

MALINDA MAYNOR: This is an interview with Dr. Martin Brooks on April 23, 2004 in Pembroke, North Carolina. The interviewer is Malinda Maynor. This is for the Southern Oral History Projects [Program's] Long Civil Rights Movement series. The tape number is 04.23.04-MB.

MARTIN BROOKS: A little summary overview of my--odyssey of my life first. My mother and father got married in Dillon. My mother was her dad's pet and she knew and he knew that my father knew that her father was not going to agree to this marriage. So they went to Dillon, got married, and got on the train and went directly back to Detroit. My dad had been in Detroit working a few years prior to that. In fact, he went up there right after Henry Ford incepted his five dollar a day's work on the assembly line. He went up there to get rich. So he came home, he was twenty-one years old and he knew he needed some more education so he started back to school in the seventh grade. He said he would sit there in the class and he was the biggest thing in the class and he'd hear the schoolteachers talking about they were making seventy-five dollars a month for teaching. And he had just left a job in Detroit where he was getting a hundred and twenty-five dollars a week for working. And so this began to ponder on his mind and he felt real self-conscious in there with a bunch of kids anyway. He had started kind of courting my mother, convinced her to get married so they went to Dillon and got married and went directly back to Michigan where he had been living for a few years. They bought a big rooming house. Things were going real good for them at the time. And, of course, they started having children and had three daughters and I was the first son that was born. I was born in '29 but along comes the so-called stock market crash at that

time. He had this big rooming house where people from here would go up and rent a room from him just to stay with Pete and Addie. My father's name was Peter and people referred to him as Pete. My mother's name was Addie Mae. She was Cummings by maiden name. And they would take these people there and rent them a room and they would get a job at the factories and go to work. Well, when the stock market crashed these boarders for the most part had very little seniority. They were laid off right away and pretty soon he didn't have enough income from the house to make the payments on the house. He had seniority enough to keep working for two or three years even after the stock market crashed and was making enough to feed his family but that was about it. So finally he had to give up. He gave his house to his neighbors, just gave it to them, said you can have it. Of course, the neighbor didn't have money. He couldn't keep up the bills, payments on it, neither could the neighbor but he just deeded the house to the neighbor free of charge. My dad owned an old 1929 flatbed Model T Ford and he packed Mama and us four kids and all the rest of the belongings on that old truck and came to Robeson County in North Carolina. We settled on a small farm out in the Union Chapel area, which we'll refer to later on, came back just here in order to eke out a living so we could survive, you know. I was five years old at that time. My dad shortly after we got here acquired an old abandoned school bus cabin. He mounted it on that old flat bed truck and that became the first busing system for Indian kids in Robeson County. And he owned and operated that at his expense for two years. He made a trip to Pembroke and a trip to Union Chapel, two trips in the morning and two trips at night hauling the kids back and forth to school. It was kind of an interesting aside when he was trying to get that school bus legalized so he could haul kids. When he first went to get a license for it he

was told well, it's going to cost you a hundred dollars to get a license for it. Well, that was totally out of the question. Was nobody, no Indian had a hundred dollars. So he kept on trying until I think the sheriff who was sheriff of Robeson County whose name was Ertle Carlyle, dad went to see him and he gave him a note to go see somebody and I'm not sure who that somebody was. Anyway, he ended up getting his license for fifty cents to operate that school bus so that made it possible for him to operate the school bus. Well, the gasoline tank in this old truck bus was on the other side right behind the drivers seat and I'd already become my dad's shadow. That became my seat. I'd sit on that old tank and count the kids as they got on and off the bus and show them where to sit, you see. So all these kids were older than me and for the most part bigger but I was a boss on the school bus for two years there. My dad would haul, make his two loads in the morning, come home and hitch up his mule and do his farming. And in the afternoon, in the late afternoon he'd take his mule out, get back on the bus and go to the school and haul the kids back. That's what he did for two years at his expense. There was no tax money to haul Indian kids to school at that time. Of course, my early school was here in Robeson County. I started school actually out at Union Chapel because we were living on a little farm there and when I was in the second grade he moved up nearer to Pembroke and then I entered the Pembroke schools. And when I finished the eleventh grade, I had an English teacher his name was Horace Layton Paul who had wanted to be a doctor. He had tried to get into medical school in the state of North Carolina and was unable to get accepted and he would talk to me. He said now Martin, if you want to be a doctor you'll have to leave North Carolina to do it. Said you just cannot get into these medical schools and he told me all about his difficulties. So that was really one of the

reasons why I went back to Michigan. So I went to my oldest sister [who] was living in Ypsilanti, Michigan, she and her husband who had served some time in the Navy, had gotten out of the Navy. He was a barber in the Navy and he and another man bought a barbershop in Ypsilanti, Michigan. So I went up and stayed with her the last year in high school and graduated from high school at Ypsilanti Central. I was valedictorian of the high school class at that time while I was working forty hours a week in the Kaiser-Frazier automobile plant. It was out at what they referred to as a bomber plant at that time and made bombs during World War II. While I was in high school there my English teacher kind of took a liking to me. She had graduated from the University of Michigan and nothing to do but I was to go to the University of Michigan. She took me over there and introduced me around and help me get my application filled out and all that kind of... I didn't even know there was a University of Michigan when I went up. But anyway, that's how I got to the University of Michigan. I received my B.S. degree after three and a half years there. When I started applying to medical school I applied to the three schools at that time we had North Carolina. We had Duke, we had Chapel Hill and Bowman Gray. We did not have the school over at East Carolina at that time. But I was turned down by all three of them. Only one of them gave me a reason for not accepting me and that was Bowman Gray. They said they did not accept me because I was not white but they wished me well and suggested that I apply to Meharry and there was a couple of others they suggested that I might have some better facility of getting in to. But some few years later my oldest son graduated from Bowman Gray as you probably know. But anyway, I had some problems getting in to the University of Michigan because at that time they pretty well had limited their out of state admissions to foreign students. They

would take somebody [from] Hawaii or India but they weren't taking many from other states. The first time I went over to have an interview with the secretary of the medical school he told me said now, because I told him I was coming back to North Carolina to practice medicine, says well, if you're going to practice medicine there we feel North Carolina should educate you. The first year I applied there I was turned down at the University of Michigan. I also had a little problem with in-state residency at the time, which had to be worked out, which wasn't a big problem. So I went ahead and certified in medical technology to stay up there to get my in-state certification to satisfy those requirements. And I was working in the Department of Dermatology at the University Hospital with a man named Dr. Arthur C. Curtis who had been dean of the medical school at the university there for twelve years just prior to this time. He was not dean at that time. It looked like I was not going to be able to get into the University of Michigan medical school so I applied to the veterinary school in East Lansing--a state school kind of similar to State in Raleigh to UNC Chapel Hill.

MM: Agricultural, technical, yeah.

MB: And so they accepted me to study veterinary medicine. And also when I went up for my interview they gave me a teaching fellow, job of teaching chemistry because I had almost enough chemistry hours to have a master's in chemistry at the time. So when I went in to tell Dr. Curtis who was my boss back at the university where I was working that I was going to be leaving at a certain time to go to veterinary school, he said I thought you wanted to be a damn doctor. I said well, I do but I can't get into your medical school here. He says who says you can't. I said well, they turned me down. He says you forget about that veterinary stuff. Said you go on back to work and you'll hear

from the dean shortly. Well, I [went] back to work, I did what he said. School started on a Thursday. The following Monday after school had started I was still at my post working with my Bunson burner and doing the things that I was doing and he came in and he says what are you still doing here. He says hasn't the dean called you. I said no, he hasn't called me. He said well, you turn off your burner and put your stuff up and he says start walking from here over to the administration office. He says he'll be waiting for you when you get there. So when I got to the building he was outside on the sidewalk waiting for me. Took me in and said Dr. Curtis thinks you ought to be in medical school. I said yes. There was a young lady who had been admitted in that entering class. When they pulled the cheesecloth back over the cadaver she fainted. She left so that left a place open so they put me in that place. That's how I got into medical school at the University of Michigan. That was my--.

MM: Fortitudinous.

MB: Well no, you can see the finger of God working all in that. But anyway, that's how I got into the university school of medicine. Then when the first semester, this same dean whose his name was Dean Whitakker- -W-I-T-K-K-E-R, I think is the spelling on that, called me in and asked me what was my biggest problem and I said paying these bills is my biggest problem. He said well, according to your grades, you won't have to pay anymore bills the rest of the time you're here. So I didn't have to pay tuition or books or lab fees for the rest of the time. The school was real good to me. They gave me a grant each semester. I think it was two thousand dollars a semester. Then they gave me a loan of two thousand dollars and they let me continue my job that I had with Dr. Curtis and that paid me about four thousand dollars a semester. I was doing skin transplants and

working with melanoma and I had a whole floor, which was my research floor. As long as I did my research I had plenty of study time too so that made it work out real, real good. When I finished medical school I went over to Wayne County General Hospital. Wayne County is the county Detroit, Michigan is in, for my rotating internship and I was over there maybe a couple of months and I got a call from the university saying they wanted me at honors convocation on a given date and I told them I couldn't do that. I had this call that day. I was on duty. He says don't worry about that. We've got that arranged for you. So I went over for the honors convocation, which was held in a place called Harp Rackham building. The guy that I had worked under for these four years, they selected one student's work for the four years in research and the Borden Company gave an award and a five hundred check to that person and that's why I went over, to get that award. It's hanging over in the office somewhere over there. And five hundred dollars was a lot of money at that time. That was like manna from heaven.

So when I finished that rotating internship I came back here to practice medicine and I think we need to go ahead and add all this. After I was here a month or two my wife said to me don't they have a medical auxiliary here and I said I'm sure they have. She said well, I haven't heard anything from them. I said well, maybe they just haven't got around to it. I said give them some time. So I was here about four months and I [was] delivering babies both at the hospital in Laurinburg, Scotland Memorial Hospital, and also at Lumberton. So one afternoon I was over on a labor case at Laurinburg and I got this call from one of the doctors who said, he says I've been made chairman of a committee to meet with you to discuss some things. I said well, what is it we need to discuss. He said well, I'd rather not talk over the phone about it and he says once we

have the meeting I'm sure it will become pretty obvious what we have to discuss and he says I'm calling you to find out when would be a good time for us to get together. Well, I suggested meeting at my office and [he] said no, we wanted to meet at the hospital. At that time we didn't have a boardroom down there but we had a little library room so we set up to meet in the library room on a given time. As good fortune would have it I had a labor case at Lumberton that night we were to meet. So I was up in the labor room and when it came time for the meeting I told the nurse where I'd be and went down to the library. When I walked in there was about six or eight doctors plus the superintendent of the hospital. The CEO of the hospital was in there. The guy who was kind of acting as chairman was not the guy who had called me. It was another guy. I don't know if these names are important but maybe we ought to leave them out. He started talking, it was pretty obvious he was groping for words as to what to say and finally he said well, let's just have Dr. so-and-so read from the state by-laws the issue we're concerned with. So this doctor read the two paragraphs from the state, by-laws of the State Medical Society, which when he finished I said would you mind reading them again so I'll be sure I'm clear on what we're to talk about here. So he read them again. And when he finished he says now, Dr. Brooks, I wrote this language into the state medical by-laws. He says I was secretary of the state society at this time and he says I put them in there specifically to keep the niggers out. He said I didn't think an Indian would ever become a doctor. It was not put in there to keep Indians out. Now this man had the biggest Indian practice of any doctor in Robeson County and practiced with the Indians for fifty-five years before he died. So that kind of set the stage for what we needed to talk about. So each one started offering their opinion as to what they thought would be the best thing to do. Now



this had all been brought to a head because the man who read these two paragraphs from the by-laws, state by-laws, was not present in the meeting the night that I was voted in as a member of the County Medical Society. You became a member of the state society by endorsement from the county and then a state member of the AMA by endorsement from the state, then and that's still true now. Well, there were two people who knew this language was in the state by-laws, the man who had written it plus one other doctor who was still practicing. When they became aware that the county had voted an Indian in as a member they made it their business to notify the state society in Raleigh what had happened. The state society in Raleigh said you're practicing in contra distinction to the by-laws and unless you correct this we'll have to put you on probation for a period of time. And if this is not corrected then there's going to be some other repercussions for you as being a member of the state society as a county. So you see the fat was kind of on the fire now. Their backs were against the wall. We've got to do something about this. So that's what had brought this meeting into being, why it had to be held. Well, we sat there and we talked for maybe two hours. One or two said if I were you I'd leave and go back. In fact, before I left the University of Michigan the same man who had helped me get into medical school, Dr. Arthur C. Curtis, he says now if you'll stay here and go through my program, he says in five years you'll take my place as chairman of the Department of Dermatology. And I'd just told him I had to come back here to practice medicine. He says well, I'm going to keep a slot open for you six months because I don't believe you'll stay down there. He says I believe you'll be back. So he kept the slot open for me in his residency program for six months after I came down here. But anyway, as you well know, I stayed and didn't go back. Well anyway, we ended up that

night not coming to any conclusion. They offered well, why don't you, you can become a scientific member, which meant I could attend any meeting that had a scientific meaning but if there's a social function to it I could not come in until after the social function was over. If there were any social functions I would have to come as an invited guest of one of the other members, you know. I just told them, I said I don't give a damn about the parties, I can have my own parties if I want to. But if I can't be a member of the AMA I don't know if I want to stay here if that's the way it's going to have to be. And then some of them suggested well, there's an Old North State Society, which there still is which was primarily a black society then and still is a primarily black society and still is a viable society. It's still going and even since the door has been opened for them a lot of them don't particularly care to become a member of the AMA because of the fees. The fees are pretty high. But anyway, the meeting was getting kind of long and we decided we'd better adjourn and think about it and set up another meeting. And I said to them that night, I said now, I think we better not say, be best if we don't say anything about this meeting to the general public because if we do I'm afraid you men won't be able to practice medicine around here for a few days. So nobody said anything about it. I went back upstairs and about midnight I'd finished my labor case and was on my way out of the building and just as I was about to push the side door to go out somebody yelled at me and said Martin, wait up a minute. And it was one of the men that had been in the meeting earlier that night. This man had treated my mother. He was a general practitioner who had limited his practice to OB-GYN and had seen my mother for some problems during this time and he knew that she had been away from here for some time. And he said where were you born, Martin. I said I was born in Detroit, Michigan. He

said do you know what it says on your birth certificate. I said no but if it says anything it probably says white. He says why don't you write to Lansing and get a copy of it and let's see what it says. So we did. They sent me three copies and it said white. We filled out another application and attached one of those birth certificates to it and it went through like a rubber stamp. So that's the way I became a member of the county society, the state, and the AMA, through the accident at birth and what it said on my birth certificate. Now this was 1958 you see. Now the desegregation, when did that happen? That happened in '56.

MM: '54 was Brown vs. Board.

MB: '54, well, but that information and practice had not filtered down to here and that's when you had mentioned the superintendent of the public school and what effect that that decision had on us that he didn't even know it had happened. And these men didn't know it happened, didn't care whether it happened because they wanted to practice the way they wanted to. But now the night that I was voted in I was voted in unanimously but none of these men knew that was in the by-laws. The two people who knew it was not there that night you see. Now if they had known I don't know how they would have responded you know. But most of these people were younger physicians. And, in fact, one man who had been a part of the politicking that had gone before this meeting told me some time later at one of the meetings someone said well, maybe we could disqualify him on his grades and they said well, his grades are better than any of ours. We've seen his grades. You can't go that route. But this same man who had written these by-laws, these two paragraphs, I was told by this same man he said in that meeting he says now if you let that Indian become a doctor here pretty soon you're not

going to be able to control the Indians in Robeson County. So this man did have some prophetic sight about, kind of like, I suppose George Washington Carver said--no it wasn't, it was Thurgood Marshall--said to keep a person ignorant and free is to expect what never was and never will be, you see. As long as you keep us ignorant we can kind of keep us under wraps you know. So that was the biggest stronghold of white supremacy that they had was ignorance you know, was keeping that going. So I suppose that was some of the big motivation that encouraged, not encouraged but I saw no way to live with myself without being active against this kind of thing or in trying to correct this.

So when I came here to practice medicine I had three children, four children, three daughters and one son and I was interested, of course, in them getting a pretty good education. But when I began to look at the educational system and talk to people about it, all I could find out was this is a poor system and it's not something you really want your kids to be a part of and so forth and so on. In fact, this same man who had mentioned let's get a birth certificate came to me one day when my oldest son was getting about ready to go to high school, he and his wife came over here to visit with me. Their son had gone to Asheville School for Boys and he said that's where you ought to send your son. He said it's a good school and said you don't want to put your son in these schools here and so forth. Well, they came over to go with my wife, Joanne, the children's mother, to Asheville. They were going to take us up to the Asheville School for Boys and introduce us and help us kind of with getting Mike in school there. Well, Joanne refused to go. She said no, I'm not sending my kid away from home and said now if he cannot stay at home we're just not going to do it. So she wouldn't go so we didn't go to the Asheville School for Boys. A man named Blankenship started a little

school over in Maxton so we put him in there. That's where he went to high school. It was called Carolina Military Academy, as you may or may not know. And this was his four-year high school at that school and he was valedictorian of that class that went through at that time.

MM: So that would have been what year about?

MB: That would have probably been '60, '61. Let's see, no, no it would have been later. It's about '64 maybe, somewhere along there, '64 or '65, right about mid-sixties. Well, during that time I had armed myself with a fair amount of information from Dr. Conant. Mortimer Conant had been a general in the service but he'd come out and he'd had written rather extensively on the comprehensive high schools. And I read a lot of his stuff on what he, at that time they were talking about comprehensive high schools instead of target schools and charter schools, etc., which came out a little later. And Mortimer Adler who at the time was chairman of the encyclopedia, board of directors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Dr. Alport who had written rather extensively on reading and how to read a book and so forth.

MM: I'm sorry, say that name one more time.

MB: Alport, A-L-P-O-R-T. And I had kind of made up my mind what had to be done to save the Robeson County school system. So you know when a decision is made then execution is the order of the day. So I called the superintendent of public education of Robeson County one Wednesday morning after I thought I had everything laid out like I wanted it and I told him I'd like to come over and talk to him. He said well, Dr. Brooks, we'd be happy to talk to you at any time. I said what about this afternoon. It was a Wednesday afternoon, which I was closed that afternoon. He said

that'll be fine. So at two o'clock I was in his office and I started talking and after I talked for about an hour and a half he called in the assistant superintendent who was Young Allen to come in and join us. I don't know if you needed to put Young, well, you was just saying that you interviewed Young Allen so maybe it's alright. And so I continued to talk until about seven that evening. Well, that conversation ended with the superintendent saying well, Dr. Brooks, what you say might be what we ought to do but that's impossible, the people won't stand for it. So I told him the people that know what was best, it was their responsibility to do what was best for them. So I left that meeting in the words of the Rolling Stones, "I ain't got no satisfaction," you see. So I realized that for my decision to be carried out, now when I went there I had made me a map of Robeson County and I'd set on that map places where I thought the three comprehensive high schools, and that was the terminology I was using at the time, should be built and I showed him how they'd have to close certain schools and so on. I remember he said if we'd close Prospect School they'd come shoot us. You know, that was one school that would have had to have been closed under this particular format that I'd put together. But anyway, I figured well, now in order for my decision to be carried out it's got to have social sanction. That meant the Board of Education would have to say so. Now I had bypassed the board because I'd already, all they'd done was set school policy and make decisions and I'd made the decision. So at that time I went to each one of the members individually. There was five members on the board at that time and individually I explained to them in some detail what had to be done to save the Robeson County school system.

MM: Now were the Indians on the board, was Mr. ( ) on the board?

MB: No Indians on the board at that time, no.

MM: Or blacks?

MB: No, no blacks either. No there was no Indians on the board. It was all white. Well, after I'd done that I saw that Robeson County had to have a new school board so I announced my candidacy for the board and I ran. Now this is where we come into the confront double voting. At that time there were six school systems in Robeson County. There were five, let me see, no, no I'm sorry, five school systems in Robeson County. There were four special charter schools areas, which were primarily city areas. They were little areas that included towns like Maxton, Red Springs, Lumberton, St. Pauls. Those were all these special charter school districts. And then what was called the Robeson County Administrative Unit, which included all the rest of the area of Robeson County, which meant that places like Fairmont had to get along on the same tax troughs that we did. So they was dividing the tax dollars in five ways but that's not the issue here. The issue here is the segregated system and the double voting. Now the people in the special charter units could vote on issues for the administrative area but the administrative area could not vote on the issues in the special charter units. Well, when I ran I got more votes in the administrative units area than any other man but when they brought in the double votes from the special charters then I was something like fourth or something down the line you see. We saw this thing, we've just got to do something to try to break this. So our next effort was well, I sat about organizing voter registration drives at that time and through that effort we added a few over five thousand new names to the voting books in Robeson County for the next two and a half years or so.

MM: And I'm sorry, you ran for the school board, was it 1968?

MB: I ran twice. The first time it would have been something like '68 and the next time something like '72. I know one weekend we had a lot of college students coming to help with this drive and there was a lot of them from Johnson C. Smith and [N.C.] A & T. About twenty some black college students came in to help and I wasn't expecting that many. I knew I was going to get some but I didn't have nowhere to put these people you know. I had to find places for them to stay. And I'd call people that I thought were on our side and was going to help and much to my chagrin some of the real, our black friends that I thought was really with us, when I would send them to their home they would be back in two or three hours said they won't let us stay there, you know, that they can't be a part of this voter registration. They were so Uncle Tomish until they just couldn't let their colors be shown. They'd talk with you but they would be active and, of course, I suppose we can understand some of that. But anyway that was the facts of the situation, no matter what the motive, the ideology of it and so forth was. But anyway as I say, we added a few over five thousand names to the voting books then we decided we should try to figure out a strategy to break or to counteract the double voting situation. So at that time you had to vote for as many candidates as there were places to be filled. So if there were two places to be filled and the person only voted for one it didn't count you see. So the next time Reverend Harvey Lowry and myself, there were two places to be filled and we ran sort of together. We tried to run in yoke and at that time Harry West Locklear had gotten Alton Lennon, who was in the Congress at that time, to promise and I don't know how this was going to happen, that if one of the Indians that was running didn't get the most votes, didn't get enough votes to win, they would appoint him from the state legislature. Well, a lot of our Indians would not vote for Lowry. I went to the



polls and this man Mr. Gilbert Bullard said Doc, I come to vote for you. I told you I was going to vote and I've come. It was the first time he'd ever voted and probably the only time he ever voted. I said now Mr. Gilbert, if you vote for me you also got to vote for Reverend Harvey Lowry in order for it to count for me. He says I ain't voting for no Lowry. I come here, I'm going to vote for you and that's all. So he voted for me.

MM: Why wouldn't he vote for Lowry?

MB: Well, there were some people just had some resentment against the Lowrys, which was traditional. I mean it was the first church here in Pembroke for a long time. A lot of people wouldn't dared gone to that building because it was referred to it as the Lowry church. They'd say oh, the Lowrys think they're the bluebloods. They think they're better than anybody else, you know, a whole bunch of stuff like that. But anyway when we were counting the votes that night there were some, about a thousand votes, no, five hundred and some votes here in Pembroke we had to throw out that was voted but I was the only one they voted for you see. Well, county wide I got a thousand more votes than Reverend Harvey did but I didn't get enough. I came in a strong third and there were only two places to be replaced. Well, after a while we found out or we think we found out that they'd been promised, they thought Reverend Harvey would get the most votes and they were going to appoint him but then when I got the most votes, at least the word got back to me and how true it was or not I don't know about that, but they claimed that that man's too far advanced for us. We can't have him on the school board. So anyway, I didn't get appointed. Let's put it that way.

MM: And this was maybe in '72, this is the second time you ran?

MB: That was good that I didn't get appointed because it stimulated some ground swell of people to work against in trying to break the double voting thing because if I had been appointed that may not have happened at that time. Later on I'm sure it would have because it was just a matter of time and these things were, these dead soldiers were going to fall anyway you know. But anyway that's what happened there. So I ran for the school board twice. Didn't make it either time. But that was all in progression to get to where we finally got to you know and to where we are today. But double voting was finally broken and when it was you know, in fact, Joy Johnson and, Joy's dead now. Joy was in the House of Representatives at the time and he was the one that really introduced the bill that when, of course, once the bill was introduced at this stage of the game it went through pretty smoothly you know. But it was introduced by a black man who was a friend of the Indians and I think he was a pretty reasonable and just sort of man you know. But anyway, that's the way all that happened. Once that happened then we began to be able to elect people to elected posts and, of course, it's just a matter, the rest is sort of history of how things have gone since then from an electoral process.

Now one of the big problems that, and this jogged my memory at lunch a little bit ago, we had no high schools that Indian students were allowed to attend that was accredited by the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges at the time. Pembroke High School, which was the high school I had gone to through up to the eleventh grade, even though it was much older than so called Littlefield High School, Littlefield High School was accredited three years after it was built. Pembroke had been here fifteen years and was not accredited. That's where we got into the hassle about they claimed well, we can't be accredited because you don't have a principal with the right

credentials for an accredited school. That's what Linda was talking about when she was talking and I was real active in trying to convince her father to go over there and he did agree to do that. But anyway, that didn't work out and we didn't get accredited. So we had a number of meetings with the board of education down here in the office and my dad was one of the outspoken people who would speak and sort of help carry the banner when they'd would go down there. Reverend Oscar Cummings was the one that did about the same thing from the Lumberton area down there. In fact, I expect he was probably more instrumental in keeping the pressure on the people in Lumberton than any other one man there, you know, by far more than, even though E. B. Turner was a pretty much titular head so far as being progressive and aggressive in bringing this pressure to bear. He wasn't near the personality as Reverend Oscar Cummings was you know. You know it's sometimes said the angels, fools walk in where angels dare to tread. Mr. Oscar he just would go right in. He'd sit on Superintendent Carroll's doorsteps and wait for him to come home and wait for him to get up in the morning when he had something. He'd catch him going out in the morning to go to work and sit there and sit there and wait for him coming in at night, you know, that kind of thing.

My own children, they went to school--, when they were in, let's see, early high school the older, no, let's see, Michael graduated from high school before his mother and I separated and divorced but the other kids were in elementary and high school when we separated. She went to Winston-Salem and all the kids actually graduated from high school in Winston-Salem, went to the Winston-Salem schools and got a much better education most likely than they would have gotten if they would have been here.

MM: And of course they didn't have Indian schools there. Did they go to white schools?

MB: Oh, yeah. That was totally integrated there you see.

MM: Right, by this time.

MB: By this time.

MM: This was in the late '60s, early '70s?

MB: Yeah, late '60s, early '70s. So that kind of covers that.

MM: Right, I wondered, you know you made the connection so strong between your father's experience taking kids to school and that being such an important part of what he felt like he had to do for his children, for the other children in his community. How your raising related to, what made you want to come home so much to practice?

MB: Well, now one other practice in the family at that time, we had a big family. It was eleven children in the family, four brothers and sisters. My mother died when the youngest child was nine weeks, when Harvey was something like nine weeks old. Dad remarried and had three sons by another lady. So there was actually nine boys in the family, three half brothers and five whole brothers. But at night after we had our evening meal, which we called supper, and the table had been cleaned off, we had a long square table with an oil cloth on it, when it was cleaned off Dad got at one end of the table and every kid got their books and got around that table and you got up your lessons before you did anything else. Of course, now we didn't have television and a whole bunch of other stuff to distract us and that kind of thing. But we had study hall after supper every night during the week. Even though dad had not graduated from the seventh grade, hadn't finished the seventh grade, I've known many a time he'd be helping my oldest

sister Althea with her algebra and she in the eleventh grade, you know. So even though he realized the importance of or the value of education, whereas, at that time most of our Indian folks, the only value they recognized was land. I remember this one fella telling me says my daddy always told me buy land, son. When you get money buy land, put all your money in land. And he was one of the few people that owned a thousand acres of paid for land in Robeson County, you know. So dad somehow or another saw the value in education and instilled it in us, you know, and made sure that we did our lessons at night. Well, that was just a given, you were going to get your lessons up. It wasn't a question of whether I have time or not. You did your chores and got your lessons up and then you went to bed. Dad told me a story, which stuck with me for a long time. Obviously it still does since it comes to mind now. But the first man to become a physician from this area was a man named Colonel Earl Lowry. At the time he graduated from the college here it was known as Pembroke Indian Normal College. It was a two-year college, primarily was a school for incurring people to teach or a school year factory in a sense. Well, the day that he graduated a man came down from this board of education named Dr. DeBow to give the graduation address. Dad went to the graduation. He and Earl were good boyhood chums. And he said after the thing Earl just kept right on until he got up to Dr. DeBow and he asked him said now where can I go to get some more education. Dr. DeBow told him said son, you've had all there is for you. You can't get anymore. It's time for you now to get out and start teaching. Well, Earl tried to get my dad to join the service with him and dad told him no, he wouldn't join the service. He told him now if you'll join the service one day we'll come back here driving the longest car that's made you know. Well, dad wouldn't join the service with him but Earl

did join the service. Service sent him to school. He did become a physician. He was head of the European Medical Theater, Medical Corps of the European Theater of War during World War II. He was mustered out of service, or he was not mustered out but he retired out of service as a full bode colonel. After he retired there for five years he was head of ( ) Hospital in Panama Canal and when he retired there he became head of Blue Cross/Blue Shield in Iowa until he finally gave up and he just died two years ago at something like ninety-eight or something out in that neck of the woods there. But that...

End of Tape 1, Side A

Start of Tape 1, Side B

MM: Okay, go ahead, so about Mr. Earl not being able to get an education here.

MB: Oh, Colonel Earl Lowry, it was the first man from here, first Indian to become an M.D., to earn an M.D. degree, graduated from Pembroke State University. Now at that time it was called Indian State Normal College. It was a two-year school for the preparation for people to teach schools, a schoolteacher factory primarily. On the day of his graduation the man who came down from the state Department of Education in Raleigh to give the address was a man named Dr. DeBow. Dr. DeBow gave the address and my dad and Earl was there present and Earl wanted to talk to Dr. DeBow and finally he got up with him after the meeting and asked him where he could go to get more education. Dr. DeBow said son, you've had all there is for you. It's now time for you to start teaching. And so that made it pretty obvious to me, and I was just a kid when my dad told me this story, that nobody in the state expected an Indian to get a higher education at that time. Indians weren't to be educated, you know, at least the state wasn't going to provide for their education. However, if you get into the history of the formal

genesis and the derivation of Pembroke State University you'll find that the state did give some money, five hundred dollars I think often to help procure some kind of physical plant for Indian education of which the people here provided the wood and the labor and so forth and built the building and that sort of thing. I'm sure you've probably gone through that history. So with those kinds of things, with one man telling me I wanted to be a doctor and I couldn't be a doctor because medical schools here in North Carolina would not educate an Indian to be a doctor. Hearing that even the state department level was saying Indians do not need to get higher education, they need to get out and start teaching the other Indians what they know at that time, all those kinds of things I suppose engendered and motivated me to know that I have to leave here to become a physician. It's what has been called by the sociologists a horizontal migration in order to make vertical migration, that kind of thing of which I'm sure you're well aware of. Now you've got some other...

MM: Why did you want to come back when, you know, especially with this experience?

MB: That's a good question. When I was perhaps, let's see, I must have been maybe ten years, no, ten or eleven years old, my mother as I just told you when she died my youngest brother, my youngest full brother was something like nine weeks old, eleven weeks old perhaps. She was never really well after the delivery of that child and I got off the school bus one day to come to the house. There was a hearse waiting in the yard under a big ( ) tree out on a little farm where we lived. And this same man who'd written the by-laws and the constitution that we mentioned already was there as a doctor to see her and they were loading her onto the hearse. They didn't have ambulances and

EMTs and so forth at that time. There was a hearse there that ordinarily was only used to haul dead bodies but they would use it to transport people to the hospital at that time.

Well, the hearse was there and they were loading my mother on it and I heard the ambulance driver say to this doctor do you think we need to be in a big hurry and he said no, it's too late for you to be in a big hurry. Just take your time. Now I wasn't supposed to hear that but I did hear it. And my mother lived for several days after she got to the hospital but the morning she died my Uncle Stan and myself were down there with her and when she got into respiratory distress they were looking for some oxygen and finally they got a tank of oxygen, an oxygen tank and brought it in and the tank was empty and she died. Actually when we went back and checked later on she had died of pneumonia, now something that she would have been, probably would have been a simple problem now days. Some people still die of pneumonia. But I felt that if she had just had care she wouldn't have died and I'm sure that was one of the big motivating factors for my coming back here, you know.

MM: So you could provide that care to people who couldn't get it otherwise?

MB: Well, it just wasn't available you see, even though she had a doctor that was there seeing, had come to see her. There was no doctor in Pembroke at that time. Nearly all the medicine practiced in the Pembroke area was house call medicine. The doctors from Maxton and Red Springs covered this area in house calls after they'd done their days work in their offices you know.

MM: What do you think, just skipping down a little bit later in time period, how would you characterize the relationships between Indians and blacks who were involved in activism and school desegregation issues at that time in the '60s and the early '70s?



MB: The cooperative relationship was poor. I think probably because of those blacks who were in some leadership position felt that they owed their position primarily to white support. And this probably would have some element of truth in it. And in order to be an active supporting member of this Indian move of trying to get some equality in the schools or equality in anything, particularly when we talked about the voting booth, they were actually afraid for their own positions. So our active cooperation was extremely poor, even though they would talk a good game with you sometimes when you were having meetings. I know when I ran for the Board of Education, at least the second time, I went to a lot of black churches and talked. And we'd have good meetings and it look like ( ) I'd leave there knowing all these people going to vote for me. Ain't no way I can lose. Well, when it came down to brass tacks to voting they seemed to remember well now look, I have to get my food in the wintertime from Mr. white man. I'd better what [do] he wants me to do. So it was really more of an economic struggle than there was cultural or moral, you know. And I think morally the black people wanted to go with us but their economic plight would not allow them to, you know.

MM: Were blacks in ways more dependent on whites economically than Indians were?

MB: No, I wouldn't think. Well, yeah, kind of. But you see the Indian was totally dependent on the blacks for their support to do anything against this system you see.

MM: Right, politically.

MB: Right, politically. You see where the black was pretty well, he's kind of satisfied in the position he's got and if I fool around with these Indians over here I'm going to lose my hold over here you see. So with more...

MM: So Indians were more willing to go out on a limb because they had to?

MB: Well, the Indians had to. They had to you see. The whites had accepted the blacks much better than they accepted the Indians because there's also a lot of fear of miscegenation, you know, the inter-marriage. And they weren't too concerned about, they didn't have near the fear of blacks marrying their white girls as they did of maybe Indians marrying their white girls, you know. So I think at that time they were much more concerned about keeping us at bay, you know. And also the economic reasons because the big Indian families was an economic asset to the landlords. Let's say when I was a kid if you, the sharecroppers, the Indian sharecroppers, if one sharecropper had three kids that were able to work and another sharecropper had five and they were vying for the same farm the one with the five Indian kids that was able to work, big enough to work, got the farm you see. Because at that time most of the labor was done by hand labor you know so large families were real economic assets, not necessarily to the family itself but to the economic systems supporting the kind of feudal system that was going on, you know.

MM: That makes a lot of sense. I think that some scholars and people that read documents and things like that from this time period, but really I'm thinking about in some ways much earlier in the twentieth century, around the issues of how serious Indians were about excluding blacks from their schools. These scholars get the impression that Indians are more anti-black even than whites are, you know. And that

they have that impression that extends up until the '60s and the '70s and even today. And I think what you're saying, it shows that it's really more complicated than that, but would you talk a little bit about that perception, sort of why, you know, how that might come about or how it was really different than that?

MB: Well, for instance, a number of our black leaders at that time were referred to as Uncle Toms by Indian people because they would have a decision, have a meeting, say like tonight, tomorrow's election day. When the votes are counted, this guy who had promised to bring all these voters in didn't show up, didn't fulfill his promise. But it wasn't a matter that they didn't want to I think. It was a matter they didn't feel they could. As I say, it was much more an economic issue than a moral issue. Morally I think they would have wanted to do it. In fact, I had a number of them would tell me says Doc, I know we need to go with you and this is the way it's got to be done eventually but we can't do it now. Says it'll just cost us too much, you know, and you have to understand and I respected some of them for doing that. There was one of the leaders over in Red Springs who was a fine gentleman. He was a leader, churchman leader, who taught me a lot about it. He says I know we need to do what you're saying but we just can't do it right now.

MM: It's not possible.

MB: It's not possible for us to do it. The timing wasn't right. The situation's not right. We can't do it. I had several people tell me that during that time. But later on it appeared some of the Indians lost faith with the black people because of this. But they didn't, weren't able to see far enough in ( ) to put themselves in the black man's position you understand. Now had this move in the state legislature for breaking double voting

had that been brought up in the legislature when I first started fussing about it, I mean Joy Johnson had been in there, I'm sure he would not have introduced that bill, you know. Because it would have been not only political suicide for him, it would have been physical and economic suicide for him, you know.

MM: But the timing was right later on.

MB: Oh yeah, it was right later on. The whole peoples, black, Indian, white, and everybody, needed a lot of, it's almost analogous to the Ten Commandments, you know. The Ten Commandments were brought in not to save people, not for salvation, but was to kind of make a society out of them that could some how or another live together, you know. Out on that mural out there, the picture of my Uncle Raymond, the only way he knew to live was by the gun and the sword, and etc., you know. He knew nothing about arbitration and mediation and going to court to settle your differences and that kind of thing. The Ten Commandments was a training, educational area so it took that for the whole peoples to learn before it was time for the Messiah to come you know. So this was a learning process evolving culturization of all the people until this thing could, until they could kind of begin to cooperate, you know.

MM: And things could really happen.

MB: And even after that it took the Indians a good while before they could trust each other. It's only been a short time that we Indians have been able to eat on each other, you know, and do business with each other. Still a lot of them don't trust the Indian enough to do business with them. They still go to the white man because I remember when we used to have two cotton machines in Pembroke, one owned by the Pates Supply Company, which was right here about where the lumberyard is and one up

on the area where it's now called the Pembroke Town Park. It was a gin there. Well, the gin up there was owned primarily by Indians and run by Indians. Of course, the one at Pates Supply was run by whites. Well, A.Y. Paul who was a white man and big farmer, Sonny Oxendine was the cotton buyer at the Indian's mill up here. He said A.Y. Paul would come by near about every morning during cotton season and he says he asks how much is strick middling today. That's a grade of cotton. He'd tell him how much. Say how much is middling. He'll tell him. He said well, that must be right. I went up to Russell's place and they told me the same thing this morning, you see. [Laughter] Sonny Oxendine told me that story, that every morning here comes A.Y. Paul. How much is strick middling today. How much is middling today. Well, you must be right. That's the same thing Russell told me this morning, you know. You see they would believe the white man before they'd believe the Indian.

MM: Why do you think that was true, differences, Indians not able to trust each other? What was the source of that?

MB: I think probably more imagined gossip because at that time if an Indian got ahead they thought he had sold his soul to the white man and he got money from the white man. They didn't believe an Indian could get ahead honestly, you know. That if he got ahead it was because he had sold out something to the white man and the white man had boosted him along. That was a prevalent belief for a good long while, even though it was fallacious, it was still a belief, you know. And if you believe it, it's going to be true for you, you know.

MM: Let's see, going back a little bit to that time period right around 1970 and describe for us what you remember about school desegregation really coming, you know,

to a crisis point here in Robeson County. What was the atmosphere like and how were you involved?

MB: Well now the schools were not desegregated while I was here and in school. That all happened after I left here. In fact, when the Ku Klux Klan was routed out of Maxton I was in my hospital training. The superintendent of the hospital knew that I had come from this area and when this hit the news he called me in his office and wanted to know if I'd ever heard of the people called Lumbee Indians down there. And they were all just jubilant about all this that had happened, you know. Life magazine came out with Shell Warriax and Simeon Oxendine's picture on the front page wrapped in an American flag. You may have seen that. But he wanted to know if I knew anything about these men and I knew both of them, of course, you know. I said yeah, that's exactly where I'm from. He said well those folks sure done us a real favor in getting rid of the, of course, they didn't get rid of the Ku Klux Klan. They just routed them out of Maxton, you know, but anyway--, so I can't speak with any first hand information on exactly what went on with the actual, what were the attritions that happened, the frictions.

MM: I was thinking I guess more about like the time period when there were the sit-ins at Prospect and Indian students refusing to go to the schools that they had been assigned to and some of the, you know, the time period for example in which Old Main was burned and some of the barn burnings were happening and things like that. Is that part of your...?

MB: I was here when Old Main was burned. Now Linda can tell you a lot more about that than I can because I'll tell you, I was so busy trying to keep my practice going.

At that time I was working day and night and I weren't too much a part of that that was going on at that time. But now Linda I'm sure can fill you in pretty well on that.

MM: That's good. That'll be fine. I'm trying to think back in my memories just some of the organizations that come to mind from that period of time or you know, for example, LRDA was formed, the ECIO, the Eastern Carolina Indian Organization, the Lumbee Citizens Council group. Seems like from that time period there were several organizations that were advocating for different things, some of them social services or others of them were focused on the schools or things like that. Do you have any recollections of those?

MB: Some but I did not take part directly with those because I kind of felt they were, their derivation was selfish primarily in it's origin and there was too much chauvinistic Indianism in them, which I was very much opposed to.

MM: Describe that a little bit, chauvinistic Indianism?

MB: Well, I don't know if we want to get this on the tape.

MM: Well, that'll be all right.

MB: You want to turn it off a minute?

MM: Yeah, I'll turn it off.

[Tape turned off and then back on.]

MM: Formation of the Lumbee Bank, yeah.

MB: The formation of the Lumbee Bank. When I was, let me go way back now, back to my childhood again. When I was about seven years old I went with my dad to the bank one day. It was called the Scottish Bank at that time and was really not much more than a loan office for the Pates Supply Company, which was the primary mercantile

interest in Pembroke at the time. The bank building was, the bank was housed in the building where that little dry cleaners thing is on the corner there just across from Locklear and Sons Funeral Home. My dad went there to get, making his farm loan or something and anyway, he had to go through a little ( ) gate to step up to walk back there to sign some papers and I started to follow him up there and one of the people up there stopped me and said no, son, you can't come back here, but your dad's going to come back and he'll be back out there in a minute. Well, the counters were up real high and weren't high enough to see what was going on back in there. I knew this thing had something to do with money but that's about all I knew at that time, you know. Well, I know that whatever dad had to do he transacted his business and at that time I would get two pair of shoes a year. I would get a pair of what we called our Sunday shoes in the fall, which was primarily to be worn to church and to school, and in the summertime I'd get a pair of tennis shoes. Well, one fall my dad took me there to get my shoes and when the clerk come around to wait on us, it was a man clerk, he said Pete, the Captain wants to see you. That's what they called Russell ( ), Captain wants to see you in his office. So we went back there and the Captain, Mr. Russell, says to dad says Pete where do you buy your groceries. Dad said well, what little bit I buy I buy from my brother Ander over across the railroad. His brother Ander had a little grocery store across the street there where Marshall ( ) Shoe Shop is. He says well, if you're going to buy your groceries there you can take your kid over there to buy your shoes. Well, Uncle Ander didn't sell shoes. All he had was groceries. So anyway, he wouldn't let us, he was going to have to get the shoes on a credit and he wouldn't let him have them on a credit. So a little later on he got some money from somewhere and my mother took me over to Red Springs, no,



it wasn't Red Springs. Yes, it was, and bought me a pair of shoes at B.C. Moore's. B.C. Moore's is still over in Red Springs. Well, when I came here to practice medicine I needed to borrow some money. Now at the time I left Michigan I could have gone in just about any little town up there and on my signature borrowed money. In fact, some of the little towns offered to set me up in practice if I'd just come there to practice, you know. We'll fix your office up, etc., you know. Well, I came here and by this time now the bank building had been moved over now to where they hold court over there. That's where the bank was at that time. The banker there was a man named Earl Hall and I went over to see him about making application for a loan. He said oh, yeah. So he took my application for fifteen thousand dollars. He said now you check with me every few days and I'll let you know what progress we've made on the loan. Well, I started checking with him. He said well, we just haven't quite got everything settled on it yet. He said there's one or two that has to sign off that hadn't signed off. Well, this went on for probably a month and it was still the same situation. Well, school had started and I was doing a little bit of work for the school, insurance. They were insured by a company called Pilot Life Insurance Company, which is now part of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, and one of their salesman came by one day and of course he was interested in selling the new doctor a big life insurance policy and so forth, which I had no money to buy a life insurance policy at the time but as he got ready to leave he wanted to know if I needed to borrow any money. I told him yes. I said I've got a loan over at the bank but they seem to be having a little problem about getting me the money. Now the last time I had talked to Earl Hall he said well, he said, now I've got three men's names, if you'll get him to sign your note we can let you have the money. One was my

dad. One was Lonnie Oxendine, and one was the pharmacist here in town, a man they called Dr. Rodgers at that time. Lonnie Oxendine had loaned me cash money while I was in medical school. In fact, when I got finished with school I owed him about five thousand dollars of money he had loaned me while I was at school. I told him I said well, I'm not going to ask my dad. I said he's done more than he was able to do anyway thus far. I'm just not going to ask him. I said I don't feel that I could ask Mr. Lonnie because I still owed him some money, you know. But I did go and check with Rodgers and, of course, Kirby Kilpatrick was working with him at the time and I asked both of them about signing it and they refused to. But anyway, I didn't get any one of those three to sign. Anyway, this man says well, he says we have a facility where we have young doctors sometimes get started. He says I'm on the way back to the home office. At that time his office was in Charlotte. He says I'll check and he says we might be able to help you. Well, he called me the next day and he says I've checked on that and we can let you have the money. I called Earl Hall and I told him he could cancel my loan, that I'd found another place to get the money. He says well, you can start writing checks on it this afternoon. So I did get to use their money.

MM: The Scottish Bank's money?

MB: The Scottish Bank's money. Well, when I had this house up to about five or six feet up from the ground, they were bricking it, Mr. Russell ( ) who was still the CEO and big man in Pates Supply Company, he'd ride back and forth by here every day, every morning and every night and sometimes he would stop out there. Well, one afternoon I was out in the front and he stopped and come over where I was and says you know, I think it's good that a man in public life is going to be out here where the public can get to

him easy. But he says you know, he says I owned this property here twice in the past and I plan to own it again before I die. Well, I still owed him probably about ten thousand dollars on that note. Well, I did not pay another thing off that I didn't have to pay in order to live. I paid for my groceries and my light bill. Everything else I made I put on that bill and within about a year or less I had it paid off. And the day I make my last payment I told Earl I want my deed of trust. He said well, Doc, I can't give it to you right now. I said why can't you. He says because it's over in the Captain's desk and the Captain's not here. I said what's it doing over there. He says well, we let the Captain buy certain loans that he wants to buy so he bought your loan. So when I got that deed of trust I've never put another lien against that house from then until this day, you know.

MM: That's amazing.

MB: He might have done me a favor, you know. So I knew the plight that Indians were having trying to get money, trying to borrow money. So one Sunday afternoon five of us met here at this house, Vernon Ray Thompson, Ralph Hunt, Carmel Locklear, Adolph Dial, and myself.

MM: And who is the Locklear man?

MB: Carmel, Carmel Locklear. He is the father of this guy who's a detective who ran for sheriff against...

MM: Mark's father?

MB: Yeah, Mark father, who was a real decent nice man who had been a member of the police force in Chicago for years and years. He got wounded and he came home. But anyway, the purpose of the meeting was I wanted to talk to them about us trying to start a bank. So we selected three of us, Carmel, seems like Herman Dial was in it, but I

want to think it was Herman or Adolph and one other, Ralph, they were to go to Raleigh to see what they could find out about starting a bank. Well, about two months later we had another follow up meeting and Carmel was the spokesman for the group. He says boys forget it. Says you can't get a bank. You got to have at least a million dollars before you can do anything. So that was the first talk in any way of formal way about getting a bank here. So it was put on the back burner even though I didn't forget about it. About a few months later Simeon Oxendine and myself went to see Hector McLean who at that time was in the Senate, the state. He was also CEO and president of Southern National Bank.

MM: Now is he Angus McLean's son?

MB: Yeah, he was governor's son. And our purpose for seeing him was to ask him about putting a branch in Pembroke. And he leaned back from his table and put his foot up on this desk. He said boys, he says I'm doing all the banking in Pembroke that Southern National can do and it would cost me to build a building over there. It would just cost me money to build a branch over there. Well, he says it would be economically unfeasible for me to even think about that. During the time I was a member of the Board of Higher Education there was a man on the board who was a son of a man named Asa Spaulding. Asa Spaulding had formed the Mutual Life Insurance Company, which was the first company in this state that would sell life insurance to the Negroes and had become real wealthy doing this. And they also had formed Farmer's Mechanics Bank in Durham. And I talked with this, I'm pretty sure he was a son or grandson of Asa's. Asa married Billy Lowry's sister up here. But anyway, I told him what my interest was in a bank. He says why don't you go over and talk to our president over here at the Farmer's

Mechanics Bank and see what he can tell you about it. Says he might be interested in putting a branch down there. So he made me an appointment and I took a day off and went up there and talked with him one day. And he listened to me and talked with me a good while and he says well, he says that's out of our geographical area. We wouldn't be interested in going that far but he says have you thought about trying to form an independent state bank. He says I think that might be the way you ought to go. Well, I didn't know nothing about an independent state bank. At least that's where the seed was planted was right there. So I came back and kind of thought about it a little bit and didn't do anything on it and Charlie Rose ran for the House. Charlie missed his bid the first time. One night during the week it was just about getting dark, Charlie Rose and Tommy Dial came here to the house and says we want you to ride with us a little bit. We want to talk. So we left here and went up to Welton Deese's. I don't know if I ought to put this in but anyway, we went up and we bought some beer and we rode and drank beer and talked til maybe eleven o'clock and then we came back and sat down. This room here wasn't built at that time. We sat down in this room over here and we talked til about two o'clock in the morning. The essence of the evening's conversation was Charlie Rose was saying, you know, if you Indians had voted for me I would have won the seat in the Congress. Says now what is it I've got to do to get your vote. And I said now Charlie, now you know I've got one vote like you have. He said yeah but you can influence people. I said well, if you'll help us get a bank here I will do what I can to help you get elected. He said well, I'll do whatever I can do to help you get the bank. I said all right, I'll do what I can do to help you get elected. All right, he was elected. His dad was active in, had some banking knowledge and was a member of a bank board over in

Fayetteville and he helped Charlie in deciding what we had to do. Charlie helped us fill out our application for the bank. The day we went up to present our application to the State Banking Commission he went with us and was our mouthpiece. Did an excellent job presenting it. Before we left there that day one of the members of the commission said to me he says we're not supposed to let you folks know anything for two weeks after this presentation but he says I can tell you, you can go home with a good feeling because we all feel good about this. Well, as you know, the charter was given and again, I sort of arrested that sort of thing as history. But that's the way we got Lumbee Guaranty Bank here. It was called Lumbee Bank to start with. Now we call it Lumbee Guaranty Bank and as Shakespeare said ( ) by any other name was spelled the same.

MM: [Laughter] Yeah, that's a fascinating part of that story too, you know, because it does link the economics with education with, as you went back, you know, you started out the conversation by talking about ignorance really and the Indians being unable to have power because they were kept in ignorance and all of these things are steps towards removing that barrier. As you look back on that time, how do you feel about it's successes or failures? Is there anything that you wish you yourself could have done differently or could have been different about the situation?

MB: No, I think the timing went along as expeditiously as it could because it was a tremendous amount of education had to happen. When we first started selling our pledges for Lumbee Bank, even though the State Banking Commission gave us permission for the charter, they said now you'll have to sell a certain amount of this because we were being chartered as a Native American bank, you see. There will be a certain amount of money that's going to have to be sold to Native Americans, that is a

portion of the amount of the total. And we were having trouble getting the right proportion in Indian hands. A lot of our Indians would stand on the sidelines and say oh, you'll get nothing. You'll never get that much money out of Indians and it turned out to be pretty difficult.

MM: You're talking about selling stock in the bank?

MB: Yeah, selling stock in the bank. We had to sell so much stock in order to get started. In fact, we ended up several of us had to buy more than we thought we, well, more than we were able to buy at the time. We had to borrow the money. Adolph Dial, Stan Jones, Martin Brooks, Joyce, my sister, and one other had to, I think it was ten thousand dollars each we had to buy in order to get the proportion. I think, one thing bothered me a little bit about that but I was so anxious about getting the bank started I let it ride. I think it was unconstitutional for them to require us to do it that way but we were required to do it. That's the hurdle we had to jump through in order to get it done. But I don't know of anything that should have been done differently. I just think it just took that much time and evolutionary culturalization for the people to come around to do it.

MM: Are there any unexpected outcomes at that time period?

MB: Personally there's only one thing I would have liked to have seen happen that didn't happen. I would like to have seen Tommy have gotten his license and practice law here. Tommy's one of the sharpest men we had. And I'm pretty sure there was probably some biased politics that probably went on that kept him from practicing. Now Tommy was kind of a radical hothead. Didn't know anything about diplomacy and nothing about compromise. Now he was an instrumental figure in some of this, in particular the Lumbee Bank move. And I'm sure he did not get near the credit that he

should have gotten. Neither did Charlie Rose. Charlie Rose was, without Tommy and Charlie Rose at that time we would not have gotten Lumbee Bank. It might have come later but without those two we wouldn't have gotten it at that time.

MM: Well, that's a very thorough treatment of it. I appreciate you sharing that with me. Is there anything else you want to add that I haven't asked you about?

MB: [Pause] I think it's kind of ironic recalling some of the hurdles I told you I had to jump through for me to get to be a member of the County Medical Society. Now the new bed tower, my name is put on the doctor's lounge at the...

MM: Is that right?

MB: And of course as I told you in the beginning that I'm a member of the hospital board of trustees now, which is kind of in a sense coming full circle in a sense and probably in sociological terms or something, you know, which is kind of interesting.

MM: It's the hand of God for sure. Well, if you'll bear with me for one more minute I'd like to ask you about your memories of your Uncle Joe Brooks, just for the purposes of my dissertation research project, anything you remember about that time period or him.

MB: Oh, there's something else I want to bring up and that has to do with a great, great, great uncle, maybe another great in there too, who was a member of the Revolutionary War, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. The last few years before my dad died he became kind of interested in genealogy of particularly the Brooks family name and he came to me one day and says Martin, he says I'm told that I had a great, great, great uncle who was a member of the Revolutionary War that fought in the Revolutionary War. He said do you think we can find out anything about it. I said I



don't know but we can write and see. Well, at that time the Bureau of Indian Affairs was really under the Department of Interior and Harold Ickes was Secretary of Interior at that time. So I wrote a letter to Secretary Harold Ickes explaining what I was about and concerned with.

MM: This would have been the 1950s or something like that or?

MB: Let's see, no, this would have been later than that. This was just not too long before my dad died and my dad died in '71.

MM: Okay, so the 1960s.

MB: Late '60s, but anyway, we didn't hear and we didn't hear and we didn't hear. Finally six or eight months later we got this big thick manila envelope from the Department of War. And in it, it had this whole itinerary of when this man went in service, the battles he fought in, the post he out of, where he was when he was mustered out, and how much mustering pay he got when he left the service. He was given a tract of land in one of the Dakotas, which I think was a hundred and sixty acres. Site unseen that land was traded for the little farm that we settled on when we came back from Detroit. Now this man John Brooks who was a member of the Revolutionary War, soldier in the Revolutionary War, couldn't read or write. In fact, his job was to take care of the horses, the menial tasks. They used horses to pull their cannons and all that. But anyway, there was an Indian agent, name I think McMillan, who was a home base somewhere in the Red Springs area who knew something about the benefits these Revolutionary War soldiers were supposed to have and he became aware that there was some money available for them to get. Well, he helped this man fill out the papers and he got a payment of seventeen hundred dollars. So his severance was seventeen hundred.

But now he didn't get that for years later after he was already out of service. So that gives a proper [pause], I suppose racial and charatorical and whatever other authority you need that the women here could set up a chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution if they wanted to through that particular effort. But I think that's kind of interesting aside from all this that we're talking about you know.

MM: Birth history, yeah. So your Uncle Joe then, you know, he was so instrumental in the federal government's involvement in this community in the 1930s. Do you have an recollections of him or information about why he might have done the things that he did?

MB: Well, I don't know if I can tell you about his motivation but at that time it was referred to as Indian business and there was two men who were real instrumental. One was Jim Chavis and one was my Uncle Joe. Now Jim Chavis still has some folks around here that you might want to interview. They might know something more about it than I do. They formed a little group and they'd collect a little bit of money and they'd give it to Uncle Joe and Jim to go to Washington. Well, their idea was they're going to give them this little bit of money and they were going to go to Washington and they're going to get a whole lot of money and bring back. That's where the phrase "our Indian money" was sort of originated. Uncle Joe and Jim were going to bring back the Indian money. Well, they never did bring back the Indian money and they fell in disrepute with the people because the people felt they were taking their money and squandering it. If you'd had it all in one pot you wouldn't have had any money hardly but they weren't squandering the money. There was just the situation there wasn't no pie in the sky for them to get the money and bring back here. But through that endeavor though they did

and I'm not so sure that this wasn't kind of an outgrowth of President Roosevelt's alphabet, the WPA's and his PWA, that they were sort of able to establish a resettlement program out of which the farming industry up here at the Red Banks area came. And Uncle Joe was instrumental in helping bring that here but I don't think that was primarily because of the Indians. I think that was primarily because of the depressed economic situation and was kind of an outgrowth, as I say, of Roosevelt's effort to give people something to do so they could make a living and eat, you know. At least that's my surmise of it. But as I say, you might talk to the Lowry girl right up the road here, we used to call her Nink. She was Jim Chavis' wife's daughter. Jim was not the father. It was an outside child she had and I'm pretty sure her memory's good. She's married to a Lowry boy, lives right up here on the right just before you get into town. What's her husband's name? Her husband was my sister Bernice's husband Marvin's brother. She would be one that you might talk to about the resettlement and Uncle Joe and Jim. Who else? The other of Jim's children are too young to know much about it. Right off she'd be the one that I'd suggest that you might talk to about that, you know. But it's my feeling, nobody's ever told me this directly, I don't think that was done primarily because of Indians here. I don't think that had much to do with it. I think it was more of a depressed economic situation of trying to get people something to do to live, you know. I know my dad's sister Margie was the first person to move in a house. That's the first new house I ever went in. It was a little house if you go to Red Banks there's a curve going back up towards the railroad. Well, right in that curve's where the house set. It may still be a house setting there. Maybe it's the same house setting there now.

MM: And she was married to Shaw Deese, correct?

MB: Shaw Deese and they got the first house and, of course, Uncle Joe was instrumental in her getting that house you see. But now whether he, I really don't think any of them could take credit for the resettlement. I think that was a thing, it was sort of like nobody can take credit for Pembroke State University being here now. When I was on the board of higher education there was a very serious discussion on whether they should close this school in favor of developing another campus somewhere else and economics was finally the deciding factor, that it would be a lot easier to...

End of Tape 1, Side 2

End of Interview

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