

Keith Edwards  
Tape 2, Side 1

RG: This is Tuesday January 2, 2001 and this is Bob Gilgor and I'm interviewing Keith Edwards at Northside. Good afternoon.

KE: Good afternoon.

RG: We were talking when we finished last time about the legacy and the trophies. And I cut you off, or the tape cut you off, and we didn't finish speaking. Do you have any other thoughts on that? About the legacy that was missing? When Lincoln High School students went to Chapel Hill High School?

KE: Well to me I would have thought they would have brought over the trophies. I remember going to Lincoln and in the showcase, they had a big showcase with all the graduates of the Lincoln High School. They also had the athletic jackets that the football players wore. They had footballs that was used to win whatever conference we were in. You know, if we won that year, they had the football autographed by all the football players. Also, I remember seeing a majorette outfit and the boots. It was just everything about Lincoln, you saw it in the showcase when you entered the school. And I had assumed that they would do the same thing at Chapel Hill High School, because after all, Chapel Hill High School brought all their trophies and everything with them to the new school. So I would have thought they would have put all that stuff right alongside Chapel Hill High School. But my recollection, I didn't see any of it.

RG: Was this a sense of pride that the students felt in the high school ...???? Was that what the display was all about?

KE: Yes. Well now, for Chapel Hill High School, that was what it was all about, and when Lincoln was open, that's what it was all about. Right. But, if they had combined both together maybe students coming from Lincoln would have had a sense of -- well, they might have believed that the school system combining together that they were really trying to combine both schools by showcasing the talents from both schools. And it would have been something that I could pass by every day and to myself I would say well, that's mine, that's a part of me. Having been in the Chapel Hill schools every since the seventh grade, I had felt like Guy B. Phillips Chapel Hill Junior High and Chapel Hill High School was not a part of my life. If they had displayed some of the items from Lincoln, then I would felt a whole lot better. Because after that long, long wait, finally, you know, something of mine was coming to the school, and I might have felt just a little bit like I had a little ownership to the school. But I never felt that.

RG: The trophies that were won by Lincoln High School in basketball and football -- is it true that they played in a league that was with schools that had more students, so they really played up -- do you recall that?

- KE: No, I don't recall that, but I do know that they had some tough opponents. And, you know, Lincoln was very, very successful. You'll find that in many of the black school back then they had very limited resources. But with the limited resources, they could still go out and really make the school very proud of them with what they had to work with.
- RG: I want to go back in history just for a minute and ask you what was the attachment of Lincoln High School to Orange County Training School, and whether you recall what year Orange County Training stopped functioning and Lincoln High School opened.
- KE: Now that I don't remember about Orange County Training School. I just heard my parents mention that. Because that was during their time when they were in school. But I did hear from them and many others, other people in the community, that when they changed the Orange County Training School and went to Lincoln High School, everyone just could not believe their good fortune that they had in Lincoln High School. In fact, I heard some women talking, and they were elderly women and they were laughing and talking about it and they felt like they might have been in the wrong school and they were afraid that somebody might change their mind. Because they had so much space, the rooms were bigger, and they had more rooms to teach children in. And they had everything they never had before, and it felt like a real school. And so that is just my memory of just hearing people talk about it. But I'm sure that's what it was because anytime we got something new in the black community and it came from the government and it did not come from us in the black community having raised the money to build something of our own, it was just amazing. Because we didn't expect anything to come our way. Except for what we provided with our own labor and our own money.
- RG: But Chapel Hill High School, when you went there, do you recall the teachers and the core curriculum, the bread and butter, reading and writing and arithmetic kind of courses – language and math and science and history – whether any of the black teachers from Lincoln High School were in these teaching positions? Were they doing the teaching of the core curriculum?
- KE: I think I only had one black teacher while I went to Chapel Hill High School. And that was Miss Clemens. And Miss Clemens came over from Lincoln High School. And I mean she was a teacher. She was all about being a teacher.
- RG: What did she teach?
- KE: She taught math and I think she taught typing. She may have taught something else. You see, coming from Lincoln, many of the teachers who came from Lincoln, they could teach several subjects. They just filled in whenever they had to, and so, but, the thing I remember most about her was I couldn't wait to have

her as a teacher, because my siblings had talked about her at Lincoln. They would prepare as though they were her and say things she was sayin' in class. They just always talked about her. And I mean in a positive way, but comical way too. I just could not wait to have this teacher because I've had so many white teachers from the seventh grade on and finally here I was gonna have a black teacher. And so I was just thrilled to death when, my first day in the classroom, she said Keith Edwards, and she says, you're Michael's sister, and you're Ella's sister, and she went on, and I said oh no, I'm doomed from the start. And she said, sit down over there. So I se all down. ?? But she brought the same attitude and personality that she had at Lincoln, she brought that to Chapel Hill High School. Race was no issue in her classroom. You came in to do your schoolwork, and that's what you were gonna do, and you were gonna be respectful. And that's how she ran her class. She didn't call anyone out in the class, she didn't embarrass anyone or whatever. But she was just the type of teacher she was not gonna tolerate anything racial in her class. You were there to learn and that's what you were gonna do.

RG: There was favoritism or no favoritism?

KE: Not in her classes.

RG: What about in other classes?

KE: Well, in other classes you could see it. Many of my classes before the school was integrated, I was in classes with, well, I'll say the upper crust in the white community. And I was in some classes where we had some kids from, you know, more like say Carrboro. And so you had two different attitudes here, because you had whites that were on a higher economic ladder and those who were on a lower one. And so, teachers tend to lean towards the students who are on the upper crust. And because their parents could donate money to the school, and they were always doing something for the school, supporting this program or that program, so these are the ones who you really, you don't want to come down on, you don't want to make waves with. And so I did see some favoritism towards some of these students. And it was almost like, if you were a black student in a class, it was almost like you were there because you were just a part of the classroom. But it was nothin' extra as far as teacher reachin' out to you. Or if you were having a difficult problem with schoolwork or whatever, you was almost afraid to even ask for help.

You know, a person, especially me, has to feel comfortable coming to you to ask for help. If you think that a person is not gonna be open to you, or willing to really, truly help you, then you're not gonna go, you're not gonna ask. And that's why I'm so grateful because we had study halls. In study halls, they were after school, and many of them were in the afternoon, sometimes we were there at night, didn't leave before 8 or 9 o'clock at night. Study halls where you could go, and all you did at those study halls, and many of these study halls were at the

University of North Carolina in their classrooms at night. And you went there, and all you did with study. You had a problem with your schoolwork or whatever, they had instructors there. And these were people who were willing to come out to help students who were having problems in school.

RG: Were these university students or were they associated with the school system?

KE: No, these were, well, these were people who lived out in the community. Professors, or their wives, and some actual schoolteachers even came, but most of the time it was just people in the community, white community, who came out and they helped people with their work. They knew that the black students were gonna need some work. You know, some help in trying to catch up. Because of our lack of resources in the black schools, we felt like we were behind when we mingled in with the other school. And we were. We were a little bit behind, and so, but I don't know who thought of it, I guess Miss Charlotte Adams could tell you who thought of that, because she was one of the main people in that group that they had at night during the study hall. She was a big, tremendous help to many blacks *and* whites who needed help with their schoolwork.

So I don't know what organization it was, but I do know that having the study halls after school, even though sometime you study 8, 9 at night, it was a terrific thing. A big, big help. Because sometimes it was that fear of a black student raising a hand in a classroom and you're the only black in there, or maybe two blacks in the class, and it was that fear of raising your hand when the teacher asked you do everyone understand. Because when they asked me, along with all the other students, if I understood, if I didn't I would not raise my hand because of the ridicule that I would receive from the white students. Also, there was no guarantee that the teacher was gonna take the time with me so I could really, truly understand the lesson that she had for us for that day. So many times, I just asked after school. And if the teacher had time, sometime they would take time, try to explain it.

But the majority of the time, I would just wait until I got to study hall, because I knew there were people there who really were concerned about me getting' an education. And they wanted to see me get an education, they wanted to see integration work. Since we were put together, they were determined to do all that they could to help everybody make it in the school. So we were just grateful we had 'em. We didn't have these study halls and things in the black community. These things were set up, like I said, at UNC and sometimes we even went to Chapel Hill High School at night, when it was on Franklin Street, and we had classes there at night.

RG: So was this before the new Chapel Hill High was set up?

KE: Oh yes, yes.

- RG: And did it continue after the setup of Chapel Hill High, the new one?
- KE: Well, if it did I didn't use it after then. I was in a comfortable environment then, because I had more blacks in the school, and then I could do my work with some of them, we could get together after school and do our work.
- RG: Were you still uncomfortable having to raise your hand if you didn't understand something?
- KE: Not when the school was integrated. When they consolidated. Not integrated, but when they consolidated schools I was not. Because there were more blacks in my classroom, I felt comfortable. Plus the atmosphere in the school had changed completely. Whereas whites felt all the ownership to the school, they didn't feel that any more. Many didn't feel it, because now they had to share the school. And when I raised my hand, I expected for the teacher to recognize me, I expected for the teacher, if I asked a question, I expected for the teacher to answer it. And if I needed help with something, and if I came to the teacher and told him I needed help, I expected for that teacher to help me. Whereas before I expected none of that. I never would have raised my hand. Never.
- RG: What effect do you think Chapel Hill High School had on Lincoln High School. The white school on Franklin, what effect did it have on Lincoln High, and also what effect do you think Lincoln High had on the Franklin Street Chapel Hill High School?
- KE: Well, I don't think Chapel Hill High School had any effect on Lincoln High School. The only effect that I can think of is that, is through the supplies. Books that we received from Chapel Hill High School, like I say, most of them were already defaced, pages ripped out or written over, but this was just common, this was a way of life back then, we just received their books and they got the new books. So, but, I do know that Lincoln High School had a big impact on Chapel Hill and Carrboro. A big, big impact. Lincoln brought with it a togetherness for all races. And that was through the athletic program that Lincoln had. Everybody wanted to be a part of that. Lincoln High School band – it was an electrifying band, everybody in town just loved the band, they were proud of the band. Everyone was proud of the football team, basketball team, because we had winning teams. We had a winning band.

And whenever we had parades or whenever the school had their homecoming, it was, I think every black in town showed up, and every white in town showed up. And for that moment when we were all watching the parade and we were all lookin' down the road just waitin' on Lincoln to come down the line, and you could see everybody just walkin' in the street just sayin' where's the band? And you would have all these floats and everything else goin' by, but everybody's waitin on the band. And then someone would say here comes the band, and everybody would get so excited, and we would move back, everybody move back

and give 'em plenty of room, because we knew they were gonna dance. So you could look all up and down the street, you see blacks and whites standing together, talking together, cheering together. It was just a happy time. And many times when I was there, I'd say it would be wonderful if we could just be like this every day. But we always knew that when Lincoln band was involved, or the school football team, basketball team, that the whole town was going to be involved. Everybody was just wrapped up into this school, this band, and the athletes.

And so it was a blessing because not only were the black kids supported by the black community, but they were supported by the white community, by them coming out, showing their presence, and supporting it. And whenever we had homecoming for our Lincoln High School band, everybody was there. We used to have it in the afternoons, and so all traffic blocked up, sort of like the Duke-Carolina rivalry. Well, when Chapel Hill High School had their homecoming, I mean not Chapel Hill but Lincoln High School, when they had that it was just like watching a Christmas parade, because everybody went. And everybody was right on the band, and I even saw little white girls, they would have on their little white boots, little white boots just like a majorette, and they had their batons, and they would twirl right along with the band comin' along and all, and it was just a beautiful moment that I wished I could have stopped in time, or recorded it so people could see that we could get along sometime where, specific times, but not all the time.

And you know, and after the parade and everything, then people would go back their opposite ways. And just wait until the next time. But, when Lincoln played football, now we had blacks and whites at the football games. And the whites, they came, they were from right here in Chapel Hill-Carrboro. They came and cheered our team right along. And it just meant a lot. And I'm sure it meant a lot to the players, when they were out there on the field. Because many of the whites sat on the visitors side. And then, the majority of the blacks sat on the home side, and, but we knew the whites were cheering for our team. And so our band just put on a major show when they got out there, but they were in competition with the other school's band too, because they were great too. And so our band had to always outdo them. So, but it was just a time when you felt so much togetherness and like everybody was just one in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. We were all in this thing together. And we were lovin' each other just for that moment. And, but when it was over, like I said we separate, go our separate ways until the next time. But Lincoln definitely had a big impact on Chapel Hill, because every time Lincoln won a game or Lincoln did something that was positive, it was positive for Chapel Hill. It said something about Chapel Hill.

RG: Did the black community turn out to watch Chapel Hill High band, or the Chapel Hill sports teams?

KE: Not as I know of. You may have had a sprinkling of people who went to the football games or basketball game, but mostly I think they were Lincoln's. But you may have had a few who went. You know.

RG: And why do you think that was so?

KE: Because of the way of life at that time. We were divided. And a person has to feel comfortable wherever they go. And, excuse me, if you're gonna feel uncomfortable or you think that somebody might do bodily harm to you, then automatically you would just stay away. But no whites comin' to see Lincoln play, they had absolutely no fear of bodily harm or anything. They were there to support a school. They paid money to come in that would help the revenues at the black school. But they came in to support that school, and it's because that school was a part of Chapel Hill and Carrboro. And blacks are very tolerant when it comes to other race of people. Even though they may have felt that another race had done them a lot of harm physically and mentally, but they're very tolerant of the opposite race. They are. They always have been. And I think that was something that our parents instilled in us, that you might not like someone, but this is someone who puts the bread on the table, puts the roof over your head, so you had to tolerate 'em whether you wanted to or not. And not apples in a barrel is bad. So you just pull out the bad ones and keep all the good ones. And you will find more good ones than you do bad ones. That's how we were raised. We was raised on that philosophy. So that's just how you looked at life back then.

RG: Who raised the money for the band uniforms for Lincoln High School?

KE: Well as far as I know, I know my brother, he had to have a trumpet, and the families had to pay for the instruments. Now for the band uniforms, I'm not sure. There's a person who I want you to talk to, Mr. Bradshaw, and he can tell you that, because he used to head the band. And so he might can tell us who paid for the uniforms, but I know that the students themselves had to pay for their own instruments, because at the time it was early sixties, and my brother needed a trumpet, and it cost sixty dollars at that time. So getting' sixty dollars was a whole lot of money. But in the black community if you wanted your kid to do something, you made all kind of sacrifices. The entire family made a sacrifice. But the money spent on that horn was well-spent, because when my parents and IK and my other siblings, when we saw my brother marching in the band and saw him playin' it, it was worth it. Worth everything. You couldn't put enough money in that horn to replace what we felt in our hearts, when we saw him coming, marching down, playing that horn, in the band with everybody else. Very special. Because he was a part of that electrifying band, that group of people that made Lincoln so special. So, like I said, it was worth the sacrifice that we had to make.

RG: I wonder if you could switch gears now and talk to me about the riot that occurred in 1969. what do you think the factors were leading up to the riot, what happened during the riot, and what happened after it?

KE: Well, leading up to the riots, I had talked with some students before they even arrived at Chapel Hill High School, students from Lincoln, and they had noticed all through the years, ever since the seventh grade, when so many black students had gone on to Chapel Hill Junior High and Chapel Hill High, they noticed the way we dress, it was not acceptable in a black school but it was acceptable in a white school. Women could wear pants, which was not allowed in the black schools. You had to wear your skirts. They didn't even tolerate a whole lot of stocking wearing. What I mean by just regular stockings. They thought that was too grown up. But at the school where I went that was allowed. Makeup, I mean everything that was denied us in the blacks school, it was ok.

RG: Was there an attempt to assimilate into the white community by the dress code on the part of the black community?

KE: Yes, it was, and it's like if you want to be a part of something, or be more accepted. The way you dress had a lot to do with your feelings about being in the school. And also how people perceived you. And so I guess we did get caught up in trying to fit in. We were having such a hard time trying to fit in that the only way we probably could was by clothes. If we kind of dressed on the level that the were dressing. And that's when we went to the thrift shops a whole lot. Because that's where we could get those kind of clothes. Because we didn't have 'em. We didn't have pants and things, you know. Even in the snow, I remember I was walkin' in the snow and all, we walked, we just had on long socks. And boots.

But when I got there in the seventh grade they had pants, and they could wear their hair any kind of way, and I mean, it was like being in a foreign country but you know it's not foreign, but it was everything that you were told not to do, you saw it. And you were going to be a part of it. And so gradually we began to change. You didn't adopt their style, but that is what they did at that store. And so we just picked it up. But we didn't pick it up in such a way that we were trying to copy anyone or trying to be like them. You did that because that was just a part of that school. And where you were going. Part of, I guess of trying to fit in more. But now when the kids came from Lincoln, they saw all the different things that we saw, but they were used to it, because we were dressing that way, and maybe our speech even changed or whatever. But they saw many things that we had already seen, and they didn't like it. They did not like coming from a strict environment, and then you come into another environment where some of the rules relaxed, or lenient. They liked to have stayed in their place where they came from, because that's what they were used to. And so the first year, when Lincoln closed and the kids came over, I mean all of 'em came, it was like they were in mourning. They were angry, some of them looked lost. I saw many tears, because they didn't want to be in the school.

RG: Was that the males or the females?

KE: Male and female.

RG: Both.

KE: I mean the males especially because many were athletes. And they just could not accept having to go to another school and not graduatin' from Lincoln. You have to remember, to the black community, goin' to your school, graduatin' from your school, it's like your birthright. It's things that you had expected and dreamed about all your life. And in the black community everything was in its place, and you never thought anything was going to get out of place or things were going to be moved, where it affected you so much. So you see those kids who did not get a chance to graduate, their whole world was changed. They were in a dnew environment, an environment they did not want to be in, and they were suffering from the loss of the school, Lincoln, being closed to them forever. To never ever be a school for them again. The band would never be there again. The football players would never be there again. The basketball players would never be there again. You would never have any games there at Lincoln again, at which they had the basketball games. We would never attend another basketball game there. The school was just shut, like a part of your life was shut off. And you couldn't get back to that life. No matter how you wanted to, you couldn't get back, you couldn't go back.

The only way that you could get around that was to go outside of the county and go to another black school. And then you would still have that same feeling. Or what you were used to. And some did that. But eventually that school closed too, Orange High. No, it was Horton High, I believe they called in Horton High. Yes, it was Horton High in Pittsboro, Chatham County. Some students did go there. But like I said, eventually that school closed too. Now Horton High that was in Pittsboro was in great competition with Lincoln High School, was a big rivalry with those two schools. Big rivalry, especially with the bands. I mean it was just huge. Whenever Lincoln had their homecoming, they had all these black bands in the parade, and it was Horton High who usually gave Lincoln High School a run for their money.

And so like I said, it was just so many things that the kids could not bring with them from Lincoln that they missed when they came over to Chapel Hill High School, and one of the biggest things that they missed was the closeness, the togetherness of everybody who was a part of Lincoln School. They didn't have that any more. They didn't have what I call the security blanket any more. They had to learn everything over again. And when they sat in the classrooms, it was totally different. And the atmosphere where it was one of belonging, or that real happy feeling that you get when you go to school and you're glad to see all your friends and all. When you looked around in the classroom, not everybody in that classroom was somebody you knew. A lot of these people were new people, people who you were told to avoid, without having any type of confrontation.

Your parents might have worked for some of these kids, or whatever, and it was just not what they were used to, and it was hard. Very very hard.

And even though I was elated to have all of them there, finally, I felt a sense of ownership with these students because they were a part of my life outside of Chapel Hill High School. I felt their pain, I also felt the white students' pains also. Because they were giving up a way of life also. No longer would they dominate a school. No longer would they say that this school is just mine and mine alone. You're here because the law says you have to be here, but you don't own anything. You can come and learn, but that's all we want you to do. Even though we had black athletes at Chapel Hill High School who tried to fit in to the athletic programs they had there. And that is how *they* felt a part of the school because they were athletes, and they were doing something totally different. And it may even have gotten a little, they probably got more attention than your average black student in school, because they were athletes.

But like I said, I did feel the pain of the white students there because they no longer were the ones that was in charge. Now they had to share everything, I mean *really* share. And they would have black teachers. Would have black *and* white teachers, male and female. You also had a black assistant coach. So it was some getting' used to for everybody, but I was on the sidelines. I was just so excited about having the black kids come to the school finally. But as the weeks and the months went on, I realized that these black students paid the biggest cost. The biggest price for consolidation. Because it was like the school system itself took away their hope and their dreams. And many of these same seniors who graduated from Chapel Hill High School, they went on to college, they went on to the military, many of them went on to do positive, productive things. But they didn't take the sense with them, sense of accomplishment, that they would have taken with them if they had remained at Lincoln. And so in a sense combining the two schools at the time when the did, these seniors from Lincoln, they had a different outlook on life. A different one than they would have had if they'd just finished up at Lincoln. Because they had to go through a lot of adversity that they shouldn't have had to go through had they been at Lincoln. The adversity was they had to deal with another race of people, when they'd never had to do that before.

RG: Do you think that that was still on (??)

KE: Oh I'm sure. I've talked to many of the seniors who, you know, the graduates who graduated from Chapel Hill High School the first, you know, graduate class of the consolidation. And as I said they felt an emptiness. Some part of their life that they feel an empty spot because they didn't get that chance to walk down the aisle at Lincoln. And have their parents sittin' out so proud of 'em, and everybody clappin', acknowledging, because not only was your parents proud of you, but the entire black community was proud of you because you were going across that stage. So you see when they graduated, you had a majority were white parents,

and theyn you had black parents. And they were all mingling there together. And it was, the sound was different, the atmosphere was different, everything was different.

RG: And how was the atmosphere different?

KE: Well, the atmosphere, you were very proud of your graduates walkin' across the stage, but the majority of the graduates walkin' across were white. You know, and, when I went to graduations at Lincoln High School, I mean, there was a lot of hollering, clappin', and almost like bein' at an old-time revival or something, you know, when the kids graduated. But it was not like that at Chapel Hill High School.

RG: Were there other differences that you described, economic differences, closeness and security, the band, sports, dress. What about punishment, methods of punishment at Lincoln High and the new high school, and any other differences that you can remember that shocked the black community or the black students?

KE: Well, it was not a whole lot of discipline going on when the schools were consolidated. You know, see, before, your teachers were secure in the knowledge that they had the upper hand in the classroom, because the majority of the teachers were white. The majority of the students were white. So when the schools were consolidated, where you had some of these students who were quick to discipline a black student or quick to discipline someone else in the classroom, they were not so quick to discipline someone, especially if they had came from Lincoln. Cause they were gonna meet with resistance.

Now, you have to remember, in the black community, there was a strong sense and a strong code that parents had over their children. You did what grownups tell you to do. You do what your teachers tell you to do. You don't come home with a note where you misbehaved in school, or you disrespected someone. But because there was so much anger in these kids comin' from Lincoln, many teachers just kind of skirted around them, because they really didn't know how to deal with 'em. I guess it was hard to deal with students who were angry. And they were not afraid of you. Because they didn't want to be there. And so, you didn't single them out in the class. Many things that you were doing to other black students, you know, because they were of the minority, so few of them, you didn't dare do it. Because you didn't have a whole classroom full of white students, and maybe two or three blacks. You had a classroom that was full, about half and half, or maybe more blacks. So it was a big thing for your white teachers to be faced with this also. They went through some changes. Because they had to re-adjust their attitudes and things and the way that they taught their classes. And the things that they did and the things that they let happen in their class, between students.

Whereas before, I remember in seventh grade, I mean, they could pick on me all day. Teachers, you know, they wouldn't say anything, or either they might say

"OK class, let's everybody come together." They never singled out a person who was doin' something to me. Because you were singling out a white person. And if that person went home and told their parents, or told the principal or whatever that the teacher was favoring me over that person, then there was trouble. Trouble for the teachers. So through all of this, the teachers are the ones who probably went through the most changes. You know, because, they *had* to change. They had no choice. And so I just kind of like set back and I watched it all around, I just watched everybody. You know, how it was affecting everyone. And, but for me, the way it affected me, I was just so glad that other blacks had came into the school, because I felt more comfortable with them there. I felt more open. I felt that I could respond more, I felt that I could learn more, because a lot of the attention was taken off of me.

RG: Was there an attempt by students or community to keep Lincoln High School together?

KE: Oh yes. No one wanted Lincoln to close, in the black community.

RG: But they wanted integration. Now how you could you have integration –

KE: Well, I think there may be more parents who wanted separate but equal. And I think all they asked for at first was better supplies. And then you know you get to kickin around with things, it's like Brown v. Board of Education, you wanted separate but equal, but then later on someone came and said no, why don't we integrate, you know, do away with these other things that's goin' on, let's integrate. And so you see we asked for a little bit more, you never know what you're gonna get. But I think the majority of people wanted Lincoln to remain, even some whites wanted it to remain, but give the school the proper supplies that they were from the Department of La- I mean Education. We were bein' denied even through the School Board. Proper equipment and stuff that we needed to learn. But we learned anyway. That is why it's so hard for me to deal with what is goin' on in Chapel Hill High School, and probably East Chapel Hill High, why they say blacks are lagging so far behind. You have everything there to teach 'em. But then you had Lincoln, who had practically nothing to teach the kids with, but the kids learned. And they succeeded.

And I think it has to do with the culture you bring – well, not culture, but the environment that you teach kids *in*. And I think that's what Lincoln, the legacy that Lincoln left with all of us as far as the black community. Is that you can have nothing, but you can make something out of nothing. And that's what Lincoln did. You come in with nothing. But you sit down, and we gonna do something. And when you leave here, you're gonna be somebody. Because not only did you learn your schoolwork, you also learned the things that you needed to help prepare you for life. And Lincoln taught you that, yes, you're in a community here in this school, but sooner or later you're gonna have to come out of this real good, wholesome environment, and you're gonna have to face the world. But for many

blacks at that time, they actually thought that they would leave Lincoln and they would go on to a black school. There were some who went on to white schools because that's what they wanted to do. But they were ready. They were ready to go to a white university. But many, as you were talking to some of the graduates, they went to black universities, or they went to the military, because many blacks at that time were going to the military. So you were goin' where your people were going. And you were assured that you were gonna continue to live the type of life that you had been living all your life.

RG: Let's go back to that kind of life. I think what you're described kind of society.

KE: Very organized. Everything was in its place.

RG: Everything was in its place, things were done regularly, parental supervision, if your own parents weren't there, were given by neighbors, and they had the right to spank, and the children were very respectful. And is this the same kind of society that you see today in the black community?

KE: Absolutely not. We're so torn apart, so mixed up. I mean, we're all over the place. And I think for some cultures, some people of some cultures, I'll put it that –

**End of tape 2, side 1.**

Keith Edwards  
Tape 2, side 2

KE: That we have survived for so long here in Chapel Hill. You can live anywhere that you want to live. But if you're in the right environment, a comfortable environment, one where you can grow, then there's nothin' that you can't do. But if you're taken out of an environment where – a supportive environment, you're kind of like tossed out here on your own. You have the same parents, you go to the same churches, you do everything the same when you go in that area. But when you go to school you're in another dimension. Everything is totally different. But you're told this is where you have to go. But it's outside of your area. Even when they're puttin' on schools now, it's not where you live at. It's way on the other side of town. We don't have any schools on this side of the town, except for Frank Porter Graham. That's the closest that we have.

But we have to leave our communities, where we used to walk in the community, walkin' to school. You'd see us with our school bus walkin' to Lincoln. Or walkin' here to Northside Elementary School. It was a part of your community, it was part of your heritage. But now your heritage is way out in the country, where expensive homes and things, where you'll never ever be involved in that community except goin' to school. And then you come back to your community, where you're losing it. Many of the houses and things, investors are buying them up, and the town, the way they figure they can have integration in the town is to put public housing in many of these new developments. That's not integration. That's just puttin' a group of people in one spot who're gonna remain in that spot. But they're not integrated into the community because the community itself, they have their own homeowners association, they have their own everything. They may even have their own little pond, their own swimming pools. But you're not a member of the club because you live in that area. In fact, if you go in that community, outside of your own, that is, someone may call the police on you. That's not integratin' the neighborhood. That's just puttin' you in a spot to say that we have diversity on the opposite side of town. But that's how the town here deals with integratin' Chapel Hill as far as housing.

RG: Well let's go back to the integration of the high school and the anger that was felt by the students who came from Lincoln.

KE: Yes.

RG: If you can describe more about the things that led up to the riot and what happened during the riot.

KE: Well you see, um, a lot of things were happening right at the same time, that we were integrating – well, we was already integrated, but we'll call it consolidating the two schools. Before the consolidatin' you had the, you know, the civil rights things were goin' on. You had the sitins, and you know, Lincoln students were a

big part of that, and they were one of the biggest reasons, along with some of the students from UNC, white students, and black students, the main reasons why we were actually able to integrate a lot of the establishments in Chapel Hill. And so you see when the students, when they shut down Lincoln, a lot of the things that students got involved in, and they were involved in the community doing this, doing that, involved in after-school programs at school, and just everything from the school. You always had somebody voluntarily doin' something. Parents and students alike. Now you were in an environment where you didn't want to volunteer anything. You didn't want to do anything for the school, it was not your school. You didn't feel a part of this school.

And so when you had all the civil rights stuff goin' on at the same time, which, some of the anger you had, you were goin' to participate in all this other stuff around, because that's how you dealt with some of the anger that you had. You were not going to go out and just beat up on a lot of the white students and take that out on them, but, trust me, many white students who were back then spittin' and hittin' on people and all, no, they didn't do it. No. They didn't do it, and I even had some of the kids would point out who was doin' all this spittin' on you and all this kind of stuff, but I didn't. You know, because, trust me, the students from Lincoln, they were not afraid of anything. And when I went to school before Lincoln consolidated with Chapel Hill High School, I had to little fear every day when I went, because I didn't know what was going to happen. Even though each year we had more black students coming to the school, I still didn't feel that comfortable until the schools were consolidated. But when you had a atmosphere where your civil rights was heatin' up and, you know, just runnin' along, um, you had angry students, you had the black community in mourning. And in mourning for a school.

You had whites, many whites didn't want the school closed, you know. It was probably more whites than blacks, cause there were more whites than blacks in Chapel Hill at the time, and Carrboro, than blacks, and surely they didn't want us to consolidate. You know. And so everybody at the time were afraid of the unknown. And so when the unknown happened, when they consolidated the schools, you just had chaos everywhere. So you had teachers who had been teaching a certain way, that had to accommodate new students, *more* of these minority students; principals who used to run the schools a different way, they had to accommodate angry people comin' in. And so it was a very touching time, and I think when the riot happened at the high school, it was just a time bomb waiting to explode. And I knew it was gonna explode, it had to.

RG: What was the match, the spark that set it off?

KE: Well it really wasn't a spark or match. I think many, some of the kids that came from the black schools, they expected better treatment, because there had already been blacks there before them, and surely everybody knew they were coming. And so they just expected some things just not to be, as far as racial things. They

expected that not to be. I just think the transition of putting the two school together was very very tough. There was not enough done by administrators to see that we had a smooth transition. Because many whites took their kids out of the schools, sent them somewhere else, because they could afford to do that. And the blacks, we were stuck. We couldn't go nowhere. We didn't have nowhere else to go. Not unless, you know, you went to Chatham, or you went to, tryin' to think, was it Orange High at the time, in Hillsboro. But people were goin' to two other schools, or maybe some either went to Durham. So they wouldn't even have to go through none of this.

But eventually everybody did have to go. But I just do think it was enough done for the transition to prepare students coming from Lincoln, coming to that school. Cause they had already heard everything from us from the seventh on. These kids were in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, some in the 10<sup>th</sup>, and so on. And they just did not want to give up their school. They didn't really give up their school, but they would have given up their dreams, their hopes. And if you take that away from a person, you've almost taken everything that you can take from them. And so, they had to find a way to get beyond that, so that they could function in the environment at the school, and it was hard because, you know, you just, for a while, you know, it was very, very tense, every day, goin' to school.

But I had expected that. I really truly expected to be in a very tense environment, because I knew the black students had a lot of pride. They come from a top school, top athletic department, top band, the whole nine yards. And they were givin' all that up. And so when they got to Chapel Hill High School, it was almost like you couldn't comfort them. You know, nothing you did could comfort them, but I could understand. And many of the teachers did understand it, but how can you console someone when you've taken their hopes and dreams from them? All you could do was try to tell them, look, you can finish school here. The dreams that you had, you can still go on with your dreams. You might even have some better dreams, you know. But this is where you have to finish school if you want to finish school, so you had to find a way to work together, you know, to make that happen.

RG: Was there any orientation given to the black students who came from Lincoln to the new Chapel Hill High, or any given to the white students?

KE: No. I didn't have any in seventh grade when I came. All you did was just came in and they put you in the classroom, and that was it. You know, you fend for yourself.

RG: So you had no orientation either?

KE: No, oh absolutely not. But it was not as bad for the kids coming when they consolidated the school as it was when we first went. Because, see, we were already there. Somebody was already, the pioneers had made their way, and so

when they came over, they had a security blanket. We were already there. So they didn't come in an atmosphere where they were the only ones.

RG: So the first black students to attend the white schools was what, '65, 1965?

KE: No. No, because I was in the seventh grade when, you know, when I went in. And I graduated from Chapel Hill High School. I'm tryin' to think, when was it. Stanley Vickers, when they went in, I think I came in after him. But they count us because we came in a lower grade. He went in in a higher grade. Tryin' to think, how old was I in the seventh grade? Heck, along about 12 or something like that, you know. So that was a very young age to have to take on all that responsibility. But, these kids comin' from Lincoln, they were teenagers. You know, they were about ready to face the world.

RG: What was the spark, not the spark, but what was the riot? What happened in the riot?

KE: Well, what it was now, we had started havin', well, you know you had the civil rights goin' on, so it played over into school. Because you had many of the, not many, you had some from the University of North Carolina who came over, and they were a part of the black student movement. And they would come over the high school tryin' to get us organized so that we could get our rights in Chapel Hill High School, so we could be treated fairly, get the right grades we supposed to get. Just tryin' to provide an atmosphere where our history and where we counted in the school. Now what I mean by our history is we wanted teachers to teach us the real history. You know, in the history books.

Um, I remember once, in history class, and it hurt so bad, when we readin' history, George Washington and all that kind of stuff, you know, the white kids their little chests was stuck out. This was *their* ancestors. And when I heard about my ancestors it was Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver. These were people who had did things that benefited the white race. Now I felt proud of them, you know, the peanut and all that kind of stuff, you know, which one of them created and all, but, invented. I felt proud because this was someone of my background, my skin color, that was in the book. And the teacher had to go over that lesson in the book.

But you know, it was the only thing in there, and then we had a day, I forgot what they called that day, but something like a representative day. And what you did in the class is, during history, if you had somebody who was very important in your family, that went back to Robert E. Lee or George Washington or whatever, you know, you got a chance to tell about that person. Or if you had someone back in that day who was in the Confederate army, or who was in the union army, or whatever. You know, everybody stood up and they said a little bit about whatever. And so here I was, I didn't have anyone, along my line of the family that I know of who had did somethin' great, you know.

So not to be left out I just said well, I went up and my great-great-great-great grandfather was in the California Gold Rush. So you know, this came out of my mouth, well everybody looked at me like you know, (laughs), but they didn't look at me like I was crazy. I mean they actually believed me. And I felt so proud that day, even though it was a lie. And, but, I had to have somebody too. I felt that I had to have somebody, because when the teacher called me, and I stood up, I was goin' to say, well, I didn't have anyone in my family. You know, and then, but, all the eyes were on me. Students had turned around in their chairs and they were looking at me waitin' to see what I was gonna say. Some of them even had a little smirk on their face and all, cause they knew I had nobody. So I just came up with that. And so they bought it. And after class I had a couple of girls, they were kind of friendly, and "Did you really?" I said yes I did. Yes. Yes I did. She said "Well, your people must be rich." I said. "No, his master got him and took the money." You know, when I said that, just like a blanket just fell over their faces, you know. So, but that was the first time I had ever felt that I was a part of the classroom, even though I had to tell a lie to be a part of the classroom. but I had to say something. I could not say that my family did nothing, I don't have anyone in my family who's done anything so spectacular. You know.

RG: What about other black students? Did they have that kind of an answer, that they didn't have anybody in their background? That would be very demeaning for them.

KE: Well, I was the only one in that class. The only black in that class. Right, so you get used to bein' in classes where you're the only one. And a lot of times you are put on the spot. And you have to be very careful about what you say, about what comes out of your mouth, because everybody's turned around, their attention is on you. Including the teacher. But that didn't happen to other students, you know.

RG: Well let's go back to the riot.

KE: Uh huh.

RG: Everything you've told me is very interesting, but –

KE: Well, on the riot, I remember the day when it started, but we were kind of building up to because like I said, you had the civil rights goin' on, you had things were happenin' in Alabama, all over the country.

RG: This was what, '69?

KE: No, no no no. No, this happened, let me see, it was '68. I think it was '68 or '67, I'm tryin' to remember. I think we had our coats on at that time. Cause I remember the guy who was blockin' our door, the door where we couldn't get out to go to the cafeteria. He had on an army jacket, a green army issue jacket. And at

that time they were wearin' what you call apple jack hats, big round hats where they were, wool hats. And they had Afros, you know, they were wearin' Afros back then. But not a huge Afro, back then they were small. They were just startin' to come out with it.

And I remember that day when we were on the bus, and some of the students were quiet because they had already planned they were gonna do something, or whatever. And so when we got to school, they kind of came in like militants. Nobody better get in their way, and stuff like that. And so it got around lunchtime, all of a sudden I heard screaming and hollering and we got ready to go out of the doors and we couldn't go out of the doors. You had to go out of the main building to go to the cafeteria, cause the cafeteria, they also had auto mechanics and home economics and some other classes was in that building. But a separate building. So the only way you could get there, you had to go out of the main building. And so the main building also had the administrative offices, the principal's office and all that.

So anyway, we went around to all the doors and we couldn't get out because they were locked, chain locked, and a padlock on them. And the guys that were standing at the doors had the keys to the padlocks. But they were other students. And they had all the doors locked up. And I remember I was bangin' on the door because this was the day that they had something good in the cafeteria. So I was bangin' on the door, and I told the guy to let us out. I said look, we just want to go to the cafeteria. That's all we want. I said let us out, so we can go to the cafeteria. And he said, no, he turned around, and said "Look, Keith, we tryin' to have a protest here." And so I kept bangin' on the door because see, if you miss lunch, that was it. But we had something real good, and that was all that was on my mind. I – riot, burn the building down, just let me out so I can go and get my good lunch. Because it was hard to come by lunch money.

So I had lunch money that day, and I was going to eat. I didn't bring anything from home, and so I was hungry. And I just kept bangin' on that door, but he would not relent. And so, there were many kids in the school were runnin' around, they were screamin', hollerin', and they didn't know what was gonna happen. Police came and many of the guys who had chained the locks and all, you know, they left, and the police didn't get 'em. Police got bolt cutters and cut the locks and things, and let people out. But we were trapped in there, we couldn't go anywhere. You know, and so, a lot of hysterical, a lot of panic, and teachers and administrators, they were trying to calm people down and all. Long lines in the office, people waitin' and tryin' to get on the telephone to call their parents. And so it looked like the school was under siege.

RG: So the black students, the leaders, locked the students in to the –

KE: Not black leaders. These were just black students.

RG: Black students.

KE: Right.

RG: Locked them into the administrative building.

KE: Right.

RG: And at that time was, white students locked in also?

KE: Everybody was locked in that building.

RG: And they went marching through the hallways, screaming?

KE: No, they didn't march through the hall. A lot of people were running and screaming in the hallway because they didn't know what was going to be happening, because you have to remember, they had Black Panthers and all of that out at the time. And some of the kids were hollerin' "The Black Panthers are coming." So quite naturally everybody freaked out. I didn't freak out, I was just bangin' on the door tryin' to get to the cafeteria.

RG: Did they destroy any –

KE: Well, they knocked over trash cans and things, and, may have tore down some bulletin boards, you know, in the school. It was just anger. It was just anger. I didn't feel, I didn't feel any threat to me, bodily, physically or mentally. Like I say, my mind was glued on one thing, and the people they were involved, I knew they were not going to hurt anyway, but they was tryin to make a statement that things at the school would have to change. That the school itself would have to integrate more programs and things, and teachers had to have better attitudes and all, towards minority students.

RG: Now were these issues that were spoken right then and there? Or were they spoken –

KE: Well many of them were spoken way before this. And that's why it came to a headon.

RG: So those issues were spoken before this, and was there any kind of a response to it?

KE: Well, back then the kind of response you got, you know, hey, you're a student. You don't have any rights, you just go to school. You do as you're told. But you see, when the kids came from Lincoln and went in the other environment, a lot of that changed. Because like I said, everything was in its place, in the black community. It was demanded everything stay in its place. And when you went out

there, the anger and the resentment for goin' to the school, that overrode everything that you were taught all your life. I mean, you blocked all your teachers out because you was in so much pain just by goin' to that school. So you blocked it out.

RG: Who were the people who received these requests for change from the black students?

KE: Well, lot of times students would just tell a teacher. Or they would tell the principal or a counselor or somebody. And they would tell them what was happenin' in class, and it was like, no one cared about what was happenin' in class. You were here to learn. Concentrate on that and everything will be all right. But you have to remember now it was a hard time for everybody. Everybody was tryin' to adjust. But black students, they were not gonna be mistreated. They didn't have a school, and they were gonna make that school part of theirs if they had to be there. They wanted more rights in the school.

RG: Were there other rights besides the respect from the teachers and black history, were they on the school council, were they in clubs, things like that?

KE: I think they wanted people on, I don't know when Mr. R.D. got on the school board. Not school board, but the town board. But they were sayin' that we needed people on the school board, we needed blacks on the town board. They just wanted, if we were gonna be fully integrated in Chapel Hill High School, the students meant for it to be fully integrated. And that they were not gonna be mistreated by anyone, and they had certain rights and things that they expected. And the same thing that they had at Lincoln, they wanted it back.

RG: So these issues went beyond the school, is what you're saying.

KE: Well, you just had all kind of issues. But the main thing was that they wanted to be a part of Chapel Hill High School because they didn't have Lincoln any more. And you still had the anger festering inside of people because they closed Lincoln. Because, *I* was angry because they closed Lincoln. Even though I knew I would never ever go there. But it still was a part of my life.

RG: How long did you stay locked up in that part of the school?

KE: Well, let's see. Well, it's kind of hard to – probably no more than about an hour. Hour at the most, even if it lasted that long. It might have been 30 minutes to an hour.

RG: And did anyone come talk to you from administration?

KE: Oh no, no. When they unlocked the doors everybody just went out. And we were able to get on the school buses so we could leave. They vacated everybody away

from the building – I mean evacuated everyone from the building, soon as possible.

RG: So they closed the school.

KE: They had no choice. Too much chaos.

RG: So this was around lunchtime that this happened.

KE: Well lunchtime is when we were locked in. We may have been locked in before then, but when I came out of my class, when the bell rung and I got ready to go to the cafeteria, the doors were locked. And so, you know, like I said it could have been locked way before then. I don't know, but I know that these two guys can tell you. (laughs) Two of the masterminds, but um, I pick at them today about it. I tell them if you're gonna do something, always check the time. If it's around twelve noon, don't do anything. Wait. Wait until cafeteria or whatever closes. But always check your watch.

But it was a troubled time, and I wish I could form you a picture of everybody being in this big backup, and they all had to learn how to deal with each other so that people could learn. Because it was a learning institution. And so a lot of concessions had to be made on the teachers' parts, and on students' parts. But black students, they wanted respect. Cause they had already had it. They always had respect. And they had a whole community that was proud of them. Pushing them, and doin' all of that, and when they finally came into another environment, some of those things, you just, it was just a different feeling. Very different feeling.

RG: Did they keep the school closed the next day?

KE: I don't think so. And I think we opened up the school the next day, and I'm not sure it was on a Friday when they did that, or if it was during mid-week. But to my knowledge they didn't close the schools down. I mean it was over pretty quick. So what they did, they issued trespassing warnings for anyone who was not affiliated with the school.

RG: So there were some outsiders?

KE: Oh, lots of outsiders, because they helped put this little riot thing together. Well, everybody else called it a riot, but we called it a protest back then. But you know, of course educators and people called it a riot. But the biggest part was, the reason for the protest, was to be heard. And to let administrators at the school board and Chapel Hill High School know that everybody was not happy.

RG: And do you think that message got across?

KE: Oh yes, absolutely.

RG: And how long did it take before you started seeing changes?

KE: The biggest part was the reason for the protest, was to be heard. And to let administrators and school board and Chapel Hill High School know that everybody was not happy.

RG: And do you think that message got across?

KE: Oh yes, absolutely.

RG: And how long did it take before you started seeing changes?

KE: Well you started seeing changes right away, because remember, you had to get people back into school. And you had to try to get them in an environment where they could learn. And so that is when, you know, administrators started comin' out and talkin', and just tryin' to see what they could do to make people feel comfortable coming to school. The main people they had to make feel comfortable were the white students. Because parents were threatening to take all the kids out. And if, many of the parents, if they could have afforded it, the kids never would have went to the school. Never would have graduated. But then you had some diehard students who loved Chapel Hill High School, I'm talking about white students, I mean, upper crust, who loved Chapel Hill High School, they just loved everything about the school. The school was their dream. Their hopes, their dreams. And they were determined to stay there.

And so, you know, so you had all this mixed in together and everybody was determined to have their way. But the administrators just had to find a way that everybody to go to school and we all be able to learn and also for the teachers and all to be able to teach and the other workers be able to work in an environment where somebody could learn. And it was tough. Very very tough, being in that environment. But it did not affect me like it did the students who came from Lincoln, you know. Because I was already in that environment for so long. You know, so, I was like a bystander just sittin' back and watching everything and watching how whites were gonna react to the blacks and how blacks were gonna react to the whites, how administrators were gonna deal with blacks coming over with anger. I just sat back and I watched it all. It's like I was paying attention, that I needed this information later on in life for some reason or whatever, but I just felt myself kind of detached from it, and just watchin' it all.

And so, but I learned a whole lot from that, and by me actually watchin' it, and not just watchin' one side, but watching the other side, combining them both, you learn a lot of things about people. A lot of things about people. While we were taught to avoid whites at every cost, to avoid a conversation, when I was growing up, I found that not to be true with all whites. I found the ways to get around all that and still protect myself. When I was watching how the whites were reacting to the black students coming in and wanting a part of the school, I learned from them that yes, they hurt too. And when I saw some of the students fighting one another, black and white, I saw a difference there. Where the

white felt they could dominate a fight between a black, now they didn't feel they could dominate it, because they didn't have as much backing as they used to have from administrators.

See, administrators now wanted peace, and so you couldn't get away with some of the little things you used to get away with, because that would set off other blacks. They weren't gonna tolerate it where if another black wound up on a black and white fight and stuff, a black may jump in. Whereas before, you did everything you can to stop this black from getting kicked out of school. And so, but it was the opposite, and so it was probably more fear, it was more fear on whites than it was coming from blacks. Because whites had had their way all that time, and then when they consolidated the schools they saw they were slipping control. The students were slipping control over things that they had control over before. They didn't have that kind of control. So I just watched it, and I just watched two different groups of people and how they handled things, and in a sense it was like how for the first time I was really seeing that whites were human. They were afraid also. But I didn't learn that until schools were consolidated. And I was in the 11th grade. Look how long that took me, to even think something like that. You know, to me, I was lookin' at 'em, well, they're no better than I am.

And so, well I learned many lessons. Many many things from that riot, and from integration and consolidation. I learned it all. But one thing I did learn, is that if you have a school in your community, make that school the best school it can be, and parents have to do their part of doing that. Don't let the school close. Because if a child lives in a community, do everything in that community, the child deserves to go to school in that community. Because that school and that community is a part of that child. When a child has to leave his or her own environment and go into another environment where they have to try to fit in, that is a major setback of trying to fit in. Some kids can go in an environment like that and they can zip right on through it. It has no effect on them. The majority of the kids who do go it, it do have an effect on them. And so I don't believe in busing kids half way around the world for integration. I believe that we have come so far and done so much with integration and we're back at square one. We really truly haven't gotten where we thought we were going to get. Now it's time to invest in neighborhoods, put schools in the neighborhoods. Good schools. Good teachers. Good supplies and all. And work with everybody in that community and everybody in that community involved in that school, just like they had at Lincoln. That is the key. The key has to be the community has to be involved. I cannot tell you when I've been to a ball game or any event they had at Chapel Hill High School. I don't feel a part of it.

RG: Let's talk just for a second about one aspect of being involved. I understand that the PTA at Lincoln High School was very active.

KE: Yes, yes.

RG: And what happened with integration and the blacks involved with PTA?

KE: Now I'm not sure, but I know it was a lot of dropoff from the black community, a lot of support from that. Because you could be a part of the PTA, but you were not gonna run the PTA. You see, they integrated you into everything, but in reality nothing was yours. If you were gonna participate within something, you had to almost be like a silent observer. So you see everything was affected that had to do with the school. Everything was affected by the two school coming together. Nothing was untouched.

RG: So the black parents couldn't speak up?

KE: You had some diehard, well, if they did, it wouldn't have mattered. Because you had to look at the people who were running the PTA. They were all white parents. And they were the upper crust.

RG: So some of them had higher, so some of the black people were working for them?

KE: No, it's not that what I'm saying. What I'm saying is, many of the people who were with the PTA, they were in the upper crust white community. Because they had the time to do this with the PTA, plus they had resources. When we came in, we didn't have resources. You know, even though we had the PTA at Lincoln, there was a lot of involvement, parent involvement in everything, and part of the PTA's duty back then was to get parents involved in the school system. But they were already involved. So the duty of the new PTA was to try to get *black* parents involved in the white PTA. And also, where you can get black parents more involved in Chapel Hill High School. And so you didn't see a whole lot of that. Oh, no. Uh uh. No. Because many parents felt their voices were not going to be heard.

And so that's where you get what I call symbols. You may have one black on the PTA. But that person was a symbol of voice for all the black community. The same as when R.D. Smith sat on the Town Board twenty-some years. You know, you end up being maybe the only black for so many years, we didn't, black community didn't mind, because he was a black voice, one black on there, with five of them. He may not have spoke anything for your community or did anything for your community, but he was a black face. That's what I call symbols. Integration. That you have a person put somewhere, but that person is supposed to be silent. But you're there for show only. Symbols. And when you do come out of that area where you want to start talking, making waves and all of that, then you have stepped out of line. And we still do that today. We say, well, we don't have enough Supreme Court Justices, we don't have a black here or a black there. And we'd like to see one black. But the one black is supposed to represent all of the blacks, everywhere. And so people do everything they can to get this one black. Because that's supposed to satisfy the black community, everywhere. So we got you one black. Same as Colin Powell. He is one black, and so we got our person, we got somebody up there, and so we should be happy.

But not every black person that you put in positions like that is gonna go in and gonna look out for his black community, or bring the issues that really truly concern the black community - they won't bring them forth. Most of the time, it's a white person who will

bring up those issues. Then the black person gets on board. It happens all the time. A lot of people don't pay attention to it, but for some reason I do. I wait and I see. But my experience is that even with local government, if you want something mentioned or brought up that interests the black community, you tell a white person. You tell a white person what you want, and they'll bring it up. And then if you watch you'll see the black person come right behind, and they start enforcing their ?? Or, you have someone else *in* the black community who's willing to go before town council, town board, school board or before the legislature or whatever, if *another* black comes up and voice their opinions and all, quite naturally media is gonna ask the black person in position how do you feel about this. And that's how that person gets their thing in. By saying well, I agree with them, we need to do blah blah blah blah. And then, that kind of like forces that person on the board to take a stand. And that's how it works in the black community. So, but it also worked that way in school. Because that's how we got assistant athletic director, with Mr. Pierman, Coach Pierman. Now that's how he came in. But he was part of the transition.

RG: Let's go back to Mr. Pierman and C.A. MacDougal. Here you had two icons at Lincoln High School. C.A. MacDougal, a respected educator.

KE: Oh Lord, yes.

RG: With degrees and running a tight ship there, with a great –

KE: Respectable tight ship.

RG: And Coach Pierman, with

KE: Meant everything.

RG: Yeah. How did the students respond, and how did the community respond to seeing both of these icons put in secondary roles.

KE: Well it hurt. But we knew that's what was gonna happen. It was no way that they were gonna put them in charge. And then have a white that was going to be working under them, where they gave the orders. Society was not ready for that. And we, the black community didn't expect it. We, I guess we were just happy that he got in, as assistant director, because they already had one. He got in as assistant athletic director, but it was a crushing blow to him, but it was a crushing blow to all of us too, because it took something out of him. And when we saw him, and we all called him Coach. Coach Pierman. We'd never address him any other way except for Coach Pierman. And now he was not calling the shots. But, he was still our coach. He was a connection. So, we could deal with it, because he was a connection. Now if they hadn't given him anything, now, I mean, you talk about a riot, we really would have had a riot, not a protest.

RG: Were there other protests during the time when you were at Chapel Hill High, or was that the only –

KE: I just remember that one and then we had moments where we had time to have meetings, black students at times they'd have meetings and things, and it was not like a black student movement. I don't mean, can't even remember what we called ourselves, but just a group of black students who got together and we wrote down things that we thought needed to be improved in the schools, so that we could learn. So that we could learn in the environment that we were in, and so we had, well we used to sing, you know, We Shall Overcome, and when we had the meetings and all, we would always let one of the teachers know how the meetin' went and what we discussed in the meetin', and our suggestions.

RG: So these suggestions went to teachers, not the principal.

KE: Well it got to the principal, yes. Because they allowed us to have the meetings. You know, and so, and then all of this was after the riot period. Because everybody was still shaken up. Even after, the year after the riots, the school was still tryin' to come up with something so you'd never have that kind of thing happening again. But, they got rid of a whole lot of what they called agitators. People who came out to encourage us to speak out for changes at the school. Now they came from the high school, and they came from places out of Greensboro, who had, you know, a lot of activists. You know, civil rights activists and all that. They were goin' around to high schools, junior highs and everything, to get everybody involved in the civil rights movement.

RG: You say they came from the high schools, you mean –

KE: No, they came *to* the high schools. But they came out of black colleges, and white colleges. You had black *and* white students doin' that. Plus you had other type activists who were militant. You even had Black Panthers roamin' around, that they had some in Greensboro. But a lot of people kind of steered away from the Black Panthers, because it was something that they had never, never ever had to approach before in their lives. And I'm talkin' about, you can be angry, but not violent. You didn't have the violence to go with your anger. You didn't have, well let's say, black and white kids fightin' in the hallway – that's just anger. But, it's anger because of something that's happenin' in the school. But with the Panthers, it was anger because of what was happenin' out in society. Everything that was happening in our society, and so if they hadn't had their little violent thing attached to them, then more people might have actually joined them. Because a lot of their, a lot of things they were doing back then, they were taking by force, but they were staying within the rights. Like carrying guns and things like that. And you see, blacks were so conditioned, you were so conditioned from birth, that weapons were just not allowed. That was too far out for many of the mainstream blacks. You done crossed the line, and I can't cross with you.

**End of tape 2, side 2**

Keith Edwards, 1/2/01, 1/16/01  
Tape 3, side 1

KE: Well, the reason why I call them agitators is because that's what administrators, or people in power, that's what they call them. Agitators. People who go around and get things started. You know, negative things. But the intent from the students from UNC and A&T in Greensboro, North Carolina Central, which was called Durham College at the time, I don't think, it was not called North Carolina Central, it was called something else. But anyway, they came over, their intent was for everybody to get fair treatment in school. Also fair treatment in restaurants or stores, wherever you go. Because a lot of things were happening outside of school that was wrong. So they wanted fair treatment for everyone. And so it was a little bit different message that you got from, you know, Black Student Movement and other colleges. And so when you had the other type agitators, as they were called, black militants or Black Panthers or whoever, their message was a little bit different.

Whereas in the civil rights, you were willing to take time to make changes. You're willing to march, you're willing to get whipped by water hoses, dogs running you down or beaten by cops and all. That's part of getting' your freedom. Your freedom to do what everyone else does in America. And that is to be treated right. You have all the rights that's been afforded you under the Constitution of the United States. OK, now that's what they were about. But some of your militant groups were – they wanted the same things, but they didn't want to wait. And they did not care how they got it. And so you had to be careful which groups you got caught up in. The groups that I got caught up in were the ones that came from the University, and came from other black colleges and all. And the reason I got involved with them, because they taught us how to wait, they taught us how to do things to get the best effect. And that was patience. You were taught patience, because you were always, you was (?), put your grievances in writing. Don't tell people what you want; you put it in writing, because that's a document. They cannot deny a document if you put it in writing and make yourself a copy of it. So they can't say they never received it, because you have a copy of it. And you write up here the date when you gave it to them, the date when they received it, who received it, and you keep it. And so you learn a different way, and I found this way to be more effective.

Now, for my brothers and my mother, because my mother had all of us out walkin' with her whenever they had freedom marches in Chapel Hill. She had us all, she had my baby brother, pushin' him in the stroller. Had my younger sisters walkin' right behind her, and we were there. I mean, your whole family turned out, but mostly, most of the time one parent turned out, and that would be, you know, like your mother. Jails, they were reluctant to keep women in the lockup, because they didn't really have anywhere for them to go. And so, but they were not reluctant to keep men in jail. Teenage boys, that was something different. But grown men, it was a little bit different. So my father stayed out of it as far as going to jail. You know, sit-ins and all that.

RG: But did they arrest any of the students at the high school?

KE: When we were marching, yes. But we knew we were going to get out. All we had to do –

RG: The high school with the protests.

- KE: No, I don't remember them arresting anyone. They got some names. But these other guys can tell you if anybody was arrested.
- RG: Were they suspended?
- KE: Oh yes, lots of people were suspended that day. All kind of things. But, the best way was to try to get these kids and everybody back in the school, cause the school got the message. You know, it had a big effect on the school administrators, why these kids, what led these kids up to do what they did. When you'd ignore people, that's what happens. They try to figure out a way that they can get your attention.
- RG: So the administration allowed the black students to meet and come up with –
- KE: No no no. This was after. This was after all of this stuff. But we could meet anytime during lunch, you know. We could have done that during lunch. We did. We met some during lunch, but that was only for lunch period. And when it was over we, you know – but it was just too much anger.
- RG: Afterwards you were still meeting at lunch, or did you have special times –
- KE: Well we had, (?) to have a special time sometime to meet.
- RG: And did they have a teacher there with you listening to your grievances, or –
- KE: No, not really, because what we did, we would write up things and take it back. And we would give it to a teacher, and that teacher gave it to the principal. What they were, excuse me, what they were doin' is lettin' black students express themselves. And the only way that the school themselves could help us is that we would have to tell them what's wrong. Why we're angry. And what things we wanted changed. And so the only way to do that, we had to get together and ask each other what is wrong. How can the school fix this? And so, how can we make the school better for everyone? So we would discuss it, and then you know we'd write it down and just pass it on. So we saw changes, but, those were changes that were forced. But, you still have some of these same problems at the school now, years later. But you don't have the same caliber of students that you had when I was comin' along, because the civil rights, when we come along in that era, everybody was complaining. And it was an opportune time to air your grievances.
- RG: Can you review for me some of the changes that you saw while you were in Chapel Hill High School and some of the changes that haven't been made, some of the problems that exist that might be solved if they made further changes.
- KE: Well, the biggest change was the attitude in whites. They knew that the blacks were not going anywhere, you know, any acts against them was not going to be tolerated. Any teacher who was kind of trapped in the middle, trapped between favoring white students over black students, they knew that now she or he was going to have to be a real teacher. You have to teach everybody. And, you know, you couldn't talk down on students, black students here. You couldn't make

them feel like they're a dummy in class. I mean, teachers had to learn a new way of teaching. Because they knew what the blacks had done and they may do it again. And it may be worse next time. And so that was one big change I saw, but like I said the biggest change I saw was in white students, white administrators. They knew they had a serious problem, and they knew attitudes and things had to change. And so they did a lot of changin' on their side, and many black students changed on their side too. Because they realized we were in this thing together, and nobody was going anywhere, so we had to find some kind of common ground so that we could be together for several hours a day.

But also, at the same time, you felt that the strong hold, well I felt that the strong hold that our parents had on us in the black community looked like it was slippin' a little bit. Because black kids would have never thought to do anything like this, step out of line or step out of place. Parents just didn't allow it. But we found that when this civil rights era was goin' on and after consolidating the schools and all, that control was slippin' a little bit. Where it wasn't that parents didn't have control over their kids, it was that kids were doin' things outside of what they were supposed to do. And it wasn't that the parents were helpless to stop it, they just didn't know when it was going to happen. So they could, you know, prevent it. And so I think that kind of woke up a lot of people when the riot happened. It woke up many people in the black community, it woke up everybody's whole town. But I think mainly the black community. It showed our parents that they weren't losing the grip on the kids that they've had on the kids all their lives. And that if they didn't hurry up and get some kind of control, you know, something was going to happen. You can't have a tight rein on people and then you lose it. Because what you're gonna do, this person who you had that tight rein on, the person gonna go out, do foolish things, or things that could get him killed, and that's what was in the back of the mind of many of the parents.

Because what was happening in the schools was happening outside also. And who knows, where my parents come from and the background that they had, you know, white men used to ride around in pickup trucks and all that and they see a black and they beat him up, or pick him, might hang him or something. This was goin' on in parents' minds. And so they had to figure out some way to kind of rope us back in. Say look, this is how this is gonna be, they had to get a control. But then in a different environment. Environment that you'd never been in before, and you see parents lettin' kids on this side do different things or have different attitudes and things about life and what's right and what's wrong. It was just a bad mixture, I think. Bad, bad mixture. For the black race. I figure it was a bad mixture because I think as long as everything was in its place and people did what was expected of them and they were respectful towards other people, I think the black race here in Chapel Hill really could have gone a long, long long way. You would've kept seein' a lot of thriving black businesses. Thriving black community. Close-knit black community. Many of those things you don't see today. It's not there. Even when people speak of it, the black community's being close-knit and all of that, it's not. It's just how people perceive us. But it's not.

RG: Did the churches play any role in –

KE: Well, First Baptist.

RG: - trying to bring back the order within society?

KE: Well see, not really. Well yeah, First Baptist and some of the other ministers, but see, it wasn't a thing like just churches. It was everybody in the black community. We was just not used to none of this happening to us. As long as we had a handful of black students in the school, they were going to go through things, just wouldn't hear about it at all. We complained to the superintendent of schools, we complained to teachers, principal, but that was it. But my life was left alone. Over here in the black community. Everything was still in its place. It's just that we had some kids goin' somewhere else. But it was ok, because it wasn't everybody. It was just some of them. But nobody was prepared for when it consolidated, when everybody's lives were turned upside down. It was turned upside down, and we been upside down ever since. We can't get it back. Now my parents have died and gone on. But it's my turn now to do what my parents did, is try to hold everything together. It's impossible. You can't. Because everybody thinks different now. Everybody was thinkin' different after the sixties.

And you have to remember, right after the sixties, with integration, as we're goin' towards the end of integration, black is beautiful, I'm black and I'm proud, Afros and everything that was African and all, all that came in. The sense of black pride and everything. All that came in. Everybody was wrapped up in it. And so, you had a togetherness, people started driftin' back towards togetherness, because of that era that we went in, black is beautiful. But when that, we went out of that era, you don't see it. You don't hear it. Now we're African Americans. And everybody says big deal. What's in it for me? I'm still the same old person I been bein'. I'm still going to have the same rights denied. I'm still gonna be discriminated on the job, so what's the big deal in changin' one to the other. Cause we went from Negro – when I went to work for the University Police, we were called Negroes. Then that was unfashionable, we went to Blacks. OK. That's unfashionable so now we're African Americans. But we are still the same people. We are still in the same boat as we were when we were back there, Negroes. It hasn't been that much, that big a change. The change comes when people are strong enough to stand up, and you have to be very, very strong – to stand up and say hey, something is wrong here. This is not right. And you have to make the sacrifices, and you have to be loud enough so everybody else can hear you, so they'll know that you are not happy, that something is wrong, and that's when you get your changes. You make changes that way. But if you keep quiet, you gonna remain a Negro.

RG: What are the changes, not in society but in the high school, that you think should be made to help the African American student there?

KE: Well, to be honest with you, I really, truly don't know. Because you see, I went to school in an environment where it was impossible to learn. But I did learn. So I don't know what the problem is now. If I could learn here at this school, at Northside Elementary School, and we had very little equipment for the teachers to teach me with, but I still learned. Lincoln was the same way. And the kids were comin' out of the school bein' a success. You have everything at Chapel Hill High School, hi-tech everything. Computers, you have the whole nine yards. They have all kinds of learning programs, they have everything you can imagine. There is no reason whatsoever for any kid to fail, or any kid, or they say a kid can't learn. I can't believe that, and that's why I'm a strong believer of less is better. Sometimes you can put too much in front of a kid. And when you put too much in front of a kid, they probably can't learn.

But if you go back to your basics – reading, writing, arithmetic – go back to the basics. You got to start there. I think what our society's doing now is schools are tryin' to keep up with society. Before, you did the basics. You kept up with that, that you were supposed to teach. Anything extra was something extra that a kid just took. But your main reason for being a teacher is to teach the basics. And many of our black kids, so they say after school, can't learn the basics. So what is the problem? If you've got a kid who can't pass – what is it, third grade year-end competency tests, you know, I think they have them again in what, eighth grade, and then eleventh grade. It makes you wonder how in the world did they get in third grade in the first place. How did they get in the eleventh grade and can't pass a competency test? What's been happening all those eleven years?

And I don't think it's a child's fault, when a child goes to school and sits in a classroom. I think it's the teacher's fault if a child can't learn, because the teacher is there to help that child to learn. So I can't blame the children. It has to be somewhere in there in how you teach. You may have to teach differently to different students in order for them to comprehend the lesson plan that you have. You have to be willing to work with a parent – yes, there are some parents who are on drugs, alcohol, we got everything out there now. But, for the benefit of the child, you gonna have to connect with somebody who you think would try to encourage this child to do the schoolwork and so the child could function in school. Now we have study halls for that.

But they have, you have everything now that could help a student who is not learning. The government gives schools, even to teachers in the school systems, to help with that. But still they say we can't learn. So what you're gonna have to do, if you can't learn it in the books and all, and their attention is not in the books and all, you'll have to ask the students, just like the school did us, what is the problem. You'll have to ask the students themselves. What can we do to help you learn in this school? What are we doing wrong? Or what do you *think* we are doing wrong? And don't blame the student. First of all, see what you can do as administrators to try to help this child. If the child want to tell you his background or what has happened to him or her at home, that will be insight for you to know just what this child has to deal with on a daily basis. And maybe that's a little blockage in there that maybe he got so many home things bothering this child, that the child just can't function in the classroom. But the child knows that he or she has to go to school.

But I think if someone took the time, yes it's gonna take time to do it individually, you know, each student, or whatever, who's fallin' behind. You have to have somebody that child can sit down with, and get that child to open up. What is going on with you? How can I help you. But you've got to allow that child to tell you how you can help him or her. and once you've established that, then you go from there. But if all you're doing is sittin' in the classroom and you keep on tryin' to teach, tryin' to teach, because you want them to pass a competency test or whatever, you're not getting' through to the child, you're not teaching the whole child. The whole child, the way you teach 'em is the way we were taught at Northside and Lincoln. You taught the child from the inside out. You didn't just put a book in front of the child. Many of the teachers and administrators, they knew the child's situation before the child even come in the school. They knew where you lived, they knew your parents' status, and they knew your

economic status, they knew everything. So when it came to that teacher and you, because they were so familiar with you in the community and all, they knew how to deal with you.

So still you have these kids, they're out of their own environment, and they're goin' into another environment, one that they have to deal with for several hours a day, and then they go back. Whereas before, we didn't have drugs that's roamin' around, we didn't have people, alcoholics roamin' around. People their own age. People standin' around, not made to go to school. You have so many outside influences on you, it's very difficult for some kids who live in certain areas in Chapel Hill or in Carrboro to actually have time to concentrate on schooling when they're concentrating on the home life. What they have to go back to face when they come out of school. Their only escape is school. But, they feel they can't, you know, function to their potential because they got so many other things holdin' them back. But if a teacher or administrator would take the time – which Hilliard Caldwell did a whole lot of that – to talk with the kids. You got to get a kid to open up. Many won't. Many will not open up at all. But somebody's gotta make the effort. And Hilliard Caldwell was a person who the kids would open up to. And their parents. Hilliard Caldwell is gone now. And so, you know it's like I say, sometimes you got to have one of your own in place, whether they do something or not, but Hilliard Caldwell was one that did.

RG: Remarkable.

KE: Remarkable person but, there are other Hilliard Caldwells out there, but they just haven't come forth. And there are many who have the same heart that Hilliard Caldwell has. White and black. But kids won't let 'em in. They got the door locked, and they feel that even if I go to school, so what? I mean you know, nothin' in my life is gonna change, because I have to go back home to the drug addict I have for a mother or a father, or no father in the house, or, you know.

RG: You're describing a feeling of hopelessness.

KE: Right. Many kids have a sense of hopelessness, and many kids who don't live that way and they live in better neighborhoods or the economic status is not down here but up here, middle income or maybe over. Some of those feel the same way - that they don't have a place, a sense of belonging somewhere. So we have so many kids that's mixed up now. But, I still say they can learn, but it's gonna have to be a lot of effort put out there to get these kids to open up. And they have to open up before they can learn. And it has to be with someone they can trust, or feel they can trust. Someone who they know really, truly care about their situations. And about them as a person. And where are we gonna get that person? Or people? We don't know. But I can say there have been many, many whites who have tried. They have. But sometimes, you know, it's hard for some blacks to let 'em in. Even though this might be the only person who actually cares about you. To really truly, and will do everything he or she could, but sometimes just because of your color line, it gets blocked. And I have found through goin' from the seventh grade, that I've had whites along the way that was willing to help me. And it helped me a whole lot. And these whites were more willing to help me than some of the blacks who, comin' from the black community that was close-knit and all of that, but I found some of these whites who, they just went all out of their way. And they didn't have to. They didn't have to want to see me succeed or finish school or do any of those things. But they took the time to do that. And I guess that's why

I have the opinions that I have now, and it was just part of molding me and shaping me for the life that I've lived.

RG: Keith, are there any areas that I haven't covered, or any questions that you don't feel you've answered satisfactorily, that you'd like to go back over? Or are there any statements that you'd just like to make on your own about Lincoln or the integration or Chapel Hill High School?

KE: Well, I just think that when the school was first integrated, even though you had a handful were going, that the students, that the school system – but it was mostly white then – I think that the students should have been better prepared to what they had to face. They knew somewhat of what they were going to have to face. They knew the resistance was going to be there. And, but I don't think that any of them thought they were gonna be completely shut out of the school system itself. As far as going to that school. What I mean by that, yes I'm going to another school, but I had expected to be treated like a student, and not a black person. Even in the back of my mind I was going to be treated like a black person, but still I thought that the teacher would make the atmosphere where I felt that I was a student and not just a black. Because that's what you were treated like, as a black person. You were not treated as a student. And when they consolidated the schools, I think they should have waited years before they consolidated the schools to get more people involved in the consolidation process. I also think that if they'd have waited just a little longer, they could have had more blacks eventually goin' to the school. Because if you lived in one area, you couldn't have done it like they do now. They put you in areas, and they reassigned you to schools and things like that. But you would not have had a whole school comin' at one time. And if you let people know, well look, two years down the road, we're gonna close Lincoln. It's not gonna be there anymore. People would have had time to try to readjust to it. Now there will be some who will tell you that, well, we knew it was gonna happen. But the masses of the community did not know it was gonna happen.

RG: So it happened like –

KE: Well there were people on the school board, people like (?) in the Who's Who, in the black community and white community, who knew these things were gonna happen. But they were getting the word back, but let's say for the students, we just didn't know, smack bam. You know, you done put a date on it and here we are. I'm sayin' that after they had gave the idea time to just build up and say well look, y'all, we gonna consolidate the school because we can spend more money in one school than tryin' to keep two schools open. We goin' to close, we have to close one school, it needs a lot of repairs and all that on the school. We can close one school, we're gonna close the other one too, and we're gonna put everybody out here in one school. But we're not gonna do it right away. We're gonna wait so people can make some adjustments to the idea that these schools are gonna be closed. And when the other two school closed, you know, there're the dedications and all this kind of stuff, everybody's bein' bought.

And so you leave the schools and things, which have memories and all, but you knew that the school was gonna close. And they closed both schools, the white school and the black school, but they built another one. But we knew that was gonna be for whites. We knew that. But, it would have given especially the black students and the black community time to deal with the fact that we would no longer have Lincoln. You know, we would no longer have that electricity that runs

the town. We would no longer have a chance to go out and we'd just see all our faces there. It's time, you know, you'd a had time to deal with all of that. And when the date came, you know, for the consolidations, you might not have had as much anger as you had, or resentment. I mean, and that's from both sides. It would have given black and white teachers time to get to know one another, in those couple of years. That they're interacting with one another. They could have had all kind of retreats, they could have had meetings, just all of that leading up to, you know, goin' out there.

And I think had they done that, no one would have lost control I don't think the black community would have lost control of their kids, that tight rein they had on them, I think it would have remained tight. I don't think we would have had an explosion, because people took the time to try to re-think this thing and then try to do this thing right. But in the sixties, that's how things were done. And that's why you had to have National Guards to go with some kids to go to school in Arkansas. I mean, everything was just chaotic, because people didn't take their time. Because when you have two races of people who have always been separated, and it was almost like everybody taught that you're not supposed to like each other. That was the biggest problem, I think, with both races of people. A lot of things happened in both races. A lot of white people got hurt way back when the hangin's, a lot of white people got hung too, just like us. Because they called, because people thought they were sympathizers. Black sympathizers. And so you had a mixture of people, things were done to them from both sides.

And, but it's just like a fire call, somebody's house is on fire, everybody come together. It's just like Lincoln. When you had homecoming parades, when you had football games, everybody came together. But they all came together for one thing, and that was to be supportive of the kids that was out there on the field, or the kids who were marchin' down the street. It was a sense of support and that we love you. Infectious. It was just everywhere, and it was coming from everybody, and you knew, like clockwork, rain, sleet or snow, everybody was going to be together on those occasions. You knew it. Now they didn't come to our basketball games because you know it's closed in and everything. But they did support the football and things like that.

But I really truly think that had they taken the time and done things right, you would have still had the closeness of the black community, you'd have had more parents involved in the PTA, you'd had more parents involved in wantin' to come out and see the teams and things play, like we did in the black community. You'd had black and white community coming together. To see our children. Our children combined together playin', representing Chapel Hill. I can say that when the black athletes came in, now Chapel Hill High School got to be a top school, top top. Because some of the students they played didn't have any black kids. And so their as far as athletic standards and all, that went up. It didn't come down, it went up. And the white athletes were beginning to appreciate black athletes because they had all this power. Some of them had God-given talent that was never seen on the field before because you had many white athletes who, they were outstanding. But these were more outstanding, and they couldn't believe it. And so, but for the teams themselves, they had a little family within themselves because they had to play together. And they were goin' out to win.

But I think the town of Chapel Hill could have had the same thing if we hadn't rushed things in the sixties. Like I said everything was rushed. If we hadn't rushed it, taken our time, and I think we would really have a different society, black society, today in Chapel Hill. Because if you look at our society you would think it was still mourning Lincoln. Because it's as if no one gives a damn, you know, about anything. It's so many people in the black community like that right now. They say what's the use of fighting. I had many to tell me, Keith, why are you fighting? You know they're not going to change, you know they're not going to do that. But I'm the type of person to take a risk. I never know what I can do if I don't do it. I have to make a, I have to try. And if I don't succeed then fine, but I did try. That's how I am, and many blacks won't take risks. They won't. And it's not so much failure, it is because it's sort of like something you were born with. That you don't risk your (?) on this or that, or you don't take a risk, speak out, or go against someone white. A lot of things that you don't take a risk on. But I'm not afraid to take a risk, if I feel that I'm in the right. And many blacks won't do that. They'll let somebody else do that for them. And then they'll come along for the ride.

But I just really truly feel everything could have been done different. And I feel that the black community could have prospered, more so, because we would have had more black kids goin' into all kind of schools back then. You did have some goin' to white universities, but you also had that at Lincoln. But I think you would have had more kids wantin' to go on to school or military like they did from Lincoln. A lot of kids when they finished high school, they just wanted to be out of school. They didn't want to see another school. But that was not good, what you were taught. You were taught to get as much out of life as you could. And even if you had to pay your way to a college or a community college, then you go to the army, go to the military. There was always an avenue for you if you really truly wanted to make something of yourself. And that was just a rule. But once you got to Chapel Hill High School it was a different rule, because you had a different mindset.

And so now we're in a mess, and no one knows how to clean it up at Chapel Hill High School or any of the schools. Chapel Hill High School is the main school they talk about. No one's talking about elementary schools, where it's all happening, where it starts. No one is touching on that. And trust me, it starts there. I had a teacher – I went with my niece to junior high school = no, it was elementary, I'm sorry, I went to elementary school, and the teacher told my sister, um, my niece said we don't think your son is going to graduate – I mean, make it to the next grade. And he was in the fourth grade and they said he was readin' on the third grade level. And I asked the principal, I said now if he's readin on the third grade level, why is he in the fourth grade? I said now what is happening here in elementary, the problem is here. This is where they can't learn. But, administrators say they can't learn when they get up in the eighth grade and eleventh grade. But if you'd have taught them back in the first grade, second grade, third grade, then they shouldn't be havin' no problems when they get up here to the eleventh grade. But everybody thinks the problem's in the high school. But it's not. It's in elementary. And that's where the school system needs to start. And they've been told this over and over and over. No one's listened.

RG: What about (?) – Head Start, places like that?

KE: Well yeah. Yeah. Head Start is important. But I really feel before a child is passed on to the second grade they should be efficient in the first grade. Head Start helps with that. And when you finish Head Start you go on into the first grade. But to me, goin' in the first grade, that's real schooling. And how that teacher teach you in that first grade determines how you gonna be taught for – I mean, not determine how you gonna be taught, but determines how you gonna learn goin' through. First grade is the most important grade, and that's where the school system should be on teachers, in the first grade. If you see any problems in the first grade, work on them. Don't pass the child to the second grade if they haven't gotten the first grade yet. Work with them. Work with them during the summer. You got to start in elementary because that's where my schooling started, first grade. And what I learned in the first grade helped me to the second grade. Second grade on. So somewhere in here, if you get in the third grade and you had a year-end test and you can't pass it, there's something happened back here. So you got to start, you got to start from the beginning. In order to get to the end. And finish. You got to start (?) there.

So I just know that Lincoln was the biggest part of the black community, and what I would say to the black community, I would say, Chapel Hill, It was the school, or institution if you want to call it, that brought everybody together. Every race, creed color, age, whatever. It brought us together, and Lincoln produced a lot of productive citizens. A lot of productive citizens. And they did it with little or nothing. And I was talkin' to my granddaughter, just the weekend, and I was telling her about Lincoln High School. She did not know that we even had a black school. She thought we had always had a mixed school. And I told her now. And I showed her that yearbook, a copy that I gave to you, she could not believe it. So you see, the work that you are doing is so important, because these are the type of kids that can read about it, and they can read about their ancestors, which – their ancestors are there now because they are, you know, high school, but they can see where the aunts, uncles, grandparents went to school. They can see what type of school grandparents and all went to. But from your documentary, and if you have any, like a video or something like that, it would be so important to them, because they would know a life that they didn't even think existed.

RG: Thank you. That's great. We really appreciate it.

KE: Oh, you're welcome.

**End of tape 3, side 1**