

November 13, 2000. Bob Gilgor interviewing R.D. Smith at his home at 200 Caldwell Street in Chapel Hill.

BG: Good morning, R.D.

RDS: Good morning.

BG: I would like to begin with just a broad question about when you were born and what it was like growing up in Goldsboro.

RDS: Well, I was really born in Baltimore, Maryland. My mother was an R.N., registered nurse, and she was in Maryland at that time and she later moved back home which is in Goldsboro. When I was a baby... I was born February 21st, 1918 in Baltimore and moved from there back to my grandfather's home (which was my mother's home) in Goldsboro, North Carolina... about 5 miles outside Goldsboro on my grandfather's farm. Of course, being a rural person we went to a one-room rural school and one of my jobs was, since the teachers lived with my grandfather—to a great extent they did, teachers—I assisted her in making fires in the old wood stove everyday, 5 days a week, so that we could stay warm.

BG: So, the teacher was almost part of your family?

RDS: She really was. And of course that put a damper on some of the things you could do with the teacher. You dare not act up in school because the teacher would come home and tell your grandparents or tell your mother. My mother was away from home a lot because of being a nurse and was one reason I was staying with my grandparents. I stayed out in the rural school until I was in sixth grade and then we moved into town and went to school in the elementary school and the high school in Goldsboro. I graduated from the high school—Dillard High School—in 1935.

BG: So did your grandparents raise you, pretty much?

RDS: Primarily they did because my mother and my father separated when I was a baby and that's the reason my mother came back home. And being a nurse, private-duty nurse primarily, most of her life was spent in private-duty nursing: nursing people who either were sick, deathly ill, or had babies. She was working in connection with a local doctor there in Goldsboro.

BG: Did your grandparents work or were they...?

RDS: Nope, my grandparents were farmers. My grandfather had a farm: raised cotton, tobacco, corn, sweet potatoes, vegetables, and all of that kind of things; hogs and chickens, just whatever they needed on the farm for survival. What they didn't can they froze. Or didn't freeze them but they, you know, my parents used to take

butter and put it down in the well, which was real cold, and it would stay down there until they needed it and they'd pull it up with a bucket.

BG: So you were a farmer, too, I guess? You ended up working on the farm?

RDS: Oh, yes, sure, I ended up working on the farm and then when I went to college I took a course in vocational agriculture so that I could come back and assist farmers in making a living on the farm. That's why I came to Chapel Hill: I came to Chapel Hill as vocational agriculture teacher. I graduated from Hampton University, or Hampton Institute at that time, with a B.S. degree in agriculture and I came here as a teacher of vocational agriculture.

BG: I assume that you lived in a segregated area in Goldsboro?

RDS: Yes, primarily it was, because back in those days most of the area was segregated: there was a section in which the Afro-Americans lived and a section where the white people lived. So, it was segregated. Schools were segregated. In fact, everything was segregated to a great extent. You could go in stores and buy stuff, but that was about it. Because, you know, people didn't mind selling you stuff in their stores but that was the extent of it. Very few but some Afro-Americans worked in some stores, as laborers, of course, not as salesmen: they worked as laborers doing the muscular work.

BG: What other kinds of jobs did the black community hold besides the men who had jobs as laborers?

RDS: Most of them were laborers. They had a box factory in Goldsboro and they had another factory that made water meters: water meters that you see out on the streets all over the United States. A lot of them were made right there in Goldsboro. That was a place of employment. There was a factory that made boxes that were shipped all over the world and that was the major source of employment for Afro-Americans. Other than the farms, you know a lot of them worked out on the farms seasonally.

BG: Did you have any extended family around you growing up in Goldsboro?

RDS: Oh yes, sure. My aunts lived in Goldsboro. I had two aunts and three uncles and all of them were right out there on the farm with their father, my grandfather. And we all grew up together.

BG: So it was like community farming with the whole family working together?

RDS: Oh yes, everybody who lived in that household did some work on the farm, even my grandmother.

BG: Was that a happy time for you?

RDS: It was a happy time. We were a very close-knit group of people. We grew most of the food that we needed to eat so nobody ever went hungry. There was never a day in which any group member went hungry, there was always plenty of food available. And it was available because of the cooperation between members of the family in getting that food and it would be preserved or carried over from month to month. The chickens and the eggs and the hogs and the turkeys and the vegetables and the sweet potatoes. I remember we used to "hill" sweet potato. They don't do that anymore... we'd hill sweet potato. We'd take three potatoes and put them in a pile and on top of that pile we put pine straw, cover them up with pine straw, and then on top of that pine straw we'd put dirt. And when you wanted a sweet potato in the wintertime, you'd go out and dig through that dirt into the pine straw and pull out a sweet potato and then close that hole right back up. And those sweet potatoes would last all winter long because that was the storage. So, you know, it'd be amazing now if people had to do what we had to do back then.

BG: So, when you finished with your grammar school and you moved into town...?

RDS: Well, I moved into town when I was in the sixth grade, which was before going to high school, because then you only went to high school in ninth grade: ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. So we had three years in high school, we didn't have twelfth grade—ninth, tenth, and eleventh—you graduated when you were in eleventh grade.

BG: How big a school did you go to?

RDS: Well, I guess still it was about 350-400 students because everybody, every Afro-American went to Dillard along with youngsters who lived in the county, that was their high school. They'd come in to Dillard High School, which was the primary high school for Afro-Americans in that area, in Wayne County.

BG: How would you compare that black high school with the high school that you worked at in Chapel Hill that was integrated?

RDS: Well, from the standpoint of teacher-student relationships there was a great deal of good relationships between the students and the teachers. One of the things I think that stood out was the fact that the teachers cared; the teachers were concerned about the students' progress to the point that they made sure that students were learning something. They made sure that the students were motivated to the point where they could learn. They felt comfortable; they felt a great deal of pride within their school. That's one of the things, I think, that to a great extent the integration eliminated from the standpoint of the Afro-American student. To my knowledge there wasn't that pride in school, once schools were integrated, like back when it was before when we were at all-black schools.

Lincoln had a reputation of excellence in a large number of areas: band, football, basketball, academics, and those types of things because the students felt that somebody cared about them. The teachers cared, the principal cared—and they were close together—and the parents cared. The parents and the teachers and the principal all went to church together, they prayed together, they did a lot of things together.

BG: They lived in the same neighborhood?

RDS: They lived in the same neighborhood and every teacher lived in this community, right close to the school. They lived with parents: to a great extent those teachers who did not have homes yet, they lived with some of the parents. When I came here as a teacher I lived with a family right up here on Church Street, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Thompson, I'll never forget them. They took me in and we had meals there with them. We did a lot of things that would build good relationships between the teacher and the family that we were living with.

BG: So you knew all the kids and their families?

RDS: I knew everyone. That's the advantage that I had, when the integration started, over the white teachers: I knew a lot of the parents. I had talked to them, prior to integration. See I started teaching here in 1942 and integration started in 1966, primarily. So I had the advantage of a lot of people, other teachers, when the high school was older because I taught a lot of the parents. I knew the kids, I knew almost every parent in this community at that time; I was familiar with them. And all I had to do was call the mother, call the father, and say, "You're son is doing this, that, and the other..." and most of the children didn't want me to call their parents. That was the case with one of the students whose picture we have in here—his mother and I were real close.

BG: I wanted to go back to growing up. To get an idea of what your neighborhood was like in Goldsboro: where you lived in the town, whether you had paved streets, whether you had running water, whether you had indoor plumbing?

RDS: We had all of that. I moved into town with an aunt of mine and she was within three blocks of the center of Goldsboro at that time. The neighborhood was a nice and quiet, well established neighborhood. We had the only doctor in town at that time lived next door, Dr. Gordon. We had mail carriers, who were Afro-Americans in the city at that time, and they lived close by. Dr. Whittington, Hatchers, and all of those people. The undertaker was living one block; the druggist was in a half a block of us. I used to work in the drug store after school for a long time. And I ended up, my last few years, working with the undertaker as a part-time job after school. I had to get ready to go to college.

BG: So, you didn't go back out to the farm?

RDS: No, we didn't go back out to the farm... I mean, just for visits, yes. I'd go out and visit my grandparents quite often, in the summertime after school I'd go to my grandfather's. I had to go to see grandpa and grandma, you know, help them on the farm.

BG: Did you feel poor?

RDS: Never, never felt poor. The word, you know, people used to think you were poor because you didn't have food to eat, you didn't have clothes to wear, you didn't have the necessities of life. I never felt that way. I had clothes to wear, I had plenty food to eat, never went hungry a day in my life and I enjoyed being out there with my grandparents and they enjoyed having me out there. So you know, there's a certain division you live within, a certain area, and you found happiness within that area. With the people who lived there, the other students who lived there, the old people who lived there. Back then, you know, you say it takes a community to raise a child? Well, believe me you, if you did anything in that community, if one parent knew about, your parents knew about it. Because they would discipline you just like your parents: they'd tell, like, "Now, I know Lula doesn't know that, what you're doing..." (Lula was my mother's name). The whole community would raise the children.

BG: You had a very close community.

RDS: Yeah, sure, a very close community.

BG: What about the interaction with the white community? Was there much interaction there?

RDS: Only from the standpoint of, I would say, the fact that a lot of the people, a lot of the Afro-American people, worked for white individuals. And the relationship to a great extent was good: the interaction was good between the adults. Of course, the children didn't have that much interaction; other than the fact that you'd go to the store and you'd buy a piece of candy or something like that or a soda, that type of thing. That was the extent mostly of the interaction between the students and the white adults. Of course, there wasn't that much interaction between the students and the students because they lived in different sections. When I'd come home, I'd come home in the black community and very seldom was there any... like now, you know, there's integration all over town. A lot of your close friends are white kids. A lot of their close friends are black kids. But that type of relationship didn't exist because nobody thought about it. We were happy within our area, with our friends. To a great extent, you know, people didn't want to be associated with each other.

BG: When you graduated from Dillard High School you went on to Hampton: was that considered a typical kind of thing in that school, that a high percentage of the students would go on to college?

RDS: Not necessarily, it wasn't necessarily. But it just so happens that my principal, [name] Brown, an excellent guy from Kentucky, was a Hampton graduate. And if you showed any promise whatsoever, Hampton was the only place for you to go. And he made sure that you got admitted to Hampton. He had that relationship with Hampton and he sent a large number of students to Hampton. If you wanted to go to college, you went, but you went to Hampton. And of course a lot of them went to Durham, to the North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, because there were teachers on the faculty who graduated from those colleges. My mother graduated from St. Augustine Nursing School in Raleigh. And the relationship between alumni and the graduates, to a great extent, determined where you'd go to college.

My parents didn't have money enough to send me to college but Mr. Brown made sure... Back in those days you would go to college and take a work year, what we call a work year. You'd go to college, you work the first year and then you took two classes at night, Math and English at night, but you worked other times, for a year. And after that, you always had a job, making 25-cents an hour and, usually, somewhere on that campus. Now, I took a work year in the kitchen at Hampton, my first year. And I worked the other four years in the kitchen during meal times. I'd come in at breakfast, I'd come in at lunch, I'd come in at dinner and work serving the waiters who took the food from the kitchen to the dining room. It was a family-style type of thing. We'd put food in the bowl and there'd be enough in that bowl for the eight people at that table or six people at that table. And I worked in the kitchen for 25-cents an hour. My whole college career I worked in the kitchen.

Of course, as an agriculture student I'd find time to work on the farm. We had a vegetable farm, we had a poultry farm, we had a dairy farm. The dairy farm was located right now where Langley Air Force Base is, in Hampton. We had to go through the air base to get to the dairy farm. And then when the expansion of the Air Force base took effect, the Air Force bought the farm and we moved that farm into town, right across the street from Phoenix High School, right down the street from Hampton University. And that is the farm that, when I graduated from Hampton in 1940, I was hired by the school to manage. For two years I was manager of the dairy farm that they moved into town. And then after that I came to Chapel Hill.

But, there were always jobs available if you were wanted to work. A lot of students, because of their financial situation, had to work, had to find some time to work. I mean my parents, my mother—you know she was a registered nurse—she wasn't able to send me to school because my tuition at Hampton was about 300 and some dollars a year. And I worked at 25-cents an hour to pay that tuition.

BG: And worked in the summer?

RDS: But I was determined to get an education, it was just that. The principal of my school, my teachers expected me, my parents expected me—even though they were not financially able—they expected me to take advantage of every opportunity that I had to get an education.

BG: Did you feel that your high school prepared you well for the education you got at Hampton?

RDS: Very well, very well. I have no regrets whatsoever. I had excellent teachers in high school, and teachers who expected you to excel. I'll give you an example; I had a math teacher—I'll never forget her, [Shari?] Hatchett [Hatcher], excellent math teacher—but she gave me a four (back in those days you were marked 1, 2, 3, 4: not A, B, C, D but 1, 2, 3, 4), the only four I made in my whole high school career. And I asked her, "Ms. Hatchett [Hatcher], why did you give me a four?" and can you imagine what she told me? She said, "Because you are not working up to your ability." And that was a motivator. From that day on, I understood what she meant. That's what teachers expected of you: to work up to your ability. And they used every method that they could use to be sure that worked up to your ability.

BG: Of your graduating class, how many would you say went on to higher education?

RDS: My graduating class was about 30 people. I'd say a third of them went on to higher education.

BG: The stories that I hear about the facilities at black high schools were that they had old books, they had old things in the school: people had used them before at the white schools. Was it that way in Goldsboro?

RDS: Well, to some extent. But it really didn't matter because those same books had the same material in them that every other student had. Because they may be a different edition, but basically the information in those books was the same. And the teachers used, not only those books, but other education materials to make up for what folks might not have, what they felt you ought to know in order to qualify yourself for college. That was more or less the attitude. They realized, "Take what you have and make the best use of it," and that's what we did; that's what they did.

BG: Did you find that same sort of thing at college?

RDS: We had everything we wanted at Hampton. It was nothing like that. Hampton provided whatever you needed, or the teacher needed, for your education experience. A lot of the times the teachers would use their own money, in high school and elementary school, to buy additional supplies. We did that here in Chapel Hill when I first came here. Teachers spent a lot of money buying; adding new material, different material, to the textbook because we used textbooks that

were handed down from the high school or from wherever we could get them. But, as I said, the school system didn't furnish everything that a child needed and the parents raised money. The first activity bus that we had at Lincoln, the parents raised the money for it – \$2,600.00 – and bought that bus from Raleigh. The parents did that; the school system didn't give activity buses. Nowadays, they furnish activity buses.

BG: So, you were the head of the dairy farm at Hampton for two years after...?

RDS: Yes, I was, two years after I graduated. The agriculture department began a program: they would select one graduate to operate it, given the experience in farm operation, for a year. Now, I started in December and I went through that year and they said, "Well, we don't have a student now for the next year." So I stayed on for the second year. At the end of the second year they hired [Avery Bolan?], a local boy who grew up right there in Hampton: they hired him to operate the farm. That was the understanding; I had the understanding that it would be one year. So I went to the placement office and asked them, I said, "You know, I'm gonna need a job." They said, "Yeah," (the placement officer and I were real good friends). So she called me one day and said, "I got three jobs you can take, three requests for Ag teachers." One was somewhere in Georgia; the second one was in Eastern Shore of Cape Charles, Virginia; and the third one was in Chapel Hill. So I talked... they had a supervisor of all farms, one man, Mr. Barnes [Voninger], was from Kansas City, Kansas. So I talked to him, he was a real nice guy, real close to his workmen. I said, "Mr. Barnes [Voninger], I've got three chances for a job." And he knew, of course, I was leaving. I said, "I've got a chance for a job in Georgia, I've got a chance for a job in Eastern Shore of Virginia, and I got a chance for a job in North Carolina." He looked at me and he said, "I'm white and I wouldn't go to Georgia." So that took that one out, right there; the words he said, that took it out right there. Forget it. But being from North Carolina and... We had a lecture series at Hampton: we would invite different people in to lecture. They would lecture and, of course, everybody had to attend the lecture. And the college invited Charles Jones, who was a minister here, Presbyterian minister here, to come to Hampton and speak to the student body.

BG: That's a white Presbyterian minister...?

RDS: A white Presbyterian minister, right. The Jones house out here in Carrboro is named in his honor. Reverend Jones so impressed me, along with other students at Hampton, because of his idea and attitude toward the races, the race issue. I said to him, I said, "You know, I think I would like to work at Chapel Hill." Because he was way before his time, way before; ideas way ahead of other people, other white people. And when I came here he was the first, his church members were the first members; they invited me to their church, all-white church, down on Purefoy. Because that's when the church had split up, the Presbyterian Church here, and they had established a church on Purefoy Road.

BG: He left the church over on Franklin Street?

RDS: Yeah.

BG: Can you tell me about his leaving that church?

RDS: I have no idea about it, but all I know is they had... evidently he was too liberal and he, along with some of his members, had established a church on Purefoy Road.

BG: That wasn't the Church of Reconciliation?

RDS: No, the Church of Reconciliation is down by the malls. But what's the name of the church down there?

BG: Is it called the Community Church?

RDS: Yeah, the Community Church of Chapel Hill, that's the one. They actually established that church and he was one of the first—the members of that church were one of the first members, along with Reverend Jones—who invited me, an Afro-American, to attend their services when I came here in 1942.

BG: How did you feel about that?

RDS: Well, it just reemphasized, to me, what he had said at Hampton.

BG: He was walking the walk?

RDS: That's right. He wasn't just talking, he was carrying out what he had said. So, you know, I felt good. That was good, because I was received by the members: they didn't look at me from the standpoint of color. They looked at me as, more or less I guess, as a human being. As an Afro-American who, evidently they thought, I was sort of special person. I was the first Ag teacher in Chapel Hill. That type of thing. They didn't have an Ag teacher until I came here.

BG: So you got the job of the agricultural teacher at Lincoln High School in 1942?

RDS: Well, it was the Orange County Training School then, the school right over here. The Orange County Training School was an all-black high school in 1942. Which is a Rosenwald School.

BG: Can you explain that; I'm not familiar with that?

RDS: Well, the Rosenwald Foundation, the Rosenwald family, began to establish what they called training schools for Afro-Americans throughout the country, in the

south particularly. And this was one of them that they established: the Orange County Training School. Now, people looked down on it because they thought it was some kind of school for delinquents. Because all of them were, all were... all the black schools—a number of black schools, I'd say—were training schools. They were named training schools when they were established. And everybody from grade 1 through 11, went to that school. All Afro-American students in Chapel Hill went to that school along with some from the county because the school system included a large area, this end of the county, until they had a referendum and it more or less separated the districts: Chapel Hill school district and Hillsborough school district. A number of students who used to come to Chapel Hill then had to be transported to Hillsborough; originally because their parents did not agree to paying an extra fee for the kids, an extra tax, for their children to come to Chapel Hill. So, since it's the county's responsibility for school for all children, those kids had to go by bus.

BG: So did you have to pay extra to go to a Rosenwald school?

RDS: No, that wasn't at the Rosenwald school; that was after Lincoln was built.

BG: For the Orange County Training School?

RDS: No, you didn't have to pay anything, there wasn't any tax at all other than your county tax; the property tax.

BG: Was that supported by the county taxes, or was it supported by the Rosenwald Foundation?

RDS: No, by county taxes. Orange County Training School was supported by the state and by county taxes. Teachers were paid by the state. Because I remember for a long time we had to—in the winter particularly when we had bad weather—back in those days teachers had to teach/work 20 days before they got paid. And we'd go to school sometimes 2 days this week and 3 days next week because of snow. And until you worked 20 days, you didn't get paid. So we had to appeal to the school board, "Listen, we need some money." So they then initiated a procedure in which they would pay teachers the 20th of every month, regardless of the number of days they worked. The 20th of every month, you got your pay. Because it was a hardship, really, in the wintertime, to get 20 days in. Because everybody almost, well a lot of the students at the Orange County Training School, were bused in. Now if those buses couldn't run, because of snow or bad weather, we didn't have school.

BG: When did the Orange County Training School become Lincoln High School?

RDS: When did Lincoln High School...? Gosh, I don't even remember the date. I guess it was back in the... somewhere back in the 50's, I guess. My wife might be able

to tell us when that happened. That might be a research thing for you to look into, because I don't remember really.

BG: So they were physically in different places: The Orange County Training School and Lincoln High School?

RDS: Oh yeah, Lincoln High School was where the superintendent's office is now. When that building was built the students moved from over here, Orange County Training School, into that school and the Orange County Training School was converted into an elementary school: Northside, Northside Elementary School. In 1966, when the integration took place, Lincoln then was converted into an all-6th grade school for all students, black and white, who lived in Chapel Hill.

BG: So when you moved into this area, did you move into Northside?

RDS: Oh yeah, I moved right around the corner here, right up on the hill of Church Street. A big house up there by Church and 19th.

BG: Were all these streets paved at that time?

RDS: No, this street here, when I moved over here, this was a dirt street.

BG: Did they have plumbing?

RDS: Oh yeah, they had plumbing.

BG: Did they have baths and showers in all the houses?

RDS: Well, not all the houses; not every house had it.

BG: Some still had outhouses?

RDS: Yeah, when they started the government program in home rehabilitation then the town made sure, the town committee made sure, they paved every street in the Afro-American neighborhood.

BG: Was that under Howard Lee?

RDS: Under Howard Lee.

BG: So that was '69?

RDS: Yeah, about right.

BG: So, it wasn't until '69 that the streets in the black section of Chapel Hill were paved?

RDS: Well, all the streets. This street was paved before '69 but we had to give 3 feet of our property, I guess, so that they could pave the street and put in a sewer.

BG: And the outhouses and those things, did they disappear at that same time, too?

RDS: Well, over a period of three years, because they put in sewer and water in every street in this neighborhood.

BG: So there was no water on some of those streets?

RDS: Well, as far as I know there might have been a few, not many, that needed to hook on to water and sewer. There wasn't sewer in all of them, because before they paved the street they had to put in water lines and sewer lines wherever they needed it. They made sure that those lines, those utilities, were in the ground before they paved the street because they didn't want to come back and have to tear it up to put it in.

BG: So, you came here in '42 and—now I know you're married—when did you get married?

RDS: I got married June 19, 1943.

BG: A local girl?

RDS: No, a young lady; we were dating each other in college, in Hampton. She was from Newport News, Virginia. But I informed my principal then—who was Mr. Harold M. Holmes, who was principal of Orange County Training School—I said, "Mr. Holmes, I'm going to get married this summer and I'm marrying a young lady who is a first grade teacher." At that time she was teaching in South Carolina, a little place called Fountain Inn in South Carolina, right out of Greenville, about 19 miles out of Greenville. I said, "And if you need a first grade teacher I would appreciate you considering her." He said to me, "Have her send in an application." So she sent in an application and she was hired as a first grade teacher before we married. So when we married June 19th, went on a honeymoon, came back here and she had a job. She knew she had a job in Chapel Hill before we got married. And she was hired as a first grade teacher at Orange County Training School.

BG: How long did she teach?

RDS: She taught, well, she was in the school system 38 years, same as me, same as I was. She went from 1st grade to maybe 2nd grade to 4th grade to 7th grade and she ended up as a guidance counselor at a couple of the junior high schools and she retired in 1941; I retired in 1940.

BG: She retired when?

RDS: 1981, I retired in 1980, yeah right.

BG: Can you tell me about your days as a teacher at Lincoln High School? What your average day was like?

RDS: Well, first of all, let me say this: when I came to Chapel Hill, I came to Chapel Hill with one, what I would call, basic philosophy. And that philosophy, because of my teachers in high school and what they did for me and the fact that they made a difference, I came here with that same philosophy: I'm going to make a difference in the lives of the young people that I teach. And for 38 years that has been my philosophy. Even when I was assistant principal at the high school, the Chapel Hill High School, I was determined that I would make a difference in the lives of the young people that I had contact with. When the principal asked me to become his assistant I told him, Larry Grimm [Graham], I said, "Larry..." Well, first of all, he said, "If you don't accept it I have to go outside the school system." I said, "That would be terrible right during the integration process. Bring somebody in new who didn't know anything about the kids, the kids didn't know." I said, "On two conditions, I will become your assistant. First condition is that we will listen to the students. We don't have to agree with them, but listen to them: they'll tell us something. And secondly, if a child comes to your door or to my door, I don't care who's in that office with us, we take time to see what they want." I said, "Because it takes a lot of nerve for a youngster to come to the principal's office and if we turn him away they're not coming back." Because at that time youngsters, particularly Afro-American students, had a belief that nobody cared; particularly the white teachers and the white administrators.

BG: That's after the school opened...?

RDS: Yeah, and nobody cared. "Now," I said, "I don't want that to happen. That can't happen as long as I'm assistant principal of this high school. It cannot happen." One of the things, one of the corrections that I have, somewhere in that first draft I got, it said something about "mascots". During the summer of 1966 they had a committee of students, black and white, who met. And they decided what the school colors would be, what the mascot would be, and everything. So what they did, they took... see, Lincoln High School was Tigers; Chapel Hill High School was... what was that... In other words, they took the mascot of Lincoln, which was Tigers, and the colors, black and gold, from the high school. They decided on that. So, that was never in question. The students made, they decided what the mascot would be at Chapel Hill High School and what the colors would be at Chapel Hill High School. Teachers, students, superintendent, nobody had anything to do with it. They let them make that decision. Because what was happening throughout this country, in integration, that was an area of contention, a tremendous area of contention: usually when they integrated schools they took the color and the mascot of the white high school.

BG: So you had some pre-planning to your proposed schools?

RDS: Oh yes, sure. As far as the colors, the mascot, and that type of thing was concerned.

BG: What about the school song?

RDS: I don't even think they have one. I don't whether they even got a school song now or not, to tell you the truth.

BG: And the trophies?

RDS: Well, the trophies, that's another question. You see Lincoln...

BG: Maybe...

RDS: Let's talk about the trophies later.

BG: Yeah, let's. I mean, I definitely want to talk about this, but I wanted to go back to your days at Lincoln High School and then, I didn't realize you were an assistant principal or vice-principal at the integrated high school. Let's go back to Lincoln High and then tomorrow, or the next day, we can deal with other issues.

RDS: Well when we were at Lincoln, Mr. McDougle, Charles McDougle, is the principal [end of tape 1, side A] ...of Lincoln High School. Very, very capable, outstanding administrator. When I went there as Ag teacher they they had put the Ag department within the main building. And, of course, with the amount of noise—with saws and hammers and all that type of stuff that we did in the Ag department—nobody could do anything in that building. So I went to the superintendent's office and I told him, Charlie Davis, I said, "Mr. Davis, I don't think it's wise to have an Ag department in the new high school." So he agreed; after we talked, he agreed, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. We don't have money to build a separate building but I'll to go Camp Butner and I'll get two Quonset huts and we'll put them together. One will be your classroom and one will be your shop, temporarily. Until we can get money to build a building." And that's what we did: he put the Quonset huts together, right down the hill from Lincoln. And that's, for a number of years, that's where my classroom was and my shop. One day he came to me, he said, "R.D., I got money for your building. School board has allocated money for your building." He said, "Now, I want you to design that building just like you want it. I want you to design it just like you want it so there will be no question as to whether or not it meets your needs." I said, "Thank you." The building that is at Lincoln now, the building behind the main building, was the one that I designed. I designed it with classroom, storage facilities, a bathroom, a shop, and a separate heating system. I did that because as Ag teacher I had night classes there for adult farmers and in the main building, the

heat at night was dropped down. So I had to have my own heating system. I also didn't like for my students to have to go out of that building to get water or to go to the bathroom because there's a tremendous amount of time lost when kids got to go from one building to another for the basic necessities of life. So we put a bathroom in there, we put a water fountain in there, we put a separate heating system, and everything. And when I drew the rough plan, the superintendent of utilities, Ray Colbert—who this school is named for, Colbert Junior High School, is named for—he was on the school board and he was in charge of university utilities. He looked at it and he said, "R.D., there's only one thing wrong with it, this thing, you don't have enough light in there." So over every workbench on each side of that building, the shop area, he put fluorescent lights over each workbench. And that's the only change that they made in that building. They built it just like I had designed it.

BG: Bet you felt a little pride in that.

RDS: Oh, I felt very much pride, you know, to have a building that kids didn't have to go out... and one that I can say, "I designed it, this is my design." Because at one point in our instruction in agriculture, the students had to do research in different areas. They were dealing with poultry and they had to do some research in diseases of poultry. And we had bulletins in the back of the room back there, in which they could go back, close off, and I could still teach out here but they could still do their research back there in the back, see. And then, if I gave them an assignment on, say, diseases of poultry, or if they had some problems with their poultry farms. When I first came here the people had cholera in hogs, lost a lot of hogs to cholera, right down on the branch down here. One of my first jobs was to inoculate, or vaccinate, hogs for cholera. I mean, they lost 400- and 500-pound hogs because of cholera. So, if a student had any type of disease in their herd, or in their crops, they did research. They'd go back and really look into what caused it and what methods to use to control it and everything. They knew how to do it when they got home. And that way... you see, I could go out and tell the farmers, "Do so and so, and so and so," but if their son came home and said, "Daddy, this is what we ought to be doing." And that way, the chances are that the father, the adult farmer, would listen to their son where they might not listen to me. Because let me tell you what, I've been doing this for 40 years, you know. But if their son came home and said, "Daddy, I read a bulletin, I did some research, Mr. Smith made me do so and so, and so and so. And I came up with this and he agreed to it." One of my primary objectives was to make changes in the way farmers did things. They way they... the crops they planted, you know, the livestock that they raised. In other words, "improve practices," that was our main thing: establish improved practices in farm operation in the farms where the students are.

BG: So you had an impact not only on the students but on the community around you by changing farming practices.

RDS: Oh yeah, we did. And not only that, you see, the Home Ec teacher and I offered adult classes for farmers and their wives. The Home Ec teacher would talk about cooking and sewing and that type of thing and I was talking about farm management, farm operations. And we'd all do it at night because farmers would come in at night for about 1 hour, we decided about an hour's instruction. But they got to the point where either they'd come in here or we'd go out to rural schools or rural churches, wherever we could get a group together. We'd go out to them rather than them coming in to us.

BG: Was your course an elective?

RDS: Yes, it was an elective.

BG: And how many classes would you teach in a day?

RDS: I'd teach half a day; my job was to teach half a day, which was about 4 classes. The other half of the day we were out in the community visiting the farms and the farmers, working with farmers out there. I taught only half a day and then went out in the community the other half. Sometimes I'd stay out in the school until dark, back then that's what I wanted to do.

BG: How many students would be in a class?

RDS: About 20 students; 20-25 students in each class. It all depends since it was a volunteer class. And a large number of the students, even though they lived out in the rural area, they had hogs, chickens, and cows in town because there was no restriction on it back then. See, they'd have a little project, as I said, farmers had hogs all along that branch down there, and the young people would... I started, in connection with a local person here, Umstead family; I started a [word] with the local veterinarian and Mr. John Umstead, who's in the legislature. We started a [word]. We had Dr. Odom, who had a dairy out here in Carrboro, gave us a purebred bull so that farmers would have a place they could.... that was one of our efforts to increase the quality of the herd, they had a place where they could come and breed their cows from a purebred Jersey bull. We kept him right down there in the branch, and the boys would take care of him, feed him and everything else; water, everything for about 3 or 4 years until we moved from over there, Orange County Training School, down to Lincoln. So we had a lot of things going on in connection with our responsibility for improved practices in farming in this community.

But other than that, and then of course we worked with the student activities. As I said, I drove the activity bus for the football team. Wherever that football went, I drove the bus. If they had a game, a home game, I'd pick them up and carry them out - we played out at Carrboro Lions Park, which is out on Fidelity Street in Carrboro, that's where both high schools played football. And we'd go away; when they had away games, I'd drive the bus for the kids. I did a lot of things

like that, for the success of the school program, since I was half-time as a teacher and the other half I'd be out in the communities. A lot of times people would ask me, "Well, why don't you just take the kids to so and so and so this afternoon." When we had a homecoming parade I just moved stuff in my shop and we'd put all of it.... If anybody wanted to have a float, they'd get the wagon or whatever they want to build that float on and put it in the shop and the kids would come in there at night and they'd build their floats and they stayed in there until parade day. So there wouldn't be much work in the shop during the time they were in there because they'd have them all over the place. But we'd work with them at night at building their floats for the parade, for homecoming parade. So a whole lot of things that we did.

BG: Did you try to influence any of your students to go on to Hampton?

RDS: We always thought the only place to go was to Hampton. And some of them went; some students went to Hampton. But it got to the point where the state began to assist in kids who wanted to go to college: they had different scholarships and things like that. And a lot of them went to local schools: Fayetteville, Elizabeth City, Durham, Greensboro A&T and those type things. Because the same type of programs were available and they were close to home. So a lot of them... and they were probably cheaper. Finally, even my own children didn't want to go to Hampton. My oldest daughter went to Hampton for the summer program and she didn't want to go to Hampton because her aunt was a switchboard operator at Hampton and she figured that her aunt would be spying on her. My son went to Hampton. My son graduated from Hampton with honors in math. But he was the only one that did, the only one in the family that went to Hampton.

BG: How many children do you have?

RDS: Four, I have four children. Three girls, as I said, twin girls and another girl, the oldest one was a girl and my son is the youngest. We had four youngsters; ten grandchildren. But back to Lincoln. One of our basic objectives was working with the students in developing that same pride. That's one of the things that I think we were successful in, because not only did the students themselves have pride in Lincoln and their accomplishment at Lincoln; the band, the chorus, and drama club and the football team and the basketball team, they all were outstanding. But that's some of the things they lost when integration started—that pride. And you can see it, because in my high school, the graduates developed what they call the Dillard High Alumni and Friends. Now they have graduates of Dillard High School all over the country but they raised money for scholarships for Dillard High's graduates. They bought the old Dillard High School, the one I went to, and they turned it into an incubator. That is, if someone wanted to start a business then they would have a room they could start their business in until they got established in the community. Then they would go out and rent their own place or build their own place. And there's still one. They

have as an anchor tenant in their building, they have a beauty parlor school and they have a business that makes shrouds for women. Those are the two anchor tenants in that high school. Now, in one of the elementary schools that they bought, when it was closed, they have set aside classrooms for sororities, fraternities, and social organizations. They have their own room in there and they decorate it any way they want to; with their club colors or their sorority colors, and of course they can't pay rent, they just assist with the utilities. And they have to maintain their room and do everything like that but the alumni association owns the building.

BG: They really took a lot of pride...

RDS: That was the type of pride that Afro-Americans had in their schools in Goldsboro.

BG: Did they have the same pride at Lincoln High School?

RDS: Same type of pride at Lincoln High School, that's what they had, same type of pride. Not only did the students have the pride, but see, a lot of the parents over here graduated from Orange County Training School and they had pride over there. That same pride was transferred to their kids at Lincoln.

BG: And they had an active PTA?

RDS: Very active. When you had PTA meetings you had overflow crowds of parents for the PTA meeting. We never, I mean, PTAs were active. That's what I said; the PTA raised money for the first activity bus. They said, "We want an activity bus for our kids." So they went out, found the bus, found out how much it would cost and raised the money to buy that bus: \$2,600, that's what it cost.

BG: Well, I think I've been here long enough, R.D., I really appreciate the interview and I look forward to learning more about the schools tomorrow or the next day.

RDS: All right, let me just check with my wife and see what we have on the docket and we can set a date. [End of tape 1, side B]

[Tape 2, side A]

November 14, 2000. This Bob Gilgor interviewing R.D. Smith in his home at 200 Caldwell Street in Chapel Hill.

BG: Good morning, R.D.

RDS: Good morning. How are you doing?

BG: I'm doing well, how are you?

RDS: I'm doing fine.

BG: Good. First of all, I really enjoyed my interview with you yesterday and I want to thank you for sharing all those things with me.

RDS: Well, it was nice. I enjoyed it myself.

BG: Good. I wanted to focus today on the events leading up to the integration of the high school and the actual integration and subsequent problems and the solutions to those problems, if there were solutions. And the first question I want to ask you is: what actions were there in the black community to have the high school integrated, or to have the schools in general integrated?

BG: Good morning, R.D.

RDS: Good morning. How are you doing?

BG: I'm doing well, how are you?

RDS: I'm doing fine.

BG: Good. First of all, I really enjoyed my interview with you yesterday and I want to thank you for sharing all those things with me.

RDS: Well, it was nice. I enjoyed it myself.

BG: Good. I wanted to focus today on the events leading up to the integration of the high school and the actual integration and subsequent problems and the solutions to those problems, if there were solutions. And the first question I want to ask you is: what actions were there in the black community to have the high school integrated, or to have the schools in general integrated?

RDS: Well, it wasn't necessarily schools alone. As an outgrowth of the sit-ins in Greensboro by A&T college students, it began to spread throughout the country. Not only for integration of facilities but it went into the schools and businesses and everywhere else. So it was just a carry-over from that particular incident in which various elements in the community and the nation decided, "Well, if you're going to integrate the restaurants and the eating places, why not integrate everything?" So it began to just take hold throughout the country, and Chapel Hill was no exception. We had some people who had, because of the university being located here, you had all various types of attitudes from people all over the country because students come from all over the country. And they come from areas where they've gone to school with blacks and they've associated with blacks over the years, probably all their lifetime, and they have good friends who are black. So it was natural that if it was going to start somewhere, it would start in Chapel Hill. Anything that's worth going on happens in Chapel Hill first. And

then, as I said before, we had some adults in the community who had very liberal attitudes and as a result they began to wonder and to push for certain changes in society that existed too long as far as they were concerned.

BG: Were there committees that were formed regarding the integration of the schools. Were these issues that were discussed in church or fraternal organizations?

RDS: Well, I guess it was probably discussed throughout the community, through various organizations: churches and this thing because a lot of it is an outgrowth of church leadership. But, no one particular segment. It was no particular committee except maybe it was discussed before the school board and that type of thing by various organizations and individuals.

BG: So individuals went to the school board?

RDS: It's my opinion that they did.

BG: Did the school board have black representation?

RDS: At that time, no. They did not have black representation. Well, they did because Reverend Manley was on the school board during that time.

BG: Was he a good advocate for integration?

RDS: Well, I don't know because I didn't attend the school board and I don't know how he reacted to it. But being an Afro-American himself he didn't object to it, let's put it that way.

BG: Did you feel that there was really strong support in the black community for integration or were there factions where people said, "Hey, it's always been this way, let's not change it. We're going to rile up the whites."

RDS: No, I don't think that... because they had a choice, they had a freedom of choice: those who wanted to participate did so by sending their children, enrolling their children in white schools; those who didn't, didn't. It wasn't so much either for or against, but as I said yesterday, the pride that Afro-Americans had in their schools was the thing that I think was the strongest, that kept the schools going. There was a tremendous amount of pride in the community, both by students and by parents, because of the record, because of the activities that went on. The school was like the church: it was the center of activities in the black communities. And they didn't want, necessarily, to disband that pride. Of course, they probably realized that eventually there'd be some changes because of the activities that were going on in the community as far as integration was concerned.

BG: That's a really strong statement: that the school was like the church, that it was the center of activity.

RDS: Well, it *was* really the center of activity. Things that happened—when I say center of activity—because every activity that was held at the school, there was tremendous parental support: football, basketball, band concert, May Day, all kinds of activities that happened at the black schools. As I said yesterday, the parents bought the first activity bus that we had at Lincoln. So that says something about the community support that the school had. And the fact that a large number of the parents were graduates of either Orange County Training School or Lincoln. So it's just like any of us that graduated from college, we have a great allegiance to that institution: we support that whenever we do. I had my twin daughters and my son; my twin daughters went to A&T and my son went to Hampton and they traveled to Virginia this weekend for a football game because of that allegiance to the two schools... and had a good time. And we support our colleges financially and everything else because of that.

BG: What kind of cooperation was there between the black community and the white community in the formation of the new high school, the Chapel Hill High School?

RDS: I'm not familiar with any type of cooperation between the two groups. All I know is that once they decided that rather than—in the process of integrating the schools—rather than have one group say, "This is *my* school and you're coming to *my* school," they built another school, built the high school, out in the country. Which said it would be *our* school. Nobody could say that the blacks are coming to the Chapel Hill High School, which would be on Franklin Street, because it wasn't happening in reverse: no whites were going to Lincoln. So, in order to keep that from being a contingent, they decided to build an altogether different school. Because really, they didn't have adequate space where they were and they had a good offer to buy that property from business people. And they went out here in the country and bought about 100 acres of land, 50 acres of that was a black person's land. So in that way, nobody could say, "The blacks are coming to my school, our school, or the whites are coming to our school." It wasn't an issue, really, I don't think, because of that.

BG: Now, the federal integration laws were passed I believe in 1964. Was that the law that then allowed the blacks to attend any school, a white school?

RDS: Well, the interpretation, of course, of the law was that, "We'll give you the freedom of choice: you can, if you wish—you don't have to—but you can if you wish." So, as I said, a few black parents took advantage of that to test the law. To see, from the standpoint of Chapel Hill—Chapel Hill has this reputation of being liberal—and they said, "Well, let's see how liberal we are here in Chapel Hill." So as a result several went into the elementary schools; several went to the high school. There was one young man: Hines—who was an outstanding football player for Lincoln, played in for Lincoln—enrolled in Chapel Hill High School.

And of course, one of the parents of one of the white athletes was so impressed with Hines and his ability to play football; they asked Mr. Pillman to play [words] to play in.

BG: Pillman was the coach at Lincoln?

RDS: Peerman was the coach at Lincoln and Hines was an outstanding athlete on Lincoln's team. And he ended up being an outstanding athlete on Chapel Hill High School's team. Of course, now, he is in the health department in Sanford: Eugene Hines. I don't think he's retired. I saw him not long ago. I don't believe he's retired, but he's probably eligible for retirement.

BG: What kind of experience did those students have—the few black students who integrated the high school on Franklin Street—have you any idea?

RDS: I have no idea because, from what I know, they didn't have that many problems. Naturally there would be somebody who would resent, but as far as physical activities, they didn't have any. But naturally, being the first to integrate a school—to go to a white school, a predominantly white school—you'd have some people who would resent that sort of thing.

BG: So, the integrated high school opened in '67 is that correct?

RDS: The present integrated high school? '66, fall of '66.

BG: Were the plans to make it integrated at opening? Or were they to make it white for a while and then have the blacks come?

RDS: Well, at one time they had said that they would open the school, and then when the enrollment at Lincoln got to a certain point, then they would send those Afro-American kids to the new high school. But that ended up with bitter resistance on the part of the black people.

BG: Can you tell me more about that?

RDS: Well they said, "If you're going to integrate, then in order to keep our kids from feeling that they're going to the white school, let's send every child to the school at the same time and then it will be *their* school. It won't be *our* school it will be *their* school." So the school board agreed that that would be the best procedure to follow and would have the least amount of problems. Because judging from what was happening all over the country, in the integration process, in my opinion they felt that might alleviate some of the problems. Just like they did for the mascot and the colors, when the students decided that over summer break. That was because, one of the things that you heard most of when they were integrating schools, was they'll always take the mascot and the colors of the white school. Which means the black school would lose of their identity. But the students said,

"No, we're going to take the color of one school and the mascot of the other school at the new high school." And that is the way the school board accepted it.

BG: Where were the discussions among the black community taking place to keep the school from being all white when it opened.

RDS: Well it was taken, primarily, in front of the school board.

BG: Who represented your community?

RDS: Well, I don't remember right off hand who was representing us at that time. But most of it was taking place there and you had organizations in the community that I'm sure discussed it in their regular meetings sometimes. A lot of times the churches had tried to stay clear of what they called 'the church and state', that philosophy; they tried not to mix it. Of course, some churches didn't. But to some extent that was a philosophy of some churches during that integration process.

BG: In the planning for the new high school, did you feel as though the black community was consulted adequately regarding integration and any problems that might occur in the new school?

RDS: Being a teacher, I was not privileged to be in on any type of conversation of that nature. I'm not sure, there might have been some discussion. But as a teacher, I was not a part of any discussions. I can imagine, because of the sensitivity of the integration process and the effect that it would have on the black community and the black schools, I imagine that there were some discussions somewhere with the school boards or somewhere in the community.

BG: You had mentioned that there was a committee that was formed, of students, to decide on school colors and mascots and so forth.

RDS: I think that was a thing that maybe some parents had discussed with the school board in an effort to try to alleviate some of the problems that they had heard about or seen in other school systems. And the school board probably realized that if we're going to integrate, we want to try to alleviate some of those problems if we can. And that was one of the ones that we said, "Let the students decide. Why should we decide? Let the students decide." And then of course, there again, it would be one of the things that would not be on their shoulder and on their minds. They had a way out by saying, "The students decided that, we didn't, the students decided it." It just so happens there were black students and white students on the committee and they agreed. Because, believe it or not, to a great extent, a large number of the black students and white students were familiar with each other. Especially in a small town like this; Chapel Hill was a small community back in those days. The city limits were so close to the center of town you wouldn't believe it. But since that time, Chapel Hill has grown.

BG: I think we're in that ten-year period where there was a doubling of the population.

RDS: I'm sure there was, I'm sure there was. Because I happened to have been on the planning board during that time and later on, in '67, on the board of aldermen. And the number of special use permits that we granted for apartments in this town was tremendous. It just expanded; it was like it just exploded. The university stopped building, to a great extent, dormitories. They slacked off of building dormitories but they increased the enrollment of the student body, which meant that they had to stay somewhere. So the business people took advantage of that. That's why Granville Towers is built up there close to the university, it's for students; that's all who lives in there, students at UNC. They can walk to campus and walk back and are close into town. That's why we're having such a problem right now in the black community; because people are building houses primarily for the student population. The students are moving in. You can see that over here, because it's close to campus. See, they've taken all the parking spaces on campus and converted them to buildings, which means they don't have any place to park cars so they're sending them out and building out in the communities.

BG: It's interesting. You have white students, primarily, moving into the black community.

RDS: Oh, sure. That's exactly right. We have, on each end of this street—down on that end on the right side—Afro-American built apartments, and all of them occupied by white students. On this end, the same man who built the apartments up there, they're occupied by students... all of them. Right next door to me; white workers and white students. We can say one thing: we don't know they're there, necessarily. They aren't rowdy and noisy and disruptive and everything. They have their parties over there next door to me and they'll put up black plastic and they'll stop all the noise they might make, even talking, because they don't have a lot of outdoor music. But they're conscious of the fact that their presence cannot be disruptive. Mr. Aycock, they live right across the street from him. He has apartments back here in the back and there are a lot of white students in those apartments that he owns, that his daddy built when he was living. And, of course, they'll become the property of Ed once their parents die.

BG: Let's go back to the high school integration again. What I hear you saying is that there was sensitivity to the integration process in both the black community and the white community. Is that fair to say?

RDS: I think that's a fair statement. There was great sensitivity as far as integration of the schools is concerned. There was a concern about losing—particularly the black people—losing their identity; being wrapped up in the white culture and losing all the identity of the things that Afro-Americans held precious, which means their schools. They put a lot of effort into the development of their schools and school programs. And the teachers had put a lot of effort into the school

system, into training the young people that went to Lincoln. So that sensitivity was there. Now I don't know how much sensitivity was in the white schools about the integration process. But as far as the black people were concerned, they were sensitive to a lot of the things that possibly could happen. One of the things, of course, was this matter of colors and mascots. There would no longer be a Lincoln Tiger, which was really a thing that the whole community was proud of. Not only the black community; a tremendous number of white students from the university and the town attended Lincoln football games.

BG: They were that good?

RDS: They were that good.

BG: And the band?

RDS: And the band was that good. When they'd parade, there would be a showplace: the chorus, the drama club, the basketball team... I mean, there were outstanding students at Lincoln High School that we were proud of; as teachers we were proud of them because we had a feeling that we had been a part of their development. And the students had shown their appreciation by the love and affection that they had given to the faculty, and support.

BG: Speaking of the faculty, who decided on what teachers would teach in Chapel Hill High School?

RDS: Mr. McDougale, Charles A. McDougale, principal. He selected the faculty.

BG: For the whole new high school?

RDS: Oh, no... the new high school?

BG: Yes.

RDS: No, at that time the principal of the school, which was May Marshbanks was the principal, she was the principal up at the Chapel Hill High School on Franklin Street. She and Mr. McDougale, who became the assistant principal at the new high school, he was the principal of the black high school. And between the two of them they decided on the faculty along with the school board because they had said a certain number of black teachers would go the high school, the new high school, and a certain number of white teachers from the two schools. Based on the curriculum, I guess it was. And then they spread out the black teachers in the other areas because we had seven through twelfth, elementary school and all, where they didn't at the high school. See, they were strictly a high school: eight and nine through twelfth. But at Lincoln it was seventh through twelfth. So those teachers had to be absorbed somewhere in the system.

BG: Did the white high school have nine through eleven or nine through twelve?

RDS: No, they had nine through eleventh when they opened.

BG: How comparable were the populations in the two schools in the nine to eleventh grade area so far as the numbers were concerned?

RDS: Oh, they were about 1/3 to 2/3.

BG: Just like the population?

RDS: Yeah, about the population of Chapel Hill.

BG: And how many black teachers were there who wanted to be on the faculty of the new Chapel Hill High.

RDS: Let's see... me, Pope, Clemens, Coach... I'd say there were about six out of... about a third of the faculty when it opened.

BG: So it was representative?

RDS: It was about representative. I think the school board was conscious of the fact that they wanted the faculty to be representative of the population. There were six or seven black teachers that went to the new high school.

BG: Once the school was integrated, what did you see the problems were at the new high school?

RDS: In the new high school one of the problems was the fact that the students had no courses in black history, that was one of their grievances: "We want black history courses taught." Another problem was the fact that the students felt that the white teachers really didn't care about their education and things like that. Because they had come from a school in which the teachers were concerned, not only with their academic achievement, but they were concerned with education of the whole child and talking about the problems that *you* had. It alarms me sometimes when they talk about "children first" now. What do they mean when they say "children first"? What do they mean when they say, "We're going to give students the best education possible"? In my opinion, education means more than academics: how to live, how to get along with people, how to develop certain characteristics—honesty and integrity and value systems—that you don't get, necessarily in academics when you stress academics alone. That's a part of students' living, students' growth.

BG: Did you feel that was given at Lincoln High School?

RDS: Oh yes.

BG: Was it given at the new high school?

RDS: That's one of the problems. Because the new high school was concentrating strictly on academics. And that set up a large number of problems. You see, we in the black community, we were so close to the students and the families that... we were required to visit the homes of every student and make a report to the principal of our findings. So we knew some of the problems that students were having—the parent-student relationship—that we could work on in the schools. We didn't have to necessarily get out there and publicize it, because we knew if a student was having problems at home that would be affecting student performance.

BG: So you visited each student's home?

RDS: No, in our homerooms.

BG: Oh, in your homerooms?

RDS: In our homerooms. Of course, I visited the home of every student in my classes because I was the Ag teacher and I was required by law to visit every home. That was a part of teaching an Agriculture course to farm boys. Most of my young men were in the country so I had to visit them and set up projects with them and their families: that was a requirement by the state and federal government.

BG: But the other teachers, the parents came to the school and visited the homeroom?

RDS: No, the teachers visited the home.

BG: The teachers visited the students' homes?

RDS: The student's home, that's right.

BG: That's quite a commitment.

RDS: It was a commitment. That was one of the things that Mr. McDougle required of every one of these teachers: that you visit the student's home and get to know the parents, get to know the situation in the child's home. That way you're in a better position to teach that child. You'll be in a better position than when you have parent-teacher conferences, to talk to the parent about certain things like a lack of study facilities in their home and those types of things.

BG: Did that practice continue in the new high school?

RDS: No. That practice ended at the new high school. So you can understand the allegiance and support and, whatever you want to call it, the relationship between

the faculty at Lincoln and the parents in the community, the homes in the community, and why we had such tremendous support from the parents of our school program.

BG: What you're describing is just, really, an awesome kind of relationship between the teachers and the students and the parents.

RDS: Yeah. And we as teachers, we went to church where the parents were attending church, too. We met them on the streets, we met them at church, we met them in schools. We discussed with them, talked with them. I knew almost every parent in the town of Chapel Hill, the black part of the town of Chapel Hill, as well as most of them out in the country.

BG: So here you have this rich heritage being taken away from the black students...

RDS: And the black parents.

BG: ... and the black parents.

RDS: Oh yeah. Because the parents didn't attend PTA meetings as well at the new high school as they did at Lincoln.

BG: Why do you think that was?

RDS: Well, you must remember you have a group of parents in this community who were highly educated and they make decisions over coffee somewhere, they make decisions in the clubs they have, as far as operation of the school was concerned. And those types of things where the black parents were not as highly educated and they weren't likely to be as outspoken and, to some extent, they didn't feel welcome at PTA meetings because of that.

BG: Did they feel that the decisions were already made?

RDS: To a great extent. They were made, as far as what's going to happen, they were already made when they came to the meeting.

BG: Did that ever end—that feeling—do you think?

RDS: I don't think it's ended completely, no. I don't really, no. Because first of all they changed philosophy. They now have this student government committee made up of parents, teachers, and one or two students. And I think they still feel that the schools are being run by parents and not by the people who were hired to run the schools.

BG: Typically, would you say the white parents?

RDS: Well, I would specifically say that because they're in the majority. They feel that we elected school board members to operate the public schools and yet the schools are run by the parents. And the principal that we select to operate the schools, who trained to be administrators, are pawns of the parents, of the student governing committee. They can overrule, in other words. And we look at the principal as being the head of each school and they ought to be able to determine what happens in their school. But it's no longer possible.

BG: You mean the parents are telling the principal how to run the school?

RDS: Sure.

BG: You had mentioned the lack of understanding that the white teachers had towards the black students, if I interpreted what you said correctly. Could you expand on that?

RDS: Well, let's see, how can I expand on that particular thing? You have a group of white teachers who, to a great extent, grew up not in an integrated society. They can't adjust themselves to an integrated situation as well, because they've never had to face that. They know nothing about the hardships that black people have and the problems they have, and the problems they feel towards the white man, the white person. Therefore they're not in tune with how a black person would react to certain statements that they might make, to actions they might take. They may feel that that person is doing this because I'm black. It may be the truth and it may not be, but they don't see the situation through the eyes of the black child because they haven't faced those problems. "Why are you late? Why are you out of school? You've got to do this, you've got to do that, if you're going to pass my class." And then the marking schemes that these people had. One time there was an idea that a certain segment, because of the way they mark, a certain segment of the population of the class is going to fail regardless of what they do because of this marking scheme.

BG: Did they call on the black students the way they called on the white students?

RDS: I can only speak from the standpoint of my classroom. Every child has an opportunity to participate in my classes and I encourage them to do that. One thing I said to a student, "Now, if you come into my classroom and you listen and you pay attention, I will guarantee that you will learn one new thing everyday that you didn't know before you walked in here." I said, "And let's think about this, if you learn one thing everyday and we have school 180 days a year, look how much smarter you'll be. Look how much smarter you would be at the end of this year than you were last year." You use various techniques to motivate youngsters to participate, so they want to. It's interesting: you wonder sometimes why students select certain teachers over other teachers. And that is strictly because of that teacher's ability to motivate that child, that makes that subject so interesting that they want to be in every class that that teacher has. And there's a rush at

registration time to get in Ms. So-and-so's class or Mr. So-and-so's class. Why? I wonder if they ever asked that question: why? One of my main concerns when I was assistant principal at the high school—I would consider myself an unorthodox evaluator, because we had to evaluate teacher's performance. Most people who go in to evaluate a teacher sit at the back of the room. Not me. I always sit at the teacher's desk. I'm not going to question that teacher's ability as far as academics are concerned: he or she graduated from college, they passed the national teacher's exam, they've been hired and interviewed by the superintendent or by somebody, and they have a good record of teaching. But the question is how well can they get across to those students. And I looked the students in the face, I watched the student's action. I can tell from the student's action how good a teacher that is. I don't have to look at her or him. But if I'm sitting at the back of the room, I can't see that student; I'm looking at the back of their heads. They may be sitting straight up sleeping or they're looking all around not paying attention to what she's saying. That person may not have any effect whatsoever on that student in that classroom and my philosophy has always been—it was when I came here in 1942—to make a difference in the lives of the young people that I taught.

BG: And you did.

RDS: And every teacher, a good teacher... I evaluate teachers on the basis of how well I feel that they are making a difference in the lives of young people. So, to a great extent, that was a problem with integration: you had teachers, both black and white as far as I'm concerned, who did not have as a part of their teaching skills to make a difference. They were too concerned with academics. Example, every math teacher. If you were teaching Algebra I in high school, and if you have three sections, there was a feeling that every math teacher should be at the same point in that book every day. Now, what does that say to me? "You get it or you don't get. I'm going to cover this book." I'll tell you why I had that. I had a young man while I was at Lincoln; Mr. McDougle asked me to come in because a teacher was out to just put an assignment on the board and just monitor them during that period because I had a free period. I came in; put the assignment on the board. The teacher left me beautiful plans, but no motivating activities. See, when I was in college, my critic teacher required every lesson plan that you write must have some motivating activities in it. If it didn't have some in there, he'd turn it back to you; it was not acceptable. But I went into this classroom and put the assignment on the board and I was just walking around looking at the students, monitoring them. And one young man was sitting in the back of room, wasn't doing anything. So I asked him, I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "I don't understand what I'm to do." So—you know how chairs are in a classroom—I pulled a chair up beside him and I went over that assignment and explained it to him like I would've explained it to him if I were the teacher. He looked at me like, "Nobody every explained it to me like that." Because I explained it differently than how the teacher had explained it. The same subject, but my method of explaining to students and her method of explaining things to

students were so different. I was giving individualized instruction. We're talking about individualized instruction. That young man ended up with his own building company. The state of North Carolina hired him to be... [End of tape 2, side A]

[Tape 2, side B] ...and he wrote me a check for \$100 and he said, "This is for your scholarship fund." And I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm consulting on bridge inspections and I go all over the country, wherever people need me." He was just back from Louisiana. He said, "I gave my company to my son and my son don't want me nowhere near it."

BG: And this was someone who couldn't do his algebra?

RDS: Well, they hadn't explained it to him in a way he could understand it. That's why I say: some of the problems, when you come to the difference in instructional methods, with the black kids and the white kids... Some of the problems that they had in that school is teachers teach as they were taught and they don't vary their instruction. They get a population of students—say 25 students in a classroom—they know nothing about those students' abilities. Nothing. They've never seen them before. And what do they do the first day? Give them a book and give them an assignment. I had a teacher, a white teacher, first-year teacher, come to me at the high school and said she was given about 20 Afro-American students who were considered below par: slow learners, I guess you might call them, that's what they called them then. But they were behind a grade level in math. And being a first-year teacher she was frustrated because other teachers had problems with those children. She came to me and said, "Mr. Smith, what am I going to do with these children?" I said, "What do you mean, what are you going to do? You're going to teach them. Now, go in that classroom and don't worry about the first day or two, find out something about the youngsters: what they know and what they don't know. You may give little pop tests or little pop exercises for them to do and let them know, "I'm doing this to find out what you know and what you don't know so I can then teach you. When you leave here at the end of this year, you'll feel like you've learned something." Her kids came to me about the end of the year and said, "Mr. Smith, I'd like for you to get Ms. So-and-so out of the classroom." I said, "Out of the classroom? For what?" "We want to give her a party." Now those kids had had problems with other teachers. So I made up a lie and got her out of the classroom to my office, just long enough for them to go to their lockers and get out little cookies and sodas and cups and peanuts and stuff and lay it out on the table in the room. She came back the next day and she said, "You know, that's the best class I had all year long."

BG: This is a white teacher?

RDS: That was a white teacher. The kids loved her.

BG: Because she cared?

RDS: Because she cared.

BG: And she motivated them?

RDS: Yes, sir. And they learned something.

BG: And she individualized the instruction?

RDS: She individualized the instruction. That's right. She did something that no other teacher was doing.

BG: So you think this was lacking, generally.

RDS: That was lacking because, as I said, everybody was so gung-ho for academic achievement, not realizing that kids weren't ready for it; not ready. They don't have the background, necessarily, for this material that you're giving them. So find out where these kids are and then move, move as fast as you can, towards what you expect they should know by the end of the year. But don't second-guess them. Let them know what you're doing and how you hope to do it. As I said, I guarantee any child who comes to my classroom, "If you listen and you don't understand, you stop me and let me know." Because I don't mind going over things. Some students may catch it the first go 'round, but some students may not catch it. I'm as responsible to that student that does not catch it the first time as the student who catches it the first time, if they're in my classroom. I am to teach every child to the best of my ability and to accomplish the best of his or her ability. And if I don't do that, I'm a failure, I think, as a teacher. And I don't like to fail, you know.

BG: Were there other problems that you can recall?

RDS: I think, basically, that the problems were the attitudes: attitudes of "I don't care". The attitude of not being that much interested in seeing that students achieve. Because these students, they've been used to people taking the time to make sure that they achieve. The black teachers, they weren't so gung-ho for academics, without some of the other attributes that kids ought to have. Some of the other things should develop as a part of their educational process.

BG: Do you think that the white teachers understood this tremendous background that you're describing from the black schools: how it was the center of activity, how they were....

RDS: No. You'd have to be in that school, be a part of that school, to realize that. You'd have to be in that school to realize that. And you didn't have, I don't think you had, that same type of background in the white high schools. They didn't have to visit families, I don't believe, as far as I know.

BG: They weren't teaching values, they were teaching academics?

RDS: They were teaching academics because that's the way they taught.

BG: Were there a lot of professors' children who wanted to go to fine schools?

RDS: Yeah. Go to the fine schools; go to the university. And that same thing is true today. We teach because the university requires certain things. We expanded our curriculum because the university says, "For a student to be accepted, he must do so-and-so and so-and-so. They must have certain subjects and courses." Not just the universities but the colleges. They're getting to the point where they want students to have more courses in order to meet the requirements for entrance. And then what do you have? What do you have? Let's look at it from this standpoint: we put so much pressure on students until they begin to rebel. Why do you think students are shooting up their classmates in different schools throughout this country? That's a rebellious sign. That's a sign that the kids are under certain pressures. So many pressures; pressure to excel. Why do you think so many youngsters are committing suicide? Something is wrong with our educational system that people aren't realizing. Parents are putting pressure on students. When was the last time you heard of a black student going into a classroom and shooting up folks and all that kind of stuff? When was the last time you heard of a black student committing suicide? I only know one black student that committed suicide and that student committed suicide because the parents were comparing his ability with his sister's ability. His sister was smart as a whip and they felt that he ought to do the same thing. The boy went home and committed suicide. Right here in Chapel Hill. Because his sister was smart and he wasn't that smart. He wasn't as smart as his sister and his parents pressured him, constantly pressured him, for achievement. Now, that to me says something. Why do you think so many young people, people in the present generation, are resorting to dope and to alcohol and all that kind of stuff? I looked at the television programs this morning: ten-year old, nine-year old kids. As a matter of fact, one little ten-year old girl said she drank a fifth of vodka. Ten-year olds telling their parents, "Kiss my so-and so. Go to hell." Calling their mommas bitches and whores and anything else. Why? And then they expect those same children to come to school and for us to teach them. Something is dead wrong. And the teachers: we are not trained as teachers, the present teachers are not trained, to take care of situations like that. They're not trained for that type of activity. Or they don't want to take the time to help that child straighten his or her life out, as a part of the whole education process. Yet we say, "children first"; we say that the present generation are our future leaders.

BG: What you're describing to me is a situation where there is a culture shock to the black students at the new integrated high school almost like a balloon that's filling with problems and it's going to burst.

RDS: Well, it did burst.

BG: Can you share that with me?

RDS: Sure. Because of the attitude of the students—as I said they had a feeling that nobody cared, nobody was listening to them—they decided, “I know how we *can* get their attention.” They went through that new high school and they broke every window that they could break. They threw chairs through them, rocks through them, everything.

BG: When was that?

RDS: '69 I believe. '68 or '69, right in that there area. Before I became assistant principal. They broke every window that they could break. They shattered that building and then they walked off campus.

BG: Just turned around and left in the middle of the day? Anybody hurt?

RDS: No. They weren't out to hurt nobody. They were after drawing attention to, and people began to listen to, what they were saying.

BG: So they were saying something before?

RDS: Oh yeah.

BG: But nobody was listening?

RDS: They were saying, “We want black history courses in this school. We feel like everybody ought to have a knowledge for what the blacks have contributed to this society.” And yet the textbooks don't even carry a thing about it. Why do you think I've got all this stuff I've got here? I don't intend for that to happen at R.D. Smith and Euzelle B. Smith's Middle School. That those kids will say, “There's nothing in the library, there's nothing in the books, there's nothing in this school that says anything about the black people in this city, in this community, in this country.” They can go to the library and get stuff like that, because that's where it will be: in the library. And the teachers can go. I mean, I've been invited every year to Ephesus, to a class to just talk to the kids about Afro-American accomplishments. I've done it for three or four years. One teacher always invites me out during Black History Month. But that was when the principal came to me and asked me if I would be the assistant principal at the high school.

BG: Was that after the riots?

RDS: After the riots. In 1970, the riot was over. The kids did that damage and they met at First Baptist Church that night to talk about it. Now they were saying their side, but they didn't say what damage they had done. I sat in the back of the room because that's my church. I sat in the back of the room and finally I got up and I

said, "Now let me... I was there and I saw what happened. None of you were there. The students were there but none of the parents were there. But I was there." And, as I've said, over the years I've developed good relationships with the parents because a lot of them I taught and they trust my judgment, I think. So I told them what really happened and I said, "Now it happened because of this," (the same thing I'm telling you). And that's why when the principal asked me about becoming his assistant I said, "On two conditions: two. Number one, we will listen to the students." I said, "They'll tell you something if you'll listen to them. You don't have to agree with them, but listen to them; they'll tell you something." I said, "That's what caused this situation that just passed. Nobody was listening; therefore, since you weren't listening, you didn't hear. You didn't hear what they were saying. And Larry, if you don't hear what they're saying, you can't advise them, you can't advise kids, you can't talk to them." I said, "Number two, if a child comes to our office—black or white, I don't care who it is—and knocks on our door, that door opens." I said, "We are here for the students; not for the teachers, not for the parents. If a parent is in our room and a child knocks on our door, go see what that child wants." I said, "Because it takes a lot of nerve for a child, a student, to come to the principal's office in the first place and if we turn them away, the attitude that they're going to have is 'nobody cares' and secondly, they never will come back. Unless they come back for some discipline problems." I said, "And you have an opportunity to keep down discipline, to keep from having discipline problems, if you nip it in the bud right from the beginning." I said, "Now if we can agree on that... otherwise I stay in the classrooms. I have peace and quiet in my classrooms."

BG: Was that [words] came?

RDS: No, that was Larry Grimm. Larry was hired after Mr. McDougle retired. Mr. McDougle came over to the central office and May retired and went back to Campbell College, where she lived. And they hired Larry Grimm to come in and initiate this flexible program. He was supposed to have been a specialist in establishing principal programs in schools. It was Larry.

BG: Did he institute it in a sensitive way?

RDS: Oh yeah.

BG: In a way that the black students appreciated?

RDS: Black students, as far as the program was concerned, yeah. The only thing is there were drawbacks to the program. There were drawbacks to the program. I think the kids had too much free time on their own. Because built into that program was free time and the youngsters had a little too much free time on their hands during the day.

BG: So they had more free time, they had a black culture, black history, class?

RDS: The teachers—some teachers, of course—began to put black history into it because we had some black social studies teachers. And, of course, they initiated it. And I guess over a period of time they had material, they got materials; teachers got materials, because there's plenty of it available now. It's just like all I have here. I've got all kinds of stuff.

BG: How did the black students communicate with the administrators after this uprising after they broke all the windows and marched off campus?

RDS: Well, that was one problem. There was only—before I became assistant principal—there was only one administrator: the principal. And in my opinion, the principal is away from school too much for one reason or another; a meeting with the school board, a meeting with the superintendent, various organizations meeting at 12 o'clock in the day. The principal would be invited to speak at the Lions Club or the Sertoma Club or this club or that club. And they really weren't available; they didn't make themselves available. If they were at school they were in the office, they didn't move around to see what was going on. I very seldom stayed in my office after I became assistant principal; I got out where the kids were.

BG: What about the assistant principal McDougle. Did he take up some of the responsibilities of the principal when May Marshbanks was....?

RDS: Well, see, when May Marshbanks was there, when the school first opened, they didn't have that problem. I think that between the two of them, they moved around, got familiar with the campus.

BG: How long did she stay? How long did Mr. McDougle?

RDS: Mr. McDougle stayed about two or three years: that was '66 to about '70. Yes, Mr. McDougle stayed to about '70 because when Larry came in '70, Mr. McDougle retired: he went to the central office in charge of adult education. And that's when Larry asked me, in 1970, to become his assistant.

BG: And May Marshbanks, did she leave with that change?

RDS: Oh yeah, she left at the same time and retired and went back to Buies Creek, to Campbell College. She lived right out side of Campbell College. Her parents had something to do, was an instructor at Campbell College way back. But they live right at the edge of Campbell College's campus.

BG: So did school administration have a meeting with the black students after the riot? Did any leader of the black student group come forth?

RDS: Oh yes, they met with the principal after the riot. But they were so bitter. It took a long time for... the principal might have understood, but it wasn't so much the principal as it was the teachers.

BG: You said they were bitter, who were you referring to?

RDS: The students. The students.

BG: Were the teachers bitter also?

RDS: Well, they weren't that bitter, they didn't express that bitterness. I guessed their dislike for what happened because after I became assistant principal they had a few problems with racial relations between black and white students. I had a history teacher; the only thing that teacher could say in the presence of all the students was, "Send them home! Send them home!" And I said, "Get back in your classroom and don't you dare come out of there." The students were in the halls. I told that teacher, "Get in your classroom and you stay in there and I don't want to hear you giving instructions as to what to do with these students." I said, "That's my job. Your job is to teach them." One of her students, during my first year as the assistant principal, got stabbed down here at the Pit, at the university.

BG: Stabbed?

RDS: Yeah. Motorcycle gangs, some motorcycle gang. He talked a lot; he ran his mouth all the time. I don't know what happened, but they say a motorcycle gang was down there in the Pit and the motorcycle gang stabbed him. And he lay there—and the hospital is right across from there—and he lay there and bled to death when nobody got him to the hospital. Now you had a bunch of girls and boys—black kids—down there in the Pit and they stood there and saw it. They saw their classmate die because nobody put forth an effort to get him to the hospital. And you know what came in the next day, came into school? I had ten black girls were mad as anybody I have ever seen in my life as a result of that incident. And most of them I had taught their parents. And everybody was scared to death of them and I told them to come in, come on into my office. And we went into my office and we sat there. And I told them, I said, "Listen, sit down." I said, "Now, I can sympathize with your feelings and I want each one of you to vent your feelings; how you feel about this whole thing." I said, "I don't expect anybody to interrupt the other one. Every one of you will have your chance to tell me. And after all of you have talked, it's my turn." And you could hear them all over the central office that day. They were cussing; they were doing everything that they could possibly do. So I sat back in my chair just like I'm sitting here; they were all around me, sitting in front of me and sitting all around me. After it was all over, I had my say. I talked about the whole incident. And then it was near commencement time and I was in charge of caps and gowns and invitations and that type of stuff for the seniors. And I think maybe the invitations

had come in and I had them in the book room down the hall. And I said, "You know you're invitations are here for your commencement? Would you like to get yours today?" And everybody said "Yeah." And we walked out of my office. They had their arms all around me, I had my arms around them, and everybody's mouth was wide open because they heard everything they said and they thought I was in trouble. They thought I would be afraid, I would be attacked. And no, the kids weren't going to bother me; the kids just wanted someone to listen to them. They'd experienced a terrible tragedy of their classmates.

BG: A high school student?

RDS: Yeah.

BG: Who went down to the Pit at UNC?

RDS: Yeah. All of them were down at the Pit. That's where they'd go, where they used to go down there on weekends, on days, nights, when anything was happening, they'd go down there. That's natural for young kids, that's just high school seniors. And they had seen their classmate lay on the ground and die and nobody seemed to care about it. Another incident in which they had a feeling that nobody cared. So all that was happening during the integration process. That's a part of it and the school suffered from it. It was carried over into the school: almost everything that happened in the community carried over to the schools that next day and we had to deal with it. And the way we dealt with it determined how the school reacted, how the situation was taken care of as far as these youngsters were concerned.

BG: How did you handle the white teachers and the difference between how the blacks were treated in Lincoln High School and then how they were treated by the white teachers in the integrated high school? Was there any sensitivity training or were there meetings to discuss this issue of how to deal with this sort of culture shock for the black students going into the white schools?

RDS: They always had teachers' meetings and somebody would... I don't think they brought on what the teachers could do to eliminate or to reduce some of the culture shock because, as I said, most emphasis on this school system has always been academics. Always and still is; it still is that way. It just so happens that the era of rebellion, to some extent, has passed. Other things have taken its place: dope, alcohol, all sorts of other things are coming in to play. To a great extent you see indications of a lack of concern. I walked into the classroom at the high school after I retired and the kids were doing anything they wanted to do and the teacher sitting right there at the desk still teaching. They were letting the kids... kids laying on the floor, doing anything they wanted to do. It just so happens you don't have that rebellious aspect of the population now that we had back in the '70's. Now the kids just don't care.

BG: So did you feel that the problems that existed were addressed and resolved?

RDS: Not fully, no. No, I don't think they were. They were addressed but they weren't resolved. There was some talk about it but not enough to really have the students feel that it changed the attitude about whether anybody cares or not for a long time. Now, eventually, yes. When they began to put in black history courses and other things in the curriculum then the kids began to develop some allegiance, you might say, to certain aspects of the program. I had a music teacher who did not want black students in the course. It's a known fact that black kids can sing; they had good voices. But she didn't want to deal with them because the type of music that she was teaching was not the type of music that the black kids liked and evidently she didn't want to put any of it in there. So what I did, I had a young man who had started to go off, go to the left a little bit. He was a brilliant young man from the standpoint of music. So I called him into my office and I said to him, "Listen, I want you to develop, during lunch hour, at this school a black chorus." I said, "I want you to start it up. I want you to select eight people, just eight, and I want you to get those eight and get them trained during their lunch hour. Make it known." I talked with them, I said, "Now y'all, after you eat your lunch then go to the gym." "When you get those eight trained, I want you to get eight more so you'll have sixteen. When you get those sixteen trained I want you to get sixteen more. You'll have a chorus of thirty-two people." I said, "And when I feel like..." and I told them why, they knew why; because we've got to let these people know that black kids can do something, can sing." I said, "Now, when I feel that you are ready for a program in which all students can come in, I'll call an assembly." And I'd go in at lunchtime and listen to them. They worked hard; after they ate their lunch they'd go into the gym. Nobody but those students and that one young man. So finally I said, "OK, I think y'all are about ready for a concert." So we called an assembly. Now, usually when an assembly is going on, students will leave school. That's an opportunity for white kids to leave school. Nobody left that school that day. Those kids went in there and they sang about a half an hour. You've never heard anything like it. They got a standing ovation from every student in that gym. And that gym was packed: students and teachers. And I did it for one purpose: to teach that white teacher what she was missing from the standpoint of development of a good chorus at this high school.

BG: Did it change her ways?

RDS: Oh yeah. She began then to think, "Why don't I have some of this type of music as a part of my chorus program?" She didn't do as much as I'd hoped she would do, as much as the kids hoped her to do, but they set the stage for a lot of things. Because I had been used to black choruses in Lincoln, they had been used to black choruses in Lincoln, and they had been used to black choruses getting excellent grades in contests, state contests, that she did not know nothing about, the music teacher knew nothing about.

BG: Did they teach black history at Lincoln?

RDS: Oh yeah.

BG: But they had a specific course at Lincoln?

RDS: Well, they didn't teach black history, per se, as a course. But in their social studies curriculum was a section that we talked about the contribution of blacks to the development of this country. And that's all the kids wanted in the course: "Let's talk about some of the things that we've done, that the black folks have done. George Washington Carver, look what he did with the peanuts. Look at the number of products he made from the peanut. Look at the guy who did this, who did that." Some of the guys that I have right over there, some that you have.

BG: Some of these inventions...

RDS: Inventions, yeah.

BG: ...that nobody recognizes, I think, in our country. So many of the conveniences in the kitchen were done by the black people.

RDS: By black people, that's right. We use them everyday but we never say who did it. We never talk about them. The idea that I'm collecting all these pictures of great Afro-Americans is another effort on my part to carry out my basic philosophy of life; that of making a difference in the lives of young people. Those who have never realized what the Afro-Americans have contributed to this country. And in this way young people in R.D. Smith and Euzelle B. Smith Middle School will have an opportunity to really see and listen to and hear discussions on what the Afro-Americans have done as far as development of this country in all areas of a person's life. Because they are, these pictures cover almost any area that you can think of: law, medicine, athletes, everything.

BG: Are you going to put that in the new middle school?

RDS: This will be a part of the new middle school; the R.D. Smith and Euzelle B. Smith Middle School. It will be there, not only for the youngsters who are in that school, but for any teacher in the system who would like to use it. All they have to do is go in and check it out. I'm sure the librarian would be happy to let them have it as a part of their display. Because the principal of the school has told me that they would have a lot of this type of stuff permanent, in cases, so that everybody—it won't be something that is hid under a basket—it will be a part of that school in showcases, just like trophies would be. And it would be changed from time to time because there are a lot of duplications in some of this stuff that we have here. And I did that purposely so that if a person gets one of these photo albums, they may get some of the same material that's in another photo album so they won't miss out on anything. And then they can realize that maybe another will have something different and it will create enough interest that youngsters

will want to do a lot of research into the contributions of the Afro-Americans. In particular the Afro-American students who are growing up in this community. And I would hope that the whites would be likewise; would be so interested that they would want to try to learn more about who did what. Who patented some of the things that we use every day, who accomplished what, who named the North Pole and that stuff, and see a picture of that person. All they may know is a name, they don't know if he's black or white, but if they see a picture of that person they'll know what color he is. They'll get a greater appreciation of the role that we have played in American life. Can we get back to the high school?

BG: Is there anything more that you think is important to share with me? Or anything in particular you want to say about the integration of the high school, R.D.?

RDS: Well, one of my concerns has always been—and I've explained it to the chancellor at the university and I've explained to the dean of the School of Education and I've explained to the superintendent of the schools—is the fact that I think a lot of the problems that we are having, and that we have had and are still having, in our schools as far as achievement is due to the fact that our teachers have not had any type of instruction—no type of seminar and no type of work—in developing motivating skills that they can carry into their classrooms and apply. It's just not a part of the educational structures in colleges and universities. Our emphasis is on academics too much and not on how best to take what academics we have and apply it so that children will learn, children with different backgrounds and abilities. Right now we're coming up with methods which might bridge the gap between white accomplishment and black accomplishment. But no where in those techniques that we have... we seem to be afraid to say to teachers, "You need some work in motivating kids." I gave the superintendent a man's name in Norfolk, Virginia who goes all over the state of Virginia giving lectures to school boards members, to parents, to teachers, and to students about student motivation. He charges maybe \$100 a day plus expenses. But if we get results, what difference does it make? They don't get it in colleges and universities. You can go to almost any college in this country and they won't have it in their curriculum; they won't have anything about student motivation. I went to graduate school at the State College in Raleigh. First thing they gave me was a list of things that I had to read, articles that I had to read, and there wasn't a single article in that group—required reading—about student motivation when that would make me a better teacher. If I could just develop some skills, because that's one of the characteristics of a good teacher is being able to motivate. I said to the chancellor, I said, "What would happen—let's talk about one thing—what would happen if Dean Smith did not turn out a winning basketball team? I know what you'd do: you'd buy out his contract and send him on his way. Yet you turn out teachers and send them out into the schools who can't turn out winning students; who don't know how to motivate kids. And what do we do? We let them get tenure. Three years. And once they get tenure, forget it. Then you've got to prove, if you fire them, that they're incompetent. And how are you going to prove that they're incompetent?"

BG: Let's go back to the motivation. Can you be more specific by what you mean about motivating students?

RDS: Alright, let's give you an idea. One of the things that I use; I have a poem called "Equipment" and I got that poem from a lecture that George Washington Carver gave at Hampton when I was a student there. And the poem says, "Figure it out for yourself, my lad, you've what the greatest of men have had: two arms, two legs, two feet and two eyes and a brain to use if you'd be wise. With this equipment everybody began, so start from the top and say, I can." "Don't come into my classroom," I tell the students, "and say 'I can't.' It has been done, if it has been done: you can do it. If anybody has done it you can do it to if you believe in yourself. Then I get, there used to be Purina Food people; they used to give out placards with certain sayings on it. So what I'll do is I may require students to learn that poem—it's a long poem, about six or seven verses—and from time to time you refer to certain aspects of it. Or put out one of those Purina signs up on the board. When I taught driver education, one of the first things I did when I walked in that classroom, I put one word on the board, one word. And it stayed up there all during my driver education course. That word was attitude. I tell them, I said, "I don't care whether you learn to drive or not. Unless you develop the right attitude about driving. See, because if you get behind the wheel, you've got to realize that when you get behind the wheel of this automobile, you have in your hands a weapon of destruction. [End of tape 2, side B]

[Tape 3, side A]

RDS: See, I truly believe that a good teacher is one that first of all motivates youngsters. He creates a climate in which they want to learn. And any time you have a student who is highly motivated, who wants to learn, you do not have discipline problems with them, they don't have time to do things wrong, they're too hyped up. To the point that they want to grab every word that you're saying. They want to go above and beyond what you require. Because they know they can. Consequently, until we begin to develop that type of attitude, the attitude of wanting kids to learn, believing that every child can learn and that we can be the difference in whether that child learns or whether that child does not learn. Whether that child succeeds in life or whether that child does not succeed in life. Until we get to that point, then we're going to have problems in school: in public schools, in private schools, there's no difference. We're going to have to look at children in a different way, with a different sense. We've got to change our attitudes and *want* to make a difference in a child's life. And that difference may not always be academic. It may be in whether or not that child has some of the other things that you expect to have in a child and in an adult: promptness, integrity, and those types of things that you don't get in textbooks. But you get it from interaction, interaction between people, between teacher and student, between student and student, you know. Those things will come along once that

child is motivated and wants to learn. There's no limit; there's no limit to what they could do.

BG: R.D., you have certain qualities that just seem to jump out to me. You were probably a very caring teacher. You had the ability to distill out all the junk from the class and put up a sign which says "attitude", which is the most important thing about learning how to grow. You had the ability to excite the student and interest them to want to learn.

RDS: Well, one of the things they did in driver education, you know, I required students of mine in driver education to make 100 on my final exam. I had 50 questions on my final exam, if you had answered 49 right, you took it over because you missed one. Now, one of the things, and I tell students this, I do that for this simple reason: that one that you miss may be the difference between life and death. How you handle a particular situation or how you don't handle it. I said, "Now, I don't want you to come up and say, using the excuse that, 'Mr. Smith didn't teach me that.' See, because when you take my final exam and you pass it, 100%, you can say very well, 'Mr. Smith taught me, I just didn't use the knowledge I had and as a result, I'm in this situation that caused a wreck or caused a life of some person to be killed.'" I said, "And that person, believe it or not, you know who that person may be? Your father or your mother, your sister, your brother. Because what happens... Can you tell me where your parents are every time they go out and every time you go out driving? Can you tell me where they are?" I said, "First of all, you do most of your driving at night and you can't see your parents coming down the road. And if you go out there and don't have the right attitude and drive reckless, that's the person you may run into."

BG: You're telling me the same thing my physical diagnosis teacher told me. And that is, "You treat everyone like they're your mother."

RDS: I told them, I said, "You drive this automobile, you drive this automobile like everybody else out there is crazy." I said, "But if you watch people drive, and you have the right attitude, you'll think they're crazy—the way they drive. So don't blame me for your lack of knowledge, because I'm going to give it to you and you're going to pass my test." And I never taught driver education... I taught driver education one year on a straight shift automobile... I mean on an automatic. Because I don't believe in teaching driver education on automatics; you give a student a half of a driver education course because that's all they can drive. Now if they learn to drive on a straight shift car, then driving this [words] on the road. And the people in the state department thought I was crazy. "You mean to tell me you got somebody teaching driver education and won't teach nothing but on a straight shift?" I said, "That's right." Because what happened? We were dependent on young people to drive school buses and every school bus was straight shift. Now, who's going to teach them to drive school buses? If somebody is teaching driver education and doesn't teach them how to use that

clutch and such? I happened to have been that person. Making a difference, making a difference. That's the whole philosophy.

BG: R.D., thank you so much. It's been a real pleasure.

RDS: Oh, you're quite welcome. We have to talk sometime.

BG: Well, I feel like I really know you and I appreciate that.

RDS: Well, I appreciate the opportunity, as I said, maybe to make a contribution to whatever you're trying to do. In hopes that our interview will make a difference in the way people see the whole integration process and the things that some of us are trying to do; to make things better for everybody concerned. I've had good relationships with every student I've ever taught: black or white, girl or boy. And I feel good about it, you know, and if I didn't I guess I wouldn't have taught for 38 years. I'd have found something else to do. But I had, in my high school, I had some very, very caring teachers. And they, along with my college training, helped me to develop a type of philosophy of life that I felt I needed to go with if I was going to be in any way helpful in the lives of young people. And I chose Chapel Hill to put it in practice, which I have never regretted. I've met some outstanding students, I've met some outstanding parents, some very cooperative parents, very cooperative students over the years. And as a result of that, I think, my wife and I are being rewarded with the naming of the new middle school in our honor.

BG: ... a wonderful 38 years. Let's end it there.

This is Bob Gilgor. I had sat in R.D. Smith's family room now for 4 hours and more over two days. I must say, I am so impressed with what I have seen and what I have heard. His family room is bedecked with awards, honors, and pictures as well as some mementos—a fishing rod, given to him by a grateful student with his name engraved on it—and some paintings and so forth. A large array of black memorabilia attributes to the history of his black culture, which he collects assiduously. Proud of his heritage and wanting to transmit this pride to everyone who comes around him. This is a man of at least 82 years of age who is, who appears indefatigable to me. He keeps on talking with enthusiasm and energy about his mission in life: to give to others; to be a good teacher; to make sure that he teaches with enthusiasm and that he motivates people to do the right thing; to learn, even just to learn one new fact a day, as he put it. He's not filled with hatred or retribution, but seems to want to treat everyone fairly and equally. His insight into history, locally, is most interesting.

What impressed me, as well as his verve, was his energy for teaching and listening to his students; was his interpretation of Lincoln High School as an institution equal in importance to that of the black churches. I was not familiar with that idea before. But, his history, recalling that the teachers lived with some of the black families,

certainly they lived in the same neighborhood, they went to the same churches, they socialized with the families, they knew the families, and the students, they made visits to the children's homes to get an idea of what life was like in the family setting of each student, to better understand them. They taught not only academics, but they taught values, ethics.

And so it's not surprising when these students who sought and fought for integration and equality went to a predominantly white school and lost their heritage and lost the mentoring and the interest that so many of the black teachers had for them, that they were distressed. They weren't treated the same anymore. I think that issue comes across loud and clear. And to me, is at least as important, this loss of the Lincoln High School was at least as important, probably more important, than any insensitivity that the white community might have had for these black students. Certainly, I don't think that the white community understood the black culture. They didn't understand the pride that the blacks had in their school and, I may be wrong, I think I'll find out more about it as my interviews continue. But I thank you, R.D. Smith, for a wonderful interview.