

James Dial

February 4, 2004

Malinda Maynor: Okay, when you began teaching school.

James Dial: Yeah, when I began teaching school in 1954, I began at Pembroke High School. In '54, in Robeson County, teaching school was the only type of profession that we could do, because Pembroke State College was the only school, institution of higher learning we could go to. And at that time, the only thing you could major in was teaching. And of course you were bound to stay in Robeson County because we wasn't allowed to leave the county, being Indian. It was understood that if you went to Pembroke you would stay in the county and teach school. Didn't really have no choice, because I didn't know, I don't think there's anybody in '54 and '55, any Indian, could go any other place to go to school. Now, we had a few that went out, like South Dakota or someplace like that. Except the experience I had at University of Georgia.

MM: Tell us about that again.

JD: In '54, after I went out of the Army and graduated, I wanted to go to graduate school. I had received a job teaching there at Pembroke Elementary School, but I wanted to go to graduate school. I applied to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and they told me that they wasn't taking Indians at that time. And in fact they had suggested I might apply at Appalachian State

University. I understood from what they said that they had made arrangements for some to go to Appalachian, but I didn't go. But I went down to Athens, Georgia to visit a friend of mine that I was in the Army with, and he was just enrolling at the University of Georgia. And he invited me on campus, and I went around and looked around, and went to the registration office and registrar, and they were real nice to me, and I told them I'd like to go to graduate school, so he said, well, just go ahead and register and we're going to get your credit later. And so I went ahead and enrolled in the graduate program in mathematics. And for the next 3-4 summers I would go down every summer and go to school, and I graduated, I believe it was '56 I graduated (). And all this time I was teaching at Pembroke High School.

MM: So you have been saying that, except for your experience at Georgia, there were few Indians that left the county to teach or go to school?

JD: No, I didn't really know of any. Now, my principal, Mr. Elmer, he—

MM: Is that Mr. Elmer Hunt?

JD: Mr. Elmer Lowry. And Dean Clifton Oxendine, he worked at the college. And Herbert Oxendine. They all went out and we had one, James Thomas Sampson, they went to Illinois, I believe it was, to school. I think maybe Herbert, Dr. Oxendine, went on a football scholarship or something. But anyway, that's where they went to school. Now, they were the only Indians at

that time that I knew they aired the grievance () other university or college. There were no teachers that I taught with that hadn't went to any other school. At that time, all of the teachers were the Indian teachers at Pembroke high school. Now, as we went on, there's a few, we had one or two white teachers that came in. I don't know whether you know Elma Louise Ransom. She came in as a music teacher, she was from Ohio. But I believe, I'm almost sure that was the first white teacher we had in our school, at least from the time I started teaching.

MM: What was the—I guess I could ask how did she get there, but I guess more I'm interested in why would she have been the first. Why wouldn't there have been any others, or—if you can use some hindsight?

JD: I really don't know, because we had segregation, and of course it wasn't a black school, but it wasn't a white school, so I guess people, they didn't cross racial lines by choice. And after Elma Louise came, from time to time we would get one in, you know, we'd be short of a teacher. Some of them would apply and they come in. We didn't have any problems, they come in. And most of them got along well. All of them was out of county people. There were no local, what we call local white.

MM: Right. So whites from out of the county would come, but local whites wouldn't teach at Indian schools.

JD: No.

MM: Did you know of any whites teaching at black schools?

JD: No, I don't believe we had any whites working in black schools.

MM: So black schools pretty much had all black teachers as well.

JD: Yeah. And all Indian schools must have all Indian. I know Magnolia and all of the other schools around like Hopewell, they always have. I think Pembroke probably was the only school that we had white teachers in during this time. And I guess maybe because we were next to the college, and that might have been a contributing factor. But you realized then that the college was segregated, you didn't have any white students in the college.

MM: But there were white professors?

JD: Yeah, all of the professors, a majority of them were white.

MM: So maybe we can back up a little bit, and you talk about your own elementary and high school years, going to an Indian-only school. What the community was like.

JD: When I lived there, over in the Hopewell community, that is a predominant Indian community. Now, we had very little intermingling with the white or black. We had our own church, of course, you know about the church, and our own school. So we just, I didn't really consider myself being discriminated against, because I didn't know any other way of life. Of course,

we knew we couldn't go to town. You know, we wasn't allowed to go to the movies or anyplace like that. We didn't want to go, because we knew it wasn't (.). And you know, one thing I have to say now, there was a—before integration, for some reason, and I'm not sure why, Indians, our people, we didn't really push for integration. Now, the black did, and a lot of the black tell us, you know, we got in on their coattails, so to speak. We did not [push for it]. After we had integration, you know, in the restaurants and everything, a lot of the Indian, they still wouldn't go. They were free to go. Now, you take my mother, for instance. She died when she was 87 years old, and she had very little education, but she was wise, and she gave me a lot of advice. But now, I never could get her to take her to Lumberton to a restaurant to eat. Because she said, you know, you could go but they didn't want you, the way she said it. And she said, I don't want to go no place I'm not wanted.

MM: And this is after the civil rights movement.

JD: Yeah, that was after civil rights, when you could go anyplace you wanted to. But she didn't want to go. And that might have been the extreme, but I know a lot of our people, we just didn't go to Lumberton or someplace like that and go in a restaurant and eat. The younger people were the ones began, college aged people, were the ones that began to patronize the businesses. And never have I, from the time we were integrating, I went into some of the

places, but I never was asked [to go] out. You could tell they sort of resented you, you know. I mean, you can tell. Now, when I was out of the county, Laurinburg, Charlotte, Raleigh, anyplace, I didn't feel inhibited at all. I could go in anyplace and never thought about it. But it's just something that I crossed over Robeson County line, I had an entirely different feeling. And I think a lot of our other people felt the same way.

MM: Can you describe that a little bit, because I think most people would be surprised to hear it, they think of segregation as being the same everywhere. What was it about here at home? You'd think in some ways you'd feel more comfortable at home.

JD: Well, I think from the very beginning, we knew our place in Robeson County. And our place wasn't to go to a white establishment. But it was common knowledge that once we left Robeson County, you didn't have no choice. You had to go, you only had white or black. And most, we'd go into the white establishment, even the places that was integrated, I mean was segregated, we'd go on the white section. Trains and what have you. I think all the Lumbee Indians did that as far as I know. And I guess that's something just sort of grew up in me, and I can't say now that I feel that way anyway. But for a long time, whenever I was in Robeson, I just felt more comfortable being in

Pembroke or somewhere around my own people, rather than going to Lumberton to one of the establishments.

MM: I think that idea about knowing your place is interesting, because you had your place relative to whites and to blacks, but then Indians had their own places, and it seems like the schools in particular were Indians' own places.

JD: Yeah. And the church, the same way. Even today, now, I know you go out to First Methodist Church sometimes, but now if you go down to Rowland, I have no idea how many churches we have, predominant Indian church. We have a lot of little churches, but if you go there on Sunday morning, the only people you will see is Lumbee Indians. Sometime when you have a funeral or something like that, you will have a smattering of other races now, but even today, our church is almost wholly segregated. And that's by choice. Now, we have people, Indians, that's living, you take my daughter, for instance, she lives in Lumberton, but she comes up here to church. She's never been to church in Lumberton, she comes up here to Pembroke to the Indian church. Of course, now, you could say, well, when she was small, that's where she went to church at, and her husband went to Prospect, that's one scenario, you might say. But she wants her children to come up here.

MM: So it continues to be a choice, even after it's not so-called required by the system.

JD: Right. And it makes a little—now you take my grandchildren that live in Lumberton, a lot of their friends is white, you know, establishment down there. And they do well, they don't see any discrimination. But by my experience, tthat I have, I'm more on guard of that than they would be. It's not a problem for them at all, but I still, I feel more comfortable. I'd like for them to be an Indian, so to speak.

MM: How did you feel about that kind of coattails thing that you mentioned before? Did you feel like the purpose of integration, or that integration would achieve lifting up everybody, or did you have that same kind of guarded approach to that as well?

JD: Well, I did, because I felt sort of like my mother, you know, if we was to, even whenever we could, legal, go into the white establishment, we still felt like they really didn't want you. And some of that I know was false, you know, and some of it was true. So I think that was by choice. Now, if you notice the black people, they're more aggressive in demanding their right. Once they had that right, they were more prone to use it. And even today, you'll find your black here—I'm talking about the black in this county, now—they're more conscious of race, making sure they get their equal rights, than even Indians. Because really, you know, I have a lot of good black friends in education, and they sort of

think hard of us because of, you know, you all could have done a lot more, but you didn't make no effort to try to integrate.

But tell you the truth now, in our schools, I don't know if I want to make a public statement like this or not, but with my experience, we probably did better with our Indian teacher than we did when we put the white in there. Because now, you take care of Pembroke. We were supposed to have a third Indian and a third white and a third black.

MM: After integration took force?

JD: After integration. We never really—we probably always had a little few more—the ratio was a little bit more in favor of the Indian than the white and less of the black, mainly of the black you just didn't have them. We had a time getting enough white to pass the requirement of the Civil Rights Act. Every year, you had to do a report and give that kind of information.

MM: Were you giving it to the federal government?

JD: Yes. They required that. Now, you see, most of the white teachers that worked in my school, they lived in Lumberton, and they would drive to Pembroke and they would be here from 8 to 4, and then they'll leave the community. So they wasn't in tune with the community. Now, that wasn't their fault. But you know, if you're absent, you just don't get the climate. The climate is important in a community, to know the climate of a community. And

of course, the white teachers didn't have that because we had very few white teachers that lived in the Pembroke area. Very few. You know, Pembroke has always been predominantly Indian. And it was the same way with the black. We had very few black, but the black teachers, they lived in Maxton or Lumberton or someplace else, and they would drive in. But now, I should say, in my experience as administrator, I had some good black teachers. A lesser number because I had a smaller number black. And I had some good white teachers, I thought they were excellent teachers. I had other white teachers, they was middle of the road type, but by not being part of the community, they wasn't as effective as, say, an Indian teacher.

MM: So when you say a good teacher, does that include someone who was in tune with the community?

JD: Yes. They seem to have a hold on the community, and the things that was important to us as Indians.

MM: What were some of those things?

JD: Well, their teaching methods. It's not too hard if you've been exposed to it to pick up, even a child can pick up, when a teacher has some reservations in their style of life. You can tell, I mean the thing, in Pembroke, if they were from Lumberton, you knew they might be looking down on some of the—we have a lot of poor people, and of course poor people is gonna be at the bottom

of the pole anywhere you go, generally speaking. But now, we have some white teachers, they seem to be able to relate to them better than some of the other white teachers.

And then, too, Indian teachers, you know, they're more of a role model, because in most cases, our Indian teachers, they would know something about the families. We have extended families here. And you can go to Pembroke Elementary School and go to any Indian teacher, and they live in Pembroke, 99 percent of them. And a child that they have in their class, they probably know something about their family. We have prominent families, Indian families, and we had other families that is not prominent. And they know all about that. And that makes it different, because if you know the background of a child, a lot of time, and you know they're coming out of a certain kind of situation. For instance, at the time I began teaching school, we had bootleggers in Robeson County. And I had a child in my class, and I knew how things was at home, I knew what kind of life they lived, and I could relate to them better, and I think they could relate to me better. And I think that would be true with all teachers. You had a common bond, so to speak.

MM: Mm-hm. ().

JD: And it was obvious, you could feel it.

MM: So in 1970 or so, when the federal government ordered that the county school board comply with desegregation, you were at Pembroke at that time.

JD: Yes, Pembroke Elementary.

MM: How did that play out? If you remember getting the word and figuring out what to do.

JD: Well, in our case, they had a mandate, I think a year or two before we really did anything about it, and that's when they started trying to use the Freedom of Choice. And that didn't pan out. You had very few people that used the Freedom of Choice Plan, so you didn't have no student. And then the Board of Education tried to write justifications. In that day, all the Indian school was in the county. You had no Indian school in Lumberton or Fairmont or any of those places. And if you had a Indian child that was living in Lumberton for instance, they was bused out to an Indian school. Now, whenever they came around with a mandate, integration, those students got caught, so to speak. If they lived in Lumberton then, they were assigned to a Lumberton school. But a lot of those people tried to move or get out. They didn't really want to go. Now most people wouldn't understand that, but they wanted to still go to an Indian school. Now the impact it had at Pembroke, because our whole community here was Indian, at Pembroke Elementary, the biggest impact we

had is when the teachers. Now we stopped mid-year and transferred teachers, the superintendent did.

MM: Do you remember what year—was it 1971?

JD: It was sometime about '72, I think, now I'm not sure.

MM: Okay, it's not ().

JD: You know my memory just don't (). It was a big deal, because when we met at the board—and up until that time, the principal and that community, we had what we called the Local Committee, and they was grading teachers. If you get the new teacher, you had a local committee that would meet and approve them, so to speak.

MM: And that's the school committee, or they were calling them advisory committees at that point.

JD: Well, after this, they called them advisory committees. But before then they were a school committee. And they had a certain amount of authority, where they really voted on a teacher, whether or not that teacher could work or not. But when they transferred the teachers, you see, they had to do away with that, and they went to advisory committee. But the advisory committee was just more or less in name, they didn't really have no authority or anything.

MM: Right. Because the county was now telling schools and teachers where to go.

JD: Yeah, they come from the central office. The superintendent and his staff, they had—well, you know by law, the superintendent is really the one that makes teacher assignment anyway. So he had the mandate. And teachers were transferred without their consent. You had no choice. They'd just send them a letter and say you've been transferred to such and such a school. And we had never had that, you see, until we had integration. And a lot of our teachers felt bad about it, and they didn't want to go any other place. But now most of our teachers who transferred, they did well. They didn't have any major problems.

MM: So after the transfer, do you remember about how many white and black teachers you wound up having?

JD: I'd say, now, I believe at the time I probably had about 55 teachers at Pembroke Elementary School, and I probably had about 12 white teachers and maybe 6 black teachers, and then all the rest was Indians.

MM: And so those teachers that had been Indian, 18, say, teachers, were transferred to other schools.

JD: Now, the 12 whites, they moved some of—yeah, those Indians were transferred to some other schools.

MM: Did your student enrollment stay at the level it had been?

JD: Yeah. See, really, even the parents at Pembroke, they didn't realize the impact, because it had no impact on our school. See, we had, I know I go

around to the classrooms and we might have one or two black children in each classroom. Out of 8 or 900 students, maybe we'd have 25 black students.

Well, you know, out of that many, they didn't make no impact at all.

MM: And so that didn't really change after—?

JD: No, it didn't change.

MM: I had been doing some reading about the way the district lines were drawn in the county. Is it true that some of them were close to Indian schools? That some of the lines themselves were—do you remember that—were drawn close to schools so that people who were living really across the street from the school would have to wind up going to a different school?

JD: Oh, yes, they did that to try to encompass as many of the white students and Indian students and whatever. But before integration, the year I was down at Deep Branch, that's just when they were getting started, they had somebody working with the civil rights, they came from Washington to the school. And they wanted to look the school over, and they did, it was a gentleman, real nice. He said, "Now, how many of your students are Indian?" And I said, well all of them's Indian. And we got a map, and he wanted me to show him on the map where my students lived at. Well, you take Deep Branch. It goes out toward MacDonald out toward [Highway] 301. Well, I had maybe 3 or 4 children there, and then he had another map that was from Rowland,

because they had a white school in Rowland, and their bus was crossing over to our line, and of course we were crossing over to their line.

In reality, you didn't have a district. The principal would decide, if you had an Indian family moved in, you just sent the bus to pick them up. If they was anywhere near your district. We sort of had an understanding, each school (). But now after they really drew the district, they had to abide by it. And that gave a lot of problems. It didn't affect us here in Pembroke, but now Prospect, see Prospect had a problem with Maxton and Red Springs. Because of the way the district lines. And they was, what they called gerrymandering, like down here in Clyburne Pines, it would run out one way and then cut another way. Like the area where we have the county country club, for instance. If you see down on the map, it would just run down and then cut out by itself, run into Lumberton.

MM: Mm-hm. And that's so white students could go to white schools?

JD: Yes. Go to predominant white schools.

MM: Well, I've just been trying to visualize it in my mind, and that helps me to understand that the lines would be drawn close to the Indian schools, not so much for Indian students, because they weren't paying attention to the district lines anyway, but really more for the benefit of white students. So any whites

that might have lived in a predominantly Indian area could live in a district with a white school and not have to go to an Indian school or a black school.

JD: There was an effort on the administrators to try to resist integration. Of course that was parents, that was their choice, you know, to try to keep their school—you know, every white child that lived in the county had to go to one of the city schools. And when they started drawing district lines, that was a different situation then. You had people moving, doing everything trying to get into the right district. People resented it.

MM: How did parents at Pembroke react when white and black teachers came in?

JD: Pembroke, we didn't have any problem, because the college had grown and people in Pembroke were accustomed—we had a right good many whites lived in Pembroke, and we always had somewhat social relations with the whites that lived in town. You know, they run the stores and that kind of thing. So it wasn't in the end too much of an impact. Now on the blacks, we had the blacks lived right downtown. Of course, they went to Rowland. Now, it was an impact on them. We didn't have very many of them, but most of those, they moved. When school started, they just didn't show up. I don't know how they would do, but they just wouldn't show up at school. And you had people, even the Indian, that their child would live with the aunt or somebody, in order to come

to Pembroke. Now, Pembroke has always been a first choice for the Indian. The majority of the Indian, they felt like the school system in Pembroke was better for the Indian child. So you found a lot of the people around Fairmont down there really came up here to school.

MM: Purnell Swett told me that story the other day, about how his parents moved, I think it was from Fairmont area. Maybe it was Rowland, wherever they had been living, they moved to Pembroke so that their children could go to the Pembroke schools, that was the only reason.

JD: Yeah, we had quite a number, and a lot of them would come live with somebody and come to Pembroke. There was more advantages. And another thing, back in that day, you find that the Indian was tenant farmers. You didn't have a lot of landowner among the Indian people. The white people, they preferred tenant farmer to black or white, for that matter, because Indian had reputation for being good farmers. So you had the Indian was accustomed to running the farm, and when they began to change the school system, that interfered with that.

MM: So integration interfered with the tenant farming system.

JD: Right. Yeah, it did. And I think a lot of your white, too, they tried to do all they could to help the Indian so they could go to school when they wanted

to. But that's the reason, of course, farming in a rural— that's the reason you didn't have any white or Indian schools in the county, they all was in the town.

MM: Any white or black schools in the county?

JD: Right.

MM: And that's mainly because it was Indian tenant farmers that were living in the county, not close enough to a town system to go, to have a school.

JD: That's right, predominantly. And the few that did live in town, why, they would bus them out. They'd send a bus in there and bus them out. Now, when I was going to high school, I drove a school bus, and I'd go by Midway. And at Midway at that time, they had a little white elementary school there. I'd pass right by the school and I'd go on down to what we called the Seven Bridges, that's right near the South Carolina line, and there was some Indian children lived down there. I'd go down there and pick them up, and I went right through Maxton, right to where the air base is at, I'd turn around there, and the Indian, there was a right number of good Indian students there. It was really Scotland County, but they would walk across and catch our bus, because they wanted to come to Pembroke. And I'd come all the way back through Maxton and then into Pembroke.

MM: That's like 50 miles, isn't it?

JD: Well, I would leave home about quarter of 6 in the morning, 20 till, and I'd get up to Pembroke about 8:15. So we had about 2 hours ride every morning.

MM: So how did you feel about the arguments that people made after integration about busing made their children ride too far to go to school?

JD: Well, you know, we sort of laughed about it here, because we had been doing that all our lives. I can see where their point is. You get a child up, a small child in the first grade, 6 years old, and they had to get up at 5:00 in the morning to get ready to catch the bus before 6 and didn't get to school until after maybe 8:30. That's a long time for a child to be up and going before they have school. And then in the afternoon, it would be after 5:00 when they got home. That's a long day for a child. And you know, just common sense thinking about it, I could see that would be not good. But now, if you give them a choice, we had our children to live near—if you're living in Maxton, for instance, they'd rather take that ride to Pembroke anytime than went to school in Maxton. Their parents said that. That's just the way it was.

MM: In the late '60s, a lot of parents were gathering at Prospect and different places to try to organize against the county school board's plan. How did you feel about those activities at that time?

JD: Well, I supported that activity. Of course, I knew it was wrong, because I knew that they would have very little influence, because the law is the law, and you're going to have to abide by it. And I think that people around Prospect, though, they wasn't really properly prepared for it. They felt like—you'll find Prospect is sort of unique in their thinking, because they had had probably a lot less contact with white and black than any other of our population, so they felt strongly against the black and the white. And I can't say it was stronger against the black than it was the white, they felt the same way about both. And of course you know that is a problem with Prospect.

I felt bad because I was afraid it was going to spill over to our school. And you had to be careful what you say, you couldn't say, well, I approve of it, and you couldn't say I disapprove. Because we had been mandated to do what we were required to do, and I know some of the people at Prospect, they said, well, we'll kill any black or white teacher that comes to our school. But you can't, I told some of them that's the wrong approach. Because if you ever got into violence it would have been bad. And we almost got into that. But thankfully, we did have enough good sound-thinking people that said there's some things you can't change, so we accepted it. You had more resentment at Prospect, I'd say, than any other area.

MM: Any other Indian area?

JD: Yeah. Lumbee Indian.

MM: Well, that's significant, because Prospect in some ways seems like they're preserving Indian identity and Indian culture and what they feel is Indian. But at the same time to look at your story or any other situation, you're not interested any less in preserving Indian identity than they were, but you just realized that there had to be a different—well, you had to react differently to the situation.

JD: Now, I will say this, like I said, we've had some good white teachers. And a majority of the Indian in Pembroke, if they'd had a choice—you see, I had to make the assignment of students. I might have 4 third grade teachers, and two of them would be Indian and one black and one white. Now, I had a problem there, because—making the parent understand that I had to make some type of arbitrary assignment. You could use any method you want to. And before then, if you had a lot of Indian teachers, a lot of the parents would come out and say—Miss Jessie was a very popular teacher, and she taught for 30 years, all her life, I guess at Pembroke elementary school, now she was—

MM: Jessie Maynor?

JD: Yes. And I had a lot of parents that would bring their child in, and say, “I want Miss Jessie to teach my child. She taught me.”

END SIDE A

BEGINNING SIDE B

MM: Once we integrated...

JD: Once we integrated then the principal, you had to make student assignments. And that created some problems with the parents. Because I had parents, they wanted their child to go to an Indian teacher, in preference. Now you had some, they wouldn't say anything, but they'd rather have the Indian teacher. And not knowing nothing about either one of the teachers, their preference would have been an Indian.

But you can see why, with the kind of background they'd been exposed, they just had more trust in the Indian teacher. That was common. And I think it would be probably true with the black. I didn't really have enough black students to see a difference, and I didn't make no effort to try to make sure black students were with a black teacher, I didn't try to do that. Wherever they fell at, that's where they—. And believe it or not, I'd never tell nobody, but I would have made assignment, like if we had 150 fourth graders, I would have the secretary, we had an alphabetical list of names, and she'd start 1-2-3-4-5, 1-2-3-4-5, and that's the way they was assigned. I didn't know any other better way of doing it.

MM: Yeah, that seems like a fair way to do it.

JD: Of course, I had to take the cursing, you know.

MM: I wonder if we could go back a minute to what you were saying about tenant farming in Robeson County, because I've heard other people comment that the reason the educational system was the way it was prior to integration, was to basically undereducate Indians and blacks especially, to keep them willing to do tenant farmer work. And so that there would be steady supply of Indian people only, who were here, who could not leave to pursue other educational or job opportunities. Is there anything about the system as you observed it at that time that would lead you to that conclusion, or is there a different conclusion that you would have drawn?

JD: No, I think some of that was true. Maybe out of necessity, because you take a tenant farmer, they was at the mercy of the landlord, so they had no other choice. You didn't have the thing of, if I don't like this job, I'll go to another one. And too, the white landlord would demand that the work be done, and at that time a lot of the work was hand work, so a lot of your Indian children, they didn't really start to school until a week or two before Christmas. They would go and register and then had to stay home to work.

And when you have a large population of uneducated people, in this case Indians, they really didn't see—in other words, you could push them that way, and they were being used by the white people, but they didn't realize it. A lot of them didn't, they really didn't realize it. See, they didn't have enough

education to see beyond that. So they didn't resent it a whole lot. I don't know if they could have did anything about it or not. And that is the difference, when you come up around Pembroke, the people around Pembroke, they were more educational wise. They kept their children in school. It would be interesting if you could go back and look at the attendance, say, take a typical grade, fourth grade, that had 40 students in it, down in, let's say Green Grove. And look at their attendance record for the first two months of school, or three months of school.

MM: Now, Green Grove is where?

JD: It's down between here and Fairmont. That was in the area where you had all Indian, but they all were tenant farmers. And they would stay home. But now I can tell you another thing that happened, that would be—it would screw up that record. I know teachers that would go to school and had 40 enrolled, and they would have two students.

MM: In the class?

JD: In the class. And that happened more than one time. Now, my wife worked one year down there, and that's the reason I knew. But you see, another thing that some of the Indians did, and it was illegal. Every month, you had to have a report of school attendance. Your teacher allocation was based on the number of students you had in daily attendance. So it was almost—in

many cases now, I don't know this ever happened in Pembroke, I do know some of the outlying schools, if you could get somebody that was there, they'd probably verify that. They would mark students present when they had never been to school. And you say that was terrible, but they knew this: if they didn't do that, come next year they would have, around Christmas, they would have 65 students. See, the student was there, but they was home. They would have 75 instead of 40. They called that padding the bluesheet. If you talked to old teachers, and asked them what do you mean by padding the bluesheet. I guess Mr. Maynor would be able, Mr. Waltz would be able to answer that question. You ask him, "Dad, what was somebody talking when they talked about padding the bluesheet."

MM: He'd probably know, because he taught at Fairgrove, and they would have had a lot of that too.

JD: It's true now. But you see, that's something that you wasn't supposed to tell. And I don't really believe it was that wrong, because that was survival, that was the teachers surviving, you see. And too, if we lose a teacher, they wouldn't have had the course attendance, the teacher won't have a job. If somebody told you that, what would you do? This is your livelihood. You see, there are different angles to look at it.

MM: And so that situation was pretty different in Pembroke.

JD: Yeah, it was different in Pembroke. As I say now, I taught in Pembroke, and I never padded my bluesheet, because the students around Pembroke, they came to school. Now, our attendance the first two months of school wasn't too good as it would be later on, but we would have enough to get by. And now another thing, you see, we had an all-white board then, and about the first six weeks of school or so, you have half a day school attendance. You'd come a half a day. And that was designed to help the attendance some. And at Pembroke when we had half a day, they would come and go back home and work the other half.

MM: I wonder too, I know that in a lot of areas closer to Pembroke, some of the landlords were Indian, like Dad for example, was a tenant farmer for his father. And there were some families that worked out that kind of arrangement. Do you feel like that might have had any impact on school attendance?

JD: Do you mean positive?

MM: Positive or negative.

JD: You find that the more educated a person was, the better, the more interested they was in education, to see that their child went to school. That was my observation. You see, up until we had integration, we had a large—we've still got a large segment of the population that has little education. Some

of them went to school, some of them will say, well, I went to school till I was in the 7th grade or 8th grade, but they really just went here and there, a little bit, not very much. So a person like that, they don't think the same way, their thinking is not the same. Now, it's much easier to deal with a person that has been exposed to education, it's easier to deal with them. They can see the need of it, more so.

MM: And would sacrifice more.

JD: Yeah, they would sacrifice more. And they supported your school better, too, to make sure their child had paper and pencil and all the things they needed to have to work with in school. During this time, you got no money for supplies, and you had to provide, the parents had to supply the paper, and we would have what we called fundraising activities, you've heard tell of that, you know, sales stuff, things like that to give them a little money. Now, they had a system, and Harbert Moore at Prospect was one of the ones that had a lot to do with it. The state would provide so much money for library books to the county, based on the population. But the county at that time—before we integrated our schools—the county administration would say, now, “we'll give you one dollar for every dollar you have to buy a book.” That's the way they did it. Knowing that the Indian school wouldn't have any money, so you end up not getting any books. And then all the books would go to the white schools.

MM: So they wouldn't give you books at all unless you had your dollar—

JD: You had to match it.

MM: —to match theirs.

JD: It was called matching. And Harbert Moore, now, I remember, he's the first one that I believe went to the board, and they changed it. Because it was mandated from the state that the money be distributed on a per-pupil basis. In other words, if you had 15,000 students, and you got money based on 15,000, and if you had 300 students in a school, you were supposed to have got some share of that library money. And Mr. Harbert Moore over at Prospect, he was the first one I knew that really took a stand. He went down to the Board of Education and fought that. That wasn't right, because we don't have any money, and the money that's coming to our children, we're not getting it. It's going to the white schools.

MM: Did the Board of Education argue back with him?

JD: No, they changed, because they knew if it had been contested, they'd have lost. They changed the system back. I don't remember it, but they didn't change it overnight, but it changed.

MM: What do you think was the impact of having some Indians on the school board?

JD: That was good. It was good. See, you know about the double-voting, and it was a guise to control the Indian school completely. Because what happened, whenever a person was on the board, you see, the way it was set up there, the people in Lumberton could vote for our board members, the county board member, and yet they had no students coming to the county schools. They could always, you didn't have a chance to put nobody in office. I mean, they could vote for their person, and we couldn't vote for theirs, but they could vote for ours.

I don't know how, to tell you the truth though, why people didn't rebel. Now that's the one thing, it's kind of hard for me to understand, even Indians, why they didn't rebel earlier on that deal. But like I said, it is hard to change custom. For instance, we had no deputies, all the deputies in the county were white. I think Craig Sampson was probably the first Indian. And it came up some way there, the sheriff did, Malcolm McLeod, he was the sheriff then. They got to talking about that, why we didn't have no Indians. So he appointed Craig Sampson, he was the first Indian deputy. But now, he could not lock up a white or a black person. He could only work with Indians. But the white could work with the Indians, black, and white, you see. Of course, you know, we have an Indian sheriff today. I had reservations about seeing that day, but it has happened. But you would think a system that unfair, people would have just

rebelled against it, but if a thing's been going on and on a certain way, people don't really see the need of getting out there and making a change in it.

Change is hard, and change comes slow. I don't care how wrong it is, it's hard to get people to change. Now, that's been my experience.

MM: What do you think it finally was that made it happen?

JD: I think that's where maybe the black people had some influence on that, you know. They got to talking about what they didn't have, and you had some black people that lived in the city—I mean lived out-of-state—and they would come back and talk to the blacks. And some of the Indians, we got to listening to that and thought, well, you know, we don't have no Indians.

But when we began to run for office, for a long time we couldn't elect an Indian, because the blacks would always side up with the whites. And I don't know whether that was out of fear or what, but the whites really was better, they'd rather see a white person advance, more so than the Indian. Now that's something I'm not really sure about. I don't know why it was that way. But they didn't want to see an Indian get in a responsible position. They were somewhat afraid. Well, I think one thing, an Indian was more independent than the black. Even today, in Lumberton, you've got just a few black people to control the black votes. You don't have nobody among the Indians can do that. Now, we've got some prominent Indian politicians, but you don't have nobody

can tell you or tell somebody, well, the Indians will go for so-and-so. We go to the polls and vote the way we want to.

But now that exists today, the—not completely, but even in that day, the blacks, you had just a few, about 3 or 4 in Lumberton, and the white people get with those and they could use them the way they wanted to. And Indians wasn't that way. They would say, when they were hardheaded, you never could tell them what to do. So we were sort of our own enemy for a while there, because in order to be effective voting, you've got to kind of vote in a block. That's about the only way you can really do it.

MM: Right () white control, you've got to do it that way.

JD: If you've got two white people running now, or three, ever how many, if the Indian said we'll support a certain person, and they get their Indian vote, they can decide whether or not that white person will go in office or not. And in turn, when he does get in office, he's going to have to make some concession to the Indians, because the Indian put him there, so to speak. That's the way that politics began to emerge.

MM: In the 1970s.

JD: Yeah. That's when it began to emerge. And the Indian found out that that made a difference, so they latched on to it.

MM: Now you were at Pembroke until 1995, which means that you saw the school mergers, county, city units merge, and also the consolidation of the high schools, Pembroke and Prospect and Maxton. Describe for us—just speaking about the high schools, when the high schools consolidated, how did you feel about that event. What did you see as leading up to it? What were some of the circumstances around it?

JD: Well, here in Pembroke, I really think it was a mistake on our part. Consolidating the high school didn't help the Indian. And it hasn't been helping to this day. But what happened in Maxton, it was independent, and they voted, themselves, to join with the county. In return, the county promised that they would—they'd begin to get pressure from the state, that your high school had to meet a certain standard. And Maxton didn't have the money to bring theirs up to that standard. Red Springs, same way. So Maxton got together with the county, some of our county people, and said, well, we'll merge with you and we'll put all our money and build one school. And of course that's what happened. But, you see, we had more to lose, because now, at Purnell Swett, it's still predominantly Indian and black. Most of the whites, a lot of them moved or did some way. So we'd have been better off, and I'm a little prejudiced here, we'd have been better off with an all Indian school where we'd have had control of it.

MM: So it was whites and blacks in Maxton that were doing this, or mostly one or the other?

JD: Well, Maxton, there were the whites and the blacks, but once they did it, the whites got out of it, they went to private schools and what-have-you. The administration in Maxton, the pressure was on them to do something, and that's the way it turned out to be. And I think the county, we were somewhat naive at that time. We didn't really understand. See, we could have made it on our own then, we were big enough we could have had our own high school, wouldn't have had to joined up.

And Mr. Swett, it was his decision that it would be best to go, and he fought hard for it. I disagreed with him on that. I thought we'd have been better off not to have done it. But you know, it was hard to convince people, because at that time, to have a comprehensive high school, you had to have a large number of students. And you could have more offerings and everything. It sounds good educational-wise, but if you didn't know the culture and the climate.

Now that was a setback for Prospect, because they had their own little high school there and they had a good program going, and they really have fell, into the Purnell Swett. It's hurt that community. They don't have the pride anymore that they had. What I'd like to have seen them done is to build our

high school somewhere between Pembroke and Prospect. I think we'd have been better off. Now, that was my thinking. And there's a lot of other people thought the same way at that time. I think if you talk to McDuffie Cummings, he was on the board, and I think that he might could give you some enlightenment on the dealing and how he felt about it.

MM: So then the county and city schools merged, that was just a few years later, wasn't it? 1988 that those schools merged. Was it a similar kind of situation? How did that develop, the idea?

JD: The state began to put pressure on the school system. You'd have like Rockingham County school, and then when you come to Robeson County, you had Robeson County, you had Maxton City, Fairmont City, St. Pauls City, and it just got to be a big joke. People in Raleigh, they didn't understand how in the world, why we're doing that kind of stuff. They started mandating that you had to be a certain size and you had to maintain a certain standard. So what they were doing was pushing them to make them integrate. The state don't have the authority to consolidate, but they can put enough pressure on the school system, they have to make some kind of a move. And I think that's what they did. I think really, even though we voted for a school merger, but I think the big push came from the state, that you've gotta make some changes. And that's the way it came about. Lumberton maybe could have survived, except these

others could not have. They couldn't survive. Fairmont couldn't have had their city on the school system.

MM: Just because the resources weren't there?

JD: The resource wasn't there. And the same way with Maxton and Red Springs and St. Pauls.

MM: Actually, I had one more question about the high schools. How was it that Red Springs and St. Pauls and Lumberton got to keep their schools?

JD: Well, they had more students. Their schools were larger. They had more resources. Lumberton, you see, at that time had a special tax, and they paid the regular school tax plus they had a supplementary tax. So they had a larger number and more resources. And St. Pauls, now, I'm not sure that they had a supplementary tax or not, but they were far enough away from Lumberton, they had a good size high school. And so they were, and the same way Red Springs, they were (). Maxton was really the one that was on the bottom, because it was the smallest.

MM: What about South Robeson? Which schools—

JD: That was Rowland. You see, you had the white high school in Rowland, and then you had Fairgrove, which was a Indian high school, so South Robeson turned out to serve both of those. And it worked fairly well down there, too.

MM: Well, they haven't had the same number of white students to leave that area, have they?

JD: No, not the same number. Now, they still have a whole lot proportionalized more black and Indian. You still have a lot of the white students. They've got Avalon Academy, and a lot of them go to the private schools, still.

MM: What do you think has made it work better down there than at Purnell Swett?

JD: Well, I think that people just wanted to register down there. What Indian was down there, you know. They was just sort of fell in line, so to speak. And the same way with the black and the white, there wasn't enough of them to really fight it too much. So what they did, they just started going to () the private schools, and most of those went to private schools.

MM: What do you think I haven't asked that I should ask about? Is there anything, experiences that you've had or just aspects of the issue that are important?

JD: No, I can't think of anything that would make a impact that you haven't talked about. Now, we still have today, I don't know how you would say it, but you have a jerking for position, control, for instance, like in the superintendent, now of course, is white, but then his main lieutenants is white. And when we

had an Indian superintendent, I think Purnell Swett was fairer, because he was the first superintendent we had Indian, and he tried to be as impartial as possible, but you have to see, like if you've got three assistant superintendents, you've got to have a white and a black and Indian. You just about have to have that. Most people wouldn't understand that. They'd say, "well, you know, you get the best qualified." But the best qualified person may not work in that position, because of the way people feel about him.

And right now, we're having problems with our board of education, because the board, I think the white element in the board of education now is pushing for more white control at the central office, and we've got quite a controversy now, and the Indian is resenting it. I guess you can read in the paper, you know, that the new superintendent, he's been trying to get some assistant superintendent and the board won't approve him. Because if he recommends a white one, in some of the position, well then they feel like that ought have been an Indian. Or a black. So that's the reason I say, you just about have to, in order to have any harmony, you've got to equal it out. You've got to have a white and a black.

And you can see, too, because of roles models. One of the most higher positions you have on the central office, besides the superintendent is the associate superintendent or assistant superintendent—whichever title they give

him—for human resources. He's the man that had a lot to do with personnel. The person that controls personnel, you can control a lot. And we don't have one of those now. It's been vacant ever since the new superintendent—they fired the one they had Johnny Hunt, which was Indian. They got rid of him. And the Indians want the Indians, not necessarily Johnny Hunt, but they'd like to have an Indian. A white wants a white. And you kind of have to have an inside knowledge to understand why some of the things goes on like that. Normally you'd think, well, they're just a bunch of dummies, they don't even know what they want, but it's a little more than that.

MM: Well, it's interesting that race is still controlling the political process.

JD: It is, very much so.

MM: And the schools, it's still controlling it.

JD: It is, very much so now. We integrated and all, and that's not the problem, but race is there. And it ought not be there. Now, I'll be the first to admit it ought not be there. But now how are we going to eliminate it, I don't know.

MM: With the history of this place, it'd be tough.

JD: You know, there's some old saying I heard somebody say, that you have to know where you've been to know where you want to go. You have to know that about a person, you have to know where they've been to know where they

want to go. And you can pretty much predict the way somebody want to go, if you know where they've been before. And that's what happened here in the county. We've got too many been there, so (laughs).

MM: Well, I think maybe they thought it would bring—I don't know who thought this, I thought, I guess, that bringing in a superintendent from the outside, just somebody that totally wasn't from here, that maybe some of those control issues would be lessened somewhat. But I reckon he's still white, even though he's not from here.

JD: Well, I think more so than the superintendent, it's probably the white members of the board of education. You don't really know what he would do and how effective he would be if he got cooperation of the board members. So I'm not critical of our superintendent, because I realize what he's had to put up with. So you don't really know. He may be a good school man, but he's not effective now.

And that's what I was trying to tell you about the teachers, you know, the fact that we had 12 white teachers come into Pembroke Elementary School. You say, well, we integrated our teachers and all, but you had to understand that in many cases even the parent and the teachers, the parent didn't feel real loyal to the teacher. And that teacher living in Lumberton, she didn't feel that way because she was here because she had to go. It wasn't like they chose to

come, they had to. Of course now, it's different. That has improved quite a bit. Now you have teachers coming from everywhere. Some of them like it, and some don't.

MM: So did that change during your time at Pembroke Elementary?

JD: It was beginning to change when I left. It was beginning to change quite a bit. But those several years there, it was a situation, I couldn't say to the teachers, about a white teacher was real negative, but students, you can sort of see how a person could take that attitude. Let me give you an example now, and this is the black. You know, blacks are very conscious about names. You can use the wrong, I don't know what you called it, but with Prospect we had Mr. Can Chavis, you've heard tell of him. Now, he was a good school man, assistant principal at Prospect. He retired, and after he retired, he was doing some substitute work up at Purnell Swett. And if you know the people at Prospect, their vocabulary and their mannerism is somewhat different. One of the things they had, he said, "Boy, you'd better get quiet." You've heard that, haven't you?

MM: Mm-hm.

JD: I used that, I'd tell my grandson, I said, "Boy, what in the world you been doing?" Well, Mr. Can was at Purnell Swett and had this black student, and Mr. Can said, "Boy, I mean you better get in that seat and shut up." And that was

common among Indians. But you can't call a black person boy. Now, if you do, you've got a problem on your hands. And that's not any lack of a— it's just a cultural difference. Now I know when I was small, used to, Indians, some of them, would be called Croatan Indians. You ever heard that word?

MM: Mm-hm.

JD: Well now, where I lived at over there, if a white person would come there and mention Croatan Indians, they'd have beat him to death.

MM: Yeah, you told me that story the last time we talked about it. Beat him with the tobacco stick.

JD: Yeah, now I was small, but that did stick in my mind, all these years. And it was offensive, very offensive. And that's the same thing it is with some of the blacks, if you're not careful. You can not have no prejudice at all and make a statement, and it can be taken. And a saying we have among our Indians here now, and I'm conscious of this, if something comes up about, you know, the white, and this and that, and one of you will say, Mr. Allen will probably tell you, well, some of my best friends was Indian. Well, you hear a white person say that, now we were taught, that's the most prejudiced person you could see. You're trying to cover it up. My daddy always told me, he said, "Son," he said, "when a white person tells you that some of their best friends are Indian, you'd better move on." (laughs) Well, you know, that's not wholly

true, but there's some () in it. I mean, he had some reasons, people had some reasons for drawing that conclusion.

MM: It's amazing. Well, Mr. Dial, I feel like we got it. Do you feel like we covered it?

JD: Yeah, I think so. I mean, there's some—it's the sort of thing, I realize you not being part of this culture and all, of course I know you've been in and out, and that gives you some insight that a lot of other people wouldn't have.

MM: I wasn't raised with it, in the same way that a lot of people were.

JD: Yeah. But you probably can see through some of it, you know. And it's like I say, it's a thing you sort of have to experience to really—it's hard to tell it. It's sort of like being in a war, you know, now I was in a war, and it's hard for somebody to tell somebody else what it's like.

MM: It sure would be.

JD: A thing you just have to experience. And that's the way it's been with our race relations. But I feel positive today about our, I think we made progress. Now, I'm not still willing to say that we need to be completely race—what word will you use when you don't want to be race conscious at all?

MM: Race neutral, I guess.

JD: Yeah. I don't know that we're ready for that. Now, I support our tribal council. They're having their problems, but I think that has given a lot of our

Indians a better concept of themselves. At least you can hear our name, now Lumbee, when at one time you didn't. So I think that things are improving, I really do. Now, we're going to have some ups and downs, and right now, though, I feel our school system is not what it ought to be. And I don't have a solution for it. I just don't think it is what it ought to be. I believe it could be improved. Now, how, I'm not sure. We don't have the best school system by a long shot. And when I say that now, I'm not saying that the whites caused it or the Indian or the black. But it's just involved in the situation with all of us, that it's just not turning out, we're not doing the best job by ourselves. And to me, education is the best tool you have to fight ignorance, discrimination, or anything, education is your best tool you have, besides of course your law.

MM: Well, it's interesting that you brought up the law, because a lot of people wouldn't want the law to play any part of it.

JD: Right.

MM: But it seems that for those of us that aren't white and in control, you have to have both. You have to have both of them on your side, or you don't get equal access, equal opportunity.

JD: And the more educated a person is, the masses, that is, the more you can exert control. They can, even when you're a national political thing, I think the person that is educated, they can sort through the ramifications and make a

better decision. And I studied different government in the world, where you had dictators, I think democracy is the best in the world, but if you didn't—right now they're talking about forming a government in Iraq. If you don't have people educated, they can't have a democratic form of government. That depends on the people being able to make individual decisions based on logic and understanding.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Melanie Miller, March 2004