

GOD, GUTS, AND GALLANTRY

Thoughts and Questions for Coker University

Participants who lack a copy of the book may obtain one at www.willjoslin.com.

I, the author, have a lot of ideas, and occasionally, even some good ones! I'll leave it you, the alumni, friends, faculty, and students of Coker University, to decide if this one is any good.

Bring Back Carriage Rides?

I think it would be great for Coker University's lore, attraction, charm, and publicity if we brought back the horse-drawn carriage rides like those led by the Major, as described in [Chapter 12](#). This would not only be a charming way to experience the school's connection with its founder, but could provide an informative tour of the campus, the historic houses on Home Ave., Prestwood Lake, a tour of Kalmia Gardens. Perhaps the rides could also tour the Coker Farms National Historic Landmark and/or Sonoco Products. Perhaps we could offer one free ride for prospective students or faculty. And to make it self-sustaining, there could be a fee for the general public, tourists, and second-time riders.

Questions

I admire Coker University for its policy of campus-wide free speech for those of any persuasion. I also admire its strong history department. At the same time, a bit more integration of Major Coker's legacy into the present school may be in order. After all, the school's founder was not just anyone! J. W. Norwood, son of the Major's best friends said: "He was probably the most highly cultured intellectually of any man who has made a conspicuous business success in the state."ⁱ

The last time I found on record that Coker celebrated Founder's Day was over sixty years ago, April 27, 1960. Prior to that, for forty-seven years, Founder's Day was an annual tradition at Coker in the month of April.

1. Major Coker has been called, by two different Americans, both leaders, "the greatest man, without exception, that ever livedⁱⁱ," and "one of the most outstanding citizens this country has ever known."ⁱⁱⁱ Do you think Major Coker should be forgotten?
2. If not, how can we ensure that he is not forgotten?

3. Should we bring back our annual Founder's Day to keep the memory of Major Coker alive?

If so, as his biographer and great-grandson, would be glad to help plan the event, and there are many other school affiliates that would also be interested.

As a cultured leader, Major Coker strongly desired that his schools uplift the entire culture of his state. Please review the beginning of [Part IV](#), where, based on documented research, we gave Major Coker's definition of uplifting the culture: **"As discerned by God's word, the acquisition of inspiring academic, spiritual, and business ideals, put to practical use to uplift the people of one's community."**

4. Do you think the definition above reasonably represents the Major's ideals of culture?
5. If not, how would you describe the Major's idea of uplifting the culture? How would you document your answer from the Major's life?

On a couple of visits to Coker's campus in 2018 and 2019, the author found that most students were unaware that historic Spivey Chapel exists on campus. It is hard to see from inside or outside. There is no internal sign on the chapel's door, and no external door or sign either. As of this writing, it's still where it's always been, on the bottom floor of Memorial Hall, where Major Coker and succeeding Coker presidents gave chapel messages up until c. 1955. Since then, it has been used for Bible studies.

6. While keeping Memorial Hall secure for its residents, could we build an external entrance to the chapel, with a sign? Or if the chapel is rebuilt, would a more accessible entrance be a good idea?
7. In the chapel, could we add a plaque or two, commemorating its history with some quotes from Major Coker?
8. Until fairly recently, Coker College had a campus chaplain. With non-required, attendance, could we renew this tradition? Could a school chaplain give morning messages two or three times a week? If the old chapel proves too small, could we use the auditorium?
9. Again, Major Coker has been called "the greatest man, without exception, that ever lived^{iv}." He was also called "one of the most outstanding citizens this country has ever known."^v At fall orientation, are Coker University freshman taught the founder's values and accomplishments? Are they taught his founding principles and the history of the school?

ⁱ J. W. Norwood, in Furman Professor Harvey Toliver Cook's book, *Rambles in the Pee Dee Basin, South Carolina*, (Southern Historical Press: Greenville, SC, 1926, and reprinted subsequently), p. 429.

ⁱⁱ Susan Coker Watson, quoting his boyhood friend and business partner George Norwood in *Recollections*, p. 68.

ⁱⁱⁱ Susan D. Reynolds, M.D. Dr. Reynolds is a highly respected Hartsville physician, author, and historian. She was voted "Best Family Physician" in Darlington County in 2012 and 2013. Susan is the county's Medical Director for Hospice Care, and volunteers at the free medical clinic in Hartsville.

^{iv} Susan Coker Watson, quoting his boyhood friend and business partner George Norwood in *Recollections*, p. 68.

^v Susan D. Reynolds, M.D. Dr. Reynolds is a highly respected Hartsville physician, author, and historian. She was voted "Best Family Physician" in Darlington County in 2012 and 2013. Susan is the county's Medical Director for Hospice Care, and volunteers at the free medical clinic in Hartsville.