

Keith Edwards

Tape 1

RG: This is Bob Gilgor interviewing Keith Edwards at the old Northside Elementary School on December 14, 2000. Good afternoon, Keith.

KE: Good afternoon.

RG: I want to start the interview by asking you a broad question. And that is, what was it like growing up in Chapel Hill? When did you grow up in Chapel Hill? I don't want to ask your specific age. And I'd like specifically to know about your parents.

KE: I was born in 1950. And I lived in Carrboro. And I had my mother and father. My mother and father, they both were cooks. And also housekeepers. And I grew up with 10 other brothers and sisters. And we attended public schools here. One was Northside Elementary School and the other was Lincoln High School. And as a small child growing up, entering Northside Elementary School, I was following behind my siblings, my older siblings, until as a child of five years old I just could not wait to get over here to Northside. And once I was here, I was assigned to a class, and the kids that I went to school with, from the first grade on, I was also in all their classes until I graduated from the sixth grade here at Northside Elementary School. So we had the same kids in each class, and you just remained with them. And by us remaining together, we formed a closeness, a closeness like brothers and sisters, like a kinship. We looked forward to being with each other every year. And so after I graduated from the sixth grade, all through my years, back to maybe four years old, I had been preparing myself to attend Lincoln High School.

RG: Before we get on to Lincoln, what was the size of your classes, and can you tell me about your teachers at Northside?

KE: Well, at Northside, we had teachers, I think it was maybe 20 or 25, it could have been maybe about 25 kids in the class. And it was cold in the building, we had heat, but we had radiator heaters and if you know anything about radiator heaters, they don't put out a whole lot of heat, especially if you're in a damp and old building. And so we were kind of cool in the winter and we just roasted in the summer because no one had air conditioning then. And we only had one fan in the school, and that fan was placed near the teacher's desk. The teacher kept cool. And all we could do was keep our windows open, and we used to take our notebook paper and make our big fans. And we would fan all day, just trying to keep cool. We had lessons in the mornings and we had recess in the morning. Then we went back and had more lessons and then we went to lunch. As a matter of fact we went down this hallway since we had the old Northside Elementary School building, we went down the hallway and we took a right turn and then we went down to the cafeteria. And we had lunch, and after lunch we came back and then we went back to more lessons, and then in the afternoon we had another recess where we went outside. Now we went outside, the only time we didn't go outside was when it was raining. Or sleeting. But we did go out in the snow. Also, during the summer months, we went out in what we called recreation, outside. Sometime we played what we called

dodgeball, [] different activities outside, give the kids a chance to get outside. Then we would come back inside the building, more lessons, and then when the bell rings it's time for us to go home.

And as I was growing up, everything was in its place, and everything came in its time. But I mean by that is, talking about our meals, through the week, Monday through Friday, you may eat anything. You may eat some beans, piece of bread, [] or something of that nature. Having a large family, you couldn't afford to eat chicken and stuff every night. You just couldn't do it. So anyway, you may eat anything - pork and beans and weiners and all that during the week. And on Friday, that was a special day in the black community also, cause all you could smell was fish. Everybody had fish on Friday. So when school was out on Friday we couldn't wait to get home, and we'd run to Hargraves and play a little while, which was the Roberson Street Center, community center at the time. Not Hargraves Center. But we called it the Roberson Street Community Center and we all went there and we played, and then everybody ran home to get their fish. Sometimes you would have sauerkraut with it, or cabbage, and you just expected that every Friday, even during the winter months. You had it, and you could smell it all over the community, no matter what street you went on. You could just smell it frying everywhere, Cabbage, fish... But we had that, and so that was referred to as everything had its time and its place.

Now on Saturday lot of times we had pork and beans and weiners, or may even have had pinto beans, and [], home made biscuits. On Sundays, no matter what you ate six days a week, Sunday was going to be your special meal. And you only had maybe milk or either water to drink, you know, with your meals, on the first six days, but on Sunday you had kool-aid. It was a treat. Sunday was a treat. It was a special day, and it was a family day. And every family spent time with each other. Mother, father, children, that was your day. It was mandatory that you go to church, you went to Sunday school, you went to church, and after church, you know, sometimes we'd go by and get us some ice cream, and then we would come home, and then we would have that fabulous meal.

And after we had our meal, then the kids in the community they would all get together. They would either just go walking or they would go to the community center. And most of the time Community Center was not open on Sunday. But that didn't stop the kids from going there. We just went, and we had our own balls, our own bats, and it was something for us to do. But still our parents would not have to worry about our whereabouts because we knew where to go. You knew your limits. And that was one of the places you could go. The other place we went was sometimes Morehead Planetarium. Sometimes they had some things going on. But that was allowed on Sundays.

So you just had specific places you went, and that did not give your parents any cause for alarm. Even though, at the time, there was some things that were goin' on, you know some bad things, or sometimes you were out at night and you may see a group of white males that may not have anything better to do than harassing someone. To avoid that, you always just walked in groups and all. And they very seldom did it to small children, but, you know -

RG: That's why you walked in groups to school?

KE: Well, you felt safe because you was in your own community. You didn't have to worry about that. It's just whenever you went outside of your community. You have to always have that in the back of your mind. It's just like there's something that's taught to you from the womb, and after you get out of the womb it's taught to you every day. And so when you get of age, like I'm sayin', that you realize you can talk, you realize what's right and wrong. That's all in your mind, so you know what to do, with the program. If you're on the sidewalk, [] in Carrboro, if you're on the sidewalk, and a white person's approaching you from the other direction, or behind you, to avoid a confrontation, because you didn't know what type of behavior this white person had, if they had any type of racist views or whatever, you had no way of knowing that right offhand. The proper thing to do to avoid a confrontation, my parents taught us, is to stop and let 'em pass. Let 'em have the sidewalk. If it's not enough room for you to do that, that you have to step in the street. It avoids a confrontation, especially if you are male, and a white female is coming. Because at that time, all the white people had to do was scream or say something, say that you said something to them. And if that happened, then you just didn't have a prayer. It was your word against her word, and back then in the 40s to 60s they believed her. So you were taught little things right from a child. And that kept you out of a whole lot of you know, let's say, irksome situations. Situations that you didn't even have to worry about if you just stayed in your place.

RG: Did you have eye contact with the white people when you'd be out on the streets? Is that something you were taught?

KE: Well now, I was not taught not to have any eye contact. I mean, you could look at 'em, you know, it's up to you. But I really didn't, because these people were not a part of my world. And I knew they were just passing through because they had to pass my house sometime to get where they wanted to get. You know, if they were walking. Because they walked through the black community untouched. No one harassed them or said anything. It's just that, we used to have a little joke whenever you crossed the railroad track, whether you was goin' to Carrboro, like out by Kentucky Fried Chicken, if you go that way across that railroad track, you gonna have some problems. Because a lot of your low income whites lived out in that area. And Carrboro at the time was known for, well it had a reputation of having some racist people then. But I don't think it was so much being racist as being poor. As being in the same economic standards as many of the blacks. Because there was some blacks who lived in Carrboro who lived better than some of the poor whites there.

RG: Was there a social stratus among the local black community, or an economic stratus, or did everyone mix in?

KE: Well you see the thing is, you know, I made a mistake one time when I gave an interview way back, I think it was 1987-88, I told the reporter who was talkin' to me, he asked me how I grew up and I told him I was poor. And then after I got home I got to thinkin' about it, thinkin' about it, and I said no, I was never poor. Because I had a mother, I had a father, they loved me very much, and they were miracle workers. Because they made

things happen that should not have happened, but somehow they pulled it off. And plus I had a loving community. Everywhere I went, it doesn't matter if it was someone else's mother or someone else's father, they were my mother and father too. Or somebody else's grandmother, aunt, uncle, they were all a part of my family, including teachers, ministers - it didn't matter if they didn't teach me or if the ministers were not a minister of my church. They were a part of my life, and when you have all of that, you can never be poor. Material-wise, you know, we didn't have a lot of material things, but you had everything else to sustain you and to help prepare you for life. Now that was greater than anything else, any gift anyone could have given me, was to help prepare me for life. Because the same rules and regulations that my parents laid down, these same rules followed me wherever I went. Because the grownups at that time, they demanded respect and they demanded to be treated the same way as your parents and your father, and so they were actually your guardians when you were away from your parents.

RG: You were raised by the community.

KE: Raised by the community. Oh, absolutely. Because I've gotten spankings from, you know, other kids' parents and, you know, any time the grownups saw you doing anything, if they didn't like it, they would let your parents know. And the parents were very appreciative of it. Because they couldn't beat the kids every five or ten minutes, and the thing is that when your parents laid down the law and said this is how you're supposed to behave, you do not act up when you leave this house. And if you did and someone told them, well you got a spanking. You knew how to act next time you left the house. And the worst thing you could ever do is show off on your parents in public. You never did that. Never. Usually they would just look at you and this would be a look. And the look would almost, it makes you wanta just stop breathing. You know, you just stop in your tracks, and the look was enough.

But if you went beyond something, and they had already given you one look, then you know it was a spanking. Even if you were in church. If you were in church, and they all looked back and gave you that look like, all right, I'm giving you a warning. The eyes is a warning. So if you kept it up and got caught again, you went outside the church and everybody knew why you was going outside, and you got your bottom spanked right outside the church. Everybody heard you, and my mother would give us like a little kleenex or something, wipe your face, blow your nose, and go back in church. And you went right back in church. And she didn't sit you down with her. She sat you right back where you were and then []. But that's how it was. And you can see the parents take their kids out, bang their behinds and then - but it was normal. Normal procedure.

And I talk to some of my girlfriends now and some of my other friends who I went to school with and oh wow, they talkin' about child abuse and all of this, I said we wouldn't have had any parents in the black community with the laws that they have out now were out then. Even the white parents. Because I notice in Carrboro the discipline of white kids at that time, those on the lower end. They were brought up the same way I was brought up. Their parents expected the same respect and everything like that. And so we had that in common. You could see it in grocery stores, you could see it anywhere you went that blacks and whites were together. And I saw it more so from the whites who

lived in Carrboro than I did when I moved up here in Chapel Hill.

RG: Did you have much interaction with the white community, did you have white friends, or only Northside -

KE: Well, we had friends that, we used to go out, since we lived in Carrboro, we used to go and we used to play in what we called the rockpile. What that really is is the University of North Carolina they have a train that comes by, and they would bring them gravel, coal, sand, and they would put it down in what we called Tintop. That's down in the Carr Court. You probably saw it. It's over there on your left after you pass the railroad tracks. Anyway, all the kids used to go down there and play in that. And so, there were some times when black and white kids played together, and it didn't matter to us. Then, we got ready to go home, they went to their community and we went to ours. But we played together like we didn't have a care in the world. Everything was fine.

But we found that it was not fine, everything was not all right, because the parents didn't see it that way. And so we were brought up not to be prejudiced. We were brought that, look, you're just as good as the next person. And you can work hard and you can make it in life. There would be people who would tell you that you can't, but you can. It's up to you. And you never let the color of your skin pull you back from anything that you want to do. Now that's how my parents brought us up. And many of my relatives, my aunts, grandmothers and people like that brought us up the same way. Because we were in the black community and we felt, well, we were never really gonna leave the black community, and then we had our own schools, we had our own stores, our cafes, restaurants. We had transportation, which were, we had cabs that ran, local cab companies that ran. And so we really had everything that we needed right here in the black community, and even though we had Northside Elementary School, we also had Lincoln High School. You could succeed, because the teachers were always on you. Always. Always.

RG: That's another thing. I would love you tell me about the teachers at Northside.

KE: Now the teachers at Northside, now my teachers, they would split the room up, you may have some kids who were accelerated, you know, learned pretty fast. And then you have some who were in that little second row, and then you have some in the third row. And they kind of put like how what the speed were, of the learning of the child.

RG: So you had tracking.

KE: Well, it was sort of like tracking, but you all did the same work. But you may have spent just a little bit more time with some others. But during that day everybody learned the same thing. You all learned the same thing. And, but everybody had to learn. There was no excuse for not learning. You were going to learn. Nobody was dumb, everybody could learn. And so that's how the teachers they taught us. Now Frances Hargraves, she went beyond that. Frances Hargraves' thing was you give me a child and I'll teach that child. If everybody else give up on this child, say this child can't learn, I can teach the child if you give me the child. I can teach that child. But so that's how I learned, was in the

classroom, even if I might not have understood something. I knew that the teacher was going to help me to understand it. And there may be some who understood it and they may move on to the next lesson, or they may move on to the next four or five questions because they got it, they know what they're doin'. And then she would spent time on the other ones catchin' them up. But we all accelerated and moved at the same time. So it's not like, they might have been on - I had one lesson plan for everybody. She would not give them another lesson plan, and let them move on ahead of the class. She kept everybody together, and by you keepin' everybody together like that, everybody was learning together. There may be some who couldn't quite keep up, but she made sure that they kept up, as a group. And so it may have taken us just a little bit longer to deal with the lesson plan that you had with us, but she made sure that everybody was up together before she moved on.

And then you had homework every day. When you got home it was mandatory to do your homework. You did your homework before you ran out to play or whatever. Of course when we left school we were ready to play. We was tired of school, but it was just mandatory, you did your homework. And then sometimes if your parents had time they would look over your homework. If not, your older siblings were responsible for looking at your homework. You just moved on down the line. I had older brother and sisters, and so they had already gone through what I had to go through. And so they would help me with mine and then I would help my youngsters sisters who come in behind me. And so that's just the way it went.

Your older sisters and brothers, they were actually responsible for you when your parents were not at home. They acted as your parents. But if a situation got out of control, then you went to a neighbor. And when you went to a neighbor, the neighbor stepped in as your parents. Then when the neighbor came over, she'd tell you what to do or he'd tell you what to do, you did that. You did exactly what they told you to do. If you were fightin' one another or whatever and they come over and they break you up or whatever and they tell you to sit down, they may spank both of you, or whatever. Whatever it took, they did. And that's why I say parents really truly didn't need babysitters back then because they had built-in babysitters if you had older children and younger children, plus you had everybody in the community cause a kid could have went to any home back then if they had a problem. Nobody shut the door on them. Everybody's door was open. But you had some families that felt more comfortable with, if you had a problem. And you go where you feel comfortable.

RG: Did the teachers live in the community?

KE: Yes they did.

RG: Most of them? All of them?

KE: Well as a matter of fact, my aunt, she had a home and she rented some rooms to teachers, right back here, right behind the school. And yes, R.D. Smith, as long as I've known him, and I'm fifty years old, he's always been on Caldwell Street. Ed Caldwell, his family's always been on Caldwell Street. Frances Hargraves has always been on

Caldwell Street, and you know that Caldwell Street is the same street the school is on. But our ministers, our teachers, principals, everybody lived in the same community.

RG: So they knew your families.

KE: They knew your family, they grew up with them. They grew up with them, they played together, we were just very very close-knit. Because like I said, everything you needed was in the black community. But by having your teachers and medical people right here in your community, it showed you what you could do. You were not confined to just being just anybody. You could be somebody if you really wanted to, and still live in the black community. But this is where we all lived.

Now Northside, we would have what you call a science fair, and we had, for Hallowe'en we would a big Hallowe'en party. We also had plays, we would, each class sometimes would give a program. And this would be during the day, during school. And we also had after-school activities that included our parents and all. The thing I remember the most, coming up in the black community, the black community supported the schools, not only financially, but they also supported the schools by parents having involvement in the children's schooling.

RG: So they had a strong PTA?

KE: Strong PTA, and I mean, strong parent-teacher relationship. Because the last thing a student wanted was for the teacher to pin a note to them and they have to take it home to the parents. Cause they know the parents are going to react to that. And it's not that the parent went straight to the child and said look, you know how to act, blah blah blah. The parents would talk to the teacher and would get the whole story. And if a child just had bad behavior in class, that was not tolerated. It was not tolerated from the teacher, the principal, nor the parents. Because at the time, as we used to call it, corporal punishment, they used to pop your hands on the knuckles. With a ruler, or a yardstick. Or they took you behind the chalk board, pop you on your knuckles. But, or either they had a paddle, and they'd spank you with a paddle. But the thing is, you got another one when you got home. Because a teacher or a principal had ??that followed you. It was really just no way out for a child back then. You really truly had to behave and you had to have a spanking. It was mandatory. It's like I said, it's from the womb. They're talkin to you while you're in the womb, say look before you get out, these are the rules. When you get out, they're still talkin to you about the rules. Like I say when you get out and you're talking, and you're able to walk and all, you know what the rules are.

RG: So you had this wonderful, warm, caring society and school here, and where were you going to go to school when you finished sixth grade?

KE: Like I said, ever since probably about five years old I'd just dream and dream and dream about going to Lincoln because Lincoln was just like electricity. The school was so vibrant and had so much, it's just kind of hard to explain it, but it was so alive. And it used to just beat like a drum. And it connected with everybody in the community, I guess it was something like way back over from Africa, where you beat the drums and

everybody could communicate that way. So Lincoln was like that. All it was was a building, but the people filled the building and the type of things that they did inside the building in bringing people together and bringing the community together, it was a drumbeat that became the heartbeat of the black community because that's what everybody centered around. Even though the elementary school, it was beatin' too, but it was a slow beat, because it was a slow beat, because it was preparing you for Lincoln, where you would get the rest of your training, your education, and Lincoln prepared you for life. For what you were going to have to face in life.

And so when I graduated sixth grade I was so excited I was just beyond myself, because I knew I was going to Lincoln. And when I was told I was not going to be able to go, that was one of the greatest blows. I never ever felt such pain as I felt as I was told I could not go. And then when they told me where I was going, actually, I was a child who had never faced death before and I thought that was what I was facing, or either death would have been better. It's just like telling you not to breathe. I'm not going to be able to breathe any more. Because I'm not going to Lincoln. And Lincoln was where I wanted to go. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of my older siblings. And Lincoln is where they went, and they came home and they talked about the teachers, principal, and things they did at school. And they would even mimic some of the teachers, like the principal, Mr. McDougle, they would just say, "Well, you know..." That's what he usually started off with, and I just couldn't wait to get there to see this famous person. Even though I would see him in the community, and I even went to school from the first to the sixth with his son, his only son. But that was not the same as actually going in the building and seeing him walk around in his domain, and just seeing for myself the things that the kids used to say about him. And the teachers and all, cause they talked about the teachers too.

And I wanted to see how they built the floats, because they used to have floats that they built in the parades, whenever we had a homecoming parade for the school, and I wanted to be there with the athletes – football, basketball – I wanted to be a majorette, but, well, I was so small back then I knew I would never make it, but I said well, maybe I could be in the band. But my heart was in being a majorette, and as a child in grammar school we used to go to the Christmas parade, and we would go to the homecoming parade, and Lincoln participated in both. It was like the whole town would just turn out for Lincoln High School's band.

RG: White and black.

KE: White and black. Just lined up the street. I mean, we could have a Christmas parade, but everybody is waitin' on Lincoln's band.

RG: What was so good about Lincoln's band?

KE: Because when they came by the kids, they just, what they call today, they just threw down. You never saw such high-steppin', everybody so proud, and you could look all up and down the line in the street, blacks and whites alike, they were so proud, these were *our* kids. Nobody made a difference, these are black kids. Whites are so proud of them, blacks are proud of them. But to the black community they represented all of us,

because they came from us. Parents there are so proud of the kids in the band, and all the floats are doin' whatever. Everybody doin' something positive. And so when watch them, you wanted to be like them. Even white kids wanted to be like them. I heard white kids tellin' me I would give anything to be in that band. But they knew because of the racial barriers, parents wouldn't allow it, students wouldn't allow it either. And so, it was kind of like a dream of theirs too, that they really wanted to be out there, because the high school band, the white high school band would come through, but they would play with nothing extra. And so everybody was cranin' their necks and all, you could hear it, blacks and whites were standin' on both sides of the street, standin' with each other. You might have had majority white over here, majority black over here, but you saw bits and pieces, and everybody just waitin' on one thing. Waitin' on that Lincoln band.

And when they came, everybody screamin' and hollerin', the excitement. And our teachers over here in Northside, the told us, "I don't wanta catch none of you all following behind the band." This is like tellin' you not to breathe or cut off your legs. I mean you couldn't, you had to. I had my little baton, I had my little white boots, like the majorettes had and all, and so I was ready. The kids in the community, they were ready. If you didn't have your little baton, then you had a stick. And you just twirl it. So when the band came, they would do dances that we would do, what you call social dances, that we did at Hargraves Center whenever we had parties and things. They would break out doing some of those dances so everybody up and down the line was doing the dances with them. And when the band got ready to pass you, everybody was following the band. Now we used to follow the band right up where they have Michael Jordan's restaurant. It used to be a Belk store, department store used to be there.

Now I would start followin' the band from that moment on. And so if this was Homecoming, they would go, come on down Franklin Street, and then they would cut and go on down Merritt Mill Road and go back to Lincoln. So I followed behind the band; some of the other kids in the community, we had our little batons, just struttin', but we did everything the band did. And that was a highlight of our lives when we were growin' up, when we was in elementary school, is to get behind that band. So we got behind the band and we marched with em, and we knew we were gonna get it the next day in school – we didn't care. Just struttin' – I got to do this. It was something you had to do. So we would follow them back to the school, and then you would see people hugging each other and all. Parents huggin', and so proud. It was just a proud moment. The entire community was proud.

And then we would have the game. It would be on a Friday. And then we would go out to Carrboro, cause that's where we had the ballfield at that time. They had it out on, what is the name of the street? It's behind the fire department, out in Carrboro. I don't know if that's Fidelity Street, or, no, it's not Fidelity Street, but anyway, right there behind the Fire Department in Carrboro, tryin' to think what is the name of those apartments that – there's the Fire Department and then you have a couple houses, and then you have all of these apartments sittin' over there to the left. And you even have a cleaners out there. But all of that was the ballfield. And so we all would rush home to get ready because we're goin' to the ball game. And so everybody in the community was there. Everybody. Even if you didn't have enough money or you couldn't spare the money and you should

be buyin' food, because like I said, there's eleven in my family. But we all were goin'. And my mother and father went. If my mother didn't go, then my father went and he would take us all. If we were old enough, we would walk. But you always walked, everybody was going, so you all just walked together. So excited, and so getting' back to it, even if you could not afford it, we would really eat anything that week, just so that we could go to the ball game on that Friday.

And so when you went, you had two sides. You had the visitors side and then you had the home team side. On the visitors side there was just as many whites, that lived in Carrboro and Chapel Hill, on the visitors side. They came to see Lincoln, came to see Lincoln play, came to see their team. And when you have two black bands, I mean two black teams, and you're gonna have two black bands. And so what it was was once they got on the field it was a competition, which band was the best. And so Lincoln always tried to be the best because we was at home. So you had the blacks on one side, and you had whites and the other visiting team on that other side. So like I said, the whites in the community, they came out. But they was on one side, you were on the other side. But that night everybody forgot about bein' black and white. Because everybody was there to see Lincoln's band, and so, and they really put on a good football game. Cheerleaders were good, the bands were good. Everybody was just so happy. And then, when it was over, we were all proud. Even if we lost. Everybody went to hug the players and all. Parents said no, it's ok, we got another day. The whites did the same thing. But they'd never miss a game.

RG: Well what was so good about the Lincoln High School football team that everybody in the town.

KE: It's not really the football team, not really the band. It was the school itself, that electricity, it just kind of like got you involved. It's livin' without electricity, and you had to do everything with candles, and all of that. But when Lincoln band came on, you could see everything. Everything was all lit up. And everybody was lit up. But they were lit up inside. That's why I say that Lincoln got to be the heartbeat of the black community. Also the heartbeat for Chapel Hill and Carrboro. It was the school, it was the team, that everybody could be proud of. Everybody put their differences aside when it came time for Lincoln's football team to go out there and play. You had a bigger crowd at the black games than you did at the white games. Because the white kids.

RG: Where were the white games?

KE: I think they played on Thursdays. But then we played the day after them. But ours was just jam-packed.

RG: And Chapel Hill High School and Franklin Street, their football game -

KE: Well they played at the same location, but you know your whites went. But you very seldom had any blacks, not unless it was blacks who worked there in the field. Cleanin' up or concession stand or whatever. That's about all that you saw, but when we went to play, you had both.

RG: Why don't we stop here? I know you have to go. If we could meet again sometime soon
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KE: Anytime.

RG: I'd like to go on to hear more about Lincoln High School and also where you went to junior high and high school, and what it was like for you. Thank you.

RG: This is Bob Gilgor interviewing Keith Edwards at Northside School on December 19, 2000. Hi, good afternoon, Keith.

KE: Good afternoon.

RG: I'd like to start here with your view of what Lincoln High School was like, once more.

KE: Well, like I said, Lincoln High School to me was like the heartbeat of the black community. Sayin' that is because everything revolved around that school. Five days a week school was open, and that is where a majority of the black kids went, that was of age to go to that school. And there was always talk from the students when they got out of school, and they talked about teachers, talked about events that happened in the school that day, and it was just electrifyin' to me as a small child. I wanted to be a part of that. And to me it was almost like my birthright, that after I finished Northside Elementary School, grammar school, I would automatically go to Lincoln High School. And so, I was being prepared for my transition to the high school from the fifth grade on. And so, I don't know, it was just like having the school, I could breathe, I could be a person. Because I felt an ownership to that school, because that's where all my siblings went, and that's where many things in the community happened, right there in that school.

And so knowing that after I completed the sixth grade I was gonna be able to go there, which was a lifetime dream for a child, to me is like unto a person bein' in a cocoon, like a butterfly. You start off that way, and that's what the black community represented to me, and also Lincoln. Once I was in a cocoon here in Northside Elementary School, and when I thought I was gonna go into Lincoln, Lincoln would have been the place for me to come out of the cocoon and become a butterfly. And also with the nurturing and the community-like atmosphere that Lincoln portrayed, it would help me fly. But it would help fly in the right direction that I needed to fly, living in the type of society that I was livin' in at that time. You could have wings, and you could grow those wings from anywhere. But if you grow your wings from the right place you can always fly right.

But, since I didn't get to go to Lincoln, I came out of the cocoon and I ended up comin' out as a butterfly with weakened wings. I didn't have enough room room to fly when I went to an all-white school. I was the only person in my class of color. I remember sittin' in the back of the classroom away from the other students as if I might contaminate them. Now, coming from a world where you're loved, you're cherished, you're protected, you had security, it was like bein' in a foreign country. But it should not have been, because this was a part of my country too. But I was just in a place where people did not want me

to be, and where I did not want to be. So you see goin' in, as a butterfly, and with weak wings, no one helped me strengthen my wings to fly. I would have gotten that from Lincoln High School. But I did not get it. So without the support that I would have gotten if I had gone to Lincoln High School, an all-black school, I had to develop my wings on my own. And sometimes the road was, well, my wings were weighted down very, very heavy. Sometimes I didn't want to fly.

But in those days you did what your parents told you to do. My parents told me to go to that school, because I was gonna get a better education. Now that's what was in their minds. I was going to get a better education. But education alone does not make a person. You have to have the nurturing, you have to have the right ingredients in order for you to get a real education. And so I got a different education than the one that I thought that I was gonna receive. And so I made the best of the situation that I was in. And looking back on my life, I don't think I, I don't think, to this day, that I am able to fly the way that I would have been able to fly if I had some time at Lincoln, and that atmosphere.

And so therefore, you're lookin' at a person who has a void that can not be filled. Even after all these years, I'm fifty years old now. When I pass Lincoln School, I get teary-eyed because of the loss. The sense of loss. It's almost like losing someone very close to you. A family member. A death. And that's the only way I can describe it, how I feel. Now there are many other students, black students, who went to the all-white school that may not feel that way. But I had dreamed and dreamed and you know, my hopes, my desires, everything was just wrapped up in going to Lincoln. And when that did not happen, it changed me. I was a very angry person, because I did not get to go. I was angry at my parents, but I could not show it. And after the first day in the seventh grade, when I went to Chapel Hill Junior High, I came home and I came right over here, Northside, it's a big rock to the left of us, out there on that empty field

End of tape 1, side 1.

Tape 1, Side 2

KE: Well I sat on the rock. It's still out there. It's there today. And I just cried. I just let it all out, just like a broken child. And I couldn't understand what was happening. All I wanted to do was go to Lincoln. I wanted to feel the electricity going through my body. I wanted to feel what my sibling felt, and what my friends, and I just wanted to feel it. Even if it was just for one day. Just one day. But I didn't get to feel that, and so I cried that day, and I have cried many days since, just wishin' that that would have come true for me. But it didn't all through the years. Somehow I just thought that maybe the eighth grade I might get a chance to go. Or maybe if I cut up in school, I might get kicked out of Chapel Hill Junior High, and then I'd get to go to Lincoln. But that didn't happen. The first day of school when I went, the principal told me, he said "You're here, you cannot go to Lincoln High School. Get it in your head. This is the school you're gonna go to." Because I cried all day. And he told me if I did anything towards a white student or a teacher, anything disrespectful, if I touched them physically or said anything to harm them mentally then I would not be able to go to Chapel Hill city schools at all. I would have have to go to another county to go to school. And that is what is what he told me.

RG: Did he tell that to everyone? Or was it just -

KE: I don't know because I was having a hard time.

RG: So they sent you to the principal's office because you were -

KE: Well, I went straight there when I came in, because I didn't even want to go in the school. Oh no. I wanted nothing to do with that. Because I was being taken out of what I call a safe, secure environment, and I was being put in an environment what I'd been taught all my life, not to be prejudiced, but to avoid confrontations, just ignore these people. Pretend they're not there. So here I am, seventh grader, and now I have to deal with these people every day, when I didn't have to used to deal with them at all. Just my parents. And the only time *they* dealt with them was when they went to work. When they got home, after work, they went right back in their safe, comfortable, secure environment. They did not have to deal with whatever was out there. You know, for another, what, sixteen hours or so, until it was time to go back to work. But I had to deal with it in the classroom, in a different setting thn what they had to deal with. They dealt with employment. I dealt with tryin' to get an education with people who did not want me there, who did not care whether I learned or not, and even the students themselves tried to prevent me from learning by the physical abuse and the mental abuse.

RG: How did they show physical and mental abuse?

KE: By spittin' on me. Trippin' me, or, I had one ear, I used to take my lunch, because we couldn't, I guess we were over their limit for free lunch. And so, you know from my family, we had eleven kids, I mean, you really had to be without to get free lunch and all. Well anyway, that was in the black school. Now when I got to this other school, Chapel Hill Junior High, I noticed some white kids who lived in Carrboro, and they were getting free lunch. But I was not able to get it, even though I knew that they had a little bit more income coming in than my family, so there was a disparity between black students receiving free lunch and white students receiving free lunch.

But anyway I had my lunch in my desk. We had a little basket at the bottom of your chair, your desk. So I had it sittin' there with the rest of my books. Unbeknownst to me, someone had tampered with my lunch. It was in a bag. When I got to the cafeteria, and we had a table that's where the majority of the blacks sat. We just had our own little table, because you really didn't mingle out with the other students. Now some did, maybe one or two blacks did, they were black males. But they were sittin' with other males, like white males. So anyway, when I got to the cafeteria and sat down, and I took my sandwich out, and I was talking and wasn't paying attention, and I was getting ready to bit in my sandwich, and one of the guys sittin' at the table said wait a minute, there's some legs stickin' out of that sandwich. Somebody had removed my baloney that I had in my sandwich, and they put in a dissected frog. Well, after a while you expected things like that to happen. You were not afraid anymore. It's almost like, this is it, you're gonna have to accept this. They don't want you here, you don't wanta be here yourself, so whatever comes, you just have to deal with it on a daily basis. Because you didn't know

what was going to happen, and you couldn't be on your guard all the time.

RG: Was it that way your whole first year?

KE: Oh absolutely, I mean, it went on. Not just first year. Stuff like that just went on probably until I got to high school, when Chapel Hill High School was built. See, when I finished at Guy B. Phillips 7th, 8th and 9th, well, 8th and 9th grade I was at Guy B. Phillips. Chapel Hill Junior High, I was there the 7th grade. They built Phillips and then my class moved there. After I finished the 9th grade, I went back to Chapel Hill High School on Franklin Street. You had the same basic kids and all. You had more blacks in school, but Lincoln was still open. So in the 11th grade, we went out to the new school. I think it was 66, well, they consolidated the schools. They closed Lincoln. That is the only time that I noticed that some of the mental abuse stopped.

RG: When you went to the new high school.

KE: No, when they closed Lincoln, and the schools were consolidated.

RG: Wasn't that when you started at Chapel Hill High School?

KE: Right, now when I started at Chapel Hill High School, you just had mental stuff, you didn't have the physical stuff. You know, cause I had been there so long

RG: The one Franklin Street –

KE: Right, well I had been with the white students from the 7th grade, and here we the 10th grade, and then we went to the 11th grade. So ok, when we got to the 11th grade, a lot of the bickering and stuff like that is kinda stopped. You still had some prejudice, you still had people may call you a nigger or darkie or something like that, but by that time it was just passin' words that bounced off of you. You looked at these people being ignorant people, you laugh, all this time, all these years they're still at it. All right now, but when Lincoln closed, and the schools were consolidated, that stopped. And the reason that stopped was because for the first time since the 7th grade, whites had to reckon with the blacks comin' to school. It was no longer just their school. It was everybody's school. They had to deal with the angry students comin' out of Lincoln High School, especially the senior class.

RG: Before you get into that, I wanted to ask you, you said that you were an angry person when you started 7th grade at Chapel Hill Junior High.

KE: Yes.

RG: How did you handle that anger? What did you do with it?

KE: Well, my mother, you know, you were programmed from life to do what your parents told you to do. You didn't question it, you just did it. And then programmed like that, knowin' my parents were not goin' to change their minds about me goin' to this school,

I had to deal with it. My parents were that way. They would put you in situations where you had to think for yourself and you had to do for yourself. Because there was no guarantee that they were always going to be around. So you had to learn, and some things you had to learn on your own. And that was just my parents way. So in that situation, they knew what I was going through.

But as my mother told me one day, "If your ancestors could sit around in a village, and everything's going just fine and everybody's happy, till all of a sudden you have a collar around your neck, you're put in chains, you're frightened, you don't know what's goin' on. Never happened to your before. You see all these strange people. You see strange boats. You're even frightened of the boat, because you've never seen one that big. And they were taken from their environment, put down in the hold of the ship, with other people there, everybody cryin', everybody wondering why God has forsaken them. And dthey're in the boat, they're comin' across the ocean, not knowing where they're going, whether they're going to live or die, just enough food to barely keep them alive. You're down in a dark, damp hold, stinking with people's feces and people getting sick, dying. And they had to face all of that, and they came to America. Strange land, strange food. They were made victims of white masters. They had to carry children that they did not want to carry. But they carried children. They had to watch their kids sold off, their husbands, their everything, and if they can endure that, surely you can endure this. You are really, truly not going through anything.

RG: That's quite a lesson.

KE: So she told me that, and my answer then, and you know, you didn't try to be smart-aleck or make comments back to your parents when they were telling you something, and I said to my mother, "Let them go. Let them go to school." I was desperate. I just did not want to go. I don't think anyone at that time, any grown-up at that time, could understand that I had a dream, I had dreamt that dream for so long, and I thought it was just automatic that I was going to fulfill that dream by going to the school, Lincoln. And that was the hardest thing for me to deal with, is to accept the fact that I was not going to ever go. The only way that I was ever going to go to Lincoln was by attending some type of event that was held by the other kids. I was just not going to be a direct part of that environment.

RG: Did you know the teachers at Lincoln?

KE: Oh yes, yes. Well see, some of these teachers lived right in your neighborhood, and plus my older siblings talked about them all the time. And they were active in the community also. They went to your churches and they were just everywhere. That's why I say you had security because you had everything you needed right in your community. And the only time that you went outside of your community is when you really had. If when you went to the grocery store, if you went for some type of socializing like Morehead Planetarium or Rose's or Belks. That was outside of your environment but you didn't mind because you knew you was going back to yours. And it took me a long, long time to understand why my parents and many other people back in the day was able to suffer in silence when they left the black community and they went out on their jobs,

and whatever prejudice they met everyday, grocery stores or wherever, they could deal with that because as soon as they left that environment, they was goin' somewhere where they did not have to deal with that. They were goin' home. And that's what the black community was, it was home. Real home to ya. Like Dorothy wantin' to get back to Kansas, that's what the black community was. You had to get back at any cost.

RG: Let's go back to where we were afore I interrupted you, and you said that when the new Chapel Hill High School was integrated, the black males were angry.

KE: Well, all of them were angry. Most of the kids who came from Lincoln were angry, because they closed the school. You took away a part of their life, a life they have had for so many years, and they expected for Lincoln to always be there. Lincoln was your stepping stone to introduce you to life, real life. And when you graduated from Lincoln, you was ready to face the society that you had to live. You was ready. But many blacks who went to Lincoln, especially the males, they either went to the military or they got a job or they went on to college. This was almost like mandatory that you do something, because it was drilled in your head from here to Northside, you have to get an education. If you don't get an education, favorite line the teachers had, your gonna be diggin ditches. And back then anybody could dig ditches. And what they meant by that, gravedigger. That's all you're gonna be doin' is diggin' somebody's grave, you go out, you dig up the dirt, and they drop a body. It doesn't take education or anything to do that. And so they always told you that. You have to do your schoolwork. You don't want to dig ditches. Anyone can do that.

RG: Do you have any idea the percentage of students who graduated Lincoln High School?

KE: Well I don't have to give you a percentage, I can show you. Because we have, I believe just about every student who went to Lincoln, I think the majority of that class that was graduatin', graduated. You have to remember back in the fifties and sixties and all, we had what you call truant officers. What they did, they may sure that you was in school, they road around and if they caught you out of school, they took you to school, and they also told your parents. You had to go to school, and if a child didn't go to school, they had a school for you to go, and that was a training school. Now this is not Orange County Training School I'm talking about. This is a school for unruly students, students who have been sent to school, did not go to school, you were caught playing hooky or whatever, and your parents had to go down and pick you up. This was a county thing. You had to go to school. But, because you had to go to school, it was expected for you to do the schoolwork and also to graduate. Because you had to go, it was almost like against the law for you not to go. And I mean they really enforced that. See they don't do those type of things now, they don't try to enforce them. But they enforced them back then. You went.

RG: Do you have any idea of the percentage of graduates who went on to get more education, went on to college?

KE: Well, I don't have the percentage, but let's see, Mrs. R.D. Smith might know that. If not, we can get it from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools administrative office. And

you'd be surprised at how many blacks did go on to graduate, and also who went on to college. It was a big number.

RG: So here they were raised in Chapel Hill or Carrboro and they went to Lincoln and then a lot of them went to college. Could they come back to the community and get work here?

KE: Well, many did. I wouldn't say many did. Some did come back and got jobs, or they went on to black universities. And then they came back and they got some employment. But it was not a whole lot of employment here at the time, as far as someone with a degree, a black person with a degree. You were competin' with other whites for the low jobs that we had here, and someone with a degree of course you didn't want to go work in housekeeping. So you had to look beyond Chapel Hill in order to advance. To have some type of career. And so we do have many of our graduates from Lincoln who went on to school, they did move to other areas.

But it was almost like you were guaranteed to have a job, or go to the military or go on to college. You had a choice. You could do either one, but you had to do something. You could not finish school and then just sit and do nothing. You had to work, you had to do something. And it didn't matter what type of job it was, you had to be productive because there was a sense in the black community especially with the families that had low incomes, the parents felt that it was their duty to get you out of high school. And as you were goin' along in those years, goin' to school and makin' your way to the 12th grade, and you finished, it was up to you what you were gonna do with your future. You could to the military, you could go to work, or you could go on to a black college. And if your parents didn't have the money for you to go, then you worked your way through school. But you had choices, but you made 'em, because this is your life now. We've done our part. And so it's up to you now what you're goin' to do with your life.

RG: Let's go back to the new Chapel Hill High School and the anger that the black students felt at not being able to complete their education at Lincoln High School, the school that everybody looked forward to attending, and where the teachers lived in the same neighborhood and seemed to really be your mentors and your friends. How did they handle this at the school, at the new school?

KE: With a fine toothcomb. Because you had a lot of angry students common' from one school and they were angry. And so the things that I had tolerated from the white students, the things they did to me and to some others, the black students were not gin' to take it. They were too angry. They did not want to be in that school, they were not gin' to put with anything that you had to offer because they had already heard these little things that you had been doing' to the other students, students prior to Lincoln closing' down. They were not gonna tolerate any of it, and many of them came in with that attitude, "I'm ready when you ready." And so there were arguments, there were fights, but the school was able to maintain, well, some semblance of peace.

And many parents, white parents, did not want their kids involved in it. And so they took their kids out of school, and put them in other schools. Oh absolutely. The well-to-do kids, their parents just put them in boarding school, or sent them to private schools.

Mostly private schools. They could afford the money. So what they were really doing' is shielding' their kids away from all of this stuff that they knew was coming. Because they knew that it was gonna be a very rocky transition, trying' to put two schools together, where all their lives they had been separated. And they lived separate all of their lives. And now, it's like you're putting them together, and I don't think that all the powers that be who were involved in that decision to close our schools and then send everyone to just one school, they didn't talk to the students. They didn't ask the students what they thought. Back then it didn't matter what we thought. Because remember the rule: you do as you're told. And so when that happened, it was trying times; it was a lot of tears from some students from Lincoln, because, and I saw myself in them, because their dream, especially that senior class, was to graduate from Lincoln.

Also, many of the athletes, they wanted to finish their athletic career in high school under one coach, and that was Coach Peerman. And they wanted that. And he was no longer gonna be their coach. He was gonna be the assistant coach. Someone else was gonna be calling' the shots. And what that person said, goes. It doesn't matter what Coach Peerman might think is best or his opinion, the opinion that counted the most was the person who was the coach. And that was the white coach. And so you had people who I wouldn't call it depressed, because we didn't even know what depressed was, back then, we just called it being' unhappy. And so I watched a lot of sad faces. I watched a lot of tears, but just like me, I don't know if it's in our genes or whatever, but it just seems that blacks, when they have to, they can adapt. And I think sometimes it comes from you not having' a choice, and so you don't keep things just lingering and lingering and lingering and grieving and grieving. You just learn to put it beyond you so that you can go forward, move forward. And that's what the kids were able to do. Not saying that anger was not there just about every day. Because it was. But these kids just did not tolerate anything from anyone.

And so it was a sad time, for them it was a sad time, but for me, it was a happy time, because here comes part of my family. This was a family that was in my community that I had to miss for what, six-seven hours in school. And I got to be with this family after school. But now I had my family in school with me. But, I had gotten so used to this other family, I guess I can't exactly call it a family because I never felt a part of the family or a member of the family, but it was something I guess that was a part of me that I had to live with. So anyway, when they came, I was ecstatic. Where I might have felt tense all those years by being in a classroom, having' white teachers, and I did have more blacks in my classroom as I went along through the years, but now I was guaranteed to have many many blacks.

So what I did, I chose the classes that I knew was gonna have the most majority of blacks in it. So I could be myself. After all those years of having to be someone else or feel like I had to be someone else, finally, I could be myself. And that's what I did. So it matter what class it was, even if I bypassed the classes that would help you get in good universities or whatever, it didn't matter. All I wanted was to be with my family. And to finish school with my family. But I can tell you, when I graduated from Chapel Hill Senior High School, I was glad to get out. And I never, ever wanted another part of a school environment like that ever again. Because I felt I was cheated. But it did make it

better for me and many others who started out from day one.

RG: What happened if there was verbal abuse?

KE: Well, tell you the truth, lot of the white kids that used to do all that of stuff, they kept their lips zipped. Because they knew it was gonna be retaliation; they were not used to that. They were used to someone just walking' on, not even telling the principal, whatever, because who's going to do anything about it? And so they just knew from instinct, especially those who are low-income whites, because you know you had a lot of verbal abuse coming from them. And they may say something and then they expect for everyone in the class to laugh at it. Other whites would join in, even if there were some whites who did not want to, it was a perception if you did not join in or smile or giggle or whatever when something was said, then you were taking sides. And they would call you nigger-lover. They would label you that. And so you see not all whites were into this prejudice stuff. A lot of those people, who were like that, now, they did come from well-to-do families. And they had housekeepers who were black, and babysitters who were black. So they were used to being around probably black people all the time. Because they were in their homes. They depended on them to clean up, to cook, or do whatever, tend to the sink, whatever.

RG: Those were the ones who were less likely to be –

KE: Right, but it made it uncomfortable for them to join in on some things was going' on, because they had someone who was in there own household whom they really truly loved as a person. Not as a black person, but as a person and they saw them as a person. And they didn't see them any other way, and it was almost like being offensive towards or joining into something that you know is wrong. Joining in with it, that gave you, that made them feel just like these other people who did it. And these other people, they did it for a reason. Sometimes I think words were said or actions taken out of fear. I think there were actually some kids who feared us being there. And you could see that sometimes with our teachers. There were some teachers who were very young. I noticed the young teachers, they were afraid.

RG: They were?

TE: Right. They were afraid because these things were happening right in the classroom and the teacher's supposed to have control of the classroom. Now, some of the younger teachers, they didn't condone what was going' on, but they couldn't show it. Because then the teachers would be targets. They would become targets because they might have stepped in to interfere when they know that someone was being mistreated. Now it's easy to step in and interfere when it's two people of the same race. But when it's two people from opposite races, then that's gonna put the teacher in a position to choose sides. And which a teacher would not have actually been choosing sides, but to other students it may have seemed that. So you had some who, I could just look at them and tell that they did not want a specific incident to happen. They wanted it to stop. But they just didn't know how to come in and get it stopped without it causing' a backlash to them. The older teachers, now that didn't happen a whole lot with the older teachers, because the older

teachers demanded respect. It didn't matter what your race was, but they demanded respect. And when they saw something going on, even though it was wrong, they may give them a look, at the white student that was doing it. Wouldn't say anything, but would give 'em a look. And they ceased.

And so the way the kids got around that was they wait until after class. They knew the classes they could go to and do things and probably get away with it. And they also knew the classes where they couldn't because the teachers would take them to the office. And tell the principal "This is not gonna happen in my class. These kids are here to learn, and they're gonna learn. All of them. So if you can't behave in my class, you're going to the principal's office or you going outside." But it was not because the student might have been doing something towards a black student. This was because you have to have respect in the classroom. And the teachers demanded that. And there was no place in her classroom for picking on someone else, even someone of your own race. Some classes they just didn't allow it. When you came in, you was ready to do some work. And the teacher was serious about it. And that's all you did.

So like I said, if you were in a class like that, you just waited till after class, and then you did something. And you didn't do it in the doorway, because there were some teachers who actually stood at the doorway and watched the kids go out, because sometimes I was tripped on the way going out of the door. But these teachers would stand there and just waiting on something to happen. And they would call that kid out. And so they just got around it.

But I guess, in a sense, this was where God wanted me to go in the 7th grade, to get the lesson that helped me throughout my life, because He had something else for me to do when I got to the university. So He prepared me for that struggle, because I had, from the 7th grade on, I had mingled with whites, and I knew some of their attitudes, and I knew why they reacted to some issues. Why they reacted that way. And so by the time I got to university police, I met so many people who I met along my way, way back in the fifties and sixties, who, that's what police were made out of back then.

Well anyway, they were very prejudiced people. But they were at a university and working in a police department. Now I had expected them to be on a police department in the city, or in the town, but not in the university where there's higher education. Because you see I was fooled, when my family moved from Carrboro, and we moved over here to the Northside area, as you're going up Church Street, when you leave out of here take your right turn going up Church Street, when you get up to the intersection of MacDay Street and Church Street and look over to your left side, the left side of this street, all whites lived on the left side of that street. And the blacks lived on the right side. And that was the first time that I had ever lived that close to whites. But the whites and the blacks in the community, they got along. I didn't have any racial problems whatsoever. I never felt prejudice, none of that.

It's an old saying, when you cross the railroad track, you in trouble. It doesn't matter whether you're goin' to Carrboro, goin' past Kentucky Friend Chicken, or you're goin' down off Cameron Avenue and crossing over at Mill Road.

So anyway, by me living that close or havin' that close contact with whites in school, and then livin' in a community where whites were right next door, that was a learning experience. Because it taught me no matter what the kids might be doin' in my school, they didn't live on the other side of the street like me. And these were professors, these were people who had a little bit. This just like another environment, and so I was constantly learning things about the white race. About them and their attitudes.

And so it was a great lesson. Because it told me something about economic status, how that played into how you were gonna view the world. Now if you was down here on the lower end, you might have viewed the world a little bit differently. If you're on the other end, you viewed it differently because you were really didn't have to have a lot of contact with either one of these two here, the blacks, and you didn't have to have it with low-income whites. Not unless you wanted to. Because your economic status kept you away from a lot of things that was goin' on. But many of the people in a community like that, they're the ones who we give to the black community. Many times I will walk in that same community, and especially during Halloween, these people would actually leave their doors open. And we just walked right in and get our candy, sometimes they had pennies and things on it, on the table. Some homes we go to, they would have writing paper. They knew we needed notebook paper for school. They even had pencils. And that was for us. For when we came by. So you see it was totally different going to school and then where I actually lived.

RG: That's fascinating.

KE: It's fascinating because you see, my mother had taught us not to be prejudiced, do not dislike a person because of the color of their skin. Not everyone in that skin is an enemy to you. But if you close your mind, you will never know which one could be your friend. And so you see, and I considered those people who lived on the left side of the street all up in that little area there, they were my friends. Summertime, we could go, and we walked, they had pear trees, all kind of fruit trees in the yard, and they knew we were coming. And they just let us have them. Take bags and just pick up as much as we wanted. Sometimes they might even have little baby-sitting jobs. Let us do that, or rake the leaves, or something. But it was in harmony. Not once did someone sic a dog on us. Not once did people holler somethin' out at the street, as we were walkin' by. We just felt a part of that neighborhood, because in reality it was still part of Northside, the Northside community. But they fit in. They fit in the community.

And so I didn't have that when I lived in Carrboro, because like I said anytime you went beyond the railroad track, you were gonna meet with a little bit of resistance. But as I went to school and was around people and all, I understood why they showed some resistance goin' that way. Because they didn't have that much more than I had. And surely, by them bein' white, by right they had to have something. Because they were not of my race but bein' white it gave you some type of privilege. Even though you were right down here with me. So I looked at it that way, and I still look at it that way. Because I can understand those people a whole lot better than maybe some whites can. Because we have sort of like the same background. We had the same morals, principles,

and all, but somewhere along the line there was so much anger way, way back, and there was a threat that blacks were takin' away something from these people who live right down here with me. Because a lot of times, whites would much rather hire a black to clean their house and do all these other things than to get a low-income white. I don't know why that's so, but back then the majority of your housekeepers and people who babysat, who cleaned houses and practically raised other people's kids, they were black. And so I'm sure there was a little resentment from that, from people on the low income white, whites on the low income, who thought maybe that job should have been theirs.

RG: So are you saying that this economic competition in a way led to some of the prejudice?

TE: Oh absolutely. But see I didn't know that as I was growin' up as a child. But as I started mingling with whites, I mean really having to have contact with whites, outside of my community, and having the contact with them every day, because see when I was in the black community I didn't have to have contact at all. Just my parents, goin' to work. But when I was with them every day, I got to see some of it for myself. I got to see how some of them were dressed. And many of these students, white students especially, knew that it was eleven kids in my family. And so I may come in with a nice dress and starch and all that, and some of the kids may wonder, well where did she get that dress? Or how could they afford that dress? Well, people gave us clothes. And my mother worked for people, cleanin' up, doin' all of this, and when they no longer wanted clothes or whatever they just passed them on. And so we got clothes.

But my mother always saw to it that it had plenty of starch in it, clothes would stick out like that. You always had starch in your clothes back then, shirts, everything, and so she tried to send us to school, you may not have had on the best clothes in the world, but clean, it was pressed. Some of the kids I saw that came out of Carrboro area is just like, the parents just threw the clothes on them and that was it. But my mother always said that your children is a reflection of you. And you feel about yourself, it goes right back to your children. So if you have a good impression of yourself and how you want to look, then your children will look the same. But that's how it was in the black community. Now on the weekend you just might be lookin' terrible, but you were at home. But whenever you went somewhere you had to look decent. It didn't matter if you even had a hole in your pants or whatever, if the rest of it was ironed and clean and neat, that's fine. So it was just some things that you did in the black community that everyone in the black community did. It's just how you sent your kids out, you never sent them out lookin' ragged or anything like that. They were always clean, especially goin' to school. And I have to admit we had two pair of shoes: one for Sunday and one for school. You never got caught in your Sunday shoes, not unless it was on Sunday. Cause I did that, and I got a spankin'. You had a time for everything and a place for everything. And so –

RG: How are you fixed for time? It's about –

TE: I got about five to two. Is that what you have?

RG: Yeah. You wanta quit now or –

TE: We can go five more minutes if you want.

RG: All right. I wanted to re-visit Chapel Hill High School, the new Chapel Hill High, and ask you what traditions from Lincoln High School came to the new high school?

TE: The only thing I saw was the name of the Fightin' Tigers.

RG: Was that there when you got there or was that –

TE: Oh no, no. I forgot what, I still recall the Wildcats. And then when the schools were combined, we had the name of Tigers and I believe we had the school colors, black and gold.

RG: When you started at Chapel Hill High –

TE: No when I started at Chapel Hill High, no

RG: No, I mean the new Chapel Hill High.

TE: Oh the new Chapel Hill High. See, it was a year in there before the school was actually integrated. See, let me see, I was in, let's see, I'm tryin' to think now, when it was actually, because I repeated the 11th grade. No, no, that is correct. When they came over, those colors and things came with them. That's the only concession that was made, is that you can have the colors and you can have the Tigers name. And that's about all that was brought over. I didn't see the trophies from Lincoln School, you know, the athletes, football, basketball, and all these other things the school was in. I didn't see any of that.

RG: And that was important to you?

TE: It was a legacy. You know, if you're going' to combine the schools, why are you going' to have just –

End of tape 1, side 2