

Edwin Caldwell  
Tape 4 of 7  
May 31, 2000

(skipped past CHTC/family material per log)

RG: This is Bob Gilgor interviewing Edwin Caldwell at 107 Caldwell Street on May 31<sup>st</sup> in the year 2000. Good morning, Ed.

EC: Good morning.

RG: I wonder if you could tell me about how the church influenced your life, and church work that you did.

EC: The Church of Reconciliation probably influenced my life the greatest that I, it had a major impact on me. In 1966 or thereabouts, the downtown church had grown to the extent that they wanted to colonize and start another Presbyterian church, and they donated or gave \$100,000 to purchase land and sort of seed money to get the other started. They purchased a tract of land down on Elliott Road, very close to Franklin Street. And preparations were begun to colonize. The person at the Presbyterian church was named Vance Barry, and he was the minister. They had an assistant minister there named Boyd Sewell, and Boyd was supposed to go with the new church and become its minister. The church at the time was under Boyd and Pat Hobson, said that they wanted an integrated church, and they had begun to look for black persons that would be some of the originals. So Bob Phillips and Boyd came to visit me and ask me if I would consider becoming a part of the Church of Reconciliation.

RG: Was it the Presbyterian Church that you were a member of before, or—

EC: No, I was a member of St. Paul A.M.E. Church. I wasn't going regular.

RG: Was that a black church?

EC: It's a black church. That was my home church. In fact my family was some of the originators of that church. I talked it over with my mother and father, and they said they had no problems with, you know if that's what I wanted to do, then that's fine. And so I told Boyd and Bob that I would help them start a church. I wasn't sure that I wanted to join the church, but that I would, you know, help them find people, I would be there to have input as to what an integrated church ought to be like.

RG: Were you going to find black members for them?

EC: Yeah, but also design the church so that blacks would feel comfortable being in the church. Um, and they agreed. So I started meeting with them at the downtown church. They put a little pressure on me because they wanted me to join the

church, the downtown church and go with the other members, you know, to the new church. I resisted. I did not want to be a part of the downtown church.

RG: The downtown church was the Presbyterian church, being an all-white church?

EC: It was all white. For several reasons. One, the, I did not feel as comfortable, you know. People came up to me and shook my hand and whatever, but I didn't get a feeling that they really wanted me in the church. I just didn't feel that comfortable. The second reason, Bob, is the history of the Presbyterian Church. To back up a little bit, there was a minister at that church named Charlie, um what's his name, Charles, um, he founded the Community Church. Charles Jones, Charlie Jones. Marion Anderson came to the University of North Carolina to sing, to have a concert, and Charlie Jones invited her to his home and to have dinner and whatever. The church fathers and so forth didn't think that was appropriate in those days, because whites should not be entertaining, you know, blacks in their home, much less their minister. So it pretty much tore the church up, split the church. Charles Jones, I'm not sure whether they asked him to leave or whether he decided to leave, but he left and took a sizeable number of members, and they formed the Community Church down on Purefoy Road. Charlie Jones, man, was just a person really out there that not only did he preach brotherhood, but he lived brotherhood. You really have to know Charlie Jones to just see what a super person he was. We all knew that, and so I just had a feeling, that number one, they did Charlie Jones wrong, and the fact that you know, they had that history of being very conservative. And I didn't want to be a part of that church, so I didn't join that church. But when the church split off, I did go with them as one of the original persons, and I joined out there.

RG: To the Church of Reconciliation.

EC: Yes. I really believed in what they were doing. Boyd Sewell was just a sort of super person, Bob Phillips, Pat Hobson, they, all these were quality people, and I found some others, you know, to come and worship with us. Under no pressure did I say that we'd like for you to join, but to come and see what we were doing. The church, I had been in and out of a lot of churches and really never found anything that I felt met my needs. I think that the Church of Reconciliation, because it was willing to experiment with different forms of worship, the fact that they wanted to have an integrated church, you know I believed in it. So I worked very hard in that church. They really accepted me, I felt very comfortable there. There were some other blacks that went that did not feel as comfortable. I guess, just talking to them, they didn't feel that they meant everything that they would sing, okay. In that church I found that I was considered a real leader. You know, I had a lot of say-so in public design of the church and it, what it was doing. To give you some examples, we started a neighborhood house, and the neighborhood house, we bought a house, we took some of that money that the church gave us and bought a house that was owned, on Church Street, at the corner of Carr and Church, okay. The neighborhood house was, it bordered the black and white neighborhoods, and I pushed very hard to say if you want blacks to join your church, then you got to have a ministry in their communities. And the thing was

to bring both black and white together so that white would have an opportunity to work in that neighborhood house, do different things, make friends with the neighborhood, and begin to understand what it was like being in the black community and not really looking down, but just the interaction was very positive. And the neighborhood house was one of the best things I think could have ever happened. And both parents and kids still talk about that house.

RG: What went on at the house?

EC: We had study groups, we provided tutorial programs, we had sewing, driver's ed, anything that the community felt that it had a need for, then we tried, you know, to provide it there. The whites got more out of it than the blacks, really. Just the contact, friendships, talking about kids, you know, over things that they were doing. So it was a real success. We found it very difficult to keep that house going, because you almost need paid staff. We went to Duke University and got an intern in the religion program, and he and his wife stayed there, okay. And ran the programs, very successfully. That was part of his internship and so forth. That went very well until he graduated and you know, then the program started to fall apart. Everybody was very busy at that time, and nobody really had time, we wouldn't even vote just to make sure that the thing ran very well. We had a lot of criticism from the downtown church because they thought that we had squandered their monies. They said that they gave us that money to build a church, not to start experimental programs and so forth. But we didn't listen to them, you know. We figured if they gave it to us, it was our money. We continued to meet, very influential, along with some others, to donate part of that property that we had been given, that we purchased, to, we gave it to ?

RG: What was that?

EC: Interfaith Council. They built some housing, you know. And that was the second thing, the church just thought we were very poor, you know, business people or whatever you wanted to call us, because here we were doing all these social programs for the poor and the needy, you know, and that wasn't what they gave us that money for. So you know, we were pulled on the carpet and that sort of thing. But you know, we were wild, idealistic, and we just did what we wanted to. I had a lot of, a big hand in doing that. Giving that property and, what we said and how we justified it was, if we gave Interfaith Council this land so that they could build housing, then we could provide a ministry to the people in those housing units. We would continue to meet in Phillips Junior High School, which is the middle school now. I really enjoyed meeting in there. Because we met in the cafeteria and you'd look out and you could see the greenery and whatever, and it was just sort of magnificent. We experimented with a lot of different forms of worship. Some were too far out for some of the members and they left. We had dance, different forms of dance as an expression of your religion, we had organ, guitar, the young people played the guitar, Bo Phillips, Bob Phillips' son was the one that learned to play the guitar and played with Len Eikenberry. Len was our organist, you know. Just fantastic. I just really got caught up in being a member of that church. We went on retreats, we had nurturing groups where we took books

and we read books and we met in each others' homes with potluck dinners, and we discussed the books, and just fellowship. Really got to know a lot of people, man. Not only did we discuss books, but we discussed growing up in the South and I spent a lot of time really articulating how I felt about growing up under segregation. More of a training for them, you know, whatever. I was an officer, I was a leader. Pretty much they listened to me. I told them, I was having a difficult time, I was one of the only ones, we had a few other families that came and decided to stay. ? Willie Bird, Jim Morrell, and so forth, but we had a lot of people who dropped out, like ? I think came for a while, Vivian Foushee, you know. They were not willing to hang in there. If someone said something which was insensitive, then they were looking for an excuse to say, I knew it, I'm getting out of this. They're insensitive. My thing was, you got to let people make mistakes, you know, and you point out, you don't jump on them, because we're all in this together. And I just found it to be very, very positive. I went back to the church Sunday, just to go, you know, and I just got very emotional. Even though the format's different, they've gotten away from reconciliation and that sort of thing and gone on to other things, but while I was there, they tried extremely hard to make reconciliation, um.

RG: Are they still integrated?

EC: Yeah, they're still integrated.

RG: In a significant, um—

EC: No, it's never going to be significant. Um, I would imagine because blacks have a different form of worship and expression, and whatever. For an example, we had some real trained musicians in the church. Beautiful voices and that sort of thing, and they were singing songs, you know, that I told them man, I want to hear some spirituals, you know. Bring a little gospel in here, you know. I also told them that we were never going to be significant, and the next thing was we had to recruit a black minister. And they agreed. So I was on a search committee, going around looking to see if we could encourage a black minister to come to Chapel Hill. Some came and looked us over, to see if we were serious, okay. And when we offered jobs, you know, I think they were just seeing if we were for real. Several people we offered jobs and they struggled with it, said no, I think I'd rather stay in a black church. We had a national search, and we went everywhere. We went as far as Arkansas. Not Arkansas, Tennessee. We recruited a guy named Ezekiel Bell. Ezekiel Bell was just a fiery person, I met him during my school work, school board work. Plus, I got pushed into a black caucus of Presbyterian ministers. The blacks in the Presbyterian U.S. is very small, because it split off from the other Presbyterian Church after the Civil War and segregation. So the, um, so there were very few blacks in that church. So it put, the church put money up so we could meet, and see what kind of influence we'd have on the major church. So I was a leader, okay. We'd go to Atlanta and different places and so forth. I met Ezekiel Bell in one of those meetings, and Ezekiel also didn't think that we were serious, okay. We recruited up here, let him come up here and preach and whatever, showed him around, offered him the job, and he also turned

it down. We finally, we had some interns, black, you know, to come and preach. We said maybe we won't be able to find one, let's get one out of Duke and groom him. Let him come while he's studying and see if he'll, I can't remember one person was there, he finally went somewhere else. We went to University of Chicago and got Marion Phillips. We talked Marion into coming. Marion was the first black minister of the church. People accepted Marion very well. Marion, I don't know if you know Marion Phillips, okay. Marion is a very dynamic person. Poetry, ?, just a great speaker, okay. He's with me now at St. Paul, 'cause Marion gave up church because even though he felt comfortable just trying to be everything to everybody in that, it was too much strain on him. In other words he was trying to preach what he thought different people wanted to hear. And I told him man, let's preach some black sermons, you know. Let's have some black music, at least one sermon needs to be geared to the way we do things in the traditional black church. And when he did, people really enjoyed it. Just a dynamic speaker. He told stories, you know, of the old, whatever you call it, speak and response things, and just showman. That's what black preachers are, they are more showmen than they are anything else, mainly because the people couldn't read, and so therefore you, you know, it was almost like being on stage and stuff. I think Marion enjoyed it, but Marion at some point, it started to, he needed to get out. At that time I was having pressure put on me by, not by my parents but by other relatives. My grandmother's best friend, who was also kinfolk, thought that I'm giving all this talent, not talent but services and so forth to the church, man, I needed to come home and do that there.

RG: In their church.

EC: In their church. And I couldn't argue with that. I learned a lot in that church. Budgeting, just the way they do things. The Presbyterians have a form of government that you just can't knock, okay. I mean, they just do things very businesslike, and they just do things well. So I learned a lot, you know, and I carried it back to St. Paul. Let me talk a little bit about the church, because I was in that church, I, there were ministers, well the church organization is, Orange Presbytery has several churches within it. And so Church of Reconciliation was part of Orange Presbytery. Made up of about 5 or 6 counties from Burlington to Chapel Hill and so forth. They recognized that I was a leader, so they sort of used my talents, you know, to have a lot of say-so in the overall Orange Presbytery. I mean, I was a leader there too, you know, because they were trying to get other churches to integrate and work in communities and that sort of thing, and not just be a white church on Sunday at 11:00. As a result, I used to get invited out to just go talk to Presbyterian churches throughout not only Orange Presbytery, but all over North Carolina. Up in the mountains, places, man, where I was a little afraid to go and talk, you know, but I did. I'd just tell them what we had done and that sort of thing. Very well received. I also got appointed to go to the Presbyterian Convention, you know. And just to back that up a little bit and explain that, you had to be a very religious, well thought of person in the Presbyterian Church to go to the convention. They just don't send everybody. I got to go as a very young man, okay. And I was in awe, because I knew, I mean that was an honor, you know, to be asked to go. They invited me in on many of the committee meetings

and so forth, and I was a part of the overall major church. I think it was only, I saw maybe three other blacks at that convention. But I had an impact. Boyd Sewell, you know was introducing me around and made sure everybody knew who I was and that sort of thing. I was in awe. I didn't say very much, you know, because I felt sort of out of place. They started to argue about Martin Luther King, you know, communist and whatever. I think they were saying something about whether or not they were going to, something came up about Martin Luther King, which to me, just was uncalled for. I mean, they were arguing about things like evolution. Hey, man, evolution. I thought we settled that a long time ago, you know. Evolution versus creation. And I'd sit there and listen to that, and having a scientific background, I'd say these ministers, man, you know. You know, it just amazed me. And I'd sit and listen to that, and I'm losing my patience. Until they said something about Martin Luther King. And I raised my hand and I marched to the podium. It must have been three or four hundred people in that assembly. And I told them just what I thought, okay. Y'all are sitting here arguing about, you know, Martin Luther King, and I don't have no business in here. Y'all saying things like I'm not even here. I can't believe that church people would even believe like this. It was, I mean after I got to speak, okay, it was quiet, you know, I just turned the tables, and they voted. I didn't know I was that powerful of a speaker. And people came up and said, best speech I ever heard in my life. To this day I don't know what I said, you know. I just sort of laid it on the line that I couldn't believe that church people were sitting here, you know, doing this kind of thing. If that's what you're doing, I don't need to be a part of this. I mean, you're talking about him as if I'm not here. The things that you're saying, you know, you say things about him, you're saying them about me. So I began to understand that I could be very influential as an orator, you know, if I felt moved, if I felt emotion or whatever. So from then, I just sort of got propelled, you know, as a leader in the overall church. Met with other ministers, I worked on other committees that had to do with black causes and so forth, the Presbyterian Church had several universities and colleges that they supported. Davidson happened to be one, and there was a black one, I can't remember which one it was. But it, the amount of money that they were giving to this black college was, you know. And I said man, y'all are giving Davidson all this money, you know, y'all not giving this other, you know, a pittance. You got to do better than that. And so the giving to the black college got increased. And the black president came up to me and he thanked me, and that sort of thing. And he considered me a real leader, because I could influence. And while I was there, I made sure that black colleges and black churches and whatever got a piece, a fair amount of money of the budget and so forth. I was approached, because we were having difficulty trying to find a black minister to be the minister of Church of Reconciliation. I, they asked me to go to seminary, okay, and become a minister. They were willing to wait two years or so for me to go to Richmond Seminary. It's not Richmond, but it's in Richmond. To become a minister, you know. I really weighed that thing, man, you know. I didn't want to be away from Chapel Hill that long, because of my school board work and being a leader in the community. I didn't want to be away from family that long. So I weighed that thing. The other thing I weighed was, am I really cut out to be a minister. If I'm going to be a minister, it means I gotta live, you know, and I'm not quite ready to life, you know, what's, what's called to be, because

you need to set the examples and that sort of thing. So I turned that down, but I really weighed that, you know.

RG: It was quite an honor.

EC: Quite an honor. I mean they had already enrolled me. And it's the people from the seminary that used to come South and go to Orange Presbytery and be a part of that, that had a chance to see me and work with me and that sort of thing. So in the church, I was not only just a local leader, but I was a regional, which was Orange Presbytery, the North Carolina Senate, you know I sat on that, which was a state, and in the national church. I met a lot of good people, you know. And when I decided to go back, I really had a lot of mixed feelings about going back to the church, uh, St. Paul, because I had found a niche there. I really enjoyed it. Let me also just say, I probably grew more being in the Church of Reconciliation than I probably grew in my life. They were very patient with me. I had a lot of hostility and anger from having grown up under segregation, poor schools, being treated like a second-class citizen. I just think that they hampered my development, and I was very angry about that. Still having problems in the job, being accepted, so I was very, very angry. And it began to be expressed because the civil rights movement was going full bloom, and therefore blacks felt comfortable in speaking out, and I was speaking, you know. I was expressing my anger. And they let me express my anger, you know. And they loved me anyway, okay. That was probably more therapy, for me as well as them. I mean, I'd lash out at them for things, and they weren't the people, man, that I should have been lashing out at, but I got it out of my system, you know. And so therefore I could be more humane, and it doesn't bother me, you know, when somebody says something that I think is insensitive. I got all that out just being in the Church of Reconciliation. Developed some long life friends, you know, always be friends. Pat Hobson, Pat and Pete Hobson. Pat's a member of the club, used to play but developed health problems. I consider family, okay. He just lost his wife, and I feel very comfortable going in and out of the house. I feel very comfortable coming in and out of my own. I worked with Pat out at Chemstrand, he was a director, but he treated me with respect and was not that difference when he saw me there, I was a friend. Very close to his children. I just feel like a part of his family. So, and there were other people like Bob Phillips. Bob, Len Eikenberry, ? Savage, I was very close to Len and his children. Bob Phillips and all his family, even when he split up with his wife, Fran, we remained friends. Remained friends with Boyd Sewell and his family. He broke up with his wife and whatever, and was going through a hard time. The church was giving him a hard time, you know, and I mean I'm a leader, and I'd say he, he's a man, he's going to have difficulties. I accept Boyd, you know he's a minister of the church, if he and his wife can't make it, well you can't get into their personal lives. I could play that kind of ?. When Boyd left, they treated Boyd almost like he was God. First minister, it was sort of hero worship, you know. And I said Boyd, I love you like a brother, but you're not the Church of Reconciliation, okay. And I told Len, if Boyd wants to leave, Boyd leaves. He's not the church. The church is bigger than any one person, okay. And you know, I just lit into them. And had that kind of influence. And Boyd went his way. Just had a lot of influence, you know. If I

thought the ministers weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing, I told them. I mean, I had that kind of power, influence and respect. I just kept them on what they were supposed to get on. Didn't let them give up on things that they had started. And I always felt very, I felt very comfortable there. If I look back and say the thing that I probably enjoyed the most was being at the Church of Reconciliation. And working with them helped me grow and that sort of thing. I just felt loved there and so forth. So pretty much that's my experience with the church.. I still sort of feel like that church is—

RG: Part yours?

EC: Yeah. You know, I went back the other day, it's not. Everybody's gone. The majority of people is gone, and they've changed directions. It's a more traditional church now, not even trying to do some of the things that the original church started out doing.

RG: That's very interesting. I wanted to change the subject at this point, and ask you about Chapel Hill and Orange County, and what changes have you seen in the last 20 years here with regard to the ethnic makeup, and what effect has this had on the black community and the community as a whole? Let me go back over that again. The changes that you've seen in the ethnic makeup of this area, Orange County, and what effect that's had on the black community and the community as a whole.

EC: Okay. Right now, the black community is really struggling to keep it intact. Chapel Hill has grown to the extent that the black community has very little impact over politics, whatever. At one time, we were shakers and movers, man. I told you earlier that we got a lot of people registered, and we got involved in the Democratic Party, and we had a lot of influence. We got Howard Lee elected, we got other blacks elected and put on boards and so forth. That's diminished. It's diminished because there's so many people coming in, migrating in to Chapel Hill-Carrboro, that it's not the same. Carrboro is not the same place it used to be. Carrboro at one time was very conservative. With so many people coming in to the University of Chapel Hill, it started to move Carrboro, and Carrboro became bigger and ? with the university. Rather than being a mill town and having its way of life. Carrboro elected a black mayor, and patrol, and Town Council. There were no blacks on Town Council, man, here in Chapel Hill. So Carrboro changed. Chapel Hill began to change. We started to elect the blacks that we elected on Town Council in Chapel Hill were from somewhere else. Did not have the feel, did not come into the community to see what it needed, what it wanted, and so the black community felt like it needed a representative. We had a minister named, can't remember his name, Wilkerson. Wilkerson was a church member, but he didn't really know the community. So from that standpoint, we lost a lot of influence. They tried to get me to run for the Town Council, I just didn't want to do that. I don't have the mental alertness, I don't have the stamina to serve on any more boards. It takes an awful lot of reading and keeping up to put that in. I have worked in support of people like ? Elliott, um Elliott's not her last name now, but anyway, she's very, very good, served on the school board, talked her into taking,

running for the Town Council. Barbara Powell was very good. Barbara grew up in Chapel Hill, so she had a feel for the community and people knew her and felt that she could represent them. Barbara got sick and so forth, and when she died we had a hard time replacing Barbara and what she represented and her understanding. At one point, man, we elected Howard Lee. That, I guess that was the height of our political. We—

RG: He was mayor?

EC: He was mayor. We also carried Orange County for Reginald Hawkins for governor. You know, we got punished for years, man, by Scott, you know, for not supporting him in Orange County, supporting Reginald Hawkins. And for a long time, '54, there was never anything done. From Scott's home in Alamance to Orange County line, and 54 to Raleigh, but the part that was Orange County, man, there was never anything, and he punished us for years. But we felt like we knew what we, we had a lot of influence and power, and we were exercising it. Howard Lee, you know, Howard wasn't from here, okay. Howard was from Georgia. But Howard came here, and I met him, and he was very dynamic. Howard's still calling shots from a political standpoint, okay. Howard said he wanted to run, you know, so I met with the coalition, the white coalition, because we were heavily outnumbered, okay. And they said well Howard, why don't you run for the Board of Aldermen and work your way up. We don't think it's the time to run for mayor. And I said Howard, do you want to run? He said yeah. So we met behind closed doors. Smoke-filled rooms, as they called it at that time. And I just told him, you know, the coalition's about to unravel. It's about to turn its back over to the business community. This coalition is about to unravel. If Howard wants to run, then he's going to run. Now we supported folks that you sent over to us that wanted to run for different things, and you know, we never questioned them. We supported them. Now we got a candidate. Y'all going to support him, okay. They had put up a fellow by the name of something Cleveland, I can't remember his name, he was on the, he was on the board up in Hillsborough. Gordon Cleveland I think was his name. Anyway, and he had, Gordon Cleveland respected me, and Rebecca, and whatever. About five of us in the room, and about 20 of them. Leaders. And I said look. Either support Howard, or don't send nobody over to see me again that you want to support, okay. 'Cause this thing works both ways. We've never asked you to support anybody, we've always supported who you sent us. From this day forward, don't you send nobody. Don't even send them to my house, I don't want to see them. Don't even send them into the community. And we got, they called us back, Gordon Cleveland said hey, I think Ed's got a point. I withdraw as a candidate. So they didn't have a candidate, they had to support Howard. And we worked very hard to get Howard elected. I mean, it wasn't easy. Howard is very dynamic, powerful speaker, well organized. We were having teas and stuff man, we'd never done anything like that in Orange County politics. He was campaigning, okay. And we never had anybody that could campaign like Howard. With all his eloquence and so forth, we needed to turn out votes, okay. That was going to win the election, not the kind of campaign that he ran. So we got busy. I worked like the devil, getting people at that poll that day. I had that thing well-organized, Bob. I had designed tally sheets, I had poll

watchers, and every black that came in, we checked their names off. We had cars, you know, ready to go. We had students, not only from the North, but from Bennett and from UNC and whatever. And as we checked off at 3:00, you know, we put into motion. We gave these people a list, to go out and find people. Put those people in cars, carry them to the polls, okay. Very effective. We had these students combing the houses, man, going in there, getting people out. You know, Doug let us borrow his bus. We were going everywhere, the grocery stores and everywhere, getting people out of the grocery store. And people said I voted already! And I said no you haven't, I've got your name here, you haven't been. It ain't going to take but five minutes, get in this bus, get in this car. And that's what we did. We worked like mad. We worked up until the polls closed finding people. And we looked down that list, and every hour we'd tear off another list, so we always had it up to date as to, and we went and found people. We had everybody voting that day, okay. The most exhilarating thing that I've ever been a part of. We, I worked up carrying people to the polls until the polls closed. And when I got to the church, I couldn't even get in the church. There were so many people in that church, I mean I worked, man, I couldn't even get it. And we knew that he was going to win, okay. We had, I, that thing was much closer than I thought it was. He didn't win by that big a margin. I mean, I think it was in the teens. It just got close. But without that effort, Howard would have never won.

RG: What was the year?

EC: Oh, man—

RG: In the '60s, or—

EC: Yeah, late '60s, early '70s. We really supported Howard. Howard really changed things, made the office a real position, had open house, not open house, but times that people could come in and talk to the mayor and whatever. So he did an excellent job. He brought grants in, there was a ditch that was an open ditch running through the community, he used federal monies to get those things closed, paved streets, put in curbs and gutters, housing programs where people renovated there houses, he did an excellent job. Howard made a lot of mistakes, okay. Very positive person, but then Howard doesn't always check back with the community, you know. You gotta stay in touch with your constituency, you know. He was a very dynamic person, but he's an introverted person as you get to know him as an individual. But you know, I supported Howard whatever Howard wanted to do. He ran for Lieutenant Governor. I didn't play as big a role in that campaign as, because you know he went outside and got professional people, you know, after working that campaign, really should have kept local people. Should have had North Carolina people that knew the state and whatever. And the national people were calling shots based on wherever they come from. Those things don't always work locally. I've remained very good friends with Howard and Lillian throughout the years. Much closer to Lillian and their children. Lillian is just a super person, you just have to know her. She's got a feel, she's got a heart this big. We're just sort of on the same wavelength. And that's not to take

anything away from Howard, because, but I just like Lillian for what she's done at the high school as a teacher and—

RG: So what I hear you saying, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that at one point the black community had a lot of influence over the politics and government in the area.

EC: That's right.

RG: But then with the influx of blacks from other areas,

EC: Not that many blacks, but everybody coming in. You can't run a campaign the same way you used to do a long time ago. The precinct meetings are not strong any more. It's just a different way of politics. Let me talk about the large number of other ethnic groups coming in has also impacted. Northside precinct was considered a black precinct. Northside and Westwood. For a long time, we've been in the minority in Northside. But in people's mind, they say well, we have to wait for Northside and Westwood precinct, which are the predominantly black precincts, to come in before we can call and say what's going to happen. Northside hasn't been predominantly black in a very long time. We have an influx of students, we've got more students and white in the precinct than we got anybody else. I guess, man, we're about a third or less, you know. But when people say Northside, they say that's the black community and that's the black precinct. And we're not, you know.

(stopped here per tape log)

Edwin Caldwell  
Tape 5 of 7  
May 31, 2000

EC: ? , you know, I don't know if they can't get the loans, or whether or not, but you know, they're going to have to be able to compete more. I'd like to see blacks stop making excuses for not getting ahead and competing with everybody else. Other people can come in with a language barrier and compete, and they need to be able to do that too, stop making excuses. I would like to see the University take more of an active role in being more a community steward as opposed to seeing how much they can get over on the town, and how much, it's sort of a closed thing that the University only thinks of itself, the way it's going, not too concerned about what kinds of things they do and how it affects the community. I'd like for them to look at the impact that they've had on certain decisions that they've made and how it's impacted negatively, you know, different communities, especially Northside and Westwood communities. I, those are the major things, I don't know what you do with so many people coming in and, I always call it, Bob, the missionary attitude, you know, they come in, think they got all the answers, they've done something somewhere else and they ride roughshod over people that are already here. And if a person gets up to make a statement, they just totally disregard them as if they don't have any knowledge, sense, or whatever. You know, they just talk right around 'cause they know everything. I would like to see the people coming in here have some sensitivity to the people that are already here. And I don't know how you do that. I've found that I almost have to hurt their feelings, you know. For an example, I'm Southern, I don't speak as well as they may, I know I don't pronounce my words as well as I should, but when I talk, I know they can get my meaning, okay. And I resent somebody correcting me in public, making fun of the way I speak, accent, whatever. And I just tell them, you know, take that missionary attitude and go somewhere else. You understand what I'm saying? Let me give you a book, let you learn how to speak Southern. You going to come here, then you need to speak like I speak, you know. I'm arrogant enough, I've spoken enough to be able to do that. I just think that when people, you know, people really need to learn to get to know other people. Asians, Latinos, I'm thinking very seriously of taking Spanish. To really learn, you know, you need to learn how to speak Spanish. I'd like to be able to converse with them in Spanish. One of the things that I fear is with the large Latino and Hispanic population growing the way it is, is I fear what happened out in California may happen here. Right now you've got a very good population coming in. I just hope that the gangster part don't come here and we got, you know, I just hope that the Mafia connected with the Chinese, the Hispanics, don't come too. And they may. Right now, you know, if you look at who's here, they're very young, all of them got babies, you don't see any middle-aged Hispanics here. Or you may see some older ones, you know, that may have come, but these young people here want a better life, they want part of the American dream. They're very young. They're too busy, man, trying to make a living and send some back to the families there, you know. I don't see a real negative element. The other thing is, we've lost a generation of blacks, you know,

to drugs. I look at these young kids standing up on the corner, man, they'll shoot you just as quick, okay. They have no hope, they're selling drugs to their own kind, not really understanding what they're doing to, you know, to blacks. They consider it their occupation or whatever. They challenge the police. I support the police, okay. We have to fight to take our neighborhoods back. What we do is, we push them out of one place and they spring up somewhere else. Older citizens are scared to come out of their houses, won't go to church at night.

RG: Do you see that in the black community?

EC: Yeah, in the black community. Right now we're trying to get a handle on it, you know, working with the police and whatever. I admire the police. Some of these people are better armed than the police, you know. Disregard for life. A lot of these kids, sixteen, you know.

RG: How would you change that?

EC: You're not going to change them

RG: How would you prevent it?

EC: I don't know how you prevent it when people are still coming in to buy drugs, you know. People coming in to buy drugs, man, are in cars. They, when I say cars, I mean they're coming from other places, riding in to buy drugs. They may come from Raleigh, they may come from Hillsborough, you know. As long as there is a demand for it, I don't know how you stop it. You put these guys in jail, man, they're back out in 24 hours. The court system needs to be changed, the police and the law enforcement just don't have the tools to deal with them. The ACLC, we had a drug bust up on Graham Street which is the major part of our community. The ACLC people come in here and said that they did it illegally. Well hell, I don't care if it was illegal, it was effective, okay. You know, and they called me and say Ed, don't you want to speak out? And I said no, I don't want to speak out. I mean, this is one block from where I go to church. People scared to go to church, man. All this shooting and stuff, man, these young kids got guns and stuff, you know. Stray bullet could kill my mother or kill my, kill somebody I know. Don't tell me to go and speak out because of the laws. Let's change the laws, man, and whatever. So you know, I feel very strongly. I look at a law, maybe they didn't do it right, maybe they didn't get the, what happened up on Graham Street was they got the, what do you call it where you have to get something to go in? Well, they got it for the block, you know, as opposed to getting it for a premise. And they went in and they cleaned it up, okay, got 'em off the street. They didn't come back. To me that was very effective, okay. I got to look at the positive results of what happened. So you know, I work with, I'm spread too thin. So many things where they need leadership or whatever, they call upon me man. I can't do everything any more, you know. I have to pick and choose. All of it's worthy.

RG: Do you see young black leaders coming up?

EC: No, no. In the Northside Association, we tried to groom some of the black college kids, man, that have come back home to live. And they don't want to handle it, they can't handle it. And we designed that so that they could step forth. I don't see too many people stepping forth, you know. Too many, I guess, doing their thing, I don't know what that is. I remember, I had to balance between family and community, and community involvement, you know, but I was able to do that. Some don't want to get involved, you know. And we're getting older, die out, man, you know. I'm hoping that someone will begin. Really, I don't know why I became so involved, you know. I don't know why everybody thinks they need to call upon me to be a leader. I don't need to be leading. I need to be grooming somebody to do that. Can't find nobody to run for the boards and sit on committees, you know. That's where decisions start to get made. But they want me to do it, they want me to run out to the high school when something goes on. I'm not on the board any more, you've got to fight your own. You've got kids in there, you need to go. Need to be visible, you know. I say hey, people going to overlook your kid if you don't go and talk to them. And they say well, I may split a verb or whatever. Split it! Okay? But let them, look them in the eye and say I love my children just as much as everybody else loves theirs. That's what's effective. So.

RG: I've asked you a lot of questions, do you want to revisit any of them, or add anything that you haven't covered?

EC: I can't think of anything. I do probably feel that I may be different than a lot of other people. I went on a cruise not too long ago, and I happened to just exchange beliefs. And my belief, as I told you, is that land has been in my family for five generations, and I'm trying to work with my son and my grandson that each generation helps the other get a little further along than we were. I noticed that the number of educated blacks that have succeeded have made statements to me as, I got them educated, they're on their own now. I'm going to spend their inheritance, okay. I'm going to have a good time. I don't know, that kind of bothers me a little bit. Why am I so different? I mean, why is it that they don't feel any obligation or whatever the word is, to continue to be in their children's lives and try to make it where if they don't want to do something different, they got grandchildren, okay? And they're all saying, you know, I raised my children, man, and now my child asked me to pick up the grandchild from school. You know, I mean that ain't too big, that ain't asking too much. These kids are working, if you got the time, why not go? Why not be involved in your grandchild's life? Grandparents seem to have more influence over that next generation than the parents. Parents struggling too much, got too many stresses on them. Job, whatever. You got leisure, you know. Why? What do you mean, you don't want to go? You ought to be in there seeing what they're doing in school. Why am I different? Why are they saying these kinds of things, you know? That's certainly not my philosophy. 'Cause I remember my grandparents, they had a lot of love and support and whatever, you know, and I learned a lot and got a lot from them. Why? I just don't, I don't know that. And I said to them, you know, I don't seem to have that philosophy. My parents left me something with the

understanding that they didn't expect anything back but to help the next generation and future generations. But there was an awful lot on that ship, man, that espoused that philosophy. And it was certainly not mine. So that's the only thing that I, the only other thing is, I believe in education for life, okay. I must have 200 books in there that I have to read before I come to the end, okay. I got a long time to stay around, I got a computer, I got things, man, I want to learn, you know, courses I want to take, because I believe in education for life. Pretty much the same way you do. I mean yeah, you're retired, but still you're very active, you've got your hobbies, you're doing this. I tend to believe the same way. I think when you stop doing things, you know, you dry up and you know. So that's my philosophy.

RG: Thanks for sharing so much with me. I really appreciate it.

EC: Okay.