

Clarke A. Egerton, Jr.
4/10/01

RG: This is the April the 10th in the year 2001, and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Clarke Egerton at his home in Durham at 614 Cecil Street. Good morning Clarke.

CE: Good morning, Bob.

RG: It's a pleasure to be here and to meeting you. I've heard so much about you and the band from people I've interviewed. So I thank you for your time in advance.

CE: Certainly.

RG: We had just been talking and you said that you grew up in Durham, so I will just ask you another question instead of what was it like growing up in Chapel Hill. Can you tell me about your background? Where you went to school, and how you got into music?

CE: Oh, I'm from Durham. Of course I went to Hillside High School. And I think my first encounter with instrumental music was from a man named William Lankey Cole. He was a great piano player back in those days, and also played trombone. And my mother was able to get him to give me clarinet lessons once a week. It was a dollar a lesson back in those days. I was one of those players that played the clarinet, and a little bit on the piano. But mostly the clarinet. And I had my baseball and football and all those things tucked away under the piano bench, and that kind of thing. And lots of times many of the boys would be out in the front yard waiting for me to get through with my rehearsal. But I stuck with it. I really enjoyed it.

One summer with Lankey Cole working' with me on the clarinet enabled me to get into the Hillside High School band. And I think my band director then was Fillmore Hall, we used to call him Shorty Hall. And he recognized right away that I had some potential, so I just took off with that clarinet, and was able to get into the marching band. And for four years, that what I did. I played clarinet, and moved from the clarinet and learned to play the oboe. I think the first oboe that Hillside received. We had a contest, and of course three of the first clarinet players had to try out for it, and I won out so I played the oboe. I'm certain that those four years with Shorty Hall really encouraged me to go into music.

And I wasn't quite certain at that time, because I was doing a part-time job at Lincoln Hospital where I was taking x-rays from one hospital to another. And during that time Lincoln Hospital would hire someone, and I was the one they hired for that little job. It was \$7.50 every two weeks. And I would stop by after school in the afternoon, and I would go to the lab. They would give me several x-rays, and bus fare, and I would go from Lincoln Hospital right down the street and catch the bus. Catch the bus, and go to Five Points, and there, you'd have to get a

transfer to go to Duke. And I would go to Duke, I knew exactly where to go, and there I would give them a set of x-rays for the doctors there to read, pick up a set that they had read, and bring them back. And that was my little job. So during that time I was very close to the laboratory technician, who was Margaret Goodwin. And she allowed me to piddle around in the lab and so forth, and I had gotten an interest in being a laboratory technician. And I really enjoyed that. But after graduation and moving on to college, I pursued music a little further. In my second year I think is when I decided to major in music. I said this is what I really enjoy.

RG: Where did you do your college training, Clarke?

CE: That was at North Carolina College, which is now North Carolina Central University. And any Saturday from 9:00 until 4:30-5:00 in the afternoon, you could find me in one of the practice rooms working on my skills. (laughs) And being certain that the marches and things that we played were learned, I wouldn't have to have the little lyre that goes on the clarinet to read the music. I had mine memorized. I just loved to do that. It came in very handy. And after North Carolina Central, I went into teaching and had some experiences in band; of course the first job was in Warrenton. The next year was at Lincoln High School.

RG: So you graduated North Carolina College in –

CE: '55. '56.

RG: '55. '56. And then you were at John R. Hawkins High School?

CE: Warrenton – it was John R. Hawkins High School, it was called John R. Hawkins, in Warrenton, North Carolina. And that year was my first year doing band. So I had the band, safety patrol, boy scouts, and bus duty. I also taught two classes of music, and three classes of social studies. And at the time when we had lunch, activity period, they called it that's when I would have to do the instrumental repair on instruments. They had a nice repair kit there. But there was no money for instrumental repair, and no money for music. So any music that I got, I either bought it or wrote it out instruments, and myself that we repaired, I did it myself, or worked it into a class situation. My principal, J. Estees Byers said: "That's a music class. Teach your way." So I did that. We did a lot of music, but we also did some instrumental repair, so I could have a band functioning properly.

RG: And then what year did you come to Lincoln?

CE: That was the following year. I was just one year at John R. Hawkins, and then it was five years at Lincoln High School.

RG: Starting 19 –

CE: '56, '57.

RG: To '61?

CE: Yes.

RG: When you were at North Carolina College, now North Carolina Central University, and how many instruments did you learn how to play?

CE: In order to major in music, to finish in instrumental music as I did, you had to learn all of them. And I was very fortunate when I attended North Carolina Central; I was pretty good on the drums, clarinet, oboe, and saxophone. And so when I started at North Carolina College I already had those instruments pretty much mastered. Then I started with the bassoon, and then the string instruments of course being the most problem, but I enjoyed those also. (laughs)

RG: That's incredible. Well, I want to focus on Lincoln.

CE: Surely.

RG: So let me just ask you a broad question. Tell me your memories of Lincoln High School.

CE: Oh, it was a wonderful experience, because I consider that to be my first, best job. My first job was at Hawkins, but the real challenge was at Lincoln High School. I was fortunate to be able to go there after my student teaching. Now when I was at North Carolina College I did student teaching, in Chapel Hill, under J.Y. Bell. He was the band director there. In between the time I went to Warrenton and taught there for a year, the job at Lincoln High School was available. J.Y. Bell called me and asked me if I wanted it and I said yes. You know where Warrenton is, it's off the beaten track, and the principal knew it. He said, "I know you're a suitcase teacher, so you have to have two sets of lesson plans. You may not come back." But anyway, (laughs), I was able to go back to Lincoln High School and actually teach some of the students that remembered me as a student teacher there from a year ago, two years ago. And so I had two classes there that I could relate to. So I got off to a real good start with those students. And they were just fantastic. Anything that I said we should do, they said we can do it. And that's what I enjoyed most about them, and they had so little. We had to repair instruments. You know, \$45, I think, was my entire budget. I thought that was something, considering that my other school didn't have anything. [laughs]

RG: Was that a repair budget or –

CE: That was *the* budget. That included music, repair, and anything else that you were going to do. And so I had to use that wisely. So we had to depend quite a bit on gifts of instruments from the community. Fundraising. All of those things were

incorporated. And there again, even with the band that I was working with, again I had the safety patrol, and I had a homeroom, and then they had the Maydays, which you are responsible for. And I was also the junior class advisor, which means that I had to be responsible for getting the junior prom together. So I really enjoyed that experience. I have a schedule somewhere, but I wasn't able to locate it. It was a tight schedule. In addition to the commute from Durham to Chapel Hill, which at that time I think we called it nine miles. Now I don't know what it is. And it was only 11 miles and it didn't take you long to get there. Now it takes you almost 45 minutes [laughs] to go just that distance.

RG: What time did you get to work in the morning?

CE: I was always early. I'm an early bird now. I was there about 7:30.

RG: And home at what time?

CE: 5:30-6:00.

RG: Let's go back to the band. I'm interested in what you know about the history of the band. When it started, who started it, how the children learned the music.

CE: I'm not sure about the history of the Lincoln band. I can't back any further than I can remember, than Jasper Bell, J.Y. Bell. I know that they were a small group, not that large. I also know that he believed in the same thing that I believed in. Marching is great, but concert band is just better. And we did a lot of our work in the concert band, as well as the marching band. Marching band you'd get the public, more of the public involved in the marching band. And for your satisfaction, you'd have those kids in there, when marching season is over, you'd say we're going to play something nice, some Bach, Tchaikowsky, some things like that. Which they really enjoyed. Once they get into it, they may shuffle their feet a little bit at the start, and then as we make a little progress, they say "this is great."

RG: Who taught the children how to play their instruments?

CE: I would. During the time I was there, you had your beginner program, which fell to the band director. So you actually get to start the kids on their instrument, and then bring them along through to the high school, which I was able to do for four years, five years.

RG: So did you go back to Northside Elementary, and teach there?

CE: I don't know whether it was called Northside at that – maybe it was. Yes. Yes I did. That was what I did three times a week. I'm not sure how that schedule worked. But yes, I did that.

- RG: Went to – it was originally called Orange County Training School, and then they changed it to Northside.
- CE: Yes. Northside, it's coming back now. Yes, I would go there, had a beginner program, I would teach the class there, and then come back to the high school and work with the high school students.
- RG: What a schedule!
- CE: Oh yes, definitely. And I also had two classes, I'm thinking now, or was it three – two classes in social studies that I taught at the high school.
- RG: So, what was the first grade where instruments were offered to students at Northside?
- CE: I want to say fourth grade, but it may have been fifth grade. I'm not certain. I know that we did start instruments in the fourth grade here in Durham, and I'm not certain about Chapel Hill, but it was fifth or sixth grade, I'll say that, to be on the safe side.
- RG: So you had a farm system coming' in.
- CE: Surely. And that's great when you can start a student and then he's responsible to you right on through until high school. That's great, because it was a little different in some other situations where you're a high school teacher, somebody else starts your program and you have to take what they send you. That was the case after I moved from Chapel Hill. But in Chapel Hill I was able to use the same students that I started, because I was *the* band director. There was no assistant, no other help.
- RG: Did you feel that the students gained more than a musical education from being in the band?
- CE: Oh certainly. There are so many lessons to be learned being in the band situation, because you work together as a family, and so many of those students that I taught actually looked to me as their dad. Later it was Big Daddy, and then I guess it was Little Daddy because I was much smaller than I am now. (laughter) But then a lot of the parents would come to me and say, Mr. Egerton, talk to little Johnny or talk to little Mary Jane – I won't call any names – because they have so much respect for you. They just love you and so forth, and they're not doing well in their subjects at all, but they love the band. Lots of times I had to be the middle person there to get little Johnny back on track. Make sure that he's gin' to his classes and so forth, and getting the education that his mom wanted him to have. And there were some cases, I guess you've found out, that there may not have been a daddy, a father at home. So I played the role of that father frequently for many of those students. I'm sure they got a lot out of it. Many years later, you know, you may

hear some come back and say, you did so much for me, and how much they enjoyed the program, and what it meant to them.

Even though some of them were not in the band, they were also under my tutelage for social studies and my social studies class, which was small, that first part, first semester I think it was. But during that time, I didn't just teach social studies. I came back to Durham and I bought a little can of fried baby bees. I also bought a bar of chocolate covered ants, and escargot or something. I've forgotten now, it was one other thing that we got, but we didn't get to that. But I carried that back and introduced it to the students, and we opened that can of fried baby bees, and started a little taste thing there, and the students just loved it. I mean, they'd Ooh! They didn't enjoy it at first, so naturally I was going to be the guinea pig, so I tried one of those fried baby bees (laughs). It had a nut-like quality. But I went ahead tried it, and then some of the others tried it, and that second semester my classes were running over with students because I was doing something different. It wasn't just writing in the book. We ventured out and did things a little differently. Naturally it got back to the principal. He says, "What's this about fried baby bees (laughter) in your classroom?" I said, "Well you know, in many countries, they do that. I mean, this is a staple."

So they really enjoyed that. And the same way with the band, we didn't always do things like the white high school band. We lifted the instruments and had them looking a little flashy for marching. Did little steps and things, which the crowd always appreciated. And yet and still, at the end of the marching season, we were able to go in and take the same music that the white high school was using for concerts, we could take that music and also play it, even though we had some inferior equipment. I was able to make adjustments. I remember once entering the band into a contest, and it called for French Horns. I didn't have any French Horns; we had what they call mellophones. So any time I found something that mentioned music or instrumental music, I read it to them. And I found out that you could get an adapter for this mellophone that you could put a French Horn mouthpiece in, and get that French Horn quality of sound. You know, I took two of those mellophones, got the adapter, of course this one was coming out of my pocket, and the French Horn mouthpiece, and worked with those students on that. When we went to contest, the judges said, "Nice French horns." Those are mellophones. (laughter) The judges were just so impressed, they said "Oh, good French horn sound." I said "Ok, right." They were playing the French horn part using the French horn mouthpiece, but it was actually E-flat mellophones that they were using.

RG: Fascinating.

CE: Oh yes.

RG: You know I hear so many people comment to me about how wonderful the marching band was. And you've touched a little bit on moving the instruments,

maybe high stepping. Can you describe a little bit more what a parade was like for the Lincoln High School marching band?

CE: Oh that was the top that was the top of the thing. If there was going to be a parade, you could expect to have a good turnout. They used to say oh, they're gonna show out. I never did like that term so much, they're gonna show out. But they did use that. And it was a chance for the students to say "Look mom, what I can do." And it gave them so much pride to be in a marching band, and everybody's just alike, all step together. We played music together, and it's just a wonderful skill. I just get goose bumps just thinking' about it right now, the way the crowds would just cheer us on, and especially when we got up there by Fowler's, where the Christmas Parade went. Just one parade -- two parades: Homecoming Parade and Christmas Parade. Get up there at Fowler's Food Store and all of the white students from the university would come down to see the Lincoln band and they would just cheer us on. And the students just enjoyed that.

And the band would step high, and play, and they enjoyed the discipline. I'm a real funny guy and we can have all the fun in the world, but they knew when it came time for the marching band or the concert band, I was a different person. I had two personalities. Time to get this job done. There was no fooling' around. And they accepted that discipline, and even today, when I retired in '97, I still had that same discipline. Students were wearing caps in the halls and wearing their pants slouching, but not in my band. Everything changed once you hit that door, and of course I'm happy that I'm out now, because maybe somebody would have challenged me, but, (laughs) but they didn't. And it lasted for 41 years, so I kept that same rules. I found that things seemed to work much better when the student knows you mean business. James Scott Farron or whatever, that thing that comes on the television, (laughs), I meant business, and they know that. So they enjoyed it because we had good results by doing' it that way.

RG: Did you, along the parade routes, stop and do any dance steps or any kind of routines?

CE: That was the highlight. Sure! (laughs)

RG: What were they like?

CE: Great. I mean, whatever was popular during that time, I would try to score some music for them. But, 20 measures or so, or whatever was popular during that time. I wouldn't want to ask ASCAP to come after me, but you could get a record. Get a record and listen to it and sketch out a little something for your band, and they would play the latest thing. And everybody enjoyed it, and the majorettes would make up the little dance steps. Of course in my early years I guess I was making' up some of them. But as time went on naturally I couldn't keep up. But they'd make up the little dance steps and we would stop and perform, and that was a highlight. They really enjoyed that.

RG: Did any of the children trail along behind the band and try to copy what they were doing?

CE: Ah, yes. (laughs) I guess you heard that. I've been known to be the piper of music, because once the Lincoln band would come along, they would sort of follow along toward the end. I loved it. I enjoyed that, and I always marched with the band. A lot of my colleagues said "You don't march with the band." I said "Oh yes I do." I'm right there, because I wanted to be sure that everything is going to be like *I* would like for it to be. You'd have to keep some of the public from coming out and bothering the girls. You know, your majorettes, you have your pretty girls out there, stepping and, they want to come out and make a date or something, but naturally I was up there and I wouldn't allow that.

RG: Did you lead them or did you just march along?

CE: I'd march right along there beside the trombones, I was always on the first row. First row is trombone.

RG: But one of the students led the band.

CE: Oh yes, I'd have a drum major. And believe it or not, my drum major for a couple of years was also one of the star football players. And even at the Homecoming Parade, they said "Well, you're not going to be able to get " – I can't recall his name – Jimmy, "to lead the band cause he's on the football team. They got a game tonight." So I talked to Bradshaw, Bradshaw said "Oh yeah, you can use him. Because he needs the exercise." (laughter) Oh yeah. So we would do the Homecoming parade with a drum major that's also going to be the quarterback for the winning football team.

RG: That wasn't Doug Clark was it?

CE: No.

RG: Cause I know he was a drum major, but he was also quarterback on the football team.

CE: Yes.

RG: So he wasn't the only one.

CE: No, he was not the only one. This was, I want to say Jimmy Little, I'm not sure. No. You may have to take that out, it wasn't Jimmy Little. I can't think of his name now. But I do know we had him.

RG: Well how do you measure the excellence of a band or an orchestra? Did you have competitions? And did you get ranked?

CE: Sure. Yes, and I did give you a couple of articles which - at that time it was a contest where thirty or forty bands would meet in Greensboro. And I think at that time, it was competition, it was called a festival, called Music Festival. But that was one of the highlights for the students. In the concert band, which, they were also in the marching band. And we would go to that competition and be judged by three judges. They would give you a list of music, and you would choose three pieces and a march, and learn those. And then you would perform. And the judges would judge you, at that time, I recall, they would judge you, and you could make 1, 2, 3, or 4 in grade, 1 being your highest grade. And at first it was sort of a local type thing. Regional, they called it. And if you made a 1 or 2, which were the two highest things, then you'd get to go to the state competition. And the state competition was normally in, I'm trying to think, it was in Greensboro. And in the state competition, there you would have the best bands. They'd all have made the 1 superior or 2 excellent together, and that's where you'd get the big prize. They would rate you again, as 1, 2, 3, or 4. And I'm happy to say we never made a 3. We were always 1 or 2. We did get some excellents, but mostly it was superior. I think those excellents should have been superior, but...(laughter)

RG: Spoken like a true father.

CE: That's right. They should have been superior, they just, they were picking' on me. (laughter)

RG: So do you happen to recall what the band or orchestra record was for the five years that you were there?

CE: Oh, no. I don't want to guess that.

RG: But you were always excellent or superior.

CE: I know that for a fact.

RG: Even in the state competition?

CE: Sure.

RG: That's wonderful. Can you tell me something about the uniforms? How did you get the uniforms, and what were they like?

CE: I inherited those uniforms. As I recall they were first orange and black. And the students didn't like that orange and black, and I think we finally went into a black and gold. Black with gold piping. And much, much better to look at. A little easier on the eye.

RG: It wasn't Halloween looking.

CE: It wasn't Halloween looking, right. A little easier on the eye.

RG: So they were inherited, you already had those. You didn't have to go out and raise funds?

CE: We had some, and I think that we did have a fundraiser and try to add on a few of those to the group, because we did get a little larger during my five years.

RG: Do you remember the PTA?

CE: Yes.

RG: Can you tell me something about the PTA? Did they work for you, did they raise money for you?

CE: The PTA, in conjunction with the Little Booster Group. Now of course the PTA would be for the whole general school, but you wouldn't have the PTA, naturally you would have some parents who would sort of spin off and just work primarily for the band. And we were able to do some fundraisers, I remember one fundraiser – well, I can remember several, but I remember one fundraiser when the ballpoint pen came out. I was able to get that fundraiser and saw it in a little catalogue, and I had the orange and black ball point pen. And the band parents, those parents helped me get those things, and we made good money selling those ball point pens. First it was a novelty, it was the first thing out some said "Oh, here's a ball point pen." They were terrible, because when you wrote with them, if you touched it, it was all on your fingers and so forth. It was hard to get off. But it was still better than the old dip in the well with the ink pen.

So that was a good fundraiser. There was so much talent among my band parents. They made doll clothes and sold them. Clothes for dolls, can you imagine? They were able to make those things and sell them, out into the community. Naturally, most of the – well, about ninety-five percent of the students' parents that I worked with, worked for the university. They worked at the university laundry, or they worked in service. And sometimes they worked in both. They were somebody's maid, or butler, or they worked at the university laundry. There were a few professionals that were schoolteachers. The parents of the children, I'm speaking of now, that were schoolteachers or in other businesses, like contracting and things that had the high stakes. But for the majority of those students, their parents were in service or working at the university laundry, or some of those types of jobs.

RG: So, the PTA helped you raise money –

CE: Oh, sure.

RG: And the money was used for instruments? Uniforms? Travel?

CE: Yes. All of the above. (laughs)

RG: Where did you practice?

CE: Marching band was in front of the school, right on the field. It was a larger field – I think you have a picture of that. And to get the practice for the parade, we actually got out on the street there in front of the school, and that would be dangerous. But I could stop the traffic and let the band march up and down so we could get some street experience so I'd know how to line my band up and so forth, and marched on down, what's the name of that street?

RG: Merritt Mill?

CE: Merritt Mill Road, right. See, you have all that!

RG: Well I know it, I've been there.

CE: Go right down Merritt Mill Road and turn off, and go right on down the little driveway to our schoolyard. We would do that at least once during the school day. We'd do that, maybe right after school. We could do that. The early morning practices that I did, of course, were for concert band. I did that earlier, then go in and do a little something before the basketball team started practicing on the floor. We were on the stage. So we had to practice in what we called the gymtorium. We didn't have an auditorium, just a gymtorium. It served its purpose, and my band room was on the stage. And the year that I left, they finally decided that I was worthy of having a band room. So R.D. Smith and his shop crew had knocked out a wall for two rooms, and were going to surprise me with a band room that year. And that's when I got the call for the job here in Durham.

RG: Where, at Hillside?

CE: At Whitted Junior High.

RG: Whitted Junior High.

CE: Paid a lot more money. And I had my first job offer and my first baby. It was no question that I was going to leave that job and take this one. I was getting my family started, so that's when I left.

RG: So you shared where they practiced football, that field outside Lincoln, with the football team?

CE: Sure.

RG: And you shared the gymnasium with the basketball team.

CE: I surely did. And also, don't forget, all of Bradshaw's athletic gym classes were held right there in that same complex. That was the gymnasium. So if he was working on volleyball, if they weren't outside, they were inside. But my band program had to go on.

RG: Did you ever have any problems in arranging times? Any rancor there? It sounded as though you were pretty pressed for time and space there?

CE: Oh sure. I imagine you want to pick up on some of the dirt like some of those reporters do. But there wasn't any. We had some moments where we would say listen, I need such and such, and are you going to be here at such and such a time. We were always able to work it out. We were both energetic; we wanted the best for the kids, so we were able to work it out.

RG: You had mentioned that you played in the parades, the marching band played in parades. What, where did you go with the marching band? What parades did you play in? You mentioned Homecoming and Christmas Parade. Homecoming for Lincoln –

CE: Yes, and those were the two parades right there in Chapel Hill. Outside of Chapel Hill parades, I'm not sure. I have to work on that a little later.

RG: Can I bring up some names? I – Hillsborough, Pittsboro, Durham – do you remember any of those places?

CE: I'm sure we did. I'm sure we played Hillsborough, which was right around the corner, I remember those guys coming to us, and I'm sure we went to them for some parades and so forth.

RG: When you performed at the football game, did you do any special things on the field?

CE: Well the half-time special, yes. Just like your parades. We'd stop to do a performance. You have a half-time show, and if you have a visiting band of course you divided the time, and it was always customary to allow the visiting band to perform first. Then you would come on later and do your performance. You would work out a half-time show, just like you see on the television today. It was really a little more complicated, I think, back there in those days, because we were marching 8 to 5, and we had to sit down and figure exactly where everybody was going to be in a particular point in a march. So at 16 steps you're supposed to make a turn, and everybody had a sheet to follow and so forth. And I stayed up

many a night past twelve o'clock working on those things, and sometimes with the drum major. We'd just sit down and we'd have to get it together so that everybody would know what they were supposed to do. And after we'd get that drill – that would be a drill – you'd get your drill done, with your marching and so forth. Then you'd have the little pageantry part there, where you'd make up different formations. I think we did something called Soul Train, or something popular. And we made a TV set with little antennas and things like that.

End of side 1

Side 2

CE: They had some streamers for the antenna, and you could do some things like that. It was quite interesting. The public really enjoyed it. They looked forward to the half-time show.

RG: Did you ever have lights on the shoes or uniforms?

CE: Yes, we did some of that. They had lights on the hats.

RG: Lights on the hats.

CE: Yeah, lights on the hats, and I'm not certain how much of that we did. I'm sure we did some of it (Inaud). But they were just for the hat. They were little battery-powered lights, and we put those on there, and we'd make different formations.

RG: So you turned the lights out?

CE: Turned the lights out, yeah.

RG: Oh how neat. Where'd you get that idea?

CE: Oh, you read.

RG: It wasn't original.

CE: It wasn't original. Nothing original there. No, and the swinging of the instruments was done at Ohio State. They'd been doing' that for a hundred or so years I guess. They did a little cursive writing, the dotting of the i. And of course University of Michigan, I really enjoyed that band. As a matter of fact, I went to University of Michigan for a couple of summers and took some marching band courses. I wish I could remember. George Cavender was his name.

RG: Well, I wanted to talk to you also about the safety patrol. You were the head of the safety patrol, and I wanted to know what the safety patrol did.

CE: OK. During that time the safety patrol was mostly monitors. They served as hall monitors, they served as monitors in the cafeteria. Of course, their primary duty of course was to raise that flag in the morning. And we all stood at attention while the flag was raised. We also had prayers in the schools, you know. (laughs) And we pledged allegiance to the flag. That was my daily thing, and of course they'd come back and lower the flag in the afternoon. We didn't have the bugle or anything while that ceremony was taking place, but we did that. And of course the safety patrol was very important to school buses -- directing traffic and things of that nature, on the campus. Buses came in. They would have the little flags to direct traffic. It was very important.

RG: Sounds like a responsible position.

CE: It was, very responsible. Of course it was a rain, shine, sleet or snow type job. The safety patrol were the students in the upper ten percent of the class. They would have to be the brightest. They would get a chance to be on the safety patrol.

RG: What'd they do in the hallways, Clarke?

CE: They served as hall monitors. Students are not supposed to be in the halls. No chewing gum, no fighting, things of this nature. So it was just a matter of having somebody there. That would be a free period for safety patrol. Or sometimes the safety patrol would be so far advanced in his classes that they could sit him or her outside the door and let them do independent study, to have somebody in the hallway. Now if somebody came to visit, the patrol could meet them there, greet them, and show them to the office. Things like that.

RG: Did they keep discipline in the hallway when the classes were moving?

CE: Oh yes.

RG: Would you say it was quiet or noisy in the hallway with the change of class?

CE: Relatively quiet. Now I'm not going to sit here and say that there was just total quietness. Naturally when you come out of a classroom you're going to talk to your friends and things, and greet each of them. But not too much of the boisterousness now that, and thank goodness no Columbine. That's scary, every time I think about some of those things. And I do believe having the safety patrol there, teachers always on the doors and things like that, any time something would start, you had someone who would be right on top of it. So it wouldn't escalate into anything large, like problems we have now.

RG: Let's say that I were a student at Lincoln, and I was chewing gum and I had my hat on. What would happen to me?

CE: (Laughs) Well, you'd be told that you're not supposed to chew gum, and take the cap off. If you didn't do that, of course they'd have to send you to the principal.

RG: Was there a demerit system of sorts there?

CE: I'm not sure about that. I'm afraid to answer that question. I do know we still had spanking. I can tell you that.

RG: Can you tell me more about that?

CE: No. (laughter)

RG: So you didn't spank?

CE: No, I didn't spank.

RG: Why didn't you spank?

CE: I didn't have to. I think by being the band director I was thoroughly loved by all. And I had such a strong disciplinary voice. I didn't have to use that tactic. Some of the football players, who were larger than I, might have wanted to challenge me a couple of times on some things, but I would tell them, "Now, you know, I played football, and I did this," I'd tell them all the things I used to do and so forth, "so I'm going to give you a run for your money." So nobody ever tried it. (laughter)

RG: Was the safety patrol honored in any way, at any time?

CE: Oh, I'm sure they were. They would get the certificates and so forth. And just the mere fact that you could put on that blue sweater with the white band and the little silver badge and so forth, that was honor and recognition that they just enjoyed being able to be on the safety patrol.

RG: So you stood out if you were on the safety patrol. Everyone knew you were a good student?

CE: Definitely.

RG: Top of the class?

CE: Sure.

RG: And you had discipline.

CE: Sure.

RG: Can you tell me about the assemblies that took place at Lincoln High?

CE: They were very orderly. And I don't recall any problems if that's what you were thinking about.

RG: No, I wasn't referring to problems, it's just my understanding –

CE: It was just an orderly assembly. Whoever was in charge was on the stage– that was my band room, they used my band room for the stage, and they were on the stage, and they would go through their programs, and we all had the little folding chairs that set out in the gymnasium that we sat in, by classes. And of course each class, with their teacher, would go into the assembly, orderly fashion, each class would come in at a certain time, because the bell would ring and I guess the seniors would go in first, and I've forgotten how they finally did that. But as I recall, it seems like the seniors would go in, the teachers would be with their classroom and they would stand by their class, check the roll, make sure everybody was there. Nobody played hooky, went to the restroom or anything like that. We had an orderly assembly, until they started electing officers, of course things would get a little loud, but –

RG: What did you do at the assembly? I understood it took place about every Friday, is that correct?

CE: Yes, and it would depend on what time of the year it was. Sometimes they would have an assembly that focused on studies. They would have assemblies that focused on the proper discipline. They would have assemblies that had the, I want to say the Crown and Scepter Club, but I think that was at another school, but the different organizations, when they had inductees, they would have an assembly that you would witness the inductees who would go into a science club, or someone was inducted into the National Honor Society, or something of that nature. They would let the whole school witness that, and that was good for the students, because they'd say "Gee, I'm going to get that next year, I'm going to be in that organization next year," and so forth, so on. And awards day, that was always a big thing, give out band awards and things of that nature. They'd get some awards, get a little pin in the contest, we got our superior rating, not only did we have a certificate or a plaque, I would give the leaders their little ribbons, the ribbons that they could wear. They enjoyed that.

RG: Did the classes perform at assembly, or the band or orchestra, choral group or drama group?

CE: We've had some assemblies that the band performed, yes. But not all of them.

RG: Some of them.

CE: Some of them.

RG: Was there usually some performance of some type at an assembly?

CE: Yes. They would have some, something special. Somebody would sing a solo or somebody would play on an instrument, or some group would perform. That was, I guess the part after we go through the formality of it, before you get to the big part.

RG: I guess what I'm driving at, I don't want to be too obtuse, so I'll just be as direct as I can be. What I'm driving at is, my perception of Lincoln High School is that it was competitive and it was performance-oriented. And the students had opportunities to perform in front of the school, in front of other students. And I wonder if- is this – am I putting words into your mouth, or is this a fair interpretation of what I've heard?

CE: I think that's fair. Of course there were some, you had the little debate clubs that would go along. All of this was on a, you were saying Friday, and I guess it was, I think I recall it being on a Friday. Those things did take place, yes. It was quite competitive, and we had some good speakers come out of that group, also.

RG: So you had a debate club on some of the assemblies as well?

CE: Sure. And naturally when they were getting ready for their – who's going to be the president of the student council or president of this organization or that organization, they had to make little speeches and things of this nature, so they enjoyed that, and the children enjoyed it too.

RG: You had mentioned your social studies classes and books. Can you tell me about the equipment you had, the books, the desks, any other things? The quality of the material you were using.

CE: It was very poor quality. The books were always second-hand, hand-me-down books. I don't remember seeing a new book in any of the classes. They were generally second in nature, and I remember R.D. Smith, I think, was in charge of that. So you may have to go back to him and he may be able to correct me on the fact that we did have some new books. Maybe there were just new books for typing or something like that, but I'm not sure. But I don't remember any new books for social studies, at all. And that's the reason why we would go outside and try to do some other things to keep that class going. The desks, of course, they were sort of off and on. I can remember some desks being transferred to our school that were in pretty good shape, but I don't remember a whole new set of anything, any equipment coming in.

RG: So most of the equipment was used?

CE: Oh yes.

RG: Can you tell me about the teachers, your impression about the teachers at Lincoln High School? And – I'll just leave it at that.

CE: Oh, I think they had a good set of quality teachers. I was impressed with the teaching staff that was there. I don't want to call any names, but I know you've probably heard. You've already heard me speak about Bradshaw, and of course R.D. Smith. And Miss Pope, I think, was quite influential. She was the Home Economics teacher. Very particular about everything. She really helped those students, I know.

And helped me also, because she was the one that told me about Metropolitan Life Insurance. And I think about that time, blacks couldn't get the kind of insurance that I got. And she said yes Metropolitan, and probably opening the door, because you probably have heard of the fact that the insurance company had two sets of books, that they would sell insurance to blacks on one book and insurance to whites on another book, because blacks didn't live as long because of the kind of work that they had to do and so forth, they weren't expected to live as long. So they had different sets of books, and some insurance policies you just weren't able to get. But she told me about some things and I followed through on them, some about savings bonds and I followed through on that. And when I got married it really paid off. Of course now, you know, I'm pretty comfortable, and it came from the insurance. The insurance policy pays dividends, you see. That meant a lot, because back then blacks weren't able to get that kind of insurance. They were paying a little, 15 or 20 cents a week or whatever it cost. And whatever it came up to, just about, this'll be a hundred-dollar policy, and that was all you got.

RG: Did the principal have an influence on the school?

CE: McDougle – he was...ok guy. He was great. Mr. McDougle was...very strict, wanted discipline in that school. And he got that. He got a lot of respect. As a matter of fact, he has a school named for him over in Chapel Hill, so he paid his dues there, did a good job. I was able to work with him without any problems. The only problem I had was when I told him that I was going to leave. He just told me in no uncertain words that I knew that I was going to leave. I told him, "No, I didn't [plan to leave]." The job came available and I said, "Well I'm going to take it." (laughter) But that was only one of the things that I remember about Mr. McDougle. The other one was when I went to Chapel Hill for the first time. We had to do lesson plans, and I had a home room, you had to do the register and all this type of thing. But I had learned at my first job, because we were called suitcase teachers, to make out two sets of lesson plans. So on Friday afternoon, I would have a set of lesson plans for the next week on my desk, in detail. And I'd carry another set of lesson plans to Mr. McDougle for him to keep.

RG: Is that what every teacher did?

CE: Haven't gotten to that yet.

RG: Oh. Excuse me.

CE: So when I gave that to him, he said "Well, yeah!" And I said, "well I have a copy on my desk. That's what I was used to." Then he made all the teachers do that, and they said "Why did you do that!" (laughter)

RG: You were the bad guy, huh?

CE: I was the bad guy. They were on my case because I had them doing extra work. But that was one of the things that I got from J. Estees Byers, and I passed it along to Mr. McDougle, and he followed through. And it's good, in a way, because sometimes getting subs is much more difficult now than it was back then, but even then, sometimes a sub would be come in late, a person might be out of place or something like that. The lesson plan's right there on the desk, so when you walk in you're ready to go.

RG: So did they continue that for the five years that you were there?

CE: Oh yes. (laughs)

RG: Lesson plans every Friday to the principal? Right on the desk.

CE: Yep. On the desk.

RG: That's pretty disciplined.

CE: And when I detailed my lesson plans, being' a band director and so forth, I would always have a little note there that whoever was in my place could call on this particular student to help you and this student knows how to check the roll for you. Nobody would be called, and say they were there and they weren't there, because this student could be trusted.

RG: Well I haven't talked about many negative things here, and I do –

CE: There's not one to come up with around here. (laughs)

RG: Well, it can't be a Shangri-La, it wasn't Shangri-La.

CE: That's right. Oh, no.

RG: And so what I want to ask you, and I don't have a handle on this. I don't have a good handle – I have a good handle on a lot of things about the school, but I have

no idea about what the dropout rate was, I have no idea about how many went on for more education. And I wonder if you could speak to either of those.

CE: I don't have any statistics on that. I do know that during the time I was there, many of those students did not go any further than high school. And it was financial, and of course it was being in the situation that we were, in a segregated situation. They just didn't have that opportunity. So what we did at Lincoln High School, we gave those students all that we could give in those four years of high school. Their junior and senior prom, it was first class. I mean, tuxedos, the big band, the gymnasium was decorated. I remember one year Cadossa McCullen the head decorator, made the stage a ship, with the portholes in it. The seniors were the ones that were allowed on the stage. They had their tables, and were served heavy hors d'oeuvres and punch and so forth. Almost like a dinner. It was a big occasion for those students, because that might be the last time that they would have something of that nature, since many of them would not go to college and get into the fraternities, sororities, and things of that nature, and have that type of expense. I know Miss Pope worked with the girls; they learned to cook, they learned to sew, they learned how to set tables and all of those formal things, to be sure they had that before they left the high school setting. So those types of things I do remember, that many of those students did not – but we had quite a few who were able to go to colleges and universities, and of course they did very well. Because we trained them. They made us proud.

RG: Well I think they are very proud of you. They were very proud of not just you but other teachers as well. I mean, the pride with which the people I've interviewed speak is really remarkable. The love that they had for the school and the teachers.

CE: They had – it was a really close, I know you've heard this phrase at other times, but it was just like family. I mean, everybody was very close, and nobody had a problem by themselves. It was everyone's problem....We were known to help each other. It was just one of those things.

RG: Are there any other remembrances that you have that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to share?

CE: I think we've just about touched on everything. We've touched on the Homecoming Parade. I can remember for the first time having to be responsible for a float, because R.D. Smith was the float builder, but you had to raise the money for the panels and things that they would decorate the floats with. And go through the catalogues, I mean that was an experience for me, and then you'd have to find somebody that had a tractor that was going to pull the float. (laughs) All those kinds of things, so being the band director, the home room teacher, the safety patrol adviser, and all of that, and then have to go through this part of the Homecoming was a little traumatic, but it was enjoyable. It meant I had to come home and then go back at night and help supervise the decoration of our float.

Hope ours was better than the other groups, with all the competition that went in and preparing the best float.

RG: Well now, I heard a story about you, and tell me if this is true –

CE: Uh oh. (laughs)

RG: Maybe it was another band director. (laughs) I think it was Willie Bradshaw who went to scout the team. And he came back and you got after him and said “Now what was the band like, what did they do?”

CE: That’s right! That’s right!

RG: Now you weren’t just performing. You were competing with the other band.

CE: Oh, definitely. Yes. I would tell him: “Brad, when you scout so and so, scout the band for me. Was it a big band or a little band? What did they do?” Yes, sure.

RG: You weren’t gonna be outdone by any band, huh? Just like the football team.

CE: That’s right. Now, I didn’t like to lose. I wanted to be a winner, and by me wanting to be a winner, that made the students winners also. And they liked the competition, and of course everybody likes to win. No one likes to lose. And when I found out what the other band was doing’ before they came to me, I was ready. Or, if I got ready to go to them, I knew exactly how to prepare myself. He would even tell me, if he could remember what songs they played, if they had something special that they did, or something like that, yes. You were right. I didn’t know what you were coming’ up with.

RG: (laughs) I thought that was a great story.

CE: Yeah, scouting’ the band, yeah. I don’t worry about the football team there, but what about the band?

RG: So you went to most of the away games and played at most of the away games?

CE: Not in Chapel Hill. That was a little expensive. I know we did go to quite a few of them. But now, I think Bradshaw remembers, I don’t think we went to all of them. But we did go to some away games.

RG: Do you remember the football team having any special routines that were unusual? Did they – someone had told me they ran out on the field and they circled the field and then came to the center and did some kind of song, and a dance routine with it.

CE: Oh, my goodness. You are right. I do remember that, yes. They did. And I also remember that Bradshaw's football players and basketball players were all clean-cut young men. I remember one time, now, you know what year this was. This was back in the sixties. This was before Michael Jordan even started. But he had all of them get close haircuts, on the basketball team. And they all looked alike. It was right intimidating for the opposite team, they all come out there with their haircuts real close, you know. (laughter) I mean, they had hair, but it was a close haircut. And I thought that was neat, and they looked so good in their uniforms. They all looked alike and they had their uniforms, and they all had the same type of haircut. You didn't see one guy with a close cut and the other guy with a shaggy cut, and this type of thing. A flat top or whatever. But they all had the close haircut. And this is what he told them to do. I don't know whether he mentioned that in his interview or not. But that was one of the things that he did.

RG: Yeah, he's a very humble man. I mean, for all of the awards and excellence that he exhibits, you don't get that impression from just meeting him. He's just a very quiet and, doesn't boast. I mean, he's in three hall of fames, I believe.

CE: But he had discipline. He had discipline, and I guess after we get old, like we are now, we do have a tendency to mellow out a little bit. (laughs) But during his day, he was a strict disciplinarian, and that's why they won so many things. Without the discipline it just would not work. You have to have the rules and regulations and a plan. And you get those students to follow that plan, that's great. And if you don't have that discipline, and everybody can do what they want to do, it's not going to work. You're not going to have the success that the two of us have enjoyed.

RG: Well that's a wonderful place to end it, I think. I think you've really summarized the school very well, with the discipline, the performance, the competition, and you also mentioned fun, and pride.

CE: Oh, definitely.

RG: I think those are really wonderful hallmarks and ways to remember the school. Thank you so much for talking with me.

CE: Well thank you.

RG: Appreciate it very much, Clarke.

End of side 2