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N.8 Undergraduate Internship Program: Spring 2016

Interview N-0045
Sherdenia Dunn
7 April 2016

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ABSTRACT – SHERDENIA DUNN

Interviewee: Sherdenia Thompson Dunn

Interviewer: Charlotte Eure

Interview Date: April 7, 2016

Location: Ms. Dunn's home in Carrboro, NC

Length 58:46

Sherdenia Dunn was born Sherdenia Thompson in Orange County, North Carolina in 1945. She mentions that not all hospitals were open to black people at that time, and she was born at Duke Hospital. She describes the ways in which segregation made news difficult to get, and how even famous black entertainers playing in the area wouldn't be allowed at hotels and so would stay with black members of the community in their homes, which she describes as intimate yet sad. She emphasizes that black people were treated as second-class citizens. Ms. Dunn grew up in Carrboro and attended Northside School and Lincoln High School, both of which she remembers fondly as strengthened by community bonds; teachers were like parents to the students and acted as role models, and there were operetta performances and May Day celebrations. However, lack of supplies and resources constricted what she was able to experience and learn, and this frustrated some of the teachers and students. She grew up reading so many books that teachers would often ask her to tell stories to the other students to inspire them to read. Reading helped her become a better speller as well. She was valedictorian of her class in 1963. She chose to apply only to UNC, because she wanted to go to an integrated school that was also an international school to fulfill her aspirations of being a world citizen. She was accepted to UNC and received a tuition scholarship. She became the first black woman to enter as a freshman in September 1963 because she lived at home in Carrboro and did not require on-campus housing. She felt unprepared the first two years at UNC compared to the white students who had already learned a lot of the material in high school. One English professor criticized a paper she wrote in front of the entire class as clichéd, but she thanked him afterward and told him she hadn't received the proper preparation; after that, the professor worked to help her. She describes the tension she felt not just as a black student but as a woman. She especially felt resentment from the men in certain fields, like accounting. She describes seeking out an international community of foreign students on campus and working with the campus United Nations and the YMCA. One white man from France wanted to marry her and convinced her that prejudice is taught. She worked with tenth graders in the Upward Bound program at UNC and was planning to be a guidance counselor for the program after graduating, but was invited to take a post as a missionary, which was her first choice. She traveled as a missionary for 35 years until health problems brought her back to the US, where she later became a testing coordinator at New Century Charter High School, which became Hawbridge High School. She reflects on her father discouraging her from being involved in Civil Rights activism to stay out of trouble but expresses rooting for the movement and attending town hall meetings. She then tells the story of being tapped into the Valkyries at UNC. She never imagined she would be invited into something like that, because it was, like fraternities and sororities, so divided by race and class. She talks about supportive professors and faculty, like President Friday and Anne Queen. Her mother worked at the Health Services Library at UNC, and Ms. Dunn worked with her some summers. She discusses her position as Testing Coordinator at Hawbridge School and her methods for engaging students, as well as

the international atmosphere created by Dr. Marcia Huth at the school. She reflects back on her time at UNC as one that prepared her for appreciating and respecting differences and getting her out of her comfort zone. She talks a bit about caring for her mother and aunt, both in their 90s. She ends with a story about being in Puerto Rico on September 11, 2001, and the feeling of being American in that moment, as well as her hopes for people to recognize the bonds that bridge our differences.

This is interview is part of the Southern Oral History Program's project to collect oral histories from the first black students to attend UNC.

FIELD NOTES – SHERDENIA THOMPSON DUNN

(compiled April 7, 2016)

Interviewee: Sherdenia Thompson Dunn

Interviewer: Charlotte Eure

Interview Date: April 7, 2016

Location: Ms. Dunn's home in Carrboro, North Carolina.

THE INTERVIEWEE. Sherdenia Thompson Dunn was born in Orange County in 1945 and grew up in Carrboro, NC. She was the first black woman to attend UNC-Chapel Hill as a freshman and graduated in 1967. While there, she participated in Upward Bound, the United Nations, the YWCA, and was selected to be a member of the Valkyries in recognition of her academic and community achievements. Mrs. Dunn made a point to get to know international students and aspired to be a "world citizen." She traveled internationally for 35 years as a missionary after graduation and returned home due to health issues. She then worked for The Hawbridge School, a charter school in Saxapahaw, as a testing coordinator and tutor, for nearly ten years. She currently takes care of her mother and her aunt, both of whom are in their 90s, and is working on compiling her life history.

THE INTERVIEWER. Charlotte Eure is an undergrad student at UNC-Chapel Hill with a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and Communication Studies with a concentration in Media Production and Theory. She is an intern with the Southern Oral History Program, working on the Communications Beat and contributing to the ongoing oral history project on the first African-American students to attend UNC.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. I met Ms. Dunn at her home in Carrboro around noon after she had an appointment at the UNC Dental School. She greeted me with a great deal of enthusiasm and immediately started telling me about her experience at the dentist as though we were old friends. We sat down at the table in her kitchen at her request. She asked if the project I'm doing is at all related to the Town of Carrboro project, and I told her more about the SOHP and the differences in the projects. She told me about caring for her mother and her aunt in Durham, both in their 90s, and how they have so many stories about spending their whole lives in Orange County. She expressed interest in having them participate in oral histories. She then told me about her own plans to collect her memories through writing and photos for her nieces and nephews, and she showed me a notebook with writings about her life and a brief timeline of important topics. She brought out some collections of photos and a manila folder that contained an essay about her written by a former student and a copy of a letter Ms. Dunn wrote that was placed in a time capsule to be opened in 2033. These were full of information about her life,

especially her missionary work, and she requested that I read them and thought they might help me with my interview. She also wanted to get to know me before the interview, so I told her about where I grew up (and she knew of the small town Pulaski, VA where I spent the first 11 years of my life) and my majors. She was especially interested in the Women's and Gender Studies major and was delighted such a thing exists. She talked to me briefly about some students she worked with who both had parents in same-sex marriages. She wanted to know what kinds of questions I was going to ask, so I went over some with her, and in the course, she told some stories. There were many moments from the second I arrived that she would tell stories and I would be concerned that we hadn't started the interview yet and I wasn't recording. Once we started to record, so much prep work had been done that she mostly just talked without much prompting from me, telling a kind of arc of her life from childhood through Carolina to working at the charter school. She elected to keep personal information about her husband out of the interview due to its sensitive nature, which we discussed before recording. The interview was interrupted for a few minutes by a phone call, during which time I stopped the recording. After the interview, while asking for clarification on some names, Ms. Dunn retrieved a yearbook from her sunroom and looked briefly for the friend who was with her when she was tapped for the Valkyries. I told her I'd seen the Daily Tar Heel article about that happening, and after unsuccessfully trying to find it online at her home, I told her I would just send her an email with a screen shot of it. She asked me more about myself, and I told her a bit more about my family. She had to leave to go back to her aunt and her mother, but she gave me a hug before I left.

NOTE ON RECORDING. Recorded with a Zoom H4N checked out from the SOHP with a backup on my iPhone 6s.

TRANSCRIPT—SHERDENIA THOMPSON DUNN

Interviewee: SHERDENIA THOMPSON DUNN

Interviewer: Charlotte Eure

Interview Date: April 7, 2016

Location: Carrboro, NC

Length: 1 file; approximately 59 minutes

START OF RECORDING

CHARLOTTE EURE: So, today is April 7th, 2016. My name is Charlotte Eure, and I'm here with Sherdenia Thompson Dunn in her home in Carrboro, North Carolina. So, I was thinking we'll start with you maybe telling me a little bit about your childhood and where you grew up?

SHERDENIA DUNN: Yes, I was born here in North Carolina, but the triangle area--. When you're born, you say you're born in Orange County--there's no hospital, really, except for Memorial Hospital. Back then, in 1945 at the end of the war, when I was born, I was born at Duke Hospital in Durham. In that era, a lot of hospitals hadn't really opened--it seemed they weren't open to blacks everywhere. So, Lincoln Hospital was one of the hospitals--. Maybe my mom will talk a little bit about that with my aunt. They're in their nineties now. They can talk about how the medical situation was back then, but I know I was born at Duke Hospital. Many young kids were born through a midwife in that era, and my mom was born through a midwife or my grandfather delivered some of the children for my grandmother. That's the background I have. But, I was born in the hospital at Duke. But, I grew up in Orange County and in, really,

Carrboro, North Carolina, which is adjacent to Chapel Hill. I went to school at Lincoln High School, and that was the [19]50s and the [19]60s and the [19]70s--would be my childhood. So, I have the real experience of segregation in America for that era, and that was a time when there wasn't much news that you could get news of what was happening in some places. It was a lot of hearsay. You didn't have news channels where you could get the news, but you knew what you were going through. So, it was that era when entertainers could come through, but they couldn't live and stay. They couldn't get a night at a motel. So, it was an era when an entertainer or somebody famous like Nat King Cole or Moms Mabley would come through. They would have to stay with people in their homes, black people in their homes, so it was different. It was more intimate, and yet it was sad. It was sad, because I know many of them--people who were famous in the black race, they were still treated like second class citizens. Yet, they excelled. You have to admire how they excelled in their music, in their talent--it was fantastic. But, for my own experience, I went to Northside School near here when it used to be the Orange County Training School. Many people know about that, and my mom--. They even went to that. They went to country schools, but ours was like city education for those in town and could walk to school. For the elementary school, it was great. In those days, we had what you call operettas. I remember so well. They don't do that anymore for schools. An operetta was like a musical. Yet, a story and costumes, oh it was--then, we had May Days. The teachers would go out of their way to make those days so festive. It was something the community could enjoy, and the students could enjoy. Oh, I have great memories of those. By the time I went into high school at Lincoln High, it was still an all-black school [and] teachers and principal, of course. They had such a high standard for the students. They were role models for the students. They cared about you like parents. Your schoolteachers were like parents to you, and they were like parents to a lot of kids. Probably the only parents they had. They would have extra clothes in their little closet. If a child needed food or snacks, they would see the child got something to eat. It was that kind of

community living even in the school. The teachers felt responsible to be role models, as well as teach the subject material. Of course, they didn't have the supplies like the other schools. Our books were like the second-hand schools you read about in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. That kind of teacher, [that] education system was a lot like what we experienced. You expected that everything would be second-class. Yet, you had to learn with that. I'll never forget in my high school, I wanted to take chemistry. But chemistry, we didn't have a lab that was worth two cents. We just didn't have it, and they couldn't afford it. Our chemistry teacher was so frustrated. I'll never forget how frustrated he was. He would take us on chemistry field trips. Now, how can you be on a chemistry field trip? Just to get out of the class, because we couldn't do anything with chemistry in the classroom. So, I didn't dare take anything like chemistry when I went to UNC, because I didn't have the background. I didn't. I'd like to take it now, though. I might will someday. Anyway, so as I went through school, what helped me more than anything else was my parents had made the decision not to have a TV. We couldn't afford one anyway. The main thing is we had to read books, and I read books galore. I read books, and my imagination grew, being able to read books. It helped me with my spelling. It helped me with so many things--reading many, many books. Right through high school, I was excelling with spelling and--it would be nothing for a teacher to come in. They couldn't spell a word in another class. They'd come in and ask me to come to that class and spell it--write it on the board for them, even for high, upperclassmen. But then, another thing that the reading books did for me was, when we had any down times in class and couldn't carry out some activity that we were supposed to carry out, the teachers would turn to me and say, "Well, let Sherdenia tell a story from one of the books she's read." I would stir up kids to read, because I would tell the story that I had read. Then, they wanted to see the book. They wanted to read the story. That's the thing reading books did for me. Then I went right through high school and was pretty much excelling to the point that I did become the valedictorian of my senior class. But then, it was school, beyond high school, what

would happen on that? I didn't know what I would do. I didn't want to go to an all-black school for some reason. I just didn't. I wanted to go to an integrated school, and I didn't want to go to an integrated school where there were just American whites. I wanted to go to an international school. I wanted my education to be world citizen. To be a world citizen is what I [grew up] in education--the effects of a true education were to be a proper, world citizen. So, I applied for UNC. It was the only school I applied to. Now, that was risky in those days--to apply to only one school. If they didn't accept you, what would you do? But, I got accepted, because my college board schools were high now. And then not only that, but I got a tuition scholarship, which was very important for me. It was the only year, and the first year, that they allowed women to come in as freshman. I was the only black woman to enter UNC at that time as a town student, a woman, entering UNC. I don't know if that makes me the first. I don't think so. It makes me the first one to come in as a freshman and then-- that's basically it. There were upperclassmen. There were people in the nursing school women--probably black women, but I don't know all the history of that but--. So, that was in 1963. I graduated in June of 1963 and went into UNC in September of 1963. That was quite an experience for me, because coming from a segregated school, I was ambivalent about how prepared I was. My fears were confirmed, because I found out that many students came in and had had prep-schools or classes that the first two years, they didn't even have to study for. Evidently, they had the modern civ and some of the history courses. [Pause] It was hard for me. I really had to study. After those first two years, then it really told where we were, because we all had the same new material to face. Then, it told who would really find themselves and who weren't. I had some experiences too that were hard when it came to writing, being prepared to write. I realized I wasn't prepared to write. One English class, I especially remember, the teacher took one paper. He not only marked it up with red; he took it before the class and let them see how terrible I had written with all these clichés and not using anything novel--writing a lot that I had read--the way to describe stuff. After he did

that, I went up to him and thanked him. I thanked him for letting me learn something from the experiences, because I hadn't had the preparation that I should have had. Then, he realized that I hadn't. Then, he really helped me. He worked to help me more than ever, because he realized I didn't come from a background that I had been taught to really write well. I had learned to read, but I hadn't learned to write. Whole different thing. So, anyway, that's a little slice of life as a student. The most important things I learned about being in an integrated school--my first integrated situation--was not only the attention of feeling like you're the only black in the class, but being a woman in a university that was basically and historically men. All men. A lot of the men, you could see, resented having women come into certain fields--business, accounting--oh, it was a lot of tension. They didn't want to see you, a woman, in that field. Maybe they wouldn't admit it, but I felt it keenly. But, what I did do at UNC, which is very important, was to seek out an international community, meet with foreign students, go to where it was the United Nations branch college level, went to the U.N. with that group more than once. It was very interesting to do that. Another thing was the YMCA. The YMCA, in those years, was like a--maybe it still is, but it was always open to all nationalities of people. People would flow through there, and you'd meet students from different countries. So, I made it a point to meet foreign students and to work with the international student club and got to meet other students. That's how I ended up meeting a man from France--French. He taught me some important lessons about race relations, that prejudice is taught. He convinced me that he had not been taught prejudice. It was completely foreign to him. It was something that he couldn't understand existed here in America. So, that was good for me to grow to that point, to realize that that is truly--. It is possible for a person with white skin to not be, naturally, prejudiced. I always thought anybody taking the right circumstances, if they had white skin, they would show up one day as being prejudiced. He proved that to me that that wasn't the case. So, I didn't marry him, but he did want to marry me and take me back to France. I was impressed with his open-heartedness about that. He really,

sincerely, convinced me that it's possible to meet someone that has completely no prejudice. So um--

CE: What year was that?

SD: That would have been in the [19]60s, because I graduated in June of 1967. So, he was soon to start his masters in economics. So, he was going to be leaving.

CE: Was it your last year?

SD: He was going to be leaving, yeah, from UNC to another school and continue his work like that. Let's see, what else can I share at that level?

CE: So, you were a tutor for the Upward Bound Program, right? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

SD: Yeah, I did. I worked with Upward Bound. I got into that. I'm not sure how I got into that, but I'm very glad I did, because all the working with American students--. It was good, because I had a chance to influence tenth graders and inspire them to be on the right track. A lot of--what would you say--underprivileged kids got into that, but they had potential. So, you tried to have them get on the track towards--like I could say, it's upward bound. So, I had some good experiences working with that each summer. In fact, when I was getting ready to graduate from UNC, my first job would have been to be like a guidance counselor in that program to help kids a little bit more to be guided into applying for schools and thinking about schools as early as possible. But, as it turned out, I also had an opportunity to take a post as a missionary. I had applied for that, also, but thought it wouldn't come up until maybe ten years hence. When it opened up for September of 1967, I couldn't believe it. When it came up, I knew it was my chance to do that. This was like an international Christian group where you work in pairs and a lot like the Peace Corps. You go into a country or any area that you work, live among the people,

and help them with the Bible as your textbook to learn how to apply it to daily life and be good citizens. That's basically it. So, I did that in many different states, and then in many different countries and ended up working in the islands doing that work and enjoyed thirty-five years nonstop as a missionary. Then, my health failed. When my health failed, I was, basically, in the islands at that time--got some intestinal problem, and I had to come back to the states to [a] doctor. Then, I also had a cancer scare in 1995. That affected my health in the sense that I had to watch people watch. [I had to be on a "cancer watch" for my health.] I had a lumpectomy in that year, but I had to keep a watch on my health no matter where I would go, get mammograms, and keep a check on what was happening with my health, because I didn't want to stop travelling, and, yet, I didn't want to take it in radical surgery, because it would've stopped me from being able to carry a suitcase. So, I survived about ten more years until, finally, I got a problem that I thought was, maybe, the cancer, but, really, it was an intestinal problem from something I ate one day. People were giving me their best. They always give you their best, but it may not be uncontaminated. So, that's what happened. I went back to Puerto Rico and went to a doctor, but it was already too late. The parasite had latched into my intestines, and I suffered with that until I lost about nineteen pounds. Then, I came back to the States to take care of myself. Then, I realized I wasn't going to get back on my feet to travel. So, I started doing some different things. So, I volunteered, first of all, in a program where you do income taxes. I volunteered doing that, and I volunteered in a reading program with kids. Then, I ended up volunteering--. No, it was really for pay. This was a substitute teaching at a school, a charter school. But, the principal saw me working with the young people, and she called me aside and asked me, "Are you going to be able to go back and do your missionary work? Because, I understand you're taking care of your health. If you're not going to be able to do your missionary work, when you're better and able, consider working with us." So, I really appreciate that, because she gave me an opportunity to train for a testing coordinator, and I became the link between the state and the school, keeping all

their testing materials and testing processes in order, and office manager work. I really enjoyed it. Plus, I worked with the students at that school, New Century Charter High School, as it was called then. I worked with students to remediate them with math and reading. It was great. I had seen, in my travels, schools where kids were struggling to have school, because of storms and school facilities in disrepair. Oh, I had seen in the Marshall Islands, kids didn't even have a school, outside in the elements--and the Philippines, also--out in the elements, trying to have school. Very limited opportunities for education. I wanted to come back to the States if it ever came a time I wasn't able to travel, I would go to schools and volunteer to put a tack in their chair, make them realize, they needed to take advantage of their opportunity to get a good education here, in the United States. Not just in-school education, but to be self-motivated to study and research as an individual. Whatever material they're studying, go beyond what the classwork is--the required work is. To do a self-education. That's what I wanted to inspire them to do, which is possible, here, in the United States. It's possible to take your own--take it in control and learn everything you can learn. Boys and girls, learn all you can. Let your teachers be stepping stones to guide you. And, I did it. I did that with students. I was always talking to them. Getting them inspired to learn the best they could. So, that was my life. I started out in the [19]60s. My family, my father was the type--wasn't the type to get us involved in civil rights. He feared us getting involved too much in the Civil Rights Movement. He didn't want his children in the marches. He didn't want them getting jailed, because he felt that it would have repercussions later. So, he kept us sheltered from that, but that didn't stop us from rooting for everything that was going on and keeping up with it, and attending town meetings, and keeping up with the history that happened during those days. So, I do have memories from that time. As I was telling you, Charlotte, I just feel that a lot of times, people misunderstanding what it was like in the segregation years. American blacks lived in a subculture. We felt like we had a full life. We had a wonderful life in our culture, but outside of it, it was oppressive. It was like a ceiling

that you couldn't get beyond. The things you could do, you could enjoy. The foods were fantastic. We had wonderful foods, wonderful years of childhood playing from neighborhood to neighborhood. Our neighbors were our parents, when our parents were working. You had another neighbor who could give you a spanking as much as your parents could. That's the way we lived. You didn't have to lock your doors, which was wonderful. It was a different era, then. Now, kids in integrated schools, I wouldn't even begin to tell what that was like, because I didn't know what that was like. For my childhood, I have good memories, but I still feel sad that I grew up in a time where to go to a post office even, go to a bus station. Colored. White. Go to a water fountain. Colored. White. It was weird. Yet, when you would be in the midst of other Americans, whatever they were, even if they were foreigners, you felt like they were invisible. You didn't even see them. Your eyes were open only when you were in your own neighborhood--stores, activities where black people were. Then, you saw people. You recognized them. You could speak to them. Otherwise, you had to be careful. You wouldn't assume you could get involved with the speaking to people who were not black people. As a child, you were trained well to stay in the confines of your culture. So, that was a reality. Something else I was going to mention, though, when I was at UNC, I was tapped into the Valkyrie. That was an unusual experience for me. It was the honor society. I didn't have any idea what it was like. So, I was living at home as a town student, of course, because that's the only way I could be attending UNC at that time. But, this experience was unusual. How would they tap me into that unless I was in a dorm? So, the way it turned out, was a student that I knew well, invited me to spend a night with her in a dorm. Now, that was very unusual. But, I was open-minded to do that. I hadn't had any dorm experience. So, I said, "OK. I'll spend a night with you in a dorm." My parents agreed I could do it. I went to spend the night with her. Well, we were getting ready for bed, and all of a sudden, I had my hair in these large pink rollers. [Laughter] We were getting ready for bed and down the hall, comes this [Pause] banging and sounded like parade clanging and going on. They

come to the door of the dorm room where I am, and they have this, I guess, a citation in their hand that they're reading and saying they need to take me away, and I'm dressed in bedclothes, really, and rollers in my head. They're going to take me away that night. I didn't have any idea what was going on. So, they did take me away, blindfolded me, took--I went away with them. My friend, there, "Don't be afraid, Sherdenia. I'm going to be with you." But, I had no idea what was going on. We were taken to, I later found out, was a church and put in a sleeping bag, slept on the floor the rest of the night. The next morning, early, at about five o'clock in the morning, they came for us again, took us to the top of the bell tower. I was hardly dressed for something like this. Again, we got this citation that you're being tapped into the Valkyrie. It was really an honor, but what an experience to go through. Can you imagine this could have happened in my neighborhood? Could it have happened? No way. My neighbors would have thought the Ku Klux Klan had come after me. Really. It was so weird, but they did get it accomplished. It was in the newspaper. I need to find one of those copies of that newspaper. I had been tapped into the honors society. I guess I was relieved afterwards. The best part about it was, this honor society stands for something that is a little unusual. It's like the Valkyries were women who helped people in need. They even went on the battlefields, from what I understand, and they risked their lives to help people and encouraged them to fight the battle. That, that really became the motto of my life is to live like that. Not just for knowledge, education, but, really, for living. To have tools like that--more than knowledge, but qualities, virtues that can help people fight battles through life. So, I'm glad I'm counted in with that--. What would you call it? Like a mantra, to live like that. Not just for a one-time honor thing or have a little pin or have a name on a plaque, but to have that calling and see the need. To actually have eyes open and see people in need and want to help them. To get victory in their lives. That's the way it's been. I've met many wonderful people in my missionary work, seeing them change and grow. It still is my goal.

If I can be a help to anybody, to help them with life and whatever life deals to them, that's what my life is still about. Do we have any other things we need to cover?

CE: Well, I'd like to know how you think living off-campus impacted your experience as a student.

SD: Well, living off-campus--a lot of kids lived off-campus now. But, the first years, you can't really live off-campus, because you needed to focus more on your studies. I had managed it, because I had to. I don't know. I don't think I missed anything about dorm life. I was sheltered from some of the things that happened in dorms. But, working with Upward Bound, I had a little chance to dorm life, on-campus life, but then we tried to protect those kids from getting into too much trouble. Anyway, I could walk to school. That was good. Then, a lot of my activities at school involve me traveling, like we did going to the United Nations with the Y, with the UNC United Nations Club. So, I really don't think it had much effect. It didn't hinder me in any way. It kept me grounded in ways too, because no matter how much I moved in a month, people, at that time in integrated situations, it kept me grounded that the real light was outside of school. You have to keep yourself levelheaded about that when you're an American black. You can't get yourself carried away that you're going to be able to do outside what you can do at the school; you know? Facts are facts. At that time, you had to keep yourself grounded about that. You couldn't do everything you could do at the school out in society and feel like it was OK. Even mixing with other students. Now, maybe they do it, but you couldn't back then. You couldn't go to parties and all that stuff with other students and not involving sororities and fraternities too. At an integrated school, even [at] American black schools, they have sororities and fraternities. You see? That's still separate. I think that's still separate today. They might have some mixing, but it's not very mixed.

CE: So, what was your social life like? Like your first year?

SD: My first year, very little. Like I said, what we did was--I looked forward to meeting international students. But, when I would meet them on campus, even anybody brown or black, I would gravitate toward them to talk to them. Like I say, it was an education for me to realize, "Here's somebody that has the same color I am, but their culture is completely different." You don't have that much communication as you think you could have when the culture is different. It's good to get broadminded and learn about that culture, which is great, but when you've really got to interact and find how much you have in harmony, you don't. I could have more harmony talking with somebody who was willing to talk to me who was of the opposite race than with somebody who was my skin color. I found that we had the same foods, read the same books, we know about the same activities. You could have a lot you could talk about with people who were willing.

CE: How do you feel you were treated differently by the men versus the women on campus?

SD: Well, I really think that back then, there was some tension, because of that being an all-men school. I felt that. And, I don't know if during that era, when a man chose to go to an all-men's school, that was their mentality when they went there--not going to a co-ed school. So, that they could focus more on their studies and not be distracted by women, because UNC had its counterpart of the women's school in Greensboro, and they would interact from time to time with activities. You know how that went. But, to have women in their school when they are focusing on being an all-men's school, that was an adjustment for them. We were encroaching to a certain extent. I think we were, but certain professions is what you have to realize. That's what I finally realized. Certain professions are limited. They don't want women in them, and I felt that keenly. It was more about being a woman than being a black. It may be still, today, that there are some professions still like that today.

CE: So, were you very involved in any of the student protests or activist groups on campus?

SD: No, on campus at that time, I don't think we even had anything. If any students came out, they came out of the school to be with the community. Now, it's more like things that happen at the school, activism in the school. At that time, which was fantastic, there were students who were brave enough. [Phone rings] When I was a teenager, when I was in high school, students who came out and participated in the community, that was-- [Recorder is turned off and then back on] because, my father was very strict with us on getting involved in too much community stuff like that. He feared there would be repercussions. Maybe even on him. In the past, it has been facts that if blacks got too far out of line, they could lose their job. My father tried to be self-employed. He was getting business. So, that was the pressure. At best, it was hard. So, if his children or he was participating in things that were troubling the waters of the status quo, they could suffer for that. Back then, that was crucial.

CE: Do you feel like or how do you feel your experience of race, maybe, changed from your first year to your last year of school, if at all?

SD: Yeah. I think some. Not a lot, though. Not a lot. It depends. I wouldn't have dreamed in my wildest dreams of the world of fraternities and sororities. From the beginning to the end, I don't even know what happens now. But, that was completely on the other side of the world as far as I was concerned. I wouldn't even have thought that I would have been invited to anything like that. Even though my father worked at fraternities, my aunts--I mean, that was part of the--. Blacks in the communities worked in those sororities and fraternities. That was part of some of their main state jobs and got good pay for doing it. Even the food that was left over that the students didn't want, a lot of black kids grew up on that food. Really, fraternities and sororities--. But its black children participating and being on that level, I

wouldn't even think of it that I would ever be accepted into something like that. Maybe some whites feel that way too that they wouldn't fit into that. It's a class thing right. It's a class thing. So, some things like that would never change. But, as far as the school teachers, professors, some of them acted better by the time I--because when I first met some of the first professors that I met, even they looked like they were put on the spot. They didn't want to be too friendly. They didn't want to be too outgoing towards you. Just all business. Deal with your work and all. That's it. Nothing extra. You know President Friday? I'll never forget him. There was something very approachable about him. Why did I have any contact with him? I think it was because when you had to do your tuition scholarship, and you had to get everything renewed, and he would be reviewing your grades, I don't know why I would have contact with him sometimes. He would always encourage me and how proud they were that I was there and continue to qualify to get a tuition scholarship. It was great. I'll never forget that. He was so nice about that. I do remember him. I don't know if he was the president. He had to be, I guess. I don't know why that's not so clear to me. Another professor that was great was Dr. Geer. He was a history professor. Old people know the Geers, anybody who knows Chapel Hill. His wife worked with the public library. They were great people, but he was a great professor. He was open-spirited. Who was another one that was really special? Oh yeah, this Anne Queen. She was with the YMCA at that time. She was a fantastic person. She would reach out to anybody of any culture, and she would open her home to students to come and have tea. Her home would be open for kids to come and sit around the floor, drink a cup of tea, and talk. That was a nice atmosphere back then. I'll never forget that. Then, I got into some honors classes that were special. I'll never forget that. The sum of the classes were no more than ten students. It would be an honor class. You can go out and sit on the lawn, and you'd write special papers. Oh, those were great times. Those things, I'll never forget.

CE: How did your interactions with the other students maybe change throughout the four years?

SD: Like I said, up until--I should show you a Yackety Yack and the pictures I appear in the yearbook. It was always with some foreign student activities like that. I made sure that if anybody came from another country, that I would be there to meet them and get exposed to what they had to offer coming from their country and the different languages, the different foods. We had international dinners. That was special. So, we did things like that. I felt like that was true education. They had a lot to offer. There really were people from all different countries. I remember. I made sure that I spent my time like that to meet them and to greet them and to follow-up what they were doing while they were here. My mom, she worked at the health affairs library with the medical school. Her work affected me too. She was doing library clerk work coming from the education she had and background and worked as a maid. Then, she got into working with her boss that she was helping her in a home. This woman offered her a job to come to the library--shelf books, repair books, all kinds of stuff like that. She was working with books in German and learning the German to file them properly, shelve them properly. So, it was great. That spilled over to our--it made us have something in common. She was at the university, as well. Her background didn't hinder her from learning as much as she could. When computers first came out, that was the era. We had those IMB--no, the IBM cards and all that stuff. My mom, she was there when they had the first computers in the library. It was some time to be in on when that first started. I'll never forget that, running those IBM cards, doing surveys and stuff, and running them through those machines. Clackety clack and all that. Oh, it was something.

CE: So, were you helping her out sometimes?

SD: Yeah, I did. For summer work, Ms. Everett, who was running the library at the time--she was one of the head ones. She would give us work to do during the summer and help

pay for school. That was great. I did work over there at the [Health Fairs] library. Yeah. Let's see if we can think of anything else to cover. That school that I mentioned--the New Century Charter High School is now Hawbridge, and it still exists up there in Saxapahaw. That's a wonderful-- I got really impressed with charter schools and what they can do. No child falls through the cracks; you know? Wonderful atmosphere. That school, particularly the one that when I worked there, Dr. Marcia Huth was there. Part of her vision was to create an international atmosphere for the students. So, she would have teachers and some of them were professors at one time--that she would have to come and interact with not only teach the students--. She had Chinese. They had African. They had Trinidadian. They had all these different nationalities, and we'd have international dinners there. It was the greatest atmosphere to work in and kids--American, black, and white--, and then, a few Spanish. But, not a big student population, but it was an international atmosphere for an education. It was wonderful. It blended right into my life. A continuation of my life's work to there at that school.

CE: You were a testing coordinator and a tutor over there? So, what did that involve?

SD: Yes. At that time, it's changing. They're trying to get away from too much testing. But, the school and the teachers and the students were under such pressure to make high scores on tests. Because of that, in math and English and all that with the school's rating and funding depended on those test scores. The teachers and the students were agonizing over making high scores. That school, from the time I started with it to the time I left, they progressed exponentially. They were making such low scores to making more and more progress each year with the testing. That wasn't really our goal. Our goal was for them to have a well-rounded education, but it was having that effect. It had that effect of them being better at math. These were kids who had failed in other schools. That was such a thrill for me to see that happen. I really liked the testing. I'm not against the testing, but my philosophy about the testing is more

like--when I would work with the students, I would get them prepared to the point that they could walk with me down the hall and spit out to me--whether it's math or biology or whatever. I would zap them with questions. You've got to have this in you enough that you can spout it out to me--not from a paper or book--but you've got to be able to talk to me about this and have these answers, because you have thought about them, and you can spout them out on your feet, walking with me down the hall. That's when I say you're ready for that test. When I test them like that, I'd use materials. It didn't matter what the material involved. I would put it on a level they could almost run or jog with the paper and understand it. It didn't matter if it was fifth grade level. If it was the same material, that's all that matters. Make it as simple as possible for them to get the concept. That's the way I worked with them. So, I would do it in illustrations or whatever I needed to do--games, whatever-- so they would get the concept. Then, you can make this as complicated as you want to, later, with journals and all this scientific knowledge. Let them get the concept, first, in a simple way. That's the way I worked with them. Then, I would test them. They knew when I came up to them, they better know what they needed to know, whether it was multiplication tables or whatever. They had to know it without any supports while they're walking and talking with me. It was fun. I enjoyed preparing them for that testing.

CE: So, how do you feel when you think back on your time at UNC now? What kinds of feelings do you have?

SD: I'm glad that I went there. I'm glad, because it got me out of my comfort zone. That's for sure. Like I said, it prepared me later when I met people from all over the world and different places and different cultures. I could appreciate their language, their foods. Like I said to that young student, I learned to eat all kinds--and respect it. If they had to eat crickets and recognize that it was safe to eat, and it was protein, I could respect that. I ate that thirteen-day-old egg in the Philippines and realized that it was safe to eat. It was a hard-boiled egg. It was a little

duck in there, but I learned to be flexible enough to say, "I can try this." If these people have learned to survive this way, I can respect that and learn to do it too. It was fun. When I was in the Philippines, I would take a bath in the river. Oh, the different things, the experiences I had in some of those places of their lifestyle. This is their lifestyle. But some of those poor homes, guess what they had growing in their yards? Orchids. Beautiful orchids. So, God has a way of balancing things out. They might be poor, but they had riches at the same time. You have to see that it's amazing. So, I've learned. The French language--I was taking a lot of that when I was in school. Then, I had to learn a lot of Spanish. Then in every country that I went to, I always tried to learn to speak their "thank you" in Korean, kamsahamnida. Just learn to speak whatever, at least be able to say "thank you," "hello," a few things that you could connect with a person with in every language and every that I went to. You can look up in the library in the sunroom--all kinds of language books I had. Tapes and languages, that's me. I love it. It was great. Just great. So, here I am now, seventy years old, but there's a lot yet to discover here. What I do with my mom a lot is get on YouTube, and we'll do--. I call them classes. We'll do music appreciation, or we'll do history. I like to go back into the era when she was growing up. People who sang songs that they knew back then and let them hear them again, learn about people that they heard of but never learned about them, like they wanted to learn about them that they know existed. I heard my aunt say the other day--she went to the armory and, actually, had a chance to hug and kiss Nat King Cole [makes noises with objects in room], to greet him when he came to this area. So, it's a lot of things, the riches of their memory that needs to be activated. When you activate it, they're losing their memory, yet there's so much there you can activate, and they can tell you more about it, that a book couldn't tell you. So, I like doing that with them now. I've worked with them a lot. Get on YouTube and find things. They'll tell me even more about it. That's the way it's going to be when you talk with them [Flips papers].

CE: Is there anything else I didn't ask that you'd like to talk about?

SD: Well, I'm scanning here. I was away from the States when 9/11 happened. I had arrived in Puerto Rico. To have that happen when you're in a foreign country, it was devastating. To hear about the homeland--it makes you realize how American you really are. You grew up in a situation of segregation or whatever, but when it comes down to it, you're American. That's a good note to end on. You feel it when the homeland is devastated in any part. You're in a foreign country. It's some feeling that you feel for America. All I could do is say, "I've got to go back and see it for myself." I couldn't believe it happened. That was the first thing I wanted to do when I got on American soil and landed in New York, was go down to Ground Zero and see it for myself.

CE: What was that like?

SD: Oh, it was awful. In Puerto Rico, there was this atmosphere that everybody was crying for America there. I'm glad I wasn't in a place where they would be happy it happened. But, there, everybody, all the neighbors came out where I was in San Juan. They were weeping about what happened. Then, when I came back to the States and went down to the area and actually saw it, I could hardly take it in. It was an awful feeling. I hope, someday, we'll have a world that it will be safe for everybody. That's the thing. Like I said, we're all bonded, because we're human beings. We all should be bonding. The sooner we can learn that, the better. The better we'll be.

CE: Well, thank you so much for speaking with me.

SD: You're welcome.

CE: It's been a real pleasure.

SD: Let me get something else in. I'll look for some of the pictures that you might be able to add.

CE: That would be great.

SD: I'll see what we can do about that.

END OF INTERVIEW

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