

Interview

with

LEONARD ARNOLD

January 18, 1991

By Goldie F. Wells

The Southern Oral History Program  
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## INTERVIEW WITH MR. LEONARD ARNOLD

By Goldie F. Wells

Goldie: I am in the office of Mr. Leonard Arnold at Triton High School in Erwin, North Carolina. Today's date is January 18, 1991. Mr. Arnold, I would like for you to introduce yourself and say that you know that this interview is being recorded.

Mr. Arnold: My name is Leonard Arnold and I am principal of Triton High School and I am aware that the interview is being recorded and Ms. Wells has my permission to use it in any manner in which she would see fit.

Goldie: Thank you and I am so glad that you responded to the questionnaire and sent it back. As I stated in the letter I am doing some research which is a part of my doctoral requirement doing a comparative study of role perceptions of black high school principals. Back in 1964, there were over 200 black high school principals. When I wrote last year to the State Department to ask them for a list of black high school principals they sent me a listing of 41 and I later learned that 41 some of them were principals of alternative schools and not traditional high schools so you all are few compared to the number of districts that we have in the state of North Carolina.

Goldie: I would like for you to share some things about the principalship with me. These tapes will be used later on for research and they will be archived at the University in the Southern Collection at Wilson Library on the campus at Chapel Hill. I would like for you to tell me something about yourself and how you became a high school principal.

Mr. Arnold: Well, Ms. Wells, I am a native of the area. As a matter of fact if you look out the window you will see my elementary school. I grew up in this area and as a matter of fact as a Boy Scout camped out on this very spot that this school is located on. I received my high school education at what was then Harnett High School in Dunn, North Carolina. It no longer exists as a high school. It now serves grades K-4. From there I attended Fayetteville State University majoring in mathematics with a minor in health and physical education. I took my first job here in Harnett County in the western part of the county at what was then Johnsonville High School. I worked there two years and went from Johnsonville High School to Benhaven High School in 1968, at the time the high schools in Harnett County were integrated. In both situations I taught mathematics. In 1971, I came to Dunn High School as a part-time math teacher and a part-time assistant principal. After one year I moved into a full-time assistant principalship dealing with those things commonly

associated with the assistant principalship-attendance, discipline, just a number of things traditionally associated with the assistant principalship. After some years at Dunn High School, I guess it was in 1975, I moved into Central Office to direct what was then called the ESSA Program. I directed that program for one year and then returned to Dunn where I was appointed principal of Harnett Middle School. Harnett Middle School was a school of 1200 students in grades 4-8. I remained at Harnett Middle School until 1985, when this school, Triton High School was being built. Upon its completion I moved here as principal and I have been here for six years. In terms of the question of how I got here, I really don't know other than one morning the superintendent called me and asked me to be in his office in 30 minutes and I told him I couldn't be and he said well, be here in 45 minutes. Not knowing what was on his mind, I made my way to Central Office and as I walked in the door he said, "Lynn, would you like to be principal of Triton High School." I said, "Mr. Gray, I've never thought about it." He said, "Well, you don't have time to think about it. I'm going to be fast this morning. I need to know whether or not you are interested in being principal of Triton High School." I said to him, "Mr. Gray, I can't answer that question. I haven't thought about it and never dreamed that I would be asked the question so I just can't answer that question." He said, "What do you need to do in order to answer that question," and I said, "There are some people I need to talk to." He said, "Who are they." I said, "My mother, daddy, grandmother, my son, my wife my secretary and my guidance counselor." He said, well you have until 2:30." So I spent the rest of the day talking to those people and each one of them said to me, you need to take the opportunity and at 2:30 I called him and I well remember the conversation. I said, Mr. Gray, I don't know what the answer to your question is. The only thing that I can say is, wherever I am needed in the system, wherever you place me I will do the best that I can. He thanked me and reminded me that he had not promised me a job, he merely was inquiring and told me that at some point in the future, he'd let me know what the decision was. Well, the future was that night at 11:45. He called me and said, "Lynn, you are now principal of Triton High School. Have a good day." That was it.

Goldie: Had the Board met between your conversations?

Mr. Arnold: The Board met that night. I have been here ever since and enjoyed every minute of it.

Goldie: Do you have educators in your family? Do you come from a line of educators?

Mr. Arnold: There are some, not in my immediate family. I have cousins who are educators. I came from a family that was a farm family in terms of mother and father with very

little education. And while they didn't have a lot of education they believed in education. As a matter of fact I have one brother and two sisters. Neither one of which ever missed a day of school in their life. I am the only one who didn't get perfect attendance. But for all three of them they went to school every day in their life and I mention that to emphasize how important they my parents viewed education. I think for eleven years I went to school 179 days and one of the twelve years I went to school 178 days. I never could get 180 days. But they did treasure education and in our household it was clearly understood that even though we had a television, I think we got a television when I was six years old or maybe seven, it couldn't be turned on until all homework was done and all chores were done. So while my mother and father were modestly educated I would say, it was very important that we receive all that we could get.

Goldie: Did your other brother and sisters go on to college?

Mr. Arnold: Yes, I have one sister who is a guidance counselor here. I have a brother who is in industrial technology with Kala Springfield, and I have another sister who is involved in computer science in the western part of the state.

Goldie: Now I want you to tell me something about Triton High School. The number of students, staff members, some of the history of the school.

Mr. Arnold: Triton High School is a school situated in rural eastern North Carolina that represents the consolidation of three previous high schools, Dunn High School, Erwin High School and Coates High School. Dunn High School had a student body of about 900, Erwin had a student body of about 400 and Coates had a student body of about 250-300 in terms of the high school student body. We are a school of 1400 pupils and 102 professional staff members. We also have 27 support staff persons including janitorial and cafeteria workers. This school opened in the Fall of 1985, and we are now in our sixth year. In terms of the makeup of the student body, we are 35% minority, 64% white and 1% Indian. The faculty is fairly reflective of that percentage. Socioeconomically I would describe our student body as being a cross-section typical of that found in eastern North Carolina. We have students who are extremely poor--extremely poor, and we have students who are extremely wealthy. We have students who live in housing that is barely adequate and we have students living in \$400,000 homes so the range is fairly clear in terms of the socioeconomics of the students. One of the things that I am proud of in looking at the socioeconomics of Triton High School is the interpersonal dynamics of the student body. Once these students arrive in this building, they are not black kids, white kids, rich kids or poor kids. In any group of students if you were to study to a makeup of



the student be it socially, or however else they may cluster you are subject to find students well integrated without regard to their socioeconomic standing or without regard to their race. It is an excellent body of students. I tell them and I tell others I don't believe that there is a better student body anywhere to be found in the state. Our faculty is basically a faculty of either natives of the area or people who have been in this area long enough that they are now rooted in the area. There is very little turnover in this school. As a matter of fact, in the six years that we have been here I have hired less than ten people. So I think that says something about the local nature of the staff but I also think it says something about the fact that the staff is satisfied to be a part of Triton High School. I am pleased to say that we actually have a waiting list of people from across the county wanting to become a part of our staff. That is something that we feel good about.

Goldie: Now I am going to ask you something about the responsibilities that you have and I will give you different areas so that you can tell me how you deal with them. Tell me how you deal with supervision of personnel and selection of teachers.

Mr. Arnold: Let me talk about supervision and then we will talk about selection and as I said, I have had few occasions to actually select teachers but supervision of personnel--in our structure we have four assistant principals. I have designated one of those assistant principals to operate in a role that more accurately could be defined of that the instructional leader--director of instruction if you will. It is Mrs. Hasty's responsibility to do direct supervision and direct observation and to deal with teachers in terms of curriculum, development, and instruction of the related matters. Of course, I take an active role in that process but she is if you will the first line supervisor. In a school this big with all of the types of responsibilities and all of the types of things that you have to deal with, I felt that it was important to identify a competent person to deal directly with instruction on a day to day manner. And while Mrs. Hasty is identified as an assistant principal, she does not deal with those matters normally associated with the assistant principalship. She exclusively deals with the instructional program and the curriculum needs. That is my direct link to the instructional program within the school. Now, not only do I take an active part but we debrief if you will at least twice a week. We try to do it daily. I would say that we average three times a week but we must do it twice a week. At these debriefings Mrs. Hasty along with the other assistant principals and I, after school, sit down and just discuss all things that are happening. So that not only will the person directly responsible for an area know what is going on but the other administrators also will know what is going on. In terms of the selection process of teachers,

we have final voice in deciding who comes to our local campus as a teacher. However, we have some understandings and some procedures that start with the personnel director. A new applicant will file a formal application with the personnel director in Lillington in the central office and from there will schedule an appointment with the local principal if in fact there is a vacancy and if that person's certification would make him or her a candidate for that position. At that point, once the interview has been scheduled to the convenience of both, the local principal assumes the responsibility--let me back up because the personnel director first of all interviews the candidate and then that candidate has an interview with the local school principal. At that time the local school principal depending on his style of interview discusses with the applicant all possible considerations related to the position whether or not they are extra curricular duties, the breath of that person's training and experience, all matters that could possibly enter into a decision as to whether or not that candidate would be an appropriate person or the most appropriate person to fill the position. Once that decision is made a report is made to the personnel director and if it a recommendation that this person will be employed then the personnel director will take care of the mechanics of employment of that person begins work at a mutually agreed upon date.

Goldie: Now when it comes to the observing and doing the evaluation who does that?

Mr. Arnold: The director of instruction is the primary formal observer. In addition to her formal observations the principal in this case makes informal observations some which are written up and some of which are not. But in almost all cases unannounced ones. Once the observation procedure has been completed then--I might also add that we are one of the pilot units therefore we also have peer evaluation. Once all of that raw material has been assembled, the director of instruction and I usually meet on a series of Saturday mornings and we review every teacher's file and using all of the information, all of the raw material that has been pulled together for that file, and with the input of the formal observer, the assistant principal, the information that the principal has been able to get through his informal observations and through his day to day observations, then we do the formal checklist, the formal evaluation too if you will. After that has been done, we, the assistant and I, schedule a conference with the teacher being evaluated, go over with him or her the items that we have checked and allow that teacher to engage in whatever discussion that he or she might want to engage in and inform them that they have a right to respond to the evaluation and ask that they sign it. That is basically the procedure. So in summary the evaluation is a punitive summary of the director of instruction's input, the peer evaluator's input, as well as

the principal's input.

Goldie: Curriculum and instruction and it seems like you have kind of delegated that already. How much input do you have?

Mr. Arnold: It sounds as though I have delegated it and I guess that one of the criticisms that I would make of myself is an acknowledgement of that. I don't know that it is criticism I think it is right and even though I delegate and respect the job that those persons who have been delegated responsibilities do and even though I allow them to do those jobs I find that it is important to me that I have hands-on relationships with all persons involved in a particular task. As an example, in the formal observations, you know that we have announced and unannounced, in the announced observations you know you have a pre-conference, then you have your observation and you have your post-conference. I try to make myself available in as many of the pre-conferences as possible. I try to make myself available in practically all of the post-conferences even though I may not have actually gone in the classroom and involved myself in the evaluation. It is important to me that I sit on the post-conferences particually because I want to hear two things--I want to hear what the observer saw and I want to hear the teacher's response. That is important to me. Which means that in March when I sit down to read these documents and review, I can relate not only to what I'm seeing at the moment but I can relate to the exchange that those two people had as this was being discussed at that time. For example, if the observer notices some serious problems, it is important to me that I know and participate in deciding what plan of improvement is worked out. It is important for me to know how a teacher responds to that plan of improvement and it is also important to me later on to find out how well that plan is being executed. So I would not say that by delegating basic responsibilities I move myself away from the process. I take pride in the fact that sometimes it gets to them because it does generate additional work but I want to be involved in as much of what is going on as possible. Take the other assistant principals for example who are involved in discipline and attendance and those kinds of things. I work right with them. If a student has a problem today that is a serious disciplinarian problem, before I go home this evening I know all the details and possibly have even talked to the teacher and the student even though another assistant principal may have that as his primary responsibility.

Goldie: Now when it comes to curriculum changes, do you work closely with the department?

Mr. Arnold: Okay on curriculum changes. In considerations that would come under this category, not only does the principal and the director of instructor involve themselves



in that process but department heads, guidance and through the department heads all staff members become involved. For example, if we are concerned with a change in the science department, the procedure would be that department head would meet with the science teachers. They would come to some conclusions or some consensus as to what they would like to see happen and reasons for it. That assistant principal then would meet with me and the director of instruction and in most cases a supervisor from the central office to discuss the pros and cons of the proposed change. Once we have heard various inputs and once we have made preliminary decisions, then that process reverses itself. The department head carries our response back to his or her teachers. They discuss it and then we try to jam it all together to come up with some considerations and in many cases the students are involved in that process either through active discussion or through surveys. Guidance is involved for the obvious reasons. They have their perspective in terms of how all these things fit into the total schedule as well as the 22 units required by the local system or the 20 units required by the state so it becomes really a kind of mushroom type involvement. Very seldom is a decision made in this office like this. Most of the decisions are affirmed in this office but the most of the decisions are made by various faculty members.

Goldie: How do you deal with the discipline?

Mr. Arnold: Well, let me tell you first just a little about my philosophy. I believe that there are two major avenues in dealing with the correction of behavior and I don't know how actively they are defined by a dictionary but for the sake of conversation with my staff and with my students, I believe in a disciplinary approach which is a guidance or counseling approach for most problems. I also believe in another avenue that I will call just raw punishment. I think there is a need for both. Our preference here is the disciplinary approach and I define discipline as a change in behavior. Very seldom does a student get into problems that require just raw punishment. Occasionally for example, if you go out there and slap somebody, you are going to be punished. But we spend far more time talking with students and counseling and directing students than we do punishing students. I don't think a student has ever been punished in this office who has not first of all understood and indicated that he or she might have understood by admitting that what we are dealing with was wrong. That is first. Students know it but sometimes it takes a week to get to a final resolution because a problem has not been solved until a student first of all understands why, what we are dealing with is wrong. Once we do that we try to establish some understandings as to what would have been the preferred and right way of dealing with the problem. Our third step is to try to arrive at a commitment for the future and then once we have done those



things we analyze whether or not there is a need for some punishment. For example, you just heard me ask one of the assistant principals to suspend a student. Now that student has had probably five conferences with me and the assistant principals. Last week, I had that student's mother in once again trying to get a commitment. Here we are less than a week dealing with the same problems again. This is a boy who transferred in and he just will not go to class. Well, we are sending him home. But while he has a five day suspension on record, he is in control as to how long he will be home. He could get back in school tomorrow if he wants to. What he knows is this. He must go home and discuss the fact that I am now suspended from school with his mother and once he decides that he is going to follow the rules of the school, all he has to do is pick up the phone and call me and say, Mr. Arnold, "I am ready to come back to school." And if he can persuade me that he is serious well then I will tell him to get his books and come on back to school. Since I have been in this school we have had to expell for the rest of the year two students. We probably have suspended for say three day periods, probably twenty students this year. We have had four fights I believe in this school this year. And on a typical day what you will see in terms of student behavior is what you will see if you get up and walk around campus right now. We appeal to students to be good because it is the right thing to do. And we say to them, you are young adults and we hold these expectations and I am proud of the fact that these kids live up to it for the most part. Now this is not a perfect school, I've never seen one but discipline just is not a problem in this school. Probably if I wanted to talk about the most serious concern I have in terms of discipline would be those few individuals who are constantly tardy to class or that seven or eight students who manage to cut a class on a regular basis but beyond that the students in this school behave probably more like you would expect to find in a community college that never matured then you would typically find in high school. One of the best ways you have of analyzing the type students that you have in a student body is to visit the public restrooms in a school and you can very well determine the character of your students by what you see in the public restrooms. I would invite you to visit ours before you leave. The walls in those rooms are very much like the walls in this office.

Goldie: I wonder if the building has anything to do with the behavior to some extent. This is a beautiful building and I didn't come in the main entrance, I came in through the first commons and I came at lunchtime and they were just congregating and they were not that noisy.

Mr. Arnold: The answer to your question is yes, the building has something to do with it. It is like clothes. You behave differently when you have on your Sunday go to meeting clothes then you do if you are out shopping.

Goldie: Oh, you really believe that? I don't think people believe that anymore.

Mr. Arnold: I believe it. I tell my students our school can be the state fairground or it can be Carowinds. You have basically the same type activities going in both places--entertainment--but at the state fairgrounds you throw your junk on the floor and on the ground. It is a dirty place. At Carowinds, because those people are running around in those shovels and they expect you to help keep it clean, you look for a trash can. I think the building has something to do with it but I think expectations--I believe that young people do to a great extent what you expect them to do if you can communicate your expectations to them. For example, I have a son who is a freshman at A & T. Three weeks ago he was home and he stayed out longer than I intended. I wouldn't let him take his car to school this year so he went out and stayed out longer. I said, "Okay Michael, you stayed out too late last night. So the next time you are home bring yourself some video tapes because you are going to be sitting back there in the room watching video. You won't have the privilege the next time to take your car out since you didn't get back on time." He said, "Daddy, I am grown now." I said, "Still bring some videos home next time." This past weekend he ran in for just a few minutes, in and out. He just ran home with a friend to pick up something and right back. So on the way out he said, "Daddy, remember that I didn't bother the car the next time that I am home." I had forgotten about it. I said, "What do you mean, Michael." He said, "Just remember I was home and I didn't drive the car. So when I come back home it will be another trip." Well, the point I make is he knows what I expect. High schools kids are basically the same way. I give students a lot of privileges in this school. Students wrote the student handbook for the most part. I did some editing and what have you but the students make every rule that governs students in this school. I present students with situations. I say, this is a problem, my student government in particular. Now you all tell me how we can solve the problem. So it works. It is a matter of expectations.

Goldie: Transportation.

Mr. Arnold: We operate 22 school buses and we provide private parking for at least 600 vehicles. We have 600 cars, student cars parked on our campus each day and we run 22 school buses. The primary responsibility for bus transportation is with Mr. Coleman, one of the assistant principals, and the primary responsibility for civilian transportation is with another assistant principal who takes care of things such as parking stickers and taking away parking privileges. For example, we have a rule that if you get a ticket within a mile of this campus, your parking permit is taken away for ten days. We do that to try to assure safe driving around

campus. In Harnett County we operate a dual bus system. We operate a bus system for K-4 students, for middle school students and a separate bus system for high school students so we only transport high school students. By so doing we have basically eliminated problems on buses. We never have to deal with problems on buses. Problems on buses are usually predicated on a little youngeon trying to be a big youngeon and a big youngeon trying to make him be a kid and all of that is taken away by operating a bus system where you only transport high school students. Our school sits within the geographic center of our attendance area. Our attendance area includes a radius of about ten miles in all directions. So even though we operate 22 buses they are for the most part short routes. Most of our buses are driven by high school students who are 18 years of age and older. We don't have any regular non-pupil drivers with the exception of one and that is the special education bus and an aide drives it. I am fortunate in that I am a proponent of the student driver.

Goldie: You are fortunate because that has been a problem that several of the principals have told me about. One even told me he had a bus Friday and it just had to sit there until they found a driver.

Mr. Arnold: Now my aides, I only have two aides, Some of my lunchroom workers and my janitors are certified as bus drivers and they can be called on in an emergency but I am real pleased that of the 21 regular buses, I have student drivers and on the 22nd bus, an aide is the driver.

Goldie: Utilization of funds.

Mr. Arnold: As you know Ms. Wells, many of your funds are line items out of central office and we use those as they are line itemed. But we do have local funds, a few discretionary funds and we have some of those funds that are passed on to us from central office that become discretionary within the broad definition. For example the equipment account--it becomes our responsibility locally to determine what pieces of equipment are needed--to prioritize items. Ninety-five percent of the spending in this school is done by a faculty committee. All I do is give the broad guidelines. The money in this fund must be used for equipment, the money in this fund must be used for supplies, the money in this fund must be used for textbooks, the money in this fund must be used for library books. That type thing. Beyond that point, those funds are turned over to what I call, the faculty finance committee chaired by one of the librarians and they prioritize need based on responses and surveys from departments and they spend the money. All I do is approve the purchase orders. Now, I have at my disposal some discretionary dollars. Those dollars earned through concessions and through student pictures. To some extent, I will reserve some of those dollars for obviously needed items



but most of those dollars are also turned over to that committee for expenditures. So basically, other than marginal expenditures to make sure that it fits within the guidelines of the funding, I don't get into a lot of line item type expenditures. You are familiar with the powering down concept. That is one of the commitments I made to my staff and that is that I wanted them to become involved in deciding what was most needed in their classrooms. I feel like they are in a far better position to know than I am.

Goldie: Cafeteria management.

Mr. Arnold: It is the responsibility of the principal to decide on staffing of the cafeteria to include the manager. Beyond that my involvement in cafeteria operation is strictly supervision. We do central purchasing, central record keeping and the day to day behind the scenes operation is a result of the manager and the central office cafeteria staff. Our job on a day to day basis is merely to manage student behavior and to assist whenever we may be called on but aside from hiring personnel and management, basically you know that the cafeteria exists in terms of what happens over on this side of campus. Is that what you have already found, Ms. Wells?

Goldie: Yes, it is just the 1964 principals who had a hard time with it. They were responsible for the reports and they said it was really something. They know that you all have it easier than they did.

Goldie: Buildings and grounds.

Mr. Arnold: Building and grounds is the responsibility of the maintenance staff in conjunction with the principal in this school because it is a new campus and because there were no funds allotted initially for landscaping. The horticulture class has taken a primary role in campus beautification. As a matter of fact, every bush and plant you see on this campus was placed here by the horticulture class. They took it as a live project and I am pleased to say that it is awfully beautiful, particularly in the Spring, Summer and Fall when the grass is green. In terms of upkeep such as grass cutting and that type thing that is a responsibility of the maintenance staff. I have a head janitor and I have appointed someone to serve as his assistant and I am real pleased to say that they are far more competent in the business and managing than I ever would be. I never have to speak to them about specifics. Just a matter of providing them with the tools and what you have that they might need to do a job. I never have to say it is time to cut the grass, it is time to cut the hedges, we need to pick up trash on the campus. They are probably prouder of this campus than I am in terms of their responsibility. I will mention to you though that the one concern that I have in the area of



maintenance of campus as well as building is that we, along with probably every other school in the state of North Carolina, do not have enough allotted manpower for the job to be done. If you grew up on a farm, which I am sure you didn't, you can relate to what I am about to say. This building is a six acraa building--250,00 square feet there about. We have 86 acreas of campus and athletic fields. We have a maintenance staff of seven people and it is just not enough. If not for the individuals that I have, I would have a lot of concerns but I am fortunate in that I have guys who take pride in the looks of the campus and who go really beyond the call of duty to see that it stays in tiptop shape.

Goldie: Community relations.

Mr. Arnold: Community relations becomes a joint responsibility and as a result I guess you could say shared responsibility and involves many people. We, as administrators, spend a good deal of time talking to various civic groups, church groups, whatever the occasion may be. The same is true of various staff members within the department. It is nothing for me to hear that one of my teachers is giving a workshop in some particular area of expertise. In addition you have your Booster Clubs that serve as liaisons to the community or if you will roots within the community. We are conscious of the need to have strong community support and we believe that it is a reciprocal type thing. I am proud to say that our community support is excellent. It couldn't be finer I don't believe. I honestly believe that if I had an identified emergency need and needed to raise \$5,000, I could do so in thirty minutes. I know I could. Not only is there strong community support in terms of dollars and cents, there are strong volunteers in the community. The Booster Club had a fund raiser Friday night--a bar-b-que sale and I was surprised at the number of people working in the kitchen. So we are conscious of the need of strong community support and we try to cultivate it. One of the things that possibly helped us is the fact that our school was designed for community use. Our school is used at least once a week and sometimes more often by community groups. The auditorium, the cafeteria, the commons area, the classrooms for meeting spaces and by having citizens come in and out of the building for activities that are really not school related it also creates a warmth or friendship that causes those same individuals to rally when they can be of help to the school. Very few people in this community have not been in this building for some purpose or the other.

Goldie: How much administrative power and control do you have over your school site and your responsibilities?

Mr. Arnold: Within the broad guidelines established by central office, the Board of Education, by State law, I would

say almost total. Now certainly when you talk about responsibility and authority, it must fit within policy laws and understandings. And I think you cease to talk about authority when you want to go outside those legitimate restraints but within side of those restraints, I have total control over what happens here. Certainly as a procedures thing there are things you seek approval for. For example, if a student group proposes to go somewhere and stay overnight it is board policy that the board would review that request and approve it. But it is almost unheard of that with the principal's recommendation you would be rejected. In terms of staffing as I mentioned earlier, it would be impossible for you to acquire a job at Tritonn High School if I said, you were not the person that I felt fitten into it. I am pleased that in Harnett County and I think it is to me that it is a commendation of the central office administration and Board of Education that you are allowed to run your school within those policies and frameworks that all people are expected to follow. One of the things I told you about was how I got here. One of the things that I said to Mr. Gray, who was then superintendent, was I am principal at Harnett Middle School and I have total control of the administration of that school. Now by virtue of the fact that it is a new school Triton High School is going to be in the limelight. Are you looking for a principal who is going to be control of his school or are you looking for a placeholder and every Tom, Dick, and Harry expect to be administrator of the school? He said, "Lynn, if I wanted something different from what you were doing at Harnett Middle School, I would have hired someone different to do it." And that was all he needed to say to me. I guess we all have our peculiarities. One of the peculiarities that I have Ms. Wells is that from day one I decided that I was not going to be dealt with as the black principal of Triton High School and I have refused to be dealt with in that fashion. And this goes back to your question. I said, if I go to Triton High School or anywhere else, I'm going to be dealt with as a professional administrator. I am going to deal with students parents, public, Board of Education, whoever as though I am a professional administrator. I will not accept a relationship less than that. And I am real pleased that I have not had to struggle to do that. Now I say that as the principal of Triton High, I say that as a black principal but it can also be said by every principal in this school system. That is just the way we are and we are protective of our authority or power because we recognize we must have certain powers if we are going to successfully run the school.

Goldie: How many black principals do you have in the system?

Mr. Arnold: Six out of twenty-one.

Goldie: How did desegregation affect your role as a principal?

Mr. Arnold: I was not a principal when school were desegregated. I was a classroom teacher. I don't know what effect it had on me other than I consider myself fortunate to have worked before and after. I think that I have an advantage over say people who have just gotten started in this business of education.

Goldie: Why?

Mr. Arnold: Because I had the opportunity to see the before and the after. It is like 1865, and studying history.

Goldie: Do you find any difference in supervising black teachers and white teachers?

Mr. Arnold: No, no. As I said, Ms. Wells, I have tried to establish the fact that I will be dealt with as a professional and I deal with my staff as professionals. I really cannot sit here and cite to you differences in terms of the supervision of teachers. People are individuals and individuals require different levels of intensity in terms of supervision but it is not racial.

Goldie: Do you enjoy your job and why?

Mr. Arnold: I like children, I don't particularly like grown people. Kids are honest. They will say what they are thinking. Grown people have developed defenses and children keep you young. I can talk to a 65 year old lady out on the streets that I have never seen before and without mentioning school within three minutes I can tell you whether or not she was a school teacher. There is a real reward in dealing with children and then there is some arrogance in that as children go through the system and go out and do well, I think that we are vain enough to want to believe that we had some hand in their success. The problem comes when one goes out and robs a bank and you wonder how much you had to do with his direction. But overall, education is probably one of the most rewarding occupations there is. I tell my staff in orientation that I honestly believe that probably preaching is the most noble of the professions because one is truly committed and right behind it comes teaching. I think the long range impact that we leave on children is probably as valuable as any relationship that you could develop with them, not just academically but socially, emotionally, the whole being that makes up a child. There are some things I don't like about my job.

Goldie: Well, I was going to ask you that next. What are the major problems of your job?

Mr. Arnold: I think the major problems of the principals' job is you have very little thinking time. I think when called on to run an operation as big as a school and an operation



that directly impacts on lives of so many people at an impressible age, we probably don't reserve enough time to just think. You are so busy doing that you don't have time to just pause and think but short range and long range. I am concerned about the amount of time an administrator has to spend on extra curriculum activities. The older one gets the longer from 7:30 in the morning until 11:00 at night becomes. I have been in the business long enough that I realize I don't have the energy that I used to and that bothers me. I think it is incorrect to call it a dislike but it is a concern. I have often said to myself and to my wife and the superintendent, if I stay in this business much longer, he is going to have to find me an elementary school where I can close up about 5:00 in the evening and go home. Last Friday night for example at 12:15 I was on this campus waiting for some parents to come pick up some kids from a dance. The school day started at 7:30 a.m. and keep in mind every other night last week I had to work up until at least 10:00 p.m. and I just think that there has to be some relief. Now you would say well, why not delegate. You do delegate. Not only was I here but a whole lot of other people had just left at 11:30 p.m. I tell the staff that we run two school days. There is a day that starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. and then there is a day that starts at 3:45 p.m. and ends somewhere after 10:00 p.m. The day will eventually come when large high schools will have to have an afternoon coordinator of events or an afternoon administrator but we just don't have the allotted manpower now to do that type thing. Aside from that I don't know of anything that I just dislike about the job.

Goldie: What do you consider the most rewarding about your principalship?

Mr. Arnold: I think the most rewarding thing is to see a youngster come into this school with problems be it social, academic, emotional or whatever and to see that student in a four year period develop into the type young person that obviously has grown from one point to another. And then to be able to follow that student and here or see evidence that that student is really headed toward what you believe to be a success in life. I think that is the greatest reward. It makes you feel good when a kid comes back such as the kid that we have at North Carolina Central University now and say to you, "Mr. Arnold, had it not been for you I never would have gone to school." That type thing makes you feel good.

Goldie: If you knew of a young black male or female who aspired to be a high school principal in North Carolina, what advice would you give them?

Mr. Arnold: I would tell that person to not only focus on academic preparation but try to develop a set of beliefs that can become a part of his daily life to the extent that he



influences students through his very presence. We hear a lot about the need for black role models and the need for role models. It is a fact. An English teacher had as an assignment here the other day, to describe certain people in their previous life. One of the kids decided to describe Mr. Arnold. He said, "Mr. Arnold was a preacher in his previous life and will be in his next life." Not that I am a religious fanatic as a matter of fact I don't talk about religion. My motto is do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But I think it is because I talk about the rightness of it all. Everything I tell students is focused on, do it because it is right not because Mr. Arnold said it, not because someone else said it but because it is right and that is my strong belief and my hope. And I think that not only do you say those things but you must develop a set of beliefs where that is part of you so the kids can see it and emulate those qualities. That would be my advice to a young person and go for it. By all means be an educator.

Goldie: We have come to the end of the interview guide. Do you have any words of wisdom?

Mr. Arnold: I have some hopes--I hope that the powers that be across the state of North Carolina will recognize that we are in a crisis stage as it relates to minority educators and that we will see the need to actively recruit minority educators and that in the process of hiring them, not hold them to a set of artificial standards higher than we apply to all of us. I am sick and tired of identifying minority candidates and seeing principals drag them out from May to late August until they find a job elsewhere and then they come running back and saying, I was going to hire that lady. I am tired of that. We need to get serious in our belief that minority educators make a valuable contribution to the integrated educational process. It bothers me that as I look at Gentry School over there, a school that formerly all black a K-3 school. It has only one black teacher on its staff now. That bothers me. Those black kids and those white kids can benefit at their formative stages from being exposed to all types of ethnic groups in leadership roles and we are allowing the few good, well-qualified blacks who are in education to be stolen from us by other states because too many of us are not serious about actively recruiting them and making them a part of our staff. That is the advice that I give to the state of North Carolina.

Goldie: I appreciate you taking your time. This has been an informative interview and I have learned a lot and you have a good school here.

Mr. Arnold: I appreciate you taking the opportunity to come by. I'll be honest with you, I decided some time ago that I'm not in a hurry anymore. There are things that need to be done that shouldn't be rushed through.