

Dr. Alan Stoudemire interview by Reid McGlamery, Lincolnton, N.C., 23 February 1999.

### Notes

This interview took place in the history room of the Lincoln County Public Library after the reception for the opening of the Blake/Stoudemire African-American History and Culture Collection. I sat down with my classmate Mark Jones and Dr. Stoudemire at a round table in the back room of the library. Dr. Stoudemire is a graduate of Lincolnton High School and was a senior during the first year of integration. He was good friends with Boyce Blake and other black students. His role on the football team and in student government was of particular interest to us.

The late Boyce Blake's son B.J. sat next to Dr. Stoudemire for a while as he listened to Stoudemire tell stories about himself and Blake during childhood. There were several interruptions throughout the interview. They were mostly people wishing to see Alan and get him to sign his book. Mrs. Stoudemire later joined the interview and would on occasion drop in her impressions and thoughts. Dr. Stoudemire was very helpful, but he did take off on his own. I asked few questions, but he talked at length about many important issues. At times, however, he did stray on a tangent. The interview was cut short due to the library closing, but he volunteered to either set up a phone interview or send us a copy of his book. He is more than willing to keep in contact.

### Log

#### Tape 1, side A

Mark and I explain the project that we are working on. We discuss our personal project, the class we're in, and the larger collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We also mention that we have both read the article about his relationship with Boyce Blake which appeared in Readers' Digest.

Question about his background and how he first met Boyce Blake. He explains that his father George was a county agricultural agent and owned a rural farm. There was a nearby all-black community called Georgetown. Since Stoudemire's brother and sister were older, he became very close to Boyce and the rest of the Blake family. He constantly played over at their house. Sports were always an integral part of their friendship.

Boyce Blake's widow, Rita, interjects to take B.J. home for bed. Dr. Stoudemire promises to swing by later to see B.J. and his computer.

Stoudemire continues in stride. He details the governmental process in 1966, 1967 and 1968 to integrate the schools. He recalls one of the first blacks at Lincolnton High School, Bobby Joe Easter, a great football player who ended up playing for the Buffalo Bills with O.J. Simpson.

Stoudemire's wife now joins the interview after asking about the price to charge for Alan's book.

Stoudemire continues to say that between 120 and 150 black students came to Lincolnton High School from Newbold in 1968. This was his and Blake's senior year. Stoudemire was captain of the football team and V.P. of the Student Body. His influence allowed him to form a committee with Blake called "Hand in Hand," an organization of both black and white students against the tensions and fights that permeated the newly integrated school.

Dr. Stoudemire sees the flash point of all the tensions as the selection of cheerleaders. Equality existed on the football field, but the cheerleaders were all white. "Hand in Hand" made a recommendation to the administration that the cheerleaders resemble the proper proportions of the student body. Thus, a few black cheerleaders were given spots.

Rumors flowed that the Ku Klux Klan was to have a rally on the courthouse square. Blake and Stoudemire organized a group of about thirty to confront the Klan that particular Saturday morning. The unity of the students drove the Klan out, and the Klan was not significant from that point on, according to Stoudemire.

Question about any tensions on the football field. Stoudemire suggests that the boys were comfortable on the field because they had football as the common denominator, whereas the girls were not on common ground. The tensions among the girls were more noticeable, especially during the cheerleader selection incident.

Question about the team's feelings about integration. He feels that the team was very excited about recruiting great athletes to play for their team.

Question about the prejudices that the older generations had. It was a very quiet, covert racism. It was there and it most likely still is, he says. Stoudemire departs on a tangent and talks about the racial history of Lincoln County dating back to the pre-Civil War era. His point, eventually, is that Lincoln County has a past filled with Confederate leadership and heavy Klan influence.

Question about the police role in dealing with the Klan during the integration process. Stoudemire believes that the police did not support the Klan, but there was not much of a police presence at the proposed rally, for example. The local paper had and has a policy in which no coverage is given to Klan events. The VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, never admitted blacks. About 80% of those from Lincoln County who died in Vietnam were black.

Question about how he was perceived for his interaction and close friendships with blacks. He says that the old guard protects the status quo. They feel that things should not change. It was a "subtle kind of racism." Stoudemire's parents were compassionate

for the "underdog, the disadvantaged." His father was a captain in the army of an integrated regiment. Perhaps his compassion could be linked to this experience. All of Stoudemire's aunts and uncles were very open-minded.

The librarian enters and tells us that she must close the library. Stoudemire offers the telephone interview and to send us copies of his book. We thank him for his time and depart.

End of interview