Mackey's Son Sent Away Again For Too Long Hair; Will Appeal

By SANDY COYNER
Thresher Reporter

Stephen Mackey, 14-year old son of philosophy professor Louis Mackey, isn't allowed to go to school anymore. His hair is too long.

A week ago Harold Costlow, principal, expelled him from Lamar High School until he got a haircut and changed his sandals for shoes and socks.

On the recommendation of Superintendent John McFarland, Dr. Mackey and his son returned to Lamar early Wednesday morning in an attempt to have the boy readmitted. "It was very quick and simple," Dr. Mackey said. "They took one look at him and said 'No.'"

Dr. Mackey will appeal to the Houston School Board at their meeting next Monday evening requesting that they overrule the principal. If the board fails to admit Stephen, Dr. Mackey will be forced to take legal action.

Studies At Home

During his six days away from school, Stephen has been trying to keep up in regular work and spending time with the orthodontist. The Mackeys have been bothered with crank calls and letters.

"Rules are necessary for the school to do its job," Dr. Mackey told the Thresher, "but the officials do not have arbitrary or despotic authority. Above all, they do not have the authority to deprive students of civil liberties and personal liberties. The right to use one's own judgment in matters of taste cannot be denied justly.

The school district's policy is that individual school principals have the responsibility to make all decisions in cases of dress and haircuts. The school has no written or specific rules. The principals make their own rules, and handle each case individually.

"Didn't Like His Hair"

Costlow told Dr. Mackey in conversation that "long hair leads to trouble," Stephen, is a good student and has an absolutely clean conduct record. "The haircut has not affected his academic record," said Mackey, "and it has led to no breach of conduct.

"The only reason for the ruling is that they didn't like his hair. They wanted another kind of hair, and they thought they had the authority to demand it. It's the idea of the "corporate trim" — they want everybody to look "normal." But they don't have the right to say that that's the kind of hair a boy has to have to get an education in Lamar."

Refused To Cut

The issue began on the very first day of school. Stephen was in the vice principal's office. The official asked Stephen to get a haircut and change his sandals.

At home that evening, the Mackeys decided to ignore the order. But one week later, (Continued on Page 7)
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(Continued from Page 1) Stephen was in the same place, and the vice principal told him not to come back to school until he had complied with the original order. Costlow confirmed the suspension.

Dr. Mackey spoke with Costlow the following morning. “They argued with me,” he says, “but they didn’t answer me.” The result of the meeting was that Stephen would not attend school.

Appeal To Board

Dr. Mackey wrote to John McFarland, Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, requesting that he overrule the principal. McFarland’s reply, received Tuesday, suggested that Dr. Mackey talk again with Costlow, the principal, or appeal to Edward D. Martin, deputy superintendent.