

TAPE INDEX – STEVE SCROGGS

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[Cassette 1 of 1, Side A -- Tape No. 4.9.2001]

- 001 My name is Elizabeth Hamilton. I'm interviewing Steve Scroggs in Chapel Hill, NC on April 9 about his experiences growing up in Chapel Hill and his years as a student during integration.

- 007 Born on June 16, 1951 in Durham, parents Ross Edward Scroggs (a professor) mother is Mary Atkins Scroggs (worked in Physics Dept.), considers self "university brat", three siblings, father's from Taylorsville, NC, went to UNC, mother from Fairfield, NB, parents opened first photographic dept at UNC, lived in Victory Village, Barclay Rd, and Rosemary St (grew up there mostly)

- 034 Life revolved around the University, in 50s most people in Chapel Hill tied to University in some way, also mill in Carrboro.

- 042 Elementary school at Franklin St. school, went to Estes Hills, Phillips, CHHS (in first class entering each as new school), rode bus and walked to school, [pause for interruption], spent a lot of time in principal's office, "she had forty eight ceiling tiles on her ceiling," an "all American kid," favorite subject was math, not very athletic.

- 071 after school spent at UNC, it was only thing to do, not a lot of recreation in Chapel Hill then, lives revolved around UNC, most friends were "professors' kids," students and professors came over, father's intense love for teaching and mother's intense love of education.

- 092 ELIZABETH HAMILTON: Did you have someone taking care of you after school?

STEVE SCROGGS: Yeah, Helen Hines took care of us. We had two--a series--a couple of nannies that took care of us. Helen was the one I remember the most. We did have one on Barclay Rd and I'll remember momentarily. Helen is still alive. Helen Hines, next to my mother, is probably the most important woman in my life. Helen was-- she knew how you were supposed to behave. She knew that you would behave. We heated our house with coal. We had a two and a half ton coal bin in the basement and

nothing we loved better than sliding down the coal bin shoot to get in the house after school because we beat Helen home by just--if the bus was early. I remember sliding down that coal shoot and Helen Hines getting a hold of me when she got in that house about--cause it would ruin your cloths. Totally ruined. Helen Hines was a gorgeous lady. She went back to nursing school once we had grown up and when my father was in his last days at the hospital, it was Helen Hines who sat by his bedside. She is a dear, dear member of our family. This is not--Helen quit working for us after about the second or third year. She became another part of our family and always has been. And always will. She still stops in and sees my mom every once in a while and mom reminds me that Helen keeps reminding me to behave.

EH: So do you mean she stopped working for you--

SS: Well, we didn't see--we didn't see her as working for us anymore. She more became--kind of--almost part of that family. And still is. She was an amazing lady.

EH: And she--is she an African American woman?

SS: She is an African American woman

EH: So did she ever bring over her kids to play?

SS: Well, Clarkston came over every once in a while. I knew Clarkston fairly well. They didn't come over a lot to play. It was--it was after school. We were, I think, a little bit older than her kids were. I want to think Helen's a little bit younger than mom so she's probably around seventy now. No, they didn't come over a lot to play. The kids that we played with really were neighborhood kids because when I started schools weren't integrated--when I started school. That didn't happen for some number of years. So in my younger years there was still quite a separation in Chapel Hill between blacks

and whites and a lot of the blacks in Chapel Hill worked in service industries or for the University at some point, but there's no industry in Chapel Hill after the--or Carrboro after the mill closed. So it really was very service oriented and so really I--I want to say it was '61 or '62 when integration really kind of--started to grab hold in Chapel Hill. [telephone rings] And at that point--I don't have to get that--at that point we started to experience kids from other races. Chapel Hill was not international in those times. We didn't have the large Asian contingent, Hispanic contingent. I mean it was a black-white situation in the fifties and the early sixties in Chapel Hill. It's so much more diverse now than it was then.

EH: So did you have--you were saying, you felt like the town was very separated.

SS: Yes.

EH: Were there ever places that you--that you did experience African Americans? Say at the university, or--.

SS: Well, we experienced some at the university but you also have to understand that the university was not terribly integrated at that time either. Where we experienced it more was in high school athletics and high school music. There was no better band in the state than the Lincoln High School band and no better football team and we'd go watch the football team.

EH: You'd go watch the--

SS: We'd go watch the Lincoln High School games. We'd go watch the Lincoln High School marching band. It was the best show in town and that's somewhat where we got some of our early experiences on that. I don't remember as a young child a lot of experiences. I remember the Manhattan Pool Hall. It was the black pool hall in town. It

was the only place where I could shoot and I remember my dad thinking this was fine. I'd just ride down to Manhattan and--it's where the Marathon sandwich shop is in Carrboro now. I grew up learning how to shoot pool at Manhattan and was very accepted and very--"Here's that Scroggs kid again. He just wants to play". At that time, we did not sense that there was a tension. We didn't understand about some of the drug stores and the segregated counters and everything else. Our definition of bigotry maybe was Clarence down at Clarence's and--but I delivered papers as a kid growing up and black kids delivered papers too. So we knew each other through ()--some of our part time jobs. We knew each other from sand lot ball, not organized ball but sand lot ball, where just a bunch of kids would appear and you'd play ball. Those probably, for the elementary years when Estes Hills integrated--and I remember when my mother ran for the school board and was elected, her first term--

EH: 1960?

SS: God, she served--probably 1960. One of the first votes my mother took was the vote on integrating the elementary schools and she voted to make sure the school where her kids went was the school that was integrated first. So I grew up in a household that was very much based in the issues of equality and so we didn't think anything unusual was going on. But then, we lived in a privileged kind of world where we didn't see the strife, where we didn't see the inequities that truly existed. We saw it through the eyes of a Helen Hines who was a--just--a saintly human being who was a great lady raising great kids of her own and trying to tolerate us. So we got a jaded picture of what we thought racial identity really was because we saw it from a lady who we loved dearly. We didn't see it as a racial issue. We didn't comprehend it and didn't comprehend it for

many years. I think things didn't really get to the issues until the high school up in '66 and I think that's really where integration made a--made a decision about how it would run its course in Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill High School was brand new in '66--I hope I'm not going ahead of all your questions--

EH: Please.

SS: Chapel Hill High School opened in '66. It moved out to where it was when the sold the building on Franklin Sreet. Of course, I've never forgiven my mother for that because I've always wanted to walk to high school. How neat would that be, walk down Franklin St. to go to high school, cool. But be it what it--so the school goes away from Franklin St. and everybody goes to Chapel Hill High School in 1966. Now, I went as a tenth grader. My older brother went as a senior and even at Chapel Hill High School, brand new to all the kids from Franklin St. as well as all the kids from Lincoln, there was a feeling among some of the white kids, "What are you doing at my school?" There was this concept that still held on. It was almost a concept that we didn't realize what the kids from Lincoln had lost and didn't know that for the whole time, didn't realize that whole time we were in school. That's a realization that didn't come until much later because we were under--we were operating under this kind of scenario--out of ignorance I'm sure--of, "You're coming to a brand new school, state of the art. You left that old rinky-dink building behind. What's your problem?" Not realizing that they also left behind a heritage that was so awe-inspiring when you really look at it and study it well. But in the first two years, in '66 and '67 there was a quiet peace held. It was almost like the beginning of a boxing match when two boxers are just feeling each other out. There was this quiet kind of acceptance of things and while there were little issues

that would come up and raise their heads, there was no, what I call now, cataclysmic failure. It was tolerated. Oh, we talked a good story. We talked about the southern rednecks that were still there at the school. You know and I--enlightened Chapel Hill children. You know we still knew we had those contingents of those bloody racists over there and you know those sort of issues. We put our selves above it but we didn't know any better but we were really empowering that to stay. So, for two years there's a quiet peace and then in 1969 that quiet peace ended. And a lot of people will tell you--talk about the riots at Chapel Hill High School. I think riot is a bad word. There were issues. There were some good old-fashioned fistfights. I went down one flight of steps because I was in the wrong place where I shouldn't the hell of been to start with. There were sit-ins and there were protests. I think, if my memory serves me, a lot of this started with the election of marshals and the issue of representation on the election of marshals is really, I think, one of the triggers. I remember my mother was still on the board then. I remember the abuse that we took, as kids of a board member, over the decisions that were made over marshals and I remember very painfully at high school graduation there were a number of kids who would not shake my mother's hand, as children of the board, when they got their diplomas. I remember that distinctly because there were some very hurt feelings and I think the Procontnean, the student newspaper--if you're looking for resources--, recounting of this--as a student run newspaper which was extremely liberal in its voices--is an excellent recounting of the details of the fact () because at that time they wrote the op/ed pages and I think there were some excellent discussions there. But what I think really triggered the issues in '69 was two years of quiet. We didn't, as kids from white Chapel Hill, really understand what had been surrendered. There, we know

Mr. MacDougale had been the principal at Lincoln and his graciousness and his forthright saying, "This has to work. I'm willing to become the assistant principal at Chapel Hill High School and May Marshbanks can continue as principal." I think really was a very bold, a very powerful statement and Mr. Mac was the man who wouldn't send Steve Scroggs home. When the teacher sent me down to the principal's, if they wanted me to go home, they'd send me to May. If they wanted me just to kind of get warned, they'd send me to Mr. Mac and I knew Mr. Mac well--I knew how many ceiling tiles were in his office--and he was a good and gracious man. But then when you look back on it and you realize when Mr. Peerman, who had been the head coach of one of the most successful black schools in the state, also became the assistant football coach. And that the teachers who came over from Lincoln weren't made chairs of department and where parents in the white community questioned whether these teachers had enough talent to teach their, at that point almost all of us college-bound, kids. You look back on it, you realize that that two years of quiet--if somebody had spoken about it and spoken about the issues of pride and white privilege and the issues of what we give up in this world to accomplish in other means, I think we could have avoided what happened in '69. But we danced around it and we danced around it as kids. I think the other issues that we need--I think--again hindsight, being well-versed I guess, is that when they decided to do the high schools, the people they didn't talk to were kids. They talked to all the little constituent bodies and the key--key stake holders that were involved in this but I think life would've been better served if they'd had more conversations with some of the kids involved. Particularly when you talk to the seniors, the juniors and the seniors from Lincoln. Why didn't those kids march across the stage and get a high school diploma that said Lincoln High School?

Oh know, it had to say Chapel Hill High School. So, let's take your eleven years of Northside and Lincoln and throw it out the window sort of thing. So it was a pretty amazing sort of process because most schools started integration and bang, right up front you had your issues. In Chapel Hill, you let it simmer. Our sports teams integrated well, had excellent athletes, and it was the one place where it seemed to have worked best. Things got testy that senior year and I think they got testy because we didn't talk about it. We danced around--"See how well Chapel Hill has handled integration." That was kind of a mantra we danced around. You know, "We know how to do this. Look at all you people in Boston everywhere else and all your riot and everything else but look at us." and we just didn't look deep enough to see who we had stepped on. When you look back at it with thirty-five, forty years of perspective, you can understand why the Reverend Manlys and the Mary Scroggses and the Hilliard Caldwells and the--all the other people involved did it the way they did it. They needed to step forward. They need to make--to make it happen. If you fast-forward to 1976 when they were deciding what to do with this building itself, I think it's interesting that in the commentary on Lincoln Center a commentary was made, "It is about time we put our people in the place--our top-dogs--in that school building." It sent a message that Lincoln High School was a viable educational institution and if it were good enough for kids, it was good enough for Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent and we've been here as a district office every since. I think that is an important statement to make but it's also maybe ten years too late. But, they got there. Because you'll notice if you look back--I think I got it historically right--we didn't start sharing things until after our class was gone. That it

was the Chapel Hill High School colors and the Chapel Hill High School mascots and it was the Chapel Hill stuff, not the Lincoln stuff.

EH: That was when it first integrated. It was Chapel Hill--

SS: It was all Chapel Hill.

EH: And then it after--

SS: It changed after a few years and I want to say it was the year or two after I left. After the issue of '69 because I graduated in 1969 and I think from the explosiveness of '69 people realized that they had, I think, maybe sold Lincoln High School short. But talk about it in '66 or '67, no because we know how to do it. We had done it without fights, without having to call on the national guard, without having to have the police. Weren't we wonderful.

EH: So you think it that was sort of liberal mystique that kept--

SS: Kept the lid on.

EH: Simmering period.

SS: Kept the lid on and then it let go as it would have eventually at some point. It--I fault us, I fault myself as well, for not really understanding the issues of pride in Lincoln. Oh, we knew it had a great football team, we knew the band was great. We didn't realize what this building meant to the community it served. We knew Lincoln was here but I never remember being in it. I never remember seeing it. I remember Northside because I think I went to a meeting there with mom one time. I never understood the Lincoln Center. I never had to go to school here. Even--and--so we knew it was there but if you'd asked me at one of the football games I went to watch if I knew where the Lincoln Center is, I'd have told you, "no" because I didn't. And it was such a

strong presence in the community. I mean it's very much like the churches. The presence of the church in Chapel Hill has been strong for many, many years but Lincoln High School was the heart and soul of the African-American community. So we picked it up in '69 and moved it without grieving over it appropriately and closing it appropriately. You can look back on it and say we did it wrong and we probably did.

EH: When your mother was on the school board before integration, what was your involvement with--or understanding of her position and--was that something you discussed at home?

SS: We were brought up very early by my father and my mother believing that the only difference between black and whites was one f-stop. If you going to take a picture of a black, you open your lens one f-stop and that's the only difference there is. So we grew up with a very tolerant understanding toward race. Now but what we didn't grow up with was an understanding of the culture. We grew up with a tolerance to accept the culture but we certainly didn't know it and what we knew, we knew from Helen. Toleration was absolute. It was--dad used to preach at us all the time because he was aware and mom was aware of elements in Chapel Hill that weren't as liberal as my house was. I grew up in an extremely liberal household, a very tolerant household, but nor did we go out and explore that culture to understand it more fully. We didn't do it and I--for all intents and purposes I think that was--if I have a shortcoming in my education, that was probably it. But we really were brought up quite differently from Old South, if that's what you want to call it. So you know I grew up saying, "The only difference is one f-stop guys. Just check it up, open up your lens just a little bit more and the picture looks good. You don't blotch them out." And--

EH: That's interesting.

SS: Well dad--my father was somewhat of an interesting human being and he had a lot of thoughts on the issue. When he was on town council--oh god I can't remember the year I'm sure--and they were having this lovely discussion. Whether we were, in official documents, going to address African-Americans as black, Negroes, coloreds, or African-Americans. It was my father who put forward the proposal that we identify them as people who reflect less than 1.2 lumens of light per square centimeter. He said--goes to back to the one f-stop issue. [laughter] They're people, call them people. So that's kind of how we dealt with it and then people have asked me, "But your mother had a servant." Yeah, my mom did, she had help. Helen didn't consider herself a servant. You look back historically and I think my parents paid her way through college just like they paid for mine. Helen's not a servant, Helen's family and I think we learned that after a couple of years which is why I said she quit working for us, kind of became my second mom. So I think we had a very healthy respect but we didn't have an understanding of culture.

EH: Did your mother run for the school board for the reasons--for the race reasons, for the integration reasons?

SS: One of the major reasons she ran, yes. My mother's always believed very strongly that an equal education is exactly what it means. It meant equal. It didn't mean quasi-legal or another building. It meant everybody's got the same shot and that's what I think concerned my mom a lot about the issues in Chapel Hill. That we'd been giving some lip service to this and really hadn't made any strides forward. I can't remember how many damn terms--I think she was elected six times but--and none of them were

even close. But through that issue, I think mother's acceptance and understanding of the issues across the town made a difference. I think its interesting when the school board was going to name two new school buildings in this district, I think its very interesting that the Scroggs family nominated not only Mary Scroggs but R.D. Smith and the R.D. Smith's family nominated Mary Scroggs and R.D. Smith. The respect those two had for each other was immense and there was an acceptance in this town that Mary Scroggs, above all else, was fair to everyone. So we never got into the situation of--of mom not playing the game straight. Mom was the great balance point and it made our lives difficult because if you didn't support her decision, I heard about it from teachers, I heard it from students. You think back on it and I think she did the best with the situation she had. I think if you were to ask her there's some things she'd probably do a little differently herself but she stood her ground.

EH: When was your father on the town council?

SS: Sometimes with R.D. Smith in the sixties or the seventies. I--dad was on so many things, planning board, town council. When did the bus service start in Chapel Hill? Dad was on the town council when the bus started twenty-five or thirty years ago. Oh I--

EH: Was it during at all--during any of the Civil Rights activism that he was on the town council?

SS: I actually want to think he came on a little later than that and I would have to look it up to see when dad served. He served one term. He said he would never run for that position again if his life depended on it. But he was--he was very concerned about the direction the town and gown was going so his big specialty was town-gown and

growth issues. Understand, when they started building Lake Forest, we all thought Chapel Hill was going to hell and hand basket about being over crowded and god what are we going to do now.

- 435 Talks about growth problems in CH, parents had political discussions at home.
- 448 Civil Rights movement, saw protests as west of bus station, Colonial and Clarence's, familiar with but not involved in, didn't understand why they supported civil rights but not involved in movement, as students didn't see it as "our issue" saw it as "their issue," like many Chapel Hillians confused about what issue was "always got along fine," many years later understood white privilege, people didn't understand this at that time.
- 498 Talks about black teachers at CHHS, not an exceptional student, R.D. Smith was a big influence on him and his twin Max, R.D.'s grandson was in his school when he was principal, "Mr. Mac" was also important
- 538 Relationships between black and whites had "strange mix," calls it "pseudo-liberal," good story about picking up a white girl for a black friend for a date, did little things to be "liberal" but didn't understand the black culture, the black church, and Lincoln, raised to think that he was "liberal" but says his silence was discriminatory, enabled the status quo, talks about stratification of white community by class, blacks had to cross line not whites.
- 600 [end of side A.]

[Cassette 1 of 2, Side B--Tape No. 4.9.2001]

- 004 Issues were there in '69, little things started to rise, didn't talk about before, questions about black teachers by white parents, these problems still persist.
- 028 Issues were homecoming queen, racial balance of cheerleaders, election of marshals, tried to hammer out solution as students, Board made a different decision then "riot" erupted, CHHS students were "snobs," thought they were better than everyone else so riot hit everybody hard, surprised, veil was blown off, exposed lingering issues, more willing to look closer and recognize differences, high school went through "liberal" stage, '69 was good for the district in the end, allowed them to get past it but still trying to deal with it, catching up, mother on school board until mid-70s, a lot going on at this time generally (Cold War, hippy era...), different factions of whites CH was a mixture of things.
- 113 In more classes with blacks because wasn't in honors classes, thought reason more blacks together in classes was to keep Lincoln kids together, yet institutional racism still existed, Lincoln probably didn't get guidance services like whites did,

didn't expel a lot of kids, good story about getting in trouble when trying to stop a fight, his experience in high school taught him life lessons, especially in failure of integration.

- 164 Had some black friends, he was just in school to get through, likens that to many black students, playing pool at Manhattan gave him in-road into black community, mother had good reputation and that helped, but he didn't go into black communities, sometimes had blacks at his house, stuck in between blacks and whites, black and whites mostly friends at school, story about how skipped school during lunch, during '66 ate lunch in commons because cafeteria not finished, most interracial interactions were athletics, music, and dances, gave them common platform, rhythm, blues, and soul was big music at time, some interracial dating, broad strata of ways whites dealt with blacks, "southern rednecks" were more separate, student government was balanced but some of black kids who got involved were seen as "sell outs," they struggled with that, his role was a mediator but didn't see that the blacks he dealt with in that way expressed truly the frustrations of the black community, trying to stop a fight was one example.
- 275 Something about "keeping the peace" that was important, fighting didn't solve anything, but he wasn't taking the moral high ground, "issues of integration in Chapel Hill were lacks of knowledge, not lack of intent. We talked about how well we communicated but we really didn't talk to each other."
- 301 Pride at Lincoln ran high, has a short but fascinating history, I ask for some more anecdotal stories, talks about football player Cotton from Lincoln and every went to watch him play, high school sports were the thing to do, rode to an away game with a black family and was questioned about it by white students, group of international students came one week and some of girls were black, this was an issue, wasn't sure if other students were pressing because of curiosity or criticism, basketball team was integrated before other schools, thinks other whites were looking for knowledge more than anything else, sees Chapel Hill as town that honors liberals who actually act on it, southern rednecks criticize openly and sometimes other whites criticize their actions as "token liberalism," he got questioned a lot about his relationships with blacks because of mother's position on school board, story about bringing some teachers from Kinston when he taught there and it was their first time in a white's home, he remembered that only time he interacted with blacks was in a crowd.
- 471 Mother went through a lot but kept it separate from family, remembers seeing mother cry, late night phone calls, she made sacrifices but made sure her children weren't affected by her stand but they knew what was going on, father worried about her, it really started during process of integration, she tried to shield herself by seeing that her decisions affected her first, if her kids going to integrated school she could justify, mother was very principled, didn't go into schools often because she didn't want to intimidate teachers, tough household to grow up in

because can't be normal, went to school board meetings to watch mother, she would knit during the meetings and made people mad, long meetings of questioning by citizens, teachers would ask him about it too, thought it was tougher for his older sister and brother, moving out of Franklin Sreet School was hard.

621 [End of side B.]

[Cassette 2 of 2, Side A--Tape No. 4.9.2001]

001 Teachers considered him a pipeline of information about administrative decisions but because she kept it separated he never felt pressure, when got out of high school he could discuss stuff with his mom, '69 was hardest year for him, both sides of "camps" criticized not him directly but his mother's decisions, a lot of people asked questions, especially during the post-riot, marshal decision was resented by students-black and white, but doesn't know what decision was.

047 Chapel Hill sees itself as a City on the Hill but marshal issue exposed the underlying problems, blatant racism didn't really exist in Chapel Hill, remembers Clarence and Colonial but at University there was a "tolerance and acceptance", so many kids caught off guard by what happened, University provided a shield, didn't see the other side of the tracks, town was safe place, no issues of safety or property, Chapel Hill was different, one of the first to graduate, basketball team playing non-integrated schools, football games, unity on protected the black players, there were relationships made out of respect, didn't hang out but protected each other, personal grudges not held, expands on athletic experience, didn't have racial discipline issues.

153 Tracking was more obvious to juniors and seniors, in tenth grade classes were still mixed, even to this day hierarchy of teachers is determined by seniority and Lincoln teachers had no seniority so couldn't teach harder classes, had to hire a lot of new teachers, many teachers from both schools quit during integration, secretaries were white, white students didn't know any better

202 Freshman experience at ASU remembers health class who asked class if they would date outside race, he raised his hand, thinks he's a better person because he is a better person because of it.

238 [End of interview.]