

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A
CALDWELL, HILLIARD

OCTOBER 13, 2000

This is Bob Gilgor and it is October 13, 2000, and I'm interviewing Hilliard Caldwell at his home at 1235 Hillsborough Street, [Carrboro, NC].

BOB GILGOR: Good morning, Hilliard.

HILLIARD CALDWELL: Good morning. How are you today?

BG: I'm well and yourself?

HC: Fine, thank you.

BG: Good. I look forward to this interview and my questions are going to be very broad kinds of questions, and I would like for you to just take them and go wherever you want with them. What I'd like to start with is if you could tell me what it was like growing up in Chapel Hill when you were a youth? Let's start with that.

HC: Well, it most certainly was an unusual growing up period in a southern town and particularly in Chapel Hill/Carrboro community. I have some very beautiful memories of my growing up. My family moved three or four times during my youthful days from Rosemary Street to Merritt Mill Road. I finished high school in 1956 at which time things were most certainly so-called equal but segregated but not equal. I can attest to that. We had no automobile in our family so it meant that walking was the mode of transportation unless you went to Durham, [NC]. There was a daily [bus] scheduled to

and from Durham from the Chapel Hill bus station, which is located on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill and that, too was segregated. There was the colored waiting room and a white waiting room. Being Afro-American, we were confined to our neighborhood and our community. When I lived on Merritt Mill Road and was still going to the old Northside School we, in a sense, passed a white high school and a white elementary school by way of Franklin Street. A lot of my classmates back in those days walked down to Church Street to go over to Northside and that was a direct route. There were two or three other shorter routes to get to Northside but I always thought during that time that something is wrong with this process of us having to pass two white schools to get to our black school, but that's the way things were at that particular time as I learned later on in life.

Our family didn't have much but our parents worked very hard to take care of six children. There were six boys in my family, an unusual family makeup with no sisters. I've lost two brothers in the last ten years, an older brother, the oldest, and a younger brother, the youngest. There are four of us still living, one in New Jersey and the other three here in Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

We worked hard. I remember many a days during my high school days working for families on Franklin Street. The one house in particular that I walked from Merritt Mill Road, my house was right near Lincoln Center, all the way down to where right across the street from where the old public library is located every Saturday morning to work for the old Lawson home place right there at the curb as you go down Franklin Street. It was Doc Lawson's home place. Estelle Paige, Estelle's husband ran Ledbetter and Pickard for many years, Bob Page. It was his dad; his dad and mom lived in the old

Lawson house. I will never forget the family. I went down and took care of the yard until it just got too cold to work outside on weeks, on Saturdays. As I look back over those days as a youngster, I worked for four hours and would get five dollars for those four hours. Back in those days, five dollars for a half a day on Saturday was a large amount of money, I mean, it could go far. I tell my kids today, you know when they were growing up they'd ask for money and you gave them five or ten dollars to do whatever they wanted to do. Back in our days if you had five dollars you could go to a department store downtown on Franklin Street and get two pair of pants for five dollars; two dollars and fifty cents a pair.

During my years of growing up, after I made my money I would come on back by a department store run by a guy named Mr. Berman and would get a pair of khakis and a pair of jeans and it was about five dollars and some tax cents. That was for a new pair of pants and then you'd save up enough to get you a pair of shoes back in those days because with six brothers it took a while before your time came around to get a pair of shoes because the others ahead of you had to have shoes. I used to tell my son with him being an only child that when he needed shoes we were able to take him to the store and get the shoes. We didn't have to say; "I can't get your shoes today. Got to wait and get Johnny's shoes tomorrow and yours will have to come later." That was the difference between then and now. During that time salaries were a hell of a lot better for those of us who had darn good jobs back during the time our children were growing up here.

BG: Can you tell me about your family and your extended family? Who was here to give you support?

HC: Well, my mom most certainly is the person that I put on a pedestal who got me through. I always would say that if you just help me get through high school you won't have to worry about me. RD Smith who was still here in the community was the person within the school system who took me under his wings and said, "By God, I'm going to make something out of you because I see a lot of potentials." Today I give credit to RD for my succeeding in high school, to my mom and to RD. After high school, RD was still there to give me the guidance and he was responsible for advising me to run for public office in 1980. My political career is history now having ran for public office in 1980 and got elected to a four-year term in the town of Carrboro on the Board of Aldermen. I went through that process four times from 1980 to the year 2000 serving four terms, which was a total of sixteen years. It's a record that I'm very proud of and again, RD Smith was that person, was that driving force behind me running for public office. I was president of my student body at Lincoln High from 1955-56. That was the first time that I'd ever ran for an office where people voted for you based on what you stood for. Having experienced that in an all black high school was the driving point in getting me to want to run for public office for citizens out in the community. As of today, I'm very proud of the record that I established during the sixteen years on the Carrboro Board of Aldermen.

BG: I would like to get into that later on. Did both of your parents work?

HC: Well, my father went away to the war and was killed in World War II, and so that left five brothers for my mom to raise. She subsequently married again and there was another brother.

Work back in those days for my mom was they used the word domestic workers. She worked for several families in town. The thing that I look back over was how in the world did she feed five children? We ate well. We didn't have steaks, fatback meat, or as you all might know it as side meat, were our staples. We had hamburgers, chicken, and fish. I will never forget, my mom somehow got hooked on something called salt herrings and she used to send us to the store to get that. The stores kept them in a crock-pot, a big old tall crock-pot, and they were in salt brine. They had more bones and I said that if I ever get to be an adult I would never eat another fish with bones in it. After I married my second wife she introduced me to catfish and that's all I eat now. There are no bones because they are filleted. They are 99.9% boneless. Oh, I hated salt herrings during my days of growing up, but that was food and I had to eat it.

BG: What kind of income did your mom have? She must not have made a whole lot of money.

HC: Back in those days as I can recall, no, you're right, they did not make a whole lot of money. I think \$25 to \$35 a week might have been top wages back in those days. During that time we as children were not privileged to monies as it came into the household particularly by the parents. I'm just assuming, based on what I can remember, that it was about \$25 or \$30 a week. I remember her last working years were at a

fraternity house. I had gotten grown and was married. I think the pay was a hell of a lot better plus there was plenty of food that they could bring home; leftovers. I remember many a days when I would go and pick her up to bring her home and she would have wrapped up packages of meat for me and my wife and my son back in those days. It was a livable, livable salary based on the times. They didn't make a whole lot of money so as a result of that they were not privileged to invest like you and I did when we were working. In later years we were introduced to investments about twenty-five or thirty years ago, and we did some. Of course today in the year two thousand it is paying off for those of us that are retired.

BG: Did your mom work seven days a week?

HC: It was more like five days a week. I remember those days if Thanksgiving was on a weekend she had to go in and help serve the food to the white families gathering. I remember many occasions she would take one of us with her. It was always a joy for me because I knew we would be able to take home a lot of food from the gathering.

BG: What kind of values did you think your mom gave you? You put her on a pedestal and I would like to get into why she was there and what you got from her in the way of values.

HC: My mom was from a large family herself. Her mom and dad instilled values. As I can recall the history of my grandparents they were Baptists ministers and they were very

involved in the Baptist Church from the Afro-American community standpoint. It was tradition that children obeyed, that children didn't talk back. You obeyed your parents; you obeyed everyone in the community, the adults in the community, and everyone in the church. It was instilled into us as children that we should do the same thing because the next-door neighbor had just as much power over me as my mom did. I look back over those days and I appreciated the lady next door, the lady down the street correcting me when she saw me do something wrong. You would pray to God that they didn't say anything to your mom about it because you'd get it again. They could say something to you and they could chastise you for what you did or send you home. I remember many a day neighbors used to say, would call your name, "If you can't act nice here then you need to go home." Now you say that to a child and you go home and you tell your mom--children go home and tell their moms that Ms. Jones said if I couldn't act nice I couldn't come to her house anymore--then that parent taking that as an--. What is the word?

BG: An affront?

BG: Yes, instead of her taking it that way of calling her and thanking you so much for correcting Jimmy; I found out what he said and I'm going to make sure he gets punished at home. You don't see that today.

My mom used to say to carry yourself--I will never forget this and it took me years to understand it--she would say to carry yourself so that when you walk down the street as an adult people can say there goes one of Irene Caldwell's sons and that's Hilliard and he's the one that works for the school system or he's the one on the Carrboro

City Council. My oldest brother was an undertaker. He worked in the funeral home business for years. She instilled those, she said, "When I'm gone I want my name to linger around for years that I raised you all right." I was always respectful of all adults, and today I still refer to people that are--. When I had supervisors that were younger than I was in my jobs I would say yes ma'am and no sir, yes sir, and today I find myself saying it to people and they will say like you said yesterday, call me Bob. The guy that's going to rent our house called me last night and I kept calling him Mr. Gossle and he said to call him John. I said that it was just part of my training, and I just respect you as an adult. That was part of my training back then. I instilled it into my son when he came along. When he was in the school system I would go to the school for whatever reason and the teachers would say, "Oh, Hilliard, I met your son, Steve, and he's the most mannerly student I've ever met." That makes you feel good as a parent.

BG: It makes you feel proud.

HC: You better believe it.

BG: Did you have aunts, uncles, and grandparents nearby?

HC: Didn't remember my grandparents. Wished I had. Today a dear friend of my late mom retired back here. Some years ago my late wife and I hooked up with her and I refer to her as my god grandmother. It's a good feeling having her there because she and my late mom were the best of girlfriends back in those days when they were young.

My mom had a brother and a sister here and they many years now since been gone on. My mom's sister and her husband didn't have any children. Her brother had a daughter who now lives in Atlanta. We stay in touch with each other as first cousins. In fact, my wife and I just went up to Asheville, [NC], this past weekend to visit my aunt. When I'm with her I think of the old days with my uncle. I used to go to him [uncle], particularly when I was in high school, and if I needed some money for a particular project at school I could go to him and get it. When I would take the money back to repay him he would refuse to take it. I always say that he contributed to my getting out of high school. There were times when there was a project and you needed five dollars to pay for this or three dollars, and if I didn't have it I could go to him and that's the reason right today I respect his wife who is a widow living in Asheville. I have some fond memories of him when I go see her.

I have two brothers that are still living here in Chapel Hill. The other older members of the Caldwell family have since then died out. There's a new generation of younger members of the family coming along.

BG: What was your neighborhood like when you grew up?

HC: Dirt roads, muddy streets when it rained. We always had water in bathrooms as I can recall. My wife and I tease each other today about those things when we were growing up. There was a family that I got to know when I was about ten, eleven, and twelve years old that I used to go and stay with out in Chatham County. It

was a black family that I got to know. They had outdoor bathroom facilities and that's the only thing I can remember of outdoor facilities.

We always rented and I will never forget that. The streets were dirt. Merritt Mill Road was a dirt road when I was in junior high and high school. Very few homes had running water in the Northside area and all that ended when Howard Lee became the first mayor of Chapel Hill. The first thing he did was to get streets paved in the Northside area. The Northside area is considered from Rosemary Street all the way back to behind old Northside where the mental health clinic in Northside complex is now. That's considered Northside from Sunset Drive right as you enter Carrboro on Rosemary Street all the way down to Columbia Street behind the old homeless shelter, and down back of that was considered as the old Northside community.

When Howard came on board there were a lot of houses in that area that did not have running--had water but did not bathrooms. Very few of the streets were paved and there were a lot of open ditches with large water--. When it heavily rained water would--. What do they call that--rainy weather creeks, and all this water running off of Franklin Street somehow went down through Mitchell Lane and out behind Northside and back over into that area.

The kids didn't have many toys to play with like the kids today have got; bicycles, scooters, and all of the up-to-date things that kids--. I know those scooters that you see now my god-grandson is asking for a scooter. When I saw the price of the cheapest one running about \$70 or \$80--that was the cheap kind and the more expensive kind with the hand brakes or the brakes on the back of the wheel--paying that kind of money back in my days--. My own son who is thirty-six--out in my shop--has got a 3.5 horsepower mini

bike sitting back there right now. He had all kinds of bicycles when he was growing up; the regular bicycle, the two speed, the five speed, you know, as they got modernized he got one. I have to pack up Tonka trucks now that he had when he was coming along. We didn't have that kind of stuff. We would take an old bicycle wheel or old tire and that was one of our toys running up and down the road with a an old tire off a car or an old bicycle rim that we would play with. We would improvise. I don't know how we did it, but we improvised those days and survived.

BG: It sounds like the community helped raise you.

HC: The community raised a lot of children back in my days.

BG: And church?

HG: In church, you were in Sunday School every Sunday, I tell you, and my mom's philosophy was that if you don't go to Sunday School you don't play you stay in the house on Sundays and that was a free day from school, Saturdays and Sundays.

Saturdays in my days you spent cutting wood because we would order wood by the cord/slabs from saw mills and then we would have to cut it because you heated by wood and you cooked by wood. Me and my brothers spent Saturdays cutting up wood. We would get out there early in the morning, Saturday morning, and we'd cut five or six hours.

BG: Hilliard, can you tell me about the relationships with whites with sports, with school, and extracurricular work?

HC: We didn't have contact with white counterparts in our days growing up. It was rare. At this point I need to give credit to the late Charlie Jones who started out in Chapel Hill as minister of the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church on Franklin Street. As you can recall, Charlie ended up being minister of the Community Church. He was ousted at the Presbyterian Church because he housed a group of black ministers that came through the area traveling and they needed somewhere to stay and he put them up. His church congregation, members of the congregation, didn't like that but Charlie stood out and made a bold statement that they were ministers and they were his brothers in Christ.

Charlie Jones was the first person to bring a group of us high school students together and we met at the YMCA on campus. I will never forget the director of the Y campus at that time was a lady--I can't remember her name now--she has since retired up near the mountains. Charlie Jones had a daughter that was a junior at the same time, and he pulled together a group of black high school students and students from the white high school. We met on campus at the YMCA. We had a dialogue for approximately two years and I would give anything to find those tapes of our meetings. That was my first involvement with white students. Prior to that we didn't go to their games. I know I didn't go to any of the white high school games. We all played--. At that time there was a park in Carrboro on Fidelity Street called the Carrboro Lion's Park. They had created an athletic field. There were bleachers and everything and concession stands, and that's where our high school would play our football games and we would have lots of whites

who would attend our games because every year our football team from Lincoln High School or Orange County Training School, the original high school here, would end up in a championship. We had good football players and the same thing with basketball players, but as far as interacting I did not know any white kids until my junior year in high school. We'd see each other. They'd pass us on the school bus. We'd be walking to the Northside School from Merritt Mill Road and we'd see them. They'd be going to school but there was no interaction, none whatsoever. That was the way things were back in those days here in southern Chapel Hill/Carrboro. It most certainly didn't take place in Carrboro because Carrboro was considered--. I wouldn't call Carrboro a racist town because I think my being elected in '81 will tell you that most of the citizens in Carrboro had gone beyond that mentality of no involvement with blacks because I was elected by--. A good example of that was my election to the City Council here, the Board of Aldermen, by the community and I most certainly needed the white vote to get elected. Your question of involvement was very rare back in those days.

RG: What was the relationship of the black community with police, with government, with UNC?

HC: At UNC we worked there. That was the predominate source of employment for the members of the Afro-American community in Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

RG: What did you do? What kind of work?

HC: Well, you either worked in housekeeping on the main campus and when the hospital came on board you worked in housekeeping there or you worked in the kitchen or you worked in the dining halls on campus or you worked in fraternity houses. You were maids out in the private community and those who worked for permanent families back in those days and I'm trying to think of some. We had a congressman from Chapel Hill for a long time a guy named Carl Durham. He lived out on Franklin Street in a big old beautiful brick house on the left there as you round the curve. There were other permanent white families and if blacks worked for those families they were considered doing pretty good because those families picked them up and brought them to the house. They made, as I can recall, not a decent salary but a salary, and their kids that I remember that were friends of mine seemed to have nice clothes. You'd remember the kids in your class who had nice clothes and you were just barely making it. Those were the jobs.

I remember during the time we were demonstrating in the early 60s a lot of Afro-Americans did not participate in the demonstrations because they had been warned by the people they worked for on campus that, you know, "Johnny, I'm your supervisor here in housekeeping--always a white supervisor--and you shouldn't be out there marching downtown." A lot of them didn't do it and then there were those of us that were brave.

In the early 60s I worked for the University in the Department of Medicine with Bill Blythe and Chris Fordham and those guys were liberal. Bill and Chris both were North Carolinians by birth. I know Bill was from up near the mountains and Chris Fordham and his family were originally from Greensboro, [NC]. Lou Welt, who was chair of the department, was from up New Jersey and he was very sympathetic to the Civil Rights cause in this community. He gave me and a couple of guys that worked for

him, he said, "As long as it doesn't interfere with your work you have my support." In fact, the night I was arrested he called my wife and said, "I will be glad to go his bond if need be."

BG: That's pretty good support.

HC: Yes, very good support of the liberal white community. I need to put the word liberal in it because I distinguish--. There might have been more who wanted to help but just didn't. Joe Straley, Wayne Bowers, these guys were professors. I know that Wayne and Joe were both in the Department of Physics. They were full professors. People in my Department of Medicine gave us their moral and financial support. They were not out there on the firing line like Joe Straley and Charlie Jones and those guys were.

BG: Was Charlie Jones the one who housed Mary Anderson when she came through ()?

HC: Probably so knowing Charlie. I was not aware of that history.

BG: What about the black community's relationship with the police department?

HC: Now in Carrboro that was a different thing. I've been told many tales about what happened in Carrboro that you were not seen in Carrboro after six o'clock on the street because back in those days the policemen that they hired were old redneck guys from the

community and had no training and no human relations training. It was not good to get arrested by a white policeman in Carrboro and that was because of the mentality of the chief at that time and the mentality of the men that was hired. Thank God that's not the case today, not around here. They still might do that in some of the old southern towns deeper South where you worked at a service station--particularly a white boy--you worked at a service station and you knew somebody who was on the police force and you dropped out of school and they had a vacancy and you wanted to be a policeman then you were hired as a policeman. Again, the tales of Carrboro were told to me by people who remember those days.

When we were coming along we were very bold. I remember going to the Carrboro Police Department several times on some incidents when things were still segregated, and it was not a good feeling going there because most of the time you didn't get any support. As the years went by, the Police Department became a little better as they hired chiefs of police who had some background training in human relations things

BG: When did this business of not being out on the street after six o'clock end?

HC: Again, this was tales that were passed on down to us by other blacks in the community.

BG: This was in the 30s, 40s?

HC: 30s, 40s, 50s. In the early 60s, I lived in Carrboro in the early 60s. I was very active in the Civil Rights Movement. Did you ever read the book *Free Men*? That's a book that you should read that will give you a beautiful--*Free Men* by John Ehle.

BG: I just bought a book on the black movement in the United States.

HC: A friend of mine just found a copy of this book in a bookstore up in New York somewhere on the Internet. I know the libraries at both the campus and Chapel Hill has it in their collection, *Free Men* by John Ehle. John Ehle was a North Carolina writer that lives up in the Winston-Salem, [NC] area.

BG: What was it like at Lincoln High School when you were there? Was it a positive experience for you?

HC: Very much so because our faculty and administration were very much into your welfare being you the student. Many a days I would ask Mr. McDougale, the late Mr. McDougale who McDougale Middle School and the elementary school were named after he and his wife both who spent many years in the educational system here, I would ask why we don't have this. We had a chemistry lab that was built as part of the new school, but we never had a chemistry teacher. We had this apparatus there and we never had anybody until later after I left high school. I remember they hired a black guy named Mr. Christmas, which was his last name, who was a combination biology/chemistry teacher. I would have given anything to have taken a course in chemistry when I came through high

school because I felt chemistry was so fascinating. My mom bought me a chemistry set when I was a ninth or tenth grader. I remember doing the experiments that was part of that set. I think the set cost about \$10 or \$11. I was just fascinated at what I could do with the little chemicals that came with that set. The white high school most certainly had more courses than we had, more courses that would lead one into going to a four-year school, you know, college after high school.

I valued my high school teachers. I will put my high school teachers up against any teacher today. I was just talking this past weekend, a friend of mine came by and we were talking about an English teacher that we all had that came along during that time named Ms. Turner. Ms. Turner was so strict. When I would do a paper it would come back so red that it would just make you ashamed and she'd say, "I want this paper done over again. I know young man you can do better." You'd take the paper home that night and you'd sit there and you'd spend many hours redoing that paper. We didn't have typewriters, we didn't have computers, and Lord, I had the worst handwriting in the world and still have.

When we had PTA meetings at our high school, the parking lot was packed with cars for those who had cars. The auditorium where we had the meeting was packed. Parents would walk from Northside way over where the Northside building is now all the way to Lincoln to get to PTA meetings. When we had a drive for band uniforms or football uniforms, parents worked their behinds off because that was their school and they felt that they had a say-so in that school environment.

I know one of the things I did when I first came on board was to spend time doing PTA meetings encouraging parents to go out to PTA meetings. It's your school too. I

think a lot of parents back after integration became part of the norm felt that the whites had already talked about what was going to take place and by the time they got involved in it it was moot. That happened a lot around here and I'm sure it happened all over the South. I know I was the first black president of Carrboro school PTA way back when my son came through. What we did was we established a system where the president would be black and the vice-president would be white and we rotated it during my son's six years at Carrboro and it worked out for a beautiful PTA.

I know when I came on board as president there was no money in the PTA treasury. When I left, I left about \$600 or \$700 for the next person. We had fund-raising. By being a black president with my agenda, parents attended PTA meetings, cooperated. Black parents became leaders within their child's class as grade mothers. Today I don't know what the situation is now because I've been away from the system since '90, an active member of the system since '92. I know at McDougle Middle School where I worked part-time for the past six years, I made many a phone call encouraging blacks to come to PTA meetings and to let them know that it was very important to be involved. I did encourage becoming leaders within the PTA.

BG: What percentage of the students from Lincoln High when you were there went on to college would you guess? I know you don't have exact numbers.

HC: Let me take my own high school class of '56. There were a large percentage of us who went out to college the first year we were out of high school, but because of family finances we couldn't go back. We didn't have the monies to go back. I look at my own

class and there were about forty of us in our class, small class, I would think maybe about ten went on and successfully finished college. Those of us who didn't finish were lucky enough to get good jobs. We were at the right place at the right time. I know I'm a good example. I never finished college but ended up having an excellent job with the school system. I created a reputation for myself within the system and the community and go on to get elected in the city government and is still highly respected. The people tell me that I still carry a lot of--. Your voice is listened to around and you carry a lot of weight. I don't want to look at it as I still carry a lot of weight; I just appreciate people having respect for me, black and white.

() back in those days was a hard commodity among black students in the South in particular. Those of us who finished our first year in college we came back and luckily I had a friend who was working for the Department of Medicine and he called me and said, "We've got a vacancy and are you interested in applying?" I said yes and I did and got hired in '58. As a result of that, I spent 35 years under the state system, and I'm not retire under the state system with a nice--.

BG: What was the position offered to you?

HC: It was in the Department of Medicine as a research technician and I ended up my career with them as the chief technician with the dialysis program in the Department of Medicine.

BG: How did they know you?

HC: A friend of a classmate had worked in that research lab and he knew me and he called me because he was looking for somebody dependable and somebody who would come to work everyday and who would learn and wanted to learn. That's what I did. My mom said that whatever situation you go into, job, and learn all you can. She always said don't pretend to know everything. Even if you know everything pretend you don't. Ask lots of questions and show interest in ever facet of this job, and I did. Every job I went into I--. You know some people come to a job knowing everything and then can in turn turn off people. I never asked for a raise. I never asked for a promotion. They always came to me. I was very grateful for that.

BG: Your first job was before integration. What was the atmosphere like with this integration pending? Laws had been passed, I assume, at that time.

HC: They were being passed and being discussed. You sat in the back of the bus from here to Durham. There was a white line and you were behind that line. You went into, they used the word colored--. Even up to '63, Memorial Hospital still had white signs on bathrooms and colored signs. They had white water fountains and colored water fountains in 1963 and that was the year my son was born. The OB/GYN wards were still segregated in '63 because I'll never forget when we were told the due date I went to the hospital and demanded that my wife be given a room on the white OB/GYN ward. She was given that on March of 1963.

BG: Did they integrate at that time after March '63?

HC: Yes. I will never forget the OB/GYN doctor whose name was Dr. Charles Flowers. He was a beautiful guy in the department of OB/GYN. He handled my wife's pregnancy and the delivery. I went to the Director of Admissions in January and said that my wife was due March 27th and I don't want her put in a ward. At that time the Four OB was for Afro-Americans and Five [OB] was for whites. The fifth floor had private rooms; every room up there was private. I wanted my wife in one of those private rooms. When we came in that night we were already assigned to one and that's where our son was born. The next morning word got out that there was a black mom on Five OB, and people from all around the hospital came over just to make sure. They couldn't believe what they were hearing.

I drank from a colored water fountain many a days at that hospital up to '63. As the government began to clamp down on hospitals throughout the South because of all the federal monies coming in, they began to--. I regret that I didn't take pictures of those water fountains and those signs.

BG: I have some pictures. We lived in Texas at that time. I wasn't used to seeing that. Went to the bathroom and it said Whites or Colored.

HC: When I speak to children at schools and in particular the upper grades, I draw a water line coming in and I describe it as pipe and then I branch off colored and this one branch off white. I would tell the kids, "Do you see any difference in the water in the two fountains?" They would sit there a few minutes and then somebody would get it and would say that it is all the same water. That's my point, it's all coming in and this one is

going to the white and this one coming to the black. The point was, and I don't know what they thought was going to happen with everybody drinking out of it because nobody ever touched the waters coming up so you never made contact with the spigot or the faucet or whatever it is.

You know, I sit here and I look back over those days and I say, "My God, how in the world did we make it through that period?" But we prevailed. Today I get asked the question, why didn't your parents start the Civil Rights struggle back in the 40s or the 50s or the 20s? I said it was just not--. My parent's generation and the generation before that was not the generation to create that kind of upheaval in the South, and it took the young people of the early 60s, the kids at A&T at the lunchroom counter there where I give the credit for the first sit-ins in Greensboro, [NC]. There are some stories about where were the first sit-ins and I always gave the kids in Greensboro credit for that.

BG: They were from A&T?

HC: Yes.

BG: What were the relationships like when you started working among the blacks and the whites? Did you feel unwelcome? Did you see outright hostility?

HC: I didn't see any in the medical field and particularly in the Department of Medicine where, you know, as I said, I talked about Lou Welt who was from up North, Chris Fordham and Bill Blythe and Walt Hollander and a guy name Franklin Williams.

Despite the fact that they were the guys from the South, we were treated with the utmost respect in the department. Christmas parties we were invited to come. I did not experience any among staff within my job. There were some in other areas and particularly the hospital. You take housekeeping was predominately black employees with white supervisors back in those days. Dietary was predominately black. In later years, black supervisors were beginning to be hired to supervise employees. I can remember very vividly that we had our own cafeteria in the hospital in the basement. All the employees and black patients and visitors went to that one and whites went to the one upstairs. I had many a meal in the all black cafeteria back in those days because it was ().

BG: That ended in '63 also.

HC: That ended in the 60s, yes.

BG: I would like to get on to the integration of Lincoln High School and any involvement you had in it.

HC: I joined the school system in '69 and that was two years after they built the high school out on Homestead Road. My first job assignment under the superintendent then, a guy name Bill Cody, was to go to the high school every morning and work with the white principal and the black principal. Both had come from the segregated black high school and the white high school. The white principal was Mrs. May Marsh Banks and the black

principal who was my high school principal, Mr. C.A. McDougle. These two people, these two administrators had been thrown together without any prior training, any prior orientation.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B
CALDWELL, HILLIARD

OCTOBER 13, 2000

BG: This is a continuation of the interview from October 13th with Hilliard Caldwell.

HC: As I stated, both schools were thrown together without any prior orientation or get-together by faculty, staff, or administrators.

BG: Was this a new school?

HC: This was a brand new school. They bought a 100 and some acres out on Homestead Road to build the white high school, to build a high school for both schools. The white high school land was sold which is now University Square. The black high school, as I can recall, was turned into a sixth grade for a year or two to help relieve the crowding of sixth graders at three or four other elementary schools that we had in the community.

My job was to go out and to be a supportive administrator to both black and white principals, and having knowledge of the black community and a lot of the students that was shifted out there at that time I was in close proximity to a lot of the black parents. My job was to be there for them and to give the two administrators support as it was needed. I made sure kids got to class. I was available to parents and particularly black parents for any problems. If any kids brought problems to me I would take them to the administration at that time to try and work it out. I served as a mediator between a student and a faculty member if there was a problem. Again, this is two years after integration and things were still not right there. I'll never forget when the governor at that time was Terry Sanford sent about twenty-five state highway patrol, which was

under his command to the high school as a result of somebody calling his office and saying that there was going to be some turmoil at our high school. I will never forget coming to work that morning and as I pulled off of Homestead Road into the lot and saw all these highway patrol cars sitting out there and said what in the world is going on? Of course, there was turmoil throughout the South going on at that time too. Somebody had got to the governor's office and said there was going to be some problems that day. Of course, our job was to try to maintain calm as best we know how. The kids did get rowdy after about the second class. I'll never forget that morning. I spent thirty minutes convincing black kids to go on to class. They tore out ceilings and broke off--they did some damage. I finally said, "If you keep this up and I can't control the white administrator here. If she gets on the phone and if she calls 911 and tells them she needs help in this building those guys sitting out in those cars--they were all redneck whites--they are not going to take pity sake on you. They are riot ready with helmets, with black sticks or nightsticks and if they have to use them they will use them and you don't want that to happen."

We were successful in calming them down. I told the two principals that you've got to tell these kids that you will sit down and talk about the inequity, as they exist in this building. One thing was the trophies from the black high school had been found and stored away and yet all the white--. They took the mascot name from the white high school and brought it in instead of sitting down and compromising to get a new mascot.

BG: School song?

HC: School song. So you see black kids at that time felt left out. I mean, they tolerated it, but they tolerated it under pressure.

BG: Were there any black traditions that were kept from Lincoln High School?

HC: Not in the initial opening and that's where the mistake was. The system should have held off opening the school until all of this was worked out, but you don't let a new building sit after you've invested millions of dollars in it.

BG: So this occurred two years after integration.

HC: Yes. And the other thing that makes Chapel Hill unique was the federal government never interfered at all in Chapel Hill integration. There was a court case pending; it was called Vickers vs. Chapel Hill School Board of Education. That case was a black family out of Carrboro filed suit against the school system and it was pending in federal court but after the school system on its own completely desegregated all of the schools when the case finally came up on the schedule it was a moot case and it never went into the courtroom.

Chapel Hill was never forced like a lot of communities, you know, the federal courts came in and said you have to do this. I know Charlotte, [NC] was ordered and the busing situation created some problems in the Charlotte/Mecklenburg system now where kids were bused across town to achieve racial integration. What Chapel Hill did was to integrate the system based on the racial balance of the town, which was about thirty

percent black and seventy percent white, and they sat down and very carefully racially balanced all of the schools based on districts. I know a couple of times there were black kids bussed out of their community to go way over to Ephesus School to balance it out. I had no problems with that. It worked well. Today the black population is doing very, very heavily--. I had a parent last year to come to McDougle and she was concerned that her granddaughter was the only black kid in three of her six classes, and she wanted to know what the problem was. I said, "We don't have enough blacks to balance out the classes.

BG: Where are they going?

HC: I think the population, the birth rate is declining and some have moved away. They most certainly can't afford to continue to stay in the area with the high cost of real estate; housing so they move into Durham, [NC] where housing is lower. They move up to the other end of the county where housing is more or less reasonable.

BG: Are job opportunities there for the black community?

HC: I think job opportunities is more relevant today than ten year ago, or five years ago. What I tell students, high school students, you need to be prepared for these new opportunities that come about and thank God for the technical colleges, community colleges that we have now. That's the best thing that ever happened in this state was to create a technical college in every county. There might not be one in every county. I

think I remember reading somewhere that there were fifty-eight community colleges in North Carolina. The idea was that there was one in proximity for every kid in our state. From our case here, we've got one in Alamance, there's one in Durham, there's one over in Sanford so a student living right here has got three assessable community colleges. I don't know of a kid who graduated from a community college program looking for a job. They most certainly made it easier with the transfer program where you can go two years and you can transfer into a four-year school in any of the state institutions and complete your work. There are so many opportunists out there today the Lord knows. I wish an ROTC program had been in my high school when I came along. I probably would have been a retired officer from the military.

I remember one year I was working for the system and I thought about the idea of a ROTC program in our high school. Chapel Hill/Carrboro has this antiwar sentiment thinking and man, I thought I was going to get run out of town. The community would not hear of ROTC in a high school. At our church in Durham where we belong, three or four of the kids in church are members of the ROTC in their high school, and I think it is a beautiful program. It teaches discipline and teaches respect, it teaches leadership and all of the other things that go with making life easier.

BG: I'd like to go back to the integration problems at the high school and hear how the problems that the black students perceived were listed and then how they were handled.

HC: There were a lot of problems between black students and white teachers because black students felt that white teachers didn't really understand their culture, their

background, and that was true. They did not deal with this kid from this other side of town if you want to be more black.

BG: Did they have black teachers there too?

HC: One or two was kept. A lot of our black teachers lost their jobs during integration and suffered as results of integration.

BG: You had a white principal.

HC: And then a black assistant principal. He was not given the full title of principal. He was degraded or downgraded from that standpoint. Those black teachers, who did go, see everybody couldn't be hired at the new high school. I can't recall how they selected. I know one or two of the black teachers from our high school did go and stayed there until they retired. RD Smith would be a good one to talk about that from a faculty standpoint.

BG: So one of the issues was the relationship between the black students and the white teachers. How did they deal with that?

HC: It was hard, as I can recall, it was hard. Black kids felt that the teachers didn't treat them right because they were black and this created internal problems. I can't remember how it worked out, but I remember trying to make the black students feel as though that if

you've got an issue with a teacher go directly to the teacher and confront them head on with the problem, with your particular problem. If it's a group, go in as a group and go about it in the right way. Ask Ms. Jones or Mr. Jones if we could see you after school or we could talk to you a minute or two before class and let him or her know your feelings about what he or she is doing or not doing in the class. One of the problems I remember is that black kids would raise their hand and the white teacher would always call on the white kids and never equally spread it out recognizing students. Kids would say that they raised their hand everyday for a week and never got called on and so just stopped raising their hand. They just stopped participating because he or she was not going to call on me anyway. I remember that and that was a biggie back in those days.

BG: I can imagine it wouldn't make them feel real good.

HC: No. He or she probably knew the answer, but whether they knew the answer or not, you need to recognize them. We still have some of that going on today. I know that during my six years at the middle school I had to go into classes and advise teachers, and I would spend a lot of time in the classroom as the administrative assistant to the principal. I would tell the teacher after I came out of the room and see him or her in the lounge and I'd say that I would like to offer a couple of suggestions on managing your classroom. They would say, "I would welcome it." There were some that resented it, but those who welcomed it would come back later and say, "You know, thank you so much for that tip because it really worked." Black kids would tell me all the time, "She never calls on me." A lot of them weren't aware of that situation.

BG: You gave them the benefit of the doubt.

HC: Yes, and they saw much more participation by the black students by equally dividing who you called on.

BG: Were there other issues that you can recall?

HC: There were a lot of social issues because of social economic backgrounds; clothing. I remember a lot of hygiene problems we had to deal with on an individual basis because they didn't have running water or they didn't have hot water back in those days. Hygiene is most certainly a very important part of one's daily situation. I was able to deal with that on an individually and on an individual family basis.

BG: That's very delicate.

HC: Very delicate.

BG: Very tough to deal with.

HC: I faced them head on. I just went to the family and said, "I know you don't have running water but here are the facts, no water, soap, washcloths, deodorant, keeping your clothes clean". I remember many days washing my underclothes at night in the sink and hanging them up. I ended up with two or three pairs. Today my wife sees one little hole

in my shorts and she throws them into the dust bag, the dust ragbag. In fact, yesterday I had on a pair and I realized a hole had gotten bigger and bigger and I know the minute she sees it when she washes clothes she going to zip it out.

BG: Your mother must have told you, as my mother did, never wear underwear with holes in it.

HC: Because you never know if you might have to go to the hospital. I heard that and I hear it now.

BG: [laughter] That's all over this country. I met a girl from Iowa who told me the same thing. I had to take her to the hospital for kidney stones and she said it.

HC: And they were right. I worked in the emergency room my first year when I went to school on Saturdays and Sundays to earn money, and it was amazing that people would come in there that got hurt and they hadn't planned on getting hurt, but the underclothes they were wearing was horrible. My wife makes sure I've got plenty--. In fact, in packing to move I discovered I had thirty-five pairs of brand new socks that I had accumulated over the past ten years. What I would do, I would be at a flea market and see some socks for sale like three pairs for \$2 and I would pick them up and bring them home and put them in my drawer. I just kept doing it; thirty-five pairs of brand new socks.

BG: Were there other issues that you can remember?

HC: There was always the equity of pay among faculty during those days and no one knew exactly how to solve the problem from the standpoint--. It was obvious and sometimes black teachers would find out that their white counterpart was making more than they were making and they both had the same kind of degree. The degree from the black might have been from an all black college and a white person was from one of the universities so the inequity of pay always crept up periodically right after integration. Now it's more--. Systems have personnel directors and you have teachers' organizations that are composed of blacks and whites. I think the pay issue is now more on a controlled basis than ever before.

BG: Was the issue of the black principal getting devalued brought up by the students where you had from what I remember a man who had degrees that were more in keeping with being a principal than the woman who became the principal?

HC: Again, this is where I'm going to refer to RD Smith who served as the assistant principal during his tenure at the high school and is the one person that's still living who went through all of that coming from the black high school to the white high school. He taught me during my days and probably could share more knowledge on that than those of us who were on the outside of the inner circle of the administrative part of the school system.

We've come a long way, we most certainly have. We still have some inequities, but the inequities are nothing like it was when we were coming along back when it was segregated and then right after integration. I will put my high school education and training up against any high school, any other white kid there is and I thank my teachers and my principals for instilling in me the background that got me to where I am today. Here I am an Afro-American owning three acres of land, a nice home, retired, comfortable.

BG: Why don't we end on that?

HC: Okay.

BG: I look forward to talking to you again.

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW