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Interview

with

CHARLES M. JONES

July 21, 1990

By John Egerton

Transcribed by Jovita Flynn

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The Southern Oral History Program  
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Chapel Hill, North Carolina

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

July 21, 1990

JOHN EGERTON: You say you're eighty-three years old.

CHARLES JONES: Eighty-four.

JE: How do you sign your name?

CJ: I've signed it two ways, Charles M. or C.M.

JE: Or C.M., because I think I've seen it two different ways.

[To Charles Jones's wife]: And your name's Doris? Oh, Dorcas. Where did you all come here from? Where were you born and raised?

CJ: Tennessee. Nashville.

JE: From Nashville? Sure enough. Well, gosh, I should have known that. That's where I've lived for the last twenty-five years myself.

CJ: I lived out on Cleveland Street. My father was a photographer there. He worked with the Thusses, and he had his own place.

JE: He worked with the Thuss brothers?

CJ: Yeah, the Thuss brothers. [Shows photographs] Now he did that himself.

[Looking at pictures]

JE: Did you go to school in Nashville?

CJ: Oh yeah, I went to Hume-Fogg High School.

JE: Then where'd you go to college?

CJ: Maryville [Tennessee].

JE: And you came out a Presbyterian preacher, or you went in a Presbyterian preacher, which one?

CJ: Well, I was Presbyterian all the time on my mother's side. My Dad was nothing, except (        ?        ). He was my favorite, of course.

JE: But how did it happen that you went to Maryville. That must have been about 1920 or '25?

CJ: Yeah, I was in Arkansas, I guess, where I was selling (    ?    ). Oh, I was with my Dad. He wanted me to go to college.

JE: Is that about right?

DJ: After we finished high school, he went on a trip to, where?

CJ: Oh, I went to St. Louis and. . . .

DJ: A number of places.

CJ: I just wanted to leave home. I'd never been away from home.

JE: Right around 1920?

DJ: I should have figured them out.

JE: Well, I'm just trying to figure, if he's eighty-five now, he was born in 1905 or thereabouts.

CJ:: January 8, 1906.

JE: So you would have gotten out of high school maybe about 1922 or 1923 or something like that.

CJ: Yeah, '23.

DJ: I know you came to Richmond [Virginia] in 1929 to the seminary.

JE: Is that where you're from?

DJ: Yeah. And you [Charles] had been to Texas.

JE: You'd traveled around some by then?

CJ: Yeah, I went with my father. I had a cafe in San Antonio. He had what we called itching feet. He just liked to travel. He bought a cafe in San Antonio. Then he got excited about a hotel in Cotulla, and he got excited about getting something else. So I ended up with a cafe and a hotel. It was lots of fun.

JE: This was all after high school or before?

DJ: I think Texas was after college.

CJ: Yeah, I didn't know what I wanted to do.

JE: In those years, like in the '20s, before you went to Richmond--you said that was '29--did you ever run across any of these guys that you later knew like Buck Kester or. . . .

CJ: I don't think so. Now, in Burnsville, Buck came up one time.

JE: If you knew her [Dorcas] though, when he did, that was after Richmond.

DJ: I think the fellowship time was the first year ( ? ).

JE: What kind of experience was Maryville for you? Was that a pretty conservative place?

CJ: Oh yeah.

JE: Didn't change your outlook much at all?

CJ: Well, intellectually, no. I didn't have much intellectual change there. They were too strict with rules. You had to be in the dormitory at, I don't know, something like eight



o'clock, and study for an hour, and then you could converse with people, and then you go to bed and lights at ten. All this sort of stuff.

JE: So by the time you got through with that you were ready to have a little freedom?

CJ: Yeah.

JE: How did it work out that you decided to go to Richmond to seminary?

CJ: Well, I was in Texas, and a Mr. Bates was a Presbyterian. I sort of pumped his organ, pipe organ that you had to pump ( ? ). He got interested in me, and he wanted me to go to Austin.

JE: Was this in San Antonio?

CJ: Yeah. And I didn't want to go to Austin because it was too far from home. I wanted to get back to home base. So that's why I came on back.

JE: I see. So he told you about the seminary in Richmond and you decided to do that?

DJ: You were interested, or so you told me, I didn't know you then, in music. You sang a lot down there at churches and such, and you decided to go to seminary.

CJ: In music education.

JE: What happened to you over there? You said that was sort of a big change in your life.

CJ: Well, it was, I guess. Intellectually, it wasn't so much, really, but for the first time not to have somebody tell

me, "Be sure and comb your hair," and that kind of thing. I was socially free.

JE: How'd you handle that?

CJ: Well, she ought to know. I did all right. It didn't worry me. I didn't worry about it.

JE: You were pretty grown by then. You had been around. I bet he was pretty mature by then.

DJ: Oh yeah, he must have been about twenty-three.

JE: That was '29 until the spring of '32. Then where did you go from there?

CJ: I went to Clarkesville, Virginia, and they had an home mission secretary there, like most Presbyterians, name of Garrison, and he took me on for summer work, Vacation Bible School work. I stayed with him, and then he told me I ought to get a church in the Presbytery. He wanted me to, and then I got two churches (        ?        ). Soon expanded that to a place called Madison. From there, I went to Brevard College [North Carolina] because I think Dr. Thompson--two Thompsons there, Ernest Trice, he was professor of history, and E.T. in education. I was special friends to both of them. In fact, Dr. Thompson gave me the same series of lectures he gave at Harvard (    ?    ).

JE: Were you all married by then?

DJ: We married that fall of '32 after he finished seminary.

JE: You had lived in the city of Richmond all your life. So then you were a minister, and you all lived in different communities, mainly in Virginia and North Carolina through the '30s.

DJ: Yeah, in Virginia about five years, I guess, and then in Brevard about five.

JE: Okay, and then came to Chapel Hill. That was in what year?

DJ: '41.

CJ: See, Brevard had Brevard College, and Dr. Thompson at the seminary thought that I would be nearer them because, well, I somehow another appealed to them. I never started my sermons [by saying], "My sermon this morning is from Isaiah," so and so. I started it with a situation and then went on. To start with the scripture itself used to turn me off.

JE: That's a sign to close your ears [laughter].

CJ: Yeah, well, you were asleep.

JE: You came to Chapel Hill during the war, or had the war started? Earlier that year [1941]. And you all have lived here ever since?

CJ: With the exception of one year, we went away when the Presbyterian Church was having those difficulties.

JE: Yeah, I wanted to get to that in a minute. What's the Presbyterian Church here called that you served?

CJ: Well, they called it the First Presbyterian most of the time.

JE: Was it US or USA Church?

CJ: Oh, it was Southern [U.S.].

JE: I guess everything was in North Carolina, wasn't it? You know, Tennessee had some northern Presbyterian churches.

DJ: I think he had gone to a northern.

CJ: I'd belonged to a northern.

JE: I don't know how that worked, why that happened.

CJ: Well, it came with the Mason-Dixon Line.

JE: Yeah, but what I don't understand is why Tennessee would end up with some of both, whereas most other parts of the South would only have the Southern Church.

CJ: Well, I think people had strong sympathies. It broke up families.

JE: Yeah, it really did, I guess. It was pretty much tied to the whole Civil War.

DJ: I think the Presbyterian Church [in Chapel Hill] now calls itself the University Presbyterian Church.

JE: Okay, so you became pastor at that church, a fairly sizable and thriving church at that time.

CJ: Oh yeah, I had two services on Sunday.

JE: What was at the heart of the dispute that you got into there with the people?

CJ: Well, it had to do with the Creed.

JE: Apostle's Creed?

CJ: No, I didn't use it in church because students didn't come there knowing it, and wouldn't stand up and say something they didn't believe. I dropped that a long time ago. But the reason I had so many people, frankly, is it's right across the street from the campus.

JE: Oh what street?

CJ: On Franklin Street. And it's so close, all they had to do was step out of the dormitory and get to church. That really

is the reason, because when I changed to Community Church, I didn't have people flocking through the doors. In other words, I had a ready made population [at the Presbyterian Church].

JE: Would it be fair to summarize the conflict by saying that you were too liberal for the congregation at that Presbyterian Church?

CJ: Oh my Lord, no.

JE: Well, why did they jump on you?

DJ: It wasn't the local church. It was the Presbytery.

CJ: A fellow named T. Henry Patterson, [a church executive].

JE: Of the North Carolina Presbytery or whatever. What did he do to initiate the conflict?

CJ: I don't know what would be fair to say. I think he really started it.

DJ: Well, I don't what you would say to that. It was just a combination of liberal things. One was race. This church was the first one to let blacks come.

JE: What year was this, that the trouble really kind of came to a head?

DJ: When the Presbytery finally took all the power away from the church and didn't let its officers act, and they [Presbytery] took control of everything, that was in 1952.

JE: When did the trouble with the Presbytery really start, as you look back on it, when did you first begin to feel that you really had a problem on your hands?

CJ: I guess when Patterson came.

DJ: I'm sure there were feelings and grumblings and all kind of things for some period of time, but the real situation, I think, didn't happen too long before that. There's a book here that's written on that whole situation. It's a thesis done by a Presbyterian minister.

JE: Would it be in the library at the University?

DJ: No. I'm sure it would be in the University of Virginia library, and then I think there's one at the seminary.

JE: I'd love to see it.

DJ: I meant to review it. It's been so long since I've read it now. I've forgotten a lot of it, but he did his whole thesis on that situation.

CJ: Read the preface to that, give you an idea.

JE: I'll just read this aloud so it'll be on my tape. "My first knowledge of Charles M. Jones was in 1952 when, as a teenager of thirteen, I became fascinated with the newspaper accounts of the controversy in Chapel Hill. I did not understand the complexity of the situation but generally believed, along with most of my friends and my local minister, that Charles Jones was a heretic and was getting his just reward.

I lost interest in the controversy because it was concluded and assumed that Jones was eventually tried for heresy and conflicted. Such an impression for a thirteen year old can be excused, but the same impression was also held by numerous people who should have known better. My interest in the Jones controversy was rekindled by Professor Paul M. Gaston of the

faculty of the University of Virginia when he asked me to consider writing an account of it. Since the initial inquiry for material about the case, I've traveled several thousand miles, interviewed many of the principles, including Jones, and have discovered that the controversy is still very much alive in the minds of many people. I also found that there still exists much confusion as to what actually took place twenty years ago in Chapel Hill. This study is an attempt to unravel the confusion which still surrounds the controversy between the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, Orange Presbytery, and Charles Jones." I need to read that, [the thesis] I think.

DJ: Yeah, I think that would give you the whole. . . . It might be possible for you to get a little one. Joe Straley has made copies.

CJ: You can call up Joe.

DJ: He was a person in the Presbyterian Church, and one of the main ones in Community Church later.

JE: Well, just to summarize, the Presbytery, which, of course, in the Presbyterian Church there is a hierarchy unlike the Baptist Church, that has some authority over local congregations, and they exerted authority over you, ultimately forcing you out. Did they actually put you on trial for heresy?

CJ: They called for it, but [higher church authority] wouldn't do it. They went so far as to go to the Synod and ask for a trial, but. . . .

DJ: The only trial they would have allowed was for the same Presbytery to have had it. So they wouldn't be accusers, judges

and everything. At that point, I think, Charles decided to leave.

JE: But really, their purpose all along was just to force you out, wasn't it?

CJ: Oh yeah.

JE: That was their whole objective.

DJ: Yeah, because earlier they had told him that if he would just go somewhere else, they'd recommend him.

JE: Did it ever come out in the public debate that race was one of the issues involved in all this?

CJ: No, I don't think so.

JE: They kept it on a theological plane, so to speak?

CJ: They called it a high plane.

DJ: They wanted a "real Presbyterian."

JE: But you're pretty much convinced though in your own heart that race was one of the factors?

CJ: Yeah, also, if they'd done it openly and right. I did not believe in the Confession of Faith. I didn't hold to this, but they knew it. But they wouldn't have a trial ( ). So it forced me to make a statement which I made at the end of that thing, why I was leaving.

JE: There was that incident in 1947 when Bayard Rustin and the other three guys were on the bus, and you got involved in that in a very direct way. You think that was one of the catalytical factors here?

CJ: I don't think so, not here, no. The chief of police might have. . . .



DJ: I think some of the townspeople were unhappy about that.

CJ: Oh, there was about eight or nine people.

DJ: Some few church people.

JE: But all along you pretty much felt that you had the support of the majority of your congregation?

CJ: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: And they were really trying with you to ward off these attackers?

CJ: While I was taking a year off, just to let things settle, they had a fellow named Dr. McMullen, quite a guy too, very intelligent fellow. He came as an interim pastor, and he tried to be fair, don't you think, Dorcas?

DJ: I think he tried.

CJ: But somehow or another, he couldn't quite make it. It soon became apparent, the officers in my Presbyterian Church had a meeting without him. They never had a meeting without me, but they had a meeting without him. Well, I guess they'd have to say this, but I think they. . . .

DJ: But finally the Presbytery took all the power away from your officers ( ). And Dr. Frank Graham was one of them on the board at the time [laughter], president of the University.

JE: Yeah, I wanted to ask about him. He was a member of your church.

DJ: Yes, one of the officers.

JE: Was he a stalwart? He hung in there with you through all this or not?

CJ: Yes. But when it comes--as they say in the mountains--between a rock and a hard rock, when it came to that, he was ( ) through and through.

JE: So he had to go with the body?

CJ: He came to me and talked to me about it.

JE: Was this an agonizing choice for him, do you think?

CJ: No, I don't think so. He hated to do it but . . . . He had no doubts. He knew what he had to do.

DJ: He did everything in his power to help Charles.

JE: When he finally decided that he had to stay with the denomination rather than with the individual, was that a disappointment to you?

CJ: Oh no.

JE: No. You pretty much understood that?

CJ: Oh yeah. He and I had travelled quite often. Once, we went to Sweet Briar. I went to Sweet Briar and he went to Hollins, two girls' colleges. I took him because he'd never drove a car.

JE: He didn't drive?

CJ: Never had a car.

JE: How in the world did the man get around?

CJ: He had a black fellow who drove him or if I was going, he rode with me.

JE: Did you like him a lot?

CJ: Oh, yes.

JE: You know, everybody I've talked to, I have yet to meet anybody who didn't just love that man.

DJ: He was wonderful.

JE: And here you're telling me that he was an officer in your church, and, push came to shove, and your denomination was cutting you off at the knees, and he went with the denomination. And you thought so much of him that you understood that and accepted that.

CJ: Yeah, and [to Dorcas] you did too.

DJ: Yes, Charles wrote to all of his members. I don't remember just what he said, but letting them know that, because they were real Presbyterians, he felt that they should stay. Charles understood that completely.

JE: Well, his reputation has stood the test of time, you know. It's amazing to me. I've talked to people who maybe disagreed with him on a lot of things or maybe they were a lot more conservative than he was, but they all just think he was the greatest.

DJ: He was so fair. You couldn't think otherwise.

CJ: He went to the United Nations and mediated between India, Ghandi as a matter of fact.

JE: He made quite a reputation for himself after he left the University and the Senate.

DJ: I think he was in the United Nations when all this was happening, part of the time. He came back to meetings.

JE: Yeah, that's true. He wouldn't have been here when the real crisis came.

DJ: I think that's right.

CJ: He'd stand up on the train.

DJ: But he would come back for the meetings, went to the Presbytery with Charles.

JE: Getting back to that incident in '47. Would you mind talking to me a little bit about that, how that all came up and how you happened to get involved in that?

CJ: In which?

JE: Bayard Ruskin and the guys on the bus?

CJ: Oh yeah. They wrote me, didn't they? The Fellowship Breakfast?

DJ: Yeah.

JE: Oh, I know who you're going to say, Roger Baldwin?

CJ: No, I knew Roger. A.J. Muste. A.J. was a peaceful fellow and a scholar too. But the real person that--I guess it was Bayard and two or three other fellows.

JE: There were two whites and one other black person and Bayard Ruskin.

CJ: Nelson was the black fellow's name.

DJ: Jim Farmer was one of them.

CJ: And Jim Farmer. He is now blind and, I think, president of a black college in Virginia.

JE: Oh, James Farmer is? Is that right?

CJ: Unless he changed within the last year or two. He was a great guy. We had, oh, many black friends.

DJ: They came to Chapel Hill. They'd had trouble in Durham, and they came over here.

JE: Riding on a Greyhound or an Interstate bus.

DJ: And they had breakfast or lunch or something with us, and they were going on to Greensboro, is that right?

CJ: Yes. Some of them were, and some of them were going to South Carolina.

DJ: They had trouble at the bus station, didn't they?

JE: And that's when they got arrested?

CJ: Right.

DJ: They were going to take them, I don't know whether I can remember it, they were going to take them off the bus, and the cab drivers were right across the street. Somebody heard remarks about them, and so Charles' assistant ( ) telephone. Charles went down and got them in his car to bring them back up to our house ( ).

JE: This is before any arrest had taken place?

DJ: I think so, wasn't it?

CJ: Yeah.

JE: You brought them back to your house?

CJ: Oh yeah.

JE: Did you live here then?

DJ: Lived on Franklin Street in the Presbyterian manse.

JE: And you took them there, and then what happened?

DJ: Well, I don't remember it very well. But the cab drivers tried to follow you, and you got there first, and y'all came in the house. The cab drivers were sort of threatening. They stopped out in front of the house. Charles called the police. Had to call them a number of times before they'd come.

CJ: Oh, there's something else, Dorcas. There was a bunch of students who heard about it.

DJ: Well, yeah, but that was later. Then the police finally did come and help escort you out of the county and far enough to get them so they could, somebody was going to meet them and take them to Greensboro. Anyway, I don't remember. They got arrested in Chapel Hill. Do you remember?

CJ: Yeah, when they got arrested in Chapel Hill, the officers were ( ).

DJ: Did those people riding the bus, then get arrested here?

CJ: Yeah, and they turned them loose because we ( ).

DJ: Well then, maybe they arrested them first.

JE: Yeah. You got them out of jail.

CJ: Got them out of jail. We had one friend on the police force, a fellow named Blake. He later became the Chief of Police.

JE: What about the students, were they on your side?

CJ: Oh my God, yeah. Yeah, they came, and they brought some weapons.

DJ: Well, there was so much commotion about it all that the Chief of Police at that time said he couldn't protect us, and he advised Charles to take me and the children out of town. While he was gone, these students went in the house to take care of the house, our neighbors. And when you came back, there was a town meeting, wasn't there?

CJ: Oh yeah.

DJ: Of everybody concerned and interested. They tried to talk about it and see what to do.

JE: How did you access the mood of the people in the town at that time?

CJ: Well, it wasn't Chapel Hill people. It was Carrboro people mostly, wasn't it?

DJ: Most of them were.

CJ: I didn't feel people in town were against me, not in Chapel Hill.

DJ: No, a few but not many.

CJ: And not the students.

JE: Or the faculty?

CJ: I know of one maybe, Hugh Holman. But he never overtly did anything, and remained a friend.

DJ: Dr. Berryhill was upset with it all. He was in the Med School, but I think he was partly on the basis that he was afraid this would effect the legislature giving money to the University.

CJ: Yes. And his wife though, interestingly enough, met me on the street and said she agreed with me.

DJ: She said we're friends of yours now.

JE: Yeah. What about Howard Odum?

CJ: Howard Odum was no help, because Howard believed that the change in race relations would come gradually with no trouble.

JE: He did not like conflict, did he?

CJ: Not one bit. We remained friendly, but he didn't like it.

JE: By reading of him from this distance is that his heart was always in the right place, but that he would have waited 'til the cows came home for things to change on their own. Yet, most people finally came to realize that that would have been forever.

CJ: Well, we had a crippled sociologist, Rubert Vance. He was just the opposite. He was in a wheelchair all the time and had to be carried up, but he was strongly for us.

JE: Did he have infantile paralysis or something?

CJ: I guess it was.

JE: Because he was stooped over and couldn't walk. He was really wheelchair bound.

CJ: He was a good sociologist though.

JE: And he was a hard hitter on this subject. More so than Odum.

CJ: And there was another named Lee Brooks, equally so.

JE: Did you ever know W.T. Couch, who ran the press?

CJ: Yeah.

JE: Where was he on this issue?

CJ: He was a friend, but he didn't. . . .

JE: He kind of stayed in the background.

CJ: Yeah. We were just Charlie and Bill and so forth.

JE: Did you have any reading of how he felt about all of this?

CJ: I think he would play things safe, but would feel, wish he could do better.

JE: And what about Dr. Graham at that time?

CJ: Dr. Frank was at the United Nations at that time.



JE: No, this was in '47 when the bus incident happened. Do you remember him coming into that picture at all?

DJ: I know he offered for us to come stay at his house if we needed to. But his help, I don't remember, because I didn't get into things too much.

CJ: Well, I don't think he would want to put himself in a position forcing me to do something, trying to force me, because he always left me free.

JE: Well, that would have been a really tough one for him to have stepped into the middle of, that's for sure, because no matter what he said, if he got into that one publicly, somebody was going to jump right down his throat on that.

CJ: Well, the Board of Trustees ( ). They tried to get him once, I think, to cease some of his outside activities, saying he couldn't tend to things here, spread himself so far. But he was very persuasive. He had friends everywhere. I remember one student, a girl, who walked up town with a black fellow, and her father was a state assembly man. And they phoned him, somebody phoned him. So Dr. Frank heard it. He called the state senator up, and called him up.

JE: Kind of smoothed it over.

CJ: Well, I don't think he violated, to hide anything, but he tried to, persuasively. . . . [Interruption]

JE: Yeah, he was pretty good at it.

CJ: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: It was a couple of years later, I think, it must have been about '49 or '50 when Bayard Rustin and those people came back here for trial. That was a separate occasion.

CJ: The judge, I think, was Judge Hopkins.

JE: Do you remember that, Mrs. Jones?

DJ: Not much about it.

CJ: I remember this much. We went over to hear the trial, and some divinity school students from Duke went over there.

DJ: Was it heard in Durham or Chapel Hill?

CJ: It was in Chapel Hill.

JE: Was in Durham, was it?

CJ: I think it was, yeah, 'cause they were Duke students. They went in and read their Bibles 'cause he was asking people, somebody started reading the paper. Told them to get out. The court wasn't the place to read papers, but to try cases. So these fellows took the Bible [laughter].

JE: And started reading their Bibles.

CJ: They were divinity school students at Duke, and they just sat in court and read the Bible and wouldn't go out. So when the judge ( ) they were reading the Bible.

JE: And let it go. You said earlier that you had blacks who came to your church.

CJ: Not many.

JE: Would that have been back before this time? I mean, in the '40s did you ever have anybody black come to your congregation?

CJ: ( ) Yeah, before that I had some students from Payne College, which was black, come up and sing. ( ) was playing the organ.

DJ: How about Brevard?

CJ: Oh yeah, Brevard. And she was playing the organ, and one of the men in town who ran a store objected. He didn't want those "niggers" sitting up there with Miss Lillian. But he was an awfully good friend of ours.

JE: But by the time this incident came up, underneath all of the formal complaints of the Presbytery people, was some feeling that you were too liberal on the racial thing?

CJ: Yeah, but I would have to say now that they just differed with me. I would hesitate to say that that was the prevailing reason. See, because after all I did not. . . .

JE: They had other axes to grind with you?

CJ: Oh yeah, the confession of faith. I had majored in physics and minored in chemistry, and anybody who had to think like that, you know it can't be true. But you know why it was true, because at that point in time, they were trying to figure the best they could what things were. And you have to, in a sense, respect them for that because they haven't done what I call spade work. You can't come on later and ( ).

DJ: Did Floyd McKissick come to your church when he was student?

CJ: Yeah. Floyd McKissick was a law student. Dan Pollitt was a teacher.

JE: At where, at the University?

CJ: Yeah.

JE: Well, this would have had to have been after '52 or '53 because I don't think the University of North Carolina had a single black student until after 1954.

DJ: He was the first one whenever it was. Is that right, Chuck?

CJ: Yeah. There a professor here now who--I guess he was my big supporter here as a professor.

JE: Who was that?

CJ: Dan Pollitt, and he had brought, I think brought or at least let [McKissick] into the. . . .

JE: The Law School. Got McKissick into the Law School.

DJ: I don't remember when the ( ) school was here, but all their band members were black, and some of them used to come to church.

CJ: And then we had a couple of students.

JE: Would that have been during the war?

CJ: Yeah, and the students made friends and they came to supper.

JE: But that was time when the University was still tightly segregated, other than for these special programs.

DJ: Yeah, the band was all black, and they had to live down in the black community. They didn't stay up here.

CJ: But they had a white chaplain who was a jackass, and he just didn't want to hear that kind of stuff. Parson ( ) was a judge in Chicago.

JE: In March of '49, according to my reading, when that trial happened, Ruskin and the others, they got thirty days on the road gang. They were sentenced. Do you remember if they had to serve that time, or did they get probation? Do you recall if they actually went to jail?

DJ: I don't know. I know, because of that period, Bayard said something to the effect that Charles saved his life. Now, what he meant by that I can't remember. Don't know what happened.

JE: I imagine it was getting him out of jail.

DJ: But I just have forgotten.

JE: I'll check on that.

CJ: Bayard is dead now.

JE: Let me ask you a couple of other things, Mr. Jones. I've got a feeling that the University of North Carolina under Frank Graham was a kind of a liberal citadel, not just in the South but in the whole country, and that when he left here, or after he left here rather, this University slipped down a notch or two.

CJ: They got a business man for president.

JE: And all of the things that Frank Graham was the inspiration for, if not the instigator of, kind of dried up. Do you think that's a fair interpretation for me to apply.

CJ: I'd say so, wouldn't you?

DJ: I'm not sure everything dried up.

CJ: Well, a few professors could stick out as individuals and students from the class, but the power wasn't there.

JE: And it being the only University in the South that really was out there anywhere at all, doing any of this social change, after it sort of lost that power with his departure, then it was way on down the road, maybe another decade or more, before the universities became a factor in all of this at all. And likewise, the churches. If you go back and look at what people in churches were saying during the days of the Social Gospel in the '20s and early '30s, they talked a good game on race relations, but when the crunch came, they didn't play a good game. Would that be a fair assessment?

CJ: That's right. They would issue their papers and so forth, but there was no implementation for it. It was sort of like the Creed. If you repeat the Creed, you're okay.

JE: And then likewise the press, if you look at what newspaper were saying back in the early '30s, there was a lot of liberalism in the press. But by 1950, it was dead as a door nail.

CJ: Now, we had one great fellow here, ( ) Campbell. He was a reporter. He wouldn't go out on a limb, but the news got in the paper.

JE: Yeah. Did you know anybody, white or black, in those days who was going around saying in public, out loud, in print, or making speeches, saying, the problem we've got is Jim Crow, is segregation. And if we don't get rid of segregation, we're not going to be able to solve all these other problems we've got in the South. Thinking about the '40s now. Do you recall anybody you knew, who talked like that?

CJ: I don't believe I do. Wait a minute, was Bill Finlator here then?

DJ: I don't know.

CJ: We have now a fellow named Bill Finlator, and he most of the time spoke. He's the liberal preacher for everybody. And we get him.

DJ: He's a Baptist from Raleigh.

JE: How old is he?

DJ: Sixty something.

CJ: But I had Bill up here for me every time I could get him.

JE: He has a Baptist church in Raleigh?

CJ: He did. But that was at State College where he had the support of the people. I think you might make the point that the change in the South came mainly through faculties, black and white, educators.

JE: Academic people.

CJ: I don't know anywhere ( )

JE: As you look back on that period, '45, right after the war, up until the communist scare got started and everybody was all frightened by that, you know, there was about a five year period there when, it looks to me like, that was a kind of a golden opportunity that never got capitalized on. Does that seem that way to you?

CJ: Yeah, I think it's true, and I don't know why though. Except didn't everybody care. See, what I call the idealism of

the college was students. Students now are cheering football and baseball, and the heroes are the athletes.

JE: Wasn't so back then.

CJ: No. In fact, they had debating societies here in the University, and they just debated real controversial subjects.

JE: Do you think most people, white and black, kind of knew down in their gut in '48 or '9 or '50, that the South couldn't sustain a segregated society? That it had to change?

CJ: Yes, I think when Dr. King got into it, he got so many white friends and spoke in so many white places. He spoke here. He was a great organizer. I would put Dr. King as the man who broke it.

JE: So that means the mid-50s. That doesn't mean '48 or '51. It was really after Dr. King that it all really, the consciousness got raised.

CJ: There was another black educator, Dr. [Benjamin] Mays, at Morehouse College, and he was invited to all sorts of white functions and places, but he never, I don't think he ever ( )

DJ: I don't know.

CJ: Dorothy Mainer sang here and held a benefit concert for the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen. Her husband was president of ( ).

JE: Let's just take Buck, for example. You knew Buck Kester all through the '40s, didn't you, pretty much, all the times you were here? Did you think of him as being a white person who spoke out openly for an end to segregation or did he not do that?



CJ: No, I don't think he did. That wasn't his major concern. His concern was the land, farms. I'd say he did for that, what others did for segregation. See, 'cause I knew Buck real well, but it wasn't through segregation.

DJ: He did a lot for sharecroppers.

JE: You know, everybody used to say, "If the Yankees would just leave us alone, we could fix our own problems down here." How long do you think it would have taken the South to fix its own racial problem if it hadn't been for the federal court and black protest?

CJ: I think you'd have had a black uprising.

JE: Had a revolution?

CJ: Being quiet, that's called harassing. Because I don't think you could openly have a revolution because you'd have police against you, but you could harass people. I remember when we sometimes had children parade, they would get harassed by the whites. But you couldn't get them arrested. You can't get arrested for harassing.

JE: A lot of people in that time would say, "Well, the law says separate but equal, and we never have really done that. So what we need to do is to make it truly equal." Did you ever believe that separate could be made equal?

CJ: I don't think so. You see, sometimes a husband and wife would decide to do certain things separately and still be married. They would give over on it and forget about it because they cared for each other. I don't see how you can do that down the line.

JE: For the whole society.

CJ: With white couples, if they would say they were going to keep all their money and stuff separately, they can't do it even. I think the reason, and I think it probably grew out of, not only sociology but all the science, the universe is so bound together with earthworms needed to do this job, with chickens to crap off the pole and give us fertilizer for tomatoes. So it's interdependent. And the time comes if one of them is taken advantage of, somebody's independence is lost. You see?

JE: I see exactly what you mean. That pretty much covers what I wanted to ask you about. I'm really enjoying the search for answers in all of this, and I do feel as I go along that I'm getting a little surer grasp of what happened and how people felt about things and all.

CJ: It's pretty good if you can do that, because if you can see where you came from, you can see where you can go.

JE: I still am a little confused though about why that period of '45 to '50 didn't seem like more of a golden opportunity to people at the time. That they could do voluntarily and accomplish so much. That we went through twenty-five years of bloodshed to get to the very same place.

CJ: Yeah, but right in our own generation, we've got a guy named Jesse Helms. I call him a big, damn fool. He does more harm. He's got a ( ) brain, but he's stupid.

JE: Yeah. You know, I guess it's almost always impossible to see what your logic would inform you to do down the road, you have to almost get--Presbyterians have a name for it,

predestination, which means being able to look back and see why things worked out the way they did. It doesn't mean being able to sit down there and say here's what's going to happen.

CJ: Yeah. ( ) Presbyterians was when they say it, they didn't try to pick up and go somewhere else. Presbyterians were traditionally segregated.

JE: You think the Presbyterian or Baptist or Methodist Church as an institution has been a force for good in the march of social justice through American history?

CJ: Overall, yeah. But you take any particular period and you'd be stuck. And I guess that's true of everything, you can't pin progress on this and that.

JE: There are always too many factors.

CJ: I don't get confused because I don't worry that much about it. But there's so much that you can keep confused and tied up with. I preached a sermon one time on the meaning of life, and the essence of it was you couldn't know because it's a mystery.

JE: The farther I go the less I understand.

CJ: But if you don't understand where you've been, you can't go anywhere either.

JE: Yeah, that's true.

CJ: So the problem, I think, often is a failure of the will. They see and don't do.

JE: Yeah. You think that was the South's problem in 1945?

CJ: Pretty much, yeah.

JE: A failure of will. You hear a lot of people say, "Well, gosh, if I had known it was that bad, that people were really treated that way and all, I would have done something about that." But that's kind of like the Germans saying if they had known Hitler was such a bad guy, they would have. . . . It just isn't so, is it? It's a failure of will. We do know but we don't act.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

END OF INTERVIEW