

## **PART 10 PERSONAL EPILOGUE:**

I believe some context in my specific actions on the issues in this paper might be important to you.

I will summarize them because there are full stories behind each that demonstrate my continuing interest since 1991 of advocating for at-risk, minority children in Texas public education. I will be glad to answer any questions regarding any of this inclusive of the report itself. There is a mountain of hard copy data to support it.

### **1. WESLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 1991 – Thaddeus Lott**

- Black inner-city principal Thaddeus Lott was being vilified by White Superintendent Joan Raymond and some other Houston ISD educators as a cheater because his 99% at-risk, disadvantaged, black and brown students were performing equivalent to some of the silk-stocking elementaries in the district – even on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. His kids can't do that well! He had to be cheating! I was asked to visit the campus by Houston Federation of Teachers President Gayle Fallon. Before the end of the year, we helped take Lott's courage and performance to ABC TV's Prime Time Live during which a much younger Chris Wallace did the reporting. It was a life/career changing matter for me personally. Why did it go national? HISD administrators stormed the campus; marched into classroom teachers during tests. Racism on steroids.

### **2. DR. ROD PAIGE – Dean of Education at Texas Southern University; Member Houston I.S.D. School Board**

- A couple of years before he became Houston I.S.D. Supt. and even more years before George Bush was elected President, I advised Rod in a meeting in his office how he could plot a path to become the first Black Secretary of Education in United States history. How? Stop hiring idiot out-of-staters destined to be failed Houston superintendents. He should become superintendent; support reforms that he espoused; and when the Republicans won the White House back, he'd be Secretary of Education. He did and he did. Interesting story; bad ending; but a true story.

### **3. HARRIS COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM: Effort for Radical Reform**

- Harris County began an alternative education program. I worked with the director and Dr. Carl Shaw to develop a criterion test patterned after TAAS but one with genuine grade level rigor. These are the children who got in trouble with the law or serious trouble on their district's campuses. The director and I worked to establish pre-test and post-test accountability measuring real academic progress over the course of student's enrollment in the JJAEP. I worked simultaneously with Dr. Paige to start the program with the same private provider in the alternative school of HISD. I worked with Paige, TEA Commissioner Dr. Mike Moses, and the private contractor to put in \$30,000 each to allow Dr. Shaw to fully develop and implement a new rigorous standard of accountability for academic growth. (Not 1 Penny to Me) When the first round of results started coming in, the private contractor was failing miserably: not even close. I urged Dr. Paige and Dr. Moses to pull the plug on the contractor and not extend any contracts. Rather, the contractor got a 'peter principle' bigger contract from Houston I.S.D. It was my final straw with both Paige and Moses.

### **4. INTERVIEW WITH TEA'S ACCOUNTABILITY TESTING OFFICIALS & PRIVATE CONTRACTORS: TEA Commissioner's conference room – 1998**

- The TEA Commissioner and legal counsel refused to allow me to record the interview explicitly citing fear that any recording might have a negative impact upon the impending federal court decision. It was a stunning interview from the first question. I should have surreptitiously recorded it; rather I took a witness so they could not accuse me of being rude and intemperate. I want the letter I got from Dr. Moses acknowledging that I was courteous but there was tension in the meeting to be on my tombstone. "Courteous Tension". It may be the only time in my career that when I created tension it was done provably courteously.

### **5. THE ENRON MEETING: That's how it is apparently memorialized in Gov./President Bush's library (I was at the meeting, so I never requested those files.)**

- The published reports, the growing local publicity, the courteous tension meeting, the JJAEP fiasco and the final straw of being quoted in Bill Buckley's *National Review* led directly to Bush's team -including a future Secretary of Education then working for the Governor's staff – Bush's association with Ken Lay of Enron, and a lobbyists/advisor (whatever) to the Texas Business Council forced my TRA Executive Committee into a meeting at the Enron building in downtown Houston for the purpose of firing me. The meeting did not go

as well as they planned; my executive committee admired and respected the work I was doing. But my bosses were tax reps and tax lawyers for their major corporations, and they could not stand up to that kind of pressure from upstairs. They didn't fire me. But the organization died a slow death on the vine.

6. **KATY ISD SCHOOL BOARD SERVICE: I Ran and Was Accidentally Elected to KISD School Board by Six Votes After a Recount. I Had A Mission That Was Derailed On Totally Extraneous Matters**

- My mission was to convince the new superintendent that Katy I.S.D.'s legal standing could perform a tremendous service to the State, minority families, educational professionals, and taxpayers by suing the State of Texas to enjoin the TEA from further administration of its corrupt testing scheme. The superintendent retained prestigious attorney David Feldman to listen to my 'case'. Feldman convened his principal expert; met with me for a three-hour briefing. The result of that briefing was that he informed the superintendent that there was a viable legal path forward. There were more meetings. The District started marching methodically down that path. It was not going to happen overnight. A lot of I's had to be dotted and T's to be crossed and extraordinary due diligence. But the path was underway. The superintendent was bold and courageous, but he was confronted with personal allegations from his past before becoming superintendent that overwhelmed him (even while he was a student at West Memorial Junior High School in KISD). The project went down with him. He was making it happen if it could happen. I've spent the past several years after leaving the board because that mission was in tatters trying to put the pieces back together – totally unsuccessful. The only thing I despise more to this day than what has become of the ideological and sinister idiots at the State and National Republican Parties is the feckless gutlessness of civil rights groups and civil rights attorneys who don't seem to care as much about this issue as some old white guy in his 70's who attended a segregated elementary school and saw "my" elementary school when I walked onto the Wesley Elementary Campus in 1991. All the kids at West Columbia Elementary were white; all the kids at Wesley were black and brown but a few.

Now, I am reduced to making one final pitch to journalists or publishing my final pissing-on-a-forest fire, vanity-press document.

I wasn't functioning at TRA as a journalist but because of my journalistic background I understand that your due diligence relative to me is much higher. I was not only a researcher; I was an advocate for serious reform.

At 74, one of the highlights of my career took place at that 1999 national conference which I have reported upon involving the TEA's presentation along with that of the Rand Corporation's Dr. Stephen Klein.

This is a literally true anecdote. The NAS paid me to be an invited questioner at the meeting obviously because my work had traveled outside of Texas. I thought the invitation was a great honor given all factors. In the morning session, some moronic educator from Kentucky said that he was frustrated with news media reports from that state questioning the brilliance of that state's public education progress. He opined that news media and others should have to get permission and review of anything they would report that might reflect negatively on Kentucky.

I was being paid by NAS to ask questions of Texas – not Kentucky – but I don't have the personality to have let that go by. So, I asked him basically - invoking my now recognized expertise at courteous tension - if he actually meant that.

During the noon hour and before Texas took the stage, the program moderator from Cornell University came up to me as I was talking to Dr. Klein and Richard Colvin – then a reporter for the Los Angeles Times. The moderator told me point-blank not to ask any questions during the Texas presentation. Texas had heard my questions! It was a great hotel! The food was delicious. I got to meet Dr. Klein. The plane landed safely coming and going. But no questions.

Dr. Klein laughed and told me: (almost a direct quote after all these years) "Don't worry George. After my presentation, they are going to dislike me a lot more than you." That was true. He represented a giant. I was just a pissant. Rand was pressured but not destroyed.

I talked with Dr. Klein shortly before Rand issued that report in October 2000 which followed up on his NAS presentation. He knew that waiting until after the election would hurt Rand's reputation. I admire his courage because so many in Texas who have had the resources and the power and the chance to make a difference never even tried.



## George H. Scott

Katy \* [ghscott2050@aol.com](mailto:ghscott2050@aol.com)

Rotary Club of Houston – June 8, 2023

### **Texas Public Education Academic Accountability *What & How Things Went Terribly Wrong***

*My Remarks Today Are Designed To Leave No Doubt About The Absolute Crisis In Texas Public Education Accountability That Has & Continues To Harm Texas Students & Families. This Is Particularly True Involving Economically-Disadvantaged, At-Risk Students Statistically Dominated By Children Of Color.*

*Now Retired, Here Are Some Of My Career Experiences.*

#### **PERSONAL**

Professional career has involved community-based journalism, nonprofit public policy research, and media consulting in business, government and political fields. He worked for the Harris County Appraisal District during his career. Scott's wife Anne is a classroom teacher. They have three children and nine grandchildren. Now retired at 73, Scott's 'hobby' has been consulting with civil rights attorneys and community organizations on public education policy issues.

#### **CAREER EXPERIENCES BY CATEGORY**

- ⇒ Community-based journalism: Hartman Newspapers, Inc.
  - Advertising Sales/Reporter: Fort Bend Mirror
  - News Editor: Daily Herald Coaster, Rosenberg
  - Assistant Publisher: Liberty Vindicator
  - Assistant Publisher, News Editor: The Alvin Sun
  - Publisher: The Katy Times
- ⇒ Co-Owner/Publisher: The Katy News
- ⇒ President Alvin-Manvel Area Chamber of Commerce
- ⇒ Media Political Consulting Firm: Robert S. Heller, Inc.
- ⇒ District Staff: U.S. Congressman Tom DeLay
- ⇒ Senior Researcher/President: Tax Research Association of Harris County. (Nonprofit group funded by major corporations in Harris County to provide independent research of local governments at all levels)
- ⇒ Harris County Appraisal District
  - Litigation research, news media interaction, member Executive Committee
- ⇒ Independent Media/Policy Consulting (Range of clients including Harris County Department of Education)
- ⇒ Public Service:
  - Board Member, Harris County Hospital District
  - Board Member, Katy I.S.D.
  - Board Member, Texas Association of School Boards
  - Texas Education Agency Commissioner's Accountability Advisory Committee