

SOHP Series: Listening for a Change
Davidson College Interviews - Ada Jenkins School

TRANSCRIPT - GARFIELD CARR

Interviewee: Garfield Carr

Interviewer: Laura Hajar

Date: 16 March 1999

Location: Davidson, N.C.

Tape No.: (cassette 1 of 1)
(90 minutes)

Notes: This interview is one of several
investigating the history of the Ada Jenkins

School in Davidson, N.C. The school opened as the Davidson Colored High School in 1937-38 to serve the African American community of Davidson and northern Mecklenburg County. This neighborhood school was initially elementary through high school, and became elementary only in 1946-47 when a high school opened in Huntersville. In the mid-40s, the school was renamed Ada Jenkins, honoring the longtime teacher and leader. The school closed in 1965 when Mecklenburg County integrated schools. The facility has recently been renovated and re-opened as the Ada Jenkins Center with a variety of programs and services.

Garfield Carr has lived in Davidson, N.C. all of his life.

He attended the Ada Jenkins School from 1956-1963, for the first through eighth grades. He was promoted to the all-black Torrence-Lytle High School in Huntersville, NC for ninth and tenth grades. Torrence-Lytle closed its doors in 1966 due to integration, but Mr. Carr left the school in 1965 to attend the newly integrated North Mecklenburg High School for his final two years of high school. Mr. Carr was among the first class of black students to attend North

Mecklenburg. He later went on to attend Central Piedmont Community College. Today, he is married with three children and is a member of the Davidson Town Council.

The interview took place at the Davidson Town Hall in a large conference room around six o'clock in the evening. He was very friendly and willing to answer my questions. Before the interview started he said that he didn't think he would have too much to tell me. But an hour and a half later, at the end of the interview, he apologized for "talking his head off at me." Although the original purpose of the interview was to find out about Mr. Carr's experiences at the Ada Jenkins school, I found myself asking more questions about what it was like for him to attend an integrated North Mecklenburg for the last two years of high school. Mr. Carr's responses were thoughtful and articulate, and I was especially fascinated by his thoughts on the differences between being educated at an all-black school and at an integrated school. In relation to his experiences at Ada Jenkins, he emphasized most the disciplinary aspects of his education there.

TRANSCRIPT

[Cassette 1 of 1, Side A]

Laura Hajar: This is Garfield Carr on March 16, in Davidson, North Carolina.

LH: Where were you born?

Garfield Carr: I was born in Mooresville, N.C.

LH: And when did you move to Davidson?

GC: Well, I've been in Davidson all my life. But it's just I was born at the hospital in Mooresville.

LH: But did you grow up here in Davidson?

GC: Yeah. Been here all my life.

LH: What were your parents' names?

GC: Evelyn and Orlando Carr.

LH: And what did they do?

GC: Various things. My dad was a truck driver and then he went to work for a company called Carolina Asbestos here in Davidson. And my mother worked at the college for a while, and then she worked a while at Reeves Brothers, which was a textile plant. And then she worked for ____, a division of Westclock, and I think they call it Lambardi Diametrics—that's what it's called now. So that's what they did.

LH: You attended the Ada Jenkins School?

GC: Yeah, I was at elementary school from first grade through eighth grade.

LH: And did you go all the way through?

GC: No, I went to Torrence-Lytle for two years which was the high school, and then in '65, when they integrated the public schools, I went to North Mecklenburg. So I was at North for about 3 years, from '65 through '68, which is when I graduated.

LH: So what years were you at Ada Jenkins?

GC: Oh, I knew you'd ask me that. I say from '56 to—I was there 8 years—so it was around '63, '64. In that timeframe.

LH: Do you remember when Ada Jenkins closed?

GC: I don't really remember. I'm just going to guess it was probably in the mid-sixties.

LH: So it was probably shortly after you left?

GC: Shortly after I left.

LH: We're assuming that it was closed because of integration, and you went to Mooresville?

GC: No I went to Huntersville. The all-black high school was named Torrence-Lytle and that was in Huntersville, and I was there for 2 years. And they closed that school in 1966. Beause in '65 it was mandatory—you know integration

was mandatory, and so I had to attend North Mecklenburg starting in 1965. It was mandatory for my class but--well, I won't say it was mandatory but I really had no choice because they had started with the sophomore classes. At least at my school. And then the following year, after 1966, it was mandatory that all schools had to be integrated. So some people were at Torrence-Lytle a year after I left. But after '66, they closed Torrence-Lytle. And everyone had to go to North Mecklenburg.

LH: How was that?

GC: How was it?

LH: Yeah. I mean it must have been--was it a pretty big change?

GC: It was a change. I guess a cultural and a social change. Because there was a period where, you know, we had to kind of learn each other. I think it was a pretty good transition because most of the kids that went to North Mecklenburg--both black and white--we pretty much saw each other every day. And at some point in time even played together. So it wasn't too bad of an experience. And I don't want to say that there wasn't some problems with certain students. But overall, the transition was pretty good.

But it was a big change. Because we were, I guess we were both wondering—I guess we were also wondering how we were going to be accepted. And hearing of some of the other problems at some of the other schools had during that period of time throughout the south, we didn't know really what to expect. But I don't think the problems that were experienced in other communities and states in the south. I think it was pretty smooth, smooth transition. We had isolated cases.

LH: Do you remember any of the incidents, or anything that happened?

GC: I personally wasn't involved in any. Like I said, there were so few that nothing just really stands out. I think the biggest problem that we had was getting the The mascot for North Mecklenburg at that time was a Rebel. And they had this big confederate flag in the gymnasium. You know what that's all about. I guess if it was one obstacle it was—

LH: Did you get that changed?

GC: It changed after I graduated. They became the Vikings. But I guess if there was one real issue, that was an issue. I don't like to use the word "fought" for change but we advocated for change. There's no way we would associate ourselves with them marching under And I think

they played the Dixie theme and sung it. So it just didn't sit well. We kind of rebelled against that. Because it was one of the things--especially when we had an assembly or a pep rally, they played this song. We just couldn't associate ourselves with being the Rebels. If it's one thing that actually sticks out, I think that would be one of the hurdles that we had.

LH: What was Ada Jenkins like? What was the school like? Do you remember--we've talked with some people that have said that sometimes the classes were grouped together? Do you remember if classes were like that?

GC: Not during the time that I was in school. No.

Earlier. I'm going to say a lot earlier than even me.

Maybe my parents. Because my parents went to Ada Jenkins. My mother did. And my dad went to Torrence-Lytle. But I'm sure at that time they probably were grouped together. But in my generation there were separate classes.

LH: Do you remember what subjects you had?

GC: You had your basic subjects. And I think I took TV French class. I guess it was the breaking of a new age of high technology. We had your basic classes--reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus. We had a very good and stern principal.

LH: Who was the principal?

GC: Mr. [J.R.] Harris. He was real stern and he was a disciplinarian. And you had to be prepared when you'd come to class. So I would say we had some wonderful teachers.

LH: Do you remember who your teachers were?

GC: I can remember a few. Mrs. [Josephine] Brown—Ms. Brown—was my first grade teacher. Miss Kimbro (sp?) I think was my second grade teacher. Mrs. Morris was my third grade teacher. And she was real stern.

LH: What was she like? Did you ever have any run-ins with her?

GC: I got caught chewing chewing gum in class one day. She had this thing—she had like a little—remember the paddle balls with the rubber balls? She had one of those. You had a choice of 3 whacks with the paddle or chewing your chewing gum and she would put castor oil in it. I chose the castor oil.

I know the one difference in going to North Mecklenburg from Ada Jenkins and Torrence-Lytle—teachers in the black schools were more disciplinarians. And they didn't take any junk off of you. I mean it wasn't abuse but--. You didn't want to be unruly in class, not come to class prepared because they would stop by your house and talk to your parents. You know "Garfield did this and he

didn't do that." And you definitely didn't want that to happen. It was more personal.

Nothing like North Mecklenburg. You were there. I'm not saying teachers didn't take interest but it was more personal in the black schools than it was in the--. Because if you needed help, you would stay after school and your teacher would help you. Or like I said, they would come by your house and make sure you were doing your homework. That was a noted difference. I noticed at North Mecklenburg--of course it was a bigger school--and I don't know what the reason for--. I'm sure they had more students and they just couldn't get around like our teachers did.

That was another thing that I noticed. Not that it affected us any. Because it was kind of like, we felt that in some ways, they were better prepared scholastically than we were. And in some cases that was true and in some cases it wasn't. Of course, their material was a lot better than ours. They had the labs and this kind of things. Things that we didn't have. But I found out that in some cases--in most cases, we were pretty much on the same level. I think that was because of the interest in the disciplinary--the discipline that was instilled in us in school. And of course your parents.

LH: Was there a lot of parent involvement?

GC: Yeah. Parents were always involved. I mean the teachers saw to that. Like I said, if something happened in school, sometimes your parents knew before you even got home.

LH: Did that ever happen to you?

GC: Couple times. Yeah. A couple times. But I learned quick. You got to school to study and learn and not to play. So I learned quick.

LH: Was there more of a sense of community then at the Ada Jenkins school?

GC: Yeah.

LH: With the parents being involved.

GC: It was a big sense of community because if you were-- again if you missed school or you did something, the teacher told your mom or would stop by. They had more home visits than they do now. Of course if you were in the community doing something that you shouldn't be doing then someone in the community would correct you. Tell your mom and dad what you did and what they did to you and why they did it. That's the worst thing you want to happen. You get caught in the community doing something because some adult was always going to call you over and "You should do this. You shouldn't do this. And I'm gonna tell your mom. I'm gonna tell your dad." You didn't want that to happen.

It was a sense of community. And it was kind of like that throughout that Davidson. And I am not saying that Davidson did not have its problems during that time. But all in all, it was pretty much a community.

LH: Were there other kids from surrounding towns when you were there? Or was it mostly just Davidson students?

GC: No. Just Davidson and Cornelius went to Ada Jenkins.

LH: They took a bus here? Do you remember?

GC: Yeah. I don't think there were any kids from Mooresville that came to school because Mooresville had their own school system. So most of the kids that went to Ada Jenkins were from Davidson and Cornelius.

LH: Did you play any sports, or have any clubs or special events that you participated in at school?

GC: We had a basketball team. And we had 4-H clubs. Homemakers of America and Future Farmers of America type clubs.

LH: Did you belong to any of them?

GC: I was in the 4-H club. Part of our school activity was a glee club. I was in the glee club. That was at Ada Jenkins. At Torrence-Lytle, of course you had basketball and football. I played basketball at Torrence-Lytle. I was in the drama club and the French club.

LH: When you went to North Mecklenburg, do you think that there were different pressures? Socially?

GC: Yeah, there was social, cultural, academic pressure.

LH: Did you feel like you were more put on the spot? Did you notice if people were more conscious of the way they dressed or---?

GC: Well, yeah. We would always try to be as well-dressed as they could, even though in some cases you couldn't. And so there were pressures. Because, of course, during that time--with the way that the country was--there was really not a lot of opportunities for black families, mothers and fathers in particular. And some of them themselves may have had limited education. You really couldn't afford to buy and do the things that we saw at school. So yeah, it put pressures on us in pretty much all aspects of life. Academically, we felt that we had to be as smart or smarter than our counterparts because there was kind of a way you were treated and judged during that time. How well you acted--you never really wanted anyone to take a negative attitude about you. So there were all kinds of problems.

LH: How did you feel going to the integrated school? Did you not want to? Did you want to? Did you miss having an all-black school?

GC: If I had my choice, I would much rather stay. Because you have something to identify with.

LH: Do you feel like that was kind of lost when you went to the—

GC: Oh yeah. It was a whole complete change.

LH: Were there mostly white teachers at North Meck?

GC: Yeah.

LH: Do you think that had a lot to do with it?

GC: Maybe. It's just a thing you don't know because you didn't know how they were thinking or what they were feeling. They certainly couldn't express maybe their true feelings. There was always this question: "Do they really care about me?" or "Do they care if I learn anything or not?" or "Am I going to be graded fairly?" So that's why we always had to maybe work a little harder. So you were always in this mode of proving yourself. And you had to strive a little harder. That may have helped. It was uncomfortable but in the end, it may have helped.

LH: How did you feel about having had the first chunk of your schooling be in an all-black school?

GC: If I had my choice, that's where I would have stayed. Because that's where your roots were and you could be with your friends. Being in a predominantly white school you may have 1, 2, 3 black children per class or something like

that. So there's really no one to really relate to. If you had a problem with homework you didn't want to appear to be dumb because in some cases, that's what some of them may have thought about you. But you didn't want to give the appearance that you were. You didn't know whether to ask another student to help you because again you didn't know what they were going to think about you. Or whether they would or not. Or what they told you was even the truth. So most of the time, when you had a break you would all tend to get with our friends--somebody we could really associate with.

LH: Were the kids that were with you at Ada Jenkins a lot of the same kids with you at North Meck?

GC: Hmm-mm. Except now when we got to North Mecklenburg, North Mecklenburg---the kids that attended North Mecklenburg were from like Davidson, Cornelius, Huntersville, Long Creek, Mallard Creek. So it was a bigger selection. And even some of the black kids from some of those same towns. So I guess community-wise, it was pretty much a diverse community.

LH: But did you remain friends with the people that you had gone through elementary school with?

GC: Sure. And I even made some new friends from the other towns. But my parents always taught me you treat a person

like you want to be treated, regardless of who they were, or what they were, or what color they were. You could do anything you wanted to do if you put your mind to it. I kind of grew up with that. I won't say that I didn't have some of the same pressures that the other kids did. But it's just that, you know, my parents always taught me that you're just as good--and in some cases better than someone else. And never let anyone tell you that you're not. I think a lot of, most, and I would even say all black parents during that time--that was the thing that they instilled in us. Regardless of what people think you are or what they think about you. You always strive to be better than the next person. And never let anybody tell you that you can't do it. I kind of grew up with that. And most of us did because that was the way we were raised as a family and as a community.

LH: Where did you live in Davidson?

GC: I lived on Griffith Street. To be precise, our house used to sit where Davidson Pond is. When Duke Power decided to build a dam and flood the area, we had to move. But my--our house used to sit right where Davidson Pond is. In fact there were several houses in that area.

LH: Did you have a lot of white friends--any white friends--growing up?

GC: Sure. Most of the kids in this area that went to North Mecklenburg—we all grew up together. And in a lot of cases played together. And I think that helped us in the transition, even though we never thought that that would ever happen. I'm pretty sure that some of them probably wished that it hadn't happened. But, it did. And we kind of suffered through it.

We got to know, and I think that they got to know that some of things that we both had heard weren't necessarily true. Over a period of time, I think we began to look at each other as individuals, as kids. Because kids kind of mimic what they see the adults do. And they repeat the things that the adults do. So I always say by the time I graduated, we began to—I won't say understand each other—but to accept each other. Because, I guess we were put in the situation that, as a kid, if you had a choice, you wouldn't do. But it was something that happened. Gosh, I had several white friends. I was usually at their house or they were at my house. I never really had any problems. I went and did everything I wanted to do.

LH: How often did you guys think about the fact that you went to separate schools before desegregation?

GC: Never really thought about it.

LH: Do you have any siblings?

GC: Hmmm-mm.

LH: What are their names?

GC: Leslie, David, and Rodrick.

LH: Did they all go to the Ada Jenkins school?

GC: No. They were in integrated schools from day one.

LH: So they are a lot younger than you?

GC: Oh yeah. I mean, you mean my brothers and sisters?

Well I have 5 brothers and 3 sisters.

LH: Oh wow.

GC: I think all of them went to Ada Jenkins except for my younger brother—my baby brother. They were there for a year or two or something like that because that's when the schools were beginning to integrate anyway.

LH: Are you the oldest?

GC: No. I have a brother. I think he's 51. He went to the black school all his life. He and my older sister went to all-black schools all their life. I was the first one. In fact I was in the very first class of integration at the public schools in the south. Which was in '65. So, I was in the transition. The changing of times and stuff.

LH: Do you feel like your older brother and sister, maybe, came out better from their experiences—I don't know the right way to say it.

GC: I think they were just as prepared as I was. In some cases, better. I really do. Just the difference between my own children's attitude about things and mine are even different. Part of that I can contribute to the fact that they went to all white school all their lives. Because it never really got into any of the history--the black history. They weren't exposed to a lot of the things--the cultures and the traditions that you had in the black school. Just celebrating and commemorating the black leaders, teachers.

LH: What did you guys do for that kind of stuff?

GC: Well, it really wasn't any special thing--

LH: Just in general--

GC: It was a daily thing. Now, we celebrate black history once a year. The country does. In the black schools, that was a daily thing. Not that that was the only history that we took. We took world history, social studies, and everything else. But as far as black history, we had black history everyday. Know who your black forefathers were and the inventors, the scientists and doctors, and the politicians and everything. Things that probably my kids don't even know about. That's a difference. I think that's one difference that my kids that are going to school now really wasn't exposed to anything like that.

LH: Do you remember any particular teacher—you mentioned Mrs. Morris—do you remember anybody in particular that had an effect on you or influenced you or you really liked?

GC: I don't know if there was any one because I think they all shared the same interests. They even kind of put a little pressure on you because there may have been some subjects that my brother and sister excelled in and they expected you to be the same way. If you weren't, "Why not?" and this kind of thing. I think other than Mrs. Morris and Ms. Brown and Ms. Bokum—all of my homeroom teachers—most anyone that you would talk to would probably say that Mr. Harris, our principal, was the most—person that people would talk about.

LH: What was he like?

GC: Hmm. He's kind of hard to describe, that man. He was tough. He didn't take nothing. He was almost a perfectionist. A stern disciplinarian. Guys and girls didn't walk holding hands. Guys—you don't walk around with your hands in your pockets. You give ladies—girls—respect; you open the doors. When you dance, you couldn't dance close. You had to dance miles apart and that kind of a thing.

LH: Did you ever have dances?

GC: Yeah.

LH: What were those like?

GC: Kind of like your junior/senior proms. Those kind of formal dances.

LH: Were they once a year?

GC: Once a year.

LH: Usually near the end of the school year. Kind of like you do now. We had one activity that we always participated in. I think it was in the month of May. That was called May Day. It's kind of a little outdoor activity. One event--well, we just would play games and had lunch and stuff out on the lawn. And then we had one activity where you get dressed up in these special little costumes and stuff. They had this one activity called "Wrapping the May Pole." With crepe paper. Dangle it down and the kids walked around--over and under and that kind of thing--the flag pole. And everyone went to participate in that. That was one other special activity we had. And of course, we had Halloween and things like that. All the same things that any kid in any school, whether you're black or white, had.

There wasn't anything--too much difference from what they were doing and what we were doing. It's just that maybe the resources that they had were maybe a little better. But, you really didn't think about that as a kid.

You didn't know whether they had a Spanish lab at North Mecklenburg and I don't guess that the North Meck kids knew that we didn't have any Spanish labs. It's just that we used what we had. I am sure they did the same thing. Of course, from a teacher's perspective, they probably realized some things that we would never realize. But they used every resource they had and got the best out of us. You may not have this, you may not have that, but it doesn't mean you can't do that. It may take you a little longer. But you can still do it. So that kind of followed me and I think it followed a lot of us going to North Mecklenburg. Even though we didn't have these things, it's not to say that we can't do it. It showed me. It proved to me.

LH: What did you do when you go home from school everyday from Ada? Did you do your homework?

GC: Well, we did our chores. Help mom around the house and then we did our homework.

LH: Did you get help on your homework?

GC: Hmmm-mm.

LH: From your parents?

GC: Yes, from my parents or my older sister and brother.

That was the law in my house. You didn't do anything until you got your homework done. If you didn't get your

homework then you couldn't do anything. You stayed at home. No kids around unless mom and dad was at home. No buddies hanging out. You get home and you do your chores and do your homework. And if it wasn't dark, you'd maybe go and visit some of your friends. You had a time to be home. Not a minute before and not a minute after. At that time, you were expected to be in the house.

LH: It sounds like there was a lot of discipline.

GC: That was pretty much with every family. And the neighbors always watched each other's kids. We kind of got in trouble one time because we had some of our school friends over the house and, of course my mom was at work, and we thought "She'll never know." And boy, when she came home she knew. And you wondered, "How in the world did she know that?" You know? Because she didn't see these people. But they saw you. A lot of times, mom and dad came in from work and they could tell if we'd had someone there. They could tell us who it was and when they came and how long they stayed and what you did and what you didn't do. And you're going "How in the world do they know all this?" But it was the people in the community that was watching after you.

LH: Do you remember if Ada Jenkins was at all connected with any of the churches around town?

GC: Well, there's always connections with the church and school. That's just a part of culture that there is always going to be that closeness and that association. Always. The minister—he visits the families. He may visit my family and have dinner with us or with some other members of the church. But it was kind of a—again—a traditional thing.

LH: Did you ever have prayer or anything like that when you were in school?

GC: One of the things that we did—we'd get to class, bell rings, you would say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, and you'd have to say a Bible verse. You stand up and pledge allegiance to the flag and then they go down the row and each kid would say a Bible verse. At the end of saying the Bible verse, we'd all say the Lord's Prayer, and then classes would start. That was tradition. In the schools. In our schools.

LH: That didn't happen in high school?

GC: At North? No. Not that I can remember. I don't think so.

LH: Do you think that all that discipline has carried over into the way that you've raised your children?

GC: Hmmm-mm. Definitely. I have no regrets. I really don't. I think that's what's wrong with some kids today.

There's not enough. My children used to call me, they'd say. "Well Daddy, you're old fashioned." I said, "Well yeah, you might be right. But I was raised 'old fashioned' and I think I turned out pretty good." I've never been in trouble. Never been in jail. Never hurt anybody and nobody's ever hurt me. I've been able to do pretty much everything I've wanted to do. So I think I turned out pretty good. Is old fashioned really bad? "Daddy you just old fashioned." I said, "Well, ok, whatever." But I think I turned out pretty good. That's what I'd always tell them. Now, I said, "You do what I do, you might turn out pretty good too."

Even though with all the discipline, even in my family and the community, my parents and I we were just like best of friends. We laughed, we joked, we made fun of each other. But we knew how far to go, and what to do and what not to do. And we still had fun. There was some slack time. We had fun. But we knew when to get serious. When the fun was over, we knew that. We knew how far to push that button. We'd kid about that a lot. Mom and dad, all of us, we'd kid about that.

But, no discipline ever came without a reason. You understood why. Even if it was a spanking. You knew why you got that spanking. Some might call it abuse but it

wasn't like that. They didn't just knock us down or anything like that, but just a spanking or discipline. I think if it hadn't been for that, even Davidson like it is now, there are things that kids could have gotten into, really gone astray. That carried me through. I didn't want to do anything that would embarrass not so much me but I wouldn't want to embarrass my parents. No way.

LH: In my class we've talked a lot about this--. Do you think that the integration process was worth it? Now, looking at how your kids have grown up or even how your younger siblings--what their school experiences were like?

GC: Well, any change that takes place--if it provides the results that your seeking then, maybe integration was good. If it didn't, then it's bad. It's something that really hasn't been into effect, per se, for a long period of time. 30 years of integration as opposed to 100 years of segregation. It's a big gap. It's still a learning process. I think it helped in ways that at least we began to look at individuals as individuals. And I am not saying that there's--there wasn't then and there's now or there ever will be someone that really doesn't buy into the whole concept of integration. And they'll come up with a dozen reasons as to why not. It didn't achieve what they thought it would achieve. But I don't know if you can say that the

process was the problem more so than the people involved in that process. In order for it to achieve what we hoped it would achieve--or they had hoped it would achieve, they got to work at that daily, constantly.

It's not something that you work on this year, and if nothing happens then everything's okay. But the fact that it doesn't seem like it's been monitored to see what the real results of it were. You have one thing that happened in the school, or happened in the society, and they say "Oh, that's the worst thing they could have ever done." I don't know. I've had the privilege of being in both situations--segregation and integration.

To me it has to be a personal thing. It's what you want to get out of it. I think the teachers, the kids, and the parents have just really got to open up, talk about it. And realize that there's differences. I mean, there's a difference. I can't change the way I look no more than you can change the way you look on the outside. But we can all change inside. You just gotta kind of open up. The things is now, desegregating the schools because they had to bus kids this place and that place. And there's a lot of reasons for that--they could be for some of the same reasons that they didn't want the schools integrated even when I went to school because "This kid of color is mingling with

my kid" or "I think my kid might be better than your kid whether he's blue, white, black, or green." And we all want the best for our kids, don't get me wrong. But, in order for the work, it's gonna always be a problem, and you have to come to grips with that.

So how do we deal with the problem? You don't deal with the problem with reverting back. That's what I see we're reverting back to—is segregation. Now, if it was so bad then and you wanted to bring about change, then why you want to revert back? It's kind of like history. History is something that happened, it's something that you learn from, that you build upon, that you try to change. Not revert back to. That's what I see the movement is now.

So, I really don't think that the change was monitored. Because again, you still have the same socio-economic problems now that you had when there was total segregation. And that's how you change, and that's how you have integration—you bring about that total equality. You don't start with your kids tearing up their schools. Because these kids have been going to school now for 12 years together. And all of a sudden you're going to tell them this is wrong?

LH: Yeah, it's interesting because starting with schools—that's where it started.

GC: Hmmm-mm.

LH: Where they decided would be the target place.

GC: That's where it started and that's where it's going to end. That could have a ripple effect on children. And to me, I can see a problem. We may not experience that problem in the next 2 or 3 years. But 10 or 20 years from now, we may see the effect of that. I think most kids and most parents have come to accept that that's the way the school systems are. I can't see one segment of society--a smaller segment of society--dominating a change for the majority. That's what I see with this thing with the segregation of the schools.

Now, when I was in school, that's all I was really accustomed to. If I had stayed in black schools for my whole school years it wouldn't have had that much of an effect on me because I had been accustomed to it. But now, kids are--the schools have been integrated since 1965, and people my age and above that were--particularly blacks that were in all-black schools and then switched. Maybe you deny your kids something. You deny them that way of getting to know and treat people as a person and not as--because--. "My mother is or my dad's a doctor and your dad's a laborer. That's kind of the way it's gonna be. It's gonna be the haves with the haves and the have-nots

with the have-nots. I don't think that's what this country wants because you're just reverting back. The thing it is, is to move forward—to find out what the problems were, if there was a problem, and work on those. Don't disrupt the whole school system all over again.

It'd be kind of like if you gave me a choice where I wanted to send my kid to school. If I could afford to send my kid to say, Davidson College, where do you think I am going to send my kid to? And who do you think is going to wind up in that school? What's the make-up of that school going to be? Because there are not very many black parents that can afford to send their kids to Davidson College. Same things going to be at the high school. If you build a private school in Providence, and it costs you to send your kid there, then who do you think is going to be able to go to that school? What have you accomplished? If you are concerned about kids—if you really are concerned about kids. These are going to be the future leaders of this country. There's going to be a very small majority of those kids that would be able to function 20 or 30 years from now because they may or may not have the resources that the parents that could afford to send their kids to Providence or Country Day. So what have you accomplished? You have just sent your country back 100 years.

So, did integration work? I don't know. I had the benefit of going to both places. But, it's still is going to be this thing where parents have choices where to send their kids to schools. Those who are able to send their kids to the better schools. And those that are not are going to be in a school that may or may not be equal. I just don't think we can stand to take that chance. Out of that you're going to have kids that may feel inferior to some of their counterparts. It's just not black kids, but we have a large Hispanic population now, Asian population. Even some of the Caucasians. Everybody can't afford to pay money to send their kids to school someplace. Everybody can't afford to drive their kids to the better. Even though you want them to go, you may not have the resources to get them there. So you've cheated your kid. But worst of all, you've cheated the country. And society. I came through and I think I came through pretty good. Maybe I was exposed to some things that maybe I wouldn't have been exposed to going to school. But there's life after school. The things that I didn't experience in school, or didn't learn in school. Life doesn't stop when you finish high school. It's always a learning process. So at some point in time I'm going to be out in this world-

LH: Did you go to college?

GC: Hmmm-mm.

LH: Where did you go to college?

GC: I went to Central Piedmont because, again, my parents couldn't afford to send me--. Central Piedmont is a great college, a great school. Would I have liked to have gone someplace else? Probably. But that didn't stop me from going to some college. I had a choice to go or not to go. Because I couldn't go to Davidson, or Wake, or Carolina doesn't mean that there were not other colleges that I could have gone to. And that's what I did. I think as far as my education, is there a lot of difference in the studies at Davidson as opposed to Carolina or Duke or whatever? Not really. So, that's what I had to continue with. Getting an associates degree as compared to a B.A., but I am a little bit better prepared had I not gone anywhere.

If there's going to be choices at schools, I think it should be in colleges and not at the junior high, high school, and elementary level. Again, your parents are making those choices. Kids can't make those choices. Like I found out when I went to North Mecklenburg, some of the things that we had heard about each other wasn't true, some were--most of them were. We heard those from adults--their

opinions. You asked a tough question. I probably haven't answered it--

LH: No--

GC: But I don't know if there's a real answer to that question. Regardless of what the scholars say or what the superintendents say. There's no real answer to that. Would I have been just as prepared had I stayed in an all-black school? I don't know. Because my kids went to integrated schools all their lives. They aren't any different than me. They know all the same things that I know. The method that they got there was a little different because of the way they do things is a little different. But we come up with the same answer. Does it work? Did it do any good? I can't answer that. I don't know. Honestly. I can only speak for me because I tried to get the most I could out of what I was given, of the situation. It worked for me. Granted everyone's not like me. But at least the opportunity is there for all of them.

LH: Well, that's all you can do. Do what you can do.

GC: Yeah. Hmmm-mm. Regardless of what the situation you're put in. I just question the reasons that they are wanting to do this again. Because no one can really answer that question. In my opinion. They maybe can. Their opinion is they can. My opinion is no one can. I don't

know. So that is always going to be an unsolvable question, an unanswerable question. Truthfully. But I don't think the choices and the thoughts of desegregation are going to answer that question either. I could see it maybe causing more questions and maybe some problems 10-20 years from now.

LH: Is there anything else that you want to say, or add? This has been really great.

GC: No, I just hope I didn't bore you to death.

LH: No, not at all.

GC: It's kind of interesting to talk about. Davidson itself is a pretty good community. It's close knit. Though it has its problems, it's the kind of community that can come together in a crisis, regardless of who you are or what part of town you live in. I think on the whole, you have some people that genuinely care about the community and care about each other. That's what I experienced growing up. And I grew up in the South—not just Davidson. It was segregated. We didn't have anything to do with it. It was part of our history and part of the history of this country that brought the situation upon.

If you look back over it, I did what I wanted to do, I feel good about myself. You can make it whether you go to an all-black school or an integrated school. You can make

it. If you really want to do something, to make something of yourself, or get something out of life, you can do it. That's what I believe. That's what I was raised with and that's what I believe. I believe in that. I would go to college and play a lot. In the science lab. Some people will say that there's a racial problem in Davidson. I won't sit here and say that there's not. I truly can't see it. Of course, I don't see everything. Nobody does. But again, on the whole, I think it is a genuine caring community.

LH: Do you think that having the Ada Jenkins Center open now as a community center helps—mostly now it's kind of for the black community. There's a lot of white staff members over there but not many white children. But do you think that that kind of aids in providing a sense of community?

GC: I don't really think of it as a community center for black—it's Davidson's community center. It just happens to be in the neighborhood. Maybe one of the reasons where there may be some discrepancies in the attendance or who uses it may have to do with programming. Some of the programs. And granted, there's a big cultural difference among not just black and white but all races. The things that turn me on—it's not going to turn you on—it's not going to turn a Hispanic on. Or an Asian. And that's the

beauty of the world. Everyone is different. There's got to be some different programming. I think it's great because it gives the community a focal point where--. It's something to have a place to come together and mingle.

Now to increase the participation among the total town, I think it's going to have to do with the programming, and again maybe some of the staff. I don't want anyone to think that it's not a community center for the entire town. It's not for any one particular facet of town or any one side of town. That's just kind of the way I think about Davidson. Davidson is everybody's town. The community center should be the same way. It's really just getting up and going and I hope that over time, the situation will change where there'll be participation among everybody. In order for it to succeed, it's going to take everyone participating, using the services provided. I don't know why--.

Now, if you listen to some people in town, and if you look, there are fewer black children that use the facility or use the services, or even black adults, as far as that matter. It's not that they can't. There is certainly stuff over there for them to participate in. It's just a matter of choice. If there's something that you want, you go for it. I don't care who you are. I think it's more

that. It's not so much as it's any one facet of the town's center. It's just that if people aren't interested then they aren't going to come. It's not to say that they won't. Again, I think some activities and programs are going to have to be diversified--socially, culturally, spiritually. It's open. I think they have a great staff and a great director. It's come a long way and I have got to think that it's going to get a lot better. Didn't mean to talk your head off.

LH: No, it's great. Thank you.

End of tape