

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

MATISHA WIGGS: This is an interview with Robert Humphreys. The interviewer is Matisha Wiggs. The date is the sixth of March two thousand-one. We're in the Old Post Office Building, One Seventy-Nine East Franklin Street in Chapel Hill. And our subject is segregation and Chapel Hill schools.

I want to start with just, kind of the basic questions: when and where were you born?

ROBERT HUMPHREYS: I was born in Chapel Hill, January in nineteen forty-eight. Lived here all my life.

MW: Where was that--what community was that?

RH: Chapel Hill!

MW: I guess-- Was that it a smaller subdivision or--?

RH: Actually Chapel Hill didn't have many smaller subdivisions; we didn't have any subdivisions back then. I was born into a house on Pritchard Avenue, which is one block to the North of Franklin Street. And we were about--when I was about four or five years old, we moved to Patterson Place, which is about one block South of Franklin Street, so--.

MW: Where--?

RH: We were sort of in the downtown area. But in the forties and early fifties, that's pretty much all there was.

MW: Were those segregated areas?

RH: Oh, absolutely. There was a predominantly black area which was just, probably another two blocks North of where I was born, over in the Northside neighborhood. So, you know, it was segregated, not too much like it is now, except probably there weren't any white people who would consider moving into Northside, you know, into the real black area of Northside. Or, the "colored area" as it was called by everybody in those days. Just as there probably weren't any "colored people"--we'll revert back in language and everything to those days--you know, that would have been--have thought about moving to the white neighborhood. That's just the way it was.

MW: What kind of things--. What were your parents' jobs? Where did they work?

RH: My parents ran a dry cleaning business down on West Franklin Street. Down at Four-Twenty-five West Franklin. The business is still there but we sold it about tens years ago, in nineteen-ninety and it's across from where McDonald's is now.

MW: Okay. Your early schooling: where was your elementary school?

RH: My elementary school was on Franklin Street, right where University Square is. And I went to, I think only one year, off of Franklin Street and that was when Estes Hills Elementary was first built. They put the sixth graders from downtown out there and--well, they put everybody out there, actually. Glen Lennox Schools was operating then; but those were the only two elementary schools outside of the downtown area and--. So, I went to Estes Hills in the sixth grade and then I came back downtown to Franklin Street for junior high and high school.

MW: So they were all just one big complex together?

RH: When they built Estes Hills they pretty much moved the elementary school out of downtown, and that's why I went out there. But then when, you know, from that period until when that school was torn down it was a junior high school and high school.

MW: Okay.

RH: And I guess by the time I'd graduated, actually, they'd probably moved the junior high school out, and I think Philips was built before Culbreth--as I recall. It was a long time ago. And I was in high school, so I don't really remember which junior high school came first, but they moved the downtown junior high as the high school grew and they needed the extra space in that building. You know, they sort of moved the high school into that space and replaced it with Phillips, I believe it was, Junior High.

MW: Okay. So, when you were at Chapel Hill High School, can you tell me your, sort of, day-to-day routine that you remember?

RH: Same as the school routine now, I'm sure. You know, get up and go to school at eight-thirty or so. Eight o'clock, whatever time the school started. It was--. I guess the only thing that might seem odd to folks is, that even though the school was located right on Franklin Street you were not allowed to leave the school grounds during the school day without, you know, a written note from your parents. And so we weren't allowed to go

downtown and eat lunch or anything else; we had to eat in the school cafeteria. You know, it was kind of one of our extra activities to try to slip off school grounds to run across the street to the Exxon station--which is still there. And, you know, we'd try to try to sneak over there to get a Coke out of the Coke machine or, you know, sneak down to Hardee's once they opened up down on the corner, you know, to get a hamburger at lunch or something like that. But, you know, we just weren't allowed to leave the school grounds, which is a little bit odd.

The only thing I used to do: I used to have a study hall, and I guess it was my senior year, and that was at the time when long hair was starting to take hold in guys, and I always kept my hair relatively short anyway so-- And during my study hall I'd go in the office and say, "I want to go right next door"--there was a barber shop right next door-- say, "I want to go right next door and get a hair cut." And they'd always go, "Okay!" [laughter] I didn't have any trouble getting a pass to go get a hair cut. I remember thinking that was funny.

MW: What'd you go do instead?

RH: I went and got a hair cut.

MW: That's all you did?

RH: Yeah, I was pretty much straight back then. I never did anything....

MW: Too bad?

RH: ...too bad. He said, as he rolled his eyes.

MW: Do you remember, sort of, the school atmosphere? How people interacted? Did you like being in school?

RH: Oh, yeah. High school-- Junior high and high school was, was a great period of time. You know, it was small enough in our high school, even my senior year there was probably only about, maybe, four or five hundred people in the whole school. And that was tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. And, so, you know, you pretty much knew everybody, even the sophomores, which was two classes below you. You pretty much knew everybody in school. You didn't get along with all of them, and you didn't hang out with all of them; you know, there were sort of cliques or tribes or whatever you want to call it that different people hung, you know-- Just like they do now. People are just

different and they sort of segregate themselves. Not in the sense that we're talking about here, but, you know, the, uh, country students--the hicks, the rednecks, whatever you want to call them--hung out with themselves and other groups--. The preppy group hung out with themselves; and then the weird kids hung out with their friends. Kind of the same way it is now, I think. I don't think there's a whole lot of difference now.

MW: How much of the county came to Chapel Hill High? Was it pretty far out?

RH: Umm, I don't know how far out it went. I mean, there were a far number of, sort of, you know, the country kids--the hicks, as we called them back in those days--and as they kind of called themselves, I guess. And they weren't always from out in the country, you have to remember that "out in the country," back then, was Carrboro. Carrboro--. We always had a joke that you could tell if you-- if a person were raised in Carrboro they held their fork sort of--um, what would that be? Baseball bat [telephone rings] style. Let me cut that off. [rings]. And if you were from Chapel Hill [rings], you held it more like a pencil; like the proper way you would hold silverware. And so you could go in the cafeteria and tell if somebody was from Chapel Hill or Carrboro. You just have to envision that Chapel Hill--"out in the country" was a lot closer than it is now.

MW: Yeah. What kind of--. How was the community involved, besides, like PTA and stuff like that? Was the community really invested in the school in any way?

RH: Absolutely. You know, we were still very much a small town in those days. I mean, the University--. I'd be guessing, but I would say, you know, in the early sixties you may have had six or eight thousand students--undergraduate students--you know, during the year as opposed to now when there's twenty-four thousand graduate and undergraduate. So, it just made for a much smaller community; all the subdivisions, as you mentioned earlier, didn't exist. I mean, they just weren't here. And, they were just starting to come along. I mean, we moved out into the suburbs, or into the country, when I was about nine years old and now that's considered--I mean, it's part of town now. It's out Airport Road, off of Barkley Road. So, but that was way out back then, when--you know, when we first moved out there. It was considered a long way from town.

MW: [pause] You mentioned cliques and things like that in school. I know there were a handful of blacks students already at Chapel Hill High before--.

RH: I think seventh grade was the first--my first year--at junior high school in the downtown school and I believe Stanley Vickers was the first black student. If I remember correctly. You probably will confirm that or something as you do your research. Or somebody will as you do your project. I think it was seventh grade.

MW: How did you treat the black students at Chapel Hill High? Do you remember? Did they kind of segregate themselves off or were they forced to segregate?

RH: They actually didn't really segregate themselves and I think it was because there weren't very many of them. There weren't enough to sort of form a group. And I think--and I don't know how they felt about it--as I recall we all just sort of accepted them as another student. And I don't remember any animosity towards any of the black students that came, you know, to our junior high school. And then as we went up from seventh grade to eighth grade and ninth and on up, there were more and more students that came over from Lincoln. It was-- I think in those days all you had to do was request, you could go to either Lincoln or Chapel Hill High School. And a lot of the black parents in those days realized that the education was better at Chapel Hill High School and said, I want my student--I want my son or daughter to go over there and so we got more and more each year. Pretty much it was accepted. I guess later on--towards my Senior year and stuff--there were enough black students in school where they were starting to, sort of, you know group up together, so to speak. But up until that point, there just weren't enough really to get off by themselves. They were just buddies of ours.

MW: Did you have any black friends?

RH: [*facetious tone*] Oh some of my best friends were black!

MW: Did you have, like, school projects with them or anything like that?

RH: Oh yeah. There were, um, Ted Stone and Stanley Vickers and Clayton Weaver. Clayton Weaver was just the funniest guy. I mean, he was everybody's buddy. You know, he used to call us "honky" and "cracker" and we'd call him "spear chucker"--you know, just in fun. It was an honesty and acceptance of one another, I think, that-- Much the same way that someone might call me "fatty" or you know, any little pet like that, you know, while it might be hurtful in one sense, it was an honesty and acceptance of one another that could kid around with one another. And that was really sort of the



atmosphere in those days. From my perspective. I don't know how they felt. But, you know, we certainly--. I don't remember any resentment of their being there, you know, on my part or any of the other white students --I mean, there were. I mean, you know, there were, there were some students, I'm sure who gave them a hard time. But there were students who gave me a hard time too. But, yeah, there were people--a lot more people then--that, because of the color of their skin, you know, not wanting them there. And those people were in our high school as well. But I don't think they were prevalent.

MW: So, when in the seventh grade or so, Stanley Vickers came, did that make you conscious of the concept of segregation?

RH: I think--you know, I don't remember in a timeline. I've looked back on it several times and it was kind of like when Martin Luther King said, you know, "This isn't right." It was just of like a light bulb that went off in a lot of our heads that, "Well, you know, it really isn't." It's just the way it had always been and so we accepted it as sort of the tradition or as the way things are, or the way things were. Um, it wasn't a hatred, it wasn't a separation because of anything other than it's just the way it had always been and so--. I can remember--I don't remember at what age having this revelation or whatever--but it was kind of like when Martin Luther King pointed it out, it was like, "Yeah! What were people thinking?" What sense did it make to have two separate school systems--to fund two separate school systems? Whether you funded them equally or one better than the other, um, what sense did it make to have two separate systems? And so, yeah, it was kind of like a light bulb going off. So I think that's why it seemed to be a little--maybe seg--uh, desegregation, or integration went a little easier here in Chapel Hill. I think a lot of people went--kind of had that notion, "Why didn't we think of this before?"

MW: So, when desegregation came along, I know you were just then graduating, but you thought it was a good idea or were you kind of resentful that your school was going to be torn down? How did that make you feel?

RH: Well, you know, my school was going to be torn down anyway. I mean, I graduated in June of sixty-six; the new high school out in the--way out in the boonies. I mean, you're talking, it was way out in the boonies when they built that school. And, uh, so my school had been sold two years before that. They had started--my senior year they were already

doing construction on Granville Towers, the two dorms. We graduated in June of [nineteen-] sixty-six and in July they brought in a wrecking ball and just, you know, just tore the school down. We all stood on the sidewalk and cheered. We just didn't understand, you know, what we were losing: the opportunity to go back and visit old classrooms and things like that, which is--ehh, you know, maybe that's a little sentimental and "smultzy" and whatever, but you do lose something if you can't go home again. Or you can't go back to your old school again. It does make a difference.

The only thing I remember thinking-- You know, originally the plan was--at least this is what my recollection of it was--and of course, I was, you know, just a graduating senior, so it's not like I kept up with local politics or anything else--but the way I remember it all coming down was--that the plan was to keep Lincoln High School going, to open the new Chapel Hill High School out in the boonies, to move it, you know, to move it out there, and to still allow people to chose between two schools. And there was a drive with the black community to get everybody to request to go to Chapel Hill High School because it was a new school, it was a better school. And so, so, they decided almost like over the summer, okay, we're going to shut down Lincoln because everybody wants to go to the new school. And I remember being resentful of that, not so much because-- You know, I wasn't going to be there, so it didn't bother me. I remember being resentful because it created a situation--and even though I wasn't keeping up with local politics and stuff--it created a situation where a brand new school opened and it was overcrowded before it ever open its doors, because, you know, you merged two schools, which was not the original plan. And so, I think it put a lot of pressures on that, you know, maybe weren't as necessary as, as could have been if they'd, you know, kind of held out to their plan and sort of eased the two schools together a little more slowly. Like I say, I wasn't out there, and after that, I don't know. I don't know were it was a good idea or not. It happened so, make the best of it.

MW: Did you ever go to Lincoln High School? Did you [shakes his head]--no? So did you just know--

RH: You mean go in it?

MW: Yeah.

RH: Yeah. Yeah, we'd go to-- I mean, I can remember going down there, um, I was trying to think of why. Maybe we went to a basketball game or two, or something. I went to some football games. Lincoln High football games. You know, they--we all played at the same football stadium, but they played on Thursday night and we played on Friday night and, uh, so that allowed us, you know, to go to each other's games. It wasn't done that way, you know--. Actually the Chapel Hill High School got preference, to be honest with you, and had its games on Friday night. You know, the only thing that was left then was to have them on week night or off Friday nights and it was easier to do them on Thursday nights for Lincoln then it was--. So that was, you know, that was certainly a slight.

MW: Where was that stadium?

RH: It was located in Carrboro. Called the Lions' Park; it was run by the Lions Club. And it was out on Fidelity Street in Carrboro. There's some apartments there now.

MW: Okay. [pause] I guess what I was going to ask about Lincoln was--. You said something about black parents wanting to send their kids to Chapel Hill because it was higher quality. Did you just know that by reputation or did you have any--?

RH: No, at that point there were articles coming out in the papers about the differences between the schools; the lack of equipment, lack of books. Even the sports equipment and stuff at Lincoln High School--most of it was second-hand, you know, used, football pads and helmets and things that the University had surplused and gave to Lincoln. And we always had, you know, brand new equipment at Chapel Hill High School. So, you know, there was--. There were inequities there. And I think that was part of it. The bad equipment, I remember hearing, wasn't very good at Lincoln and things like that, I think.

MW: Did you--. So, did you understand why all the black parents had wanted their kids to go to this new high school?

RH: Sure. Oh, yeah. There was just no question about it. I think it was just--[pause]. You know, at the same time that I would say we would read in the paper or hear in the news about what was lacking at Lincoln--. I think I mentioned to you earlier that, you know, I took saxophone lessons--or took band--in the seventh grade, my first year of junior high school, and my parents bought me a saxophone, which was very expensive. And in the



eighth grade--or, the end of the seventh grade period--they decided they'd do away with the band program. The school board voted to do away with the band program in the Chapel Hill High School system--in the white system. But Lincoln High School had one of the best bands in the whole state of North Carolina, and so they said, "We're not going to stop that." And so, if I had wanted to take--continue on taking lessons on my saxophone, I would have had to transfer to Lincoln, which I don't remember--. I don't think that any white student went to Lincoln. I guess we had the option to do that, but I don't know that anybody ever said, "Which one do you want to go to?" But I guess I could have opted to go to Lincoln so I could continue work on my saxophone. But I didn't.

MW: Saxophone lessons not that important to you to change schools?

RH: Well, I don't know, it was never offered as an option, and, uh, I probably wouldn't have done it. I mean, I kept on playing, and still play now, but you know, I just always think, gosh, maybe I'd actually be able to play good--or played well if I'd continued to have lessons. So we didn't, we didn't have a band just about through my whole high school career, we didn't have a band at Chapel Hill High. But they had a great one at Lincoln, so--.

MW: Where, after school, were, sort of, your "hang out" spots? Where did you go to be social?

RH: We went to Sutton's Drug Store, or Sloan's Drug Store. Or we went to the Cat Cellar, once it opened, which was a teen center in the basement of what is now the Brueggers Bagel, but it was actually the basement of the Zoom Zoom Restaurant, which was the rats--which was Danzinger Enterprises, the people that had the Rathskellar and the Ranch House and some other places. And they donated the basement, and we went in as kids and fixed it up. Then there was a great lady, Jean Sparrow, who ran it; and our band just played for her fiftieth wedding anniversary, just two weekends ago. So, she's still around. Still a great lady. But, uh, you know, we just hung out in the downtown area after school and then went to jobs or whatever, and went back home.

MW: Sutton's was one of the sites of some of the protests, and some of the picketing. Where you here for any of that?

RH: I don't remember them ever picketing at Sutton's or Sloan's. Sloan's was up on the

corner where Spanky's is now. Corner of Franklin and Columbia. And I really don't remember there being in protests at Sutton's or Sloan's. Most of them were more centered around Colonial Drug Store and Village Pharmacy, which were up on the west end. The west end, which is where we had our dry cleaners-- where I sort of grew up playing around as my parents worked--was more of a black neighborhood, you know, than any other part of Franklin Street, although it was not an exclusively black neighborhood by any stretch--or commercial district--by any stretch. It was the business area that was sort of closer to the Northside and the west end neighborhood, which is, you know--all black neighborhood. You know, it was right up around that and so that's where, you know, most of the black community shopped and got their drug store items, their pharmaceuticals, or their groceries or whatever. So, the Village Pharmacy and Colonial Drug Store were businesses that black people frequented more, being on that end of town; and I think it was probably that reason that they targeted--. Because they could go in there and they could buy a pharm--they could buy a prescription or medicine or sandwiches or anything they wanted, they just couldn't sit down and eat. Since they shopped there all the time and they were the bulk of probably those two pharmacists' businesses, you know, it wasn't right they weren't allowed to sit down and eat! They were providing most of the money to pay for that place, you know? So I think that's why most of it was concentrated down there. And I really don't remember any sit-ins at Sutton's or Sloan's. But there very well could have been.

MW: Your parents' business being down on that end, did they cater to a mixed--both black and white communities.

RH: Very much so.

MW: And were they open to that or did they have any kinds of reservations?

RH: No, actually, I remember my dad telling me that--. I started in the business when I was twelve and I don't how it ever came up except we were just talking about it but my dad once told me that, in some places that you went they would actually clean the clothes separately. So you had black people's clothes in one pile, white people's in one pile, and, when he was telling me this, he said there were also places that put Jewish people's clothes in a third pile, and they keep them separate as they're cleaning them. Which, I

mean, boy you take something to extremes. That makes no sense at all. Basically you're putting them in, you know, cleaning fluid, which is a petrole--back then, was a petroleum product, sort of like kerosene. You know, so you're putting these clothes in kerosene! I mean, what difference did it make if it was a black person's clothes or white person's clothes? We never did that and I don't think any of the dry cleaners in Chapel Hill did it; it was my dad, you know, just saying that he had heard tell of that in other places, but, uh--and maybe it happened here. I know it never happened in our place. It was too much trouble, and why would you do it anyway?

I do remember in our dry cleaners, though, and, in fact, in that building, which is there today, you can probably still go in the back, and there were two restrooms in that building. And this is a very old building, and, you know, it looks very old, and I bet you to this day you could go in there and over those two bathrooms' doors there's a "W. Ladies" and a "C. Ladies," for "White Ladies" and "Colored Ladies." 'Cause it opened that--built that building in 1947 and that was just the accepted practice then. It's funny that I never remember going into but one bathroom. There were no men's bathrooms, by the way. I guess we were supposed to go out in the back behind the boiler room or something, but, uh, we always just used the same bathroom. And it was, it was the "C. Ladies" bathroom, if you paid any attention to the sign over the door, which nobody ever did; and the other, actually, had broken down and just been boarded up. So, there was only one in my, in my recollection. But the sign was still there and I often thought I'd take the board down--'cause it was kind of like aluminum letters like you'd put on a mailbox just kind of tacked on a board that went across--over both bathroom doors. That'd be kind of a neat artifact to hold on to.

MW: Yeah, definitely.

RH: I don't remember your question or how I got off on the bathroom!

MW: That's okay.

RH: Oh, you just asked how the business worked.

MW: Yeah. Okay.

RH: I grew up working there. Like I said, at twelve and I'd say, probably three-quarters of the workers in the dry cleaning business, you know, were black. So, I just grew up

working side-by-side with those people. There was one lady in particular who-- I always called her my second mother; she died some years ago, which was sad. She was a fine, fine woman. In fact, she and her, uh--this has nothing to do with your question.

MW: That's okay. Go ahead.

RH: The ramblings of Robert. Um, she had a son who was about--I guess he was about maybe three or four years younger than I am--and he wasn't right. He had some mental deficiencies. But we still played together, you know, 'cause I was up there hanging around. At twelve you don't do much work. You just really kind of play and-- So we'd play together out back and stuff like that. Maybe he wasn't that much younger than I am; maybe he's more like two years younger, I guess. Anyway, we were playing one day and my dad said, "Y'all get out of here! Go get you something to eat." So, he gave us some money and we went down to the Carolina Grill, which was a very popular bar and, you know, restaurant sort of space for the students, and for the whole community, located right down on West Franklin Street, across from where the bus station is now. And it was a big place. It had a big bar running down one side--I'm about the oldest one now who would remember the Carolina Grill well. But anyway Walter--oh, shouldn't say names! This black friend of mine and I, we went in there and I guess we were about ten or twelve years old or something like that. We went in there, went in and sat at the bar, as I usually did. We ordered two hot dogs each and a Pepsi-Cola. And when they brought our hot dogs, they brought his in a paper bag and mine on a plate! And I remember thinking, "Well, that's really strange. He didn't order his to go!" And he didn't, you know-- I don't think he thought anything about it. He just pulled them out of the bag and unwrapped them and started eating. And we sat there and ate and nobody said a word to us. I just remember thinking about that later and going, "Oh, yeah. They didn't want him to sit in there and eat those hot dogs. They wanted him to take those hot dogs and go on out." But you know, they had the good sense or whatever not to say anything. I mean, obviously we were ten or twelve years old, or whatever, and we weren't in there as a sit-down protest! We just were two kids that came in to get a hot dog in the middle of the summertime. So, I do have that recollection

The west end of Franklin Street, like I said, had, had a fair number of black

businesses. There was--right next to us where there's a parking lot and a little garden that's owned by the University--there was an old wooden clapboard building that was still standing back in those early nineteen-sixties. Late fifties, early sixties. And there were four black-owned businesses in there. You had-- Miss Edwards had a hand laundry. Gehazi Joe Smith had the S and W Tailor Shop. Doug Clarke, Sr. had a shoe shop, as I recall and--no it wasn't Doug--Doug had the pool hall and the shoe shop was run by Bynum Weaver, who later owned the funeral home down the street. And across the street from that, there was--where 411 is now--that was the Hollywood Cabstand and Hollywood Cafe, which were black-owned and operated businesses. And, uh, Thurmond Couch ran those. And he had a house that was right there on the parking lot that's there now, next to that Four Eleven [note: 411 Restaurant] building now. And the Hollywood Cafe made the best egg sandwiches in the world. I used to eat there all the time. And Bynum Weaver's shoe shop had the coldest bottled drinks in town and I go there--I'd always work in the summertime, of course, when school was out. So we'd go there to get cold drinks. I wasn't allowed in the pool hall.

I'm rambling again, I'll let you--.

MW: That's okay. No, that's great.

RH: There were another series of black-owned businesses on Graham Street, kind of where there are some black-owned businesses now. And there was a few on Rosemary Street as well. There was one grocery store that was there on Rosemary Street run by a black family. There was the Mason family--they had Mason's Motel, which was right there, sort of next to it. Ask your question; I'm just rambling.

MW: I was just going to say, were there any other places from, maybe more your high school time, that you remember specifically being places that that Chapel Hill students would go, but Lincoln High probably won't have?

RH: I think Sloan's or Sutton's or any of those. I mean, most of-- You know, you really didn't see a lot of black people on East Franklin Street, past about the high school. You know, right there around University Square. You just didn't see them come down that way. I mean, it was--. You know, they did most of their shopping and stuff, I think, up on the west end. And they just didn't come here. And I know there is--I have been told



anyway--that there is still sort of a feeling that black people don't come on to the hundred block of East Franklin Street now. That they don't feel like it's their end of town or something.

MW: Do you get that impression or have you just been told that?

RH: I was told that by somebody and I can't remember--. I was trying to remember who told me that one time recently. I mean, you know, if you look out there you see a lot of all kind of faces, and so it's hard to believe somebody would feel that way. I can't say how they feel.

MW: Well, you mentioned to me the other day that you weren't involved in any of the activist movement. Why didn't you get involved? Was it just--?

RH: I didn't, uh--. I didn't see any reason to. It didn't stir my soul. I didn't think, "Oh my God, this is tremendous inequities and therefore I need to get mobilized and go out here and do things." I was--. You know, I was just a kid and as far as I was concerned, all was right with the world. And if somebody else had problems, you know, that was their problem to deal with. I didn't feel like I was contributing to any of that and therefore I didn't feel moved to do anything about it, I guess. You know, I don't think it ever crossed my mind that I would go sit in at a restaurant because I could do that anytime. I mean, they didn't deny me access to those places. And so I couldn't have seen myself doing that. I don't know that there was any deep thought process that went into other than a sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year old, thinking, "I've got better things to do than that. There's girls to date, music to play, and fun to have."

MW: Okay.

RH: I was never much of an activist on any front.

MW: That's okay. But you did witness some of them. Would you mind repeating the thing you told me about the paddy wagon?

RH: That's one sort of funny/fond memory. Well, not a fond memory, but I just remember thinking it being very funny back then. More of the demonstrations that I witnessed and the sit-ins and those kinds of things that took place on East Franklin Street in front of the Post Office--which is right out front of here--they would--and I think it was predominantly students at that point. The students on campus had gotten more involved and they would

come and just sit down in the middle of the intersection and just block traffic and the police department would come in--. Course, the police department didn't really know how to handle it. I mean, you know, nobody really knew what do in any of these times. And I think the mayor back then was Sandy McClamroch. He's probably a good one for you to interview, if he'll talk about it. I've heard him say before that, you know, that was a time when suddenly they were faced with new issues and new changes and, and nobody knew what to do. I mean, it was kind of like, "well, golly. What do we do now?"

So, here were all these people sitting down in the intersection out of Franklin Street. The police would go in, and of course, you know, try to move and said, "okay, if you don't get up we're going to arrest you." And they said, "well, we're not moving. Go ahead and arrest us." And, you know, I guess Chief, uh--was Blake. Chief Blake was probably the police chief back then and, you know, he probably didn't have a clue what to do to handle this kind of, of thing. And they'd just go ahead and arrest them, which meant they had to pick them up, carry them over to the sidewalk. Well, as soon as they put them down, they'd get up and go back over and sit in the street and so they had to take them away. And they didn't have anyway to take away large amounts of people, so they decided they needed a paddy wagon. And so they went and found a surplus Tip-Top Bread truck and, you know, a big ole step van kind of thing. And they painted it black and put the police logo on the side, but you could still see the Tip-Top Bread logo through the black paint. And I just remember this--I mean, vivid memory of mine is them throwing protestors in the back of this Tip-Top Bread truck painted black! You know, I just thought it was the funniest thing! But they didn't pick me up. They didn't throw me in and so I guess it's easy for me to laugh.

MW: What other kind of protests did you witness and--around Franklin Street?

RH: Probably that was the only thing that we witnessed as far as protests. They would do protest marches, quite often. You know, just marching from the Post Office up to First Baptist Church or where ever they would go. You know, so we'd stand on the sidewalk and see them walk by with signs and plaquers. Much the same way they did, you know, a few years later to end the war in Vietnam and stuff. There were, you know, there were demonstrations just out front here in front of Post Office where they just marched with

signs, you know, but didn't really sit down in the intersection and that kind of thing.

MW: Can you remember what any of the signs said? Do you remember any of the slogans?

RH: [pause]. Um, no.

MW: Or even the gist of what they were trying to say?

RH: I really don't.

MW: No?

RH: I mean, I could tell you that they said, "We Shall Overcome," or, uh, "End Segregation Now" but I honestly don't remember what any of the signs said. I remember more of the "Make Peace lo--" or "Make Love Not War" more than I do--of the peace marches--more than I do the Civil Rights ones. 'Cause I was older then and I guess paid more attention.

MW: Do you remember how big the crowds seemed to be? About how many?

RH: You mean of the sit-ins and stuff?

MW: Yeah. The size.

RH: I'd say thirty to sixty people, you know, would go sit down in that intersection, which would pretty much clog it up.

MW: Yeah. [pause] Did you understand kind--why they were protesting? Not just that they wanted desegregation or integration but was there some deeper meaning that you got out of it? Then or later.

RH: I think, you know, I think at the time I didn't--probably still don't understand exactly what was going on, and certainly didn't then. You know, I was a teenager and it certainly didn't concern me as other things did. The only thing I can sort of remember is that I went, "well, yeah, they've got a point." I mean, you know, why wouldn't they be allowed to sit down and eat or why wouldn't they--? I mean, what's really the difference? And, there isn't one. And so, I think I understood that part of it and sort of accepted it but I didn't ( ) part of it. You know, like I said, I wasn't moved to action or anything by it.

I probably resented it. [pause] I don't remember a huge feeling of resentment, but I would say I probably did because I resent anything that's change! Or--. You know, most people do and, and maybe I still resist or resent. Maybe the fact that I say, you know,

"What were we thinking?" It is the way it should be. Maybe that's just kind of an acceptance. I don't know. Hard to say how I felt when I was sixteen to twenty or twenty-five.

MW: Let me go back to high school again for a little bit. What kind of extra curricular activities-- I know you said something about football and saxophone.

RH: Played football. Played in a band. Emulated a couple of black bands that were here in town. Just, you know, thought, "Man, if I could just be like them--" Played black music, predominantly. Uh--.

MW: What do you mean by "black music?"

RH: What is it they called it when it first came out in Little Richard's day? "Race music." Music that was, you know, done and not played on white radio stations and you had to listen to WLLE out of--where was that?--Nashville, Tennessee or something late at night to hear, you know, some of that music. So that's mostly what we'd play: Little Richard, James Brown, Wilson Pickett. People like that. Otis Redding. That was-- That was kind of the music that was happening in, you know, in our circles and so that's what we played. You know, not long after that the British Invasion came in and we didn't give a hoot about the British Invasion! We just thought it was the worst thing in the world. Because you don't get any better than a good James Brown, Wilson Pickett number. That's what we played and that's what the people we played for wanted to hear.

In football, I can remember Eugene Hines was the first black football player.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

MW: Go ahead.

RH: Eugene Hines was the first black player--football player--at Chapel Hill High and he was excellent. I mean, he was an excellent player. He was the first--probably the first black football player in sort of the white conference for high schools. So, so we would go out and play Roxboro or Hillsborough or, you know, other schools around the state that were in our conference and they didn't have any black players, because they didn't have any black students at their school. I mean, this was early on. And I can remember-- Course, I

was, I was a bench warmer; I'm not going to tell you a lie and tell you I was a starting tackle. I rode the bench the whole time. But I would hear tell of--. Our guys would come in off the field at a timeout or something and the guys from, you know, these other smaller, rural communities out around North Carolina would say--. You know, get down there on the line. And when you're down there on the line, facing that guy, and you're, you know, inches away from his face, and he looks across at you and he says, "We're going to get your nigger," well, that just fired our team up. 'Cause he wasn't our nigger. He was Eugene Hines. And we were going to do everything we could to shove him down their throats and to make sure that he made it across that line and caught that pass and ran in for the touchdown. I mean, I really--. I guess it was a unifying force to us. I mean, "No, you're not! This is our teammate! We're going to kick back!" I think that was--. I do have that recollection. So, I know that we were very different in Chapel Hill, in that regard.

MW: Besides those two things--. Well, actually, let's stick with the music for just a second. Where did you play your gigs when you were--?

RH: We, uh, we played, you know, at birthday parties for our friends, at their houses, their basements, their rec. rooms. We played at the little teen center that was located, like I said, in the basement of the Zoom Zoom. And in fact, totally off the subject, but a great trivia question--.

MW: Go ahead.

RH: One of the first public venues James Taylor ever played is the basement of Brueggers Bagels.

MW: That is a great trivia comment!

RH: Um, his brother Alex had a brother, and whenever James was in town--'cause he was going away to school--he would come up and play guitar. And he didn't sing really, he just played guitar, for the most part in Alex's band, the Corsayers. But it was James' first band and they did some of their early jobs in the basement of what's now Brueggers Bagels.

But, we played there--. Just any place we could. And we played in what was called Roberson Street Center back then, now it's called the Hargrave Center. And we went down there and played dances on Friday and Saturday nights, sometimes for an all-black



crowd. Except for some of our girlfriends that would come in and--. That must have been a sight.

The Roberson Street Center, I thought, was a great, great facility back then and it was ( ). I remember playing there several times but probably we played no more than two or three times down there. You know, but that was in a span of year or two; I mean, it was a very short period of time, as I look back. But we had great parties down there and I remember thinking, "This community center is great." Because there would be little kids there, there would be grandmothers there--. I mean, all age ranges at these community dances at Roberson Street. And it was all black, I mean, except, for the people that came with us and for us. And, man, they would get into it! We'd have the best time down there. It was a good time. Good place to play.

MW: um--.

RH: And didn't feel the least bit threatened or intimidated. I mean, you know, they made us feel very welcomed. And that was a good experience.

MW: It seems interesting that they picked a band from Chapel Hill High if their band at Lincoln High was so good--.

RH: Well, I mean, our band--. When I say Lincoln High had a great band, they had a--. I mean, their marching band was a hundred members--or eighty or sixty, I don't remember how many. But it was a big marching band. It wasn't the kind of band that would go play for a dance.

MW: But still, if you were in a high school band--.

RH: The black bands that were around were Doug Clarke and the Hot Nuts, certainly, and a band called the Jammers, run by a man named Jap Allen, whose musical roots went way, way back into, into the early days of jazz. And he lived right here in Chapel Hill and Durham. Had a little Rock 'n' Roll band back in the early sixties when we were just getting our start. Gosh, we was an old, old man then and I've often said--or said back then--you know, one of our goals in life is to be an old man like Jap Allen and still be played Rock 'n' Roll music. I was telling that to my son and he pointed out, "Dad, you've arrived!" [laughter] I guess he's right, so--.

But, um, you know, I think, I think they must have had those dances pretty

regularly down there, so they would just get who ever they could get. And they didn't pay anything, so--. Or, you know, if they did, it wasn't much, and I guess that's how we got the job.

MW: Were most of the gigs you played in some way segregated like that?

RH: Oh, absolutely.

MW: Yeah?

RH: Absolutely.

MW: Where were some of the, like, predominantly white dances that you did?

RH: Well, we played, you know, like I said, birthday parties for our friends or--. You know, played a job or two at the country club and at the school. We played at the school dances. And at the rec. center.

MW: Which rec. center?

RH: The teen center.

MW: Oh, the teen center? Okay.

RH: And that was about all. I mean, set up on the street sometimes and play for various things. Played for the world premiere of Joy in the Morning, the movie because the lady [note: Betty Smith] that wrote that book lived here in Chapel Hill and made a movie out of it with Yvette Mimieux and Richard Chamberlain. So they had the world premiere right out there on Franklin Street, in front of the old Carolina Theatre, where The Gap is now. They had the big search lights shooting up into the air--. It was a real big deal.

But, yeah. I mean, all the parties were segregated then, pretty much. Pretty much like now. Now it's not as--it's not as forced or it's not as dictated or it's not as expected. It just happens, you know. I think. People like to hang out with people who are like themselves. It's only when you tell them they can't hang out with other people that you're being wrong. You don't want to hang out with me do you?

MW: [laughs]

RH: [laughs] See?

MW: Well that depends. I'm here, so--.

RH: Yeah, but after today, you won't want to hang out with me.

MW: I don't know, there's some pretty cool stuff in here. So perhaps.

RH: If you want to see the cool stuff, it's across the hall in the teen center.

MW: In the teen center? Did--. Did your son go to the new--the "new"--school?

RH: Two sons.

MW: Two sons? Okay. As, a parent--and in that different perspective--and this different school, what was your impression of se-- or desegregation?

RH: Of course, my son was born five or six years, you know, after I finished and so then it was another five or six--or six years after that that he actually went into public schools. And it was the thing then. I don't think--. I don't think there was a lot of problem. And, uh, I can remember--. I remember one discussion--several discussions--we had on race, my sons and I. One was--. They're four years apart, so I guess one was in high school and one was in junior high. And we were riding along one day in the car and we had the radio on and there was--. WCHL came on and they had a report that said that black students scored more, you know, poorly than white students. That white students always scored higher on, you know, standardized testing and stuff. And something--. The school board had appointed a committee to see what the differences were and that kind of thing. And I went, "Wow that's interesting." And my son said, "well, dad, we can tell you: it's true. And we can tell you why. They don't need to study." And I was like, "Well, why do you think it is?" And they went, "well, because the black students that try to do well at Chapel Hill High School--there's peer pressure for them to do poorly. If a black student tries to do well, then the other black students go, 'What are you trying to do? Kiss up to whitey?'" And sort of drag him down and say, "You quit doing so good." And I went, "No way." And they said, "yeah, it's true." Well, as it turned out, I was on some sort of panel with Lillian Lee and Ed--. No, not Ed Caldwell. Hilliard Caldwell and some other people, you know. We were on a panel one time. A panel discussion thing and that topic came up. And I told them what my kids said and what they had seen. You know, they had witnessed this and both Lillian and Hilliard said, "They're exactly right. And that's one of the biggest problems we've got and we're working on it." That it's sort of peer pressure to do poorly. So I remember my kids, you know, seeing that.

I remember my younger son's senior year in high school and he was selected to be on the National Honor Society. And we just thought that was the greatest thing in the

world because he was the first one in our family that was picked; because his older brother was--had more ability, but he was sort of lazy and he just did enough to get by. The younger son was very competitive and had a learning disability and-- But he was so driven by competition that he was not going to poorly, you know, he was going do-- He was going to work really hard and do well, and so he got on the National Honor Society. Got picked to be on it. And so we were making over it, you know, and making a big deal out of it to him and he said-- He said, "well, it's no big deal" and I said, "It is a big deal." He said, "no, it's not." He said, "The only reason I got on it is because they lower the standards so they could get more black people to be in it." I was like, "Who told you that?" He said, "They said it at the school." I said, "That is not true." He said, "It is true, dad. Everybody knows it at the school." And that was the word going around at the school. And I said, "well, if that's the case, there weren't many black people picked this year, and I don't believe it." 'Cause if they'd done that just to get more black people in, then they figured out how many points they had to lower-- However it works, you know, so it actually works. I said, "It didn't work. They didn't get that many black people in this year." So, so, you know, it's sort of that notion--which I don't believe--but that rumor or whatever that he picked up on really sort of diminished his enjoyment of that program because he felt like the only reason he got in was because, because they were trying to change the rules. So-- So, I don't know what-- The problems of racism and stuff in the schools might have been worse when they were there, even though it was more widely accepted and it was the normal thing to do and it was everywhere and, you know-- It was in Roxboro and Hillsborough and all those places where it had not existed when I was in school. I'm not too sure there weren't too many more problems then than when I was in school and it was-- You know, we just kind of accepted the fact that they were there and, you know, they were our friends and everybody when on, you know, and kind of studied and went to school and had a good time.

MW: Did your kids know that you went to a segregated school?

RH: Sure.

MW: Yeah. Do you think--?

RH: Everybody went to a segregated school. See that's the thing, when you ask a

question like that, it sounds as if, [*shocked*] "You went to a segregated school?" Well, I didn't have any choice! That's all that existed!

MW: No--.

RH: You know, you remind me of the thing I told you the other day that my son said one time--my younger son. We watched a movie and it dealt with the Civil Rights movement and protests and I can't remember what the movie was, whether it was a documentary or just a movie, a fictional piece. But at the end of the movie, my son turns to me--and he was ten or twelve or whatever--and he said, "Dad, how come white people hated black people back then?" And it wasn't a hatred. It was in some people; it still is in some people. But it was just the way things were. Yes, I'm not ashamed I went to a segregated school! I didn't have any choice; that's all there was!

MW: Yeah. I think--. What I was trying to drive at--.

RH: If that sounds defensive, it's only from the sense that, that I feel like people like yourself--young people--that never experienced any of that, you know, have this impression that we were all just terrible, terrible people. That, we went, "Oh that's a black person!" [laughter] And it just--. It wasn't that way. It's just the way it was. And it was pointed out to us it wasn't right and we went, "Yeah, it's not."

MW: [laughs] The point--.

RH: What were we thinking?

MW: The point I was driving at was, um--. I kind of see segregation in many ways as a forgotten history. Things that we try to push away and, and so I was wondering how conscious high schoolers were during your sons' time period in school were of, of your time period. I mean, really, you're right: it wasn't a big gap. But I tend to think of it as something people didn't really want to deal with that decade and a half later. Did you get that impression from your sons?

RH: I think there's no question about the fact that you can't really explain how something was. I mean, you can talk about it in terms of segregation but segregation is such a--. It has such a negative connotation and it sounds evil and it sounds, uh--. And it's just a negative, negative word that invokes a lot of negative feelings in anybody that hears the word. And there's a difference in trying to teach somebody about that and trying to say to



somebody, "This is just the way it was. It's the way it had always been." It wasn't right; you know, we accepted that point and tried to move on from that. But it's the way it was. And my parents raised me to be a segregationist or racist, not because they were hateful people or bad people. It's just the way that everybody raised their kids. And-- I can't speak to how black parents raised their children and whether they raised them to be subservient or, you know, sort of cower under the white man's gla--gaze or whatnot. I don't know that they taught that as much it, it just was imparted to them. You know what I mean?

MW: Yeah.

RH: You know if-- I hope my boys saw me accepting of everyone that came along and I think they grew up with that idea. And I certainly hope that's what I imparted to them. And any [pause]-- You know, anything different than that, they picked up on their own or through reading or association with friends or whatever. I don't think there's a racist bone in either of my kids' body, but I could be wrong. But again, that's because that's the way we raised our children. I mean, we were accepting then and we'd sort of gotten over the idea of segregation, but it-- But when you use that word, it just really-- You know, it wasn't like we were all going around evil and burning crosses and wearing hoods. It was just the way it was. It's kind of like feminist, almost. The University used to be just for men; well, wasn't that a crazy notion? What were we thinking. You know, even, even as much as fifty years ago, the percentage of women to men was just minuscule on this campus. And it's only been in the last--probably in the same period of time, you know, in the last twenty-five or thirty years that women have out numbered men on the campus. So, it's just kind of the way it was.

MW: Good comparison. Your position now at the--let me get it right--Downtown Commission Welcome Center and just this whole ability to deal with local businesses and things like that-- How do you see from your childhood to now the changes in the Franklin Street area? Do you see it as, like you said earlier, somebody mentioning that it's still kind of segregated, or do you feel that there's a better situation now?

RH: Well, I certainly think there's a better situation. I mean, it's certainly a lot busier than it ever was; it's a lot more expensive than it ever was probably proportionately. Relatively.

And, you know, to my knowledge there's not a single business that includes anybody-- unless you're too young to drink--from going inside and enjoying or shopping or buying their wares or sitting at their tables or anything else. I don't think--. I don't think there's any sort of racial bias in down--in the business community. I mean, I just don't see any of that anywhere and--. The only thing that smacked of racism in recent years was a newspaper reporter called me up one time. They were doing a story on how increased rents on Franklin Street had driven out some of those minority businesses that existed many years ago. And I said, "What you're saying is that, in order for a minority business to exist, it has to be substandard. It can't afford pay market rents. And that's a racist comment." And the reporter got real huffy and said, "No it's not!" And I said, "think about it." I said, "You're telling me that the reason we don't have any African American business on Franklin Street is just because the rent's too high. If a businessman can afford to rent, it doesn't matter if he's black, white, green, or purple. You know, it's not--. The cost of rent is not going to drive a minority of a class of citizens out. It's going to drive a business that can't quite make it. You're saying that in order to make it, a minority business has to be substandard and that's a racist comment." I said, "What's driven people out--the same thing that drove the minority businesses--is just a change in the market. And there are minority businesses on Franklin Street. There are probably not as many as there used to be and that is a true fact.

MW: Why do you think that is, though? Why can't they pay the rent, you know?

RH: I don't know. That's one you'd really have to do a lot of research on and I don't know if there's--if it goes to the fact that there's more opportunity elsewhere. You know, because of the struggles of the Civil Rights movement, it opened a lot more employment doors. It also opened the doors to, to markets, to shopping that wasn't available before. You know, anybody can shop anywhere now and so maybe they don't need those businesses serving one particular clientele or another. [pause]

MW: Well--.

RH: I know without mentioning names, there was one man--a black man--on Franklin Street who had two businesses and when his children grew up, I know at least his son--. I don't know how many children he had, but I happened to bump into one of his sons and

when I heard his name I said, "Are you related to the man that used to be on Franklin Street?" "Oh, yeah. That was my dad." And I said, "Oh, I knew your dad very well." And he's an attorney in Durham now. Well, he didn't need to run a business on Franklin Street; he went to college and he went to law school and he broke out of that cycle, you know? And he--. Because being in a small business is kind of like--in some cases like breaking the poverty cycle because you know it's hard work and it's not as well paying as a lot of people think. So if you can be a lawyer and make more money, then that's what you encourage your children to do. I mean, I ran a small business on Franklin Street and my kids grew up working there. On West Franklin Street, in that dry cleaning business. And they had no more interest in staying there and running that place. When they got out of school, man, they were ready to go somewhere else and do something that paid them some money, and didn't have to work as hard and etc., etc. So maybe the fact that there's more opportunities now. Maybe that's the reason there aren't, you know, those African American businesses or minority businesses.

MW: Well, to look at the city as a large picture, we were talking about earlier how there weren't communities, particularly, when you were younger because Chapel Hill was so small. But now that it's kind of sprawled a little bit into the Research Triangle area, and the whole Triangle, and that there are things would be considered communities and subdivisions and, and, even, exclusive neighborhoods. Do you think that--. This might be far fetched but do you think that that's a new kind of segregation, like a self segregation, and maybe those businesses are going into communities that they see as more accepting?

RH: Um, that's entirely possible. I mean, I think that segregation that exists now as far as in neighborhoods or housing developments or subdivisions or--is self, self done. I mean, I don't--. I haven't heard even inklings of anybody saying, "Well I wouldn't rent to a black person." Or, "I'm not going to sell my house to a black person." Or, "I'm not going to sell my house to a white person."

I mean, the closest thing that we had that smacked of that was a year or so ago when some of the residents of Northside neighborhood came into the town council and complained that the students--. You know, investors were coming, buying up family homes that people had lived in for fifty or seventy-five years or more and, you know, as

the kids grew up, they sold off those homes to investors who fixed them up and rented them to students. Because, let's face it, there's an incredible housing shortage for students here and um, they were asking for protection from the town of Chapel Hill. And it's no different than the pressures that are put on the historic districts, you know, by the students. You know, it's actually the same pressure, but the Northside community came in to say, "We need some help." Well, what can you help them do? And there was black man who owns about twenty or thirty of those rental houses in Chapel Hill and Carrboro who stood up and said he didn't see how in the world the town council could do anything for Northside. That, you know, he said basically-- I remember that--I'm paraphrasing, of course--but he said, he said, what you've got up there is a bunch of black people that don't like the fact that white students are moving into the neighborhood and you can't keep white students out of my neighborhood anymore than you could keep me out of your neighborhood. I mean, he just-- I was like, well that's pretty much--now--pretty much just telling it like it is. But of course, he was one of those investors. He was a man who was making a whole lot of money, and still is, on renting those houses to students.

MW: Sure.

RH: You know, but he goes in and he'll buy a house and do a lot--an awful lot of fixing up and painting up, you know, remodeling. He keeps them up well, he rents them to students, and he makes good money. So, it's sort of blockbusting in reverse. You know, in the old days, they said they used to move a black family into a white neighborhood and it was block busted. And pretty soon you'd lower all the property values and someone would buy it up and make a killing.

MW: Yeah. But the process you're talking about is gentrification. The current one. Yeah okay. Yeah, we've heard a lot about that on campus.

RH: And that's really funny because if you--you know, if you take that same situation and you put it in the historic district, are you gentrifying the historic district when you put students in there? [laughs] But you're gentrifying Northside. Now, isn't that a racist comment right there? To think that moving a white student into the Northside neighborhood is gentrification but it's considered pollution by some when you move that same student into the historic district. I don't know. These are all-- You could argue



these points forever, I guess. It's the intricacies of the question, I guess.

MW: Yeah. A lot to do with community planning, and that's a really difficult process now, I know.

One more thing I want to ask you is, Chapel Hill has that famous tagline of being the "most liberal town in the South" or something to that effect; and UNC being such a big affect on the town itself-. Basically, just the liberalism of Chapel Hill. And a lot of what we've been reading in my class, and a lot of the literature that's available now is, it's the "Liberal Mystique." It's kind of a false notion to call it a liberal town either during the sixties or even now to say that. How do you kind of feel about that?

RH: [pause] Well, I think it's--it's an interesting question. Probably the most difficult question you've asked all day. I think there's a--it would be a correct statement to say it's sort of a pseudo-liberalism. There was a situation years ago where a palm reader wanted to open a business in Chapel Hill out on the bypass--or, out on the boulevard [note: Hwy 15-501]--you know, just right at the edge of Chapel Hill. And the town council wouldn't give her a permit because they said, "well, we don't want your kind in town" or "we don't want they kind of business in town" or whatever. Well, the very liberal community that is Chapel Hill and UNC came rushing to her aid and said, "Well of course this lady--. This is a free enterprise system, you know, and if she wants to open her palm reading business, we should allow her to do so. She has the right and freedom to do that." So the town council said "Okay" and gave her a permit. And about three months, she went out of business because this very liberal community that says she has every right to do it wasn't crazy enough, you know, to go pay her to do it! But, by golly, she had the right to do it. So, maybe there's a lot of lip service, you know, or was back then. I'm not sure that that's totally true but, you know, we've heard that and--.

I remember in those days of integrating the schools here and whatnot, you know, that part at least, when pretty easy as far as openly. You know, we didn't have the demonstrations to not integrate the schools or--. You know, we didn't have the civil problems that they encountered in many cities in the North. I mean, from a southern perspective, we just thought it was incredible that all these northerners that just, you know, condemn the South for being a bunch of racist rednecks--. You know, when they



went into the Italian neighborhood or Irish neighborhood and tried to integrate the schools there, they just fought tooth and nail. I mean, they'd get out and have fistfights and riots over it, because they didn't want it--. They didn't want their kids going to school with black kids. Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute, that's what you've been condemning us for in the South for years, because of course all this integration, at least my recollection, was--. You know, it happened here first, and then it went up North. And the people up North had so constantly condemned the--us poor old stupid southerners, well, we saw where their head was really at. And I really think it was here--.

Maybe it's--. Maybe what you're speaking to in that question is kind of like that palm reader: well, yeah, what were thinking when we had two separate school systems? We only need to have one school system. But, you know, I don't want to go to church with black people. I mean, I'm not saying that personally, but I'm just saying--.

MW: It's the town attitude?

RH: The town attitude. I mean, if you go into the churches of this community, they are not integrated. And hopefully they'll never be forced to integrate. I mean, people are going to associate with who they want to associate with and, and is that something that should be forced? No, certainly not. And is that where that perception that you're talking about comes from? Probably. You know I don't think that--. I mean, there are black families and white families and Asian families and Indian families in my neighborhood and nobody thinks anything of it. There're students renting eight to a house and nobody thinks anything of it. I don't think people pay that much attention to who live next door to them. But that don't mean they invite all that whole cross-section of that neighborhood to dinner every night. Maybe they'll have a party once a year an invite the whole neighborhood, but that's probably where--. You know, nobody's shunned, interracial couples aren't looked at funny as they walk down the street. It's not--it's just not noticed. I think that perception that you're talking about comes from the fact that people just chose to associate with the people they chose to associate with. Does that make sense?

MW: I think so. I think I followed that. I think it's interesting what you said, that you don't pay attention to your neighbors. Do you think that despite moving out into separate communities and things like that, that we sort of lost a sense of community.

RH: No.

MW: No?

RH: No. I think a sense of community is here if a person wants to belong. And I feel like that I'm a very--very much a part of community having grown up here and having stayed connected and involved. And I feel like that I'm very much a part of it and anybody is welcome to come here and join this community. And there are people that come here and live here that never join it, but it's because they don't make the effort. We don't go out--. I don't think--. I mean, the community's available. It's not like we go out and recruit. You know, you've got to kind of want to be part of it in order to become part of it by getting involved, by volunteering, by working in the community--not in your job--but by doing things to make the community better or to make the community, you know, work better and to help other people in the community out. That's how you become part of the community. [pause] And there's some people that come here and they don't know how and they never become--. You know, they don't--. They say, "well, this place isn't actually what I thought it was going to be." That's 'cause you never got in there and found out what it was.

MW: I think we're about done, but for the final question, I just want to ask if there's anything that you want to say that I haven't asked about already?

RH: Um, I don't think so. I think the only thing that I'd like to reiterate is that whole notion that really hadn't, I guess, crossed my mind before about the fact that, you know, when you talk about the days of segregation then you invoke in people a very negative connotation and I just--. An evil, hateful connotation. And it's just kind of the way it was and, uh, and I don't know how we convey that to people. You know, I have admitted many times that, yes, I am a racist--a recovering racist. You know, I'm like the alcoholic: I could probably backslide at any given moment. And sometimes when I hear Louis Farrakhan or Al Sharpton or some of the comments that some of those folks make, sure I backslide into my racist side, but that's just the way I was raised. And I fight it all the time. It's not a hard struggle. But like I say, I'm a recovering racist. I'm first to admit it. But so are you, in some sense anyway. Right?

MW: Oh--.

RH: You're not going to admit it! [laughs] Okay.

MW: All right. I think that's good.

END OF TAPE