

**Dorothy Craig**

WILLOUGHBY ANDERSON: Today is Monday, November the 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The interviewer's name is Willoughby Anderson. I'm at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute archives in Birmingham conducting an interview for the Oral History Program's Long Civil Rights Movement project on school desegregation in Birmingham. I am here today with Ms. Dorothy Craig. If you could please say your name, we'll see how you are picking up.

DOROTHY CRAIG: Dorothy B. Craig. [break in tape] You have my name.

WA: Okay, we have your name. We're recording. So these are life history interviews so we like to start with hearing a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up and about education at that time.

DC: [whispers] ( ) repeat my name.

WA: No. Go ahead.

DC: I grew up in Chilton County, the peach county. There were five sisters of us, no brothers. My father was a minister and a principal in Clanton. My mother was a first grade teacher in Jemison, that's still Chilton County. We had a very well, memorable childhood I thought. We participated in various activities there. All of my sisters attended college. All the brother-in-laws. My husband also is a minister or was a minister. He's been dead about three years and was a professional marriage counselor. We have one son. He lives in Atlanta now. I'm a graduate of Alabama State University and both of my degrees, but I have studied at other schools, Samford, Birmingham Southern, and I don't have degrees from those, but I have studied at all of those and Columbia. We went to Boston University for several years when my husband was working on a doctorate. I live here at 100 Tenth Avenue West.

In coming to Birmingham right out of college I started working at Tarvel Elementary School. I worked there for a while and then one day during the summer I guess it was about '67 or '8 I received a call from the Board of Education. They were unaware of what it would mean or it was, and the assistant superintendent, I've forgotten his name now, told me to come in. I kind of wanted to know what had happened or what was wrong. He did ask me, he said, "I have just a few questions I would like to ask you." He said, "What do you think about teaching people of the opposite race?" I told him that I felt that I could teach one child, I could teach another. It really didn't matter. He said, "Thank you." That was all. Later on I was told that this was, what this was for. He didn't say he was going to have me moved. He said, "Well, thank you very much." That was the main question he asked me. So during the fall of, I think

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it was '87, there were, seems there were thirty-two teachers that were sent into the, at that time, white schools.

WA: '67.

DC: Yeah, I think it was the year '67. Because I have it down here, but anyway. We were sent into the white schools at that time. All of them didn't go to Graymont. They were scattered around in various sections of Birmingham. I think I was the only music teacher that was moved. It worked out fine there, but many of them had problems. They were told that they didn't need any more teachers and all that kind of thing. But it worked out fine. I was very close to home. During that year, well, the principal was very nice. Mr. Tatteresi. I have his name if you don't know how to spell it.

WA: Okay.

DC: He was very nice. Italian young man. Since they knew we were coming, they seemed to I guess have worked on it. They wanted to make everything work because I did not—now I don't know of any other problems – I did not have any problems particular problems there because they were extremely nice.

During that year many things happened. Graymont, I think school started around about the 30<sup>th</sup>. It was a very old school, one of the older schools. I participated in the Christmas festival with my little choir. First time they had had blacks in that. But the teachers were nice. I didn't feel any difference. And the black festival that was going on when I came into the system was held in the spring. So that year I was not in it because I was in the Christmas festival that usually lasted about two days, two nights. They had it two nights. Also during that year, I'm going to tell you what happened, you can put it where you want, that school came into the PTA Council. No blacks had been into the PTA Council. So the principal sent the PTA president which was a black, very outstanding lady. She died about a year ago and the council. She did say that she was greeted, said she was at the wrong place, but nobody did anything to her. She told them that she was president of Graymont's PTA and out of that she was the first black president of the PTA Council in Birmingham.

During, yes and during that year well, we had little problems, but they were the same problems you would have any place. They were human problems I thought. We never had a lot of problem children. It's really the problems. They were pretty easy to handle. Oh yes, during that time well, I really didn't

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particularly want to go because I didn't know what I would run into. That was the first time we had, they called it breaks, but it was called preparation periods. We just worked straight through other than lunch. We did receive preparation periods, which helped a lot. We attended, the group I worked with – I was head of the fine arts group – and we attended about four concerts a year, symphony concerts at the civic center and about four children theatre concerts a year. It was a school that was on the go. They did a lot of things there. I thought it was a very up-to-date school. The children were very alert.

Now Graymont School, I finally found some of the history. You might not believe it, I couldn't find it anywhere in Birmingham. I was appalled, and I went to the main library. They didn't have anything. That's why they had it down there. I found the man who had worked at the Board, and he told me he thought he could help me especially when I was on this discussion here that we had here, *Brown versus Board of Education*. He had a lot of very good information, and the school was the first school in Alabama. You had all types of tales, but it was the first school in Alabama. At that time I think they said Alabama was 144 years old. But it was the first school to be integrated, Graymont itself. That's why I say you hear so many things. I have been around people who say I was the first to go, well, it didn't mean anything. They would say that, but you pretty much know the first people that went there, and we did many things that we had not experienced and many things we had experienced. The school had many well-planned field trips. We took the children to operas and things like that. I enjoyed it very much. At the beginning of the next year, you had more blacks. We had a black principal. We still had white kids.

WA: In '68 so there was a black principal at Graymont.

DC: When I went there it was white. Mr. Tatteresi.

WA: Right and then the next year—

DC: Yeah, as usual it starts kind of changing. We never, at the time I was there, had a lot of problems. Graymont was in a nice neighborhood back over there then. We never had a lot of big problems those you read of now. Maybe because the children were always pretty busy and on the go and had something to do. So we kept pace with all the latest trends with diversity or where they were going, the festival of arts. We had an art department. The lady was very good. Any type of contests, we won because she was a very good artist. It was that type school. So I stayed there until it closed.

WA: When was that?

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DC: The school was closed in '90. No, it wasn't '90. It wasn't. I think it was '89, '88 or '89.

Yeah. Then at that time I moved to another school. But it was quite an experience. Oh yeah, we found an amphitheater there that they had years ago. So we took a day and on a spring day and the children all helped and we, they had rakes and things and cleaned it up. It was really nice. I hadn't been to an elementary school where there was an amphitheater, and it served us well because any time we had a big program they had it out in the amphitheater. They would take the keyboard out and even the little eighth grade graduations we had them out there. I wrote out a grant and they gave us some things that could be used in the amphitheater. I guess it's still there. It's JCCO now. It's now across from the museum theater. That was about the biggest thing. I enjoyed working there.

Now at that school was integrated as I said in '64, '63 or '4. There were no black teachers so that was about a four-year period. I look in my notes and see to be exact. We had the Armstrong boys. They lived not too far around in there. They really were the two that integrated that school. But I think in the next two or three years there were a few more blacks who went there. We were, we came later. So we didn't come with the integration. We were the first ones to integrate the teachers.

WA: Right. So you were the first wave of teachers moving into the schools, to integrate schools.

DC: Yeah.

WA: So why were the students the first? Why didn't students and teachers integrate together?

DC: Well, it was the board, I guess the board would have had to do that. These boys that integrated the school. I was wondering if you ever talked with him, Mr. Armstrong.

WA: One of our other researchers interviewed him, and we're going to try to interview Dwight Armstrong who now lives in Louisville.

DC: I thought he was in Boston, but anyway, he said they're doing quite well, the two sons. They integrated the school. I really don't know. But then after that others enrolled there so I don't know whether they had to wait for a court order for the teachers or they just did not do it. But that was about four years, three or four year span there between the time they went there and when the teachers went there.

WA: So you moved there with how many other teachers?

DC: It was about eight or ten.

WA: Okay. You were the only music teacher and then—

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DC: In the system. See you would have one music teacher in the school anyway. But I was the only music teacher, black music teacher that was moved. I think I had a whole list of them. I knew I could not remember them all. I might leave some off. Let's see. [counting to herself] Twelve but then many of them, they left there and want to stay. Then I guess they missed where they were ( ). They kind of drifted back. But still we had more than any of the other schools. They integrated West End with one or two more. But Graymont was the first.

WA: So what do you remember about the first day of school, the first year that you moved to Graymont?

DC: Well, just about everything. You mean problems or—

WA: Well, problems—

DC: The good things. I didn't have too many problems.

WA: Both.

DC: They seemed to be impressed. So I was happy there. They seemed to be impressed with my work and attitude and work doing. Before going to Graymont they had the children did not pass classes. They had just a standard way where everybody stayed in their room, first, second, third until the eighth grade. They were able to ( ) system where children passed to the art teacher and that kind of thing. They liked that. Now the children loved music classes. So we did a little bit of everything during that year. Jumping and clapping and dancing and exercising. Nothing too special that stood out because I did what I had been doing. As I say we participated in everything. They excelled in most things. As I said the next year some trickled back this way. You could do that then. It's a little stricter now. You can't just leave because you think you don't want to be there.

WA: Right.

DC: But I thought we got along fine.

WA: So you don't, the students didn't, there weren't any disruptions among the students.

DC: That's a cute thing about it. The eighth grade girls got kind of little, they're almost teenagers. And every time we would look around, I told them in the discussion they had here, the little black girls there was the hair, combing the white kids' hair. ( ) sometimes we think, I didn't think anything about it. I was wondering about it. Joyce combing the hair and then she sits down. It was real

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cute. So, they would pull on their hair. The next thing we knew they were combing the little black children's hair all day. So I said they were just all children getting to know one another. So we didn't have too many racial things. I don't know what was said or thought among the parents and all. But we didn't have any that I know of, not too many racial mix up there. I guess if they wanted to take them out, they did and if they didn't, they didn't. But they were all children. That's what I noticed about that. They would love to comb the little black kids' hair. But at first the black kids loved their hair. They would just comb it. They would just do that to each other and get along and go on and on. That was kind of humorous and let me know they were all children.

WA: So the children were getting along and did you see any difference among male students and female students getting along in the classroom among your desegregated classes?

DC: I really didn't. I really didn't. Children would get mad and say Miss so and so is prejudice. ( ) said Miss Craig is prejudice. We didn't have a lot of that. Seemed that the children just got along fine.

WA: Okay. Okay. You got along with the principal when you first went there.

DC: Oh fine. Yeah.

WA: What sort of leadership, what sort of things did he do to make sure that things were going smoothly?

DC: He was very good, at that time—it might not be that just now—they had very good discipline. It was just a very normal school. It didn't seem something big had happened and we're all doing this and they're doing that. It was just regular school. Any problems were just a human problem. I enjoyed there until I left.

WA: Okay. You mentioned the PTA. Were you involved in that at all?

DC: Well, they had little programs that I played for and things like that. But at that time my child was very, very, very small. But the lady was a friend. I knew her quite well. She enrolled her son there I think the next year after the whole school was integrated. When I went there, he had gone. He was in an accelerated class. He's still ( ) school. So he was an excellent worker so she had been elected PTA president before I got there. So evidently there weren't any black teachers there. So evidently they thought she was really ( ) and that type thing because we didn't have any hand in that. We weren't



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teaching there. So and I told you she finally became president of the Birmingham PTA Council, and she did an outstanding job. She's the first person, not black, to be elected twice. So she did an outstanding work there. She's a very good friend. I'm not sure you've heard of Betty and Frank Carter. They were very good friends. I think she succeeded Mrs. Carter, this council president I think.

WA: So you said that you didn't get a lot of parents, you didn't really know what parents were thinking.

DC: No, they went along with the programs, indeed, yes. If they thought it, they were not verbal about it or didn't act it out. They still got their lesson and the blacks got theirs, just as a group.

WA: Okay.

DC: The little choir we had was mixed. Well, they were happy to be in it because Graymont did not have all those activities.

WA: Didn't have choir and—

DC: I mean when I went there we got this.

WA: You brought it there.

DC: Yeah, it was just standard straight. You go to your first grade class and stay all day, traditional. They were happy to be in those type of things. When we would take field trips like the children's theater or the symphony, it was very, we had no problem getting parents. Some don't want to do anything but we'd mix them up. Get black and white folks who would attend, and that might have helped some. They would go with us to chaperone. So I think they enjoyed it because at that time they were not doing anything. We were just reading and writing, arithmetic and that type thing. So the children who were there, it was something very different for them. They were having school. I don't mean that they weren't learning. But this other stuff they didn't have. So I think they found it interesting.

I've see them now. I had this ( ) I think that's what, sent out by the power company to cut down trees and wires. Came there one day and so I didn't like the way he had trimmed the tree. It looked one-sided, looked like it was coming over. I told him I said I just don't like this. It might fall over on my house. So they said we'll check it out. We'll check it out. The next morning before I left there was some old man out there. He said, "How are you Mrs. Craig?" He was one of the little white boys, two of them that I had taught. I remembered them quite often. They're very, very nice. Sometimes I remember

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them and sometimes they have to make me. They will have grown so. But he was the boss there, he just came out to see me.

WA: Let me get down my list here. So did you think about school desegregation after your initial experience moving there in '67? Was it, did you think about what was going on at the other schools in terms of teachers being moved around and—

DC: Well, I thought about it, but during that time, shortly after that, each year you would see a little shake-up maybe to pull somebody here or send them to Huffman. See a lot of those schools would be dominantly white for a good while. I do remember they sent black teachers to West End High, to the other schools. Then some of them said they had problems that people told them they didn't really need them there. They had cited some ugly problems. We didn't have too many fights. It was a place where the children did not do a lot of fighting. Very different from that now with what they're like. Let me see what had happened during that time. I remember West End, but as I said was not integrated when Graymont the teachers were. When they sent us out, they sent various teachers to various places. But before then the schools were not integrated. Do you understand what I'm saying? So you get what I'm saying. Graymont was the only school.

WA: Graymont was the only school with students who had been integrated up until the teachers so when you moved in '67.

DC: We were the teachers who integrated.

WA: You were the teachers who integrated and also teachers went to West End and other places.

DC: Yes, at that time.

WA: But there were not integrated classrooms there yet at West End.

DC: No, not when Graymont was. I guess they integrated when they sent teachers there.

WA: Okay.

DC: I think it was Pratt School. My sister went to Pratt. But those schools were not integrated and nowhere else in Alabama when Graymont was. So I thought it blended in pretty nice. They had a very small enrollment, but we had been told that it was a very nice community but then a lot of the people had moved away and that children were grown. I was surprised that there were so many people who they say had gone there; Mayor Cooper Green. I didn't know him. But they named this high school after him. He



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was a mayor here, and a lot of those people they say had attended there. During our first year there when we cleaned this amphitheater up a man, it was a lot of turf from Legion Field. He said his wife had gone to school there. So we got a lot of favors like that. It was quite nice. It was very convenient too.

WA: Do you think that, so you stayed at Graymont until it closed. What—

DC: ( ) go on.

WA: No, please go ahead.

DC: They closed because of the middle school. We didn't have middle schools here and your county had junior high. We only had, it got to eighth and eight through twelve. They were bringing in the middle school concept and they met code—it might not. I don't think that was the reason. They said it needed a repair and this thing and that. But that is when it closed. The teachers, some of them wanted to retire and some of them did. Some of them moved to other schools.

WA: So did you see, what sort of changes did you see at Graymont from the time you started working there through the '70s and into the '80s when it closed?

DC: You mean teachers or the children or just anything?

WA: Anything you want. Changes in, we'll start with the students.

DC: Yeah. Well, it finally became all black. Okay. But we still had a strong mixture of teachers. That was about the biggest difference. It became completely black. But we still had a very good working PTA and things like that. So, everybody liked it. We were sorry that it closed.

WA: So where did you start teaching after that?

DC: EPIC School. It was wonderful over there. I got along real well. They had a lot of things you don't have anywhere else in Birmingham, facilities and Steinway grands and stuff like that. It was nice there. It kind of ( ) about going over there. Oh the principal, you don't need to be afraid of her. But you just have to learn people for yourself. She was just so nice. We did some of the same things, I'm sure they were already doing – but field trips and special things. The only difference there, I did go for a year, two days a week, to Hill since they had kind of broken it up. But all through the years I had stayed at that one school, Graymont.

That was a school you would be teaching your class and having the children do different things and in would walk the principal. She was a lady, and this is Ms. Ethel Kennedy and this is – it was more

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than a model school. So you didn't know who was going to see you during the day, that came through and wanted a tour of the schools. She would bring them around. So that was quite an experience. Because people visiting I guess wanted to see it. But they aren't always like that now.

WA: How do you spell that?

DC: EPIC, Exceptional Program for Individual Child.

WA: Is that, that's the one you were just talking about.

DC: EPIC, yes. It's right behind the science building over at UAB. I ( ) off and on. It's kind of part time at Hill School. That's not too far from me because they did not have a music teacher.

WA: So let me make sure I've gotten all my questions.

DC: I don't know how clear they were, but at least I think of whatever it was that we did. But that was most of it. It was quite enjoyable, and evidently it was because nobody ever wanted to leave that went there, other than those that left when we first went there. Sometimes people don't want to be there. They don't get used to being there. They would let them do it then. Then some of the white, blacks that went to schools like Huffman or West End they said the people told them didn't need them and they would just go back. They finally stopped doing that.

WA: Didn't need them—

DC: Wherever they sent you, you had to stay.

WA: Didn't need them meaning, we don't want you.

DC: Exactly. Exactly.

WA: We're going to have no job for you when you get here.

DC: Exactly. See we weren't supposed to be able to do that because you were sent there from the board, but I was told that many of them went back that way. Not that we had any leave from our school that way. But I was told that. But the next year or two wherever they sent you, you stayed there.

WA: Do you remember specific instances or things that some of the teachers who left Graymont, some of the reasons that they gave right at the beginning?

DC: I guess they didn't want, they didn't find it enjoyable or were a little prejudiced. But I was saying my experiences and most of the people that were there had similar experiences to mine because you can always find people that said they didn't like it or didn't want to be there. So I don't know. Then one or

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two said they were out of fear. And they let them go back. But it didn't bother me because see, I had all the classes at one time or another during the week. I had a period for them. So I even had kindergarteners. They were just great – they remember everything. So it was very nice.

WA: Okay. Well, let's to kind of wrap up and think, we have some sort of broad questions at the end thinking about school desegregation and the impact that that had on Birmingham schools. So the one we start with is, in your opinion what were the goals of school desegregation, both students and teachers?

DC: What were the goals, okay. It had been stated that you couldn't have a separate but equal education. Anything separate definitely was not going to be equal. That's one of the main things, which we found was true because there were many things some of the schools had that the others did not have it. They did not know hardly anything about it. I think that was the main thing that anything separate was not equal. Still like that today though. But I guess they just have to work that out.

WA: In the schools today.

DC: Yeah.

WA: That they're unequal.

DC: That's not said, but in going into them, it was not said then. But now for instance as I said when we went to Graymont, I told you they had the tradition of the system of staying in a class all day. That's not the worst thing, but it's best that they get passed and come into contact with the library class, music class and art. But they, the kids experienced a lot more when they were integrated, experienced a lot more. I know in my classroom I had just about everything you would have to work with, instrument or things that I needed; whereas many years before, I didn't. It helped the kids to recognize and know things, at least know what they were. Most of them that used them would beat on them or hit on them or whatever it was. They were intelligent and ask what things were and as far as my class was and all of the instruments and what they looked like and what was used in the orchestra. They were very up on stuff like that. But I had started that before I went to Graymont, but with the mixture all of them learned it because as I said the kids there, it was just a little traditional. The enrollment was very small because I think all the kids that lived right in that neighborhood had grown up and moved away. So when Graymont was integrated you had a lot kids that came in white and black. I think it had a real good impact. I thought it did.

WA: So you think that school desegregation fulfilled its goals in a lot of ways.

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DC: In some ways. Not just every goal but I think in most ways. You cannot make people get along if they do not want to. But we felt that the faculty that we ran into evidently it had been discussed or something because they seem to have wanted it to work. Now the principal was very nice.

WA: And so do you think that your views on school desegregation are representative of the other teachers at your school?

DC: Well, most of them, I would say maybe the majority.

WA: Felt that school desegregation was successful at Graymont and was to the benefit of the children and—

DC: I would think so because as I said the experience and did things and learned things that they did not know about, but now the longer we stayed at Graymont, it was not integrated.

WA: Okay.

DC: You see what I mean.

WA: So tell me about that. When did you see a change from a fairly, what were the balances like with you when you first got there—

DC: It was already white.

WA: It was white. And then—

DC: Some more whites came because many whites living all down in here and blacks. So I'm not too sure, but it was pretty racially balanced. It might not have ever been really equal on either side, but it was just a nice balance. Each year you would see more blacks. I don't know what year was the biggest year, but then I told you they got a black principal who was very nice, a graduate of Birmingham Southern, and then we had student teachers to come in and that. They enjoyed being there because they were close. Some were white; some were black. So they must've felt that the school was doing a pretty good job. They would not have sent them there because they're real close [Graymont and Birmingham Southern College]. They can check. Then, I thought it had a very good impact, but as I said the longer I stayed there the blacker it became. But we even at that time we did not experience a lot of the problems that they are experiencing now. We never had any just really, really bad problems with children there. Some of these schools here, they're pretty tough.

WA: Do you think that was of the neighborhood that Graymont was in?

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DC: I would think so. I would think so. Yeah. So some of them say it's gotten a little rough now but I don't know because they're a JCCO down there and they said the building had to be remodeled. They didn't. So the JCCO remodeled it. That's a gorgeous building inside now. But so I saw a difference each year as far as enrollment, I mean as far as racial. But we probably had an even number of teachers. The whites seemed to get along well.

WA: Okay.

DC: Another thing, it didn't seem to me. I may not have it right. Whites didn't seem to change and leave there as much as they did in other black schools. I noticed they stayed around longer. Some schools they'd leave every year or two, whites would when they went into a school where it was mostly black. We had few changes but not a lot.

WA: So there wasn't as much white flight from the school for a longer period at Graymont.

DC: I mean the teachers.

WA: Oh teachers. Okay.

DC: Teacher. Now I could tell the difference in the flight the next year a little bit more, a few more left – the students. Now I was saying the white teachers stayed more than they did in most black schools.

WA: Right. Okay. So do you think of school desegregation as an ongoing issue, as something that the schools are dealing with now or not?

DC: Somewhat because so often I hear of problems and things that we didn't run into. I don't know whether that part of it is getting better or worse or about the same. Sometimes people change. Doesn't have to be the children all the time. So I'm not too sure, but I think it was pretty ongoing for a while.

WA: So did—

DC: Like the problems you read about in the schools and all, we didn't have all of that then.

WA: Like what?

DC: Well, you hear so many things like kids carrying knives and guns. These are children and we didn't experience a lot of that.

WA: Why do you think that those are problems now? Do you have—

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DC: I expect that comes from the home. So often people take what their kids say rather than come out and find out what they're doing. We had many people who really visit the schools. A kid might not have gotten a very good grade and they might tell the parents she just doesn't like me or something. The parent will come and ( ) check on it and all and find out the kids have misled them. We've had parents who have started crying because the kid would lie to their parents but maybe that helped, because they would come and just see what the kids were doing. All of them didn't do it. But the majority would. As I told you about going to these symphonies and concerts and all. There were parents you couldn't get to do anything with but we'd have a large number of parents who would just go with you anywhere you went. So you had that too. But mostly it was good on the better side.

WA: So do you have children that went through Birmingham schools?

DC: No, I have one son and he enrolled at EPIC School, and when the EPIC program, you can only go so far in EPIC School. He went there to ( ), high school.

WA: Did you talk with him about your experiences desegregating Graymont?

DC: Yeah, we talked about everything. I guess they thought we were two grown people. Since there was nobody but Darryl, we always talked about everything, his daddy too. So he pretty, he was pretty much aware of everything. He went to all the concerts. ( ) he even got to go with me, but many time we would go to the operas and concerts at night down there and he has a love of music. He took trumpet, and I think he took piano at Birmingham Southern. The kids started teasing him he wanted to take piano lessons. But he's a music lover. He can appreciate it very much. We're proud of him. So he did not go to Birmingham, but he knew everybody in there.

WA: Okay. Okay. So is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you would like for us to discuss?

DC: Unless something I've forgotten, let me see, I had everything written down. There's just so much. I have something you may not be used to this but I could let you see it. I don't want to be too fast. [Mrs. Poe is looking through the papers she brought with her to the interview].

Carolyn was up there, you see, Carolyn McKinstry.

WA: Um hmm, yeah. I met her last time.



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DC: I wanted you to see. Well, I enjoyed teaching over there. I really did. It was quite an experience. This is—

WA: Oh great. So what, were you on one of the panels?

DC: Yeah.

WA: Which panel was that?

DC: Desegregating Birmingham Schools. The dean of the law school of Sanford, Birmingham Southern, UAB. There were many out-of-town people here. It was wonderful. Judge Clemens, one or two judges from out of town. Here, just let me check it.

WA: Do you need a pen?

DC: They were people who had experienced this, and I think Carolyn was the moderator I think. People from ... John Carroll — you may see here from the law school. It was very nice. That was a place where we stopped for lunch here and all these were very prominent people back here that were on here. Would you like a copy of this?

WA: Sure. Can I make a Xerox copy?

DC: Oh sure.

WA: There's the machines out there.

DC: I may have another one.

WA: Okay, I'd love that.

DC: This is very nice, and it was presented by the Civil Rights Institute, Cumberland Law School, Sanford, Miles Law School, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church across the street, the University of Alabama Law School. I just brought it in case I had another one.

WA: Thank you. So what, so I see the title is "Brown at Fifty Where Do We Go From Here?"

DC: It was very interesting.

WA: So what—

DC: You heard of Judge Clemens?

WA: No.

DC: You haven't? He's a judge here in Birmingham, black judge—

WA: I have heard a little bit about him. I'm supposed to interview him actually.

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DC: His little boy went to Graymont.

WA: Oh he did?

DC: Um hmm.

WA: You taught him there.

DC: Yeah, I had in an opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitor," it was real cute. He's grown now.

WA: So what sort of, was there a conclusion that the conference?

DC: I think the men who wrapped it up, I didn't know him, but he was newly elected council for the NAACP or something, Here's Clemens. There was another man. He was kind of wrapped up but—

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DC: One or two schools or something, but there were about four of us on each panel.

WA: And you were sharing, talking about sort of what we've been talking about today and your experience.

DC: Yes.

WA: And they did the same.

DC: There were some who had been students and they talked about how they would get in various fights and things like that. It was very interesting. But you heard some of everything if you stayed and got along with the lesson. Some said they got along well and some said () call them a name and they'd end up fighting. It was quite interesting. That's why I asked you about him. I think he, somebody told me Dr. Huntley was ill. He might not have been but I think he was. And I don't know if he could attend or not, but it was very interesting.

WA: I'm sorry I missed it. It sounds very interesting. So I think that's about it. If there's anything else you want to—

DC: No, I've just been trying to see if anything I've missed too much. Yeah.

WA: So and you're retired. Are you retired now?

DC: Yeah, now I am. I worked down here a while. As a docent, every once in a while. It's been a good while. I do other things. I didn't work down here too long because I would be doing more than I did when I was teaching.

WA: So—

DC: Let's see if I missed anything. [She reads]: Yes, "history was made in Birmingham September the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1963, when at Graymont School the first known grammar school in Alabama's 144 year history was integrated." They start off mentioning the Armstrong boys then ( ) later ( ) teachers were hired there.

WA: So let me double back to that, to 1963, what do you remember about the announcement that Graymont was going to be?

DC: Well, it was a lot mentioned because even though I was not working there.

WA: Were you teaching at—

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DC: Tarvel.

WA: Okay—

DC: They had big pictures, headline in the Birmingham News Post-Herald Herald, Graymont School integrating. It showed troopers all on the steps, the steps that were facing Legion Field, Ninth Avenue. They made a big deal out of it. They didn't show anybody that was bothering anybody but maybe they were out there for prevention. But they said a lot about it that Graymont was going to be integrated. As I said the only thing I wondered all those troops and all those caps and stuff on like that. The morning we went, I guess I'm skipping a lot because I'm thinking about it now, the morning we were to go to Graymont, the Friday before we were called to the board and Dr. Matheson was there. He was a black administrator and he mentioned different things. He said that he would not announce it in the papers that since we knew who we were and we were all there together, we knew where we were to go. So that was not announced when the teachers went into the schools. But after once we went in there, it was in the paper and that type thing. But the integration of schools was.

WA: Why wasn't he going to announce it?

DC: I wondered about it. I wondered if he thought there would be problems or what, just my thinking. But nobody, I remember, nobody, anybody getting hurt or anything like that.

WA: Were there protests—I'm sorry. Go ahead.

DC: When we went, nobody was out there protesting. We just went into school like we did every morning. That's what happened there. But they made a big show of that when they integrated, entered the school.

WA: Right, when—

DC: Dwight and Floyd—

WA: Dwight and Floyd went there were big protests.

DC: Yes, because their Daddy said they wouldn't act right and they didn't want to put them in anything. But after they stayed there a little while they were leaders of everything going on there the kids liked them so. Because he was on the program [at the BCRI] and he was telling that.

WA: Okay, but they were escorted by troopers to school and everything.

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DC: Yeah. That made it look scary and all like that. I guess maybe they didn't know what would happen. Didn't anything happen but they wanted it to sound big. [Pause] Actually they were kind of cutting up around here. That was during that time when different things were being bombed and this and that. I guess they didn't know what would happen.

WA: The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing was just a couple of weeks after.

DC: Oh yeah. Because I included that in my report. I just mentioned it since it all happened there. But now when those girls were killed, Carolyn had a sister, no, two brothers in there, in the church. But they missed it. As you know many people were there. Those four were killed. So I guess they didn't know what else would happen. So they were taking precautions. That was about the biggest that I can think of at Graymont School, going into the council PTA, and although there were just a small number of children as I said there, when we got there, all the classrooms had encyclopedias. I guess they must've furnished the composition books and pencils. I don't know if they did that with their pupil supply money or it was just furnished to them. But we didn't have that when the schools were all black or all white. After we stayed there a while we still didn't have it, but we had pupil supply money where we could order stuff. But now we've found all those things in the school. It was a very small—the building as big, but there weren't many children there.

WA: So how many do you think were there in '67.

DC: Oh you mean after we went there?

WA: Um hmm.

DC: I'm not sure, but there weren't a lot of them there, whites there, much. I mean the school was very small. Let me see this.

WA: Did it get bigger?

DC: Yeah.

WA: Oh okay.

DC: Let me see. I don't know if there is enrollment here or not. It may be at one of the others. The school was bigger after we had the black and whites there.

WA: Do you think that is a reason why they chose Graymont as one of the first, as the first school to integrate?

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DC: I wonder.

WA: Because it was smaller.

DC: Now the enrollment was smaller, but it was a big school.

WA: So the buildings were big and the facilities.

DC: Yeah, we had room. I told you about when we uncovered a lot of weeds and found this nice amphitheater was there. So a lot had been going on there. Now when you have a lot of people to move out of a community, all the facilities are not used because many of these people around here who had been county commissioners and mayors and all went to that school.

WA: Right, Cooper Green and—

DC: The man who gave us the turf. I can't think of his name. He gave us that and said his wife went to school there. So a lot of whites had come back for some reason said they had gone there. So, and I figured that after they were grown and they moved away and probably not too many more whites moved up there in that area. It was very centrally located. Right across from Legion Field and could go over there and have a little picnic or an outing and it was just pretty nice. I'm trying to see if there is anything else ... We'd go to the planetarium over there at Birmingham Southern and let me see. I think I saw some numbers. Now they said '72 and '73 there were 567 pupils. That was in '72 and '73. Four-twenty-one were black. One-forty-six were white. See that had been about four or five years and they were getting smaller and smaller, the ratio. [Pause. She is reading.] So I just thought it was kind of nice.

WA: Okay. All right. Well, is there anything else?

DC: You always think of something when you leave.

It was nice working conditions there. We hadn't had a, what you call it, a break but it was not a break, preparation period and as a result most of the schools started giving preparation periods.

WA: So Graymont was sort of a model—

DC: At that time.

WA: School.

DC: Well, it was the first so most folks would remember what went on or what was happening, being the first. Mr. Armstrong said his boys actually graduated from Boston University. We used to stay there my husband and I. Then we have one or two students who are doctors and bishops, and other things



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to come out of Graymont. A lot of them have gone to college but things that stand out, you know, what they have done. So it was quite a memorable time.

WA: Great. Well, I guess that's it. Thank you very much.

DC: I'm not that much help but--

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by L. Altizer, December 9, 2004