

McCauley, Polly

Tape 1 of 3

By Bob Gilgor

RG: And this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Esther McCauley, or Polly McCauley at the Chapel Hill Library.

Good morning, Polly.

PM: Good morning.

RG: I'd like to start the questions this morning by asking you what it was like growing up in Chapel Hill. And if you would let me know when you were born – I won't ask you how much you weigh, (laughs) but just let me know when you were born so we have an idea of the years that we're talking about.

PM: Could I put it between certain years? (Laughs)

RG: Sure, that'd be fine.

PM: I was born in (laughs), a few years after the depression to James and Esther Atwater, right here at 509 Church Street in their bedroom, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

RG: And what was it like growing up in Chapel Hill when you were young?

PM: I thought it was great to grow up in Chapel Hill. I was very, very happy. I can't remember many sad days at this time, because, looking back, I think I was very happy. I had two brothers, two sisters, good friends, nice family, and I was happy.

RG: What were your parents like, Polly?

PM: My parents were very supportive. My mother did graduate from Levinson College. My father was a laborer; he worked on, left here before he got married and worked as a porter, came back and married my mother, at my grandparents house, Main Street, Carrboro. Maggie Jones Malthus and Will Malthus were my grandparents.

RG: What did your mother – did your mother work also?

PM: My mother worked part-time after – she worked, before she got married, for North Carolina Mutual in Durham. She lived in Durham. But after her marriage, when they started having a family, she was a homemaker.

RG: And your father did what for a living?

PM: My father worked for the university a majority of the time I remember. But he also ran a pressing club. This was up near St. Paul Church. Several men ran what they call a pressing club. But the majority of the time he worked for the university. He had three or four jobs to support his family. He would fire the furnaces at several houses. Leave early in the morning and start the fires before the families would get up. Stroke the, whatever it is, the furnace, put the coal in. And one was Dr. Wells. At that time he lived on Main Street. And he also worked at the Chapel Hill Country Club. He was the janitor there, and also, he was a serv – he served parties and other activities. One person I remember he worked for permanently was Mrs. Bagby. She would have a dance club at the Chap – she would have dance classes at the Chapel Hill Country Club, teaching all the little students how to dance. And have activities. He worked for her, among his many part-time jobs.

He also did something unusual at that time. He sold water at the games, the football games. He would put on his own white jacket and put on a barrel that he contrapted around his back. And bought cups and everything. He didn't sell the water. He would say "this is a donation." But just think, with all these people walkin' around with bottles of water, drinkin' them now, if he'd just had a little bit more insight, he could've really profited from sellin' that water at the games.

RG: He made some money from it though?

PM: Yes, he made money. He would bring home quarters and half dollars and things like that. Certainly did.

RG: Sounds like an industrious man.

PM: He had five children and a wife to support.

RG: That's a lot. What was the pressing club?

PM: They would press clothes, and at that time I know there was a lot of blocking of hats that the gentlemen wore. So it was just another name for a cleaners, dry cleaners.

RG: That was a group business?

PM: Yes, it was a group business.

RG: Did you feel poor growing up?

PM: I didn't know what poor was.

RG: So you always had enough food and clothing, and you felt the house was adequate? Good heating?

- PM: Yes. I was a child, so...we had a stove, so we had heat. We would stand around the stove from the front, and then turn around and warm up the back. (laughter) So we had heat, we had food. Some of that was due to the dances and the dinners they had at the Country Club.
- RG: I don't understand what you mean. Did you take part in those, or did your father bring food home?
- PM: (laughs) My father brought food home.
- RG: How did your parents get along?
- PM: I think they got along beautifully. Sometimes I could, our bedroom, the girls' bedroom was right next to theirs, and the boys were upstairs. And sometimes you'd wake up, you'd hear them laughing at night. And I would say I wonder what they're talkin' about. They had a great relationship as far as I'm concerned because they had their own private jokes. He could say a word and she would just laugh and laugh at it. Just the opposite, she could say something to him and he would laugh and laugh. And we always ate together in the morning. We had breakfast together. At night we had dinner together, we all had our special seats. We, whatever was there, it was expected that we would eat it.
- RG: Did your father drink?
- PM: Yes, my father had a special cabinet that we could not open, in the dining room. And inside that cabinet there were bottles of alcohol. And small glasses. And we would, when he wasn't there we could peep in the cabinet and see that there was alcohol. And when they would have company, especially men, they would close the dining room door and we knew that they'd use these glasses. And we would sniff 'em. Say "oooooh, they been drinkin." (laughs) But he was not a so-called drinker.
- RG: So you didn't see him drunk?
- PM: I never saw him drunk, I never saw him drink.
- RG: What was the house like? Two-story house?
- PM: It was a two-story house, this is a house that's still on Church Street, 509. When they purchased it it was a small house. They bought another house and they had a local carpenter, Mr. Hibbert, and they worked, worked, worked, and made it a two-story house, and added a kitchen.
- RG: Who did they buy it from?

PM: I have no idea.

RG: Do you know if they had a mortgage or not? (inaud)

PM: Sure, they had a mortgage.

RG: Do you know anything about how they got the mortgage?

PM: No. I have papers at home that would give me that information, but I can't remember right now.

RG: Can you tell me, you had a stove heat.

PM: Yes.

RG: Wood-burning stove.

PM: Coal.

RG: Coal-burning stove.

PM: Yes.

RG: And what about the bedrooms, did you have ducts with heating in the bedrooms?

PM: No, we just had a large, warm morning heater in the living room. And then we had oil stoves in the kitchen at that time, little oil stoves that would warm up the kitchen and the other part of the house. And we would move the little stove, you know, to the dining room when we were eating in there. We'll move it to warm up the bathroom, throughout the house.

RG: So I take it the bedrooms were sort of chilly in the wintertime?

PM: I guess so. I really, really can't remember being cold, but I do remember we had lots of quilts. Of course one that I still have in my possession, it was made out of samples that they would send around to tailors. I don't know who made it, but I still have this quilt at home. We had lots of heavy quilts on our beds.

RG: What about the neighborhood? Can you tell me about your neighborhood and the friends you had?

PM: You want the names? I will forget someone, but –

RG: It's up to you. I don't think that's important. Just the general overview of your friends. But if you want to give names, that's ok.

- PM: We had a wonderful group of children. Since there were five of us, my brothers had their friends, I had my friends, and my sisters had their friends, right in the neighborhood. We played together, we laughed together, and we just had a good time. Of course there was little fights and arguments among our little group, but for the majority of the time we were just out in the street, right at 509 Church Street, in the street, playing ball.
- RG: Was it paved?
- PM: Yes, it was paved. I can't remember it being unpaved. It was paved until, it was paved from Main Street until one house past our house. It was not paved beyond that.
- RG: So the whole community there didn't have paving.
- PM: No.
- RG: What about running water and sewer when you were growing up? Did you have that?
- PM: Yes, we had running water and sewage.
- RG: And what about the rest of the neighborhood? Did everyone have it, or do you recall?
- PM: My father's aunt lived across the street in a log house. That would be just about 511 Church Street, or 512, I can't remember. But she lived in a log house, and she didn't have, she had a septic tank. So she's the only person that I remember in the neighborhood that did not have, and I was grown when I found this out, so as far as I was concerned, everybody else had running water and sewage.
- RG: How did you get disciplined? If you were out in the street playing and did something that wasn't nice, or somebody – maybe you didn't do it, somebody did it. (laughter) Somebody else.
- PM: Well, I wouldn't be, I wouldn't remember this if I hadn't received punishment. My mother would send me out to a hedge bush and she would say get a nice long switch. And you would bring it in full of leaves and she would then tell you to take the leaves off. You ended up with a nice long switch that was very, very flexible. You would get spankings on your legs. Always on your legs.
- RG: Why on the legs?
- PM: Well, I don't know. But there were, I mean you had to dance, as you would get these little switches. It never left marks, because you would just get the little sting from it.

- RG: What if your mother wasn't there and a neighbor saw someone doing something?
- PM: The neighbor would probably call my parents. They didn't punish me, but they would call my parents, and let them know. Teachers did the same thing. And the punishment was left up to our parents.
- RG: How did you treat your neighbors, or adults? Did you treat them the same way you treated your parents?
- PM: You mean the grownups?
- RG: The grownups, yes.
- PM: Yes, yes, we respected, called everybody Mr., and Mrs., and we'd speak to them with the most respect. Yes.
- RG: Did you feel that, in a way, that the community raised you, or that it was just your parents raising you?
- PM: Well of course my parents did the majority of the raising, but my community helped. Because they did know everyone, and they did know that if they called my parents, that my parents would believe them. And we would receive the appropriate punishment.
- RG: Did you see many bad things in the neighborhoods, among your friends or your friends' parents? Things like physical abuse in homes, or broken homes, or alcohol abuse that was to excess?
- PM: Well, it's hard to remember, but I know there was domestic abuse. There was alcoholic abuse, there was incest. There was anything any other community had. But the thing about it is our parents didn't involve us in this. They talked behind closed doors, they talked to other adults, and they kept these things to themselves. I never witnessed any of these things, but there was certainly anything that happens in the world in our community. Rape, robberies, drunkenness. But we were not involved in it, the children in our house were not involved in it, except our relatives. And they just didn't talk to us about it, this was grownups' things.
- RG: Did you grow up with any kind of fear of crime or fear of being attacked?
- PM: No.
- RG: Fear of robbery?
- PM: I didn't have fear of anything.

RG: Did you keep your door closed at night? Locked?

PM: We slept with the doors open. Unlocked. Many times. We just didn't have any fear. Especially in the summer. The windows would be open. Sometimes we would have screens, and sometimes we wouldn't. But we just, I just didn't have that fear. It may seem like paradise, but I'm sure, I'm relyin' on my memories, I just can't remember anything.

RG: Anything that was bad?

PM: Anything that was bad in my house, or in my immediate neighborhood. When I say neighborhood I'm speaking of Church Street, not (?) McDade, McMaster, Caldwell. I'm speaking of how I felt in my household, Church Street.

RG: Did you have much interaction with the white community?

PM: Um, interaction. We would walk every Saturday downtown. We walked, sometimes we would have to walk through the little community. We'd walk about three blocks up Church Street, you could turn to the left and walk through there and you could, that was the only white community I could remember at that time. There would be children our age, and we would, we knew their names. Sometimes they would tease us, sometimes we would tease them, but there was no violence. I remember when we were skating, we would skate to Carrboro, and kids would holler at us. I'm not saying they were Carrboro kids, but they would holler at us and say racial things, like that. But that's when we were out skating. And we had some people that, especially guys, that were friends with my brothers, they carried newspapers together. And there was a certain bond between white kids and black newspaper boys.

RG: What was the impact of segregation on you, growing up?

PM: Well, since I grew up in segregation, I knew that I had to, I *felt* that I should accept it. I should go to the fountain to drink from the colored water, I should sit on the back of the bus, I should follow the rules, so I wouldn't get harmed. I don't ever remember drinkin' from a fountain that said colored, but there were plenty fountains that said colored. You just, you were trained to accept this is the way it is. To keep out of trouble.

RG: Did you fear being attacked?

PM: No, I don't think I feared being attacked. I felt I should stay in my place. Yes, I should stay in my place. This is where I belonged, lived. And my parents were just probably two generations away from slavery, so this is the way we were raised.

RG: Were your grandparents in the area also?

PM: Yes, my grandparents, one set, my maternal grandparents, lived in Carrboro. Main Street, where the Art Center is. We visited them quite often. My paternal grandparents lived in Philadelphia. We visited them every summer.

RG: How much stress did you feel was put on education in your house?

PM: A great deal of stress. Good stress. Since we didn't have television until I was a teenager, we read a lot. We read the Titanic, we read the newspapers, we had books. We just read a lot. My father would bring books from the university. Old magazines, some of the professors would save for him. We'd read Life, we'd have Time, we would talk about the things we read. We just did a lot of reading. We had a big front porch with rocking chairs. We would sit there, we played together. Played house like everybody else. We had chickens, we had – that's all I can remember. But we did read a lot at my house.

RG: And what was the effect on that as far as education of your brothers and sisters and you was concerned?

PM: Well I think that had a great impact on us. I think it gave us, gosh, what I want to say, it gave us a love of reading. It gave us, it opened up the world to us. And having this as a university community at that time, that was great. Not having to live in a place where there were a lot of factories. The university was the major thing in Chapel Hill. We'd go downtown when they had football games, park on Main Street and just watch the students, and dream. One day, you know, we would be goin' to college. Maybe not at the University. But we could dress like that, we could carry books like they did, we could go to classes. We looked forward to higher education.

RG: How many of your brothers and sisters got college education?

PM: All five of us attended college. One did not graduate, but she moved on to dental technology, tech – dental hygienist at that time, so she finished that. So we all finished, beyond high school. And that was a task at that time.

RG: I'll bet.

PM: Yes. I don't know how much debt my parents – I'm sure they had some good people that would let them have money, but I can remember goin' to the registrar at North Carolina Central with a letter and a note saying we'll send the tuition later, and they would let us attend. And they would send payments. There were three of us in college. We stayed at home, and we rode the bus. My father would go to the bus station, late Sunday night, and buy a book of tickets. And we would travel with these tickets all week to North Carolina Central. I think two stayed on, were fortunate enough to stay on campus. Two out of the five.

RG: Can you tell me about your school, what the school was like?

PM: Lincoln High School?

RG: That would be fine.

PM: OK. Lincoln High School was within walking distance. I started out there, five years old at that time. The teacher would say please send your birth certificate, but after you stayed there so many weeks, you know, you were accepted. Our parents sent us to school because another child was on the way, another child was there, and she needed some care, so they sent several of us to school at five years old. They never took the birth certificate to school. And it was great. It was great. We had punishment, we had the principal, the teacher would punish us, things like that, but the activities that we had were just outstanding as far as I was concerned.

RG: What kind of activities?

PM: Well, in elementary school we had Mayday, we would raise money for the school with this activity, with May Queens, each class would raise money. So that started in the first grade. We would have plays every week or every assembly. Activities that you would participate like that. We had basketball games, football games. We could stay at school, after school for a few minutes or an hour or two, to play on the playground. There were so many activities in our community that were sponsored by the school that we attended, from first through twelfth grade, that it was great going to school at Lincoln.

RG: Now what was it, was it called Lincoln when you started there, or was it Orange County Training School?

PM: It was Orange County Training School. At that time the majority of the black schools in North Carolina were named Training Schools. And from my memory, my mother was president of the PTA in '48 or '49, before my brother graduated. And she ran for president because she said she did not want her son to graduate from a Training School.

RG: What was the connotation of the training school that she didn't like?

PM: That black students were being trained, they were not in high school. There was Roxboro, Person County Training School, Orange County Training School, and Hillsborough – I can't remember if that was the correct name for Hillsborough. But all the communities except Durham and Raleigh, the black schools had Training Schools. That was the name they would take. The county name, and make it a Training School, because at that time they thought that you – they didn't want to get the schools mixed up because of segregation. They wanted you to know that you attended black schools, so they were named Training Schools. And so she said she did not want her son to graduate from a Training School and the

PTA had a great big renaming of the school. First the PTA and the students voted. We had an assembly and we voted for a name, and I wish I could remember some of them. I remember one was, they wanted to name it, oh my goodness, it came down to three names. Oh boy. And we voted for it. At this time I can't remember the three names, but I know Lincoln won. I don't know if one was for the people that gave the land for the school. I can't remember their last names now. But I think their names was among the selection, but it came down to three schools, and out of that, they voted for Lincoln High School.

RG: So the Orange County Training School, which is now Northside Center, became Lincoln School?

PM: Lincoln High School.

RG: Lincoln High School. And that was what year, 1949?

PM: '49 is when he graduate. I think that they had already ordered their diplomas and I have to go back and look, but I think that the diplomas came out as Orange County Training School, but the school was named Lincoln High. I do have a folder at home that has the school name, the school's name on it, the class of '49. And I'd have to go back and look at that photo. But I think the school was officially named Lincoln. But since all the process went through the main office, ordering diplomas and things of that sort, I'm thinkin' that the diplomas may have said Orange County Training School.

RG: Then in '51, Lincoln out on Merritt Mill Road was built.

PM: Right.

RG: Did you attend Lincoln out on Merritt Mill Road?

PM: Our class was the first senior class to attend Lincoln. We graduated in 1952, the first graduating class from Lincoln on Merritt Mill Road.

RG: What influence did you think that Orange County Training School had on the new Lincoln High School out at Merritt Mill Road?

PM: Well, when they, when Lincoln was nearly finished, they renamed our old building Northside Elementary. That was an elementary school. Lincoln was 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th I think. And the other students went to Northside. So we had two schools at that time in Chapel Hill for the black students.

RG: Did the same philosophy of teaching that was at Orange County Training School move on to the new Lincoln High School?

PM: Same kind of philosophy. The same high school principal moved with us to Lincoln High School. Charles A. MacDougal. So we had another principal at Northside that was James Peace. So the philosophy was the same, we had the same teachers at Lincoln. We just moved to a new building. The building was new but the philosophy was the same.

RG: What was the philosophy?

PM: To teach. To learn. To – oh boy – to respect, to honor, to seek out your education.

RG: Now, when you say to respect and to honor, can you explain that a little further? Who were you respecting, who were you honoring, in the eyes of the teachers? What were they trying to get across to you?

PM: First that you have to decide for yourself your future. You had to study, you had to respect your parents, you had to respect your teachers, respect your building, take

End of tape 1, side 1.

Side 2:

PM: take care of our school, take care of our books, take care of our – anything that was related to the school. Gosh, (inaud)

RG: So you're not talking about simply educating subject matter here. You're talking about a completely different kind of teaching.

PM: That was always brought in with the subject area. Manners, how to get along with others. So all this was brought in with the teaching. The teachers that were at the school had been here some time. When I say that I mean that they had taught at this school for more than two or three years. Some of the teachers, not all of them. But those that were here for a long time, we knew what they expected from us. We knew that they had certain goals and values, and they put these goals and values in daily lessons.

RG: Was there much turnover in the teaching staff or the principal's office?

PM: No, not much turnover. Mr. MacDougal was here for a long time, and before that Mr. Holmes, he was here for several years. The high school teachers were here for a long time. Ms. Turner, Ms. Pope. At that time, I can remember only one teacher that graduated from Lincoln and went off to college, that they hired, and that was Thomasine Kirkland birthday (?). She was from our neighborhood. She lived two houses from me. They were the first family to have a telephone, because her mother was a nurse in our neighborhood. She didn't have, the only one I can remember that they hired from the Chapel Hill community. The school board had a philosophy that you finish – I'm just guessing, I don't know – but my feelings

were if you finished from Lincoln, you didn't come back to this community to teach, because – I don't know.

RG: So the teachers were not usually teachers who grew up here?

PM: Yes, they were teachers that did not grow up here.

RG: Well why do you think that was so?

PM: Um, philosophy of the school board and the principals, I guess. But James Peace was a principal, and he grew up just a few houses from me. So those are the only two people I can remember, at that time. Since that time, several other people have been hired that had been schooled (?) from Lincoln High School. But during my high school days, that's all I can remember. Course the (?) hired after I graduated.

RG: Did the teachers live in the same areas?

PM: All teacher were required to live in the community. They had homes in Winston-Salem or Raleigh, but they roomed here. They bought houses here. They were expected to – I think they were expected, the majority of them came (?), participated in the community. Attended churches here, went home on weekends, participated in community activities. They were among us.

RG: So your parents knew them, and you knew them?

PM: Yes. We knew them.

RG: And they knew you.

PM: Yes (laughs). They knew me. (laughter) Five children, they knew us.

RG: Tell me about Mr. MacDougal.

PM: He was a stern disciplinarian. You could hear him, he would walk down the hall with a certain stride. He was aware of all of his surroundings, what was happening with the teachers and the students. He knew them all by name.

RG: All the students?

PM: All the students, from the first to the twelfth grade. When I graduated there were only 26. But he spoke to parents –

RG: Did he go to their homes to speak to them?

PM: Sure he did. The teachers were required at the beginning of school to visit every home of the students that they had in the classroom. They would do that in the first two or three weeks of school. I don't know if that was Mr. MacDougal's or the principal's requirement, but it soon faded as the school got larger. But when I was small, we would get ready for the teachers visit. They would introduce themselves, we would have an assembly the first day of school, and they would announce new teachers. Then they would get up and tell who was in their class, and you'd stand up and follow her down to the classroom. So we would have a big assembly at the beginning of school. We didn't know our teachers' names until we attended the first day.

RG: Was Mr. McDougal's voice a stern voice, a booming voice, or was it just sort of an average kind of thing if he was walking or on the loudspeaker system?

PM: I wish I could remember all this. He had a stern voice. We always remember him as a stern disciplinarian, but I got to know him very well that last year of high school. He would always have two students to work in his office, and I remember that I was chosen as one of those students, so I got to know him in a different light. He was a warm person, just a stern person. He was a person that we respected.

RG: What kind of things did he do that made you respect him?

PM: He dished out discipline. (laughs) He dished it out. We never (?) auditorium, we had a gymnasium. These poles in there, we played basketball there, and he had them take down those seats, and sweep (?) – he could discipline you.

RG: So that was one of the disciplines?

PM: Yes. Sweep, sweep.

RG: Did he – did he show a loving side to him as well to the broad group of students who were there?

PM: Well we think of him as a person. At that time you respected the principal. You tried to keep out of his way (laughter). And if you saw him over the door and look at you, you know, you'd say uh oh, I'm in trouble. But he also came in and said how you doin'.

RG: Did he ever inquire as to how you were doin' with your grades?

PM: I can't remember.

RG: Did he greet the students every morning at the door?

PM: I can't exactly remember. It's been how many years ago, I can't remember. Probably. We had entrances to the high school and we had an elementary entrance. We had so many entrances – not so many, but we had several you could go to the classrooms from the outside at the elementary school, right into your classroom. You could go in the big door (?) to find the classroom. You could enter the back door. So I think at different times he would be at these different doors. So it wasn't a thing that he would stand in a certain place every day. Sometimes he would just be in the hallway, where he could see down the high school, the auditorium, the elementary. It's been such a long time.

RG: How important was the school to the African American community?

PM: It was the second most important thing, my belief. Church being the first. Well maybe home the first, then the church, then the school.

RG: We haven't talked about the church. Can you tell me what the church meant to you and your family when you were growing up?

PM: (?) which has been here over 125 years. At that time I did not know that one of my grandfathers helped start the church, so that was not (?) my attendance or having to attend there. I just remember that it was a small church. We would have Sunday clothes, we didn't wear these clothes on the weekdays (inaud). And the Saturdays that I talked about walkin' downtown, to town, some time ago, we would always have to go buy ribbons to match our dresses. We would get a yard each so we could wear it on our hair. We always had shiny new ribbons to wear with Sunday clothes. The family would go to church together. Now after having five children, my mother decided that she wanted to start cooking dinner, so she didn't attend church. But my father would take us, and we would attend Sunday School. Then we would come back and dress, then we would come to church. We were expected to stay for Sunday School, and sit in a certain place (?) we would stay in the church. If my mother appeared we would be so happy, and sometimes she would surprise us. "Momma's in church today." But it doesn't mean that she was so-called backsliding or anything. Just that she had five children. So we would stay for Sunday School and church. My parents sang in the choir. Served as (?), missionaries – many, many different offices. So the church was very important to us. They had activities that were related to community themes. Like one time we had a summer baseball league, and the only way you could play on these leagues was to attend Sunday School. We had a lot of newcomers, a lot of friends who did not attend every Sunday, who started attending because they wanted to play ball. Or they wanted to participate in activities. Course this is still goin' on today. But at that time we could point people out, you know. "He wants to play ball. (laughs) That's why he's comin' to Sunday School." (laughter)

RG: You knew the true believers.

PM: Yes, we knew. But it kept us out of trouble. Which was the church's activity during the summer, to provide recreation.

RG: So they did provide recreation.

PM: They did provide recreation.

RG: Where were the gathering places for you and your friends when you were growing up? I know you had mentioned right out on Church Street. Were there other gathering places for the young people?

PM: My back yard was a gathering place. We called it Atwater Gym. (?) My father had a basketball goal. And to this day I can hear at night, sometimes, that basketball, the sound of the bounce. Especially when I'm on Church Street, because they were free to come, and play any time (inaud). So many children came to Atwater Gym, that's what we called it. We also had, when I was in high school, we always had the community center, Hargraves was the name. But, it was built (inaud) we could go there and have activities. We had a recreation director, and they were playing (?) during the summertime that we could participate in. So we had the community center, we had the school, we had the church.

RG: What were the things that you got out of the church? What were the important ideas that the church left you with? Talking about education, what kind of values?

PM: You had to be a well-rounded person. You needed to participate in your church. This was the church-provided services. You should participate in the church, you should participate in the church activities. Church is for family, church is. Certain families would take advantage (inaud). Even now, and we know that this family attended, we could come together at least once or twice a year to worship – or anytime we worship together, but in the summertime you would have the church picnic, get in buses and go to Raleigh. This is a time all the black churches would come together. and attend this great big activity because we didn't have no swimming pool in Chapel Hill. We went to (inaud)

RG: Home Farm? (?)

PM: I don't know, I think park is still there (?) so it must be (?) It was still there and they had picnic tables, they had merry-go-rounds, they had ball-playing fields, they had a real activity place, a place that you could go in and dance and listen to music, go to swimming pools, (?) major attraction. So it was a part of our lives.

RG: You had mentioned before the PTA, the fact that your mother was president of the PTA at Orange County Training School, about the time they changed the name of the school. Can you tell me more about the PTA?

PM: When I attended, I was always takin' a nap, so I can't remember. But we did, she would take us, my father was working and we had to go sit in the back of the PTA. The PTA was very active. The PTA of course was very well organized with presidents, vice presidents, things like that. They raised money for the school to buy curtains, to purchase a bus. I don't know if they had anything to do with the so-called halls of the school or anything like that, but they saw a way to provide uniforms for the basketball team, football team, all the coaches and teachers would get up and request certain things.

RG: How well-attended was the PTA?

PM: I only attended when I was very small. I think it was well-attended. It was within walking distance. It was always on a night when it wasn't (?) with a church activity. Everybody knew when they would meet, plus some people would come there with their gripes and things like that. I think it was well-attended.

RG: Did they have performances at the PTA meetings? Did the children from the school do anything?

PM: Yes, yes. Yes, they would have classes to perform at the opening of the PTA. Maybe they would have a certain teacher would be assigned to provide the devotion at the PTA. They would have two students, three students, or any type of class to come and open the PTA. (?) Maybe their parents went home with them (laughter) and didn't stay for PTA, because at that time we didn't have what they call babysitters in our community. Parents did work. I guess some of these questions are comin' back from the other people you interviewed, but due to the fact of, I just, my memory –

RG: You're doin' great.

PM: Thank you.

RG: You really are. I couldn't remember half the things you remember.

PM: I just can't remember some of these things. There's so many different memories, when we do have our alumni meetings, things come up, and I say "Oh, I remember that," when they start tellin' it. "Did that really happen?" Evidently I wasn't at school that day. I don't remember missing many school – but some people have so many different memories. When we get together for the reunion, we divide, we – the first night we meet is what we call class, the whole class gets together. Then the next time we have activities that include all the classes. But that night when the class meets and we're talking – boy I must of missed school that day. Because the memories are so different. They can remember people being expelled by Mr. MacDougal and not coming back to school. They can remember families being angry with the teacher or angry with the school. So everything wasn't lovey-dovey. But they can tell things due to the fact their

families are older. The people are not older, but their parents didn't talk that much. This was their business. I've heard things in this class gathering that I wasn't aware of or I didn't remember.

We've been having these reunions since 1973, and the first year we had it, one of my classmates (?) married a college professor, and he went back, he attended with his wife, had a good time, we had a band playing, we had (?), we had a memorial service, (?), we had a picnic, and of course we always ask them to bring back their children. It was the first time that we had an opportunity to meet our classmates' children. It was very exciting. The university professor went back to his class and was tellin' that he had attended this high school reunion that was just outstanding. And it just happened that a person in his class was from Chapel Hill. He couldn't believe that he heard this professor expressing how great a time he had had at a Lincoln High School reunion.

RG: Did most of the graduates leave Chapel Hill?

PM: Most of the graduates left Chapel Hill.

RG: Why was that?

PM: Jobs, education, or the parents had gone – many parents, you know, moved to the North, and the grandparents raised the children. They didn't want them in the city at that time. So when they left they would either go with their parents or get a job or most of the time for education. You could not attend the university, which was most reasonable, you know. So we would go to predominantly black schools at that time.

End of tape 1, side 2.

McCauley, Polly
Tape 2 of 3
By Bob Gilgor

RG: Polly, you graduated, you say, with a class of 26 people. Do you have any idea how many of that group of 26 went on to get more education?

PM: I wish had their names here. I think quite a few, over half. Even if they did not graduate from college, they attended school. They probably went for a year, or they went to the technology school – when I say technology I mean nurses' education, or there was a great secretarial school in Durham at that time, they went to that school. I think we realized that to get a good job we needed higher education. Out of our group, three or four went to A&T, three or four went to Central, one went to Hampton, and several went to the Armed Forces. Then when they were discharged from the Army they went on to college. And we didn't know, we wouldn't know anything about it. They would come back and say "I bet you don't know what I did." You know, at the reunions, we found out they did graduate from a school or college (?). They even received higher training because they got to be brick masons or chefs or something.

RG: Is it fair to say that there was a brain drain in the black community? That the African Americans who went to Lincoln and then got more education left this area and – by and large because they couldn't get work here?

PM: Yes.

RG: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but –

PM: That's true. And a lot stayed here at the university, they got great jobs at the university. Yeah.

RG: Can you tell me about that?

PM: Oh boy, I wish I could remember. I worked at the university while I was in college. I served patients at night. I would fix trays and take the trays to the patients' rooms. And some people stayed here since the hospital hadn't been open that long. I can't remember when it opened. (?) We had the infirmary students, UNC students there. They went to the infirmary to work from high school. Some would stay, and they would get into these positions you know. (?) positions in college. They had worked there for some time. As secretaries or food servers, or even in landscaping and maintenance, yard maintenance. (?).

RG: So some did stay on, but was it a minority or a majority?

PM: I'd really have to look at my (inaud). The majority went on to seek higher education. When I say that I mean training schools or on-the-job training or college.

RG: But some did get work, did stay here at the university.

PM: Yes, they did.

RG: And the women, you're saying in nursing? Or supervisor, eventually supervisory roles at the university.

PM: Yes.

RG: Not janitorial work or –

PM: Oh, they did janitorial work too. At that time the janitors, when I was small, the janitors would sign in, and I would take – and my father would have to sign in near Emerson, the old Emerson Field. (?) all the janitors would meet in there. And they would have a white supervisor, he would assign them. You go to this building today, you go to that building. And if they were late he would chastise them. He had a way of making men feel below themselves. Or you can't work today, and things like that. Of frie them. (inaud). That had an impact on grown black men.

RG: To put them down.

PM: To put them down. Boy – using that term. And during that time I was very young, and so sometimes in some instances you could talk. If not talk, just sit down (?). "I want my child to have a better life than I have. I don't want them to work for the university. I don't want them to stay in Chapel Hill. I don't want them (?) to have to go into servicing families – there was a lot of service workers at that time.

RG: Domestic?

PM: Domestic. I've done it for all my life, I know how I've been treated. I want my child to have a better life.

RG: That's a terrible place to stop, and a great place to stop, but I have to, I know that we'd be lost an hour here. I would like to talk to you again and hear more about a number of things.

PM: I'll have my, a lot of old things so I can remember.

RG: I want to talk about the activities of the high school – the sports, the band, the chorus, acting – any other activities that went on there –

PM: Drama club.

RG: Drama club, and also you had just started to talk about the way people were treated who were domestic workers. I'd like to hear more about that. But we'll schedule something more.

PM: OK.

RG: Thank you so much.

PM: Thank you.

*

RG: Good morning, Polly.

PM: Good morning.

RG: How are you this morning?

PM: Just fine.

RG: Good. I wanted to spend the next hour or so talking to you about Lincoln High School and your memories of Lincoln High School. So I'm just gonna open it and let you talk, and if you want to stop and think for awhile, I can jump in and ask more specific questions. So tell me about Lincoln.

PM: That'll help a lot. I think we talked about Mr. MacDougal, but not so much about the other teachers, except the teachers – most of them came from other places, other homes. And they stayed in the community. They roomed either, or bought homes eventually. Their children attended school there. They were great teachers. They had been educated at some of the best black colleges. And they brought an experience to Lincoln that enabled us, and probably prompted us to do the best we could do. Especially the English teacher, the French/English teacher from Shaw University, M.D. Turner, Mrs. Turner. She pushed us and pushed us and pushed us. We had to read and learn about Beowulf, MacBeth. She was also in charge of the Drama Department. Each year we put on a fabulous production that parents and everyone paid to attend. The costumes, the lighting, on that very small stage at Lincoln was outstanding to me. One of the best productions I can remember, the night of January 26, where the audience was polled, and they brought different people up on the side of the stage and they had a jury. It was a trial, murder trial. And they had, we didn't know how the end would be. We had to practice two endings, because the jury would say, give the verdict. And then another one she put on with three people, Mary Louise Stroudworth, Lisa Burchett (?), and I can't remember, there was just three people, or four, in this production. About the war something. It was outstanding. So she did this, she taught there a long time. And she did this every year.

We also had a science teacher. Of course we didn't have a science table in the science lab. But, she came from Greensboro, I can't remember the college. But she taught science. We did a lot with these large charts that hung up on the wall. We'd do simple

experiments. But she would teach us as best she could. We had a small library. We went to the library every week to check out books. And we were taught the system, the Dewey Decimal System. And we didn't just spend time sitting. We had to partake in book discussions and learn all about using the dictionary, the encyclopedias and things, so it was a class. Not a time just to come and sit.

We had a math teacher, R.O. Carnegie, that liked to embarrass us if we were leaving sometimes with these questions like what is pi? (laughs) He was also the basketball, football coach. He was here for a long time. He was here from Durham. His wife was also an elementary teacher. Gosh. We had outstanding teachers. Of course, we didn't have anything to compare it to, so we thought that they were great. And I still think that today. Now did I miss someone? We had the drama club, the safety patrol.

Safety patrol consisted of people that had a good average, because they would leave the classroom five minutes before the bell sounded for the classes to change. Since it was a small hall, we were taught to walk to our right. The safety patrols would come out five minutes, put on their white belts, and if they were on duty that week, they would wear a blue skirt, and a blue sweater. They would put on these white belts and stand in the hall. And you had to flow, the traffic had to flow just like we drive today. Goin to certain classrooms, go around the safety patrol. Safety patrol also had the power to turn in names to teachers if people did not follow the rules. I remember the safety patrol at another high school, Hillside, they always went to Washington. Unfortunately we never had a chance to do that, but we were proud of our safety patrol. OK, we had the social studies club. That was definitely a club that was, that you joined according to your grade. You could not make less than a B. Mrs. M.D. Forfoot (?) was a social studies teacher. Also, (?) and the basketball, the ladies' basketball coach.

RG: What was her name again, Polly?

PM: Her name was Milton D. Forfoot. She came the year that I was a freshman. She was the prettiest and...statuesque. I don't know what you want to call it. She was just a nice-looking lady, and we were proud to be in her home room. The other teachers I spoke about were nice-looking also, but when Mrs. Clifford came in right out of college, that was very exciting.

RG: So she wasn't an old teacher (laughter). She was closer to your age.

PM: Fresh out of college. Yes, closer to our ages.

RG: Were most of the teachers older? Had some experience teaching?

PM: Most of the teachers had some experience. She was about the, well, I haven't said this (?), but most of them had experience. I can't remember her coming fresh out of college. And since we were with her in the home room for four years, that's how I can remember her so well.

RG: So you had the same home room teacher for four years.

PM: Yes.

RG: But you walked to different classes –

PM: Walked to different classes. We would go to home room for ten or fifteen minutes, we would have attendance, we would have daily devotions, prayers, bible verses, and so on. And then it would be time to change and go to different classes.

RG: How big was your home room? How many students did you have?

PM: We had one of the smaller classes at Lincoln at that time. I guess there were about 30, 35 students in my home room. 29 of us graduated.

RG: Was there a problem with attendance, or did most of the students get to school all right every day?

PM: Most of the students arrived on time, even the ones who came on buses. Since I lived right on Church Street, I was just walking distance from the school. Just a few steps from the school. But we had a lot of students comin' in on buses. The buses were usually on time. The only person I can remember bein' late was Ed Collins.

RG: (laughs) He wrote a paragraph about sneaking into the school, so that's really funny.

PM: (laughs) He lived closer than I, and our classroom was located on the side where you could see the ball – the place that we had recess and played football and other activities. You could look out the window and see Ed coming across this field. (laughter) And everybody in the school would know that he was late.

RG: Now, did anybody pick that up? Didn't the principal greet you at the door some days?

PM: Some days, yes. Many days. Most of the time he was on duty. He was on duty.

RG: Meaning he was there?

PM: Meaning he was there. He was there.

RG: Right. But was Ed able to slip by him? (laughs)

PM: Sure, Ed would come and – I don't know, I'm thinkin' that Mr. MacDougal was in his office, which was on the other side of the hall. But we could see, if you were on the right side, in the right classroom, you could see him comin'. So since this was near the beginning of school day and I'm sure Mr. MacDougal had to do his reports, things like that, and he probably had a student help or something to watch the students late. It was

primarily left up to the teachers to turn into absent or late, tardy, rather. So I don't know what –

RG: What time did school begin?

PM: Oh my goodness, that is digging deep. Cause I asked someone that a little while ago. They said we had to be there at eight.

RG: And how long did school run?

PM: Until 3:30.

RG: Long day. You had mentioned some clubs – drummer club, safety patrol, drama club, social studies. You had band, was band a club also?

PM: Band was a class. Mr. Pickett was the bandleader. He was from Winston-Salem. I think he graduated from Winston-Salem State. When he came down, he recruited certain students that could possibly afford instruments. Many instruments were purchased through the school, and students that had any musical talent would go to him and have classes. And I don't know anything else, since I did not go in the band room or anything. I don't know how – if he would go into each class and see who was interested. I don't know how he chose the band. My brothers played drums, and several of my classmates were in the band. I think about five or six.

RG: Now the drummer club, was that part of Mr. Pickett's class?

PM: The drummer club? No, that was part of Mrs. Turner's. The French/English teacher. The Drummer Club.

RG: And when did they perform?

PM: They performed in the spring.

RG: Did they go to the football games also?

PM: The Drummer Club?

RG: Oh, drama. Or drummer?

PM: No, drama. D-r-a-m-a. The drama club. (laughter)

RG: Oh, drama. I got it.

PM: I know, the southern accent (laughter) It's very slow. But since we mentioned the drama club, they performed in spring, but they also would go to drama festivals. I went to one, which was at Shaw University. High schools from throughout the state were invited.

They would present a one-act play. And during that time they would be given grades or rates. The best would get trophies or some other certificate, something to let them know the best play. They would have judges. And this was in addition to the (?), English and French. This club met after school. They would sit in their chairs and rehearse their parts, go over them. Do the presentations. So they put on this one-act play in addition to this three-act play that they put on in the spring.

RG: How did they fare at Shaw, at these festivals and competitions?

PM: Some times they came in first place, sometimes they came in second place. But when you compare Lincoln to the larger schools that would perform, I think Lincoln was outstanding.

RG: So they often won awards there.

PM: They often won awards. Outstanding performance, I can't remember, the plays were in certain categories or just one-act plays. They don't write plays or movies like those anymore. See what else, other clubs we had. Of course basketball, football. We also class teams in addition to the school teams. At lunchtime, we could go into the gym and watch the tenth grade play the ninth grade, or the ninth grade play the tenth grade. And that would end up also in a type tournament session at the end of the basketball season. So that way, not only did the best players get to play, who did not participate in class roster, I guess, according to my memory, you would also have other students that could play ball and participate.

RG: Was the gym constantly being used during the day?

PM: The gym was used during the day, yes, because we also had a Mayday presentation each May, and the gym had to be used for that rehearsal. We had glee clubs, choral groups, and it had to be used at that time. Some practices, or many practices were during the school day in the teachers' classrooms, for maybe twenty minutes. And a lot of activities were after school.

RG: Was the choral club a class, or was it a club?

PM: It was a group of students that were chosen to sing. I don't know the process, since I didn't belong to that. I can't say, can't talk. (laughter)

RG: You doing great, fine.

PM: I don't know, but some of the people you've talked to were in these choral groups. They would also put on a performance. They would also sing at graduation. The band would play. The band would march, the band would march. In the beginning, basketball had to provide their own shorts. We went to (?) to buy them. Basketball players got their own shorts. The school, PTA I guess raised money for the shirts. And they would raise enough money, before I graduated, for uniforms, for basketball. In the beginning, back in '49, I

remember players would buy their own shorts. When the band first started, they also provided their uniforms. The majorette costumes were made by parents, under the direction of Miss Pope, who was a home economics teachers, who also graduated from Shaw. If you've ever read or heard about the Delaney sisters, you can imagine what type of university Shaw was, and the type of students they sent out into the world of teaching. Miss Pope was a home economics teacher.

RG: Tell me about the Delaney sisters, and the quality – obviously you're proud of that heritage. Can you share that with me?

PM: Wish I could remember. The Delaney sisters, who just died recently, were in their nineties when they decided to write a book. The book was about their life from the time of their birth until they moved, they were living in New York. They talked about Shaw because their father worked at Shaw. Can't remember if he was professor there, whatever it was called at that time. I can't remember because it's been several years since I read it. But the book was so popular that they had turned it into a play. The play came here about three years ago, to the university. They had in the book about Shaw University, and how they, the influence that their father and they would talk to these young proud black blues (?). I remember a story about the train ride. Plus they have in there some of the things that happened to black women at that time. Black men also. It was an outstanding book. (inaud) I mean they just, a person was just doing an interview with them, like you're doin', and decided to write little excerpts that they talked about. They were never married. They always lived together. And they were, they carried themselves with such grace.

RG: I remember reading about them in the newspaper. An article on them.(inaud)

PM: Right. So Miss Pope was from Raleigh, from Shaw University. Miss Pope, unfortunately, just died a few months ago. She had an air about her. She taught us manners, she taught us etiquette, she taught us about how to set a table. You know, using a napkin. She also was the first person who went in the cafeteria, even though she was a home economics teacher, the cafeteria was built down the hill. She was in charge of the cafeteria. Sometimes she would send certain girls down to work for an hour, and she would go down and they had an adult there also. But the first cafeteria I can remember had sandwiches. Soup and sandwiches. And then the one we had full-course meals. I remember that potato machine. Never seen a machine peelin' potatoes. But we liked to go to the cafeteria, because that means that we could leave class. So she would name two people to go to the cafeteria. It was also based on your behavior and your grades. They really (?)

RG: Were there other clubs that you can recall, Polly?

PM: Let me insert this about Miss Pope, while we're talking. Miss Pope, and her sister, who was the librarian at North Carolina Central University in Durham, both retired, but they lived in a house not far from Shaw University. They both refused to sell that house. It is standing, it has been put on the national archive. Their father was a doctor or dentist – his

nameplate is still on the front door. The original floors – it's just outstanding to see. There are parking lots on both sides where people sold their property. That old house is standing in Raleigh right now. (?) to keep that house. I'm sure it wasn't planned, but they refused to sell.

RG: And they probably could have sold it at great profit.

PM: Great profit. They're right there off, right downtown Raleigh.

RG: Fascinating.

PM: It is. So it's great to have that.

RG: Do you think they held onto it because the history was so important to them? Or were there other reasons for them to not sell it?

PM: I wish I could tell you. I don't know. Did have a special person – maybe I could get in touch with her and see if she said anything, talked to Miss Pope about the house. But Miss Pope reminds me of one of the Delaney sisters.

RG: Do you recall how big the entire school was, how many students were in the whole school? Any kind of guesstimate?

PM: Mm see, now do you mean the high school?

RG: Yeah, the high school, which was ninth through twelfth grade.

PM: Ninth through twelfth grade. During my time, those four years, I know the class ahead of me was one of the largest classes, they had two sections. They probably had about, had to have over sixty students. And the class ahead of them probably had maybe thirty students. More than that, they had more than that. So the high school probably, they were small classes. Probably had 200 students.

RG: In what years?

PM: This was from '48 to '52.

RG: Were there any rituals that you remember? Any things that – you already mentioned one, and that is the safety patrol and everybody walking on the right side of the hallways, and being reported. Were there other rituals in the school that you can remember?

PM: We had assembly every Friday. All the classes would come in to assembly. And during that time there would be also class plays. Each class, you know, would put on a performance. The glee club would sing, or –

End of tape 2, side 1

Tape 2, side 2

PM: - a parent would speak. Sometimes we would have a dentist (?) or a magic show. But every Friday we would begin this assembly with a song and prayer. "Sweet Hour of Prayer" was one of the outstanding songs. You'd get a blend of those voices, still sends a chill (inaud). Don't hear it that often now. But it was just great to hear those singers. The Mayday performance, that was a fun one (inaud) but it was fun. It was held every spring. We wrapped the Maypole, we'd have a spring queen and a king, a procession. During this time they would have a little production, put up the Maypole and do different activities, and after that they would have a ball game. Had to do a lot of money-raising, because things were not...purchased at that time like drapes, curtains for the stage, a bus. We had also borrowed a bus, we rented a bus to go on basketball and football trips, and that had to be paid. We also, when other basketball teams or football teams came to play, the local football team would feed them a good meal (after) the game. That had to be paid. Of course they would do the same when our teams went to their schools. They were football players (laughs).

RG: Had to be fed, huh?

PM: Yes (laughter)

RG: Beefy. Can you tell me about prom?

PM: Ah, the prom. The prom was a way of raising money to leave a gift to the school. Like a speaker system, a record player, a piano, an instrument for the band. It was held every spring. The juniors would sponsor it. They would raise the money. The seniors were invited. And the tenth graders would serve. It was also held in the gym. It had to be decorated, always some of the money raised was used for the decorations. We would like to get that ball fixed, mirror-type ball that put the bubbles around the room. Everybody wanted that ball at the top of the ceiling. We rented it from a firm in Durham (laughs). And they would decorate it with different themes. Class colors or Hawaiian or beach time. Everybody would dress to the tenth, to the ninth, to the twelfth. (laughter). You had to have a new formal gown. Silver or gold shoes. And jewelry. It would probably last from nine to twelve. And parents went, lots of chaperones.

RG: So parents came with their children?

PM: Parents came with their children. Some dads came and sat around, there would be seats all around the auditorium.

RG: Did they come formal also?

PM: They would dress, but not formal. When I say formal, I mean, during this time, the girls dressed, and I think the fellows rented tuxedos. I have to go back and look at my prom pictures. They did have on white coats. I remember the white jackets. But I think they had tuxedos. Not sure. Or dark suits. It was a dress up occasion.

RG: And you say that the tenth graders served.

PM: Served.

RG: And the eleventh graders sponsored?

PM: Sponsored.

RG: And who could attend?

PM: Anybody – twelfth graders.

RG: So eleventh and twelfth graders came, or did the whole school come?

PM: No, just eleventh and twelfth graders. Just a few tenth graders that would serve. The junior teachers were in charge of the prom. Now, as far as bringing someone from another school, to my recollection you had to ask, you had to get permission from Mr. MacDougal. Very seldom did someone come from another school. And no one that had graduated could come. Just (?) a school affair. (?) invited some cousins from another towns, but I can only remember somebody coming one time from (?) (laughs)

RG: Who played music?

PM: Just records. I can't remember.

RG: The band didn't play? The school band.

PM: Not the school band. If we had a band it was probably a local band.

RG: Or a DJ?

PM: Maybe a DJ. I'd really have to dig to think. Who played at the prom? (?)

RG: So that was once a year, every spring?

PM: Every spring. We had a program, we had souvenirs. The program would give the theme, and also names of the seniors and the names of the juniors. And I do have a program here somewhere.

RG: I'd love to see it.

PM: Right, we had a program. I even have a program from 1930 or '20.

RG: Could I copy it to show?

- PM: Sure, if I can find it. I'm making you so many promises.
- RG: Well, I will hold you to all of them, you know.
- PM: OK. Have I forgotten any activities? The band, the glee club, the Mayday.
- RG: So you had a theme and program. Did you have any performers at the prom?
- PM: No. (inaud)
- RG: Can you tell me about the football games. Were there any rituals that went on at the football games that you can remember? Anything the team did that was special? OR the band did that was special? You had cheerleaders?
- PM: We had cheerleaders. And I can remember goin' to Emerson Field. The majority of the games were played on the UNC campus, in Emerson Field. And we had to pay to get in. But I just can't remember anything about the rituals. I'm sure they started out with the pledge of allegiance, probably, singing of the national anthem.
- RG: Did the players come out through a banner or with smoke or anything like that?
- PM: (laughs) I wish I could remember. I wish I could remember. I don't think that I attended any football games until I was in the tenth or eleventh grade.
- RG: Did most of the students who were in the high school go to the games?
- PM: Most of them.
- RG: Parents?
- PM: Parents, yes. I mean, how could we have used Emerson Field if they didn't participate? They had good participation. Great.
- RG: Lot of people.
- PM: Lot of people were there, and people from the opponents, they would also come. They had cheerleaders, and bands, other things. I don't remember anything like half-time shows.
- RG: Did you get dressed up for the game?
- PM: No, most of the games, well not, what do you mean by dressed up? We just wore school clothes to the game.
- RG: Did the white community come out to see –

PM: A few. You'd have a few.

RG: Now did they change where they played the games from Emerson Field later?

PM: Sometimes they would play at the school. At the site, Lincoln. Cause I remember the guys goin' out there, marking off the field with those white lines. And I remember the park in Carrboro. I think, I can't remember football out there, but I remember where the White Oak(?) condominiums are located, there was a field that was baseball. We played some games out there. During Homecoming there was a ritual, we always had a Homecoming parade. The band was so good. When I was talking about uniforms a little while ago, I'm trying to think of their first uniform. I think it was white pants, white shirts and tie. And the band was, the drums would draw the crowd and kids would do like they do now. They would follow the bands from the school, because they would go from the school to the (?)

RG: Chanting?

PM: (inaud) band, we had floats, we had other marching groups, we had bands from other places. All kinds of (inaud)

RG: Did you have any parties after Homecoming?

PM: I'm sure *they* did. (laughter) I don't know. I forgot (inaud). My parents (?). The boys probably went to them. After parties and things like that but the girls (inaud).

RG: So they were pretty strict with the girls?

PM: Yes. Well, I wouldn't call it strict. They just, yes, they were strict. The girls, and the boys, they were strict with the boys also. They participated in the boy scouts. We participated in the brownies and the girls scouts. The boys could go to camp, and this was not through the school system. This was, I think it was sponsored by, I believe they would meet sometimes at the school. And sometimes (inaud) at the community center. Hargraves Community Center. But I don't (inaud). But the boys could go up to camp. We didn't go to camp (inaud.) This has come up recently. I don't know if (inaud) or the parents and the community. Very active.

RG: Was the school used for anything else other than for school? Did the community use it?

PM: I can't remember. I don't think it was. I only remember going to the PTA. (inaud). I don't think it was used much for social activities.

RG: Did you have an auditorium at the school?

PM: Yes, that's where we played basketball.

RG: Oh, so the auditorium and the gym were the same.

PM: Auditorium – were the same. There were three poles, right in the middle of the auditorium. And classrooms had, some of the classrooms had pull-down walls. And they would open these walls during the basketball games so you could sit in the classroom. But everybody teased us about these three poles right in the basketball –

RG: (laughs) Right in the middle of the basketball court?

PM: Some people said there were two and I said there were three. But they were to our advantage. We used those poles when we played. We knew how to go around them and avoid them and things like that. At that time, when we played basketball, it was half court. We only played half court basketball. But we would hug those poles, you know. And we knew how to drive around them, as far as getting to the basket. So it was to our advantage.

RG: Was that your sport, basketball?

PM: Yes.

RG: You played basketball?

PM: I played basketball.

RG: Did you play for the high school?

PM: The high school. The only high school (?) to play team basketball.

RG: How many years did you play?

PM: Four.

RG: Did you start all four years?

PM: I probably didn't start all four of the years, but eventually I was a starter. Remember on the other tape I talked about Atwater Gym. My father put a basketball goal in our backyard. So I sort of had this advantage of having my own gym. We could play basketball. We played with the boys. We could play until dark; then we had to come inside. Cause my girlfriends also played. And I can name the ones who came to Atwater Gym. And many of them were starters on the basketball team.

RG: So it really helped.

PM: Yes, it helped.

RG: Having that Atwater Gym.

PM: Having that Atwater Gym.

RG: How good was the team?

PM: The team was outstanding. With the talent we had, we thought we were right up there with the best.

RG: Did you win any titles?

PM: I can't remember winning any titles, but we always went to the tournament. And I don't know if that was based on our play or the number of games we won during the season, or this was just a culmination of the season. But we would have tournaments.

RG: Are there any other things that stand out in your mind about the school, any physical attributes of the school that, besides the poles in the gym?

PM: Well, the boiler room.

RG: Tell me about the boiler room.

PM: The boiler room. (laughs) That part has been torn down now. I can remember when they added classrooms on the end of the school. The back part is still standing, it's the Northside Senior Citizens building now. And our cafeteria's being used by the mental health, Orange County Mental Health, the present site. But the part that was torn down had the classrooms and the gym. It was a tall building. I have a picture of it. And I've also placed that picture in the Town Hall (?). That picture shows that it was, had steps at the front. So the building was built with two floors. But only one side could be used. And if you're looking toward the front of the building that would be the left side. And there were one or two classrooms in the so-called basement of the school. I remember one class there. I can just remember one. There were probably three classrooms down there. And then the boiler room.

RG: This is Northside, or Lincoln?

PM: Oh, this is old Lincoln High School, Northside Senior Citizens – it's over on Caldwell Street now. And the boiler room was the place, of course, that you had the coal, by the boiler, put coal in, things like that. Also a place for punishment. Guys would be sent down there to the boiler room to think about what they had done, you know? Think about it. And while you're thinkin' about, you put a lump or two of coal in there. I never went down there, so you have to talk to the guys about it. But I do remember passin' it, because my class was down there when I was in the sixth grade.

RG: Did you have lockers at the gym, or did you have lockers at the school at Lincoln?

PM: Not to my knowledge.

RG: And if you took gym class, did you have showers afterwards there, to wash off?

PM: No, no. No.

RG: Did you have a pool at the school?

PM: A pool. What kind of pool? The water would stand when it rained, in the parking lots. (laughter). No. No pool. Sometimes people want to know why some blacks excel in basketball. All it takes is a ball and a basket. But to skate or to play tennis or to play golf, more is involved financially. So if men did as my father did, put a basketball hoop (?) for a child to get involved, it has some great possibilities. That's all there is to it.

RG: A number of people I've interviewed regarding Lincoln, when talking about Mr. MacDougal, begin by saying he was a strict disciplinarian.

PM: He was.

RG: And I just, I wonder if you could expound on that. Why was that important, and how did he show this discipline?

PM: Have you heard of Joe Clark?

RG: No.

PM: OK. He showed his –

RG: Doug Clark. You mean (?) –

PM: No, Joe. Joe Clark. There's a movie out about Joe Clark. Just like the Delaney sisters. But anyway, his walk, his talk, his demeanor, his voice, all of that. And this was necessary at that time, I think, because we were still at the spankin' stage. People believed that children should be taught by the rule. Using the rule, either on their hands or on their legs. Hasn't been too long ago when punishment was rendered physically. We did not always have physical punishment at our school. We didn't walk around with a stick like Joe Clark did. But his – all of that led to the way he was perceived. And that was the way

–
End of tape 2, side 2

McCauley, Polly
Tape 3 of 3
By Bob Gilgor

RG: Was there a swagger about his walk?

PM: There was a – his shoulders were high. His head was high. He had an erect form. His toes tended to point out diagonal. I didn't say that, now. (laughter). But you could hear that walk. He had a certain stride.

RG: So you knew he was comin'?

PM: We knew he was coming.

RG: Was there a certain fear regarding his arrival?

PM: Sure. There was a certain fear. Is he after me? What did I do? Did he find out what I did? (laughs) Parents did the same thing. Parents expected things of him. He was a disciplinarian. Mr. Holmes was the same.

RG: So it wasn't as though things were easy beforehand, and he put discipline –

PM: Oh no. No. All principals had the same philosophy.

RG: So the parents wanted that discipline? Is that true?

PM: I think they did. I think they did. Sent 'em to school for learning. And I think he (?). The majority of the parents. I can't speak for everyone. Some parents were very angry with him. Since my parents were not, or at least I never heard them say they were, I can't speak for the parents who were disappointed, angry, disgusted with Mr. MacDougal.

RG: What would make them angry or disgusted with him?

PM: Well, he would expel people. They had to stay away from the school. Or he would give them punishment the parents didn't agree with, I'm sure. They didn't agree with everything, even, you know some parents get angry with the way you may speak to their child. I'm thinking the same thing probably happened during this time. We weren't all cut from the same cloth, even though we were all black. There was difference in the homes. There was difference in their philosophy, their belief, or – I'm sure not all parents appreciated his disciplinarian ways. I can't remember my parents (inaud) for or against him. But if he called our home, we received another punishment. My brother, they would play basketball in the afternoon. And I can remember my brother running back so excited he'd finished his chores, goin' back over there to play basketball. Now I don't know, I'm thinkin' that this was, just guys, a pickup game. But there had to have been an

adult there. There was barbed wire around two sections, to beautify the grounds. And there was just (?) and my brother ran into that barbed wire, and cut his legs. Now why am I bringing this up with Mr. MacDougal and (?)? I don't know. I never heard them say anything about him during this tough time, you know, to have your child run up in barbed wire. And you'd have to talk to him about did my parents blamed Mr. MacDougal. Who put the barbed wire there? We could see it during the day. But during the night a child running would forget. Oh, because we always, we were so close to the school, and it was, there were so many activities there. I can't imagine, when you're running back at night, that you would say oops, I need to go this way, there's barbed wire. It was dark. But there was also something else about Miss Pope that was outstanding. She kept her home in Raleigh, she worked here in Chapel Hill. But during the summer, she had (?) a class where she taught to adults, free. And some of the students, all about sewing. We would go back to the school, to the home ec room, where she had set up several, ten sewing machines. You'd bring your own or she would have them there, and we would learn how to sew. They did a lot of turning collars at that time. You know, when the neck of a man's shirt would get frayed because he wore it every Sunday, the women would sit there, take out those tiny stitches, and turn those collars over. It looked like a brand new shirt. So our teachers provided services to the community, after school, during the summer.

RG: Were those the school sewing machines that she used?

PM: Some were, and some parents, some adults brought their own sewing machines.

RG: And the school, this was not a course sponsored by the school? The school let her use the facilities?

PM: She was able to use the facilities. I don't remember paying anything. Of course, I was only a student, and she would come pick up students that were going to help her that day, and take them with her. And we would stay there and she would drive us back home. We would have a little lunch at school. So I don't know, you know –

RG: Were there other things like that, where the school was used to help the community? That was necessarily part of the curriculum or the PTA or sports?

PM: That's the only thing I was involved in. (inaud)

RG: Did they have a vice principal or an assistant principal in the school?

PM: No. But if he was, if Mr. MacDougal was out, you would know who to go to. One of the teachers would know who to go to. I don't remember there being a vice principal. I tell you, my memory – soon it'll be over 50 years that I graduated.

RG: Did you have any counselors?

PM: Counselors.

RG: Like today they have counselors at the schools.

PM: No.

RG: Did you have a truant officer?

PM: Can't remember a truant officer. I was never truant. I guess Mr. MacDougal served in that capacity.(?) and find out what's happening.

RG: You mentioned rulers. Did he walk around with a ruler in his hand?

PM: No. Joe Clark (inaud).

RG: Sure. That was Joe Clark you were talking about. OK.

PM: (inaud) But Joe Clark was a principal they hired up north, who walked around with a bullhorn.

RG: I saw that picture, yes. That was - who was the star?

PM: Lean on Me.

RG: Lean on Me. That's great.

PM: Lean on Me. Joe Clark came from that same pattern of (?) the principals that are all retired. When I was at Lincoln, I think it from that same cloth.

RG: Are there other things that you would like to share, or that you remember about the school that have special meaning to you?

PM: I would have to get my scrapbook. I think I mentioned the majority of things that were special to me. Most of all.

RG: I wanted to ask you one other thing - I don't want to end this on a bad note, but I just wondered, were there fights in the school?

PM: Yes.

RG: There were fights?

PM: There were fights.

RG: Were they common?

PM: I wouldn't call it common. Meet me after school. Most of the, the majority of the fights were between, it was between students, about something that was simple. Trouble about my boy friend or my girl friend, or sayin' talkin' about my momma. Misunderstandings. I don't ever remember seein' a fistfight. They had them, but I don't remember seein' them. They'd stand in a circle and push each other. But I think I was wise enough to run home.

RG: What about weapons? Were there people bringing knives or guns?

PM: I never heard. I never heard of anyone bringing a knife or a gun. Or a whip or a stick.

RG: Did everybody wear shoes to school?

PM: I can remember the teachers would – some of the classes had cloakrooms where you would hang your clothes, and where they would put extra supplies at the back of the classroom. According to had she had it set up it would be to the side or to the back. But usually the cloakrooms were in the back. The teachers would take you back there for punishment also. They'd take you back there and give you two or three licks on the hand. The whole class would hear it. But there was a box back there that had clothes, and she might take a student back there at the end of the day and give him a piece of clothing, or a pair of shoes. They may have come to school with shoes that were, that had holes in the bottom. Cause I can remember a time or two wearing shoes that I had to put cardboard in the bottom. Didn't want to throw them away. So I'm sure that there were students the teachers assisted with clothing, shoes included. And I don't think that's a bad note. I think that's a good note. Because that lets me remember that our teachers were sympathetic, understanding also.

RG: Let's end it there, unless you want to say something more. Anything you want to say, you have open mike.

PM: (laughs) I wish I could...comin' back it sounds like it was a wonderful time. I remember the rainy day schedules, when it rained so bad until the buses would have to leave because the roads were impassable.

RG: Muddy?

PM: Muddy. Water standing. Unpaved. Buses would leave early, and then after the buses would leave we would get to walk home. I liked rainy days. (laughter). My mother was at home at that time, so we could always walk home. We also went home for lunch every day. We went home for lunch every day.

RG: From Lincoln or from Northside?

PM: From, well Lincoln was at Northside. But it was when Lincoln moved from the Northside location to Merritt Mill Road. I had two sisters under me, I don't know what they did for lunch. But the time that we were – I can't even remember, I ate in the cafeteria. When I went to Lincoln. So I'm thinkin' that they did also. One thing about the cafeteria under the direction of Miss Pope: you could always get something to eat. She would feed you. If you had to, if you did not have lunch, you could work, you know. You could go to her and say I'm hungry, and she would feed you, get a sandwich for you. And I'm thinkin' that to pay my lunch money, I'm sure that I worked in the cafeteria. If you worked, you received your lunch. (inaud)

RG: What was the year that the name change occurred from Orange County Training to Lincoln, was that 1949?

PM: I did go back and look at my brother's photo, and he graduated in 1949. And it did say Lincoln High School. I don't know if the diplomas were changed, but that was the first year that they had a graduation named from Lincoln High School, and not Orange County Training School. There are some people still here in that class, could give you more insight.

RG: Well you've given me tremendous insight, and I feel that I have a real good flavor for the school and what it was like there. Thank you very much, Polly. I really appreciate it.

PM: Thank you.

End of McCauley tape 3. Side 2 blank.

RG: