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N.8 Undergraduate Internship Program: Spring 2016

Interview N-0046

Karen Parker

3 March 2016

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ABSTRACT – Karen L. Parker

Interviewee: Karen L. Parker
Interviewer: Kadejah S. Murray
Interview Date: March 3, 2016
Location: Greensboro, NC
Length: 1 hour and 51 minutes

Karen Parker begins by reflecting on her high school experience at Atkins High School in Winston Salem, NC, where her guidance counselor told her and some other students that they had the academic record to attend predominately-white schools. Ms. Parker describes her experiences at North Carolina Women's College; she focuses on her relationships with her roommates, housing dynamics and making the dean's list. Karen explains how her parents, both teachers, played an influential role in her general education, and how that prepared her for college. Luix Overby encouraged Karen to attend the University of North Carolina; at UNC, she felt her role was to change hearts and minds. Ms. Parker reflects on some of the problems that she had with professors during her undergraduate career, and her experiences with depression. Karen retells a story about her friend Joanne Johnson moving into her dorm room, and explains that because of their differences in race this was illegal according to administration. Karen also retells a story about her worse experience during her time at UNC and one of the most shocking sit in demonstrations that she was involved in. While at UNC Karen was a part of a program called the Toronto Exchange, she explains in detail her time in Toronto. Karen takes time to explain what all the pioneers in the class of 1965 did after graduation. During her time at UNC Karen kept a diary that encapsulated her emotions, triumphs, and general experiences at UNC, she spends time talking about specific entries and people that were in her diary. Ms. Parker talks about a range of topics like the time she encountered the Ku Klux Klan, the speaker ban, the exhibit "I raised my Hand to Volunteer, her involvement with the black pioneers, and what she currently does in her free time. The interview ends with Ms. Parker giving words of advice to incoming African American UNC students.

FIELD NOTES – Karen L. Parker

(Compiled March 9, 2016)

Interviewee: Karen L. Parker
 Interviewer: Kadejah S. Murray
 Interview Date: March 3, 2016
 Location: Greensboro, N.C.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Karen Parker was born in Salisbury, North Carolina and raised in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and in 1963, she became the first African American woman to enroll in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. While here, Karen majored in Journalism, and became the editor of the UNC Journalist, the Journalism school's newspaper. She was involved with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and while participating in a sit-in demonstration to end segregation in Chapel Hill restaurants and businesses, she was arrested. After she graduated from UNC she accepted a job as a copy editor at the Grand Rapids Press in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Later on in her career, she worked at the Los Angeles Times and the Winston-Salem Journal.

THE INTERVIEWER: Kadejah Murray is a junior double majoring in Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a part of the 2016 Southern Oral History Program Internship Program.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview took a while to start, because Karen got a phone call from her doctor, but after the call was finished, the interview went smoothly, with only a few minor glitches. The interview was conducted in the living room of her house. I was unaware that Ms. Parker owned three cats, and I am allergic so I can heard sniffing and sneezing in the background sporadically throughout the interview. Three minutes into the interview, the cat comes close to the recorder and can be heard making noises. At the time 5:41 Karen's house phone rings, and at 6:47 her answering machine can be heard in the background. Ms. Parker gets up to show me pictures from a book called *Courage in the Moment* at 41:24. Karen took me to another room in her house at 50:19 to show me pictures of her travels to Niagara Falls. At 58:04 Ms. Parker gets up to show me her class yearbook, and at 1:02:25, she shows me a picture of herself with four of the five black pioneers of her 1965 class during a reunion. Ms. Parker gets up to get herself something to drink at 1:21:09; at 1:42:40 she walks over to her bookshelf to show me some coloring books that she has completed over the span of 10 years. This interview focuses on Karen's education before UNC Chapel Hill; her struggles, triumphs, experiences, and emotions while she attended UNC; her involvement with the black pioneers; and what she currently does in her free time.

NOTE ON RECORDING: I used a Zoom H4 recorder from the Undergraduate Library Media Resource Center.

TRANSCRIPT—KAREN PARKER

Interviewee: KAREN PARKER

Interviewer: Kadejah Murray

Interview Date: March 3, 2016

Location: Greensboro, North Carolina

Length: 1 file; approximately 1 hour, 54 minutes

START OF RECORDING

Kadejah Murray: OK, my name is Kadejah Murray. I'm interviewing Karen Parker today on March 3rd, 2016, at her home in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ms. Parker, can you start off by telling me about your high school career?

Karen Parker: I graduated from Atkins High School in Winston-Salem. It was all African American because schools were segregated then. I graduated in the class of 1961, which turned out to be a very-- [Pause] a class full of brotherhood and sisterhood, because we have a lot of reunions and meetings, and that's great. We had our fiftieth last year and--that wasn't last year, whatever year it was [Laughs], 2011, with the numbers, and people--I was surprised how many people came and how many people were still alive, and so we're rather close most of us, and we keep up with each other. Most of us--it started off. They put all the kids who were bound for college in one class and the ones who weren't in the other classes, and then they decided that that really set apart the other students, and they had them by number, like ten-one, ten-two, ten-three, ten-four, or ten-five, tenth grade, and of course the smart kids were in ten-one, two, three, and of course the one down here in ten--. The ones in ten-to-twelve were considered to be a hopeless

case. So that was not good, so they mixed everybody up, and a lot of kids went to school. We had a very good sports program. We graduated some famous athletes: Carl Eller of the Minnesota Vikings; Happy Hairston played basketball for NYU and ended up on the Lakers. Let's see, who else? Well, anyway, other folks [Laughs]--I'm getting old. I can't remember everybody, but it was a good sports program, and a lot of our graduates went to Winston-Salem State, the ones who went to college. Other ones went to A&T and some of the HBCU schools, and the predominately white schools, almost all white school, were just starting to open up, and guidance counselors said to me and a couple of other students that we had the capability of going to those schools. We had the grade point averages and probably sense enough to get through it. It took more than sense. It took a lot of guts and nerve, and I don't know what else, because at WC--I went to WC, which is now UNCG, and they put all of the blacks--it was five of us in the class of [19]65. They put all five of us at one end of a hall next to the housemother, and they had empty rooms between us and the white girls, lest we contaminate them with something. I don't know what we were going to do to them. We ended up being friends with a lot of them, so I don't know what they thought that was all about. And then, they had a roster of all the girls in the dorm, and, of course, they had "N" after our names for "Negro," now, lest you confuse them with somebody else. And we liked to play bid whist, and we had lights out at 10:30. And we weren't ready to go to bed, so we'd get out a flashlight, and we started playing bid whist. And one night, the house mother caught us, and she came in, and she says, "I just don't understand you people and that game." She made the "you people" mistake.

So this went on for a while, and, I think, around [19]70, [19]71, people--we were humiliated a lot. "We're still going to keep you in your place," and it was a lot to fight them, but the later students fought them. Now, somebody had to, and things are even now, of course. I had a tough

time also because of two roommates. They were from Charlotte, Second Ward High School.

We feared Second Ward High School in football or basketball when we had to play them. I was in the band, and we went down there one year, and it was their homecoming, and we beat them.

So the band director told us to-- [Phone ringing] Let it ring. I'm not going to answer it. It'll be done in a minute. Six rings. That should be six. OK. All right. There we go. [Laughter].

So we went down there, and the band director told us to walk quietly out of the stadium lest we attract attention, and, I mean, they were tough people down at Second Ward. They didn't think anything of beating you up, setting buses on fire or whatever. [Intercom message] And all of a sudden, a crowd of men and boys started chasing us, and we ran like crazy. And when we got to our buses, a guy is sitting there with a switchblade. The other thing that they liked to do was rock the bus, throw rocks at the bus, and we got out of there with our lives. At least, that's the way we felt, because that was a tough school.

Well, anyway, these girls were from Second Ward, and they were street tough. They were whizzes at mathematics. They aced the math part of the SAT like I aced the verbal part, the English part, of the SAT, and they ganged up against me, and I had no defense against them.

Here I am, a geeky--I was a nerd in high school—a kid from Winston-Salem, didn't know one end from another, very naïve, and I wanted to go home because of them. They had to talk me into staying in school. Everything else was OK. I stayed. I was there for two years. After freshman year, we could pick our own dorms and our own roommates, and I had a new roommate, and she and I got along fine. And she introduced me to a man--well, he wasn't a man. Well, he was a man. He was nineteen, named Barry Lambert, and I married him. We were engaged, and my parents opposed it, so it--, when I got to Chapel Hill, it broke up. My interests got different from his. I was very ambitious. He was not. He went into the military,

and I went off to Michigan. I married him thirty-five years later. [Laughter] It took that long, and my mother decided that he was [a] very nice guy, but thirty-five years before she didn't want me to marry him, so she changed her mind. He and I moved into this house together, and he had some issues, so we broke up, and I didn't like that, but it was for the best. Sometimes, you have to do that. Which other part of everything do you want to know?

Oh, I'll tell you another thing about WC. That first semester, I made the honors list, which is the dean's list, and they posted it on the bulletin board on the dorm, and the bulletin board was near our room, and we could hear them. And these girls would go up there and go, "Karen Parker?" [Grunting sound] like this was impossible. It was not to happen. And the girls would come in and say, "Can you help me with my biology?" and stuff like that, and I got in the honors program with the next semester, which I learned a lot from. So my high school education held up pretty good, but then I was also the daughter of two teachers, and they always emphasized education, of course. There was no question that I was going to college. There was no question that I would graduate, and we had a lot of things in the house. We had encyclopedias and books and things, and my father got the latest magazines, and there were things to keep up with, and all of this makes a difference in your general education. And in my becoming a newspaper copy editor, a lot of that job is finding things that are wrong. And how can you know they're wrong if you don't know what's right? Which means you have to know a lot of stuff, and I had that trivia mind, you know useless facts, useless stuff, one of those people, and, boy, it came in very handy in copyediting, and I really enjoy that. I had been a summer intern on the Winston-Salem paper, and we were supposed to spend time in various departments. So I went to the women's department, and I don't know what else I did, but when it came time to be on the copy desk, they put me in the library. Now, I didn't think anything about it because I didn't know what was

going on, but one of the photographers came and told me, "They put you in the library because some of the reporters were not going to have a Negro editing their copy." And he said, "I think that's unfair, and you have a right to be on the copy desk like anybody else." So he got me on the copy desk, and I was there a whole two days, and I decided that was exactly what I wanted to do. I didn't want to be a writer; I wanted to be on the copy desk. And of course, after two days, there were complaints from the reporters, so I was kicked off the copy desk and put back into the library. This was 1963, unbelievable. And one thing I had to work on was something called the Negro Page, and it came out every Sunday. The guy who put it out, his name was Luix Overbea. He was one of the founders of the NABJ, the National Association of Black Journalists, and he was the one who encouraged me to go to UNC journalism school. He said, "You can do it." He had to go on vacation one year, and there was a teacher who used to sub for him, but she wasn't available. And he really wanted to go on vacation, so he had to find a Negro, of course, to do the Negro page [Laughter]. So he was desperate, and he came to me. He says, "I know you can do it. I saw your writing for the school paper." And he took me over to the paper, and we did a two-day, two-night crash course in everything: editing, writing, newspaper style, layout, pictures, the whole thing. And I got the page out. They looked awful, [Laughter] but they got out. They got published. And of course, I improved after that, but it took time. But I am ever grateful to him because going to UNC Chapel Hill School of Journalism changed my life and everything I have now and I've done, I would not have it if I had not gone there. That was a turning point, and it opened my eyes, because I realized there were things going on in the world that I didn't know about in the black community of Winston-Salem, because you're very insular. We kept to-
-we had to keep to ourselves. And I'm listening to the white students, and they're telling me about how they went to Europe and they did this and they did that and they travel here and travel

there, and it sounded interesting, and I wanted to do it to. I didn't have the money to do it, but one day I'm going to do it. And then, I go to the concerts and things. I went to ballet, and I went to opera. I went to piano--. It's not recitals when they're professionals. Piano concerts, I guess you would call it, all kinds of stuff that I never had seen in my life and never would have seen, and that expanded my horizons too.

So that's how I managed to get away from the boyfriend, because he was stuck in one place, and, as a matter of fact, he was on academic probation at A&T mainly because he didn't study. He just didn't, and I had no patience for that, none. So I went on my way, and I felt at UNC somehow that it was my role to change hearts and minds of the people I happened to run into, and one thing I wanted them to know was [that] I was not stupid. As a matter of fact, I might be smarter than you. And as it turned out, I was in the very top of the journalism class. I think I was somewhere in the top five. I was in ten percent of the graduates of the Class of [19]65, the general population. That surprised a lot of people, that we were not dumb, and the same thing with the other students. I did not have as much trouble as some of them.

We had a brunch down at UNC during Black Alumni Reunion Weekend, and we were telling people about the bad stuff that happened to us. Professors--you'd walk in the room--this didn't happen to me; these are other people's stories--professors who--you would walk in the room, and they'd say, "What are you doing here?" Professors that refused to give you an A grade even though you made it, and one guy, he was in medieval literature. I mean, anybody who is in medieval literature is pretty smart anyway, and he did his papers, and he got good grades on them. But when he got his final grade, and they used to post them on the wall, he got a C. So the professor came by, and he said, "Mr. Womack, I guess you're puzzled about why you got a

C.” And he said, “I want to tell you your papers were very good. Your approach was very good. You got some good grades, but I had to give you a C.”

KM: Did he say why?

KP: No. Several other students encountered the same thing. “You cannot give those Negroes an A even if they made it.”

KM: Did that ever happen to you?

KP: Slightly. I had only one problem with a professor. He taught North Carolina history, and it was a required course for journalism majors, and I had heard that he hated women, blacks, and journalism majors. [Laughter] So I said, “Please don’t make me go to that class. Please don’t make me take that. I’ll sign an affidavit saying I never will work in the state of North Carolina if you don’t make me take it.” And they said, “No, you’ve got to go anyway.” And this professor, he liked to come in--I was up towards the front of the room--and he would talk about lynchings, and he loved to come and stand right by me, by my desk, when he talked about lynchings and other things, and he was known to be quite racist. And I wasn’t afraid of him. I sat there. You don’t intimidate me one bit. I’m not going to play that. You’re not going to do that. And one paper, he gave me a C, and I thought it was an A paper, and I went and talked to him about it, and he did raise the grade to a B, so I have to give him credit for that. And that was my worst experience with professors, but the journalism school, no problems there. I had a couple of good mentors over there who really helped me toward getting a job when I got out and all kinds of things, so that was good.

What I found was tough was that I couldn’t be myself. The black community expected this much from you. The white community, the segregation, is expecting that much from you. The non-segregation is expecting something else from you. My parents are expecting something else

from me, and there's all this stuff going. It's a big rumble in my head, and you're trying to go to school and learn things and have a social life, which was not easy for a black student then because you can't be part of the campus culture, which I always wanted to be. I watched those college movies on TV, and I thought these sororities and fraternities and stuff were a lot of fun. So we had no part of that back in those days, and things were hard, and I was so confused. I was depressed a lot and had a lot of anxiety, and I got put on Miltown. Miltown was the tranquilizer of the day, very similar to Valium. And I would take Miltown, and it helped me get through school. And in that diary that's in the library, that I wrote--you know what I'm talking about--I looked at it, and I had forgotten how confused I was and struggling with everything, and I felt that I had to excel at everything. I had to show these white people. I was going to show them. And the first year, I got a scholarship. I got the editorship of the *Journalist*. All kinds of good things happened. And by senior year, the only awards left were the Sigma Delta Chi Woman of the Year or something like that, and I really wanted that, and another girl got it. It was supposed to be based on grade point average, and my grade point was higher than hers, and I knew it. And she got it, and I got very upset about that. That really, really bothered me because that was an opportunity I didn't get. And then, there was another award-type thing that was going on, and a similar thing happened, and the same girl got that one too.

KM: Both of them, she got?

KP: Yeah.

KM: How did that happen?

KP: The people who voted her in voted her in.

KM: Was she African American or white?

KP: No.

KM: Oh, yeah, she wouldn't be African American.

KP: There wouldn't be anybody else.

KM: Yeah, yeah. [Laughter]

KP: You know?

KM: So she was white.

KP: There were no other blacks in the journalism school.

KM: Yeah.

KP: There had been one before me, Lester Carson, and he'd already graduated by the time I got there. Then, another one, Walter Jackson, came in the Class of [19]67. I knew him. He was just starting out.

KM: How did you handle not getting both of those awards?

KP: I cried. [Laughter] I cried a lot, and one night I had just come from some banquet, and the dean of women was berating me for something or another. She was always bothered--. She was always calling me into her office because I was going to jail and stuff, and she hated that, and that looked bad for the university as such. So I had come from this thing, and I wasn't very happy, and I guess I had taken some Miltown. And a couple of my journalism classmates; we went out and had a beer over at Harry's. Harry's was a bar and grill next to the post office at the time. I don't know what it's called now, but do you know where the old post office is on Franklin? Well, it was right next to that, so that was the hangout place. And Harry's was integrated before the Civil Rights law. So was the Carolina Coffee Shop. There were two places that we could go. And I had beer on top of the Miltown, which was not a good idea. [Laughter] But what that did, it didn't make me happy or high. It made me more depressed, and I went back over to the journalism building. And I had an office down in the basement because of the

journalist thing, and Curry Kirkpatrick was across the hall. He had an office, and I just cried and cried and cried on his shoulder, and he was trying to tell me, "You don't have to be better than everybody else. You have made an impact on the school. You don't need to prove anything else." And I said, "But I have to. Yes, I do. You don't have to, but I have to." I felt that. And when I graduated, I felt very much a failure. I did not want to go through the graduation thing, but my parents made me, because they said, "Hey, we spent all this money sending you to school. You're going to go to graduation." So I did that very reluctantly, and I left there feeling very depressed and not wanting anything to do with UNC, very bitter and mad at myself because I didn't achieve what I thought I should achieve. And I realize now I was being pretty hard on myself. I was asking a whole lot.

KM: You did a lot.

KP: Yeah, and I did a lot. It was amazing. The other thing that happened there that was amazing; I made some friends in the dorm. And one girl, I had known her up at WC. You were allowed to transfer. All women had to go to WC unless you had some strange major. There were a couple of exceptions. But when you were a junior, you could transfer down, so of course I transferred for journalism school. And the girl named [Joanne?] Johnson, she was going to journalism school too, and we had picketed together up at WC. So I had an empty bed in my room. She was squeezed in with two other girls, and she said, "We get along OK, don't we?" I said, "Sure." And she said, "I'll move in with you," and I said, "Cool," and she did. Somehow, that was illegal, they said, and when they found out about it, the powers that be, they had a holy fit. The next year, they re-segregated everybody, because the students were coming in and finding they had a white roommate. Some of them stayed, and some of them didn't. A lot of the

white roommates walked in, looked at the black roommate, and walked out. Yeah, and--excuse me [Coughs]--I had strayed off my point a little bit. Where was I?

KM: You were talking about your roommate, Joanne.

KP: Oh, yeah, yeah. And then, they made--. If you were a white and a black rooming together, they sent your parents a form, like, "My daughter, Karen Parker, Negro, has permission to room with Louise Ambrosiano, White," and her parents got the opposite ones. Our parents signed it. And the next year, when I figured out what the administration had done by re-segregating everybody--they made sure blacks--. "We're not going to have any more problems with the roommate situation like with Joanne Johnson," and they punished her for moving.

KM: What did they do?

KP: They campused her. Now, they couldn't possibly do that now, because, they used to lock us up in the dorm at night, eleven o'clock or something, and you couldn't come out until six o'clock in the morning. And on the weekends, you could stay out until midnight or 12:30 a.m. or something, and twice a year, at Jubilee, you could stay out until 2:00 a.m., and that was it. Otherwise, you came in, and they locked you up. So she was not permitted to go off the campus. Basically, she could go to class and back. That was all she was permitted to do, and she was campused for two weeks, and Joanne took that very well. She was the kind of person that--. Joanna and I are still friends to this day.

KM: Where does she live?

KP: She lives in Tacoma, Washington, and I just saw her the year before last. We have a reunion of the Cobb girls. Cobb was the dorm I was in, and we had it in Chapel Hill in 2008. The first one we had in Tacoma, and then the last, most recent one, we had it--. Joanne got us a beach house on Vashon Island, somewhere in Puget Sound, and that was nice. We had a week at

the beach house. It was a little confining as far as I was concerned, but, some people, it was nice to see them for two days, but then anything beyond that was troubling. One woman's husband stayed there. Two husbands stayed in, and one of them was a real pain. He licked his plate. We're in a restaurant, and he picked up his-- [Laughter] And stuff like that. And then, he--what was it--passed a kidney stone or something, and he insisted upon showing it to everybody, that kind of thing. He had his-- Then, he had a big sore or a bad-looking toe, and he had to show everybody that too.

KM: So he just showed everybody everything.

KP: Yeah. Yeah, and things that would gross out people, they didn't gross him out, but other people got grossed out. We had a good time. It was amazing--that was our 50th reunion--that we have kept that little group together for fifty years, and I know those women, and they were activists back then. They went to jail. Joanne went to jail more than I did. A lot of the others went to jail more than I did, the white students, because they really believed that things should not be segregated. They really believed in the principles, and they've carried that through their whole lives. And of course, everybody is a Democrat. [Laughs]

KM: So how did your housemates react to you when you first moved into Cobb?

KP: The dorm? They ignored me. It's not like the black (). The guys got a lot of flak and tricks played on them and terrible stuff. And if you ever read about Harvey Beech, who was one of the first, he had to endure a lot of stuff. Those first students had a bad time, but you had to stay there, because somebody had to be the first. And my mother would always say, "Behave yourself, or they won't let any more of us in," and I was always reminded that my behavior affected the people who came behind me. But I feel good when I go to BAR and go to the banquet or something and look at all those professionals and all the successful people who

graduated from UNC since I was there, and that's what it was all about, and that feels so good. It was worth going through all the nonsense and the pain and the humiliation for those students to come along and, however many years later, things loosen up, and for them to excel and have productive lives out of school. I think the worst thing that happened to me--. I was walking across the men's quad to journalism school like I always did every day, and it was a nice, sunny day, and there was nobody walking across there but me. It was totally empty, unusually empty, except for a couple or three guys in a dorm window. And they were clearly drunk, and they started calling out things to me. And they were racial, and they were sexual, and they were awful, awful, awful. And the only thing I could do was pretend like I didn't hear them. Of course, I heard them. There was nobody around but me and them, and they weren't that far away. I heard them, and I knew that if I responded in any way it would just make it worse. And they were talking to me like I was a prostitute or something. I mean, it was awful. Just because of the color of my skin, you think you can talk to me that way? Yeah, how awful. And that was very, very upsetting.

KM: Did you talk to anybody about it?

KP: No. At least, I don't remember talking to anybody in an official capacity. I don't know what they would have done about it. I don't know who the guys were. If I turned around to look at them, that was acknowledging that I heard them, but I wish I knew where they were, because I'd like to talk to them. [Laughter] I'd have a little chat. That was the worst thing that happened to me, the indignities. Those were bad. My friend John Sellers, who was a couple of, three, or four years behind me, he said, "You know--." We had this shock when we came to UNC. Now, back home, we were probably--. Some of us were middle class or struggling to be middle class or whatever, and we were academically gifted, and we were at the top of our class, and we had

the respect of our classmates and our teachers and stuff and the community, and they were all behind you going off to school and hoping you would succeed down there. But he said, "You know, the white people looked at you as just another nigger," and that was the truth. Now, I'm not talking about every last one of them. At the [19]65 reunion, I had a couple of women come up to me, a couple of them in tears, saying that they saw me on campus, and they thought I was very brave, and they were sorry that they didn't befriend me, and they didn't because their peers. And this one woman, she wanted forgiveness. I couldn't forgive her. That's what the pope does. I don't know. [Laughter] I told her not to worry about it, that that was then. OK, so when we were in school, we didn't have sense about a lot of things. Forgive yourself now. I had others come up and tell me that they became activists. They felt bad about school, so they became activists when they got out and made something of themselves. And we had a seminar--they called it a panel discussion--it was on race and the demonstrations and stuff, and we had a full house. It was over at Murphey Hall, full house, packed, standing room. And afterwards, people loved it, came up--I was the moderator--to tell me they loved it and they learned so much being there. And I had two other people with me: Mickey Blackwell, who had been a reporter for the *Daily Tar Heel* when all the demonstrations were going on; and Jim Wallace, who was the photographer who took pictures then. Interestingly, both Jim and Mickey didn't finish their classwork on time. They had to go to summer school because they were spending their time chasing after the Civil Rights demonstrators for a whole semester. And Jim got some wonderful pictures. I'll show you. He did a book called *Courage*--that's Mickey's book--*Courage in the Moment*, and did he get some great pictures. And he always said--it was really funny--he never got a picture of me. I think I'm probably in one of the crowd shots somewhere, but this is a lot of--. Take a look. And we had people beaten severely. We had--.

KM: Oh, these are amazing.

KP: One guy had an aneurysm after the demonstration, and they poured drain cleaner or something like that down one guy's throat. And the worst one was this woman--. The wife of the owner of the restaurant came over, hiked up her skirt, and urinated on somebody.

KM: Wow.

KP: And see, we were told that the thing was to drop to the ground and make the cops pick you up and put you in the car, a passive resistance. That was part of the program. So we're lying on the ground and everything, and this woman just came up, hiked up her skirt, and peed on somebody. And our thing was that we could not retaliate. We could not respond when things like that happened, and that was the passive resistance. You just couldn't do it. And the people who wanted to fight back, they'd tell them, "We don't want you if that's your inclination; if you want to hit somebody and you can't help it, we don't need you," because that's the way it worked. The leaders of those demonstrations, there were three guys: John Dunne, Quinton Baker, and Pat Cusick. They sent the leaders to the chain gang.

KM: What was that, the chain gang?

KP: The chain gang. Do you know what the chain gang is?

KM: No, I don't.

KP: They've eliminated the chain gang. What they would do is get a bunch of prisoners, maybe five or six of them, and they would be connected to each other by chains. And they'd put them out on some road project, mow the grass, pick up the litter, and take them somewhere else and do some other job. I remember when I was fourteen, my grandmother--. The road in front was a dirt road, and they decided to pave it, and they had the chain gang out there every day.

Have you ever heard that song by Sam Cooke? “That’s the sound of the men working on the chain gang.”

KM: No.

KP: You’ve never heard that?

KM: No, I’ve never heard that.

KP: And they’re hammering things and working their lives away, and I think there were two popular songs back then about the chain gang. They eliminated the chain gang, but that was--.

The chain gang was considered a light sentence because you did get outside the cell, and usually you weren’t in there but a couple of years and sometimes only a few months. And the leaders finally got their sentences commuted by Governor Terry Sanford, but he couldn’t pardon them.

He said that that action set the Democratic Party back for a long time, and it did. The segregationists didn’t appreciate that. OK, now, what else do you need to know? [Laughter]

KM: So, on January 2nd, 1964, you went on trial for being arrested in December.

KP: Yeah.

KM: Can you tell me about that process and how you felt during that?

KP: For being out of the dorm? Oh, no.

KM: For the trial process, when you were waiting for--.

KP: Oh, for the sit-ins. Yeah, my dad came down for that, and we didn’t know what was going to happen. And we went to Hillsborough to the courthouse, and the judge was pretty tough. And we had to sit there, and he asked a lot of questions of some people, but mostly the lawyers took it. Well, the dismissed all the charges against us. It was a whole bunch of us. I think it was one hundred of us. They dismissed all the charges, and they just got the leaders.

And of course, my father thought I was going to be thrown in jail for years or something,

[Laughter] so he came down. It might be the last he saw of me for a while. And they said, “Y’all go home,” and, “All right,” and happily went. But we were there maybe four hours or something like that.

KM: So it was a quick process.

KP: Yeah, yeah.

KM: Oh, that’s good.

KP: But it was scary at first because we didn’t know what was going to happen.

KM: So I want to know more about your experiences in Toronto during the Toronto exchange that you were a part of.

KP: I love that. I absolutely loved that. You’re talking about broadening horizons; that really broadened my horizons. The Canadians came down to Chapel Hill first, and one of the things was that they were having a party at the Beta Theta Pi house, and there was some discussion about whether I should go in the front door or the back door. And I let it be known I wasn’t going in anybody’s back door. So I was going in the front door, or I wasn’t going, and they figured, “If she doesn’t go, that’s going to be an issue too.” So I went in the front door, and the building did not fall down. [Laughter] And we had a nice party. We were dancing at Beta Theta Pi. So I was, I believe, the first black to go in the front door of Beta Theta Pi. It’s so ridiculous where you have to single out a person, like the first athletes, Willie Cooper in basketball. Everybody knows Charlie Scott, but he was not the first. It was Willie Cooper. And you get to a hotel, the band members who--black band members and stuff--. All the white students stayed there, but you had to go across town to the black community and stay there. And they were always getting pulled out. Isn’t that something? It’s incredible. Well, anyway, my co-Canadian, her name was [Hela?], and we had a lot of seminar discussion things and stuff. Then, we went

up there, and the first thing was a blizzard. We were in a blizzard, and they took us to Niagara Falls, and it was frozen. And I don't know what the temperature was; it was something ridiculous, below zero, and we didn't have the clothes for it. But we got out to see Niagara Falls, which wasn't doing much, and I looked at it for about five minutes, and I got back on the bus. I was determined to see Niagara Falls when it was not frozen, and it took me until 2013 to do that. And when I did, I went crazy about it. Can I show you something in another room?

KM: Yes.

KP: My Niagara Falls-- I've got a fixation on Niagara Falls. I loved it so much and the broadening experience. () I saw a thing idea where this guy somehow was standing right on the edge of the Falls. They don't know how he got there or why he got there, and they managed to grab him just before he fell off.

KM: OK. Oh, wow, yeah, I couldn't imagine.

KP: So that was one exception. Well, anyway, I just showed you my Niagara Falls pictures.

KM: And they were very beautiful.

KP: Yeah. And I did my own-- Well, I did a lot of travel writing, and I've got some of the pictures of them on the wall. Can I show you something else?

KM: Yes. [Laughter]

KP: You don't have to go quite as far. We had a good layout guy at the Winston-Salem paper, and these are some of the ways he laid out some of my stories. And I put another bunch of them in the laundry room. Yeah.

KM: So those are all your stories.

KP: Uh-huh.

KM: Oh, wow.

KP: One was the *LA Times*, the middle one down there. So I was there fifteen years. Again, () did beautiful layouts and things. I traveled overseas. I love travel. I absolutely love travel, and I save up my money, you know. When I was a little kid, I look at the encyclopedias and the magazines and stuff and go, "I want to see that one day. I've got to see that one day." And I've gone and seen a lot of it, as much as I could afford to go. This year, I'm not going anywhere because I'm broke. [Laughter] My house needs repairs and stuff, so I'm not going anywhere. I'll be right here, and I am determined to--. Come here, cat. He's too friendly. I'm determined to go as many places as I can while I can still walk. I do have some back problems that, you know, are going to deteriorate after a while, and it won't be so good, so I want to go while I'm still ambulatory, because travel just opens your eyes so much. I encourage students to go if they have an opportunity. I was talking to some young black high school students down at UNC. The journalism school had them down there, and I asked them, if they were given \$10,000 to go to either Vegas or to Europe, where would they go, and they all said Vegas. And I pointed out to them, "OK, so you go to Vegas, and you lose the \$10,000. You can say you had a good time and everything, but if you took that \$10,000 and went to Europe, you would have experiences that will last you the rest of your life. It opens up your horizons. It opens up your opportunities for jobs and everything when they realize that you are with it." And then, you see the other people and other cultures, and you realize, yes, they are people just like us, and, yes, they do some things differently from the way we do it, and sometimes you might think they're a little primitive or backwards. However, they've been getting along for centuries, so who are we to say anything about them? And I hate it when Americans go over and belittle the people, the country that they're visiting, calling them names. That is awful. There's a guy on TV named Joseph Rosendo, and he quotes Mark Twain. He said, "Travel is," not hazardous, but, "Travel is bad

for,” I forgot the word--. “It erases stupidity, prejudice,” and something else. I should not quote things that I can’t remember the words of. [Laughter] However, it’s around here somewhere, right here. I put it in the university. That was the () for the class reunion. So all I have to do is look up Karen Parker. Yeah, and the quote is, “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” That’s the quote.

KM: Who was the quote by again?

KP: Mark Twain. But Joseph Rosendo--how do you spell his name? R-O-S-E-N-D-O, and he has a TV show on public television called *Travelscope*. It’s on one of those--. UNC TV has these two other, three other stations. One is Kids. Another one they now call the North Carolina station, and one called UNC Explorer, and I watch that one a lot. It has a lot of travel stuff on it. But anyway, that was my page. They had us get a picture of us as we are now, and, of course, they put the yearbook pictures in there, and, boy, some people cheated. They put pictures of themselves 20 years ago. This is the girl that got those awards that I wanted.

KM: OK.

KP: And I don’t take anything away from her, just the people who gave it to her. And I did an essay forum. That’s how Cobb Hall used to look. That’s how I used to look. [Laughter] I’ll never be that size again. And this turned out--. And Joanne, this is Joanne, the roommate that moved in with me, and this is a classic picture of her. It pops up in magazines and stories and newspapers, of Joanne being dragged by the Chapel Hill police. And when the chief of police saw that, he banned dragging demonstrators. They had to pick us up. As a matter of fact, the chief of police really was on our side, and he kept things really under control. But this piece was in a book called *27 Views of Chapel Hill*, so we reprinted it. Then, I added, because I figured that the white students, most of them had no idea how many black students were in the Class of

[19]65, and I see one here, and you see one here. It really didn't register with them. So I put in here what everybody was doing, and there were only six of us, and one of them was my cousin, Rear Admiral Larry L. Poe, and he was head of intelligence for the Navy at one time, for the whole country. He was the inspector general. When they first went over to Iraq the first time, he was the inspector general over there, came back, worked for the Pentagon as a private contractor, and for years he was in the CIA. And those years, I didn't see much of him, and they recruited his wife too. So they were both over in Africa somewhere at one point. She let it slip. She let "Sudan" slip out one day. But only when he got back and stopped doing spy things did he come and speak to me. [Laughter] And we grew up together. We were kids together. We lived in different towns, but he lived in the town where my grandparents were. His mother was Parker, OK, so we had a tie, and all the kids went over and played with them, and it was just a great place to be. There were five kids in that family, and we'd chase fireflies, and his daddy would tell tall tales and ghost stories and scare us. It was a good time. He came to school up at UNC, and all he did was borrow money from me. [Laughter] Then, I couldn't find him. He'd disappear.

KM: After he borrowed the money?

KP: But it was--. Yeah, when it was time to pay the money back, he would just be gone.

KM: That sounds familiar.

KP: That's been a running joke between us for years. Then, we have Lewis Burton, and he's a certified public accountant, and he lives in Chicago. He didn't make it to the reunion. Five of us were here. Five of us got there, and I think, for the first time, a lot of the classmates realized how many of us were there.

KM: Which one is your cousin?

KP: This one.

KM: OK.

KP: The Poe family. And he did tremendously well, and he's from East Spencer, which is a nothing of a town. You go through it, and you don't even know you went through it. And for a boy from East Spencer to go do the things he did, it's amazing, and that was all of the big people and the politicians and the whole works. And then, we have Dr. Eddie Hoover, and he's a professor emeritus and chairman of surgery at the State University of New York in Buffalo, so he did pretty well for himself; Dr. Russel Peterson, professor emeritus of biology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; and Otto White Jr. --we talked about him earlier--he was the scientist manager of safety and health at Brookhaven National Laboratory.

KM: Wow.

KP: And I knew people wanted to know--. A lot of people wanted us to know that they saw us. They wanted to know if we made it. Well, we all made it, amazingly, and we're still alive. That's the other amazing--. By statistics, at least one of us ought to be dead. And one guy came, and he had his walker, but he got there.

KM: He was still there.

KP: Yeah. So that was cool, and I thought that everybody deserved credit--I'll put that back-- for what they did, because we all went through a bit of hell, sometimes a lot of hell, some of them, to graduate from Chapel Hill. It was not easy, and some have told me how, after they were there a couple of years, they were ready to get--. They said, "I can't take it anymore. I'm going home." And usually, a parent or someday would say, "No, no, no, you've got to stay."

KM: You've got to stick it out.

KP: Yeah. One guy said his father told him to grow a backbone and put up with it. Of course, he was glad he did. So what's your next question?

KM: I want to know more about the Valkyries. Earlier, you said you were a part of that. I want to know what was their role on campus.

KP: The Valkyries didn't do anything. The Valkyries--and I told them--were a glorified sorority. Now, these were supposed to be the smartest women on campus, and what did they do? They had a baby shower for somebody, a wedding shower. They had a joint singing program with the Order of the Golden Fleece. They sold little Valkyrie pins that were gold for a whole lot of money that I didn't really have; \$20 was a lot of money. I got \$20 for the whole month. That's what I lived on every month, \$20, no more, and this little pin was \$20 or \$25, all gold, and I had to get it. I couldn't be the only one without one, and all of those girls, a lot of them, came from high-end homes. So I told a couple of them that they were a glorified sorority, and, boy, they took affront quite a bit, and it was like, "No, we did you a favor by taking you in." And I think a lot of it came from the Toronto exchange, which I didn't quite finish that story about--. Once we got away from Niagara Falls, we went to a hockey game. We went to a play. We went to restaurants like I'd never seen before with the décor and everything, nothing like that at home. I came across rare meat for the first time. I do not eat rare steaks. In our home, we cooked beef, we cooked everything, to death, and I had to eat around the edges of it. That was the only thing I could take. And then, we had a session with the president, and we went over to his house, and he had a conservatory. Do you know what a conservatory is?

KM: No.

KP: It's a huge sunroom, and they've got a lot of plants, and I mean big plants, going up toward the ceiling and everything, and it's a huge, huge room. And of course, it has chairs in it,

like a living room, and, of course, this was in addition to his living room. So I had never seen anything like that. That was crazy. We had dances. They took us out in the snow one night. It was like twenty below, and the snow was so deep we could hardly go through it. They had a farm out there, and they took us out to their sauna in the snow, and I think we had a sleigh ride or something, and it was awfully cold for that. Of course, it didn't bother the Canadians. They were pretty used to it. When the temperature got up to twenty degree from minus-twenty, everybody was taking their hats and coats and gloves off. I mean, it felt--. Everything is relative. Twenty degrees felt very warm after minus-twenty. It really did. I had a London Fog rain coat with the lining, and I did not have a coat for that kind of weather. It was not good. I was frozen, but it--. Oh, we went skiing, and they gave us a quick lesson and said, "OK." So I get on the ski lift, and I get to the top of this thing, and I start skiing down, and halfway down I fall down, and I can't figure out how to get up, and I can't remember what I was supposed to do. And I finally figure out that there's only one way out of this, and that's to ski down it. And I said, "Dear Lord, if you let me live through this, I promise I will never ski again." [Laughter] And he saw me. I skied down the hill, and I never skied again.

KM: So how did the US and Canada differ in terms of race relations?

KP: They didn't seem to worry--. I mean, it didn't affect them like it does us. It's sort of (). I mean, I'm sure they had some problems, but they didn't tell me. When I was up at Niagara Falls, we were there on a Saturday. Hindus, Indians, tons of them, I mean, the women in their saris, everywhere you turn, there were women in their beautiful--. You know how pretty some of those things are, materials and stuff. Old women, young women, in-between women, and I asked around, and I said, "Where did all these Indians come from?" In fact, they outnumbered every other minority that was there, and just about every minority was there, because Niagara

Falls is a cool place to go on the weekend. And I was told that there were a lot of Indians in Toronto, which wasn't that far away, and, to them, coming to Niagara Falls for the day, a little day trip, was nothing. And they liked to come there, and they had picnics on the grass, and so, "OK, that's cool." That was an experience. And I had a girlfriend. She was Jamaican. They had a big Jamaican community up there I know. I did not meet any other blacks while I was there. I saw them, and they didn't talk about it much, but I got the feeling that it was not an issue like it was at home. The Canadians were shocked at our segregation system.

KM: What did they have to say about it?

KP: I mean, they're just--. They couldn't say much because they went where we were told to go, where the powers that be told them to go. And they'd say things like, "I can't believe it," but they had no choice but to go along. OK, next.

KM: I was reading your diary, and you wrote--. You said, "I seem to be less concerned about myself and more concerned about the general gamut of things, the common man, societies, false values. I sit around and philosophize." I want to know what brought about this change of thinking between thinking about yourself more and thinking about society as a whole.

KP: That was part of my broader horizons at UNC, and I realized there were a lot of things that needed doing, and especially in race relations, poverty, [black?] poverty, and I thought that, as a journalist, I could use the written word to get rid of prejudice and famine and drought.

[Laughter] You know, I was going to get rid of--. Through the written word, everybody was going to be elevated to a new status and stuff. I found out very quickly that it doesn't work that way. You feel very fortunate if you help one, two, three, four, five people. In the end, you've done something, and I'm sure I helped more than that, quite more than that, an individual here,

an individual there, but that's about all you can do. And you've made a contribution. So I started looking at that. That's what I was looking at, things that needed doing.

KM: I also saw that Jerry Carr said that people like you and him were meant to suffer, and he called you and him "the necessary two percent." What did he mean by that?

KP: I love that, the necessary two percent. He said, "Thank goodness the other ninety-eight percent are not like us, because we're a little crazy." But we were the people who spurred other folks to do things. We were the instigators, the troublemakers, and he felt that that was our role in life, to do that, so that's what that was all about.

KM: That was interesting. I never heard that before.

KP: The necessary two percent. Yeah, I think it originated with Jerry Carr. I don't know past that. It should.

KM: So what do you feel like your biggest accomplishment was while you were at UNC?

KP: I think I did change some hearts and minds. I mean, those people who came up to me fifty years later, there was a guy at the '64 reunion--I happened to participate in their Civil Rights seminar--and he was sitting in the audience about four rows back, big nametag, and I recognize him. He walked up to me one day in journalism school and told me I did not belong there. So it was cool when they introduced me and all my journalist credentials--the Hall of Fame and all that stuff--and I looked at him. I stared him down for a long time, because I haven't forgotten what you said. [Laughter] I haven't forgotten at all. And I wanted to talk to him, but people kept coming up and talking to us, so I couldn't keep track of him. I'm being nice and not naming.

KM: That's also what I meant to ask you. How do you feel like the other journalism students reacted to you being a part of the J school?

KP: Pretty good, except this guy. [Laughter] If the other ones felt that way, they kept it to themselves. There were the ones who probably had some objection to my being there. I'm sure there was somebody. In any large population, everybody is not going to be of the same mind. They kept it to themselves, and they stayed away from me, and I think it was that same group with the award thing, the same people, the same guys.

KM: How did they react to you becoming the editor of the *UNC Journalist*?

KP: I think some people were surprised, but I was very qualified for it because I had been working on the Winston-Salem paper in the summers, and I came in there knowing a lot more about journalism than the average student. I had already been writing. I had already been published. I had already done layout and copyediting, which I would have to do as the editor, and it was \$50 a quarter, and that was a lot of money, and did that help me out, because there were times when me and my roommate were starving until the check from the parents came in. [Laughter] One time, her mother--she was Italian--sent us a big thing of biscotti, and I don't particularly like biscotti, but she didn't have any money. I didn't have any money. We really--. I mean, I think we had ten cents between us. We ate biscotti until the checks came in. I mean, that was all we had to eat, [Laughter] biscotti. It was only like two days. That's what we had to eat. Somebody else I wanted to tell you about. It escaped me. I don't know whether it had to do with the *Journalist* or what. And then, there was the Ku Klux Klan party, and I got that--. I took it upstairs, but there was an article in the *Daily Tar Heel*. In the fall of '64, the Civil Rights people got together somehow out in the country. Now, out in the country is probably somewhere down Franklin Street now. So we're out in the country, and I was standing out in the back and drinking beer. And all of a sudden, bullets are ricocheting off trees. [Laughter] And somebody yells, "It's the Klan! It's the Klan! Get down!" And this is a great story. There were two blacks

there in that group. They put us on the floor--our cohorts, our friends--at the bottom, on the floor of a Volkswagen bug, and they all piled in on top of us so the Klan wouldn't get us. Now, that's nice friends, but it was very uncomfortable down there under all those people. [Laughter]

KM: Was that your only encounter with the Klan?

KP: Yeah, my only encounter with them. Some people went to Klan rallies and stuff, but I never did that, and the ones who did go came back scared as they could be. I mean, the white students were scared. Do you need a glass of something iced or something with this?

KM: Oh, I completely forgot about this. Thank you.

KP: Yeah. I'm going to get my little diet (). I'm getting a little thirsty. Yes. What's next?

KM: My next question was going to be--I was going to ask you, "Did you know anything about the speaker ban that was implemented while you were on campus?"

KP: Yeah, and I don't remember a lot, but I do remember participating in something or another. And there was a guy named Norwood Pratt, and he claimed to be a socialist, and he was having trouble. () some cookies.

KM: Thank you.

KP: Yeah, OK. Here are some napkins. Take one. But I remember the incident--I was not there--the incident where they had the speaker stand on one side of the wall, and the students were on the other side of the wall, and that was one of the things that we talked about at our panel discussion at the fiftieth reunion. Mickey Blackwell was something of an expert on it, and he was talking about how they rammed that through the legislature with no discussion, nothing, no rules, the usual stuff. Everybody went for it because they could not have those communists talking on campus. [Laughs] The communists--you know, the library had an exhibit called "I

Raise My Hand to Volunteer,” and it carried the cafeteria workers’ thing--you’ve heard about that--and some other big incident, and the Civil Rights things. So I was there for that part of it. And when they put the thing up in the library, they had the freedom songs we used to sing, to get ourselves all revved up to go out in the streets and get beat up maybe. And next to that were some letters from white people saying, “You can’t let these people have equal rights because all they’re going to do is rape our women.” And then, they had things that say things like, “They’re all communist, and they’re all this and that,” and the worse language, really. And I cried. I started crying, and it was the same thing I felt then. How dare you talk about me as less than a human being? That indignity just--. That still does bother me, and I will not watch a lot of programs about things that happened back then, because I lived it, and I cannot put it away. In that article for *27 Views of Chapel Hill*, I said I had put those experiences that hurt me in a jar and set them aside and remembered the nice things that happened at Chapel Hill. And then, they had a panel discussion one day, and somebody brought it up, and it got to me. It was amazing how much it got to me. I couldn’t--. I was so discombobulated. I mean, I couldn’t answer any other questions the rest of the night with any intelligence because my emotions had--. And it still hurt, forty years later, forty-five years later. And another oral history student some years ago-- Nicete Moodie--I don’t know if you know--. Well, no, you’re too young to know her. She did an oral history thing, and it’s in the library. And I was talking to her about this, and I started crying, so she got me crying on tape. [Laughter] But it still bothered me. How dare you? How dare you tell me I’m less than a human being?

KM: Do you find yourself thinking about those experiences more frequently?

KP: About--.

KM: All the stuff that you put in a jar.

KP: Mm-mm. I said I put stuff back in the jar, and I made the lid a little tighter. [Laughter] I keep them in there. I get the emotion of things that really hurt me and keep them out of the way, because it doesn't accomplish anything to keep going over and over that. It happened. I know it happened. Everybody else knows it happened, and why should I make myself miserable? I talked to another student who had come back after many years living out of state, and he was one of the black pioneers. As a matter of fact, he was the first black cheerleader and one of the first blacks in the band, and he said-- We were talking on the phone, and he said, "Boy, just talking to you made me remember some incidents that I put away," and he said, "I wonder why we put it away." I said, "You put it away to survive, because otherwise you would not. You would just be one uptight, miserable person." And when I left school, I was angry, and it was only after I got married and had a child, and I let up. And of course, I felt better after I let that out, let it go a little bit. Did that answer that question?

KM: Yes. [Laughter]

KP: I did go off on a tangent.

KM: You did answer the question. The tangent was fine. I want to know is there anything-- Looking back at your years at UNC, was there anything--if you could go back--is there anything that you would change about your experiences or anything that you did?

KP: Of course, I can think of a lot of things you would change. I would like it to have been an open campus where I could have fully participated in the campus experience, and the going-to-college experience is a big deal. It's good for you. And when you're fighting people all the time and fighting for survival and you're depressed and you're angry and you're this and you're that, you're not having a good time. [Laughs] Sometimes, when I got together with the handful of friends, and we would get together with the other demonstrators, so we were a group, they

called us “rebels.” Oh, we dressed differently too. We wore a lot of black. The women wore--I did too--black turtlenecks, and they were men’s turtlenecks. We got them down at some store down the street, and we wore black knee socks or tights and beat-up tennis shoes. They had to be beat-up. [Laughs] If they were brand new, you had to do something so they were (), and the only time we were allowed to wear jeans was on the weekends. Otherwise, you had to cover up--stupid rules. Oh, goodness, but that was the social group, and I had a good time with them, and I learned a lot from them.

KM: Do you still keep in contact with some of them today?

KP: All the time. Jo and I talk about once a month. As a matter of fact, I have a note to call her because I hadn’t called her in a while. She called me last time. I’ll call her and see what’s going on. And she was a very easy roommate, and the times that she has been back to visit me--. I lost track of her for about thirty years. I didn’t know where she was, and finally some friends got us back together, and she was in Tacoma then, and I was in Salt Lake. And she took the train down there and came to see me, and I was worried about what it was going to be like after all this time, and she fell into place. It was just like we were roommates again, back then, and now it’s the same thing. Everything falls into place, and Jo is still the same Jo, and I’m still me. It’s cool.

KM: It is.

KP: And one of our friends, one is in Indiana. One was in New Jersey, but she just moved to Charlotte. One is in Brooklyn of our little group. One is in Santa Barbara, California, and Jo is in Tacoma, and I’m prob--. Oh, another one, she was a nurse, but she is retired, and she’s in some little town out in the Boonies with some name that you’ve never heard of, and she’s still in North Carolina, and we’ve had great reunions with them. Oh, yeah, Pat Taylor is in Chapel Hill.

KM: Pat Taylor. I'm going to write that down.

KP: You know that name?

KM: I'm going to write it down.

KP: OK. Her husband, Charles Taylor, he did an essay in the alumni magazine, and it was also reprinted in *27 Views of Chapel Hill*, where he talked about running with me and the group of people, and he said he realized that it didn't make any sense that I couldn't go the same places they went. I remember one day, they were going, "Oh, let's all go to the beach." I said, "I can't go to the beach because there are only two beaches blacks were permitted on, and you're going to another one, and it's not going to happen." And they had forgotten about it. And to them, I was just another person in the group. They didn't look at--. "My friend who's black," no, I was just accepted as a member of the group. And one day--that was stupid--they had a tanning court. So when it got hot enough to lie out in the sun, the girls go on one side of the dorm--it was private, so the guys couldn't gawk at them--and they could strip down to their underwear and maybe get away with taking their bra off if they kept their backside on. And so they came in. It was the first day, and they're comparing tans. And I happened to walk in the room, and one of them said, "Where did you get that tan?" She realized who she was talking to. [Laughter] It was very funny. But the thing was, I was just one of the girls. That's all it was, and I thought that was nice. That was cool. A great group of human beings, I think. Next? What have you got next?

KM: So you're still involved with the Black Pioneers to this day.

KP: Yeah, oh, yeah.

KM: How did that come about?

KP: Walter Jackson, Class of [19]67, started talking. I was visiting down in Durham. He lived in Durham, and we were at a coffee shop in Durham, and he started talking about, "You know, it would be nice if we got everybody together. We haven't seen these people in a long time." And we talked about could it be done, figured it could be done, and he got on the computer and started looking people up and stuff. So we started sending out emails to people, and they'd say, "Yeah, yeah. We liked the group, and we would like to get back together again." So we set up this dinner, and these people that we hadn't seen from years--some of them had been in grad school--we have the years between [19]52 and [19]72. That's the Black Pioneers. It was so great to see all these people after all those years, and I think the mistake that was made was that some people decided that they wanted to keep doing it every year, and, of course, every year it got smaller and smaller and smaller. What it was supposed to be was a one-time event, and we really worked hard to get everybody there. Wade Chestnut got on the phone and called people and encouraged them to come, and we had really good attendance, and we kept it up doing something or another every year. We would have our own dinners separate from BAR because we felt BAR didn't understand us, and they'd be talking about things that we--. I don't know what you're talking about. And what was that, the () Lounge, the something Lounge -

KM: Upendo.

KP: -- what was it?

KM: Upendo.

KP: Upendo, uh-huh. And they're talking about that and stuff, and we don't know anything about that, and there were several of us at that banquet--that particular banquet, because we go to that Light on the Hill thing once a year. And when Camille Roddy became president of the BAR

reunion, somehow I got her ear, and I told her, “You know, we don’t want to be part of this, because you guys disrespect us, and we have a key role here. And the reason we want to be separate from you is because we don’t know what you’re talking about.” And she said, “Cool. I understand that.” And she did a lot to bring the groups together. She started the Golden Ram awards. Those who had been out of school for fifty years, I think it--. Is it forty? My certificate on the wall up there says forty-nine years or something like that. And they’re honored at the Light on the Hill thing, so everybody knows who they are. Let’s see. Do I have that picture? No, I didn’t--. Well, this was taken at that. Now, Walter was [19]67, but Otto--. This is Otto White.

KM: This is Otto right there?

KP: Mm-hmm.

KM: OK.

KP: And (). That’s me and the chancellor. I thought that was cool.

KM: Chancellor Folt or another one?

KP: Yeah, Chancellor Folt.

KM: OK.

KP: I met her at a banquet honoring the Civil Rights demonstrations, the original ones, the Greensboro Four. My () usually talk to. The journalism dean is too. OK. Some of my friends are texting me, and I have some crazy friends. I talk to the North Carolina people on the phone first, then the West Coast people, eleven or twelve o’clock, talking to them. There it is. All right. Turn sideways. Thank you. [Laughter] But that was the last group of Golden Rams, and they give you a nice certificate and everything.

KM: Oh, yeah, that is a nice certificate ().

KP: And I haven't found a place on the wall for it yet. There may not be any room on the wall for it.

KM: I'm pretty sure you could find a place.

KP: Uh-huh.

KM: I'm pretty sure you could find a space.

KP: Yeah, if I work at it.

KM: So besides being involved with the Black Pioneers, what else do you do in your free time?

KP: Talk to students like you. I've gone down there and talked to classes. I talk to people away from there. I tend to my hobbies. One of them is right there beside you.

KM: Oh, yes, saw this.

KP: You know, I was doing that before it became popular.

KM: Yeah, my roommate has one of these.

KP: Yeah, I was doing that ten year ago, and it was great. I would come home, and I had such a--. It was such a tense job. We were on deadline, and you're writing headlines. You've got to do this fast and get this story out and keep one eye on the clock. And I'd come home, and I needed to unwind, and it was so good, because all you have to--. You have to concentrate on what you're doing. You can't think about your troubles and fret about all the things that you worry about that you can't do anything about anyway. So I enjoy it very much. I take my time with them now. The one that I'm working on right now, I don't know where it was. There's a loose one in there. Oh, there it is. Now, ones like that, that takes time. I do a little bit today and a little bit three days from now and a little bit--. So that's the way I would do it now, but I used to--. I have them bound, all of these.

KM: All of those are the ones that you've done?

KP: Uh-huh. Yeah, I thought they were so nice. I had to do something with them.

KM: Yeah.

KP: This is all the same design, and it's--.

KM: Oh, you just colored it different.

KP: You color it different. You have to put your mind to it. I've been told it uses both sides of your brain, and some of it was this kind of design. Then, I got another one that's paisley.

KM: Are those--. All of them are from ten years ago to now?

KP: Mm-hmm.

KM: OK.

KP: () coloring book, and I have a friend who keeps sending me coloring books. I've got more coloring books than I know what to do with. Does your friend need some more coloring books?

KM: I'm pretty sure she does. She colors a lot too.

KP: () coloring books that I'm never going to use. (). That's the paisley. I don't like coloring books about flowers and animals and things like that. I just like designs that give me a reason to think about it. A flower, you've got to color it the color of the flower, so your roommate can have that.

KM: Thank you.

KP: With my blessings. [Laughter] And the real colors of the flowers are in the--. And I think I started on one there somewhere and realized that I could not keep that up.

KM: Oh, that's really pretty.

KP: I did one of those, one of them, but I'm not going to do the rest of them. Yeah, this one is not--. It doesn't have a lot of empty in it. Let me find that, another one she gave me that I know I'm not going to have anything to do with. Yes, I am not going to do birds.

KM: Thank you. [Laughter] I have one final question. Are there any words of advice that you would give students now who are just starting UNC?

KP: Well, excuse me for munching on cookies. On the tape, they're going to wonder what's going on here. I'm munching on cookies. Don't be insular. Black students tend to group together and ignore the rest of the university community, and they'll go to the same programs, and they'll go to jazz concerts. They'll go to R&B, and I think it's--. There's so many more of us on campus now. I'm sure there are people who go to the ballet and go to opera and go to other things besides the things that we were familiar with growing up, and I would advise them to go to everything like that they can. Kitty cat, stop that. She doesn't want to play with you. Come on, (). They call him "Doggie Cat" because he minds.

KM: Doggie Cat. [Laughs]

KP: If you call him, he comes. And I say, "(), stop that," and he'll stop, and he'll look at me like, "But I really want to." [Laughter] He's very--. He's pretty smart too.

KM: Yeah, he's very friendly.

KP: But the female is the smartest one. She's--. She outsmarts me all the time. She's the only one who wants to go out, get out of the house.

KM: How many do you have?

KP: Three.

KM: OK.

KP: If she gets out of the door, if you leave the door open, she is gone. [Laughter] Remember when we had all that ice and snow? The garage door was open, and she's going. I'm going, "Oh, she's going to go out that door, turn around, and come back in." She kept going right through the snow and the ice and everything. She stayed out about forty-five minutes.

KM: Oh, wow.

KP: Yeah, but she just wants to explore. Anyway, we're not talking about cats. But as I said, really, there's a lot on campus that will give you new experiences that you can use later on. I mean, you can talk to our community, but when you graduate, you're going to have to go out, and you're going to have to deal with their community. And you've got to find your place in there and scope it out and everything to be able to move and function in it. Now, you can get a start on it in school if you don't keep to yourself so much. So I don't like to see that, and I do see that. I see the groupings, and there was a movement by Sam Fulwood, an alumnus, a black alumnus. He was down in Atlanta, I think. He worked for the *LA Times* while I worked at the *LA Times*. I never met him, but he was talking about this movement of blacks who wanted to re-segregate themselves basically. "Oh, we don't want anything to do with white people." Well, most of you won't have a job. [Laughter] "But we're just going to associate with black people," and I said, "Well, good, that's familiar, and its comfort, but it doesn't expand your brain. It doesn't give you any new experiences." I hope I have new experiences until the day I die. I hope I learn new things until the day I die. And between friends and events and things around me, something is always happening. I probably do learn something new every day from somebody. It's really cool. When you were asking what I do all the time, I do have some medical issues that have kept me from doing as much as I could, spinal and such. But when I can, I do things, and usually, even when I don't feel good, if they ask me to do something, I drive

down to Chapel Hill, because I feel like it's giving back to the university. And some students say they're inspired by it, and they tell me that they appreciate what happened back then and that it must have been tough, and some of them are telling me that it is not all that great now, because things still happen. And we know all about those. So it's a fight. I mean, my whole career was a fight, nearly fifty years in the newspaper business. And I did well in it, but there was always somebody who wanted to bring me down, and they couldn't do it in the open. They had to be subtle about it, because if you do it in the open you get fired. But they're going to try to cut you off, don't give you information that you need, make life difficult for you, and there's still people like that out there. Some of them with-- This young woman, she graduated recently. She must have been-- She must have graduated about 2002, '03, something like that, and she absolutely resented me. She was a conservative Republican, and she resented the fact that I had traveled all over. And one day, we were talking about scuba diving, and she said, "Have you done any scuba diving, Karen?" And I said, "Oh, no, I haven't. I haven't done that. I wouldn't do a thing like that." And she said, "I was just wondering. You've done everything else." Whoa, did we touch a nerve there somewhere? [Laughter] I went, "OK." And then, I would bring something back to all the women when I went on trips. I would go to Europe every other year, and I always brought something back for everybody, and she didn't refuse them. One of them, she took it, and she gave it to somebody else. It was like, "I don't want this. () any part of this." OK.

KM: Have it your way.

KP: I mean, and this is a younger, recent, more recent person--relatively recent person--to me, anyway, and they're still out there. So I wish you well in school. I have heard that the journalism department is a problem now. Some students have told me. In our day, we didn't have any-- They were really good to us back then, but I hear that that's not the case right now.

KM: I am a women's and gender studies major and sociology major, so I know very little about the J school.

KP: Yeah.

KM: But I'm pretty sure there's problems all over campus.

KP: Have you encountered anything?

END OF INTERVIEW

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