

TAPE 1, SIDE A
FEBRUARY 5, 2001

DAVIS, SHIRLEY

BOB GILGOR: This is Feb. 5, 2001. And this is Bob Gilgor, interviewing Shirley Davis at her home at 1102 Brenda Court.
Good afternoon, Shirley. How are you?

SHIRLEY DAVIS: Fine. How are you doing?

BG: I'm doing good, thank you. I appreciate your talking with me today. I want to begin just with a broad question about what life was like for you growing up in Chapel Hill. And did you grow up in Chapel Hill?

SD: Yes, I was born and raised in Chapel Hill.

BG: What was it like for you growing up?

SD: Oh, it was wonderful. I enjoyed my childhood.

BG: What were your parents like?

SD: Oh, I had wonderful parents. I really did. I was so, like they say, I was a spoiled child.

BG: Were you a single child?

SD: No, I had a brother, but he was 6 years older than I was. But I was the only girl. And I really enjoyed my childhood, and I experienced a lot of things in my childhood that I'm glad I'd experienced when I was a child.

BG: Can you share some of those with me?

SD: Well. One thing, I was raised up with a white family. Well, really they were Jewish but we considered them as white. But I really had a wonderful childhood with them. And to this day I still go see them.

BG: Who were they? Or who are they?

SD: The Milton Julian Family. Virginia Julian is the mother. And my mother worked for them about 35 years, and I grew up in their home and they grew up in my home.

BG: So you knew their children and –

SD: Oh, yes. It was 7 kids. And the oldest boy, his name was Andy, he died on campus, overdosed, back in 1960, I think it was.

BG: 7 children?

SD: Uh huh.

BG: What were *your* parents like?

SD: My parents were wonderful. My mother was a hard-working woman and my father was a hard-working man, and joyful man. He loved animals. You could come to my house, you might still see a snake in my house.

BG: Dogs, cats?

SD: Dogs, cats, rats – anything he could tame, he had it. Alligator in the bathtub, anything. And my mother, she loved flowers, so she would like a yard person. But I had a wonderful family. And my grandmother, I stayed one block from my mother's house, my grandmother stayed, and I was back and forth from Merritt Mill Road to Graham Street.

BG: So you lived on Graham Street, or Merritt Mill, which one?

SD: Both.

BG: Oh, you lived on both? Where was your parents' home?

SD: My parents' home was on Graham Street.

BG: And your grandparents weren't far away?

SD: A block away, Merritt Mill Road, which was the same road that Lincoln High is on.

BG: Did you have aunts, uncles, in the area with you?

SD: Yes, my uncle lived with my grandparents.

BG: What did your father do?

SD: My father was a custodian at a sorority house.

BG: At a sorority.

SD: Is that the girls'?

BG: Yes.

SD: Yes, yes. Sorority, for thirty-five years. At Sigma Kau.

BG: So, he was a custodian there? What did he do as a custodian?

SD: Well, Daddy did a lot of things, but he was a hired for custodian, he took care of the place, and he also cooked for the boys.

BG: But it was a sorority, but he cooked for the boys, where did the boys come from?

SD: Oh, from different parts of the state.

BG: So, were the boys he cooked for part of the fraternity?

SD: Yes, they were fraternity boys.

BG: They were fraternity, so he did custodian for a sorority house and cooked for a fraternity house. And did you ever go to the sorority or the fraternity?

SD: Oh yes, I was always there, in and out, breakfast, lunch, supper.

BG: So you had your meals there.

SD: Sometimes. Whenever I wanted to go to eat.

BG: Did they treat your dad all right?

SD: Oh they just loved him. They even named one of the rooms after him, after he passed away.

BG: Did his role as a worker there extend more than just cooking?

SD: Well, no. He just took care of the place. That's all I know, you know, he just took care of the place.

[Pause because of the phone call]

BG: You were talking about your dad, Shirley, and that he was a cook. Did the fraternity allow him to bring food home, were they kind to him in how they paid him or treated him?

SD: Oh no, he brought anything he wanted home, I mean, you know. Every night he would bring steak home, every night. They had steak at the fraternity house, every night. But, Daddy brought everything he wanted home, you know, he had no problem with it.

BG: How long did you say he worked there?

SD: 35 years.

BG: 35 years.

SD: Yes, he retired from Sigma Kau.

BG: Was your father a drinker?

SD: Yes, he drank.

BG: Did the fraternity ever reward him with alcohol?

SD: No, not my knowledge.

BG: Did you ever see him abuse it?

SD: No, no.

BG: Did you ever see him drunk?

SD: No.

BG: So he would drink, but it was moderation.

SD: Yes.

BG: What about when you would be out on the streets playing, if you misbehaved, or if you were in downtown Chapel Hill and you didn't behave.

SD: Well. I was always brought up that you had to respect the elders, and racial was not an issue at that time about who was the adult or who couldn't talk to you. But I wasn't allowed to talk back to adults. And if I did –

BG: Black or white?

SD: Black or white. If I did something wrong, they had the right to either spank me or tell me what to do, or what not to do. And then, if I did some wrong, and it got back to my parents, I was in double trouble.

BG: So you got spanked again.

SD: Spanked, punished, whatever.

BG: Did you see that same sort of thing going on in the white community as well? That same kind of respect your elders, and -

SD: Yes, yes. Yeah, because, I mean, Chapel Hill was so small, downtown and uptown was just like one block or two blocks from each other, you know. And just about all the blacks they were raised in Chapel Hill knew everybody on Franklin Street, as far as the storeowners, and in Carrboro, Mr. White in Carrboro, and Cliff Stone, shop, meat market. I mean, Cliff know me right now from a child, you know, cause I knew his father, my grandfather used to take me to his store all the time. And, we just, I mean, it was so small, everybody knew everybody.

BG: So did you feel that the same sort of thing that went on in your community, that you got into double trouble if you misbehaved; some of adult would discipline you. Did you feel that the same thing went on in the white community as well?

SD: Well, I felt like some of, most of it did. The ones that we grew up with, or grew up around. And, like, you know, the old saying, where you sit around and you hear older people talk. We would point out some of the people that were said to be Klan. But the thing about that, my grandfather always say you be nice to whoever be nice to you. And, even the ones that we thought were Klan, they were nice to us, so we were nice to them, you know. And there was a few white people they were Klan, they didn't care if you knew it. But they gave us respect, we gave them respect. Like, he's not living now, his name was Elmer Pendergraf. He used to own a filling station on the corner, of Merritt Mill Road, and he definitely was a Klan. Now, this was nothin' I heard, I mean, I knew he was a Klan. You know, I just lived like three houses from his shop. Sometimes at night, about 4 or 5 of us that lived in the neighborhood, when they had their meetings, we would always sneak and listen. But he was real nice, he was a nice man and he gave us respect and we gave him respect.

BG: What kind of the house did you live in, Shirley?

SD: I lived in a four-bedroom house, two stories, on Graham Street. My grandparents had a three-bedroom house, two bedrooms upstairs, one downstairs. Which the house is still there now, on Merritt Mill Road.

BG: And when you were growing up in that house, was the house painted? Was the wood painted on the house?

SD: Yes, white paint.

BG: And, did you have electricity?

SD: Yes, we had electricity.

BG: Indoor plumbing?

SD: Uh huh..

SD: We had TV.

BG: So, you didn't feel you grew up poor?

SD: No, no, no, I don't, no, I can't say I grew up poor, no. Because like I said, my parents had anything they wanted because they worked hard and they bought it. And if there was something that my mother or father decided they wanted, they got it.

BG: So your father worked two jobs.

SD: No.

BG: No?

SD: No, my father worked one job.

BG: But you said he was a cook for a fraternity and custodian for a sorority.

SD: That's why I was asking you, is sorority for girls?

BG: Yes.

SD: No, he just worked there at Sigma Kau.

BG: I see. So he just did that for the fraternity -

SD: Um, he was a cook and the caretaker of the place, at Sigma Kau.

BG: So in the summer when they went there -

SD: He took care the place.

BG: He took care of it. Did he do repairs?

SD: Oh yes, he did everything. He was like, you know, he was like the father of the place.

BG: Uh huh. Did they ever make him a member?

SD: Yes.

BG: They made him an honorary member?

SD: Yes, yes.

BG: Could he paddle?

SD: I don't know.

BG: He didn't share that with you.

SD: No. But I know that they made him a member because when they made him a member they named one of the rooms, the activity bar room, they named it after him. His nickname; they called him Coon, Coon Davis. [laughs]

BG: When you were growing up, did you have a dictionary in your home, did you have books around?

SD: We had a dictionary, yes.

BG: Did you have an encyclopedia?

SD: No.

BG: Did you - What was your parents' and grandparents' education, and their stimulation - How did they handle *your* education?

SD: Well, my mother handled my education. She just always wanted me to finish school. And she also finished school, she went to nursing school. And my father, he didn't finish school. And my mother always made sure that I had my homework done before I could do anything else. But sometimes, you know, when you're comin' up, we used to just run in the house, throw the books down and go out the back door. But I had to do my homework before I went to bed.

BG: Where did you play after school?

SD: We went to Community Center, which is Hargrave now.

BG: That was sort of the gathering place for everyone?

SD: That *was* the gathering place fore everybody, yeah. Yes, it was.

BG: Did your grand parents tell you anything about education? Did they -

SD: Well no, my grandparents didn't go to, finish school, because they grew up back in, way back, and they grew up on the farm. So they had to survive and you know, and out and help their parents. That was the only thing they told me. I don't think my grandmother finished school or my grandfather. But they were - my grandmother could read, she still could read. And my grandfather could read, he worked in the university till he retired.

BG: What did he do for the university?

SD: No. I take it back. He worked for the town. What are those people that go around and pick up the...

BG: Janitor?

SD: No, pick up off the street, with the little stick, that's what my grandfather did. But he worked for the town for thirty-some years.

BG: [laughs at Shirley's kid] Did your mother or father take an active role in the PTA when you were in school?

SD: No, no.

BG: They did not. And you went to Northside?

SD: Yes, I went to the Northside, too, out there, first grade till the sixth.

BG: And when did you leave Northside, do you remember the year that you graduated?

SD: I think it was '59.'58 or '59.

BG: And then you went to Lincoln, and graduated Lincoln.

SD: I went to Lincoln in 7th grade.

BG: What was Northside like?

SD: Oh, Northside was fun. It was a lot of fun. And we had good teachers, Mrs. - R. D. Smith's wife, she was one of my teachers.

BG: What did she teach?

SD: First grade.

BG: Did she teach you first, second and third?

SD: Yes.

BG: So you had one teacher for three grades.

SD: In some of them, but, like Ms. Hargrave taught special education. Ms. Smith taught first and second, Ms. Peace taught first and second, I think it was. I think there were two teachers. Same teachers for first and second, I think it was. But it's been so

long ago, but I think who it were. And Mrs. Roberson, taught fourth grade, I was in her class in the fourth grade.

BG: How about fifth and sixth?

SD: Fifth grade, I think my teacher was named Miss Monroe. I forgot my fifth and sixth grade teacher.

BG: Now, Northside was where, at the end of Caldwell Street, near there?

SD: Yes. Which is called Northside Lane, ain't it?

BG: Did they have paved the street there?

SD: Yes. Uh huh.

BG: So, it was paved by the first time you got there.

SD: [Pause. Taking care of her kid.]

No. It wasn't pave. It wasn't paved. It wasn't paved because we had a big old pole – I remember we used to have a jump a wall to go to the store, Mr. Bannan (?) Weaver had a store, and we used to sneak off the school grounds and go to the store before the school started. You are right, it was a dirt road, it was a dirt street, one little old quiet street.

BG: Did they still have the rock pile when you were there?

SD: Yes.

BG: So you had a big rock pile?

SD: It was sidewalk rock, sidewalk out of rock.

BG: No, I'm thinking the rock pile from which you watched the softball games, but they didn't have them then.

SD: Uh uh.

BG: Okay. Did they have an auditorium when you were there?

SD: Yes, we had an auditorium.

BG: Did you have programs, regular programs in the auditorium?

SD: Yes, we had programs in different parts of the week. But we all met in the morning in the auditorium. Every morning before you go to class, we all met in the auditorium.

BG: I see. What did you do when you met in the morning before class?

SD: We pledged allegiance to the flag. And then -

BG: You said a prayer?

SD: Yes, we said, the pledge allegiance to the flag, and then we went to class.

BG: You sing a song, or anything?

SD: I think we sang the school song, I think it was the school song.

BG: And, did they have announcements?

SD: Oh yes, you know, they had announcements of what the activity was going to be for that day. And then we sung the school anthem and the pledge of allegiance to the flag. And then, sometimes during the week, they would call us in the gym, for different activities that were going to go on during that day.

BG: Did you have assembly in the gym where they were - I guess they put chairs in when you had your assembly. And did they have programmed singing, or choral group, or a band, or anything like that, or acting presented?

SD: At Northside? Yes, we - like when I was in fourth grade, we had a little instrument -

BG: A guitar?

SD: No, no. We played the cymbals, and flute, and things like that.

BG: So, you could get up and perform during assembly?

SD: Well, we was in a group. Each class had a group, to do different things. Like one year, I think it was in the fourth grade, I was in the flute class. And that was Mrs. Roberson's class. And then one year I was in the group, we played the little triangles, the little cymbals, the thing you made noise, "ding, ding, ding." We did different activities.

BG: Was this common, to have a lot of activities during assembly or during class?

SD: Yes, I think that was a part of the activity going on the school, because we even had a May Day. We had a May Day, every May we would wrap the pole. We even did that at Lincoln, and now, that's on the (?). But you can't see it that good, it's all (?)

BG: Great. Did you - thinking back, did you feel that the school was performance-oriented, that there was always something going on, somebody doing something, not necessary sports but other things?

SD: Well, to tell you truth, Bob, I was just so happy to be involved, something like that didn't even really cross my mind, on how often that they were doing it. But as a young girl, coming up, I was just glad to participate in anything they had at school. If I could get in it, I got in it. I didn't have any problem with my parents, as long as I kept my grades up.

BG: What are the activities that you got involved in, Shirley?

SD: Well. I've always been active; I've played basketball, I've played drums in the band, and I've played saxophone. I was a majorette, I played basketball majorette. And at Northside we had a band, a little band, I was in that, and our instructor always taught us how to play drums. Even though if you played the saxophone you had to learn another instrument in the band, so I chose the drum.

BG: Well, you *were* active - saxophone, drum?

SD: I had saxophone lessons at school.

BG: Who taught you the saxophone in school?

SD: I don't remember the man's name. But I know when I got to the Lincoln, Mr. Echon (?) taught me. So I kept doing the drums and the saxophone. So Mr. Echon taught me mostly what I knew when I got into high school.

BG: Now, did you know anything about Lincoln High School before you went there?

SD: Not really. I just knew I was going to a new school, and I would be in seventh grade.

BG: People didn't talk about it in the community where you lived?

SD: Not really.

BG: Did you know any of the teachers from Lincoln?

SD: Oh yes.

BG: I mean before you went there?

SD: Um, I knew a couple, because one of my best friends' mother ran a boarding house, and it was for teachers, and a couple of the teachers that was at Lincoln, lived in the boarding house, which was Miss Allen. Her last name was Allen.

BG: What were the teachers like at Lincoln?

SD: Oh, we had some wonderful teachers. They were caring teachers, they were just like another mother. And they cared about you, wanted to make sure that you were doing the right thing, stayed out of trouble. They could help you with anything that possibly they could help you with.

BG: Did you feel that they taught you to live a certain way, taught you how to survive?

SD: Well, I feel like they taught me how to survive, after I became a young older person as adult. Such as, I started working when I was 15, which I didn't have to, but, because my parents gave me an allowance every week, but it's something that I wanted to do and I enjoyed doing, because I had the friends who were doing it, too. I started working at the Lenoir Dining Hall when I was 15, part-time after school. But my teachers, you know, they just, in a sense, just put in our heads that, you know, when you get old, things are gonna change, you're gonna have to have education to move up, and you don't have to be a genius but you gonna have to have a good education to get a good job - things like that what they spoke to us, (?)you know. And, to pick up a career that you thought you would like, to have, to make more money than just the average, what you were making. So, that was one of my goals.

BG: Are there any particular teachers that stand out, that you thought were influential on your life, from Lincoln?

SD: Yes. Ms. Pope, she taught home economics. She taught me really - she didn't teach me how to cook, but she taught me some things that I hadn't learned from home about cooking, such as being, you know, reading recipes and sewing, I learned sewing, I even got a, when I graduated I got a certificate for one of the best sewers in the Home Ec. And Ms. Basnight and Ms. Clemens - Ms. Clemens taught me typing, which I had to at least learn, we had to learn the basics. She was the type that taught typing; back then, a teacher could use a ruler, or a paddle. And she didn't allow talking in her class and she caught you talking she'd paddle you. And when she said learn the keyboard by heart, she meant learn it by heart. So when she gave a test, and you didn't know that keyboard, she'd come over with that ruler and pop you on the fingers! Back then, you know, nothing said. And I'm glad that she did that because I'm not a well typer but I know how to type, I know the basics.

BG: Because of her.

SD: Because of her I know the basics. And Ms Basnight, and she also, Ms Basnight taught me basketball, everything I know about basketball. And Mr. Smith, was a great teacher. He was, he was like an all-around teacher to me. I mean, it wasn't nothing that he couldn't do. And his main job, I thought at the time was teaching boys to, in shop, learn how to build and lay brick, but he took time enough to teach girls, too, if they want to learn it. So I was in one of his workshops.

BG: So he taught boys *and* girls.

SD: Yes. If they, if the girls wanted to sign up for shop, they could. So I signed up for shop, and he taught me a little bit about laying bricks. So I know how to lay a brick, I don't how to work with a car, but I know how to lay a brick. [laughter]

BG: What was it that made R. D. Smith special to the students?

SD: Well, I'd say, to most of us - I'm speaking mainly for myself and a few that I know - I grew up around Mr. Smith, I mean, he lives on Church Street and I had an aunt lived on Church Street, but he knew my parents and my parents knew him. But he was sort of like a father away from home. You know, if you saw him you knew you had to stand tall, cause you had to be right. That's the type of man he was, you know. He was a good man, you know, he was caring and, if you did something wrong, he let you know and he'd pop you if he had to, and then tell your momma. But Mr. Smith was a friendly man. (?) And Mr. MacDougal, I just adored him. At that time I hated good. (?)

BG: [laughs] Why? Why those mixed feelings?

SD: But, [laugh] I'm glad he was like that. Because back then, you know, we thought, well, some of us thought, that he was the meanest principal you ever seen, but, after growing up and seen how kids are today, they need more MacDougals. But see, Mr. MacDougal's the type of principal, what he says goes. No matter what nobody said outside the school system, what he says goes. And it wasn't, in its day, bad. Because like, we couldn't come to school with blue jeans on. And if you came to school, he would be standing at the front like this [imitation]. And if you came to school with some blue jeans on, he'd tell you, "you have to go back home, you are not dressed properly." Or, if you were late, you too early for tomorrow or too late for today, that was his motto. And he was just the type of principal, he didn't let the kids rule him. You know, he wasn't scared of the kids or the parents. That's the type of principal he was. When he made a rule, he stuck to it.

And if he knew you were doing something wrong, he'd put you to work. He didn't send you home, he put you to work. He didn't care who saw you, if he said go wash 30 windows, you go wash 31 windows; if you did something wrong, you was in the fight, it takes two who fight, that's his motto, it takes two to fight, he'd put one to work here and one to work there. There was no go home to your parents, you know.

And that was just the type of man he was, he just had his rules and he stuck to 'em.. And I admire that, now that I grew up, you know.

BG: But you have some problems with it when you -

SD: Well, back then we just thought he was mean, you know. Some things he said doing,(?) we just thought it was mean. But it was really, he was looking out for our interests, trying to show us what life was gonna be like, if we didn't do what someone told us to do. That was his the impression I got.

BG: Between the time you went to high school, seventh grade and twelfth grade, how many students would you say dropped out of your class?

SD: I don't think, out of my class, I don't think it was more than six, about six.

BG: And how many graduated do you remember?

SD: I think it was 80-some of us.

BG: 80! What year was that?

SD: '63.

BG: '63.

SD: I think it was 80-some. Maybe more. [Then speak to her kid]

BG: So, you were a member of the band, and a drum majorette, right?

SD: Yes.

BG: And played basketball.

SD: And I was a baton twirler first.

BG: And a baton twirler.

SD: I became baton twirler before I was a band majorette. And then I moved up to the majorette.

BG: What was the difference between majorette and baton twirler?

SD: Baton twirler, you march with the band but you use your hands with baton different, different twirls with your hands with the baton. And a majorette, you just march and hold your head up, throw your legs up, and move; a baton twirler, you twirl the baton different ways, different opposite ways, and things like that.

BG: What did it mean to you to be a drum majorette and a baton twirler?

SD: I enjoyed it. I really did. [smiles] I enjoyed being in the band. I really did. And it was just not so much of being, you know majorette of the drum band. I enjoyed just going, marching down the street, or up Merritt Mill Road. At first when I was in the band, we always came from Lincoln High up to Main Street, and then, I think when we became a junior or senior, we would start down at the Planetarium, and come all the way through Carrboro.

BG: And that was for what, Homecoming?

SD: That was for Christmas, and Homecoming. For Homecoming, most of the time we would march from Lincoln High School to Carrboro to the ball field.

BG: What was the ball field?

SD: It was the football field in Carrboro, now it's the cleaners there now.

BG: Near the fire station.

SD: Right behind the fire station. It's apartments, then a cleaners. Right there where there's apartments and cleaners, there used to be the field. And wooden white fence, ticket box, we'd go in there and play all our games.

BG: Now, would the crowds, were there a lot of people there at the games?

SD: Oh yes, yes, yes. It was even blacks and whites. A couple white people that I know used to go out there. They're dead now. One guy that was called Cat Baby. You ever heard of Cat Baby.

BG: No.

SD: Well, Cat Baby used to be – he's from Carrboro, but everywhere Lincoln went, he was there. And there was another white guy. But it was always – McFarlanes, they were always there. And people like that, you know. They were all at the games.

BG: What drew them to the games? What kind of teams did they have?

SD: Oh, we had great teams. We were unbeatable. We had great teams.

BG: Did the team have any rituals that you remember?

SD: Well, I like to say it was great. And see, I was a cheerleader (laughs). I really didn't know that much about football; all I knew was the touchdown and the field goal. That's all I needed to know.

BG: So at Homecoming the band would march. From the school or from –

SD: That was during the day. On Homecoming, we would march that day. And we would march - every game we had, we marched on the field anyway.

BG: You'd march *on* the field every game.

SD: Uh huh. At night. Uh huh. Half time.

BG: But at Homecoming you'd march from the school to the field.

SD: We'd have a Homecoming parade.

BG: And at Christmas from the planetarium?

SD: From the planetarium through Carrboro, to Town Hall in Carrboro.

BG: And would people follow you along?

SD: Oh, follow, throw money, and just have great fun.

BG: Would little girls follow you and mimic you?

SD: Oh yeah, holler and just cheering "Shirley, Shirley, Shirley, throw em up, throw em up," and I was just throw my legs as high as I could throw them. So they enjoyed that, so I enjoyed giving it to them. (laughter)

BG: Sounds like you did. Sounds like you had a great time.

SD: I did. I did.

BG: That's great.

SD: And every year my father would have – it's on the tape too – when we had our parades, even Christmas parade for the town, my father got a new Buick every year. And he would put his car in the parade, and (inaud).

BG: You have it on the tape?

SD: Uh huh. A blue jersey with wide back, like Batman. Every year he'd get a new car.

BG: Was that unusual in the black community, to see a new car every year?

SD: Well, I mean every four years. Daddy would get a new car. I don't know, because people around here didn't talk that much about what other people had. And I guess

it's because everybody knew everybody, and everybody knew everybody worked and got what they wanted. And also, my father's best friend owned the Buick company, so he didn't have any problems. It used to be right there where the Carolina Car Wash – there used to be a Buick car lot.

BG: Was that owned by a black?

SD: No, we're talking about a white man.

BG: But he was your father's best friend.

SD: Uh huh, one of my father's best friends. They were good friends. And he always – Daddy didn't have no problems getting a new car. So every four years he'd trade his Buick in and get a new Buick convertible. Always convertible.

BG: Did you get to drive it?

SD: Oh yeah, I learned how to drive on it. (laughs) I started driving when I was 16.

BG: Let's go back to the band – how big was the band?

SD: Oh, we had a big band. As far as I'm concerned, we had a big band. I think it was over, it had to be over about 200 people. Probably about 200. I think it was about –

BG: That's huge.

SD: Yeah, we had a big band. See, everybody wanted to join the band because see, we not only were there just for the Homecoming and stuff like that, because once we wasn't performing at Homecoming or Christmas parade, we would always practice to go to concerts. Participate in different concerts in the state. Music state concert. (?) And we would practice for that, and we won a lot of them. We won two or three or four.

BG: So it was competitive.

SD: Yeah, uh huh. So we traveled to Henderson, North Carolina for competitions. We went to Roxboro. Different places. Washington, D.C. We went to Washington, D.C.

BG: Did you go to any of the ball games?

SD: No.

BG: What did you do in Washington?

SD: We played at a music competition with the band. We were in the music competition in Washington, D.C.

BG: And did you get to play then? Were you –

SD: Oh I was, oh yeah, I played the saxophone. That's why our instructor, you know, he was one of the types like, you can come into the band, but he recommended that you at least learn one instrument, if you were a majorette or a baton twirler. You had to learn one instrument to play. So I chose saxophone, cause my father had a saxophone. And I played the saxophone.

BG: Did you get to play his sax?

SD: My father's? Yeah. That's what I used when I had music.

BG: And you used that at the band, when you played with the band?

SD: Yeah, uh huh.

BG: What about other musicians there who didn't have an instrument or couldn't afford to buy one? How did they get their instruments?

SD: I remember a few times we had fundraisers for people that didn't have money to buy the instrument. We had fundraising, and Mr. Echon would take the money and buy the instrument that they needed.

BG: Can you remember what the classrooms were like, and the hallways, what they were like? Whether they were noisy, or very orderly? Did you have patrols, safety patrols, anything like that?

SD: No, we didn't have safety patrols, because like I say, you know, if our teachers told us to go up the hall and not talk, we couldn't talk. And if you did, she'd come pull you by your ear and take you and put you in the back of the line. Or either pull you to the side and talk to you and let you know that you're not supposed to do this. I'm trying to think, was it Northside or Lincoln, we had some patrols. I think it was Northside, though.

BG: You had a safety patrol at the time? Was it walking on one side?

SD: Yeah, and the person would follow you to the front step. But I don't think we had that at Lincoln. I don't remember it being at Lincoln.

BG: You mentioned a dress code at Lincoln, that you couldn't wear jeans. Were there other –

SD: Girls weren't allowed to wear jeans.

BG: Were there other things that you couldn't wear?

SD: Short dresses.

BG: No short dresses. No jeans. Did you have to have your shirt tucked in?

SD: Yes, shirt tucked in.

BG: What about hats? Could you wear a hat to school?

SD: You could wear it to school, but you couldn't wear it inside the school. You weren't allowed.

Pause for telephone.

BG: So we were talking about a dress code. Shirt tails in, shirt tails out? You had to have them in or out?

SD: In. They had to be in, far as I remember. The boys had to wear their shirttails in.

BG: What about makeup? Could you wear makeup to school?

SD: Well, I never heard any of the teachers or Mr. MacDougal speak to much about makeup. And maybe because I didn't wear makeup. You know, when I was in high school I didn't wear makeup. And my Home Ec teacher, we never discussed about girls wearing too much makeup or whatever, you know. And the ones that wore makeup, that was their choice. But I never heard about it, really, discussed about too much makeup. And then if it was, like I know one time, we an incident; our basketball teacher, she taught math. And there was one girl who had on too much lipstick. She would, you know, like say you've got on too much lipstick today. And that would be it. Far as that, though, we didn't have that problem. I wasn't around that problem too much.

BG: Was there a code of how you could keep your hair?

SD: No. Not to my knowledge.

BG: How about smoking in the schoolyard?

SD: No. Smoking wasn't allowed.

BG: And drinking, did you ever see any of that?

SD: No, no drinking, no smoking allowed on campus, on the school grounds.

BG: Did you have a favorite gathering place before school began?

SD: Oh yeah, we all, at Lincoln, we would always meet, most of us would be out in front on that side bar, used to be a side – I think it's still there, isn't it?

BG: I think so.

SD: We would be out there on the side bar, or either some would be on the opposite side of the school, or in the field, on the field.

BG: Now some people have mentioned to me a place called Kelly's.

SD: Kelly's?

BG: Yeah, soda shop?

SD: Oh, Miss Kelly. Yeah, yeah. On the corner of Merritt Mill Road, yeah. And Mr. George Bynum, he had a store. You'd go through the path the back of Lincoln, and his store was on the corner right there.

BG: Mr. Bynum's.

SD: Uh huh. George Bynum.

BG: George Bynum. Was that a gathering place also?

SD: Yeah. Every day somebody from Lincoln would be at Mr. Bynum's in the morning, or sneak to Mr. Bynum's before school had given out, to buy a soda or a pistol. (?)

BG: (laughs) Soda or a pistol?!!

SD: Now I'm not talking about Susie, Susie Weaver Bynum. I'm talking about Mr. George Bynum. His store was down in the woods on James Street, behind Lincoln. But we could go through the woods and get to his store. And I had one teacher used to send up to the store every morning. Her name was Belcher. Every morning she'd pick a student, or she would ask who wanted to go to store for her and get her a soda, every morning.

BG: So you ran an errand for her so she could have a soda?

SD: Everybody did. Everybody. Everybody that wanted to go to the store. Sometimes we'd beg, "Miss Belcher, can we go to the store for you today?" But see, the principal wasn't supposed to know that. But we went to the store for her every day.

BG: Now how about after school? Did the students have a gathering place after school?

SD: Well after school, like I said, the only place I remember gathering is either at Nick's, on Graham Street, which he ran a grill, hamburger grill joint, and Hargraves

Center, which was called Community Center. And that's where ninety percent of the people went. From four o'clock until six.

BG: Was that safe haven?

SD: Oh yeah. We had a ball over there, I mean, it was good.

BG: What would you do there?

SD: We played shuffleboard, played old maid. (?) We played old maid, any type of game, do puzzles, watch TV, play pool, piano. She even, Miss Caldwell, Lucille Caldwell, she was one of our leaders at that time, she even had people to teach piano lessons to those who wanted to take it.

BG: At the Hargraves Center? At the Community Center?

SD: Community Center. Then they renamed it Hargraves. But we always had something to do. Played basketball. Baseball was one of our favorites. I was on the baseball team, too.

BG: You could play baseball at Hargraves?

SD: Yeah. Yeah, we had a team.

BG: After school?

SD: Yes, during the weekends. We played on the weekends.

BG: What are some of the other things that you remember about being a cheerleader or a drum majorette?

SD: My most experiences, when we used to do a lot of traveling, and we went to different schools and perform. We would be invited to different schools to be in the Christmas parade or the Homecoming parade, because we were so good. You know, the whole band was just excellent. And that was mostly it, and I was just tickled pink because when I was growing up, my cousin was a majorette. Two of my cousins were majorette, and it was just something that I always wanted to do, and so, like, once I became a baton twirler and I realized you could move up, I just thought that was the greatest thing because I just felt like I was big enough to move up. Better, I had gotten better.

BG: Was it competitive to become a drum majorette?

SD: No, no.

BG: So anybody who really wanted to do it could get in there.

SD: Yeah, you could get in, but you really had to put it in your heart that you wanted to be one, because the majorettes also had to learn how to twirl the baton. It wasn't just all about steppin'. He was the type of bandleader that, you had to have skills both ways.

BG: Who led the band when you were marching? Was it the band director who led it, or did you have someone else lead it, one of the students?

SD: We had both. We had a drum majorette, which was Jimmy (?), I don't know his last name. He's some kin to the Ballards. (?) Jim Low (?) was our drum majorette. We had two or three. Laura Clark was one. I wasn't in the band when Doug was one, Doug Clark? But he was one of the drum majorettes right before I got into the seventh grade.

BG: So you could have either students leading the band –

SD: It was always a student.

BG: It wasn't the teacher from the class?

SD: No, it was always a student, a male, and then a female behind that male, and then the band leaders was always on the side.

BG: So he marched along with you on the side? I see. Now when did you do your practicing?

SD: We practiced in the field at Lincoln.

BG: What time?

SD: Well, it all depends on what was going on, as far as the activities for the football team or the basketball team. Most of the time we would practice in the evening. Or if we had to perform somewhere, we would practice at lunchtime. He would call a practice at lunchtime, but he would let us know a day ahead of time that we were going to practice at lunchtime or either in between some time before the afternoon.

BG: Ever get up early in the morning and practice? Before school?

SD: Not to my knowledge. Not unless we were going out of town, and there was something special he wanted us to make sure we knew how to do. But to my recollection, I can't remember practicing early in the morning, unless it was on a Saturday.

BG: So you did your practicing mostly after school and at lunchtime.

SD: Yeah, if we were going to perform, you know, a specific place, and he wanted to make sure that we had it pat down and the music right, we would practice at 12 o'clock. He would call a practice at 12.

BG: So did you have your sandwich with you, or, did you go hungry?

SD: No, we didn't go hungry, but like I said, he would always tell us in advance. Some people bought their lunch, but I always ate in the lunchroom, because I worked in the lunchroom.

BG: So you'd have a quick lunch and then head off to the bandroom.

SD: Yeah.

BG: To practice.

SD: Yeah.

BG: Did you have assembly programs?

SD: Oh yeah, we had all kinds of programs.

BG: How often did the school meet in the auditorium?

SD: I think we met in the auditorium, was it every day or once a week, we'd meet.

BG: And when you would meet in the auditorium, was there usually some kind of performance?

SD: It would be all different – performance, or art and craft, or different things that went on in school. Black history week.

BG: Was it usually the students who were showing something to the other students? Or was it the teachers who were showing something?

SD: It was students putting on a performance.

BG: Uh huh. Did you feel as though, looking back or at the time, did you feel as though the school was performance-oriented? That there was a lot that the students were showing to each other, all the time? Once a week you had assembly, and something going on, with students showing students art or music or singing?

SD: Yeah, yeah. There was always something goin on at Lincoln. And like I say, as coming up, and the way you said it, I didn't look at it that way, but I knew that being at Lincoln, I always had something that I could be involved in. And there was always something that was offered to me that I had a choice to be in or not. And as

being able to be close to that school, and knowing that whatever I signed up for, that I could get there. So whatever went on that was offered for the students, I just took a part in. And there was always something, always.

BG: Did the band give you a feeling of – I don't want to, I'm not sure of the word I want to use – make you feel like you were somebody, if you were in the band?

SD: No, not really.

BG: You already felt that you were somebody?

SD: Cause I was popular anyway. I was popular anyway.

BG: So you didn't need the band to make you feel like you were somebody.

SD: No, no, no. I didn't need the band. (laughs) Because like I said, I was good in basketball. I joined the basketball team when I was in ninth grade. I became very good in guard, and I played every game.

BG: So you were a starter from ninth grade on?

SD: From the ninth grade.

BG: Three years.

SD: Yeah, uh huh. I was a starter from ninth grade. And I give a lot of that to my coach, because you know, she always pushed us to be out there and never give up till the buzzer go off. And you know, I was just also, being with my mouth, a lot of people always said I was mean, but I wasn't mean, but I was just the type that if I said boo, some people would jump. See I don't know why.

BG: You weren't very inhibited, huh?

SD: Yeah. But the band, no, I didn't feel that way with the band. I just felt that was something I liked to do, and I liked performing. I liked dancing. I always have loved dancing. And so you know, basketball. Tennis wasn't presented to us. And that wasn't of interest to me. So like dance, or basketball – I always wanted to do ballet. But back then, ballet wasn't introduced to blacks. Or if you got it, you got it on the side, from somebody like say your mama worked for somebody and they might put you in ballet or something like that. That's the only way you got that. OR knew about that. But I always wanted to be a ballet dancer. But I never did, but I was a good dancer, so I just did what I had to do with my legs. That was the way that goes.

BG: You did it on the basketball court.

SD: Basketball court, street, marching, anything else. I just had a great growin;-up childhood in Chapel Hill. I was born and raised in Chapel Hill and that's just the way I feel, you know. And Lincoln was a great school. Because also, I don't know if anybody mentioned it, it used to be an old saying, blacks weren't allowed to go through Chapel Hill High. Where my father worked, it was right behind Chapel Hill High. And I was one of those, I was gonna see for myself. So we all found a little hole in the fence, and we would creep through that at night and get scared. That was the fun part. But we never did go through there during the day. Cause we were told you couldn't go through there during the day. So we'd go through there at night. But that was the fun part.

BG: What kind of a basketball team did you have? Were the rules the same for the women as for the men when you were playing?

SD: Yeah.

BG: You played a full-court game.

SD: Yeah. Full-court. Yeah, it was the same. It was the same, but then two years later they changed, and the guard could play forward *and* guard. But for two years you couldn't do that, but the next two year. A lot of rules changed, but it didn't stop us.

BG: Did you have a winning record?

SD: Oh yeah.

BG: Did you win a championship?

SD: We won a bunch of championships, bunch of championships.

BG: Shirley, you look like you're getting tired. Do you want to stop here and then we'll continue another day?

SD: All right, thank you very much.

BG: You're welcome.