

EDWIN CALDWELL, JR INTERVIEW

March 2, 2001

Interviewed by Oliver White

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ED CALDWELL
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OLIVER WHITE: Mr. Caldwell, just like start off with a little brief background with your involvement in Chapel Hill?

ED CALDWELL: My name is Edwin Caldwell Jr. I live at 107 Caldwell Street in Chapel Hill. Grew up in Chapel hill, went to school at Lincoln High School and Hampton Institute, now its Hampton University in Virginia. I have done some advanced studies but no degree. But that essentially small background.

I have participated in a number of organizations. The most one that most everybody would probably recognize would be the Chapel Hill Carrboro School Board. I served on that board for about thirteen years. Have been on the North Carolina School Board Association, served as treasure of that board for about six years, and have been on the national school board in different capacities, mostly committees and so forth. With the state I have served on several boards and advisory committees, one Title III, I also served on the Title IV board in the state as well as several other boards. As you can see I've had extensive background in education. However, I have been involved in just about every other thing that happens in Chapel Hill.

OW: How did you start to get involved in all this, school board administration?

EC: I came—after finishing college, I finished in February of '57. I went to New York and worked for Columbia University. From there I was drafted into the United States Army, went to Fort Hood in Texas and from there went to Germany. Served the country for two years. When I got out I went back to New York and back to my job at Columbia University. And worked my way up to where I was supervisor of the lab in biochemistry. Stayed in New York for about seven years, and I was getting quite a

bit of pressure from my father because I had children and he wanted to be near his grandchildren. Every summer I would come home to visit he would apply pressure, "when are you coming home?" In October of '63 I recruited for a job here at Memorial Hospital to take over its chemical lab. At the time they were having problems with the lab as far as quality control. That was one of the things I specialized at Columbia, doing research, investigating new analytical procedures, and so forth. They asked me to take that over. I also interviewed at the Research Triangle Park, just in case. I gave a months notice at Columbia. They didn't want me to leave. They said it would find it very difficult to replace me. I decided to come home. So when I got back to Chapel Hill I reported to Memorial Hospital. Found out I didn't have a job. The man apologized and said that my application had been held up. I think that they found out that I was not who they thought I ought to be. Too much money and the fact that I was also black. He reported that it looked like my application would be held up forever. So I reported to the Research Triangle Park, and that's where I worked. I worked for company in the Research Triangle Park called Munsanto, it really was Chemstrand, but Chemstrand was a division of Munsanto, worked there for about five years.

How I got involved in education, was there were not many potential black leaders coming back. I was college educated, people always looked up, that I would be a leader, I guess, because of my family. So I came back and before I knew it I was put on every advisory committee and every committee and so forth. A person by the name of Rebecca Clark and some other key leaders thought I ought to run for the school board. At that time Reverend Manley was on the school board and he was not going to run again, so they were looking for somebody to run. I was not really qualified, I was coming back, I

didn't know politics, I didn't know very much of anything. But I ran, and almost got elected. From that I found myself being put on a lot of, asked to volunteer for a lot of, committees and so forth.

I got involved in politics because that was the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were already chosen. The Civil Rights Movement was moving at its own steam and I did not feel that there was a place for me in that. I did not agree with some of the tactics that they were proposing. Many of the leaders and so forth, there were some from Chapel Hill, but there were quite a few leaders from other places that were calling the shots. One specific thing that I disagreed with was they wanted to put some of the older people out front in a march. It was reported that people were coming up from Georgia. Mr. Maddox had sent some people up from Georgia with axe handles and so forth. So therefore it had the potential of being not good. I stood up and said the older people that you are asking to lead the march were parents of some my classmates, they were people I always looked up to. I don't agree with that. I voiced that. I guess the fact that I stood up—there were quite a few of the adults that said, “no since Ed said that, I don't think I want to go out there.” I think the young people took the leadership role. I don't think anything happened, but the police were waiting, they had things under control.

So I began to look for places that I thought I would be effective. I decided to get involved in voter registration, I felt that it would be nice to break down barriers of segregation and public accommodation, but I also thought that we needed a certain power. I didn't think we could muster economic power, but we certainly could begin to have some political power. At that time the business merchants ruled the town. There

was about a hundred business people and they were on every board, they pretty much controlled the elections and so forth. I said to myself, "hundred some people control politics."

I had worked with a person by the name of Tony Mason. Tony Mason was a white student, I am not quite sure if he was in high school or in college, may have been his first second year of college. Tony wanted to be in the civil rights movement, his parents were a little afraid that he may get hurt so they tried to look for other places for Tony to work. Tony and I co-chaired a voter registration campaign and we registered a lot of people. I have a lot of respect for Tony because he did a super job. I learned a lot from him even though he was young. He was fearless. We did it right. We selected block captains, on every block that we used to find out who was registered or whatever. We used block captains very effectively. We printed a newsletter. We did a lot of surveys and found out who was registered and who wasn't registered. We worked with them to get them registered. The person didn't read very well we helped them go over what they had to read to get registered. In those days it wasn't easy to get registered. The registrars were a little hostile to anybody black coming into the courthouse. I remember the first time I registered I just didn't feel comfortable going in there. Just the hostility and how the questions they asked you and whatever, and I was college trained. I think I had to read the constitution of North Carolina or something. After I became registered we went around and we registered a lot of people. I think Tony must have gone back off to school. Therefore, I continued to work in voter registration. We were very successful in registering a lot of people.

We needed to be able to form some kind of political organization. At that time I was working with—my father introduced me to Martha McKay and Virginia Nicholson, they were the movers and the shakers of the Democratic Party. They were very good. So I started working with them and I just watched them to see how they organized things. How they got the vote out, just how they did it. I was learning. I learned everything I could from them. When it came time to begin, we started to get the vote out. As a young idealistic black man I was surprised the first time I was working trying to get the vote out. What I learned at the time was whatever we planned, before we got out of the meeting, the white power structure knew everything that we were doing what we were planning. There were people planted in some of our meetings that just ran back and told them everything that we were doing. That was the first surprise, I think the second surprise that I had while I was out working in some of the campaigns as well as some of the elections, was that leaders and people that I respected were working for the opposition. They were being paid, and they said they were being paid. I am out here working for the cause. That bothered me because, one person was my cousin's father, I had always looked up to him. After I got strong enough and began to have a reputation I began to speak out against them. Told them if they want to take the money take the money but you don't have to work, don't work against us. After a period of time I was able to say that I began to get a reputation throughout the Democratic Party and other places that I was a leader. I had other persons, like Braxton Foushee and Hilla Cladwell and Howard Lee, we formed a political party called PRAD, don't ask me what PRAD stands for because I don't know right now. We named it PRAD it had specific names. Howard Lee became the chairman and I was the vice chairman. Hilla was the treasure. Braxton

Foushee had a position. This was our venture into politics, we had a political party and we were doing it. We were calling the shots. We had quite a few white professors at that time working with us. We couldn't have done this by ourselves. We said to them that we needed to be the officers and they agreed. We were officers; we had people like Ann Queen at the Y with us, there was a person named Jean Lucar. I don't know where Jean is. I'd like to see Jean. Jean also worked at the Y. She and her husband were just dynamic in helping us with politics, elections and so forth. We began to meet a lot of other professors, with the institute of government, you are going to be interviewing Peachie Wicker, her husbands name is Jake. All these people at the University who were considered liberal were working with us. We continued to operate PRAD. They formed their own political organization. I am trying to remember who the president was running at the time. But they rallied behind this fellow, can't remember his name, but he didn't get elected, but he mobilized just a lot of support. During that time it was just exciting we were doing things that we never had done before. For an example, PRAD we weren't local. We were calling folks all over the nation to come into Chapel Hill. I remember there was a person, a dentist out of Charlotte, running for governor. He didn't have a campaign he was just somebody who threw his hat in the ring. What was his name, he had a son here, Hawkins. Hawkins for Governor. Hawkins, in the primary we turned out more people for Hawkins, we carried Chapel Hill for Hawkins. We had just gotten that powerful. Later on the Governor, Governor Scott punished us because we didn't support him. For years and years Highway 54 never got paved, Highway 54 was paved from Chapel Hill/Carrboro to Alamance County, cause Alamance County is where he lived. He and his brother, his brother was in the legislature. They had beautiful highways from

Chapel Hill to Alamance but from Chapel Hill to Raleigh on 54 was a death trap. So he punished us for years, the Department of Transportation, we never got anything from them. They let us know they didn't appreciate us going for Hawkins.

Hawkins came to Chapel Hill and we had press conferences and TV cameras rolling, he got excited about this thing. He wanted to move his campaign office from Charlotte to here and they were consulting with us. We brought Ed Napier in, flew him in from Atlanta. We had a rally in Raleigh, the whole mall down there, we had people out there.

It was an exciting time, here we are participating in politics and we are not thinking small we are thinking globally, nationally. After the election with Hawkins we decided to keep this thing going, that's how we formed PRAD. I had mentioned that Howard Lee was the president. Howard always had political ambitions, Howard said, "I think I want to run for mayor." The group that we were involved in, let me back up and say, by that time we had taken over all the precincts we had just become that organized. We plotted and schemed and when it came time to go in to have the precincts meeting we had that place packed with our people. We took them over because we had more people there. Therefore, we became a force. We had taken over all the precincts. We replaced all the hostile judges and put our own people in there. There were some very good whites that were still in some of the precincts, and when we took them over. I know I was chairman of the Northside precinct for years, I didn't really want to be chairman but they elected me chairman, this one lady said she was the registrar and she said, "I would be glad to continue to be registrar and I will work with you." So we began to replace and registration began to be a little easier. Wasn't as hostile. People didn't feel as

uncomfortable about going to register. We fine-tuned and began to work at turning out votes.

So when Howard decided he wanted to run--the Liberal Coalition had already decided they were going to run their own candidate, who was Gordon Cleveland. Gordon Cleveland had been in politics in Orange County for a long time. He was on the County Commissioners but he was from Chapel Hill. They had gone around and asked him if he would run, and he reluctantly agreed that he would.

When we went into the meeting and they announced who their candidate was, it was Gordon Cleveland. Gordon was a good man. We said, "you already picked him but you didn't consult with us." I let them know, "don't send nobody else back into the black community you always pick these people and send them over for us to support. This time we have our own candidate, Howard Lee." They said, "nah, we think its to soon for Howard to run for mayor why don't he run for Board of Aldermen." I said, "Howard you want to run for Board of Aldermen?" He said, "no I want to run for mayor." We had this strategy meeting, we were outvoted in there we had about five people in there from PRAD. I guess they must have had about twenty-five thirty in there from the other organization. We just said, "Look, you are going to need us, you need us. We may not have a lot but we can turn out people at election." We said Howard was going to run, you don't run then the business people get back in, because we control the elections, we control a sizable number of votes. So we played the trump card. And they said no- - I forgot a lot of the persons names, they no longer live here, but they were shakers and movers. I just said, "come on group you go your way and we'll go ours, but you are going to need these black votes and we can guarantee all of them." Gordon Cleveland

said, "Well I really don't want to run anyway. If Howard wants to run for mayor let him run." That's how Howard got the chance to run.

Well we were small time, but Howard was organized. Howard came out with a platform. He came out with everything. He had coffee's he had things set up. He had press conferences. This was unheard of in Chapel Hill, but Howard was organized. Howard has his stuff together he was a good speaker. Rollen Giddes was selected by Sandy McClamrock and the business. Sandy McClamrock ran everything. He was the mayor at the time. Sandy owned the Chapel Hill WCHL. He was mayor. Sandy had plenty of money, he just controlled things. Rollin Giddes was handpicked by Sandy McClamrock, because Sandy wanted to step down. Rollen had been on the town board and Rollen had prepared himself, he had been toastmaster, he had done a lot of things. It was just a foregone conclusion that he would just automatically go in. It got kind of tight, Howard was running a good campaign, at first they just said, "this black man he just a protest." But then people started to get excited, we had these coffees, and people started giving money and people started working. It got to be very, very close. Rollin Giddes said, "I am in a rat race here." When it came down to that election it was close.

We had gone up, there was a fellow in Durham named Bill Davis, me and Bill were working on elections. Bill had gone to Bennett College to talk with the history professor up there, to give credit for anybody that wanted to work in the campaign. That's what they did, we had all the class come down and work in Chapel Hill. They worked in, they just did a lot of things. Week in and week out that was their class project. We also had people coming down from the North. They had heard about this black man running. There were a lot of colleges and so forth with kids that wanted to

come South and work. They were coming every weekend, and they were going around trying register and they were talking and whatever. This thing turned into a big campaign.

I knew that I could turn out a sizable number of votes. I had my stuff together. I had gotten the registrars to agree to allow us to have poll watchers to come in. Well, this was our precinct we had picked the judges so they agreed, "yeah, Ed you can have people here, () you can have your people here." So we had poll watchers. What I was doing is, I had all the black registered voters on lists by street and alphabetical order. If somebody came in what they would do in the poll is read their name off and we would check them off. So we knew who had voted and who hadn't voted. At three o'clock we passed the lists out, we had carbon copies behind about five of these names all mashed up together. At three o'clock we tore the first list off. I had cars. I had these classes from Bennett. I had high school kids that were excited working in this campaign. There was Doug Clark and the Hot Nut's he had his bus, his bus running all over everywhere. We had cars all over everywhere "Howard Lee for Mayor." We put about two or three people student and a person who they identified in the car. We sent them out. We went to the grocery stores. We went everywhere. We went to their doors, because we could look to see who had voted and who hadn't voted. We would go to Miss So-and-so we want to take you down to vote, "I've voted already," I said "no there must be some mistake here, cause we got people in the polls and you haven't voted." "I can't go, I can't walk." We got a car here. "I got to go to the grocery store." As soon as you go vote we will take you to the grocery store. "Well, OK." And they would go in there and get dressed up and we take them off. That's what we did we searched and we combed. We combed in

neighborhoods, we found people. We went on their jobs and got them. Business people got a little worried. Because they could see that we were highly organized. This was something they just weren't quite sure of. We had students voting. We had student registered on the campus, and they were working. The Black Student Movement was working. There was excitement in the air on that day. We work the streets until the polls closed, and we knew Howard was going to win, we knew. Because we could count votes. We could count all of our votes, and we were hoping they wouldn't be able to get theirs out. So what the business's decided to do is, because we had poll watchers and people at the poll passing out literature—One other thing that we did, to ensure that they voted for the right person. We had a slip of paper that we would put in their hands who they were supposed to vote for when they went in the thing. We would say, "Look, who are you going to vote for?" "Well you know I'm going to let the Lord." I said, "No, we ain't going to let the Lord choose today. You take this piece of paper, this is who you vote for. You let the lord choose some other day." So we pretty much told them who to vote for. We controlled things. They went in there and they came out and people were proud. You talking about South Africa and voting, people were voting in Chapel Hill and they were proud the same way. You could just see their backs straighten up and see how proud they were. I worked the streets until the polls closed, we got every vote that we could find. We almost wrestled some people in that didn't want to go, but once they went and voted they were proud.

When I got to the church, Howard had set up the Second Baptist Church, no CME the Methodist Church on Rosemary Street, was where he was supposed to give his acceptance speech. The man already thought that he was going to win. I couldn't even

get in the church, and here I was a key person in his campaign. My job was to turn the vote out. His job was the campaign, have the tea's, the platform. I told him, "Don't you worry about the votes, I'll turn them out." I couldn't get in the church. There were people standing up there with him that hadn't done a lick of work. It's surprising how people come out of the woodwork and say I'm on your team and they didn't do nothing. We did it all. We found out that he had won, the returns started coming in, it was very close, he didn't win by very much but he won, because we turned out every vote that we could find. Then when he got elected, Howard had his stuff together, he was going to have office in the Town Hall. Nobody ever had the office of the mayor in Town Hall. Howard was the first to have an office, office hours. He took that job very seriously. He went to different things in the town. Howard put Chapel Hill on the map. Howard put the mayor's office on the map. Before that time it was a city manager, city manager ran the town. The mayor was more of a figurehead. Howard changed all that. Howard started going to Washington, () "First Black Mayor of the South in a predominately Southern town." People wanted to give him grants. Chapel Hill got put on the map. He bought a lot of money in, lots of streets got paved, a lot of houses got built. Worked right in to the sort of things that we wanted to do. Because it wasn't just running a political campaign, we wanted to improve our communities. That's pretty much what happened. Essentially, I worked very close with Howard, ever since then we became very good friends. His wife, we are like brothers and sisters really, we are just that close. His kids are just like family, my kids are like family to him. I've maintained a great relationship with him even though he has gone on to other things.

I decided--after Howard ran for mayor, I decided I was going to run for school board again. I want to say to you its different when you are running for something and not controlling the elections. I couldn't very well run for the school board and call the shots and run the kind of political get out the vote. I couldn't get elected. I didn't have anybody else to step in and do that sort of thing. Everybody sort of expected me to turn the vote out. So I never got elected.

I ran for the county commissioners. That's difficult because we are talking county wide, Chapel Hill was an oasis within the county. People would say, "Chapel Hill Liberal you know." Jessie Helms has even said "Chapel Hill liberal we need to build a fence around that University." He thought that for years. When you start talking about running in the county you are talking about a different ballgame. But, I put my name up and I ran for County Commissioners. There were several other people that ran; there was Jimmy Wallace, who later became mayor of Chapel Hill. There was a guy named George Harris, George ran Glenwood Pharmacy. They just sort of put their names up, they didn't think they could win, it was just a good opportunity to get some exposure. I ran seriously, I organized the county the same way I organized Chapel Hill. I made contact with all the political leaders from the North that were black. We organized and got people registered, we knew who was out there. We were going to do the same thing for turning out the vote in Northern Orange that we had done in Chapel Hill. I had worked with them and we were able to do that, let me back up and say how I was able to do that. Jimmy Wallace and George Harris were not know outside of Chapel Hill, very popular in Chapel Hill, but they didn't know anybody in the county. I knew quite a few people in the county. Let me back up and say that my uncle was Albert Leon Stanback.

They have a school named after him up in Northern Orange. Everybody knew the principal of the school, everybody knew my Aunt Catherine Stanback. My mother had also taught school up at Cedar Grove and all those people remembered my mother as a teacher. When I went in they all said, "We know you. You are Miss Pearl Caldwell's son. How's she doing? You got our help that's our teacher." A lot of things were already in place because I was going off the reputation of my mother. A lot of people knew my father in Northern Orange because he used to hunt he just has a lot of friends there. Uncle Leon and Aunt Catherine. Everybody knew me up there and they were willing to work. We had this thing organized. One of the things that happened was there were ten people in the race. I knew, and I had calculated, that if I was going to win a seat on the County Commissioners I needed to win it in the first primary. I needed to get the number of votes that I needed so I didn't have to be in a runoff. I think I missed that by twenty something. Which put me in a runoff. Got murdered next time around. Because I think there were about four people that I had to run against. And all those folks who went to those other white candidates went to the people in Northern Orange. What happened in Chapel Hill, because I did so well in the first primary, they said, "he's serious, serious candidate." And when they began to realize that I was running a serious campaign. I was running to win I wasn't running for the sake of running I was running to win. The shakers and movers of the Democratic Party started saying "I want you to run as a coalition between Jimmy Wallace and George Harris." They wanted to put them on my shirttails. I said, "No, I'm running my own independent campaign, I don't run with anybody else, I don't want to go in--

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EC: So I was still trying to run an independent campaign. They were determined that we were going to run as a coalition, and my campaign started to come apart because I started to lose votes that I had been able to count on from the white community. All kinds of stories began to come out that I had called for what they call a bullet vote or single shot vote. Which I didn't. I just said I was running my own campaign. I had my own literature my own organization. I had people working for me. They were supposed to be doing the same thing and I didn't need to them on the brink come in and question how I was running my campaign. I didn't need that. I didn't need to bring other people in because I all ready had my campaign people that had worked with me. People like Billy Barnes, his wife Ann Barnes, Ann was in the () for many years. Berlin () just a number of persons were in my campaign. I had a pretty good campaign staff. I knew also that if I didn't come in the first time, that was held in May, the first week in May. Well the University closed down the first week in May, students went away, I lost that vote. I lost the vote of the professors that had to go on their vacations during that period before summer school started. I said, "its all over for me if I can't come in, and I missed that by twenty votes." And I knew it was all over. I did more--I didn't campaign, I did more trying to hold onto the votes that I had. I was losing them because they were writing letters and editorials that Ed had called for single shotting, he didn't want to support others in a coalition. I got letters home now that I kept. That really bothered me and hurt me, and I was looking for my resume and was looking at the newspaper that I have at home. It says "The Northern Walker Boys and somebody else slaughters Ed Caldwell." And they pretty much did. I knew I couldn't win it, if I couldn't win it on the first time

around with ten people in there. I couldn't carry that kind of vote. You've got to understand that Northern Orange was very conservative, very conservative. There were know Klan, I guess you call them Klavets or something. Where they had little organizations in the county, and we knew where they were. Because we had white friends who would say, "Don't go in there. Stay away from there. You ain't doing nothing but risking your life if you go in there. You're not going to get any votes out of there." They let me know where I could go in and that sort of thing. But in the county I depended mainly on the black vote, got very few white votes in the county. Quite an experience, enjoyed it, quite an experience. Got to be. Because I had contacts, I developed a lot of friendships, therefore, I was better known in Northern Orange.

Next time it came around they asked me if I was going to run. There was I guy named Richard Whittet. Next thing I know--he's black and he was all ready in the election. So I didn't get a chance to run for County Commissioner again. I don't know if I really wanted to at that time. I had gotten the reputation. If you run for things and you can't win, I think I had run three times and lost. Even though I had lost by small numbers you get the reputation of you can't win. I was soon getting that reputation. I could help other people get elected but I couldn't get myself elected. I was appointed to the school board, somebody resigned, I can't remember who it was. I need to go back and do research. I think they were looking for a replacement on the school board. They wanted a black on the school board because we didn't have a black on the school board after Reverend Manley decided not to run we just couldn't elect anybody. It was know that when whoever resigned, I think he went somewhere else, that they were going to select a black. The selection committee pretty much said that we think that we need black

representation on the board. It boiled down between two people. One person was named Vivien Foushee, Vivian had been in Chapel Hill, and Vivian was quite political. Everything that happened in Chapel Hill Vivian almost had to put her goodhouse stamp of approval on it. She was just that good. They put my name down. I guess I was starting to get a certain reputation. People knowing me, that sort of thing. It boiled down between Vivien and myself, I thought that Vivien would get it because Vivien was probable better know. When it came out I found out that they had chosen me to be on the school board. Norman Wellerly, I think was the chairman of that committee, search committee. He told me that I was his first choice and he was able to convince the others that I would be the best person to represent. That's how I got on school board, I wasn't elected, I was appointed. After you are appointed and you serve for a while people get a certain amount of name recognition and they get to see how think they get to see how you vote.

My years on school board were very good. We had some very, very good school board members. People like Mary Scroggs they just named a school after her. I considered Mary my mentor. Mary got me on just about all these other North Carolina School Board Association, she was president of North Carolina School Board. When they got ready to select somebody, I got selected, because all these people wanted black representation. Through Mary I got selected to a lot of boards. There were people like, Phillips, what was his name he was State Superintendent, Craig Phillips, Craig had come out of Chapel Hill. Phillips Junior High School was named after his father. Craig was quite an educational family. He ran the Department of Public Instruction. He knew me. Therefore, I got put on a lot of boards and things at the State. There was Norman

Wellerly. Norman was just grounded. He was just grounded he just had a good mind. We had a lot of good people on there. There was Betty Denny, everybody that was on the school board at that time had an area of expertise. Betty Denny's expertise was school law. Her husband was an attorney, he was attorney for the town. She just knew state statues up and down, she was our legal expert. I guess she talked it over a little with her husband. We had a person by the name of Ken, was our financial expert. Ken went to the State as the Chief Financial Officer, what ever that position is. He was good there. We had Sam Holton, Sam was in the Department of Education. He just knew education very well. Ken Howard. So Ken was our financial. Sam Holton education, Betty Denny was the legal person, Mary just, Mary just very good, she was a leader everybody looked up to Mary. My role on there was to begin to be the voice for the black community. They had made a lot of mistakes and one of the things they wanted to do was try to correct some of the mistakes they had made. They looked to me to be their conscious. To help them think through decisions, because they did not have the perspective for what was best for black kids. So even though I got, I guess, appointed to represent the blacks, I told them that I was not here to represent just the blacks I am here to represent all children. Whatever happens that we make decisions for if it is good for all others then it is going to be good for blacks. They were quite impressed by that. That I wasn't going to always be speaking for this. I took being a school board member very seriously. I am not just a black candidate I am for all things.

One of the things being on school board it's very time consuming. They send you out a packet of materials and you have to read all this stuff and get prepared for all the meetings. I have a full time job, and then I am on all these other committees throughout

the state and the nation. I have an awful lot of stuff to read. I did the best I knew how to do with a full time job, raising kids, people expecting you to come to every meeting that they had, it was just tough for me. Sometimes I didn't quite get to the packet. I would go to the meetings and I'd start talking. I guess trying to talk my way through. They would say, "Ed you didn't read your packet did you? What you're talking about was already written in there." They caught my hand and I had to at least try to wade through all that paperwork. You have to see what they would send out to us on Friday and we were supposed to read this for the Monday meeting. There was a lot of – I started reading, took it very seriously.

When Mary stepped down, Norman Wellerly became chairman of the school board. Norman was a good chairman to, Norman was not on all the committees and positions that Mary was on at the State, but Norman was an excellent chairman, fair, ran a good meeting. I just had the utmost respect for Norman. All persons like this, when we went to the national meetings, they had workshops, clinics that they called them. When we went off to a national meeting, they ran the clinics, you selected areas that you wanted to learn something about. They had over a hundredsome clinics that you could go to and you picked the areas you wanted to know about become better informed. Well Norman ran several of those clinics. They had me running clinics. I guess that's the kind of thing where they begin to see how you think and respect you.

I was quite a leader in the national school board. I worked with the black caucasus stuff. I was trying to get more blacks elected throughout the nation. I was on quite a few things.

I was in the Church of Reconciliation as one of the first blacks in the Church. Church of Reconciliation is on Elliot Road. When it split off from the Presbyterian Church downtown they wanted to start an integrated church. The only way to do that was to start it from the beginning. They asked me if I would be involved in that, so I was involved in the Presbyterian Church. Well if you are black then you get up on all the committees of the Orange Presbyterian. I was on the Presbyterian State Senate attended all those meetings. I was a national leader in the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian Church was the southern part of the Presbyterian Church, after the Civil War they split off so you don't find many blacks sitting in the Presbyterian Church. They sent me away, where did we go? Louisiana, Alabama somewhere. Mobile Alabama. We had a national meeting. Generally you don't get to go to these national meetings, you almost have to be dead. You have to have proven yourself. Because I am black I get to go as a young man, because they wanted to show me off. If you really wanted to know, they wanted to show me off. I always remember, there must have been seven eight hundred people in this convention I wasn't going to say anything. I remember them saying all these derogatory things about Reverend King. These were church people and they were calling him communist and saying he is doing this and doing that. They are going to pass these resolutions against Dr. King. I hadn't planned to say anything but, I marched up the pulpit. They had microphones strategically located at different places. I didn't go to no microphone I went in the pulpit. I told them people, "You are church people, I can't believe the kinds of things about somebody that I think—you all are talking like I am not even here. I am a black man and you are saying all these things and you are supposed to be church people. I don't have any business being in this church." You could hear pin

drop. I mean I let them have it. When I sat down I got a standing ovation, that's when I knew that I was able to speak and I was able to get people to listen. I wouldn't have stood up in front of those people.

Let me tell you one other thing that they asked me to do, because there were so few blacks maybe three or four of us in that whole thing. The guy from the pulpit learned my name he said, "We are going to ask Ed Caldwell to lead us in a word of prayer." And he closed his eyes, I was going like "No, I am not going to stand up there." It was silent in there for a while and I think he opened his eyes, he opened one eye and I am going like this so he started to pray. I have had quite a few experiences, both in the Presbyterian Church as well as School Board. I really like Presbyterian Church, I got to be a leader in there. I just got to be a leader, people began to look up to me. I got to travel all over the Southeast for the Presbyterian Church. I got to travel because they were wondering why more blacks wouldn't join the Presbyterian Church, for a long time I was one of the few. That remained, people would come and then they would leave. I hung in there with them, because what they were trying to do I thought was good. I said, "Well if you want blacks to join us then you have to have something in here that they can identify with. We are going to have a black minister." They agreed. We went all over the nation trying to recruit a black minister. One of the things about blacks they would let us have it. "That church up there you all are not serious about bringing on a black minister." We invited them to come up and preach, a couple of them we offered them the job. We said, "We offer you the job. If you want the job, you got it." They had to do some soul searching. A lot of them just couldn't pull it off being a black minister in a predominately white church. We had some assistant ministers that were black. We were very serious about

finding a black minister. We had a few assistant white ministers that were very good. It was a liberal church. We experimented with worship and different things. We had Norman Vincent Peale's son there, he was minister for a while. He was over a Duke University. We were able to go over to the University of Chicago, we went to Memphis Tennessee, there was a guy named Eizequial Bell. He was a fiery thing, in Memphis Tennessee. He was in the Civil Rights thing, everything he was out there, had a lot of pull. So we asked him to come. He was one of the ones that didn't think we were serious and we offered him the job. He turned it down and said, "I think I need to stay here in Memphis." We went down to Sanford, there was a Presbyterian Church there, but its Southern Part it's the other Presbyterian Church. We offered him the job he turned it down. We got fellow to come here named Marion Phillips. Marion is over in the medical school now in the dean's office. He stayed here for a while and preached. I think Marion found it very difficult trying to gear his sermons to a wide variation of people. I used to get on Marion all the time, "Look, don't come with that kind of sermon. You have to give me a little soul here." Marion's a very good speaker and a very good storyteller. Storytelling is what makes the black church go, you tell stories. It's a performance. Marion had this down pat. Marion stayed there for a while and then it got to be too much for him. One thing that I always had is I was grounded because I knew where I was coming from and things that people used to say to me that I ought to do. I'd weigh it but then I'd tell them, "This is what you need to do." There was a lady who had a beautiful voice name was Joyce Peck. Her husband name is Bill Peck they were in the religion department. Joyce could just sing. She would just sing all these operetta kind of songs. I one day said to Joyce, she said, "Ed why can't we get more people." I said,

"Joyce you gotten sing a little soul, sing a spiritual every once in a while. I like your voice but you don't move me. I want to hear something that goes up my spine." I can say those kinds of things. Minister at the time was named Boyd Suil. Boyd's father was Malcolm Suil who was Attorney General of North Carolina at that time. Boyd was torn because he wanted to be in politics. He went into religion because he didn't want to compete with his father. Boyd was always involved in politics, that's how we met. I used to really get on Boyd. You have to understand that there were people who loved Boyd. Boyd was this young fellow, all the women love young ministers. I used to get on Boyd. Boyd would go off on the wrong track I would get on him. We became friends. I pretty much ran the Church of Reconciliation. When they started hero-worshipping Boyd I just get up and tell them, "Boyd is not the church, Boyd is the minister of the church." One time Boyd was about to leave and I told Boyd, "You are my friend and I wish you good luck, but you are not the Church of Reconciliation." I told the people, "You all hang in here. We have to let Boyd go, he is no the Church." I was able to get up and say those kinds of things.

One of the things that the people up at, there is a religious school up in Richmond, one time they asked me to come up and go to school up there. I forgot the name of the school, because they wanted me to be the minister of the Church of Reconciliation. I couldn't go. I have kids. I have work. I couldn't do that. I have had a lot of opportunities. I could have had a fellowship to go to the University of Michigan State. You write your own program in education. Once you finish that program you would be a superintendent. It was a great deal, but I had kids, I had family here. I couldn't pick up my family and move. They also had one job like that in North Carolina, I had turned

down the one down in Michigan. They really wanted me to come there. Trying to get the one in Raleigh. Which meant I could stay home and traveled back and forth. That went to somebody else. So I didn't get that. As I look back I have been involved in politics. I have been involved in with Church of Reconciliation. I have been involved with the state. I have had a pretty good life. What else do have down there you want me to talk about?

OW: I have all kinds of things. You are just so interesting. I was wondering when we were speaking what about his idea of being the token black. Being appointed to all these things just because they wanted them to be integrated—

EC: Well but see when I've gone in—One thing you have to understand is I am not—If they elect me to something then I am going to tell them what we need to be doing. Everything that I have been in I have sort of been the conscious. To give you an example of what I am saying is with the School Board Association. I was on every committee there. I was one of the executive committee because I was treasure of that. The guy that we had, the executive director, he wasn't doing what he was supposed to. I went in and told him, "You are not doing what you are supposed to be doing, here is what you are supposed to be doing." I had that kind of presence. They knew that. The executive director died, he had a heart attack and died. The organization was talking about falling apart. "What are you all talking about falling apart? Get yourself together. We have to run this thing. We will appoint the assistant until such time that we go out for a search. While we are doing that lets look at where we want this organization to go in the next five years, ten years, fifteen twenty years. What are our goals? We are going to set a new direction. Now we know that the executive director that we had had taken this

organization about as far as it could go. He was a great guy, but now is our time to relook at where we need to go in the next five years, ten years, fifteen years. Mainly the next five years. Here I am making them do a self-evaluation before they start talking about going out and selecting somebody. We are not going to select anybody based on personality. We are going to select somebody who can carry us where we need to go. That's going to be the criteria that we are going to select the next executive director. They had a president. He wasn't very strong. Essentially as the treasure I took over the organization. He didn't particularly like it but he didn't really it but he really couldn't do very much about it. I guess the people respected what I was saying, and they knew that what I was saying was right. The president wanted to go on and appoint he assistant. I said, "No, if he wants to put his name in the hat he can do that, but he is not who we want to carry this organization. We are not appointing him." This guy had gone out and lobbied different people on the board to appoint him. He pretty much had them (hoodwhipped). I said, "No, we are not doing that. We are going to develop criteria, we are going to do this self-analysis and see where we need to go. Then we are going to look for the king of person to be the next executive director." They just though, "This guy has done taken it over." Well pretty much I did. I had to keep them form getting sympathetic and moving to somebody, who wasn't who we needed. I took it over. The guy didn't like it, but he started to step down. "I don't like the way you doing it, you running--." Hey, you are the president. We elected you president, you are going to be president. Get yourself together you are going to be president. I don't want to be president, but I am going to make sue this organization goes where it needs to go. If you have a problem then you need to bring me up before the group. We will see who they are going to

support. He didn't want that kind of challenge. That's the kind of role that I played with different organizations. I was not a token.

They put me on Title IV, Title III. Title III was a program that had federal monies and different schools could write grants for different innovative type programs that they wanted in the schools that they thought may be able to benefit. They had to do that. Being on that thing they had a woman. They didn't want to support her, all these good ole boys from the state. You have to understand, they had a lot of power. You had the treasure on there. You had a lot of positions on there that were appointed by the Governor on that committee. State board chairman was on there. I had some strong political people on there. The budget offices were on there, the treasure was on there, the state school board chairman was on there. You are talking about some power. Hey, they got in their pants just like I got in mine. When they started going after her I let them have it. Nah, she's good. She was the best person. She had her stuff together. She was excellent. Just because she was a woman they didn't want her. She eventually went off to Minnesota. Minnesota's gain was our loss. I let them know, "I don't like what you all do. You let this woman go because she is a woman. She had her program together."

I read projects. Each person on Title IV had to read grants, read the proposals that came in, we had to rank them, we had to decided who would get them, based on some criteria, not just given folks stuff. I made them put in the criteria. Schools that did not have professional grant writers on their staff. We would look at small schools that we though could benefit. That would carry a lot of weight. I made sure that went in, because the rich were always getting richer and the poor were not getting the grants. We changed things. Then one of the things as a member of the Title III board was to go out

and do an evaluation. To see if these programs were running these grants the way they said they were going to run them. They didn't expect anybody to come in there looking like me. They just didn't expect that. Here I am going in there and you could just see the black teachers get proud. "We got a black coming in here on Title IV evaluating these projects. These superintendents didn't know anything about the projects, this just happened to be in his school. They would come in their woofing, "If you all don't want to do this then you don't have to do that." I said, "You wrote the grant according to—you are going to carry this grant out according to how it's supposed to be carried out." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "I pool the money out, that's who I am." The blacks were just, you know, that I would have the nerve to stand up talk to the superintendent the way I did.

I went to Roanoke Rapids. Roanoke Rapids is down East near Weldon North Carolina. They didn't expect me to come in there. When I went in there to evaluate their grant they were surprised because they had decided to invite us to one of the persons' homes for dinner and whatever. That gave them problems because he hadn't planned for me to be there. He was going to wine and dine white counterparts. He had that planned. I had to go in there. This guys name was Clarey, had a lot of problems with me.

A guy over here in Durham, Superintendent over in Durham, not one with the city was the county. I went in there to evaluate one of his projects. Jean Lucar who is now a senator from Durham was the project director. She knew her stuff. She knew how the project was going. It was running good. They invited him in, he didn't know what was going on. He came in there and was going to make some changes. Jean was saying, what ever his name was, "You can't do that." "Well, I'm superintendent and I do whatever." I

said, " You listen to her. You have a project here today. I go back and make my report you don't have a project tomorrow."

People began to know that I meant business. You are not going to take this money and do like you want to. You had to account for the money. I'm going to look to see where the money is being spent. You are not spending this money somewhere else. You are going to spend this money the way you said you were going to spend it. You are going to run the project the way it is supposed to be run. And we are going to get some good information out of you. Because how do we know if you are going to have innovative techniques that you found out that we can implement in other places? This is what that money is for.

I have never been a token. I had a reputation, whether I was with the Church of Reconciliation, or the Presbyterian Church, the school system. We had teachers who were up for suspension. One of them happened to black. He wasn't doing what he was supposed to be doing. He wasn't doing his job. I read that. He thought that I was going to support him. I told him, "He has to go. He is hurting children." That guy doesn't speak to me today. He is up in Orange County I see him every once in a while. He thought I was going to support him because he is black. You are gone. You are foolish if you think I am going to do that. You know you haven't been doing what you are supposed to do. You were not even showing up. He was a traveling band director and he was supposed to go to this school and he was supposed to go to that one. He is off somewhere not doing what he is supposed to do. Got to go. It is things like that. I am for right. The teacher organizations respected me, both black and white.

I was vice chairman of the school board for about six years. Now the system was set up where when the chairman left after a period of time the vice chairman moved up to be the chairman. When it came to be my time they pulled a coup. A fellow out here named Jim Riddle. He was minister of the community church. He wanted to do politics. I said, "No politics on this board. If you want to have politics you go over to the town board. No politics on the school board. We are in the business of children, no politics. We make the best decisions we can make. If we make one that politically may not be the right decision, because of other factors timing or whatever. We will make the best decision that we can make. That is what I expect you all to do." Jim pulled a coup. Norman Wellery was the chairman, very good chairman, very good chairman. Jim called me up and said, "I got the votes, we are going to replace Norman and we are going to put in Sodwell." Sodwell it was her first year on the board. She was good, but this is her first year. He had talked her to get her to run. He had the votes, but he wanted my support. He said, "Ed I'll offer you this, if you come with me." I said, "Let me tell you one thing Jim, you don't have my support. I will never give you support against Norman, when he is the best person for the job. Have you talked with Norman?" Norman didn't even know. When he came in there he had the votes. He got up and—

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A