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N.7 Undergraduate Internship Program: Fall 2015

Interview N-0036

Henry Foust

24 November 2015

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ABSTRACT – Henry Foust

Interviewee: Henry Foust

Interviewer: Monique LaBorde

Interview Date: 11/24/2015

Location: Love House, Chapel Hill

Length: 99:23

Henry Foust grew up in rural Alamance County in the 1960s and attended UNC in the early 1970s. He discusses his experience with school integration in rural central NC. He recalls his elementary school “freedom of choice” integration and then his 5th grade-6th grade transition to forced integration in Alamance County. He attended Eli Whitney School in middle and high school. While he was a first year in high school, the school mascot changed from “confederates” to “patriots” after integration. He discusses involvement on the high school yearbook staff and his intentional subversive placement of “patriots” in the high school yearbook. He was “college tracked” in his integrated high school and was placed in honors classes. Therefore had only one Black teacher in high school. He attended Project Uplift at UNC as a high school junior. He went to NC Governors’ School in social science in 1974. At the Governor’s School college fair, the UNC recruiter was Richard Epps, the former Black student body president. He only applied to one college, UNC. At UNC, he got a bachelor of arts in secondary education with a concentration in Spanish. He got large financial aid assistance. He was involved in BSM, Gospel Choir, and the Black Christian Fellowship. The Gospel Choir became his main social group on campus. He became the president of gospel choir in his senior year. He glowingly describes his social life and the importance of the Upendo Lounge in Chase Hall as a center of Black life on campus. In the last few minutes of interview, Foust thumbs through his Black yearbook from 1977-1978, Ebony Images. Mr. Foust has been a Spanish teacher at Northwood High School in Pittsboro for thirty years.

TRANSCRIPT—HENRY FOUST

Interviewee: HENRY FOUST

Interviewer: Monique Laborde

Interview Date: November 24, 2015

Location: Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Length: 1 file; approximately 1 hour, 39 minutes

START OF RECORDING

ML: This is Monique Laborde. It is Tuesday, November 24th at the Love House in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and I am interviewing Henry Foust. Mr. Foust, could you describe where you grew up?

HF: I grew up in Southern Alamance County, south of Burlington. Actually, I was born in Burlington and my family moved back down to the southern part of the county, where my parents were from, about eight or nine months after I was born. So I grew up in the rural area in between a little community called Snow Camp, which is officially on the map, and another little place called Eli Whitney, which is not on the map. That's a crossroads community. And that's where we lived until I--my mother still lives in the area now.

ML: Was it a prominently white area, prominently black?

HF: Mixed. There were different sections that were black and white. When we first moved down to the area we rented a house from a white family, and we were surrounded pretty much by mostly whites. But weren't surrounded by much of anybody because it was out in the woods. And then my parents, when I was nine or ten, probably ten, yeah, they actually built a house. And that house was in more of the black community in that area.

ML: What did your parents do for work?

HF: My father worked at Western Electric, which at that time was like a military contractor and did communications more than anything else. Built--they were one of the precursors for Bell, the Southern Bell and things like that. He mostly worked in warehouse, getting parts and things like that. My mother had several different jobs. She worked more production. She didn't do mill work but it was more just kind of like labor, more of [a] laborer. She worked on a flooring company, Cherokee Flooring. She worked in a hosiery manufacturer. She worked in one of those places that--where people who have businesses and have rentals for towels and sheets and things like that, she worked in that place for a while. She eventually wound up working in a school cafeteria [and] driving a bus. That was her last job, which she retired from when she was seventy, I believe. So she had different laborer jobs.

ML: And what were they like, or what are they like as people?

HF: Ying/yang. My father's the calmest person you've ever met in your life. Everything was always kind of lucky, kind of loosey. He was very much--he would roll with the punches, very funny. My mother was much more strict, much more demanding, much more regimented than he was. And so actually they worked out being a very good team. My father died fourteen years ago. My parents were married for forty-nine years before he died. They

would have been married--they were married in March and he died in May, so they were going toward their fiftieth anniversary. But he had been sick for several years so we knew that he was probably not going to live very long so it wasn't a surprise. But, anyway, but they were very much a team. And it's one of those--it was a rare, very, very rare marriage. I remember one time my mother getting angry with my father. Once. Now, we didn't see some of the other times but one time we saw it. We had never heard them raise their voice to each other. Ever. And even until my dad got in his very last stages, we would--as adult children we would come home and they'd be sitting on the couch together. They were the loves of each other's lives and my mother swore she'd never even think about getting married again when dad died. We were like, "Well, that's kind of a big promise to make there, Mom, but it's up to you." And she hasn't. And that was it. She's still--my mother still puts up cards that my dad gave her at Easter and at Valentine's and at Christmas. She puts up the cards that he gave her in the house. So.

ML: Wow, that's really special. What was your early education like out there in a rural area?

HF: We went to--this was--I was born in [19]57 so I started school in [19]63 and so it was segregated. The southern part of Alamance County, where we lived, had a--it was a K-8 school, I guess. I can't remember what years it were but it was a--yeah, obviously elementary, middle school that was three miles up the road from where we lived when I started school. When we moved to our new house it was about four or five miles away, a little bit further away. That was the white school in that area. So we caught the bus and went all the way to Graham. Wasn't that far. Maybe twelve, fifteen miles. Went to Graham Elementary--Graham Elementary Negro School I think was the actual full name of it. And I attended that school from first grade until fifth grade. There were no kindergartens. There were no public kindergartens back then.

Kindergartens were private, mostly in churches. And so that school serviced most of the county. It did not service people in Burlington because at that point Burlington was a separate school system from Alamance County. And except for--there was a school up in the northern part, Pleasant Grove, I think was the name of it, and there might have been a school near Mebane, where African Americans went. But everybody else in the county went to that school from kindergarten through eighth grade. And then the high school changed names from Graham High School for Negroes to Central High School. So all the African Americans pretty much went there. So it was very much segregated education. We didn't know the difference. But we knew the difference. We knew we didn't go to school with whites but we didn't really think about it that much. I don't remember there being a lot of talk about unequal education or that being a big deal. I felt like, at least at the time, that I was getting a good education, as much as schools did then with whatever kind of projects and what kind of educational philosophy there was. I felt like I was okay.

My fifth grade year is when, I think it was the federal government, finally said schools will be integrated. When we started school, I'm the youngest of five, and so when I started school was actually one of the first years where they had what was called freedom of choice. And I thought it was just something they made up but I read stuff later on that it was actually a program where African Americans could decide to either go to their community school, whatever that was, or go to an African American school. You could do either one you wanted to. I have a sister that's a year older and I remember my parents talking to her and me, and there was a young lady down the road the same age as my sister, and asked the three of us if we wanted to go to the white school or we wanted to continue to go to the black school. "Well, I don't know. Does it make a difference? I'm not really sure. I guess I just go to school with my siblings and

the people I had been to school, I mean, my friends and stuff like that.” So we went--we continued to go to the black school. There were one or two people, I think, that went to the white school. I didn’t find that until later on. So we did that for maybe first through fifth grade.

And in the fifth grade is when they made the announcement that, from then on, people would go to their community schools. And so we weren’t real happy about it. I’d been going to the school for five years. My brother had been going to the same school for-- He had gone all the way through eighth grade and then was already in the high school in his sophomore year and my sisters were in-between us. And there was a little bit of resentment. It’s like, “Why we got to move and go to their school? Why can’t they come to our school? You know, why we got to move?” And there was one instance I remember real clear, being in the library. Well, we noticed that-- It seemed that all of a sudden things were getting fixed around school or things were being improved. And I remember there being-- The library got a little carpeted reading area and I remember being in the library with my fifth grade class and adults were--teachers and some other adults were bringing in all of these games and things like that. And we got all excited about, you know, “We going to get to play those games?” and stuff like that. And they said, “No, that’s for next year.” And they said, “No, that’s for next year.” And every one of us in our head finished the sentence, “When the white kids come here.” And how a bunch of fifth graders can be angry and militant I don’t know, but we really just-- It was like we were mad. We were like, “How dare you?” We didn’t know how to verbalize that but it was like, “How dare you treat us like we’re not good enough to play with these games? These games aren’t going to be any good until we get whites coming to this school next year.” That was one of my real awakening moments about, okay, how things obviously weren’t equal because now we are getting all this stuff that’s happening here that had never happened before because they’re going to integrate this school and

all the other schools, too. Sixth grade through eighth grade [I] went to the local school, Eli Whitney School. I was fine, my academics were okay, so I got into some of the--back then there was still that ranking, where you had the A group, B group, C group kind of thing, and I was always in A group. And I don't remember anything really big happening in that instance but that's when the transition took place for me, was from fifth grade to sixth grade. And so my sister was sixth grade to seventh grade, one was seventh grade to eighth grade. A sister was ninth grade to tenth grade and my brother was from tenth grade to eleventh grade when he switched over. So he was at the end of his high school career when he switched over to the new school, to their school, which eventually became my school, Southern Alamance High School.

ML: And when you started in sixth grade, the first time you had been to school with white children, were there many other black children? Was it pretty much all your school moved or was it--?

HF: Our fifth--remember our fifth grade class, we went to one, two, three, four--I can think of five or six different schools we split up to across the county because it was-- Except for that area in the north it was pretty much all the black kids in the county, except for the kids in Burlington, went to the same school. So we were all in-- We went to different-- We were all at-- They changed the structure then to middle school. We all went to different middle schools at that point. So in our school-- Yeah, Southern Alamance had four middle schools, or feeders, and I think eastern had one or two. Western had two, I believe. And so we were split up to a lot of different schools. And we saw each other when we played basketball and football and stuff like that. And some of us in the southern part obviously were closer to each other physically and went to some of the same churches and were connected by family and so we kept connections there and we stayed closer to the kids at Graham. I remember that. But the kids in the other part

of the county, some of them I don't remember where they went to school that much after that. I had a set of cousins, they went to school in Burlington, and so they went to different schools anyway. And so we would see them, of course, in family stuff. We knew they had this whole other circle of people we didn't know in the African American community. And some of those connections we made through churches or camp.

ML: And what was the white students' reaction when you integrated?

HF: On our level there was none. On the middle school level I don't remember anything happening at all until, I think it was eighth grade. And we were having--. Somehow some discussion started about race and schools and I don't know what the discussion was about. But I remember this white guy that I knew, we weren't enemies, we weren't friends either. We were just talking about schools. And, again, I don't remember the whole context. But the sentence I remember him saying, was turning to us and said like, "Well, I know y'all weren't here, but where were you all that time when y'all weren't going to school here?" And we looked at him like, "What do you mean where were we? We were in another school." And that's when I began to realize that, for a lot of times for whites, there was this whole world they never even saw. As far as they were concerned we obviously didn't even exist at all. So that was a--. That was one of those moments I'm thinking, "Okay, this is how the world works. This is how it really works in this area."

But as far as getting along with people, there really wasn't--. I don't remember there being any big deal about mixing and coming together. I remember some small things happening every now and then where it was clear to us that there was a difference in the way people related to each other. But for me, at least, it didn't have that much of an influence as far as shaping who

I was. That happened at home and that happened in those kindergarten--, I mean, those
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elementary school years and happened with my family. A lot of our self-esteem and self-identity happened there. So anything that I might have heard from classmates, we just kind of dismissed that.

My brother and my sister, who were in high school when the transition took place, they had it much tougher. There was a lot of stuff that they talked about. And they still--they talk about, every now and then, that they went through that made their experience a lot rockier. There's a big piece I will talk about later. But I guess being in high school, you talk about things a lot more. And they had people ask them stupid questions. And I have no problem using the word stupid questions. Like my sister--. Back-up a little bit. My father is very brown-skinned. My mother is very, very light-skinned. So if you're not looking real close it looked like they're a mixed couple. But the five of us are kind of like this range in-between. We're a little bit of everything. And my older sister is brown-skinned like my father. And she says she remembers getting asked when she was in high school if she stayed out in the sun does she get lighter. And she's like, "What are you talking about?" And they said, "Well, we get darker when we stay out. When y'all lie in the sun do you all get lighter?" And we're thinking, "Where does this come from?" How is that any kind of logic in anybody's head?" But, of course, you never exposed to people you think--you don't--. There's a void. There's a vacuum there and you don't know how to fill the vacuum. But, of course, we had to watch--. We watched the white media, we watched white TV, we saw white magazines, we saw white--all this kind of stuff. And so there was an exposure there. But in those instances where whites didn't have any exposure at all, so they're trying to fill this void and they're coming up with stuff that makes absolutely no sense at all to us. Because we're going, "Where do you get this stuff from?" But looking back as an adult I realized that there was no structure there for them to build stuff on. Which in a way I'm kind of

glad about because a lot of times the structure that was built was negative. They just had no structure. They had nothing to build any kind of relationship on. And at least they were, I guess, open enough and curious enough to ask questions, stupid though they might be. They at least asked a question and they were able to explain it.

The big piece--this is where the story takes on a whole different meaning--is very much like other places--. I don't know if you--. Are you from the South? Okay. So you may know but since--. Are you from North Carolina?

ML: Mm-hmm.

HF: Okay. So we were from Southern Alamance. Every school, Southern Guilford, Southern Durham, Southern Wayne, Southern Alamance, southern anything, one of the mascots, it was either the confederates or the rebels, regardless where you were. I thought it was just us but it was everywhere. So Southern Alamance was the confederates. The mascot was the confederate soldier. The colors were red and gray and white. And I don't think we even thought about that because we never even--we didn't care because we didn't care what they were. But then when they moved the black kids, there was like, "Okay, we have a problem here. There's going to be an issue about this."

And, again, my brother played football. And he went out for the football team and I don't think they thought anything about it. I've never talked to him about what that was like, going out for the football team. But the first day of school is when everything started because it was tradition then and it still--a lot of schools. The first day of school you have a big opening assembly. You present the faculty, you present the student council officers, and you present the cheerleaders, wherever, like that, and they said--it's really not funny. It's comical now but it

wasn't funny then. But it's comical because it's just so sad. They got everybody in the auditorium and they said, "Everybody stand up. We're going to sing the school song." And they stood up and guess what they started singing? "Dixie." And my brother and my sister said they went like--. They said the black kids started looking around going, "What are y'all--? Y'all are singing 'Dixie?'" And the black kids, I think they said some sat down, some started talking, and some started reacting. They said the white kids like, "What's wrong?" "What do you mean what's wrong? We're not going to sing 'Dixie?' What is wrong with you people?" They would be interested in coming in, talking about that. But they tell that story, and of course now looking back I'm like, "Okay, I get it. But is this really saying that nobody had the forethought to think what's going to happen when we put these black kids and white kids together? What's something we need to be looking out for that are going to cause some issues?" Nobody thought that having a group of the kids named Confederates was going to be an issue but it was. It was a huge issue.

Again, my brother was very involved in sports and band and stuff like that. I don't think they had to wear the word confederate on their uniforms. I don't remember that happening. But it was obviously a big symbol and a big signal and it started a conversation. There was all kinds of--. I mean, the black kids, of course, are like, "This is--. We're not going to deal with--. We're not going to be called 'Confederates.'" Our brother played sports and he wore the uniform and I think he may have had one uniform that had gray in it but after a while they just started doing the red and the white because that was really--. The school colors were red and white; they just kind of used the gray as symbolic. But they would do all kinds of things. If you remember how, when the football team comes, they'd go charging through the big banner, they'd burst through that big paper banner and they'd go running across the field. My brother and his--the other blacks would check the banner out. And if it had the word "Confederates" or the flag on the banner--. And for

some reason they put my brother in front. He was the first one to run out. He would run out to the banner and run around it and go on the field and he would not break the banner. And if I'm not mistaken, the way he said it was he would not break the banner and all of the other blacks coming after him would run around the banner, even though it'd been broken before. Now, why you keep putting that guy in front, I don't understand. Put somebody else in front. Let him go out first. But they kept putting him out first. He'd go around the banner and go out. They did other stuff. They took down flags. They would just take them down. "We're taking this flag down." And so from the time he started as a junior in high school to the time I started as a freshman in high school, the name stayed.

My freshman year was the year they changed the name and it was because the administration had been asking the students, "You need to deal with this. You need to change its name. You need to go through this process," and the students kept dragging their feet. Finally the administration said, "You will change the name now. It's gone. It's no longer confederates. You need to pick a new name." And that was my freshman--. That was my introduction to high school, was that. I was like, "Oh." And at first I was like, "What's the big deal. I don't really care. I don't really--. It doesn't matter to me. It's just a name. Get rid of it. Not a big deal."

Well, then I got pulled in because they formed this committee of students to pick the name. And, of course, I get picked to be on the committee of students. I'm like, "Oh, great. I have to start high school like this." I don't know what's going on. I don't know if you're getting all the details about that but it was a year-long process to change the name. And we had walkouts. And here's the funny part. The name got changed and there were fights and walkouts and protests and all this kind of stuff. But fights and walkouts and protests were all by the white kids. [Laughter] We were going to class. The white kids were going, walking, staying out of

class. We're like, "Fine, leave class. We don't care." It was a role reversal, what happened in a lot of places where blacks were protesting. Here the whites were protesting. And it did no good. I mean, they weren't going to get it back.

We eventually did change the name. It changed from Confederates to Patriots and the colors went from red and white with that gray in it to red, white, and blue. Now, the interesting thing is, and I paid attention to this from the time I was a freshman to the time I was a senior. The cheerleaders, nothing official, nothing that was really produced by students, except for one exception, ever had the word "Patriots" in it. They used nothing. They used "southern" for everything. They would not use the name.

I came back from college my freshman year on purpose to go to a football game and that's the first time I ever heard a cheerleader say "Patriots," was after our class, the freshman class that had been there. Once they cleared out everybody who was in that controversy, that next year they started using the school--the mascot name in cheers and stuff like that. The newspaper never used it. The yearbook, however, did use it. Hmm, I wonder why? Because there was certain people on the yearbook staff. So my junior year in the yearbook staff we kept slipping it in the copy. We'd slip it in. And there was a white girl who was with me, too. We were sliding it in everywhere we could think of. We'd put it in the little captions. We'd put it anywhere small we could think of. We had it all throughout that book. And it was a plan. She and I came to it together. It was a plan. So my senior year, she and I were co-editors. We put it everywhere. We put it in headlines. We didn't put it on the cover. We were nice. We didn't do that. We put it everywhere we could think of putting it because we knew when the yearbook came out it was going to be over. The year was over and nobody could do anything about it. And my advisor knew we were doing it but we were like, "This is ridiculous. This is crazy." By the time we were

juniors we figured out it was a plan not to use this word “patriots” until our class was gone. So, “Fine, we’ll fix them, we’ll do it anyways.” So anyway, that was one of the--. That was probably my big racial controversy that happened when I was in high school that really made a difference. It set some concepts in my head about how you deal with race. That if you get your--. You perform well and you do what you’re supposed to be doing, you can get yourself into a position where you can make change happen. And sometimes it can be overt change, sometimes it has to be subtle stuff, but you still make the change happen.

ML: I’m curious, were you--?

HF: I knew that was going to bring a whole new perspective to the conversation.

ML: It was a good story. Yeah. But I am curious. You were pretty young. You were in eighth or ninth grade when this--.

HF: Ninth grade.

ML: -- change was happening. Were you in spaces where black, other students your age or older, were talking about the confederate symbol or--?

HF: No, not that--. I mean, other than--. I mean, it would come up in conversations in family and stuff like that, but it wasn’t a big deal to us by the time we got there because when we got there the decision was made. Like I said, I remember my brother telling stories, my sister talking about things. But it wasn’t that big of a conversation piece. The real piece, I think, that--. You knew that there was something wrong about it and you knew it just--it had to change. It was not going to stay the same. So figuring out how that was going to happen and figuring out--. And in some ways almost helping the white folks deal with it: “Y’all got to learn how to deal

with this. Because we are not going to do this. We are not going to have this symbol put on us. So you need to figure this out.”

I do remember in the meetings we had to try to change the name--. This went on for a year. And I'm a freshman and I'm fourteen. I'm in this room with juniors, seniors, sophomores, and we're trying to figure this thing out. Things would happen. I'm thinking like, "This makes no sense." First of all, we had to put up all these names. We put up papers in the homerooms to put up names you think should be used for the new mascot. Well, that was a mistake because the stuff they put up there, even in today's terms, you couldn't put out in public. They wrote some raunchy stuff on there. And I'm fourteen. This is fourteen in 1971, not fourteen in 2015. And I'm like, "What does that mean? What are those words? I don't know what those words mean." Now kids know it. I'm like, "Oh, my God, what are they talking about this?" We had to go through and filter those names. And I'm like, "Why are they getting so upset about this?" And then we had a list of names that were decent names, all the other names, mascot names like Trojans and Chargers and all that kind of stuff. And so we were going through those and after a while we figured out that the white kids were finding reasons to eliminate every name on the list. And when the administrators came in and said, "We need to make sure you understand. You will either pick a name or we will pick a name." And so then we had to get busy because we were sitting there going like, "They're going to find a reason for everything on here." They would say stuff; for one thing, that makes no sense. "You're going to throw that name out because of that? That makes no sense." And it was constantly things that just--. There was no logic to it. So a lot of times the black community was trying to figure out how to just--. Can we tire them out? Because we know what's going to happen. We know what should happen. And they keep fighting this stuff and we're sitting here waiting for them to get tired and not fight it anymore.

And that's eventually what did happen. I mean, it's finally like, "You're going to make this change." And to me that was a lot of what happened. I don't remember there being a lot of conversations in either the black community or the white community because, again, obviously--well, I guess not obvious but most of the time, in most of my classes, I was the only black in most classes. So I don't remember those conversations coming up that much. Every once in a while somebody would broach a subject about something but most of the time we went to class and we didn't make that big a deal out of it.

ML: Do you remember having any particularly influential teachers? Who were your biggest role models?

HF: My parents obviously were the biggest ones. I did have an uncle who started college. I guess I was in middle school and that was like, "Whoo, what's this college thing?" Like, "What are they talking about?" So that was a big influence. I had some really good teachers. My kindergarten--my kindergarten, I didn't go to kindergarten. My first grade through fifth grade teachers, all the black teachers I had, I thought were really good, solid teachers. I didn't feel like I didn't get a good education. I felt like I got a pretty solid education there. So I remember all of them. I can remember. I can name them all right now. I can see their faces. I know who they were. Middle school was okay. I had a couple of really good teachers in high school but what shifted in middle school was from the time I left the black school in the fifth grade until I did post-baccalaureate work here at Carolina, I had two black teachers. One in tenth grade, and then I had one when I finished my degree and I came back and was taking some classes to add on certification. And I had a black teacher in an African American literature class. Those were the only two I had the whole time. What my brother had for a little while, and my uncles and aunts had, they talked about their high school teachers at the black school and these

people were legendary and they talked about them. I didn't get any of that. I missed all of that because when they integrated the schools and, of course, they reassigned black teachers also. But all the black teachers at my high school, they were assigned to teach at Southern High School, and I think it happened at other schools, too, they were assigned the C level classes, the non-college prep class. So they were assigned not even algebra one, basic math. There wasn't even a black math teacher when I was a senior, come to think of it. They were assigned lower level English. The one black teacher I had in high school was a social studies class that was a general social studies class. Everybody took the same class. There were no levels. There were no college prep, CP, and honors. It was all, everybody the same thing. That's how I got him. That's the only time I got a black teacher. All the other black teachers were in classes I wasn't going to take because I was college tracked then. So I missed out on that whole experience. I did have some very good teachers. One of my English teachers, who was a yearbook advisor, she was a very young teacher. We spent a lot of time together. She influenced me in lots of ways to really push myself. I had a teacher that nominated me to go to Governor's school. I got all kinds of support so I didn't feel like I missed out on opportunities, per se, but I did feel like I missed out on connections, which I think would have happened with some African American teachers if that had been available. But it wasn't. And my friends who went to the other high schools; I don't think that any of their teachers ever taught the upper level classes, either. That was a function of the way integration happened and it was one of those unintended consequences that happened for some of us.

ML: Did you attend Governor's school?

HF: I did.

ML: In what subject?

HF: I went in social science in 1974 and there was only one. People always say, "East or west?" There's only one. Did you go?

ML: I went to Winston-Salem.

HF: OK.

ML: Where was the one you went to?

HF: That was () that was the original one. That's the original one, so yeah, that's where I went.

ML: So you were saying you were the only black student in many of your classes in high school.

HF: Well, in high school, except for PE class and some literally basic level classes, anything I took beyond the basic level I was one of a few, if not the only one.

ML: Because they were advanced placement classes?

HF: They were the honors level classes. And I do get angry about this now. It wasn't that there weren't other smart black kids. It was either they weren't identified for some reason or they didn't demonstrate their level of knowledge, so they didn't get placed into some of these classes. Because there are several, in my grade level, several of us went to college and did very well. Some went to smaller colleges but still did very well. And I knew they were smart back then. I knew Ricky was smart, I knew Eddie was smart, I knew these people were smart. But for some reason they chose not to perform at a level that they could, or when they did they weren't recognized for some reason. And who knows what happened back then, why that kind of stuff happened.

I was placed in honors English my freshman year in high school, completely unbeknownst to me. I had no idea what I was in. I was like, "What is this class?" I didn't try to get in it. My parents didn't ask for me to get in it. They didn't do anything. My brother and my sisters had never been in honors English. We think it was an IQ score or something like that somewhere along the line that popped me out. But then I know my cousin Eddie was just as smart as I was. I know he was. And maybe I was picked to be the one to be in the class. Who knows? I have no idea what happened. I have no idea how that happened. But anyway, that did make a difference in the way I saw myself and it made a difference, I'm sure, in the way that other students in the school saw me because I was in the honors class. I'm sure that happened. And, come to think of it, I had never thought about this before. There was one black student in every honors class at one point. I know one girl pulled out of an honors class because she said, "I can make an A in a CP instead of making a B in honors." I'm thinking, "Isn't a B in honors the same thing as an A?" We didn't get () points back then. I'm thinking, "Isn't that going to be the same experience?" So I stayed in it. She was trying to talk me out of moving out of the honors class. I'm like, "No, I'm going to stay." But she moved out. She came here and she went to Carolina, did fine. But there was that thinking, "I'm not going to stay here in this hard class when I can go to an easier class making a higher grade." I'm thinking, "Maybe I should stay in the harder class because I might learn more. I don't know. I don't know how this works." So anyway. But I don't remember there being any advocates for African American kids pushing us, identifying us, trying to get us somewhere. There may have been, and maybe figured I didn't need it, so they didn't worry about me.

ML: So when did you start thinking about going to college? Was it your uncle?

HF: I think my uncle was part of it. I don't remember there being a point where it happened. It was there for a long time. I'm sure my uncle went. I was in middle school. Because I remember going up to visit my uncle in college. I remember being on a college--. It was Winston-Salem State. Going on a college campus, "What is this? This is something that smart people do." "Okay." And even when he got married and his wife was in college also, and I'd go up and spend the weekend with them, my grandfather and I would go up. And they were in college and it was this whole idea about you do this. And then he had a younger brother and sister who also went to college. So it was like, "Okay, they're going to college, too." My brother went to college. I'm like, "Okay, he's going to college." So everybody's going to college. But my sisters did not go and I had several cousins who were older and did not go. But by the end I was already set that I was going to go, or I thought, "This is what you do, you go to college."

I have to always be honest about this. One of the things that got me attracted to college was back in the late sixties a player came to Carolina named Charlie Scott [Laughter] and I watched. I loved basketball. And I remember having this thought in my head, "Hey, Charlie Scott's black and he's going to Carolina. Maybe I can go to Carolina." I had no idea how to get from where I was to where that was. I did well in school and made sure I did the stuff everybody else was doing and thought, "I guess I'll go to Carolina one day," but I didn't understand that it was supposed to be difficult to get in. I didn't understand that it was prestigious. I just wanted to go to Carolina.

And where I grew up is twenty miles from here. And so everyone, while we might drive into Chapel Hill or go near the campus, but I still didn't know what it was. And my brother, he talks about this, we actually worked with a brick mason, very well-known brick mason. My brother remembers bricking parts of the campus. I remember bricking the credit union over on--.

Is it Rosemary? Not Rosemary. Over near the FedEx Global Center. That credit union, I remember helping to build that credit union. My brother was building stuff on campus and he said even then he didn't understand what this place really was. He knew it was a college but he didn't get that when he was starting to work with the brick masons. So we had that influence that was there, too. So had all these little seeds playing along the wind.

And, of course, my classmates in high school would talk about going to college. So I'm like, "Okay, well, they're all going to college, I guess I'm going to college, too." And then the dominoes started falling into place. Getting into the honors class, going to Governor's School, getting into the honor society, all this kind of stuff. It's like, "Well, yeah, you're going to college. That's what smart people do." And so that's how that got started. I tell my students, they ask me about my journey to college. I'm like, "First of all, you can't do what I did. You just cannot do that. Just crazy, because I applied to one school." [Laughter] To one place. I applied to no other college. I didn't even look at another application. And, of course, now I know how crazy that was. And, actually, even back then--. By the time we got to January, because I didn't know early decision, I didn't know what that meant. When it got to January and I still hadn't got in--of course, most people hadn't gotten in by then but a lot of the honors kids had gotten in the school--it was like, "Oh, I may need to apply someplace else because this may not work out." I mean, I don't know how this worked. I figure, "I'm smart, you go to Carolina." I didn't understand that there was competition and you may not go. I didn't get that part.

Plus I also had been invited down for Project Uplift. Is that the one? Yeah. I came to Uplift. So I was invited down for that. So I'm thinking, "They want me to come down." And I came to another thing my senior year. So, again, I'm like, "I guess I'm going to Carolina." And I do tell people that I did also get an invitation to go to Wake Forest for a weekend and turned it

down. It was the dumbest thing I've ever done. I still think I would have come here because Wake Forest is way too small and, quite frankly, I knew there weren't enough black people there for me. I couldn't deal with Wake Forest. It was like, "No." There's not a lot at Carolina but there's more than are at Wake Forest, I know that. So I could not. I wouldn't even go for the weekend, which I wish I had gone just to see what it was like. But I'm like, "No." So it all worked out. And when the regular admissions letters came out, I had my letter from Carolina and I was fine. But it was like, "Phew, I don't have to go somewhere else now." But I was really getting a little bit scared. Again, I didn't understand the college thing. I thought you applied, you smart, you get in. I didn't realize how competitive it was even back then. [Laughter] How competitive it was. I've learned a lot since then. [Laughter]

ML: So you didn't consider HBCUs? Was that not--.

HF: No. For several reasons. One, they were small. They were all small. One, I did not have enough exposure to them. My brother went to Central. Like I said, my uncle went to Winston-Salem. An aunt went to A&T and I think an uncle went to Fayetteville State but I never visited anybody other than my uncle at Winston-Salem. And I visited my brother at Central but by then I was already set on Carolina. And I don't remember hearing in any grand way about Howard or Morehouse and I really wish I had. I still don't know if I'd have gone there because they're small but they're in bigger cities so that might have gotten me there. But it was there was nobody who keyed in and said, "Hey, this guy's smart. Let's get him to Morehouse," or "Let's get him to Howard," or "Let's show him Fisk." You know, "Let's do these other places." Nobody did that kind of stuff. My parents didn't know. I mean, they knew schools, there were schools for black kids, but they really didn't have enough awareness to be able to talk to me and push me to go any specific place. They just didn't know that. And I don't remember anybody in

the community going to any HBCUs other than the ones around here. And quite frankly, I knew I could get into all those. That really wasn't an issue. I knew I could get into those. I knew that their profile wasn't as high as Chapel Hill. And again, by then there were people who were starting to push African American kids to the predominantly white schools. At Governor's School there was a college fair and I remember going to the college fair and going to--. And I don't remember there being HBCUs there at all, which, looking back is a little bit disheartening. And part of it was the historical shift in HBCUs. They had had the market for so long and when they started to shift they weren't ready to go out and recruit. They weren't ready to go out and market themselves as the school you want your child to go to. They had had the black community so long they did not do any recruiting that I know of at all. But I also remember, and I don't know if this was planned or not, but when they did the college fair at Governor's School, the guy behind the table at Carolina was black. It made all the difference in the world for me and I think a bunch of others. Like, "Hmm, there's a black guy recruiting." And it was actually, I found out later, his name was Richard Elks and he was the first black Student Body President here. They didn't play. I'm almost sure it was Richard that came because I remember seeing him later on thinking, "That's the guy that was recruiting." But they had an African American guy behind the desk. Now, of course, you would think that they would--. Well, I guess you send the student body president because of who that is. But you'd think that Governor's School is a high prestige place, you're going to get somebody to go there who represents--, looks like the schools. But I think, maybe in Carolina's mind they were thinking back then, "We know we're going to get the white kids. We're going to get them. Let's send the black guys because we need to start bringing our numbers up." Because we were still in the first set of African American classes here that had a substantial number. I think the seniors, when we were freshmen, the seniors were

the first class that had a big number of African Americans here and we were still in that first wave. But Carolina did some smart recruiting and the HBCUs didn't. Because they had never had to, so why worry? And it was about ten or fifteen years later before I really heard that they were starting to really go after smart black kids. But yeah.

ML: Before we get into your time at Carolina, I am interested in Project Uplift and what that experience was like. Was that run by the Campus Y at UNC, or do you remember?

HF: Good question. I don't know who ran it. And it wasn't BSM. It might have been the Office of Minority Affairs. Almost sure it wasn't the Y--I think it was the Office of Minority Affairs because Dean Renwick and Dean Wallace--. I think Dean Wallace and Dean Renwick had a lot to do with that. I don't remember the details. It was forty years ago, so it's really getting fuzzy now. But I think we came in on a Friday and stayed Friday, Saturday, Sunday because we did Project Uplift junior year and then senior year there was something called--. I think they called it National Achievement or something. It had a different name for it. But this was when they brought--. And this was I think January. They brought us in in January of our senior year. So for some kids it was the first time they'd ever been to the campus and some hadn't even applied. I'd already applied so I was ready to come to check it out. But I know that first time we came it was on a Friday, we might have gone to one class and it was social time the rest of the time. And senior year I think they gave us a little bit more class time but after, not long after, they changed the program and they came in on a Thursday and had a whole day of classes because they didn't show our class enough of the academic side. We saw way too much of the social side. When we got here some of them weren't ready to make that shift to the academic side and we lost a lot of people. But for me it was still--. I came here and I was, for the first time in my life--. Governor's School was good as far as the racial balance goes. But Uplift was the

first time in my life I was ever surrounded by a substantial number of intelligent black folks who were trying to do something. And it was just like, “Whoa. Where did this come from?” I never knew this existed. It was really neat to be in a place where you had academic commonality and social commonality. In the past so many of us had to pick between the two. We either were in our cultural comfort zone or our academic culture zone and those were two different areas. And I don’t remember getting a lot of the, “You’re acting white,” stuff, and there was some of it, but I ignored it for one. But I don’t remember getting a lot of that stuff. But it wasn’t even brought up so much. Just like, “Yeah, he’s a smart guy. He goes over there.” And then when he comes to me, he plays basketball with us. But it’s like they couldn’t mix. I’m like, “I don’t even get this.” I wish I had known then what we knew now. I’d have probably done more stuff to grab some of my classmates and say, “Come on, fellas. Let’s study. We can play ball but then we need to study. We really need to study because we need to make better grades here. You need to take some harder classes.” Yeah. The worlds didn’t mix that much to me.

ML: And when you say we lost a lot of people you mean--.

HF: Our freshman class at Carolina.

ML: People dropped out?

HF: People dropped out. Dropped out or got on academic probation and could not come back. I don’t know the numbers but I know that there was a substantial number. There’s a line that’s used in a lot of these African American sitcoms about going to college. And I’ve heard this said in the general area, too, where a dean will tell you, “Look to your left, look to your right.” And they’ll say, “Look to your left, look to your right. One of the three of y’all won’t be back next year.” And I’d heard that in legend and it happened in our freshman class.

The guy said that and I was like, “Oooh.” I was like, “One of y’all is in trouble because I’m going to be here.” [Laughter] Everyone’s thinking that thought. I said, “I don’t care what’s happening.” And one of them was my girlfriend. I’m like, “One of y’all is going to be in trouble because I’m going to be back when it comes to sophomore year.” And my girlfriend did not come back. She’s fine. She went to school somewhere else and did fine. And I don’t know who was on the other side but I was like, “It’s not happening.” [Laughter] “I am not going to be the one not coming back.” That was my decision. And I had to go back to that decision a couple of times because there were a couple of times where it got a little bit hard and I was thinking, “I don’t know. I’m going to make it but it’s going to take more effort than I thought it was going to take to make it through Carolina.”

ML: What did you study?

HF: Started out political science, going to law school. That happened about a semester and I was done with that. [Laughter] I was like, “No. I’m not staying here for seven or eight years. That’s not going to happen.” At that point my undergraduate degree was a secondary--, Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education and specialization in Spanish.

ML: So you picked what you were going to do early then?

HF: Well, no. I mean, teaching was always in the list of things to do. In high school I started learning more about history and culture and change and (), law school, smart black guy to go to law school. That’s what you ought to do. And then I got in the yearbook and loved the journalism stuff. And so those three were battling for a while. And then at Carolina eventually the other two (). Law school was like, “You know, really, I’m not going to spend all my life sitting in an office reading books. I love to read but I’m not going to do that.”

And then the journalism department here was more newspaper but not magazine and other things. I'm like, "I'm not doing newspaper." I was left with teaching at the end. And I did find myself doing a lot of volunteering with kids. It started to fit together after a while. The Spanish piece just kind of happened because, quite frankly, I had more Spanish than anything else on my transcript when I had to declare my major. I'm like, "Okay, well, I'll do Spanish." There was no background at all. That just kind of happened. It worked out fine but there wasn't a lot of forethought there. I got to the point, I had to write my name on that paper and write that major down. It's like, Education, Spanish. And I'm not a big change person so once I said it, I'm like, "I'm done. I'm not going to change this ten more times. I'm done with this."

ML: What sort of social institutions were you involved with in college?

HF: I did BSM. Not heavily involved in BSM but a lot of BSM stuff. I was in the gospel choir and did that for three years and wound up being president of the gospel choir the fall semester of my senior year. I did work on the yearbook one year. That was boring. I didn't want to do that anymore. We called it the "yuckety-yucks" instead of the *Yackety-Yacks*. [Laughter] And we started that in high school and then we'll come together and change the yack to a real yearbook (). I did a lot of little stuff. I did a lot of volunteer work, volunteered in the hospital, in the children's ward. That's what cued me in. I wanted to do volunteer work and I kept volunteering with kids in places. I'm thinking, "Okay, you keep picking the same thing over and over again. There's obviously a pattern here. You need to follow this because where is this going to lead? Classroom, okay."

One of the biggest things I got involved with at that time was called the Black Christian Fellowship. It later changed the name to United Christian Fellowship but it was an on-campus ministry that was started in the early seventies as part of the minority recruitment, minority

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retention program. Somebody, understanding the strength of the church in black life, figured out that they needed to have some kind of presence on campus in order for African Americans to feel comfortable. That there needed to be that place to go. And BSM was good for social stuff. They had the readers, the dancers, the choir. But there was this piece about African American culture that was not on Carolina's campus. And there were black churches around, and I found out later, that did do some shuttle thing, took kids to churches. But the Black Christian Fellowship was an on-campus ministry. The base was in Upendo Lounge, which was the base for everything for the black community down on south campus at the time. And so we had bible study, church, choir practice all in Upendo and that became a focal point for the community.

My involvement started my sophomore year and it started with, I joined the gospel choir in my sophomore year. Through the gospel choir I made my statement of faith and did a conversion and then joined the United Christian Fellowship in order to have that base of support and to learn what it meant to really live out your faith. And so the fellowship became my real go-to social structure for the school, those school years.

I guess I have a bit of an odd story in that when I first came to Carolina, of course, my roommate was white, I had gone to Governor's School. Even though there was a substantial number of us, the whole class came, most of the people that I knew at Governor's School and they came here were white. There was a good number of the blacks at Governor's School who came here, too, which was really nice to see that crew. And it just so happened that the one guy I started hanging out with in my dorm in Morrison was a white guy I knew from Governor's School. And somehow we met this other guy named Walter. I never remember how we met. But the three of us were thick as thieves. So it was Walter and Roger, who were white. And Walter's from the mountains. Roger's from Albemarle, so here, pretty much. And we hung out together

and we pretty much hung out together that whole freshman year and into the beginning of my sophomore year. And when I finally joined the Christian Fellowship my sophomore year I had this whole other group to hang around and it's this slow transition happened and I spent less and less time with Roger and Walter, and before I knew it I was spending almost all of my time outside of class amongst a group of black students and it was mostly the fellowship students. And I went through this shift in my community group at Carolina, and it wasn't a plan. I just spend a little bit of time, then more time and more time and more time. I had met, obviously, met quite a few African American students my freshman year and quite a few of them were also in the Black Christian Fellowship. That's what it was called then. And so the better I got to know them the more time I spent there and I did a shift and it was the first time where, again, everything came together. The academics, the social, the cultural, all those things had this one common group. I wasn't having to go back and forth between these groups to meet an academic need and a social need. Obviously in my classes here at Carolina I was still, a lot of the times, one of few, if not--there were a couple of times I was still the only one--but I was always obviously a minority of people. So the Black Christian Fellowship for me became the focal point for my Carolina experience for the next three-and-half, however many--. I stayed here an extra year. For that whole time. That was my focal point. There were still friends from Governor's School and some from high school that were white that I kept in touch with and talked to but my closest friends were in that group and then the gospel choir itself. That was pretty much my social, my foundation here.

ML: Did you miss going to church? The fellowship stood in for church but did you miss the multigenerational?

HF: Yeah. That's just a part of the way you grow up in the South. You just do that. And my freshman year when I wasn't involved in the church I would go to the fellowship every now and then. But those people were serious. I'm like, "Oh, no, these people are too serious for me." [Laughter] So until I got saved I was like, "I can't deal with that," because it was too much. [Laughter] But it was a really neat experience to be in that kind of group with people my own age. That was a lot of fun. We have stories. We have so many stories and those are the people that I see now when I come back to Carolina, when we come to reunions. That's the group. And so many people, the friends you earn in college are the ones you really do--, those are the ones you keep up with. When something happens in a family from somebody I went to college with, we're there. When a parent dies, we're there. When something happens with a child, we're there. That's the group you can depend on always. For me, that was the group. It wasn't a fraternity or sorority. I didn't join a fraternity for lots of different reasons, but for me it was that the Black Christian Fellowship was the group that made the huge difference for me.

ML: There were black fraternities at the time?

HF: Yeah. I mean, yeah, I think all of them were--. No, we didn't have Sigma then. The Omegas, the Alphas, the Kappas were all back then. We even had a group called the Grooves. They died out, thank goodness. We didn't like them much. So the Sigmas are the only group that wasn't here when I was here. And the sororities, the Deltas and the AKAs were here. The Zetas were not here then. They came later.

ML: How many black students do you think were around you? Dozens?

HF: I am sure I have this skewed idea that there were thousands and it was probably more like hundreds. Maybe even like a thousand. I think I've heard some numbers. At the most

there might have been a thousand black students here. I'm sure it had to be more than that but when I try to be realistic about it, and when I look at this book, there's not a lot of people in these books. I'm counting. There's not a lot of--. There's like twenty of us in our class and I know everybody didn't make the picture but I know most of these people, so there's not a lot of people that I knew who aren't in this picture. So it might have been in the thousands but it wasn't a lot. And at one point I even got the *Yackety-Yack* out and looked through the class pictures trying to find all the black people. I'm thinking, "There's not a lot of people in this." [Laughter] I thought there were more because I was around them so much those last three years. But I really don't know. I would love to see the numbers, to see what they really were like. And I guess if I went from--. There were fifteen of us that came from my high school that year. There were two blacks. And that was highly unusual to have two from any one school. And so I know a lot of schools didn't send any blacks here. And then there were some schools where there'd be four or five. There was Garner with four or five. They had more African American kids, period. And there were other places like that. But then there were high schools here, I know they sent no black kids at all to Carolina. That'd be interesting to know what the numbers really were back then.

ML: You mentioned Upendo Lounge on south campus has a space. Were there any other particular spaces that you and black friends were in?

HF: No. Well, no.

ML: Like black spaces, you know.

HF: Well, the wall but [laughter] there was the--. Coming out of Undergrad Library there's a little wall at Greenlee. Is it Greenlee?

ML: Greenlaw.

HF: Greenlaw Hall. Greenlaw Hall. That wall was occupied by black kids most of the time during change of classes. And there was a space in the union where there was an eternal perpetual spades game going on. [Laughter] That was a black space, I guess. But as far as a formal space it was just Upendo Lounge. But the hangout spots were those places like that. And, of course, most of us lived on south campus, so--.

ML: Were there any institutions you felt particularly excluded from at UNC?

HF: No, not that I noticed or cared about. Or, to me, not necessarily in a formal way and not because I was black. I remember getting rush cards from white fraternities. I got two or three so I think they took the classes and divided them up and said, "You all get these people in your fraternity. You all send the cards out." Because I didn't get a lot. And some of the cards I got other people didn't get. So I think they had some kind of random lottery system. And I remember looking at the card going, "No, I'm not going to that. I'm not going to that. It's okay." It's real nice. And I thought, "If I showed up what would happen? I'm not even sure so I'm not even going to try this." So I didn't do any of that rush stuff. And I didn't join the black frats because it was too much time and effort. Oh, my gosh. It was so much work. I'm like, "No, I don't have that kind of time."

ML: What was dating like?

HF: Well, my first year my girlfriend was here so that was easy. [Laughter] We just went to stuff. There were free movies. There was bowling. We went bowling a couple of times. It was more just hanging out more than anything else. And that freshman year was like--. This is bizarre but I was either with Roger or Walter or with my girlfriend. That was pretty much it. It was just those. Those are the two choices I had. And when she left I was like, "Oh, well, guess

it's Roger and Walter now." [Laughter] Because I'm around them some. And I dated off and on through college but it was all girls that were in the United Christian Fellowship. Black Christian Fellowship. It changed junior year, I believe it was. So it was all that. It was church dating. So it was mostly safe. We can get into that. [Laughter] But more than anything it was just hanging out in groups. Lots of groups. I really wish my students would do that more now instead of going off in these pairs because there's all kinds of stuff going on. But we hung out in large groups a lot, out to eat, getting in somebody's room and just hanging out and being crazy. And there were parties. We'd go to parties every now and then. They were fun to do that kind of stuff.

ML: Parties? House parties?

HF: No, mostly Upendo. We talked about this. So you go to Upendo on Saturday night to party and you do come back on Sunday morning to go to church. It was the same space, the very same space. Just cleaned it out, put the chairs up differently and you had a party on Saturday, church on Sunday. [Laughter] So Upendo was pretty much where we hung out all the time. Everything happened in Upendo. There is an Upendo now but that's not it. There was a building on south campus called Chase Hall, there's a cafeteria. The bottom floor in Chase Hall had a small room on the corner and that was Upendo Lounge. And so y'all can't even imagine the landscape. You have to imagine it without Hinton, James, North, and what is it, Horton, those four dorms right there on the street. They were not there. It was just lawns, really long grassy lawns. And at the bottom of the hill at Morrison, that's where Chase Hall was and that's where Upendo was. It was in the middle of all the south campus dorms, which is where most black kids stayed anyway. So it really was a hub. It was very much a hub and everything happened there. Dances, parties, meetings, concerts sometimes, practices. Anything that went on in the black community, pretty much the first place you tried to get was Upendo. If you couldn't get that

then you got someplace else. But that's where all the parties and stuff took place. And every once in a while somebody might do something in their dorm room, have some music and stuff like that, and hang out, or it'd be one of the lounges on the high-rise dorms. But it was almost all Upendo.

ML: What kind of music was popular? What kind of music did you listen to?

HF: See, music back then was different. There was black music and white music. It was a real clear line most of the time. And so it was pre-disco. Disco came in right at the end of my time at Carolina. So we were spared that. [Laughter] It was mostly the Motown sound, stuff like that. Motown, Jackson Five started out then, so that was real popular. Earth, Wind, and Fire was popular then. Kool & The Gang, all that kind of stuff. So it was pretty much dance music but there was a real clear line. There was a clear line between white music and black music and I remember in high school going to dances and suffering through dances because I'm like, "There's no beat. How do you dance to that? What do you do?" We tried. We would go sit back down. It's like, "We can't dance to that. Sorry. We can't do that." So it was good to come to Carolina and there was black music all the time. It's like, "Oh, we can dance. This is going to be a lot of fun." And I know they had parties at the frat houses. We didn't go to any of that kind of stuff. We weren't going to that. And they would try to have campus-wide stuff. We're like, "No, we're not going to that. We're going to go to our stuff. We'll be fine." Okay. "We don't need to integrate so much. We're okay." [Laughter]

ML: Where did you eat mostly?

HF: Chase Hall. Well, then there were only three places. Chase Hall, which was on the south campus; the basement of the Lenoir was the cafeteria, what's called the Pine Room, which

we affectionately called the slime room, and then the top of it was the art department and stuff like that. And then there was a little place called the Scuttlebutt, which was on the corner diagonally across from Carolina Inn, the Carolina Inn, the frat house, then Peabody Hall. That corner had a little place called the Scuttlebutt, which is a grab and go place. And they might have served some food there but mostly grab and go. Was there a place in--? The Y might have had a little grab and go place also but that was it. And the dorms, in the bottom floor, Morrison and James, Eringhaus, and Craige, there was a little store there that had grocery store food, stuff like that. But there were only two cafeterias to eat in and neither one of them was wonderful. You know what? You survived. It was college food. You went there and ate it and as long as you didn't find anything in the food you were fine. Which happened a couple of times. And every once in a while we'd walk to Franklin Street. This corner up here where Time Out is now was Hector's. And I know there was a couple of places. I don't think there was a fast food place on Franklin Street yet. No McDonald's or anything like that. And the Carolina Coffee shop was there. There were little places. There was a place called the Porthole. So there were some restaurants around but most of us ate on campus because you had the meal plan. It was more convenient and plus there weren't that many places to go like there are now, which ().

ML: What were the national issues going on at the time that you were at UNC? Do you remember any activism issues that were happening at the time?

HF: One of the big things was the political shifts because of Watergate. Watergate and Nixon, Nixon resigning, and all that stuff happened. We were at Governor's School. It's the best place in the world to be and I was in social science. We got (). Anyway, so that happened between junior and senior year. So college years was the end of Ford's term and the beginning of Jimmy Carter's term. So there was a lot of that lack of trust in politicians, in

government, and trying to restore that. I don't remember it being a big, big issue but that was also those transition years of *Roe v. Wade*. It was discussed some. And it wasn't a big deal on campus. It was one of those things you knew happened in that time. It was [19]72 maybe of [19]73. I can't remember but it was right before we got here, I think. There was a good bit of civil rights stuff going on but it wasn't the protests and the riots and the stuff that happened then. It was just more like some national issues. And I can't even think of one in particular right now that was going on. But a lot of advances were being made at that time, like politicians being elected to offices they had not been elected to before. That kind of stuff was going on. I'm trying to think what else was--. And our high school years were at the very end of Vietnam. So it was the first time in a long time the country had been at peace, so to speak. There were some economic issues. That was when gas prices really started to jump and there were gas shortages. There were water issues and stuff like that. I'm trying to think of anything else big that really happened. But yeah, in a lot of ways on the national level we had a fairly calm four years at Carolina.

Some crazy stuff happened at Carolina. I think we were here when they invited David Duke, who was a Klan member, to come and speak. That might have been right after we left. But stuff like that happened here. But we didn't have a lot of the stuff. Some of us, our alumni group are amazed that they're still having issues at Carolina. We're like, "Folks, this has been forty years. There are some things that should have been figured out by now. This is ridiculous. The kids here are still going through some of the same stuff that we went through." It blows our mind that we're hearing kids talk about some of them are still in classes where they're the only black kid in the class. And part of that's because so many other schools are so much better now and

smart black kids have more choices than Carolina. But it still seems like it's been spinning its wheels for a while so that's a bit of a frustration, I think, that we have.

ML: When you were here what do you think were the biggest frustrations that you had as a black student?

HF: Acceptance and trying to figure out how to navigate things. We were here in a time where the BSM had just been formed, I believe, in [19]71 or [19]72. Maybe a little bit earlier than that. But there were several times during our time here when the student government, for some reason or another, either denied funding to BSM for a particular activity or cut the budget back. There was an investigation of alleged impropriety and mishandling of money. There was at least, I think, one attempt, it might have been to close Upendo. There was something that they were going to do to Upendo and that was it. You can talk about money all you want to but you're talking about closing Upendo, you've got a fight on your hands. It's like, "You are not closing that because that's our spot." So that kind of stuff happened and it was kind of like, "We just want to be here. Just treat us like you treat the rest of the organizations on campus and just let us do what we're going to do. Why is this becoming an issue every time?" It seemed like every year there was some issue that came up where student government or somebody in the administration made some kind of decision that--we're again going back to, "What kind of sense does that make?" The real crazy thing was they had a habit of doing this right around the beginning of October. And so we were smart enough to go, "Okay. This is happening the end of September, beginning of October. So in about two weeks you're going to have University Day and everybody's going to be here. All the politicians are going to be here. All of them are going to be here. You just gave us our platform." And we would wait. They would do something dumb. We would wait for a week and then we'd have our protest right in

the middle of the university. There are pictures in the yearbook; there might be some in here, of us lining the sidewalk at Memorial Hall where the professors are going through. And then there's other pictures where inside Memorial Hall you'll see black students standing around the outside wall with signs. And we're like, "Really? You couldn't have waited two weeks? You just gave us this huge platform to talk about what we're upset about." We're thinking, "This is crazy. You all are not thinking. You all really wanted to be--. We're not worried about anybody doing anything dangerous because you all are too dumb to think through this stuff. You could have done this a lot better, had a lot less publicity. You're giving us a platform to tell our story." People on campus would not have known what was going on half the time but we were like, "You wait until University Day and you're going to do it then." We'll take it. We're fine. It happened at least twice, I remember, during those four years when I was on campus that they did something where we took University Day. And we didn't make a lot of noise. We stood there with signs and got in the background of all kinds of pictures.

ML: Was it BSM organizing campus or student activism?

HF: Yeah, oh, yeah. Definitely BSM. Because most of the time BSM was the target for some reason or another. It was BSM funding. And Upendo was considered the BSM's domain so it was always going to be targeted at that group. And I'm sure there were probably sometimes where the people in charge of BSM maybe didn't handle things exactly right, but we're twenty-one, twenty-two years old. We don't necessarily know how to do all this kind of stuff. So it was figuring out how to make this work. Now, let's see, Richard was president of the student body. And during our time there were several other blacks who either were like, I don't know what the term was then, but the Speaker of the House that they had back then or was some kind of other officer. It began to be more of a thing where African Americans were getting

elected to be official officers and were in the room having these conversations. And so that was when a real shift started with that.

ML: How did your parents react to your going to Carolina, your experience?

HF: My parents, their attitude about me and school was, "He knows what he's doing." My brother had gone to Central and I don't think they had been very much involved in that process either. And I remember them almost saying one time, "You know what you're doing better than we do. We're going to trust you to make decisions." And they might have questioned me every now and then about something but for the most part they were like, "You want to go to Carolina? You can go to Carolina. You want to do this? You do this. You do what you feel like you need to do." I know part of it was they were trying to feed five children. They didn't have time to be worrying about anything else. They were trying to keep a roof over our heads, pay the mortgage, get the food on the table. College was something, "You deal with that on your own. You've done well so far. Just keep going." So they really didn't have much--. I don't remember asking them about college and what I should do and stuff like that. I would have probably appreciated the conversation but I really felt like they felt like they really didn't know enough about it to contribute to the conversation at all. They were supportive, obviously. When I moved in my dorm I had everything I needed. I mean, everything I needed. They made sure I had it all. I got mostly financial aid but what financial aid I didn't get they did. They took care of that. When I was involved in things down here, as much as they could, again they were still working and stuff, they would come down for concerts and they'd come down for church every now--. I mean, they were supportive of it but college was my thing. That was for me to be able to handle that. Because most of school I had actually been so--.

ML: Yeah. Did you live on campus all four years? Was that a choice?

Interview number N-0036 from the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at The Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

HF: I did live on campus all four years and then I needed another semester to finish my degree and so then I moved into an apartment, Estes Park. But I stayed in Morrison two years, Avery one year, and Eringhaus one year. And I loved dorm year. By the senior year though I was like, "Okay, this is too many people. I need to go." But I really enjoyed the convenience of being near people and being near campus activities. I didn't want to be near classes. I didn't want to live on north campus. Like, "No, do not want to wake up, look out the door, look out the window and see my classroom." I enjoyed the walk away from school. It was very therapeutic for me even back then. I loved campus life and my roommates. I had one roommate that was not a good roommate. Had nothing to do with him being white. He was just filthy. Race had nothing to do with it. He was just filthy. All the other roommates I had on campus were white and we got along fine. We got along great.

ML: What was your experience in the classroom like? Did you feel like your teachers were giving you sort of adequate, the same treatment?

HF: Pretty much. Somebody asked me this question. I've got a student that's a junior here who is doing some education stuff, too, and she asked me the same question recently. I don't remember overt personal racism. I don't remember anybody ever really doing anything or saying anything formally or informally to me as an individual that made me feel like they were singling me out because of my race. It was more institutional stuff, I guess, more than anything else. I actually had an English teacher my freshman year who--. I took the basic composition class. And at the end of that class he tried to get me to write a paper to get credit for the second English class because he said my writing was that good. It didn't show up in the SAT scores to get me exempt from the first English class but he really felt like I probably never should have taken that first level composition class because I had written for the yearbook for three years, I'd

had some of the toughest English teachers I'd ever seen in high school, so I wrote all the time. But my scores didn't show it on the SAT. But in class he was like the--. The comments on my papers were more like mechanics more than anything else. Some of it was mechanics but the rest of it was like, "This is really good." He really wanted me to go ahead and write that paper. But it was the end of the semester and I already had three or four exams. I was not writing one more paper and I regret that decision because the next teacher I got was one of those, "If you do what I tell you to do and you follow the format and all that kind of stuff, you're going to get a C because that's average." And he was a C grader. Everybody got Cs unless you were fantastic. Said, "If you were going to make an A, you wouldn't be in this class." I was like, "Argh, should have written this paper." I was so mad. I wasted a semester. So I had that happen.

I had a couple other teachers that really took an interest. I didn't feel like in the classroom I was singled out. I have friends who have stories about how they had to manipulate their life to be able to get the grades they deserved. And one guy in particular said that he was--. It was a German class, something like that. And the teachers, one of the teachers didn't bother to know your name. He just did numbers. And my friend said he made sure that teacher never knew his name and his number. He never saw that name and number in the same line. He never saw them together. He made sure that his name would be on something, his number would be on something else. And he made As all through the class. But he said there was a black girl in the class and the professor knew who she was and he said her grades were always the lowest grades in the class. And he said he knew if that professor ever found out his name he was going to struggle to make As in class. I never had that but I have friends who have stories about things like that that happened. I have friends who have stories about how they moved into their dorm room and the white person moved out. I wish one of mine would have moved out but he

wouldn't, so I moved out on him. But I felt very fortunate that the only thing I felt was the institutional stuff that happened and I probably could have avoided that. I could have ignored that if I really wanted to but I chose not to. I chose to be involved in that. But on a personal level I never felt like a professor was singling me out. Now, could they have been and I didn't know it? Who knows? But I never got the comments that other people got. And I did feel like I was pretty much prepared for college anyway. I did struggle in some classes but for the most part I felt like I was capable and I earned my spot here. I didn't feel like I was given a spot. I feel like I earned the spot here.

ML: What was your graduation day like?

HF: Well, considering the fact that I had to wait a whole year. Because when I got to the end of my senior year there were three Spanish classes that were these upper level Spanish classes offered once a year. And when I started taking Spanish there weren't a lot of us taking it anyway, and they offered classes on these cycles and I got in. Because I didn't have a lot of background before I started at the bottom and so I was off the cycle, so I was always trying to catch up. So when I got to the end of the senior year, these three classes, I couldn't take them before that semester. They weren't offered the summer or the fall. They were offered the next year. So I literally had to wait out a semester, come back into school almost a year after my class graduated and took those three classes. And so the fact that I had to wait. I had been thinking, "I'm not going to march. I'm not going to miss it. This is just a ceremony. We're going to stand up, we're going to sit down, we're going to go to someplace and they're going to hand us our diplomas, some office window. What is the big deal?" And I mentioned something like that--, I might have said something like--. My mother might have said, like, "Are you ordering your graduation robe?" I don't know what the conversation was but I made some kind of comment

and I got one of those looks and I thought, "Oh, no." [Laughter] I think the ceremony might be important so I got busy and started ordering graduation robes and all that kind of stuff. I was like, "Okay, we're going to get this to happen because it might not be important to me but it's important to somebody." [Laughter] We were one of the first ones to have ours outside. Up until then they had had it in Carmichael, which, of course fits--. Nobody can get into Carmichael. I think the year before, when my class graduated, it was inside because of the rain, I'm sure. But our year we had it outside and it was the picture perfect postcard Carolina blue sky day. It was all that stuff. And it was a lot of fun. Couple of my friends and I walked in together. Mom and Dad were there. My brother was there. I don't know if my sisters were there or not. I know my brother-in-law was there because, and I'm going to remind him of this--, my oldest brother-in-law was there because he was taking pictures and something happened and he either dropped or opened the camera and it ruined all the pictures from my graduation so I have no pictures of my college graduation at all. Which is a little disheartening but I still got the diploma so I really don't care.

But we began the day by--we had a final church service. We had the seniors, were recognized, our fellowship, had the church service in Upendo Lounge. All the families were there. And it was fun to have them there. And they got to talk and so my brother talked about me and it was really nice to hear him talk about me because he never--. He's a typical brother so he was kind of a bully to us when we were little but he talked about how proud he was of me and all that stuff. It was a nice day. And I remember finishing the ceremony in Kenan where, of course, like I said, we stood up, sat down, that was it. And we didn't have a separate ceremony for School of Education. We went to Great Hall, everybody didn't have a ceremony. Went to Great Hall, stood in one more line. I was like, "Really? We got to stand in one more line here to get

out? I've been in lines for four-and-a-half years. I don't need one more line." Stood in line, got my diploma, and a friend of mine, we opened our diplomas, we went over in the corner and read them out loud to make sure that everything's right. [Laughter] "Yeah, this is it. I am done!" Shoved it back in the thing and took off and went home. It was a fun day but I really wish I had pictures. Just one picture would have been nice. But you know what? Like I said, I've got the diploma.

ML: When you graduated you were satisfied with your experience at UNC?

HF: Yes, I was. I really was. I was like, "This was good. I learned a lot. I've got a good background." I met a lot of people. I've had some good experiences. I felt like it was a good experience. I overall felt like I made the right choice, even though I didn't have a lot to choose from because I didn't apply anyplace else. [Laughter] I felt like it wound up being very much the right choice for me. I needed a big school. I don't think I would have been happy at Elon or NC Central or probably even UNCG and that's what turned me off of Wake Forest, also. It was so small. Oh, my God, I'm an introvert by nature but I like having a lot of people around that I can get to when I need to and having choices about going to--but I did not want to be in this little enclave with a thousand other people. My high school was a thousand people. I didn't need that. I had that experience once. So I really felt like Carolina was a really good experience for me, and I felt like in the School of Education I got a pretty good experience. I don't think it was the best. There was a lot of things I wish had been done differently there, but I felt like when I started teaching I was fairly well prepared for what I was going to be doing. So I really don't complain about my Carolina experience. Overall it was good. And even the things that were tough, again, they were good lessons. We caught it a lot of times because people would say we went to the white school and so we weren't going to get a black experience. And we tell them,

“We beg to differ. We never felt more black in our lives than when we were at Carolina.

[Laughter] “We felt very much like we got a black experience because we had that (). We very much felt like we went through the struggles and things here. We don’t feel like we missed out on being black by being at Carolina.” Just the opposite. It was very much, for me, very much a transformative experience to being around a black community.

ML: Do you think as you’ve gotten older, have you been more satisfied over time or more disappointed with the university? Have you been seeing progress in it or are you frustrated? What are your feelings?

HF: I have seen progress. You can’t help but have progress. Now, the story about my uncles and my brother coming. I came to Carolina and I was the first one to come to a big school. I had six cousins in a row come after me. [Laughter] So it became the family school unintentionally. And what really helps me is I felt like they all had very positive experiences here. I think they all had good education here and were very much involved to the extent they wanted to be. And they talk fondly of being here at Carolina also. So to me that’s a real satisfying thing to me, is when they came after me they experienced it as good or better in some ways than mine was. I felt like the university has grown. Again, I do think it’s sad that there are some things that still seem to be pervasive here, but as a whole the university has grown. I’ve had enough friends from my time here who have been on a very official Board of Governors, Board of Trustees, GAA board members, visitors, all that kind of stuff where I know that people I know have had an opportunity to have real input into what goes on at the university. So I really feel like, to that extent, African Americans do have a say-so in what’s going on and have had an influence in what happens here at the university. So I do feel satisfied with the university. And I

very comfortably will recommend to my students they consider going to Carolina and that would be a good experience for them.

ML: So you've been teaching since you graduated in this area?

HF: No, I spent four years working in mental health in the Burlington area and then I've been teaching since [19]84 in the Pittsboro area.

ML: And what are your feelings about staying in central North Carolina?

HF: It's the best of both possible worlds. I mean, I love--. I live in Pittsboro for a reason. When I left Chapel Hill I pretty much made the decision I was not going to live in the city again if I could help it. I was going to stay somewhere rural. Not even suburbia. It was going to be a rural place. But I wanted to make sure that rural place was close enough to a lot of other places. I love the fact I live ten miles from Chapel Hill, so I can get here and see Playmakers, Memorial Hall concerts. I can see Broadway shows. I can see all that stuff. I can get to Durham in twenty-five minutes, Raleigh in thirty-five minutes. But I don't have to stay there. I can live right here. I do think this is probably one of the best places in the country to live and I'm really disappointed people are finding out about it because they keep moving here. [Laughter] "Just live in Raleigh. That's fine. I don't care. Live in Raleigh. Go live in Cary. I don't care, just don't move to Pittsboro. We're fine." Central North Carolina is a great place to live and I do think this area around Chapel Hill really is a special place. I do get the warm fuzzies with Carolina blue and I get the warm fuzzies when they show this stuff at the basketball games and the little commercials. And I'm like, "Oh, I went to school there." I'm still not used sometimes to being in other parts of the country and I say I'm from North Carolina. You know, "Where'd you go to school?" "I went to the UNC Chapel Hill." They're like, "Oh, really? You went to Chapel

Hill?" I'm like, "Back away. Back up. It's just a school." People are enamored. It really is legendary and it is disconcerting to go somewhere, another part of the country, and see people wearing all this Carolina stuff. I was like, "Why are you wearing that? You didn't go to Carolina." "I love Carolina." "Well, when did you go there?" "I've never been." I'm like, "Okay." [Laughter] I don't get that. And I guess I don't get it because I'm here and it's special to me but it's not like--. I don't know what the word is. I'm not obsessed with it or I don't know what the phrase is but I'm not a fan of Carolina, I'm an alumni. And to me that's a whole different story and I will proudly wear Carolina stuff anywhere. I have no problem wearing it and talking about the school and talking about what a positive thing it's been in my life and still is. I'm still connected in some ways to what goes on in Carolina. Very connected with the black () reunion stuff, because they have several students here and I keep in touch with them and we'll meet up and go to a lecture together and stuff like that.

ML: Do you have anything else you want to talk about in particular?

HF: Can't think of anything.

ML: Well, it's been about an hour-and-a-half. [Laughter] That's all the questions I have for you.

HF: Okay. I didn't know if you wanted to look at these. I don't know if there's anything in here being of interest but it's just--.

ML: Well, for the tape, Mr. Foust has brought--.

HF: Called *The Ebony Images* and it was two black yearbooks that were put out in [19]77 and [19]78. I think there are copies in the, I don't know, the black collection. I can't remember what it's called. I know there are copies of the *Black Ink*.

ML: In the archives?

HF: In the archives.

ML: Mm-hmm, Wilson.

HF: And they have the *Ebony Images* in that also. If they don't, they're not getting these. They can photocopy them but they're not getting mine. But it has the different groups, the fraternities and sororities. One thing I think is interesting, it has the black faculty.

ML: Oh, yeah.

HF: None of which I had. [Laughter] Had none of them. But this is pretty much the black faculty back then. That's it. And some of these were even administrators, not teachers. But then one thing they did, I know in one of the books is that--. Right. Like here. This is going to be odd. This is like, "Some of the black members of the RA staff," and it's got like five people. There might have been five more but that would have been it. There weren't a lot of black RAs at all. And then the black members of different things, attorney general staff, and then these were black () honoraries, () and all that stuff and there weren't very many of those. One of them is Elson Floyd, who recently died. He was the president of Washington State. Had been an administrator here. So they highlighted what some of the African American students that were making inroads and stuff and then there are the fraternities and sororities and then some of the black athletes. There weren't a lot of black athletes. There really were not a ton of black athletes back then. Nowhere near what it is now.

ML: Who put this together? Who put () images?

HF: They had their own staff. There is the staff there and they decided to do it. I'm sure they had to be sponsored by somebody. And, again, it might have been Dean Renwick's office or Dean Wallace from Minority Affairs. Let me see if this one has--. It's BSM. No, maybe it's in the back. Well, no. No, this is general stuff. But I don't know that--. Okay, now, this is *Black Ink*, was involved. And I know some of these folks were on *Black Ink* staff. But I don't know for sure who actually was the sponsoring agency for this. This is also the first time, when we were here, the first time that a black was elected homecoming queen. That happened, I think, our sophomore year and that was a plan because back then, I don't know what it is now, but back then all the different organizations on campus, fraternities, sororities, whoever, could nominate a girl to run for homecoming queen. And so the blacks all got together, decided we're nominating just one. We're just nominating one. And one other girl wanted to run. We said, "You can run if you want to but we're supporting her." And so all the blacks voted for her. Of course she won because all the other votes were spread out among everybody else on campus. And that happened about three or four times. And then they wanted to change the rules about how homecoming queen was elected. I'm like, "Change the rules. That's fine. We'll figure that one out, too." So now it happens without having to do that kind of stuff. Black girls get elected because they just are. But back then it was pretty much a plan to make this happen. And it was a shock. Everyone was like, "Gasp, how did she get elected?" "She got the most votes." [Laughter]

ML: All right, well, thank you so much for talking to me. If you don't have anything else.

HF: Not a problem. I enjoyed it.

ML: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, July 21st, 2016.

Edited by Lauren Bellard, September 27, 2016.