

This interview is part of the **Southern Oral History Program** collection at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. Other interviews from this collection are available online through www.sohp.org and in the **Southern Historical Collection** at **Wilson Library**.

N.8 Undergraduate Internship Program: Spring 2016

Interview N-0047

Patricia Ricks

2 March 2016

Abstract – p. 2

Field Notes – p. 3

Transcript – p. 5

Abstract---Patricia Ricks

Interviewee: Patricia Ricks

Interviewer: MaKayla Leak

Interview Date: March 2, 2016

Location: Charlotte, North Carolina

Length: approximately 1 hour

Patricia Ricks, a contract attorney with Tower Legal Staffing, begins by discussing her early childhood and primary education. Next, Ricks discusses her family and their occupations. She describes her decision to come to UNC with her sister in 1967 which included the campus's prestige, cost-efficiency, and proximity to home. She discusses student life on campus and her first encounter of racism as an undergraduate in her dorm, Joyner. Discusses her bond with her roommate. Discusses the familiarity of the segregated lifestyle when going home to visit Durham as opposed to the integrated lifestyle on UNC's campus. Ricks discusses how participation and interest in the Civil Rights Movement took the place of extracurricular activities and a social life while at UNC. She comments that this trend is common among the black students of the time. Briefly mentioned a push for an African-American Studies curriculum which resulted in the hiring of Dr. Jackson and Dr. Brewer. Reflects briefly on her time at UNC and describes it as enjoyable and harrowing because everything was new to her within this integrated society. Discusses her involvement with the Black Student Movement and their efforts to bring change to the campus. Elaborates on atmosphere within the organization and their obligation to help the cafeteria workers on campus experiencing bad working conditions. Discussed that Carolina was a microcosm of the segregated society. Discusses her white roommate ability to date and take part in Greek Life social events, such activities that black students of the time were excluded from. Discusses fears of drafts that the male students were faced with. Contrasts her parents' experiences at college to those of her and her siblings. Discusses classes she took. Discusses more about the efforts of the Black Student Movement. Discusses life after UNC and briefly moving to VA before attending law school at NCCU and then Boston College. Practiced law in Washington, D.C. before returning to North Carolina. Discussed present job of consultant law where she represents corporate companies instead of individuals. Discusses where her family members are currently. Discusses the impact of Carolina on her life perspective. This interview is part of the Southern Oral History Program's project to highlight the integration of UNC from the perspective of the first black students to attend the university.

Field Notes—Patricia Ricks

(Compiled March 2, 2016)

Interviewee: Patricia Ricks
 Interviewer: MaKayla Leak
 Interview: Wednesday, March 2, 2016
 Date:
 Location: Charlotte, North Carolina

The Interviewee Patricia Ricks is a corporate contract attorney with Tower Legal Staffing in Charlotte, North Carolina. Born April 15, 1950 in Atlanta, Georgia, Ricks lived in Kings Mountain until the age of 3 when she moved to Durham with her family. Ricks attended Burton elementary school, Whitted Junior High School, and Hillside Park High School. After high school, Patricia Ricks attended UNC-Chapel Hill to study math. Next, she went to North Carolina Central to study law. Ms. Ricks ultimately finished law school at Boston College in 1975. Aside from her current job in Charlotte, Ms. Ricks occasionally works as an attorney in Washington, D.C.

The Interviewer MaKayla Leak is a junior undergraduate student double majoring in Anthropology and Exercise and Sport Science. She conducted this interview as a part of her internship with the Southern Oral History Program, focusing on integration of UNC and the stories of the Black Pioneers.

Description of the interview The interview was conducted in the dining room of Patricia Rick's temporary home (a home of a friend). There was a brief interruption when Patricia's friend arrived home from work. Other interruptions include the phone ringing. The interview lasted approximately an hour. The interviewee was willing to talk but seemed a little reserved throughout. After turning the recording off, the interviewee brought up a phrase she used throughout the interview, "people are people." She continued to talk about her roommate Glenda who she said helped her see that "people are people." The interviewee contrasts her accepting roommate Glenda with the first roommate who refused to live with her. After the recording was turned off, the interviewee also spoke about how important working for the community was. She stated, "I was getting an education but also helping the less fortunate." The less fortunate that she was referring to was the food workers on campus in the late 1960's. It is important to note the eagerness of the interviewee to talk after the recording was turned off. The interviewee's demeanor changed. The interviewee was more open and more informal.

Note on recording I used the SOHP's Zoom recorder. I mistakenly stated the wrong date on the recording out of nervousness. I had trouble with the recorder during the introduction portion and had to restate the introduction several times.

TRANSCRIPT—PATRICIA RICKS

Interviewee: PATRICIA RICKS
Interviewer: MaKayla Leak
Interview Date: March 2, 2016
Location: Charlotte, NC
Length: Approximately 1 hour, 8 minutes

START OF RECORDING

MAKAYLA LEAK: My name is [MaKayla Leak] and I'm here with Patricia Ricks on the third of March, 2016, and we are in Charlotte, North Carolina.

PATRICIA RICKS: It's the second?

ML: No, it's the third. OK. Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood?

PR: Well, I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, April 15, 1950. I was the youngest of three children. My brother, Walter Edward Ricks III, my sister is Cynthia Laverne Ricks MacDuffy. I lived in Kings Mountain when I was about two, three years old, and then moved to Durham, North Carolina with my family, and grew up in Durham. I attended Burton Elementary School, and Whitted Junior High School and Hillside High School. And had a very happy, happy family life. Very happy childhood. Yes.

ML: So you talk about school and having a happy childhood. How was your interactions with the teachers and classmates?

PR: Well, I was very quiet, and I was the youngest of three, and my sister was fifteen months older, and we were in the same grade throughout, so we would be together a lot. She was very outgoing, so I didn't really need to talk [laughter] that much. But I interacted-- I enjoyed school and I still enjoy learning and reading and writing. So I interacted with the teachers very well. I was brought up to believe it was very important to get your lessons, so my mother, who was a teacher also, made sure that we got our lessons and really didn't have any home--, anything, any housework to do, except on Sundays. So all we really had to do was to get our lessons, get home, get a snack, and get our lessons and our homework and that kind of thing.

ML: What did your mom do?

PR: She was a second-grade teacher.

ML: Oh, great.

PR: Elementary education was her major.

ML: What about your dad?

PR: He was an attorney, a trust officer at Mechanics and Farmers Bank.

ML: So are you and your sister really close?

PR: Yes, we're very close, yes.

ML: Where is she now?

PR: She's in Laurinburg. She's principal of Laurinburg, a private school there, and so she's there with her family.

ML: So what brought you to UNC?

PR: Well, it was close, only twelve miles away from home, and my father and mother had three children in college at the same time, and my father felt that it was an economical issue, and it was a thrifty choice to go to an in-state school. And so that's how we ended up--, my sister and I both went to Carolina. My brother also went, but he went to Morehouse first and then transferred to Carolina. And then--. But he didn't finish. He went from there to Central Law School, and then went back and finished college after law school.

ML: So what was student life like at UNC while you were there?

PR: Well, it was very, very challenging. We had a lot of homework, a lot of classwork. I guess the main thing, the main concern we had, was doing well in the classes and getting our homework, our classwork, and graduating. That was our main focus. At the time there were about seventy, if I'm not mistaken, seventy blacks at the school, and so it was a situation where this was the first time I had been to a predominantly white school, because all of the schools that I had been to before were segregated. And so it was a challenge socially and intellectually. Yes.

ML: Tell me a little bit more about that.

PR: Well, when we first got to Carolina, my sister and I both decided we were going to go to the same school, like I said, because of the economics and because it was a good school close by. And so we, at first--. We had been roommates throughout, and so we decided, "Oh, well, we'll see if we can branch out and get to know other people," and we would experiment. We decided that we would go, and we first signed up for different dorms, East and West Cobb. And we said we would get other roommates and even stay in different dormitories. Well, when we got the assignment, they had assigned us to the same dorm, and so we were both assigned to

Joyner. I don't know if you're familiar with Joyner, but I was assigned to 308 Joyner and my sister was assigned to 315 Joyner, which was down the hall, not in the same--it was on the same hall, but there were, I don't know what you call it, but it was--.

ML: Like a suite?

PR: Right, maybe suites; well, they weren't really suites. Everybody had a room, but it was further down the hall than the immediate area. I wonder if I'm making myself clear. So when we first went to Carolina, it was my brother, my mother, and my sister and I. And everybody had a bag or box, and we were taking things up, so we went to my room first, if I recall correctly. And when we got to the room, which was 308, there was a young lady there, already there with her parents. And when we came into the room, I had never talked with her, never seen her or met her. We introduced ourselves as her roommate, that I was her roommate. And so they seemed to be very surprised, and they were a little less than cordial. They spoke, but they were less than cordial. And so we went on back and got another load, and when we came back up, they were gone. And so there was no note or anything, but they had left. And so we proceeded to go ahead and finish putting my things--.

FEMALE: Hello?

ML: Hello.

F: Hi.

PR: Hi.

ML: How are you?

F: How are you doing?

PR: Good, how are you?

ML: Good. OK, so we went ahead and finished putting my things in, and we put my sister's things in her room. And so her roommate was already there--, her roommate was Patricia Spica. And so they got along fine the whole three years that--. Well, three of the four years they roomed together and had a very nice relationship. But the young lady who was placed with me, like I said, they were no longer there when we came up with the second load, and the week after I moved in, I received some flowers with a note from her saying that she was sorry about the way things happened; it wasn't her, it was her parents who didn't want her to room with me. And so I never really got to know her, but I would speak--we would see each other in passing, going to classes throughout the years, and we would always speak and smile, like that. And then after this young lady moved out, I was assigned a junior transfer student by the name of Glenda Lemons. And she was from Murphy, North Carolina, which I had never heard of, but she was so friendly and so nice and we got along fine. And we would go out on Friday--. She loved to go to the movies and to dinner, so on Fridays we would treat ourselves to going out to eat at the Rathskellar on Franklin Street. And we would go to the movies, and we enjoyed that. She would come home with me, and I remember she was very friendly with my family, mother and father, and my brother and, of course, my sister. And she taught us how to fix beef stroganoff, and we would enjoy that, and for years after that I would fix beef stroganoff with that same recipe. So we enjoyed each other. And she graduated--, being a junior transfer student, she was ahead of me, but she took a little longer than she had anticipated. But she was still ahead of me, so the third year--. We roomed three years together, and then she graduated. And then the fourth year, I didn't have roommates, so my sister and I decided that we would treat ourselves, and my father allowed us to stay at Granville. And we roomed together, and that was very enjoyable. So

we spent a lot of time together; we commiserated with different challenges and adventures and all. And of course, she met her husband there, and they're still married. So we would have a lot of fun together.

ML: So the first roommate that you had, that night after your parents left, she never came back?

PR: No. No, she moved to Conn, was actually where she moved. And so I never saw her. But I don't remember it being a long period of time before the second roommate came, Glenda. And so she was very vivacious and funny, and she was fun to be around.

ML: And Glenda, she was white?

PR: Yeah, she was white, yes. And the first one was white. And Glenda had a best friend, Marlene, who was white, and she lived across the hall from her. So they would be in the room together a lot looking at television, and I would be mostly doing my work and laughing off and on with them.

ML: So Granville, I know now it's where the richer people stay. How was it back then?

PR: It was like that then, too, yeah. We had our own suite, and we ate in the cafeteria, but the food was much better than--is there still Pine Street?--the Pine Street Inn in Lenoir Hall, where we ate, it was not really that good.

ML: Tell me about Pine Street. Where was that?

PR: Pine Street was--, as I recall it was beneath Lenoir Hall. It was a smaller cafeteria, but the food was better. I remember eating the omelets; the omelets were really good. Cheese

omelets, ham and cheese omelets, and you could get a lot of better food, like hamburgers, cheeseburgers, things like that. At Lenoir it was very bland, as I remember. Yeah.

ML: So anything else about student life, like the story you told me about your two roommates?

PR: I remember that the black students got along together and would socialize. Sometimes we would go to different events that were on campus, different dances, and that was fun. We stuck together. And also there would be sometimes parties in the city of Chapel Hill. So we would go there; I enjoyed going to--, not so much the football games at Carolina. I would go to all the basketball games, though, and my sister and I would get up early, I remember, and we would have to be there at six or seven o'clock in the morning to get a good ticket. And so we would get up and stand in line so we could get tickets to the basketball game. And of course, my sister's boyfriend, who later became her husband, was working with the JV team in some capacity--, I can't remember exactly; a trainer or something like that, or a water boy or something. So we would be at all the games, all the basketball games. And I did go to a few of the football games, and like I said, the movies and going out to eat, that was fun. I don't remember going to church that much, but I did enjoy coming home on the weekends, getting away and being back in the familiar territory at home in Durham. We would ride the bus sometimes. And it was during the time of the civil rights demonstrations, and I remember, it was--, my sister was in one of the marches. But my brother--. There was a curfew one time, and he came over to see how we were doing, and broke the curfew, and went back. Another thing I remember, too, was being in the Black Student Movement--. I was the secretary of the Black Student Movement, and we were trying to help the cafeteria workers who were in the union,

trying to help them to acquire more rights. And so we were pretty active with that. And it was an unforgettable experience, and like I said, we, because it was very segregated in the school, we did stick together, like I said. I had my sister, and we had friends that we would fellowship with. So that made it nice.

ML: So you mentioned that you didn't go to the football games that much. Was there a particular reason?

PR: Well, let's see. I think at the time I was dating a young man who was at North Carolina Central. And so a lot of times I was in Durham on the weekends. And my sister was there, because she was dating someone at Carolina. I don't remember having that many dates in Chapel Hill, maybe a few. But most of the time I was in Durham on the weekends.

ML: And you mentioned going out with your friends to eat. Were the restaurants and the diners and stuff, were they--, waitresses and stuff, were they nice? Did you experience anything?

PR: Well, yes, they were very nice. That was one of the reasons we went; they made us feel very much at home. And one of the--. I remember the manager's name was Lloyd, and my roommate had a crush on him. And she had a crush on Sidney Poitier as well, so I remember going to see *To Sir, with Love*. And she was crazy about him. But, yeah, the Rathskellar was very comfortable, and the food was delicious. They had a strip steak with grilled onions and delicious bread, and the apple pie a la mode, and the Coke. It was to die for. [Laughter] Yeah, that was nice.

ML: So you mentioned going home to Durham, it was comforting. Would you consider the atmosphere a lot different there than back in Chapel Hill?

PR: Well, it was like night and day, yeah. Because, well, it was my family, and it was basically a segregated lifestyle during that time, in the [19]60s. Because I got to Chapel Hill in [19]67 and left in [19]71. So in the Chapel Hill, it was integrated, and in Durham it was segregated. And so it was a familiar situation, a familiar social life, of friends and church and parties and movies. Everything was familiar; it was just like the way it had been throughout my whole life. But in Chapel Hill, it was academically focused, like I said. It's the main--. I mean, there was no if, ands, or buts about it. I knew I was there to get my lessons. And so it was like, oh, staying up late. I was introduced to coffee for the first time. I was introduced to No-Doz, so I could sleep--, I mean, so that I wouldn't get sleepy while I was studying for an exam. And so that was mainly it, the studying. It wasn't much social life for me there, with the exception of, say, the basketball games, and getting together with some of the friends that I had met, other African American students. And we were really concerned with politics and civil rights, and that was another issue that, I guess you could say that that took the place of an active social life, an extracurricular community life. Working with the Pine Street Inn, the cafeteria workers, trying to help them and trying to help get an African American curriculum in place. And we were successful at that. I think it was Professor Jackson, Blyden Jackson, and Dr. Brewer were able to come as a result of our efforts in trying to get African American Studies in place.

And so it was a full four years, and my sister and I were able to finish right on time, and that was no surprise, because we put that first. And I majored in math, which was a challenge, but I had always liked working with numbers, and so I thought I could do it. And it required a lot of study. But it was enjoyable. Altogether, when I look back at it, it was an enjoyable experience. Of course, going through it, it was very, sometimes, harrowing, because everything

was new. Relating to people of another race, going to the classes and all of the teachers were white. I don't think I had a black teacher there. I remember I did have a German teacher; the hardest math class I had was a German instructor, and it was very hard to understand what he was saying, [laughter] because he had a German accent. But that was something that we--. It was like medicine. You know how when you're sick and you take medicine, it might not be good-tasting, but you know that you've got to take it. So, that's the way it was. And so we were able to make a challenging situation tolerable and enjoyable because of the way we related to each other, my sister and friends that we met. And so we were able to enjoy that overall.

ML: You were going to tell me a little bit about your efforts with the dining hall and getting the curriculum, the process to ()?

PR: Yeah. I remember that we had regular meetings with the Black Student Movement, and Jack McLean was our president. He was a chemistry major, very intelligent; in fact, he helped tutor me in chemistry when I was taking chemistry. Preston Dobbins was very active; he was another one of our leaders. And I don't remember the specific issues that the cafeteria workers were facing, but I remember it was hours. Hours and pay were the things that stick out in my mind, as far as the things that we were trying to help them with and get some relief. And so we met with them numerous times, and I'm sure there must have been meetings with the administration on that, and I believe we came together with a list of things that we wanted to see done, and both of those things were on the list, with the curriculum, like I said. And so we spent a lot of time working, trying to get strategies together and pursuing those two issues. Some of the details I don't remember, as far as what we did with Lenoir Cafeteria. But I

have heard some other students say that they recall Lenoir also, and how the students would congregate in Lenoir in connection with our plans to help the workers and the curriculum.

ML: So that list you spoke about, do you remember anything else that was on the list, or were those the only two things?

PR: I can't recall anything more than the cafeteria workers and the African American Studies. Yeah.

ML: So you said you were a member of BSM?

PR: Yes.

ML: The secretary? What was the atmosphere like within the group?

PR: Oh, we were very serious. I can recall Jack's facial expression now. It was something that we had to do, because we felt that it was our responsibility to help them. Here we were, coming from all parts of mostly North Carolina, and then we were faced with people, blacks, who didn't have as much education as we did, or as we were trying to get. And we felt that we were obligated to help them to better their lives. And we felt that we were in a place where we could; we were in a position to help them and to speak up for them, because they were not able to speak up for themselves.

ML: And when you say "them," you're talking about the black community in general?

PR: The cafeteria workers, mm-hmm. Yeah, I don't recall the black community, I don't recall any--. I know there were sit-ins at the time, and demonstrations and so forth, and I do believe my sister was--, had participated in one of those, but I don't recall ever going--. Well, I know I didn't go to jail, because I probably would have remembered that. [Laughter] But I

know that some of the students before us went to jail as part of the civil rights marches and demonstrations and that sort of thing. Yeah.

ML: So you mentioned someone named Jack. Who exactly--?

PR: Jack McLean.

ML: Who exactly was that?

PR: He was the president of our Black Student Movement; when I was the secretary he was the president, so I would take minutes. And it seems like we met near Franklin Street at one of the buildings near the planetarium. And, yeah, he was down at North Carolina. He and two other of our classmates who were in our class, Larry White and Roosevelt Randolph, went to Florida and finished law school there. And they went into private practice.

ML: So what about the attitudes towards the Black Student Movement by the people that weren't in it?

PR: Well, it was--. I don't recall any angst. There was a lot of isolationist-type attitudes, anyway. We were together, the blacks stuck together, and then the whites were more or less together--not so much against us, but not involved. Because we had a mission that we were concerned with, and they were more--, they were friendly, but it was that the social fabric of the South was such that it was a segregated society, and Carolina was a microcosm of that society. And so I don't recall any fighting, any verbal abuse or anything between the larger community and the blacks to the movement, because we weren't antagonizing the students. It was mainly the administration that we were bringing to task over the issues relating to the cafeteria workers and the curriculum. The students didn't--, it didn't concern them. If it did, it didn't concern them to the extent that it concerned us. To us, it was something that we had to do,

and we felt, like I said, we had a feeling of responsibility to look out for our fellow blacks, our fellow human beings. And that's what we were about.

The girls in the dormitory were very friendly. Again, it was a segregated situation. My roommate and her friend were unusually interactive with us, with me and my sister. And my sister and her roommate were interactive. They had a good relationship. But more or less, the dates of all of the girls--. Your first year at college you're concerned about going out on dates, of course. And so everybody was--. That was a main thing, or it seemed like that was the main thing in a lot of girls' lives. Going out on a date, maybe joining a sorority, going with a guy who was in a fraternity, that sort of thing. Because there were no minority sororities or fraternities at the time, so that was not an option for us. Because that was a big part of the social life of most of the students. For a lot of the students at Carolina it was the Greek life, but that, again, was not something that we were involved in. That was not something that we could participate in. So that was why we went on--, I was out of town a lot back in Durham, and my sister was with her friend, and they would travel. Because my sister--, I can't recall if she was in the band or not; I don't believe she was. But, yeah.

ML: Are you familiar with BSM's current projects and efforts, and how--?

PR: No. I have heard through the years that they were involved with--. Let's see, there was a house that they were able to have built, or what was it Fannie Lou Hamer? Yes, yes, I recall. I believe that was the Black Student Movement, right? Was it? Mm-hmm.

ML: All right, so besides the obvious racial relations on campus, were there any other issues going on, like the war, and any other things that you were involved in?

PR: Well, I believe the Vietnam War was beginning to get started, and there was an ominous thing with the young man in my class, and some of the ones I knew, that it was something hanging over their heads as far as whether they would be drafted. And I remember some of the classmates I had from high school went to Vietnam and never made it back. So that was part of what we were facing as a country and as young people. Coming of age, you're trying to get your education, and then you're trying to get a job, you're trying to figure out what you're going to do with your life, and at the same time your concern with the state of black America, with the civil rights struggle, and how blacks were treated differently than whites. And we were trying to do an experiment, I guess you would say, because my parents were educated in segregated schools, both of them. My father went to Morehouse and my mother went to Spelman. They were both HBCU schools, and that's where they met. And so fast-forward twenty years or so from the time when they got married, and then they have these three children, and they were--. Even though my father sent my brother to Morehouse, that didn't work out, and then he came to Carolina. So they were in a sense trying to see if we could integrate, and see what would happen if we tried the integration method, which was different from what they did. And it was different from what we had experienced coming up.

So we really didn't have a choice. My sister and I wanted to go to Spelman, because we thought that that would be something that we would enjoy, go and get a Morehouse man like my mother did. Or we thought about Howard, or--. We didn't think about North Carolina Central, because that was at home. We knew we wanted to get away from home. But it was not something that was on the minds of the ones who were going to pay for it. And so it was

expedient for us to go to Carolina. And I'm sure it was in my father's mind that he wanted us to participate in this experiment of integration.

ML: So how did your parents react to the story you told me about your roommates and the struggle, were they supportive? Were they--?

PR: Oh, yeah, they were very supportive, but they always supported us in what we did. And they thought it was a little comical, because here we were, doing something new, and then--. We didn't know how things were going to work out, but that was the first thing that I remember, going to the school. And promises, very important. Sometimes in life, when the first thing--. I remember when I was practicing law and taking classes on how you litigate, you try to put the most important thing in a jury's mind first. And so that was the first thing that we were hit with when we went to North Carolina. And so it set the tone. If it hadn't happened, then we might have had a different mindset, but that brought home what we were faced with, that we really were in a different place, and we really were going to have to pool some more resources in the way we reacted. We weren't mean or angry at whites; it was that we didn't know them, they didn't know us. And it was something that we had to go through to experience. And I'm sure that it was something that helped us in dealing with whatever else we had to deal with, because we knew--, only thing we knew was the way that we had been brought up, to treat people fairly. And so that's what we did, we tried to do. And so it worked out in the end.

ML: What about any experiences that stick out with your professors or with the administration? Personal experiences that you remember?

PR: I remember, let's see. Experiences with professors? OK. I remember Dr. Sonner, he was my math instructor. I think it was advanced calculus. And that was very

challenging, because like I say, I couldn't understand his accent that much. [Laughter] But after I got through that was really good. They had a system whereby if you wanted to get a bachelor of science in math, you had to take a certain level of physics and chemistry. And I didn't want to take anything but the basic physics and chemistry, so I did the bachelor of arts, and that way I had to have five to seven sciences. But you could choose astronomy; you could choose the basic courses in five to seven areas, so that's what I did. And that was good.

Let's see, I remember that I--. I don't remember if it was a minor in history, African history, I believe it was, that I--I enjoyed that. I did a paper, I think it was on Patrice Lumumba. And I enjoyed that. And I remember taking music, and I enjoyed that.

But I didn't have any real problems with the instructors. It was pretty cut-and-dry. Getting up in the morning was one of the challenges. Sometimes I would have eight o'clock classes, and that was new, having to get up and walk across the campus to a class when I was used to being driven to school.

But yeah, the math. Let's see, the chemistry was the most challenging, too, because that's the one that Jack McLean tutored me on. He helped me get through that course. And after I got through that, that was it for chemistry. I never looked at another chemistry book.

[Laughter]

French--, I never really liked foreign languages, but I had taken French in high school, so I was able to place into French III or IV. So I only had one or two semesters of French, which, I was glad about that. Let's see. I took political science; that was a different kind of class, but I only took one class of that. And let's see. And I worked at the library; I think it was in the

summer of maybe my first year, after my first year or before the first year. So that was different too. Louise D. Hall. And that was fun.

ML: Do you mind going back a little bit, to the Black Student Movement and the two very important things they were fighting for? I'd really like to hear some specifics about it, if you remember any.

PR: Like I said, the only thing I remember about what we did or what the issues were was the cafeteria workers. They were striking because of the pay and the hours. And the other was that there were no African Studies, African American Studies department at Carolina. We thought that with Carolina being the caliber school that it was, that we needed to have more diversity in the studies; that the students there should be able to learn more about their own history and their own roots than just studying other nationalities. And so we thought that was very important. And I'm sure we probably had some things on the agenda relating to the demonstrations and the marches that were going on. Because that was part of what was going on at the time. Because like I said, we didn't have to--, we didn't go to jail, even though, like I say, some of the other students in previous classes did go to jail in fighting for civil rights.

One of the things that I remember: there was a phrase about "I'm black and I'm proud." That was around the same time. And so it was during the time we had Afros, and we would grow our hair long and natural. And it was a time that we realized that we could be proud, or should be proud, of who we were. And with that pride came an obligation to work for the betterment of our race, of our people. And I remember we would joke a lot and have fun, because we were just kids. I mean, seventeen, eighteen years old, but when we would socialize, we would be talking about what we needed to do and what needed to happen, not just on

Carolina's campus, but in America. Because we knew we were there for a short time, but we were going to be facing the larger society when we left. And so we were getting our mindsets ready for what we would be facing, and working and talking, talking things over, different issues, so that we could know how to address things as we went forward.

So it was a fun thing to do, because we got a sense of satisfaction of helping people. But it was, like I say, it was a responsibility that we had. And nobody had told us that, "you have to do this." But it came from within. And so that's the way it was.

ML: So to get to that point, did you go and sit with the administration? Did you write letters, did you have speeches? How were your goals accomplished? What did you actually do?

PR: Yeah, that's a good question. I know I recall, if I recall correctly, we did put things in writing and present them to the administration. And I don't recall sitting in a meeting with the chancellor, but I believe there were meetings with some of our members, probably; the leaders had meetings numerous times with the administration. And it was never a situation where we were disrespectful or anything; it was very peaceful, and that type of thing.

ML: OK, this is unrelated, but when you were talking about getting introduced to coffee, and I think you said No-Doz?

PR: No-Doz, yes.

ML: What was that?

PR: Are you familiar with No-Doz?

ML: No, ma'am.

PR: Yeah, it's a pill. It's a little white pill, and I have no idea what is in it. I don't even know if it's on the market now. But all you did was take it with some water or juice, and

you would be up for hours, as alert as everything. [Laughter] That's what got us through, coffee and the No-Doz.

ML: OK. What about your most joyous time at UNC?

PR: Oh, I would say it was probably with my sister and our friends that's hanging out, that's enjoying each other, laughing and talking. And sometimes we would go to different games, go in to the games and go over to Lum's after and get a hot dog. And then times with Glenda, hanging out with her, and Marlene was the other girl's name. And that was fun and enjoyable.

ML: So besides the ladies you just mentioned, do you remember meeting any significant people that maybe you're still in contact with, or--?

PR: Well, let's see. I wish I were in contact with Glenda. I have tried over the years to see if I could connect with her, but I haven't been able to. Let me see. There's my sister and her husband. And Donny, I saw Donny--. I was able to reconnect with people that went to school with us at the last reunion, which is where I met your supervisor. Donny was in the class with me, Donny Hoover. And so we had fun recollecting, reminiscing on different things. And, let's see. But most of us have gone on, dispersed on different pathways. Life takes you down different pathways, and we weren't able to stay in touch. Angie, I saw Angie Bryant, who's another student who came in with my brother-in-law's class, and we were able to talk the other month. And it was good seeing her.

But most of them I haven't really seen. I think Ellis Stanley was another student that came in two years behind me, and I was able to see him the last time, which was a couple years

ago, when he came back to the Pioneer. It was a dinner then. And I think he's in Atlanta now. But yeah, it was just a handful of us.

ML: So what about life after graduating from UNC? What did you do after?

PR: Well, after I finished Carolina I went to work in Alexandria, Virginia, at, well, I guess you would call it Arlington, at the Navy department. It was a civilian personnel job, and I worked there for a year, and then I went, came back home and went to law school at North Carolina Central. And then after that I transferred to Boston College and that's where I finished. So after Boston I went back to DC and practiced for years and then came back home. So it's been nice, being back in North Carolina. Yeah.

ML: So is that still what you do now?

PR: Well, I do contract work now. I work for a consulting company who consults with the larger law firms in commercial litigation, and I conduct electronic discovery on issues dealing with banks. So it's a little different from private practice, where I would basically represent people on different issues--civil, criminal, estate issues. And this is basically, like I say, banks. And it's working for corporate America on the legal side, legal/analytical side.

So I guess throughout it's, like I said, even from the time I was in elementary school I liked the learning process, and so that's carried on; my interest in law, as I'm talking now, I'm thinking it's probably because I like learning new things, and this contract work is an opportunity to learn different areas of law that I might not have been involved in if I were just representing an individual. So in that sense it's challenging.

ML: So what about your family?

PR: Oh, my family's fine. My sister and brother are in North Carolina, so I see them frequently. My brother's in Durham, my sister's in Laurinburg. My mother and father passed years ago. But they made an indelible impact on our lives, and are still part of us. But yeah, my sister and brother and I are still very close, and we all have our children, and so all the children are close, and we enjoy getting together.

ML: What about your children? How many children do you have?

PR: I have two sons, Patrick and Reggie. Patrick is 31, he's a social worker in Washington, and he's a resident initiatives coordinator, working to provide services for fixed income residents in Washington, seniors and families. And my younger son is 29, and he was pursuing a master's in marine biology at Nova Southeastern in Fort Lauderdale. So now he's got his advanced scuba diving certification, and so he enjoys two jobs where he's working with fish, and one he gets to do scuba diving for the Rainbow Restaurant Café, and take care of the fish. And in the other one he gets to take care of them and sell them, so. So they're doing fine. I'm very proud of them.

ML: Where were they born?

PR: They were born in Washington, DC.

ML: So when did they move--. Which year did you move back?

PR: Moved back in, let's see, [19]92. They were seven and six then. And, yeah, moved back then. They were in elementary school. So they matriculated through the Durham Public School system, and graduated from Jordan High School. They went to A&T, so they both were students at HBCUs. So we go full circle from my parents, who graduated HBCUs, and then my siblings, my sister and I are graduates of, like I say, Carolina. And then my children,

graduates of HBCUs, and then my sister's children--. There's two at HBCUs and one at Duke. And then my brother's children, one Carolina; my brother's daughter graduated from Carolina. And his son is a postal employee. He had attended Florida, which is an HBCU.

ML: All right, so if there was one thing that you haven't told me yet or that you think you'd like everyone to know about your time as a student at UNC, what would it be, looking back?

PR: Oh, let's see, looking back. Hmm. [Pause] That's a hard one. It's--. That I haven't told you? [Pause] Mm, I can't really think of anything that we haven't gone over. I didn't tell you about Charlie Scott? Charlie was one of the basketball stars, and so he came to Carolina--, he was there when my sister and I went, and he and a friend of his and my sister and I would double-date. And so that was fun. We enjoyed that, and enjoyed going to the games and seeing him play. And Leroy was majoring in astrophysics and minoring in thermodynamics. [Laughter] That was what his plans were at first, but that was part of the social set. And I remember Charlie would come out to the quadrangle, the area in front of the library? And he was so popular, and so everybody would come out and shake his hands and he would enjoy that.

But overall it was a good experience. And it's helped to shape our views, at least mine, of integration. And I'm glad I did have a chance to go there. Because we live in a society where we have to learn to get along with everybody. And like I say, it was my foray into learning to get along with people who come from different backgrounds. Like I said, Glenda and Marlene, and learning that even though people come from different backgrounds, they're just people. Everybody's human. And as a culture we're going through different things now; I sometimes feel like we're going backwards, but what I learned is that, people are people, even though they

have different experiences, different paths. And we all want to live the best life that we can live and do the things that we enjoy and be able to support ourselves and have a family and enjoy our family. And whatever color a person is, that's mostly what they want to do. And so that's where I really learned that people are people. And that's, I guess, how I could sum up the whole experience.

ML: OK, well, do you have any questions for me?

PR: No, I don't think--.

ML: That was my last one, so.

PR: Oh, OK.

ML: [Laughter]

PR: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW

Edited by Lauren Bellard

October 6, 2016