

Interview

with

JAMES LEWIS ROSS II

May 11, 2006

by Elizabeth Gritter

Transcribed by Laura Altizer

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

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Transcript – James Lewis Ross II

Interviewee: James Lewis Ross II
Interviewer: Elizabeth Gritter
Interview Date: May 11, 2006
Location: Charlotte NC, at his home

ELIZABETH GRITTER: [This is Elizabeth Gritter interviewing Jim Ross] on May 11, 2006 in his home in Charlotte, North Carolina. Would you say your name?

JAMES ROSS: James Ross.

EG: Okay, that's picking up good. Good. So I'll just from time to time like I said be checking to make sure it's recording, and also I have to jot down if you say like somebody's name or some proper word and I don't know the spelling, at the end we'll go over that. But () and all that stuff. At the end too we'll have to do (), and we should be sign the interview agreement. Then I just first have this just basic life history form to fill out. Most of them are about your work as, I'm very interested in learning more about I got some of the notes from when you talked to the supervisors at our project () and Joe Mosnier. So I do have some background information. But specific questions around employment as well as some questions about your political involvement as well. Do you have a middle name?

JR: Lewis, L-E-W-I-S.

EG: And James.

JR: Right.

EG: And do you have a suffix at all?

JR: The second. Ross, R-O-S-S the second.

EG: Were you born in Charlotte?

JR: Mecklenburg County.

EG: Mecklenburg County. And any city associated with it?

JR: It was close to Matthews in Mecklenburg County but closer to Matthews than to Charlotte at the time.

EG: What's your date of birth?

JR: December 1st, 1934.

EG: Okay. What's your wife's name?

JR: Jeanne, J-E-A-N-N-E.

EG: Okay. And I met your son, Marvin, was it?

JR: Um hmm, Marvin.

EG: What's his year of birth?

JR: Ooh.

EG: Or approximate.

JR: [figuring numbers] Let's see he's forty-six so, let me just ask him.

EG: Okay. I just—[break in tape] And do you have any other?

JR: And Roderick, R-O-D-E-R-I-C-K. May 10th, 1962.

EG: Oh just had a birthday yesterday.

JR: Did I miss his birthday? No, that can't. Well, that's right. Rani, R-A-N-I and she's August 14th, 1960.

EG: Okay. You got an associate's degree in liberal arts from—

JR: Carver Junior College.

EG: Carver Junior College. Do you know what year that was?

JR: Probably '62, I think '62.

EG: You got a bachelor's in psychology from Johnson—

JR: From Johnson C. Smith.

EG: When?

JR: '64.

EG: Then I saw—

JR: Master's in education from UNC Charlotte in '79, I think that's right.

EG: Any other educational experience.

JR: Just technical stuff when I was in the Air Force. I was electronic technician so gosh, I was, excuse me. In fact one of the best educations that you can get was military, stuff in the military. You don't

study anything except the subject. In other words you don't take English and math and world history. You just take electronics and electronics and electronics. Yeah. So that was kind of a waste of time for me because I wasn't interested in electronics, but I did learn a lot about it because I didn't have a choice. I fussed and argued with them about it, and they said look. When I was sent to electronics school, I didn't want to go to electronics school then. So I wouldn't, I mean I wouldn't study. So the guy called me up and they said, "Ross, you know you can stay here for four years in school because there's no such thing as flunking out. So you can just stay here for four years. It's up to you. If you don't want to do--. We know you can do because we saw your test scores. So if you don't want to do, we'll just keep you here for four years." I thought well, maybe I'd better buckle down and study. So I studied.

EG: What branch of the military?

JR: Air Force.

EG: Oh that's right. You said that.

JR: Air Force.

EG: And when were you there?

JR: From January 13, 1954 to September the 19th, 1957. Most veterans know the exact day you went in and the exact day you got out.

EG: Yeah, my dad he was in the service during Vietnam. That was one of the greatest days of his life was when he was released early, and I'm sure he could tell you the day and maybe even the time.

JR: () I was glad to get out in January, but they said, well, if you're not going to stay then we can let you go early. I said let me go. I'm ready to go, yeah.

EG: Where were you stationed?

JR: Basic training in San Anton[io], Texas.

EG: San Antonio.

JR: Yes, San Antonio, Texas, and then I left San Antonio and went to electronics school in a little town in Illinois, Belville, Illinois. It was Scott Air Force Base. The Air Force—

EG: () Illinois.

JR: No, Belville.

EG: Oh Belville.

JR: At Scott Air Force Base in Belville. Then at the Air Force base in San Antonio was Lackland is a basic training, L-A-C-K-L-A-N-D, Lackland. Then I left Scott and went to the Philippines at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. Then when I came back from Clark they sent me back to Texas of all places again, back to San Antonio but this time to Kelly Air Force Base.

EG: To Kerry, okay.

JR: Kelly.

EG: Kelly, Kelly Air Force Base.

JR: Lackland is a basic training base, and then Kelly is just a regular Air Force base, came back to Kelly.

EG: And what did you do for employment after you were done with military?

JR: Oh. Let's see. When I got out of the military, I was unemployed for a while. Let's see what was the first job that I kept. Let's see we're talking I got out in '57. I worked for a little company making golf carts and sail boats, fiberglass. I got into the fiberglass industry. It was just starting in Charlotte. So I got into the fiberglass industry and was going to do the college at night and working during the day.

EG: Oh, okay. What was the name of the firm or business? Do you remember or what your position was?

JR: Oh gosh, I don't even--. There was a technical name for it. We were called lay-up technicians. They just, you made things out of fiberglass. The company, I don't even remember the name of the company now, but it was fiberglass was brand new in North Carolina. The little guy I worked with had been out, had learned the trade I think out in California and came back to Charlotte and was running this company for a dentist. We were making things like well, it was almost an experimental deal because we were making both outdoor swimming pools, the little top of the ground swimming pools and just trying all kind of things to see what kind of things would sell. Then we repaired, there were boats that were being made out of fiberglass. We made some sailboats and then golf carts, started making fiberglass golf carts. I did that for a while.

EG: That was in the early '50s.

JR: Yeah, yeah.

EG: Then was there anything else like working () employment that you did before you began work for the Charlotte Bureau of Employment Training?

JR: Let's see. In fact I, was I still working. Yeah, I was still--. I had gone with another company and was still fiberglass stuff. I working with another company, and then I left that company and went with the Charlotte Bureau. That would've been, well, in between that time I finished the junior college at night, and then I needed two more years. So then I started going to Johnson C. Smith in the daytime and working at night. So I had all kinds of jobs while I was going to school. I worked for a bottling company and some company that sold, they bought and sold metal screws. They would buy up surplus screws and bolts and nuts. I don't even remember the name of the company. So what I would do is I would get my schedule at Johnson C. Smith, and then I would go find a job that fit my schedule. So I worked at a cafeteria work, I had all kind of odd jobs. I worked at S and W cafeteria. At that time was a really, it was, S and W was called a cafeteria, but it was really like a first class restaurant that served meals cafeteria-style. I mean it was, oh, it was it. But linen tables cloths and real silver and cloth napkins. I mean, this place, it was fancy. I'm not sure why they called it a cafeteria. But then the food was just great. They had chef cooks. It was a first class restaurant. But it just, you went through the line and got your food, and then they had these waiters that would take your tray to the table, and then, what I did was I was a bus boy. I bussed the tables and then sent the dirty dishes down to the dishwashing room. So I did that for a while, and then I worked for a bottling company, and when I finished and then a friend of mine had a construction, a little construction company. He did driveways and patios and carports. He had a little cement construction company. So I worked with him at Smith because since he owned his own company, and he was a friend of mine. He said, "Okay, when you get out of class, we'll be working over in the () section of the, some other section and you just come over and find us." Then he worked in the summertime they would work until it got dark. So I could get in some hours that way. So I had two college degrees and four years of experience as an Air Force veteran, and I was making one dollar and twenty-some odd cents per hour. One of the the, I don't even like to talk about this one. As I said the Air Force, one of the best training schools in the world in technology I think it was, it was not IBM. It was a company out of New Jersey that made the Selectric typewriters. You probably don't even remember typewriters.

EG: () not.

JR: I'm trying to, maybe I'll think of the name of it. I know they were stationed in, the headquarters in New Jersey. So they had an ad in the paper for technicians, and so I go over. It was to the company to apply for a job. When I got there, I noticed these European Americans in a room taking the test. They were sitting at desks, and they were taking the test. So I just assumed that I'd go in and take the test. So the guy stood there at the desk with me and said, this is the test, handed me a copy of the test and said, "What is the answer to number one?" By me going through electronics school, I mean all it was basic electronic technology like how to figure resistance or how to figure voltage and how to figure voltage and what's the other, not wattage, current. I equals E over R. That's how you figure the current in an electrical line. So and it was multiple choice, and so it was easy. I mean, basic, I had some of the basic training you could get. So the answer to number one is E. He said, "What about number two?" I said, "The answer to number two is C." So we go down maybe the first fifteen questions, and I don't know how many questions were on the thing. I got them all right because he's just asking about the basic fundamentals of electronics. Then when we, it switches from the formulas for how you figure wattage and resistance and voltage. It switches from that to some other questions. You've got to have a pencil and paper, and you've got to think a little bit. So I started missing questions. So he said, "Well, you know you missed the last four." So we're up in the twenties. "You missed the last four so--." Now the guy had to be amazed that I'm standing there with not a pencil and a paper, and I get the first nineteen correct without pencil and paper. The guys in the room, I don't know how they were doing, but I know good and well that none of them are doing as well as I'm doing because they haven't been through electronics. So he said, "You know, have you ever thought about going to, getting into TV repair." I said, "They don't hire any black folks in TV repair either." So I didn't get the job is the point I'm--. That was, I'm standing here looking at this guy, and I'm thinking now you know that you won't find anybody else if you interview fifty folks, you won't find anybody else with the kind of background I have. But you're not going to hire me simply because of the color of my skin. I knew that's what the deal is. Let's don't kid around. So I said, "Well." He gave some off the wall thing and I left.

I don't know how much longer after that Mr. Polk and some guys out in the neighborhood where we grew up had started something called the Eastside Council on Civic Affairs. He'll tell you all about that kind of thing. But Mr., I keep saying Mr. Polk, Jim is my mentor. He was the guy who from the time I was

a little kid, he was like a, he has a brother who is closer to my age but Jim is, I don't know, maybe ten years older than I am. I always looked up to him as in the neighborhood where we grew up, we had as a tradition that the generation in front of you sort of looked out for you. They did what was called pull your coattails. They helped you or they took you under their wing. For instance when I was introduced to the world of work, it was a guy who lived down the street from us said, he lived three doors down the street from us his name was Guy Beatty. One day he came by and I was out in the yard working with my mother. We were doing some kind of yard. He came by and my mother's name was Annie. He said, "Miss Annie, I want to take—my neighborhood name was Bubba—Miss Annie I want to take Bubba to work with me." I must've been like nine years old. "I want to take Bubba to work with me." Said, they didn't ask me. Just said, "I want to take Bubba to work with me Saturday." She said, "Yeah, that's fine with me." So he said, "Okay you be ready at," now see this wasn't negotiable. He just told me you be ready at, you be ready at eight-thirty or whatever it was. We come. No tools; no cars; no transportation. So he comes, the Saturday he comes by my house on Saturday so we started walking. Well, you know Charlotte so—

EG: Not a whole lot.

JR: Okay. But anyway, so we walked from, we lived over in the Grier Heights section on the east side of town. So we walked from there to over to Eastover, which is the wealthy side of town. So what we, Saturday morning, so you just go and knock on a door and whoever came to the door, you'd say, "Do you have any odd jobs you want done?" So we cut grass. We raked leaves. We carried coal, whatever needed to be done. So if they said no, you went to the next door and something, somebody would want something done. He would negotiate a price, and then we would do the work, and I must've been nine and Guy was probably fifteen, and so I could, at that time you didn't have power lawnmowers. You had push. It wasn't, you pushed the lawnmower. You didn't have anything with the motor on it now. The thing that I shall always appreciate was that Guy split the money with me fifty-fifty even though I couldn't do half of the work. He took me in and showed me how to cut grass and how to do this and how to do this stuff. We would get through whatever we made eight dollars then he'd give me four and he'd keep four. So that was—

EG: Yeah.

JR: Yeah, very generous. Yeah. But again that was a tradition in the neighborhood that the older guy took the next generation behind them and he introduced them to, taught them how to swim, how to fish, how to make a slingshot, how to catch a baseball, how to do all kind of things. I mean it was a wonderful system for a young kid. So if you were without a father or you didn't have brothers, I didn't have any older brothers. I mean, the guys in the neighborhood just looked out for you. So Mr. Polk's brother was the one who introduced me to the Air Force. He had joined the Air Force, and he told me about the Air Force. So that's the way I made the connection with the Air Force.

Then Mr. Polk knew the kind of mind that I had and that I had gone through school, that I'd gone to school at night and then school in the day time. They started this organization, and the whole idea was to break the backbone of job discrimination in Charlotte. That was what the, it was called the Eastside Council on Civic Affairs. Originally that was not what it started. Originally it was started to create dialogue between African Americans and European Americans in Charlotte on a peer basis. It really, it was one of the most I'm still not sure other than the fact that I know Jim Polk. I'm still not sure how they came up with the idea that it was time in 1959 or 1960 to start relating that African Americans and European Americans it was time to start relating as peers, not as some kind of superior, inferior group. They still () even now in 2006, I still [see] that as a watershed event, and I'm not sure how they came to that decision to do that. So what they did is that and Jim will go into some more details. But what they did, they started inviting people of power, European folks of power to the house, and the idea was they would sit down at the table and talk. So these guys said, "Are you crazy?" The answer was, "No, we're not crazy. This is something that needs to be done." Then out of that I'm not sure all of the details again. Again Jim can fill in the details. They got a grant from the Stern Family Foundation to start trying to find employment. Now Jim had been involved in this kind of effort with the fire department, with the police department and with the bus. At the time you had no, you had no black firemen. You had a few black police officers and no black bus drivers. Jim had been involved in an effort to, he come over to the college and recruit guys from the college to become a fireman or to become a bus driver, to work at-- Well, the post office did have some of the black workers at the post office because that's where Jim worked. But—

EG: What college? The Johnson C. Smith?

JR: Johnson C. Smith and to Carver. Carver was a little bit better recruiting area because most of the folks that went to Carver, were veterans. Most of the guys were veterans. So these, so we would have some experience. We would go in the Army or Air Force or Navy or something, and we were going to school under GI bill. So these guys were a little bit more mature, had some experience, had been to other places other than Charlotte, had been around the world. So it was a good recruiting place to find someone who could take the hassle out of being the first one into a particular situation. So anyway, in 1964 I think I was teaching at a high school. I was substitute teaching and later had gotten, my father had gotten killed, and so the principal had hired me to fill out her term at a high school. So I was teaching English literature I think at Second Ward High School. Jim called me one day and said, asked if I was interested in going to work at the Charlotte Bureau. At that time they had hired a guy from Iowa to run the place, but he just, he could never figure out how to get from point A to point B in Charlotte. So they finally let him go. Jim went from the board to being the executive director. So when he took over as executive director, he hired me as a job developer. That was my first professional was as a job developer. My responsibility was to go out and find jobs for people. Men, women, whatever. Just go out and find jobs for people.

EG: For black people.

JR: Yeah. Yeah. The whole idea was to get folks into jobs where there had been no blacks or there were no blacks working at the time. In 2006 you sit here and think about some of the jobs. Like bread truck driver, linen, the people who pick up the towels and things from-- Linen truck driver. The National Linen Service. Diaper service. Telephone operators. What else, bank tellers. Just ordinary jobs now, no blacks at all. So I came, we'd be sitting here a long time if I told you the first black we got hired as a telephone operator, as a beer truck driver, as a linen truck driver, appliance repairman, just what we would just consider almost menial jobs now. No blacks had ever been hired in those positions. So me and I think there were four of us who were job developers. So that was what we do. Absolutely had no guidelines to go by, no precedent. We just made it up as we went along.

The other thing there, the other thing was our, we had rented some space right downtown Charlotte. It was on Third Street between South Tryon and College, just about middle of the block. They had never been any black folks who had an office downtown, and we had an integrated staff. We had this large plate glass window in the place. I don't know what the place was before we rented it, but it did have

a large plate glass window. So we had a receptionist and a secretary. We had two receptionists, and one was Juanita Currie who was a receptionist. Juanita was olive-skinned, strikingly beautiful, olive-skinned, and I'm not sure what her background was, but she could've, if you didn't know she could've passed for Indian or Indonesian or and then Wanda, I remember Wanda's (), but Wanda was platinum blonde, again strikingly beautiful. So somebody would be walking down the street, and they would look over and see Juanita sitting behind the desk. They would literally stop and come back because they would, I mean if you walked down the street and you'd seen a zebra sitting behind a desk, it would've had the same effect. What in the world is going on. Sometimes Elizabeth, there would literally be eight or ten people just standing there looking in the window because this was an integrated office. After while we just, we'd wave at them and like that [demonstrates]. The other thing was that we wore suit and tie to work because we'd go out to call on these companies. We wanted to look presentable. We didn't want to go out with just a pair of jeans on because you're asking these folks to do things. So we dressed and we had briefcases. On Tuesday at ten-seventeen you would call the guy and say you were going to come by. Sometimes we'd do cold calls. We'd just go and ask to speak to the personnel officer. But we'd walk in, the guy who was my partner in this endeavor.

EG: Was he white? Black?

JR: No, no. Black guy. Frederick Douglass Ford. So Fred, Fred must be, Fred is like six—I'm six-one. Fred must've been like six-three. We walk in, here are these two tall black guys with brief case and suits on on Tuesday, and the guy would be trying to figure out what, what are--. I mean first of all, what are you guys doing with suits on with a briefcase on Tuesday. I mean that was his first thing. Then when we would explain what we were doing, I mean sometimes it would literally take the guy ten minutes to get all of this fixed so he could talk to us in some kind of real way because again we were presenting something to him and he had no experience with. If he ever had any experience with black guys, it would've been some guy who worked on the dock at the back of the company, or the guy who cleaned up the building, or some guy in a six down position. Not one down but six down position. So here's some guys who are standing here as professionals with a suit and a tie on and a briefcase, and they seemed like they know what they're talking about, and they're proposing to me to do something with our company as

equals. First of all they're asking me to hire somebody that I had no intentions of hiring or had no experience hiring. It was strange. It was strange.

EG: Was that a common reaction?

JR: Common reaction, yeah because we were introducing these guys to something, we might as well have showed up from the moon. I mean, absolute. It was that out of their experience. Okay, it was that out of their experience. Then after a while, we adjusted to the fact that, and again what we tried to do was to, you know you're shocking these folk. Right. You understand that. So what you do is you've got to ease it in. So we had little techniques that we would use to try to let these guys [know we're] okay, this is what--. We were real. We're not some, you're not having a nightmare. We're real. Here's what we can offer you. Fred worked, the office in the Charlotte Bureau that Fred worked for was called OJT, on-the-job training. There was a federally funded program that they could pay part of the cost of training someone. For instance, if you hired one of our client and they were the first fifteen weeks they were with you, we would pay half. If you were paying the guy two dollars an hour, we would pay a dollar. So you would get the guy for half price. So we could do that, called on-the-job training. Then we could do some other things. We could come by if the guy didn't come to work, we'd go see what was wrong. If he didn't have a ride, he could pick him up. We had all kinds of little incentives, and a lot of companies, it didn't take them long to figure out, hey these guys are going to pay part of the cost of this guy working here, and then they're going to make sure that he's doing all of these things. So it was a pretty good deal for a company. [telephone] So we could sweeten the pot. I think they'll get it in there. [break in taping] So some of the companies it didn't take them long to realize that we could, it was a win-win situation for them. It didn't take long to do that.

Some other cases, they could not get over the fact that here are these two tall black guys standing here talking to me about something. I have no idea what they're talking about, and some of the guys when we left, I mean, I'd look at Fred. He'd say, we'll have to come back and talk to him. He just, he's still being literally in shock.

Some other times, I can remember. I won't name the company, but some of the stories turned out to be funny and Jim and I went out to this large company. They'd never hired any black folk at all. So we'd go into this guy's office. He was very professional, very courteous. He explained very patiently why

they'd--. He said, "Look this is a, we make this product, and we sell it to textile companies. Before we sell the product to textile companies, we have a like a textile mill in the basement of this building. We take the product, and we make, we weave it into cloth, and we make various things out of it and then when we take it to sell it to this company they can see all of the possibilities of this materials." He said, "Now here's the dilemma we have. Down in the basement all of the workers down there are white because we recruited them from textile mills. They have told us in no uncertain terms that if we ever bring a black down there, that they would all quit. So if they'd all quit then we would be, we'd be stuck because there's, we'd have nobody else to hire." So I said, "Let me ask you a question. Suppose one of those guys came up and told you that they were going to start a union." He said, "I'd fire every damned one of them." So I just sat there. He said, "Okay, okay. All right. All right. All right." That's just how--. "Let's talk about, let's talk about. Let me think about this and come back again." So we came back and it turned out to be one of the best calls we ever had because the company agreed to hire some kids for that summer. They also set up a scholarship at () university where the kids could go to school that didn't have to come back to work. It turned out to be a really good deal.

Now if we had not been astute enough to get past this little smoke screen he set up. I knew that the Charlotte was anti-union. I knew what the answer were. If you () talk about union. All out there door. I don't care if you didn't have anybody. So when he saw that we were that astute, then let's, okay--. Let's stop kidding around and let's see what we can do about this thing. Good friend of mine now. We play golf together sometimes and that's been, that was 1966 probably when that little incident happened. But again what we tried to do when we went in, it had nothing to do with anything except pointing out to folk that you have policies that just didn't make sense. So let's change them. Now here's what we can do: We can guarantee you that the workers that we send to you will be good workers. We'll make sure that they do what they're supposed to do, and then we can even toss in some other little things to make this a good situation and that's all we're looking for. Now there were some folks who just could not see the wisdom of training. We had Southern Bell, well I'll name some of these companies. () It wasn't Southern Bell. It was the lady who was supervisor over telephone operators. Her argument was that people using the telephone could not understand black folk when they talk. I'm saying to her, look this is the South. This is the South now. Black folk have two languages. There's one language that we speak at

home, dialect if you will. But there's another language that we speak. If you hire someone as a telephone operator, they will not speak as if you heard someone on the street or on the bus talking. They would, she just--. I don't know whether she understood that or she just used that as an excuse to, and so we had, it must've taken us probably a year battling back and forth, back and forth with Southern Bell before we got them to hire some operator. We finally ended up going, getting some folks from the regional office in Atlanta to come up and having lunch with them and going through a bunch of stuff before--. I don't know if they finally fired her or got rid of her or something. But it took a, it was one of the tough nuts to crack with the telephone. Same thing with the Eastern Airlines was the, are you familiar with an airline company called Eastern Airlines?

EG: Somewhat. I've heard of them. I am not familiar with it.

JR: They went out of business, but at one time they were the dominant airline. It was like USAir in Charlotte, and it was the airline to Charlotte. They had their reservation center here, out in the South Park area. Their particular reason for not hiring black folks was that nobody could pass this little, had some test that they gave. I don't know if it was the Wonderlic Test because we also got introduced to the, familiar with the Wonderlic test.

EG: Yeah.

JR: It's a fifty-item test. In fact () the national, the NFL, the National Football Association gives it too all incoming draft, people they draft they give it to them. They give it. There's fifty items on the test, and you have ten minutes or fifteen minutes. It's timed. It's timed. You just go through and mark the answers and see how many out of the fifty you can get in ten minutes or whatever the time is. The strange thing, I don't know who invented that test, but companies were using it for executives, for janitors. It made no difference what job you were applying for. They used the same test for that. There is no test in the world that can measure CEO and a janitor and an airplane pilot and a football (). Their argument is it does not measure any specific thing but it gives some idea of how, your intelligence. Well, I would argue that anyway. Wonderlic was a test that was being used.

So one summer we, Fred and I put together this plan to really turn the screws on Eastern Airlines. So we, we sort of advertised all of the local colleges, historically black colleges to come by and fill out an application with us and to go to Eastern and take this test. Even if you don't get the job, do us a favor and

do this. So we must've gotten a hundred college students up and down the east coast to go out and take the test and give us the date and time that they took the test. The, none of them passed the test. Over a hundred, none of them okay. None of them quote passed the test. So we go out to Eastern, they were having career day, one of those job days. We go out and they explain to--. They had the NAACP, the National Council of Negro Women and some other local black leaders that would invite in to explain to them why Eastern needed their help to overcome this problem of not being able to find qualified blacks for this thing. So they explained this thing. So these folks that they explaining to were just ordinary citizens who belonged to the NAACP or to National Council of Negro Women or whatever it was. They had, they had regular jobs. They had no way of knowing that these folks were just blowing smoke. But it sounded good because computers, they were using computers, and computers were just being sort of introduced into this kind of thing, and these computers can do so many bytes per second and then they talked about the computers and all this thing. So they went on with this crap for a while, and so I finally asked if they had any white kids who were high school graduates who had passed the test, or that worked there. They said, yes. Said there's some high school graduates who passed the test. Yeah. So you're telling us that 100 students from some of the finest universities in this country could not pass the test, but there were some local high school students that passed the test. Well. I said, look. I got the file here of these 100 students who took the test, and none of them passed. You're telling me none of them passed. Now, okay, now the NAACP and the National Council of Negro Women, all of these folk who have been sitting here swallowing this stuff all at once they went to these same schools that I named. I named Howard University, Winston-Salem State and A and T and Johnson C. Smith and Livingston and Barbia-Scotia. All these folks had graduated from those same schools. So they, I mean it's an insult to them to imply that some high school graduates could pass this, but no black college student could pass this test. So now we got a problem. Okay, now we've got a problem. There is some funny business going on. The guy said, well, I told them we shouldn't have had this meeting. So the meeting broke up. Well, Fred and I, well, I guess Fred was in his twenties at the time, and I was probably either in my late twenties or early thirties. I mean we were, we had afros and the whole thing. We just, I mean we weren't very nice guys. So we started cussing, and we were ready to fight. It had gotten to the point where this one guy said, well the language you all are using is just not dignified and this stuff. So it got a little heated. So we got out to the

parking lot, and I mean we were ready to kind of do whatever. It really wasn't professional on our part, but that's the way we handled the thing.

To make a long story short Eastern then started to hire some reservation agents. It was a good job. It was a high paying job. You sat there and made reservations. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to do that. They just did not want to hire any black folks to do that. So from 1964 to 1968 the Charlotte Bureau broke the back of job discrimination in its time. We didn't eliminate it, but we broke the backs of it. It's a story that has never been told in any kind of open way in Charlotte. There are most, a lot of folk in Charlotte have never even heard of Charlotte Bureau. They had the benefits of it. They derived the benefits of it. Look, when Charlotte Bureau started there was not one single African American in the city of Charlotte on a salary of ten thousand dollars a year.

EG: Isn't that incredible.

JR: Not one. I mean we had school principals, nurses, now you may have had some doctors and people who had their own businesses who were making that, but I'm saying on a salary of ten thousand dollars. Not one single, we hired a secretary, and we were paying the secretary five thousand dollars a year. In fact when Jim hired me, he apologized because he could only pay me six thousand dollars a year. I'm thinking to go from a dollar and twenty-five cents an hour to six thousand dollars, I'm rich. But anyway, we hired a secretary. So Jim's secretary who was the executive secretary, we were paying her five thousand dollars a year. We had a senior minister of one of the largest black churches in Charlotte who was on the board. He was just outraged that a secretary was making more than a minister, senior minister at one of the largest churches in the town. I don't know what he was making, but it wasn't five thousand dollars a year. So that just shows you, and so not only did we break that job discrimination thing in Charlotte we changed the wage structure because we paid a secretary five thousand dollars. Then somebody else could think, woah. Oh come I'm only making \$3200 a year when they're paying this woman down here five thousand dollars a year. So we changed folks idea about what they were worth in terms of, what they could demand in terms of salary.

EG: I wondered too with you're getting a bachelor's in psychology if you used any of that sort of knowledge with your work with the [Charlotte Bureau]—

JR: Yeah. Yeah. The guy who was my, what do you, psychology-- What do you call it the guy at the college who was your—

EG: Professor.

JR: Your professor, advisor, kind of yeah.

EG: Mentor.

JR: Mentor. His name was Gerald Elston. E-L-S-T-O-N, Gerald Elston. Gerald was a, oh he was sharp. He was a graduate of Fisk University over in. Gerald was I mean really sharp. He taught psychology. I mean, all of the Freud and all of this other kind of stuff, but he also talked to us about the every day use of psychology as a tool to get things done. For instance he would say look. Emotion does not, ()-- There was a folks who tried to prove that blacks were inferior to white because you couldn't pass a certain test or you couldn't do this. He said okay, the response to that is not an emotional response. If you get angry because somebody said that you're inferior, I mean that's not a response. Anger is a response, but that's not a legitimate response. So what you have to do is to do research and this kind of thing. So don't accept, if someone says that you're inferior and then gives you this research that they've done that shows you're inferior, then what you do is you go out and do some research to show that you're not inferior and then match research with research. You don't get angry and say that this guy is a racist and that kind of. That's not an answer to what this person is doing. Some bogus research, so you go out and get some legitimate research to show that this bogus research is bogus. I mean he drilled that in our head that you cannot respond to research with emotion. You have to response to bogus research with legitimate research. So when a yeah, that was, so if somebody came up with, like the guy with this thing about the, we can't send any blacks down there because all the whites will quit. Okay, that's bogus research. So you hit him with something, what if the guy comes up and says we're going to start a union. That's okay. So yeah, we were, we were heavily armed when we went out. Not just that, growing up in Grier Town, it's a small community out on the east side of town that when I grew up out there in the late '30s and '40s and '50s, it was an African American community, completely surrounded by European Americans. On one side some of the richest folks in Charlotte, Eastover, Myers Park on one side. On the south side, Cotswold, these are upper middle class neighborhoods, and then on another side sort of blue collar white, blue collar, low income European Americans, but we were smack dab in the middle of that. So we were isolated in one

sense but not insulated in another sense. So it was a community where you knew everyone. I mean, I literally knew, I could just tell you who all the streets in the neighborhood and I could tell you who lived in each neighborhood. So you were it was like being part of a family. So that kind of background, and you had the folks who settled in that neighborhood in the, at the turn of the century tended to be independent entrepreneurial types, almost everybody in the neighborhood I grew up were brickmasons or automobile mechanics or carpenters or painters or landscape. So we had a, you had a neighborhood where almost everybody had some kind of trade. So you weren't, they were not dependent, as dependent on the good will of folk as some other neighborhoods where you just worked for someone, and you showed up on the job. These guys, so they tended to be an independent streak in the neighborhood where I grew up. That was part of the, what we took into these companies when we would go to, that was part of why the East Side Council was started--.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

EG: Okay.

JR: Okay, part of that independent streak that we had coming in was a result of the kind of neighborhood we grew up in. It was a special place to grow up. I mean, I would take nothing for the experience of growing up in that neighborhood, and so we had, we did have this, I don't want to call it arrogance because that, independence I think is a better word. There was kind of fierce independence that we had from growing up in that neighborhood, yeah.

EG: You didn't have this dependence on white employers.

JR: Right.

EG: Like you see which is why () throughout the South.

JR: Exactly.

EG: So that was part of it as well. You, let me see here. () What did your parents do for a living?

JR: My mother, pshaw, my mother in the early '40s, my mother worked as a maid. At the time we're talking right after the war, Second World War, I don't want to say right after the war, right after the Second World War in the mid '40s. Fireworks were still legal in North Carolina. There was a guy who

had a, his name was C.C. Brasswell. He had a small company in the neighborhood where we grew up where he manufactured fireworks. So my mother got a job there as an assembly line worker, and my mother was one of the brightest folk that I have ever met. So she, they got paid by production. You make so many fireworks, and you got paid on a per basis. They had, they made something called cherry bombs. It was the little things about the size of your thumb, and you put this powder in it and seal it on both ends. Then you took an ice pick and plugged the hole in it, and you put the fuse in it so when you light it, it would go off. So my mother went to Mr. Brasswell one day and said to him that there's got a faster way of doing this than plugging each one of these things with an ice pick. So she came up with some way of making the holes faster. So he said, "Well, Annie, that's a good idea." So then I think they did all of them by, so anyway she made some kind of frame. She came up with this idea of making some kind of frame that you could put all of these things in and do them all at once, do them individually. You could do like fifty at a time. So production went [Ross makes take off noise]. So then she came back with some other idea. So he finally [said], "Look, don't bring me anymore ideas. From now on you're in charge of production. You're my foreman." Now this is in nineteen, this would've had to have been in 1945, '44, '45.

EG: And this was a white man.

JR: White man said to her don't bring me any ideas. From now on you're my foreman in charge of production. I run the front. You run the back.

EG: How about that. Not only black but also a woman.

JR: A black woman. So I said to folk that C.C. Brasswell was the first equal opportunity employer in North Carolina probably. "Annie, you run the back; I'll run the front." He literally, so he took care of the orders and that kind of thing. She ran the back. She was making like \$100 a week in the '40s. Now—

EG: That's a lot right.

JR: It was a lot of money. Another little thing that she had, the little sparklers. You've seen the little things. You light them and they start, the sparklers, you put together this chemical formula, and it reacts and you dip these wires in it and then let them sit. You dip the wires in it, and then it gets a little bit thicker. You hang them to dry and then you sell them. Well, the formula, once you put the catalyst in, it

has a life, a lifecycle of like four hours. After four hours it goes kaput, and it won't sparkle or anything. It just dies. So you can make up a batch, and all he'd have leftover at the end of the day, he said, "Well, Annie, you can take this home," and so she could come home on our back porch. We'd make sparklers out of whatever the stuff was left and so she sold sparklers to neighborhood kids two for a nickel, and then she also would buy material from him and we'd make firecrackers at home and she'd sell them. So not only was she drawing like \$100 a week from the Brasswell, she was probably making another fifty or seventy-five dollars a week selling fireworks to folks in the neighborhood.

EG: Very savvy.

JR: Then in 1947 the North Carolina General Assembly outlawed fireworks in North Carolina. Boom. So she went from being a foreman making \$150 bucks a week to a maid making nine dollars a week. She, to the day [of her death], I told the story at her funeral, to this day I never heard her say that life was unfair or what a blow or what. I was doing good. Now it had to have had some effect. It had to have had an effect on her. But I never heard her lament the fact that she went from here to here, and the world is bad and she never did that. I mean she just, she just switched gears and kept going. But it was devastating. We went from, we were doing fine to doing not so fine.

EG: But growing up you were like part of the time you were like middle class status and part of it you were working class.

JR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I wouldn't say middle. Well—

EG: Middle to upper class maybe.

JR: Well, when I say middle—I have a definition of middle class that has nothing to do with income. I mean, that's my own thing. It has nothing to do—. To me middle class has nothing to do with income. It has to do with certain values that you have. So but we did, we were, we had money at one time for about three years, and things were just going along good. Then the bottom fell out. Boom. She was back working as a maid. But she just took it in stride as best as I could tell. As a kid you were watching stuff, and you don't, you're not privy to all of the conversations going on, but I didn't see this really downward turn. She just like, she again it had to have had some effect. But like she just kept going but she was a truly remarkable person. Yeah, truly remarkable person. In fact a lot of the toughness and the tenacity and the independence and don't take no for an answer kind of thing. I got that from her. That was,

I'm probably more like her than my dad or any of the other folks that I've been around. Yeah, a lot of, we had as counselor said, we had a symbiotic relationship me and my mom did, yeah.

EG: Did your dad have a job or—

JR: Yeah, he had, at the time my mother was making this kind of money. He started his own little company. At the time you didn't have backhoe diggers and power things like they use now to dig holes and that kind of thing. So they used horses and something called a drag pan. So if you were going to make a driveway. It was like a big scoop with handles on it. So you had these horses hooked to it. So my mother bought him a team of horses and equipment to get into (). So he started a little excavation business. But my father had a, he was a, let me see if I can put this delicately. He was allergic to alcohol, but he didn't know it. So he would drink on Fridays and would go into these, they weren't comas, but there were times literally when he would pass out on Friday and it would be late Sunday afternoon sometimes before he would wake. We virtually couldn't wake him up. So they finally divorced I think in like '47 or '48. He moved to Ohio, and we never saw him again. But it was a just for about three year period of time there when he had his little company and my mother had a company, that was about a three year period, and after that it went [Ross makes going down sound].

EG: Yeah. Well, that's fascinating hearing that about your mother. I mean that's just, that's just all you said, and particularly that she should be the foreman at that time. Yeah. I mean—

JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and she had that kind of mind. She told me once, and she asked me one time, "Boy, what do you do for a living?" This was when I was grown. I had my own consulting business. "What do you do for a living?" I said, "Well, I've got a consulting company." She said, "But what do you do?" I said, "I charge people money to tell them the stuff that you told me when I was growing up." She said, "Oh that makes good sense."

EG: And like it's interesting too how early on you got all this sort of business influences like your mother and with like the people in your neighborhood and Guy who went around and stuff.

JR: He had to negotiate a price with these folk. Because if you say well, I'll cut your grass for a dollar and they had this big yard, I mean you couldn't. I mean you'd get a dollar but you'd be there all day. So you had to negotiate a price, and if your price is too high, then they wouldn't hire you. But if it was too low then you're cheating yourself. So again, you picked up these skills by you had to negotiate a price.

Some Saturday morning this person is kind of sleepy, and you knock on the door without being asked and this kind of thing. So every, so you picked up all these little skills. See that's one of the things that young folk don't get the chance of doing now and that is learn how to survive in the world. Because as parents we've liked to relieve our children from that kind of responsibility or we like to make sure that our children don't have to go through what we went through kind of foolishness. But and I don't have a quarrel with that. I mean who wants outdoor bathrooms, and you've got to go pull water out of a well when you can turn a knob and that kind of thing and get water. But there's some life lessons that you can learn when you're a paperboy or when you are cutting grass for someone or raking leaves for someone. There are just some things that you cannot learn unless you do it. So I think it would be really helpful for most kids if they had chores and things to do. I mean I had things to do as a kid other than just play. You had to get water and you had to get wood and you had to help in the garden and you had, you learned something from all of that stuff. I mean you learned the difference between a squash and a weed because if you dug up the, if you dug up the squash and (). That was a whipping if you dug up the squash. So you didn't, so you had to get in the wood, and you had to on Mondays was wash day. So you had to, I mean you didn't have a hot water faucet and a washing machine. You had a wash pot that you boiled the clothes in. So you had to make a fire around the wash pot and get the water hot and you boil these clothes. Then you had three tubs, and you had the wash tub, then rinse tub and then another rinse tub, and then if your mother was really fancy, you had what was called a bluing tub. This was a tub where you put something in, it was you had this like indigo. It was a stuff, blue, and you put it in the water and you washed the white clothes, and this blue stuff because that light blue made them look whiter. So if there was any, and if your mother was really fancy, then you had to get four tubs of water. If you had to carry bucket, a bucket at a time to fill up a wash pot and four things, then that was a half a day's walking across the way down to the spring or to the well. So you had these chores. It would be good now, kids ought not to have to do all of that stuff, but it sure would be nice if you had some responsibilities. Yeah.

EG: Yeah. I wanted to ask you too. You were doing this employment work during the time of so many changes going on nationally with the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act being passed. Black power movement, King's murder and if that sort of had an impact on your work, if when you were doing this if you felt you were a part of a larger movement.

JR: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah, see the other thing about the Charlotte Bureau that I hadn't talked about as an employment agent, but it was also an independent agency. We didn't get any money from anybody in Charlotte. The Stern Family Foundation out of Chicago gave us the initial grant, and the other money came from the feds, and we got these contracts from the feds in Washington. We had on-the-job training from the Department of Labor. We had some money from the Office of Economic Opportunity. So there was nobody in Charlotte who could put pressure on us for whatever we did. So we would be war room, if you will, for a lot of the city. The other thing is we had a staff [which] Jim [directed where] we were free to do--. His only thing was don't do anything silly. Don't do anything silly. By silly, don't do anything stupid. But whatever else you wanted to do, fine with him. So folk would call and say, for instance we had integrated staff. Male, female, African American, European American. So we would go to lunch. So Alexis Stein who was a, she and her husband had moved here from New York. So she knew nothing about living in the South and segregation and all that stuff. So we said Alexis and Alexis was blonde. So we said, "Alexis, we're going to go today, we're going to go to this cafeteria and eat." She said, "Okay. Fine." So we'd walk in the cafeteria with Alexis, and here are these two black guys and maybe a black lady and Alexis is blonde. And we'd come in. Well, they don't serve black folks in this restaurant. They certainly don't serve black men with a blonde female in this restaurant even if they serve black folks. So now they don't know what to do with us. But we go in and well, you just have to deal with us. They I mean, what was the choices they had. We wouldn't leave and we could stay there all day because Jim would say why did you take more than an hour for lunch. So it was fine with him as long as we were doing something that wasn't stupid. So in the sit-ins and the picketing and the marches, our staff would be. It was like we were the paid staff to do that kind of stuff. So we did pickets. We did sit-ins. All of the protest kind of stuff. Our staff would be right in the middle of it here.

Because again because we were, I remember one night we were, we were discussing closing some schools. At the time this was *Brown versus the Board of Ed*, the Kansas, this was the Brown decision. They were trying to decide how we were going to, what we were going to do about this in Charlotte. So the guy who was head, I don't remember his name now. I may think of it who was the chairman of the school board. At that time you had the county schools and city schools. The guy who was the school board chair of city schools had called a meeting at one of the local, at Second Ward, which was, there were two

black high schools in Charlotte, Second Ward and West Charlotte. Second Ward was on the east side of town and West Charlotte was on the west side of town. To talk about well, I don't remember what it was we were talking about. But he, he had the whole, the school board was having a meeting, and they had the whole board up on the stage, and we were sitting in the audience, I mean in the auditorium, and this guy kept saying "nigras." See nigra was sort of a nice way--. They didn't call you a Negro, but they also didn't call you a nigger. It was somewhere in between there. So nigra, so he nigra children this and nigra children that and he nigra children this, and so I had probably been at the Charlotte Bureau for about a month. So he, after about I raised my hand and he said, "What is it?" I said, "I have a problem. I don't understand how," you have to get the gist of what I'm doing now. Okay. See "I don't understand how you cannot pronounce, I mean I don't understand how you can pronounce Communists word like Czechoslovakia and Khrushchev and Russia and Sputnik but you can't pronounce an American word Negro, capital N-E--." You see the trick I'm putting him in. "I don't understand how you can pronounce these communist words." We're talking in the middle of the '60s. I () communists were still bad. The Red Scare. Okay, that's bad. So I'm setting this guy up. I mean I'm setting up. There ain't no. See another thing Elizabeth, you couldn't get by me. You might, if you were good you might get a tie. If you were good, you could get a tie, but there was no way you could get around me. Do you understand what I'm saying.

EG: In terms of your argument.

JR: In terms of my argument because if you were defending segregation, you were wrong. There was no defense of segregation. Segregation was a bunch of crap. So there was no way you could defend it. So if you got into a debate with me, if you were really good, you might get a tie. I had never got a tie on anybody. But I'm saying if you were somebody who was really good, might get a tie. But there was no way you could win with me. So it was like shooting duck. I mean, shooting fish in a barrel. So I got this, I'm sitting there looking at this clown. So I'm setting him up for my mother. She had a really sharp sense of humor. So I mean I'm, I'm setting him up. "I don't understand how you could pronounce communist words"--Now I've got everybody's attention--"Like Czechoslovakia, Khrushchev and Sputnik. So but you cant' pronounce an American word, five letters, capital N-E-G-R-O, Negro." Now this guy is dead, I mean, he is like a deer caught in headlights. Where can he go? I've got him, boom. I mean what could he

say? The audience is shocked because first of all this young black guy stood up and challenged the chairman of the board of education. Where is he from? What is this? So there was this hush. So the guy, so then he started saying colored instead of, he just couldn't find himself to say Negro. So he started saying colored. That was better than what he'd been doing. So he colored his way on through.

So he asked something about trust. I raised my hand again. I said, "What have you ever done that would make you think that we trust you?" Ooh. Again you stand up telling the white man in public that you don't trust him. What was that? So when the thing was over, this newspaper reporter got, said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm James Ross." "I mean, but who are you?" "I'm James Ross." "But where did you come from?" "What do you mean where did I come from? I've been here all the time." So he () he turned out to be a good friend of mine. I said, "Did you know what you--." In other words did you know what you just did? Of course I know what I just--. I know what I just did. I stopped this clown from standing up there insulting people. So teachers and principals came to me: "I am so glad you did that. I've been listening to this guy call us nigras for (). I can't say anything because of my job." I can understand that. I mean, I understand that. I can say something because of my job. You can't say something because of your job. Now some folk would say well, you should've, even if you lost your job. Well, that wasn't realistic to say to someone with a wife and kids that you should challenge some guy like this no matter what. But I could because we were independent. So that kind of independence permeated. So we would be the first in line during the marches and the first in line doing--. It got to the point where people in power started coming to the Charlotte Bureau and asking for us in terms of getting things done. So the mayor, the police chief, the city manager knew that they could trust us to get an honest opinion. For instance the mayor of the town at that time, his name was Stan Brookshire. He wanted to know from Jim, "I don't know understand. Charlotte is a great place to live. I don't understand these angry young black men. I'd like to talk to some angry young black men. I just, I don't understand." Jim said, "Mr. Mayor, I have two that I'd love to send over to talk to you." There's a book that I've got here someplace on where this guy wrote the article about the mayors of Charlotte, John Belk and Brookshire and some other guys. That story is in his book. Jim sent me and Fred Ford over to talk with the mayor. So when we walked in, he started, "If you're qualified—" And we said, "Okay. That's--. Mr. Mayor we've got a problem before we even started. You're using the word qualified. All we understand when you use the word qualified is

that's just another way of stopping blacks from getting jobs. What do you mean qualified? For instance let's give you an example. There are some guys who sit out on the street in the summertime and count cars." They didn't have those little things you put across the street where the cars get counted automatically. You just put these little ropes across, and if a car drive over it, it clicks and it counts cars. Well, back in the '50s and '60s, they would hire young white kids who were high school kid to sit on the side of the street and you counted cars. You never saw any black kids doing that. So we said, "Why? How qualified do you have to be to sit there and count cars?" He said, "You mean to tell me you would, we have hard time finding white kids to do that. You would want a job like that?" I said, "Why not? All you do is sit there and count cars." He said, "I've never thought that anybody would want that job as hard a time as we have." "I'll tell you what, you open it up for black kids, and you'll have a hundred down here tomorrow." Count cars, we've always, that was one job as high school kids we were always envious of because, and he was flabbergasted. He just couldn't believe anybody actually wanted the job sitting out in the hot sun counting cars. Okay. So now, now again the mayor is beginning to understand. It never occurred to him that I mean they had to beg white kids to take the job, and it never occurred to him that black kids would love to have that job. Okay, so anyway we talked about some other things and he said, "I'm beginning to understand why you guys are angry." He said, "But I still say qualified is a good word." That was his, we didn't say it was a good word. We just said we didn't like you putting that word in front. Why does blacks always have to be qualified? Because qualified means whatever you say it means in a certain sense. You've got to be qualified to get this job. Why would I apply for a job that I wasn't qualified for? Qualified became one of those catchwords that folks used to, sometimes you were overqualified. Then sometimes you were underqualified. So if I'm making the rules using qualified as some kind of criteria for hiring folks, I can make that to say whatever I want it to say. But to answer your question, we were right smack in the middle of, and we did feel a part of a national kind of thing that there was this movement.

We took the employment part because employment in a lot of other cities--. We never found anything similar to the Charlotte Bureau any place else in the country [where] it's only job was to break [job] discrimination. Now you had Urban League and NAACP and other organizations that did that as a part of what else they were doing. But an organization that was created specifically to tackle the problems

of job discrimination. And I think this country would have been, we would've moved a lot differently had other communities taken this on. Now later on the feds started the Concentrated Employment Program, and they had all kind of acronyms for employment and the whole idea was to get folks into employment. But it did not have as a kind of as a stepping stone to break the backs of discrimination. It did it as a part of it, but that was not the main thrust of it. Yeah.

EG: How many people would you say that you placed jobs for? How many businesses? [I'm talking here about] ball park figures.

JR: This is probably, I kind of in my own mind I divided it into the first beer truck driver, the laundry truck and then other kind of jobs where you just, it was just strictly an employment. It didn't have anything to do with breaking a barrier. You just, it was getting somebody a job. I would think on the, if you look at it on the first, I would think that the Charlotte Bureau probably I'm thinking maybe thirty companies where we hired the first African American in history to do that particular kind of work. Then on just getting folks on a job some place, if you add those two together, I'm thinking we probably worked with another probably another, I would say we probably worked with a hundred companies in all during that time. If you also count local government because we worked with the county and park and recreation and the school system and that kind of thing.

Now one of the things that we did we started the first summer job program. You know, you had the riots. At that time there was a catchword called long hot summers because you didn't want the long hot summers because people in Watts and Philadelphia and Detroit, people, Newark, people were literally burning cities down and it happened in the summertime more than in the winter. I mean I don't remember any riots in the winter. People try to stay, if you were in Detroit in the winter, you were trying to stay warm rather than riot. But when the summers came and so one of the sort of the catchwords was, we've got to have something for these kids to do so that we don't have another long hot summer. So we started the first mayor's summer job program in this town. We must've hired, oh we also as part of the Charlotte Bureau, the Charlotte Bureau was a mixture. We had the on-the-job training program. We also had something called the Neighborhood Youth Corps. The Neighborhood Youth Corps was for kids who had dropped out of school. It gave them something to do where they got paid a little stipend, and they had a job, and then we did things like picking up paper, cleaning the park, we would find jobs for these high

school kids who were drop outs, try to get them back in school. If they didn't go back to school, they had to go to classes, and they also did work at the same time. So that was a big part of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Now it also gave us a lot of warm bodies. So we must've had, I don't know, like 200 kids who were Neighborhood Youth Corps kids and so when we got ready to have a march, that was part of their job that day to march with us. So yeah, that was interesting.

EG: But the Neighborhood Youth Corps, that was a War on Poverty initiative right.

JR: Yes, yeah. That's a part of the War on Poverty. Yeah.

EG: And the summer job program, how many youth were employed with that?

JR: Ooh. The first year, I'm thinking the first year, I could tell a lot of stories about that summer employment. The first year we probably had, probably had maybe a hundred and some odd kids. Because what the guy who was the city manager at the time was Bill Veder, Veder, V-E-D-E-R, and he was a good guy. He was, Bill was the kind of guy that if you told him about a problem in city government in terms of discrimination, then it ceased as of the time you told him. I mean, he just did not, so did not play that stuff. So we go over to, Jim and I go over to meet with Veder to have a summer job program. We said, "Look, we're going to have a summer job program. We need the city of Charlotte to hire some kids." He said, "No problem. Come to my manager's meeting, my manager's meeting." This was with park and rec and police department and the fire department, the heads of all of these agencies work under city manager. So we go to the (), and Bill asked us to stand up and talk about what the summer job program was going to be. We said, "Okay we are going to, we've got these kids and we're going to screen them and then you work with them and then we want them to have meaningful jobs. We don't want them just in anything. If the fire department wants them to be doing something meaningful," and blah, blah, blah, blah. So Bill said. "That sounds good. So okay, how many, you know, how many do you guys want. What can you take?" So this guy from park and rec said, "Well, you know we have this policy through the years where we hire these kids and we've always had some colored kids and they—." And what they would do is they'd hire some college kids to go to the parks in African American neighborhoods, but it was rigidly segregated, hire a few black kids for Grier Heights, hire a few black kids for West Charlotte, rigidly segregated. So we already had this policy. So Bill said, "Okay. Fire department, you'll take twenty." He was not listening to that crap. So when he started passing them out, okay, so fire department take twenty.

Police department take twenty. Parks and recreation would take twenty. Whatever. At the end of that summer, the park and rec guy had a party for the kids over there. Oh he put on the dog. He was, see he was not going to do it because in the past the kind of city manager you had would have gone along with the good old boy network kind of stuff. But Veder didn't lay that crap. So Veder said, "Okay I asked you how many you wanted and you came up with this crap. So I'm assigning. You take twenty; you take twenty; and you take twenty kind of thing." That's the kind of guy he was. So we had a really good working relationship with him with the city.

Same thing with the police department. We had a, they'd hired the city of Charlotte had hired a police officer out of California. His name was John Ingersoll, and Ingersoll was the first police chief in Charlotte who was specially trained. Before we'd had for the police chief was some big guy who kicked down doors and probably didn't even have a high school education because police were expected to be southern police kind of thing. So Veder had hired John Ingersoll. Ingersoll was out of police academy in California, some parts of California. He came to Charlotte, and we had a meeting with him. We being a group of so called Negro leaders, had a meeting with him. You have to understand that while Jim Polk and me and some other folks had one idea about the changes that we wanted in society, you have to keep in mind that there were some African Americans who were uneasy with this new freedom and these young kids that were pushing the envelope too fast and so forth. There were some folks who just didn't think, they didn't see anything wrong with segregation. There were some black folks who thought segregation was okay. That was kind of the way it was, and it was frightening to them the pushing we were doing. We just didn't understand what we were doing. So we were sitting there talking to the police chief. We were explaining to him how police officers did not know how to talk, called you "boy" and "niggers" and just didn't know how to talk to you and were discourteous and stop you for foolish reasons. We went on with the litany of wrongs with the Charlotte police department. So this school, high school principal, I think he was a high school. Anyway he was a school principal, he started to, said, "Well things are not as bad as these young guys say. Sometimes they get a little hot and this kind of thing." So he sort of said, "I don't like the kind of talking you're doing because the kind of talk they're doing will get somebody killed. I want the truth so that we can do something." You could've bought this guy [with] a nickel because what he was doing is what we call Uncle Tomming. He was sort of ingratiating himself with this white guy. He

said, "I don't like that kind of treatment because that's dangerous. That's the kind of thing that will get folks killed." So we said to Ingersoll that these police officers don't know how to talk to folks. He said, "You know you guys know how to tell police officers how you want to be talked to. I don't know how to do it. So I'll tell you what, if you all will agree to teach the classes, I will start some classes at Central Piedmont Community College. Every officer on the police force will have to go through these classes if you all will agree to teach them. We have a deal." So of course you have a deal. So Gerald Elston the guy who taught me psychology at Johnson C. Smith, Jim Polk, Fred Ford, a guy who was at WBTV. He was an announcer at WBTV, and a couple of other guys I think Rudy, Rudolph Worsley who was an elementary school teacher at that time. We agreed to teach officers on the police force, we'd take them through some sensitivity training as how to relate to black folk. So every, we had it at the local community college, and two nights a week they'd come, and it'd be maybe twenty-five at a time and we'd do these little skits and that kind of thing.

Let me tell you a quick story. [There] was an officer, he was a major, Major Harkey. So we had, we tried to get them to become sensitive to how riots have gotten started in some other cities where the police had arrested someone who wasn't doing anything. Or he was doing something but the police misinterpreted what the person was doing and arrested them and folk was saying you were arresting an innocent person and the next thing you know, boom. Somebody's buildings are burning. So we tried to get them to understand the concept that we sometimes use in the black community called selling wolf tickets. Remember the story about the boy who cried wolf, and well, okay in the African American community that was sort of turned around.

EG: What was the concept called again?

JR: Selling wolf tickets.

EG: Selling wolf tickets.

JR: Yeah, remember the boy who cried wolf. He, well, let me tell you a little story about the boy who cried wolf. He came running down to the village one day yelling, "Wolf, wolf, wolf, wolf." And everybody dropped what they were doing and ran to see about the wolf. Then the next day he came down and yelled, "Wolf, wolf, wolf," and everybody stopped what they were doing and got their axes to go kill the wolf. When they got up there, he laughed and there was no wolf. So the next time he went up, it was

really a wolf and he yelled, "Wolf, wolf, wolf." And nobody went to see him, and the wolf ate him up. So the moral of the story is don't yell if there's not a wolf there.

Now in the black community we kind of took the story around and blackinized it if you want to use that term and called that selling wolf tickets. In other words you're saying something that isn't really true, and you know it's not true. But it's called selling wolf tickets. So what you would have sometimes is this guy who is talking loud and what we call wolfing, running off at the mouth. But he doesn't really mean any harm. He's just wolfing. I mean, so you've got to understand. So first of all make sure that you assess the situation. Just because the guy has a loud mouth, you can't arrest him because it's not against the law to have a loud mouth. So in a lot of other cities you've arrested some loud mouth guy who is wolfing. The next thing you know all hell is breaking loose. So anyway, Dr. King is assassinated. Bam, Dr. King is assassinated, and the kids from Johnson C. Smith and some of the other high schools started having these marches at night. So about six o'clock, the kids coming down () marching from Johnson C. Smith to downtown Charlotte and back and forth. So Major Harkey was stationed at the--. He'd gone through our classes. So he's stationed at the square. So he said about nine-thirty a [black] guy is going down the street, and he looked at [Harkey] and he said, "Tell Clark I'm going to kick your ass." [The black guy] kept marching down the street. So they went down a couple of blocks, and then this same group of kids said, "Remember at ten o'clock I'm going to kick your ass." [Harkey] said, "Ordinarily I would have arrested this guy but after going through these classes, I thought well, let me just kind of see if this guy is selling wolf tickets." Down the street again, "Remember at ten o'clock I'm going to kick your ass." He said, when ten o'clock came, he was getting nervous because he didn't know what was going to happen. The bus pulled up and somebody raised up the window on the bus and said, "Good night officer," same guy. [Harkey] said, now if I had not been through these classes, I would've arrested that guy for threatening me. But I waited to see if he was selling wolf tickets. Nothing happened. So I want to thank you guys for this class. So that was the kind of, those are the kind of things that--.

See the other thing, Elizabeth to understand, at no point in any of the endeavors that I was involved in with Jim Polk was there hatred. Anger was used, but it was always, the only time that I think that we got () this deal with Eastern Airlines. That was the only time that anger kind of got the best of us. But before that, anger was a part of it, but anger fueled what you were doing, not dictated what you

were doing. It was still on anger, anger not at the person who was doing this stuff but at the system that put the person in the thing that said we can't hire you because you are black. There was a system in place, not the individual, because the individual was just responding to the system of segregation. So our anger was not at individuals. The anger was at the system that was in place. So we were breaking the system. We didn't want to break the individual. I mean, that's not, I mean that's not humane to break individuals. You can point out their foolishness so that you can understand that you understand that what they're doing is defending a system that doesn't make sense. But it was never directed at an individual. So we were able, I never got a death threat. No one ever, I mean it was, why because we came across as genuine. Like Brookshire, Mayor Brookshire said to me one time that you are a responsible militant, one of the nicest things anybody's ever said to me. You are a responsible militant and that was an exact description. I never thought of it that way, but that was an exact description of what we were trying to do. Militant against foolishness, but responsible because we have a society that we have to live in. Once we break the stuff down, we still have to live together. So that was, and that was also the philosophy that Jim sort of drilled into us when he said don't do anything stupid. Fight the system, but don't do anything stupid. So the police department, the fire department, just whatever we had an effect [on] because one, we built credibility. We build credibility, and at no point in this thing did we try to put folks down or to make individuals look bad except when they were defending something that was indefensible. So it was a, it was fun in some ways. It was a lot of fun in some ways. It was very rewarding because you got, I, that was thirty some odd years ago.

I have some folk now who-- [We] put them on the job, and they have retired from those jobs really nice pensions. A guy retired from Sears, and I mean, Sears had a pension plan at one time where you worked at Sears for thirty years, you might have four or five hundred thousand dollars that you, that you walked away with. I kind of, your social security and your retirement kind of stuff. They had some kind of profit sharing deal that was very lucrative for folks who worked at Sears for a long time.

Another friend who worked for Westinghouse, retired from Westinghouse, I can think of. I run into someone every once in a while that says, "You got me a job at the hospital and I retired from the hospital. You don't even remember me do you." I say, "No. Tell me about it and maybe I'll remember it."

I run into some folks that I've gotten a job, and they'd retired from wherever and lived happily ever afterwards, and I don't even remember getting them the job.

EG: Wow. That must be very rewarding.

JR: Oh yeah. Yeah. Very rewarding. Yeah. Now the guy who retired from Sears, we went to junior high school together. He looked European. I mean, he had straight hair and very light skin. He looked, in fact the only way you would think, the only way you would think he was black is if he told you he was black. I mean, when we went to school he just sort of, so we had been trying to get a repair folk at Sears. They just reluctant to (). You were some white lady who had lived out in some nice section of town, and some black guy came by to fix your refrigerator, he had to, see. The guy who was, the guy may have been a chauffeur or the guy may have cooked. He may have had a black cook, a black chauffeur, a black yardman, but you couldn't have a black guy to come in and fix--. The guy go in the refrigerator and get the food out and cook it for you, but he couldn't come out and fix the refrigerator because--. I mean, stupid. But anyway, Sears was just reluctant to hire black guys as appliance repairmen. Ted looked white, but he was black. So the guy called me one day and said, "I need an appliance." "I've got just the guy, just the guy." So I called Ted. "Ted how would you like a good job at Sears." "Doing what?" "Repairing appliances." "When do I start?" "Okay, here's the guy you're going to call" and when Ted walked in, the guy, oh yeah. I've got the best of both. I've got a black guy who looks white (). So everybody lived happily ever after. Ted's still in the appliance repair business. He's been retired from Sears, but he still goes around and, he knows how to do that stuff and so neighbors call him down to fix. So it turned out to be a great job for him.

EG: You said that people like the mayor and other people ended up coming to the employment bureau.

JR: Yeah.

EG: Did like businesses come?

JR: Um hmm, yeah.

EG: That wanted to hire black people?

JR: Yep. In fact some of our staff got hired away from us to businesses because, and one other thing is that if some guy from the Chamber [of Commerce] or some guy from some company would come

in to meet with Jim about something. Jim would have some of us around, and he'd introduce the staff. We'd talk, and the guy would see we were obviously sharp, professional and this kind of thing. He'd say, "Where did you find these guys?" He'd say, "Ross, what were you doing when you came here? I said, "I was working at making golf carts, making a dollar and twenty-five cents an hour." "Fred, what were you doing?" Fred was, Fred went to Talladega in Alabama making, he was working at a Seven-Eleven store. He was a clerk at a Seven-Eleven store. Someone else was menial jobs. The guy said, "You mean to tell me this guy was a--." See again a lot of business folks had no idea of the depth and breadth and stupidity of segregation. They just didn't know how it affected them. "You had two college degrees, and you were making a dollar and twenty-five cents an hour sharp as you are. Why?" "Because guys like you wouldn't hire me that's why." "What do you mean guys like you--. I didn't know anybody like you existed." "That's why you--." And they weren't being facetious. "I didn't know there were guys like--." Jim said, "The town is full of them and that's why you're here." Town is full of them. It's nothing extraordinary about--. Well, there's nothing extraordinary about these guys. There's plenty of guys like this around who are trained and college folk, and they just never got an opportunity, never got a chance up there.

EG: Wow, when did people start coming to you like to hire blacks or whatever?

JR: Probably, let's see, I started in '65. Probably '68, probably three years after I started working there then we started to get folk who were, we had credibility. The word was getting around that these guys deliver, that they can deliver. If you hire somebody and their experiences were good. If you hired somebody from their company, if the guy doesn't show up for work, they'll go pick them [up]. In some cases they'll go pick--. Then the other thing, we helped companies to solve particular kinds of problems. We had a hosiery company—

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

EG: Oh I was asking you, you said it was about 1968 that ()—

JR: Yeah. Yeah.

EG: What did you attribute that to? You said the—

JR: Credibility, we had built credibility, and we were starting to get a reputation around town that the people we were recommending, because again keep in mind we had the cream of the crop because it

was just all kinds of jobs that blacks were shut out of. So you had folk who had to work, and so they would take a job. Like I'm building golf carts and sail boats, not because I wanted to, but because I had a family to feed. So I had to take a job. Well, I had two college degrees, and I'm working in some menial job. So when something came open, so you could come and pick a guy with two college degrees rather than one. Okay, so we might have a guy who is driving a bread truck who's a college degree. Well, driving a bread truck was a lot better than what he was doing before then. So we were, in fact we were probably placing a lot of folk in job that they were overly qualified for. So the companies were getting, I mean oh, they were stealing is what they were doing. So the word got out that, if you go to these guys, you can get a good employee, and you can, I don't think anybody would've said, they're probably overly qualified, but you would get good employees. So we got folks who were starting to call us and said, do you have—that's how this thing with Sears. A guy called me and said, do you have somebody that--.

EG: It ended, when did it end?

JR: Okay, it ended, Jim, not ended. Remember we started a summer jobs program.

EG: Yeah.

JR: We had a couple of friends who had helped us. It was a couple of young insurance executives, a guy named Robert Gilley and Reitzel Snider were both hotshot insurance salesmen. They were part of the Charlotte Jaycees, Junior--. We used to have something called the Jaycees, Junior Chamber of Commerce. In Charlotte the Junior Chamber of Commerce was one of the vehicles where up and coming young European American males--. That's how you sort of plugged into, it was part of your, it was one of the stepping stones. So if you were a young white guy who was on their way up, you became a member of the Jaycees, and you were introduced to the power structure and you were, blah, blah, blah, blah. Bob and Reitzel were members of the Jaycees, and part of what they were to do as Jaycees where you, one of the things that you did if you were a hotshot, you became one of the outstanding young men of the year. That was kind of the epitome of the Jaycees. In order for you to become one of the outstanding young men of the year, you had to do all this civic stuff. So we were a civic project for them. We being the Charlotte Bureau became a civic project for Bob and Reitzel. So they came over, and they helped us to start the first summer jobs program. They kind of liked the way we did business. They saw something in, and so they said, "Look, you guys, we want you guys to go out to Texas with us." This company sells

motivational, motivation equipment, and one of the dilemmas that we ran into when we first started this organization we were placing the cream of the crop. After we'd been doing this for about four years, it was no longer the cream of the crop. We were getting down to just ordinary folk who we were trying to place. Sometimes we'd hustle and get somebody to hire a person. They'd work for three days and wouldn't show up again. So we started running into what we called motivational problems. How do we get these folk to work? So we talked them about motivation. Said, "Look, we have, there's a company out of Waco, Texas called Success Motivation Institute. They'll come up with some ways of doing motivation. Why don't you guys go out and talk to them? See if they have some stuff that maybe you can use to motivate these folks that you all are working with."

So we, this is 1968. So we fly to Texas and meet with this company called Success Motivation Institute. Jim, me, Jim, Reitzel and Gilley fly to Texas. The guy who owns the company is so taken with us until he makes us an offer that we couldn't refuse. He said, "Why don't you guys come to work for us and develop some programs to work with the kind of people you're talking about?" So we looked at each other. Jim and I looked at each other. I was making probably \$8,000 a year, and Jim was probably making twelve, and this guy is talking like tripling our salary. He made us an offer we couldn't refuse. So we left the Charlotte Bureau and moved to Texas.

EG: Wow.

JR: So that was the end of the Charlotte Bureau for us. It wasn't the end of the Charlotte Bureau, but that was our, end of our connection with the Charlotte Bureau. 1968 was our last year with the Bureau. Then when we left town, the Bureau merged with an organization out of Philadelphia called the Opportunities Industrialization Center. It was started by Dr. Leon Sullivan. He was doing something similar to what we were doing in Charlotte. It started in a church in Philadelphia. His was more training rather than just place folks in jobs. Opportunities Industrialization Centers, they created these centers where they brought people in and trained them before they went to a job. It was a variation on the theme of doing that. So the OIC and the Charlotte Bureau merged, and I think they lasted for maybe a couple of years after that, and it just, it just phew, I mean it disappeared. I think the death knell was when Jim and I left. That was it. Jim was the, how to put this, was the--. It was his idea. The Bureau was his idea, and when I came along I was able to, at that time I was Jim's assistant director. I was deputy director for the

organization. I was the person who was able to put the idea into action, to make it, I'm not saying I in the sense that I was the only one. I'm just saying that we were the clog that made the thing work. When we left, it just sort of, we took a certain kind of energy, certain kind of connections. Jim had the connections in town, and it was a different organization when we left. It did okay for maybe another few, maybe another year, and then it just, gone.

EG: When you were there, you were saying there was the, I'm trying to get a sense of the people who worked there when you were there. You said there was a () who was also a job developer like you.

JR: Right. Yeah.

EG: Then there was the blonde who was like a secretary. Another black woman who was like—

JR: Receptionist. Yeah.

EG: Was there anyone else too?

JR: Oh yeah, the staff, how many people on the staff? Probably was, at some point there may have been twenty-five people on the staff.

EG: Really. That big.

JR: It was a big organization. I mean big in the sense that we had, we had-- I can remember, we had the on-the-job training and I think let's see it was Ollie, Fred, and Floyd and another guy. There were like five people on the OJT staff and Dick. Fred, Ollie, Dick, and then this other guy's name. There must've been five people on the OJT staff. Then the administrative staff of the organization. Jim was the executive director. I was the deputy director. Ben was the controller. Marlene was Jim's secretary. I didn't have a secretary. Marlene was the secretary for me and Jim. That was five, and then the job developer was Alexis and Jack and maybe Bruce. That would've been eight. Then we had the Neighborhood Youth Corps. So Pat was the director. Harold was assistant director. Then you had probably six or eight counselors. You had a bus driver. So we probably had thirty people on staff at one time. So the OJT had a staff. The Charlotte Bureau, we were sort of the administrative arm. Then we had these other, then we had under that you had all these other, the OJT and must've been some other because Ada and, who did they work for. They did something, yeah. So it was a, I would need a flow-chart, but we had administrative staff, and then we had probably I'm thinking maybe four separate entities under that.

The on-the-job training, the Neighborhood Youth Corps and some other things I don't remember the title of.

EG: What was the black/white breakdown with staff?

JR: Probably () Pat who was director of the Youth Corps was a white female. Floyd who was director of the OJT was a white male. They both had integrated staffs. I'm thinking if we had thirty people, it was probably twenty-ten. Something like that, twenty blacks and ten white.

EG: The Mayor's [summer] job program, was that in like '65 and '68.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: Was that for just black youth or—

JR: No, anyone.

EG: Anyone. Okay. Yeah. I wanted to ask you too about-- Shifting gears a little bit. You, I know also have been involved with politics.

JR: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

EG: Something that was kind of unique I picked up from talking to Joe and Sarah from their informational interview of you was how because you identify with the Republican Party and have for some time. Right.

JR: Yeah.

EG: But did you start out being a Democrat or—

JR: No. Republican.

EG: Republican, okay.

JR: And I'll tell you the story. I went to a, I guess I was at Carver at the time and went to a youth leadership conference. I don't remember where and who the guy was. But this guy, European American guy who said to us that the one of the real problems-- If you want to change--this would've been in '50s-- if you really want to change Jim Crow and segregation and all in North Carolina you've got to have two parties because the Democratic Party is the party of segregation. And as long as there's one party there is no threat to them; so they don't have to do anything. So if I was a young black now there would be no way I'd become a Democrat. I'd become a Republican and if we ever get two parties, now () it didn't turn out that way. But anyway if you ever get two parties, then at least you can make the parties fight

against each other. So I went straight and registered as a Republican. The first people I voted for was Nixon and Eisenhower. I mean, these are just names for you. But Eisenhower was president and Nixon was vice president. So that was the first, I registered as a Republican. Now when John Kennedy became president, I switched from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party because I liked Kennedy. I thought he was very different kind of, very different kind of politician. So I switched party and ran for the state house the first time in 1970 I guess it was. We had just gotten back from Texas. We moved, we went out to Texas in '68, and we moved back to Charlotte in '70. We were having lunch one day, and this preacher walked up to the table where Jim and I were eating lunch. He said, "You guys should've never come back to Charlotte." He said, "Because when you left here, you lost all your power. I don't know why you came back to Charlotte because you no longer have any power." Well, I can't imagine anybody making a more asinine statement than that. I mean, that's just, I had first of all we had no idea what he was talking about. What do you mean power?

EG: This was a black minister.

JR: Yeah, black minister. He was serious. So I said, "Jim we've got to make a statement. I mean this guy is crazy but we still have to make—I don't know how many other people believe it, but we've got to make a statement. I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to run for state house to make a statement." So I went out and filed for state house. At that time you didn't have district races like you have now. You had at large. The top, I think you had what, seven or eight members of the North Carolina for the house. So the top seven voters got elected, and then everybody else went home. So I made it through the primary. I was the first African American to make it through a countywide primary. So I got nominated, but I came in eight out of, there were twelve people running I think. I finished—

EG: Just one under.

JR: One under. I was like 800 votes short.

EG: This was running a non-partisan election or—

JR: I was running as a Democrat.

EG: Oh as a Democrat.

JR: See, after I switched parties I was running as a Democrat. Yeah, I was running as a Democrat. We shook up the () because I was naïve. I had no idea what I was doing. I justified it that

okay, we've got to make a statement. One way to make a statement, I'm going to run for public office. So I had no idea what I was doing, no political training other than voter registration and that kind of stuff. I've been involved in politics helping something but not as an office holder. So I opened a campaign office right downtown. The Democratic Party didn't know what to do with that because they had a campaign headquarters downtown, but I didn't know that they had a [headquarters?], I didn't, I didn't open the headquarters as a protest. I didn't know any better. So I just thought if you ran a campaign, you were supposed to have a headquarters. So I opened the headquarters, and young blacks were, had never been involved in politics in the sense that there was somebody that they could work for. So I mean my headquarters was full of folks day and night because they were so excited about, because I was young at the time. The fact that, the elected officials, black elected officials in town at that time had been--. One of two were old guys who these young folks just couldn't relate to. I was close to their age, and so these high school kids and college kids were just flocking to my campaign. It was a lot of excitement. Then I know how to talk, and I had the reputation about the jobs thing, and I already had this reputation of being a militant. I had an Afro, and so the campaign was a lot of excitement during the campaign. The Democrats didn't know what to do with that because I opened this campaign headquarters and they said, well, is he a Democrat. If he's a Democrat, why is he opening a separate headquarters. I don't, anyway—

EG: Was it still like a white organization at the time?

JR: The Democratic Party.

EG: Yeah.

JR: For all practical purposes yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was, you had blacks who were Democrats, but they weren't any Democratic in the Democratic Party, there were no black officers or I mean you would have second vice president Democratic but no. You had some precinct chairs, but they were precinct chairs in African American communities, and the, one of the things that we had to fight against was the bag. At that time what white politicians did, on election day they'd come around with this bag of money and these preachers and ward healers and other slicksters would tell them they could deliver the black vote. So they'd get three or four hundred dollars to deliver the black vote. We were tired of that stuff because what would happen is that you'd go to this guy and say, "Look, we want some streetlights over here." Okay the guy said, "What do you mean streetlights?" Said, "Well we want some streetlights." "Go talk to Reverend

so and so. I paid him off. You can't have the bag and the streetlights." They didn't use those terms, but the implication was you can't have streetlights and take payoff on Election Day. So we started a campaign against these, a lot of them were preachers because they had little stand[ing] in the community. We started a campaign, look, no more bags. We've got to get rid of the bags. So we said to these white politicians, no more bags. First of all these guys can't deliver the vote in the first place. How do you know, the only thing you know is you've got a certain number of votes. Who, how do you know this guy delivered the vote. There is no way you can do this. Nobody had ever talked to these guys about this stuff. So we started pushing these white Democratic politicians to stop giving money in the black community on election day. Then we got to these guys who were taking the money and said, "Look, you've got to stop doing this." So that was a little fight but all of these kind of little behind the scenes or under the table, behind the door fights that we were involved in, and we were Jim and our group, Jim's group was one of the first to challenge this kind of foolishness.

So again it wasn't just jobs. It was the whole notion. So you asked about did we do things other than jobs. It wasn't just jobs. It was challenging foolishness wherever you found it, whether it was in the black community taking the bags on election day, or whether it was in the white community giving the bags on election day. That's wrong. So let's stop doing this. So we were able to, we were able to change that.

EG: So you were successful in getting the, as much as you could tell the bags stopped.

JR: Yeah, the bags stopped, yeah.

EG: ()

JR: Then so we, now we negotiate, we give you a vote, we get something in return. What do we get in return. Well, it may be streetlights, could be jobs, the spoils of politics. So yeah, that was, that turned out to be really well. Now you have folks who were elected now who have no idea about these kind of changes. I mean, that's okay. They didn't understand. Then I switch back to Republican Party when Jim Martin got elected governor of North Carolina.

We had met Jim when he was a professor at Davidson. He kind of liked the way we did business, and then when he became a congressman, he stayed in touch with us through the years, and then when he became governor, he asked Jim and I and some other guys to come to work in his administration. So he never said we had to switch. Jim was a Democrat all the time, but he never said anything about, I mean

that wasn't important to Jim Martin. He just liked the way we did business. So he wanted us in his administration. So I switched back to the Republican Party, and then Jim switched to the Republican Party, but my--.

It's interesting. There are some folks who still don't understand why I'm a Republican. They just, I had a guy to tell me, a Korean guy to tell me there's no such thing as a black conservative. I said, well, anyway, you wouldn't understand. But my argument to folk is that if I'm, if I go into the bank and there are two lines, this line has three people in it and this line has fifty-six folks in it, and they're both cashing checks up there, which line am I going to get in. I'm going to get in the line with fifty-six folks. I'm going to get in the line with three in it. I get in the line with three. Okay, that's what I think about the Republican Party. I still think that we ought to have a two party--. In fact I'd like to see us have a three party system now. I'd like for us, I wish we had a party other than the Democrats and Republicans because there is, political parties now really there's not, the Democrats and Republicans, it's not that different in terms of the party. They both waste taxpayers money, and they both do crazy things, and there's no, it's not that real difference that the Republican Party is conservative and Democratic Party is liberal. That's, those are just words. It would really be nice if we did have a some sort of plurality system where you, like in England or some other places where you have, you've got to put together a coalition in order to govern. Like they do in Israel and a bunch of other places. I'd like to see something like that because what we've done in Mecklenburg County, we've, not just in Mecklenburg County, but in the last, in this past election, we had three point eight percent of the—

EG: Yeah, Tawana Wilson-Allen brought that up to me.

JR: Three point eight percent of the folks in this town who were eligible to vote voted. Why? Because no competition for one thing. So we have district representation and district representation is fine. But here's how we divide it up. We say we have Democratic districts. We have Republican districts. We have black districts. Well, black districts turn out to be Democratic districts. No black Republican has ever been elected to any office in Mecklenburg County. So it turns out to be the Democratic Party gets to make a double dip. They dip in what are called the black precincts. Then in the Democratic precincts so we have--. So if you live in certain sections of southeast Charlotte and if you're a Democrat, you have no voice. In the, on this side of town being a black Republican or not being a black, just being a Republican,

this side of town they have no voice. I mean there is no way. I ran for public office three different times. I ran for the senate. I ran for the city council at large, and I ran for the state house twice. The time I ran for the state house I was a Democrat, and you had at large elections which if you're African American, you're automatically out because you couldn't get, just couldn't get whites in numbers to vote for you. In the other two elections I was running, I ran as a Republican. But in a Democratic district there was just no way I'm going to get elected. I knew that when I ran but again I ran in one case for the senate because the guy had stepped down and the seat was empty. So the Democratic Party had annointed this guy. So in America you don't annoint to them. You don't pat somebody on the head and say this is your seat. No, this seat belongs to the folks. So you're going to have to, you're going to have to work. So I made him work, but I knew I couldn't beat the guy. But I made him work. He just couldn't, he wasn't appointed to the seat. He had to go out and work. I made him work, yeah.

EG: In the spirit of having two-party South, more of a democracy, democratic system.

JR: Yeah, but it was more philosophical position than it was practical. Now that does not mean now that it was a complete waste of time because when Jim Martin was the governor of North Carolina, he was the second Republican governor in this state. Jim Holshouser was the first one. Holshouser was a good guy but he was not a Jim Martin. Jim Martin hired more African Americans in his first year as governor than all of the other governors in North Carolina in the history of this state. Jim Polk was his administrative, Jim Polk's office was next door to Jim Martin's office. He was the assistant to the governor. I was Director of Employment Training for the State of North Carolina. That was the first job I had. He just had all, he hired more women in important positions and more minorities in important positions than all of the governors combined. So there was some, there was some practical benefit from us being Republican.

Let me tell you another little story about how blind folk can be. We had a, there was a statewide organization called the African American Leadership Coalition or some thing like this. We were the first year when we got down with Martin, with the Martin administration had a meeting over in, a statewide meeting in Winston-Salem. So we get in there. Nineteen top-level senior executives from the Martin administration showed up at this meeting. Now in the, in Jim Hunt's administration, Hunt may have had three. Nineteen from Martin shows up. Nineteen top executives. These were people like assistant

secretary of Department of Transportation, director of employment training, special assistant to the governor, assistant director in Department of Commerce. These were top level men and women, top level folk from around the state. The guy who was introducing, who was the moderator for the statewide leadership conference introduced all of the Democrats, introduced two summer interns, never introduced any of the nineteen top executives—now we're all black. Everybody in the room is black, but we're Republicans. So if you're a black Republican, you don't even exist. He never introduced us, and it was so obvious that this guy who was a Democrat got up and said, "I can't believe what just happened." People, "What do you mean what happened?" "I just can't believe what just happened. You introduced all of these black democrats, two summer interns and then nineteen senior executives from the Martin administration who are Republican." Now all of us weren't Republican because it didn't matter to Jim Martin whether you were a Republican or a Democrat. I mean, he just didn't care about that stuff. He didn't introduce (). I'm ashamed that you would do that. (). The guy who did that knew exactly what he was doing.

So you still get this funny business about being a black Republican. You still get, but again that's a game that Jim and I love to play. We love to play, you attack foolishness. You attack foolishness. So you attack foolishness. Not out of animosity but to make people think. To make people think because that's what it's about. It's about attacking foolishness. I mean if you just let foolishness go by then foolishness soon becomes the order of the day. But if you attack foolishness, it'll just, it'll leave. It's like four years on the, I mean people, now I'm sure there is job discrimination in Charlotte. I'm sure there must be somebody who looks at the color of your skin or whether you're female when you get hired to the job. I'm not crazy. But it's not the order of the day. I mean, it's not the, there has to be some individuals, not to () there is some individual that has some hang up that needs to go to some place and pray a lot of or whatever you do when you're like that. But so you challenge that stuff, and so you same thing in politics. You challenge that foolishness with the bag and the same thing in blind black folks. You challenge them. This book I wrote, I mean, that's a lot of what that book was about. It's again, it's not just challenging, but it's giving, okay, instead of doing that, do this. Instead of segregating, let's do this. Instead of cutting people out of jobs, let's give you some, I mean, let's negotiate. That's what sensible people do. They negotiate.

EG: Did you see your political work, running for office, as like part of the civil rights movement or an extension of it or something different?

JR: See civil rights to me is a little bit too narrow for what I was doing. Because I think of the civil rights thing as a particular thing in time. Now this is just my definition. I think of the civil rights movement as the, from the sit-ins until Dr. King was assassinated. That was, what was happening at that time was called civil rights. There was some stuff that was happening before then; there was some stuff that happened after then. There was some stuff that happened while it was going on that I would not refer to. I called it freedom rather than civil rights. In my mind I always made a distinction. I always saw civil rights as a particular approach that happened in a span of time. But my thing has always been about freedom. So even before the sit-ins, I was, the sit-ins was just a vehicle for freedom. It was new, and it was a vehicle, but freedom had always been a part of--.

See I went in the Air Force in 1950—January of 1954. The military had started making some strides in terms of change. The military led the nation in terms of change. It wasn't the churches. It wasn't the Harvard and Yale and the schools. It was the military that made the real practical changes. So I, the military was the first time I'd lived in an integrated society, when I went into the Air Force. I was able to I mean I had, I grew up in Charlotte and I was able to, I lived in a, it wasn't like I didn't know white people. But I had never been in situations where there was a level ground. So when we had to learn to march, you had folks from all over the country, different ethnic groups and none of us knew how to march. So we, I mean you got a chance to see Mexican guys and Puerto Rican guys and African American guys and European American guys, some couldn't march. Some couldn't read. Some couldn't do this, and so first time I got a chance to just see people in a level playing field, and some guys were here and some guys were there. Before then I had been taught, didn't believe it, but had at least implied that there were some folks who were smarter than others because of the color of their skin. I didn't, I never believed that crap, but I, it was (), but I never had a chance to compete with folk on an equal basis. So I did. So I'm saying all of that to say that the civil rights thing to me was a particular event that happened in a span of time. But to me all along freedom has been a part of what I was pushing and fighting for all along, yeah.

EG: Let me go (), they don't say civil rights movement. They say black freedom struggle. But sometimes, sometimes they use it interchangeably with civil rights movement. There's one

historian John Ditmer he likes the idea of yeah like what you were saying, considering just a specific period of time and a narrow time the civil rights movement, recognizing the black freedom struggle has been ongoing.

JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So I'm still, I'm still involved in that, but it's different. It's different now. It's different now in the sense that you have to, I started saying, you have to fight black folk, but it's not fighting black folk. It's, there are some people who hold onto old habits, and it doesn't make any difference about color of their skin. So now I'm saying now, but that was also true then. For instance I'm, to promote my book I've been attending some book clubs. There's one book club I've been going to at a large church here. The majority of the folk in the book club are professional women, Ph.Ds and professional jobs and I never, such prejudice. It's hard for me to believe in 2006. In fact at that last meeting I said to them, "I just can't believe that in 2006 you guys are sitting here talking like that." [These black women say], "They do this and white folks do this and you know white folks don't do this and white folks--." I'm saying, "What are you guys talking about? I mean do you hear what you're, do you hear what you're saying?" So I just, I just, I just can't stomach the thought that we talk about something called white folks as if they are some kind of different species of something. See, I just—

EG: These are black women.

JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Not just black women--these are Ph.Ds. These are professional folks who work (). There is not a one of the folk in there who work in some kind of separate society where they're not, they don't have interaction with I don't even like to use the word white but with European Americans on a regular basis in terms of friendships, in terms of working together. I mean these are not folks who grew up in some kind of apartheid system. But they still holding onto [what] I call foolishness. "They and well you know white folks, and you know white folks." Then you fill in the blank. "Well, you know, those white folks, the Duke thing". They've already decided that the [lacrosse players are guilty.] How do you know they are guilty. You looked at what. Or how do we know there's not a Tawana Brawley. How do you know that it's not? So you won't know until the verdict is in. If I don't know, you probably won't ever know the truth because now it's just, it's part of the criminal justice thing so the one is over here. So you never say we want the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Well, that's a bunch of crap. Nobody wants the whole truth. I only want that part of the truth that gets my client out of trouble, and I only want

that part of the truth that gets you in jail kind of thing. So we tell, so, but the point I'm making is that I just find it appalling that in 2006 these so-called educated, so-called professionals, so-called are still holding onto 1956, 1946 or 1936 kind of ideas about white people.

First of all as far as I'm concerned there's no such thing as white people. You have Europeans, you have Africans, you have Asians. But there is no such thing as white people. No such thing as black people. Those are some abstractions that we use as a kind of shorthand. You understand as an abstraction, that's fine but if you don't then that's, so well you know they, what do you mean "they"? "Well, you know at Duke, those white boys are privileged." What do you know about those white boys at Duke? What do you know about those white--. See, as long as I can use "those white boys at Duke," then I can ascribe to them any kind of foolishness that I want to. Those white boys at Duke, now that's a shorthand for you understand that they are rich. All the white boys at Duke are rich. They're all spoiled. They're--. That's just--.

That's but that's the kind of society we live in, and again, in the book that I've written, [I've got] one whole chapter in there [about] this myth about race--that there's no such thing as "races." Again I want to create dialogue to get us to begin to discuss. Now my book will be discussed at this book club and I look forward to the day that we go and we talk about this kind of thing. Because again it's like when I went into this guy's office, and he started this foolishness about we can't hire any black folks down there because all the white folks will walk off and leave. That was foolishness. So I said to this lady who was sitting next to me at the last book club meeting. I said first of all there's no such thing as race. I mean if I had said to her, that George Bush is not the president of the United States, it's really Condoleezza Rice. You probably, I mean she--. I had to scrape her off the ceiling. "What do you mean there is no such thing as race?" Yeah.

EG: What do think of, this kind of came to my mind, affirmative action policies?

JR: I have okay, I have to put this into perspective. When affirmative action began under this, the law says, EEO, I can remember when they first published those little pamphlets that had to be posted in every office. You had to put up a sign in there that we are an equal opportunity employer. So what these companies would do, they'd put up the sign and then that was it. They just put up a sign saying we're an equal opportunity employer. Then the federal government said, it's not enough for you to just put up a sign. You have to take affirmative action. Affirmative action means that you have to interview some black

folks. You have to hire some. So that's an affirmative, you can't just, you can't be neutral. See what they said. So I put up the sign. Put it in the back room where nobody could see it, and no blacks never applied. Well, and we said to them, I mean blacks have been walking by this company for fifty years. They know that you're not hiring any black folks. If you put up a sign in the bathroom, how are blacks to know? So the federal government said, okay that's not enough to just put up a sign. You have to take an affirmative action. So that's where the word affirmative action came from. Now I had no quarrel with that. You have to make sure that black folks know that you hire, that you at least interview and hiring black folks. That's affirmative action. Then that got translated into not only do you have to make sure, but then all this other stuff. You've got to have a certain number. Well, suppose I hire one. Is that affirmative action? No, well, how many do I have to hire? Well, quotas. You've got to have ten percent of your workforce. So it kept, it kept, you see that there are some things that doesn't make sense that can't be—. For instance, integration never made sense because nobody can define it. Integration, now I'm getting back to this affirmative action. Integration, how many folks, how many kids does it take to integrate a classroom? One, it's integrated. We had ninety-four white kids and one black kid. The classroom's integrated. They said, no, that's not enough. It's tokenism. All right. Then the question, how many do we have to have. See instead of saying, why don't we just stop this foolishness and go ahead and do some thing that makes sense, we started asking well, how many does it take. Like how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. How many and so how many is enough. So said, okay. Here's enough. Whatever the percentage of African American population is, then that's the percentage in the classroom. So if it's thirty percent black population then thirty percent of the kids in the school have to be—. That's not the answer or anything. That just is an answer, but it's not an answer to anything. Okay, same thing happened with affirmative action. We kept asking instead of doing what was right, we kept playing games with this thing, and so you make, you define something that is not definable. Doing right is we'll know right when we see it if we begin to do right. So it's not a number. It is an attitude. You might have a situation where there are no blacks, and it's okay. You may have another situation where it's all black and it's okay. So it's not definable in that way, but it has to do with trust and integrity and honesty rather than a number. So to me what affirmative just ended up being [was] numbers. For instance Bill Cosby's son is treated as if he is needy. So you said to this—. You apply to a college, and you say well, if you're black then you

automatically get this kind of thing. And it didn't make any difference whether you were Bill Cosby's son or my son. You were treated as poor, that kind of thing. So I'm anti-affirmative action now. Am I pro-segregation? Of course not. I'm saying that affirmative action had a place, just like civil rights had a--. It was a specific kind of narrow thing that helped a lot of folk to do something, but there is, it ended at some point, *Bakke versus* the thing. As far as I'm concerned that was the end of it. So but what do we do next. Instead of fighting to keep affirmative action, what's the next step beyond affirmative action. See, so you don't, I mean when you get to the top of a ladder, you don't just stand there. You step onto the--. Why did you get the ladder? To get to where? Okay, so when you get to the top of the ladder, you use the ladder to get to the roof. Well, when you get to the roof, you step off the ladder. So when we got to where affirmative action took us to a certain point, now what's the next step? See, folks don't want to talk about the next step. They want to defend what we, well, I know I've got affirmative action. But affirmative action was a rut. Okay, we were in a rut because we're being attacked because it was being silly. It got to a point where it was silly. The Bakke case in California, that was the case of silliness. This white guy can't get in because he's white. So yeah, I'm definitely anti-affirmative action.

EG: What do you think is the next step or next step beyond affirmative action?

JR: Okay, you have to, and I said this to those women in that class. See at some point you have to declare your own freedom. No emancipation proclamation makes you free. No forty acres and a mule makes you free. No reparation makes you free. You become free when you declare that for yourself. This is nothing new. Muhammad Ali did it. Jack Johnson did it. I mean, () there have been cases after cases of folks who at some point said I'm free. I did it. One day I woke up and decided this is America and I'm free. Now, nothing happened except I'm free. Okay. So the minute you find that you're free then all kinds of opportunities open up for you, but if you think that somebody has to pass some kind of a law to make you free, then you will be unfree, whatever that means, forever. So the next step is that anybody who sees themselves as needing things like affirmative action and that kind of thing, my problem, my thing with them is you will be forever enslaved because you're looking outside of yourself for something that is inside. See but those ladies sitting in that room talking about white people as if part of the problems that they have in life is that these privileged white folks stop me from doing certain things. That's, that's, that's a kind of self-imposed slavery. It's self-imposed. Self-imposed. "Well, Ross I'm just not where you are."

I know that. That's why I'm sitting here telling you that when are you going to declare your freedom. So freedom now is not doing the civil rights thing. That was a kind of collective freedom. Okay, that was a kind of collective push for freedom. The black power thing, that was again, these were expressions of freedom. But when it all boils down, freedom is an individual thing. Now I understand that you can have laws that stop folks from doing things. You can have laws that say you can't marry this guy. You can have all these laws and this kind of thing. What I'm saying is that when you declare that you are free, at that moment life changes for you. Barriers that you, things that you used to see as barriers are just no longer barriers anymore because why? Because in the first place they only existed in your mind one level in the first place.

See there have always been Africans that didn't do the segregation game. I can remember from my own experience that okay, I recognize the fact that there is something called segregation. I will play the game up to a point. Past that point, no. Past that point, I have dignity as a human being, and you can't do certain things to me. You can have two water fountains, and I drink out of the water fountain that's labeled colored. But there are certain things that you cannot do to me. I remember going to visit my grandmother one summer. We went into that little pharmacy there in Matthews. My grandmother lived in Matthews. She said you want some ice cream. I said, yeah. So I go and I ordered. I said I want some vanilla ice cream. Don't you want chocolate?

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

EG: Okay.

JR: So my grandmother said to me, "Shut up boy." But the guy gave me the vanilla ice cream. So when we got, when we walked out of the little pharmacy, my grandmother said to me, "You told that cracker heh," and she made this little--. See there's a little sound that African American women like my grandmother made. There's a little sound that she made and what the sound was, she said, "You told that cracker didn't you heh, heh, heh." She didn't laugh. That was, now what the sound meant was what you did was okay but you have to be careful because Matthews was a little country town, and I was from Charlotte. Emmett Till, that's what happened to Emmett Till. I didn't whistle at somebody but I was, I sassed the white man. She said, it was okay what you did but the reason she said shut up boy was to keep

this guy from taking it to the next stage. But when we got out, she said to me in no uncertain terms, in the front of my book in the introduction to my book I said that my grandmother gave me courage. So what she said to me was what you did was right because all you did was ask for some ice cream. He had no right to say that black folks should order chocolate ice cream, and that was a put down for you. So what you did was right. But you still have to be careful. This is Matthews, and you could and this could be dangerous. But what you did was right. What you did was right. So see these are the kind of little lessons that I got through life why at some point I said, hey, I'm free.

EG: When was that that you—

JR: 19, I could've, I was less than ten years old.

EG: Huh. That's interesting.

JR: I was less than ten years old.

EG: This was back in the '40s.

JR: Yeah, back in the '40s, yeah. Early '40s. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But my grandmother did not allow me to be intimidated by—

EG: Was this your maternal grandmother.

JR: Yeah, my mother's mother. Mama Liza. Yeah, she did not allow me to be intimidated by that foolishness.

EG: () another question about employment integration. The people that you placed in these jobs, I know you followed them and their performance. Did you also follow them to see how they were being treated?

JR: Oh yeah.

EG: By the ()

JR: We made it very clear to them if some funny business starts, whatever, you don't quit the job. Come back and talk. If somebody, whatever, whatever you do, don't walk off because that would happen a lot of times. I remember the guy called me, the guy who [drove the] Merita Bread Truck. He was delivering for Merita bread. He goes into this little store out on, kind of in the rural, outside the city limits. It's one of those little stores out there. The guy, he's delivering the bread. The guy said I don't want a nigger, we don't want bread delivered by a nigger. So he called me and said, "Mr. Ross, I'm getting ready

to quit." I said, "Well, what do you mean quit?" He said, "I went out to a, I went out"--he named the little store—"I went out and they said they didn't want bread delivered by a nigger so if I can't deliver the bread then, I'll just quit." I said, "No, have you talked with the guy at the, have you talked with your supervisor?" "No, I haven't talked to him. I want to quit." I said, "Well, go talk to him first." So he said, "Oh Quillie, the guy was Quillie Smith." He said, "Quillie, if the guy don't want our bread, the hell with him. We don't have to deliver him any bread. Merita doesn't, we don't, if that's the way he feels, we don't want to sell him any bread anyway. So don't worry about it." So that was kind of, that was the kind of thing. So we said, look if something happens, come back and come back and talk to us. Yeah.

EG: How often did that happen? Was it regular that people would come back and talk to you about these certain things?

JR: I would think it was, I can't think of any other incident that was dramatic as that. Most of the time they would kind of live happily ever after kind of thing because again, these folk end up with a good employee, a good employee, and so it would go on. So that was it was not something that happened very often. Oh I started to tell the story way back about motivation.

EG: Yeah.

JR: The knitting mill, and these folk were on production. They got paid, so this one, they had a couple of ladies. I know this one lady, she would only work three days a week because she could, she was so fast that she could, she could make enough stockings Monday through Wednesday to make as much money as the rest of the folks in the thing. So she didn't work on Friday and Saturday. So the guy said, She--. Asked us to come out and talk. Frances is our, I don't know what her name was, Frances is our best employee.

EG: This is a black woman.

JR: Yes, our best employee. She will only work three days a week. She makes enough in three, she makes the same amount of money in three days that these other women working five. She's our best employee. How can we get her to work the rest of the week? You've got to, you've got to get Frances in debt. You've got to help Frances get a car, buy a house or something because Frances is, I mean. You've got to keep in mind that Frances does not want to separate herself from the other workforce because there will be pressure on her if she separates herself in some way. If she starts to make twice as much money as

the other folk here, then that sets her aside from the other folk. A lot of folks are just not comfortable with that. So you've got to, best we can tell you to do is maybe to help Frances to buy, talk to Frances about buying a house or getting a nicer car or getting a car. Then she'll have to pay for it.

This was another phenomenon that we found. For instance, I remember a guy from a construction company calling in and saying Ross we need to hire a foreman. We have some guys who've been working with us for twenty years and know the job and can be a foreman, but they will not take a job as a foreman. We cannot, we have tried, we have offered this job to five different people. None of them will take this job. Now why didn't they want to be a foreman? Because if you're a foreman, you are neither fish nor fowl. You're not part of the regular crew that's predominantly black. You're not part of the administration, which is predominantly white. You are neither fish nor fowl. So the guys just didn't want to take that thing. So I ended up getting Jim's brother a job that he retired from with construction company because none of the guys on the job would take a job as a foreman.

EG: Black?

JR: None of the black guys would take the job as foreman. So I talked to Leroy, "Ray Construction Company is looking for a foreman. Would you be interested?" "Darned tooting I'd be interested." So he retired from Ray happily ever after. He put in at Ray I guess thirty years retired because he took the job again, he was Jim's brother, and it didn't, he didn't have the hang up being neither fish nor fowl. I got a good job, and he's the kind of guy that can relate to--. So he had a wonderful relationship with the guys on the job. He had a wonderful relationship with guys because that was the kind of person he is. In fact I knew that when I asked him about the job that he was the kind of person that could relate to the administrative folks. He was a foreman and the foremen wear white shirts and the regular labor wear blue shirts. So he wore a white shirt. That was no big deal with him. Whereas with some of the other guys--. [They] just weren't comfortable with that separation because it put them in a what they felt was an untenable position that--. Because some of the guys would say, we will recruit from the ranks. Okay, you're white now. You're wearing a white shirt, you think you're white. That would've been one of the criticisms of the guy or you would've had to fire some guy who you'd been working beside for twenty years--if he didn't do his job, he came in late and that kind of thing. So they just didn't want that responsibility. So that was also another little thing that we had to negotiate a lot of times was how do you

get, we want to promote from within. How do we get these guys to take on that responsibility? That was the problem yeah.

EG: I wanted to () the rest of your employment history because you mentioned. What was your, when you went out and ended up getting your job at the Success Motivation Institute, what was your title?

JR: [laughs] Gosh, what was my title? I think we were probably called sales representatives, but what we did was we marketed the motivational products that they had to an audience that they weren't working with before like labor unions and government agencies and colleges and this kind of thing. The idea, the clientele that they had before were people who were already successful, and their argument is if you're already successful, then we can make you more successful. So insurance sales, people who were in sales, that was their clients, people in sales. Now the question that we went out there [with] was if it works for successful people, will it work for someone who is probably not motivated. If this worked for people who were already motivated and they just want to climb higher, will it motivate somebody who is, who didn't understand success or has never been motivated. That was the question. So that was the question company wanted to know the answer too. So we worked with labor unions. We went all over the country. We worked with labor unions. We worked with colleges. We worked with government agencies that were training to see if this stuff would work with them and it would.

What happened was that the company finally decided that our niche is well, the company had what were called distributors, and these were franchises. These guys said, "Look, I'm not interested in working with anything except the kind of folk we've been working with all along. I'm not interested in working with government agencies. I don't want to get involved with government stuff. It's slow in paying." It's just, so the company finally decided that while our products will work with these folk. We depend on these local distributors to, that's the backbone of our company and they're not comfortable with this new population. So no deal. We could've stayed with the company, but we weren't interested in working with insurance folks. I mean that was, so Jim and I started consulting. So the guy gave us a franchise, the guy in Texas gave us a franchise. We came back to Charlotte and went into the consulting business.

EG: This was in 1970.

JR: '70, yeah.

EG: You were in Texas from '68 to '70.

JR: Yeah.

EG: Then how long did you do the franchise then?

JR: Until, I think I got out of it in seventy--, maybe '75 or '76. I left the franchise and took, we had a, we had a, we had a contract with a drug treatment program called the Open House Drug Treatment program. We had a contract, our consulting firm had a contract to do some staff training for the drug treatment program. My background is in psychology, and I had never got a chance to use in working with drug treatment and that kind of stuff. I had used it in job placement, but I'd never gotten a chance to do counseling. Well, that's not true. I counseled with the job thing, but I just wanted to, I was curious as to whether the experiences I had would work with drug addicts. So I didn't want to train the staff. I wanted to work with--. So I left the consulting firm and took a job as a director of inpatient facility, the treatment of drug treatment inpatient facility. A bunch of kids lived there, not the kids. But the clients lived there twenty-four hours a day. I left that. That was in seventy-, must've been like seventy-, I don't know, seventy-, must've been like '74 or '73, '74 because I can remember when the, '76 when that was their hundredth, whatever I remember in 1976—

EG: ()

JR: Were you born in 1976? Bicentennial. How old are you?

EG: Well, I was born three years after '76.

JR: The bicentennial.

EG: My parents [got married in '76], so that's why it sticks in my mind ()

JR: I have to remember when I'm talking to folks that everybody wasn't born in 1930 something. I was doing a talk up at Davidson College some years back, and I was asking the students about transistor radios. They were sitting there with this blank look on their faces. I said, you remember transistor radios, the little radios that people used to walk around holding up to their ears. Said, no. Said you don't remember transistor radios. No. No. No. No. I said, okay one of these days you're going to be standing up talking to someone and you'll be talking about CDs and (), and they won't know what you're talking about. So if you live long enough that'll--. But what were we talking about?

EG: You were—

JR: So I left the drug treatment program.

EG: You were director from like '74 to '76.

JR: No, until '79.

EG: Okay.

JR: Then '79 I went back to work with Jim—

EG: You said you started a consulting business with him.

JR: Yeah, we started the consulting business in 1970, and I left the consulting business in 1973 or '74. I'm not sure.

EG: When you went to work for the drug treatment.

JR: Drug thing, yeah.

EG: What kind of consulting did you do or—

JR: We did training for organizations. We also had a franchise to sell those motivational materials. We did the motivational, but we did, I guess for want of a better word, we did, we called ourselves a human resource consulting firm. So we did diversity training. We did sensitivity training. We did a lot of sensitivity, what was called in those days sensitivity training, and it was called diversity training now. So we did, so we did that kind of stuff. Schools were integration, school integration had hit big. So we had a lot of, we did a lot of work with school system. There were riots on the schools, and there were fights and teachers were--. Schools were integrating, teaching staff and kids. So we did a lot of work with school systems in Winston-Salem and Columbia, South Carolina and Charlotte and Hickory. We went around working with, we did things with governments. The government was also doing some things. We also got a--. Nixon hired John Ingersoll who was the police chief I talked about. Ingersoll was lured away from Charlotte to Washington as the director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. So he called us and said, "Look." First he tried to get me to come to Washington to work for him, and I wasn't interested in living in Washington. So he said, "Look. I'm--." It was a new program. Nixon had combined about five other agencies that had, that all worked with drugs in some kind of way, but they were never central. He said too scattered. So he started something called the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and brought all these agencies in. Alcohol and tobacco and firearms and something else, something else.

Ingersoll took the job with the understanding that he could change these agencies away from their good old boy network. Most of them had no female agents. Most of them had minority agents only as street agents who went out and bought the drugs to build a case against them and this kind of thing. Ingersoll wanted to change that whole climate. So guys came up from Washington and talked to him. So he said, "Look. Here's what I want you to do. We have I think sixteen or eighteen regional offices, Denver, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, New Orleans, Kansas City, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington DC. I want you to go to, I want you two guys to go to every regional office we have, and I have told the regional directors that whatever you guys do, it's like me talking. I want you to introduce them to the real world because I'm going to hire female agents. I'm going to hire minority agents. I'm going to have minority supervisors. I'm going to have directors at some point. I'm going to have a regional director who is a minority. I'm going to change this climate. You guys got to do the footwork for me.

So for almost two years we were like, we were like on a rock concert tour. Philadelphia, Denver, we went to almost sixteen major cities in this country, and we'd go into the director's office and call the staff together, and we'd read the riot act to them. I mean, not read the riot act to them, and I would tell them what they had to do. First of all what they were doing and then what they had to do in order to--. For instance if you were an African American agent or if you were a Latino agent, you were only allowed to go on the street and buy drugs from African Americans and Latinos. Then once you made the case, you were taken off the case. The white agents came in, arrested the guys, got credit for the thing, got promotions and you were sent some place else to buy drugs, very dangerous, and white guys never went out and bought drugs. A very dangerous kind of a thing and the reward was that you went from Denver then to San Francisco because the guys, the crooks in San Francisco didn't know you. So you went in and you made the case in San Francisco instead of getting a promotion. Then you went to Las Vegas on the street. It was very frustrating. So this is no longer, white guys are going to have to buy drugs. You're going to have to go out and make cases. If you don't know how to go out and do that, then you can get a job doing something else. So that's the way we were talking. Oh that was, we were not very popular. We all know we were not very popular. We did it.

The final upshot of the thing was a conference at the Air Force Academy, in fact I've got a picture I can show you of me and Jim and Ingersoll and the director of the Air Force Academy. We got snowed in in Denver. That's where we had the conference to bring in all of the sixteen regional directors and some guys from Turkey and some other places where you had the big poppy growing and this kind of thing. Had a conference, and Jim and I had to make a report about that. So we, it's been interesting. All because of this kind of integrity, treating folks with respect and dignity. We kept getting into these situations. We'd go to Texas and this guy hires us. Then we come back and start our thing, and Ingersoll remembers the kind of--. "I want to do this in Washington. You guys come up and do this thing for us.

So that's the kind of thing that Jim and I have been involved in since mid sixties.

EG: Did you feel when you were doing this work with the narcotics department that was there evidence that the practices have changed after you had--

JR: Oh yeah, yeah. Because Ingersoll called us and said, I want you guys to come up to Philadelphia because Art Williams is the new regional director in Philadelphia. So the first African American to be a regional director in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Ingersoll made us come up for the announcement. It was a big deal. Come up to Philadelphia and I'm going to, Art's going to be the new regional director in Philadelphia. I want you guys there because we were part of, you helped me to make this change. I want you guys to be there, yeah.

EG: With the when you were with the consulting business, were you and Jim codirectors of it or--

JR: Partners. We were partners.

EG: Partners of that, okay.

JR: We were partners.

EG: And the, is that the same with the Success Motivation Franchise, Institute franchise that you had.

JR: We used the, we used the franchise. See other guys just sold the product. What our argument was that the product was nice, but it didn't do anything about diversity. So we didn't want to be limited to just selling the product. So what we did is that we sold the product, and we did these other things because you go into a company and get them to--. For instance we had one program that was for supervisors. How

to train you to be a supervisor. Well, that was good to train somebody to be a supervisor. But what if this company never had any black supervisors. What if they never had any women supervisors. So it wasn't enough just to sell them the, this is the way Jim and I looked at it. It wasn't enough to just sell them the package on how to train the supervisor. While you're training the supervisor, this may be a good time to promote some minorities and promote some women into the thing and then train them at the same time. So that, so that's the way we did with the franchise. We took the franchise and made it something a little bit bigger. Again always knocking down barriers.

EG: Yeah, definitely. Then how long did the consulting business last?

JR: Well, Jim stayed in it, whoo, until he went to work for Jim Martin, and he retired from state government. But Jim stayed in. I can't do the same thing long. I just, I do something and I stayed at Open House for, from '74 until '79 and then I left Open House and went to, moved to Greenville, South Carolina-- Well I didn't really move to Greenville, South Carolina. Went down to Greenville, South Carolina as the director of minority businesses for the city of Greenville. Again, Greenville did not have a program where they, the city of Greenville did not have a program where they recognized and promoted and did anything with minority businesses. So my job in Greenville was to introduce Greenville, South Carolina to minority businesses. I stayed there for a year. I stayed there until 1980. Then I came back to Charlotte in '81, and I was the executive director of something called the Cherry Community Organization.

EG: The what?

JR: Cherry, C-H-E-R-R-Y, Cheery Community organization. What the Cherry Community Organization was is a, it's a, it was, not was it is a small African American community that was like Grier Heights. It was completely surrounded by European Americans. It's plopped over on the east side of Charlotte. Also like Grier Heights next door to the one of the richest communities in Charlotte called Myers Park. The Cherry Community organization was owned, I mean the Cherry community was primarily owned by two, it was heir property, two families had owned the majority of their property in Cherry. They had a bunch of rental houses. They weren't interested, their parents had, they had inherited these houses. They weren't interested in the houses. They had this rental company that collected the rent and sent them a check, and they were absentee landlords in that sense. The houses were falling down, and so the, this guy came up with an idea. His name was Sharif Abdulla. Sharif Abdulla came up with the idea

why don't the city of Charlotte make a loan to the Cherry Community to, excuse me, buy these dilapidated houses, fix them up, rent them back to the community or sell them to members of the community then the-- . That would take care of these the slum landlords () would end up with a pocket full of money. The community would end up with these houses, and the residents would end up with some decent places to live, and since they didn't have to make a profit, everybody live happily ever after. Wonderful idea and the only problem was Sharif was an idea person. He did not know how to implement. So he'd fumble around for about a year and the thing was falling apart, and I heard about it. I was in Greenville and I wanted to come back to Charlotte and I said, okay I'll take the job. So I came to Cherry in 1980. By 1984 we had carried out the, we had bought these houses and rehabilitated like 100 and something houses, had sold some to residents, just () were going along smoothly.

Jim Martin got elected to the governor of North Carolina in 1984. I go to Raleigh as the director of employment training for the state of North Carolina. Then in the second Martin administration I was going to work special assistant to the commissioner of motor vehicles, worst job I ever had in my life making more money I ever made, the worst job I ever had. So I stayed there for about a year, and I just, I couldn't put up with that bureaucratic nonsense. So I came back to Charlotte and started by own consulting firm. Well, I had a consulting firm kind of all along, but I went into my own deal in 19—probably--'79 I guess I started my own deal and had these other jobs.

EG: 1979 you started your own consulting [business].

JR: Yeah, and what I called Ross and Associates, and I had had all kind of --. I also taught at the university off and on during this time at UNC Charlotte. I had taught up there for like nineteen years as an adjunct faculty.

EG: ()

JR: I taught counseling, psychology and then I worked in the African and African American studies program where I taught motivation and what is that book over there. Human, gosh I have to look at it and see. Human, what is this? *Human Relations: Behavior at Work*. Now that was one of the classes I taught in African/African American studies. The lady who was the dean of African/African American studies she wanted me to come in and help these students, it was not closed to just African American students because we always, it was an integrated program part of the university. But what she wanted me

to do was to help these kids to have a practical appreciation in the world of work. For instance a lot of the kids from UNC Charlotte came there from smaller towns. They couldn't get into Duke and Carolina and some other places. So they came to UNC Charlotte. She went out and recruited kids from [the] rural [areas] of the eastern part of the state, smaller counties in the state, and a lot of these kids had no, once they graduated from UNC Charlotte they were going to get corporate jobs. These kids had never had any experience with corporations. So what she wanted me to do was to teach them, that's why it was called Human Relations: Behavior at Work. She wanted me to introduce them to the world, to the corporate world. I had experiences with corporations, () in terms of getting folks in and then working with them. So she knew that. She wanted me to introduce them to how to survive in corporations. That should've been what the course was called. But it was called human relations, the world of work or something. How to survive in corporations. If you're a young African American right out of college, how do you get into a corporation and survive. Yeah.

EG: When was this you were teaching that particular course?

JR: I started teaching that course in 1970, I think it was. No, no. I didn't start teaching the course the lady who was the director of the studies program started something that she called understanding self and others.

You had a lot of--. UNC Charlotte was not a friendly school for African Americans for a long time. First of all, it grew out of, remember I went to Carver College which was the little college. Then you had Charlotte College. Carver was black; Charlotte College was white. These were two junior colleges that were started for returning veterans from the Second World War. They were, they were really high school extensions because at that time you had a lot of kids who were drafted out of high school to go into the, fight the Second World War. When it was over these kids couldn't, these folks had wives and families. They couldn't go back to regular school, and so they had, they started these high school extension programs at night. When they finished these things, why don't we turn these into junior colleges at night? So you could still go to, it was a junior college and a high school at the same time. You had two, Carver and Charlotte. Well, then when the integration started, there was this, the notion was you were going to have to integrate these two junior colleges. Well, the way we kept from integrating those two colleges, we moved UNC Charlotte. It was called Charlotte College at that time, we moved it twelve miles out in the sticks.

No buses out there. They didn't want any black kids out there. Then they built another little school called Mecklenburg College. Carver is closed, and Charlotte is closed. They built another little school called Mecklenburg College. It only stayed open for about two or three years until Charlotte University got established. They closed that college, and then Central Piedmont Community College opened, which was integrated. But UNC Charlotte was opened as a separate white school and persisted that way for a while until we started to do the same thing we'd been doing other places. Crack that egg at UNC Charlotte. So for the first time, large numbers of black students were being recruited at UNC Charlotte.

Bertha Maxwell who as the director, very smart woman. She didn't, she did not want to bring these kids into a hostile situation without giving them some protection. So she hired me and Jim Polk and some other to we'd have a, with the incoming freshmen, we'd take them through a sensitivity training, in other words how to survive here at UNC Charlotte.

EG: With the incoming black students.

JR: With incoming black students. How to survive in this situation.

EG: Was this in the '70s?

JR: Yeah, started in 1970. So from that I got hired as a, from then I started teaching there. So we started doing these orientation, student orientation programs, and then Bertha then asked if I would not only do the orientation but then teach some classes. I taught some classes, and then I had some other friends in the master's counseling program. At this time I had finished--. I think I don't know, I guess, I hadn't finished my degree. Or had I--. Anyway, from the Open House experience I had made some friends with some college professors who knew me from these Open House experience and hired me to work in the psychology department. So I lectured in the psychology department and later on in the counseling department.

EG: So you started doing these sensitivity trainings in 1970.

JR: Right.

EG: Then was it that same year or like a year later that you were hired as faculty?

JR: Probably two years later.

EG: '72.

JR: Probably '72.

EG: How long did you, you said you stayed like nineteen years.

JR: Yeah, I stayed until '89, '91. Yeah, '91.

EG: Did you then was Ross and Associates in 1979, did you work for, do that until you retired?

JR: Yeah, after I—see all Ross and Associates stayed alive during this time. Sometimes I'd be working another job, and then if I would quit it, so I was doing training for all kinds of organizations at the same time. So yeah. Yeah.

EG: Did you retire in '91 or

JR: Well, I'm—

EG: Or are you not retired?

JR: I'm not retired. I'm, you know, I just kind of do whatever. So I don't call myself retired. Well, I do what is called piddling. That's a southern word for you kind of do what you want to do. So I do stuff for, I still do some work for the city of Charlotte, school systems and folks who are call and ask me to do stuff.

EG: Are you, do you still have the consulting business?

JR: Yeah. Yeah.

EG: () you still have that.

JR: Yeah.

EG: And were there any other sort of employment I should note here [Gritter refers to the life history form she's filling out]?

JR: No, that's let's see. I worked in the Martin administration. I was director in Greenville, South Carolina. Let's see anything. Nothing, that was, in terms of no, that was it in terms of employment. Those are the biggies.

EG: When did you run for the senate?

JR: I ran for the senate, ooh, must've been '90, maybe '92. I'd have to, I've got some, I'd have to look up. Probably '92 let's see. [finding information]

EG: The city council at large.

JR: City council at large, this is a scrapbook that somebody made me. So () 1989. So I must've, yeah.

EG: But you ran for the—

JR: City council, I ran for city council at large in 1989.

EG: Okay.

JR: What happened—

EG: Then probably 1992 for senate. You said you ran for, well first for the house in 1970 and you said you ran again.

JR: Right.

EG: When did you run again for the house?

JR: '72. I ran for the house twice, and then for the senate, the senate must've been in ninety, maybe the senate in '94.

EG: '92, did you run twice for the senate.

JR: I ran for the city council, I just had, look I ran for the city council in '92. Then I must've ran for the senate in '94, I guess it was. Yeah.

EG: I actually have to get going.

JR: Okay. [laughter]

EG: You've been so generous with time. But and I have to, I want to leave time to just go over some spellings of some () words. But we've covered so much ground. I know you could, we could talk much more about many of these topics. But is there anything that you want to add or bring up that we haven't talked about that you think we should cover or just kind of for the record.

JR: No. No, I think that's I'm comfortable with [the interview] because as I've warned you, I'm a talker. If we start something else, I'll be off into the wild blue yonder. So yeah, we'd better tie up the loose ends.

EG: All right.

JR: You want me to sign a [release form]—

EG: That's right. Thank you for [reminding me], I'd forgotten.

JR: You want to turn the tape off or do you need to record all of that.

EG: Yeah, I can, the only thing is sometimes when people do the, I'll bring up proper words I'll tape it. I better keep it on. But so your mother Annie was A-N-N-I-E.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: The, when you were like nine and the person who took you around what was his name?

JR: Guy, G-U-Y, Guy Beatty, B-E-A-T-T-Y.

EG: Okay. B-E-A-T-T-Y. Let's see here. There was a high school called Second Ward High School.

JR: Second Ward, yeah.

EG: Juanita Currie is that C-U-R-R-Y?

JR: C-U-R-R-I-E. Yeah.

EG: And Juanita, J-U-A-N-I-T-A.

JR: Right.

EG: Then Frederick Douglass Ford.

JR: F-O-R-D.

EG: E-R-I-C-K, D-O-U-G-L-A-S-S like the—

JR: Yeah, he was named after the guy, I don't know if it's two Ss or not. I don't know.

EG: Then probably because I think it was would be whatever the spelling was of the—

JR: Frederick Douglass.

EG: Nineteenth century.

JR: His last name was just F-O-R-D

EG: Ford, yeah. You said a department of yours was, on-the-job training. Was on-the-job hyphenated at all or was that four separate words.

JR: It was hyphenated.

EG: Okay. Oh. The Southern Bell you were talking about how it was hard to get blacks hired there. You had to bring in people from the regional office. You mean the regional Southern Bell office?

JR: Yeah, out of Atlanta.

EG: Okay. Then Eastern Airlines, is just like how it sounds.

JR: Right.

EG: And oh the Wonderlic test. Is it, W-O-N-D-E-R-L-I-C-K?

JR: L-I-C.

EG: Oh I see. Test. Let's see here. Gerald Elston.

JR: Elston.

EG: Is that Gerald with a G or a—

JR: Um hmm.

EG: Then Elston, is that E-L-S-T-O-N.

JR: Right.

EG: Catswold.

JR: Cotswold.

EG: Cotswold. How do you spell that?

JR: C-O-T-S-W-O--. Well, I'd better look up Cotswold. [looking up name]

EG: Alexis Stein, that's S-T-E-I-N, and then A-L-E-X-I-S.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: And you mentioned somebody Vader, V-E-D-E-R.

JR: Veder, Bill Veder. He was city manager.

EG: Was it, you said Veder, V-E-D-E-R.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: And John Ingersoll. Is that J-O-H-N and then I-N-G-E-R-S-O-L-L.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: Rudolph Worsley, is that Rudolph with a P-H or an F?

JR: P-H.

EG: And then is it W-O-R-S-L-E-Y?

JR: Um hmm. It's C-O-T-S-W-O-L-D, Cotswold.

EG: Thank you. And Major Harkey.

JR: Harkey.

EG: Is that H-A-R-K—

JR: E-Y.

EG: E-Y. Oh, Leon Sullivan, L-E-O-N and S-U-L-L-I-V-A-N.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: Then the two people with the, you mentioned with the Jaycee—

JR: Reitzel Snider.

EG: So how do you-

JR: That's a—I've got.

EG: Snider is that, S-N-I-D-E-R or like—

JR: Let me just. I've got the business card in some place. It's R-E-I-T-Z-E-L Snider, S-N-I-D-E-

R.

EG: Okay.

JR: The other guy was Robert Gilley, G-I-L-L-E-Y.

EG: Okay. Jim Holshouser.

JR: Yes.

EG: How do you spell his last name?

JR: Ooh. I'm not going to be much help to you, H-O-L, Holshouser, H-O-U-S-E-R probably.

But he was a governor so—

EG: So I can find that out.

JR: First Republican governor in a hundred years or something.

EG: And your grandmother you were saying, Mama Liza.

JR: Liza, her name was Eliza, E-L-I-Z-A.

EG: So but you called her Liza.

JR: I called her Mama Liza.

EG: So L-I-Z-A.

JR: Um hmm.

EG: Then the Marita Bread.

JR: Merita Bread.

EG: M-A-R-I—

JR: M-E-R-I-T-A.

EG: Okay.

JR: It's still around, Merita Bread.

EG: And Quillie.

JR: Smith, Q-U-I-L-L-I-E, Quillie.

EG: Okay. The treatment facility you were out you said it was called the Open House—

JR: Open House Therapeutic Community.

EG: Oh okay. You mentioned Hot Williams [transcriptionist note: Sounds like Art to me].

JR: Hmm? Somebody Williams.

EG: Yeah. Sometimes I can't—

JR: Umm.

EG: Then, maybe, Sharif Abdulla.

JR: Oh Sharif Abdulla was the guy who dreamed up the idea of the Cherry Community Organization, not the Cherry Community Organization but buying the houses, and he was that's Sharif, whoo. S-H-A-R-I-F probably and A-B-D-U-L-L-A I think that's the Sharif Adbulla.

EG: And Bertha Maxwell.

JR: Yeah. Dr. Bertha Maxwell.

EG: That is B-E-R-T-H-A.

JR: A.

EG: And then—

JR: M-A-X-W-E-L-L.

EG: Maxwell House. Then it was the official name was what John Ingersoll started was the Bureau of Narcotics and—

JR: Dangerous Drugs. BNDD.

EG: Yeah. So let me turn it off then. [tape turned off]

JR: [In the following passage, Ross talks about the historical memory of the Charlotte Bureau] () in Charlotte. The folks who it affected directly you've got a job if you, it's not that big of a deal so the only way it's alive is through memories that when you talk to Jim, Jim has a lot of newspaper clipping, and he kept files and stuff from the organization. He was able to get some files. So he has a bunch of memorabilia. I have some stuff up in the attic, some paperwork and conferences that we attended. In fact I was up there looking at stuff, and I don't remember even keeping some of that stuff. Wow, this is, I don't

even remember keeping this. But anyway, the fact that this, it will be archived at the UNC, that's a real honor that it's being put there, and then you're coming to the source and getting the information as best we can remember it. That's, I think that's worthwhile because it did happen. Maybe some day somebody will some scholar will be doing research on something and find out there was some things that happened. A lot of things that happened in the South, both European Americans and African Americans who did things for, with, about each other, and they only did it because it was the human thing to do. Weren't looking for any particular thing but their stories were never told.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by L. Altizer, June 13, 2006