

Betty King
Interviewed by Bob Gilgor
1/18/01

Cassette 1 of 2

RG: This is January 12 in the year 2001 and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Betty King at her home at 207 Oleander. Good morning Betty.

BK: Good morning Bob.

RG: Thank you for giving me some of your time. I appreciate that very much. Let's just get started with the first question. I'll make it a broad question, and you can take it and talk for as long as you want. What I'd like to know is what it was like growing up here in Chapel Hill, if you did grow up in Chapel Hill. I don't know if you did or not.

BK: Yes I did grow up in Chapel Hill, in Carrboro, been here all my life. I just thought it was wonderful growing up in Chapel Hill because I knew nothing else and it was just wonderful. And now that I do know other places, I find I still love Chapel Hill and Carrboro. The community was small – the black community was small. You knew everybody. Streets didn't have names. You just knew where people lived. You had sections that had names.

RG: What were they?

BK: In Carrboro there were very few blacks that lived in Carrboro. But then you had Sunset, which is over in the area where the Chapel Hill Housing Authority, over in that area, and then you had Pottersfield, which is over in that area too where Northside Elementary School and Church Street and Caldwell Street -

RG: That was called Pottersfield?

BK: That was called Pottersfield. And then you had the area down from the Chapel Hill, I think it's the Chapel Hill Car Wash. I can't remember the car wash.

RG: Over the railroad tracks there?

BK: Oh the railroad tracks were down there. And that was called Tin Top. And that was where (unclear). OK, then we had Southwest Lane, Mitchell Lane, and they were all down – Southwest ? Lane was down where the Chapel Hill Laundry is, down in that area. Mitchell Lane was right off of Rosemary Street down behind George Tate Construction. So those were the sections in the town.

RG: Where did you live?

BK: I lived in Carrboro. And I lived on the other side of the railroad track. I lived where there were probably about six black families in the area where I lived in Carrboro. And if you lived in Carrboro, you lived over where I later moved, over like Lord ? and 4th?? Street, Carrboro. But I lived in town, where Southern States is...?

RG: Can you tell me about your parents? And brothers and sisters?

BK: My parents, I had older parents. My mother was 39 when I was born, and of course they had old idea, they were old-fashioned. I had two brothers. My mother had been married before, to Matt Morgan??, and she had two sons. Her husband died she married my father, who was ?? and they were hard-working. My mother worked at night. She worked at the University laundry. All my life that I can remember she worked at the University laundry. My father worked on campus as a janitor. And we never had a car. He rode a bicycle all the time. My youngest brother was 11 years old at the time. I was mainly brought up as an only child because when I was brought up they had gotten married and had their own ?? Everybody in the community ?? My father was a singer. He sang in a quartet, and since my mother worked at night, sometimes my brothers would stay home with me and my father would practice. And then sometimes I would have to stay with neighbors when he went to practice. So it was just a big family. You knew everybody in town. If somebody new came in town, you knew right away. I had friends who left?? who come to visit and they laughed because our phone book was so small they said it looked like a ?? book, because it was so small. And I've just seen Chapel Hill just grow by leaps and bounds. ?. That's the way I feel about it.

RG: Did your parents talk about their work?

BK: Not too much. My mom, she would go to work at 4 o'clock until about two. In town we had a cow, and I was never so glad to see that cow get on that truck the last day and go away. The family sold the cow. Cause I had to churn. And I didn't mind churnin' in the summer, but in the winter it was awful, I mean, it took forever for the butter to come. And my father and I, I guess, were really closer than my mother and I, because we spent more time together because he was with me in the evening when she was gone to work. My mother worked at a laundry sometimes. Sometimes she would talk about the laundry, talk about the bosses and what they expected. Sometimes the things they wanted her to do that was unreasonable. But other than that....

RG: Did she work five days a week? Six days a week?

BK: Five days a week. In the summertime she would sometimes get off early. In the summertime sometimes the hours would change, like sometimes in the summertime she would work in the daytime instead of the night-time. Because they wouldn't have as much work in the summertime. And she walked to work.

She walked from over across the railroad track all the way to the laundry, which is about over a mile. And that's another thing, in school we had, if you lived in what we called town, if you lived in town, you could not ride the school bus. You had to walk to school. So I walked from over where Southern States is all the way over to Northside School every morning. That's when I was in – I did that for about ten years goin' there. Then I had to walk from Broad Street to Lincoln, on McNeil road, where the central office is now. We didn't have to worry about waitin' and stuff; we just got out and walked. But it was no burden to us, because that's all we knew.

RG: How did your parents discipline you? Were you so good you didn't need to be disciplined?

BK: I tell you, my father, I don't think ever really disciplined me. Only one time, I'll never forget this, he was really, really truly upset with me, and then let me say this, my father was very close to me, simply because he had no family. There was only two of them, him and his brother. I never met the brother. The brother died before I was born. And his parents died when he was a child. And he was born in South Carolina. He left home at a very early age, went to Greensboro and from Greensboro came to Chapel Hill.

There's one thing that got on my mind that I will never forget. My parents didn't really believe - they were religious. They really didn't believe too much in going to the movies. But I would go, a neighbor would carry me to the movie, like every Saturday night. Everybody else in town went to the movie on Friday; I went to the movie on Saturday night, because I had to with an adult. I just couldn't go – because where I lived there were very few kids where I lived. And so my mother didn't allow me to go by myself, so I went on Saturday night. So they opened the movie on Sunday, they started havin' the movies on Sunday. And I'll never forget, I went to church one Sunday and my girl friend said "Come on, let's go to the movie." Knowin' full well that my mother's not going to approve of my going, so I said "I can't, cause my mother won't let me." She said "You don't know till you ask her." So I asked her and she said no. My father didn't go to church that Sunday. He was home. I knew, and they had this little - Any which of 'em I asked, what the one said, I didn't need to ask the other one, because that was it. So I decided to be smart this day, I went home, cause he was home, and she was still at church, and I asked him could I go, and he told me yes, that I could go, asked me did I have the money, and I had the money to go, so I went to the movies. I did not enjoy that movie one bit, because I knew I was going to get it when I got home. I knew that without a doubt. So when I got home he told me he should spank me because – and the only reason he wasn't gonna do it is because he told me to go. But he said I knew better that if my mother already said no than to come and ask him. Now that's the only time I can remember him getting very upset with me.

RG: So you didn't get spanked?

BK: I didn't get spanked then. He didn't spank me. But my mother would tear me up. I mean, she would. I guess telling stories was the worst thing I did. You know, that's what ?? catch you in a story. Get a switch, and she never sent me after my own switch, some like parents would send you after a switch. She never did that, she always got her own switch.

RG: What about other people in the community, did they discipline you also?

BK: Oh yes, I mean, it was just like the whole community was your parent, because if you did something wrong, and somebody in the community saw you do it, then you were gonna get scolded and everything from that person, and then when you got home, you were going to get it again. Because they would certainly tell your parents on you. And so you had to be very careful. Like on Sundays, we had very little recreation, but on Sundays we would do ...??

RG: Franklin Street.

BK: Go down Franklin Street...?..Now the guys, they would get together and they would play ball and stuff. Girls tend to just parade up and down the street. That was fun. When I look back I wonder how did I consider that fun, but it was fun at the time.

RG: What kind of toys did you have to play with?

BK: See that's another thing. We, in this little community across the railroad track, there were four houses. And there was, right in front of me there was a boy, named Burnice? Down below there was a guy named James Jr.??, and there was a house beside me where there was Lena and Lara and John and James Atwater. In fact everything over there actually were Atwaters except ?? And they called him Little Atwater because my brother had two brothers that were Atwaters. And they would make, we would make toys. You know, our parents didn't have money to buy toys, so we would make a jumping board, where you just put a board down and put a rock or something under there, and jump on it. And then we'd play hopscotch. And then we made something called a merry-go-round, where they would station something in the ground and have it up, and then put a, I guess a wedge between, and then you pushed the people around in it. So, that's usually what we did, we made our own toys.

RG: Did your parents get along well?

BK: Oh, they did. Yes, I didn't know anything about, as I told you, I lived a sheltered live, because my parents, they didn't argue or fuss. My mother always had this fussy ? voice, we all had that voice. She was kind of in charge. What she said went.

RG: So did she run the household or was it run by both your father and mother?

BK: It was run by both of them but she was kind of in charge.

RG: Who ran the finances of the house?

BK: They both did, but I think she did most, I think he would give her the money to pay the bills. ????. But he had bills of his own that he paid, but he would give her money to pay the majority of the bills.

RG: Was there any drinking in the household?

BK: No. Neither one of my parents drank. My brother, wait, let me explain. Neither one of my parents drank, but both of my brothers did. And my baby brother, he was with a fellow, I think they call it a periodic drinker. Beers. What he would do, he would drink, and then he would go a long time before he drank. Nine times out of ten, he was going to stay off at least a week from work.

RG: How old was he at the time?

BK: At this time, I don't know how old he was at that time. But still, he kept doin' that all until his adult life, I mean, until his middle age.

RG: But he wasn't a teenager?

BK: No, he wasn't a teenager. But he did this, well he married very young, I mean, I'm tryin to think. He married very young, he had ten children, and, but the people he worked for,, and I'll tell you who worked for, and he worked for them for years, and he died. They were so good to the family. He worked for Fitch Lumber Company. And he worked for Fitch for years. And they knew, if he got on that binge, he gonna' stay on it for at least a week, sometimes two. He always had his job, he would never quit.

RG: You call him your baby brother. Is he the one who's like eleven years older than you?

BK: Yes.

RG: Do you have any brothers and sisters younger than you?

BK: No. I was the last one. They weren't expecting me I guess.

RG: They were a little surprised huh? Did you see alcoholism in the community at all?

BK: Oh I saw people drink, but I never saw people in my community, like personally, I didn't ?? I know that went on in some of the communities, but where I lived, the people, I guess because they were older, just like I say, my mother was 39 when she had me, so they were kind of out of that, grown up or getting to be grownups, or whatever.

RG: Their wild years.

BK: Their wild years, I guess they had spent them already.

RG: What about broken homes in the black community? Did you see much absentee fatherism?

BK: I didn't. Not in my community. And to be frank, in the community as a whole, in Chapel Hill at that time, there were not many. I mean, if they were broken, they were broken when I met them. Not many people..?. if that's what you're talking about. I didn't know a good many parents just separate. And when it was, it was kind of a rarity. Like in school sometimes that happened. I knew one family that I knew of that that happened, that they broke up. The kids went with the mother, the mother left town.

RG: Were the streets paved where you lived?

BK: No.

RG: Did you have running water or sewers?

BK: Oh, we had, where I lived across the railroad tracks, over near Southern States, we had a community well. And we all used that well. We didn't have electricity. We all had lamps. And I had no trouble seein', until I moved, my parents built a home, and when we built the home we had electricity and all that, and so when I went back, because when we left where we were living, my brother moved, his family moved into the house we left, and when I would go back over there it was so dark it was like candlelight. But the whole time I was there it was fine. But when I went back, it was... And then we had, you know, no plumbing.

RG: You had an outhouse?

BK: We had an outhouse.

RG: When did you move? Do you remember how old you were?

BK: I was 11 years old when I moved from over there to the house my parents built.

RG: And where was that?

BK: On Broad Street. Right behind Kentucky Friend Chicken. Which wasn't there at all then, though. All that place up there, all in Carrboro, where you got Kentucky and you have - everything up there was residential at that time. It was not business. My uncle ran a woodyard there across, over there, I guess like there where the body shop in Carrboro is now. In other words he had a sawmill that he had, he did the wood for the community.

RG: Did you feel poor growing up?

BK: No. I didn't know I was poor until they told me I was poor. I never felt poor. I always had enough to eat and I was always warm. And I never thought about it until, it was really fun until everybody started talking about underprivileged children and well, that was me, but I sure didn't know it.

RG: Do you look back on your childhood as a happy time?

BK: Very. Very happy time. Very happy time. And I, it's just like I said, the whole community, the whole town, was just spreading. We still just like a big family. Everybody knew everybody and everybody just, like a family. Of course you know like families sometimes fight, and that's what happened in school and stuff, but other than that, it was a very happy time.

RG: Was church a big part of your life?

BK: Oh yes. We had church every, I didn't go but go once a week, that was on Sunday, and I went to Sunday school morning services and come back in the evening. I don't care whose parents let them go other places, I had to go to church.

RG: Did most of your friends go to church?

BK: Most of 'em went to church.

RG: Did you have friends in the black community *and* the white community, or were your friends all in the black community?

BK: See, as I said, when I lived over across the railroad track in Carrboro, I had white friends, because that's all what was around me. And we played together, we fought together, it was just, and see my mother came from a rural area, and at that time, a lot of the people in Carrboro were rural too, they came from the rural area, and they knew each other, they had worked together in fields and stuff, and they knew each other when they came. So, there was no problem. There's always gonna be some people that are cruel. There was a store - Mr. Tank Connor? - I don't know what his real name was, but they called him Tank Connor - he had a daughter named Betty Hunt, I don't know if you knew her or not, but she ran the store. She had a store on Rosemary Street. In later years she opened a store on

Rosemary Street. Now there were some people that lived in Carrboro – white – that were mean and called you names and stuff. But then if they knew that you knew somebody, for instance because I knew most of the people around me, they didn't bother me but I saw them bother other people, other blacks.

RG: Most of the white people got along ok with them

BK: Yeah. And see then, I knew what, got my first taste of segregation mainly was when I started school.

RG: Which school?

BK: It was Orange County Training School at that time. And that's over there where Northside is now. Same building. OK. The white school was where the Town Hall of Carrboro is. And that was right, no place where I lived. But I could go to that school. That's when I first, our friendships, the kids we played with, I guess because we didn't have that much in common any more, goin' to different schools, and so, that was when I got my first, because I couldn't understand why I couldn't go to school with the other people. I didn't understand it but, so I guess when I was six years old was when it happened.

RG: What was it like in Orange County Training School, what are your memories of the school there?

BK: I just enjoyed it. It was just a plan that was from the 1st to the 12th grade - I think it was, when I first started, I think it was 1st to 11th grade. See I didn't know much about the high school because the high school part was on the other end. But I think it was from the 1st to the 11th grade. I think it was like in – I don't know when it was that they added the 12th grade to the school. And I think that was one reason we knew everybody because everybody went to the same school. You knew everybody.

RG: Did you know the teachers?

BK: Oh yeah.

RG: Where did the teachers live?

BK: The teachers lived, they had, most of the me had boarding houses. There were boarding houses around, people that kept the teachers, different places. And at that time, you had to live where you taught.

RG: Did they go to the same church?

BK: They went to church, but on the weekends they could go home, wherever home was. Yeah, they could go the same church.

RG: Did they socialize with the parents in the community?

BK: Not really, no.

RG: Did teachers make visits to your home?

BK: Yes, even when I started teaching, we used to.

RG: What was the purpose of that?

BK: To see what the family was like, to get close to the family, just to make a connection. To let – this is a child and we both share it. And they would talk about the needs of the child and all. Just to get a closeness I guess, to the child, so the child would feel that he was cared for. I'll tell you one thing, I think that when the teachers stopped having to live in the town, and stopped visiting, I think that started to become a strain, you know, it wasn't the closeness any more. Because you didn't know each other. When you have the teacher visiting, the parents begin to get a little idea what that person's all about. I think when they stopped doing that, I think that started – they weren't as close. But then there got to be so many people it was impossible to visit all your students. And that was done mostly in elementary school anyway, not high school.

RG: Can you tell me more about Orange County Training School?

BK: Orange County Training School, you would not know it now, which is Northside – we had a pile of rocks, I don't know where the rocks came from, I never understood that. But on one side one of the kids had fallen...?...there was just rocks everyplace, and we played on those rocks. And we, I don't know, I just enjoyed school. I didn't miss days out of school.

RG: Did any of the students play hooky?

BK: Oh yeah. My brother stopped school, I guess they were like in junior high when the stopped school.

RG: Did you have an encyclopedia in your home?

BK: I don't think so. Not when I was real young. But when I got older.

RG: Did you have a dictionary?

BK: The school dictionary.

RG: Not at home?

BK: No.

RG: Did your parents get newspapers? Did they subscribe to a newspaper?

BK: I don't think so. I can't remember them subscribing to a newspaper.

RG: Were there books or magazines at home?

BK: Yeah. Sometime we'd get books. Sometimes we'd have papers at home too, because my father worked at the, as I said, at the university, and he would go to the classrooms, clean the classrooms, and sometimes there would be papers that he'd bring home. But they never spent money, I don't think, buying papers. I don't know, really.

RG: Do you still remember your teachers from Orange County Training School?

BK: I remember, not back too far. I just went to one of them's funeral. She passed. Ruth Hope, I went to her funeral. One teacher, Miss Eziel ? Smith. She was my teacher. There's another one that's still alive and lives in Creedmoor, Miss Rogers, who was a ?? I guess I remember just about every one of my teachers.

RG: Did you feel that they were your friend or that they were for you?

BK: They were my friend. They were for me. They helped me. They were always just like, to me, they were like another set of parents. They would help me. I knew, that was my inspiration, I knew I wanted to teach.

RG: When did you find out you wanted to teach?

BK: I think I always kind of had it in the back of my head, but I guess it was when I was, really determined I was gonna teach was a teacher named Miss Davis...?..She's still alive. She was pretty and young. I wouldn't tell anybody she taught me. But she's still, she's in - down east. They gave her an award in Raleigh, and we all went over there. But she came, and she was an inspiration to me, she just was really someone I wanted to be like.

RG: What was the relationship of your parents with the teachers?

BK: Like a business relationship, I mean, it was not, it was like a business relationship. They didn't socialize. They knew them. My principal, who lived on the same street that I lived on, they were friends. That was the MacDougals, you know the MacDougals? They lived right down the street from me. They still were friends like a next door neighbor.

RG: What about their relationship with the teacher, say, when you would have parent-teacher meetings? Did they ever go to the school to have those meetings, or were they always at home?

BK: The only time that I can remember my – I can't even remember my father ever going. It was understood that when you went to school, that you had one purpose goin' and that was to learn, and they didn't want to hear anything that you misbehaved in school, and if they did, what you had to deal with, is that if you misbehaved in school and the teachers got in touch with the parents, then you would get it double – you'd get it in the school, then you get it at home.

RG: So you got a spanking in school?

BK: Spanking at home, if I got one, you know.

RG: Did they question the teacher as to what you had done?

BK: If they did, they didn't let me know it. I'm sure, I guess my mother and father had some disagreement about a lot of things but I never heard it. They chose the time to talk about it. I know this was about the teacher ..?.. I had the same kind of attitude. My son, believe it or not, he went to Catholic School, because I wanted them disciplined. Not getting away with things. Which I knew in public school they do because I was teaching in public school.

RG: So he went to school after integration?

BK: Oh yeah. He went to ???

RG: When did they change the name Orange County Training School to Northside and Lincoln.

BK: When they built Lincoln. No. They changed Orange County Training School, I think, I'm not really sure, I think about 1949, 48-49, somewhere along there. And that was because the parents – we had some parents that really were political. The name Training School sounded like it was some kind of training, not a school

RG: Reform school maybe?

BK: Yeah, something like that. And so, when the kids go out to – I didn't play sports, I was in the band, but I never played basketball, something like that, but the kids would go out, people would tease us about the name of the school. And so the parents got together, they wanted that Training taken out of that Training School. And so that's when they changed it, somewhere about 48-49, somewhere along there they changed it to Lincoln High School.

RG: And Northside? Or the whole school was Lincoln?

BK: The whole school was Lincoln. See because as I said the plan was from 1st to 12th grade. Now when it became Northside was went Lincoln was built. And the first graduating class at Lincoln was 52.

RG: So the school opened in the fall of 51, and they graduate in the spring of 52.

BK: 52, yeah. And that's when Northside became an elementary school. That became an elementary school. Lincoln was from 7th, or 6th. And that's when Northside got its name.

RG: And when did you start at the new Lincoln High School, what grade were you in then? 7th?

BK: I was in the second class.

RG: So were you there when it opened in 51?

BK: Yeah.

RG: You were in 10th, or 9th grade then?

BK: No, I was in 11th grade when it opened.

RG: Oh that's right What was Lincoln High School like. Was Mr. MacDougal principal when it opened?

BK: Yes. What was it like? I would say, it was not that much different, I mean, the same people were there that you knew before. I met new people and stuff, so it was somewhat similar. Same thing. Not as many people but you know, you knew everybody, you knew all the teachers. We never had - things that always bothered me, we never had lockers. It was dangerous for the people who had to come around the curve. It's not as steep now, but if you know the curve that you come around on Merrit Mill Road, if you come around there, I think somebody got killed, maybe he didn't, and they kept tryin to, I remember in PTA they always tried to get the state or the town or somebody to put sidewalks up so kids could have somewhere to walk instead of walkin' in the street.

RG: So you had to walk in the street to school?

BK: Sure did. Unless you went though the woods like we did. We knew short-cuts. But you had to walk in the street. And that was the one thing that really really really bothered me. I was working in a summer program and when they decided - I don't know if you remember it - when they decided to make the school I went to, that was Lincoln, to make it an all six grade school - nothin' but sixth graders were there, from all over, went to that school -

RG: 65-66. When they merged the two schools.

BK: Yeah. Somewhere along there. I don't think it lasted but a year or two at the most that it was an all sixth grade school. But if you had – I had gone to school there – out of school, teaching at Lincoln. I had been teaching. And there was never any improvement. Same stuff. The year that they decided to make it an all sixth grade, you should have seen the pavement goin' down. You should have seen the lockers goin' out in the hall. Heretofore they couldn't do it. But when all the kids came down there for sixth grade –

RG: White and black.

BK: White and black. The lockers went up, the pavement went out. So I mean, you know, that was – of course I let the school board know my feelings – but that's what happened. And I mean I felt very strong about that.

RG: Can you tell me about Mr. MacDougal?

BK: My buddy. My friend.

RG: That may have been after you graduated. How about when you were a student? Was he a buddy and friend then too?

BK: Yeah. I just told you he lived down the street from me. And so he was, you know, I just respected him, you know. But he was ?? He was always, I don't know, I had a different, something, kids had about teachers because some of the teachers, like talking to your friend Ed, some of them that, they just didn't, but I had hit it off with most of them, I did, so I guess when you talk to different people you get a different opinion about the teachers. But Mr. MacDougal was always a friend of mine. But let me tell you, I kind of got, I finished school, and I applied for a job at the school. And he told me I was too young. At the time I was really quite upset with him. But then later on I understood what he meant. And then I didn't know it until Trish Stanford, Trish Hunt, Trish Love - I really didn't know, I thought this was a black thing, to tell you the truth, that you had to go away and teach someplace else before you could teach at Lincoln.

RG: You were a Lincoln grad, you couldn't just get your degree and then come back.

BK: No, you had to go someplace else and get you some experience and then come back. Now I thought this was just a black thing, but it was not. This was a thing with Chapel Hill, and the way I found out about it, I was out teaching, I invited Judge Hunt to come to my class and speak to my kids, and so she was telling them, I never knew this, but she knew that I was the first, black or white, to come right out of school and get a job without going any place else.

RG: So where did you teach?

BK: I taught at Lincoln.

RG: So they hired you even though you didn't have experience elsewhere?

BK: Yes. What happened is that I – I wasn't married, I just finished high school. So I wanted to ?? But then one of the teachers, something happened and I had to substitute for her, and in fact they hired me for the rest of the term to take the teacher's place. I decided then that I wasn't really sure I wanted to teach. These kids gave me a headache. It's kind of bad when you don't come in on the beginning of it, they already have, this teacher had been there for a while, and so I decided well, I'm going to get married.

RG: So you left the teaching position.

BK: Yeah. Because I really wasn't hired as a full-time teacher. I was just filling in as a substitute. But this teacher had left.

RG: Can we revisit that and go back to when you were in high school? I'd like to hear your opinions of your teachers and what school was like for you and your friends.

BK: Loved school. Yes, I did. Loved school, and there were some teachers that we thought were really hard, you know. Didn't particularly like to be in their class, but later on they were the best teachers, you know.

RG: Why didn't you like to be in their classroom? Why was it hard?

BK: Because there were some things that, believe it or not, there was, segregation among blacks too. You know, people were chosen to do certain things because of what they looked like, and that kind of stuff.

RG: Can you explain that for us?

BK: I can only say, yeah, that there were – I just think of a black girl. You either had to be light of complexion, your complexion usually had to be light, or you had to have long hair. Crazy huh? That's the truth.

RG: And those were the favored students? Favored by the teachers?

BK: By the teachers.

RG: What about by the other students? Were they the most popular, or considered –

BK: Sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't, because there were a lot of kids who resented that. So it all depends on the personality of the person.

- RG: So even within the black community there was prejudice towards those fairer skinned and straighter of hair?
- BK: Yes. You could be my color with long hair and you'd still be ok.
- RG: But if you were your color with short hair, nappy hair.
- BK: Doesn't even have to be nappy, just, well, yeah. And that's the way you were chosen. That's the way, they were the ones – and I guess that taught me something too, because there was another reason I wanted to teach. It's because I was always for those kids that tend not to have gotten attention. You know what I'm sayin'? Those other kids ..?.. And also the prominent people in the town, too, that's another thing. The parents, if they owned their home, or owned their own business. It all depends on what kind of work they do. Some parents didn't want other kids playin' with their kids because they were not good enough. They come from the wrong side of the tracks ?? So, that went on.
- RG: So there's prejudice even with the black community. Was the long hair part of the fact that you may have been whiter, because white girls have long hair? Or am I putting words in your mouth?
- BK: Well, no no, you're not putting words in my mouth. I think you got it exactly. The whiter you looked, the better you were. What was that old saying? I can't remember the words "If you're light, you're all right. If you're brown, stick around. If you're black stay back." I think that was what it was.
- RG: I've heard that before. That's really so hard to stomach.
- BK: At school they ?? I really enjoyed school And most of the kids enjoyed school. I mean, we really did.
- RG: What did Mr. MacDougal do that made him what he was?
- BK: Well see, what he was was different things to different people, so I find that hard to answer.
- RG: How was he to your friends? I understand that you and he had a great relationship and you respected him and maybe loved him, he was a model for you. How was he to your friends?
- BK: Well, you see, I thought he was all right for them, and I think he was. I mean you know, you just have some people that wanta do what they want to do, and they don't want nobody to chastise them.
- RG: Was he authoritarian?

BK: Yes.

RG: And how?

BK: I mean, what he said. And even when I worked for him sometimes I'd come in late and he would, he'd tell me don't be late. ?? If he was comin' down the hall. You'd have to know how you've been ?? The hall is straight, but they have changed it now but there were some rooms that....

end of side

Betty King
Interviewed by Bob Gilgor
Tape 1, Side 2

BK: He would see me comin' down the hall, and he was ?? speaking to me. Sometime I would go right behind him. One was MacDougal, so he ?? -

RG: So he'd try to avoid you because he knew you were late?

BK: Um hm. Just disgusted with me for bein' late.

RG: What about if you were a student and you were late?

BK: Oh, he'd send you back home. He would tell "Too late for today, too early for tomorrow. Go home."

RG: Too late for today, too early for tomorrow.

BK: He'd send you right back home.

RG: Is it true that he would commonly greet students when they came to school, at the door?

BK: Mm hmm. ?? I guess to start the day off right. Or wrong, ??? how you took it.

RG: Did he know everyone's name?

BK: Yes.

RG: And how many were in your class?

BK: Now I don't know that. ??

RG: When you graduated?

BK: I don't even know that. I can't even remember that, but I know when we started off...??I don't know...???

RG: Do you remember about how many of your class dropped out before graduation?

BK: I have no idea. A lot of - I mean, it all depends on whether you're talkin' about from high school, -

RG: From high school.

BK: I don't, I can't I have no idea. I just, quite a few dropped out. Quite a few dropped out.

RG: Do you have any idea when you graduated, how many went on to get a college degree or started college?

BK: Most of them that finished school went on.

RG: Went on to college?

BK: To college, yes. And a lot of them left Chapel Hill because there was no future for them in Chapel Hill. The only thing you could do in Chapel Hill was to work at the university, which you made nothin', you know. And the only way to make any money, you had to leave Chapel Hill. With the education that a lot of 'em went to college, never came back to Chapel Hill to live. Now there's always been a closeness with the people in Chapel Hill. And that's where the reunion that you're talkin' about, we had it, we first started it, my class was the one that started that reunion. And first we were havin' it every five years, and then it, so many people started dying now, so we started, now we have it every three years. And, but we were always, always very close, but then a lot of them left because they wanted jobs, better jobs, and there was nothing in Chapel Hill.

RG: So the young black person who got a college degree had to leave to find work? Is that a fair statement?

BK: No, they didn't have to find work, they just did not come back to Chapel Hill. Everybody didn't feel about Chapel Hill like I feel about Chapel Hill, but when they left they didn't come back. Now a lot of 'em are comin' back now, as they retire they're comin' back..??..

RG: Let's say I was black and I graduated from Lincoln, and I went to North Carolina Central and I got a chemistry degree. Or A&T.

BK: Then you had to go somewhere where they could use you.

RG: They couldn't use you here.

BK: Not in Chapel Hill, no.

RG: Was that because I was black?

BK: Nine times out of ten it was because you were black.

RG: I'd like to get off of that and go back to the high school again, learn more about Mr. MacDougal and any other reminiscences you have of him and the teachers. What he did as a principal that you remember.

BK: What he did as a principal was make you feel like you were somebody. He made you feel like you could do anything if you set your mind to it. And he believed in "doin' right." The moral things to do. I think that where most of the people got in trouble with him, when they wanted to do things that he felt that was not ethical.

RG: Did he ever come into the classroom?

BK: Oh yes, yeah, he came into the classroom.

RG: What would he do in the classroom?

BK: Just sit down. Sometimes he participated in the lesson the teacher was teachin'. Ask questions.

RG: So that was not uncommon.

BK: No.

RG: What about teaching? Would he ever teach if the teacher was absent?

BK: No, I can't remember him teaching, I can't remember him teaching. That's not saying he didn't, but I don't remember him doing that.

RG: Did he ever walk the hallways?

BK: Oh yeah, all the time, I mean yes, and I'll never forget this one day, I was sick, and I went to work, and he happened to pass the door and he came in and he looked at me and he said you are sick. Go home. He sent me home. Now I don't know who took that class that day, but he sent me home.

RG: So he was a kind man, it sounds like.

BK: Yeah, and, but he could look at you, and I mean he just looked at me and told me "You are sick. You have no business here, go home." And I did, I had acute hepatitis. Sure did, and didn't know. Knew I was feelin' awful, but I didn't know what was wrong with me. And that's what I found out I had.

RG: What kind of a voice did he have?

BK: I don't know.

RG: Was it a scary voice, or a big booming voice, or a little squeaky voice?

BK: No, just an ordinary voice.

RG: Ordinary voice. Was he a big man? Small man?

BK: No, he was just a medium-sized man.

RG: So it wasn't his size or his voice that gave him stature.

BK: No.

RG: What about your other teachers?

BK: They all were, they all worked kind of on the same principle. They were concerned. They ?? I mean they made you feel like you wanted to do well, to please them, you wanted to do well.

RG: So you wanted to please your teacher.

BK: Yes.

RG: They gave you that feeling.

BK: They gave you the feeling that you can do it. And for instance, I was in the band, and I'll tell you how we loved the band. When I was in college, we came back, a few of us. ?? would come back and play with the band. When they had programs to do, we would come back and play in the band with them.

RG: It's getting' late and we've talked for a long time, so why don't we wrap it up and, if I could come back and talk to you again, what I'd like to discuss is a little bit more about what Lincoln High School as a student meant to you and you're playing in the band, and what the band meant to you, and to the community, and then your college experience and teaching at Lincoln, and then the integration process and teaching in the integrated schools, and that would wrap it up. But I thank you very much, I appreciate it.

BK: You're welcome.

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RG: This is Bob Gilgor interviewing Betty King at her home at 207 Oleander Street in Carrboro on January 18, 2001.

RG: Hi Betty, how are you this afternoon?

BK: I'm fine, how you doin', Bob?

RG: I'm doin' much better now that I listened to the end of the previous tape and I know what I want to talk about. Let's just start with your ideas about what Lincoln High School meant to you as a person.

BK: Lincoln just meant everything to me. I can't, I don't know how to explain to you what it meant to me. It was just part of my life, part of my childhood, part of my everything. And it was just, the people at Lincoln were just like a family to me, growing up. And we all were just one big happy family. And we still are, when we see each other, it's the same way. We're glad to see each other, when we run into each other. I don't know, I don't know what life would have been like without Lincoln. I don't, you know, and it was interesting, you know, Keith was the one that told you to get in touch with me?

RG: Yes.

BK: I didn't realize that she didn't go to Lincoln. But she said no, she didn't go, time it was time for her to go she had looked forward to it so much, and time for her to go, that was when the schools was integrated. And she had looked so forward to it, and all the young kids used to say they looked forward to goin' to Lincoln. That's just to give you an idea of what, you know, what the school meant to us at that time. We cry for what it is now. Kids are not very interested in schooling. For one thing, I think maybe they're still going to school too early, for one thing. You were six when you went to school before. But now they start in Kindergarten and all that, and I think by the time they get to sixth grade, they're kind of worn out with school. I really do.

RG: But you didn't feel that way when you started.

BK: But see, I didn't go to kindergarten, and I didn't go to those places, I only started school when I was six years old. By the time they get to junior high school they've done everything. Going to the high school means very little to them because they used to have a junior-senior prom and those things. Then they started that down in the seventh grade. You know. And when they got to the high school that was something they'd already done. So it wasn't exciting to them anymore. I think that had a lot to do with the change in attitude.

RG: You didn't have brothers and sisters, did you?

BK: Yes, I had two brothers, remember? I had two brothers.

RG: Older?

BK: Yes, one.

RG: So did they bring home the mystique of Lincoln High School? Did they talk about it?

BK: No, see they went to Orange County Training School.

RG: Oh yes.

BK: And I told you, they really didn't like school that much. Both of them, I think quit school about the seventh or eighth grade. I'm not really sure. That was a different time and different – and you know another thing, it didn't matter, I found this out. When I was at Lincoln they did a survey about the school system, Lincoln. And so many people, the reason they quit school like in the seventh or eighth grade was it didn't matter. If you went to high school, nine times out of ten you were gonna have the same job. And so they went to work instead of goin' to school. So they were goin' to work at the university, cleanin' and all that, so they didn't need, they felt they didn't need an education to do that. So they stopped school. That's the only thing unless you did have a college education. And then if you had a college education, round here, you left, more than likely left Chapel Hill.

RG: People wanted to get paid commensurate with your training and you didn't want to be a janitor or serve, wait on table, or be a domestic.

BK: Right. Cause that was the only thing here. I mean, there was nothing else to do in Chapel Hill. You worked at one of the restaurants or you worked for the university. And that was about the size of it.

RG: Now you were in the band at Lincoln High School.

BK: Oh yes.

RG: What did you do in the band?

BK: I played the alto horn and the French horn.

RG: And did you go out marching with band?

BK: Oh yes, that was my pride and joy. And we, when we started out we had white pants and white shirts and black jackets. And right before I finished school, a little before, we got new uniforms, and I thought that was the greatest thing. And I wouldn't give my uniform to anybody else. Cause I would come back, and I would play with the band. A lot of us did, some of them went to Central, they would come back. Like I think Ed used to come back, and play. Jimmy Atwater, Sammy Atwater. They would come. Those were Polly's, you said you interviewed Polly this morning, those were her brothers. They would come back and play. If they had a concert, or they had –

RG: So even though you had graduated, you maintained a close relationship with that band.

BK: Yes.

RG: How many performances would the band put on during the course of the school year?

BK: Oh, I can't remember that because they were, sometimes they would go other places to play, like they used to go, we used to go all the time to Pittsboro for the openin' of the fair. I remember that, we used to go out and help open the fair. And then it all depends on what kind of programs they had during the year, that the band would have to play for. So –

RG: Would you average one performance every couple weeks, or once a week?

BK: Not that often, no. Once a month, maybe, or once every two months. Something like that.

RG: Now what about when the football season came around? Did you play every week at football games?

BK: Oh we played for the football games. They did later on play a lot for the football games. But it was a young, when I got in the band, it was a young band, you know. And we didn't play as much as the kids later on did, for football games.

RG: So as the school got along further, the band became more active –

BK: Well see, it wasn't the school, it was just the fact that we did not have a band. We used to, for football games we used to get the band from Hillside to come over to play, like for Homecoming. Because we did not have a band at that time. I was in the first group that we, of the band, but we did not have a band.

RG: The Orange County Training School didn't have a band? Or Lincoln High School?

BK: Orange County Training School, not Lincoln. Well we started at Orange County Training School, and I think, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Bell was the first, no, we had Mr. Pickett was the music teacher. But I don't think we had a band. Maybe we did have a band, started out the band with Mr. Pickett. He was a teacher here, and he was also one of those people that, servicemen that lived over to the center, you know, they had that band. Some kind of band over to the center. That's how it started out, you know, the center? And I think it was really kind of built for them. I can't remember, but I know they were musicians, and they were all over to, and I had Miss Rebecca Clark sayin' something about them the other night, and I can't remember exactly, but she knew exactly who they were. But I was young, and I know the same, I took piano lessons and Mr. Carson, the same man who gave me piano lessons when I was young, taught, he was the band director when I went to college. And so when I went to A&T, they wouldn't let girls in the marching band. We could only be in the concert band, we couldn't be in the marching band. And I always liked the marching band.

RG: What was special about the marching band at Lincoln?

BK: It was just, I just thought it was the greatest thing. We enjoyed it.

RG: Was it high-stepping?

BK: Oh yes.

RG: So it was –

BK: And you know, a very active band, I mean you know, we didn't just march casually. We had drum majors who would show off some stuff. And majorettes who would do things.

RG: So it was a high styled, show-offy kind of band.

BK: Yes.

RG: And it sounds like, by the look on your face it was a lot of fun.

BK: It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun.

RG: How often did you meet to practice?

BK: Well, as I can remember, we practiced every day. Because we were in the band, and we took band.

RG: Oh so you had a band class every day.

BK: Yes, yes.

RG: Is that right?

BK: Yes. Sure did.

RG: Did the band, when you were a member, ever go anywhere special that sticks out in your mind? Do a New Year's celebration anywhere, or to a parade somewhere?

BK: Oh we, you know, we just went to parades and things around, not that far. I think after I left the kids started more competing in competitions. But we had a few people that would compete in competition. We had some people that were very good in the music that they played, the instrument that they played. And they would compete sometimes with others. But as the band as a whole, I can't remember going to compete.

RG: Now you graduated, again, what year?

BK: I graduated in '53.

RG: '53, so that was the year after the school opened. That was the second year. Lincoln High School started in '51, the first graduating class was the spring of '52. So you were the second graduating class.

BK: Second graduating class. But see, when we, it was just a new building, it wasn't a new school. Now that was just a new building there, it wasn't a new school.

RG: I stand corrected.

BK: OK. The school was, we just moved from one place to the other.

RG: Does the band have a reunion?

BK: No, not that I know of.

RG: And the school has a reunion.

BK: Yes.

RG: How well attended is the Lincoln High School reunion?

BK: It's very –
Phone rings

RG: So where were we here?

BK: We were talking about the band.

RG: Oh, and then we talked about the attendance at the high school reunions.

BK: It's very well attended. It started out from my class, by the way. When did it start?
It started in

RG: Seventies?

BK: '73. It was time for us to have a reunion, and what happened, there had been other classes that had tried to start a reunion, and when a few people found out that we were starting, the class of '53 was going to do a reunion, they asked if they could join in. And we said yes. Cause we didn't care who joined in. So the first year, I think that it was from class of '50 to '55, I think. Now, anybody, any class that wants to join in can join in. Younger classes, older classes, but we started with '50 to '55.

RG: How many do you get there? Do you get 100, 200, 300 students, graduates?

BK: Well, I tell you, my concept of people, without counting them, I have no idea, but it's a lot of them. If you've ever been to First Baptist Church and you know how large that church is. OK, I mean, we filled that up. And other churches, like Barbee's Chapel – I don't know whether you know about Barbee's, that's where Reverend Hadley preaches. Down on Barbee's Road. We had a reunion there, and this was, it's a rather small church, and they were all outside – when I say reunion, we have a memorial service every time we have a reunion. And on a Sunday, we always have memorial services. People would go in the year, I mean, they just couldn't get in the church. It was quite a few.

RG: So you graduated from Lincoln High School in '53 and then went to A&T up in Greensboro?

BK: Yes. ??

RG: And then you came back and struggled to get a job at Lincoln?

BK: I came back and thought I wanted to really teach, I told you, and I left because I got married, because they had given me a headache, those kids. So I didn't know if I really wanted to teach, but then, I loved teaching. Teaching was a joy to me.

RG: And what was it like teaching at Lincoln?

BK: When you say what was it like, I don't understand what you mean "what was it like." It was a joy to come back and teach in your home town, and most of the kids you knew. You knew the parents. And that was one of the reason that, you remember I told you before that you had to go away, to come back and teach. That was what Mr. MacDougal, I told you one time he told me I was too young, and I didn't understand what he meant. But what he actually meant, especially when you're young and little guys, you know, I was only four years older than some of 'em, and you know, they would try me.

RG: Test you, huh?

BK: Yes. So I realized what he meant by that. But, it was a joy and just like I said, it was still a family kind of thing, when I started teaching. The teachers all seemed like family, that I taught with. So, I enjoyed it.

RG: What were you teaching?

BK: Social studies.

RG: And did you make visits into the homes of the students?

BK: My classes? Yes I did.

RG: All through the years that you taught at Lincoln, or did that –

BK: Not all through the years. I don't remember when he stopped making home visits. I would just go, sometimes we would just hand things out in class, we had one family, the Hackners ??, that lived out off of 54, and they had a big yard, and we used to go play ball and stuff, you know. Used to have a nice time, it was good. When we decided to do something together. We would go. The parents would participate.

RG: With the students?

BK: Yes. The parents would participate too.

RG: Did the principal participate?

BK: Not with - I've never known him to go, when I had something to do like that. But if we had something at school, now, we did a lot of that too. We had a lot of things at the school and stuff, then the principal would come.

RG: What kind of things did you have after school?

BK: Oh, we used to have May Day, just a get-together after school sometimes, we'd just have it, and parents would send stuff, food and stuff. And it was like, I guess you would call it like a potluck. We did a lot of that, when I was teaching at Culbreth, the 7th grade. To get to know each other, that's what we ?? Celebrate night. All those pictures, and families would come and ??, to get to know each other.

RG: What was May Day?

BK: May Day was May Day. May Day was the first of May, and you wrapped the Maypole, and had little skits, and we did a lot of that. Now, that's another thing. Children had a chance to display their talent at Lincoln. Which was kind of cut out later on. You know, kids that could act, kids that do things, play the piano, you know, they got a chance, we had an assembly every Friday. And they got a chance to display their talents. Which was cut off later on. And we used to have, we had talent shows. And that was the only time they got to display their talents.

RG: So once a week, talented students would perform?

BK: Yes.

RG: Did they perform in other ways, like PTA meetings, or shows?

BK: Sometime they had, yes, sometime they did.

RG: Would you say it was a performance-oriented school?

BK: No, I wouldn't say that. But I'd say that there were people that had talent that didn't ever get to display it. And you know that really taught kids how to speak. They had to, each class had an assembly day that they had to, the class had to do a program. And so that was every, used to be every Friday.

RG: So every Friday someone performed, or a class performed?

BK: Or a speaker came, or something where we all got together. And that was how you learned how to sit in an auditorium without acting up, and all those – and I have to tell you about this incident when I went to, you were talking about when the school integrated. I was never so angry, the first day that I went to Phillips. That's where I went to teach, Phillips. And I could not believe, when they had the lunch time, these kids ran, I mean, it was just like a zoo or something. Nobody, none of the teachers, corrected them. And I was just appalled by it. Because I knew what it was all about. It was, they were kind of challenging the teachers too. I knew that too. But that afternoon a faculty meeting, and I had to say something, so I told them that I was very upset by the fact that they did not correct those kids. I said "Is that what you think they were supposed to act like?" And I was very upset about it. And they apologized. Because they didn't know what to do. Because it was time that they were afraid to say something to the kids, afraid that they would ?? them out, you know, that kind of stuff. But I said "But you have to, if you're going to teach kids, you have to teach 'em the right way. You just can't let 'em" – and you know, that never happened at Lincoln. I mean, that would *never* happen at Lincoln.

RG: If someone tried to do that at Lincoln what would happen?

BK: Oh, they would get in big trouble. They would get in big trouble, you know. That would never happen at Lincoln. And I would just, I mean, I would just stand back and look. And of course I wouldn't have taken the things and talked to them ?? But of course they weren't used to doin' that. I mean, I, it just shocked me, it really shocked me.

RG: So your first teaching assignment once integration occurred was at Phillips?

BK: Phillips.

RG: And can you remember how many black teachers there were in the school?

BK: No.

RG: You weren't the only one?

BK: No, uh-uh. I was not the only black teacher in the school. I guess it was about three or four of us. I can't really remember.

RG: And that was what, 1965?

BK: Yeah, somewhere along there, '65, '66, somewhere.

RG: And did you have any preparation? Was there an orientation period during the summer before school started, or for a couple of weeks before school started?

BK: No. It was not. But after we started teaching, we saw a need for, we used to go on trips, go out with groups away from the school, to assess what was going on and how to handle it, and get to know each other. We did do that later on. But not in the very beginning, we didn't. And because, see, actually what happened, it was just a shock, because you know we had a freedom of choice in Chapel Hill for a long time, that kids could go to the school they wanted to go to. And so when they built the new high school, the black football, basketball, the athletes, decided what they were gonna do. They were gonna let the white students school out first that first year, and the next year they were going to bring the black students in. So they decided, the kids decided, and this is what caused a lot of trouble, cause the kids just up and decided themselves, that no, we are going when everybody goes. So all of them applied to the high school.

RG: So the original plans – was that a plan by the school board, or was that just a rumor –

BK: Yes. That was a plan by the school board. Was that they were going out the first year, and then the next year, then, Lincoln was going out. And the kids said no, we're all going out there at one time. So it won't be *their* school. Cause they felt like that if they went out there ahead of time, it would have been their school, and we were following them. So they applied, and see that left everybody really unprepared. The school system was really unprepared for integration that year when it integrated.

RG: I've heard from some of the students that went to the integrated Chapel Hill High School that they didn't know until like a month before school started that they were gonna end up at the new school.

BK: Well that was probably true, but see, they didn't have enough students to open up a school. See that's what I'm telling you.

RG: I see. Now were there meetings in the community, in the black community about this?

BK: No. Well, I can't say no, because there were some. Because some of the, I guess some of the kids had voiced what they felt. I mean, they felt, you know, I know at church meetings, I don't know about school meetings, but I know at churches, because my minister at that time was from California, if these kids are ready for this integration thing right now. And ready or not, they went. I mean, it just happened.

RG: Ready or not, here we come.

BK: That's right. And that's what happened. And then we, you know, it happened, and the funny thing – it wasn't funny, but they had to decide, two school coming together, havin' different specialty in the sports arena, having different mascots and colors, school colors and all that, they had – that was hard. They had to settle on things like that. And the ironic thing, ??wanted to know, but the ironic thing – you know who most of the trouble between the races were? It was between the black females and the white males. People say well why was that? There's a reason for that. But that's where you have most of the trouble. When things started happening that was usually who it was between.

RG: The white female and the black –

BK: No no no. The black female and the white male. And you know why that is too, don't you?

RG: No. Tell me why.

BK: Think about it.

RG: I think I know the answer, but I want to hear your –

BK: No, I want to hear what you're gonna say, this time.

RG: Well. OK, I'll tell you what I'd heard and what I surmised and what I've seen. And that is that the white female was off-limits for the black male, that the white female was the ideal of what real beauty was. And the black female didn't like that, that the black male wanted to date the white female, but wanted to have sex with the black female, is what people said to me. Now maybe that's all wrong.

BK: I don't know, I don't think so, though. I don't think that's so. See the white female and the black male got along fine. But that wasn't it – they opt for position, you know, the white male always, to me, put his counterpart down. I mean you know, like the white female was never really up with the white male. If you know what I'm talking' about. And the same thing with the black female, when black, even in slavery time you'd think that, go back into history, the black female could always get work. Where the black male couldn't get work. Think

- about it. And so they opt for positions. They both want to be on top. The black female and the white male. Because they been on top, and they're racing.
- RG: That's fascinating.
- BK: Um hm.
- RG: How did you see that in the school? Did you see that in that the black female was a leader and the white male was a leader, so they're vying for leadership?
- BK: Leader, that's what it is. That's exactly right.
- RG: They were both alpha dogs, so to speak.
- BK: Um hm. That's exactly right. Exactly. And I think it was brought home more when they integrated the schools. See, I always knew this, that it was a kind of a competitiveness there, but then when they integrated the school you could see it. It was clearly there.
- RG: So this matriarchal role of the female in the house carried over into the young black female who went to school? Is that fair to say?
- BK: Not just in the house, in everything. I mean, when black women could get jobs, not just in the house, they could get jobs when males couldn't get the jobs. Black males couldn't get the jobs. And that's why you had a lot of – and people didn't understand that. Whites never, see, I think blacks always understood whites much better than whites understand blacks, because think about it. They were always in the house, they were in their homes, and they knew, and you know, you think about some of these kids, some of these white kids were raised by some of these [black] kids' parents. And so they knew them very well. And so that, I think that's, and what I was gonna say is that I think one of the reasons the white always thought black men, I'll just have to say this, white men have always wanted to keep black men down. And what happened a lot of times when the male would leave the family, he left the family because he couldn't support the family, got better help when he wasn't there. He was treated less than a man, that's what it was. It wasn't because he didn't care, like it seemed to be. But it was, a lot of times they couldn't get jobs, they couldn't work. And they were made to feel less than a man.
- RG: Of the people who come to the reunions at Lincoln High, would you say that most of them are from out of town. In other words, did they leave the area after their education to get better work?
- BK: Most of them did, I told that earlier. Most of them left, you had to go away from Chapel Hill if you wanted a decent job. There was no jobs here for blacks. I mean,

the only thing you could do was be a janitor or a waiter or waitress or a maid. So they had to leave, to find decent jobs. So they went north to find better jobs.

RG: Let's revisit Lincoln High School when you taught there, and compare it to your teaching at Phillips. And the first thing that you mentioned to me was the change in discipline that you saw in the two schools. Lincoln High being very structured, a lot of discipline, a disciplinarian principal, and then you go to Phillips and the kids are running into the lunchroom, carrying on –

BK: Runnin' wild.

RG: Do you think you could expand on that? Were there other instances where the discipline was different at Lincoln, versus Phillips? Besides that lunchroom?

BK: Well, you know, I really can't tell you that it was that much different, like in the classrooms I don't think it was that much different. I didn't find it to be, anyway. In my classes, I didn't find it to be. Because when the kids came in my class, I always talked to them when they first--. The first day, we just talked. We talked about getting along with one another. You know, you got a class of what, 30 kids? They'd have like 30, 32 kids in a class. I would let them know that in my classes you had to get along. You may not like everybody, and you don't have to, but you have to be able to treat each other civil in my classroom. When they decided that they couldn't - I would show them the doors in my room. I would tell them, "When you feel like you can't do that in my room, then you need to take one of those doors, and leave my room. If you can't get along with 30 people, how in the world you gonna get along in the world? You can't." So our class was always kind of closely knit. They always were. Kids have different barriers, you know? We talked about things like that. Well I'm a social studies teacher so I--.

RG: When you first started teaching at Phillips, and you had a class of 30, how many blacks were in that class?

BK: I don't know.

RG: Was it half and half? Was it a few?

BK: No, it would never be half and half because there were more white kids, period, than it was black kids. But it always was two or three. Sometimes as much as five. It all depends on what kind of class it was. And that time, you know, they were still "grouping" kids too.

RG: Tracking.

BK: Tracking, you call it. And when I was at Lincoln, they tracked at Lincoln too. But when I was at Lincoln, I always had the worst the kids. I liked that though.

RG: Tell me why.

BK: I liked that because they were the kids that people couldn't get along – you have to be able to get along with a kid before you can teach that kid. You can't teach a kid a kid something and they're not with you. I mean, they're somewhere else, and you're in class. So you had to get to know the kids, I mean, you had to take time to get to know that kid. It was funny, my husband passed, but this was at Culbreth, this was not at Lincoln, but the same kind of thing happened at Lincoln. And Mr. Edmunds, I don't now if you know Lou Wood ?? Edmunds – you didn't know Wood?? – I'm surprised. Well anyway, he was the principal at Culbreth, and the guidance counselor - ?- they used to call and tell me to come on back to school, you know, because I was out, and they used to call me back to school. And they were laughing so Mr. Edmunds went down, gonna handle your class. Couldn't do it. Then they sent the guidance counselor down, one of the teachers, Mr. ?? told us to go down there and not to leave that classroom till you got back. Although they had a substitute teacher. But it's just the way you help kids. If you let them know that, you know, you're human, they're human. People tend to treat you like you treat them. You know, they tend to do that. So I had some rough ones. One year in particular I had a really rough class. So they say, so they say.

RG: What were the other differences that you saw between teaching at Lincoln and teaching at Phillips?

BK: I didn't see that much difference. I'm gonna tell you, I really didn't see that much difference. The only difference of course that I saw was that, the treatment of, when kids act up, and teachers didn't know how to handle that, with black kids. They didn't know, they really didn't know how to discipline them. They really didn't know how to do that. And then they always talked about spanking, see, we came from a culture, and we're not talking about child abuse, but we're talking about correcting kids by spanking. OK, in Phillips, in the integrated school, they didn't believe in spanking kids. And that was, and black kids would really play the teachers. I mean, I could see it. They would play them. Sometimes they don't want to be in the room, and at that time, they used to put them in the hall. Set children in the hall, which was the worst thing in the world. Put kids in the hall because they were acting up, you take them out of the class and put them in the hall. So they act up so they can get in the hall. They would act up so they could go to the principal's office. So they played games.

RG: Did you have problems disciplining white children?

BK: Now let me tell you something. When we spanked kids, now this was at Phillips, when we spanked kids at Phillips, you could paddle, you could spank them, but then you had to protect yourself, you had to have somebody there to make sure that you didn't overstep your bounds. And it was funny, Wayne, I'll never forget Wayne Sweers, Dr. Sweers was the Superintendent of Schools, his kid was in my class, Wayne was in my class. He kept acting up ??, so I spanked ?? next door,

who was white, the lady next door came over and witnessed it. So after school was out that day she came over and she said "Are you all right?" And I said yes, I'm all right, why? What do you mean am I all right? And she said "Well you did kind of spank Wayne a little hard." I said I didn't spank Wayne any harder than I spanked the other child. And she said well no, but because of who he was, she felt that I wasn't supposed to do him. And that was one rule I had, you cannot make difference in kids. You cannot do it. Because if you do it you're in for trouble. And so just because he's the superintendent's son, didn't matter to me. I mean, he was a child just like – every child in there was somebody's child, you know what I'm saying? So, but then the funny thing, you know what? Wayne had already been by there. He had come back and begged me not to tell his daddy that I had whupped him. So, see, you know, and I think kids felt that a lot. The people, the teachers treated them diff – white kids felt this way too, according to who they were, who their parents were, you know, that counts.

RG: You felt, I take it from what you're saying that black children knew that they could get away with things with teachers that they couldn't get away with that with the black teachers.

BK: Oh yes.

RG: So discipline was a, somewhat of a problem in that regard.

BK: Um hm.

RG: What about dress code or hair style, things like that? Was there a difference between Lincoln and Phillips in those regards?

BK: I don't think so. I think the dress code was about the same. I think they all dressed about the same. I have always said this, and I know that nobody believes it, but I think that a lot of fights and things, people would take each other's clothing. Because they didn't have such and such a thing, and they would take, and I always just felt they ought to have a dress code, everybody wear the same thing. That's the way I would of thought of it. It's too military, I know that, but I still it would have cut out on a lot of fights back then in those days.

RG: My wife says too...??.. You could do away with a lot of ?? from an economic point of view.

BK: I think so. I know that was a lot of fights and things about takin' clothes and things like that. That was one of the problems back then.

RG: I've heard some people say that the, there was a big difference in the students on the basis of where they came from and the resources that the family had.

BK: Sure. We know that.

RG: Can you speak to that, and how you saw that in –

BK: Of course, you know, cause you know, but you know, oh, I tried this thing one time, one year, got a lot of kids' parents a little upset, about kids helpin' each other, those kids that didn't make good grades. And we had where everybody got the same grade. And believe it or not, those kids that had bad grades pulled their grades up. And their grades went up more than the kids that were on top brang them down. Because those kids helped each other, because they didn't want bad grades. Those A and B students didn't want bad grades.

RG: So what did you say, that you were going to give everybody the same grade?

BK: Yeah we tried it, we talked about it, and we tried it. And they liked it.

RG: Did you do that? Did you give everyone the same grade?

BK: Um hm.

RG: At the end of the semester?

BK: One time. No. That's just for a little while.

RG: And is that what helped them help one another?

BK: Yeah, they helped one another, because they didn't want, especially those A and B students. They were gonna help those kids that was pullin' them down, so, and they worked with them. And the kids tend to, they kids got along, I mean, the tend to have gotten along, black and white kids tended, and I think that most of the time if parents would stay out of things, it would be better. It would be much, much better. But the kids tend to have gotten along with each other.

RG: When I was asking you the question about resources, I was thinking specifically about the fact that a lot of the students were children of university people, with a tremendous chance to travel, who had books, references books, dictionaries, and encyclopedias in the home. Did you see this is the students, the resources, did you think there was a big disparity?

BK: Yeah, it was. I mean yeah, you could see it, but a lot of the kids that did a lot of travel and stuff, I always used them. I used them to come in and teach a class. Tell us about where you been, tell us about, they had films that they had taken, pictures that they had taken. And the kids tend not to have been so jealous of them when they did things like that. But yes, they had a lot of, and like the kids complained about some of the students parents doin' their projects and things, that they didn't do them, the parents did them and all that kind of stuff. So I, yeah, that was a problem.

RG: Did you see much in the way of physical abuse?

End of tape 1, sided 2.

Tape 2, side 1.

RG: So the question was whether you saw physical abuse among the minority students, or hurt verbal abuse when integration at Phillips first started?

BK: When you ask me about abuse are you talking, who are you talking about abusing who? The kids –

RG: Any way.

BK: The kids bein' abused at home or the teacher abusing the kids, or what are you talking about?

RG: I'm talkin' about children abusing children, and also teachers abusing children. In attitudes or the way they made eye contact or didn't make eye contact, or didn't call on them, things like this, but mainly what I meant was the students, first of all. Let's deal with that.

BK: All right, students. I think that a lot of black students made some white students very miserable. Because they would boss 'em, you know, they would be afraid of 'em, to tell you the truth. And some –

RG: The black students would boss the white students? And the white students were afraid of them?

BK: Yes. But they knew who to do it to. See, that was the, it was interesting, and then like I said, a lot of it, I didn't have a lot of that kind of stuff in my class, because I would always see it. And we would talk about it. And so, it wasn't that much, but some kids, but I could see why some of the white kids did not like the black kids. Cause they were mean to them. They would take, I could, some of them first came in the classroom without a bit of prejudice and I bet when they left they had plenty of it. Um hm, yes.

RG: You were starting to say they would take.

BK: Oh well, like some kids would make kids give 'em their money. And that kind of thing, you know. I heard a lot of this, I didn't see a lot of this. I heard a lot of this.

RG: So it was more intimidation that you saw from the blacks against the whites.

BK: And the whites against the blacks.

RG: And the whites against the blacks. That's fascinating. Because there's as much the other way that I've heard as there is –

BK: But see now, let me tell you, it's a different thing. In the classroom it's one thing. When they got together as a group, for instance, at lunch time, and that kind of thing, you find, I think you'll find just as much the whites doing the same thing to the blacks, you know. Like in a group situation it was a different kind of atmosphere.

RG: So if you were one on one it was one way and if you were a group where you held the upper hand in numbers it was another way.

BK: Another way. Yeah.

RG: What about the way the teachers treated the children after integration?

BK: Well the teachers, sometime they ignored the kids, some of them ignored the black kids. And I think sometime it was not to, not because they were mean to them. Sometime they would do more to embarrass them, because they felt that they didn't know certain things, you know. So I think that was a lot of it. And then you talked about black teachers too, now there were black teachers and then there were black teachers. Now just because my skin is black didn't necessarily mean I'm black.

RG: You'll have to explain that further.

BK: Well, have you heard people call people oreos?

RG: Sure.

BK: You know what that means?

RG: Yeah, you're black on the outside but white on the inside. You kow-tow to whites and don't respect your own culture.

BK: Right. And so there was a lot of that in the school system too. You know, kids are somebody that you can't fool. I mean, you know –

RG: But weren't you taught that you follow the rules? You follow the system? You accept the way the society is?

BK: You make rules, I mean, rules are made to be broken sometime too. Now, the kids used to question the fact, in February I would always do the black history stuff. And kids didn't know much black history. Black kids didn't know much black history. And the whites didn't know. They'd say why do we have to do black

history the month of February? Why don't we do white history? I said we do it every day except the month of February, I said, and we still do it in the month of February. And they didn't understand until I explained. They said you know I never thought of it that way. And you know they were, blacks were left out of history books for a long time. So, how you gonna make people feel good about themselves, and they don't know the roots, they don't know anything. And then white teachers were very uncomfortable trying to teach black history. Because they didn't know either. I didn't know all that much, but I sure studied a lot of it.

RG: They didn't teach it in Lincoln? Did you not have a black history class at Lincoln?

BK: Not that I recall.

RG: So this idea to get background about black culture, black history, really came about after integration?

BK: Well not, it didn't come about after that, but I'm talking about, if you didn't have things in the book when you were teaching, there was so much that you didn't know, the kids didn't know, and it wasn't in the book, so it was very hard. And then you couldn't blame them because they didn't teach it. They couldn't teach it because, but they were good about getting people to come in during black history month, and have programs in the auditorium. We had programs on black history. We did a lot of that.

RG: How did you feel you were accepted by the white teachers? You must have had a majority of white teachers and few black teachers? And did you feel discomfort or put upon in any way?

BK: Uh uh. No, because like I told, remember I told you that I had a unique upbringing in the fact that I was around whites a lot, you know. And I didn't, there were some that I felt that were prejudiced, you know, of course. And I guess I was prejudiced too, you know, so, but I didn't feel -

RG: When you say "I guess I was prejudiced too," can you explain that further?

BK: Well you know, like, ok, for instance if you're eating lunch or something, and then you, you tend to go to where your peers are. I mean you know, that doesn't mean that didn't want to be bothered with them, it just meant that you had more in common to talk to that person about. And so maybe sometimes I would go somewhere else and have lunch. Or, like we'd have parties and things, we'd have our own parties, and that kind of thing.

RG: So the kind of prejudice you're talking about is not a hatred so much as it is you're comfortable with your own.

BK: Yeah. Not a hatred.

RG: You taught at Phillips for a while and then you moved on to another school?

BK: Taught at Phillips, Phillips moved, see Phillips and Culbreth when they integrated were in the same school. They were working on Culbreth. They hadn't finished Culbreth. So when Culbreth was completed, like in the middle of the year, we went, I went to Culbreth. I taught at Phillips for about three years, I guess.

RG: Did the name Culbreth have any significance to you?

BK: No. I knew who he was, I knew Greg Culbreth.

RG: What did you think ..??..

BK: What did I think about the naming of the school? I didn't think anything about it. But I did think something about when they – I mean, I was very instrumental in the naming of MacDougal. MacDougal.

RG: How so?

BK: Well, at first it had been rumored that they didn't want to name any more schools after people. They wanted to name them after the region or something. But then they decided ok, a lot of people wanted, because there was no black schools with a name, no black people. And so they never named, because I always thought Lincoln should have been MacDougal. OK? So on the night when they, anybody who wanted to go to the school board and speak on it. Now I'm a person who, I don't speak. I mean I'm talkin' to you, but I don't usually speak in a group. And so, the night that they were going to name, talk about naming the school and all that, they had told us come at two different times. It was supposed to be at 7:30, so I was told. But it was at 7:00. And so when I got to the school there was somebody in the yard, Clementine Self? I don't know if you spoke to her or not. Anyway, she's a Chapel Hillian and she's taught school here. Anyway, she ran to get me. She said, "C'mon, c'mon, because they're about ready to call on you." And I wasn't there. So when I got in I got really, truly upset. I got upset with your friend, Ed Caldwell. I got upset with R.D. Smith, Hilliard Caldwell. Now, their names had come up.

RG: That's a powerful threesome to get upset with.

BK: Uh huh. Their names had come up, somebody wanted them, and we had all said that we thought the school should be named for Mr. MacDougal. That was the whole consensus, we had talked about it in the reunion, we had talked about it among ourselves. OK, the three of them, their names came up. Instead of them backing out, sayin' no, they all had people down to speak for them. And it upset me. I mean, it truly truly upset me. And when I found this out, that was one night that people really said well Betty I heard that you didn't talk, but you talked that

night. Because I was really, truly upset. Because he was a mentor to all those people. But yet they wanted the name. They wanted the school named for them. ??? They didn't deserve it. Not a one of them deserved it. Not – named one for RD - ?? – which is fine. But not then, that was for Mr. MacDougal.

RG: So you spoke up, and did they vote that evening?

BK: Yeah, they voted that evening, and they decided to make the two schools, and they didn't want to name the school after someone who was deceased, too. And I guess he would have loved for them it for him, but they didn't, so now you got the chance and so what happened, Mrs. MacDougal had taught in the school system, and so she's alive, and Mr. MacDougal's dead. And so, it was a combination school, a junior high and elementary school, so that's how the name came back to MacDougal. The elementary is Lucille and the other one is

RG: C.X. ??

BK: So that's how it came about, that name. I was so upset with the others. And I told 'em too. I mean I just told them. They were all were good people, wasn't a thing wrong with any name that was up there. But Mr. MacDougal came first. I mean, he taught them.

RG: He was an educator also, whereas I don't – well R.D. was an educator. He didn't have the same status that Principal MacDougal had.

BK: And see but Ed, now, he was piggy-backing on, you know his parents, now they were educators, I mean his mother. And somewhere the grandfather and stuff had given land and stuff for school, you know. I mean he had a, it could have been named Caldwell. It could have been named that.

RG: You can never tell if ..??

BK: Yeah maybe, maybe. And that's fine. That was fine. I do not care if it's named, that they have a name. But not before Mr. MacDougal.

RG: So he really meant a lot to you.

BK: He meant a lot to this community. He really did. He really truly did.

RG: Are there any other things that you remember that you think are important to save for posterity, to make part of history?

BK: No. And then you know James Peace was an administrator here too. But you don't hear his name. People didn't feel the same about him as they, and my feeling was hurt when he died.

RG: And he was the principal of –

BK: Northside. And he was a Chapel Hillian. He was from Chapel Hill.

RG: You think he got left out?

BK: He left himself out. Well, he did that. I mean, he did a lot for the people, don't get me wrong, he did a lot for the people in Chapel Hill. But it was his air, his attitude about, like I was saying, about black and black and then black and black.

RG: Not an oreo.

BK: No, cause he was fair, so he wasn't much of an oreo. But yeah, not, he was fair-skinned, so he wasn't dark on the outside and white in the middle. But the same kind of thing. His kids played with the white kids. He didn't think the other kids were good enough to play with his kids, and oh just a lot of little things, a lot of things. But I liked Mr. Peace. He gave me my first job, to tell you the truth.

RG: How's that?

BK: Well when my father first came to Chapel Hill, he roomed with the Peaces. And when he found out that I had finished school and I wasn't working, he called and I did substitute work over to Northside.

RG: Are there other things that you'd like to say that I haven't asked you.

BK: No.

RG: Reminiscences...

BK: I don't think so. I think we talked enough, I don't know.

RG: I think we've talked a lot, and I really appreciate your being so candid with me, sharing your memories. Thank you.

BK: Well thank you for doing this.

End of tape and interview.