

Interviewee: Deanna Tinsley

Interviewer: David P. Cline

Interview date: August 3, 2005

Location: Louisville, Kentucky

Length: 3 discs; approximately 1 hour and 13 minutes

START OF DISC 1, TRACK 1

DC: This is David Cline. I'm in Louisville, Kentucky on the third of August and if you could just introduce yourself, that would be wonderful.

DT: I'm Deanna Tinsley. Anything else?

DC: Most recent position here before you retired?

DT: Recently retired, in fact just one month ago as assistant superintendent for elementary schools, Jefferson County public schools.

DC: Wonderful. And if you could just tell me where you were born and where you were raised.

DT: Actually, I was born in Rushville, Indiana, but I left there at a very early age and have been a Louisvillian just about all of my life. Have lived in segregated Louisville, in integrated Louisville, and have attended segregated schools, integrated schools in the city. As a matter of fact, my class integrated the junior high school, I think in 1954. Great experience. I've been with Jefferson County public schools for thirty-seven and a half years, but initially when I graduated from college, I went to the system as a fifth-grade teacher, stayed there one year and then worked with Upward Bound at the University of Louisville for two years. Returned to the district as an elementary teacher and then as a

staff development trainer with the Upward Bound program. Went on to teach again and then worked as a principal for eighteen years. After the principalship, worked—

DC: What school was that?

DT: I was at Atkinson Elementary School, an impoverished neighborhood, interesting school, and then left there and went to Norton Elementary School in the suburbs and was there for twelve years. Following that, I became the director of elementary student assignment, which was a great job for six years where I worked with elementary schools to maintain the deseg guidelines for the district. And then the last three years as assistant sup for elementary schools.

DC: Great. So I'll just go back a little bit to when, how old were you when you first moved to Louisville?

DT: Oh, I must have been two.

DC: Okay, and you have brothers and sisters?

DT: I do. I have two sisters and a brother, a sister who lives in New York City and who works with a non-profit agency, a sister here who retired after twenty-seven years as a police officer who is now in the sheriff's department.

DC: Oh boy, I'm just going to put this on pause because we're getting a phone call here.

DT: That may be Raoul.

DC: Is it 502? Yeah.

DT: This is Deanna, hi how are you? Okay, that's alright. Okay, I realized I needed your work number, the office number, but luckily you were home. But I'm talking to a gentleman who really needs to talk with you, I think. His name is David Cline from UNC and he's working on the Southern Oral History Program for Civil Rights and the project is

called the Long Civil Rights Movement: The South Since the 1960s. But he will be here for another day or so and I didn't want him to miss meeting you. So I'd like to introduce you by phone. Alright, David Cline, it's Raoul.

DC: Great. Mr. Cunningham, is that right? Mr. Cunningham, hello. I'm doing great, thank you. So you got a little bit about what I'm doing here. I've got just another couple of days left in town, but I would love to meet you if possible. What we're doing is this oral project trying to get down on tape some of the stories of civil rights history in Louisville and I've been mostly looking at the desegregation of the public school system. Do you have any time available in the next couple days? Okay, well how about tomorrow afternoon? I'm free. Okay. Thursday, right. I'm going to be here Friday. I've got a pretty busy day already Friday but I might be able to squeeze something in possibly. Great. So just give me a ring, that would be great. The number that you just got is really the best way or only way to reach me right now. It's my cell phone number. So I'll have that with me. Great, we'll go from there and plan a time that will work for you. Good, I appreciate it. No, I've got a car so I can come wherever's good for you. Very good. I'll speak with you then.

DT: Raoul, thank you darling. Okay.

END OF DISC 1, TRACK 1

START OF DISC 1, TRACK 2

DT: Great political organizer, I'll tell you who he's worked with just real closely over the years has been Joe—

END OF DISC 1, TRACK 2

START OF DISC 1, TRACK 3

DC: Okay, so I believe we were talking about your siblings. You were saying who your siblings were.

DT: I think I mentioned the sister here in Louisville, the one in New York, and I have a brother who's here also. He's a computer person.

DC: You said that you went to both segregated and integrated schools. Can you tell me about which, when?

DT: For elementary school, I went to James Bond Elementary School, which is very interesting because years later when I was twenty-three, I married the grandson of James Bond. Of course, I didn't know that when we were younger. But James Bond School was a neighborhood school and it was segregated. Actually, it had some just very outstanding teachers whom I just remember in detail to this day. We had things that we don't have now, like a marching band in elementary school with majorettes and the teachers were very much involved. My mother used to walk down the street and she was president of the PTA for awhile. So it was a nice school. I think what happened as a sixth grader, what I can recall is those teachers trying to prepare us to go to Western Junior High School, which was again only four or five blocks from my house. That was the year that we would integrate that school. Most of us were from James Bond and maybe three or four other elementary schools in the vicinity. So in '54, our group went to Western; it's now Western Middle School, it's still there, still going, and of course, it's within the fifteen-to-fifty percent African-American guidelines. Of course, there was nothing like that then, although our city system had open enrollment by then, which meant if you could provide transportation, you could go anywhere within the city. Alright, so the years at Western—

DC: What was the neighborhood like around Western at that point?

DT: At that time, there was a range of income because there was no open housing in the 50s. So you had middle-income blacks, middle-income whites, from within maybe an eight-to-ten block radius. It was a very small world for me and for most of my contemporaries because we lived at about Twenty-second Street and we seldom went past Thirty-fourth Street going west, because that was maybe a dividing line going west. Now going to school, to Western, was going toward the river, going into the Portland area, which was and still is mixed, a mixed neighborhood, then more white than black, but still a rather peaceful, calm mix. I can remember there was a Boys and Girls Club, it was a Boys Club then, over in that area and my little brother loved the Boys Club; he was there all the time as a little kid. So that meant he had to walk, now that I think about it, about eight blocks or so over in the Portland area, never had a problem, never had any. It was a peaceful time. We used to walk and stay out in the dark and walk around the neighborhoods and everybody went to churches in the neighborhoods. Everybody pretty much walked because most of our parents didn't have cars then, so it was a walking world: walk to the grocery stores, and it was before Kroger; there was no Kroger there. It was a big issue when Kroger built a store in Portland. It was not an affluent world but it didn't matter. It seems like everybody was there, the teacher, the doctor, the factory worker, everybody.

DC: Everything you needed.

DT: Was just in the neighborhood.

DC: Right, and black-owned businesses?

DT: Several, but most of those were a little beyond in Louisville, toward downtown. There was a section of Walnut Street that—

DC: Right, the black main street section.

DT: And along that street there were the barber shops and the doctors' offices and the dental offices and three movie theatres where blacks could attend. That stopped, going toward downtown, at about Sixth Street, because when the civil rights struggle began in terms of sit-ins and walk-ins and all that, a lot of it centered around Fourth Street where the world changed between Sixth Street and Fourth Street in terms of segregation.

DC: So they came basically to you and your classmates to prepare you for this first year?

DT: Mmm hmm.

DC: And how did they prepare you?

DT: I think what they wanted us to do is to be ideal little model people. There wasn't a lot of talk in terms of coping with racism, because really people didn't talk much about racism directly like that; it was kind of indirect, had to get that at home. When I grew up, it was always "you've got to do better, you've got to act better, you've got to be better," in order to make it. That was the mantra and that was from school and from home. So our job was to get over there and not show off and not get into trouble and do our best work and that's what we were told. When we got to Western, I had a good time those years at Western and that's where I met my husband because he came from another elementary school, Western Elementary School, which no longer exists. But anyway, I found people to be wary but accepting. I think it had to do with that Portland neighborhood having always been rather mixed. We had people who did act really nice, like little ladies and gentlemen, and those who acted crazy, just like they do now, on both sides, white and black. But we did not have any classroom disruptions. There wasn't that atmosphere. You went into the classroom and folk acted the way they were supposed to act and pretty much, the teachers were in charge. I found that we had some teachers who were curious but not unkind. I had

a really good experience. I guess an overwhelming feeling after all these years is that Western was fine, it was okay, we didn't have difficulty getting to know people, there were friendly kids and not-friendly kids, just like there are now.

DC: Were there particular teachers that you were told to sort of watch out for?

DT: There were some teachers that I was leery of, but there are teachers today that you would be leery of. But I never felt any particular racism that I can remember. The one example though that I do have is this one teacher asked me one day, and I don't know if it was seventh, eighth, or ninth grade, seventh-eighth, I can't remember which grade, but she asked me to come to her house. I thought that was a compliment. I didn't know what that meant so I told my mother and said well can I go to her house. And she said, well you know what she wants, don't you? And I said, uh uh. I don't know what she wants. I just thought it was a friendly thing, especially since in elementary school, some of the teachers did have you to come to their homes. They had little reading groups and what not, or they taught piano, they just knew everything to do. But what she wanted was a housekeeper. So somehow my mother knew that and she said you can go if you want to, but she wants somebody to clean; she wants a housekeeper. I said, a housekeeper?

Now I must have been thirteen, maybe, or something like that. But anyway, I did go to the house. She found me acceptable, this teacher, enough to fold her—she wanted me to fold towels and do other kinds of housekeeping work. Well my father didn't like it. I mean I didn't mind it. It's just that it surprises me even now to think that a teacher would ask a student to come to the house and the student of course, how would you know? Now I was naive but mother wasn't. She let me experience it. It really wasn't bad. I mean I think she may have paid five dollars or something like that to do stuff, which was okay. But because my father didn't want me to go back, I didn't. I think he probably was right in that

it shouldn't have been a teacher. For me to have work, that was not an issue, but that it was a teacher just didn't sit right with him, having her asking the student. But that's the only thing and I just remembered that just this minute ago.

All of us liked the PE teacher and I read where she died maybe just two or three years ago. When I saw her name, Claxton, she was a little wiry teacher who expected everybody to do what they were supposed to do and in the days where you had to wear the ugly gym suits and all that and we hated that. Black girls had kind of hard time at first because no black girl wanted to shower and wash hair because hair, for black girls, is an issue. It's just too much work and you can't just brush it back and make a ponytail. I mean you've got major work to do. So I think Claxton eventually had enough empathy to understand that that's just not going to be something that they are going to want to do without a whole lot of argument. So she worked that out with the girls.

Another thing I remember is a teacher who let everybody bring their music, which I thought was really smart because it's a culture-building thing. So I can remember we had some very heavy music, you know compared to—it wasn't light at all. In those days, you had Ray Charles and you had oh, Curtis Mayfield and people like that who sang very deep, heavy music. I can remember him wondering why in the world these young people would be listening to that music, but that was the music of the day and it was bebop and rhythm and blues and it was morphing at that time from the old R&B, the old bluesy-bluesy R&B, into the R&B rock and roll, but it was just about that time when that was happening and it was not the happy jump-around music that the white kids would bring, altogether different. I remember that teacher because he let us bring it and during breaks, he'd let different ones play our music.

DC: Interesting. The teachers were almost all white teachers or were there any black teachers?

DT: Oh all, no black teachers. I remember taking what they called clothing, which I loved because I like to sew. I loved that teacher, who was just, she was just a good teacher. We learned to sew and we used the old treadle sewing machines and then we wore our clothes that we made for programs. I remember assemblies. See, I have good memories basically of those three years.

DC: And then where did you go from there?

DT: From there I went to Central High School.

DC: Okay, you were a Central grad.

DT: I don't think I did too much of anything at Central, actually. I decided that I didn't want to be a great student at Central and there were just superstar teachers. I was lucky to be in high track because in those days, the schools were tracked. They still are but in those days, they really were. You're in 1-A or in 1-B or 2-A, and that's the track you follow all along. So I was in a good track and I liked the kids. I still know them, still know many of the teachers who are still living. They took care of us, they really did. There was a teacher who just died last year, Mrs. Lauderdale, who was my favorite English teacher, who said things like, "oh you can really write." So you know, it's that, "oh I can? Alright, so I'll write." But she just has a place in my heart because she was just excellent and people who remember her will say that to this day.

DC: That was a segregated environment.

DT: It was a segregated environment except for one student named Bertie McHue. Bertie, for some reason, wanted to be there and was open to everybody and so everybody liked her. I believe when you talk to Raoul if you mention Bertie—now Raoul did not go

to Central. Raoul went to Male High School. In fact, most of us when we kind of split from junior high school, we either went to Central or Male and I believe by that time, Shawnee High School had become more integrated because that's where my sisters and brother went. That's where my mother wanted me to go but I liked Central; I liked the history of Central so I wanted to go there.

DC: Was it odd to go from segregated to integrated back to segregated? What was your feeling about when you knew you were going to Central? Can you think back to preparing yourself then for that change?

DT: I don't remember a transition that was difficult at all; it was just bigger and getting to know the building, getting to know the kids. There was just no difference for me. I don't remember a difference. I liked junior high school and I wasn't a great high school student. For some reason, I just didn't dislike it, but I just didn't love it. I don't know why; it maybe was just me. But I tell you what helped and that was about, the civil rights sit-ins and what-not really helped, because we had this great principal, Atwood Wilson and Mr. Wilson was involved with the movement in that he would make the announcements: All those who are going to participate in the marches today meet in the auditorium at such a time. I mean it wasn't, he was not the kind of principal who did not support the movement, just the opposite. He wanted us to be involved, he was involved by giving permission for us to be participants and facilitating our gathering together and leaving a little early in order to walk down to the Quinn Chapel Church, which is where we usually began. Quinn Chapel wasn't far from Central.

That's something Raoul may talk about too because it's one of the oldest AME churches in the state, maybe in the country. It was the gathering place and that's where the youth leaders were and that's where the ministers were and those who were helping us to

get ready for the march. I think that's a highlight of my high school years. We would leave Central and go down to Quinn Chapel, walk down there and gather, and then we would participate in songs and then in a non-violent pledge, which I can't remember, but we'd have to take a pledge of non-violence for obvious reasons, when you could not be violent on a march.

DC: How were you learning that? Were there leaders that would sort of train you in non-violence?

DT: Well let me go back to maybe the beginning for me, which was Raoul and my friend, Connie that I just talked to, and several of us belonged to a group called the High-Y Group at the YMCA, that was also somewhere on the corner between the high school and the Quinn Chapel Church, there was the Y. So the High-Y practiced civic club behavior and we had little conventions and would watch our peers do public speaking and that sort of thing. Various leadership folk emerged in that setting. Another group that I was active with—

DC: When you were doing that, that was outside of school?

DT: That was outside of school.

DC: Were you involved in that before you started at Central or is that around the same time?

DT: I think before. That sounds like junior high school and before. We were always involved at the Y. In fact, we had parties at the Y. We'd called them "from seven to eleven;" we could start at seven and it ended at eleven almost every weekend. So the Y was kind of a place those of us who lived in the Russell area and the Portland area and other areas—that was about Twelfth Street—close to that area, would gather. The parents, whoever was carpooling, would drop us off at about seven, somebody was picking us up at

eleven or we'd walk home; we'd walk home at eleven o'clock at night. There was no issue with walking home. The Y was kind of central to our play time.

There was another group called Jack and Jill. Jack and Jill is a mother's group. It's a national organization of mothers who, for at least now I guess sixty, seventy years, have provided activities for their kids and it's a black organization. Because of segregation, kids couldn't always participate in things so these moms would have luncheons for us, they had parties for us, and we were in various groups. So if you were a little child, you might be in the Lads and Lassies and the next group might be the Junior Latines, the Senior Latines. There were various groups, maybe six or seven, age-based, so that the moms who had kids in that age group would then prepare the monthly activities for the kids. In the Jack and Jill group were many of those same friends. Or if they weren't in Jack and Jill, they were still friends because it was a small community of black folk.

Anyway, we decided, this little group of people, one night I don't know if it was after a party at the Y or what, but Frisch's Big Boy in Louisville has always been integrated and we could go there and I think there was one at Caynlin Road and maybe Raoul had a car. So we were sitting there with the discussion of what was going on in the South and complaining about what we couldn't do in Louisville. I can remember that night at Frisch's we decided that we were going to have a stand-in, I guess, at Stewart's Store on Fourth Street. We picked Stewart's because it was a nice store first of all, but notorious for not letting blacks try on clothes. I mean you could go in and you could buy stuff but you couldn't try on clothes. But more than that is you couldn't eat in their two restaurants. One was a tea, they called it the tea something, cafe, I don't know, probably not cafe, but it was on the lower level. Then there was another restaurant on another level. So we decided to target that lower level restaurant. We picked a day. I guess we told our parents. My mother

was always very, very supportive. My father was always hesitant: be careful, they can arrest you and all that stuff. But anyway, we picked the time, we went, we met down there. I guess there were about seven of us. We followed the methods of the kids in the South.

DC: You'd been reading newspapers and—

DT: Reading the newspaper and learning a little bit. It was before the real heavy TV coverage though; we weren't getting that but we were getting the stories. We had money and we got in a line and then one after another, we went to the counter and one after another, we were refused. So we just kept going back, kept going back until they called the police. When they called the police, then of course they came and threatened to arrest. But we had a newspaper here called the *Louisville Defender* and the son of the editor, Frank Stanley Jr., was semi-involved in civil rights, but more importantly, he was the editor, he worked at the newspaper.

DC: This wasn't a black newspaper?

DT: It was.

DC: It was the black newspaper.

DT: The *Louisville Defender* was the black—it was the *Louisville Defender*. So somebody and I don't know if it was Raoul, probably Raoul, called Frank. So Frank got there at about the same time the police got there, which was a good thing because here's a newspaper. So anyway, they didn't arrest us but they were going to. In fact, they took one of the girls, in fact it was Connie that I just talked to, and were getting ready to haul her off. I guess they just didn't want the bad publicity; I don't really know what the thinking of the adults were at that time. I know when Frank got there, we all gathered and told the story and said we'd be back, because we talked about the movement in the deeper South and how we needed to get involved here. Now that's the first time and from that grew the

meetings with the NAACP and the youth NAACP and High-Y groups, to having meetings at Quinn Chapel to learn more about what the struggle was about.

DC: And did college kids then get involved too or was it really with—

DT: It was high school for the most part. If there were college kids, they were few at U. of L., but we don't have a college here. We have in Frankfurt, of course Kentucky State. So there may have been kids coming in, but I don't know if they were available like we needed to be available.

DC: But it felt like a high school movement?

DT: It was a lot of high school kids.

DC: And did you have NAACP support? Was there a chapter here?

DT: Yes, yes. The youth chapter as well as the adults. And definitely the adults because then after awhile, you know we had to get the attorneys involved and more of the ministers became involved. Now that I think about it, Quinn Chapel had to be open to us. I know the ministers would come in and they were very much a part of it, leading marches and leading prayer. In other words, what you see on TV now, the model for mass meetings began to be developed here in Louisville, so that if you call a mass meeting, everybody knew what that meant after awhile; it just was that and it was generally in a church.

DC: And not always Quinn Chapel, but Quinn Chapel—

DT: Well Quinn Chapel was generally where students met. Mass meetings though were in several churches. It depended on direction from those ministers and direction, well mainly from them. They were getting direction from the national movement by this time. They also were learning from the lawyers what was happening at the courthouse and what the feeling was about what was going on, so they could bring that back to us and get us ready. There were some targeted areas on Fourth Street. I remember well, we would get—

alright, then at Quinn Chapel, back at Quinn Chapel, student movement time, we would talk about non-violence, hear about it, say the pledge, promise to be good, be given the placards and the plan, and march from Quinn Chapel to Fourth Street, and go to whatever was targeted. I remember lots of the theatres that were downtown all were segregated, so we targeted those, and then restaurants. It just depended on what was going on at the time. That went on for a long time.

DC: Did you have successes?

DT: Yeah we had successes. People have different memories. My memory of most of the downtown theatres was that there was name-calling and there was ugliness, but after awhile, I really think the business leaders in town said, "this is ridiculous, we have got to end it," because we stopped business. Oh and then we had a time that we boycotted Fourth Street, very successful boycott: "Nothing New for Easter." I remember that because Easter's always been a big shopping time, so we would go down to Fourth Street as black folk to buy clothes, couldn't try them on, but no place else to buy really nice things, and so there weren't the shopping centers that there are now. So we decided to boycott for Easter. I think that hurt business and therefore all of those things came into play and maybe it was just time, the time for it, the time was right. There were some holdouts. There was a restaurant on a corner which I can see it but I can't see of the name of it, and they just refused to ever integrate. I don't believe they, I don't know, they probably went out of business rather than to integrate. But that was an especially nasty place.

There was a restaurant called the Blue Boar, which was a cafeteria-style restaurant, very nice cafeteria-style restaurant. They refused to integrate for awhile and then I think I tell the story, I told it to Jenny, of several parents who could be anything, white, they could look Hispanic, they could look whatever, who went there and ate and they didn't know it

in the restaurant until after it was over and they introduced themselves as black, just to show how ridiculous the whole thing was. I think I was arrested once coming from at the Blue Boar and again, I was arrested with a large group and I don't know if it was large or not, come to think of it. I don't know how large it was, but I remember us one time being in a holding area and we decided to sing and that sort of thing. The NAACP and the attorneys and what-not got to the courthouse and got us out after awhile. So those were my experiences.

I left Louisville in '62 to go to West Virginia State College, which was in Institute, West Virginia, outside of Charleston. During those times, there were civil rights sit-ins in Huntington at various restaurants and so I participated in a few of those in Huntington when I could get there. When I left West Virginia State, it was in 1965, I graduated in '65 and came back home and when I got back home, the mood had changed and the struggle was for open housing. For awhile, that first year when I got back I did open housing testing. That meant that I was assigned to go to an apartment to try to rent it and then I would not be rented, not be allowed to rent it, or go to talk about buying a house or something like that and be dismissed. Then a white couple would go and of course, they were. So all this was to build a case for—

DC: So that was really an interracial project.

DT: It was. And that was just three years after I had gone to school. Seems to me, again the ministers, this was NAACP work because this was we had Dr. Rabb, I believe he was the president then of the NAACP and Rev. Hodge; neither is living now. Both those gentlemen started to lead that movement. One night, Dr. King was here at one of the churches and he spoke. Of course again, the mood had changed. When we got to public accommodations in terms of restaurants and things like that, a lot of that had been opened

up. But then open housing created another monster among landlords and homeowners and neighborhood groups. It was nasty. I can remember one march one evening where rocks were thrown; Dr. King was hit. I can't remember where it was though. So anyway, that continued for quite some time until now where it's where your money will take you. But then I can't remember the details about the timeline in terms of when the laws were changed. But it took a struggle, it took a fight. It was also during that time that we had what the press called outside agitators. These were hardened, deep South folk, who were not afraid of anything and who would walk into any situation; they thought it probably was mild here comparatively. But they were helpful in the struggle. Those are most of my memories of the struggle.

DC: So you met your husband here in school. When did you get married?

DT: In '68 and at that time, I was working at the University of Louisville with the Upward Bound project.

DC: Was he involved in the struggle also?

DT: He was. In fact, we were arrested together a couple of times.

DC: Oh, so you had more than one arrest.

DT: Yeah. He was in the social group that I talked about. Let's see, what else happened? During that time, let's see. We went to the March on Washington in '63, I believe. Again, this was part of the NAACP youth group. Several of us went by train, I remember a long train ride, and just were there with those thousands and thousands of people. I remember people hoping that Kennedy would come out and speak, which he did not do. But we heard most of the speeches and that was quite an experience. So that was my experience for the most part as a young person.

DC: Right, and when did you start teaching in the school district?

DT: Let's see. I taught one year, from '65 to '66, and then I stopped for two years and worked at U. of L., and then went back to teaching after those two years.

DC: Okay, so then—

END OF DISC 1, TRACK 3

START OF DISC 2, TRACK 1

DC: So then jumping ahead maybe a little to 1975 then to the desegregation plan and busing. Where were you teaching at that point?

DT: Where was I that first year? Okay, I think that first year I was not teaching. I was working as a staff development person with the follow-through program. Follow-through was a federal program. You remember follow-through?

DC: No.

DT: Head Start was several years old and there were colleges that created various programs that would follow through from Head Start. Our model was a behavior analysis model out of the University of Kansas. I taught using that model for about two years in a second-grade classroom and then became a staff trainer. It seems to me, when I was a staff trainer, we had an office downtown and that was the year of the violence with busing. So I wasn't in a school, in a particular school, but of course I was here and the atmosphere was volatile, especially in the south end of Louisville.

DC: How did it directly affect you?

DT: Well only in that my work with the teachers was maybe stressful, but that's about it because I didn't have anybody personally involved. It was just hearing the news and trying to figure out well now how am I going to work with people and how they feel and how the kids are doing. There's a wonderful woman whom I met not long ago who said that her—she has a great story about how she and parents went to the south end and made some demands because of the treatment of the students out there. I did not know that that was going on. I mean I didn't know that that group was doing that.

DC: I think I talked to her.

DT: Did you?

DC: Benetha Ellis?

DT: Benetha, yes. Oh God, I'm so glad you did. I knew the story later, but at that time, I didn't know what she was doing, but they did some wonderful work because the kids didn't expect to be treated like that and they didn't expect such ugliness from other parents: "Now these are adults. Why are they acting like that?" But it was a wakeup call from Boston, see because Boston's foolishness was going on right before that, I believe. Louisville had always integrated rather peacefully. You know the '54 thing, there was not a lot of violence; there was none that I knew of. There may have been ugliness but I didn't know of it. When the city system opened for enrollment for high schools, you could go anywhere you could get to. That may have been a problem because blacks may have been in such the minority, that may have been an issue, but I know several did decide to go out to other schools. Then we had that great merger between the city and the county, for which I am really grateful because we don't have any of this stuff that other school districts have, where the county is rich and the city is poor. We have one school system for the entire county and so there's accountability at every school. It also allows us to continue a deseg plan, where other districts have long ago abandoned those plans. As a matter of fact, the plan was recently upheld and of course, the family's taking it to the Supreme Court and we'll see; they say they are, the McFarland case.

DC: So you see a definite link then between the city-county merger and the implementation of the busing plan?

DT: Definitely. And I think even now that we have metro government, you have folk at the table of metro government who represent every part of the city now. There were people who disagreed thinking that the west end of the city would not be well represented,

but still looking at the whole, in my opinion, it's the merger of the city and county school systems that have saved this community.

DC: So do you see the integration plan as it worked out in Louisville as being a success?

DT: The school integration plan?

DC: Yeah.

DT: Well I do. I think you can analyze it in a lot of different ways but I do. I think you open ideas to everybody, you learn about people, their friends across races and geographical areas. I think poor people have learned, have seen what's possible. I think some people have run from it and gone to other counties for whatever reason. I think teachers have become better teachers. They have had to be because some of the kids who are poor have fewer resources to grab when it comes to their learning, so it takes some better, harder teaching. I think people have come to say okay, yeah we're different. So what? It's been a struggle though and it's not over, because all this other stuff is in the home. It's hard to get rid of that home stuff, but still—

DC: In terms of what people are taught in the home?

DT: Mmm hmm. But I think it's been good for the community. It's interesting now for the last several years to just walk into a restaurant; nobody pays any attention to you. I can remember as a young child cringing, thinking somebody is going to say something or I was somehow less than. It's nice. We still have a long way to go, but I just think it's a human thing. I mean, I think people don't like each other a lot of times just as people. I don't know what that's about.

DC: Do you see the schools as actively still involved in trying to work out new solutions and to keep improving this project?

DT: I think there are a lot of things the school system does that are—one of those, and this is before No Child Left Behind, our state was disaggregating test data by subgroups longer before No Child Left Behind so that when I left—and this was a big change because the words were never said, these are the words that were not said, this was a question that was not asked: why does this group score lower than this group? It was very quiet. It's like (whispered) look at those You didn't say the words, but every time you start talking, you get better. So toward maybe ten years ago when the Kentucky Education Reform Act began and the data that came back to the schools on test scores was disaggregated by various subgroups, then there it is. You got to [look at it], now why is this group reading at this level and this group reading at this level? So now we're into new talk. It's gotten more and more, it's now the feds are saying you've got to look at your data by subgroups and we're going to score you and analyze you based on how well you achieve for all your groups of children. So I mean this is the new day because you've got this issue of blacks scoring lower on test scores everywhere. It's not just in Louisville, Kentucky; it's everywhere. So you've got to talk about—

DT: Okay. [phone buzzing]

DC: I thought it might be Reverend Cosby.

DT: Oh no, he hasn't called.

DC: It's just my brother. It's not important. I'll talk to him later.

DT: Well maybe he'll call. I hope he calls. So I mean I think this is the next thing. So in our district, the board has decided well, we could—you could really end the whole controversy of subgroup differences at each school if you had segregated schools in some cases. For instance, at the last school I was in, it was a very high income area but the kids who were brought in were from a very low income area, so they walked in like this. So this

achievement gap issue was very, very difficult because will you ever do this or will you do this?

DC: Where both go up at the same time?

DT: Where both go up, because you really don't want this group to come down and you want this group to get up, but the deficit in terms of travel and language and money and all that is so wide. So you hear a lot of talk now more about gain than gap, but still the scores, being able to have the discussion about the scores and everybody being able to say black, white, ESL group, this group, ECE group, I mean everybody can talk about it without—

DC: When you were principal, those conversations were not happening or weren't able to happen yet quite at that point?

DT: Well they just didn't happen. For a long time, we didn't have disaggregated data so you couldn't quite see by group. Then we weren't sophisticated enough, I wasn't and I don't think many were, in terms of getting the raw data and then separating out. Now what we started doing the last couple years, well before KIRA, was seeing which teachers had which kids and looking at gains in terms of did that teacher do anything this year with these kids. We still need to do that, but basically what matters is—oh, a second thing happened, teaming, so that you ended up with a child who maybe had three or four teachers in elementary school. One taught the reading, one taught the math, one taught the social studies. So it became even more complicated without your computer savvy and without real statistical knowledge to really disaggregate that data. But then it started coming in and when it started coming in, then we could easily see what was happening with groups of kids. Now the movement now and then, but better, is to see what's happening with individual kids over time by aggregate and disaggregating the groups at the

same time. So you got this group of kids and how are they doing as a group and individually. Then you can kind of back it up to Ms. Jones and say what happened all year? What can we do to change this? So it's getting better but the conversations were not there out loud, around the table.

DC: Now for the last school at which you were principal and you had these kids that were coming in at this lower level, what kind of special concerns did you have about them or strategies at that point for trying to bring them up?

DT: Lots of concerns. A concern was, I hate to say this but it is true, behavior, because these kids would all get off the bus together angry about something. So maybe the first thing we had to do, I felt, was make them feel comfortable coming miles out of their environment. Once they did, then they were comfortable, but then making them know that you don't have to take up for yourself here. We are your support structure so you don't have to fight, you don't have to do that. We'll help you be safe at school. That was one thing, just the lower level human needs of safety and nutrition. Then, do you have all the stuff you need to have school, so there's money to provide. Make sure nobody has to beg for paper or pencils, dictionaries, and all that stuff, so you've got the stuff you need.

The next thing would be in many cases, you get kids in classrooms and then watch to see if you had a good match between teacher and student. A lot of times, we had to make changes because sometimes it just wasn't a good match for whatever reason. A kid acted up over here, move him over here, he's fine. So there's a lot of that watching and protecting. We had amigo programs where teachers would have a child or two, every adult for that matter, we'd identify those kids who were kind of off the wall for whatever reason and say okay, that's going to be the one you watch. Check on them when they come in: did you get your homework?

That's a major thing, did you do your homework. For some reason in some homes, middle class mainly, there are these routines: you come from home, you have a little snack, you sit down and you do your homework, we check it together, we have dinner, or you have scouts and then we have dinner, or you have dinner, then we have church, or what. But there are those routines and by such and such a time, you have your bath and you go to bed. With a lot of our kids who are impoverished, there's none of that, there's just none of that. There are no routines. Some of them are taking care of themselves or some of them are up watching television and it's just the way it is. So it's teaching that, okay, you have to be resilient, you know, you go home, where do you do your homework? Before you leave to get on the bus, do you have your homework? Do you paper, do you have pencil, do you have everything you need?

A real handicap for some of those kids was project work because we'd have big science fairs and big Kentucky history fairs where they had to do a lot of projects at home and they came back and you know the parents did them. I mean fabulous log cabins that the logs were just perfect and—

DC: Everything lined up.

DT: Oh yeah. And of course the little kids who didn't have that kind of thing at home couldn't even get the poster board. We started buying the display boards, keeping those at school so that if you need a display board, you can get it, because where are you going to get it if you don't have a shopping center nearby that has a hobby shop or your father's handy? Because some of them would come in, wood with hinges and just beautiful lettering and all that. To some extent, to not a great extent, we were working on this. We were trying to get time during the school day so the kids could do their projects at school who could not do them at home. For that matter, my goal was to have all the kids do them

at school, because then we knew that they were the kids' projects. But then a philosophy is family working together on projects. I mean so sometimes it's good; you want the family to work with the children on certain projects, not on all of them.

So anyway, trying to provide that kind of help, trying to find those kids who had gifts, art for instance or music, so that they could do other things, so we would have talent shows, send buses for the parents to come in or sometimes I would just keep the kids after school until the show started, feed them and they just stayed there and then we took them home, because sometimes once they get home, they can't get back for these evening shows. So it's on and on and on, and I guess if you talk to a group of principals, they could just list all kinds of ideas for trying to help the kids.

DC: I'm just going to throw in another disc here.

END OF DISC 2, TRACK 1

START OF DISC 3, TRACK 1

DT: During the deseg case that went to court before McFarland, what was that case? I can't think of the name of it, but—

DC: The one that's basically the Central High School case?

DT: Yes. Well it was Bob [Cunningham] who really initiated a lot of the work to resegregate Central. His reasons, though, for it are interesting. It's interesting for him to talk about what he thinks was missing from the black neighborhood and that was a high school where in the 60s and the 50s, that was a gathering place. It was like the heart of the community. That's his thinking.

DC: How does that differ from your own opinion about that?

DT: Things have changed, things have changed and we don't have those teachers that we had years ago. People have choice and I believe it's just a different world. We have

generations now, maybe two, that have gone all over the county and don't have that same allegiance to a high school, but it remains to be seen. When it was at fifty percent black before that case, it's now at about ninety percent, which was predictable. So we'll see.

DC: Do you think it's possible that it might have real benefits for the community?

DT: I don't know. I don't know because I believe the world has changed and I haven't seen it yet. I don't think there's anything wrong with an all-black school, but I don't know that it has the same purpose as forty years ago in uniting a community. It works back to my thinking about James Bond Elementary, when I walked down the street and the mothers walked down the street and we had majorettes and we had a little band and we had all the black teachers who were just highly educated folk there; they lived in the community. And that's kind of the dream that he was talking about, he and Dr. Joe MacMillan. You may have met him. Their belief was that that was a good era and that we messed that up with integrating Central by decree.

DC: Central in particular, but not the whole—

DT: Central in particular. So I don't know yet. We'll see what happens, we'll see.

DC: I don't want to take up too much more of your time so let me just ask you a couple last questions and one is clearly you had a lot of success in the school district and rising up to the point of being principal. What do you think accounts for your drive and for your success in working within the school system?

DT: Relationships and I think that's the key to all of education. Besides some basic knowledge, you got to have some of that, but it's working with people and it's working with teachers or kids working with teachers, teachers working with each other, because there's a lot of conversation that has to happen. I mean you have to talk about what it is that you want for the children and what it is that you expect of the teachers and what it is

that you expect of all of us who work in there. I think I'm not a brilliant person and I don't pretend to know all the pedagogy that's appropriate for every child, I don't know that. I know some stuff that may or may not work. But I'm not bad with the relationship-building piece and I'm a supportive person. I think teachers need, as much pressure as we're putting on them, they have to feel supported. You have to have the pressure but you have to have the support, kids same way. You've got to push but you've got to build for them a safety net.

Golly, the same for principals because principals are the ones who are most easily removed from their jobs and they work really pretty hard. I've worked with principals really more than anything for the past nine years and have been one, so that's where my real empathy lies of late. My goodness, they just need all the in-service and pre-service and district support that you can give them. So I think that if I think of any one thing that describes my success, it's got to be that somebody helped me and helped me understand the importance of the relationship-building part and sustaining that relationship so that folks trust you. You have that trust so you can fail and not feel like you've got to leave the profession, you know. You fail and you learn and you do better the next time.

DC: So would you say that—I think this is an obvious one—you were changed by this whole process that you went through?

DT: In education?

DC: Yeah.

DT: Oh yeah. I guess I'm an adult learner, thank goodness. Sometimes I don't learn too easily. I mean some things are hard for me to grasp. I think I've just been in continuous learning for the last forty years, forty-five, fifty years. And I've enjoyed it.

DC: One final question, which is is there anything I didn't ask that you were expecting me to ask or that you'd like to add that you think I should have asked?

DT: I think there's still a struggle going on and it's the scarier struggle. I hope you learn in your research, because you're going to talk to so many people, what people identify as the focus for the next movement, because it seems that people sit around sort of waiting for the next leader to emerge and focus on this one thing. The civil rights era had such a clear focus on public accommodations that it was you know you could target a problem, focus on it, attack it, propose solutions, get folk politically involved, all that. I mean you could see the path. I think education is a focus everywhere and so it is being addressed in so many different ways, but I don't know if that's the reason that we have the violence that we have. I don't know why people are not, with the schooling that's available, with the voting rights, you're not being killed because you want to vote, nobody's being killed because you want to learn to read, all of those barriers are gone; okay, now the doors are open, why aren't folk going through the door? What is the barrier there at the door? What are the barriers at the door? So, you may be one, this whole project may be able to help identify and focus everybody or groups of us on something that we can really affect, something that we can really affect. (laughter)

DC: I really appreciate your time. Thank you.

DT: Okay. I look forward to—

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Baran. December, 2005.