

Elizabeth Carter  
1/27/01

RG: This is January 27<sup>th</sup> in the year 2001, and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Elizabeth Carter at her sister's home at 321B McDade Street. Good afternoon, Elizabeth.

EC: Good afternoon.

RG: I'd like to begin the interview with just a broad question, and that is, what was it like growing up in Carrboro?

EC: Well for us, we lived on Broad Street, and we lived at the corner street of Broad Street and Fowler Street. I think currently there's a Habitat in that spot now, and it was rental property, and I don't remember the person that rented the property to my mom and my dad, but I guess for us, you know my mom and my dad were both in the home, there were seven of us. I'm the middle child, there are three older and three younger than I am. It was a little unique because my older sister had, we all had a responsibility to each other, and my older sister basically had the responsibility of all of us, looking out for us because she was the oldest, but we all had the responsibility of kind of watching out for the one that was under us. It was like this hierarchy process, is what I refer to it as now that I'm older. And you looked out after each other. There was no babysitter. My dad was in the home because of his polio that he had had from early on. My dad, my mom shares with us, always remembers him being in the house. And caning chairs out on the front porch, and my mom getting up in the morning, making biscuits, and she would be in the kitchen when we would wake up, and she'd be singing hymns. She never participated in the church choir, and there were times she didn't get the opportunity to go to church because of doing things around the house or doing things for my father, since, because of his health, or doing things for us. But she always made a point of making sure that we went to church, it was very important. I participated in everything in church, from Sunday School, I was an usher, I went to conventions, represented First Baptist Church, we just did everything, and my mom made sure that we participated with the church, I guess, all but the social aspects of our lives. Because it was so important that on Saturday, you had to start getting ready for church on Sunday. Like you had to get your bath, and I remember we had a tin tub, because we had running water, and we've always lived in homes that had running water, not having to go outside to get water. Except in one house we had, and that was on Broad Street, you had to go out the back door to get to the bathroom, and that was the coldest piece at that house, and I never remember truly being cold because we always, my mom always made sure that we were covered up at night. We had plenty of what we considered covers, and that meant blankets and things to keep us warm. And I just, I remember the house being warm and loving, and it was, my dad was always there, reading to us, telling stories. There were always people, because he didn't, because he did have polio and walked on crutches, usually people would come in and see him and talk to him. And I guess he was an advisor, and children enjoyed coming and playing in the yard, because my dad was usually on the porch working, doing the chair caning, and he also would make oak canes or splints or whatever they were called, to cane the chairs, my dad used to do those types of things. And he would be sitting there talking with somebody all the time. I always remember my dad, memories of him being on the front porch on Broad Street, doing something or talking with somebody about something. And we were in the yard, playing in the dirt. There was no grass in the yard, just dirt. Dirt. We played in the yard, you know. The Foushees, Miss Cora and Mr. Prevet lived next door. And they had a lot of children also, so there was always somebody to play with. And Miss Cora was my mama's best friend. Across the street was the first chief of police for Carrboro being black, and that was Mr. Jeff Foushee, lived across the street from us. And it was just a loving community. Everybody knew each other, and kind of like my dad was there, and I guess he was kind of like the patrol, or whatever you call it, in that if there was something going on with other people at work, that they knew that Mr. Bud was there and would do whatever he needed to do for them. I was, I never remember being hungry. I know that some people say, assume that as blacks we were hungry and didn't have clean clothes, didn't have this, didn't have that. I don't remember any of those things. Truly don't remember being what people consider to be poor. We, I think we just kind of made

the best, and my mom and dad, I think if there were hard times meeting bills or hard times doing something, that was discussed separate from the children. I don't think as people do today, have the conversations in front of the children. I think we were very protected. We just kind of were good children. I think we always, we couldn't go to the Center, is what we called Hargraves. We were supposed to come, walk to Northside, come home, play in the yard, not go to the Center, come straight home from school, don't stop, don't do anything. We were expected to be in the yard at a certain time. And at night we were in the house at a certain time. So even being poor or not as privileged as some, we had a lot, because I think what we had, we had a lot of love. My dad was the person that, he was, even with his disability, he pretty much ran the house. And whatever he told, he would tell us when we were doing something, I'm going to tell your mama, and we knew that was trouble, if he told Mama, because Mama was, she was heavy-handed with the switch. She believed in, you know, if you did something you had to get a whipping. And she was going, sometimes it was like, as Mary Alice shared, and she said, we all laugh now, she said, you'd have been in jail for child abuse. But you knew it was all in love, and you didn't carry a grudge that she spanked you, whipped you—I call it whipping, I don't call it spanking, 'cause I think there's a great difference in spanking and whipping—

RG: Really? What is that?

EC: Oh, spanking is if you give the kid a couple licks or paddles on the backside, and usually with your hand, and you move on. With Mama it was like a switch. And she would get an elm switch which had little ridges on it, and she liked to get them dried out to make sure that she was really getting you good, so. And she thought she was doing it all out of love, and I'm sure she was doing it out of love, but it didn't feel like a lot of love at the time. I have always been afraid of getting a whipping. I even now don't like you to yell at me too much. And my mom was like a yeller. So I think she, you know, looking back on what Mama had to do, you know, to make sure that we had our basic needs met, she had to do a lot because of my father's disability. I don't know what my dad brought in as far as money for caning chairs, but I'm sure it was not very much. My mom paid all the bills. She did a lot of negotiating, and I say to her now is that she doesn't think that she sometimes is that smart, but she, basically, with some consultation and conversation with my father, ran a household with seven children. She could go out and get what she needed. She always had excellent credit. You know, I say to her now, even at 79, that she has credit cards with limits of \$100,000, and like, we're middle income, so she's always maintained excellent credit. Always maintained excellent credit, where you know, you could go in and, she would always pay her bills off at the store when she bought groceries and stuff on time. My dad was the one who had the head for math and could keep up with those types of things. So it was, I saw it to be more of a joint effort in thinking back. Growing up, I thought nothing about it. I had a mom and a dad in the house. And most of my friends on Broad Street, they had a mom and a dad in the house. You know, they, I knew—

RG: So you didn't see many broken families.

EC: You know, I did, and my mama says that I one day came home from school and asked about where somebody's daddy was, and she tried to explain to me the best that she could, that they didn't have a, there was not a daddy in the home but they had a daddy somewhere, that everyone has a daddy.

RG: Did you grow up feeling that absentee fatherism was common, or uncommon?

EC: Well, we didn't give it, I didn't give it a lot of thought. On Broad Street everybody had a daddy. On our street, in our particular neighborhood, everybody, there was a father within the house. He may not have been there all the, in the house all the time and doing the same things as my dad, but we didn't, I guess the thing of it, I didn't see growing up that there was a lot of this class separation. It was like people just living together and making the best of whatever they had. And I think now what you find is that people are truly working harder, or I think as hard as people did when my parents were trying to provide for their families, but perhaps not achieving as much,

because they don't spend as much time with their children as I think they should. But that's one person, and hopefully not passing judgement on someone else, but I just see the children. And I guess I see it that way because we were always important to our parents. My mom was, her mom died when she was young, and so her father sharecropped, so my mom was basically passed from one family member to the other family member. And my dad's mother died young, but his father was around with them, and in fact I think lived with my mom and my dad some when they got married. But the thing of it is, we kind of had this joke that my mom prayed for seven children, you have to realize that. She has always wanted seven children because she didn't want her children to have to grow up like she had to. To grow up, if something happened, from place to place to place. And she said that when she was young, she would go to her relatives, and she always felt like an outsider, and that there was a lot of laughing and talking, but she never felt a real part of it. And she didn't want us to have to go through that. My thing I say to her, 'cause you know I have prayed for something else from God, other than seven children, and seven children, I mean, are a massive amount of responsibility. But she seemed, you know I don't think she has any regret. Perhaps we're not all what she would want us to be, but I don't think anyone is really sure what she wanted.

RG: You had mentioned that your parents rented. Did they want to own a home?

EC: Well they, they were, my, there at one point they were buying a home. And my dad, in fact, some of the properties that were there near the Frank Porter Graham site was properties that my dad had owned. I remember them talking a lot about, and that was one of the reasons that Mama was working so hard was to help, to build a home and when that school came there, that school that the Frank Porter Graham site got all of that, a lot of those properties that were owned there by people of color. And I think that's part of it, is that I don't think families realize that they had say-so in where their properties were. And I'm not sure they had a say-so. It was, maybe it was kind of like, you know, there's a black person owning this land, we'll just kind of do what we need to do. Acquire the land, build the school, or acquire the land to do whatever we needed to do with the property. When indeed, that strip, I think it separates the highway now or something, because I think there was something about that school and the highway and, that's a vague memory, because I was younger, and truly wasn't into the politics of things as I am now.

RG: Did your parents, or did black people in general, have trouble getting a mortgage?

EC: I, that I don't know. I don't think so, because the community that I currently live in is the old Lincoln Park area. And perhaps one of the more concentrated African American areas, where people, I think, individuals were purchasing homes. The home I live in is now about 30, 50, I think it was built in the '60s, '70s or something, it's 30-some years old, and it still is predominantly black. I had a friend say to me, there are no longer what you consider black neighborhoods, because they are neighborhoods where people tend to stay. It is what they like to do. There is a lot of stability in my neighborhood, a lot of the original owners. So I think a lot of people owned property, and a lot of people rented property. But I don't think it was a big thing. You either owned a house or you rented a house. And—

RG: You also talked about how your father was always talking to someone on the front porch when he was caning. And I wonder if he had the same penchant to talk to the children. And if he did, what were the sorts of things you remember him stressing, talking about?

EC: Well I think one of the, my work ethics I got them from my mom and from my dad, 'cause my mom always worked hard, she always went to work. My dad worked within the home by caning chairs and repairing chairs, and my dad got up every day and did what he needed to do. I do remember my dad saying to us when we were little, and I guess it was in sharing, in his attempt to tell us about the cruel, mean world, is that what you have to realize is that the white man would do you like they do a mule, they'd hire you today and when you die, they'd hire another one. And I'll never forget that, is that they have no feeling and compassion toward you, you're just someone that performs a task for them.



RG: Did you feel that you grew up with prejudice toward whites, or did your parents try to teach you, love thy neighbor no matter if he's black or white?

EC: Well I think my mom and dad they taught us a lot of love, and I don't think it was in relation to race. I think they were just good people and they believed in treating people right. I guess the first time, we had moved from Broad Street up to Main Street, where the ArtsCenter currently is in Carrboro, and we were staying there with some, I guess some relatives of ours who, her mom had some health problems, and my mom had agreed that she would take her family and would move into the home with them to help take care of Miss Annie so she would not have to go into a nursing home. And plus my dad was home all day. And you know, he did not have, he couldn't get around very well himself except walking on crutches. He never got a wheelchair and I remember him, he had a straight backed chair, and we would kind of pull, because we had wood floors or linoleum, and we would pull him in the chair or he would scoot himself, make the chair scoot across the floor. Because he was a determined man, to do whatever. And I guess, thinking now, with my brother being terminally ill, I guess that's where he gets some of his will and determination, because my dad maintained a lot of it. He was mentally alert, I think, throughout his whole life. I was away at college when my father passed, in '69, it was my freshman year in college. But they sheltered us from a lot of prejudice and things that, you know, it was like in most small towns, where we had the tracks that separated, in Carrboro, blacks and whites. And we truly had the tracks, because I think that the only black family that I truly remember being in what I consider a white neighborhood was Mr. Bynum, Mr. ? Bynum that lived across the railroad tracks, across from what we call the Farmer's Exchange. And he had white neighbors around him. But we had the tracks going down Fowler Street, up the hill to get over to Mr. Bynum's house. And I had a friend there, Marcia, that I used to go see, but you know, we played in the yard. And he had a nice big white house, and nice yard that we used to play in. And I think whenever you went even, you ventured that close to a white neighborhood, pretty much is that there was that unspoken rule, you need to stay in the yard. And that was kind of like the rule with us, you needed to be where your mom could come, my mom had a big mouth, she could yell forever. But where your mom could look out and see you, call you, that type of thing. But my first encounter with what I consider to be racism was going to Carrboro to the grocery store, and I'm not sure if it was Hearn's or Andrew, that grocery store to pick up some things for my mom with some of my other sisters and brothers, and I think it was my younger ones in the middle, I may have been the older in the group. And the drugstore in Carrboro, we had gone down, gotten the groceries, was on our way back. And we had often stopped in there to get a lemonade, 'cause they made homemade lemonade. And we had the groceries. And this time, we put the groceries on the store and I kind of ordered the lemonade, hopped up there on the barstool, because it was not taken. And the lady said to me, you can't sit there, and I looked at her and got down, and I asked why, and she said you just can't sit there. We paid for the lemonade and just walked out. And I don't even remember us having conversations about that incident.

RG: It's obviously stuck with you though.

EC: Well you know the thing about it then is, I went back to the, I think to the comfort of my home, and it was, it was okay. And I don't even think I shared the story with my parents at that time.

RG: Do you ever wish that you could have gone back and relived that, said something?

EC: Oh, I wish that it would happen to me now (laughs).

RG: I guess you do wish you could go back and relive that moment.

EC: You know, even to, I remember walking out to Carrboro and going down, I guess it was West Main Street, and at that time the homes were truly lived in by whites in Carrboro, and it's there where the Weaver Street Market is, and that's the street I was going down is Weaver Street, and some of the white kids were in the yard and they called me nigger, and it's like oh....And I, I

guess that's why I say to people that unless you've been discriminated against, you can't start to describe the pain. It is, like it's at the core. To me it is like an open wound with salt in it. It just burns and it burns and it burns and it burns and it burns. Nothing anyone can say can ease the pain in your heart, and I guess that's why I do what I do today, hoping that things will be better for my grandchildren. I have taught my children to advocate for themselves, and I, when I first had my children I used to truly be afraid for my children. Truly be afraid. And I used to say to them, you know when you go to school, and you know, that people, and you're having problems and things, and you need to approach an authority and ask people what you need to do. Unfortunately my daughter didn't feel as comfortable with it, and I think if she could turn things back that she would change things and be a little bit more vocal. But always say that you're important. If they want to know why and how, you know that, because your mom tells you that. I make sure that I validate my children today at home, so that the world will not have to do those things, and make their task, the world's, that much easier. And hopefully my children will feel anchored in, you know, that they wouldn't have to go look elsewhere for people to say that they were important. I think it's so important for people to feel good about themselves, regardless of what, where they come from.

RG: How did you deal with the anger that you must have felt by being discriminated against and hearing those names?

EC: Just harden, and you know, I think perhaps the reason I do some of the things I do now is because, to shield the children from a whole lot of cruelty and, just unnecessary hurt and harm that people do, and hopefully I am breaking barriers. I know I can't, I will not be able to do it all in my lifetime, but I hope that what I do will make a difference. I don't do any of it for, anything for me. But I think it's so important that someone has to be out there and advocating for what's right for people in general.

RG: When you tell your, or told your children that they are important, are you saying that they're not seen as important by others in society, in a way?

EC: I think sometimes that, you know, I think blacks and other people of color are sometimes looked down upon, and I want my children to know that regardless of how they're seen by someone, that you're important if to no one else, you're first important to yourself. Because you're only as important as you feel that you are. And but, secondly, you will always be important to me. You will always be important to me. And that when you're out there and you're facing the cruel, hard world, that you have, you know, a safe haven to go back to, that Mom is there and, I can hear her saying to me, Rodney you can do it, Kim you can do it. Or any child that I come to. I hate to see children or even any person of color feeling they can't do anything that they... I think that this world is basically a blank check. You can do what you want to do. Write as much on the check as you want to write on it. It's just that you have to be willing to go through some things in order to get to, to get the monies returned on that check.

RG: Are there any other things about your childhood that stand out? I know I've got a lot of the history from your sister, and I don't want to, I assume you had a lot of same experiences growing up. And I don't want to repeat some of the questions, I would like to talk about your experience at Lincoln. But if there's anything else about your childhood that stands out that you want to tell me, I'd like to hear it.

EC: I think that's pretty much it. I think that my mom and my dad did an excellent job at, you know, looking back and thinking about obstacles they had before them, and the things they had to do, I remember my mom being, because there were limited monies, that sometimes we got hand-me-downs from people that she had, that she did domestic work for. But she always brought them home, washed them, cleaned them. I remember my brother John one time saying to my mom, why do we always have to get their hand-me-downs, cause they don't need them? And my mom said, you know, you take even the trash that you get to the good things. Because people are not going to take out the good things all the time. That they give them to you is that they don't want them anymore, they don't want them anymore, you have to weed through them and throw them away.

But you're appreciative of what people give you. And then you come home and you decide what it is that you really need out of all of that.

RG: How many hours a day did your mother work?

EC: I never really thought about it, because I think Mom was gone half the time by the time we left in the morning, or the same time we left in the morning, and sometimes Mama got back it was dark, I remember that, 'cause Daddy was there and he would have started doing dinner, or telling us to do what we needed to do so you won't have to hear your mama when she comes in, you know how your mama is if things are not done like they needed to be done.

RG: So she had more than one job?

EC: She had multiple jobs. She would do two, three...

RG: At the same time.

EC: Uh-huh. She would do, the thing about it, even with the limited education, and she says now, is that what people are paid hourly. My mom was making, when she, way before she got where she could not work, I think she just truly believed that if you worked hard, you should be rewarded for that hard work. Because there are times that, you know, someone would say that they were making more, and she'd say oh, I was making that when I was working, so you need to be making more than that. And I have a sister-in-law that is, she works as a housekeeper, and even the grandchildren say that if they're not, if they're not living up to their potential she'll say, you can do better than that! People were doing that when I was a girl, when they did not have the opportunity to attend school. So I think that my family has always stressed education, and I think more so because they recognize that it was truly, truly important. As I said, my dad used to read to us. We were, we were well into, I can't call it middle school, but high school or older elementary before we even got a television. There was a lot of reading, a lot of listening to radio, a lot of sharing of history where my daddy or my mama would talk about what it was like for them growing up. So it was that continuing telling of the stories, I think in the hopes that it would be told again. And I guess I'm glad that it was shared, because my dad died in 1969, my freshman year in college. And he had always wanted for one of his children to go to college.

RG: Did your parents, your grandparents talk to you about education as well?

EC: Well you know, I, we were probably different from most people. I don't remember what my grandfather, and that was on my mother's side, grandpa. That's the only one, and as I say to my children, we didn't have a grandma. And, which is unusual. My dad was extremely, he was older than my mom. They had both had been married, my mom had had a bad marriage and was divorced. My father's wife, and I guess that's one of God's order of things, is that had my father's wife lived, we may not even be here having these conversations today, because he, he talked of how much he cared for his first wife, but she died, and he later met my mom and married her, and was pretty much like a father to her. And I think that's the piece where she always, 'cause she would say to me, you know, I always did what your daddy told me to do and never questioned what he said, and I said, but you know, a marriage is a partnership, it's not a dictatorship. And that you have to work together toward one common goal. So I envy and admire any one that has an opportunity to have a grandmother, and I guess that's why I've always told my children that you know, when you go to Grandma's, regardless of what she says you have to do what Grandma says, 'cause she's your Grandma. And we never had a grandma to make cookies for us. We never got to go to grandma's to do those type of things. Grandpa used to come see, what he called my mom was Doll, because my mom was one of three children, she had two brothers that were younger. And my grandfather lived out in the Mt. Sinai area, he bought a house out there. He didn't drive, but he would come see Doll, any opportunity he's left Mt. Sinai Road walking, people had picked him up, he would stay only a hot second, he would see Doll, and he would go

back home. So there was a lot of love, and he, oh, he worshiped Doll. I mean, Doll was his, just as he called her, Doll. His Doll. So—

RG: When, when did you go to school, Elizabeth? What years—

EC: I went to school in the first grade.

RG: What were the years—

EC: Oh, you want me to think back that long? You know, I didn't have to, it's forever! (laughs) I don't remember the year, but I first attended Northside. We had to walk. And to walk, we'd walk from Broad Street and we'd cut down through to go up, I think it's Starlight it's called now, but it's where you have to pass the Baldwins. Mr. Henry Baldwin. He had a wood yard there, and we'd cut through the wood yard and go up the hill, and go through Sunset, and there used to be a branch that we had to cross over to get up the hill, because all the beautiful landscaping that we do for schools now, it was not done for Northside. And so you had to go up the hill and there was this branch. The children had to cross a branch, and I always remember that branch because it had significant impact on our family because during a hurricane my brother Joe, my oldest brother, he was swept away, he fell off the branch and fell into the water, so it was neighbors and things that actually saved my brother. And the roaring waters that go over there. And that is the true memory of walking. And we were little, and my mom and—

RG: So you went to Northside, six years at Northside?

EC: Went to Northside, spent the entire, hmm. Went to Northside, then I went to Frank Porter Graham when they opened Frank Porter Graham, that was sixth, seventh.

RG: What year was that?

EC: I don't know years, dates very well. Sixth, seventh I went there, and graduated from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School District in '69, having, I was the first class to integrate into the Chapel Hill High School with, I was a little bit disappointed that I never had as much of the chance to attend Lincoln. I attended Lincoln my, I think it was eighth, ninth grade I attended Lincoln High School. And it, it's like you always looked forward to attending Lincoln, because there were a lot of things going on at Lincoln, a lot of things that involved the community. It was, I think, the focus and the stability there in the community where we got the opportunity to come be ourselves, sharing of things that were common amongst us. It was, as I said to you earlier, it was, perhaps it was like a safe haven for us, you know.

RG: Can you explain that a little more? What safe haven meant?

EC: It was a time that, regardless of what you did in your particular neighborhood, is that you came together and people were there that loved the school, loved the heritage of the school, you know, parents had an opportunity to be themselves, you didn't have to worry as we worry now about people picking up kids, you know. We would go to school and, like us, our parents were not able to go to, with us to events, but we could go there and I don't think mommy and daddy worried about us, 'cause we were there. Because there were other adults there, and you knew that if you did something wrong, it got back perhaps before you did. We did not have a telephone in our home until, about the same time we got the television. We would always go to a neighbor's. And it was not unusual for black families to not have a phone. Usually someone else had the phone and they would tell you, people did not mind you coming in to use the telephone, because it was sharing of things. It's like, you know, I don't have anyone to come to my house, even though I live in a predominantly black neighborhood, nor my relatives, now, to borrow a cup of sugar. But it was nothing for Miss Cora to come over and want a cup of sugar, or something, but I think the safety piece of Lincoln was that it was like our world, and we got the opportunity to share and



enjoy ourselves, and you know, I don't ever remember, and maybe they were there and it's the pieces that I cut out, you know, like white faces in that school.

RG: So it was all your community there.

EC: The entire community. You knew everyone. You know, you knew everyone. You know, at lunchtime it was when, now they have Parks and Recreation to do some of the intramurals, you played basketball at lunchtime. You know, you'd go into the cafeteria and you would have, you know, we always went to school and we took a brown bag lunch, we usually took a bologna sandwich or some type of luncheon meat, salami or something, and you'd get whatever it cost, a nickel, a dime, or a quarter, whatever it took for the milk money. And that's what we had. And you didn't eat any more until you got back home and got something to eat.

RG: What were the teachers like?

EC: Well I thought I had the best teachers in the world.

RG: What made you think that?

EC: I, my first teacher, you know, I remember I had Miss Peace, Mrs. Peace and then Miss Smith, and I thought Miss Smith was, I was going to have her forever. Cause I was in Miss Smith's first grade, and all through, and then I got Mrs. Peace when I was in the older part of the elementary school. Pretty much in schools, and it's what it's called now is tracking, you were in high performing, low performing, whatever. And you stayed with that same population of, that same group of students, now as I say to Dr. Pederson and to some of the school administration, we call it looping now, but in black schools we were looping long before it became proper to do, in that you had basically that same teacher all the time, and knew everything about you, and you said oh, when do I break this, this vicious cycle.

RG: Did that continue on into Lincoln?

EC: Pretty much into Lincoln, because I basically the same group of kids, I went to class, class, class with. When we started to break away from that and me having different individuals within my class, and not just because they were white faces in Chapel Hill High School, but also different black students in my classroom, was when I got to Chapel Hill High School.

RG: Do you remember anything about Lincoln and sports, or extracurricular activities?

EC: Well there were a lot of things going on at Lincoln, because there were always, after school you could see the guys practicing football, or whatever sports that they were participating in. The band was perhaps the highlight of the school, and everyone, I wanted to always be in the band, in fact I got Mr. Goldston, was the band director when I was at Lincoln High, and I played the coronet for a brief period of time and I got to wear one of the black and gold uniforms for a brief period of time. The band room was in what is the gym now, it was in the basement. You had to go down and they had all these old instruments and we had this little room that all the band, he had the responsibility of the band students and having us be seated properly and be quiet, I'm sure acoustics were horrible, because they're horrible upstairs in the gym, but that's where he taught band. And when the weather permitted you would see the band out on the field, with formation and all those things. To me it was just the thing to do, was to play in the band, and when there was parades you would see, you know, Lincoln High was, is, was to the Chapel Hill community what Hillside is to the Durham community, and what Hillside continues to be to the African American community at Christmastime, when you see the kids that are following the band, in hopes that they will see them perform, and it's a true art, because you see the drum major, I remember the drum majors in the white hats, and usually it was a thin guy, but truly a very proud gentleman that was leading the band. The majorettes. What disappoints me now is to watch the two schools and not to see as many African Americans participating in these activities, because



we've always enjoyed the arts. And I'm not quite sure why we don't do those things now, is it that we don't feel a welcome part, or we feel we have no place in that, but the band was the place to be. Football—

RG: Did the band make you feel important?

EC: Oh yeah, it's just like, like watching them perform with just the finesse and the charisma that they had. And just, the band director, was, I think it was Mr. Thrasher at that time, or someone. I don't really know their names, because I was much younger, but just always wanted to do it. I don't remember their names, but when I got there it was Mr. Goldston, and I could never forget Mr. Goldston because he was Mr. Goldston.

RG: Did he lead the band when they went marching out in the street?

EC: Not when Mr. Goldston was there. I think the gentleman who was there before had gone over, was working at Hillside.

RG: Did being in the band make you feel important? It sounds like you were saying to me that looking at the band made you feel important.

EC: Well it did, but it was not what I thought it to be. Because it was a lot of hard work, and once you get there, you always want to be where someone else is, that's because you don't know what they, what it requires you to look like they're looking at the time you're observing them. But it was a lot of hard work. Eventually I quit because it wasn't what I thought it to be, but I still enjoyed the band, you know, on Friday night is where they had the Lions Park, and I think now I think there's like Fidelity Court laundromat or something like that in that area, and that's where we used to go um, to football games on Friday night. And we lived on Main Street, and of course, because my older brothers and sisters they got to go more than we did, we'd sit on the porch and watch people walk to the game and back from the game, and because of the loudness, the band was always at the game, and you could hear the drums and the loud instruments sitting out. And my dad always made an effort to go sit on the porch and watch people as they come back, because it would also mean that he would get to have conversations with some of the people that had attended the sporting events. My mom was not as outgoing, she's not very outgoing now, but my dad was pretty much, even being with his disabilities, was the more outgoing part of the family. But there was always something to do at Lincoln Park, always something to do at the Lions Park with the bands, and the football, and by the time I probably was old enough to go to the games was when we integrated schools, and—

RG: You didn't go to the football games in seventh and eighth grade.

EC: Oh no, I wasn't old enough to go. You have to realize that my parents were truly vicious.

RG: They were strict, huh?

EC: There was an order to things, and if you were not old enough to do something, you were not old enough to do things, even my older sister sometimes, when she had to go, she wanted to go places, she had to take one of us with her, because of the things, and my mom, if she wasn't back on time, oh my God, you'd have thought she killed someone. My mom would fuss fuss fuss fuss fuss, and it wasn't worth it to me. So I didn't do, I wasn't as anxious to go out. And she used to take my brother John with her in order to go out, but I guess he was the watchman for whatever she was doing, but she would just tell him that she wouldn't take him anymore, so eventually he, and he would still come back and tell whatever she did, so (laughs), and she would take him the next time. But it meant that she got to go out of the house.

RG: When you went to school, did you have lockers, or coat rooms, cloak rooms?

- EC: I don't remember, no. You had, what I remember is the hook, and you could put your coat on the hook in the classroom, just like on the wall, and you could put your coat there. And it was pretty much, you had the desks, the desks were large but they were older and a lot of times scarred up and damaged. You put your books under there and your coat hung there. The lunch sack went in, I remember my lunch sack going under with my things.
- RG: So you, on one of the walls in the classroom you could—
- EC: You could hang your coat.
- RG: Hang y our coat, and then you had to carry it to the next class?
- EC: Well you left it there, because you pretty much—
- RG: Oh, that was your homeroom?
- EC: That was pretty much it. I don't remember the thing of changing classes as much until I went to Chapel Hill High School. Because when I, I was perhaps considered in the high performing group, and we pretty much stayed in the same classroom. And we went across to home ec, and maybe some other things, but pretty much you got that—
- RG: You're talking about seventh and eighth grade at Lincoln.
- EC: Uh-huh. I was at Frank Porter Graham for seventh, I think it was seventh and eighth.
- RG: Eighth and ninth then.
- EC: I think it was eighth and ninth that I spent at, it was eighth and ninth that I spent at Lincoln High. I only spent two years at Lincoln High, and that.
- RG: And were your classes separate—
- EC: And the coat thing was on the outside. Yes, there were changing of classrooms at Lincoln High. Now different from my sister, when I went and Mr. McDougle was there, you had to walk to the right of the hallway. You had to walk to the right of the hallway, you had to move in an orderly fashion, there couldn't be all that noise in the hallway, you needed to be going to class.
- RG: Pretty strict.
- EC: Pretty strict, pretty much. But you didn't think anything about it. And what you were doing, early in the morning, I, when we were the younger classes there, we looked forward to lunch when we could go into the gym and watch the intramural sports, watch the girls play or watch the boys play, you know, at graduation time was a time to, I looked forward to, because that's when the seniors got to do special things, and they would have where they would will someone this and will someone that, will, you know, X person this, when I leave this school, I will to Elizabeth yadda yadda ya, and a lot of those things that you just looked forward to that. And you looked up to the seniors in the building, and the upperclassmen.
- RG: I have heard similar stories, and I'm trying in my mind to categorize some of what I'm hearing. It sounds as though there was a lot of performance at the school.
- EC: Uh-huh.
- RG: It was performance-oriented in many ways. The band, the singing, the acting, the sports. And also it was very competitive. Lunchtime, you didn't just have your bologna sandwich, you went

and played ball. Or you watched someone else compete. Is that, is that a fair characterization to say that the school was performance-oriented in the arts, in sports, and it was competitive?

EC: I see it to be academically competitive, and I can only speak from my perspective, it was important to each of us, but particularly the group of students that we had started out with, in entering from Frank Porter Graham to Lincoln, that we stayed together. So we, we kind of helped each other with homework, you know, I don't think it was cheating or anything, but we always wanted to make sure that we were in the right class. And we pretty much continued together until—

RG: What was the right class? You mean the smartest class?

EC: Yes! You know, I think even though we, you know, externally we look different, I think those same things exist now, is that it's always good to do your homework, we always did our homework. Always did our homework, even, my brother John will tell you, he perhaps was one that really didn't care about learning, but now he says he wished he had been more in tune to his school, his academic needs when he was in school. He was always trying to figure out how he was going to cut school, and I remember one time he did cut school, and that's when they had, they did have some public transportation, and my mom was on the bus and she saw him there, near the Harris, the um, what is now the Kentucky Fried but was the Riggsbee-Hinson, and she got off the bus and took him to school, so (laughs)

RG: There was no messing around with your mom!

EC: Mom would get you now, she really, you had to go to school. And I, it was important I think also to the teachers that you attended school, and pretty much they knew your families, they knew everything about you, so it was no getting around it. You know, the thing about it is that you were usually, with me, is like the teachers, a lot of them knew me because of Mary Alice, because she had had them, some of the same teachers that I would have had, and they knew that I was a Mason, and they knew that she, I don't think she shared, but academically, she was extremely good. Math was her, even now, when we're, during this Christmas we were shopping and my sister asked me something about some percentage and I said I don't know, get Mary Alice, she's not here, she's the human calculator. So you know, we had even, Mr. Farrington, Ross Farrington, he was a math whiz, and he was born in this community, and he was to be my math teacher. In eighth grade, ninth grade. And he got a job with IBM, and I got Mr. Evans that went out there at that time, and was a little bit disappointed, because he left public teaching and went out to IBM to start working, and that's where he retired from was out to IBM.

RG: I have been trying to find Mr. Evans.

EC: Mr. Evans works, Ernest Evans.

RG: Ernest Evans. Where does he live?

EC: He works at Harris Teeter in Carrboro, and he also works at Firestone. Mr. Evans lives on Starlight Drive, somewhere there. His name is Ernest Evans.

RG: 'Cause Reverend Manley had said I must talk to Mr. Evans, and—

EC: He was a teacher, and he was, did he attend North Carolina Central? But we got him in his first year, fresh out of school. He, and, I think we, that coming was, you know he was green, and not ready for teaching.

RG: You weren't too much younger than he was.



- EC: Yes, and you know, it's like that same rapport that Ross had with the children, with the students, was different than that of Mr. Evans. I was in his math class, it was like oh, he had a difficult time managing us in the classroom, because, I actually saw, you know, a man that was not too much older than we are. You know, I'm gray now, he's gray now. So—
- RG: Are there any other memories of Lincoln that stand out? Prom, May Day?
- EC: See I didn't get to do the prom. I didn't get really to do May Day, because by the time I was there, May Day was like, gone. And it's like all those things that you had like lived for, when you get to go to Lincoln, they're not there any longer. And then the talks of integration, and I don't know how much talking there was, other than I just, from just thinking back, that perhaps it's something that was decided because it would be, would bring less attention to this affluent neighborhood than to meet with opposition to integration.
- RG: I've heard some stories that letters were sent out to the students, or their families at Lincoln, and they had to vote as to whether they wanted to leave Lincoln or stay at Lincoln, somewhere in 1965 or early 1966, and I wonder if you know anything about that.
- EC: I know nothing about the letters, the only thing I know is that there were conversations about the school closing, my last year, my ninth grade year. And I don't remember taking a letter home to my mom, I may have taken a letter home to my mom, being that my family were truly disciplined, if they gave you a note you took it home, you didn't bring it to, as kids do now. You know, they'd read the note, but um, I don't remember the letters going home. They may very well have, because as I said, my mom and dad, they took care of us, we didn't have to worry about all those things that some families had to worry about. All I knew at the end of June, that was our last time at Lincoln, and then we moved to, over to the high school. The only conversations that I, I do remember some vague conversations about what were we carrying with us. And I knew that the high school would maintain the Chapel Hill High School namepiece. I don't think they were very much entertaining of the notion of it being named Lincoln High School. There were talks of the mascot being that of the Tigers, and I think at that time they, the high school on Franklin Street, I think they were Wildcats. And I think for a short period the new high school was Wildcats, and eventually it flipped to being that of the Tigers. But I think that was with some doing, continuing, and being persistent, from African American leaders.
- RG: What about the trophies?
- EC: The trophies, and I think that still leaves a lot of questions in a lot of our minds, is because currently there is some memorabilia at Lincoln Center, the administrative office, of some of the students, the accomplishments of that school. Some of the student accomplishments. But to get those things in those cases, they had to come from some families. Families had to part with some items, some keepsakes that meant a lot to them, because my understanding is that they kind of got thrown away. And no one will 'fess up to say actually what happened with those things. I know I, the Peermans were, Mr. Peerman was the coach at that time, and they, they had a lot of conversations about these memorabilia, some of the things that are there in that cabinet, I think comes from his family wanting to share that history.
- RG: So you went 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade to the new high school.
- EC: Uh-huh, Chapel Hill High School. And at that time it was what we called, now it's considered to be city limits, it was like in the country to us, and it was like, we had always lived in the city limits. And here we go, we had to finally get on the bus. Finally get on the bus. And I guess I am now, when we talk about, as a board member talk about overcrowding and racially balancing the district, is I am sometimes hesitant about particularly putting children of color on buses, because we've always been placed on buses to accomplish something. At some point, when do we stop doing that? Moving people of color in order to accommodate others? And it becomes my question. You know, you look at community standards, and there are no schools in African

American community there, you know, and I understand that because there is, currently there is nowhere to build a school in an African American community, and build as comprehensive as you'd like for that school to be. But some of these thoughts should have been, as we were integrating, some of these thoughts and conversations should have been held by those persons that supposedly represented, you know, the various segments of the community. I think very little thought was given to it. I think that there could have been, had things, the thought that we put into facilities now as a board, as a community, that if some of these conversations had been held at that time, I think that we perhaps would have a richer community, that there would be, Lincoln Center would not be an administrative office, Lincoln Center could be some type of school.

- RG: Do you remember your feelings as an African American going to a merged, or consolidated, or integrated school in 1966?
- EC: Hm. Scariest time in my life. Suddenly, all of a sudden, I am like, what do I do? It's truly my first time of truly getting to have close interactions and conversations with whites, and it was like you felt if you were in the room, if you were entering the room, the white kids were seated or the teacher was in front of the classroom and you walked, everything stopped and they were looking at you. You know, you were usually in the back of the classroom, sitting in the back of classes, unless you got there in time to be seated in the front of the classrooms. You were usually not recognized if you raised your hand. It was, I've never, never, never, never felt that bad. And that's why as a parent I used to say to my kids, never sit in the back of the classroom. Never sit in the back of the classroom.
- RG: So you didn't feel that if you raised your hand, you would have the same chance at being recognized as a white student?
- EC: No. I didn't feel I would be recognized the same. Because there were times I had raised my hand and I had not been called on. And it wasn't, I think some things happen without a real thought process, without even thinking that, I'll call on Bob and I won't call on Elizabeth, even though Elizabeth's hand has been up. And you'd feel like, I'd been in the classroom with my hand held up, and it's like, then after a while you get tired and you put your hand down.
- RG: Did you have eye contact with the teachers?
- EC: Well I have developed more eye contact since I have become an adult, because I know that's important, that when you're talking to someone you can look at them.
- RG: Did you have it when you were at Chapel Hill High School and you were in the classroom, did the teachers give eye contact, the same eye contact to whites and blacks?
- EC: I never felt that they would give us eye contact. I think that it was, we felt slighted, because they were looking toward the front, or they were looking toward the side that the white kids were sitting on. Because usually it ended up, truly, even though the schools were integrated, the classrooms were segregated, because whites were on one side and blacks were on the other. Same typical thing, if you think about now, if you go into integrated situations, that people tend to migrate toward people that they have something in common with.
- RG: So it's, it's almost as though it's segregation by choice, because you happen to be familiar with the people who were similar to you.
- EC: I think it's more of feeling comfortable and feeling safe, is to know that here's someone who's going through what I'm going through, let's go through it together. You know, if I'm there on the opposite side mixed in, I'm truly left alone, truly feeling more alone than I am even sitting next to Jeannette, or Blanche, and these are some of the persons that I was in class with. You know, I am still alone.

- RG: But you're saying that this continues today, is that right?
- EC: I tend to think it continues today, and I've had the opportunity by being a board member to go into schools, or even go to ball games, and you look up in the stands and you see where it's truly, it's you know, numbers of blacks, numbers of whites, even Hispanics. As our population truly continues to be more diverse, I think that, I think we, without consciousness, we segregate ourselves. And I think some people consciously segregate themselves. I tend to, to want to, when I go to ball games I like to sit with my family, so I sit with them. And my family, I think, they just tend to get together, and we have conversations with people that are not like us who are sitting around us, and we laugh, we talk, we do those type things, but there are some people that, you know you don't always feel as comfortable sitting next to them, because that look is on their face that they really don't want you there. I'm the type of person that I'll sit there because you don't want me there (laughs).
- RG: Tell me some other thoughts or feelings that you had at Chapel Hill High School.
- EC: Well, at the time, it was my first time to have, you know, white teachers. I was accustomed to having black teachers. I remember that in your paper you said that Mrs. Battle taught history. I don't remember Mrs. Battle teaching history, I remember Mrs. Battle as my French teacher at Chapel Hill High School. So some of those teachers that did teach in, at Lincoln and predominantly black schools, did go into, or from all-black schools went into Chapel Hill High School. Mrs. Battle taught me French, and Mrs. Gigi Clemmons taught me, she was always in the business field, and she, to me, always reminded me of a drill sergeant. She would walk, now she was the one teacher that was truly a teacher, because I think, when you were in black schools you were accustomed to, you had to watch the teacher move around the room because she was integrating herself into the classroom. She wasn't standing in front of the classroom like you do at a college lecture, where she's standing there giving you the information. Mrs. Clemmons always would walk around, and to make sure with the com—with the, I was going to say computers—with the typewriters, to make sure that we were, where we needed to have our hands properly this way and regardless of your race, you know, she would correct you. She was just a strong black lady that was sure of herself, and she took no stuff from any of the kids, any of the parents. She was the teacher, she was the adult. And eventually I think Mrs. Clemmons ended up being like an assistant principal for an interim period of time at Chapel Hill High School, but she was respected. She was truly that disciplinarian, those pieces that I think she had learned under the tutelage of Mr. McDougle with her. And you could tell those strong teachers that were in Lincoln High School that went over into the Chapel Hill High School integrated situation. Because I think they still continued to carry themselves in that manner. The same with Mrs. Battle, I never felt that even teaching French, and to think of a black teaching French is like unusual, even now, but I always had the most respect for her because she was an excellent teacher.
- RG: Did you have any thoughts or discussions with your friends about the fact that Coach Peerman, who was so successful coaching Lincoln High School to just unusual success in football, and Principal C.A. McDougle, who had a Masters from Columbia University, both being made assistants, and the fact that the core curriculum teachers were almost all white. Did this, did the students talk about this?
- EC: We didn't talk about it, and I think that is the problem with us in Chapel Hill with the integration, we never talked about, we never—I think we sometimes would have some conversations at the lunch table about things, and why things were not as we thought they should be, or the way they used to be, you know. Mr. McDougle, I was so glad to see him retire, because he was such a, you know, he was a short little man, but he was a tall man. He demanded respect. And it became a point like he was more of the disciplinarian, he was the bad person at the integrated high school, that he was, and I guess it's with any assistant principal, if you're assistant for someone you usually give them those tasks that no one else wants to do. But the, I just gradually as you watched him, I saw that the respect he received at Lincoln, he was not receiving it from others at Chapel Hill High. And I started to perceive this perhaps medium-height man begin to shrink. And



that was my vision of him, that he no longer, even being, for a man, he was a short man, to see him not be as powerful as he was at Lincoln High. It's like he was thrown from grace, and but, you know, I think he never, and I don't know what he shared with his wife or his family when he would go home in the evening, and I never thought a lot about it. We were always taught as a people to respect people in positions, and I think that's what you find now is usually you find African Americans, and I don't think it's that you, being obedient, but you are told to respect people in authority. I don't think with African Americans he did not lose that, that image, that he was always that power for us, he was always that connection to the white world, or to where, what integration was intended for us. Because I think we went into integration to hopefully get better facilities, better books, better everything when it talks about education, but I think what happened is that we picked up some of the culture of the white world, and it's a piece that, you know, children have always, I think parents have always wanted their children to work extremely hard, homework was important, and all those things, you know, it was just different, it was truly different. Even when you talk about special education to me was different, because the way that Mrs. Hargraves did special education, when she was, when I thought in a segregated system was, it's just that the kids seem to stick out like a sore thumb once we got to Chapel Hill High School. And in the other schools it was more blended, and it was like when they were at segregated schools, it was the place to be. It's like they were cooking, they were having fun, they were living to their fullest, and when they got into an integrated system it seems like it was like, to do, they got to label supplies, they had their special little place, you really didn't see them unless they were with Mrs. Hargraves. And it's like, it's just thinking back, and perhaps I do more thinking about that now, since I'm on the board, and thinking about situations since I've had children. And since I've gone through, and I am a person that likes to assess and think about what it could have been like, or look back over my life and reflect.

RG: I've had someone describe to me that as school continued at Chapel Hill over the second year, and into the third year, that it was like a wall had arisen. Can you talk about that, the anger that was felt?

EC: It was, I think it was that it was quiet hostility and anger. It's where we, we had no choice, we had no place to go except Chapel Hill High School. As a high school student you had to attend Chapel Hill High School. And it was, it seems to be us and them. And I guess I think about it now, I used to be an Upward Bound counselor when I was at Shaw, and in the summer I would come back and work the Upward Bound program. I know of a student that graduated from Chapel Hill High that was, had a, was in some of Mrs. Hargraves classes, and was slated to not be successful. The student now teaches at a community college. So I don't think it was ever believed that we could do anything but just come to school and just perhaps do menial work, and that, the bar was never raised for us. It was never, ever raised for us, and sometimes I wonder now if the expectations are there, that African American children who are extremely smart, they are bright children, that they have a bright future ahead of them, that they can be anything they want to be. They have to have the same nurturing, the same support as any other child. They are children, and they need to be told each and every day how important they are, that they can learn, let's see what we can do to help you, and not put out there to sink or swim on their own. Because there's a perfect order to things, why there are adults in places.

RG: Let me back up a little bit and interpret, if I may, what you've said. Were you saying (laughter), "where were you on the night of"—were you saying that in the black schools, the message was given to the students that you can be anything you want, you can do anything you want, and I'll help you get there, and then when they went to the white schools, the expectations went down?

EC: It was all there. That's my perception, that the expectations went down. And there were only a few people that looked like us there that you could go to and feel that you got that same nurturing, that same support that existed at the old—

RG: Were there white teachers that gave you that same nurturing?

- EC: You know, I was in, I was fortunate enough to have Carolyn Horne for math, and I thought that she was a good math teacher, and there may have been others who felt differently, but I thought that she was a good math teacher. And it's amazing that she served on the Board of Education and she remembers me from math, and I was never really good at math, but I felt that I could go to her for help. And, you know, even now, when I was appointed to the board, she called me and congratulated me, and said that she would be here, you know be there for me and those types of things. And it's amazing that now, Steve Scroggs and I, who's the assistant superintendent, he and I graduated high school—
- RG: Mary Scroggs' son.
- EC: Her son. Steve and Max. She had twin boys. And Steve was perhaps the more rowdy of the group, and he and I laugh sometimes now, because there were kids that were the popular kids, and they were, they would always be popular because they were from the affluent families, and we really didn't think a lot about it. You know, the kings and queens and things, of the high schools, at Chapel Hill High School, they were white. You know, all of a sudden, you come from a school that has a rich heritage, where you're accustomed to the king and queen being black, and you have people that are serving on their own student government and, you're looking now at an integrated situation, and all of a sudden it's not integrated, it's not, it's not what you thought it would be. You know, you're not seeing people that look like you in leading positions. You're kind of going to school because this is what, this is the only place you can go to school. And I guess that's the way I felt about Chapel Hill High School. This is where you have to go to school, this is where you have to get on the bus, you have to go to school. And I think that, at that point it became not as, education has always been important to me, but not as important. But my thing was, I need to get out of here, I need to be going on and doing something different. And you know, to talk about preparing to leave Chapel Hill High School, it was not those conversations about what are you going to do next. Had I not been in the Upward Bound program, I don't think there would have been any conversations about college.
- RG: Now, someone else has talked about the Upward Bound program. And what he said to me was that the summer before he went to the high school, they took a group of blacks and put them on campus at UNC, and Upward Bound met with them and they spent like, either a couple weeks or a month going to classes.
- EC: In the summer program there were some college classes, you had the opportunity to attend the college classrooms. When I, to attend, it was like math, but it was in college, on a college campus. On a university campus. I attended Upward Bound, we spent probably about a month there during the summer. We spent, we stayed in the, in Ehringhaus, we stayed in Peabody, I think it was Peabody or something, or across from the, I think it was Peabody. No, it wasn't Peabody. What was the name of that dorm? Oh gosh, it was right there across from the, where they used to play basketball, Carmichael, that we stayed, in those two buildings. I think what Upward Bound did, it afforded, I know a lot of people that, persons that were in my class, they went away to various schools across the United States because of the Upward Bound, and support was there for the math and the science and those types of things.
- RG: Did they continue that Upward Bound program?
- EC: It's even current that they have the Upward Bound program.
- RG: So they never really stopped it.
- EC: No, it has not been stopped.
- RG: Is it a federally funded program?
- EC: It's a federally funded program.

- RG: And you felt it was something that was very helpful for the community, the black community?
- EG: Uh-huh. And until recently, I don't know when it first integrated, it was predominantly, it was all blacks attending the Upward Bound program. All blacks attending the Upward Bound program. The counselors were black, even coming on to a white university, the counselors came from historically black institutions.
- RG: Did you feel that because of that, students did better? Not that the teachers were black, but that you had the Upward Bound experience. But, address that also, that the teachers were black. Because I think both of those—
- EC: I think that had a lot to do with it, because I think in order for you to feel good about yourself and to rise to the occasion, you have to feel that the expectation is there from the person who is feeding you the information, and nurturing you all along, as, okay now, Elizabeth. They're like your coach. Okay, and you've done this, now what are you going to do next. It's not, this is the bare minimum, this is all she'll ever do. And the director of the program at that time, he was black, and maybe there, it was ? Coleman, and he may, he's not there because he left and went somewhere else, I think somewhere, Berkeley or somewhere else to work, when I was in the program.
- RG: Could you get this kind of help during the school year, or was it only during the summer?
- EC: I did not feel that there was support during the school year, during the school day, in the, in Chapel Hill High School. At Lincoln, I used to be always staying after school to get something done, because there was always somebody in the building. If it was in Home Ec and I didn't finish something, Mrs. Polk was there, if it was in something, you know in a core class, I could get the help from the teacher. At Chapel Hill High, I never felt that I could go to that teacher after school to get anything.
- RG: Why is that?
- EC: I don't know, I just didn't feel—
- RG: Were they there?
- EC: I don't know. They never availed themselves, you know. I mean, I knew what was going on in Lincoln High School. It was a much smaller setting, I knew everyone, everybody knew me, and so, it was just, it was a different environment at Lincoln than at Chapel Hill High School. I wanted both my children to attend predominantly black institutions and to get that, as I say to them, that true experience. And that's one of the reasons that I attended Shaw, is, and I'm so glad that I did, is because it's, you, I think my kids have truly missed a lot of things because they went to integrated schools. And I missed some of that heritage, but by having the opportunity to go to Shaw and we had the band, we had the football team, we had the, it was close-knit, it was small. And I truly knew about a struggle. You know, if I didn't have money and you had money, we both had monies.
- RG: This was at Shaw?
- EC: That was at Shaw. And I think there was that same mentality, and I think that's because of, black people as a whole, we've always helped each other, you know, if I had a ham and you didn't have ham, I'm going to share my ham with you. So it was a lot of sharing of what you had to help your neighbor out, and it's that piece that I say to people is that, and I guess the reason my kids didn't go to day care and a lot of my family members didn't is because we believed in taking care of your own, pretty much. And my mom at the time was able to take care of my children, and I was off, I helped take care of my sister with the older ones, and they went to day care more, perhaps



the older grandchildren went to day care more than the younger grandchildren did, but I think it was that feeling of family, and that need to help each other out. And that's what I found again when I, you know, I missed that little window of opportunity that was not afforded to me by having to enter an integrated school. But going to Shaw, I found that. You know, when my father died, and he died my freshman year in college, it was like, I got all the support from the Dean of Women, I knew everybody there, and my son's getting some of that from attending Methodist, which is extremely small and it's nurturing and it's what he says that he needs. But—

RG: That's not a black school though.

EC: It's not a black school. He has, and the thing that he struggles with, and I can't get him to recognize, is that you're truly missing a piece of your heritage, you know to go there, and meet people from all over the United States that bring with them different backgrounds, and different stories to tell, even talking about integration, even talking about segregation, the stories that they've obtained from their parents. They even talk about racism, and that it still is an obstacle for us. To talk about, as I said, to, I used to worry about my kids, in particular my son, because when he was small, my kids have always been taught to respect people. And to, if you're ever going to misbehave, misbehave at home and not in public, because that's a reflection of me. My kids have always been invited to attend their white friends' birthday parties and to do those things, to the point that I was beginning to worry and I said to my husband, you know, do we need to make sure that he has a good nucleus of black friends? Because, you know, I've always lived in, when I was living in apartments, I was living in an integrated neighborhood. And most of the kids were, all of the kids were usually white kids. And my son is easy to do. Because he used to go out to one of his little white friends' out across University Lake, and his mom would say, he is the best kid, what do you do for him? I said nothing, just that he needs to respect your home when he's in your house. I don't do anything for him. She said, he's not like my kids, he doesn't make all that noise, and he says yes ma'am. And I said well that's what I taught him, that regardless of where he is, he needs to respect where he is. So I used to worry about that, and it was when he went to Chapel Hill High that it's like, oh my God, I am so glad that he is, he has the opportunity, when he started to bring black friends home with him and talk about his black friends, it was like, but when he was like in elementary school and middle school, all his little white friends, their parents were getting him because he was a good kid.

RG: They didn't expect that?

EC: Hmm?

RG: Do you think they didn't expect that?

EC: I think they were shocked, because you know, I think the unknown is frightening to all of us, regardless of our race, I think it's a little bit frightening to all of us. And integration is still new, even though it's been in, supposedly into practice for a while now, since the '60's, it's still new for some of us, that we've not had the opportunity to invite people different into our homes and have them be, make an attempt to be cordial and hospitable to them. Because I think when you invite someone into your home, you treat them like your family. I would.

RG: Did I hear you say that when you went to Chapel Hill High School, the feeling was sink or swim?

EC: I think you were left out there on your own. I think it's more of a concentrated effort now, more recently, to make sure that students are being successful. I think that it was always, I think when we went to Chapel Hill High, and no one has ever told me this, that the kids that were currently being successful at Lincoln, the administration at Chapel Hill High knew those kids that would be successful, that they thought would be successful. Those kids that were, they were problem free, they did their schoolwork, they were good, quote good families, that they had, we had already been identified. And that may be wrong, but I just, because it seems to be so, even though integrated there was a lot of segregating of the population. So how can you randomly segregate as

many people as you did, i.e., the kid that I talked about that is now, that is teaching at, he's not a kid, he's a young man, that is teaching at the community college? And he was, at Chapel Hill High he was in special education.

RG: Let me continue on about Chapel Hill High and ask you if you were involved in the riot or uprising, or whatever you want to call it, that occurred, when was it, '68?

EC: No, I was not.

RG: Do you remember?

EC: I was usually by, I guess it's again, the older group. I had one of my best friends, Sylvester Hackney, he was, because his brother Bernie was a part of that process. So he knew more about it and was a part of that, because his brothers and friends was planning. And even with entering high school, I still had that, my mom and my father was home, and we had to do what we needed to do at home. So I've never been the one, I guess I'm more of an extrovert now than I was when I was in school, and I, I see that now because it's, I just see more of a reason. Because you know, I was always active in my children's education, when they were in public school. I was always an active parent, always on this and always on that. And when they got into site-based management and student governance committees, I was approached by the principal at Carrboro to be, I want you to do this, and it's like no, I don't want to do it. Well it's this new committee and I want you to do it, and I was to get back with Randy about that, I never got back with him simply because, you know, I was tired of being that token. That's on a committee because now we have an integrated committee. We have a representative from the black community. If I could change that then I would go back and I would serve on the student governance committee because I have a better understanding, but his explanation is that we want you on this committee, it's because he saw me to be someone that was serving and served well, not give, you know, would not be a lot of problems for them, I would go to the meetings whether I wanted to or not, I would attend because I would feel an obligation to go. But you know, when I was in high school I was not, when I went to Chapel Hill High School I just went to school. Pretty much like my daughter, I just went to school. Hoping that June of '69 would come and I would graduate. I went to class, worked hard at times, and at times, I was as inconsistent with academics as my son. Did I ever dream I'd be on the Board of Education? No. Even recognizing that there have been a number of African Americans on the board. Even having served on the board for six years. No. I was appointed, I was going to do it for that window of time, be through with it, and move on. But because things are not where I feel they need to be right now, I see more of a need for me to continue in whatever capacity that I'm needed. Because there, even though this started in '66, there's still so much, so many things that has got to occur. Not just thinking of the children of color. That lunch is not the main reason to attend school. The academics are the main reason. I remember she talked about it, Mary talked about her son going to, up to a prep academy, to a prep school and he opted out of Chapel Hill High. He was approached during his junior year so he repeated his tenth grade year at Mt. Harmon. And we went to see the schoolmaster. And he said that, he talked about, that Bruce is extremely good in basketball. And he could have gone to ?, talking at a conference about schools that were recruiting him. And the only conversation that that man had about Bruce, even though he was academically gifted, was about his basketball ability. And about halfway through the conversation I said to him, but you can't do this to him. You can't stud him like he's an animal. You know, he has a brain. What if he breaks his leg, he can't play football? He needs to go to school because of his mind. And you can't break a person, it takes a lot to break a strong person's mind. It takes a whole lot to break their mind. And he can't fall and break his mind, he can fall and break his leg and have an injury forever. So, you know, even back then and as recent as that is, it's still that mentality.

RG: Athletes and not students.

EC: And it just happened down the street. Nine miles, ten miles. You know, where the grades were being changed just to have this young man play sports. You know, and that's what I used to say to

my son, you're not going to school to play basketball or football. Those things you're afforded because you attend school. That's like a luxury. The reason is the classroom, is the academics. Because you know, if you're cut from a basketball team, fine; don't ever be cut from an admission into a math, science, those things that are truly important. And no one will ever ask you later what you learned in that math class, no one will ask you any of those things once you're out in the business world. But it is part of what you need to be successful, you have to do well in school. And I just think those emphases, when the doors for African Americans at Lincoln was closed, I think some of that emphasis and that, those expectations for black kids, it went, part of that closed, and I think it closed, also not with the expectations of others, is we're not afforded that, I don't think we're always afforded that opportunity, but I think parents became a little, just like, oh well, you know, some of the hope that was there, and it's like we became, we got a little bit complacent, and keep hoping that it would have a— (tape ran out)