars, I hear the truth, it liveth.
What through the darkness round me close, Songs in the night it giveth.

No storm can shake my inmost calm, While to that rock I'm clinging.
Since love is lord of Heaven and earth, How can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, And hear their death-knell ringing,
When friends rejoice both far and near, How can I keep from singing?

In prison cell and dungeon vile, Our thoughts to them are winging.
When friends by shame are undefiled, How can I keep from singing?

- Lyrics from “How Can I Keep From Singing.”