

**SOHP Series: Listening for a Change
Davidson College Interviews - Lincoln County**

NOTES AND LOG - RONNIE ROSEBORO

Interviewee: Ronnie Roseboro

Interviewer: Mark Jones

Date: 22 March 1999

Location: Denver, N.C.

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

Notes: Mr. Roseboro is a minister who grew up in Lincoln County, very nearby where he lives today. He was a varsity basketball player for East Lincoln High School from 1971-1974 where he played under Steven Cherry [see Steven Cherry interview]. Mr. Roseboro is African-American.

East Lincoln High School is located in Denver, North Carolina at the eastern end of Lincoln County. The school opened in 1967-1968 after the Federal government mandated that the "Freedom of Choice" plan which had existed in the county during 1966 was insufficient in achieving integration. eastern Lincoln County is primarily a rural area.

The interview took place at 4:00 PM at Mr. Roseboro's house in Denver. When I arrived at the house, Mr. Roseboro and his daughter met me at the door. We then proceeded into his kitchen and I set up the recorder on the kitchen table. Mr. Roseboro brought out his senior yearbook for use during the interview. This was very helpful. From the start, Mr. Roseboro seemed very happy and willing to talk.

TAPE LOG

[Cassette 1 of 1, Side A]

Question about parents. Says that both his mother and father were born and raised in Lincoln County. His mother worked for Hudson Poultry and Broyhill Furniture. His father worked for American Efird Textiles. Land on which his present day house sits was once part of his father's cotton fields. He has eleven siblings - five brothers and six sisters.

Question about schooling growing up. Says that before desegregation he attended Rock Hill Elementary school (grades 1-7). Integration came when he was in eighth grade and he attended Rock Springs High School.

Question about the racial makeup of the schools. Says that Rock Hill was an all black school and that Rock Springs was integrated but that blacks were a "real strong minority."

Question comparing Rock Hill to the white elementary school - was there a lot of visible descrimination in terms of supplies, etc.?

"Basically, yes. I think that a lot of the books and stuff that we had were more like hand-me-down type materials, but I found out that [with the] educational process there wasn't a whole lot of difference. Back when we were coming to school, I had some cousins that taught school and they really, really made sure that you did what you needed to do at Rock Hill. You know, they stayed on you, they did a good job as far as making sure that you got what you needed as far as education-wise. Made sure that you had your homework done. There was always contact between your teachers and your parents because it was like family."

"As far as working with parents, we got more of that out of the black school than when we went through the integration process."

Question about whether there was a lot of interaction between students and teachers in the community. Says that there was some, but the tight bonds were more a result of the fact that the same teachers had taught all the children in the family and gotten to know the family.

Question about where he is in the line of children. Says that he is the "fifth from the bottom" - 4 younger, 7 older.

Question about the age of his oldest sibling. Says that his oldest brother is now in his mid-50s. The older siblings went to Newbold High School (before integration), while the rest went to East Lincoln High School.

Question about contact with white community growing up. Says that white and black communities were pretty separate. "First year of integration at Rock Springs went a lot better than I expected." Says that he developed good relationships with the white community and teachers during this first year.

Question about school athletics. Says that there was very little organized athletics at Rock Hill. Remembers that Rock Hill played football and softball against Newbold and the black school in Northbrook.

Question about informal games between whites and blacks. Says that there were none while he was at Rock Hill. Intermingling started more after he was at Rock Springs. Recalls that blacks and whites used to play basketball together at Denver Tire after school. The shop was owned by Mr. Lynch, the father of Boyce Lynch, an older student at Rock Springs.

Question about East Lincoln High School: class size, racial makeup, Student Government Association, faculty, administration, etc. Says that there were generally between 2-4 black students in each classroom (20-22 students total). Says that the SGA had some black officers.

"I guess it was a forced thing. . . Our SGA had what we called class coordinators and part of their responsibilities was to make sure that there was a black and white on some of the committees. To make sure that there was a voice to represent every aspect of the school."

Question about whether he remembers any racial problems. Says that he does not really remember any problems. Says that he thinks there are more racial problems in the present day than there were in the 1970s.

Points out Human Relations committee in his senior (1974) yearbook.

Question about Human Relations committee. Says that the committee was set up to work on racial relations at the school.

Question about existence of interracial friendships and romantic relationships. Addresses the romantic relationships. Says that there were some but that they were not open like they are today.

Question about response to these romantic relationships - was there any negative backlash? Says that he does not think there was any negative backlash.

Question about racial conflict in school. Says that there was some but it wasn't very blatant. Says that situations in the present day are worse than they were back then.

Question about any specific incidents of racial tension, violence, etc.

"None. No. . . not like that. You might have a couple of incidents where it might be two individuals that just didn't care about each other and they might get into a little skirmish but of a major proportion or something that was outlandish, no. . . We didn't have those kinds of things. . . Not at all."

Question about amount of contact with white students outside school. Says that he had a lot of white friends. He probably hung out with more whites than blacks.

Question about community reaction to interracial friendships. Says that he might have run into problems had he been alone with a white female but that there was no problem in groups.

"The climate was there, sure it was. But I didn't put myself in a position to get involved in the climate."

Question about clarification of "the climate was there." Says that some people would get upset.

Question about what sports he played in high school. Says that he played basketball.

Question about racial tension between teammates at East Lincoln. "Never. We didn't have any problems at all."

Question about whether the community supported black and white athletes equally.

"I think so. We never had any racial problem with athletes at the point when I was there. That was the one area that everything always seemed to go okay in."

"We had some coaches that were really fair and they didn't look at the color of skin as far as whether you made the ball club or not. If you could play, you could play, whether you were green, purple or yellow. It didn't make any difference. And we were even in the decision making. Coach Cherry, even, when I was a senior as far as making the ballclub - trying to decide who would fill the last few spots even asked for input - black players over white players and this type of thing. What would be the best makeup for the ballclub."

Question about captains. Says that his senior year there were two captains- himself and Robin Dellinger, a white player.

Question (looking at 1974 yearbook when racial makeup of the varsity boy's basketball team was about 50/50 white black) about whether this 50/50 racial balance was representative of his entire career at East Lincoln. Says yes.

Question about whether there were racial quotas in other sports such as cheerleading. Says that he does not know.

Question about racial makeup of faculty at East Lincoln. Says that there was just one black teacher.

Question about tension between black students and white faculty.

"Some of the teachers, regardless of who you are, they are going to be that way. We had some teachers that we never had any problems out of and then we had some teachers that, regardless of who you were, that's just the way they were."

Question about crowd support and crowd makeup at East Lincoln High School. Says that the team was very good and played mostly to a full house. Says that a lot of students came to the games. Black students would sit together.

Question about experiences at away games, especially at schools where integration had been slower or less complete.

"I've never been to a school where we had any major problems with the racial situation. Probably one of our biggest enemies was West Lincoln. West Lincoln very seldom during that time had any black players. Very seldom."

Question about specific problems. "Not anything that I can say, 'yes this took place.' No, none of that kind of thing."

Question about equality in press coverage of white and black athletes. Says this was not a problem.

Question about the race of referees. Says that most, if not all, were white.

Question about discrimination on the part of referees. Says that he does not remember any.

Question about trash talking. Says that it was not nearly as prevalent as it is today.

"I did not experience a lot of racism. Even playing basketball, didn't see a whole lot of it. To me, things like that, if it's done in a proper way - or an improper way, can give you some motivation."

Question about when he decided to go into the ministry. Says that he answered the call within the past year.

Question anything else he'd like to say. "We had a lot of fun. Some of the problems that kids have today, we didn't have back then."

Question about number of blacks in his senior class. Estimates 22-23 out of 100+ total.

Question anything else he'd like to say.

"As far as my experiences with desegregation, I haven't had a log of bad experiences. Probably the worst experience that I ever had was. . . One day I went up to Denver [Tire] to play basketball and these two guys jumped on me. I'm not a fighting person anyway. They called me some names and all this kind of stuff because, basically, they didn't know who I was and I didn't know who they were. But after that, I didn't have any more problems. When Boyce found out the guys and who they were and everything, I never had any more problems out of those guys after that."

Question about the Human Relations Committee at East Lincoln High School. Says that each home room class had two representatives- one black and one white student. The primary purpose of the committee was to make sure that there were not any racial problems at the school that couldn't be dealt with. Says that the committee used to sit down and hash out situations.

Question about homecoming king and queen. Says that there were always blacks on the court and sometimes black students were crowned.

(Tape turned back on) Talks about mechanics class- one black student.

[End Tape 1, Side A. Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Question about Textile and Industry group pictured in the yearbook (all white).

"Basically, those classes were offered. They were available. But it just wasn't something that I guess we were involved in or interested in at that time. It wasn't one of those things where it wasn't available. Those classes were offered to anyone who wanted to participate in them."

End of Interview.