

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

HELEN CLORINDA GEORGE HEATH
November 13, 2004

KIMBERLY HILL: This is Kimberly Hill talking with Mrs. Helen Heath at her home in Birmingham, Alabama, November 13, 2004. Thank you for having me here tonight and thank you for the chicken salad and the tea.

HELEN HEATH: It was my pleasure.

KH: We're going to talk about school desegregation and so we're going to start just by asking you about growing up and what inspired you to become a teacher.

HH: Well, I was born in Birmingham, which is very unlikely for a person my age. So I grew up in Birmingham and my parents were Charles Henry George and Juliette Moore George. My father was a minister and my mother was a teacher. And I guess my mother didn't get a chance to teach very long because after they had been married ten years I was born and my father sort of took her out of the labor market. So she had to come home to rear me.

KH: Did your mom teach in Birmingham too?

HH: No, she taught in a rural community.

KH: And where did you go to school in Birmingham?

HH: I went to Parker High School. No, let's take that back. I went to Industrial High School, which ultimately became Parker High School. At the time I attended it was Industrial High School. I graduated from Industrial High School in 1936 and about two years later the school's name was changed to Arthur Harold Parker, who was the first principal of Parker High School.

KH: And then will you remind me where you went to college?

HH: I went to Alabama State College and I graduated from Alabama State in 1940. And from there I went to Atlanta University and I stayed one summer and I left Atlanta University and went to the University of Michigan. And I think I might have gone there because I was unable to enroll at the University of Alabama. So I chose as far away as I could comfortably go without being around my parents.

KH: What were your favorite school subjects when you were growing up?

HH: I guess I liked all of them, particularly I enjoyed my English classes and I enjoyed some of my math classes. And did not realize that I really enjoyed math as much as I really did ultimately because my first teaching experience was in the math department, after I had taught one year in biology. Because at that time when we came out of school there were hardly any jobs that you could find in the city area so I taught at Bessma first in biology for one year and then I left Bessma and came to Birmingham where my first job was in math, although I graduated with a degree in English and social studies, minor in social studies. Reluctantly I took the job as a math teacher because I said that I couldn't teach math. But the superintendent assured me that I would be able to teach the math that I was going to be hired to do because he had noticed that my college grades were good. However, my college grades were not that good. It was just that I had a cousin who was a major in math and he tutored me before I went to the college classes and that kind of helped me out. So I taught math for three years and believe it or not, but I've had some of my students to come back and said I did a good job and that was because I was learning a page ahead of them. And then I went into the English department.

KH: And what school were you teaching at when you came to Birmingham?

HH: I taught first at Dunbar High School in Bessemer and then after I left Bessemer I came to Parker High School, the school from which I had graduated. And I taught three years in the math department there and then I went into the English department where I stayed for approximately ten or twelve years. Let's see, in 1945 I taught math until 1960, and in 1960 I went to Hayes High School and became a counselor because my college, my graduate degree was in guidance and counseling.

KH: Well, tell me some of your favorite memories about Parker High.

HH: Oh, my goodness. I guess I can remember that that was the most delightful experience that I had ever had because first thing the children were attentive with my being relatively young. I mean too young really because the first five years that I taught at Parker the principal would not let me teach in any grades other than nine and ten because he said that the children would not respect you. But in that day the children were most respectful, and I taught in grades nine and ten until I had the privilege of teaching the principal's daughter. By the way, the principal's daughter was the sister, well, the sister to Alma Vivian Johnson, Mrs. Colin Powell. And so after I taught her sister, Barbara, the principal was impressed with what his daughter came home and said about me I guess every night so then I was moved to the upper level of the high school.

KH: Did you enjoy teaching the older students just as much?

HH: Well, I loved all of my children and I just had the most wonderful time. As a matter of fact, if ever I was a little puny and ordinarily I would not have gone to work, I had to go. Well or feeble, I went to school every day because I enjoyed the children just that much, the young people. They were just respectful and you never

had to say, a single day did you ever have to really fuss at anybody and scold them and say, you know, "Get back in your seat." You just sort of looked their direction and they just were obedient and cooperative and fortunately I had the privilege of having taught every child that I ever taught a concept of one kind or the other.

KH: What do you mean by that?

HH: I mean that, you know, in that day we didn't have special ed programs. We taught all of the children in the same room. Consequently if there was a child who was a slow learner, you still had him in your classroom. And any type of mental disability, you still had to teach him. So I felt comfortable after having taught that every child learned something. Many of them did not learn as much as the other because they were not capable of doing. They didn't have the capabilities of doing more than the minimum amount of lessons.

KH: Okay, I understand. That's impressive. My mom's a special ed teacher so I know it can be difficult.

HH: It can be difficult. Now when I went into the counseling area, even I worked with those kids in finding the resources that they needed in order to do their work, other than that that was ordinarily offered in the school system where the special ed teacher had to work with them.

KH: What were your experiences like with other teachers at Parker High?

HH: Wonderful. We were all closely allied. We were one body and in my day in teaching every teacher wanted to have the reputation of having had cooperative students who were anxious about learning. That was one of the major jobs that we all felt at Parker that we had the type of discipline that they were seemingly motivated to

learn, even those slow ones, they were anxious to please the teacher. And the parents were cooperative because if you had any small problems you could just anytime refer to the parents and you just had all of the support that you needed. In that day you didn't have parents fussing at teachers for being a little hard on their children. They were just happy to know that you were interested in getting some concept over to them.

KH: Well, let's talk about how you ended up teaching at Hayes High School.

HH: Well, the person who was designated to be the unnamed superintendent of the black schools was Carol W. Hayes. And when the new school was built he decided that he would go through the school system and pick the people that he thought who were doing excellent jobs and he pulled us all from Parker and Carver and anyplace, to put them in the school that was named for him. So that kind of gave you an added reason to believe that you were doing a good job. So I went to Hayes as the first counselor at that school. Well, being a new school, you know, they had not had a named counselor anyway.

KH: Can you tell me a little more about who Carol W. Hayes was?

HH: Carol W. Hayes was a person who evidently had a very excellent relationship with the powers that be in the Birmingham school system. So he always had an office at Parker High School and we always called him the black superintendent. But he did not have that title as such, but he was the liaison person for the school system and the black teachers. Whenever they hired a teacher in the system they always had to go through Dr. Hayes in order to be hired in the system. So he was the man, the big man, in the Birmingham school system.

KH: How long did you work at Hayes High School?

HH: I worked at Hayes High School from '60 until '70, ten years. Then I moved from there to Glenn High School, which at the time was ninety-nine percent white. So each time I moved, although I didn't get another title, it was always a sort of promotion because that was right, behind rather the time when the school system was first integrated. And when it became mandatory that they would have black and white teachers in all schools that's when I was pulled from Hayes to go to Glenn. And Glenn was a vocational school but with having been rezoned and taking some of the children from certain districts, those kids were taken from the district in which you are now interviewing me in my community and this was an upper level kind of black community. And most of the children, many of the children, not most of them, many of the children who were zoned to Glenn were from the homes of the more professional blacks in the community. So many of our children were from homes where, one hundred percent of those children, I'd better say ninety percent of those children went to college and consequently the children who went came out, went away to graduate school and to professional schools and became professionals themselves. And consequently the school was no longer a vocational school but it was a comprehensive high school, which meant we had the academic subjects as well as the vocational subjects.

KH: So when it desegregated it also changed its academic focus?

HH: Changed the, yes, the focus of the curriculum.

KH: Most of the students from this area would have gone to Parker High if they hadn't gone to Glenn.

HH: Yes, they would have. You see at the time, up until about this time when they started building new high schools, Parker High School was the only high school for blacks. When I went there it was only one high school and that was Industrial High School. And so for a long time it was the only high school for blacks in the city system. There may have been some, there were some high schools in the county system, Jefferson County, but this was the only school in the metropolitan city for blacks.

KH: And then came Ullman and Hayes?

HH: Well, Ullman and Hayes came later. They came later. I cannot tell you the year that they came because I don't remember exactly what year they came, other than Hayes. I know that Hayes came in '60.

KH: Well, how did you feel when you found out that you were getting transferred from Hayes to Glenn?

HH: Well, I liked it very much because it's just three minutes from my house. So that was the first plus for me there. And, of course, I was anxious to see how I would relate with the white students after I had related so well with black students. And here again, I had no problem. I do know that when my white counterpart, he was the vocational guidance counselor, I was the academic guidance counselor, and I do know that when we would go to assemblies he would have difficulty in getting the attention of the students. I don't know why I was able to just walk on stage and everybody just quieted down immediately. I don't know whether it was just my personality or what but everything was just quiet. I had great respect from the white students.

KH: Even though he had been there longer?

HH: No, we both went there at the same time.

KH: Oh, okay, that's good to know.

HH: We both went there at the same time. We occupied a suite of office spaces. My white principal, who was certainly a racist at that time, put me in the front office so they could keep a watch on what I was doing. They put him in the back office. And it was interesting to know that they would even send spies out to look to see how many white children were going to come in to me.

KH: Spies?

HH: Yeah, is that a good word?

KH: Do you mean that they were spying on the students?

HH: Well, on both, the student and because when you said that I guess that's I guess that's why I used the word "spies" because I know one young white youngster came in to talk with me to tell me about some of his personal problems and when he left my office the white counselor called him in and said, "Do you know she's black? You shouldn't tell her all of that." But he was telling me all about his encounters at home and his problems.

KH: Did you have a lot of students come to talk to you about personal stuff as well as academics?

HH: Yes, yes, even my supervisor from the Birmingham Board of Education who was at that time Clay Sheffield, he ultimately went to the University of Alabama-Birmingham and became the head of the department of guidance and counseling. And at one time he invited me to come and teach his classes at the University of Alabama

because something in my personality he said would encourage the students to talk openly to me. And I had a lot of students to talk very openly to me. And, as a matter of fact, my co-counselor, some of the parents said no, let their child go in to see Mrs. Heath.

KH: That's interesting.

HH: That was interesting. It really was.

KH: What kinds of issues did students bring up with you usually?

HH: I'll tell you one funny thing that happened to me. The white children came in and said, one group of white children came in and said you gave me a schedule, and of course, I was doing a lot of scheduling at that time, with a white teacher who taught history. And they said, "You know, I wish you had given me that black man." They said "he's teaching a lot of history," rather than the white teacher that they were going to. So we had some workings out with that.

At the same time, there was a black teacher who was excellent in her preparation and who did an excellent job with her children. The white, I mean the children, not white, these were black and white children, came to me and said "Please don't put me in her class because she requires too much work." And after they kept coming to me I said well now, let's make a contract and I want it in writing. And I said if I move you from that class I don't want you to come back and say put me back. Of course, I was a little bit knowledgeable about what the white teacher was teaching and what the black teacher was doing who required them to do a lot of work. And after a couple of months, a couple of weeks sometimes, the children would come back and say, "Oh, please put me back in her room because she's teaching da, da, da, da,

da. And we're not getting that in our class because our teacher let's us just stand around her desk and talk and just have a social conversation and we want to go back to the black teacher." So it spoke well for the black teacher. She was an excellent teacher and the white teacher was -- I don't know whether she was just learning or I don't know how long she had been teaching -- but she was not as competent and was not as requiring, not as demanding rather, than was the black teacher.

KH: Do you remember either of the teacher's names?

HH: Oh, yeah. The black teacher's name was Gary. I won't give you the name of the white teacher because ultimately she got a job in administration. I'll just say it that way and people can just think who ever they want to if they read this comment. The black teacher was Mrs. Laura Gary, who was an excellent teacher.

KH: Would you tell me about your relationships with other people in administration at Glenn and with the other teachers?

HH: Fortunately for me, as much as I'm talking now, somewhere in my being trained to be a counselor I didn't talk quite as much. Consequently, whenever I would go into the teachers lounge, black and white teachers would pounce on me and say, "What did so-and-so talk to you about when they came in the office?" And, of course, I never spent too much time in the teachers lounge. I did not, however, ever have any conflict that I am aware of. I didn't have any conflict with teachers but I was respected by them as well as by my students. I sound braggadocious, don't I?

KH: No, you can tell if people respect you or not. It's not bragging.

HH: Right, right. Well, I just had many parents to come in and say, "Oh, I just hope that you will get my child to talk about whatever the problem was."

KH: Were white parents as enthusiastic about your work with their kids?

HH: Well, there was one professor at Birmingham Southern and some of our students at Glenn were children of those parents who were professors at Birmingham Southern College. [phone ring] So I had an excellent relationship with them.

KH: How did you deal with your principal because you said he was racist?

HH: Well, he was very shocked to know that they had put a black female at his school as a counselor. And, of course, when I went in the first thing he said was "They didn't tell me that you were coming." And he was not too comfortable with that. In a few years later he retired and he came back to the school and I attempted to shake hands with him from over my desk. He said, "No, I don't want to shake hands. I'd like to give you a hug." And, of course, me being kind of shocked I said, "You mean a white man want to hug me?" But he said, "Yes, I just enjoyed having you at the school."

KH: That was nice.

HH: One of my coworkers, by the way, was telling me the other day that when she went in the teachers lounge they were not used to it. You see they were bringing blacks in and they were not used to having so many black coworkers. So she said that she noticed that when they got there they said, "We're going to put the names on our coffee cups so we won't get them mixed up." And they said, "Oh, where is your cup? We want to put your name on your cup." She told them that "No, you need not worry about having a cup for me because when I was a little child my mother told me not to drink coffee because coffee made you black." And, of course, we were tickled pink to know that they were trying to be sure that they didn't get their cups mixed up with

black cups. She said, "No, I won't put my name on there because I don't drink coffee because my mama told me that coffee makes you black."

KH: Maybe their parents told them that too.

HH: Yeah. I told them don't get it mixed up with a black teachers cup with any other black people.

KH: Did you discuss desegregation with other teachers often?

HH: Not, yes and no, because the teachers would come in and talk to me about white children who came in and they wanted to be a little resentful at having a black teacher. And, of course, that became not a major issue but it did become an issue in many cases.

KH: Was that just at your school?

HH: No, I think that was generally in the entire Birmingham public school system. And after a while many white parents recognized the fact that they were getting the longer part of the stick with black teachers because we were all so enthusiastic of having our children coming out knowing something. So you did occasionally get a chance to discuss problems that existed in their classrooms as well as what do you think about would you rather have been at the black school rather than at this school. But after a while I think that it became a known fact that we did not all have tails and that we could communicate very well with them. And certainly when the schools were first integrated we were very definitely aware of the fact that black teachers had been better trained because many of them did not have the kinds of degrees that we brought into the system. I think any teacher, any person that you talk to in this Birmingham area would say that same thing basically. That we were far

better trained. And then after we came into the system and we were legally better trained we found that many of them immediately started getting honorary degrees because they didn't go to school to get what we had gotten.

KH: That's interesting. You mean they would go back to their old college?

HH: They would go back and we saw so many Ph.D.s surfacing, you know. And another thing that we noticed, if you went into the bank and we were busy trying to peep over and look at their checks because if they seem to have been practically the same age that you were, their checks were a little bit larger than ours. And, of course, then after a few years they had to start publishing the salaries. For this kind of degree you got this kind of pay. So I think that came as a result of some of us complaining about the fact that, you know, that teacher is making more than I'm making and I'm sure that that was happening then. I felt relatively sure that it was happening.

KH: Did the other counselor get paid more than you?

HH: No, no, not unless they had a degree that was higher than my degree. I only had a master's degree. My coworker had an AA, however he only had a GED from high school. I'm not sure how he got his degree. I'm not sure that he really worked for it. But I do know that some of the issues that would come up in the counseling area, well, specifically we were giving a test and he said, "Oh, I have forgotten how to give that test. What do you do next?" And, of course, I was very upset over him saying this. I said, "Well, you got a degree and I don't know whether you earned your degree like I earned mine." Because he had an AA and I only had a master's degree and he didn't know how to do many of the things that I knew.

KH: So he always had to ask you?

HH: Yeah. And later even one of the white teachers who was a sec, not a white teacher, she was a secretary, came to me after I retired and said "You know, we knew all along that you were doing the major part of the work." Because I did a lot of things that he didn't really know exactly how to do. Does that sound strange?

KH: I hear that story a lot. I hear about a lot of people who don't really know how to do their jobs and somehow find ways to get other people to do it.

HH: Well, he did a lot of things that were not the proper way of doing it and, of course, I had to call his hand on it many times. I said you know better than that. And I know at one time we were doing some schedules and I said that to him and he said, "That's the second time today that you have called me stupid." I did not use the term stupid. I said you know that's not the way that's done.

KH: I was going to ask about the parents of black students at Glenn. Were they really involved in the school?

HH: To some degree. I did find that I had more expressions of approval by many of the white parents than I did of the black parents and I contributed that to the fact that the black parents knew what their children should have been getting. And I wondered if the white teachers had expended that much energy with preparing their children for after high school.

KH: Last time you mentioned that you had problems with girls getting pregnant in school.

HH: Yes.

KH: Can you talk about that some?

HH: Well, many of the, as a matter of fact, I had one white parent come to me and talk about her daughter who had had an affair and was in trouble. And that parent came in and unfortunately the person that she had had sex with was a black student, so you know they were not happy about that. But I had a number of students, as a matter of fact, I went to the class reunion the other day and a child told me something that I was not aware of at the time. She said "You saved my life." And I said, "How is this?" She said I had been raped and I came to you and you calmed my fears and referred me to an agency that would be able to see had she really been impregnated. I was not aware of that particular thing but she told me that just about four or five weeks ago. But evidently I surely had had the conversation and she told me that I gave her some references to the health department and they worked it out.

I even had one girl, white girl, who came to me and told me that she had contracted a venereal disease. And she said, "And my mother works at the health department and I can't go over there and talk about it." Her mother did know about the child having the venereal disease but the mother didn't want her to come because she didn't want to be embarrassed by her coworkers. And, of course, the health department came to my office and gave the child medication for it as often as it was needed. Isn't that strange?

KH: Yeah. Do you think that there is a higher incidence of teenage pregnancy after desegregation than before?

HH: Oh, well I don't think segregation had anything to do with it. I just think that that came as a result of a relaxation of morals. I don't think that integration had

anything to do with the number of incidents of pregnancy, no. I just think that America has relaxed its concern about morals.

KH: Let's see how much time we have. Got about ten more minutes left on that side. Can you tell me about that class reunion that you went to? Which class was it exactly?

HH: It was a reunion, school reunion, of Hayes High School because about five or six or more years ago they decided that Hayes would not be a high school anymore. It would be a middle school. And so they were having a school reunion. However, at this time the school has gone back to being a high school. But they had this reunion that was a remarkable reunion and, of course, I had many students to come up and tell me about myself when I was there as a counselor. It was a wonderful reunion. I enjoyed it more than I have many other reunions that I have attended. I guess because you saw not one class but you saw several classes and my being there from 1960 to 1970, a number of my counselees have become professionals. And just today I mentioned to somebody, they were talking about the president of Lawson State Community College, is married to my first honor graduate from Hayes High School. So it was just remarkably a blessing to me.

KH: Have you ever been to a class reunion for Glenn High?

HH: Yes, I certainly have. And I ran into a student at Glenn High School just, this is not at a reunion, ran into him, he said, "You know, I shall never forget you because I had said that I was not college material and you reassured me that I was." And he had gone to college and I believe he is now working on his doctorate. So he was just thrilled to have an incident of seeing me again and telling me about myself.

And, by the way, that reminds me. I have a letter up here that I received from a girl just this week and she was saying, and I'll find that letter in a minute or two, she was saying that I came to your office after graduation and I was just very blue and you changed that immediately because you said that "you need to be in college." So that child went to Stillman College and she has a master's degree as, she's a social worker. And she came out and went to the University of Alabama and got an advanced degree and she is a social worker. I got that letter now. I'll share it with you before you leave.

KH: Okay. Just thinking about your career in general, when do you think...

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KH: Okay, my last question was what was your favorite year as a teacher or counselor?

HH: [It's hard to] answer that question because the entire time that I was at Parker High School as a teacher, every year was my favorite year. My first year at Hayes was a very good year because I got a chance to utilize everything that I had learned, I mean a lot that I had learned at Michigan. And consequently I got my first honors student who ultimately became the wife of the president of Lawson State Community College. That was a favorite year because I was just thrilled at the number of students that I had been able to help be placed on a job or at a college. So that was a favorite time also. So I've just, I enjoyed all of my experiences in the classroom or in an office as a counselor.

KH: Well, the rest of my questions are just about desegregation in general. Back when this school district desegregated, what did you expect would be different about the desegregated schools?

HH: I discovered that the black schools were stripped of their excellent teachers and they were substituted by unprepared white teachers. As a matter of fact, I confronted my coworker with [this], I said I don't understand how your children were able to make accomplishments if you all taught your students as I now see being done in the school system because they didn't seem to put any effort on children learning. They just casually presented things and I don't think children were really indoctrinated, if I want to use the word, if that's a good word, with the importance of being educated.

KH: So what do you think have been the consequences of that?

HH: Our school systems, our schools have been weakened. They've been weakened. Because even at Glenn I do know that there were teachers who would put on the television during a regular teaching class session and then on their tests, if this were a history class they would put on the television and then ask them a question off of the television that had no relationship at all with the subject area that they were teaching. And I've had students to come in and complain about the fact that Miss So-and-So-and-So asked this question that was a television question and it had no relationship at all with the material in the classroom that they were in. You understand what I'm saying?

KH: I understand what you mean. Could you do anything about that when students confronted you?

HH: When I confronted the teacher diplomatically, in many cases I was able to improve the situation. And I also know that in many cases when we first got to Glenn the white teachers were underminers of having children that know the importance of going in a classroom and well, I didn't complete that sentence, but in our classrooms a child walked in and he knew to pull off his, a man, pull off his hat and sit attentively and pay attention to the teacher. But I had a teacher say to me well, because you wear a hat in class that doesn't have anything to do with what you are learning. And, of course, I had to retaliate back and say "but your husband would not hire that boy to work in his office if he wore a hat all day," you know. They encouraged the children in some cases, "Yeah, wear your black band on your arm to show that you are black" because they were trying to make friends with the black child and they were not insisting that the child would find it necessary to really indulge into the classroom situation. They just encouraged them to be loose and loud and not respectful and that kind of thing.

KH: Do you think in general there's been a decrease in behavior among the students?

HH: I do. I do. I do. I cannot give a reason for that but we have far less interest in participating in intellectual affairs I believe. Now I've been out of the classroom for, I've been out of the school setting since 1984, so that's just my belief. I don't know. But I certainly believe it strongly that little is done to enhance a child's ability to be respectful and to concentrate on academic things.

KH: Do you have grandchildren in school now?

HH: No, they're not old enough for school now. They're in the lower grades like first and second grades and I don't really know what's going on there because parents are so interested in helping their children do their work at night so I don't know what's happening in the actual classroom. But my, and these are my great grandchildren, my grandchild attended Spelman College and her children are now in the lower grades in the Hoover school system and that's suburbia Birmingham. So they really are spending a lot of time with those children and they are doing well in school I think.

KH: But then it's probably because they spend so much time with them.

HH: Yes.

KH: Well, let's say when your great grandchildren get a little older and they ask you about Birmingham history, about desegregation, what would you tell them about it?

HH: I would tell them that in spite of my disappointment in a lot of things happening that the opportunities are far greater if they were to allow themselves to participate in activities that were enhancing for them, themselves.

KH: What kinds of activities do you mean?

HH: Well, the Hoover school system particularly offers greater opportunities for them to enhance their learning abilities. They have the resources in the schools are far greater. Now I don't know what's happening in the Birmingham school system and they're always talking about we need money, money, money, and more money. So I don't know really what's happening. I listen to the president of the school board and, of course, we have just gotten a new president of the school board. And, by the

way, she is a young woman who has her doctorate degree and she was in Parker High School at the time that Colin Powell's wife was a student there. And, of course, she is quite cognizant of what they ought to be learning and I have great hopes that she's going to implement some of the things that she knows that should be happening in the public school system.

KH: Do you ever hear former teachers or former students having nostalgia for all black schools?

HH: Yes, occasionally you've heard that because in many instances now I think that they are sometimes overlooked in this unless they are, I don't know. I don't know this. But I think that the average child many times does not get the opportunity that a child whose parents are affluent. Am I making sense?

KH: Yeah, I understand.

HH: Okay. That's just a belief that possibly I could not do any research and confirm it. That's just a belief that I have.

KH: Well, I've asked all the questions that are on my list but is there something you can think that I haven't asked you that would be important?

HH: I can't really think of anything that I should have told you. Let's see. You'd have to jog my memory by asking me another question.

KH: Well, I can ask you about race relations in Birmingham.

HH: Much better, much better, much better. I can't confirm the fact that they are sincerely interested in relationships being better or whether they know that that's the popular thing to do.

KH: Yeah, but either way.

HH: Either way it's good because you do see some change. And I have a number of people from the other race who I feel are pretty friendly with me. They seem sincere and they are not reluctant to come to visit with me as they once were. I know my father and mother had a lawyer who was working with them on some things and they were telling me, I was in college at this time, that they walked down the street and this particular lawyer ran off and left them because he didn't want to be seen walking down the street with black people. And, of course, now when you see a white person who knows you they are just very anxious to let the other people know that I know this black person. And they are very, very hospitable when they meet you. So that does occur. So we have that kind of thing going on.

Just last week we had in Birmingham a project that was called "City, Thou Art Loosed." You know the other one that [Bishop T.D.] Jakes does, "Woman, Thou Art Loosed?" They had a prayer session for forty days and they had a manual and each morning for the forty days they had a thirty-minute program on the TV that was under the title of "Viewpoints" and they brought up scriptures each morning to enlist the interest of people in the community. It was a very good session for forty days. It was chaired by a man in Birmingham, who has a lot of streets and things named for him. But there were about a hundred and fifty preachers I understand, ministers, who were from all segments of the religious community and made a good impression on the city of Birmingham. They were all races, all denominations, and they did this program for forty days. They would have three or four ministers each day and they had some women preachers, as well as the men. That was a very interesting thing. There was a textbook that went along with this. I have a textbook that they had.

KH: Do you think that school desegregation back in the '60s, especially '69, had a lot to do with race relations in Birmingham getting better?

HH: Perhaps, perhaps, because they have learned a lot about us. I think that we may have known a lot about them because inasmuch as an older generation of blacks had to work in the homes of whites, so we knew a lot about their involvement in things. But they have learned a whole lot about us and we have a white councilwoman who we were talking about just like week. She does not miss a single event that occurs in the black community because I think that she's just shocked to know that there are so many intellectual things that blacks are doing and that blacks are intelligent and they're not all mammies and uncles, you know, aunties. So I think that the school system may have had its impact on that particular kind of thing.

KH: Well, I think that's enough for our interview tonight.

HH: All right.

KH: Thank you very much.

HH: I've enjoyed it and you had me thinking about some things that I had not thought about.

KH: Well, that's good. In a couple of weeks I'll be able to get this.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW

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