

Interview

with

BARRY STANBACK

February 9, 2005

by Gerrelyn Patterson

Transcribed by Chris O'Sullivan

The Southern Oral History Program  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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**Transcript – Barry Stanback**

Interviewee: Barry Stanback  
Interviewer: Gerrelyn C. Patterson  
Interview date: February 9, 2005  
Location: NC Central University in Durham, North Carolina  
Length: 1 cassette; approximately 30 minutes

**START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A**

GERRELYN PATTERSON: This is an interview with Barry Stanback in Durham, North Carolina. It is February 9, 2005, and we are in his office at North Carolina Central University. The interviewer is Gerrelyn Patterson and this is part of the Spencer Grants Project on school desegregation in the South and will be used as part of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The tape number is BS2905. Mr. Stanback, can you tell me when you attended Hillside High School?

BARRY STANBACK: 1972 through 1975.

GP: Tell me what you remember most about being a student there.

BS: The comradery of the student body and the pride in Hillside.

GP: I keep hearing about--. First of all, your face is lighting up when you are thinking back. I keep hearing about this Hillside pride, some people said it was the thrill on the hill, what is it though?

BS: I think it's just the history of the people that attended Hillside. When you talk about Hillside's athletics, the band and the tradition of excellence in academics, it's not just one thing that is Hillside pride. It is just a wonderful, wonderful feeling. I went

to Durham Academy from the second through the ninth grade, and my parents were adamant about me staying at Durham Academy. They wanted me to stay at Durham Academy because they knew that I would get the best academic training possible. I was adamant about going to Hillside.

GP: How did you win that fight?

BS: My brother.

GP: He went to Hillside?

BS: Yes. He convinced them that I needed a more well rounded life. I don't regret one minute of it because I got the academic foundation I needed at Durham Academy and it continued at Hillside. I also got the well roundedness because I went to Hillside.

GP: Okay, I am hearing a couple things, academics and well roundedness. Tell me specifically a little bit more about each. Talk to me about what the teachers were like.

BS: We had excellent teachers.

GP: Who were your favorites, who do you remember?

BS: I remember Ms. Christopher my French teacher. I remember Mr. Bowens my Chemistry teacher.

GP: Tell me about him, because his name has come up.

BS: He was a hard core Chemistry teacher, very serious about his work but he cared about his students. All the teachers at Hillside, all of them, every last one of them cared.

GP: How did you know they cared?

BS: It was just obvious by the way they taught and the way that they talked to you. The way they disciplined you and the way that they made you work. Ms. Compton, Ms. Corbitt, Ms. Lucas. Ms. Lucas was not my teacher, Jeanne Lucas, but she was like another mother. Ms. Cousin. It was like we all came to Hillside and the teachers were all sent there to make--. We had a hell of a class. I would say--probably everybody says this--but we probably had one of the top ten classes that has ever been there.

GP: Every person I have interviewed has said that. [laughing]

BS: Well, they are lying.

GP: Because yours was one of the top ten right?

BS: Yes, of course, absolutely.

GP: What makes you think you had one of the top ten classes; did the teachers tell you that?

BS: I don't know that the teachers told me that, but just where people went to college afterwards and what people did afterwards was amazing. We had people go to Harvard, UNC, Duke and colleges all over the country. We had Morehead Scholars and Angie B. Duke Scholars, so we were in it. We were in the mix.

GP: Top notch. You told me that the teachers cared about you, the way they taught, how they talked to you and that they made you work. Did you feel like in addition to those things that you got any other special messages sent to you as a student?

BS: Yes. The message was to not rest on your laurels. Don't think that because you are in the National Honor Society at Hillside that you are going to be an A student at Carolina or wherever you go. Don't think that if you are an A or B student at Carolina

that you are an automatic success. They started preparing me for real life, not just life after high school and they were good at it, they knew what they were doing.

GP: So tell me about some of the other things, not just academics. Were you in any clubs or anything?

BS: Oh yes. I played basketball.

GP: Okay, I have to stop you there because I have heard about the football team, I have heard about the band, I have heard about Mr. G. ( ) school and I don't know if it was still there while you were there-if it was I want you to tell me about it-and I have heard about the track team. I have not heard anything about the basketball team.

BS: Well, you are getting ready to. I came in the year after John Lucas left. John Lucas was probably the greatest basketball player to ever play at Hillside. Although there were great ones before him, like Goat Long and God, they had so many great basketball players at Hillside. They didn't get the publicity that John got. I was a basketball superstar at Durham Academy; I mean I was a basketball God at Durham Academy.

GP: You were Shaquille O'Neal!

BS: I was Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal and all that wrapped up into one. I averaged probably twenty five points a game and one year we were undefeated. Here's a little tidbit of information [phone rings-tape stops]

GP: Okay, you were about to tell me one tidbit of information.

BS: In 1971 or 1972 Durham Academy started getting a little bit of publicity in the sports section because of its basketball team. We were good, we were beating everybody. Back then there were not that many private schools, but we were beating all

of them. So, my name was in the paper quite a bit and the summer before I went to Hillside I went to a cook out in a park on South Alston Avenue, what's the name of that park. It was brand new at the time, I cannot think of the name of it, but it's still there. I got beaten up by a bunch of students that were about to go to Hillside the same time that I was.

GP: Because?

BS: Because I went to Durham Academy and I was a basketball star and they were angry at me because of that. Actually I didn't get beat up, they jumped on me and I kind of went crazy. If you are by yourself and you had five or six guys jump on you, the only way to survive that is to go berserk and just start swinging and kicking and just go crazy. So that's what I did. I did not have a problem a day after that at Hillside, because after that they respected me. I wasn't the bourgeois negro from Durham Academy; I was a crazy nigger at that point. One of the reasons I wanted to go to Hillside was the band.

GP: Were you going to be in the band or did you--.

BS: Yes.

GP: Could you play something?

BS: No, but I'll get to the band in a minute. I went out for the basketball team and made it. I started on Junior Varsity and we were sixteen and zero, and then lost two straight games. Our coach was Bill Hayes, the athletic director at this fine institution. I need to go by and see him too. Coach Hayes after our second loss, one was on Friday and one was on Tuesday, he made us come into the gym which was known as the rabbit box because it was so small. He made us come in to the gym during our recesses, lunch period, whatever free time we had and run suicides in our socks and clothes. Our junior

varsity team was so good that people came to the gym to watch us run suicides during lunch.

GP: That means y'all were good.

BS: We were good.

GP: Y'all were great if people came to watch you run suicides.

BS: Well, they came to watch and laugh at the same time. I think we ended up twenty two and two or something like that. The best player in my class didn't play for us, he played varsity. That was John Harrell. My junior year we were good, I think we lost in the first round of the state tournament. My senior year we were very good, we won the conference championship over a very good Durham High team. We went to the State playoffs and made it all the way to the semifinals, which is the Final Four basically. In the first round we set a record that still stands for the number of points scored in a state playoff game, which is one hundred and ten points, in thirty-two minutes of basketball. We beat Charlotte Olympic in Charlotte, in their gym and the headline of the Charlotte paper read something like when Hillside comes to town, you better have your running shoes on. I mean it was the headline of the Charlotte sports section. In the quarter finals we beat Kinston in overtime ninety to eighty-seven, and I hit the basket that put it into overtime. Our coach was Willie Bradshaw. Coach Brad was saying dammit while I was up in the air taking the shot because he did not want me to take the shot. John Harrell, who was the star of our team, who actually went to Duke on a scholarship was supposed to take the shot, but he wasn't open. I was the point guard, so I had the ball and I took the shot and I made it. We beat them in overtime, and then we lost in the semifinals to Enloe. I think Vance won the state championships that year; they beat Enloe, or was it



Reynolds. I can't remember who won, I didn't care after that.

GP: So the basketball team was doing some things too!

BS: Oh yes, I don't know why nobody has talked about it--. We rocked.

GP: Nobody has said anything about it, they said sports in general, but it was always the football team and the band and the track team. So, y'all were rocking too.

BS: We rocked from the time that John Lucas was there, which I guess was 1969 to 1972 through when I was there and then they were still good after that. I cannot remember a period when Hillside's basketball team was not good. There were times when they were great, but they were always good. Even now, they are good.

GP: Tell me about other things, you said Mr. G's Swing School was still going on? Mr. Gattis, right?

BS: Mr. Gattis was still--. It was hilarious. It rocked, now I wasn't in it because I didn't have time. I was playing basketball and in the band, I'll get to that. Mr. Gattis was a very, very unique man.

GP: I have heard, but I am not quite sure I know what made him so unique.

BS: He was a genius; he was an absolute musical genius. He was also the organist at my church, at ( ). That is where I really knew him from. John Gattis had the ability to take people who had no ability and bring it out, and there were plenty of people at Hillside that were talented. My God, there were talented people there! Mr. G's Swing School, I had forgotten about it until you brought it up. Mr. G's Swing School was his creation and it still exists in some shape or form there now, I do not know what it's called but I can assure you there is some form of Mr. G's Swing School. It was just a musical play that rocked; I mean sold out, standing room only every time it was presented. I can



remember wanting so badly to be in it, but I just couldn't. First of all I had no talent and second of all I just didn't have time even if I had had the talent. It was a wonderful production.

GP: Who went to the play?

BS: Everybody.

GP: Everybody that went to the school or people from-

BS: The community. Hillside was not just a school, it was a community treasure. That's why-and I may shed a tear right now-it tore me up when they tore that place down. It tore me up.

GP: Why?

BS: That's my high school. That was Hillside and not to be able to ride by there and see it is really painful. It really is painful and every time I see Chancellor Ammons I say to him you never should have done that. I don't care about expansion; you could have kept a part of it. You don't tear down something that meant so much to this community. I am really upset that the leadership in Durham--because I wasn't here when they tore it down, I was living in Tennessee--did not take more of a stance on it. They could have kept something, the gym or the band room or something. Anything, even just a statue or a plaque or something, but there is nothing there. Nothing!

GP: What about the Hillside pride and spirit?

BS: That will always be there, but what do you show your child? This is where I went to high school, but there isn't a high school there it's a college dorm or whatever the hell it is. I mean they could have kept something, and that just bothers me. They even left all of our uniforms and tapes of games up in the locker room of the old school. They

didn't take any of that stuff out. Most of it was destroyed by pigeons and weather. D. D. Mcallister, my teammate and classmate, managed to salvage some of it. Even John Lucas' old jersey was up there. That's history and why they left that stuff in there I do not understand. When they built the new Hillside they just left that stuff there and I will never understand that. But, the band, my second reason for going to Hillside...

GP: I want to know how you got in the band if you didn't play an instrument.

BS: Well, I had taken piano lessons from Ms. Cook. I flunked out of piano school and I am told I am the only person to ever be put out of piano. So I had a rudimentary knowledge of music. Mr. Edgerton basically let me in the band. For some reason I had a rhythm and I do not know why, I went to a white school, but I had rhythm. I had been going to Hillside games and parades and for some reason I picked up the cadences. So when I went to try out for the percussion section, which is now called the drum line, I knew the cadences. I have no idea why, I just knew them. I played tenor drum my sophomore year.

GP: Did you have a good time?

BS: Oh my God!

GP: I was in the band so-

BS: At Hillside?

GP: No here.

BS: At Central? Back when it was sorry or when it-

GP: No, it was good. We went to the state championships, well not the state championships but the-

BS: When?

GP: Late 1980s, ( ) Harvey was there. We were good, we were still loaded then.

BS: Okay, well there was a period where y'all were the nifty fifty.

GP: No I wasn't there when it was there, I had heard of them.

BS: They were horrible.

GP: My first year we had about two hundred people in the band and we were still rocking, but it dwindled.

BS: It went south in a hurry.

GP: Okay, but we won't go there though. Did you have a good time?

BS: Oh God, the band was the bomb. It was the bomb! I mean, oh my goodness, it was so much fun. I can't even remember anything that I have done since that has been as much fun, and that is the God given truth. I cannot remember anything that I have done since that was as much fun.

GP: Okay, so what made it so much fun?

BS: I don't know, it was just--. We rocked and everybody loved Hillside. In the parades we had to be the last band, in every parade we were in other than the Mardi Gras because everybody followed us. Here's the funny thing, my junior year I played the bass drum. My senior year Derek Harrison and I talked Mr. Edgerton into having two drum majors. It was the first time Hillside had ever had two drum majors and I was one of them. I went from having no background in music whatsoever to drum major.

GP: Wow, you had a ball.

BS: Oh my God! We put together a routine to the theme from Soul Train that I don't know how I thought of it, but it was legendary for about fifteen years.

GP: The Soul Train routine?

BS: The Soul Train routine, I still remember parts of it. I am not going to show you--.

GP: Okay. [laughing]

BS: If you played the song I could probably do the whole routine.

GP: What was the response to the two drum majors?

BS: People loved it; people were like wow you have two drum majors. We were the first high school to ever have two drum majors. I got it from Central, because Central had two drum majors. One of them was light skinned and I can't remember his name and the other was real dark skinned named Sarge. I remember him very well. I thought why can't we do that, and we did it, we talked Mr. Edgerton into it. Mr. Edgerton said he was not spending any more money though, so if you can get by on what you have then you can do it. We went to Whitted Junior High-Mr. Mcallister, D.D. Mcallister, my college roommate, my high school teammate. His father was the principle of Whitted. Whitted was closed by then I guess. Whitted had a band and they had a drum major uniform and Mr. Mcallister remembered that. So we went up into the attic of Whitted one Saturday morning and found it.

GP: And it fit!

BS: It fit. It was the wrong color though. Mrs. Edgerton made the what do you call the vest plate or whatever, she made one and she replaced the stripes on the pants and I found a beat up baton in the attic of Whitted. We had a parade before school opened; I don't remember what it was for. It went from R.N. Harris up through McDougal Terrace. I don't remember why we had that parade or what it was for, but we had on our uniforms and the rest of the band just had on blue pants and white shirts because we didn't have

enough uniforms for the damn near two hundred people we had in the band. People went nuts over two drum majors. They went nuts, it was amazing. I was like a celebrity. Kids were running out trying to touch you!

GP: I'm sure, I can imagine.

BS: It was amazing! We won all kinds of awards that year for the band. My senior year was a dream, it was an absolute dream. Semifinals in basketball, won all these awards for the band, won an award in Florida--. The band went to Florida and I couldn't go because we were in the basketball playoffs and Coach Bradshaw wouldn't let me go. The year before we went to Mardi Gras and we won an award there in the longest parade I have ever seen in my life. Hauling that big assed base drum--. Oh I forgot this is on tape. My senior year was an absolute dream. I think I made straight A's maybe a B somewhere, we made it to the semifinals in basketball, I won the conference in the long jump and the triple jump--.

GP: You were in track too?

BS: Yes and played baseball.

GP: How did you run track and play baseball? How did you make both practices?

BS: I did. I did.

GP: Wow.

BS: I was in the National Honor Society, the French Club and some other club. I had a ball. I loved Hillside.

GP: It sounds like it. You know I have been talking to a lot of people about Hillside so I think I am starting to get a general sense of things, even though I did not go

to a school even remotely close to Hillside. Is there anything more I need to know to understand why it is such a special place for people or for you?

BS: John Lucas Sr. was the best principal that ever lived.

GP: Why do you say that?

BS: Mr. Lucas just had a way with his administration and with his students. He made us believe in Hillside and made us believe in ourselves. I still love him to this day. I talk to him every now and then because he goes to my church. I don't know if you have gotten this from others, but it is almost indescribable because it is just that Hillside pride. In fact, we have a class meeting tonight--.

GP: I should go and talk to everyone.

BS: Go, Go!

GP: No, I cannot go without an invitation. You would have to talk to them first.

Let's finish the interview first.

BS: I'll try to talk to Angela Jenkins Scott.

GP: Okay. That's the piece I'm ( ), it does seem to be indescribable.

BS: It's today at six o'clock. Do you know where the Delta Sigma Theta building is? Do you know where Forest Hills is? Do you know the street that runs--.

GP: University? Chapel Hill Blvd.?

BS: No, it's the street that runs into Chapel Hill Blvd. beside Forest Hills. Whatever the name of that street is, that's the street that the Delta Sigma Theta building is on, maybe two blocks from Forest Hills. If I can get in touch with Angela I will call you and let you know if it's okay for you to go. I can't be there because I have to referee a game. It's at six and my game is at six thirty, so I can't be there.

GP: So your class still meets?

BS: Yes, we have our thirtieth-year reunion this year.

GP: So, is that what you are all planning at the meeting?

BS: Yes. Also, one of the things we are planning is a Hillside and Durham High alumni basketball game. It will be players from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, well maybe not the 1990s. It will be the Durham High players from the 1970s and 1980s against the Hillside players from the 1970s and 1980s.

GP: Is that a big rivalry?

BS: Oh God yes.

GP: Massive?

BS: Massive.

GP: Who usually won?

BS: [pause] I would say Hillside probably won the majority of them, although when we were there Durham High had a better team than us. We beat them more times than they beat us, but talent-wise they were better than us.

GP: Did Durham High have an integrated team as well?

BS: Oh yes.

GP: When you were there were there--. I know that *Brown vs. The Board of Education* was in 1954, then we had all these stall tactics in North Carolina and then it is my understanding that Hillside did not really have a large contingency of white students until the 1970s?

BS: Yes.

GP: So when you were there in 1972 through 1975--.



BS: We had a good number; I would say that probably about twenty percent of our student body was white.

GP: Do you think the school changed because of that?

BS: Yes, for the better.

GP: Tell me, how so?

BS: It just made it more like real life, there were white people there and that is reality. There were rich white people, like Nello Teer's daughters and a lot of faculty members from Duke had children at Hillside. As a result of that we had a really, really, really good girl's tennis team. I think they may have won the state.

GP: Were the white students integrated into all the activities? They were in the band, on the basketball team and in Mr. G's Swinging school?

BS: Yes, yes, oh yes.

GP: In the chorus?

BS: Yes, especially in the band. We had white people in the band that by the time they left Hillside they actually had rhythm. [laughing] When they went into that band they went thinking that they could just play in the concert band and not have to march, but Mr. Edgerton didn't play that way. We taught them, they taught us and we taught them.

GP: Are they part of the reunion class? When you have meetings are they a part of the group?

BS: We had a white class president, Fred Ship.

GP: Oh did you?

BS: I was vice president and he was president.

GP: You were vice president too?

BS: Yes.

GP: So when you all get together there are white people at these gatherings, former white alumni?

BS: Yes, oh yes, and I will tell you this, they love Hillside as much as we do.

GP: You think so?

BS: I do.

GP: Why do you say that?

BS: Because it gave them an experience that they could have never had anywhere else, and we treated them like gold.

GP: So they were treated--.

BS: Very well.

GP: Do you remember anything more about school integration? Did it have any other meanings for you and your family?

BS: It did for me because I think that is one of the reasons that my parents ultimately consented to letting me go to Hillside.

GP: Because it was integrated?

BS: Yes. Also because Mr. Lucas explained to them how integrated my class would be and how integrated the faculty was. About three or four of those teacher names that I gave you were white teachers. That meant a lot to my parents.

GP: So Mr. Lucas talked directly to your parents?

BS: Oh yes.

GP: You had him to call them?

BS: Oh no, I let my brother handle it. My brother is ten years older than I am so he intervened and I just don't know where I would be if I hadn't gone to Hillside. I probably would be somewhere up north, probably rich as hell and miserable. [phone rings tape stops]

GP: You were saying you don't know where you would be if you had not gone to Hillside, probably rich in New York.

BS: Probably rich in New York or Boston or somewhere, really, really white acting, married to a white woman and miserable.

GP: Why do you say that?

BS: That is the route I was going.

GP: How did Hillside change that route for you?

BS: Hillside brought me back to reality. Hillside brought me to the realism that this is my home and this is probably where I need to be. As it turned out, that was very true. I have been able to take care of my parents, I have a wonderful son and I have a lot of people who care about me here and a lot of people I care about, including your mother. I know that if I had stayed at Durham Academy and progressed the way I was progressing I would have been at an Ivy League School or somewhere, and I would have never come back here.

GP: So it grounded me.

BS: It grounded me--. Thank you, it grounded me. That is the perfect word, it grounded me.

GP: You kind of touched briefly on how you thought the class being integrated helped you gain some things like getting to know each other, helped you learn one another and how it helped you navigate the real world. Do you think anything was lost?

BS: By integration?

GP: Yes.

BS: I always think that things were lost due to integration, not just at Hillside but just in general. We lost a lot of our identity; we lost a lot of ownership. If separate but equal really meant separate but equal then I think we may have been better off because we still would have owned things, there still would have been a black Wall Street in Durham. There would be more black banks, there would be more historically black colleges and universities and they would be stronger. However, it never was separate but equal and it probably never would be, so in the long run integration probably is the best thing that could have happened. It has its detriments and its drawbacks, but in the long run for your children, my children and our grandchildren and us, it probably is the best thing.

GP: Why do you think the best thing, why do you say that, what did we gain?

BS: We gained a sense of equality.

GP: You said a sense of equality.

BS: Yes, it still isn't equal. I mean that there would be less equal if they were separate, but because we are an integrated society there is at least more of an appearance of equality because there has to be. If we have another Republican administration in Washington for eight more years after Bush, then that appearance of equality won't even exist. You are going to see more Morris Brown's out there that close. You are going to

see probably one third of historically black colleges and universities close down because there is no emphasis on keeping them alive. They are on life support as it is now, the private ones.

GP: Do you think school--and this is in general, not just about Hillside-- integration could have been done better?

BS: I don't know the answer to that. I really don't because how else do you do it other than busing? How else do you do it? I don't know.

GP: Do you think there are things that are important for those of us who did not go through that time period to know or to remember about school desegregation?

BS: I think the important thing to know is that there was segregation and that many, many great African Americans came out of segregated schools. Remember also that those great people had great teachers that helped make them great. Once desegregation occurred, the faculties of those desegregated schools got better and the facilities got better. The training or the education that came out of those schools consequently got better and I think the people that came out of those schools were more well rounded and diverse. That's what needs to be remembered.

GP: Another general question, what do you think schools can do better now to help educate black students?

BS: Wow. I think we have to have more teachers that are committed to black history, what I describe as ancient black history and recent black history. I also think that more teachers need to do what I try to do in the classroom, which is to talk about issues that students can relate to. I will start out in my textbook and start talking about an issue in the textbook and I will draw it into a current issue, and then I will leave the textbook

alone for the rest of the class. I think the system is too test oriented and too standardized test oriented, and that may just be because I was not good at taking standardized tests. I don't think that standardized tests are a good judge of the kind of person or the professionalism a person will exhibit down the road, and I think that is important.

GP: So what do you think is important for us to learn about the legacy that Hillside has left this community?

BS: Hillside has left a mark on this community, some good and some bad, mostly good. The good marks are the tradition, the pride--.

#### **END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A**

#### **START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B**

BS: --high level of teaching, the high level of athletic excellence and excellence in the arts. Here is the bad thing that it left; I can remember a cheer that the stands used to do at basketball games. It was "if we lose, you lose" which meant if you came to our house and you beat us, we were going to beat you. We were going to rock their bus and we were going to kick some behind. So, if there's a bad thing about Hillside's reputation at that time, it was you did not go to Hillside and win and come out unscathed.

GP: So those things really happened?

BS: Oh yes. Oh my goodness yes. We rocked many buses, and notice I said "We." I came out of the locker room and threw a few rocks. Just remember that Hillside--I hate to do this, but you almost have to--the old Hillside and the new Hillside. The old Hillside tradition, it's almost like the Army and Marines tradition, honor and pride. It comes from the type of person that is created at Hillside, because people didn't come to Hillside with that pride and honor; they got it when they were there. It is just

instilled, or it was. I don't know whether is still is or not to be honest with you, I kind of think it's not.

GP: Do you know anything about the new Hillside?

BS: Yes. I know that it is a good school and they still have good basketball teams and good students that come out of there. I know that they are still very proud of their band, although I don't think they are nearly as good as they used to be.

Unfortunately that's what I look at because I know how much pride we had in a straight line and a cadence that was tight and I don't see that now. I see them marching down Fayetteville Street looking into the crowd and waving to people. If we did that, Mr. Edgerton would have pulled your behind out of the line and have you walking beside him. Seems that that is true everywhere now.

GP: Times have changed.

BS: Times have changed, times have changed. There still is Hillside pride, I just don't think it is as strong as it used to be, but what else would I say.

GP: Right, what else would you say? [laughs] Is there anything else you want to tell me that maybe I didn't ask a question about?

BS: Go Hornets.

GP: Thank you Mr. Stanback.

## **END OF INTERVIEW**

Transcribed November 2005 by Chris O'Sullivan