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FEBRUARY 20, 2001

BATTLE, ALICE

This is February 20th in the year 2001, and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Alice Battle at her home at 1205 Cranebridge Place in Chapel Hill. I guess we are across the county line.

BOB GILGOR: Good morning, Alice.

ALICE BATTLE: Good morning.

BG: First of all, thank you for giving me time and sharing your experiences with me. I appreciate it very much.

AB: I'm hoping that I can remember things. I can't remember things like Mary Norwood can. Have you talked to Mary Norwood?

BG: Oh, yes, several times. She's a walking--.

AB: [Laughter]. She was one of my classmates.

BG: I'm sure that you will do very well.

The first question that I want to ask you is just a broad question and that is what was it like for you growing up in Chapel Hill, and when did you grow up in Chapel Hill?

AB: My mother died and I think it was in 1940 or '39 or something like that. I came to Chapel Hill to live with my aunt and uncle, Alice and Henry Neal, who were parents to Frances Hargraves and grandmother and grandfather to Ed Caldwell, when I was six or seven because I went into the second grade. It was wonderful. Of course, I missed my mom very much, but Alice Neal was my mom's sister, and I was

named after my mom's sister Alice Neal. Then when I was ten years old my father died so I was their child from that point on.

BG: Your mother died when you were seven?

AB: I was about six.

BG: Your father died four years later. How devastating!

AB: Yes, very much so. I had really good parents and I knew I was loved. It was basically a happy childhood. My mom worked for Frank Porter Graham, Marian and Frank Porter Graham, President of the University of North Carolina. After school, I would go to the mansion and spend the afternoon at the mansion because I didn't go home. Crime was not like it is now but I always had a place to go where adults were around.

BG: When you say you went to the mansion, you went to Frank Porter Graham's home, the president's home.

AB: Right. When I was sick and Aunt Alice had to go to work she would take me to work with her, and they would put me in a bedroom upstairs to be taken care of. Every Sunday my sister who lived with the other aunt, Aunt Hessie and Uncle Willis came to visit us on Sunday. Sometimes it would snow on Sunday and they would pop in and say, "Well, we came over to say it was too bad to come this Sunday."
[Laughter]. But they always came. Those were happy times.

BG: Where was your house? Where was Alice and Henry Neals' house?

AB: 407 W. Franklin Street where McDonald's is right now.

BG: So you were right smack dab in the center.

AB: Yes, right smack dab in the center of town.

BG: What kind of house was it?

AB: It was a big two-story house with three bedrooms upstairs and a sleeping porch. No, there were four bedrooms upstairs and a sleeping porch. That's where Uncle Henry liked to sleep in the summertime because it would get cold out there in the winter. We had one bathroom that was upstairs. Then downstairs we had a hall, which I guess they would call the family room now, and a living room, dining room, kitchen, and a huge back porch that we spent a lot of time on during the summer.

BG: Did you sleep out on the back porch in the summer?

AB: The back porch was the width of the house. There was a second stairway leading upstairs to a back porch upstairs and into this sleeping porch. On the sleeping porch there were windows all the way around; windows that you could pull out. All the rooms were huge except one room and that was the one at the top of the stairs that was my room. It had a deep closet that if you went in you could go into the attic up there, but it was kind of like a mysterious closet.

BG: Was the back porch a gathering place for people to talk?

AB: In the summertime, yes. We had a ringer washing machine that was out there. There was a table where you could eat. There was another mysterious closet under the stairway. We would slide down those banisters on the stairs. There was a huge backyard but the other part of it was where we had our garden. The lower part there was a peach tree and it had been a chicken lot with a fence around it. There was a chicken house that a limb extended over and we would go up on the chicken house and jump off and catch that limb and come down to the ground. Then on the side, the same side where the chicken house was across the little fence, hedges were on this side, tall hedges. I had a goldfish pond and she just had lots of

goldfish. I declare, when Aunt Alice would come home in the afternoon and she would go out and call her goldfish they would come right to the edge like they knew her. They would stay out there all winter. If the ice froze and you punctured the ice they would die so we knew not to puncture the ice. It would just be frozen on top and it didn't get that cold for the whole thing and so they would be swimming under the ice. She had a little bench out there and all of us would go out there and look at the goldfish. She had greenery growing in there and it seems to me she fed them oatmeal.

BG: I just see the look on your face as a beaming smile. It must have been a very happy time for you in spite of the fact that you lost both parents.

AB: Yes. In the front yard in the summertime, she had a hammock out there. We would have such a great time in that hammock. I don't ever remember her saying don't go too high in the hammock, don't do this or you will break it, and I'm sure we broke several of them. Ed and Billy and Jerry and the cousins, Bobby and John Nicks and Joe Hargraves, they would all come down and play.

BG: Who lived there with you and Mr. and Mrs. Neal?

AB: It was just the three of us, but from time to time she would have roomers and she would rent out the other two bedrooms.

BG: Were these always black roomers?

AB: Yes.

BG: Again, I would like to get back to the back porch. Was that a place where there was storytelling going on?

AB: Yes. It was kind of like an oral history. She would talk about our family, and she loved family. She was a smart lady, wise, funny, and she would talk about her growing up, and she told us that the house that burned down and they built this house and they were so proud of the house. She said that the night that they moved in they turned on all of the lights in the house and went up the street and came down on the other side and looked over said, "Oh, whose beautiful house is that up there on the hill?" It was up on a hill. Something else I remember, she always said we were bluebloods, "You've got a good family and you're just bluebloods and you hold your head up." She would say, "If you can't be the bell cow, you gallop in the game." I always remember that.

BG: What was that?

AB: If you can't be the bell cow gallop in the game.

BG: So if you can't be head--.

AB: Be a good follower.

BG: Okay.

AB: Good member of the organization or whatever it is. That carried over in school. You would get in an organization and you might not be the leader for that, but you could do something. You can contribute in some way. I think she was my biggest role model.

BG: What kind of stories do you remember her telling on the back porch? Did your Uncle Henry tell stories as well?

AB: Not so much, but he would be there with his cigar and that was the best smell in the world. I think most of the storytelling came in the hall where we had this big warm morning stove, coal stove, that he

would have to go out and we had under the house not a basement but a crawl space. It had been dug out a little bit and they would put the coal under the house and he would have to go out and get the coal to stoke the stove. We also had a fireplace in the living room and when it got really cold we would open up the French doors that led to the hall and put a fire in the fireplace. At Christmastime and on Sundays, we would open up the living room and the dining room. Coming into the hall there was the glass door and Uncle Henry's chair was right near the door between the front door and the French door leading into the living room. He would smoke his cigar. Then there was an alcove right close to the stove and there was a sofa there, and my grandfather's picture was above that sofa.

BG: Part of the tradition of the family was important to Alice Neal.

AB: There was a mantle piece that we had and on that mantle piece was a clock. It was a pendulum clock.

BG: I don't understand why you said that you don't remember because your memory is so sharp here. You are just remembering so many things about specifics that I couldn't remember about my house.

How far back did Alice Neal go when she talked about family?

AB: She talked about--. I don't know whether it was her aunt or her grandmother that she said that they knew when somebody was going to be sold into slavery because the masters were very nice to them and they gave them cornbread and molasses and that was being nice to them. A child was born that they sold away from the family. I don't know whether her children were sold or not.

BG: This was her grandmother?

AB: It was either her aunt or her grandmother. I'm not real clear. Aunt Frances would probably know. Frances Hargraves is my first cousin, but she was much older. When I came over or maybe it was before I came I can remember her saying, "I'm not going to have a child the same age as my children calling me by my first name." So she became Aunt Francis and Ed's mamma became Aunt Pearl. That's why I call my

first cousin Aunt. And so it is like Ed and Billy and Jerry were my first cousins. We grew up as first cousins. Billy was the oldest. Billy Hargraves was the oldest grandchild, and he didn't like somebody coming in and taking his grandmother as her mother so there was some friction there. In later years we became good friends.

BG: In your discussions of the history that you learned, was there emphasis put on what happened during slavery? It sounds like it was pretty clear some of the history did relate to slavery.

AB: I just remember that particular story about the molasses and cornbread. Not a lot of emphasis on slavery but she talked a lot about what happened after slavery. It was an aunt or great-grandmother. It had to be a great-grandmother instead of just a grandmother because Uncle Rick was brother to her mother and she said that on one occasion something had happened in the community and I'm not sure what it was but Uncle Rick and some more men were hold up some where with guns because the white people were going to come looking for somebody. One white man called out and said, "Rick Taylor, come on out. You know we aren't going to hurt you. We don't have anything against you. Just come out and nobody is going to get hurt." He yelled out, "All right." But he told the men with him, "Lay low boys." I don't know what the end of it was, but I know he wasn't killed. Some kind of way it was settled.

She talked about somebody saying to my grandfather who was principal of the old Quaker School that, "Oh, yes, London, you are very smart. You know you have white blood in you." He said, "No, Indian and Negro blood."

BG: The object was to put them down saying that his smarts came from whites and not from his African heritage.

AB: Yes, and it's Indian, Native American. That's why I'm surprised because she always told us that he was part Indian, and then in later years our historian for the Witted family found in the documents in Hillsborough that there were mulattoes so I don't know whether they said that because of the color and looks of mulattoes and they had straight hair.

BG: Mulatto being?

AB: A mixture of black and white. I just think she knew what it was. [Laughter].

BG: So you had a stove and a fireplace to heat. You didn't have central heat in that house I take it.

AB: Not at that time, but I said when I graduate from college I'm going to put in a furnace and going to buy a washing machine and Uncle Henry would always say, "I'm so glad that I don't have to go under that house and get that coal because we've got heat pumped into every room."

BG: So you put central heat in the house.

AB: Yes.

BG: Did they put any emphasis on education?

AB: Oh, yes, definitely. There wasn't any question about whether you were going to school or not. There wasn't any question about whether you were going to excel in school. There wasn't any question about whether you were going to college. It was just where are you going to go to college? Where can we afford for you to go to college? And it wouldn't hurt for you to win a scholarship to go to college.

BG: Did you see that kind of emphasis in other homes?

AB: I'm sure there was. In the classes before me, I would say in '49, '50, and '51, students went to college.

BG: Can you take a guess as to what percentage went on to get more education?

AB: There were forty-five students in my class which was about the biggest class that had graduated at that time.

BG: And that was in '51?

AB: '51. I would think about three-fourths of the students went to college.

BG: I don't want to leave your childhood just yet, but I can't help but ask this question at this point and that is was there emphasis within the school on students that had gotten a college education? Did you see a record anywhere of students who had gone to college in Lincoln High School on bulletin boards or assemblies?

AB: I didn't see a record, but there were teachers at the school--.

BG: Who had gone through the school system locally and had come back?

AB: Yes.

BG: Was your house painted?

AB: Yes. White house.

BG: Did you have internal plumbing or did you have an outhouse?

AB: Internal, but just the one bathroom and that was kind of a problem when Aunt Alice got sick and she was upstairs and we were thinking about turning the dining room into a bedroom for her and building a bathroom, but she died before we could do that. She was so determined. She would slide down the steps one step at a time on her rear end to come downstairs maybe at Christmas or something like that.

BG: Was she sick before she passed away?

AB: We didn't know what it was at the time, but the autopsy said that she had cancer.

BG: Cancer?

AB: It was pancreatic cancer.

[Portion of interview excised.]

BG: Can you remember your playmates at that time? You had a big backyard and did you play in the backyard with other children?

AB: Yes. You know I told you about jumping off that chicken house catching a branch like Tarzan or Superman. Next-door was Lucille Edwards. She was a little older, about two years older. Up in the alley, Aunt Effie lived up there.

BG: Aunt Effie Foster?

AB: No, Effie Taylor who had married Aunt Alice's first cousin, Rick Taylor's mother. Then her grandchildren, Bobby, John (), and Joe Hargraves. We would play with them. Then there was Ruth Booth that lived on Rosemary Street and Cynthia Booth. I don't think they were related because she lives in Sunset. Mary Louise Stroud that lived over on Linda Street; Almeda Foushee McPherson that lived on Cotton Street I believe. It was down from the school and her father and Uncle Henry were good friends. I think they were both cooks at a fraternity house. Not the same one but different fraternity houses.

BG: Your Uncle Henry was a cook at a fraternity?

AB: Yes.

BG: Do you remember the fraternity? Was it a DKE fraternity?

AB: No, that's where Uncle Edward was, it was in back of the DKE house I think. You had to go through a pathway at old Chapel Hill High School and go back that way. I think they have done away with it and Granville Towers is over there, but it was back in there.

BG: Did you have white playmates as well as black playmates?

AB: There were two girls and one was Mary Alice and her sister Pat that lived next door to us across these heavy thick hedges. Sometimes we would talk through the hedges but we didn't go across there. I can remember one time we started arguing about the hedges, whose hedges they were. I said something and she said something. I said, "What did you say?" She said, "If you hadn't of eaten your ears for breakfast you would have heard what I said." I had never heard that before and that ended the argument right then.

When I was at Frank Porter Graham's house, I would go over across the street and play with Mary Jones who was the daughter to the Jones that started the Community Church. What's his name? I would also play with--I didn't know his name then--Walter Creech whose wife taught French with me in high school.

BG: So you had black and white playmates but mostly black it sounds like.

AB: Yes.

BG: Did you see the boys playing sports in the backyard? It sounds like you had a big backyard.

AB: Actually, she had this peach tree and there were flowers all around, and I can remember the mint and it smelled so good. So there was really just a place if you had a car you would drive up the driveway and turn left. We would play ball between the garden and the hedges on this side where the Edwards' house was. It was more of a narrow strip where we would play ball than just a big open space.

BG: Were there black businesses where you shopped at that time?

AB: Across the street there was Charlie Merritt's Café, but I know I didn't go in there that much because they would have drinking going on and sometimes there were fights. I don't know whether I ever went in there, but he had his job there. The Scarborough's had a building on the end right beside that café so I don't know what they did there.

BG: Was this on Franklin?

AB: On Franklin.

BG: Was it across the street where the rock wall is today?

AB: Yes, but closer to the dry cleaners. It seemed to me there was this building that they had, the Scarborough's had and then there was an open space and then there was the dry cleaners. It might be a brick wall up there now, but at that open space I would cut through to go to Rosemary Street and then we'd cut through to go to school rather than going down Franklin Street past the white high school and then turn left onto Church Street and go that way. Sometimes we would go that way coming from school and you had your little boyfriends and you wanted to make it a long walk home. [Laughter].

BG: It sounds like fun.

AB: Yes. Usually after school, I was going to Mr. Frank's house. I would walk with the Windy Hill gang and sometimes we would get on the sidewalk all abreast on the sidewalk so the black people had to walk around. [Laughter].

BG: Well, that's a switch.

AB: We did that. I can remember that very well. Ms. Suzie Weaver and Mr. Bynum had a little store right there in front of the school that was on Cotton Street. And Mr. what's his name was blind and he had a store. We would go in there and we loved ginger snaps and we'd get ginger snaps. We weren't always honest about how many we got. We liked coming down and this was before we got a cafeteria.

BG: This was near Northside now?

AB: Yes.

BG: Was that Ms. Suzie Weaver and she owned that bus, is that right?

AB: Yes.

BG: What kind of a store was Suzie Weaver's store?

AB: It was kind of a general store, but she would cook hamburgers and hotdogs at lunchtime, and we would go down there and get those hotdogs, and they were so good.

BG: Was it called Weaver's?

AB: Bynum Weaver, Suzie Weaver, Weaver's Store. I think they had other stuff that you could buy.

BG: Before the cafeteria, that's where you had your lunch.

What was the African American--?

AB: Let me tell you, I would go to Almeda's house. Remember I told you that Almeda Foushee and her father and Uncle Henry were good friends. When I came over--I didn't know this--Almeda said that he told him that he wanted her daughter and I to get together and that must have been about third grade and we've been friends since third grade. Sometimes I would go down to her house and have lunch, and I could sit at the table just like it was my table. Her mother didn't work at the time.

BG: Was Almeda a neighbor?

AB: No, she lived across the street from the Weaver grocery store. She died in '96 I think it was. She got married her senior year and she said that the teachers were not very nice to her because she had gotten married. They made it difficult for her and she quit school. Her husband was from Hillsborough and they lived in Hillsborough after she left school. She went and got her GED, and she became the deputy insurance person for the state.

BG: Commissioner?

AB: Yes. Her maiden name was Foushee and her married name was McPherson.

BG: Did you see much alcohol abuse in the community?

AB: We knew people that would get drunk on the street and if they got drunk on the street they would arrest them and send them to the road and that meant that they were going to do time and they were going to work on the road like that man is having them to do in Alabama now. I don't know whether they had chains on their legs like the man that has them do it. Making them wear pink underwear and serving them just two meals or one meal a day. That's happening now. There were people that we knew were going to go to the road because they would get drunk and they would be on the street. I didn't know many of those people. Now, Uncle Henry drank but he would come home and he just harmed himself.

BG: He would abuse it?

AB: Well, he would abuse it.

BG: I mean the people in the household.

AB: Oh, no, no. I don't remember getting many spankings from Aunt Alice, but I never got a spanking from him. We would all go to the movies on Friday nights if we had been good. Sometimes Billy and Gerry and Ed would come to the house after the movies rather than having to walk home. I don't know where Aunt Alice was but Gerry had to sleep in the bed with me and I guess I didn't want her in the bed. Henry told me to move over and I didn't move over. He kind of pushed me and I considered that a spanking and I just cried for days cause I had gotten a spanking in my mind.

BG: It sounds like you weren't used to having him do anything like that.

AB: No. I don't even remember him raising his voice at me ever.

BG: But he did drink, you were saying.

AB: Yes, he did, and he wouldn't drink everyday, he would just have what we would call spells and he'd drink excessively.

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START OF TAPE I, SIDE B

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BATTLE, ALICE

BG: So you were saying that he would have drinking spells.

AB: Yes.

BG: And he wouldn't eat during those times?

AB: Right. He would usually get sick. Then he could go months and months without.

BG: Could you characterize Potter's Field and the general condition of the community at that time and what it was like?

AB: It was like where all the cool kids were. You wanted to go over there and play because they seemed real close to each other. I'm here on Franklin Street up on a hill looking over the town in this big house and also being new in town so I didn't really feel like a part of the gang. I would like to go over to that area or down at Sunset and play with the children, but I never got just really close. That's why I don't know a lot of the things that somebody like Mary Norwood knows. She lived in Carrboro but they were just kind of more in, it seems to me, than I was. I don't know whether they felt like that, but I did.

BG: Did you perceive that impression within the black community itself? Certainly there was prejudice from white to black, but how about within the black community itself?

AB: Yes, light skinned people got preferential treatment it seemed to me.

BG: Whom did they get the preferential treatment from?

AB: Like running for May Queen, running for Miss Lincoln High School that kind of thing or Miss OCTS. It seemed like they were light skinned girls, the majorettes, the band, and that kind of thing.

BG: How did you interpret that or did you even think about that?

AB: Yes, I thought about it.

BG: What did you think about it?

AB: Like I know she's going to win because she's light skinned.

BG: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but let me share with you what someone has said to me and my interpretation of it. There was some resentment and it was that the role model for what was beautiful was a white woman and looking back on it is that the way you saw the fact that light skinned blacks were treated preferentially is that they looked more like whites?

AB: Yes. Now when there was a football game and there would be traffic jams and they would just be moving slow and we would say, "That's me." We'd look in a car and see a white woman all dressed up and of course they dressed up then. When I went to college you dressed up to go to a football game. "Oh, that's me. That's my car." So, yes, it had a lot to do with that.

BG: Were there any other prejudices of family or economics that you saw in the African American community?

AB: I just couldn't understand why Aunt Alice would say, "yes ma'am, no sir," and I would say to her, "Why do you say that? She's real young and she's almost younger than I am. Why do you say that?" She would say, "Honey, I live in a different world from you." I think Mr. Frank asked her why someone that was visiting would say something like it's snowing outside and it's not snowing and why she'd say, "Yes,

sir." She said, "Let me tell you, Mr. Frank, if I disagree with that man he will probably not give me a tip, but if I agree with him he's going to give me a big tip." It may not have been as obvious as snowing and it's not that she would agree with.

BG: So your economic welfare depended on subservience in a way.

AB: She said those things but she was not subservient. She spoke her mind. She never felt like--. "We're blueblood." She would often, with her interaction, let them know that she was better than you.

BG: You couldn't put anything over on her.

AB: No.

BG: ().

AB: Oh, yes.

BG: And wanted to give that pride to you.

AB: Yes.

BG: Did she?

AB: Oh, yes.

BG: Well, let's go to school. I could ask you some more questions about your childhood, but I think that's drawing enough on it. I would like to hear what your experiences were at Orange County Training School when you went.

AB: When I went, yes.

BG: Can you share?

AB: And it was from grades one to twelve in the same building. My first teacher was Mrs. Hale. I guess she was a Mrs., and I don't even know whether she was married or not. I don't think she liked me very much. She called me Ann Page, like A&P. [Laughter]. I don't really think the students liked me at first. Marion Jones Brooks, I can remember her pushing me down. I don't know why she pushed me down but I remember that. She probably doesn't remember, but we were good friends at school later. Her father was the preacher.

BG: Marion's father.

AB: Yes.

BG: I'm surprised to hear she pushed you down.

AB: [Laughter]. I may have been in her seat or something. She pushed me out of her seat or something.

BG: You didn't think your teacher liked you in the first grade or was it the second grade?

AB: Second grade.

BG: Why.

AB: Because she called out my name and my name wasn't Ann it was Alice. She didn't take the time to learn my name. Aunt Alice said that I really didn't start catching on until fourth grade when I had Mrs. Snipes. Do you know Roger Snipes?

BG: I know the name.

AB: Roger is adopted, but his mom and dad--. His dad worked. I think he taught with Aunt Pearl.

BG: Let's go back. You said something that was very interesting that you didn't start to do well in school until the fourth grade. Why do you think that was so? And you also said that your second grade teacher didn't like you, did your third grade teacher like you?

AB: I don't remember my third grade one. Maybe it was the third grade that I had Ms. Snipes. It was third or fourth but I was thinking it was fourth. She was the kind of teacher that, "You're going to get it and I'm going to be here."

BG: You're going to get it?

AB: You're going to get the work. You're going to do well.

BG: She was very encouraging.

AB: Right.

BG: When you had a teacher who encouraged you, you did well. Is that the right interpretation?

AB: Or if I had a teacher like Mrs. Waddell who said in the seventh grade, I think it was, I mean I was doing really well in school by that time, but at the end of seventh grade she was calling a long list of names and I'm sure Billy's name was in that list, she was saying Atwater's name was in that list, "I know they are going to do well in eighth grade, but I don't know what's going to happen to the rest of you." I was determined and Peggy Battle's name was in that list too, and so I was really upset about that. I was

determined to be first and I ended up second by one point. I don't know how you can be first in a class for four years and then come up at graduation time and by one point you get to be salutatorian instead of valedictorian.

BG: You were second in your class when you graduated from Orange County?

AB: From Lincoln High School.

BG: Let's go back to Orange County Training School. It sounds as though it was competitive for a teacher to make a statement like that. Do you feel that the school was competitive and there was competition among the students?

AB: Yes, we worked hard to be first.

BG: Was there a competition in sports or other extracurricular activities?

AB: Yes.

BG: What were some of those activities?

AB: Aside from the football, and the basketball, we had a drama department, and the Othello Club. I think I was instrumental in naming that.

BG: Drama would be the Othello Club.

AB: Yes. The Future Homemakers of America Club, the Othello Club was under Mrs. Turner, and Ms. Pope had the Future Homemakers of America. I'm sure that Mr. Smith had the Future Farmers of America.

BG: When lunchtime came along, were there competitive games that you described that went on at lunch?

AB: We would play baseball, I'm sure the boys would play football. I don't know whether it's still over there, but there were rocks facing the field and we would sit up on the rocks and have our lunch or after we'd have lunch in the cafeteria we would go out. We played baseball.

Ms. Pope would organize dances at school. Marion and Johnny () wanted to go to the dances and Ms. Pope said, "Now look, I'm going to pay for them to go to dance and don't anybody breathe a word about it." It was at lunchtime and they would have to sit in the classroom and not be able to go to a dance, sock hop, so she did that.

BG: Did you have rivalries between different classes like third grade against fourth grade or some things like that during lunch period with basketball, football, or baseball?

AB: I don't remember them playing basketball at lunchtime, but I do remember those softball and baseball games. It may have been between classes. I don't even know how it was done.

BG: Did you have assembly?

AB: Oh, yes.

BG: How often did you have assemblies?

AB: It seems like we had assembly every Friday.

BG: What would take place at assembly?

AB: Sometimes classes would present an activity. Sometimes the principal would be talking to you. We had activities at night, like we had a concert pianist to come. Mrs. Lampley was second or third grade teacher and she had married again and her husband had a son that was a concert pianist and he would come

and the whole community would be there. We had activities on Sunday at the school. I don't remember what it was that we would have. We would have plays. The Othello Club would present a play. We'd go off on competition and oftentimes we'd come back with an award. The band would do the same thing. I would go to the New Homemakers of America convention or meetings and then I guess it was my junior year or my senior year I went to Baltimore, Maryland, Morgan State University, representing the New Homemakers of America.

When we would have the plays, the whole community was there. It was standing room only. I remember at one of the concerts that Mrs. Lampley did Ms. Pope, the home economics teacher, was sitting beside my mom and she announced that the next piece is by Chopin and Ms. Pope said Chopping. She said, "It looks like Chopin to me." [Laughter].

BG: Was performance important to the students?

AB: I think his name was Eunice Berchet and he was a tall, thin guy, and he was such a good actor. Mary Hargraves was a really good actor. Mary had come back later and she was one of Ms. Turner's outstanding actresses. She played a part in Richard Wright's "Native Sun" at Playmakers when they first opened up, the new Playmakers, the Paul Green Theater.

BG: You were in Future Homemakers, were you in any other clubs or the singing group, the choral group or band?

AB: Band, chorus.

BG: So you were band, chorus, and Future Homemakers.

AB: And on the newspaper staff. We had a newspaper, *The Lincoln Echo*. I was probably on everything. I ran for president of student council. I never liked to be president or anything like that and somebody talked me into running for president and then Sammy Atwater probably go it. Carlee Edwards, Keith

Edwards' little brother and she didn't know that I had gone to Lincoln. I have to remind her that her brother and I were in the same class and her cousin Vivian Swain Foushee was also in class with me. Carlee said, "I got more votes than you got and I wasn't even running." [Laughter]. I remember that.

BG: What instrument did you play in the band?

AB: The glockenspiel.

BG: How did you learn how to play the glockenspiel?

AB: Well, I didn't learn to play it very well, but Cynthia Booth was the official glockenspiel person and when Cynthia wasn't available then I would do the glockenspiel.

BG: Did the music teacher give you lessons or did you take lessons?

AB: From Cynthia and the music teacher pointed out notes and stuff like that.

BG: It was both who had learned how to do it. Who was the music teacher?

AB: Mr. Pickett and Mr. Bell.

BG: Was your band a marching band at that time?

AB: Yes. It started out as a marching band with Ms. Scales. I don't think I was in the band when Ms. Scales started, but the uniform was a white shirt, black tie, white pants and white buckskin shoes, and it made a pretty sight.

BG: White shirt, black tie, and what color pants?

AB: White and white buckskin shoes.

BG: Did they have to buy this uniform?

AB: Yes.

BG: It wasn't provided by the school.

AB: No.

BG: What about your school supplies, the things that were necessary. The pots and pans for home economics and the sewing machines and things like that, were they provided for you or did the school have to raise money for those?

AB: I think they were provided in the home economic department. They had a certain number of machines but it seemed like we didn't have enough of them. I don't know whether they were new or not. They were pedal machines. I guess later on, I remember getting--we had a pedal machine at home--it was either my freshman year or my sophomore year I bought me a featherweight Singer machine, and I still have it.

BG: Does it still work?

AB: Yes.

BG: Great. Do you use it?

AB: Sometimes. I don't use it as much now as I used to.

BG: Did you make that?

AB: No, my sister can really sew. She was brought up by Aunt Effie and Uncle Willis who was a tailor. Aunt Effie sewed and so she learned sewing from Aunt Effie and tailoring from Uncle Willis.

BG: What did it mean to you being in the band?

AB: We always wanted to go to practice. It was a little tiny room; it was a narrow room in the front of the building off of the auditorium/gym, "gymatorium". We would crowd in that room and I remember (), oh, that was the prettiest song. We just played it so well.

But Billy and Ed did the clarinet and sometimes I think Billy did the saxophone. His daddy was a musician. Cynthia, sometimes she didn't do the bells because she played the piano. Georgia McCoy played the piano. She was in the band. She may have done the saxophones or the clarinet; I don't know which.

We just felt like we were good and when it was parade time we just knew everybody was coming out to see us and were following us. It was wonderful.

BG: Did you play in many parades? At Christmastime, did you play in Chapel Hill and Carrboro or alone, or did you go to other areas?

AB: I don't think they had Christmas parades then because I remember going to Durham to the parade and of course Hillside was outstanding and we were always in that. I don't remember when I was a little girl going to a Christmas parade in Chapel Hill.

BG: Did you play at homecoming for the high school?

AB: Yes.

BG: What about the University of North Carolina, did you play at their homecoming or the Beat Duke parade?

AB: No.

BG: That was later.

AB: They may have after I left.

BG: Was your band the high stepping band where you would put your instruments down from time to time and just dance steps in front of the people watching?

AB: No, we didn't do that, but the majorettes would just show off. They were high stepping, and high dancing.

BG: Do you think that gave pride to the students at the school?

AB: Yes. They would work on those floats and get the colored paper and make the cars look pretty. They had the queen riding. Everybody knew about the band.

BG: Tell me about *The Echo*. What was *The Echo* about? What kinds of things did you write about in the school newspaper?

AB: Anything that had happened around the school.

BG: Local news.

AB: Yes.

BG: You wanted to inform students, parents?

AB: Students, yes.

BG: Did Aunt Alice read it?

AB: She may have. It was never anything controversial. It was just what the students did, and it was a way of probably encouraging other students because seventh grade news for example, so and so did such and such. There was one little column that they would use initials; A, AP, likes so and so and that kind of thing. They would try to figure out who it was.

BG: How often did the paper come out?

AB: I would like to say every month, but I'm not sure.

BG: What was discipline like at school?

AB: You were afraid of the principal. I remember coming from taking class and coming from Mrs. Turner's class which was on the end and coming up the hall going around the patrol that stood in the middle of the hall and you went right and coming up on the other side. Everybody went to the right and you would go around the patrol. You couldn't cut across. If you got caught cutting across, you would be kind of brought back and you'd go across that way to go to your class. I knew Mary Louise Stroud was behind me and I went into Ms. () room and closed the door and put my back up to the door so she couldn't get around. There was a glass in the door and I turned around to lick my tongue and () was standing there and I almost fainted. I never did that anymore. [Laughter].

One time Mr. McDougle disciplined me and I didn't think I should have been disciplined. It was at lunchtime, and it was in the spring. I was in the library doing homework or doing something, and he

came in and just chewed me out for not being outside mingling with the other students or playing with the other students. He made me stop and go out at lunchtime and I didn't think was fair, but I went out.

BG: You didn't argue with him?

AB: Oh, no, no.

BG: Was he principal then?

AB: Yes.

BG: What kind of principal was he?

AB: Strict. If the boys got into trouble, I don't know what they would do but they would have to wash windows or sweep the floors. They tried not to get into trouble. You didn't have that kissing and holding hands that I saw at Chapel Hill High School.

BG: How about gum chewing and hats in school?

AB: Oh, no, no.

BG: Shirts out?

AB: Girls didn't wear pants either.

BG: Could boys come in with their shirts out?

AB: No.

BG: Tucked in.

AB: Tuck it in.

BG: The dress code was neatness?

AB: Exactly.

BG: How about talking back to a teacher?

AB: I never heard of anybody talking back to a teacher.

BG: Why was that? I mean, why couldn't you talk back to a teacher?

AB: You just didn't do that. I mean, they were the authority figure and you just don't do that.

Getting ahead just a little bit, I had two boys in my homeroom, Robert Davis and I can't think of his friend's name, but we had had the junior/senior prom that Saturday night and they-- Maybe it was Friday night and we had a snow day or something that Saturday and they came to school in their tuxedos and we spent almost the whole morning talking about them coming to school dressed like they were.

BG: You say they came on Saturday to school?

AB: I think it was a snow makeup day.

BG: I see. Mr. McDougle had an assembly and talked?

AB: No, over the intercom. This was later when I was teaching at Lincoln.

BG: How did he view that where they came to school in their tuxedos?

AB: I think he felt like they had been out all night and probably been drinking didn't have time to dress for school properly when they come to school in their tuxedos.

BG: What was the message that the student body got from Mr. McDougle?

AB: You're not going to do that. You don't do that. You don't come to school dressed like that. You dress in proper attire. That's for the prom.

BG: Did he send them home?

AB: He didn't suspend them but he made them feel real bad. I think they will remember it for the rest of their lives.

BG: Did you have a demerit system at the high school when you were there?

AB: No. Do you mean to do certain things some of the times that you'd get a certain kind of punishment for? I think whatever came into Mr. McDougle's head is what he did. He didn't beat them or anything. I can remember in fifth grade getting a ruler in my hand.

BG: That was one method of discipline a switch or a ruler?

AB: A ruler. I don't think she ever used a strap. Maybe a strap in the hands but that was it for maybe talking too much.

BG: How many blows would you get with a ruler on your hand?

AB: About two or three.

BG: So it wasn't as though you were getting beaten.

AB: No.

BG: What are the other things that you remember about Lincoln and Orange County Training School. The high school I guess was called Northside for a while after they changed the name. In '49 it was changed to Lincoln. What are the other things that you remember?

AB: I think it was in '50 or '49-'50 that it was changed because the class of 1951 was the first class to graduate from Northside under the name of Lincoln High School.

BG: Someone had told me the name changed in '49 and that they didn't have enough time to put the name Lincoln on the certificates so it still has the old name for the graduating class of '49-'50.

AB: Okay. You know, Joe Hargraves keeps saying, "We were the last class over at Lincoln High School." He says that at almost every reunion. We'd said, "Oh, no, no. We were the last ones." So that may have been true that they didn't put the name on it. We thought that we were going to be in the new building by the time we graduated and we wore white robes. Then it came that they hadn't finished the school and we were going to have to graduate from the old OCTS. I guess we wore black robes. But we were the last school to graduate from that building and it was Lincoln High School.

BG: What was graduation like?

AB: Lots of people. We had class night and that's when you would get awards and you would have a speech by the president of the class and maybe a little skit was presented. On graduation, you would have the valedictorian speech and the salutatorian speech and musical selections and awarding of the diplomas and that kind of thing.

BG: Was that a big event?

AB: Big event, yes. The highest averaging boy in the junior class and the highest averaging girl in the junior class were the class marshals. So for the class of 1950 Ernest Weaver and I were the class marshals.

BG: What did the class marshals do?

AB: They led in the graduates and the girl was dressed in white and the boy was dressed in a dark suit. You were proud to do that.

BG: I bet you were.

AB: There was some conflict about the class marshal at Chapel Hill High School later on. I brought that up because of what had happened there.

BG: That was quite a spark.

How did you feel about your teachers in high school? What characteristics did they have?

AB: What was the name of the librarian and she was my English teacher? Oh, my goodness. I have forgotten her name. They seem so smart, and they knew so many interesting things. I was probably in the library that time wanting to be around--.

BG: Your English teacher?

AB: Yes. Oh, my goodness. Mary Norwood would have known. Well, anyway, Mr. Pickard, the music teacher, seemed like he knew everything about music. I mean there was nothing that he didn't know. The math teacher--I wasn't good in math, but he seemed to make you want to learn it. Mr. Kornegay, who was the football and basketball coach, was good with boys. He coached the girls' basketball team. I tried out

for the girls' basketball team and he cursed me and so I didn't particularly like him. He taught math, too, I think he taught me math, but he was more for boys. Later on Ms. () coached the girls' basketball team. When I tried out for it, he didn't like what I had done and I had not done it correctly. That stayed right there on the floor except for the students that would tease me about it, like my ex-husband who was an outstanding basketball--.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

FEBRUARY 22, 2001

BATTLE, ALICE

AB: She was a Mason. Catherine Carter's maiden name is Mason. So her sister was something Mason and I can't remember her first name. She was one of the younger ones because I had taught John and Catherine at Lincoln.

BG: Was there () uprising?

AB: There was a second because I can remember Mr. McDougle standing up on the lower level and you could look down on the stairs to the first level of the high school entry and this father had come in and he was saying, "I am tired of coming over here for this nonsense. We are going to put an end to this." I don't know who it was but that had to be the second one.

BG: Were they in the same week?

AB: I don't remember.

BG: The newspaper report, and the thing that was in everyone's mind, but from the newspaper reviews it looked like there were two in the same week. Did they lock the doors both times?

AB: Yes.

BG: Chained the doors so that nobody could get out. When that happened did you have an intercom system and did the principal suggest keeping the students in the classroom?

AB: Yes.

BG: ()?

AB: It seemed like it was in the morning and no later than lunchtime.

BG: So it may have been a couple of hours.

AB: I think so.

BG: Did you see changes in the--?

AB: It seemed like every time something would happen then we would start meeting to put a Band-Aid on that and then some of the other issues would not be--. I don't remember that it was in the same week. It seemed like it was a little time after the first, but I could be wrong.

BG: I could be too. I think it was like a Monday and Wednesday. I will go back and look through the newspaper reports and see what they say.

So they kept putting on Band Aids. Did they ever do a major operation and correct the situation to make the patient well again?

AB: I don't think they ever made it well, but made it better. They were more satisfied that the mascot became the tiger.

BG: Did they find the trophies?

AB: I think they put what they had on display, but a lot of them had been destroyed.

BG: They were trashed?

AB: I think so. From my understanding, they had been trashed. A lot of the trophies that were salvaged are what Mr. Peerman was able to find. My ex-husband, Jackie, was an outstanding basketball player and he had won a lot of awards. He does not have any trophies.

BG: The trophies were important.

AB: Very. And probably the band trophies from the band clinics. They would grade you and give you awards.

BG: Why do you think the trophies were so important? I'm not saying that they shouldn't be, I mean, I hear this over and over again. It's a major issue.

AB: It was evidence of achievement, accomplishment, excelling in an atmosphere where people think that I'm not a significant person but these trophies would prove that I am. That's about it.

BG: One of the things that I hear repeatedly from people I've interviewed is that at Lincoln High School there were values that were taught in the classroom and if necessary, at assemblies to teach values. Is that a perception?

AB: Yes.

BG: Now what happened to teaching values when you went to Chapel Hill High School?

AB: You know I think that social graces and things like that the white students got it at home and so it was not important to repeat it at school because it was done at home, not remembering maybe that the black students did not have that advantage. What I did was that I would stand at my door in the morning, and I always spoke to my students, and I expected a greeting back from the students. Just common courtesy kinds of things, and in the classroom I would tell them I was going to respect them and I expected them to

respect me, and to respect each other that when someone else was talking that you listen until they are finished and then you have an opportunity to talk. Just in a subtle way but there was no outright teaching. It was just doing what was right.

BG: You mentioned something that the white students got at home and the black students didn't. I wonder if you could be more specific about that. Is that what you were just talking about when you said don't interrupt when someone else is talking?

AB: I'm thinking about-- Kind of being exposed to society, you know, going out to plays, big productions, and that kind of thing. Some of them, I don't think, were exposed to that kind of thing. Using your napkin, or even the whole family sitting down together and some of the black students were not exposed to that. Some of them may not have known where their next meal was going to come from so they were more concerned about eating than using a napkin or using the right fork or that kind of thing. So I think more of the white students had that advantage. It may have-- I don't know what I'm trying to say but--.

BG: I think you've been pretty clear.

AB: Do you understand what I'm saying?

BG: Absolutely. So you're also talking about a different economic level here.

AB: Yes.

BG: You're talking about poor, poor people and University professors to the large extent.

AB: I found out that not only were the blacks discriminated against, but the students from Carrboro, which historically were the "crackers" at the time, and we call them "red necks" now. The students at the old

Chapel Hill High School discriminated against them, professors children, and the elite () people being associated with Carrboro.

BG: What happened to the band the students mention all the time, the marching band from Lincoln High School when you got to Chapel Hill High?

AB: I don't remember that there was a band at the Chapel Hill High School. There may have been. Some of the teachers at Chapel Hill High went to junior high school--.

BG: They were Lincoln teachers.

AB: Right. Betty King, but I think they were split up. Ernest Edwards, I think, went to Phillips.

BG: What was Mr. () first name?

AB: Leon.

BG: Does he still live in Durham?

AB: Yes.

BG: Tell me about Mr. Peerman and what his role was his first year at Chapel Hill High after integration.

AB: I think he taught physical education, and he may have been an assistant football coach.

BG: He wasn't the head coach?

AB: I don't think so. I think Coach Culten was the head coach.

BG: Did he become head coach?

AB: Yes, after a year or two. But then Mr. Strickland became head coach. Ms. Clemmons would know all of this stuff.

BG: Is she still around?

AB: She lives in Durham and I haven't seen her very much. Whenever the students invite her back for reunions, parties, and things she won't come. When the Martin Luther King Committee honored the principals in the school year before last, 2000, she didn't come. Someone said that she said that when she retired from Chapel Hill High School she retired from Chapel Hill. She could get the students to do anything she wanted them to do. I don't know how she did this.

BG: During the late 60s, in the spring of '68 is when Martin Luther King was assassinated and then '69 there must have been uprisings still going on in the South. What role did these events have on how the students used what was going on in school?

AB: The students were always angry. I know I was just really sad. I had been over to a meeting at the central office and--. Was Martin Luther killed in '68?

BG: I thought it was in '68.

AB: But something had happened and I came back to school and I remember that I was just so sad and I may had been crying because () had just gone to first grade and my baby is in school with people that hate her. I was just so sad but the focus was on her just going to school. I can't put it into words, but I can feel it.

BG: Did she come home?

AB: No.

BG: Did she share that same feeling with you?

AB: No, she didn't even know it had happened. She didn't know a thing about it.

BG: She didn't feel--?

AB: No.

BG: It was a mother's worry.

AB: Yes, right.

BG: Certainly that hate sounded like it was just there at the high school and the anger.

Did you perceive all the students were angry? Were the black students just angry?

AB: Primarily the black boys and some black girls. I can remember some of the students were even angry with black teachers.

BG: Why?

AB: I never understood why. I think they felt like everyone was going to discriminate against them.

BG: Even the black teachers?

AB: Yes.

BG: Did they see a change in your teaching style?

AB: I don't whether they did or not but I'm sure there was a change because I wanted them to be certain that I was not going to discriminate against anybody no matter what the color. I tried to make certain to call on everybody and that I was going to even it up. I wasn't going to let somebody dominate the classroom. Everyone was going to have equal opportunity to perform. I think maybe I did it at Lincoln but I was more obvious, you know, aware of making it equal.

BG: Are there other memories of either Lincoln or Chapel Hill High that stand out in your mind that I haven't asked you about?

AB: Some of the white students would be so friendly to your at school and sometimes you would see them in town and they would pretend that they didn't see you.

BG: You were invisible.

AB: Yes. But I can remember--this is in later years--students would come to my classroom at lunchtime and there was a little Vietnamese girl, there was a black girl, and a white girl and I think a white boy and they would go and have their lunch and then they would come up to my room and talk and discuss television shows and things like that. The thing that most affected me when I retired was having to leave my students. It was a happy time at the school.

BG: What year did you resign?

AB: In '91.

BG: Did you feel there was significant progress had been made in high school by the time you retired?

the classroom--and that I didn't let them chew chewing gum and I didn't let them wear hats and that I made them pay attention in class and that kind of thing. They come back and say it was for their good and I appreciate that.

One thing that was very disappointing to me was to see black students and many of them I had in my classroom who were outgoing and would participate in various organizations like being on the yearbook staff because they would have to go into the students home where the meetings were held in the white students homes, but my point is that some of those students were ridiculed by their black counterparts for trying to be white and acting like they were white because they were excelling. That was a great disappointment and I hear that this often happens. It happened here in Chapel Hill and it happens throughout the country. We need to do something about that. I don't know what, but we need to probably make those students who are doing the ridiculing feel important so that they won't think somebody else is trying to be better than they are. I don't know what the answer is and maybe somebody does have the answer.

BG: Do you think it is the association with whites or that they are excelling or a combination of that that makes the other blacks students want to ostracize them?

AB: I think that they don't feel important and to see someone that is--.

END OF INTERVIEW