

Interview

with

VINCENT H. JARBOE

October 15, 2004

by Elizabeth Gritter

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The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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VINCENT JARBOE
October 15, 2004

ELIZABETH GRITTER: Elizabeth Gritter interviewing Mr. Vincent Jarboe at his office in Louisville, Kentucky on October 15, 2004. I was wondering if you grew up in Louisville?

VINCENT JARBOE: Yes, born and raised.

EG: Oh, okay.

VJ: Yeah, I was born here in Louisville and was raised here and lived just about a couple of miles from this spot here in the southwest part of Jefferson County in Pleasure Park.

EG: Oh, okay.

VJ: That's where I lived until college.

EG: Oh, okay. What was your neighborhood like?

VJ: Very lower middle class. Small ranch style homes in the neighborhood. Most of the people worked probably in places like General Electric and the Ford plant but definitely lower middle class.

EG: Was it a mainly white neighborhood?

VJ: Yes, predominately.

EG: Predominately white?

VJ: Yeah, until busing started there was only maybe two or three African American families that I can remember that were in the neighborhood.

EG: And did you know any black people growing up?

VJ: Yes, yes. I knew a whole lot more after busing started but, I only knew of a couple of people while I was a child growing up. I mean my remembrances of

students and we never mixed. So the one black child that was in the class--. Everybody in the class was friends with each other so that wasn't an issue at all.

EG: Sure. What do you remember about when you were growing up about [the] civil rights movement or civil rights protests going on in Louisville?

VJ: I really don't have any recollection of that. I was born in 1961. I have asked my mother about what happened in Louisville as far as that goes but I have no remembrance of anything as far as the civil rights struggle at all because growing up there were no black people around. So, I knew what a black person was, but I can't remember anything about any racial issues until busing started. And, at that point I was in the seventh grade when busing first started.

EG: And you were at Pleasure Ridge?

VJ: Pleasure Ridge Park, yeah.

EG: Pleasure Ridge Park High School?

VJ: Yes, at that time the high schools around here started at seventh grade. There were no middle schools.

EG: Okay.

VJ: So, you know, there weren't middle schools at that time so seventh graders were going to school with high school kids. So I started at Pleasure Ridge Park as a seventh grader and that was the first year of busing and what I remembered about that was that my alphabet would have been bused the year before. The only year for a J, for J, Jarboe, was the sixth grade and busing started when I was in the seventh so I just missed being bused by one year.

EG: How did you feel about that?

fourth grade. So, once seventh grade started, I don't think that the busing was as much of an issue for me as it was for the fact it was my first year of high school. And I'm in there with these kids that are twice as big as I am. I was a very small child. I was a very small kid, so I'm looking up at people that outweighed me by a hundred pounds. And so that part I remember taking a while to get used to.

As far as all the black kids coming in the school I do remember that it was very, very segregated, that all of the black kids stayed in one area, whether it was at lunch or whether it was at break or whether it was between classes. It was almost like the blacks would walk on this side of the hallway and the whites would walk on this side of the hallway. It just seemed like everyone was just sizing each other up and it was always an issue of just not knowing what to say or what to think or what to do because none of the kids -- very few of the kids that were at Pleasure Ridge Park -- had any interaction at all with black kids. So, I remember that it was just a very strange time because just of the way everybody interacted. The blacks didn't want to have anything with the whites and the whites didn't want anything to do with the blacks. At least at the beginning I can remember that.

That was a lot different in my class. Again, I was in the advanced program at Pleasure Ridge Park so, again, our class didn't mix with--. We did outside of school or we did between classes but in our classes we pretty much all would go from one teacher to another teacher as a large group. So at that time when I was a seventh grader we had probably, and I'm just guessing, five or six black kids in our advanced program class with us and I got along very, very well with them. I don't see them today or anymore but when I was at school, we got along very, very well and all of the advanced program kids did. I mean one thing that I can strictly remember is I

EG: With all the problems was it more so at first or was it consistent throughout your time at Pleasure Ridge?

VJ: Oh no, I wouldn't say it was consistent. I think it was much more at the beginning of it. It was much more at the beginning that it ever was continuous. My recollection and my take on it was that once people got to know each other it became better. I don't necessarily believe that a lot of people changed their minds about how they felt about blacks or how the blacks felt about whites. But I believe that everyone learned that we're just going to have to get along and get through this because it wasn't a situation where everyday there were fights in the--. It wasn't anything like that and I certainly don't mean to paint that kind of portrait but it was tough at the beginning but as time went on I think there was much less of it. I believe that people just learned that this isn't going to go away and no matter how much protesting or complaining or anything else about it, it wasn't going to change. So I think that once people realized that, you know, this is the way it's going to be, then we settled into a truce, if you will, or a way for people to get along.

EG: When would you say that things settled down and there was more a truce-like environment?

VJ: Well, hard for me to remember. My memory is not as good as it should be because as the advanced program class got to be sophomores and juniors we were the leaders of our classes. We were the student council presidents and we were definitely the leaders of the school as far as our class goes. I can remember things being relatively settled during that time because I played sports and [had] a lot of interaction with the black kids. As far as that goes, I can't remember much at all as far as any racial tensions as far as athletics went. So from my recollection I would

about black people and using "nigger" and saying that all the time. So I knew where that was coming from. I was a smart kid, and I picked up on that because I was always listening to adults and I was always listening to what adults said. And it was very easy for me to see how these people -- these kids that I ran around with and respected and liked and were my friends -- got that from their parents. I remember [realizing] early on that racism was something that's learned and that you're not born a racist. I hate to use clichés, but nobody's born a racist. You learn to be a racist because that's what these kids did when their parents were always telling them how bad black people are and they shouldn't be living in neighborhoods and shouldn't be going to schools with us and they're all a bunch of lazy, no good, you know, whatever -- that's learned. So, I didn't hold it against my friends because I realized that they felt that way because that's the way their parents felt and not because they necessarily--. If they'd had a different environment they probably wouldn't have felt that way. So I remembered learning early on that racism is learned.

EG: When did you realize that?

VJ: I don't know. I really don't know. It's hard for me to say when I learned that but I've always known it. From my perspective, it seems like I've always known it, especially when I had--. I mean the kids that I ran with in my neighborhood I started running around with them when I was probably twelve years old. When I first went into Boy Scouts -- [I was] maybe eleven, eleven or twelve when I entered Boy Scouts -- that's when I first met the guys that I ran around with from that point forward. So, you know, I guess when you're eleven or twelve you're probably a sixth grader, something like that, fifth grade, sixth grade, something like that. But when I started running around with them that's the first thing I noticed is

changed their views, hard for me to say. I don't believe that they ever really changed their ideas about how they felt about blacks because they learned it at a very young age and to this day I don't see some of those friends as much as I used to obviously but to this day they're still raising their kids to be that way. I know that and that's disconcerting and it's probably why I don't spend very much time at all with that group of friends. I have a different group of friends now. I do feel when I have had some interaction with those, they are now raising kids and they're raising kids the same they were raised, which is sad. It's probably kept me from having more of a relationship with them that I do. It's kept me from interacting with them as much because I know that they're raising their children the same way as they were raised. So hopefully, maybe the cycle will get broken in the next generation. That's what we have to hope for.

EG: Why do you think your parents didn't have these, [what] seems like, common racial views at the time?

VJ: Well, I'd probably have to say it was the way that they were raised. It's the only thing I can come up with. I don't know. My mother's never had a racist bone in her body. She's always been very progressive as far as black and white relationships go, you know, getting along with each. My grandmother, my mother's mother, I never heard her say--. I mean she might use some of the, like again, vernacular that was used at the time but she never meant it in a--. I always knew that my grandparents, if they ever used those words they didn't mean it in a demeaning way the way a person would say nigger and say it in a bad way. They said it because it was just part of the vernacular at the time. But I believe it was the way that my mother was raised. As far as my father goes, I don't know. My parents were

VJ: Yeah, probably around the time that high school started and they already had preconceived notions about how everybody was going to be and all blacks are this way. So, I can remember telling them that that just doesn't make any sense.

EG: What did they say back to you?

VJ: My friends spent the better part of the time goading me because they knew that I would get mad about it. So, they spent plenty of time saying things that I don't think they necessarily meant or thought but they'd say it. You know, all black people are lazy. No black people ever has done anything good ever. They would say that because they knew that it would get me upset. You have to learn to just--. I knew what was the bull and what wasn't the bull that they were saying so it was a lot of give and take. I mean we were still friends. It wasn't something that consumed our friendship or that's all we talked about at all. I can just remember that that was their attitude as far as blacks go.

EG: How often did you have such discussions?

VJ: Rarely. Not very often but if, just like life's experiences there are, when you're talking about anything or doing anything the issue of black and white will come up. So anytime it would come it up they would make sure that they said what they wanted to say and I would say what I wanted to say. But I don't think it was anything that we talked about every day, not anywhere close.

EG: How did you see your schooling as different before and then after desegregation?

VJ: Well, the after was when I got to know and be friends with many, many black kids. So that's the easy answer after. It wasn't a problem at all for me to quickly make friends with a lot of black kids after we started interacting. Before that

station or anything else so that these kids would know that PRP was having a reunion. So, our ten-year reunion was lily white. There might have been a handful and a lot of us noticed it. Many, many people that I went to high school with in my advanced program class were very, very progressive so we all noticed it right away and went to the people who did this and said where are, you know, "Where is Terri Banks?" We named all these people and they went, "We don't know." We ended up finding out that they didn't know about it, and I think [for] the next reunion they did a better job of it. When we talked to [black alumni] at the next reunion, they said, "We never knew about it." Now, I gave them grief because it was ten years after you graduated. You have to look for it and that could be part of it too. I don't know. We didn't spend a whole lot of time talking about those kinds of things. To make a long story short, the question was about before busing and after busing. No interaction at all with black people, very little interaction at all with black people before busing started. All of my interactions and all of my relationships with black kids was after busing.

EG: And you said you played sports in high school?

VJ: Un-huh.

EG: What did you play?

VJ: Played freshman football but I broke my collarbone and I was very, very small so football wasn't my sport anyway.

EG: Was that freshman, was that when you were in ninth grade?

VJ: Yes, ninth grade. Actually I played in church leagues in the seventh grade and in the eighth grade. I played basketball for my church team -- parochial -- and they played other Catholic schools. So I did that in the seventh grade and eighth

remember seeing anything that I would say, "What a terrible racist thing going on" when we were playing sports. I believe that's probably still true today. There's still plenty of racist people out there, I think, but as they get on a sports team together they learn that we have to be a team and overcome whatever thoughts. You might have your thoughts but you've got to keep them to yourself. So even back in the mid '70s, it was that way and I still think it's that way today. There weren't any problems at all as far as that goes.

EG: It seems like that where you saw race relations going well at your high school was in the advanced placement program and also with sports. Were there any other areas where you thought it went well?

VJ: Not really, no, because I mean those were pretty much my experiences except for when we weren't in school -- after school and things like that. After school wasn't so much of a problem because all the black kids got on their buses and went back to the West End. So, there didn't seem to be a whole lot of after school stuff at least at the beginning for black kids to do. They didn't stay after because there was no way for them to get home and I can remember that distinctly. There probably were a lot of clubs that some of them would have joined and would have been able to participate in but their parents couldn't come get them. I did have one black kid that came home from school with me one day so we could play basketball together at one of my neighborhood basketball goals and he had to catch a bus, you know, public transportation to get back home again. I think one other time he came my mother actually gave him a ride back home. But it really limited what the black kids could do after school in their home school, you know, because they couldn't stay. Now I don't remember what--Now obviously a lot of them stayed for football

VJ: Well, I mean I guess friends is a little bit--. I'm not sure how to use that word only because the blacks didn't live in our neighborhood, and that's different. You were friends while you were at school but when school was over with everybody got on the buses and went back to where they lived and we went back to our white neighborhoods. So yeah, I believe that there were a lot of whites that were friends with a lot of the blacks but there was very little interaction with each other after school was over with. When the weekends would come and nobody was in school, we never saw any of the black kids and the black kids never saw any of us. So very, very segregated as far as where people lived. This area of town now thirty years later is very integrated, extremely integrated, because, if we go--. The West End is that way and you and I could get in my car and I could show you and it would take us about three to four miles to get to a place where it was all white. I mean white all the way down as you got towards the West End and then there was a line where the blacks lived. Well, now that line, you know, now there are blacks living on the east side of where we are right now. So this entire area, I wouldn't call it full integration or anything else, but there are hundreds of families that live where we sit right now that was completely one hundred percent white thirty years ago.

EG: Did you see when busing began any changes in your neighborhood in terms of blacks moving in?

VJ: No, I remember one. I lived in the outskirts of a very, very poor area that's called Sylvania and Sylvania was considered, besides the very, very poor people that lived in the West End, the poorest place in Jefferson County basically. My house was right on the outskirts of that. So all of that was right around where I lived and a black family moved in there and they burnt their house down. They

to have had a worse time than they did at Pleasure Ridge Park, no doubt in my mind. That was where there were riots during the protests and the police and they threw rocks and bottles at police and all kinds of, you know, probably some of the stuff that you archived through the *Courier Journal* I guess. I'm sure you're doing those kinds of things. That's where it happened. Pleasure Ridge Park High School was about two miles from here. Valley Station is another just couple of miles down the road past that.

EG: Is Valley Station the name of the neighborhood?

VJ: Yeah, Valley Station is an area. Yeah, there's Pleasure Ridge Park, which is this area here and then there's Valley Station, which is out there.

EG: What sort of economic mix was in the area?

VJ: Lower middle class, all lower middle class at that point. [There are] a lot nicer houses built nowadays than there was back then. All just single family, small single family homes, and lower middle class and blue collar workers [were predominant in] the Valley Station and Pleasure Ridge Park area, not a lot of white collar people. Mostly blue collar and very, very adverse to segregation, to desegregation, I'm sorry.

EG: I saw that one of the riots broke out after a football game between Pleasure Ridge and another school. What are your recollections of that?

VJ: I don't remember that really. I don't. I don't know why because I can remember something about it but very little detail. I don't know. I don't know whether I've suppressed those bad memories of those kinds of things but I think I just never looked at it as being all that important. I saw a lot of fighting and things happen but it just seemed like it was over with as quickly as it started. I never

VJ: Correct. Yeah, if you were white you were only bussed for a year or two. If you were black you were bussed for your full four years or five years, whatever it was. So yeah, there were several of my friends that were bussed to places and then they would come back and end up finishing their high school career at Pleasure Ridge Park.

EG: Do you remember what their experiences were like?

VJ: Yeah, I have one friend now that I'm still very, very good friends with that was bused I think in his freshman year in high school and he's as progressive as I am so he didn't have any problem. There were some of us that were literally loved by black people because I believe that blacks knew who the people were -- it was very easy for them to tell -- who didn't care that they were here. It was fine with them being here. My friend was one of them. He got along fine. He probably got along as well down there as he would have being back in Pleasure Ridge Park with all white kids.

EG: Where was he bussed?

VJ: Went to a school called Noe Middle School, N-O-E. I don't know why it was called Noe Middle School because he went there--. It might not have been his freshman year that he went there. That's right, they were just starting the idea of middle schools and I think bussing probably started the idea of middle schools. I think he went in eighth grade, not ninth grade. So in the eighth grade he was bussed to Noe and then came back for freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years at Pleasure Ridge Park. So he was just bussed one year.

EG: What do you remember about the anticipation of bussing, what people were saying?

VJ: Correct, right, that's right.

EG: Did you see any difference between how male students versus female students were treated?

VJ: No, no, I don't. I can't remember. I really don't remember anything like that at all. I don't remember it being gender specific. I mean it was definitely just blacks and whites. I can't remember anything about problems between black guys and white girls or white guys and black girls. I don't remember anything like that, any problems really.

EG: What are some of the striking instances or incidents that you remember about poor treatment either way?

VJ: Well, I can remember that the big white guys that didn't like any blacks being here would be the ones that would start most of the trouble. I mean it wasn't the little--. I was an eighty-five pound, you know, five foot two kid. If I did have racist thoughts I certainly was going to keep them to myself because I'd have got the crap beat out of me every day. So those kinds of racists weren't saying anything because they knew they'd get the you-know-what beat out of them. But I can remember some of the larger kids who could do something about it would say all kinds of nasty things to black kids and that there were plenty of fights going on over those kinds of things. I think there was kind of a turf war, kind of territory thing. This is our school, and I can remember some of that -- not a lot. Not a lot because there were a lot of people around to make sure that didn't happen. The thing about the desegregation of schools was that there were a lot of teachers and everybody else that had to turn into referees and they were around a lot to make sure that those kinds of things got nipped in the bud. The worst thing that probably could have happened

that I just finally had to go to somebody in the administration and tell them about it and they basically left me alone after that. So that was my experience and, yeah, there were plenty of black kids that would pick on white kids. I mean kids are kids and I didn't look at that as being, it was easy for somebody to look at that as being a racial or racist situation but I believed that some of the blacks kids that were rough on the white kids and everything else, they were rough on little small black kids too. I didn't look at that as being a racist situation. Just like the big white kids that were picking on the black kids were picking on the small white kids. Kids are kids and even more so back then because bullying back then was a way of life. Now we have all these things about [getting] bullying [to] stop. I'm okay with that but thirty years ago bullying was part of life and nobody did anything about it and parents might complain a little bit if their kids really got roughed up. But you just had to deal with bullying the best way that you could. You didn't have anybody to save you unless you had bigger friends that could help you with the guys bullying you. But, a lot of people had to deal with bullying back then and I don't think that that was necessarily a black white thing from my recollection.

EG: But the white kids who bullied the black kids, would they say racial slurs and would there be this?

VJ: Sure, yeah, plenty of that. People are going to use words much more than they are going to use their fists so those kinds of things were said very often by people.

EG: What about with black kids bullying white kids? Was there a racial connotation with it?

interact with black children. The teachers had it tough. Teachers had it tough. Now they have kids that don't act the same way as white kids do and they didn't. They just didn't. So everybody had to get used to the way that these kids were coming in and different things that they would say and different cultural things and ways of expressing themselves that all these teachers and everybody else had to get used to if you were going to interact with black kids. I learned a lot of these things because I knew I was going to interact with them because I didn't have any problem interacting. But you can imagine teachers had to do it because it's their job. But I really can't. I have to say a lot of good things about Pleasure Park High School because I think that, for the most part, they handled things very well. When fights got broke up, there was a lot of big teachers, big football coaches, that were teachers. We had some big guys that were coaches and those were the guys that went around and broke these kinds of things up. They didn't have any problem getting in there and breaking things up when things were getting out of control.

EG: Were they all white teachers? Did you have any black teachers?

VJ: Yeah, there were some black teachers that came to PRP, I guess at the same time of busing. It's hard for me to say. But I had a couple of black teachers and there was one black administrator that came down and was like an assistant principal there at PRP. Then there were several black teachers that came that were there at the time that busing was started.

EG: Did you have a sense of what their experience was like or what students thought of them?

VJ: Very little. I mean I do remember we had one teacher, Mr. Johnson, who always seemed to counsel the black kids a lot. I mean he would always be

the things that they talked about. I can distinctly remember that black kids talked about things that white kids didn't talk about. Hard to be specific but just their experiences and the way that the black boys interacted with the black girls was a whole lot different than the way the white boys interacted with the white girls. They spoke to each other and I can remember that it was relatively derogatory. The black guys talked to the black girls in bad ways, and I can remember some of that. As to whether that falls under culture or not, I don't know. But it seems to have revolved mostly around language.

EG: In bad ways -- do you mean they talked to them like sexist ways?

VJ: Yeah, yeah, those kinds of things were said and that might be coming from [that] white guys are going to pick on the black guys and the black guys, the only way they can pick on somebody is to go pick on the black girls. I don't know. I truly believe that that was probably part of it was that bullying tends to run downhill. You get bullied and you go try to find somebody else to bully because you're frustrated over being bullied. That could have been some of it. Now on the converse, there were a lot of the black girls that those black guys didn't mess with. There was definitely some hierarchy for some of those girls that they didn't take any guff from anybody. Those black guys knew they'd better watch what they say to some of those girls. There were black girls that I met that I went to high school with that would beat the you-know-what out of those guys. I mean these girls were mean and they didn't put up with it. But I do remember that they seemed to be more derogatory towards black girls than white guys were ever derogatory towards white girls. And to whether that was culture or not, I don't know. I could have been but

They made sure that the powder keg wasn't going to get lit, so to speak, when there was things that they had to try to be in control of. The classroom situation was one thing but it was what's going on between classes and what's going on at lunch break and what's going on at your recesses that they had to keep a watchful eye on I think.

EG: How were things in the cafeteria?

VJ: Crazy, pretty crazy. Whenever I went to lunch it always seemed like the cafeteria was just full, just lots of people in there. You put that many kids in one room and it's too loud to think. But there were fights and food thrown and stuff -- not a lot. I can remember some but nothing big. I used to entertain a lot of the-- I was the class clown anyway but I used to entertain a lot of the kids at lunchtime just by eating crazy stuff or filling my mouth up with things. I can remember some of the black girls would sit around and just watch me because they wanted to see what I was going to do next. I had a sister that was one grade below me and they would go to her and say your brother's crazy. I would eat a banana with the peeling on it and just eat the whole thing in front of them and they'd just laugh the whole time. So I was just all about making people laugh so I did that a lot at lunchtime and I can remember a lot of times that the black kids would just sit around waiting for me to do something. So I was the entertainment for them, I guess.

EG: What was the academic life like? Was it a high quality academic school, Pleasure Ridge?

VJ: Well, yeah, I mean we were advanced program students so everybody in the advanced program went to college, probably a hundred percent. Maybe ninety-nine percent of the advanced program students went to college. And I'd say maybe ten percent of the regular program students went to college.

VJ: Yeah, and my sister graduated in 1981, so '78, '80 and '81, and then a younger brother who was eight years younger than me. He graduated from a Catholic high school here.

EG: Did they have similar experiences in terms of desegregation and what they thought about it?

VJ: Hard to say. All of us are very progressive. No problems at all feeling that there's something wrong or something different between blacks and whites. That's for sure. All of us are that way.

EG: What do you remember about people or do you have any memories of people who were actively pro busing? I saw there was a group Progress In Education that was a pro busing organization and held like counter rallies.

VJ: Oh, really? Couldn't tell you.

EG: Yeah, I also read that these anti busing rallies and demonstrations really drowned out some other people.

VJ: Oh, I'm sure. Oh, I'm sure. It was probably fifty to one as far as people that were against busing and people that were pro busing. But I can't remember anything about pro busing. Of course, I didn't get involved with any of the--. I didn't see any of the anti busing except for what I saw on the news.

EG: Do you think that school desegregation fulfilled its goals?

VJ: I'm not sure what the goals of desegregation were. Now I think I know what they were. But it was hard to tell what desegregation was at the time because everybody's negative view of it was that, you know, "Why are they doing this? Why are they bringing people in that don't want to be here to a school where they're not wanted?" So, I do remember that the idea to me was much more about getting

lower middle class people that have moved into these areas that are lower middle class have done so because there's no place to live. Their population's growing just like our population growing -- moving out into suburbs and making more suburbs in this county. So, I believe that if the goal was to get people to interact it happened much more so and so I think that the goals were realized as far as getting people to interact.

EG: You think things could have been handled differently to make it smoother or make desegregation more effective?

VJ: No, because the only way you could do it is to start it. It was that starting point, you know, that flash point was going to be what was going to happen and you had to start it. So as to how they could have handled it, no, I can't think of anything on how they could have handled it better because there was just no other thing to do than just to say it's time, you know, next year is busing. So it's hard to answer that.

EG: Do you think there was anything lost by the white community by desegregation?

VJ: No. I can't think of anything lost. I believe that if you spoke to a lot of the people that were against it, I would think that a lot of them would say that things were lost, sure. There's no doubt in my mind they're going to say that things were lost. They wanted things to stay status quo, extremely conservative, as far as that goes. Extremely conservative as far as keeping blacks and whites apart. But, I can't think of anything that was lost.

EG: What about among the black community, do you think anything was lost?

blacks. But, I think that whites gained a lot in seeing where white people were coming from and they got to see, even though it was bad, they got to see how whites felt about them negatively, you know. I think that gained that perspective because it reinforces some of the things that they might have believed about some whites but I believe that they saw that not all whites are the same way. I believe whites gained the same thing. Plenty of black people came that are just the same as we are, you know, no differences whatsoever except skin color. You know, nice people that wanted to do well in school, said nice things, talked to you and were your friends. So those are the things--. A lot of that stuff was definitely gained.

EG: You've been great.

VJ: Thanks.

EG: This all have been very, very helpful.

VJ: Thanks, good, I'm glad I can help.

EG: I just have a few more evaluatory questions and then a few wrap up questions.

VJ: Sure, okay.

EG: So in your opinion, when do you think desegregation ended in Louisville or do you think it's an ongoing issue?

VJ: Until I started having children that are now in the school system I completely didn't think about what was going on. I'm not a teacher. I'm not an educator. I'm not somebody that gets involved with those kind of things so it was definitely out of sight, out of mind. From the time I got to college and then went to college and then came back and got into the workforce, from the time I graduated Pleasure Ridge Park High School, I never really thought about desegregation again.

Valley High School, even if I wanted to, because I lived in Pleasure Ridge Park. So now it's hard to even come with--. Kids can go anywhere. They can go anywhere. As long as they can get to school and get back home from school they can go to any school in Jefferson County, except for the traditionals. They have to let you in and you have to win a lottery or be accepted into the traditional schools. So it's just completely different now and I just haven't kept up with it. I have nothing to do with education so it's not something I've involved myself with.

EG: Do your children go to integrated schools?

VJ: They go to a traditional school called Greathouse, which is actually the top school in the county as far as the grades go and it's very integrated. There's a lot of black kids that get an opportunity to go to that school. There's probably I'd say fifteen to twenty percent are African American kids and this is in not a black area at all. I mean it's a very white neighborhood is what it is but kids come from all over.

EG: Do you talk to your kids about your experience going to school right when busing began?

VJ: No, they don't even know what busing is. I've got a ten-year-old son who's in fourth grade and a first-grade girl, six years old. They don't know what busing is. Both of my children have said the same thing. They called them brown people when they first started talking. They called black kids brown. They said I've got a brown kid that I met. They don't know what busing is. They don't know what desegregation is and I haven't talked to them about it. You know, I mean to me it's not anything that really necessarily needs to be brought up unless they start asking questions about it because to them everything's always been integrated. So, I mean I'm not going to--. There's just not been any reason. Until you all came along there

plenty of people out there that are raising their kids that they're bad and we're good. If they then move those kids to a place where it's all white, they're not going to have any interaction. So, if they don't have but very, very little interaction it's hard for them to change their viewpoint. But, the more and more people realize that they shouldn't raise their kids that way I think it will get better. And it has, there's no doubt.

EG: With going to an integrated school and experiencing busing, how did that if it did make an impact on you later on in terms of your career and life after you got done with high school?

VJ: I believe that I had much more of an appreciation for cultural differences and had no problem interacting with really any black people, black kids. I have plenty of clients now as a State Farm agent that are black and I get along very well with them. I don't treat them any different than I do anybody else. I think that they know that. I think if you're able to interview my customers and especially my African American customers, I don't believe that any of them would, they don't know me very well, but they know how they're treated and they know that they're not treated any differently than anybody else is and I think that they would tell you that. So, my interactions have always been with people that--, I mean I even probably more so because of all the racism that I've seen I go out of my way to make sure that I show a friendly demeanor towards them. I probably do treat African Americans differently because I probably subconsciously want them to know that I'm not a racist person. So I probably go out of my way to make sure that they realize that I'm saying "Hey, how are you?" and being friendly and all of that. I mean in reality I'm not any different than I am with the other customers but

and all that. I'm like, that's three people. That's three people. That's not a hundred million people. It's three of them. It doesn't make everybody else out there the way those are. You don't group all black people in one big group just like you can't group all white people in one big group. If a white person robbed a liquor store it doesn't make every single white person a terrible person. But that's the way they viewed it because if they saw a black person that was a bad person and was an idiot and was a lazy person, that just reinforced their idea that all of them were like that. I think that desegregation hopefully taught a lot of people that that's not necessarily so, that you can't lump everybody in one big giant group. You know, that each individual is different and sure there's a lot of black people that are the exact stereotype that a lot of these racist think. There are people out there that are what they think. But it's just because that person is that way, not the entire group. That's how I've always viewed it and I think that a lot of people learned that. That it's not an entire group. There are a lot of good people. Just like there are a lot of good white people and a lot of bad white people, there are a lot of good black people and a lot of bad black people. So I think that desegregation probably taught a lot of people that you can't lump everybody together.

EG: And overall how would you assess school desegregation went in Louisville?

VJ: I think it succeeded in the interaction part. I don't believe--. Kentucky is a very, very, a very backward state as far as education goes. Not a lot of kids get all the way through high school. I mean a lot of kids do but there's a pretty good percentage of kids that don't get all the way through high school and drop out. A much too low percentage of kids even now that don't go on to college. Now I truly

INTERVIEWEE LIFE HISTORY FORM

(Note: Attach curriculum vitae/bio sketch/profile, etc., if available.)

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