

## INTERVIEW WITH MR. GEORGE MILLER

By Goldie F. Wells

Goldie: I am in the home of Mr. George Miller in Gastonia, North Carolina. Mr. Miller was one of our 1964 principals. Today's date is January 19, 1991. Mr. Miller, I would like for you to introduce yourself and say that you know this interview is being recorded.

Mr. Miller: This is George W. Miller and I agreed to the recording of this interview.

Goldie: Mr. Miller, I am doing the research for my partial requirements for my doctorate and I am doing a study to see if there is a difference in the role perceptions of Black high school principals. In 1964, there were over 200 Black high school principals. In 1989, there were approximately 41 and of those 41 on the listing that they gave me from the State Department of Public Instruction some of them are principals of alternative schools and not traditional schools so there are less than 41 in the state in 1989. I am going to ask you some questions and just have you respond to them and I would like for you to try to think back to 1964. Tell me something about yourself and how you became a high school principal.

Mr. Miller: Well, there were two principals in one there. It should tell you something about myself. I finished my under-graduate work in 1941, although I finished high school in 1940, stayed out and worked 15 months and I finished from A & T College, it's a state university now, with a Bachelor's degree and a double major in English and French. I came back to my hometown and started teaching. Then I took some courses and I had done extra work in drama while I was in college and I went off to school at Penn State for a couple of summers and studied journalism. Those were the four areas that I concentrated on in high school. I stayed at Highland for 20 years, 1941-1961. In 1961, I took my first principalship. Let me say this. I wasn't certified to be a principal but I had worked 12 summers with the principal at Highland and I had learned about every area of principalship except the cafeteria. I had done every kind of report, scheduling, book reports, supplies, statement of receipts and disbursements, financial reports. I had helped him with that. Therefore, I had had the experience, not the certification and when the job came open there were eight of us who applied and I was the only one that didn't have a Master's degree or a principal's certificate. But this was in Cleveland County in 1961, and they had a system that went along with the county schools then. They had Black committeemen and I went before them and then the Superintendent decided that I wasn't the one because I didn't have the degree but they didn't want

anyone but me. So he condescended somehow and called me and said, I don't know what it is you've got but they won't accept anybody but you. So I came in on a provisional principal's certificate and went right to work on my principal's certificate. I had started on two different occasions working on a Master's at Penn State in English and I had gone there for two summers and then I went to the University of Cincinnati and was going to do it in French. But when this came up I had to stop all of that and start again so it wasn't that I was not doing anything I took extension courses in between. This was a rural school. I had six children that walked to school. Everybody else came by bus. I had about 630 students grades 1-12. During that time we were totally segregated and the only thing I got paid extra for, we had no supplements, \$6 for bus per year which meant I got \$60 extra at the end of the year. There were ten buses but I found a way to work with the principals, the maintenance people, with everyone and I started getting some things done. I just wasn't satisfied. The one thing that struck me most during that time was that all the years in that county, the superintendent who is deceased now, Mr. J.H. Gray, they said that he had never appeared at a program at any Black school. The second year that I was there he came and spoke at an assembly. So that was a first. I worked for him for two years and they changed superintendents, a Mr. Phoenix, and he came to my school for his first meeting. We became friends although I worked with him one year there, he was my boss two other times after I came back to Gaston County--Mr. Lee Phoenix from Asheboro. I stayed there from 1961-64. We didn't have but one sport, basketball but that was generally on Friday and we would play and get through around 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. and get home around 11:30-12:00 and then you would take off and go to the A & P the next morning for that 9:00 class from Kings Mountain. Wednesday night was always a study night. My wife and my daughter were so good. They never bothered me. Every Wednesday was my study night. My thesis work in my Master's was French and I was doing a thesis along elementary faminics, not phonetics, faminics. None had been done for high school and the irony of it was that after I got my degree and went to take the NTE they gave me an English one. Therefore, although I had prepared and done everything in French about my thesis in French I had to take the English test. So the unique thing was I came out with more certification than I thought. I had the principalship, elementary and secondary administration supervision, supervisor's certificate, Master's in English and Master's in French. That came about because I worked through the summer. As long as you got straight A's you got a job. I worked in the Dean's office while going to graduate school and I learned what subjects would be good more than one area. That was the reason I was able to qualify in some of the others. In my French classe, two of the three classes I had, I was the only pupil and in the other class there were three of us. So you can imagine being with your teacher for

three hours and you were the only pupil.

Goldie: Did you have any educators in your family?

Mr. Miller: No, no educators directly. I had a aunt that had a Bachelor's degree and at that time she became principal of a little three-room school but there were no other educators in our immediate family. My brother and I were the only two.

Goldie: Could you tell me something about the school, about the people.

Mr. Miller: Well, you are talking about 1964. You see that was a split year. I was at one school part of the year and another school part of the year in 1964. Because in '64, I went to Price High School. Before I went to Price I had this school, as I told you was out in the country and behind a church, but we did a good many things there. We had very few disciplinary problems with rural children. We tried to improve the makeup of the school. We still had a frame building with pot-bellied stoves and that was good because the furnace went bad on me for awhile and we were able to keep everybody warm at the pot-bellied stoves. But we tried to change the program around there and apparently someone must have thought I was doing good because during the summer while I was doing the CSIP Program there I got a call from W.I. Morris that a position was opening at Price High School. Mr. Jones was going to A & T State College and there were 22 people being interviewed for that job and I came up for an interview there, this was Price Junior-Senior High on Bank Street. You can imagine after the first interview I went on back and then in July, I think, yes, Superintendent Knox called me and told me he wanted me to come on up again. So a friend and I went up and they had the contract laying out there and I had a series of questions that I always wanted to know. First, I wanted to know who was my boss and what the jobs with the other people were because I wanted to know how to respond. At that time they were doing some partial integrating in Boyden High School and I had the opportunity of employing the first two White teachers in this school. This school was much different from the other in that the staff was most highly qualified. I think they might have been ten or twelve there that had their Master's degree and most of them were good teachers. We had a full program. We had programs that I didn't have where I had been--agriculture in the county--I had to get acclimated to such things as the full business courses that they offered., They had a varied program in vocations that we didn't have before. ICT and cooperative education, students going out. We had an enlarged athletic program, we had more course offerings that you had to deal with and further had a lot more activities within the school because we were close to Livingstone and Catawba College. We were right in the city then.



Goldie: I'm going to ask you something about the responsibilities that you had and how you dealt with them. I will give you different areas. I want you to tell me about supervision of personnel and selection of teachers.

Mr. Miller: I don't think I had to employ any teachers that first year in 1964. They had the staff but I did have to organize and the superintendent was good enough to allow me to work eleven days before my contract started. They paid me locally which gave me a headstart. Therefore, I was able to do some organizing to meet some of the faculty. The majority stayed in Salisbury. A few were away and I started building up the department heads, chairmen of departments. You were responsible for not the total operation, we had no buses, but you were responsible for the lunchroom everything except the food there. You were responsible for the cafeteria managers and the people there and next I found that going to Price High School, it was a school that was an established school with much tradition. It was named Price High School after the founder of Livingstone College and they had a lot of tradition and in fact I had his daughter--she had been on that staff. She had been transferred and exchanged and Dr. Sam Duncan who had been the supervisor of the Negro high schools in North Carolina had become President of Livingstone College. So the switch was made and his wife came over. She was on my staff therefore you had people who had had various experiences. They knew what their job was but it had to be explained to them and one of the things that you have to do is to know your staff, know your pupils, you have to learn that, but on top of everything you have to let them know that you are the boss and the buck stops with me. Finances, program, everything--I had problems with a coach, for example, going over the athletic director and I had to stop him. Another thing that we had, Livingstone College did not have a gymnasium therefore we had to provide a gymnasium for Livingstone College and it had been done on a haphazard kind of way; therefore, I had to go to Livingstone and tell them that anytime that they used the facility that I had to have one of my personnel in charge. They didn't like that but that was the way it had to be because if something had gone wrong that was my responsibility and I always believed in being at school. I hate for a teacher to beat me to school. Therefore, my day generally was 7:20 to 5:30 to 6:00. We had good emphasis upon scholarships. That was another thing that I liked there.

Goldie: Curriculum and instruction.

Mr. Miller: We had a good program there--as I told you a very broad program and the students I would say--50% to 70% going to college. That was a high percentage back then and not too many of them went to White colleges. A lot of them went to Livingstone College. I remember we sent the first

student to Catawba College and we had to stay on that situation pretty closely because we wanted to know how that one student was being assimilated into a White college. We met with Catawba on several civic projects. There were nine students in that system, 3 Black, and 6 White. A very small school, I think there were about 4200 students all total at that time. It is now down to about 2800. They are trying to merge. Salisbury System was different from most city systems in that they had from the very onset assumed a lot of the responsibility themselves. They did not rent the textbooks, they bought the textbooks. Therefore, you had more concern over which books you could get. You collected the money but you bought the books. The next thing I think during the four years that I was there, if I am not mistaken, I put in eleven different programs. One of them was a program with area teachers in the junior high. They were starting clustering That was one of the bigger programs that we put in during that time. I don't think I had any major problems when I was there. I didn't have to worry about a truant officer. Everybody lived close in the vicinity and I was the officer.

Goldie: It looks like you must have seen my interview guide because the next thing is discipline.

Mr. Miller: Well, I have never had trouble with the discipline. I made a mistake the first couple of years that I taught and I had one student to really set me straight. One day I was doing what you call mass punishment. I punished the class for cutting up and one student told me, Mr. Miller I'll stay here to Doom's Day. I think you are unfair because I wasn't cutting up. You should punish only those who were doing it and I went back rethinking. Therefore, my discipline became very narrow to what I put in writing. I only had two rules and one statement. The first rule is, thou shalt have respect and respect begins with you. I never put down don't write on the walls, don't throw paper down, all of those fell under the line of respect. How young men treated the ladies, respect; how you dressed, respect; and I set the example myself. I would pick up paper and I have never been to a classroom in 42 1/2 years with a sweater on. So that set an example and I was able to assimilate myself with my peers. I had to be because while I was there every summer I worked while the other two Black principals did not work. I had to learn the ES Program during the summer. Some  
Next thing is, thou shalt tell the truth. Break a window, I don't care, just tell the truth and I never had a problem with fighting. If they fought, I would bring the two of them in and set them down and first of all I would check to see who was hurt. Then I would set them down until they'd get quite and there are not but two things that cause a fight. You have to learn that. One playing gets the better of another one and they start fighting or somebody is agitating and then you can stop that but if I found someone telling a

lie, I'm going to punish them for lying and not for fighting because if I could with respect and truth I had my major discipline under control. The third thing was a statement, everybody shall be happy. That meant that you had to know your staff, you had to know your students and that went all the way through when I became the 10th Black principal in the State of North Carolina at a White school at Hunter with 1600 students. I had a job learning their names but you must learn their names and you must learn to say something good about them, I don't care how bad they are, so that you know them. If a child is hungry, stop what you are doing and go feed them. A child can't learn if he is hungry. You should know their homes. I require teachers to go into the homes. They don't do that now. That is the biggest problem that we have in desegregation that we'll never get in integration. Desegregation is that we cut our home visitation yet they can send a twenty-five year old social worker into a Black community and they can't send a teacher. And when the teacher doesn't know the homes from which the children come, they want to do this, suspend them. The concept of school has to be established first. What is a school for. A school is the second place you learn. You only learn two ways--either through experience or through teaching. Experience takes a long, long time therefore, you expect children to make mistakes. You don't punish every mistake. You set about to change it. Therefore, you must combine teaching and learning. If no learning takes place, no teaching goes on. You can talk to Doom's Day, and that's where they pass judgement, and learning only takes place when you are changing a behavior pattern. Getting students to learn to listen. Noise in a classroom does not mean that children are not learning. Quietness doesn't necessary mean learning. You've got to know how to distinguish what is going on. You can't go into a carpentry class and ask them to be quite but you can go into a music class and a bunch of them are over there talking. Something is wrong because everybody sings together. You have got to learn to distinguish what is required in each situation. Further discipline depends a lot upon your personnel. Teachers vary in their aspect of discipline and you ask them to define discipline in their room and they will give you something right out of a book. That is not apropos. It is how you are going to do in a hypothetical situation because that is the way you have to operate and I don't interview teachers who haven't gotten down to that yet. I never interview teachers like anybody else.

Goldie: Tell me how you select your teachers.

Mr. Miller: I never ask a teacher where they went to school; I never ask a teacher what grades they made; I never ask them what they majored in. I got all of that information before hand. I can get that from their transcript and their application. I know they have said they have certain hobbies



so I know that. Therefore, if they are certified in a certain area I want to know how they are going to deplore what they know. I give them hypothetical situations to see what they would do. Such things as, "What would you do if you were teaching mathematics and you went to the board to explain the principle in algebra, or trigonometry and every time you had your back turned somebody in there starts whistling and you turn around and they stop. What are you going to do?" You can't tell a girl whistle from a boy whistle. Or, a student comes to you and says, "I went to the restroom and I left a dollar of my lunch money here in my desk and I came back and it was gone." What are you going to do? Are you going to accuse everybody, or are you going to search everybody so if a guy lost a dollar or a dollar and a half I'd go right in front of everyone and give them a dollar and a half myself then I would give a lecture on honesty. That paid off. Then I also gave that person a lesson on carelessness. Next thing was to explain the difference between boys and girls. Most people do not tell students why, they tell them what. There are six major things who, when, where, what, how and why. We learned that in journalism that that is what you do. Most teachers don't like to bother with the last two. How and why are listed in the science class. The why bothers everyone but I made it my business to go in and do some teaching myself under why and boys are with girls. Why do you not hit a girl in the breast? The difference between the breast and the chest. Why do girl's hips shake when they walk and boy's don't. You see a boy twisting and shaking like that, what is wrong with him? And you begin to go over that and you teach respect and you make an analogy and if they don't understand it you say all right, you bring it down to the family. What if this is your mother this is happening to, what would you do? This is your sister--would you want some boy to do thus to your sister? The next thing is, you've got to realize is how children act at different age levels and I taught my son and I was a principal for my daughter. My son was in my class for two years and he never called my name. He wasn't going to say Mr. Miller and I wasn't going to let him say daddy. But you had to establish the fact with the other students that I did not help him with his lessons. They soon respect you. If they tell you something confidential, you must keep it that way. They want to be respected and they come to you with their problems and particularly in the junior high. One of the problems that we had, particularly I'm talking about Price High School now where I have 7-12. A lot of times you will have teachers teaching in the junior high school who were high school oriented. Therefore, they do not understand the biological, the social changes that are taking place with a 7th, 8th or 9th grader. Therefore you have to be a good administrator to make sure you put the right personnel there and those are the foolish years. Sometimes it begins in the 6th grade or on down. I remember one instance at an elementary school where I had a girl who was,

it was a day at school 1-6, she was in the 5th grade and she was the only one that was menstruating. She and her mother, the secretary, and her teacher, we had a conference and we had to explain and talk so that this girl would not be embarrassed and the other children would not be embarrassed by this situation. That is just one incident. Why did they do this? One day a kid comes here happy when he is 12, 13, or 14 and the next day he is pouting. Why? And how are you going to handle it? A teacher in that area must know that they are inquisitive about human nature. Their bodies are changing, they're developing, and you have to learn to see but not see everything and hear and not hear everything. Then when the situation arises you have to learn how to discuss it.

Goldie: Now you have already told me that you didn't have any busing so you didn't have any transportation problem, everybody walked.

Mr. Miller: Oh, some of them drove cars. Yes, because they came from the other side of town. Therefore, they had to learn how to handle cars. So you set your rules about cars or else they get in that car and leave. We didn't have many then but they had to have a sticker and they had to sign a sheet saying they had the parent's signature with their name, what type of car, the tag and who rode in that car. There were certain rules and violations. If you left a car unlocked, it cost you fifty cents. If you came in with any alcohol, drugs or weapons that car never came back on the campus and you were going to get the appropriate punishment. You didn't go to your car without a permit or if you had to leave early your parents had to let me know because if you just left and went on off and they were expecting you at three and you left at one I don't know what you are doing. I'm responsible when you first come there until you leave and generally the old rule used to be that you were responsible for one hour before and one hour after. Teachers don't want that now. They don't want that responsibility.

Goldie: Tell me about the utilization of funds. The best way to utilize fund

Mr. Miller: The best way to utilize funds is to explain to teachers, which most principals don't like to do, the source and amount of all funds. You have state funds, local funds and your general funds. A lot of the high school teachers did not know that 7th and 8th grades were considered elementary. They got special allotments. Principals didn't tell the teachers they got special allotments and therefore, they could finagle. If you got vocational money, book fee money, home ec money, physical ed money, let us know where all of it is. And then you get your department heads together and along about a month from now, I'd say the middle of March, each department head would contact the



teacher and find out what their needs were going to be for the following year. That would be on a white page. They would make me a summary on the blue sheet on each one and I would summarize all of them and I'd meet with the total amount of the funds and whatever it took for band--they may not go to band a lot or glee club a lot but you've got to have it. There is a funding problem. All right, the state this year decided they were going to cut out a certain amount of free products. You need to know that. Everybody in the school needs to know that. In the bricklaying class, the company will give you 2,000 bricks but how long will 2,000 last; therefore, how much will you give to bricklaying? How much do you give to carpentry? How much does a math class need every year? If they have their competencies and their scales all those things they give, how much do they need every year. We'll get some other class that is using it up. And in that way, when you do that that is hypothetical, you see, at that school, Price High School, we had a total of \$20,000 coming in but we had a request for \$25,000. Now they had to set priorities. What comes first? After you said priorities each teacher knew what they were going to get. Next, I committed them to order what they wanted for the next year before school was out. When school opened everything was on hand. If they had something they wanted to hold back, it would be there. If an emergency arose, you had another meeting. For example, one year we had the price to go up on mimeograph paper 100%. From 34 cents a ream to 69 cents per ream. Therefore, if you are allotted so much for supplies something had to give. The next thing is what you do with the general funds. That is your biggest problem. Money that is raised outside of allotments. I handle that differently. I did not allow the athletic director to handle the funds. We had an athletic finance committee. The athletic director submitted his needs but you got someone who was unattached to that and that would generally be the head of the math department or someone and we would do the accounting that way. As far as the tickets and everything we'll meet your needs if we could. Then we ordered in bulk--that is another thing. We could place your order for certain supplies that you need for athletics or whatever you have and the system would put it on bids which meant that you were able to save that way. Then came the problem. Money that was raised during these years how do you account for that. There is only one answer that you can give. If there had not been a school here, would you be raising the money. You're raising it because there is a school here, the school is going to have a say so in it. Now we can have a French Club and you can raise thousands of dollars but you are not going to take that money and have a French party. We made some decisions on that. Therefore, we have to keep teachers from going way ahead. And such projects as yearbooks and whatnot. The yearbook people have all the money in pictures. You run into some things and how do you equate that. Then if the yearbook people handle all that and don't tell the other faculty

members how much is taken in and how much is involved, there comes the whispering. Any time you have something it should be accounted for it and I don't care what it is there should be an accounting. The hardest thing to account for is concessions at a game. We had a way of doing that. We carried all of our equipment together, we sold everything and the people were in charge, we had so many cups, and we come back and counted what was left so you better have one for so many others. This kept down the problem. But now when I came back and went to work in Gaston County, this became a problem. Outside interests--Booster Club, who needed a Booster Club. I didn't need a Booster Club. I could handle my own program. I ran into a situation where the Booster Club wanted to run the whole program. That didn't make you popular then.

Goldie: No, I know it didn't. What about cafeteria management?

Mr. Miller: Except for the three years that I was at Green Bunker from 1961-64, I had to run the cafeteria then myself. I had to raise the funds, hire the workers, buy the food, buy the pots and pans. They furnished the utilities. That was something that I had never faced before because always before it had been done central-wise. That was an experience and you will find that 40%-50% of your children are on welfare. They are farming and this time of year they don't have any money. So you have to learn to cope. The first thing that you have to do is you have to make sure that you have a person who understands cafeteria cooking, bulk cooking. Just because someone has cooked in a person's house you don't need them. I had that problem. The lady would cook some of the best pinto beans or the best cabbage and have all that fatback floating in it. I couldn't afford that. She was cooking as you would in a house. She didn't understand the cards. So I had to get someone who understood the bulk cooking, cooking by the hundred and that is important. With that problem I had to do a whole lot of finagling like getting one of the farmers when they got ready to sell their corn and buying 20-50 dozen, a man getting ready to sell his chickens had the children to bring in chicken food and buy all the hens, roosters and everything. Then the next day kill them and put them in the freezer. Then you don't pass out fried chicken you see. It doesn't take it long to get gone. You have to use that chicken with something else. There were a lot of ways you had to learn to do. But, when you got to Price High School I didn't have to worry about it with my operation. I just had to deal with the personnel and the discipline and if you got a good manager you didn't take an individual problem in the cafeteria to the individual. You took it to the manager. If you do that you intercept the manager. You should first take your problems to the manager and the same way within the school to this chairman unless it is a personal problem with the teacher. But you take it to

the manager and let the manager attempt to settle it. Then if they can't, then you have a trial where the three of you come in. But always in the end the buck stops with me.

Goldie: Buildings and grounds.

Mr. Miller: They say, "That George Miller is a principal and is a teacher--not to godliness he was noted for being next to cleanliness." I had a school, an elementary school where I had a spy in where I would give anybody \$5 if they found five pieces of paper, I don't care how small, on the floor in the hall. You must do this. You must understand all aspects of the school. You have to know maintenance, boiler room, you have to know all of it. I went from the city system where you had one type of plumbing out to the rural system where you had a sump pump so you had to learn it and back to the city system. So that means a different thing. Next how do you maintain cleanliness? You maintain cleanliness by making it everybody's responsibility. You should know how many rooms the janitor can sweep per hour but if the teacher lets the children leave their books and all the paper inside the desk and every time the janitor moves the desk they fall off it is going to more than double his amount of time. So you have got to tell them what to do. I would rather that they take all of the books out, empty all of the trash on the floor. You can sweep that up. If the janitor has to close every window and adjust every blind after he gets through sweeping, he has a problem. It's going to take him longer. Therefore he might wind up not being able to dust. Next thing we should know how much a person can do, this individual can do, not all individuals. He may can do twice as much as you can in the same period of time. Understand? When I went to Green Bunker I had two older people, an old man and an old woman so they worked at a different pace. Therefore, you employ the students and do it. Then they had been trying to get through with their job so they could ride the bus back home. Whereas at Price High and these other schools I had other janitorial help, Edward Strange. Then if you see them doing something wrong, you have to have some training sessions on how to do certain things. Therefore, I have spent many times even going to A & T College and to various other school systems lecturing on maintenance and cleanliness and how to get things done. Using ESSA, CETA workers have to use that. Most janitors when they get extra work like that do not know how to supervise them. So you have to teach your head janitor to be a supervisor and a lot of his workers have got to have it. They don't know how to work and they don't know how to supervise. They don't know what to do when a child sits around and goofs off. Therefore, you have to establish that in the beginning.

Goldie: Have you ever had any janitors that wouldn't do?



Mr. Miller: Oh yes.

Goldie: How did you change their behavior?

Mr. Miller: I told you there were only two ways. One by experience and one by teaching. They came to me with poor experience because I couldn't teach them they had to do like the cat that stole the milk. They had to curl their tail and go around the house.

Goldie: You did try to teach them first.

Mr. Miller: Oh yes. Then they had to go. Well, for example you've got a lot to teach. A principal who doesn't do a thing but stay in his office and sit down needs to be fired. But if you have a custodian who doesn't know when to change the heads on the mop, you have a problem. You can't sweep with dirty mops. What do you do with mops when you get through with them? I find them with heads on them like this and up the wall and it is all dirty. You've got to make preparation. So I nailed a big 1 x 6 board across there and put some nails in it and made a rack for them. Every so often I would go down there and see number one, two, three and how many we had. I had a key to everything. The next thing when I went to one school they were sweeping the hall with a 12" mop and they had to go and down it four times. So immediately I bought some 72" mops. The next thing is that your staff if you are involved in cleanliness, they will soon fall in. For example, different lunch periods. If you eat on the first lunch period and he eats on the second he has a right to have a clean table just like you do. Therefore, you are going to have to teach cleanliness. Do not leave this table that way because you may be on the second lunch period next year and when we have three lunch periods, you have to do it. When they see you doing things then sometimes we get so bad you go back to the basic way of leadership. There aren't but four ways of leadership. The first is the old hard way of telling, the second is selling, the next is consulting, and the fourth is joining. In the army they don't ask you to do one thing, they tell you. So if the grounds don't look right, you bring your class out here and line them up and I'm going to show you. This is what we call policing. Every one, two, three trashcans, pick up everything that isn't nailed down. If it is nailed down, paint it, if it moves salute it. If it gets that way next week she takes her class. After a while you can do it all in 15 or 20 minutes on the campus but you have it clean. Then remember that what people see first is the impression that they have last. When you come in the front door of a school- I can walk in the door of any school and look at the grounds out there and walk through the front door and tell what kind of school it is. I can take you to a school in Gaston County that doesn't have a full-time custodian now and I know because you are going to find cigarette butts and everything

laying all around because they can't do it. So we don't have any problem with that. One last thing--make sure the people that you ask to do a certain thing have the right supplies and equipment to do it. I remember doing summer cleaning at a school when I had 80 classrooms and the man asked me what did I want for summer cleaning and I said 200 pounds of rags to start off with. He had been used to giving everybody ten pounds which wouldn't last no time because nobody figured it out. All right, how much glass cleaner would you need. How many square feet can you do with a gallon of wax? You need to know those things yourself. No janitor can figure that out. There is a whole lot that you have to do yourself. Next, don't let teachers become borrowers. I'll keep my room clean if you will give me a broom and a dust pan. If you have 80 teachers how many brooms do you need? 80 brooms and 80 dust pans. After a while you don't have one for yourself. No one has the authority to move any furniture without permission. I don't care what it is. I don't inventory a file that was different. When you went into your room you had two sheets in there and you signed them both. It said you have so many desks, a teacher's desk, and you had to sign whether it was clean or not. You had a trash can, a pencil sharpener, this, that and the other. I've come back to the army. If you have too much, you stole it, and if you don't have enough, you sold it. So when I went back the next time, I could do my inventory real quick. Therefore, if you had a broken chair, bring me your sheet and we'll take it off until I replace it. Or if you got more students in your class than you have furniture, let me know. Don't go somewhere picking it up. I want to know where everything is. That goes in the cafeteria, everywhere. You can do an inventory of a school of 1600 students. I don't care what you got. In two days I did.

Goldie: Tell me about the community relations.

Mr. Miller: That is most essential because the most important product you are dealing with is their child. The only reason we don't open school on Saturday and Sunday is there are no children. The only reason the teachers go home at 3:30 is because the children go home at 3:10. Therefore, what is important--the children. You try to instill within your staff that importance. You must get out in the community, you must belong to things in the community. Go to the churches in the community--White or Black. Go to the organizations. When I was in Salisbury I spoke at several of the clubs, I joined the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and all those things. Couldn't get in the Country Club because they wouldn't let me in it. I asked. You have got to know the community. Now any community--when you used the word community--I wish you had said communities because within your school community you have sub-communities. There is maybe one section of town where the people call themselves affluent. You can go down and cross the highway and it is a

different thing or you can go back to all these apartment people but they are all in the community. You have some who come from way across the other part of town who feel that you only give certain ones who are right around the school the opportunity to do things. You have got to know that. That is most important. So you have got to know all of your sub-communities within your school community and one of the better ways I used to do was to make sure that I drew a map of my attendance lines and then I would have it reduced to a sheet like this. Then I would give one to every child to carry to every parent. You'd be surprised at what that will do to let them know where they are all coming from because the people way over here don't know what the people way over here are doing. Next, you must let them know that if they can come to a football game they can come to PTA.

Goldie: Well, how in the world do you get that done?

Mr. Miller: Well, you start with a few, first you have to get the child interested and you're going to tell them something to entice them to come to the PTA program or reception. You have got to get them to come but then you have to let them know. When I first became principal I never had to worry about getting people to come because they are going to come the first time just to see me and find out what I had to say. That is when I said it right then. I let them know what I meant--whether I would spank their child or whatnot--If you don't want them spanked, you come off your job and come over here and spank them. I expect to see you back here every month when we are doing so and so. I don't want to see you crowding in the basketball game and can't come over here for anything else. Don't tell me that you live 20 miles away. You go anywhere you want to go. You go to the fair, you go anywhere. This is the most precious thing that you have--your child. You trust him with me for 7 1/2 hours a day. Please give me that respect. If you want me to do a job with him, put him in my care. I said, remember we have a whole lot so don't expect us to be a nursemaid for every one of them because we don't have that many nurses. So your child is going to have to learn some manners and some discipline too. Parental conferences are important. Now you must realize you can't always set the parental conferences based on your time. You have to a lot of times set the parental conferences based on the parents time and you have some parents who are working third shift or second shift who come in he may want to be sleeping during the morning. When do you have that conference with that parent. That is when you need to know. Therefore, I would do what we would call a parental survey so we could find out--most times just a name and address isn't sufficient. You need to know something about them. Other things you need to know are when you get with the parent you try to find out what the health problems were of their children. My daughter had a friend that was diabetic when she was at Price High School and one day she went into a



coma. But it was a reverse coma. It wasn't that she needed insulin, she needed sugar. She had taken too much. I was in the medics in service so that knowledge came in and immediately when they got her on the outside I told them to rush down to the cafeteria and get me some sugar, put it in some water, bring me a spoon or a knife so I could hold her tongue down. She had almost gotten rigid. Then I stayed out there with her thirty or forty minutes and she began to come around. What are you going to do if you have a student with epilepsy and he has an attack and he is chewing his tongue at lunchtime? Everybody is running around. First thing I would do is put them big fingers in there and open his mouth and hold that tongue. He could choke himself to death. Next what medication can be given? What do you do with a child they bring to school in a stationwagon and has to stay on her back all day and you don't have an elevator or she can bring one boy, he comes, he rides and they have him in a chair and they have to take him upstairs in the chair. Knowing all the things. We have to learn to explain the difference between males and females. I use three words. Sick, ail, and ailing. If you came to me and said you were sick I'd ask you what is wrong with you. If you said you were ill, it meant that your period was on and you needed attention. I would get you to the home ec room, or in the olden days we would tend to it properly ourselves. Ailing--you and your boyfriend had an argument I'd be willing to listen in on it. I'd ask them if they were sick or if they were ailing and when they understood which one and they would tell me I would not embarrass the child who was ill by asking them sick questions. I'd send them on to the home ec teacher.

Goldie: What did you say your basic difference between male and female--between girl and boy. What did you give them for your definition?

Mr. Miller: Well, God made two--male and female and thank God for the difference. You'd talk about the characteristics. The boys need to understand menstruation, that it takes place, in my teaching experience I've had girls to have problems with menstruation and didn't know what to do and it come down all over the floor. I've gone through so many experiences but you need to explain that. Why it takes place and if they don't do that in the science class or in the home ec room--parents don't know the why themselves, they know what but they don't know why. They don't keep a chart of the when. So you can't get ill every week. If you start coming in here every week there is something wrong with you. We're going to get a doctor. Therefore you don't pull that trick on me. When I was teaching and I used to have plays and I used to go with cheerleaders and you'd have girls at that time who were in their period. The boys had to understand. A girl would come off stage and it was necessary for her to change so I explained that before practice started. You have got to be able to talk to young people.

Then another thing is that some parents don't want you to tell them certain things. You have to be on the lookout for that. Some parents get upset if you taught about anything dealing with sexuality. Everybody has it. It's going to take place.

Goldie: What did you tell the girls about the boys?

Mr. Miller: Well, I would tell the girls its all right for him to hug you and its all right for them to kiss you but be sure to hold both of his hands. The only time they get in trouble is when his hands start moving. I told my daughter that and all of them. It's going to take time. You're going to like somebody but then I did differently with my children than most people. I not only told them why but back then they just started the pill. They had prophylactics and I made my daughter carry them after she got up to a courting age and everything and I told her if you don't tell me now, nine months later everybody is going to know it.

Goldie: How much administrative power and control did you have over your school site and your responsibilities?

Mr. Miller: You are going back to the first question I asked when I met with the superintendent. I asked him who was the boss and he told me that I was the boss. For example, if a supervisor of instruction came in elementary or what have you and didn't come by my office to let me know, that is a stranger in the building, I'm going to call the police and have him arrested. I was number one in the school. It don't have to be a great big I. It can be down low but I let them know that I respect them so you come by because today I may have things I want you to do other than what you want to do if you are a supervisor. As a supervisor you don't hire, you don't fire, you are there for instructional purposes. I'm head of the instructional program. You are there to assist me with my instructional program, not to set up yours. Therefore I may have special needs for you today if you are a reading teacher. This fellow over here needs one-on-one today and not you going in the class.

Goldie: How did the desegregation of schools affect your role as a principal?

Mr. Miller: It put me on the spot on many occasions but I had thought it though and I learned how to weather those spots. For example, we would meet in principal's meeting and a White principal would say, well we have 65 or 70 Black students over here and they don't give us any trouble. We are keeping our eye on them. I would say, are you keeping your eyes on the White ones too? I would say, listen, I don't even have to open my mouth and I cause more problems by just existing and being here with you all. You can't say what you want to say because I am here. You have to change

your language, you have to change manners, because I do exist. I don't have a problem. You have a problem. Then they get into it and you go a little farther and you come to this. I be in segregation. If I am dirty, you don't have to be around me. I need to go take a bath. Right? If I'm talking and you don't want to hear it, you can leave, can't you if you are segregated but if I go in the store or anywhere and just because of my color you try to treat me differently, you say God made a lie, and my God didn't make a lie when he made me my color. Therefore, you can segregate me on some of those other Biblical things but when you start doing it on color, I'm not going to have it. You don't have to like me but you better respect me. And when you start demanding respect--you must give it--remember that anybody that you work with whether you agree with him or not, do as Abe Lincoln said. Be loyal to them but if you can't put him down to your heart's content but be loyal to everybody you work for. I have never had anyone yet that I worked for that when I told them, I may disagree with you but I'm not going to be disagreeable. I'm quick to disagree.

Goldie: Did you notice difference in the supervision of White teachers and Black teachers?

Mr. Miller: Sure, White teachers don't want to spend that much time with the children. They don't want to go into their homes, they feel that the White children have access to most all of the facilities, the library and everything in the community--that makes a difference. They don't know the home, they don't know the library, not like my daughter. She could tell you what books we had here. A lot of them didn't have newspapers and one T.V. and it made a difference. They were victims of post-pms syndrome. The teacher before had always put in their minds that he wasn't any good. He was going to create a problem. And that was bad. Rather than changing the patterns the White wanted to suspend and they do to this very day. They love suspension. Out of sight, out of mind, problem gone. A lot of times you had to discipline a teacher. Any time you don't start class until ten minutes after the bell rings you have a problem. If you quit ten or fifteen minutes before the bell, you haven't prepared a lesson. And that can create a problem. If you don't have a lesson well prepared, you have a problem. I've had students come to me and say, you have to get rid of that teacher. We've been on the introduction for three months. I can't stand that. I can't go to college this way. You've got to face that fact. They had to go. I've asked them what they are doing and they say, we're having a synthetic discussion. Not in my eyesight! I've gone in and taken over the classes I've taken over English and biology classes. All you have to do is tell me what the subject is. I'm going to teach it.

Goldie: Did you enjoy your job and why?



Mr. Miller: Everyday the good and the bad. Because I was trained and I loved it and I was a professional. I love working with children, I love working with youth, and nothing can give me more joy than for a kid that I taught thirty or forty years ago to meet me and give me a French expression. I had one boy come in and get some dry cleaning last week and he started quoting from Shakesphere. He said, do you remember making me learn this? I said, yes. He said, Why? I said, look where you are now. You have a good memory and I said, do you remember when I taught you, you had to look at the book.

Goldie: You knew it yourself.

Mr. Miller: You've got too. I didn't come to teach no book. I came to teach English literature. You're supposed to be well-prepared. Knowing your subject matter is like putting on your clothes. Everybody does that. It is how you put them on that makes a difference.

Goldie: What do you consider the major problem of your principalship?

Mr. Miller: Being Black.

Goldie: How would that apply?

Mr. Miller: It kept me from advancement. That was the only problem. It slowed down my advancement.

Goldie: Do you think you would have been a superintendent had you not been Black?

Mr. Miller: Oh, I got it for Assistant Superintendent. I think if I had not been Black at the time, sure I would have been a superintendent. I would have been in one big school in a large system somewhere. In other words what I meant by that is this. You could give an idea at a meeting, principal or superintendent's meeting and the idea would be rejected and somebody else would come along thirty minutes later with the same idea that is White and they would accept it. I was stupid enough to say I told you all that thirty minutes ago. They respect you but they'll work with you even where you are now. But you all don't integrate. You don't go to one another's homes and have parties. They don't know what kind of culture you have, what we listen to. They don't know if you like the Georgia Open Shoe or what. Understand? They just don't know. They don't know your religious background. They don't know any of those things. They don't know what kind of wine you drink or if you drink wine. Your social habits--I'd bring all of my faculty here and we'd party right here.

Goldie: What do you consider most rewarding about your

principalship?

Mr. Miller: Oh, the principal. The opportunity to help teachers and students as well as auxiliary personnel to do the job of educating youth. That's the most rewarding thing.

Goldie: If you knew of a young Black male or female who wanted to be a principal of a high school in North Carolina, what advice would you give him/her?

Mr. Miller: Come and spend three or four hours with me. I'd have had so many of them when I was an assistant superintendent that moved from assistant principal and they hadn't gotten not even to base with the principalship, most of the time they only gave them two or three things, discipline, buses and janitoring and then they were given the job and they would have to come sit here to find out. Therefore I set about when I was assistant superintendent of secondary education of doing training and the new superintendent they have now is doing the same thing that I tried to do years ago. I had a series of twelve areas that I developed for them to be proficient in. A lot of the assistant superintendents answered and believed in a congressional system. Seniority. He has been here so long let's move him up until it's time for him to move out. I don't know if we're willing to pay the price. You see the next thing if you are going to be a principal you are not a principal alone. The wife is part of a principalship. Your children are part of a principalship. You must remember that a principal is on duty 25 hours a day because the 24th hour is twice as hard. I've gotten calls at 2:00 in the morning, break-ins and she is laying there beside me and I have to go. She is part principal. I have got to go to a fair. She has got to sit there with me. She has got to be part of it. So we can't be principal long. This is what happens in there. Basically this is what is a amour in the Black family. A female sees too many Black salesmen. The Black wife is afraid if you are going to get out somewhere to go selling that you are going to be gone a week. But you don't have to go out to work at night. You can go out in 30-40 minutes and do what you want to do. She doesn't know it. The point is we fail to take the opportunities and advanagements in business and that is where the other people get ahead of us.

Goldie: Are you saying the Whites are holding the Blacks back?

Mr. Miller: No, they don't hold them back but they don't push them too far forward when the opportunity comes. The Black wife wants the husband beside her every night. I probably could have done that and made much more money. A lot of others do but you see these Whites with selling and whatnot going on all over the place. They rack up. Then after so long they are able to take care of their family and

after so long they are able to take care of their family and do whatever they want. For years and years who sold the rings and everything in the Black schools? The White salesmen. Who sold the gowns? Who sold all the candy that you sold? Who sold the cookies to you? Who sold the athletic equipment? But you just imagine. How many Black salesmen do you see coming in to sale athletic equipment? But you have to have the equipment. This is the type of thing. Not only in school but in most jobs you see.

Goldie: We are at the end of the interview guide but if you have any words of wisdom we'll record them. These tapes are going to be archived so people for years to come will listen to what you had to say.

Mr. Miller: My last word of wisdom--study your Sunday School lesson and the last parable in Matthew. I don't care where you go don't leave God out. You can't do anything on your own. You think you can and you go part of the way but you can't go far. Don't play with God, don't play with sinning and don't play with giving. He will let you know because His word is the truth.

Goldie: Thank you. I really have learned a lot and I'm so glad I sat here this extra time because you are the last one of my forty people to interview and you are number forty so you were the end of these interviews and you have shared a lot and I talked to Mr. Mast and he said, You are going to enjoy talking to him. I talked to Dr. Lucas and he said, I would enjoy talking to you.