

Edwin Caldwell  
Tape 2 of 7  
May 29, 2000

RG: This is Bob Gilgor, I'm interviewing Ed Caldwell at 107 Caldwell Street on May 29<sup>th</sup> in the year 2000. Good morning, Ed.

EC: Good morning, Bob.

RG: Um, I'd like to start with a little different topic this morning than what we did yesterday. Can you tell me what changes you saw in society in Orange County and Chapel Hill during your high school days and college days? I assume that's when the civil rights movement really got off the ground. Maybe a little later, correct me if I'm wrong.

EC: It was a little later. Um, I finished high school in 1952. Civil rights movement really got started in 1954, after Brown versus Plessy. That's when the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal was unconstitutional. It also started when King had the boycott, bus boycott. 1954 I was at Hampton. Two important things happened. One, King came to Hampton to address our assembly, to talk about the bus boycott. And it was just, the best speech I've ever heard, just very moving, a very dynamic man. Generally I used to come to the assemblies and go to sleep. I carried a pillow with me, because it was mandatory that we go, and that was my way to rebel against having to go to the assembly. I mean, it was just magnetic, you know, just being there with King and having him talk about that. Um, soon after that in May, the Supreme Court ruled, and I remember sitting in my dorm room when they said that schools, segregation was unconstitutional and that they should dismantle segregation with all delivered speed. I took that to mean immediately. I really believed in the Supreme Court as being fair, just, and I always looked at that statue with the balance with the blindfold on, and I really believed that. In my dorm room that day, we were just talking as to what that meant. And I said to my colleagues that I didn't think I was coming back to Hampton, that I was going to the University of North Carolina. I always thought that I should go to the University of North Carolina, just family being associated with the University, but I always just thought I would be going to the University of North Carolina. I'll go into more detail about that as to why. But I said to my colleagues that I really would miss Hampton, and I had missed emotions about not coming back, but I thought I owed it to my parents to go to school in Chapel Hill and therefore save money. I was very naïve, you know, to believe that they would open up the University. But those were the two times that I remember sort of being a changed person. One of the things about Hampton, Hampton trained all its graduates with two goals, objectives in mind. Number one, to give back to the university so therefore it could continue. It was a private school, so alumni always gave money back to the school. The second thing was that anybody that graduated from Hampton should be a leader, should go back into their communities and be a leader. So that was, those two things were instilled in me so therefore I sort of felt, I returned home after graduation, applied for a job in my field, which was

chemistry, knowing full well I would not be hired. After a certain period of time I left home, because I refused with all that education and all the money that my parents had spent, to take a job at the Carolina Inn, you know, waiting tables or whatever. Just were no jobs for blacks during that time. So I left, going north, stayed for a period of time with my aunt in Washington, and tried to get a job with the government. I did not have sufficient hours, the government said you had to have 30 hours in your field, I had 28. That was because Hampton made sure all its graduates had educational courses, so that you could teach if you couldn't get a job doing anything else. So I was short two hours. And so I went on to New York to get a job. Rude awakening, jobs were very difficult to get. I had an inflated idea as to how hard I had to work in chemistry and what I ought to be paid. When my money started to run out I accepted a job at much less than what I thought I should be paid. I went to work for Columbia University, in a biochemical lab. I learned a lot there. One of the things that I learned was that even though I was in the North, there was very little difference between the North and South except that in the North, they disguised discrimination a little bit better than they did in the south. In the South they were blatant about it, in the North they played games with it. And I found out that even though I had a college degree, there were persons of the other persuasion being able to get jobs and having a high school education, and just sort of bypassing me, you know, even though I had a college degree. So I got smart, and I began to learn everything I could about chemistry and how to save the hospital money. And so where they used to call in service people to repair things, I began to repair. I used to watch the service people and see what they were doing, and therefore I learned and was able to do whatever. And so they didn't really have to call them in because I could do everything that they were doing. There was a man named Dr. Samuel Graff, who was over the biochemistry department. He was conducting research on cancer. And under him was the biochemical lab. Dr. Graff was preparing some of the more technical electronic equipment. All he couldn't fix, he'd call the service people in and I'd watch the service people, and I got to the point, man, that I was just as good as the service people in fixing the plain photographer piece of equipment. And so I remember Dr. Graff coming down one time trying to fix the equipment, and I was telling him he was doing it all wrong, and he threw the wrench down and cursed, and said damn it, you do it. And I did it. And from then on, they didn't call the man in, I did it. And I started to move very rapidly, because I had a special knowledge that nobody else had. And I told Dr. Graff I was leaving, and because I was that valuable, you know, the raises began to come. Soon after that I think I was married, and I needed more money, you know, to raise a family. So they gave me about as many raises as they could humanly possibly give. People at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center began to question why was this one person getting all these raises, you know. But I became very valuable to them, and one of the things I started to, they gave me a job that was dedicated to medical students so that they could make money while they were in school. And one of those jobs, you know, was given to me, so therefore I was on call for all emergencies, and so therefore I got paid more. So I was able to supplement my income enough to raise a family. And I became very valuable to that chemistry lab. Dr. Graff went to Russia on sabbatical, and he put me in charge not only of that lab, but of the whole biochemical department, and so therefore persons who had Ph.D.s and so

forth had to come to me. I made all decisions, I ordered all supplies, you know, and I just did the whole thing. About the, people were pretty nice about the fact that I was in charge, you know. When Dr. Graff came back, he looked at the books and so forth, and he said you've done such a good job, why don't you just continue to do this. So that's what I did. So I became supervisor of the lab and whatever, and I was still ordering the supplies, so therefore they could give me increase in salary and so forth because of my responsibilities. I began to do research on procedures and so forth that we used, you know, to test to see whether or not we could use those procedures, if they were accurate enough, and that sort of thing. I remember where I ran into some problems with the people in the lab was when they were going to have the march on Washington, okay. I said that I was going to the march on Washington, and people in the lab they didn't think I ought to go, okay. At that point I said hey, I ain't gonna let nobody tell me what to do and what I should not do. I got the time, you know. These people have gotten too much into my private life to tell me that I shouldn't go to that march. And they sort of held that over my head that if I go, there's going to be repercussions and so forth, and so I said to myself, I was going anyway.

RG: What year was that, Ed?

EC: Um, that had to be in the year of '63. That summer of '63. I kind of fell out with the people that I was working with. We just didn't see eye to eye. During that summer, after the march on Washington I came home to, for vacation. My father, I had two children at the time, he tried to get me to come home, so I guess he could be near the grandchildren. So I applied for a job here at the University of North Carolina's hospital biochemical lab. The hospital was having all kinds of problems with accuracy and so forth with their procedures. And I interviewed for the job, with my background and so forth, the fella hired me. During that time I also interviewed with Research Triangle Park. They were also interested in me coming to work for them. So I went back and I gave them notice. I gave them a month's notice so that they could train somebody or whatever. I knew that I didn't have to give them but two weeks, but I gave them a month. They said to me that they were willing to pay to have my parents come live in New York, you know. And I said to them, you don't know anything at all about my parents or whatever. My parents have been in Chapel Hill for many generations, and I don't think they'd want to come to New York to live, okay. Just no concept of who my parents were or what. And at that point I just said well, you know, I'm resigning. And they did everything they could to try to talk me out of coming back home. But my mind was made up. The reason I knew it was 1963, November, around Thanksgiving time was when I was preparing to move, that was when Kennedy was assassinated. So I remember going around doing all the, whatever you need to do to terminate your job and so forth, when I heard that he had been assassinated. I was supposed to report to work in Chapel Hill, so I was here. I went back down to the University and the doctor had said he really apologized, but my application had been held up. There was no way that they could, he could get it released. They found out that I was black, and so therefore they were not going to give me that position. So I said fine, so I went to work for the Research Triangle Park. I always resented the fact, you know, that I did not go to work for



the hospital. Going back, not only did I think that I ought to go to school at the University of North Carolina, I also thought that I ought to work for the University of North Carolina. The fact that they turned me down, you know, always there was a resentment. And I tried for several positions with the University, which they were all turned down for one reason or another. So that's how I went to work in the Research Triangle Park. I've gotten off what I was supposed to be talking about.

RG: It's all interesting. Um, the changes that you saw in um, society.

EC: Oh, okay. One of the things in coming back, the civil rights movement was in full bloom, okay. It was very difficult, even though I had grown up in Chapel Hill, to get involved to the extent because they had a lot of outside persons leading the civil rights movement. One was Howard Fuller from Durham, and some others. So I tried to get involved, but there were a lot of things I disagreed with. One of the things I disagreed with was they had planned a march, and they were going to put the old folks out front. And that was right after, it was reported that there were people that had come into town to stop that march, that was when Lester Maddox in Georgia had the axe handles and so forth, and we had reliable information that some of the people had come up from Georgia, man, with these picks, the handles, whatever. And they were going to stop that march. And some of the black leaders said, well, we'll put the old folks out and the children. I said hey, not, I disagree with this. I mean I respect these people, I grew up with these older persons, these are the parents of my schoolmates and so forth. And I just said I disagree with that. I will not be a part of anything which endangers the lives of older citizens and of children. So I didn't participate any more. So I started to work in voter registration, okay. My feeling at the time was, I thought the civil rights movement was going along very well, they didn't need me. And I needed to, if we were going to ever gain any power, it should be political power. And so at that time, Rebecca Clark introduced me to some persons that were starting a project on voter registration. And I worked with a young man named Tony Mason, who was white. He also wanted to work in the civil rights movement, but his parents were professors and they were afraid that he may get hurt, so they said he could work in voter registration. So we worked together. We registered a lot of people, okay. We registered a lot of people. Not only in Chapel Hill, but in the county. I mean, Tony went into places, man, that I was afraid to go into. I mean they were known to be Klan havens, man, and I just didn't have the nerve that he had. But after we registered persons, you know, I felt that there's no use registering them if we don't get them out to vote. So I started working in turning out the vote. My father at that time was involved in the Democratic Party and working with Martha McKey and Virginia Nichols. They were the shakers and movers, man, in the Democratic Party. I mean, they knew how to do it. So I started working with, I learned everything I could from them, okay. And so therefore I started to turn out the vote in the black community. And we had that thing down to a science. Even though we were in the minority, we could turn the vote out, we could change elections and so forth. I organized all the precincts, I organized everything. We used, went to the colleges, man, and got students from Bennett, which was a sociology class, and we talked the professors into giving

them credit if they worked for the campaign. But it was highly organized. Business, with Sandy McLamrock and others, man, controlled Chapel Hill. They controlled all the elections. There was about a hundred business people, man, that were in power. We soon changed that. They had plenty of money. They started to buy, try to buy elections by getting blacks to stand at the polls and confuse people. And we raised money, and you know, Doug Clark and The Hot Nuts gave us money, man, and we bought, we bought the blacks off, man, and that sort of thing. We told them to take the people's money, but here's what you do. And so we started to elect a few people. We elected Howard Lee, you know, mainly because, I didn't know Howard at the time, and we put together a political organization called PROD. PROD was an integrated organization, it was not just black, it had everybody. We needed professors and so forth, man, 'cause they, they brought a lot to the organization. They could solicit and get money. We had people working at the YMCA that could get in meetings and find out what they were plotting and planning and so forth. I was head of PROD, and I convinced the white counterparts that we needed to have a black in the forefront. Blacks would not take direction from somebody other than somebody that looked like them. So they were willing to do that. PROD came apart when I was appointed to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school board. Now I ran for several positions, you know, and did not win. I ran for the school board when I first came back home. It was really too early to run because I really didn't know everything you needed to know about running a campaign. I ran for the county, ran for county commissioner. There was ten people in the race. And by that time I was very astute as to how to run a campaign. I, out of those ten, not, let me back and not, let me back up and say family connections and knowing everybody, I was able to do very well. Not only in Chapel Hill, but the county. My mother taught school in Cedar Grove in Orange County, so a lot of people knew her. A lot of people knew my father, man, from hunting. But one thing that helped me most was my uncle was principal of the school in Hillsborough, A. L. Stanback. They got a middle school named after A.L. Stanback, okay. But everybody knew A.L. Stanback, everybody knew my aunt, okay. I had a lot of family that lived in northern Orange. The Whitteds. So I took that very seriously. I was running with Jimmy Wallace and George, can't remember his name, he's a pharmacist now with Kroger's. But they were also running. And I told them I'd run independent. They wanted to put me in with George and Jimmy Wallace, and I said no, I'll run an independent campaign. I don't want to be in with no coalition. 'Cause I felt, man, I had more going, okay. After that first election, I led the ticket, okay. I missed out by 20 votes of having a majority, so I then had to go into a runoff. And when I went into a runoff I knew that I couldn't win. And one reason is that the University closed down during that time, and all my people that I counted on to vote was gone away on vacation. The other thing was that the county pulled together to make sure I didn't win, okay. So I got about the same amount of votes, but all the votes that went to the other candidates went to the white candidates, and they just killed me, you know. The other thing that happened Bob, was people that had supported me said they wouldn't support me any more, because they thought that I had called for what they called a bullet vote, single shot. They just couldn't see how I could do that well in an election, so they wouldn't support me. That hurt. I had letters and so forth, people that thought that I considered

friends, you know, they just told me that to my face. So it killed me, man, I didn't do very well at all, so I didn't win. And then there was a resignation on the school board, and Norma Wellerly and some others approached me and said that they'd like to support me, and would I be willing to serve on the school board. And I told them yeah, I would serve. And that's how I got on the school board. I don't know if I could have ever ran an election and won to get on there, but once I was on there, I guess that I became effective as a school board member, and so I really had no problem running again and winning. Things still were very slow to open up, okay.

RG: Things were slow to open up.

EC: Yeah. Chapel Hill was considered to be a very liberal place, with the University and the professors and so forth. One of the big things was public accommodations was not, the restaurants were going to open their doors to serving blacks, and therefore you know, you could go in and sit down and that sort of thing. And all that revolved around the Greensboro sit-ins and so forth. So it started to spread all over North Carolina. The town was very divided as to whether they would serve blacks. So Chapel Hill is not as liberal as everybody said it was. There were some very good liberal people, but the town still was kind of conservative. Having served on the school board, more and more, I guess that's where people started to respect me as a person, and I guess what I stood for. I'd have to say just serving on school board.

RG: Well, what did you stand for?

EC: Um, I was for all kids, not just black kids. My philosophy was if it's good enough for white kids, it ought to be good enough for black kids, and I was not going to push, you know, the black kids having a special whatever. That they needed to get in and get a good education. They played ball and so forth and didn't hit the books, then they couldn't play. You know, and they came to me and I just said no. Parents and so forth. They didn't hit the books, man, they didn't play. Started working with teachers and so forth, trying to break down stereotypes and so forth that some teachers had against black kids. Black kids started to disrupt, you know the schools and close down, and they had a sense of power. The first time, you know, that they felt they were powerful and therefore they could call the shots. They were in control, you know, and they had meetings and so forth, mass meetings and so forth, and I just stood up and said hey, don't be part of this. Parents, you need to take the leadership and responsibility back. Kids were talking about closing schools and running their own schools I said we ain't got enough money, okay. What makes you think that we can run some schools? You know, even if the church let us have the building, we don't have the money, the supplies, or whatever. We're going to make these schools work for our children, not separate.

RG: Why did they want to run their own schools?

EC: Just power, okay. Those kids were very powerful.



RG: Did they disagree with integration?

EC: Well, at the time integration didn't, did not, okay, they felt that they lost many things that they had in the black schools, which we did.

RG: What kind of things did you lose?

EC: Okay, we lost our teachers, you know. Our teachers really inspired, even though we didn't have the materials or whatever, they took special interest in our kids, man, and pushed them. Wherever a kid had potential, they pushed that kid in there and got the resources and so forth, and inspired and motivated the kids to do well. When they integrated, they really got rid of the black teachers, okay. And it was based on the fact that they didn't attend some of the universities and so forth that some of the whites did. Just a difference in philosophy. We had one of the best bands, we had one of the best football teams. Our kids were excelling, and when they went into the integrated thing, they didn't excel, they got pushed to the side. So you know, they just said we don't excel, they got pushed to the side. So you know, they just said we don't want to be a part of this. We don't want to be a part of integration, we want to run our own separate schools. Logistically we couldn't pull that off, okay. We had no money to pay no teachers, you know, I mean just, it was a nightmare. We had, ideally, it sounded good, but to get right down to it and look at it, it was unrealistic. And I was one of the first to say, we dropped the ball. We worked very hard to integrate the schools, but once they were integrated, we went to sleep. We just thought everything was going to be taken care of. Where we should have continued to negotiate and whatever, just to make sure that those schools were serving our kids, and they weren't. So therefore we had a lot of things to go back and try to correct.

RG: How were they not serving the black kids?

EC: They was, that was supposed to be a consolidated school. What they did was just bring the black kids into the school, okay. It had the name, Chapel Hill High School. There was no discussion at all about those things that were very dear and precious to us that came from Lincoln, okay. School colors, school mascot. They left the trophies, we had won several state championships, and they had left all those trophies down at Lincoln, did not bring them to the high school. The department heads were all white, okay. Blacks were never considered. Mr. C.A. McDougale, who was a very strong administrator and had a lot of graduate courses at Columbia University in education, he became the assistant principal. And when you look at his credentials, he was much stronger, with graduate credentials, and Ms. Marshbank who became principal, only had a college degree, okay. You know, so as you went right down the line, no blacks, administrators, teachers, or whatever, carried the same kind of power, status, decision-making, you know, at the new school. The kids got pushed aside. They were put in courses and so forth that said that they were, well, all the positions in the student body like president, whatever, you know, you just didn't get elected or whatever. The coaches were white, and everything was white. What they did was bring black kids into that

school and just sort of push them aside, okay. Kids were telling us, but we didn't listen to them. Until one day they disrupted, okay. They disrupted over something that happened at graduation, where they had marshals to walk in with the graduating class, and no black, even though they put their names up, were ever elected. So the kids just rioted toward the school. They got their attention. So therefore after that, you know, they had these groups gather to work on solving some of the problems. So it's hard to change behavior, you know, and part of what I was doing was try to get the school board to run and service education on diversity and things like that, so the people that really needed to be there didn't come, it was, I mean they could come if they wanted to, freedom of choice or whatever. And so that worked for the whole time I was on there, on the school board, and we passed policies and so forth but it didn't really get implemented down into the schools the way it should have been, okay. All that depended on whoever was principal of the school. Some tried, some didn't. Some just didn't listen to the superintendent, okay. And if things are going to get implemented, it's got to be from the principals, you know. The principals felt caught, getting the school board and the superintendent's direction, and having very strong teachers and so forth, said we're not going to do that. So you know, you got very strong teachers that have been there for 30 years, and you've got the parents' backing, you know, they did it just like they wanted to. So I guess when I left the school board, if I look back there were a lot of things that had been accomplished. There were a lot of things that still needed to be accomplished.

RG: How long were you on the school board?

EC: Oh, about 13 years or more.

RG: And what did you feel that your accomplishments were, and what would you have liked to have done that wasn't done?

EC: Well, the thing was, we integrated all the schools. And when I say integrated, I meant that we had a racial balance policy that schools had to reflect the racial balance of the community. If any school fell below that then we'd have a redistricting, okay. We had built into that bus routes and so forth, but we really tried not to destroy communities, and that sort of thing. So kids that played together in the community, you know, we would try to move all the kids together to a particular school. That was very effective, because that's the only way that they could begin to break down some of the feelings about certain schools. For an example, Carrboro was always considered a mill town, they considered Carrboro redneck. And there were people from Estes Hills that said we're not sending our kids down to that redneck school. But Bob, when you get right down to it, Carrboro is one of our best schools, man, okay. I mean when you look at the teachers that we put in there and the facility and whatever, but these were perceptions in people's minds, okay. They elected me, I was chairman of the redistricting committee. And one of the things that I was able to do, not that I thought about it or planned it, it's just by instinct. I knew it was a very explosive issue when you talk about racial balance and moving people's kids and whatever. And I had these meetings all over town. And I let people come, man, and just



vent, you know. And they, I let them have their put. Parents participated in the redistricting committee meetings and so forth, and by the time we got ready to submit the plan to the school board, those parents felt that they had input and therefore they had some ownership. I had no problems, man, you know. And if you say did I plan to do that, no, it was just sort of by instinct. And people were, they, it was their plan, and they supported it. So therefore they thought it was going to be a lot more explosive and that sort of thing, and it just sort of went through with a whimper. There were some things that were compromised with the first redistricting plan, you know, that I had wanted to get through that didn't get through. So next time we worked on it a little more, until the redistricting plan that I supported got put in place. These things just sort of came on instinct, okay. One of these things that also happened was that we had blacks and so forth on this redistricting committee that worked for some of the white parents, okay. They were afraid to speak up. Parents put pressure on them. I know one young lady lost her job 'cause she didn't support what her boss wanted her to support. That kind of pressure. So when I began to count votes, I'm looking at these blacks, there was some, there was one, Effie Mann, I don't know if you know Effie Mann, she's preaching now. Her husband was named Kenny Mann. She was working for some doctor's office, I don't know which one, but I do know she lost her job because she took a stand. Some other people, man, that I thought were stronger caved in. And you know, I just told them, I can't understand you caving in like that. One of the things, when I ran for the school board and I went on the school board, I talked to my father. I told him that I was going to do what I thought was right, okay. That if some pressure, economic pressure or whatever, if I lost my job, you're going to have to support me, because I'm going to do what I think is right. I'm not going to let nobody tell me, try to pressure me. That did happen one time. I was working out in the Research Triangle Park. My boss lived in Raleigh, okay. We had an understanding that he was not to get into my business as to what kind of decisions I made on the school board. I guess somebody must have called him and tried to get him to talk to me, you know. I told him I respect you very highly. I respect your academics, you've taught me a lot, okay, but you don't tell me what to do. You don't know enough about what's going on, okay. And then coming to me, whatever. I respect you and whatever, but you're wrong, okay. And if you've got to fire me, then you got to do what you got to do. I'm not changing my mind. He laughed. He was a great guy, you know, and said I respect you. And that's the only time somebody from economic tried to put pressure on me. There were a lot of people that I knew, that I played tennis with at the Chapel Hill Tennis Club, and they used to stop me while I was out there trying to play tennis, to try to tell me what they felt that I ought to be doing on the school board. And I listened to them, because that's, a school board member ought to listen to them. But you know, I then told them what I thought I needed to do and why. I gave them an explanation, I wasn't arrogant about it, whatever. I lost a lot of friends. The way I look at it, I lost a lot of sewer friends, okay. If you're going to be my friend, then you got to respect me enough that for those parts we disagree, we just say we come from different experiences, let's just agree to disagree. And we go on being friends. But when you drop me as a friend because I won't do what you want, then you're not my friend. And then some I just told.

RG: So there was a lot of pressure on you over redistricting.

EC: Redistricting, and other decisions.

RG: What other decisions?

EC: One, you had a very strong advocacy group that had to do with, one of the biggest ones that people got all worked up about was, what is it, I've gone blank. Let me explain to you what it is. In this community, parents try to track their kids into more academic coursework. It's got a name, I can't think of what the name is. They felt if they could track their kids into the more stronger academics, then it would separate them from the blacks who were not going to be taking these academic courses. So they had a lot of, I mean they worked very hard to give these, these courses and so forth to their children. And did not look at the overall picture of what we were trying to accomplish with all the kids, okay. Gifted and talented, that's the word that I want to use. Very strong gifted and talented advocacy, okay. And I got more pressure to support some gifted and talented programs, and you know, I'm for gifted and talented, but not to track, okay. They wanted the tracking so they could separate their kids from the total school. In this community, the guidance counselors spent an awful lot of time trying to get people's children in the best academic colleges and so forth. So they spent a lot of time filling out applications and so forth and contacting, whatever. And they were not spending enough time with some kids, man, that had behavioral problems and other things. And so therefore, one of the things that I began to look at, man, was the amount of time that was being spent. And saying, you know, they got to get a better balance. They're losing some kids, man.

RG: Not just the gifted and talented kids, but the kids who were at the other end of the spectrum.

EC: Right. That was another issue, you know. And then just trying to get some courses that helped with diversity. I mean this community was beginning to not only be black and white, but there were a lot of children coming in, Asian, and really. In this community they come from everywhere. It's only black and white that were visible. Another thing that I had a lot of disagreement with was the Jewish population began to grow, okay, and therefore parents were beginning to come and say, I have some difficulty with some of the holidays and some of the things that are being taught in class that were offensive. And so you know, I pushed that. My thing is, if they are here and their parents, and whatever, we got to be more sensitive to it.

RG: When did you see this change with the Asian population and Jewish population increasing in Chapel Hill?

EC: Oh, I guess about the time that I was about at the end of my school, being on school board.

RG: Which was—

EC: I can't remember. '80s, late '70s, early '80s. So therefore we began to change the calendar, okay, and we put in policies that said if a Jewish kid's parents wanted them to observe their holiday, then we had to do something, we had to allow that to happen. It was just not a Christian thing, we began to look at policies that said, where people came and they said, you know, Jesus Christ. It's got to be where it's not offensive. I don't know what that is, but let's get some committees, and let's work on these things, you know. The white parents began to say well, this is our community and they're coming in and whatever, and they ought to be assimilated into it, and I said no, no. There were prayer groups and so forth. We had to look very closely at that, okay. Because if it was school sponsored, then anybody with a different religion is going to think that the school supported that, and therefore, there was a lot of things that we began to look at. And you know, I tried to be sensitive. I'm a black man, and I feel very strongly about things that were offensive to me, being black, then there are going to be a lot of things that are going to be offensive to other ethnic groups. So you know, I had to really be open. So those were some of the things, you know. We changed the calendars, we did a lot of things.

RG: Did you see any Muslims coming into the schools?

EC: We didn't have very many Muslims at that time. I'm sure they've got some now, but it was just, I mean that wasn't an issue at that time, you know. So I guess the fact that you'll listen and you'll be open, you know, I was supported by a large number of groups. We didn't necessarily always agree, but they knew that I was fair and open. And even now, I'm surprised that people thought that I was chairman of the school board for much longer. I was only chairman for a year. But the teachers and everybody considered me chairman for many years. That had to be because they believed in me, I guess. There are a lot of parents now that I don't know, that still talk about me being on school board. I'm introduced in Chapel Hill as former school board member. Bob, that's been a long time ago, that's been 20-some years ago, man. They still give me that kind of recognition, okay. People still come up and say, you know, you were a great school board member.

RG: What's the most important thing that you felt you did on the school board, regarding race relations, diversity—

EC: Well, you see the thing is, Bob, you got to understand that I was not just a local school board member, okay. I was a state school board leader, went to the national, I was also a national leader, okay. So I was able to accomplish a lot of things, man, in other capacities. Greg Phillips, state school superintendent of, Department of Public Instruction, you know. I got put on every committee and so forth. I was probably more well known outside of Chapel Hill than I was in Chapel Hill, okay. I mean, um, so when you say accomplish things, I guess I've accomplished a lot of things in education, both on the state and local and national level. Thing that I probably feel most, the best about, was that I served on the Title III program for education, which was a grant program that we were able to



let schools make proposals and therefore we made grants and so forth to the schools for innovative ideas, which gave me a chance to travel all over the state, you know, and I was key. Put a lot of money in a lot of places, man, that did not have monies. Like Gates County, which is a very rural county. They didn't even have cafeterias, man, with their schools. And this is a farm community that just didn't have the resources. Couldn't tax farmers and so forth, so I was reading grants, and I had a lot of pull. I had a lot of say-so as to where grants went.

RG: Were these federal or state grants?

EC: Federal.

RG: Federal grants.

EC: Yeah. So I had a choice of putting money in places, and I put money in Chatham County, I put money in Gates County, I put money a lot of places, you know.

RG: What did the money go for?

EC: Innovative new ideas to try to teach.

RG: Such as?

EC: Oh, well they may write a program that they were going to do certain things with students, like in Chatham County they wanted to put in audio-visual equipment and so forth so that students who were maybe having difficulty learning could then go in, into this kind of program and gain other skills. Programs similar to that for kids having problems and so forth. I had a lot of say-so. I went into places like Roanoke Rapids, okay, where the superintendent took the money and did it like he wanted to do it, okay. Told the teachers they didn't have to adhere by some of the guidelines that they had agreed to do, you know. Strong person, you know, strong superintendent, loved by everybody in that county. Very difficult to have a black man come and in say I don't understand why you're not following the guidelines. He said I don't think I have to. I said well, Monday morning I'm pulling this money out of here, okay. I'll give you a chance to do what you said you were going to do, and if you don't, won't have a grant anymore. And the teachers and the parents and so forth that had benefited from that, put pressure on him. So he adhered to it. I don't know if that's power or what. The way I looked at it was that they were supposed to be helping kids with problems and that sort of thing, they were going to give it to all the rest of the kids, man, that, you know, that ain't what we agreed to, okay. The same thing over in Durham County, you know, Durham City. The superintendent would challenge me and said he wasn't going to do what, you know. I said hey, you know. If you're openly challenging me, you know, then I will pull the money out. Teachers began to come to me, you know, and say we're trying to this and the superintendent doesn't know what's going on in the project, then going to try to dictate, you know. So they leaned on me to do that, and that way they could protect their jobs and so forth. So I worked on a lot of state programs to create ?

you know, and I guess the people in the Department of Public Instruction just had a lot of respect and admiration for me. I worked on the School Board Association. I did a lot of training for new school board members when they were coming in, I was on, I was an officer for many years. We reached a place where the question was whether or not, we wanted to go in different directions. The question came is whether or not our present executive director could take us there. You know, we sort of really had to agonize, he was a good friend. We never had to make the decision, because he had a heart attack and he died. His assistant started lobbying for the position, okay. He didn't have the skills, he wasn't what we wanted. But persons on the committee to pick thought we ought to just go on and give it to him. I said no. We're not giving it to him, we're going out for a search. We are going to open this thing up. He is not what we need. This guy was president of the association, you know. And he just couldn't see me telling him, since he was president. But that's the way it stood. I said, we're going to go to the rest of the members of the board of directors, you against me. And they went with me, okay. And that destroyed him. I don't know if it destroyed him because I was black or whatever, but he sort of took a stand. And he really didn't have to take a stand. And he was going to resign. I went and talked to him, told him you don't need to resign, and I explained to him why we needed to go out for a search or whatever, and he remained, and later on he came back and said you know, you were right. You were right. I had taken my stand and it was got to be personal. And I'm glad that we went out and got it, 'cause we got a real good person. The association just took off where we needed to go. So it's small things like that.

RG: During your stay on the school board, did you feel that the inequities that you saw around Lincoln was disbanded and it became a mainly white, integrated high school, did you see some of those unfairnesses change for the blacks in positions of leadership in the school, the teachers mix, the races?

EC: Yeah, I saw a lot change, I really did. I mean, it got to be, you know I really have to say that we had a very good superintendent, we had very good school board members. A lot was changed. There were pockets of people that just wouldn't change. For an example, we had a coach, basketball coach, that did a lot of things that he shouldn't have done, you know, as far as not being fair, you know, to black kids and that sort of thing. Um, and when those things happened I went one on one and talked to them. Parents began to look to me as a parental thing, man, to speak on behalf of them where things weren't fair, you know. And I'm saying to them, they got just as much power, really, they ought to be the ones, you know. So no, I challenged a person where he was wrong. I backed him up, man, where he was right. And black kids being abusive, disruptive, and that sort of thing, challenging them, the parents would come to me, and I'd just say your kid's wrong. I wasn't about to support them, I was at the game. I'll put him off myself. I went to the coach and told him, put him off. I'll back you up. ? Chapel Hill people, man, the way this kid acted. Not fair to the school, and not fair to his teammates. Put him off the team. And I told the kid, you're being put off. I told him to put you off, okay. Those kids respect me to this day. One kid I see, man, he says hey, Mr. Caldwell, right. The parents let the kid rule them. Where they should have been disciplining the kid. And I told them man, somewhere down the

line, somebody's going to get this kid. You can do it now or later. This same parent, let me tell you what I did. I took a group of juniors and seniors to visit some of the predominantly black schools. I took them to Hampton, took them to Norfolk State, took them to Elizabeth City. Went to the superintendent and got an activity bus, okay. I got to Hampton and the alumni association gave me money, you know, for the trip. And I called the colleges and they not only fed the kids, but they paid to put them up, okay.

RG: Were these all black kids?

EC: Yes, okay. Those school board members didn't know that me and the superintendent did this. Mr. R. D. Smith and Mrs. Smith went with me, I had chaperones, I had the guidance counselors, everybody knew what I was doing, you know, but my school board colleagues. I was trying to get some kids interested in going to college, okay. Very successful. I went to the parents and talked to the parents before we left. I said I don't know what kind of guidelines you give your kids, but I tell you what. When we go, I'm in charge, okay. One little girl was fast. I know she had already been sexually active, okay. And I said to the parents, your daughter can't go unless I'm in charge. I will not bring no girls back pregnant. There will be no pot smoking on this trip, okay. Just will not be. And I told them unless your daughter is going to adhere by my rules and regulations, she can't go. And so me and the parents and whatever, she said she would abide by my rules. Well, we were up there and kids came to my room and said hey, this girl's in there smoking pot. You know. I mean the kids came. They knew what my rules and regulations were. And I went in, they were in the room with some fellas and whatever. I separated them, told them I'm not going to tell your parents, but I don't need no problems out of you from here on. And today these kids see me on the street and they respect me, you know. I just didn't want to bring no kids back and they're going to be pregnant. Out of those trips, just about all the kids found a way to go to school. That year we had 16 seniors from Chapel Hill High School go to Hampton. They didn't have the money, okay. They got scholarships, they worked, okay. But they went to school. They cried, some of the kids cried because they had never been in a, to a school where that many blacks went to school, you know. They were in the band, I took them to a play, and seeing black actors, singing, and whatever. And they just said hey, I want to go to school. I've been in integrated schools all my life, where we were always in the minority, and you know, I'm aspiring to, looking at these kids, man, I want to do something with my life. That was very successful. Very successful. The school board members found out about it, called me on the carpet, you know. Called me and the superintendent both on the carpet. So they terminated, you know, terminated me being able to get an activity bus and take it. They were right, you know, because I had taken all black kids and not integrated kids.

RG: I think it would have been great to take the white kids with the black kids. That would have been fascinating to let them see another side of blacks.

EC: Yeah. And they were right, they terminated that, you know. But it was very nice to do while we did it.



RG: How long did you do this?

EC: Two years.

RG: I want to go back to something that you said before, and that is that you felt an obligation to go to UNC. What, what made you feel that?

EC: Well, my great, everybody that I've been able to research has been connected with the University.

RG: In your family.

EC: In my family. The, the name came from Joseph Caldwell, who was the first President of the University. He, November was a slave and therefore he was Joseph Caldwell's coachman. And the students and so forth really respected him, and everybody in the community respected him.

RG: What was his name?

EC: November Caldwell.

RG: How did he get that name?

EC: I don't know how he got November. He had a son. At that time, being slaves, you get permission to go visit another, you know, slave owner and therefore he had a kid. His name was Wilson Swain, okay. There was a President Swain at the time. He raised Wilson like he was his son. He taught him to read and write, and he was a playmate of his son. Really loved Wilson. I got a picture back there, I'll show it to you. But Wilson became the custodian of the University, and Wilson was strong enough that if white kids at the time were acting out or whatnot, doing whatever, Wilson was strong enough to do that. The same thing my father did at the fraternity house, you know. Well-respected, okay. So as I read the history, everybody in my family in some way had either worked or been connected with the University. November, Wilson, Wilson's children, my father. So therefore just reasoned to me that I thought I ought to be somehow connected with the University. Also I think I'd have to say the Dekes played a role. Here's a book, this is the Yackety Yack. So therefore a lot of publications and so forth, I was in there, okay. The person that took this, his name was Hugh Morton. Now I don't know if you know Hugh Morton, Hugh Morton is a photographer who's still taking pictures at all the basketball games. He's got several photography books and so forth. Hugh took that, okay. There were other Carolina Quarterlies and so forth that had said that, at some time there was discussion that blacks would one day go to the University of North Carolina. So I read that and thought maybe I really ought to be the one. Here's a picture of me and my, let me find it in there, he took this. Okay, this came out of the Carolina Quarterly. And what this was about, this was taken at the back of the South Building. And that article said that blacks eventually one day would go to the University of North Carolina. So I read

that, okay. And I really just thought that since I was in this publication, that I was going to be the one to go to the University of North Carolina. I don't know why, it's just sort of the way that I grew up. It's the way that I was treated by persons at the Deke house. That I just thought that I was supposed to go, okay. Nobody said that I was supposed to go, I just thought I ought to go, you know. 1941, the height of segregation, and here I am as a black in this.

RG: Were you the only black in the Yackety Yack?

EC: Yes. Yes. The only black that had been in there for many years. So mentally I just thought I ought to go, Bob, you know. I mean, that's why. I thought if anybody was going, it ought to be me, and I thought that maybe they would get me in there. Frank Graham, you know my grandma had worked for him, okay. Just a number of people that I knew connected with the University, throughout the years. So.

RG: I can understand that. It's natural.

EC: Okay.

RG: I want to change the subject again and go back to something that you had said. That you were the head of this group, was it PROUD?

EC: PROD.

RG: PROD. You said we had everybody in there. And when you say everybody, who do you mean by everybody?

EC: Okay, we had a lot of professors, and I'm thinking a lot of white professors, we had people that worked in politics, you know that wanted to be a part of this group.

RG: Did you have white businessmen?

EC: Never had no white businessmen in there. White businessmen was completely controlled by, well the white man was pretty much a political organization themselves. No, we didn't have no white business people.

RG: Were there Asians at that time, were there any Latinos at that time, or any other minorities?

EC: No. No.

RG: So it was just black and white.

EC: That's right. Wasn't no Latinos or others of any consequence at that time. They did have Indians on, East Indians that were connected with the University. But East Indians, being brown-skinned, didn't want to be in any way connected with

- other blacks, didn't want to, you know, because they were really treated as white, even though they had brown skin. So they made sure that there was no misunderstanding.
- RG: So it was mainly liberal white professors and the black community banding together to form this organization to get people to vote, black people registered to vote.
- EC: That's right. And the organization really called shots, man, as to picking you know, who we were going to support. At that time we had to be very secret of who we were going to support, because we did have blacks that thought they had friendships with whites, and therefore maybe they would go back and tell it, man. Before we even got home, you know.
- RG: What did PROD stand for?
- EC: Political, of Democracy. PD, I don't know what that, Political Democratic Organization for Democracy, or something that stood for those letters. I can call Lillian Lee and she can tell me what that means.
- RG: One other thing, and the last thing, and that is regarding the restaurant integration in Chapel Hill, which you said you really weren't part of. Who led that in the community?
- EC: Hilliard Caldwell was a key figure. There was Vivian Foushee, there was a person by the name of Harold Foster, who was from Chapel Hill but no longer lived here. And there were a lot of young persons that were just coming out of school that were about to be leaders and so forth.
- RG: Did you have support from the white community at all for that?
- EC: Oh yeah.
- RG: And who were the white leaders that supported it?
- EC: Um, Dan Pollitt, Bob Phillips.
- RG: The psychiatrist?
- EC: Yeah. Um, there's a number of persons like that, I can't—
- RG: Dean Smith? Was he one of them?
- EC: No, Dean really didn't take an active part. But Dan Pollitt and Bob Phillips were persons that were really out there on the firing line.
- RG: Did you feel you had good support from the white community?



- EC: Oh yeah, we couldn't have pulled it off if we didn't have white support. Who's going to challenge Dan Pollitt?
- RG: Who is, I'm sorry, I don't know who Dan Pollitt is.
- EC: Dan Pollitt is, was, professor emeritus over at the Institute of Government. Everybody knows Dan. There were a lot of strong professors and so forth that just had a lot of stature. Joe Straley, Joe went on to, Joe Straley went on to Town Council, but even now, there was Dan Okum, you know, and his wife. Just a number of persons of high stature like that.
- RG: Did you have any support at all from the business community?
- EC: Not support as such. But the business community split down half and half of those persons that supported going ahead and giving public accommodations, and so therefore they were strong, they were strong with their colleagues and so forth. Let me put the dog out. You can cut that off. Mary Scroggs' husband, who was also on the Town Council.
- RG: Earl Scroggs?
- EC: Earl Scroggs. We had Adelaide Walters, who later became on the Town Council. We had a lot of persons who were very strong. Mary Scroggs, Mary was, I had a lot of respect for Mary. Mary pushed me into areas and so forth, man, that I could have never gotten into on the state and national level. I mean, Mary paved the way for me, you know. Introduced me to the right kind of people. So it was persons like that that, you know, I guess if I thought long enough names would come. So as far as business people, I can't think of anybody. But you know, if I have, then—
- RG: Well, I've kept you long enough, I think. And I really appreciate it.
- EC: Okay.
- RG: Thank you.