



# Turning the Tide: The University of Alabama in the 1960s

*Earl H. Tilford*

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## **Turning the Tide: The University of Alabama in the 1960s** Earl H. Tilford

This book documents the period when a handful of University of Alabama student activists formed an alliance with President Frank A. Rose, his staff, and a small group of progressive-minded professors in order to transform the university during a time of social and political turmoil. Together they engaged in a struggle against Governor George Wallace and a state legislature that reflected the worst aspects of racism in a state where the passage of civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965 did little to reduce segregation and much to inflame the fears and passions of many white Alabamians.

Earl H. Tilford details the origins of the student movement from within the Student Government Association, whose leaders included Ralph Knowles and future governor Don Siegelman, among others; the participation of key members of "The Machine," the political faction made up of the powerful fraternities and sororities on campus; and the efforts of more radical non-Greek students like Jack Drake, Ed Still, and Sondra Nesmith. Tilford also details the political maneuverings that drove the cause of social change through multiple administrations at the university. *Turning the Tide* highlights the contributions of university presidents Frank A. Rose and David Mathews, as well as administrators like the dean of men John L. Blackburn, who supported the student leaders but also encouraged them to work within the system rather than against it.

Based on archival research, interviews with many of the principal participants, and the author's personal experiences, Tilford's *Turning the Tide* is a compelling portrait of a university in transition during the turbulence surrounding the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.

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