

SOHP Series: Listening for a Change
Davidson College Interviews - Ada Jenkins School

TRANSCRIPT - TALMADGE CONNER

Interviewee: Talmadge Conner

Interviewer: Brian Campbell

Date: 26 March 1999

Location: Davidson, N.C.

Tape No.: (cassette 1 of 1)
(approximately 60 minutes)

Notes: This interview is one of several investigating the history of the Ada Jenkins

School in Davidson, N.C. The school opened as the Davidson Colored High School in 1937-38 to serve the African American community of Davidson and northern Mecklenburg County. This neighborhood school was initially elementary through high school, and became elementary only in 1946-47 when a high school opened in Huntersville. In the mid-40s, the school was renamed Ada Jenkins, honoring the longtime teacher and leader. The school closed in 1965 when Mecklenburg County integrated schools. The facility has recently been renovated and re-opened as the Ada Jenkins Center with a variety of programs and services.

Mr. Conner graduated from the eleventh grade at Davidson Colored Grade School (later Ada Jenkins) in 1941. He served in the military, and he worked as a custodian at Davidson College for many years. He is now retired and just across the street from the Ada Jenkins Community Center.

Mr. Conner grew up on a farm three miles outside the town, and he walked to school each day. After a full day of classes, and perhaps a few hours of athletics or work at the textile mill, he returned home to feed the animals and finish his homework. Mr. Conner was one of four black students to attend the white elementary school two days a week as a unique exchange created

through the cooperation of the principals at each school, Mrs. Jenkins and Mr. Ives. He was later a member of the glee club, and he sometimes participated in a group that recited poetry and gave speeches. He describes how strict Mrs. Ada Jenkins was as a teacher and her use of "hickories" in disciplining students. Mr. Conner tells an energetic story of Easter egg hunts on his farm and the joy of holiday celebrations during his childhood. He laments the loss of the school and the loss of a number of ball fields once central to the life of the black community.

We sat in his living room as he shared his memories of education and life as an African-American resident of Davidson. Mr. Conner seemed comfortable sharing about those things he remembered well, though he was uncertain about specific details like dates. He often sat in silence, gathering his thoughts, before answering my questions. His cynicism about current local and national political dynamics (especially development, child discipline, and desegregation) played a large part in his perspective on certain memories. Still, the overall tone of his sharing was pleasant, and he appreciates the way life once was. He seemed most interested in sharing things that were new or surprising to me, and he was often quite attentive to my responses.

TRANSCRIPT

[Cassette 1 of 1, Side A]

BC: Why don't we start and you can tell me, were you born in Davidson?

TC: Well, I was born more than three miles from here, and I began school down here at the grade of four. Mrs. Jenkins was the Principal of the school. That was a little school down here with three classrooms. There were three teachers: Jenkins, Brown and Baucom (sp?). So, I don't remember now how many were in our class, but it was quite a few. I stayed there until seventh grade.

BC: At the small school?

TC: Yes, at the small school

BC: Did that school have a name?

TC: I was just "Davidson Graded School" as far as I know, you know. And then after they built this one up there, we eventually

went up there, yes. And I don't remember the year that building was built, either, but the cornerstone is on there on the far end.

BC: Do you know why they built the big school?

TC: Well, they had more kids coming in. That's the only reason I could see, because you couldn't go to the white elementary. It wasn't integrated then. But we integrated this school here. There was four of us, two girls and two boys, and we went to the white elementary school two days a week. Professor Ives was the Principal over there, and he and Mrs. Jenkins got together somehow, and four whites came here and four of us went there. And that was long before the time they started integrating, so I can say we started that.

BC: So, you were one of those first four?

TC: Yes, I was one of those first four.

BC: What was that like?

TC: Well, it was OK. They taught us history, math, and one class

of Spanish. Of course, I never did pick up on the Spanish, no, not too fast. Those were subjects that we took over there. That was twice a week. . .

But Mrs. Jenkins, she was a good teacher. She was really Principal. When she gave you your subjects to bring in the next day, she meant to have those things in. Don't say I forgot, I was this, I was that. She wanted those subjects and if you didn't get it, bring it in, you sit your butt down. The first day in the classroom and you got it.

BC: So she was really strict?

TC: She was really strict.

BC: Did you ever get in trouble? Di you yourself ever have any problems with that?

TC: Yes, for being rude in the classroom, for talking and running my mouth when I should have been listening, sure. That's another thing she would do, is put the whip on you. Yes, she'd whip you. She used hickories, didn't use no straps or nothing, she used the real hickories. And I used to bring hickories to school, knowing I was going to get whipped. That's what she asked me to do. Cause

see I was a country boy and we had plenty of them. Get these long dogwoods, and shred all the leaves off of them, tie them together. Boy, and that was it. Oh yes, and I didn't get enough.

BC: You didn't get enough?

TC: No, I didn't get enough. Not the way things are now, you know.

BC: What do you mean?

TC: Well, kids now don't get any whippings. And you can't whup your own, so if I'd of gotten more of them then maybe it would have made me meaner. Ha ha ha. Yes, I don't understand the law. If Mrs. Jenkins were here, I'm sure she and Professor Ives, they'd turn that law around, where you can't whup kids in school. What are they going there for? They are going there to learn, but if you can't discipline them, how are they going to learn? They'll just run over you. And the parents better not whup them now. If the parents whup a child now, all they'll do is call the police and take them to jail for abuse. I'm gonna feed one and clothe them, and I can't spank them if I want to - abuse - no. That's the law . . . terrible.

BC: So you said you were a country boy. Tell me about where you lived, and how did you get to school. Did you walk to school everyday?

TC: We had to walk, yes. Three miles . . . everyday. Rain, shine, sleet, or snow. It had to be awfully stormy for us to stay at home. It was three of us. I had another brother and a sister. My daddy says, "Are you going to school?" "No, Papa." "Oh, yes, you're going to school, so get up and go." It suited me. I'd rather be at school than be at home with him, because he'd have me doing chores all around there. And you'd have to do it. I enjoyed it.

BC: Did your parents go to this school too?

TC: There were only four of us to go. I had two sisters, but one moved out. She went up to Lenoir or Hickory or something . . . No I believe she went up to Washington, DC. My other sister, now we began school out here. I graduated from this school right here. I graduated from the eleventh grade, and down in Cornelius, they had the twelfth grade down there, so I went down there for a half a year, but got tired of it and just quit.

BC: But most people would do another year in Cornelius after they graduated here?

TC: Yes.

BC: What year did you graduate, do you remember?

TC: 1941

BC: Did you say you started at this school in eighth grade?

TC: Seventh. Yes, well the eighth, because you graduated from here in the seventh and went there for eighth.

BC: Was that the first year it was open?

TC: Yes.

BC: Do remember much from when they were building it?

TC: No, that's why I told you it was on the cornerstone of the building.

BC: Right, but I mean not just the year, but do remember when there were people here working on it? Do remember what it was like in the community when they were building a new school? It's a pretty big building to be putting up.

TC: Now, you know where the middle part is? The far end is the old building and this here was added on later.

BC: Was that pretty exciting, though, to be going to this three-room school and to see this other building.

TC: Oh yes, oh yes. Everybody smiled. Yes, that was great, to have a new school going up. And we had a basketball team. Of course, Mrs. Jenkins was not over the basketball team. That was, we had two professors here, Professor Harris - he was out of Charlotte. And we had Professor Poe (sp?) - he was out of Charlotte too. But Mrs. Jenkins had retired at that time. We had seven or eight different teachers.

BC: Do any of them stand out as people who influenced your education?

TC: Oh yes, well they thought I was halfway tops. I wasn't no expert, but I wasn't a dummy either. Mrs. Jenkins called me her boy. We had a basketball team and a glee club. We went from school to school all over Mecklenburg County, sang songs and just had a good time.

BC: So you were part of the glee club?

TC: Yes, I was part of some of everything that went on.

BC: What other kinds of things went on? Activities . . .

TC: Well, we had no activities really. The glee club and basketball was about all we had.

BC: So who was the leader of the glee club?

TC: Well, she was a lady. We had two or three leaders, now.

BC: I didn't know whether that was Mrs Jenkins . . .

TC: Oh, the teacher. That was Mrs Jenkins, yes. She was the pianist and the organist. She played the piano, and she could

play it too. Yes, she was head of the glee club. Oh, we had speaking. What do you call it? Essays? Isn't that what they call it?

BC: Giving speeches?

TC: Well, we would recite poems. We had that going on too.

BC: Was there a school song or any special songs the glee club would sing?

TC: Yes, we had special songs, but I can't remember them now. That's been years. Ha ha, that's been years. We had one student there that recited the poem - you've probably heard of it - "Living in the House Beside the Road to be a Country Man." She really spit it out. Her name was Ruth Byers. Yes, she won top honors in that. We went over to the Presbyterian Church, over to the auditorium. Each one had a speech. Yes, it was great, great days.

BC: Did you have a favorite subject at school?

TC: Yes, I liked science. Beause I always said, if I'd gone on in

school, if I'd made it, I'd be a doctor. I liked science, that's what I liked. I lived on a farm and we had lots of chickens, and sometimes you'd see a hen or a rooster walk across the barn lot with a big crow, you know. I'd catch the joker, and cut that crow open and cut the food out, and get a needle and some black thread and turpentine. Soak that thread in turpentine and sew it back up, and not a one time did they ever die.

BC: So you were a doctor.

TC: Yes, I loved that. You have some with a broken toe, I'd do the same thing. Put a little string on it, tape it up, turn it loose. Yep. Well I had to do something since I had my mind on being a doctor. Why not start out here?

BC: So what were the science classes like in the school?

TC: Well now let's see. Environmental, we tested water, we examined fish, we dissected frogs. The snakes I didn't bother with. Some of them did, some of the kids did, but I didn't want to be bothered with it. But, those are the kinds of things we done. Some of them went out and caught butterflies, stuff such as that. It's been such a long time that I can't remember much.

BC: Did you have classes that were mostly like science, history, stuff like that, or were there also more practical ones, learning how to do certain skills?

TC: Well, we got most of that from the book. You know, you read something and then you go out and try to do it. Something you'd read.

BC: But you didn't have classes like shop class. But they didn't have classes, I think they called them textile and industry?

TC: Yes, well, yes. We had that too. There were a lot of textile plants here. That's really what was all around here. Up there where you all are building, remodeling that old cotton mill up there with the depot sign on it. I worked there for seven or eight years, after school. That was textile. This one over here, that's a storage place, was asbestos. And there was a place down here was the old oil mill, where they ground cotton seeds. They made cotton seed meal. They didn't have all this mess like they got now. Every door down in Cornelius is a eating place. We didn't have that.

BC: So you would go down to the mill after school and work?

TC: Yes, and on Saturdays.

BC: Did a lot of people do that?

TC: Yes. Well, they had regular people working there, but the school kids could go there, you know, just to make a few dollars, some change. Something to go out here and play in the street with. Some girl comes by and you want to make a pass at her, well you've got to have a little money in your pocket to jingle.

BC: Did you have a girlfriend in high school?

TC: More than one. Yes.

BC: What kind of stuff did you do socially? What kind of stuff did kids at this school do?

TC: Well we mostly went to movies. Sometimes they'd have a little dance in the school, they'd let us have a dance in there once in a while. If everybody was nice and didn't cut up and carry on, you know. But, mostly movies. There was a movie uptown, right

where the Gulf service station is. And there was one in Cornelius, just after you are getting into the town on your left down there where there is an antique shop on your left. And we could go to Mooresville if you had a car, you could go. There was two taxis that would carry us to Mooresville, drop us off, for a quarter each. They'd take as many as five, for a quarter each, and come back after ten-thirty or eleven o'clock. We got around pretty good. I had a car. We lived, We lived a whole lot cheaper. We didn't make as much money, but we lived a whole lot cheaper. The money we make now doesn't go anywhere. You go out here and break a twenty dollar bill and you might as well let it all go right then. You can't say I'm going to keep this for tomorrow, because there's no such thing as tomorrow. Before you can get back, it's gone. That's the way it is.

BC: So you said most students would work after school you think? What kind of different things would they do?

TC: Well, a lot of them worked - especially this time of year - raking leaves. A lot of the girls would go and clean up the houses for the professors. The professors hired most anybody that wanted to work. They'd give them something to do.

BC: Was your school the same schedule then, as far as time of day and months of the year?

TC: School opened at eight o'clock, get up at four. Just like it is now.

BC: Were there any big events or holidays at the school?

TC: Oh, we had the egg cracks, at Easter-time. Our farm was three miles from here. My parents owned a 66 acre tract. They'd come out on Easter, this time. They'd walk, and the road would be full, going to Charlie Conner's farm, going to have an egg hunt. And shoot, man, there would be fifteen or twenty dozen eggs hid all around. And the younger kids, they were the ones that enjoyed it more. You just turn them loose. Yes, we had some good times.

And it was good at Christmas time here at the school. You know, we used to pull names. Especially the ones in the highest classes, we pulled names. Everybody brings a gift there and exchanged gifts. We had a big time. We had ice cream, cake, fruit, nuts, yes, it was great. You can't have that now, though. Kids have Christmas everyday, that's what makes it so bad. We only had Christmas at Christmas time, that once a year. Now kids have Christmas all the time. That's the same thing with dying

eggs. We used to dye eggs for kids and they'd appreciate it, but now they don't want no dyed eggs. They'll take them and throw them up and down the street, bust them up. I think the world is living a little too fast.

BC: I agree . . . So you would walk every morning, leave real early and then go to work and walk back and it would probably be dark already?

TC: Yes, deeper in the winter, yes, it would be dark. Well, see there were chores there that we had to do. We had four milk cows, eight or ten hogs, three horses . . . and all those things had to be fed when we got back in. We had plenty to feed back at that farm, but sometimes, when my dad wasn't too tired or hadn't worked too much in the fields or woods or something, then he'd go and feed them. But, ordinarily, we had to do it when we got out of school. Used to get out of school and play around out here instead of getting home, knowing what we had to do. I left this hill right here on this little path right here, and me and my brother would trot all the way home. Three miles, that wasn't much for old farm boys like us. We was tough anyway. The reason why we had to trot was because we didn't get . . . See if we had went home when we got out of school, we wouldn't have had all

that to do, but proud of it now.

BC: Now how did you do all your homework and everything? Get home after work, chores . . .

TC: We had kerosene lights, lamps.

BC: Did you have a lot of homework?

TC: My biggest problem was math. Yes, and as far as the history, I didn't care anything about history anyway, because I never did believe in history. I didn't believe in all those, no. What was the point of me learning what happened back yonder when Methusala was born, and George Washington and Abraham Lincoln? That old stuff needs to be somewhere else. George Washington lied just like everybody else. Cutting down the cherry tree, ha ha ha. Some of the history is OK, but a whole lot of it I think is useless. The young people, they aren't getting anything out of that. What do you see in history?

BC: Some of it, I think you can learn from. You can see trends in history that you can see again now. Different things like that. With a lot of it, I've never been that interested myself. It

seems like a lot of facts.

TC: That's right, that's the way it is.

BC: But this interview is part of a history class, and we're trying to put together a history of this school, and it seems important to remember.

TC: If I had more time, and had more thoughts about it, but man from '41 till now. Wow.

BC: Well, what do you think is important about this school? What is important, say, for the kids today?

TC: Well, I think they should've let the kids go on here, instead of busing them to Charlotte or North Meck[lenburg High School] or somewhere. There was enough for kids here to do, to support their school, to take up. And just like over here, now, the county, the town, or whoever runs this thing built that great big school over there, and they didn't really need that school. So they cut this one completely off. They got a little Head Start class over there, of course you know about that. I don't know. Don't want them to mix up too much and they're going to do it anyway, so

there's no point in trying to keep them from it.

BC: So, tell me how that happened, with integration and busing. Do you remember how that happened with this school?

TC: No, not really. I just woke up one morning and there they were. You know, it had been planned long before. It was planned long before we knew about it. What you call cut and dry. All this stuff was worked out before they told any of us about it. I guess it was the college or the county. Everything that happens here is the college anyway. You know that. They run everything anyway. So I guess that's the way it happened. It wasn't a whole lot of headaches. Some of the older people grumbled and growled, but I think the kids enjoyed it. A lot of them had never rode a bus before anyway, so they liked that. I don't hear them complaining now at all. And most all of the older people on this side of the tracks are dead. And a lot of them on the other side of the tracks.

BC: So why did they grumble and growl?

TC: Well they thought it was nasty for them to close this school down and bus the kids to somewhere else. That was the main issue.

BC: So people really wanted this school to stay?

TC: Yes indeed. The older heads, they wanted it to stay. And the older white heads over there, they wanted it to stay too, a lot of them, because they didn't want them over there. It all changed, and I guess that's why so many of them passed on.

BC: Why do you think people in this part of town cared so much about this school staying open?

TC: Well, because they figured there would be some kind of confusion to stay over here and go over there to the white school. That's why they wanted them to stay over here. They wouldn't let the white kids come over here. That's another part of it. I guess it's better that they done what they did. And I hear now that they are going to build a big arch building . . .
(Gets out paper and shows plans for new school in Davidson)

BC: A private school, huh?

TC: Yes, 288. That's money talking there. It is.

BC: On Armour Street.

TC: If you've got the money you can get in there, but if you don't have the money it's too bad.

BC: \$7,500 per year.

TC: That's small change.

BC: So this school, was it a community center in a way? Was it a place where the community gathered in a way?

TC: Yes, we had a community center, down here. We'd go down here and have games, debates, or private meetings. Whoever wanted it you know.

BC: But it sounds like, you were saying that there were a lot of people who wanted to keep this school open. It sounds like there were a lot of people who had a lot of pride in this school, Ada Jenkins School.

TC: Oh yes, people far and near. Like I said, the older heads are all dead, and the younger kids, well under me I'll say - I ain't

no young baby - they don't have much thought about it now.

BC: Why do you think the older generation had more concern for it?

TC: Well, because it was here, they enjoyed it when it was being built, and they don't want to think about throwing it away.

BC: So then, those who don't remember the time before it, they don't value it as much.

TC: That's right, that's right.

BC: Do you think the other school before it . . . How do they compare, the two schools?

TC: Well, they were glad to get rid of the older school. It wasn't nothing but a straight three-room school. It had a big long front porch on it, and it was heated by coal or wood. So, everybody was glad to see it go. And everything was so much better. You had a lot of visitors come here and you had to take them around and show them your building, but this other old shack, you didn't even want to be seen with it.

BC: Did you have better supplies and teachers, everything about the school was better would you say?

TC: Everything was better. We eventually had, we had three of the older teachers that were here and we brought in some young ones. But you couldn't beat Mrs Jenkins. She was just as good a school teacher as you'd want to see. She knew what she was doing.

BC: Now, how did they choose to name the school after her?

TC: Yes, because she was the oldest teacher. She was the head of this one down here that was the old school. So, that's why they named it after her. Yep, she was the first Principal down here. She just died in... let's see, when did Jenkins die . . . '43 or '44? I believe she died in '44. I'm sure she did because I was in the service when she died.

BC: So they chose to name it after her right after she died?

TC: Yes.

BC: What was it called before that?

TC: Just a grade school. I didn't ever know another name. That's just like the white school over there. That's what it was called, graded, a grade school. Now, what's its name now? What's the name of the school over there.

BC: I think it's just Davidson Elementary . . . Now, how do you think the school here compared to the white school?

TC: When it was in session? I don't know. I can't say that because we had some pretty smart kids over here. We had some pretty bright kids in this school here, and some of them left and went far and near.

BC: Are there any people you think are particularly notable graduates of this school, people who went through there?

TC: No, I don't know of any. I don't know . . . became teachers or lawyers or doctors or something like that, is that what you're speaking about?

BC: Or anything, you know . . .

TC: I know one guy made, became a teacher. He's in Atlanta, Georgia and he became ;rincipal of his school. I think he's retired now. And the black girl, can't think of her name. . . she's a preacher, assistant preacher.

BC: Brenda [Tapia - see interview with Tapia in this collection]

TC: Yes. And I don't know of any others.

BC: Any athletes who went on, basketball? Stars of the team?

TC: A couple of guys left for football, but they didn't make the team.

BC: Now, did you have a football team here?

TC: A get-together team, you know. See, all this here was open field before they built that new part back there, and that's where we played football. And we had a baseball team too, yes. I forgot that too. And that was over here where the drug store is at, the CVS Drug Store. All that was field down there for baseball. And there was some real ball players here. All of them didn't come out of this town, but they were in the neighborhood.

And after they took that, it moved over here across from Exxon to that vacant field over there. But that belongs to Davidson College, so I've been told. And they was going to build wonders in there, so they had to move out from there. And they haven't drove a peg out there. Too much traffic is on the road, too congested. They want that to be the main entrance into Davidson College, coming off of I-77.

(Telephone)

Excuse me.

Well young man, that's about all I can tell you.

BC: Have you seen this? (Hands Conner a picture of Ada Jenkins students) I don't know if you remember that. Vinnie Moore gave me that, and I just thought you might appreciate looking at it.

TC: Ha ha ha ha, hey hey hey.

BC: We're trying to find, I think Ken Norton has an original one - you know, a color, or bigger picture. We're trying to get one of those to put up at the center.

TC: I don't believe I'm on this thing. No, I don't think I'm on

this one.

BC: Do you think that was after you'd graduated?

TC: Yes. Yes, this is not my class.

BC: I bet you recognize lots of people though.

TC: Yes. Yes, it would sure be better if you could get a hold of Kenneth Norton's.

BC: Yes, I talked with him the other day and he is trying to get a copy.

TC: He does have one, huh?

BC: Yes, I think so. We're going to put up an exhibit or something to hang up over there, so people can visit to remember. So, we're looking for any kind of pictures or anything - old yearbooks, or anything from the school.

TC: Ok, ok. I've got some, hmm. I've got a class picture. It's not here. I think it's down at my sister's. Yes, I think it's

down there.

BC: I think it would be neat to have several of them so people could go look at their class.

TC: And have fun looking at them and laughing about how you looked and all that. Yes. Yes, that would be nice.

BC: Now, when did you move over here close to the school?

TC: '46, right when I got out of the army. I wasn't staying at this house, but I was staying at a house down the hill.

BC: And have you stayed in Davidson ever since then?

TC: Sure have, ever since.

End Tape 1, Side A

Begin Tape 1, Side B

(comparing his experience in school and that of his children)

BC: Do you think things were a lot different?

TC: Oh, they enjoyed it, they had a lot of fun out there. When they went to school, there wasn't no problems. They was born here in this town. You've been working up here, for a little while? Have you met Cecilia Conner?

BC: Maybe, I don't know the kids very well.

TC: No, I 'm talking about Cecilia, that's my ex. She's their mother.

BC: And she worked up here?

TC: No she's retired. She worked at the laundry for a while. And at one of the fraternity houses.

BC: Was there a lot of parent involvement at the school?

TC: Yes, they had meetings. But as I said, a lot of this stuff was cut and dry over there before it was known over here. So, we didn't have any . . . Our parents had a lot to say, but it didn't go anywhere. They had everything already figured out, what they were going to do and all. That's the same way it is now. When we

have these town meetings, they already know what's going to happen and what they're going to do. You go up there and your little voice doesn't mean anything. Just enough to say we had a few blacks. That's what it's all about. I know this town.

BC: You think that's the way it's always been?

TC: That's the way it's always been and that's the way it's going to always be.

BC: You think so?

TC: Yes, because some of these younger ones that's coming up - these older ones retire or move out - they gonna go about the same old history. The grandfather clause, that's something they need to do away with that, the grandfather clause. Shit, excuse me.

BC: So you don't think there's any change going to happen?

TC: Oh a few things might change, but it won't be in my time. It ain't going to be no change in the next ten years.

BC: Did your sons graduate from this school?

TC: Yes. My older son went to go on to write. He went to Lees-McRae College in the mountains. Yes, he went up there for three years and then dropped out. He was on the football team at Lees-McRae.

BC: So did this school continue to go through eleventh or twelfth, all the way until it closed?

TC: Eleventh, yep. I said yes. I think that's right, but I'm not sure either. Let's see, they might have stopped in the ninth grade up here because my son went to North Meck. That's where he was playing football, at North Meck. and he went to Lees-McRae College. He went up there and ran over that team, ran over that team. He came down here and played Davidson College over there. He was on the punt return, and he returned a punt for ninety-six yards. And on the next kickoff, he returned it for eighty yards. Nobody on the field could catch him. He was a running little boy.

BC: And where's he get that from?

TC: Right here. He got it from here. I could truck now.

BC: So I bet that was pretty exciting to see him come back here and play in Davidson.

TC: It was great. I was the greatest game. They had to hold me back. I started to cross the field, and they said, "You can't go across the field!" Yes, he really tore the ground up over there.

BC: Now, when he went to North Meck., was that after integration?

TC: Yes.

BC: So, was he one of the first to go over there?

TC: No no no no there were several of them over there.

BC: So tell me more about what it was like for you to go over to this elementary school. It seems like you had a really special chance to see both the white school and the black school and most people didn't ever get that chance.

TC: See, they sent four of us - what they called four of the smartest, that's what Mrs Jenkins called us - four of the

smartest over there, and Professor Ives sent four of their smartest ones over here. That's how we got to mingle together. I felt good about it. And we didn't go over there and just sit together, you understand - all in between.

BC: Was it difficult at all? Were there any kind of problems or anything?

TC: No, none whatsoever. See, they sent the smartest ones, what they called the most intelligent, the ones that gave less trouble than some of the others. Now, there were some smarter than I, but maybe they would keep up a little noise, a little racket. That's how it got started.

BC: So did you make many friends at the white school?

TC: Sure. Now I don't know them all now, but I sure did. The Kimbrough (sp?) boys, Dr. Woods, Professor Jimmy . . . Oh, I can't tell you all of them now.

BC: Was that pretty common around here to have black children and white children being good friends?

TC: Yes, yes. See when we had this broken field out here, we could play football and then over here baseball. A lot of them would come. You know, come and mingle and talk and have a good time. They enjoyed it. And to tell you the truth, our boys were, our football boys were much rougher than the white kids, so they enjoyed coming over here and seeing them tear each others' ass. And a lot of the old people came by. This was a big thing here before they put this part of the building. And I hate that they took the ground from us over here. But that's the way it is, they took it. And over here by the Exxon, they took that and now they don't want it. Some supermarket had planned to build over here. They'd hauled all the steel beams and all that kind of stuff over there. And somehow something went wrong and the College made them move all that stuff. And now you see what they're building now - all those big condos. But there ain't none on the College property.

(Girlfriend enters.)

BC: Yes, I think we're finished up.

End of Tape