

Interview

with

JACQUELINE WILLIAMS and MARVA SHULER

February 9, 2005

by Gerrelyn Patterson

Transcribed by Emily Baran

The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Interviewee: Jacqueline Williams and Marva Shuler

Interviewer: Gerrelyn C. Patterson

Interview date: February 9, 2005

Location: Hillside High School in Durham, North Carolina

Length: 1 cassette; approximately 65 minutes

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

GP: This is an interview with Jacqueline Williams in Durham, North Carolina. It's February 9, 2005, and we are in her classroom at Hillside High School. The interviewer is Gerrelyn Patterson. This is part of the Spencer grants project on school desegregation in the South and will be used as part of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The tape number is 2905JW. Okay, Miss Williams, tell me when you attended Hillside High School.

JW: I went to high school in 1960 through 1965.

GP: Tell me what you remember most about going to school there.

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

GP: Tell me what you remember most about going to Hillside, what was it like?

JW: It was strict, Hillside was very strict with the teachers, because they were basically—

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

JW: Will that mess you up?

GP: No, that's okay.

JW: Okay, sorry. The teachers were very strict because basically they were the teachers that lived in your community. So therefore they were able to chastise you without

any reprisal from the parents or anything like that, and it was respect when the teachers in the same neighborhood. You were expected to do your work. A lot of expectations were put upon you. And one of the things that they said is that the white man's skin color was going to get him over, so you as a black person had to work twice as hard, and that's the way the black teachers taught at that period of time.

GP: Can you remember them saying any other messages like that to you?

JW: Just study hard and whatever you promise to do for people, you carried it through, your word was your bond, and just a form of daily everyday living, not all academic. It was expected back during the period that I came through that you attended college. That was just the expectation from you. There wasn't as many well-known scholarships and that type thing available. Another thing with that it was only a certain group of people that was exposed to the scholarship part of the deal. It depended on where your parents worked. If your mother was a cook or father was a janitor, sometimes expectations weren't set of you. It was kind of cliquish then, it was kind of cliquish.

GP: Okay, now tell me more about that because I've haven't heard more about that. What I hear is it was Hayti, the black (), everybody had money—

JW: All of that was a part of it too, and even though you had the high echelon of the blacks, everybody still lived in the neighborhood, but they were still like at a level like above your head; you may be waist length, you know. That was just I guess a given thing. Even though we had the black Wall Street, all the black business and all that within that Fayetteville Street-Pettigrew area and the business, there was a caste system within the black race, even as far as appearance went also. What really—

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

GP: That will give our listeners a real sense of what it's like to be in the classroom.

Okay, so you were saying there was a caste system—

JW: Within the black, it was.

GP: I haven't heard that much about it.

JW: You haven't heard that much about it, but it was. It was like certainly if you came from McDougal Terrace, it was expected that you didn't have as much as the other students had. So therefore, certain things weren't expected of you. But during that period that I was coming along, the achievers basically came from McDougal Terrace, a lot of achievers came from McDougal Terrace. I guess that's what was instilled upon them within their families, because we go back to the theory again, a child can't help where their parents have to live, so okay.

[tape interruption]

GP: Okay, so we were talking about a lot of the achievers came from McDougal—

JW: From McDougal Terrace. They were, students were hard workers. Like I was about to say, a child can't help () where their parent lives and you just make do with what you have to do. Certain expectations were expected of the neighborhood where the grass was cut, the yard was kept clean, they had house inspections, that type, that pride, that's all I'm saying, which is like a carry-over, back over to the school of Hillside. Again like I say, we had achievers coming from all neighborhoods.

GP: All areas.

JW: Right. No particular area did as well as others, so you had achievers coming from all over.

GP: So then the clique, the caste system piece didn't really play out, or did it?

JW: It was there, it wasn't like it wasn't. It was there. Sometimes favoritism came from certain teachers and sometimes certain administrators. If () the class, instead of getting sent home for a day, they may have to go around and wash the windows of a classroom, which was not the same thing, that type of thing.

GP: But on the most part, you feel like—

JW: It was kind of even, because Prop Alston, Howard Alston, I'd guess you've heard about Prop Alston's name, he was a firm believer in being a good disciplinarian, yes, Prop Alston.

GP: Now is he Prop or Prof? Who was he when you were there, because I've heard Prof and Prop?

JW: He was Prop. He was supposed to have been a professor because he loved going into the chemistry class and showing his knowledge there. When he spoke to you, you stopped, you listened, even the toughest student, whether male or female. He would get on the phone and say call your mom in a minute, call your mom. He would get on the phone and talk to you. It was that kind of respect that you had for him. In fact, his wife is still living now and she comes to a lot of the reunions. She comes to a lot of the reunions. But yeah, he had a past history of being a chemistry teacher, so sometimes he would go into the classes and teach in the chemistry classes. If you got in trouble, he would tell you to call your parents. He would talk to the parent on the phone. If not, he would say I'll send you home for a day or two, and that was just a known fact. In fact, he got, back during our day, more respect than the principal did.

GP: I heard he was really the—

JW: He really was the principal without the title of being principal because that's where the respect came from. In fact, we just had a discussion at our '65 class reunion,

we're getting ready for our fortieth class reunion, and we were debating who threw the keys down the hallway. We knew that Mr. Schooler, who taught at Whitted, and that was originally first Hillside, and then somebody would say no, because Prop threw the keys at me several times over at Hillside, which meant that they really were in trouble, if he had to throw the keys to get the attention. It was that type thing. Every once in awhile, you may get one or two guys that felt themselves, that may try to talk back, but that was very seldom. When he got on you about something, you sat and you listened. That went with all of the teachers. That went with all of the teachers when they gave advice away. You might mumble something under your breath, but nothing was really said out of (). I'm getting off. Let me say go back and ask your questions.

GP: No, you're doing--. Were there other people like Prop Alston that one would need to know about to get a sense of Hillside?

JW: Oh yeah. There was Mr. Gattis.

GP: With Mr. G's Swing School?

JW: Mr. G's Swing School, you heard about that. They put on a play every year that kind of made fun really, how the classroom teachers did in the classroom, and the students cutting up and that type thing. That went on for years. So G's Swing School. And Hillside's always been known for its band. That time it was Mr. Mitchell was the band director over at Hillside. There have been so many good teachers that came through Hillside. Packingham was a biology teacher that left a big impact on people also. And the list goes on and on. If I keep on naming, I'm going to leave someone out. I had a Miss Smith in French that was very good.

GP: Who was your favorite teacher?

JW: Gosh, my favorite. I loved Jeanne Lucas. I loved Jeanne because I guess it was her voice, and it was so authoritative with the knowledge. It seemed like when you went to her class, you wanted to learn. You had teachers like Mr. Knox, one of the math teachers. I was thinking about my tenth grade. We even had Miss Junes, who was a biology teacher, Mr. Davis, they called him "Shakie Davis," but a biology teacher. Then there was Mr. Bowens, who was over teaching at Hillside and retired about five years ago. The list goes on. It's hard to say one favorite, but you can pick one out every year, because like I said, the expectation of you was really expected. You were expected to do well. You were expected to do well.

GP: What else do you think has made Hillside so unique and such a special symbol in the community?

JW: Again because the location of Hillside was right near the college campus and that type thing, and that was supposed to have been like somewhat in a elitist neighborhood, with Peco, () Court Street, all those, the nice homes and everything, and the other children coming from other neighborhoods, coming to Hillside. Back during that time, people walked from various communities to Hillside. All this busing, if you lived in—

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

JW: If you lived in Walltown, north Durham, and the different areas, like you'd meet in certain points like in front of the-- You'd walk home in a group.

GP: People in north Durham walked home?

JW: People walked in north Durham. People walked to the west end. People walked to Pearisonton, which is down by Fayetteville Street. So it seems like a long distance to the youth now but it was not. Then see there wasn't as many fat people. We

didn't get fat until now; see I'm fat now. Probably if I get back out and start walking, I wouldn't have this problem. But yeah, we walked. You stopped at the store and whatever, you walked home. But yeah Hillside, it produced so many people on different levels. I mean we have judges that came out of Hillside, top lawyers, I mean you name every occupation. And like I told you before, in the various neighborhoods, we had people coming out of those neighborhoods doing well, doing extremely well. That's a pride.

In fact, when they were about to change Hillside's name, word got out. They claim that's the only thing that Howard Clement had done for the Durham black community. He kind of brought it up in a meeting and then the people started protesting that you could not change the name. Letters were sent nationwide to former graduates of Hillside and they had this big mass meeting at Hillside about the name change. They wasn't going to change the name of Hillside because they figured if they changed the name of Hillside being like Southwest—

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

JW: If it was going to be Southwest High School, okay then this will be your influx of white children into the school. But, and I don't want to leave a bad taste in anybody's mouth, but Hillside is built in a black community, built in a black community. I can't see that many white kids coming in here. We have a little controversy now going, but really Shephard is our feeder school with the IB program, the International Baccalaureate program. Okay, stop for a minute.

[tape interruption]

JW: What happened when they were going to change the name, a committee got together, sent literature all over the United States and to former graduates in various positions, and they came back and—

GP: Mass meeting at Hillside.

JW: Mass meeting at Hillside at the old Hillside on () Court, and went through the discussion of why Hillside's name shouldn't be changed. We're pretty sure that the superintendent at that time was very upset about that, because Hillside, the old Hillside, under Mr. Richard Hicks, they did a model school; it was supposed to have been the model school concept.

GP: I saw the report. It was a report about the model school ().

JW: Right, all of these things were supposed to have been available here for Hillside students, to help the kids to achieve. They were supposed to have been used in the Research Triangle Park, and everybody thought that was going to be a drawing card with all this wealth of information this close to the campus, that this influx of white children were going to come in. What happened, got over here and the influx didn't come. I think it was a white flight. The parents probably got scared, you know the negative rumors that you hear about the inner-city schools. Like I say, I came from Durham High so I could easily identify with it, because when there was the two inner-city schools, both of them predominately black, Durham High got all the shaft: the teachers were dumb, the children couldn't read, and that type thing. So when we came over here, and I'm saying "we," it was fifteen teachers that came from Durham High over here and I was one of those fifteen, the same thing was said. That's what we told them; we said the handwriting's on the wall for Hillside. No, no, no. And as they see it, they can see it happening now little by little, little by little.

Again going back with the name change and everything, so that went on, a lot of debate, stating the reasons why the name shouldn't be changed and that type thing. So in essence, the community ended up winning the battle of the name not being changed.

GP: So the community wasn't, they were okay with demolishing the old building and building up a new one?

JW: Not really. They were wondering if they could do something else with the building as opposed to tearing it down. I think when Central bought the property, it was originally said that they were going to make that a biology building. I think that's what was supposed to have been the rumor. But I think Central said it took too much money, so they tore it down. In fact, I have about six of the bricks when they did that—

GP: Did you go? I know there was some kind of rally or something—

JW: What happened, I was out of town but my girlfriends, I had told her, you got a wall; you didn't get me one brick. (laughter) I have a piece this large at home that I have sitting like in my flower bed. So that was it () a lot of the things at Hillside, we were hoping that they just wouldn't tear it down. Just lift it up and bring it here, because you're even talking about the trophies from the old Hillside and that type thing. We didn't want to happen to Hillside what happened to Merrick-Moore. Merrick-Moore was a predominately black county school, one of them, because they had a little river. What happened, they lost all their trophies and that type thing. We were hoping Hillside would never do that, because all of the different championships and that type thing that we had. Because also, not only did the students at Hillside excel academically, in sports they excelled also.

GP: So were those items saved?

JW: They have them in certain places. They just haven't been put up. The old-timers like myself want them put out, want them—

GP: Displayed.

JW: Displayed, exactly. So you don't lose that. Like I say, the name did not change. We feel like when the old-timers kind of stop being so active and if people are not

attentive, that eventually it will. You see what I'm saying? Even with my daughter graduating in '95, you talking about thirty years later, and she said that this Hillside's present location, 3727 Fayetteville Street, she feels like this is not the Hillside that she graduated from. They don't feel like they have the ties like we do. But if you notice that most people who have gone to Hillside, we talk about Hillside with pride, I mean () and whatever, even with the few bad times we had or whatever may have been, you know what I'm saying, financially with some parents and different things. You went to school with parents who had what they called "liquor houses," did domestic work, you know what I'm saying? But it was a job and it was an honest job. It's different if you want to use a comparison of somebody's parents selling drugs today. You see what I'm saying? That was no big deal because you weren't taking anything from anybody, in our minds, that type thing.

What else can I tell you about Hillside? But so we feel like, like I say the old-timers feel like as we stop being active, that maybe the name will change and then there will no longer be that Hillside persona about us. But right now, it's not.

GP: I'm trying to make sure I capture the pride ().

JW: I went to Hillside and it's because our parents went there.

GP: Your parents went there?

JW: My mom and dad went to Hillside, some of our grandparents went to Hillside, and it's like a legacy. You see what I'm saying? I went to Hillside and so therefore, my mother, my child and everything, before my husband passed, that's where we wanted our daughter to go. She was supposed to have been going to Jordan. She didn't go to Jordan; she came to Hillside. So you're talking about that's my daughter at Hillside, myself, my

dad, my grandmother. I had an aunt that taught at Hillside. So it's the legacy of your parents coming through that same school, and that was the pride that was put upon you.

GP: So even before you go to Hillside, you knew you were going.

JW: Right, you were going to Hillside.

GP: And you already had a sense for the school.

JW: Exactly. You knew you were going to Hillside because that was segregation time and you weren't going anywhere else.

GP: You had nowhere else to go.

JW: You had nowhere else to go. (laughter) And when they did start with the integration, they took the better students, like say if a student lived over in Walltown, and Walltown was closer to Durham High, the student who was academically doing well was pulled because that way, pressure was going to be put on you for being black, first of all. So you didn't need to have a person of color in a school and have an academic problem. You see what I'm saying? I knew people who got their heads put in the commode, the whole nine yards.

When we go back to segregation, I remember the signs in Belk Department Store, fine department store, colored on one sign, white on another sign. There were certain things, it's almost like we go through this thing, I know my place, you don't rock the boat. There were certain things expected. Then with the civil rights movement and the marching and protesting, a lot of those meetings were held at Hillside too, along with the churches and that type thing. In fact, I did my voting there, all that pride. When I got ready to vote at eighteen, turned eighteen years old, stood in a line so long to vote for John F. Kennedy. You know what I'm saying? Just pride, stood in line about six hours waiting to vote. I'm

just saying that those are little things, like that the Hillside brings all those memories back to you about.

GP: You went in 1961 to 1965, but the order for school desegregation came in 1954.

JW: But Hillside was still a black school.

GP: Where there any white students when you were there?

JW: There was not () one, you hear me? () one. I don't know if they understand that () one. (laughter)

GP: Meaning not any at all.

JW: Not any at all.

GP: The entire time you were there?

JW: No.

GP: So then do you think, a broad general question, because school desegregation ends in 1954, or the ruling is 1954, you're there in 1961 to '65. Do you remember when you were at Hillside there being any talk of "oh the white students are coming," or "oh we get to go to Durham High"?

JW: Oh no.

GP: Nothing.

JW: I'm stopping you right there, no.

GP: Was there any discussion about integration?

JW: Here's what I'm talking about, no discussion about anybody wanting to come to Hillside. You see what I'm saying? Because why would you come to a school when we got hand-me-downs and everything? We got hand-me-down books. When the white kids at Durham High finished with their books, they passed them over to us. Even passing those

secondhand books down, we were still able to excel. You see what I'm saying? That was not the topic when I was over there from the period of time, to '65 when I came out of Hillside.

GP: So no black parents were saying well, you're at Hillside and you got second hand-me-down stuff, I want you to go to Durham High?

JW: No. We might have had a few, like the McKissicks or something like that, some of the proactive parents, but everybody was comfortable because again, you have to hear me, that pride of being a Hillside graduate. I wanted to graduate from Hillside. My mama graduated from there, my grandmother, and I expect my children to graduate from Hillside, *the* Hillside. That's it. So there was no hang-up on that, even getting around the secondhand material.

GP: Were there white teachers?

JW: No. (laughter) We had a teacher, K.C. Thomas, who was very, very, very fair. In fact, when we had what they called the Southern Association Accreditation, when they would come around, they came around and they wanted to know if the school was integrated, because they saw this white teacher. K.C. lived across Lawson Street on the corner. It's a nice brick house that's still standing there on the corner of () Court and Lawson Street. They were whispering, () white, but he wasn't. It was strange. The only time we had whites on the campus is when they were selling something, like for a fundraiser, want us to dip into a fundraiser.

GP: Okay, well I'll ask this question, although I think you've answered it already. Did Hillside change as a result of the order to desegregate schools?

JW: I think it probably came after I left there, but not during the period when I was there. In fact, Lou Hammond was the superintendent when I graduated. He was the one that shook our hands when we graduated from high school out of the auditorium.

GP: Okay. I'm going to ask you a couple of general questions about the education in general. Tell me what, and we've touched on some of it, what was the general notion of what was good for blacks in terms of education at that time? What was considered a good education for black kids?

JW: A good education for blacks again, as I had said earlier, was to go to college to get you a good job. It was expected that a lot of, you either went into teaching or nursing. Those were the two professions back then. It's the technology and all this now, if you want to do a comparison, but it was just expected that you'd go there and make a good salary. Because your parents did not want you doing domestic work, cleaning up behind white people; that's the way it was relayed. So that's the way you go about getting that education. In fact, Durham Tech was really not off the ground that good, so a technical school, we didn't have a lot of technical places to really go. You really picked that up within the high school setting. They had what they called the distributive education classes, where the students came to school like for half a day, and went out to the workforce. In fact, one of my classmates is one of the top tailors around here in Durham, and he went through that program.

GP: Who is that?

JW: Gerald Parker.

GP: Okay. So there was what we call now vocational—

JW: Vocational, uh huh.

GP: So you got some training to do something in the real world?

JW: Right. Then they had brick masonry class. All the houses out behind Hillside, used to be Hillside, going down Lawson Street, were built by students. So that's pride. Those houses, if you're going to C.C. Spaulding and right there on the left-hand side going down Lawson, right behind (), all those houses were built by students.

GP: I didn't know that.

JW: Yes. Mr. Tucker was the brick masonry teacher. Over in the school, there was a class down there where they learned how to put mortar on bricks and level. You're talking about using math and all that without using a book, which it takes math for that. But yes, all those houses were built by—so you're talking about pride. So can you imagine the pride that a Hillside brick masonry student has when he goes down Lawson Street now to see that the house is still standing--

GP: That he had built.

JW: That he had built. Yes, so those houses, I think it's about six houses down there on the left-hand side, all those were built by students.

GP: I had no idea.

JW: Yes.

GP: Okay, so a good education was no domestic work.

JW: No domestic work.

GP: A career in teaching, nursing, brick masonry, tailoring—

JW: Right.

GP: Something that could earn you—

JW: Money, right, a decent salary.

GP: We talked about the teachers, okay. Going back to the time period, school integration/desegregation, do you think school desegregation, integration, whatever you want to call it, did it mean anything in particular to you and your family?

JW: To have equal rights to everything, that's as far as education, if I wanted to go to a cafeteria to eat or that type thing, that will be the only part. Everyone could not participate in the protests. There were strict guidelines. You had to go through training.

GP: Oh, I didn't know that.

JW: Yeah because you think about the temperament. All races have worked together and some of the whites used to work with us with the training, and that was like, if I spit on you, what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to turn the other cheek. Well if you couldn't turn the other cheek, you were working against the cause. So therefore, you could not be effective in working for that. That means somebody could get your goat right there. You know what I'm saying? I was not a candidate for that. I didn't qualify. I did not qualify for that. It took a strong person. A lot of my friends went and a lot of friends couldn't go, because if you get up there and you pop your head back and you're ready to fight, you're against the cause. A lot of that.

What our parents wanted was just equal rights to everything for us. And that fear of getting hurt, you know we had a lot of parents that were scared during that period. There was a lot of parents afraid during that period. We sit back and look now and you hear the young kids, oh I would have done this. I said no, you would've rolled with the punches the same as everybody else did.

GP: What I'm hearing you say is that your parents were afraid for your safety and that the whole idea of school integration/desegregation was this equal access, so having equal resources.

JW: Right.

GP: Have your thoughts or feelings about integration changed since then?

JW: At the age I am now, almost fifty-eight years old, I think we might need to go back, especially for black children, back to segregation, for learning purposes, because our kids, as I see it now, even though I work with special kids, are kind of taking things for granted. They're not studying. At this day and time, every child that goes through the school system should be a reader. There's no excuse for not being able to read in this day and time, even though there may be some disabilities that may cause that. But a normal, functioning individual shouldn't have any problem reading and that's my personal views of that. Like I say, because sometimes we get into these heavy discussions about has segregation hurt us or helped us, and that we don't have hands-on with our children, because one time, our teachers somewhat threatened us, "you better do this because the white man's already two steps ahead of you," you can't say that now, because I had a girlfriend that taught at Jordan that said that to a student, pulled him aside. He went and reported her to the principal. He pulled her in and at that time, it was only about two black teachers out there teaching. He asked her was she prejudiced. That wasn't what she was trying to get over to the young man. He was sitting there cutting up in her classroom and that white child was sitting there. He might have laughed at him, but he was getting his work. That seems to be a lot of that, that's going on now.

Back during my Hillside days, a teacher would say to you, your parents didn't send you here to be a clown. You come to school for a purpose and that was to learn. So you have to be careful in how you say that. That's why I think that the segregation has really hurt us. Like I say, back in the day, were back from the neighborhood, the teachers were in the neighborhood if a student got out of hand. That helps now, right now, believe it or not.

If you see a child () or a child that's having problems and I don't know if you've ever had to identify with this, but you can say what's your last name, and he may say Brown. What Brown? And then he'll start questioning you what part of town. I know your mama! And you get a different perspective from that child from then on.

GP: That's right.

JW: Because it's hands-on, because "oh, my mama." Even the toughest kid, "I know your mama. I went to school with your mama. I know your uncle. I know your grandma," anything that brings you back into that neighborhood, so that hands-on. That's why I'm thinking that that has hurt us. Sometimes our children think that they have arrived because so many things are given to them. I believe that we as parents give our children too much. They need to work and to accomplish some of these things themselves, you know what I'm saying, instead of giving everything on a silver platter. Now I'm not going to give you a token for getting good grades because you're supposed to. Our parents used to say that I have a job and you have a job to do. My job is to go to work everyday. Your job is to go to school. Don't let me come to school. You don't () for your mama. You know what I'm saying? And if you cut or whatever, the teacher was on the phone calling your parents: "so and so didn't show up," because again, that teacher was in that neighborhood. That goes all back to that, in your neighborhood and your church, and () various functioning.

GP: So the teachers were part of the community.

JW: A part of the community. Whatever that teacher did, you didn't go back and discuss it, you know what I'm saying, what they did with their personal life, because they had a life outside. And we were taught that your teacher has a life outside of school,

whereas the kids now, well I saw Miss So-and-so. Somebody's like, "That wasn't to be discussed." Your parents told you that.

GP: So I'm hearing some of the things that you think we lost.

JW: Yeah, that we lost. We lost a lot.

GP: Through school integration.

JW: We lost a lot from the educational approach, as far as our children getting as much as they can from the school system. As I said earlier, there's no reason for missing any information at this day and time, because everything is accessible. We have the new books. We aren't using new books. It's so disheartening to see students at the bus stop with no book bag, even if you don't do anything but fake it. You had to carry books home whether you used them or not. You had to have the book open. And if you were sick and you stayed out of school, my mother came home. I think I stayed out of school about twice the whole time I was in high school. My mother was there and would feel the TV. If the TV was warm, that meant that you weren't sick. That means you've been up watching TV. So who wants to stay home in that kind of condition? (laughter)

GP: That's good. I'm going to write that down.

JW: You feel the TV. So things were just expected of you. You were expected to achieve, to do good.

GP: So those are some of the things that you think we've lost?

JW: We did that.

GP: What do you think we gained?

JW: The diversification, being able to work with all races. I think that part is good, because you can get lopsided and you do get to learn about other cultures. I think that is one of the advantages that you do. Some students, not all, from that you can pick up

wanting to achieve more, depending on what kind of group, but knowing also that you are black, never forgetting that. I think that's one of the things that we achieved from that.

GP: I saved this question for last. Do you think that there was any way that they could have integrated schools better like Hillside? How could they have gotten white kids to Hillside when you were there, because supposedly the school was desegregated?

JW: I don't know. I don't know how they could have gotten them, because you're talking about Durham High. You look at Durham High compared to what Hillside used to be. Now who would want to come from Durham High to over to Hillside when Durham High had electronics, they had every vocation you could possibly think of? When they started with integration over at Durham High, Durham High had a full-sized swimming pool for the swim team.

GP: I just found that out.

JW: You know what they did to that when they integrated?

GP: They covered it up or—

JW: They filled it in with cement, so that the black wouldn't rub off on the white in the pool. They did that.

GP: So then what I'm really hearing you say is that the only way they maybe could have—

JW: Therefore they almost would have to drag them over for the forced integration. I'm not sure and I don't want to say this until I find out more about that, is that the whites that did come to Hillside, I think a lot of them came out of the Forest Hills section of town. I think the parents were more liberals where they came into Hillside that way, you see what I'm saying, because Hillside still has that elitist status. Hillside walked away with a lot of

scholarships when I was coming through. And now, even though you don't hear about, Hillside gets over eight hundred thousand dollars in scholarships every year.

GP: I've never heard of that.

JW: Oh no, you would never hear that. You just hear about the fights and all the negative stuff. Hillside students walk away with a lot of scholarships. So all that scholarship money, so it's not a bunch of dummies over here. It's not a bunch of dummies. That's another advantage of going to a black school too, coming to Hillside, because with the scholarship and if you're the valedictorian, you can walk away with more scholarship. But when the white kid comes in there, that's more competition that going to pull away from you.

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

GP: So do you think that there's something special that Hillside did, that other schools lost once they became integrated?

JW: When they became integrated? I don't know if Hillside did anything that was special, no more than saying that because our parents and grandparents went to Hillside, their children, their offsprings wanted to come there. It's like I say, I can't see any white student wanting to come to Hillside, because Hillside was considered inferior to what they already had. So why step back, why lean back, as the children say? (laughter)

[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

GP: So do you have any thoughts on what you think schools can do better now to help educate black students?

JW: Let me tell you what. Let me tell you how I feel about that. They have knocked a lot of vocation classes out. Everybody's not college material. For some reason, we have gone four-year-college crazy. They really don't even push the technical institutions.

Everybody is supposed to be going to college. That hurts us. Again, to have all that in place, I always think you need three factors functioning in that. You've got to find what's in their home, their community, and their school. The school can have everything you want, the cream of the crop for everything, but you've got to find out why that child won't come to school to get what's there. Then you've got to find out what's happening at home. If the parents send him to the school and he won't come to school, then they need to find out what's in their community that's keeping him from getting there.

There's something also about our black kids and especially males, they don't want the other guys to know that they're smart. I don't know what this mentality is. They'd rather do bad than identify with that. I don't know if that's supposed to be a sissy approach, quote sissy approach, if that's supposed to be it or not. But I know that the vocation is one of the areas that's really hurting us here in the high school, because at one time, like I told you before, Hillside had brick masonry, oh God, they had the tailoring, oh gosh, am I missing something? I'm missing something, Shuler.

MARVA SHULER: Auto mechanics.

JW: Auto mechanics, exactly. We had all those areas.

MS: Electronics.

JW: And they could go in and work on that, doing things with their hands, start their own business.

MS: All the houses on Lawson Street are—

JW: That's what I was telling her. She didn't realize that.

GP: So we could implement more vocations.

JW: More vocations because everybody's not going to college.

GP: Okay and get to know students' home lives, where it is they come from and what's happening in school?

JW: That's right and really be concerned. That was another thing about Hillside people. I'm probably () before you all, but because you could—
[conversation breaks off as announcement comes over loudspeaker]

JW: You felt like the teachers cared. You see what I'm saying? Even though they fussed at you, you felt like they had your best interests at heart.

GP: But how did y'all get that feeling? What did they do specifically that made you—

JW: From the talking to you, from actually talking to you. They would talk to you.

GP: Did you ever have a teacher visit your house?

JW: Well they would call my mama: "What's your mama's name?" (laughter) I'll call Hattie Mae in a minute. ()

GP: So is there anything else I need to know, because I asked you a lot of stuff? Is there anything else I should know about Hillside to tell the story from the black community's perspective about why it's so special? Or what's so important about the legacy that future generations should know?

MS: I know you're not asking me but back in the day, they pulled from every walk of life, and I don't know if she's talked to you about that or not, to make up your sports or whatever. Everybody from the projects to the richest person played sports. Now if you don't have money, you don't get a chance to play. That's why we're losing our project kids per se, they won't talk about the projects but I came from the projects, but that's how you're losing them. You don't have a project kid at all on the basketball team.

JW: Right now if you're doing a comparison.

MS: Because they can't pay for the one hundred and twenty-five-dollar shoes. They can't go to a two-hundred-dollar camp. If you don't go there, you don't make the team. These teams are almost like recruited now. That's back in the day. When I was a physical educator, let me say that, if you keep a kid occupied for physical education or () is concerned, you had them, but we don't have that anymore. The poorest of kids don't have that opportunity anymore to play. It's money that's closing them out. Whereas back in our time, everybody had an opportunity to play.

JW: ().

MS: And they stayed there because they did what they needed to do, because the rules said, you don't come to school, you don't act right, you can't play. I see that a lot for us now. When I was in Wake County, if you came to school late the morning of a game, you didn't play. But () didn't have that rule; that's not a rule. They feel that these days, "I'm on the basketball team and I come here ()—

JW: If I feel like I want to.

MS: That's that mentality.

GP: So Hillside offered everybody opportunities.

JW: To participate in athletics.

GP: Did either of you participate in any activities?

JW: I was and I was a talker. I just talked. I didn't think, I'm thinking sure, you were athletic like—

MS: I played tennis for awhile, but I got that feeling from what these kids are getting too because I was a project child.

JW: We talked about the pride in Hillside. I know we keep getting back to that, but you're talking about even your cafeteria workers; see they came from the neighborhood,

you see what I'm saying, even your custodians. So there was respect. You didn't look down on anybody's job.

MS: Right.

JW: You didn't look down on anybody's job.

MS: Because that was somebody's mother.

JW: That's right.

MS: That you knew.

JW: That you knew, that's right. It's just hard to really put in words and for people to even visualize. You speak about Hillside and you start beaming, you start beaming right away. You could go back to funny stories, uh huh, like Miss Reaves would say if she disliked people chewing gum, she would say honey, black folks' lips don't need no exercise. (laughter) In other words, don't chew gum. She had a gate up around her desk, like say if this was her desk and she had a gate, and if somebody walked up to her, "don't walk around my gate." Then she would say to you, I'm going to call your mama, what's your name? You try to get smart with her and then she would come back with something smart. You didn't talk back. You might mumble something () disliked, but that was it. That was it. She would tell girls, don't have no boy come to your house blowing no horn and you come running out the house. Right now, I can't stand nobody coming to my house and blow the horn for me to come to the door; they're blowing the horn. You come up to the door to knock. That was back during the day. So they gave you advice about dating also. When you went to the prom—

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

JW: They would give you advice about dating and that was expected.

GP: That was expected? When I was a teacher that wasn't expected.

JW: Well no, but when you started dating, they told you what--. You were expected to keep your little dresses down, keep your legs crossed, that came out. Now if you mention that to a child today, I'm doing a comparison, somebody's parents are going to get up there and get offended: "Why you talking to that child that way?" But that was said that way. When you went to the prom, there were certain ways you were expected to dance. You had on a long dress, so therefore a long dress, you act like a lady.

GP: So it's the expectation.

JW: That's what I'm saying. There were some spoken, some not spoken. Some was supposed to have been common sense, common sense. () they say, you know. Gosh, in fact, like now for my fourth class reunion, we're sitting there trying to write down what different teachers would say, little sayings that they would say to you.

GP: So Ms. Shuler, since I have you, can I ask you one quick question?

MS: Yes.

GP: Since you said you grew up in the projects—

MS: Right.

GP: And Ms. Williams was saying that there was kind of—

JW: We had cliquish groups, like Dr. Watts. Okay, I shouldn't call the names.

GP: Say whatever you want to.

JW: Okay, like the doctor's children and that type thing. I was told, that was something I heard, that sometimes even the administrators played a different role. Now John Lucas had a bad reputation.

GP: For doing that?

JW: John Lucas, right now half of the people do not care for John Lucas. That's why they were so crazy about Mr. Howard Alston. Right now, at our twenty-five class reunion, we said that's the last time John Lucas will speak, because he did a name-drop. Here's Alice McCullums, that's a judge out in our--, here's Barbara (), that's working with Mayor Maynard Jackson, start—you know, like wait a minute, we're not doing that. So we don't do that. Like I say, in my class, the class of '65, and I'm sure it's yours, we don't talk about our accomplishments. We're just like we're here, you're doing well, that's fine. If you're achieved this, we're glad for you, but don't come telling me I make x-amount of dollars. We're not about that. We think what happened too, with the people from the high echelon, some of their children didn't achieve. So therefore they don't come back to the class reunion. You know what I'm saying? To them, some of that might be a little low-class.

GP: But it sounds like they would be welcome if they came.

JW: Always. Because you never know what tomorrow's going to bring for anyone. You understand what I'm saying? I don't know what tomorrow's going to bring for me. I might be in here sweeping up floors, () and I'm walking, and I might not even do that.

MS: But I know when I was on the tennis team, because I came from the projects, that you had to play to get your seating. Even though I would win, but I wouldn't play because I didn't have a name. The black girls that were on the teams were Dr. so-and-so's and whatever. But I was always kept back. It made a difference. One of the things during

integration that really made me mad was because they had tryouts for cheerleading during the summertime. They announced it on TV, on the radio, whatever, for tryouts.

GP: For Hillside?

MS: Right. The white people didn't come. When we went out for cheerleading, that's what really gets in my craw is that when I went out for cheerleading, you were ranked, who had the highest points or whatever. When they came, because we didn't have any white representation on the cheerleading squad, they took those last six rankings of the girls and they put them off, and they gave them to the white cheerleaders. I was in that last six and I carried that with me for awhile, a long time. It really made me so militant. That's what really--

GP: So they didn't show up?

MS: They didn't even show up.

GP: And then they just cut the bottom six and gave them—

MS: Because they apparently had to have them on.

JW: Even though I know you said people really hadn't talked about that, but there were, it was difference in there at Hillside during that time, and with some of the teachers and basically the administrator.

MS: () the administrator make that decision?

JW: Yeah, that was there. If you talk to a lot of people who will really be honest with you, and sometimes, I guess because they put it on tape, they don't probably want to say it that way.

GP: ().

JW: But Lucas was, there was some big differences.

GP: You know I get the, everybody's face lights up when they talk about Hillside. Sometimes they've cried when they talk about this building being torn down, and they talk about Swing School and the band being kind of—

JW: Yeah.

MS: Swing School—

GP: It was still going on when you were there?

MS: Oh yes, Swing School was fun. I mean you know, they had their positions, the white people had their positions in there too, but—

GP: They were in Swing School?

MS: Yeah.

GP: See that's the part that—

MS: Someone had a tape, () had a tape.

JW: Ms. ().

MS: () Swing School, and she wants me to try to put it on. I really want to try to make her think about trying to do it or whatever one day, but it's going to take a whole lot of people to try to do it. Because that was just, you're talking about Swing School.

GP: I didn't realize it was still going on in the '70s.

JW: They had talent shows. They had students () our class.

MS: Class night—

JW: Class night.

JW: You did your wills and—

JW: Testimony, uh huh.

GP: What's that?

JW: Wills is like "I leave this back to," you know that.

GP: I leave my car to so-and-so, that kind of stuff.

MS: You'd be doing funny, you know whatever.

JW: Yeah. In fact, Donald Fozart from Mt. Zion Church, he was in the class of '64, he was a year ahead of me in high school. He used to fold down that mike, act like he was James Brown singing. (laughter) It's like I say, if can you keep on thinking, keep on going on and on. You been over to Coleman's Fish House? Coleman graduated from Hillside. Doug Sanford runs the fish place, (), other businesses like that.

MS: You've got () downtown, the artist. He has an art museum that's downtown, right across from, I think it's a Marriott now.

JW: It's Marriott.

MS: () He has an art place right across from there. You have them that have insurance companies: McGhee, Ava Haskins (), she's married again. That's why—

JW: I know what Ava's name is because she's All-State also. There really is a lot of achievers.

GP: So did everybody graduate? Because not everybody in my class graduated.

JW: No. Okay, there was three hundred and fifty people in my class that were supposed to graduate. I think we had about three hundred something, because they started dropping off at the wayside, girls getting pregnant. Let me tell you about getting pregnant. Like I was getting ready to tell you earlier, these girls walking around here pregnant, if the Dean of Girls, who was Mrs. Schooler, thought you were pregnant, someone went and told her, you went in the office, you pulled your dress up. You pulled your dress up and you had to turn around in slow motion, and she better not see any (). So many girls back during in our day wore girdles, three and four girdles, yes.

MS: () I know even during my time or whatever it is, that when you got pregnant, they had a school for pregnant girls.

JW: They didn't have that.

GP: You didn't get to stay in the school, but when you were there you got to stay at Hillside when you were pregnant?

JW: Uh uh. They didn't know you were pregnant. I just said you wore three or four girdles.

GP: That's right.

JW: () three or four girdles laced down.

GP: At some point, the girdle couldn't hold it in though.

JW: You didn't hear me. Mrs. Schooler found out two days before this girl, Louise, was supposed to have been graduated. She wouldn't let that girl march. Two days from graduation, she had hid it all that time, she wouldn't let the girl graduate, march down the thing.

GP: So you just—

JW: You just didn't. You just didn't.

MS: That's it.

GP: I'll just write that down.

MS: You just didn't. That's it.

GP: But when you were there, you just went to another school if somebody got pregnant.

MS: Yeah, but it was an underlying "you just didn't" either. I mean it happened, but—

JW: My daddy would say, if you get pregnant, you ain't coming in this household.

That was enough threat said in their words, same thing with the teachers, that you just didn't.

MS: But they did open up a school for, where they would move them from the regular ().

JW: But see during my time, they had a school which is the temple on Alston Avenue. That was where the white girls went.

GP: I didn't know that.

JW: We didn't have anywhere to go.

GP: So you just didn't.

JW: You sat and crossed your leg like they told you. You made sure that a pencil can't go between your legs.

GP: Got it.

JW: Okay.

GP: No more description, (laughter) Okay, so if you didn't graduate it was probably because you got pregnant.

JW: Pregnant or every once in awhile, maybe in a hardship case, very seldom was a hardship case. On the average, they usually graduated. Sometimes some of the students might have had academic problems, got a little embarrassed, because you got to remember too that special education wasn't as pronounced as it is now. So the special ed student was within the classroom and they had groups, in especially the elementary level, A, B, C and then like the A group may have helped the D group. There was no shame in that. But as the students started getting older, you what I'm saying, and reality jumps in there, so that's how we lost some of those also. Again, there were hardship cases. Some people just became disinterested, some smart students, you know what I'm saying, smart.

GP: So does, because everybody I meet seems to have it, does everybody love Hillside?

JW: You got some that don't because of bad experiences from teachers and all. In fact, have you talked to Dr. Steppe-Jones over at Central?

GP: No, not yet. I'm talking to Dr. Lucas next week.

JW: Is Dr. Steppe-Jones going to be on there?

GP: I don't know. I'm still like halfway through, so I'm getting names from people and—

JW: Okay, so talk to Dr. Steppe-Jones. There were teachers sometimes that would tell people you didn't come from that kind of material, so your family didn't come, so you don't need to go to--. We had a trifling, God forgive me, may she rest in peace, Mrs. Kean was trifling. She only catered to the people whose family had a name or could get pushed on. That's the bad taste that people will have with Hillside.

GP: So that's kind of what you were talking about the cliques?

JW: Right. She will be it. Once a person had achieved as an adult, then she wanted to run back in and wanted this recognition and people just freeze up when they see her, would see her. I do know, because I can't remember the other counselor, but she was the one that stood out from everybody else.

MS: () was the one that stood out with me because I got this piece of paper about who's who among high school students, and they told me that didn't mean anything, throw it in the trash can. So when I got to Central, I was going through the stacks looking for material for a report. I saw this whole thing that said who's who among high school students. I pulled it out and I looked at all these kids that were from my school. Because I was from the projects, you did not promote me. It came from a testing situation, they knew

that your grades from the testing situation were how they pick you to be among who's who in high school students. () That's for your mama to spend money. Your mother didn't have that money to spend.

GP: So you had some, but basically—

MS: I still love Hillside. I still had those experiences because I was not in this establishment.

JW: A few bad apples have left bad tastes in a lot of people's mouths. Some people, because of their personality, are able to move on. Others do not. Now we have people around here in Durham that still don't participate in the class reunion. You know what I'm saying? Some people haven't gotten over that.

GP: But on the most part?

JW: On the most part, no. Yeah we do, because nothing is going to be perfect.

MS: Kids gonna be Hillside to the death.

JW: That's why, I've always said that.

MS: They could spit on you, put you out of school, but if it's push come to shove, it's Hillside. That's proven when the parade comes. When Hillside is in North Carolina Central University—

JW: Where do they put them? In the back.

GP: I was in North Carolina Central University's band and I asked that question. Why is Hillside's band in the back?

MS: It's over. ()

JW: Because you're going to have a parade. When you have a parade—

GP: I didn't understand that at the time because I thought this is our parade. Why are we not in the back? Now I understand.

JW: Because you wouldn't have anybody watching the parade, because everybody's following Hillside. You've seen it. That's why they had trouble, downtown Durham, when they have the parade, because when Hillside came through there, could have seen the other bands, da da da da, and what are they going to do? They're going to follow that beat.

MS: Follow Hillside, and they used to get in between every other band, and the crowd followed them. Everybody else, they were just not seen. Santa Claus had to come before Hillside.

JW: In fact, when Hillside's doing practice now, especially in the warm weather, you see people, parents, everybody stops. They're probably late going to work watching the band, you know what I'm saying? There's just that kind of pride.

GP: I'm hearing things like the band and the teachers caring about you.

JW: Caring about you, the athletics, all those things, and the brick masonry class, the tailoring class, electronics, like I said, that distributed education to a lot of kids, got put into employment from coming to the school a half-day and then going to work, getting into the job force early.

GP: Now I'll ask both of you since you're both here. If people come up to me and say, Gerrelyn, I know you're writing this paper about the significance of Hillside in the Durham community, what would I say to them? Why is this school so important? Why does it mean so much to this community?

JW: It emulates pride and again, because our parents went there, our children have gone there, grandparents, it's like a legacy.

MS: () It's a family unit. You're talking about a family now.

JW: Right, and the closeness of a family.

MS: () kids got pregnant or whatever it is, and you knew you couldn't deal with it, somebody in the family took your baby. If something happens here at Hillside, somebody, a Hillside graduate, is going to take that responsibility (). It's just like a family. It's a family unit.

MS: Even though they may have said that, everybody still pitched in. Just don't mess your life up, that was supposed to have been the lesson, because they wanted you to be able to do better than what they have done in life.

GP: Okay, unless y'all want to tell me some more, and I believe you do. (laughter)

MS: () talk about Hillside, but it might not be what you want.

GP: I want it to be what y'all want.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Baran. November, 2005.