
Donald R. Ferrell

Don Ferrell was a member of the 1960 Urban Institute.

I am often touched by a sense of irony and fate when I walk by Judson House on Thompson Street in my comings and goings to and from my psychotherapy office on East 10th Street. It is highly probable that I am now working in New York City in part because I had the good sense in 1960, in my junior year at West Virginia University, to apply to the Church in Urban Life project sponsored by Judson Memorial Church. I was accepted and found myself, with other undergraduates from around the country, moving into the Judson Student House in June of that extraordinary summer.

The project was directed by Joe and Judy Pickle, two remarkably able people who guided us into the complex realities of life in New York City and helped us wrestle with the profound questions we were confronting through our immersion in this greatest of all cities.

We also got a taste of the unique ministry of Judson Memorial Church under the visionary leadership of Howard Moody within the dynamic crucible of the cultural, political, and social life of New York. It was one of the most challenging, stimulating, and growth-enhancing summers I have ever lived through. As the end of the summer neared, I had been profoundly changed in ways I could not even fathom at the time.

I returned to complete my senior year at West Virginia University with a deepened sense that I wanted to return to this place and continue to evolve from my Appalachian origins under the continuing impact of an urban culture that, to me, represented the vanguard of a psychospiritual evolution for the whole human family.

And so I did. I enrolled in Union Theological Seminary and graduated in 1964. Seventeen years later, I again returned to New York, after a painful decision to end my first marriage and surrender a tenured position as professor of philosophy and religion, to undergo seven years of training at the C. G. Jung Institute in New York City to become a Jungian psychoanalyst.

Even though I do not owe all of my life to that fateful summer in 1960, it is true that something about working in New York got planted in me then, something I am still practicing almost forty years later.

So I hold that remarkable place and the extraordinary personal and spiritual transformations it has silently witnessed very close to my heart. The loss of Judson House will be a loss for all of us who shared in its life. But I am sure the heritage of Judson House will live on after it has been removed from the landscape. I, for one, shall never forget how Judson House changed my life.

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lives in Montclair, New Jersey, not very far from Manhattan.