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VICKERS, STANLEY

NOVEMBER 20, 2000

This is November 20<sup>th</sup> in the year 2000 and this is Bob Gilgor. I am interviewing Mr. Stanley Vickers at his home at 2604 Whipple Tree Drive in Raleigh, North Carolina.

BOB GILGOR: Good morning, Stan.

STANLEY VICKERS: Good morning.

BG: I'm going to begin with a very broad question and it has to do with you growing up and your childhood. I'll just let you take off and go where you want with it. Can you just tell me where you born, when, and what it was like for you and your family growing up.

SV: I grew up in Carrboro, [NC]. I was born in Durham, [NC]. At the time, Lincoln Hospital in Durham was the place that black families had to go to be born, to have children, and for hospital stays and so forth. My mom went over to Durham and I was born in Durham. We always lived in Carrboro although many of my relatives lived in Durham and still live in Durham.

We lived in a kind of an interesting place. The area that we lived in we were surrounded by white families. My grandmother was alive at the time and in our house it was my grandmother, my mom, and my family, of course, my dad and my sisters. Next door was my aunt, my mom's sister, and across and not too far from us, maybe three or four hundred yards away, was a house that a distant cousin lived in, but all the other houses in that area were owned by whites. I grew up kind of around white people. We weren't the closest of friends but we played. I remember there was a young man who lived across the street named Mickey Williams. He and I were kind of like oil and water. We didn't get along too well. We only had one fight and gee, I really hate to say it but he

won, but I still got a beating for it. Across the street on the other side was a young man named Johnny Riggsbee who I ended up going to school with in high school. His parents owned the grocery store in Carrboro where everybody went. They lived around us and most of my black friends I would see at church or if I had the opportunity, my older sisters--I have two older sisters and they were in high school--and if I might have an opportunity to go with them somewhere. I didn't get to do too much going out on dates with them but if they were sitting with me and they had somewhere to go I'd go with them. I'd get a chance to meet some of their friends and their friends would sometimes come and visit us. Most of my black friends were visits more so than playmates. All the playmates that I had were the white kids across the street and the couple of kids who lived in our distant relatives house over across the way.

I started out my kindergarten years going to kindergarten in the basement of what is now the Hargraves Center. At that time we just called it the Center. The teachers there were just awesome. I still remember them and they gave us a lot of the values that we learned as we were growing up. I went from there to Northside High School that is now a mental health regional office or something like that that's there in Chapel Hill.

I guess about the time I was in the second or third grade my mom decided and I believe it was my mom who decided that she wanted me to go to Carrboro Elementary School which was very close to our home as opposed to Northside which was a good distance from our home.

BG: Could we table that for just a minute? I want to go back and ask you about a couple of things that you have mentioned. One, the neighbor who you got into a fight with once

and you said that you got a beating. Could you tell me about that, what the philosophy of your family was regarding fights?

SV: Well, I think it was more than just that I got into a fight. This was in the early to middle 50s and black kids just didn't jump on white kids. Along with it being wrong to fight, you're now fighting in some cases the hand that fed you. Not in this particular case, but it was a perception, I believe, more than anything that you just don't go around fighting the white kids. I was punished for that. Mickey and I were never that close of friends anyway. We played but he and Johnny, the other kid, were good friends and so I just kind of ended up in it sometimes. It was nothing malicious or anything like that. It was just the kind of fight little boys get into.

BG: I wasn't so much interested in the fight as I was in how your parents handled it and the values that you were taught regarding fighting.

SV: Again, it was more than--. The lesson was more that fighting is not the way to resolve the issue. It was more of here is me a black child fighting with a white child and because at that time white people were different. They were considered to be--. That's probably not the right way to put it. You didn't buck the system, and white folks had their place, black folks had their place, and fighting with them was just not the thing you do. You don't attack the king's kids. From that I was to learn that we were not equal, that we were not supposed to do that. I keep going back saying that and that's what I learned that you just aren't supposed to do that. That was reinforced later on in life by

something else that happened. I mean, that was almost like--. I'm not exactly sure that this is in line with what you're asking, but I remember my sister came home on the train. My older sister left Carrboro and went to school at Morgan State up in Baltimore, [MD]. She was coming home one time and I remember going to the train station here in Raleigh and there were the signs for white and colored. It didn't dawn on me to go anywhere else and I started for the white bathroom and I was very swiftly corrected that you don't go in there. It was the same kind of thing, you've got your place, we've got our society, we're got our way of doing things and they have theirs. We stay on our side of the fence and they stay on their side of the fence.

BG: Thank you.

The other thing that you mentioned that I'd like you to expand on is that you mentioned that your teachers gave you or taught you values. I'm interested in knowing more about that. I'll let you explain what you are saying.

SV: Okay. We learned things like why discipline, we learned respect, and why respect, and in a lot of cases who to respect in a sense that going into school each day for instance we had prayer and then we had the pledge of allegiance. Well, it didn't make any sense as to why we were doing it then at an early age, but I felt that gave me a better understanding of what this country is about and I understand that's another issue, but it gave me a greater appreciation of what this country is about. Then as I learned going through school about the sacrifices that had been made and this was at the beginning of the Civil Right's Movement but we were learning then the sacrifices that people were

making for us to be free in this country. It just gave me a greater appreciation, discipline, the do's and don'ts, even how to act in public. Some of things maybe they taught us would not probably be politically acceptable now but how to act in public, how to carry yourself. Teamwork was another one. Even before I went into the military, I learned from them that if you're part of a team then you all triumph together, you all suffer together or you all fail together, so those types of things that I didn't see when my children were going through school because of different influences. In the schools and the community at that time, there was a much greater sense of family. If I misbehaved in school, my parents knew about it before I got home. I would be disciplined in school sometimes physically, and disciplined again when I got home but for different reasons. Disciplined in school because you have to keep order. Obviously, I didn't have this understanding until later in life, disciplined in school because you have to keep order, disciplined at home because you stepped out of line in the sense that you broke a rule and not so much that you disrupted things. There was that sense of community.

I had aunts that lived over in Chapel Hill and if I went to one of my friend's houses over there and I did something wrong like I wasn't supposed to play in the street and I was playing in the street and somebody else saw it then they may tell my dad before I even got home or my mom. We took care of each other. It was a greater sense of family. Down in the area there where Lincoln was, there was a lot of that. I had a couple of friends who lived over in there and if I did anything wrong over there their parents got me and then my parents got me when I got home. That's the way it was. This is just my perception, but I think at that time there was a much greater sense that we were a minority society or a minority culture within a larger society and that we had to ban

together to survive. I don't mean that in a very stark survival sense like we'd starve to death if we didn't, but just so that we--. There was a lot of rejection, a lot of abuse outside of our community at that time because the vast majority of the people there were low wage earners on the lower end of the scale. That's a whole other issue, but they were then and so communities banded together. They banded together to keep us kids out of trouble. They banded together to help themselves. We had our own whole economy up on the Carrboro end of Franklin Street and over into Carrboro. We had everything that we needed right in there. That's kind of what I grew up in is that real close knit kind of community. Folks didn't move away. They were born, grew up, and raised families, and died right there in Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

BG: Fascinating. You had mentioned things that you were taught that wouldn't be considered politically correct today and I wonder if you could expand on those things?

SV: One of the things that I learned and I'm not sure it was conscious teaching but you don't talk to whites the way that you talk to blacks. I learned that when I talked to whites I had a proper language, and when I talked to my black friends we could talk different. A few years ago somebody in one of those schools out in California tried to give it some really fancy name, but that again is another story. That's one of the things.

As I said, we had our positions as it were in life. For me to want to do certain things was very different, at least my perception, than if a white kid had wanted to do it. For instance, when I was fourteen or fifteen years old I wanted to go and be a ham radio operator, an amateur radio operator. It was kind of insignificant anyway then, I mean, it



wasn't as popular and as widely practiced as it is now. Anyway, I bought a little kit and put it all together, but there was nobody I could go to to get mentored on it to understand how to do it. That was not the typical thing. I was really blessed to have people put in my paths who were forward thinkers. They didn't see me a black child. They just saw me as somebody who wanted to learn, somebody who wanted to know. A lot of them were that you don't step too far out of your place, and again, Jim Crow was still very much alive and still that type thinking and peoples prejudices were more public accepted then. It was okay at that point for name calling in public. Now you'd end up in court if you do it. It was that sort of thing.

BG: Could you tell me more about your mother and father and what they were like and your immediate family and your extended family as well?

SV: Okay. My father was a janitor and a waiter. He held typically two or three jobs. That was kind of the norm for then. He worked at a fraternity house as a janitor, the Sigma Nu house there on campus. He worked at the Carolina Inn. He worked pretty much fulltime at the fraternity house and at the ranch house if you remember where that was down on Airport Road. He was my dad. What can I say? That's interesting, I've never been asked to describe him. He died when I was--. He had a stroke the night of my graduation from high school and he died a couple of months after that. It wasn't the kind of father/son relationship where he was taking me out to play baseball and play catch with me and play football and that kind of thing because he worked. He was a very popular man around Chapel Hill. Everybody knew him and for the longest time I thought

my name was Lee Vicker's son. [Laughter] I didn't realize I had my own name. He was very--. I thought he was articulate. He was always well dressed. He knew how to interact because he worked at the fraternity house with the people who were going to become the captains of industry as it were. He had a lot of white friends. People were constantly coming back to see him and doing nice things for him and giving him things because he was a good man.

My mom is still alive. She was the hard driver in the family. She was the disciplinarian. I don't ever remember my father spanking me but I can pretty much recount everyone that my mom--. She graduated from high school. Actually, while she was carrying me, I believe, she graduated from college. You would have to check with my sister on that because I don't remember that part. She graduated from Central that was called North Carolina College then. She did domestic work quite a bit. She worked for Dr. Flowers. Dr. Flowers used to be one of the more prominent physicians here in Chapel Hill. He had an office there at Glen Lenox on the corner there where the school is. She worked for him and took care of his house and took care of his kids. I played some with the kids. He had a son and a daughter. I only remember the daughter's name because they called her Bunny, and that's not one you forget very easily. She wanted better for us so she was kind of the hard driver in the family. She was the one that wanted me to go to the elementary school and so forth.

I have three sisters. The oldest sister lives in Maryland now. She's retired from the Department of Social Services there. She was one of the senior administrators. She left Chapel Hill and like I said during that time not a lot of people did. She went to



school at Morgan. People who did go away to school came back. She did not. She married a young man that she met there and they lived in Baltimore.

My middle sister went to college. I don't ever recall that she graduated. My older sister is ten years older than I am. The next sister was like eight and a half or nine years and then there's me. I was kind of an oops. My younger sister who was a second oops there is eight years between she and I. My middle sister passed a few years ago from breast cancer, but she was kind of my other mom. My two older sisters were my other two mothers.

My younger sister graduated from Chapel Hill High. I don't think she ever went to Lincoln. She graduated from Chapel Hill High. She now lives with her husband in Durham. I learned a lot about relationships from them. I know this isn't a part of what you're talking about, but I learned a lot about relationships from them. I believe that a large part of my success today has to do with the fact that they helped me understand how to relate to people, my family that is. My dad because I was around him like in the summertime's. During football weekends, we would go down and help out because he would be serving parties and stuff like that. When I did get into the school down there because where he worked was right through the hole in the fence basically. I would go over at lunch and so I got a chance to see how he related to white people, the majority of society. It taught me how to do it because I had to work in that same world and move around in that same world. My sisters took the hard edge off. When I went to the school there was a lot of abuse and that's a whole other story. They took kind of a hard edge off in that women with that nurturing kind of spirit they tend to be able to see the softer side of things, and it helped bring some of that out of me. I could have been pretty angry

because of some of the things that had gone on during that period in my life, and that carried me even later on when I was in the military. Civil Right's leaders were being killed and put in jail and so forth. That which they poured into me earlier really has served me well all my life. I don't have a problem relating to people on any level now, and I really think it's because of what I learned back then. That's kind of a broad stroke of the family.

My mom has four sisters and her is five. My mom is the oldest and they all live in Chapel Hill in various places but all kind of right there together. When their mom was alive, my grandmother, they were at our house all the time because we lived with her or she lived with us, whichever. Again, just the community closeness. Their husbands, if I can digress for just a moment--. In that area up around where First Baptist Church is, a couple of blocks over, there was kind of the economic center of Chapel Hill at that point for the black community. There was a laundromat, a restaurant, a barbershop, a funeral home, another restaurant, and then you come around the corner and there was a grocery store, well, one of my uncles owned the restaurant and the other one owned the grocery store. Again, I had the opportunity to--. Even in a black community there were levels as it were. There were people who were very well known throughout the community, black and white. I had a chance to interact with them and with people on any other level that there might have been. Having that kind of influence come in and out of my life all the time, as I said, it really did serve me well as I matured. It's been a large part of the reason that I feel I have been able to be successful in the things that I've done just from learning that.

BG: It sounds like you had a lot of family around you. Did they get along well?

SV: Well, they were sisters and they had their times. When I was younger it was much better. As they got older, of course, some of the sibling disagreements took on a little bit more intensity, but they were sisters so they got along well. My dad's side of the family when I would see them it was interesting. My mom's side of the family I would see on a pretty regular basis because the sisters' mother, my grandmother, lived there with us or we lived with her. My dad's family I would see pretty much every weekend because almost every Sunday we would go to his mother's house. She lived up by Hillsborough, [NC], and cousins and other aunts and uncles would be there. In the summertime, during the summers, when I would stay at my grandmother's house we would go to Durham and I then would get to see all the other family. It was like I really got to see all my family in bits and pieces. It was interesting. They got along well and actually both sides of the family did pretty good. There were some disagreements between my mom's side of the family and my dad's side of the family. There was a cousin that my mom didn't like. There were some aunts that didn't like my mom, you know, that kind of thing. Even at a young age you pick up on that.

BG: Did you feel as though they were showering you with love, or was this a family that didn't express a lot of love?

SV: Well, that's an interesting question. I felt loved, I mean, I knew that they loved me, but it wasn't a lot of running around hugging and that kind of deal, no, but I knew that if I ever needed counsel from one of them, if I needed anything from them they were always

there. If we saw each other at a family dinner at my grandmother's house or at the homecoming at church--. We used to have homecomings at church. We would see each other there and it wasn't like we would all run up and hug each other or whatever. My aunts would probably do that, but my uncles would be careful of that. [Laughter].

BG: How did you feel economically? Did you feel there was an adequate amount of food, clothing, shelter, and other things in life?

SV: I did. At the time, I didn't really want for anything that was a necessity. I never went hungry in the sense that we didn't have something there to eat or that we did not have something there to eat. Didn't miss out on coats and that sort of thing in the wintertime. I felt at that time that we were just kind of like everybody else. We helped each other out, I mean, there'd be hand-me-downs here and there. There'd be things that we handed down because I had outgrown them or whatever. I think we were pretty much middle class for the economic strata that we were in. My dad worked at the Ranch House and sometimes he would bring stuff home like on the holidays I remember Ms. Danziger who used to own a place used to give everybody a turkey. As a matter of fact--again, this is a very short digression--I worked later years as a second job at the Rathskeller that at the time Ms. Danziger still owned, and she still had the tradition every year of giving out a turkey at Thanksgiving and at Christmas. I remember that we would have food. My uncle owned a store so if we really needed anything you go there and get it. The white family that lived across the street, the Riggsbees that owned the store on the corner, as a young child I can remember my grandmother telling me to go to the store and get such

and such and tell Mr. Riggsbee to put it on her bill and he kept like credit, a running tab. We did okay.

BG: Stanley, could you tell me about the role that the church played in your life when you were growing up?

SV: The church was kind of--. Gee, that's a tough question. I don't want to say it was the center. We were very involved in the church because my mom was. She was an organist and she taught Sunday School and at that time we had a program that they had every Sunday evening called BTU, Bible Training Union, or something like that. I went to the Boy Scouts there. A lot of things evolved around the church or were an extension of the church that I was involved in. I do have to mention that our minister there who I didn't realize until much later in life had such a huge political impact in Chapel Hill that was quite a force in all the things that were going on with me at the time and that's Reverend J.R. Manley. He is very influential in both communities even now, I believe. Not living there now I'm not sure, but I know that as I was growing up I didn't really understand that because I was kind of young at that time and didn't understand the nuances of politics, but as I've had opportunity to speak to people and share experiences with them and so forth, I've found out how much of an influence Reverend Manley had. He may even have in the school case that we talked about I believe he even had some impact there also, some influence there also. So the things that went on in the church for us weren't central but they were fairly important. A lot of the contacts and so forth and my network of people a lot of them were there and a lot of my friends. It was an

opportunity to see my black friends because of where we lived and it would be an opportunity to get into a little mischief, nothing too bad. And like I said, to have some time with them on Sunday and we would plan our Sunday afternoon meetings and football games and stuff like that. We would get together--it's a parking lot now--at the railroad tracks there in Carrboro. Next to the railroad track there is what used to be a field. It was a munitions factory during the war. We would play in that field. That was our football field on Sunday afternoons so we would plan our get-togethers there. We did that at church, too when we were supposed to be in Sunday School. [Laughter] While church was going on we would sneak over to what is Pyewacket now and it was the Dairy Bar then, an ice cream place. We would sneak over there and spend our Sunday school money. It's interesting, about half my friends when to the church that I went to and the other half went to another church up the street.

BG: The name?

SV: St. Paul and Second Baptist. We would kind of get together there and spend our church money after Sunday School. If you want to leave that part out you can because my mom will see this. I can still be in trouble. [Laughter]

It was important. In a lot of areas, it would have been like a central focus and to me it was more of a place of congregation. I mean, I just got to meet people there. There was some more growing there, I mean, obviously I learned more about dealing with adults and people on all different levels and so forth, but it wasn't every time I would go



out of the house I'm heading to church kind of deal and everything for me that happened in the community went on around the church, it wasn't like that.

BG: How central was the school for your existence and your family's and the community's?

SV: Well, for me at that time it was the social center in the sense that a lot of what I would call fun activities that went on in some way were related to the school and remember that I'm pretty young at this point. Sports, dances, and things like that, I didn't get to go but I knew they were going on because my sisters were going. My goal, my desire was to get there so I could see what was going on, and then I got there and got to spend one whole year. Socially, that way was pretty much the center. It also provided recreation. We would go over there sometimes and I would have the opportunity to play over there.

BG: When you say one year over there you're referring to Lincoln High School?

SV: Yes, I went to Lincoln for my sixth grade year and then seven through twelve I was at either Chapel Hill Junior High or Chapel Hill High School. Again, I know this is a little bit outside the scope of what we're talking about, but because I wasn't a part of the "community" there at Chapel Hill at the junior high or the high school, things like sports and that kind of thing for the first couple of years I still really associated with Lincoln because that's really where all my friends were. For football games and so forth, I went

to Lincoln's games. I didn't go to a Chapel Hill High School game until I went out for the football team. Dances and so forth, I didn't get to go to dances anyway so that was kind of a non-issue. [Laughter] I still knew what was going on at Lincoln more so than at the school I was in because the school that I was in at that point it was a place to go. They said I got to go to school and so this is where I go. I think the year that I was at Lincoln was great. I enjoyed that, I mean, I remember my teachers from there--I only had three--but I remember my teachers from there. I had waited so long to get there and I remember how the hallway looked. You mentioned a moment ago about the trophy case. I remember where that trophy case sat right there beside the door to the principle's office, the cafeteria, and how the gym looked when I walked in and all those sights are just--. Those stayed. I remember the first day walking also into the junior high school and the feeling. It was an experience on that level that I remember about Lincoln.

BG: What were your feelings at Lincoln? Were they pride? That's what I'm reading in your physical expressions in your eyes and your voice.

SV: At the time, Lincoln was--I'm probably overstating it--kind of like a Mecca. I mean, they had a good football team, they had a good basketball team, and they had a great band. Everything that I could aspire to at that point in my little world was there. I don't remember the school being rundown. I know I've been to some places even during that time when I would go to Durham to the schools that my family members were going to over there weren't as nice as Lincoln. I mean, it wasn't a brand new school by any stretch of the imagination, but it was nice. It was well kept. It was in a good community-

-a good community in the sense that it was on a decent street and what I would consider as middle class families in the area. I was proud of it. Lincoln was kind of THE school. We beat up on Hillside over in Durham. The guys who played football and basketball I looked up to them. It was more than just a physical looking up sense. In later years, I got a chance interestingly enough to work with some of them, and I realized that I still kind of revered them and that's an ugly word these days, but I did kind of because these were guys, oh, man. It's interesting. I'm sorry, I just surprised myself that I remembered all of that.

BG: What about your teachers? What was your relationship like with the teachers at Lincoln?

SV: It kind of ran the gamut. I had one teacher Ms. Barnes, I liked Ms. Barnes and she was a pretty woman. Then there was Ms. Pope. As a matter of fact, she lived in the Pope House over here in Raleigh that they are talking about tearing down. It was just in the paper a couple of weeks ago. I knew Ms. Pope. There was a Mr. Christmas who was a--. Gosh, what did he teach? Anyway, there was Mr. Christmas and Ms. French who was the French teach oddly enough, and so it kind of ran the gamut. I really liked Ms. Barnes. Ms. French was kind of okay. She was really aloof; she was different as was Mr. Christmas. Ms. Pope was really nice. I didn't really connect with them. I don't know if I'm unusual in this regard but sometimes little boys have a crush on a teacher. Well, I had a crush on Ms. Barnes. You can leave that out definitely. [Laughter] I did but I don't know why. She was younger and the other teachers were older. Ms. Barnes was

younger and she was to me a very attractive woman. I was just on that age where you go into hormone frenzy. It may have been just timing. [Laughter]

The thing about the teachers is that I got the sense that it was more than just a job to them. I really got the sense from my teachers that they cared about me. Interestingly enough, I mentioned to you in another conversation about the teacher that I had at the junior high school he gave me that same impression. It was not just a show up and do the eight to five or whatever it is that teachers do. They cared about you and they cared about your success not just in the work world but your overall success, you know, what you would be like as a family man, what kinds of things that you're learning because those are the things that you're going to be teaching your children. How to interact is a good example. How to be--. I've had a lot of female bosses, and I think that the fact that I had to be submitted as it were or disciplined by a female at school and to understand that it wasn't anything that I needed to take personally when they disciplined me, but that it was, again, I was either out of order or I broke the order or the broke the rule that served me later on. It didn't make it any easier, but it served me later on in that when I had bosses who were female that I could then understand when they are angry--

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SV: ....if you start yelling and screaming, all it does is just makes her yell louder which makes you yell louder and nothing gets accomplished. I learned then and I didn't always put it in practice too well, but I learned then that you listen, you just shut up and listen. There will be a time for you to speak, but you don't do it then. I would have the same situation with bosses where we're in a stressful situation, a deadline was missed, for instance, and it was missed because of something I didn't do or overlooked or whatever it was, the situation was tense and she's getting upset and she's expressing herself. I learned long ago, let them talk and that's not condescending, it's just that that's the way to handle the situation, let her have the opportunity to have her say and then if it is something that she needs to resolve in herself then she will either come to a resolution or you'll have an opportunity to speak. Ms. Barnes was kind of a fiery lady, and so I learned a lot from her. [Laughter] I can see now that I'm going to be in big trouble with some people. [Laughter]

BG: Is she still alive?

SV: I don't know. We had a reunion about five or six years ago and she was there.

BG: There should be a visit.

SV: I don't know. If she is, I might phone it in.

BG: You had started to say before I so rudely interrupted you that your mother was the one who was responsible for starting the suit. Could you expand on that or if you want, we can do that another day. It depends on how much time you have.

SV: I'm fine.

BG: Okay. Could you tell me more about that?

SV: I can only give you my perceptions of what was going on. When you talk to my sister she will know better because she was older. When this started I was in the third grade. I would have been eight or nine years old. A lot of the things that were going on around us at the time didn't really register. I was aware that my mother wanted me to go to that school. I didn't understand at the time--.

BG: Which school?

SV: Excuse me, Northside Elementary is where I was going to school when we started the process.

BG: And that was the black school.



SV: I was in a black school at Northside Elementary. She wanted me to go to the school which was the nearest to our home which was the white school.

I beg your pardon, Carrboro Elementary. I'm sorry. I misspoke. I can only guess that it was because, I mean, I don't think she set out to be a history maker or a trendsetter. I don't think she set out to blaze any new ground. I think she just did it because that school was closer to our house. I mean you could almost throw a rock from our house up to the school. That's kind of my idea as to why it was done that way. From myself, again, because I was used to playing with white kids that had lived in the neighborhood and we all lived in a neighborhood together, I didn't understand why I couldn't go to that school, and then I didn't understand what all the fuss was about me wanting to go there. To me it was, what's the big deal? Those are my perceptions at the time. There may have been more going on around that time and that would be a place that Reverend Manley can help you on. I don't know if you had planned to speak to him or not, but the history around that time I'm sure he would be a huge resource and my sister could tell you things that were going on around our family in particular. She had gone off to school at the time but she and my mom and dad communicated, and so I'm sure she would have known a lot of things that were going on then.

BG: Can you expound a little bit more on the suit? You ended up a few years later at the white junior high school.

SV: By that time, I had--.

BG: Was the suit settled?

SV: Yes, well, the suit ran for about three years. It started when I was somewhere along about when I was getting ready to go to the third grade. Actually, it must have been the fourth grade because I went my sixth grade year at Lincoln and I went my seventh grade year at Chapel Hill Junior High. The lawsuit was actually settled that summer of the summer that I went to school, which I think, would have been in '61 or '62. My memories of what was going on at the time was just being in the School Board meetings. I wasn't aware of when the suit actually started. I knew that they wanted me to go to that school and that I couldn't and things were going on. My first memories are of being in the School Board meetings, sitting there in the School Board meetings and hearing the people talk. I didn't understand what they were talking about. I didn't go to any court sessions that I'm aware of. And as I said, my mom didn't set out to be a trendsetter at that point, and then by the time it was actually resolved and part of the resolution I think came about as a result of integration going on nationwide at that time. I don't think it was just my case the reason that it was resolved. I know it was turned down and turned down and turned down and I don't know the reasons why. I was told that it had been turned down. To me it didn't matter. I was at Northside with my buddies and then I was my one year at Lincoln with my buddies so it didn't really matter to me. It didn't have an impact on me at that time. Once I went to the school that changed, but that again is the subject of another question.

BG: A three-year suit must be very expensive. Who were the lawyers involved and how did your family handle the expenses?

SV: I have no idea. I have no idea. I do remember that we got some help from Floyd McKessick. I don't know if the NAACP helped in that. I don't know. I really don't. I was at that age where money just kind of appeared when you needed it. When you're a kid you can ask for anything and it just kind of appears. You don't always understand that somebody has to go out and work for it or whatever. I was kind of naïve. Maybe I was blocking things out. I don't know where the money came from. Whoever it was, if you are out there I thank you.

BG: So you say you lost the suit. Your mom lost the suit.

SV: Initially, they were turned down and turned down and turned down. She just kept going back, going back and going back until they said "we give", basically. It was like that woman in the Bible that she just worried the man until he said yes. [Laughter]

BG: Seventh grade you started junior high school, right?

SV: Right.

BG: What was the name of the junior high school?

SV: Chapel Hill Junior High.

BG: And that was on Franklin Street where University Square is.

SV: Yes. The junior high actually sat where Central Carolina Bank is now, and the high school was the west of the area that University Square covers there. The back where Granville Towers is were the playing fields for the junior high and the high school and then back behind that were fraternity houses and Cameron Avenue going all the way back. It was an interesting time. Franklin Street at that point was and it still is a very nice street to be on. I could walk to school; even in the seventh grade I could walk to school and didn't have to worry about--there weren't that many cars--crossing streets and stuff like that. I remember when they put that Hardee's in that is down the street from University Square. I remember that and it was a new concept at the time. I remember when that went in.

An aside, initially there was a lot of animosity toward us there. There were some people who were not negative but kind of ambivalent to us being there. As I got to know them, they were people whose families were, I don't know if you would call them prominent, but were citizens of the community, I mean, Phil Walker's dad owned the service station. It was downtown then, Walker's Gulf. There was just one downtown.

BG: Was he an ambivalent one?

SV: He was not. There are some that were very vocal in their dislike for us being there. There were some that were very physical in their dislike for us being there, nothing that

I'd come away with any bruises or anything. There were some that were very, I won't say welcoming; they just weren't openly negative or ambivalent to us being there.

BG: Were you the first to integrate the junior high school?

SV: Well, the three of us went at the same time, myself, Ted Stone, and Sheila Florence. I'm not exactly sure when Ted and Sheila joined the suit and how that happened, but when the case was settled I knew that they were going to be there. When I found out that summer that I'd be going to the white school in the fall, I knew that they were going to be there, and I remember thinking that it was great and that at least I wouldn't be there by myself. It didn't turn out that way because of our schedules. Their schedules were together and then my schedule was separate.

BG: What was your first day like at the junior high school?

SV: I remember walking up the steps in the front of the school and it's interesting, it's a little bit ominous because if you look at Lincoln and I'm sure this is something that I have just perceived later on, but Lincoln is built on a flat, it's kind of one level, the junior high school and even high school to get into them you had to walk up steps to get to them. Say like, I walked up the steps and into the school and I believe I was by myself. I don't think that my parents went with me. Well, no, they did because I had to find out where my classes were and so forth and once that was done I was kind of on my own, typical new kid in school kind of deal. When I went to a class I remember that I was the

center of attention when I first got in there. I was kind of expecting to see Ted and Sheila when I first got there, and I didn't

The hallways for me between classes, you know, how you change classes and that was really the first year that I changed classes, it wasn't a place I looked forward to being in. I would get bumped, not knocked down, but bumped. You could hear the comments, and sometimes people just talking directly at you, "Why are you here? You don't belong here." There was a couple of people who I felt kind of singled me out. For the most part, it was just a very--. That part I could deal with. That didn't seem to bother me as much as I just felt very much alone. I didn't really have anybody to talk to. Sometimes I even got the impression that the teachers didn't want me there. It's not that they didn't teach me, I didn't ever get that impression, but I just didn't feel like that was the place. I would go to my morning classes and lunchtime--. I mentioned that my dad worked at a fraternity house and I could sneak through the hole in the fence, but before I realized I could do that a lot of time I would go out to the rock wall on the back of the school between the high school and the junior high school and I would just go sit out there just to get away and have some quiet because it seemed like somebody was always calling me names. Somebody was always in my face about something. Just to get out there and to have some time to think, you know, well, maybe you don't. But anyway, just some time to get away from it.

Then we had gym that was--. I didn't know what to expect, I mean, you go in the gym class and you've got to change, you've got to get naked in there with people who you know don't like you. I had no idea what was going to happen to me. I blessed that nothing did. I don't remember anything going on there in the locker room or anything



like that. I didn't have to worry about them getting too close to me. They didn't seem to be anxious to be close to me while we were undressed. I guess that was the phase where we were all a little--.

BG: Shy?

SV: Yes, that's the word I'm looking for, thank you. We were all a little shy so I didn't have too much trouble there. Having to get into the shower with all these guys, having to take my clothes off, and be around them and then in the hallways just realizing how they would just come after me in a sense.

BG: What kind of remarks would you hear besides why are you here?

SV: I'm constantly being called boy, I'm constantly being called nigger, and I'm constantly being pointed at. Have you ever been to a party you as a white male and you walk in a room full of African-American people standing around talking and the conversation may not stop completely but it dies down a bit. They may not look at you but you know that they are aware that you're there. You know that their thoughts have changed at that point. It was like that everywhere I went. That was the feeling I got. When I would walk into the cafeteria, it would not get quiet but the tenor in the room would change. It would be like a dark cloud would come into the room. Somehow and I don't know where it came from, but somehow I had enough confidence in myself I guess is the right thing, that it didn't--. I would think that that could destroy a person. It hurt, I

mean, they are very painful experiences from that but nothing that has made me hate any of those people. I really think they were just stupid, I mean, if they had just come and talked to me. As the year went on, you know, a person here, a person there would speak to me as though I were an equal human being and maybe even have a conversation with me, not long, but some conversation, and as they got to know me and as others got to know me it began to change. There were still some that had their animosities even up to my senior year in high school in 1966. There were those that had that animosity and who knows, maybe it's there today, I don't know, I have not seen some of those people in a long time, but they didn't take the time then. And again, I've always been a kind of a forgiving person, I guess, because I'm number three. If I were number one it would be a different story. But I have been a forgiving kind of person so that a lot of the things that they did they did out of ignorance. It was just pure stupidity. It didn't hurt any less. I remember seeing the kids who had integrated the Little Rock, Arkansas, school and the furor that was there, and the one thing that I did not want and thank God it never happened to me was I did not want to be spit on. I don't know why, I just didn't, but that was always a fear that somebody was going to spit on me. It was that kind of thing. I got pushed around in the hall. When I went over to the high school in the tenth grade the seniors had this tradition, they called it a tradition, but I didn't see them doing it to a whole lot of people but they had this tradition where the class ring that you get they would turn it around so the stone part is to the palm of your hand and they would pop people on the head. I was getting hit from all directions. I thought it was stupid and I didn't do it when my turn came and I could have, but that's what they did. Maybe that's what they did, I don't know, try not to read anything in there for them.

It wasn't all bleak. There was one teacher who I really looked up to. He brought me in early to his class after school one day and he asked me if I was having a problem with the work. Some of it was stuff because we studied different stuff at Lincoln than we did there, you know, in the sixth grade they are preparing you to go on and so I didn't get some of the things the other kids had. I was hustling to catch up. He asked me if there was a problem. I said that I just didn't know the stuff. He let me know, he told me that I could do this and if I needed any help I could come to him. But the thing that stuck with me more than anything was that there was somebody--. You know your family believes in you. You know your brothers and sisters believe in you and they tell you and it just like thanks. But here's somebody who had absolutely no vested interest in me or my success or failure telling me that I could do this thing. He has stuck with me all these years. I only had him one year and that was that year. I have remembered that all this time. I can remember him. He came and sat down on the edge of his desk. I was sitting on a seat on the front row, and he talked to me. I remember that. It wasn't all bleak. That was consolation for me. I had times when I could get away so it wasn't like I had to be subjected to it at all times because after school I didn't associate with them. I didn't have to ride the bus home with them because I could walk or I could go to where my dad worked. Weekends and so forth, I never saw them. If I went to football games and that kind of thing initially I would go over to Lincoln and I didn't have to worry about being the only black kid in the stadium. In retrospect, and I've thought about this, it gave me kind of an awareness of this--I know this is going to sound really strange--it gave me an awareness of being around black people. I guess those were some fairly significant formative years for my psyche on some level. At one point, I was in class up in

Kingston, New York, and there are not a lot of black people in Kingston, New York, and I was beginning to feel that same kind of trapped feeling or the same kind of being on an island as when I had gone to junior high. My brother-in-law met me in New York and took me up to Harlem and it was like being back home. He jokes about that. It was that same kind of thing. That was really--. Although it was a dramatic period of my life, there was something that was kind of instilled there that I really didn't understand what it was until much later on. Just having to go through that experience and deal with it, I could have gotten into a whole lot of fights and maybe that's what they wanted, I don't know, again, I try to walk that fine line and not judge what peoples motives are and what their motivation is. It taught me to deal with it. I think some of that came from prior experiences in knowing that or understanding that--. I'll go back to the fight with Mickey. Do you remember that I talked about that, I mean, I would have been crazy to hit one of those kids and I'm the only black kid in the hall. I might have done a Jimmy Hoffa thing, you know. I'm being facetious obviously, but I'm pretty sure that I would have taken the brunt there. I've kind of wandered in my explanation of how I felt then, but it was traumatic. That first day just not knowing what to expect, you know, and when I went there I remember being kind of excited about it and looking forward to it, again, because I thought that I knew white people from the people that I had lived around. By that time, the kid that I had gotten into a fight with had moved. He and his folks had moved, but Johnny, the guy across the street whose family owned the store, he and his older brother were both at the school. They were very much on the outside, I mean, it was like, okay, we know he's here and I know I'm going to see him when I go home so whatever they are doing I don't want to get involved in it because it could cause problems

later on. His older brother is much older and they just didn't ever seem to be that type people, and I think it was because they got to know me from our interaction at home.

BG: Were they your advocates?

SV: No, but they weren't aggressors either. I don't know that I had an advocate until later on.

BG: Do you mean in junior high school or high school?

SV: By that time it was--. No, in the junior high school because after a bit where I began to have some other interactions like junior varsity teams and that kind of thing I went to some sock hops and dances. It was easy because the lights were low and you would kind of blend in around the edges there and people know you are there but they don't see you so maybe you are not really there. Do you know what I mean? I went to some and that was early high school. I began to become a little more involved. I had some friends; let's just say closer associations and a little more than acquaintances. They were never going to invite me over for dinner, I don't think, at least not at that point, but they did help me through some things. We could study together. I didn't get much of that in the seventh grade, but in the eight grade, ninth grade and stuff we could study together. I would see them in the library. We could share information. We could share things, books. I remember borrowing books. I guess my first advocate was a young lady. I don't know how that came about. Oh, yes, I do too. She was new to the school in the

eight or ninth grade. She was new to the school and in a sense was going through a little bit of the same thing that I was. When I would be out at lunch she'd be out at lunch. We had the same schedule. We just started kind of talking at arms length. If there was advocate, I guess, she might have been it.

BG: In the eight grade and ninth grade, did you still feel as though you were on an island?

SV: It was getting better because then we had more kids that were coming in. Each year we had more black kids coming in. I don't know that it necessarily increased the level of acceptance but the feeling that I was there kind of by myself was not as great because I was able to see other kids. I had other black kids in my classes and stuff like that so as the numbers grew then kind of the attitude, well, maybe the attitude didn't change but at least the perception did change.

BG: Your perception?

SV: My perception, yes.

BG: Did you still have that feeling when you walked into the lunchroom?

SV: No, not as bad for two reasons and number one because there were more black kids to interact and somebody else would probably change the tone before I got there. The



other was that I just quit going to the lunchroom. [Laughter] I reached the point where I just stopped going to the lunchroom. Actually, that happened in the seventh grade. I would try not to go to the lunchroom, to the cafeteria.

BG: Did you ever share with Ted and Sheila what they went through? Was it similar to what you had experienced?

SV: Actually, no we haven't. I don't think we've ever talked about it. No, we haven't.

BG: Could you contrast the teachers between Lincoln High and Chapel Hill?

SV: When I first went there?

BG: Yes.

SV: Well, I knew at Lincoln that the teachers were concerned about the "whole you", if I can state it that way. I mean they had some interest in how you were maturing and learning, what you were learning socially as well as educationally. When I got to the junior high I wasn't as aware of that. It was more of here is the material kind of deal. Anything outside of the--. The teachers at Lincoln could have been involved with what went on outside of the classroom. I don't remember if they did or not, but if the teachers needed to be in the halls during the class breaks and so forth down at Lincoln they were and they were talking to kids and that kind of thing. When I got to the junior high school

I don't recall that, you know, the bell would ring and everybody would just kind of inch into the hallway. I don't remember seeing teachers there because I probably would have sought some shelter if they were there.

BG: So there was no help from the teachers when you were getting bumped and--.

SV: No, I didn't bring it to them. Not knowing what to expect and not knowing what should have been happening, I mean, to me this could have been an initiation, I guess. It took me some time aside from the name-calling; it took me some time to really understand that some of these were malicious acts that the folks were carrying out. Boy, that sounds kind of rough, doesn't it? The things that were happening were purposeful. I didn't go to the teachers with it. I don't know that it would have mattered because I didn't get the sense from the teachers that they were particularly thrilled that we were there. On a whole, there were exceptions. They didn't teach the same way and again, that might have been just me because I was playing catch-up during that period. The material that they were giving us were things that I guess they expected us to be able to pick up on quickly because we had had some background, and it was just kind of here it is. Now if I really had a problem and needed to go back and talk to them, I believe that they probably would have helped me but at that time I didn't think they would so I just needed to tough it out myself. That's how the conversation came about with Mr. (

) as a matter of fact, the gentleman I was telling you about. I mean, that's one of the things I told him, I just figured that nobody wanted to help; they just didn't care and so I was just doing the best that I could just trying to tough it out.

BG: Did he comment on that?

SV: He did, and that's why the comment that you can do it. If you need help, let me know but I know you can do it.

BG: Did you feel as though you were treated any differently by the teachers at the junior high school versus the other students, the black students? Did they call on you less, take you less seriously?

SV: I got called on less. I felt that I got called on less. At the time, that didn't really matter. I don't know that they took me any less seriously. I sometimes felt and this could have been one of those pre-teen and early teen things that, man, they are really being hard on me when they grade my papers and that kind of thing. I mean, I thought they were really good. I had put a lot of work into them and that was a little disheartening sometimes, but again, that's a judgment of me saying that I did pretty good; a five page paper that said nothing, you know, to them. Part of it was I had to learn also. Again, I was kind of going into a different value system, value system meaning that you were there to learn as a student. I'll try to explain this. I'm having trouble putting it together in my mind so hopefully I can get it to come out of my mouth right. At Lincoln, I got the sense that they were concerned with me as a whole person. Once I got over to the junior high school and in high school, for the most part I think they were interested in me as a student. They didn't teach me any less, just some of the things around it, things

that would--. If we were talking about the Civil War--I didn't study the Civil War at Lincoln so I'm only guessing but just from my experience I believe that I would have had a better understanding of what we as blacks, what our role was, in helping in the Civil War, not just being kind of the cause of it if you want to put it that way. At Chapel Hill High, it was just presented as a fact. Here are all the facts, here's what all these people did, and by the way, here's what all these white people did. I mean it was a long time before I knew that black folks had a history. I missed that coming out of Lincoln because I know that process had just started. I was just beginning to learn that there were black people involved in the American Revolution so I had that kind of gap in there. I didn't get the black version of it; I got the white version of it. Do you understand what I mean? So then later on when I learned the black version of it I put it with this and I was like, wow, man, that's great. I'm glad that we had a role here and that we weren't just still out picking cotton while these white people are out fighting for liberty and stuff, but facetiously, I think you know what I mean.

BG: Did you have any preparation for going to the junior high school? Did anyone in your family, or at church, or anyone else speak to you about how to handle situations there?

SV: No. I just walked in the door. [Laughter] How do you teach somebody that, I mean, unless you've been through it which they wouldn't have, how do you know?

I mean consider most of the people dealt with the majority culture as a ( ), and I was about to begin to interact with them on a different level. Even if they had gone to

college with them, it would have been different because you are more mature. Teenagers are brutal, and like I said, if you haven't been there it would be very difficult to prepare somewhat. I just walked in! Aside from the admonitions that you get anytime you go out to the first day of school from your parents; be good, mind the teacher that was pretty much it, I think. I don't remember anything special.

BG: How did you handle the feelings you must have had after the physical and verbal abuses that you had to put up with?

SV: It's interesting and I'm glad you asked that. I went through a lot. I went from not understanding what was going on--. In psychology, there's this range of learning and I don't remember exactly what the principle is but you start with not knowing what you don't know and then you go to just beginning to understand what you don't know and then you know what you don't know and that's the third one and I think maybe there's a fourth one. Well, I started out not knowing what to expect and what I should be expecting. This was late into high school and then as I'd gotten into college, then it was knowing what I didn't know and beginning to understand what happened. Well, it was too late to be angry then but I got angry anyway. I figured I deserved to. Then I went from college into the military and by then the Civil Right's Movement had moved into that next movement there where there was very much a conflict between the races with the Black Panthers and the war in Vietnam was dividing the country and stuff like that and in going through that period I got to vent that and some other anger in some of the things that I did then or was able to do then. Nothing against the law, I mean I was in the

military and so forth and I just had the opportunity to get some of that out. As you can tell, I'm a very verbal person and I was able to relate that. I didn't have to wear those feelings.

BG: How did you do that?

SV: It was through some of the groups and associations that I had in the military. The military was a definer in that area. I got a chance to meet people who had other experiences. I got a chance to look back at what I had been able to do in my life and realize that I didn't really--. I think that was the place I learned it or the time that I learned what had gone on and the past was out of ignorance because a lot of what I had an opportunity to do in my life and a lot of those kids hadn't even had the opportunity to do so I kind of switched from the inferior feeling to the superior feeling. When that happens, you know, it really sounds trite but at that point I realized that I didn't have anything to hold against these people. Even the people who did me the most injury, physical, mental, or whatever, that tried to do that kind of injury to me I just know they were stupid people. They still are stupid people. If they were making that mistake then and they didn't learn from it, they still are. I don't know as I said; some of them I see and some of them I don't. I met some people in the military who really helped me mature. Then when I was in the military it was an interesting thing. I was stationed in Japan for about six or seven months before I went to Vietnam, and it just kind of worked out that I spent a lot of time by myself in Japan which again I did in school, and I stayed off base for awhile and I would walk back and forth to base. It was a couple of miles. I would

have time to think. The place I was stationed, Iwakuni, is right out on the ocean. There was a seawall that ran around the base. I could just get on that seawall and walk for, I won't say hours because it got pretty cold out there, but I mean walk distances and just have an opportunity to think and to get things out.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B



START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

NOVEMBER 20, 2000

VICKERS, STANLEY

SV: I had just started to tell you about my friend in Japan and I learned a great deal from him. Because my dad had died when I was still kind of a young teenager--I was sixteen--I didn't have a lot of time with him to be able to ask questions of him when things were changing and when things were going on. He was there when I was going through the junior high school to answer questions and give me direction and so forth, but when I was trying to resolve some of the feelings I met a man in the military name Leonard (

) and his nickname was Itchy and don't ask. [Laughter]. Anyway, it was actually ichi, which is number one in Japanese, but we called him Itchy. He was a really good sounding board. I mean we would sit and talk for hours just about things.

BG: Was he white or black?

SV: He was black. He's from Port Arthur, Texas. That was the first time I had every heard of Port Arthur, Texas. We had some similar experiences in growing up and so forth. I could talk to him and he was just a great sounding board. So that allowed me, I think, to get out a lot of what was going on then. Even the injustices that I was seeing that were angering me that were going on in the Civil Right's Movement that were going on with the war and people coming back and no honor for the men coming back. When I came back I wasn't expecting any and obviously we didn't get any for the longest time. The outside of me got really jumbled at one point, but somehow the inside of me just

knew. I knew that I was okay. A lot of the things that really tore people up, that would have really made people angry, it didn't do that to me. Maybe it should have, but it didn't. Again, I think that's kind of carried me or helped me as I've gone forward. Like I mentioned earlier, the young men who were aggressive toward me, verbally and physically, I hold no animosity toward them. That's their life to live. I don't know, that's interesting, I got rolling on this path and I had no idea why I'm not angry. I really should be. I marched; I walked. Down the street from First Baptist Church is a drugstore. It used to be owned by a guy name John Carswell. I marched in front of that drugstore because he would not let blacks come in and sit down there. We boycotted; we picketed in front of--.

BG: Suttons?

SV: No, not Suttons. It was on downtown. It's across the street from what used to be the Chrysler dealer. I marched there. We took all kinds of verbal abuse there; long hours of marching there. Later on interestingly enough, I drove a school bus and his son rode my school bus. No anger toward him at that point. I knew who he was. I knew what his dad stood for and probably what he stood for because he had a little vitriol in him too. It just didn't bother me. I just tried to live like that. It's probably not been real good and again being number three you tend to be a mediator, you know, you take it and you file it and some of it affects you and a lot of it doesn't.

BG: We will stop here and maybe we can set a time to go back and talk about your experience in the Chapel Hill High School on Franklin Street. You were in high school during the time of the Civil Right's Movement in Chapel Hill. I think that would be interesting to hear that and your role in it and how things might have changed in high school.

Thank you very much.

CONTINUATION OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

BG: This is Bob Gilgor interviewing Stanley Vickers at his home in Raleigh on December 8, 2000.

BG: Good morning, Stan.

SV: Good morning.

BG: How are you this morning?

SV: Great, thank you.

BG: Good, good. I wanted to revisit something that you said at our first interview and that is something that I found profound and that is you said you felt like you were on an

island when you went to Chapel Hill High School on Franklin Street, and I wonder if you could share with me what made you feel that way.

SV: I had left an environment where it was a family type environment. People were close. There were people that I had known for a period of time and in some cases all my life at that point. I didn't have contact with them. I guess I didn't expect or I didn't think about that until I got down to the junior high school and there were no friends around. You just kind of take for granted that they are going to be there until they are not there.

BG: It was a family type environment at Lincoln High School?

SV: Yes. Once I got down to Chapel Hill to the junior high, times when you have to talk with your friends like between classes in the hallway, at lunchtime, when you are changing for gym, after school, those kinds of times I really didn't have anybody to communicate with because I didn't know the folks and they didn't know me. It always takes time to build new friends. Just at the time this was something that I had not considered at all. Even in class during class participation and so forth, it may have been just a confidence problem at the time but when a teacher would call on me it would be like spotlights from every direction right in on me. Oh, man, if I ever didn't have the answer I felt about an inch and a half tall. It was like going from a nice warm, cozy, comfortable, very familiar kind of setting to this cold, in a sense, impersonal kind of atmosphere. I was there but I was not really acknowledged. You walk past people in the hall in one environment when I was at Lincoln and you walk past people in the hall and

they speak to you and it's one of your friends and so you ask him what happened yesterday or whatever. You walk past people there and it's like--. Do you remember Ralph Ellison's book, *The Invisible Man*? I felt like that so that's what I meant I could have been on an island in the South Pacific for all the concern there was at that point in the beginning. It got better. The whole first year was really tough. I made a few friends; I made a few acquaintances as the year went on. Not everybody was--. Because Chapel Hill has always been kind of a melting pot, not everybody was cold to me because it was not something new to them. But a lot of people who were from the area, had grown up there had inherited from their parents their prejudices, their bigotries or whatever. Those people I had some problem with and even six or seven years later when I graduated I still had some problem with some of those folks. That's neither here nor there. But that's what I meant. Like I said, it was just going from that nice warm cozy kind of atmosphere, non-threatening. I didn't have to worry about somebody coming up behind me and doing something malicious. That was always a concern when I went to the white school because I didn't know what they were going to do. They pretty much know what I was not going to do. They knew that I was not going to be a big troublemaker because it was one of me and four or five hundred of them. The odds were definitely not in my favor. Those were the types of things. It was a combination of things but like I said and I keep going back to it as I think about it again, it's just that I felt very comfortable there at Lincoln. That's interestingly kind of gone on throughout my life. I'm very comfortable; I can get comfortable around large groups of black folks. I can get very comfortable in integrated groups, but if I'm in a group that's a predominately white group I still get a little uncomfortable. I've grown up with whites, I have gone to school with them, learned

with them and from them even in high school and after, but still there's that little uneasiness when I'm in a predominately white group in whatever it is. I think I mentioned last time that I went to an IBM school up at Kingston, New York, and Kingston at the time--I don't know if it's changed now--didn't have a large black population. I got the same kind of feeling, I mean, people were interacting with me at work on a very business level, but at five o'clock when class was over or when whatever we were doing was over they disappeared, you know, and here I am. My brother-in-law came--I have never been at that time to New York City--he came and was going to give me a tour of New York City. I had been in and out of LaGuardia but never down in the city--and he was going to give me a tour of the city so he came and the first place he asked me if I wanted to go was to Harlem. I wanted to go to Harlem just to kind of reassure myself that while I was in Kingston that some plague had not come along and wiped out all this mass of black people and it was just me. It's my own paranoia.

BG: I wonder if you could compare your relationship with the teachers at Lincoln High School and your relationship with teachers at Chapel Hill High School?

SV: The teachers there at Lincoln and again I had them for one year and I had teachers at Chapel Hill for six or seven years, the teachers at Chapel Hill High initially were teachers; here's the information and you learn it. The teachers at Lincoln were with me a little more forthcoming; it was just a feeling that I got. There seemed to be a lot more relevance in what they were teaching and that could just have been an identification thing because they knew what it would take for us to succeed going out and what it would take

me as an African American or black man to succeed if I only had a high school education; what it would take for me to succeed would be different than what it would take a Caucasian or white person to succeed. I got a lot more from Lincoln on here's the kind of thing that you need to succeed and from Chapel Hill High it was more of here's the information and kind of do with it what you need to. Again, think it just might have been a relevancy or a relation--I'm not sure what's the right word there--because those teachers at Lincoln knew what it would take and had a more personal interest in it. The teachers at Chapel Hill High taught me everything I needed to know. They brought in some areas that I had not had there at Lincoln, not educationally, but just some of the little things that I didn't always get there and I'm trying to think of some of them now and I can't. Maybe it was just different styles. The teachers at Lincoln gave more of that feeling that having been through the war, in a sense, having gone through what you are about to go through here are some things that you definitely need to know. Teachers at Chapel Hill High were, here's all the information you will need. They didn't put any prioritization on it to say these things are very important, these things are not as important. I did not get a sense that I was treated unequally in terms of education because if I went and asked for help I cannot remember a teacher who denied me, but then I can't ever remember a teacher except for Mr. Vaughn--I mentioned Mr. Vaughn--aside from Mr. Vaughn I can't remember any other teacher who in the hallway between classes made any particular effort to come over to me and say that you're doing a good job or come see me after class because I think you are having a problem and maybe you need some extra work so come by my classroom after school or whatever. I don't remember that sort of thing. At Lincoln in the hallways between the classes when there



were teachers out there and things were a little different then because teachers didn't have to patrol halls between classes. My how things have changed. If there were a teacher in the hallway they were there for a reason, I mean, they may be out there looking for somebody to get them to come to their class or whatever, but if they were there they were cordial, if you had a problem they would let you know that there were things that you were not focusing on and I need to help you understand what those things are because you may not understand the importance of them. Chapel Hill High was just a bit different.

BG: The impression I'm getting is that you didn't feel as though you were singled out by the teachers at Chapel Hill High. Is that fair to say?

SV: That's fair.

BG: You were treated like anybody else?

SV: Pretty much, yes, as far as I could tell. Again, I was kind of young. I didn't know what I didn't know so I didn't know what to expect. I'm sure there were teachers who had their biases and that may have affected the way that they interacted with me, but at that time I was naïve enough to not know or to not realize it. None of the teacher were, when we were going through history lessons and we talked about slavery, I didn't hear any teachers in there talking about those niggers doing this. I don't ever recall any indication toward me that there was any--where I was singled out. I can't say because I

don't remember, but I don't think I was ever disrespected by a teacher and that I was purposely embarrassed. I did some things to embarrass myself, but I don't recall an episode that was so shattering to my ego at the time that now some forty or so years later that has stuck with me. You know how some of those--. I have impressions of walking through the halls of Lincoln and walking through the halls at Chapel Hill High. Those kinds of things stuck with me, but I don't remember any teacher just abusing me in front of the class or anything like that.

BG: Tell me about those impressions of walking through the halls at Lincoln versus walking through the halls at Chapel Hill High.

SV: As I think back and I pull up those pictures again, I remember the classes that I had were on the west end of the building. I remember coming in and the hallways were not really crowded but there were a lot of people in them. I just remember a lot of noise, a lot of--. It was a warm kind of place. Chapel Hill High, there were more people in the halls, it was more crowded, but there was a different kind of noise. I don't know how really to explain. I don't know if this was the case or not but the hallways seemed bigger, in fact, a smaller school but the hallways seemed bigger. My locker seemed to be--gosh, did I have a locker at Lincoln? I don't even remember. But my locker at Chapel Hill just seemed to be so far away from my classes. I don't think it was, it just seemed to be.

BG: It was difficult walking the halls at that time.

SV: Yes, it was.

BG: Can you think of some specific example where the teachers at Lincoln might tell you something that's important to success? You mentioned that they emphasized certain things that would allow you to succeed as a black person in a predominately white world. Can you think of something that's specific along those lines? I know it's forty years ago or more.

SV: Whatever it was it worked. If I could just remember what it was. [Laughter]. No I don't remember anything specific. No, I really don't.

BG: Let's not belabor that. The other area I wanted to talk about was the Civil Right's Movement in Chapel Hill and your role in it, I guess this was 1963 and '64 and how this-  
-. Were you at the white school at the time?

SV: Yes.

BG: I'd like to hear 1) your role in the Civil Right's demonstrations, and 2) if this affected how you were treated at the school.

SV: Okay. During that period there were a lot of marches, boycotts, and those types of things in Chapel Hill. I participated in those probably not as much as I should have, but I did. I think we talked last about the drugstore there near First Baptist and John Caswell.

I can remember him, but I can't remember the name of the drugstore. Anyway, we marched there and we marched in front of the dairy bar that is now Pyewacket. I marched at Sutton's downtown on the corner and then some of the marches that they had in town. Participated in the boycotts because at the time you could do that and you could have an impact and that again is the subject of another documentary. I did participate in those. Dissemination of information was a little bit different than it is now, I mean, things now happen so fast that if a plane crashes before the engine catches on fire there is usually a news crew there talking about the incident. So seeing people if there were pictures and so forth that were going to be the newspaper because so many things were going on at that time I guess it didn't get the kind of television coverage that some events got. What was going on in Chapel Hill didn't get as much coverage as things were happening in other places. It wasn't like people who weren't there to see us marching knew it was me in particular or knew it was John Smith or Joe Blow or whoever. In terms of how it affected my relationship or my treatment, was that your question?

BG: In general, whether the other students said anything to you, whether the teachers said anything to you.

SV: I don't remember the teachers saying anything. One of the things that I learned as I was growing up and this was kind of the lesson of the time is that you respected the people that were in authority over you, your teachers or whomever, so that could be why I don't have any real negative impressions of the teachers because there wasn't anything overt that was done that showed me any disrespect. As I said, I know they had their

biases so I'm sure that it did have some impact in the way that the teachers related to us as black students. But again, I didn't see them in a light that anything that they did was far out of the ordinary. I don't have any real bad remembrances there.

In terms of the students, we didn't have discussion about it. By this time, I had made some more friends and the situation had gotten better. There was still a lot of animosity from some of the kids that we were there. The number of black students there has increased each year and so by this time we were not a novelty as it were. Their comments, I mean, there would be students--. They had their little groups and they would stand off in their groups and would talk loud enough that they knew that you could hear in your group what was being said. Mildly provocative in the sense that at least in our day it wasn't to the point that they were trying to instigate fights, again, due to numbers it didn't warrant that, but enough to express their dissatisfaction. It could have been inflammatory. The people who were there at that time--. At that time, militancy was still kind of a new thing. The Civil Right's Movement had not heated. It was still pretty much in a nonviolent bane at that point. It really didn't get heated until the later of '66, '67, '68 in there when the Black Panther party came along, when the nonviolent movements became more violent or less nonviolent because of the environment. But at that time peaceful demonstration on our side was still the accepted action plan. As far as I know, we just kind of carried out there also.

BG: I'd like to go back to your high school experience at Chapel Hill High for just a minute, and I wonder if there was any difference in how you were treated by the males versus the females.

SV: The women seemed to be more accepting than the guys did. The guys really had a problem with us. I don't recall having any problem with any of the female acquaintances that I made there even in the first years when I was still getting to know people. The people who I could have called friends or close acquaintances at that point none of the guys would have been on that list. Women tend to be more nurturing, more accepting of people. It seems to me if I meet a woman who is not--. Women can sit down with each other, black, white, red, green and then in ten minutes they know all about each other. They talk about their kids, the house, their husband and boyfriend or whatever. Men are very--. We come into the party and we go and stand at the back of the room and we survey the situation. Women just kind of come and dive in. And this situation was pretty much the same. I can remember and if I can remember just a couple of names and I'm not sure they were there the first year that I got there but there was Sue Hickey, she was the coach at Carolina, she was his daughter. Jenny ( ), Lee and what was Lee's last name? She was at Fine Feathers the last time I was there. I can't remember her last name. They were the first ones who would at least speak if you made eye contact. The guys would take it more as an aggressive gesture if you made eye contact. Remember again, we were just coming out of Jim Crow. Black folks didn't look at white folks in the face. Maybe that's one of the things that I learned at Lincoln that I couldn't remember. It wasn't that you couldn't, if I'm sitting on a street and people are walking by and I'm staring at white people and making eye contact that could be a provocation in some areas. I have not been there but I know people who have through experiences as I've grown up that if I'm walking down the street and you and your wife are walking and I look at her in

a way you don't like, that could be a provocation. You are white and I'm black and I look at your wife and she's white and you think he's goggling my wife or whatever that could be a provocation. I got a little off track there but there was a difference in that way that the females treated us or me anyway as opposed to the way that males treated us. The males all through my high school career even in my senior year, I can remember there were provocations from white males. I don't recall unless it was that peer thing the girl with her boyfriend or whatever and he was giving me a hard time and then maybe she'd join in, but walking in the hall or if maybe on a Saturday I was going downtown to help my dad where he worked or just kind of hanging out with my friends and you'd see them on the street they would at least maybe acknowledge you. They're not going to run all the way across the street give you a big hug hi, how are you doing deal. We're not at that point yet, but at least you could get a hello from them. Some of the guys just seemed provoked very easily.

BG: So are you saying that you didn't make eye contact with the males, but you did with the females?

SV: I was more wary of the men because you didn't know when he would go into an attack mode. With the women, there was less of a concern there.

BG: So you could make eye contact with the women if you were alone?

SV: Oh, yes.



BG: Did you develop what you would consider any close friendships at the high school with white people?

SV: Yes, I did. There were some that I to this day still have a good relationship with. We just don't see each other because of jobs and where we live and so forth. I run into them periodically. I had one just last year who I developed quite a close relationship with. I felt and works at travel agency up in Winston-Salem, [NC], and she was looking for other people who had been in the class. She found my name in the Raleigh phone book and she said, "Are you the Stan Vickers that went to Chapel Hill High?" We just kind of got together like that.

There are people who are still in Chapel Hill that I will see periodically that I know from school. Interestingly enough, it's funny you should ask that. There are also some of those who still seem to have some of those--. I have an acquaintance that used to live five hundred yards from me. He had three brothers and he now works in Chapel Hill. I'm being tactful. I was over there the other day, I went to see my mom, and I ran into this young man. There's something that says I'm still not happy about what happened thirty years ago or whatever it was. I mean, there was no open animosity. He didn't look at me and start throwing visual daggers at me, but after forty years and you haven't seen somebody you would expect a little warmer reunion. We went through some wars together. We were on the football team together. We were on the basketball team together. He's that way so life goes on. I just thought it was interesting. It was just kind of coincidental that happened just a few days ago.

BG: Let's go back to the Civil Right's Movement and you made some comments about the community's awareness of what was going on. I wonder if you remember the reporting of what occurred? I guess there was just one newspaper in Chapel Hill.

SV: *The Chapel Hill Weekly* at the time.

BG: Did you feel that they were--? This was a big event. This was a lifetime event. Did you feel that it was handled that way? Did the newspaper cover it well? Did it show pictures and did it have articles?

SV: I don't recall. We took *The Chapel Hill Weekly* as a newspaper and I don't recall seeing a lot on it. I remember when the court case was going on, when my court case was going on, I remember one front-page article. I can't remember what it is but I can still kind of see the picture. Most of the stories were buried down in there. As the Civil Right's Movement went along, I really don't remember reading a whole lot about the unrest part of it, the demonstrations and the arrests. Most of the news that came out of that was the kind of word of mouth. You know, we're going to march in front of Sutton's today and the word would just kind of come, and after it was over--. I marched in some of these places. I don't remember anybody being arrested while I was there. Again, they were peaceful demonstrations at that point. There were signs and we would mostly just march around in front of the place and we weren't going in and spending money. There were not black folks crossing the black out lines. I don't remember anybody being arrested.

BG: Were there people out there taunting you?

SV: Not too much, not at that time, in earlier days maybe, but not at that time. The biggest problem was marching in front of the store and people wanting to go in and being careful as we were marching not to make contact with those people; not to bump into them or anything like that. There were a few who would purposely make it difficult for you to not walk over them--that type taunting. I don't recall any verbal exchanges. Well, now, I do remember one time we were walking in front of Mr. Carswell's store and some people were spitting and we got spit on. That was early on.

BG: Were you involved with any of the sit-ins?

SV: No.

BG: Do you remember the trial that occurred or the trials? There were about 1,400 people arrested during '63 and '64. Do you remember reading about this in the paper?

SV: No, I don't. Again, I'm still kind of young to want to read all the way through the paper, but I don't recall hearing about trials. I didn't know that people got arrested for the longest time. Thinking back, I guess I did know. I think Hilliard Caldwell got arrested. I remember he got arrested. He was kind of a close family friend. I'm trying to think of whom else. I remember Hilliard. From my remembrance, Hilliard was one of the movement, if not a leader at least an influencer in the community because I know he

seemed to be out front in the sense that he knew--. I remember him knowing things that were going on. He went to our church and that's kind of how I knew some of these other things happening because he was around talking to the adults. I don't remember anything about trials or anything like that.

BG: I wonder if there is anything that you would like to add to the discussions we've had if I've left something out that you think is important or something that you would like to go back over and reemphasis or something new. Let me just open it up to you if there is anything else you want to cover or go back over or just emphasize.

SV: No. It's been interesting going back and remembering some of that because quite a bit of it I just kind of put out of my mind. Some of it I didn't realize the importance of it. Well, much of it I guess because of my age and experiences I didn't realize the importance of it at the time. I didn't appreciate it or observe it as I should have, but it's like anybody's past serves to make you are what you are today and so I guess the things that I put away were good things. Those people who had then and maybe even now maintain animosity toward us for wanting to have the kind of life that every American deserves, I don't have any animosity toward them. They have a right to feel the way that they feel. They've got a right to say what they want to say. They don't have a right to always say it to me, but they do have that right. I appreciate the fact that I've had the opportunity to share this. I will love it at some point to be able to sit down with my grandkids and say listen to this or watch this since it's going to be a documentary film kind of a thing.

BG: I appreciate your sharing with me. I'm sure I brought up some things that are not pleasant for you, but let me ask you one other thing. I have my own feelings about you and do you feel that you have achieved some of what is rightfully every Americans that the dream of success, the dream of having a family, of home, and things like that?

SV: My opinion of what every American should have is the chance. The reason that the Civil Right's Movement got started was not about how many people got hired. I'm sorry, but this is going to sound decidedly un-African American probably, but I'm going to say it anyway because it's the way I feel. The Civil Right's Movement got started not about going to sit in a restaurant, not about where you live or how many black people work at this business or how many contracts go to minority contractors, it was about everybody having an equal chance at them. Now personal prejudice is always going to play into it as long as you can see that I'm black and you know that you're not because you see that when you look in the mirror every time we look at somebody and see something different just because of the way that we are--I don't know if that is human nature, I don't know if it's something that's just ingrained from this country or because we come from different parts of the world through our history or whatever, but whatever it is, we see somebody that looks different you treat them differently, and that's not always bad unless you make it a bad thing. Taking away choices taking away opportunity is the thing that is bad and so in terms of myself, I have been just unbelievably...

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A (END OF FIRST INTERVIEW)

START OF TAPE 3, SIDE A

DECEMBER 15, 2000

VICKERS, STANLEY

SV: I was saying that I have been unbelievably blessed to be able to do everything I have wanted to do. I have had people who have been so effective with me and by me and I hope that doesn't sound too self-serving but they have given me opportunities and pointed me in directions that-- I mean they have taken me to places. I never thought that I would be where I am at this point in my life. Yes, I could be a lot further along and I could be doing a lot of other things, but I didn't even imagine this when I was a little kid growing up in Carrboro. That's what this was all about to have the chance. Now it got distorted and polluted, this being the Civil Right's Movement because now we've got to have so many Mexicans, we've got to have so many Indians, and that's not a knock against anybody, but to me I spent four years in the Marine Corps and one of the things that four years did to me is that it gave me a great appreciation for this country and for what we have here. Before that time, I took a lot of stuff for granted like many people do now. I say it a lot; I say it to my kids, my grandkids who have not had an opportunity to see other parts of the world freedom is not free. Every time you take away somebody's freedom you take away an opportunity to make this country a greater place. Look at all the contributions that all kinds of people made to this country. Yes, we've had a lot of white influence, and yes, the whites are the dominant culture in the sense that there are more white people than there are blacks or Mexicans or Indians or anybody else, but everybody who's come here has contributed and the movement was about giving

everybody an opportunity to contribute. I had to fight, my parents had to fight for me to get into the system so that I could get that chance, but once I got there I took full advantage of it. I think if you go back and look at the people who went to integrated schools in the beginning and look at where they are now you'll see phenomenal achievement, not to take away from the kids who went to the segregated or the all black schools because there have been phenomenal achievement there also. But it's just a different attitude about it; a different methodology about it and that's what this is about. That's what every American should have. There's nobody who's trying to breakout of this country, not a one. There are people everyday, hundreds of thousands I'm sure, who are trying to get here just so we can have what we have. We just don't appreciate it and because we take it for granted that all this is going to be here for us, this democracy, this freedom, and all the things that we can do, taking away somebody else's freedom then just becomes another thing that we can do.

BG: It diminishes us all.

SV: Yes, it does. I'm down off my soapbox now.

BG: That was a good soapbox. It's a good way to end this interview and so I thank you very much for giving me the time and sharing with me.

SV: Thank you. Thank you for asking.



END OF INTERVIEW