

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

JOHN MASON
MARCH 1, KATE GOLDSTEIN Page 1 4/30/01 2001

Kate Goldstein: Today is March 1, I'm interviewing John Mason and I am Kate Goldstein. Okay, I guess I just wanted to start really briefly with kind of some life history; were you born in town?

John Mason: I was born right on this block.

KG: Oh, wow.

JM: In fact, with a midwife. The house is still one block from here, and the lady's--. Her son is still living in the house. Nelo is probably, he'd have to be close to eighty years old now.

KG: Oh, wow.

JM: So at the time when I was born, Blacks couldn't be born at the hospital. So, you know, I'm fifty-one years old if you want to count back and see how many years ago--. Strange enough my brother, my youngest brother was the first Black born at UNC Hospital.

KG: Wow. That's quite the--.

JM: Black male.

KG: That's interesting. So do you only have a brother? Do you have a lot of siblings?

JM: My brother Joe. My brother Bob. I have two brothers and I have four sisters: Elizabeth, Catherine, Ida, and Mary Alice.

KG: Wow. What was the community like here when you grew up in this neighborhood.

JM: It was a black neighborhood. It wasn't predominantly Black; it was all Black. It was Black with what you see across over here, which is Piedmont Health Center. That was Fitch Lumber Company, a milling operation. And, I just found out some time back, I guess a couple of weeks ago that what was there just before the lumber company was (). It was a saw mill and

stacks of lumber with no fences, probably the most unsafe thing you ever want to see. That never would happen anywhere else. I don't think that was intentional racism, but I don't think that ever would have existed other than economic reasons. We played, I think Blacks played a double role because actually for economics we were discriminated against and because of skin, mostly about the same. And I think you look back at it to day, I think that the poor whites had it just as bad as Blacks. And I didn't know we had it bad. I didn't know until I looked back to see what someone else has, it's like being broke and talking to someone with money, you know. That's the difference I think, you know.

KG: Okay. So you said you attended both Lincoln and Chapel Hill.

JM: I attended Northside first, which was a predominantly Black school, which is over off of Caldwell street. I think it's a counseling agent or a senior citizen's group because I do a lot of volunteer-- I know the senior citizen's is over there. Old Northside, that was the elementary school. I went to Northside up until the sixth grade. We would walk from here. I was actually born right across the street over here. This is my family's residence. You got Broad Street and Fowler Street at the corner out here and we would walk—do you know where Northside is?

KG: I think I do; I haven't been over there.

JM: If you're coming down Church Street, you know where Church Street is, at the corner it used to be at the corner of () or Rosemary Street. Right there at the corner of () Rosemary, you make a left, that's Caldwell. So if you went to the end of Caldwell Street., that's where Northside was. And the school was up on the hill there. It's the hardest clay where no grass would grow or anything else. I don't know how they got grass out there now. It's probably the easiest thing you ever want to see to pave because that was a red dirt playground with big rocks and things. It was just sort of put there, and you see that now and see a huge rock wall

without a barrier or anything up wondering if some kids didn't fall down because it had to be about a twenty foot drop. It's still over there, so if you go there you could see that almost. It's just amazing, I--. People now, I hear people complain about things, but I don't think you could get any Black definitely to ever go back to those good old days, because those good old days weren't quite as good as they might seem. And you don't know until you've tried something else, you know. But from there to the sixth grade, and from there I went to Lincoln 'til--.

No, I went to Frank Porter Graham. In fact, my daughter is at Frank Porter Graham now. She's in the Child Development Center, she's not at the school just yet. But, I went to Frank Porter Graham from sixth, I mean, from seventh grade. That was a new thing, it probably was an experiment somehow, I knew it had to be because my class was the first class at Frank Porter Graham, in fact it was a new school. Matter of fact, my family owned part of that land, strange enough, that was sold or stole with none of my family—and the school was built. I never understood it. I hope one day I can look into it and find out why that school was able to be put up. My brother and I, we thought we had a house being built.

My father was a polio victim; he did furniture just like I do furniture. His dream was to one day build us a house right on that land where Frank Porter—you go up to the drive way right where Frank Porter Graham is now, it used to be Carrboro trash dump. And, anywhere the trash dump was, you know, was pretty cheap property. So my father had sort of () on purchasing that land right there. I don't know really the outcome of it, I'll have to ask my mother about it some day. I know they had to go to court about it. Because someone either forged his name or it went through some type of claim where they just come in and take the property and build a school or whatever. Matter of fact, today they probably wouldn't even want to build a school where there was a trash dump. But I know Carrboro trash dump was there, because when we was

kids, the trucks would dump trash there and there's—it probably was cleaner then, too as far as trash is concerned, because I don't really ever remember us having all that many trash bags, and I know they didn't pick up trash but once a week. Everything was recycled, so there was never really as much hazard waste as you have now. I don't know what the university did with their stuff.

My brother and I, we used to go down there to Morgan Creek to the Bridge across the Smith Level Road. That's Morgan Creek right there. You know where the bridge is. So, if you look to the left right there, where Frank Porter Graham is, that was Carrboro City trash dump. And if you look to the right over there, that's where public works is right now. And somehow, I know Carrboro had to be in cahoots all—it was just a phony sale, I don't know what it was. I know my sister still has the old deed to that property. And it was never where someone knocked on our door to buy our property. That's the most disappointing—I still say that's what took my father down. My father, if he was living today, he'd be like a hundred years old.

KG: Oh, wow.

JM: He was twenty years older than my mother. And, it's amazing. The most wonderful man you ever met. And I got to know him, probably for I'd say, twenty-- I was almost twenty-one when he died. Life with him—that's why I learned my trade. I mean, he did furniture, shoes, all types of things. He () baskets. He was sort of a handyman. he was the first Furniture Doctor, which I'm the Furniture Doctor now, but he was sort of the first Furniture Doctor.

KG: Yeah.

JM: And--

KG: Did he work out of the house?

JM: Yeah, he worked out of his house. Across the street over here is where I—the blue house that's across the street over here, that's a Habitat built house.

KG: 104?

JM: I don't know what that is, actually, that house is not facing—when we lived here on this street, that house faced Broad Street. It's just whatever people want to do now, I mean that's— you know twisted version of things. because when I was a kid, there were no houses on this street. There were two houses on this street, that house right here, the long house here which was built by Habitat, which was a big failure and a flop. Put in a Black neighborhood, it should never have been put here. My uncle even said that; he lived here. Not because he didn't think good of Habitat, but people place things and do good at the same time. What I mean by that is, you want to build something for them and keep them right there. Instead of putting it somewhere else, you had to put it back in the Black neighborhood. With integration, Blacks have always wanted to integrate. We always want something better. We always want to eat in a better restaurant. We always by nature want to be like anyone, I guess. You want the best of anything; you should. But, when that house was put there, they tore down another house, and all these houses were turned in all these weird ways here.

There was a stack of lumber right here, in that spot over here, at the corner of Fowler and Lloyd Street. There also was a stack of lumber over here at this stop, across the street there was lumber, that's why that lot over there is empty. Growing up as a kid, there was a saw mill and there was dust and there was an incinerator right over here at the end of this street here. And that's what they'd do, they'd burn the dust. You know where the smoky air is coming— [Mr. Mason motions toward his house]

KG: Yeah.

JM: I mean, I think back at these things now when you ask questions about school and all. I get a little comfortable with the microphone recorder. I think of it now, one of the things that got me-- now, when I was at Northside, the strangest thing--. You might be at the university and want to investigate this or something. I used to wonder, I've had fillings in my mouth since in I was about the fifth or sixth grade. Why in the Hell were they dentisting on my--. That's the most fearful thing for me to do now is go to the dentist, because they would bus us from Northside to the dental school. I'd never even—some of my other friends even wondered why they was taking us to the dental school and drilling in our mouths at that age.

KG: No reason what so ever?

JM: It had to be a reason.

KG: had to be a reason, but--.

JM: I have to say, if you went and asked any of those dentists, they'd probably say it was because you had bad teeth. Kids at that age, normally you try to teach them and train them and whatever. Maybe our gums and things was rotten then. I don't think so. I have some fillings in my mouth now, after I lost these two here cause they tried to do a root canal and save them. Matter of fact, I had a dentist do a root canal, and went into my sinus passage and spoil my cavity and I had to have surgery that was about five years ago, but all this stuff started when I was a kid. And I still wonder, as a kid, why we had to be bussed to the dental school. I don't even think any—and I know my mother and father never really approved of it. It was like a thing, if you were in school, you take this group of kids. I often wondered if that happened at the white schools, too.

KG: That's something we'll have to find out.

JM: Yeah. I would love to find that out. That's—it's a very interesting thing because I remember going in there it was like waiting and hearing this noise and smelling all this stuff and you could smell the drill [Mr. Mason imitates sound of drill]. The drilling sound. And you know, what really got me thinking about this thing, for me to remember that, that was the most thing I remember about Northside school was going to the dentist. I used to hate that. God, I hated that.

KG: How often did you go?

JM: I don't know. I'll have to ask some more of my friends how often we went. You know, it's just one of those things. I don't know who even approved it. I'm going to ask my mother tonight on that. Matter of fact I, I really am.

KG: So your friends all felt the same way, that they didn't know why, and they didn't like it, they just didn't—

JM: Well you couldn't have a whole class going to the dental school.

KG: Yeah, Yeah.

JM: Maybe they was checking me and I was the only one who had bad teeth and they had to drill me. But I don't think so. I remember just being in tears and pain leaving that place, smelling that I don't know what, Novocaine or what ever they use, but just the smell of the dentists off ice now will bring it all—I mean that's-- I think about these things where if someone had been violated in some way and they say, once you're violated you flashback or something. If I ever had a flashback it was that dental school. And then , growing up, reading the Weekly Readers, telling what was going to happen in thirty years and seeing what's happening now. I tell all my friends, I tell my wife—one night we was at UNC that I remember the teacher explaining to us how the hospital was going to go across the highway where there's parking decks and things now, and then thirty years, I mean thirty-five years or forty years or forty-five years [Laughter], it's there.

And you reading about these things. There's going to be one of them top of the line dental schools, best dental school in the nation, and this, and that, and the other. And how something like that could be thought of and how much experimentation they was doing. You know, I still wonder about that, and I think what people think of racism, they think of a Black man being called a nigger. But that's not racism, that's a brave person sticking out his lip. Racism to me, or anything else () we're not necessarily talking about race, or maybe we are. But, it's when you do something g to someone unbeknowing to them. That's when racism really hurts. I can always see that person who called me nigger and either speak to him, or ask the Lord to forgive him, or walk by, or do whatever I did, that's happened lots of times in my life. And deal with it. But, when I think about the thing with the dental school, it bothers me today. I still think that's the reason I have the teeth here that's missing. Because anyone else would have been a pet project back then, back then they would have followed up on it. I do know for a fact, there probably wasn't any Black dentists in there.

And the few Blacks that you hear tell of it being so great and of being the first ones, which was great, but--. And some one always has to be the first one and I'm amazed at it, but that's just like being a token and you know, if--. It's like being anything else; any rare object is valuable, so--. What's the name of the lady that rode the bus the first time?

KG: Um, Rosa Parks?

JM: Rosa Parks. She's like a rare piece of furniture, so she's extremely valuable and she had to do what she did. And for whatever reason, the same as Moses went down to the Red Sea, -- as far as I'm concerned -- to do what she did. But the same thing, back to the school system, for economic reasons we had integration. Just like anything else, Hayti in Durham, where it was a viable operation because the first time I had seen a movie, I saw it at Hayti theater. I wasn't

about to see it at the Varsity or Carolina. Being Black, I do remember you could go to the Varsity before you could go to the Carolina because, the Carolina wouldn't admit Blacks. I also, too, remember going to the police station because we actually, we went down to—it was a restaurant down where the Sienna Hotel is that didn't admit Blacks. So that was the first time I'd ever been to jail, poor been to the police station. They really didn't lock us up, they put us in a room and locked the door.

KG: So this was a protest or—

JM: This was—Hell, yeah. This was the Sixties. This was the protest this was a march this was a—to me it was just fun. I didn't know why in the world—I thought we was okay. That we should be like this. I know now, as an adult, as my father was an adult, my father being a polo victim and being fairly well educated, too. he was allowed to get an education because they didn't think he could do anything else. But when he got the education, he couldn't be a deacon in his own church. He couldn't be a school teacher because he was discriminated against by Blacks.

KG: Really.

JM: Oh, yeah. So discrimination to me is a joke, it deals with the haves and the have nots. It's like the male and the female thing. If you can find the weakest of the sex, if you can find the weakest, I found that when I got sick. There is no such thing weakest, it depends who's down on your back. Which my wife is a good, strong person and she did nothing against me. But it taught me what it was like to be down, to be disabled. To not be able to get out and walk on top of this hill right here. And the most blessing thing you have is you find out you don't want to put up any barriers. So barriers is not good for any part of us, I've been through the Black, I've been through the thing with the business, I've been through it with the sickness and everything else. It's not

good any way to inflict any type of thing and funnel people. Most of the people that's putting things out there sometimes don't know they're doing it. Because people sometimes I think are taught that certain things are okay, and when I got to where I left Frank Porter Graham and went to Lincoln, I saw Blacks, teachers, it looked to me like they were competing for spots on the floor. Who was going to be next or who was going to be most powerful.

Lynette Mason: [Daughter] Daddy, can you hear your voiced in there?

JM: No, I can't hear it right now. She's going to record it and then she'll come back and play it, and will we get a copy of this? I mean after you write it, I don't necessarily want a copy.

KG: Yeah, yeah. I'll do a transcript, and I'll do a tape, too, if you'd like it.

JM: It's , I wouldn't necessarily say that the competition—but I found that a lot of class type things in Black discrimination. I saw that in school. I'm mean, I run the Furniture Doctor and I think I'm a pretty good old person when it comes down to building and rebuilding furniture and doing things with my hands, and I'm surprised that no teacher saw my worth. So, really all I wanted was a diploma. I never really wanted to go to college, or wanted anything else. I just wanted to get the hell out of there because, I never could figure out why I was put in there. I knew if my father, which they called him Bud Mason, if they could discriminate against my father as nice, as strong and intelligent man as he was, because he could do anything as my daughter said about me one day. I remember doing and thinking the same thing because—projects people would bring us was better than anything else. And the white people we dealt with, sometimes was nicer than the black people we dealt with. Now, I don't mean this in the manner of who's being the most, and who's neighborly, but I mean that wanted to make sure—I was asked more times about going further on to school or doing whatever by whites than I was blacks. So, in school, I think the teachers and things was trying to get you out the door with a

certificate and saying you had completed twelve years of going somewhere, now go out and get you a job. I actually think Chapel Hill, personally, was just a farm system for the University for the janitors. We didn't have any factories. We didn't have any tobacco field or farms or any things like that. We had-- I remember just about the biggest thing you could be was just like a head janitor at one of these dorms, and not knowing it intentionally, I knew it how people reacted. Who was something around here because they did certain things, but those are not the people.

Sometimes the head of the line is not the one that's marching up front. It's those people behind the line, that's marching with the head up there with the line. The cause didn't come from the leader who's marching up front sometimes, sometimes it comes from the person who sat down on the bus. That said I wasn't going to get up. None of those leaders I ever heard of doing anything drastically, like sitting down on the bus. It's like Rosa Parks again. She was tired and she was ready to go this, there, and the other.

My father, I mean he was a very religious man, but he was a very careful man when it came to his religion and his God. He believed in his God stronger probably than anything else, but he didn't think he should be in shackles. I think about it more and more. I think of slavery I often, when I sit down and think about how people can be trapped and how people can be held back and, how old are you?

KG: I'm twenty-two.

JM: You're twenty-two years old. You would have no idea what it was like when I was twenty-two, and I have no idea what it's like today when you're twenty-two. So it don't make me know more than you, we're just in a different mode and a different world. People when they say: you don't know... that's got nothing to do with it, because if it hadn't been for people like

yourself, people like me probably would have never existed. So you came from good background. I was probably, [laughter] when I was twenty-two, you'd probably never come over to this house and this neighborhood and sat down to interview me and waited in your car outside. Not because the neighborhood was bad, because the neighborhood was black, and black was bad. Black is a whole lot better today than it was then.

Things do improve, I'm a better furniture person than my father, but I got my beginning, he was the base, and I can never be larger than my base. I just increased in his knowledge, cause he knew things that I would never even know. Going back to , I was talking about the issue of slavery, I think about the people that had slaves and then I find out in my work, Thomas Day, he's a furniture builder out of Milford NC, and out of Danville VA and a few times I restored several items that belonged to Day, and been of antique restored and respected in my work but my first respect came from my father. Goes back to those baskets.

When we used to deliver them down to Chapel Hill, cause everyone would have a different basket every season. Say everybody had a garden, you didn't go out and pick your tomatoes and put them in a paper bag. They didn't have these paper and plastic things they have now. A good paper Bag, when you had it then, I mean it was a paper bag, you cherished it. If you had one with a handle, a lot of times, if you were going back to the store, you'd take your bag and put your same groceries back in it. Just unfold it when you got to the counter and the man would load his groceries back in there. Or you'd have a paper sack, a paper sack with a handle, or a cloth bag, but my father made baskets. My father made baskets, and we made baskets, for people to carry their goods in when they're at the grocery store. People never pushed out of the grocery store at that time with a cart that was a hundred and fifty dollars; even a rich man probably didn't do that. He just never had that much groceries. I don't know why people need so

much. I mean even the trash trucks; the trash man would come around, they had one trash truck that would come through this neighborhood, probably once a week. We had a trash can, but I bet you the top could go on it all the time, and six other brothers and sisters, and my mother and father in the same house. So that's putting out a lot of trash, We have this big container out here and some Mondays we can't get all out trash in it. I tell my wife, I say where'd it all come from? Where's it all coming from? How'd it all get here.

I think about Lincoln. How the people in here with the school board and all, you have Lincoln and Chapel Hill High School which was white and Lincoln was black. You have my uncle here, he served on some-- I have some old papers where my uncle served on some type of PTA committee or something similar to the school board, and he was a wonderful man. Really, one of the most prominent Blacks in this neighborhood, Morris Mason, he worked with the UNC football team for forty-six years. Matter-of-fact, when he retired, they gave him a brand new Ford. [Laughter] Which was nice.

KG: Yeah.

JM: When he died, he had thousands of dollars; they was really good to him. Matter-of-fact, I doubt if there's another professor, Black with anything—that has retired with that much income, with that much money in the bank, or whatever. The people though a lot of him, they highly respected him. I've read so many articles about him and met so many old players, they're doctors and lawyers and whatever, but when you heard the name Mason, and they say are you a relative of Morris Mason? And I say yes, or I say I restored his old house here. They would just be shocked at it, because he was well-respected. In many article I've read, where he was interviewed at the University at the end, they asked him why he always called the twenty-two year old White boys 'mister'. And I guess they were trying to say-- He said he respected them,

and that was his answer. But he did everybody like that. It wasn't a racial thing, he was an extremely powerful man; he reminded me a whole lot of my father. We called him Uncle Morris, and he and my father was first cousins.

LM: Can I finish my song Daddy?

JM: Not now, we're doing an interview. That's my father right here, he's making material right here, these are basket splints. {Mr. Mason shows a black and white photo of his father sitting next to a log or large branch, making long, thin strips from it.} One leg, that's the bad leg right there. {To Lynette} This is Grandpa. This is a white oak log right here he's splitting he's in this field right here {Mr. Mason gestures toward the area west of his house}, see cause I can see all this open space over in here, and I can see something like the mill over in here.

LM: Daddy, where's his bad leg?

JM: You can't see it. He walked with crutches and all, but you couldn't tell. he walked, he did everything. Everything. I think he was, I think society put him at uneven. He fell for it a lot, until he got old enough to see integration come. So that the first time that my mom got, my mother got really sick with us going out there marching and causing all that trouble. It caused more trouble for us, but my father would say, things are gonna have to change, Louise.

LM: Daddy, please can I finish my song?

JM: No, this is talking, just listen. Come on and listen to me talk and I'm going to tell you about what I did as a kid. Do not touch that. You sit right here if you want to or whatever.

He believed, he was educated enough to know change had to come. Things that he talked about was when things was going to change.

Leave that alone. Did you finish, did you get enough to eat?

And things did have to change eventually, things did change. I think that was one of the nicest things in his lifetime, he always wanted to do things. I remember where Old Wells apartments are right now, we lived down on—we moved from here up to where Arts Center is. I lived there a while. Our family, we lived there for about five years. From there we moved – and we moved up there when I was probably eight – and we lived there maybe about four or five years. Then we moved to, because I walked to Frank Porter Graham, yeah, moved down there because I was in the seventh grade, because I lived in Northside. We lived up there until I was maybe nine, it couldn't have been, until I was maybe twelve. Then we moved to where Old Wells apartments is out on Jones Ferry Road. I guess you know where that is. If you know where Owasa is, go down past Owasa like you're going to University Lake?

KG: Okay. I think I--. I'm not good with directions.

JM: Go straight through Carrboro. Do you know where the lake is?

KG: By the park?

JM: No, don't go that way; if you get on Main Street you would go straight out. Matter-of-fact, University Row team is out there and they do whatever. That's the largest body of water we have, for a body of water. We lived on, it was like a rundown dairy farm. So we moved out on this Farm. We bought a horse, a mule, a cow, two goats, a pony, and whatever. So it's kind of going back to what he wanted to do; my father was always self-employed. He always probably made a little bit more than the people at the University.

LM: Could you fix this, Daddy?

JM: It never dawned on me until I started going to work for myself, but money is not dependable, you got to make it for yourself, and if something happened to you, you can have a setback. And the property came up for sale, and we had a chance to buy it.

No we're not going to play with this now; you can take this in your room. You can fix it cause I know you can fix anything. Who can fix anything?

LM: Daddy.

JM: That's Right. I'm a late bloomer; when my daughter was born, I was forty-eight years old. So I'm spoiled with that. Every evening she's with me, there's not something unusual with that.

But with that property out there, he had this dream of doing what I'm doing now. So in a sense, he invented the furniture doctor from that point. So I never thought we'd continue to do—we could do about anything. I guess in a sense, things was so cheap. Gas, when I was in high school, I had a car, when I turned sixteen I had paid fifty dollars for a car, put the car together, and made it driveable.

KG: Wow.

JM: My first car was a 1949 Oldsmobile Coup, clean as a pin, but all my friends teased me about it because it wasn't too hot rod-y. So I was ashamed to drive it, peer pressure; it would be worth a mint if I had it today. It was so clean—big velvet seat and this wooden dashboard—it was long as this house right here. I mean it was a two door with the big radio buttons on there, it's amazing, it looked like a spaceship. I bought it when I was fourteen, actually my father paid me to do chairs and whatever. I could make more money working for him than I could anywhere else, and people were [], I mean I could weave, I really could weave. And, I figured, if I could weave like that there, I would do anything before I'd do that. But, that's one of the things I want to teach my daughter to do is weaving. I didn't like it so I bought me a '53 Ford and, it was a hot rod, so you know, it was more of a classy car. It wasn't nothing but a piece of junk. But, everybody else liked me because I had this—I was the only one in town with a car almost. At

really my age, a friend of mine, Cliff, and myself we was the only ones that had cars in high school. I never thought about that. We did, we was the only ones. So we, you know, if we go to a party, we'd probably haul in that fifteen, twenty people in that car []. You never would go drive fast at that time anyhow. So it was amazing. It's just a fascinating time. My wife.

[Mrs. Mason comes in the front door.]

We kind of moved because of need and necessity, my father had a heart attack when we lived here, and somehow I always think the house was foreclosed on. He owed a hundred dollars on it, and he lost the house. I think of it today, the trick behind that is, it goes back to that whole racial thing and economics. It was either Meeks or Savings and Loan, but it was one of the black banks out of Durham where he had borrowed some money. They put some blamed asbestos siding on it. It was just one of those things, at the same time before he could pay for it, he got sick, he had a heart attack and they foreclosed on the note. A lot of people lost their house that way, I found out. They would do this, they came through with this siding stuff. Some of it looked like fake brick. We didn't have—it might have been asbestos too, most people started taking that stuff off. It was like tar, but it looked like fake brick. Have you ever seen that?

KG: I don't think so, I'm not sure.

JM: There's a house in Chapel Hill like that, now, where is it. I'm going to have to find a house like that. I've read all these things actually through the North Carolina Oral History things. I've been reading and following--I love it; I love history. And you find the plights on people, cause always someone—if someone press someone down, you just bounce up harder. It never stopped them if you have determination, it would kill them if they was weak and couldn't stand it. So if you had something really good and hard about you, you'd bounce back up. It's like anything else, the more I read about things that went on in the past, the biggest thing it taught me

is never discriminate intentionally against anyone-- unintentionally, sometime if you ever catch yourself doing, correct yourself. Be person enough to do it.

I can never understand why, if no one ever wanted to be a slave, why did anyone would own a slave. Why would you want some people to go out in a field, and to work for you free, and to house them in a barn somewhere because they looked a little different from you, maybe. But they could talk—only they're physical appearance was different, maybe, their skin, but everything else-- and they spoke a different language. You would corral these people up, and house them and have them to work for you and not have care—that's what I feel about, when I think of some of the things that happened during the Holocaust. To me, I don't know how anyone could be mean against people and why.

I think this even when I saw the movies of the Holocaust and whatever. Either I missed that part of why—same thing goes with slavery—I missed that part of why. It's just like today when we sometimes, I think stop people from doing something—whether it's people from El Salvador or Mexico of whatever crossing the border. They wouldn't come over here if they didn't need to work. And to me, if we have the work, and they're willing to come, why not hire them and let them do the work? Why shut the door in their face if they're having plight just because they're Mexicans. Everyone's scared of this thing that's going to get them. There's always something that's going come out of the closet and it's going to get you, until you get so far down, you don't care who helps you back up.

You start believing in God, then, because if the doctor tells you there's no remedy then you start praying harder and harder. We pray before, but we really believe in God when they come in and tell us it's terminal. And then their God's so important. And, you know, but life is

terminal always, and God is very important always. And we shouldn't do things to be against people.

And that's the way I feel with the intentionally separate schools, if you go back to the school issue again. The biggest thing I found, the biggest difference – more than anything else, it wasn't leaving elementary school going to high school, it was leaving high school going to high school. That's from Lincoln to Chapel Hill High School, which was dominant white. All these people that sat down in this room somewhere and said 'look, I can figure this thing out. We got a white school over here, we got old Lincoln High School there. When it rains real hard it floods in the basement, leaks in the gym, and they're cold over there, they're complaining and this thing is coming. We're going to have to do something about these black folk because they're tired of going to those run down schools. The Universities, the elementary schools, the high schools, we're going to have to do something there. Best way to do that: what we'll do, we'll close down the white high school, we'll close down the black high school and we'll start a tomorrow. So, it's almost in Chapel Hill, it was forced upon us, you had no choice, not saying there should ever be any choice because it's a school, that's the way I feel about a church.

If God can't be in this church, and can be in this church—religious programs I see on TV now, everybody's got a different message from God and, it's so confusing, it's almost scary. I mean, it's really, to me it's scary. So if I just try to read my Bible the best I can anyhow and do my praying, as my father would always say, and that's before they start tearing down some of the barriers so handicapped people can go to church and get around pretty easy.

They built one school and, that one school became Chapel Hill High School. And at Lincoln, we had a pretty good football team, a very good football team, and sports and athletics, and I guess we had fairly good academics too, considering what we had to deal with. You get a

book, and you see somebody's name in it. You might see someone's name that you recognize as being a Lloyd or a name that's round here, that's been in town a long time, you recognize that name in one of your books, and you know it wasn't a black man so you know it had to be books that was passed down when the white folk got new books, we got their books and, if it had all the pages in it, you were lucky. If it didn't have where some hothead had gone through and highlighted. Cause, see, in the black school, you weren't allowed to write in those books. They'd examine those books real carefully and if you wrote in those books, you had to pay for them. You know. And I think the strongest thing we had then was not so much the school, it might have been the church. That might have been the strongest school we had. Cause, actually, I went to church more on a regular basis – every Sunday—you were going to church. That happened up until probably early teen-age. Then my father said to us, you get a certain age-- I don't know what the age was and how—but you didn't have to go. And I kind of stayed away from it for about, almost twelve years. I didn't go back to church until I—I didn't get involved in church heavily until I actually opened my shop up. I started dealing with certain things, so I think church was one of the most powerful things we had. The school system too. If you respected what you had, MacDougal school after Mr. MacDougal, which was a very good friend of mine. R.D. Smith, he ran the shop, so we was allowed to go in the shop and do some things, and build some things, and make some things, and whatever. But, it was nothing like the shop I saw out at Chapel Hill High School – and all this nice machinery and this, that, and the other – but somehow when I got out there, I didn't qualify for shop.

So I became a school bus driver and tried to figure out how I was going to get through these last two years of school. That was about the hardest thing I ever done in my life. I had to go through the eleventh grade and the twelfth grade, cause I needed help my father in school—I

mean at home—and I really had lost –totally—interest in it – at all at Chapel Hill High School—in school.

KG: And you were a school bus driver.

JM: Oh yeah, a school bus driver. So, being a bus driver, I went to school. I loved cars so I could drive to school. So, my interest in school was pretty much shot. I had an incident once in school, when I was going to school one morning, and I had a hot rod car. The transmission went out, and this is—which you'd just gone through integration, like I said, some of the things you have, the sit-ins and CORE every evening. You go down there, they tell you how to go march, how to sit, how to fall, how to keep the police man from picking you up, and all these things here, so that's what I used to do. After school, I'd go up to the CORE meeting, out for a little while, then go home. I think everybody's parents had a good okay about it cause the churches didn't want to say a whole lot because they didn't want to—I guess for economic scare. Everybody held somebody's mortgage. So you know, if somebody's holding a trump card somewhere and can do some little mean things to you and you couldn't get back at them—society's like that now. I mean nothing's really changed.

KG: Do you think that held back a lot of people from saying things and acting, because they were afraid of—

JM: Oh, it happens today; I see it today. I mean people are afraid – You know, the people that get up and say something and ones that's knocked down, and if they get want they want, all those people there that wouldn't do it usually, sure, they'll ride the bus, too. They sit down on the bus, they don't keep standing, I mean Rosa Parks just got mad and got blasted for it and whatever, 'old crazy woman, what are you causing all these troubles for?' but when they said 'okay, everybody can sit down on the bus' nobody stood up. So they wanted to sit, if you think

about it. But some people don't want to cause any problems. And that's what my mother used to say, she didn't cause too many problems. Saying that, and I can understand it now, being a parent, cause you love your kids first, more than anything. You'd be surprised how much your mother and father love you. When I say that I hope that is the case and that is the case, and that's what you would be like, You'd be surprised how much I love Lynette and how much my wife loves Lynette. You know, that's the thing when you're married and have family and all, that you're still giving back into the family. You know family, there was more black families then, even though you have black families now, but usually people supported the child one way or the other, 'it was my child'. I grew up in a neighborhood here where everybody had a – pretty much—mama and daddy. It wasn't single parents and a girl and he boyfriend lived over here, it was mama and daddies all over, I mean that's the way it was. That's not necessarily the rule anymore. That's kind of the exception to the rule. You can have the babies and you don't necessarily have to get married and this, that and the other. And that's where the breakdown come in, that's where the breakdown come in the schools. Kids leaving home, and there's not a good two parent home, I think that means more than we as human beings, we need that, that makes us stronger than any other animal there is, probably. And I know some animals still, the two parties work. In the cat family and the lions and things like that, they still sort of support a bit, but really, in human family, it's a necessary need to have both mother and father to become strong. That doesn't mean that the one that don't have it won't be strong. But that chance of it is very slim.

My father, growing up seeing him walk with a crutch and having one leg and not being able to do some of the things some fathers could do and the other, I felt, I didn't think he was as strong as some of the fathers. But growing up, knowing now, he was the strongest man I ever

knew because, what he believed in. My mother had never been yelled at, I mean that, My mother's never had to have the fear of being slapped or not speaking out. He made her have her opinion whether she wanted to have her opinion or not. He would accept it no other way. That's, my mother and I would laugh about it, cause I left home when I actually, even not going to college, I still went to work for myself, and moved out when I was about eighteen years old. So I hadn't lived at home since I was eighteen years old, so I was one of the kids in my mother's family who sort of—I lived all over Chapel Hill. I did everything there is to be done, and I had a good – I think, not necessarily a – I had a—I skipped childhood a little bit when I was going to school because of some of the things I had to do at home. But I had a sort of extra childhood, probably from I'd say twenty to twenty-five, very freelance. Very [] with my afro and doing what I want to do, and sort of being free a bit. Had no idea I'd ever really work for myself, because I was doing fairly well working for someone else doing the same thing that

[end of TAPE 1 SIDE A]

TAPE 1 SIDE B

KG: Can I just ask you again, you said you really lost interest in school when you went to Chapel Hill High, was that mainly because of, you said that they said you weren't you weren't qualified for shop and that's what you were really interested in, was it the school environment?

JM: Something happened, I did not qualify for shop, and I had been in shop all along. I didn't go to shop at Chapel Hill High School. That was a real hurting time for me, not to be able to go into the shop. And they may have things like computerize saws and things like that, and I had never seen things like this before, and I wanted to be part of it, but somehow I didn't qualify. I don't know how or what—these things, it's almost like the thing of being taken to the dental

school. I think there's a lot of people ask themselves why. It's not because the people—and maybe it was my grades, I don't know – but I often wonder why my grades were good enough to spend half a day at Lincoln in the shop. I never—anything I worked hard at – [to Lynette,] cut that TV off, go in there with your mama. I think anything you work hard at, most people, now sometime you might have something inside of you to keep you from excelling, everybody's not going to be a doctor. Every doctor's not going to be a lawyer, every lawyer's not going to be a painter, every painter won't be a janitor, and there's a need for the whole chain, and somewhere in that chain of people, there's this level of status came about.

It's almost like when blacks typically become doctors, that if we get to be doctors, the one that was the best janitor wasn't important any more. When you could be the number when janitor, you were the doctor, and you looked down on the house painter, and the house painter looked down on the garbage collector, and the garbage collector could look down on whoever. You understand what I'm saying. And that type of thing, I think is so sad in society today. Even being in business and working for myself, I'm real stunned when I have someone come in , and every once in a while, I'll have this man, he'll come in and he'll need to 'explain this thing for his wife, and I'll tell him , 'well, maybe you need to fix it for your wife, and don't explain it to me how to do it for after she can't explain it because once I do it and she's not happy with it and I'm doing it and' blah blah blah. If I can do it for her, she should be able to talk to me.

I think discrimination is one of the worst things that ever happened. Except till I start seeing the problem we have in society today with these neighborhood drug problems that people have, and that's about the worst of it now, but I'm seeing it probably because I'm an adult. Not because -- when was a kid and a young adult, I saw that in a different light, too. I think now my opinion has grown up through both ends of it, I know the difference in the two. Not qualifying

for shop, I don't know why. Today, I wouldn't know why. I got along very well, like I aid, Mr. MacDougal, he was assistant principal at Chapel Hill High School, one of the most wonderful—I used to think he was like a bully, a mean person – and I got to know him one day. I walked in there, I forged my mother's name on an excuse where I was late out of school. He looked at it, he said, 'Mason, your mama didn't sign this,' he said, 'I've been knowing Mrs. Mason's handwriting for – I don't know—we'll say twenty years since I got so many brothers and sisters—' I said, 'oh my God' that scared me. He said, 'Now you come in here' and I went in his office and he had a private conversation with me and gave me the most respect for that man that I'd ever had in my life. He said, 'You could play games and pull my leg when I was at Lincoln. But you're not going to do it here at Chapel Hill High School. He says – I never seen someone was so hurt, because I think his power was taken from him.

KG: He was the principal, right.

JM: He was the principal at Lincoln, and he became the assistant at Chapel Hill High School, and that's demeaning. Se, it was demeaning for him also because, if the role would have been reversed, they would have never done that to a white man. See, if Lincoln had been a white school, and Mrs. Marshbanks If he had been a white woman—it's a role reversal is what I'm trying to say. it wouldn't have happened because of chauvinism, you know. At that particular time, the man was not being put down, other than the black man, for the white woman. Now, I don't think, I look at it two ways, she came from a larger school, and maybe she knew how to handle things different than he did, I don't know. But, I think it was one of those things where she wouldn't budge and he had to budge. So I think the decision was made in favor of her, no matter what. I think the decision was racial [Laughs]. The best way is to just come out and say it. It's too bad with that, too because, that's really probably what destroyed Mr. Mac. In that room,

he told me, 'you be careful, you watch yourself, you can't do what some of these young white kids out here can do. You're going to end up in trouble. Here you are, forging your name just like they do, they bring it in every day and another, I've never seen their mama and daddy's handwriting. I don't know when they're faking it and I have to go ahead and say it's okay. I know your mama didn't write that note, did she?' I said, 'no sir Mr. Mac. 'he had me do some work around the office there, about forty-five minutes, and said, 'now take this and you go to your home teacher and you go on to class, and I don't want to ever see you do blah blah blah'. And he became, I love Mrs. MacDougal now because of what he taught me now because of what he taught me then. That's probably when I start growing up a little bit, because I saw another black male being, I became important to somebody, and he told me why. I understood what he said, and how it was, because I didn't like the situation out there either.

KG: And there was a real double standard?

JM: Oh it was a triple standard. And most blacks had a ball out there because the ones that was accepted, if you ran fast and jumped high and whatever and you was accepted into whatever, you was okay. None of us had really the right tools to compete academically. It wasn't the kids fault. Like I see kids now in school, they never qualify and there mothers say, 'they didn't qualify?' Well hell, my wife and I, we know where Lynette stands, do you understand what I'm saying? Your mother knew where you was going to qualify to come to Carolina, did she not?

KG: She did, I didn't I was scared.

JM: You was scared, but she probably knew more so than you dd.

KG: Yes she did.

JM: That's what I meant. Going in,, no one ever said anything to me like going on to school or doing anything else. it was just the end of twelve years. You walked across the stage

and you dropped off. It wasn't no different—and it's happening today. It's so sad to me, cause I want to go to graduation stuff, and I still see this thousand foot fall when the kids come off the stage. Are they going on to school, do they have a job, are they prepared or society, do they know what's round the next door? Has anyone stopped to tell them anything? You're very fortunate, you didn't walk off the, fall off the cliff. I didn't either, and it's because of where I come from. It's because of my mother and father, it comes from my base. There's a lot of people that have fell off the edge. It's just like you get a diploma, you walk over there and you're gone. It could have easily happened to me, and it pretty much did in a certain sense, because I should have gone on to school, whether it was Durham Mechanic or—something, there should have been something else provided for me. You know, not go back to the job I had. I worked at the trading post at the time. I go to the dining hall and wash dishes and hope something happened one day that I get a job driving a truck. So this is what happening in society, we keep wondering, are they prepared, do they have the right thing on the SAT? The hell with the SAT. You need to know if they have the right thing to work at McDonald's, cause half the kid s that work at McDonald's are not qualified to work ant McDonald's. Yes, they can add up five and five and get ten, and slide the piece through the thing and it tell the price and whatever—they're just robots. We're not treating our child that's in school, we're not feeding them the right thing. We do more for dogs and animals and cats from the beginning in a veterinary hospital, because we wouldn't let them fall through the cracks like that. I mean people put signs up if you have a dog in the house so firemen can get them out cause they're so concerned bout them.

Now you go back to another society and some any kids have fallen through the cracks. We I see them out standing in the street and stuff, I'm wonder what hole they fell in school.

KG: Did you see that shift from Lincoln to Chapel Hill?

JM: I saw a big shift of it. That's the biggest shift. Not saying that you didn't have some of the same problems at Chapel Hill High or Lincoln didn't have the same problems. What Mr. MacDougal said, 'I knew you,' it wasn't intentionally, but what we did, we classed everything up. We have to have that big house or whatever. We intentionally live here, cause I want my daughter, I fee like, you know, I don't think I did bad. Other than being poor, financially, I think I'm very rich;. Not because I can go in there and pull out ten thousand dollars or go get in my Lexus out here – which is not out there—it's because of my parents, they cared for us. Every morning we had breakfast, my mama made some of the best biscuits in the morning, and we'd walk over to Northside. Every morning she packed a prepared lunch, or my father prepared lunch for us to take to school. It was baloney sandwiches or whatever, but it was a lunch and whatever. Everyday, I came home, fortunately my father had a shop at home, and someone was there. I hear these things now, yes, it is very, very important that you spend time with a kid, it's better for me to take my daughter with me to my customer's house a few minutes ago, than to have her at a babysitter waiting on me, so she'll know a little something about me. She knows where I've been, she knows what the ride is going down the road, she knows this, this, and this. And that's sort of the way I work, my father would go fishing and I'd go with him. He'd take the whole family, but that's how life was.

When we lived here, there was a little neighborhood store right here, so if you needed something in the neighborhood, this one woman she had a store here. Cokes, candies and bread, stuff like that – she had a sort of convenience store. This is what fast fare got rid of, not you cant' have a neighborhood store, cause the worst thing that happened [] come rolling down again. Those guys would sit out and play checkers an drink Cokes and play horseshoes in the ditch. There was no – there's a necessary need to culture certain things.

I told you I went through the thing with the colon cancer, which I had to be out of work about sixteen months. My daughter at the time, she was about sixteen months when it happened, so when he was about two, I had a ladder on the back porch and I was doing some work out back. I came in to answer the telephone, looked out, Lynette was on top of the house. That's two years old, she climbed up on top of this house right here, you see the house. Scared so me bad I didn't know what to do, I could see out the window. You remember when you climbed up on top of the house?

LM: Uh-huh.

JM: Yeah, that's what I'm telling her now. I saw her out the window on top of the house at the same time as her mother saw her. I said Lynette's on top of the house, Lydia, Lynette's on top of the house, well, you go out the side door, you go out the front door. I'm gonna try to make her stay calm, so I get under her where I can catch her. Then Lydia came up under her, so if she fell, she could catch her. That's the only thing we could think of, and at the same time, she enjoyed it. So I went to the ladder to get her, and she got upset, because she didn't want to come down. So I had to take her to the peak of the house so she could see everything and play or whatever. When I came down, I always think of this thing. Kids teach adults. My lesson out of that thing is, if you're ever using a ladder and the kid's out side, you put it up. Around kids, you lock it, now if you don't want them to get hurt, don't teach them how to get close to that stove, cut it off.

You know, you gradually can at a certain age you can teach you child, but the best lessons I ever had in my life is being a parent. The most fun in it is being a aren't. I think black people had the most fun enjoying their kids. That's what my father did, and we enjoyed him more than anything else, because he taught us certain things, when we all went to school we could

pretty much read a little bit. We could do our ABCs we could do our numbers and all the necessary things that were going to make us doctors and lawyers and everything else. Then you go through these things, and people tell you you can be it, then you see all these stumbling blacks, and kids can see it. They know they can't be a doctor with no chemistry. They talking about cutting open a body, and you're in the tenth grade ad you haven't dissected a frog. I mean why should you even be a doctor, you now that. I knew if I stayed in the shop, I probably could become a pretty good mechanic, and I was a pretty goo mechanic, too. I've taken engines apart, put them back, and everything else, so my shop teacher was teacher was teaching me fairly well. And at Lincoln, after a while, I didn't remember going to anything but the shop, because I could do certain things, but you had to read, you had to study, and you had to do certain things, and if you did, you stay and saw.

But I also saw, one of my friends get his fingers cut off in the shop with a band saw. I saw the teacher go wrap him up real tight, and fuss at him a little bit, and call the coach, and coach came down and carried him to the hospital. We just wiped the blood up and kept on working. I saw those fingers jumping on the table like this, I'll tell you, [laughter]. People were saying 'you had to be a man about it now'. See girls weren't allowed in the shop then, we had to be men about it. We were scared to death, and if I had been a woman I would have been scared to death [laughter]! it was the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen before in my life. It happened at Lincoln, I was [] There was no kind of safety rules anywhere. We'd tear down an old big bus. I remember tearing down an old big bus one time, we were working on it, and I left a penny intentionally on top of the head so when it started up, it would make noise in there so it blew the head, the shop teacher didn't know I did that. Poor Mr. Smith—[] I did it. We'd tear it back down again, it was just fun. It was, school was fun, it probably would have been just as much fun

in an English class if you make it fun. And that's what I see my daughter learning, getting a chance to read do and everything else, it has to be made fun. That's what happened to school to day, school is: we're manufacturing these kids over here for IBM, and we're manufacturing these here for Microsoft, and we're doing these here for Stanley Steamer, and you will be working today for whatever and all you need to do is behind a computer. Teach us how to get rid of these vacuum cleaners here, we have them built now, convince people they need a new one. They're even doing that with coffins. I mean, you know. Everything now, you're manufacturing people. The biggest thing then, people was being manufactured—I feel with the Chapel hill thing here—because, don't you seem like if you was living in town where the state university was, they would have blacks in the university from the same town, coming out of the high school going to the university. Ain't something screwed up about that? Huh?

KG: yeah.

JM: You weren't even allowed a whole lot downtown, I'm serious. Before integration, Belks was right where Michael Jordan's is, that was the Belks. So you had [], every black in town would come down[]. So that was just a different time. I often wonder some time if the biggest mistake they made, is saying ' well, we'll put the high school out here, and they get them out here isolated, there won't be no trouble.' They blew it. Now the town's out there, so the same trouble that you had then – it's the most ridiculous thing, I mean it's crazy. I don't , I might be talking in circles so you need to ask me questions. I don't know what it was like growing up in this town being a black man or being a man, or being a kid – I wasn't a man then, I was a kid. I do know one of the first times I worked at the furniture store here in Carrboro, and my very best friend, he passed away here about two years ago, he had colon cancer also. Matter of fact, I forced him to g to the doctor and they found a big tumor in him. Two months later, I went in to

get my physical and they found a big tumor in me, so we went through this same thing, far as the cancer is concerned. We was in this restaurant, which was the Smoke Shop. Now the Smoke Shop's still there in Carrboro, I didn't know that till I saw it there the other day, I saw this thing on the wall said Smoke Shop. And the Smoke Shop was your average red neck restaurant. For whatever reason, to stipulate the red neck part. There were a lot f blacks, and if you were a good black like I was, you can come in the front door and go all the way to the back and buy a hot dog. Now if you was a bad black, you can come in the back door and buy a hot dog or get put out by Red, Red ran the place.

KG: Where is that located?

JM: On Main St in Carrboro, You familiar with Main St. is in Carrboro? You now where that little building is in the forks of the road where they have the little tulips in summer time and all? If you went straight across from the tulips, it's over there. It's I think pen and ink, if you go down from pen and ink towards, three or four doors down. It's some sort of architecture shop – the nicest people in the world. I found this out too, that's another part of the story I'll tell you, but we went in the Smoke Shop that day, and my boss had sent us in to get a Barbecue sandwich. They had the best barbecue sandwich you ever want, I mean it'd be loaded up to here, thirty-five cents. Yeah. I mean Coke at that time was fifteen cents. I remember when it was a nickel, so I'm one of these old folks now, but I d remember a five cent Coke, cause you could buy one in a Coke machine right down on Main St. down in Carrboro next to Bank of America. They had a little machine sitting out there, you put a nickel in, you get a Coke. And we went in there, we sat down on the stools, and I'd never been in there, I'd never been in a restaurant before in my life, other than bill's Barbecue which was a black restaurant, I will say. But this is the first time going in—this is the first time I had any knowing there was a difference between me and any white

man in the world, I'll never forget it in my life. Cause I was about thirteen years old, and we were working for the guy that ran the Trading Post in Carrboro, his name was Harris Davis. He was retired military, and he'd come in and opened up the Trading Post. He'd sent me and Cliff down to get a barbecue sandwich an something, a small Coke. he'd never drink a Coke in a big bottle he wanted a short Coke. And he really put in his liquor. We went in, which they had the bar stools and stuff, sort of a sixties style bar if you'd ever seen those round bar stools, so the first thing, I got n and spin, I got up on there and just turn and spin [Mr. Mason makes a spinning sound]. You know, and the place was about empty, because we had just gotten out of school, and Red hollered out, 'what you niggers doing out there on that stool!' d we just stopped, cause we didn't know he was talking to us. I mean, we knew we was niggers, but we thought he was talking to some other niggers, so we just stopped spinning. We didn't know he meant get of cause we couldn't sit down in there. [Laughter] It was so stupid. When he got old, cause he still ran a restaurant, and I got to know him fairly well, and I had been to his restaurant as I got older, and it reminded me. You go in there, you sit down and you eat, this that, and the other, and it never really bothered him. I think what he was afraid of is that some of his other customers were going to leave or not going to come in if he let blacks sit on the stool. So we stood up, and he said get you asses off of there and we jumped up and we still, you know, got our barbecue sandwiches, got our hot dogs, and we went out the door like we was young. I'd never really had anyone talk to me that way, and it didn't affect me in anger, it scared me. I thought he was sick. Thought something was wrong with him, and I'm so glad a that time I thought something was wrong with him, cause today, guess what, something was wrong with him. So [] intelligence and I didn't hate him, I went in there, but I didn't sit down again, cause I thought he didn't want me to sit on those bar stools. I didn't know he didn't want me to sit on them because I was black, until--

this is when demonstration came. The marching thing was coming on more and more and more. And we lived up, some time there when I got to be sixteen, seventeen ears old Howard Lee was running for mayor in Chapel Hill and things was changing. We would find all our—in fact one old guy that worked for us, I heard him talking one day how Chapel Hill was going to have a nigger mayor. What we did, we took some of the bumper stickers and put them on the front of his car, so that man, when he went out to get his car [Laughter], he drove around for a long time with those bumper stickers on the front of his car. Cliff and I, we used to come up with all these little sneaky things to do. And he never could guess, he didn't know who was putting them on his car. I think about old Mr. Donnelly, he was a sweet old cat but, I'll tell you. It was so funny because it would drive him crazy. He asked us one day, 'any of y'all put them damn bumper stickers on my car?' I sad what bumper stickers? I used that old straight face and then keep right on going. But I bet his friends really got him for that.

That's the time, that's how sick people were in their mind. He never knew why or what or whatever, because he lived long enough to sit down in a restaurant beside a black man or sit down in a church beside a black woman, or whoever. finally it was no different. Why people talk this thing up, when you hold me back, you hold my neighbor back. he's not affected directly, but he's affected indirectly. I think that's the same thing that's happening to school today, and people don't realize that, and the affect of it is not over. A lot of people think because you actually integrate, you have made things equal. You didn't make us, so you can't make us equal. Only time will make things equal, and it will be with change. That goes through the whole world I bet, with society, as far as we're people, animals, or anything else. With schools, even though we're in the same school system now, that, if you come from parents with better academic backgrounds than I, more than likely that child is going to be better off, because he's going to have a head start

somewhere with some of the things in academia. That doesn't mean other kids can't get involved if society allows that to happen. I think in most cases, society hasn't allowed that to happen in equal basis, not so much of discrimination, but because they don't know how. I think we as human beings we're delicate, we're very, very delicate things, I mean we're not a machine, so I don't know what or how you can make things better. But growing up, I remember when I was a kid. I really don't know what year it was, but I do know, when there was a white woman, she was killed in the arboretum. Did you ever hear of that.

KG: No. I'll go look it up.

JM: That was a scary time for black men round here in Chapel Hill, I don't know if she was raped or whatever. I was a young kid at the time, it really didn't scare me as much as it did some of the older guys. The word was out, no black people—don't go downtown, cause they out to get black men, cause a black man killed a white woman down. And this stuff grew up in this town here, that's what was happening twenty-two years ago. Things have gotten better than that there, it was a murder, and it was a black suspect. I don't even know if that was a case, I often wonder what happened with that case. And I often wonder sometimes if they know how much damage they did, and it may not have been a black man—I don't see how a black man could have got off campus. At that time, if you were black, and you know where the arboretum is, right?

KG: Um-hm.

JM: You know, down, right through campus, if you was a black man at that time, and you was that far downtown and you did something, how in the hell could you get away from there. Cause from there to Carrboro, back to Church St., that's where the black neighborhood was. We were placed in areas that was easily found, and everybody knew how to do whatever, so it was just like a—I tell people all the time, this was just like a black reservation here. I don't care who

lives in here now. Someone asked me, do you care if white folks move in your neighborhood? I said are you joking, I don't want to live on a reservation, I want everybody to live here. I mean it; every race of people there is, it's good for my daughter, it's good for me and my wife, because I don't want it to be a reservation, cause I learn from all people that I have been surrounded by. A good friend of mine, he's funeral will be tomorrow. He was about ninety years old, [] said the same thing. Now, when he got his GED, back when he was , I don't know, in his late sixties. I've never seen someone so happy before in their life, you know, just to be able to get something like that. Not so much because he wanted to do something so much with it, but just to have it. The struggle is just amazing, to have someone deny you something, just because they don't want you to have it. What will your degree be?

KG: English.

JM: English. Say someone come and tell you, you can't be an English teacher, or a professor, or a writer, or whatever because you're a woman. Can you imagine that happening?

KG: A little bit, it's scary, yeah.

JM: Can you? It'd be scary, it'd be crazy today, but can you imagine someone in society accepting that. I tell you Rosa Parks was more powerful than people even realize. I know we put Martin Luther King way on a pedestal; Rosa Parks was so far back in that line they had to take the time—she was tired of it, she just got on that bus and said let them take me on. Come back here and kick my butt. [Laughter] And so the bus driver; 'get off here, please don't get on here tomorrow, but she made a move somewhere, and that's what it took. Once she did it, I guess everybody sat down the next day, I don't know [laughter]. You know, that's kind of a joke I tell myself when I sit down and look at things and read things. When I see my heroes and I see people, and a lot of blacks, we've always been prone to follow blacks that do something in

academics, in academia. I think about my uncle being [] had all these papers when he was equipment manager. Now the man that has his job probably has a Masters degree. He kept up with all that football equipment, he ran the field house, they named the weight room after him, Morris Mason weight room in the football stadium.

KG: It was named after him?

JM: Oh, yeah. Matter of fact, a new football coach here John Bunton, when he played, my Uncle Morris thought so much of him I was glad to see when they named him football coach. And, he was a rebel before his time, being a white man, a white boy. I remember getting his chin strap once. That's the coach that's here now, and that was back when I as selling Cokes. You know when blacks were going to watch a game, can you imagine going in something as big as Kenan stadium and not-- the first time you sit down in it, was to watch John F. Kennedy's speech, and you were so high up, you didn't know what he was saying anyhow. But it brought us all out, because Terry Sanford at the time was trying to change things for the South, and the South is still trying to change things. I mean it, Not being able to sit down in the stadium, I remember sitting down there once and they made us get up, because we was black and the stadium was about empty. There was a certain place you could sit back over the band and you could sit way down in the deep corner down there and you could see the football players run back through. I remember Michigan coming here playing football one time. I saw one of the Charles Somebody, a football player, and the first black football player we had seen in a uniform, in a college uniform because this was a country town. If you went from Durham to Chapel Hill, it was dark then. I mean it was a long ways, the first time I went to the theater was over in Hayti, the Hayti development center in Durham. It was over there in Hayti; somehow we went to see a movie there. My brother and I sat and watched and watched and watched. Most

fascinating thing I'd ever seen in my life, and you couldn't go see it here. And that was one Saturday morning when somehow, we ended up going to Durham to see that, and it's so fascinating, when I think of it now, the first time I went to the theater in Chapel Hill, to the Carolina theater. I'm not sure what the movie was, I've seen in on TV before, I can't think of it now. We watched that thing from start to finish about five times. That was the most wonderful thing I'd ever seen happen, it was like having cable TV [Laughter]. My brother was my best friend Joe is sick now, but at the time, everything went in groups. If my sister was going somewhere or she—all of us were going out somewhere, I had a chance to go with her, because my mother wasn't going to let her go by herself. We laugh about that now, the first time I went to the fair, my sister's boyfriend and I – she was supposed to go down to the washette but they went to the fair down in Pittsboro. We all went to the fair, but when we came back I was not to tell, but I had such a good time, I had to tell my brother, my brother got upset and told my mama, my mama got my sister [laughter.] We went all the way to Pittsboro. You know where Pittsboro is?

KG: Yeah, I've been there.

JM: Going to Pittsboro now is not like it was then, that's like nightlife. When all of a sudden you see these candles start burning when you hit Chapel Hill, all the way to the fair. I saw these things, I had never been to a fair before. I told Joe about that, and he was really upset, cause Mary Alice didn't tell him anything about it. We was just young, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old, had no business down there. That was one way, the system worked in, the check and balance system, that me, my sisters, we couldn't hardly get away from anything because we had to stay in groups. So one part of the family helped the other part of the family. That was the only system we had because my mother worked outside the home, my father worked all the time, anyhow just to try to keep ends meeting. Like I said, losing a house over here—I mean that

should be unheard of, losing your house for a hundred dollars. There should be something built into the government saying, 'nope, you can't take his house, not at a hundred dollars, give it to him.' I mean I wouldn't do it if I owned the company, and you know, like I said, it wasn't the white man's bank. It was one of the mutual banks in Durham, and my father, I remember telling my sister, always keep that deed. Always remember that, never get yourself locked into something like this; never put your house on -- never put it out on the market for something. It's wasteful he did, cause his father owned the house and he lost the house. I think it hurt him a lot, it really carried him down. It hurt him even more after he got sick, but then again, nothing he could do about it. We lived in the house and paid rent for a while, because the people that foreclosed on it, they let us stay there and pay them rent, but they owned the house. It's the old thing that you see on the old Westerns or old movies that you see now, but people would be ashamed of that now. If they weren't ashamed of it, they'd be ashamed out of it. That's how a lot of the property was lost, all the property where you see where McDonald's, cross the street from McDonald's, down Rosemary St. Most of that property was black. Down Franklin St, blacks lived back down in there, and you wonder, how on earth all these times, did this whole race of people lose all of their property. No one lives down on Franklin St. now, how did they get all our -- what happened. I guess like anything else, you either can't afford to pay the taxes, but how can you tax people out of their houses, when you know they don't make any more than what they're making, how can you go up on the property of a person that's making minimum wages, knowing they own it and then you come out and assess it. 'Well I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll assess this property you have here for two thousand dollars, knowing darn full well that you probably make fifteen hundred dollars a year, or whatever. So, you look at Franklin Street and Rosemary Street, people lost their properties. It's still going on, and our tax situation, and people talking about fair

taxes and whatever. The people don't have, they have a house a house and can't pay taxes, let them stay there. Let them live. What are they hurting. What you do, you put up a public house that pays no taxes and let them stay there. It's something ridiculous about that, the balance is not right somewhere. It's intentionally wrong.

That's what I found, the difference between the black schools and the white schools, integration and segregation, with segregation, it was intentionally done, with integration, it's hidden.

KG: You think it was hidden on purpose and accidental? The differentiation and the racism and everything.

JM: Segregation, early segregation was intentional.

KG: But with integration.

JM: Integration, what we had to do is find a better way to do this, cause it's not cool it's not neat, and why in the world would you want to own a slave when you could pay someone minimum wages, you pay your slave. What you do, you pay him minimum wages, and you keep him a slave, and he'll be loving you forever. Don't educate him, don't make him improve, if he's shiftless and lazy, why don't you teach him to work, the same way they do in countries where races haven't mixed so strongly, in Japan or China or places like this here. Your still economic races, but they know if they educate you and put you in a factory or do what ever, sometimes—they still don't pay you right so it's the thing—the difference in it, it's all economic. They don't get a lot, I mean the TV is sold more for here any how, so a lot's not coming in. Most blacks that's been successful in this country, really successful, they're not willing to come back, they don't want to go back where they lived, they don't care anything about their grandmothers. I don't work on rich black people's furniture. I mean I don't do a whole lot of things for blacks where

their bringing their furniture in and caring about it. Most blacks don't know who Thomas Day was or really give a damn, and it's too bad. Because, 'if I ever get enough and get rich enough, I just want to own me some slaves', and it seems like in some cases, that's what some blacks have worked hard to do—become the old master. If you're not careful in your growing up, you will become the master, and who's dirtiest, the master or the slave, you know, cause you're a slave when you're a master too. So it's no difference in it, so you have to reach back, and you have to bring somebody with you, and you have to help your generation. Generation after generation shouldn't lose everything they have; I hear let's lift up Hayti, but you can't put something back that's been taken away. We as a people, we're so foolish to think that someone can give it back to us. What we need to do is to make sure that it never happen again to no people. What's black people, white people, Chinese people, Mexican people, anybody else. And that plight could happen again, what you do, you find out what they're doing wrong there, do we need what he's got? Yes, if he's doing wrong, we need what he's got, let's find him. He'll lose everything he's got. If we don't need what you got, let's let him keep it. It's someone else that's watching you to see—may be it's my own paranoia that I feel that way, but if I go back and ask my father, and that was his theory, he carried it to the grave with him. There was someone in town here that sold the land, my father used to say he wasn't intelligent enough to think of this plot by himself, so someone else had to put him up to it. Who that someone else was, I don't know. Someone else signed the papers, and that land I was telling you—right where the Frank Porter Graham school-- . You know where the Frank Porter Graham is, right.

KG: I think I've been by there, once. I don't know Chapel Hill well.

JM: Do you know where Wendy's is out in Carrboro, do you know where Wendy's is today? have you ever been straight down the road? Down the bottom of the hill, all the way

down to the bottom of the hill, under the bridge and turn back to the right and go 15-501 back to UNC. But when you turn back to the left and go 15-501 to 54, back to the hospital, when you make a left there, that land right there to the right, that's Frank Porter Graham.

So you know how valuable that land would be today, that's what I'm saying. So you're talking about probably a few acres in there could be worth several thousand dollars, you know. That just happened, the land on top of the hill there was black owned at one time anyhow, and think you know, whatever. You can almost tell where certain things happened and whatever, but that goes back to anything in my heart I think of was that. Even when I went to Frank Porter Graham school I used to walk on the corner and look down and think about that same thing. But, I often thought it was—have you ever read that book, Who Moved My Cheese?

KG: I've heard of it, I've never read it.

JM: It's a very interesting book, it's similar to that. It's so short too, but it's some of that. I remember being like Hee and Haw, one of them never wanting to leave that spot, and I remember going back even when they built the school, waiting for that thing to change back so we would own it again. I'd never seen my father cry until that happened. He never really, I don't think he ever really felt much of a man afterwards, where something could happen to him, and a black person do it to him. So, the sense of family was lost. I don't know how close you are to your family, or when I say family, what it means, but if you come from a family, it means a certain thing, and it was family. I don't mean the black family, but I mean family—you're in the same church, same neighborhood and you respect the person for this, that, and the other, but at the same time, you're being bitten in the back. I think I seen my father when we lived here, we lived right across the street over here, and we lived--. In the summer time, no one really had air-conditioning and stuff like that. At night you'd just sleep with you windows up and the air would

just circulate through the house, and it'd be hot as the dickens. But not, after some of these winters hot, didn't seem as hot as it is now. In fact this house, here, when we moved here, it'd never had any heat ducts or air-conditioning or anything else in it. I put the original heat and everything else in this house.

KG: Wow.

JM: There was no vents or anything, we have air-conditioning and everything now. We plastered walls and put that [he points to deer head on wall] I'm not a hunter, I put the deer up there, because I like the deer. So, I do like wild meat, and I figure if I eat it, I could put it up. I think it's good for my daughter, cause she loves animals, but I would never kill deer and hang him up there, but after somebody else put him up there, I'll put him up there. Not trying to explain that, but to have things as they are and leave them as they are, but change will come about. even my uncle could afford certain things, but he wouldn't afford it. He would never put any proper air-conditioning in the house, or proper this or proper whatever. In the neighborhood here, in the summer time, we'd sit outside, we did baskets and chair seats and do weaving. My father sitting out on the porch, he wouldn't cu the light on, they'd put a bucket in the yard, put some rags in it and burn it. The smoke would shift and run the mosquitoes away, so you put it far enough from the house and that circle, that was our, I guess way of exterminating, and—

[TAPE1 SIDE B ENDS]

TAPE 2 SIDE A

JM: Well anyhow, we had the smoke out in the yard for the mosquitoes, and it probably was a weekend, I'd say. I was so young, at this time I could have been maybe six years old, or seven years old, or eight years old; I'd say it was between six and eight. I could weave, and I could weave early, and that's amazing. I could I don't have any weaving here [returns with

basket] This here is something, I still do that in the shop now; we make baskets, too. We got this over in the islands two years ago, in the Bahamas, but it reminds me of what we used to do. So at night, you're weaving, or you're taking out the [] like I showed you. But, you know, when it gets dark, if you're used to weaving, you can weave, it's like playing a piano, you're not looking down at the keys any more. You're a master at something, and God has given you this talent to be able to do this. And seeing these ladies run this here, being over at the Bahamas two years ago was like being back in Carrboro. I met this lady, she was the most wonderful person; she taught basketry, and she was just nice. She just wanted to talk about her work, and I like talking about my work too. But anyhow, the whole neighborhood was at our house, and that's the way it used to be. My mother cooked a lot and had a lot of deserts and people come over in the evening and whatever. This lady came down the road and she was screaming, and like I said, my father was twenty years older than my mother, and everyone called him Uncle Bud. So she got to the porch, she ran behind my daddy's chair, cause he was sitting in his chair working. I don't remember where I was, I remember seeing the whole thing, I was so proud of him. And a hoodlum came up behind him and he was going to beat him. And my father somehow twisted his arm back somehow, and got him down, he was about drunk, and got him on the floor and told him, he didn't allow that in his yard. He don't beat his wife, he don't allow anybody else in his sight if he can get his hands on him. He held him down, and the man just laid there cause [], my father then said I'll kill you if you're not treating her right. He calmed down, she got up, and her standing up behind the chair, crying and upset. These are grown people, and he got back up, and he said 'I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to do it...' And so, my dad finally let him up, he went home, I don't know what ever even happen, his family's still here; the woman, I see her periodically, he's passed away. But, I think about that, I think of that same word, how powerful that could be, how

powerful my father was at that point. It was just something about that, that was a very powerful neighborhood moment, cause she had no where else to go – no one had a telephone. I know we didn't have a telephone, cause when I was about fifteen, sixteen years old, I bought the first TV in our house; we did a lot of listening to radios, and I'm serious about that. You know, it sounds like a thousand years ago, my father didn't waste money on things like that. My wife and I we're pretty much the same way. We have them, we don't really watch them all that much, but they're here. And I think about the same way, because at that time , we depended on each other for our own protection and everything else. I don't think people realized that, because the man lived across the road over here, he was one of the first black police officers, Mr. Foushee, and matter of fact, the [] rebuilt that house a few months ago. That was one of the things I was really concerned about, was keeping that house, cause he was the first black man I'd ever seen with a police uniform on. I just remember Mr. Jeff with his uniform on, and just seeing pictures of police officers and whatever, and kind of let you know that you could be a police officer. I think some blacks don't know that now – you don't know what it's like to go into an office and not to see a white person. I do know what it's like to go into an office and see no blacks, or you'll see twenty-two people down on the field playing football, and sometimes they're all black , and no one in the stands watching them but white folks, and you can't be a coach and this. You wonder why, what's stopping me from having the same things. You know, that some of the thing with athletics and all, because I wonder . I keep wondering about the University here and wondering why they don't have a black sitting here in some powerful athletic position, not some [

] position or whatever. I mean from a coach to this to that, and athletic director, a decision making position. I think Dean Smith was made just as much by his players as his players was made by Dean Smith, it's a fifty / fifty thing. 'I gave all to him and I made him', no it

goes back too. I think Michael Jordan needed Dean as much as Dean needed Michael. When you look at it from that view that 's the way it was. I think my father needed me as much as I needed my father, I know I would not be the Furniture Doctor, probably, without him. Doing what I'm doing. I think sometimes our society doesn't share the wealth, I don't mean financially, I mean the wealth of getting these things. Sometimes we want to hold some people back just because of—and we don't want to be ruled by kings and queens and things like that or a monarchy, we still cheer and worship these people, I can't understand that. But you don't want to be ruled by them. What makes them so great if you don't want to be ruled by them. Something 's messed up in our thinking, and I wonder, even like I said, back with the school. Did anybody see the difference, did any of the teachers, the principals the educators sit down and talk, or school board, or things like that, did they ever visit the black schools or anything like that. I know this one customer of mine now who's still in town, Mrs. []. She was probably the first white woman I'd ever seen in a black school teaching, and I don't know what she was teaching, but I know she was at our school all the time. She was so pleasant, and she was so nice, and whatever she taught, evidently, she was doing a good job cause everybody loved her. I never really had a class with her, but I knew her, so that's good, and she's one of my customers now. Last time I was at her house, I tell her that I think about that all the time. She was one of the first pioneers, she was the Rosa Parks, she sat down on that bus and whatever. She did it she told me, partly because she wanted to , she wanted to give something back. She probably had more to give to us than she did to anyone else, whether we accepted it or not, because she probably, being, going to college, she picked up more. It's just like anything else. You can be taught by this person over here, and you're going through your apprenticeship, from apprenticeship to master craftsman, that has a lot to do with the master that you was taught by. In other words, your abilities to excel,

you see my father here, making these splints here. What he's doing now, he's shaving that splint right here. This splint comes out of the white oak tree, and when you cut a log or anything, you cut it open, you've seen the grain in wood, well the grain. Say my hand is the grain, see my fingers are the grain running this way, see the cracks in there, so you turn my hand this way, and you see the grain ingrain here. what you do is you shave a piece off, and that's how you make the splint to basket weave. This here is a paper fiber so you weave that anyhow. This right here, this is a water base type thing, it come out of the swamp and the ocean. So this is sea grass right here, so we didn't do this particular material right her. We'd do cattails. When you got the cattails over across the railroad tracks in a little swamp, over behind Harris Teeter, the swamp is still there. The cattails, right before the train track area, there's a little creek over in there, you got the train track that goes straight on over to Carrboro, and the train track that goes to Fitch lumber Company. There's a fork right there, right there where that for is behind Harris Teeter, it's still there, my daughter and I we went last year and we picked black berries over in there. The same blackberries I picked when I was a kid, they're still there, big juicy blackberries. That was a thrill for her to gout and do the same thing. The reason I teach her things like that, I think it's very, very important not to get but so far back. I'll tell you this story here, not so you'll fell sorry for me, and I don't hate you, because I think it needs to be told. When I read other things and seen other things, I've often wondered why and how many people know what it used to be like. It wasn't all bad, and there always was need for change, when it changed in the proper way. That's the only thing I , even when I was talking about educators now—black and white—they benefit too much from it. I often wonder how in the world can some of the churches and things I see, how can they have a minister that can profit so much, have so much more than they're poor members. And I don't think a professor should have that much more than they're poor students.

Not saying they shouldn't be paid, I think they should be paid very well. It shouldn't be at their students expense, I think some of the things that were happening back in the Sixties, cause I graduated from high school in sixty-eight, it happened at some of the students expense, and it wasn't good.

I was about to tell you what happened. Me and my car, I was going to school one morning, and I quit school after this incident, I learned a lot about cars at Lincoln. I didn't know how to tear an engine down, and I learned a lot about compression and combustion. I also knew what it takes to put an engine together. It's still fascinating, it's man and machinery, how can you put this thing together, build a fire in it, and make it go real fast if you want to, or make it go. I mean, it's like the Wright brothers, that's the way I felt, the first engine I put together. Didn't have any money, so the first engine I rebuilt, I rebuilt with used gaskets, used rings, used burns—you might not even know these things that I'm telling you, thee are things that go inside of an engine. But if you look at any study or anything, they tell you, it's not supposed to work. I remember my father sitting on the porch doing chairs and I had my old car, my engine was blown. I needed an engine, I had an engine just like it, one had trouble in the top and one had trouble in the bottom.

The engine I wanted, I wanted to take the parts out of one and put them in the other, they were the same size engine. I remember talking to my cousin on the telephone, it hadn't been long we had a telephone, and I lived in Greensboro, he told me how to do it. I would call Joe bout every day. He showed me what to do to change the engines, and I knew a bit from school, and he walked me through rebuilding it—all this is going to come back to the classroom. I put the engine together, and it was a hotrod engine, it was a 348 Chevrolet engine, it's like a big block engine. If you don't know anything about stuff like that, it means hills of beans to you. When I

did, it fired up and ran. When you put gas to it, it worked. It didn't knock, you know what a knock means in an engine, it's not going to run. It didn't knock.

Statistically, this thing isn't supposed to work. Statistically, the only thing I could afford to do was rent a pull bar which is a thing you torque everything down with. I didn't have any money to buy any new stuff with. he said, I have put one used piston in, you talking about putting in eight. You can try it, it won't hurt nothing he said because you can deal with the balance and the precision of the engine and blah, blah, bah. I understood all that, but I said, it can't be that bad, I want to ride. I was taking this engine and putting it in a 1956 Chevrolet, so I was making me a hotrod car. When I was through it worked, the car ran most of the summer. When school time came around, I was driving out to Chapel Hill High School, that's where I was going to school then. One morning I was going to school, I had built me a four speed transmission, and the darn thing jammed up going across the railroad tracks out here at the school. So what I had to do was coast to the side, cause I couldn't change gears. I went up under the car, took the side casing off, caught my transmission fluid in a jar, took the transmission out, got the gears going again, put it back in, and I was at school by ten o'clock. I took a rag, wiped all the grease off of me I could. I went into class and asked my old teacher, I said look, I can either go back home or I can stay in here, I got transmission grease on me that don't smell too cool, and so, whatever you want me to do. Cause Mr. MacDougal told me not to be playing any more games. I was trying to do the right thing.

She said, oh go over there and sit down, you got some kind of excuse every day. You know, I did have something going on pretty much, I was a pretty good student doing what I wanted to do. This was an English class, and I don't even want to call the teacher's name, I think about it now, it was just so racial. After about five minutes, she said something sure stinks in

here. I said I told you that this grease was going to stink. She didn't say anything, she kind of rolled her eyes and then turned red-faced. We'd gone through enough racial stuff then, so anything that happened, you're going to take it to be racial anyhow. I think it was racial, even today. I think when kids tell you stuff, you ought to listen. She said, whatever it is that's stinking, I hope it's not in here tomorrow, and I said, look, I ain't got to put up with this crap. You're crazy. She said, what did you say to me, go to Mrs. marshbanks' office. I said I'm not going to damn Mrs. Marshbanks' office, I'm going home, don't need this. I had a job, I had a car, hell, I had everything I needed in life then. I went home, I got back up under the tree, pulled my hood up, I made the biggest move of my life. I quit school. my daddy said didn't you go to school today?

I said no, I said to tell you the truth dad—I was already sixteen, you can quit school at sixteen if you want to—e said you quit school, I said yeah. I quit. I told him sort of what happened, I said I ain't got to put up with that crap, I said that's what's wrong with the white folks. I put on race, I was stinking, but I did ask her. She wanted to make a joke out of it. He said, well, I really don't want you to quit school, I said it don't make any difference. I'm sixteen now, I got a job, I can work, I can do whatever. I'm not going back. He kept weaving his basket, I think about it now, he was smooth, it was unreal. He said, now she already have a job, I said yeah, she has a job. He said, now she kind of wanted that confrontation, I said she sure did, cause I left them now. I just kept working on my car, and he would say something periodically as I would just come to the house and do what ever. It was a big farm that we lived on, an old dairy farm. It sat right in the middle where Old Well is, by the house that sat in the middle, that's fifty acres of land almost. It didn't bother me, and it did bother me the way he was talking to me.; So later on that evening, when it was time for me to work with him, finish up some of my chairs, I

was free. I had put me a little house down in the barn. I'd built me a little house away from the house, had electricity and all. I thought I was pretty much on my own, summer time I could live, I had a bed in there and my old garage and my cars. He was really proud of me to be able to take something apart and put it back anyhow. He handled things in a manner, he never was physical with us, he handled us as a teacher should handle things. He was a teacher. Somehow he convinced me—he called Mr. MacDougal, or my mama or somebody called—and I went back to school. That summer, I went to summer school, that's the first time I ever enjoyed English, too. I had a wonderful English teacher; I walked out of summer school with an A. I used to see the other teacher in the hallway; I'd walk by, wouldn't speak to her. She's one of my customers now. I don't know if she knows, or if she actually remembers the incident, she probably does. I think of it now, and it doesn't bother me, I can laugh about it now because she was stupid. You just don't do kids like that, because a school is something that saves kids. It's not there really even to educate them, it's there to save them. That's why you're there, you can give back to somebody else, that's your job in life, somewhere to contribute. It don't necessarily have to be a kid, it could be an adult, but make a contribution somewhere. Everybody wants to – I know I do, even my work, I love antiques and I love making a contribution. We're in the process of taking my old family recipe and making a wax now and hopefully can sell it, cause it's child safe, biodegradable and blah, blah,blah. I went back to school, and that's really the last and the best of it. the best of it was going to see Mrs. Senn, that was her name, the English teacher I had for summer school, God was she not a teacher; she made you want to do the work! I mean I went home, did my homework, I was doing essays, I never wanted to do an essay before, why me? But we had fun. That's the first time and the last time I had ever carried an A average in school. That wasn't the first time, in Lincoln, I had an A average a few times. I enjoyed doing that. Also, my

history teacher at Chapel Hill High School, I enjoyed her too. These people tell you why and what and give back. These were the two white teachers I had. Going on through school, I never did have a black teacher again. I never did have a black teacher again, I never had a black teacher once I left Lincoln, not one. I think maybe what happened, I may have felt like I was deserted. It's a strange thing to be out on that island like yourself. You're part of that first piece of soup, and you're like a pea in a pot. You don't know which pea is important and which one's not. You see some people getting certain things and you wonder why you're not getting the same things. Some people you're fair with, I tell you about this teacher—some of the other black students she probably never would have said that to. My father, I think taught his whole family to stand up. My sister, one time, was head of the school board here, believe it or not, and I was one of the people who helped her get elected to the school board. Never be one of these people who gets something so you can say it was mind, do it to make a contribution, to give something back. That's what the young kids need now. I think most of them don't have it. I think all the time, how many other kids in society run into the same thing that I ran into, it could have easily happened to you. It didn't matter which line it's on, but when you hurt someone's feelings, know it or not, their feelings are still hurt. It's like sometimes people, if you're a teacher being marked absent, instead of being marked absent, it should be marked where are you. They know you should be, and they shouldn't be allowed for you not to enjoy your school. That's what I enjoyed, I mean even English class. I learned more from that because I was challenged, I know for a fact, if you're challenged in something, more than likely, you're going to do your best at it. What ever you're doing now, this should take you and probably, not necessarily change your perspective about anything, but make you think and notice things more. That's what I've been able to do with my life. When I went in business, I never knew, I didn't write a business plan or anything like that, I

was unemployed and looking for a job. I was in the kitchen, had just left the unemployment office, and I had somebody's furniture I was working on. my mother said to me, john, you're looking for a job, don't seem like you're going to be able to find one, do you? I said no, this was in about 1976, we had a real cold winter that year, we had ice storms and power lines was breaking. It's the last time I ever really remember it being cold around here, it was cold. So being unemployed, I just kind of hung around the house, I lost my job that December. It's never a long time cold around here, probably just a month, that's a long time around here staying cold for day after day after day and not get up into the 50s and 60s and break back down like we've had to day. I said No I'm not going to be able to find a job, and gas lines had began to form, that's when gas first went up. That's what we're talking now with politics, talking about the good old days, you can't bring no good old days, it's gone, some things don't ever happen again. We was in her kitchen talking, and my mother had just found out that she was diabetic and she was kind of I think depressed about it. I said these things can happen, my father was diabetic too, and she still was trying to reach out, I think feeling a little sorry for me. I was unemployed, actually I was forced from my job, I still wonder if it wasn't political too. I made a joke out of some politics at that particular time, but anyhow, I didn't probably respect my job enough anyhow. She said to me, why are you looking for a job, everyday, you're working on someone's furniture, why don't you just go into business for yourself. That thing hit a bell with me just like the English teacher did. I said you know she might be right, I don't know how I'm gonna do that. That's what I'm going to do. I've been self-employed ever since, that was twenty-seven years ago. It came from my mother which had no education, I mean my mother had pretty much no education. She can read a little bit and whatever, but not much. She have improved upon what she was, I tell you that woman invented [] I could work for myself. I never saw my father as a self-employed

business man at the time. I saw him as someone who did baskets and chairs. He was a very successful business man. That's what I tell my friend, 'well I'm gonna get in business here, sometime when I get off work, I cut yards, well if you cut yards, you're a business man, don't worry about it. You're self-employed. If someone pays you for what you do and you're doing a good service, don't worry about it, you're in business. If you want to do fifty yards or one yard, that's the difference in it. If you want to do one yard, you need a job at the university and do that on the evening. If you want to do fifty yards, you can't work at the University, you have to do it on your own, you have to save your money, you have to take it to the bank, pay other people, and blah, blah. That's the way it works, it's a very simple solution, work hard and you'll have what you want. That's pretty much it. from then on, my father restored furniture, I restored it. He respected it, I respected it. I hope that some day we'll have our own polish on the market.

[Mr. Mason showed me the furniture polish and wax. His neighbor Hector also stopped by.]

JM: That's the most amazing thing for me, I'm real proud of the fact – I'd never want to be a slave, but I'm proud of the fact I came from slavery as far as my ancestors are concerned, to get to where I am. If we was running a race, and I look up and you're running so hard, and you're not too far in front of me, or you might be standing right beside you, or I might be a little bit in front for you. So, life is equal automatically wit God, so no matte how you treat his people, you can't win the race unless you treat people fair. So that's my theory behind that. I'm serious about it, no different than Hector who just came here. His father's one of my very, very best friends, and he works or me at the same time. We share food, Ash Wednesday, they're very religious, I'm

a Baptist and they're Catholic, so they practice a different thing, so they won't eat any hard meats anymore until after Easter. I practice what they practice, cause one thing, it's healthy. It doesn't matter what I believe, I believe what they believe too, I'm very sensitive about my God too. It's healthy. If you don't do it for no other reason, it's healthy. It's amazing what we as people, and how far we are a part, and how close we are. They came over here from Mexico, and talking to him, his life sounds just like my life, his background and that same life sounds almost identical.

Mr. Mason recommends people to talk to: Nelo Linsley, his mother was a midwife in the community. Joe Parish has been in the community a long time. Tells about the time his uncle died at the mill.