

Young H. Allen
February 16, 2004

Malinda Maynor: This is an interview with Mr. Young Allen for the Southern Oral History Project's Long Civil Rights Movement Series. The interviewer is Malinda Maynor. The date is February 16, 2004. The interview is taking place by telephone. Mr. Allen is in Kinston, North Carolina. Malinda Maynor is in Pembroke, North Carolina.

Young Allen: () And I started teaching at St Pauls, and I was a high school coach. I stayed there 2 years. I did teach, I taught 2 years at Carthage, that's where I met my wife, before I came to Robeson County. We got married, and decided we wanted to move away. Had an opportunity come, and I was the high school coach, teacher at St Pauls. She was a teacher also. I stayed there 3 years, I had finished my graduate degree, a principal's certificate, and I went to Rowland as a principal.

MM: Okay.

YA: Principal school at Rowland.

MM: And how many years did you stay there?

YA: I spent about 3 or 4 at Rowland as principal, and then I went to Lumberton to be assistant superintendent. I was assistant superintendent under Mr. B. E. Littlefield for 9 years. After he retired I became superintendent.

MM: Tell us a little bit about how you first got that job, if you don't mind. How you first got that assistant superintendent position.

YA: I don't know, I was just chosen, and I think that, I've always been active, moving around. Mr. Littlefield was older and didn't move about that much, but anyhow he was a mighty good fellow. Many of your buildings are there because he was very much noted for the construction of schools. And I think that he chose me, I would make this statement, there were only 4 other assistant superintendents in the state when I became assistant superintendent in Lenoir County, in Robeson County.

MM: That's interesting.

YA: And I was very much involved, one of the first involved was trying to get our schools accredited by the state and then by the Southern Association. Most of them was not accredited by the state, and we had a lot of work to do to get that done. And that was one of my prime assignments, as assistant superintendent.

MM: So that must have been right about 1960, maybe, when you--

YA: Yeah, in the '60s.

MM: Okay. Well, we sort of rushed through those first 2 questions. Is there anything you want to go back and say about your childhood?

YA: I'll go back once again. I think I've already told you, I was the youngest of 5 children, and I went right on through. I was on the G. I. Bill so I could go to college. That's the finest piece of legislation anybody ever passed was the G. I. Bill. You came out of service, and you could go to college with expense paid. And I came to Robeson County as a teacher and a coach at St. Pauls High School. I had been in graduate school before, I had my principal's certificate when I was at St. Pauls. And then after 2 years I moved to Rowland to become the principal of that school. And it was a union school, grades 1 through 12.

Then--I go down to [question] number 3 there--Robeson County schools had at that time, the county schools, with the county system, but it had 3 city units. Lumberton, Fairmont, and Red Springs were city school systems. You know what I'm talking about?

MM: Right, I do.

YA: City school district, Lumberton had a special school tax for its schools. I believe Red Springs did, I don't know about Fairmont. And after being in Robeson for, I think, 2 years, St. Pauls and Maxton became city school systems. And that was done by an act of the North Carolina Legislature. It had to be done by a legislative act. And we had 5 city school systems and the county system.

MM: Okay. Do you mind if I ask you a follow up question?

YA: I think I've got somewhere else down here.

MM: Well, let's just keep going then.

YA: Yeah, that question there. Our biggest job right then, my biggest effort at that time, was working on improving instruction and seeking not only instruction improvement, but accreditation of the schools. And when I came, I don't know whether we had the schools accredited or not, but that's what we worked on tremendously, to get them accredited. Then that basically your first 4, and your fifth question, what was the reaction that took place from the--was that your question, on Brown vs. Board?

MM: Yes, that's right.

YA: The reaction was very, very little. It really got very little publicity. It made the papers a day or so, but in North Carolina, it did not shape very much. It was one school system way out yonder in Kansas, and we had enough problems of our own, working trying to provide the program in the schools (), and there didn't seem to be anybody much concerned about it. You see, that was in '54, Malinda, it was in '54, and desegregation really didn't hit us in Robeson County or any other systems in North Carolina till the middle 1970s. You had 20-some years later before it ever really got here. Got into North Carolina.

MM: Right. Did you feel anything yourself when you first heard about it?

YA: No, you didn't find anybody very much worried about it. It was way out yonder in one school system in far distant Kansas. No, we thought, well, when it comes, it'll come. And so I think we built some buildings, thinking if it did, our schools would be well-placed for it.

MM: As in large enough, or--large enough schools?

YA: Yeah, and well-enough located. As we get down in our questions, I'll tell you some of the problems that we have basically on location, the students and so forth. And the question about how did the people did reacted, and I don't know that they did anyway. North Carolina got very involved in that, it was something we discussed, what they were doing out there in Kansas, but we didn't expect it to be coming here very soon, and it didn't. It didn't hit here for nearly 20 years later. And of course it hit everybody else at the same time.

It gathered some people, different ways that it handled it, so we looked at, how did it really affect us when we started to doing it. When H. E. W. began to send its people in, the state, how did it really affect them? Well, we moved some teachers, and of course students moved too, we re-drew some lines. I'll give you an example. I don't know whether you know, a good example would be Orrum and Proctorville, that's down there in your southeastern part of the county, and they were 2 schools within 2 or 3 miles apart, one was a black school--black students attended it--and the other one white. Well, we made one

of them the high school for all children and the other one the elementary school for all children. Then there were not very many Indian children lived there, most of our Indian children lived from Fairmont back toward Rowland. And we had the large school there outside of Fairmont, and then we had a school over near Rowland for Indian children, Native American children.

So you get down to where you ask me this, how did the people accept the movement. Well, we didn't have very much improvement, the more concern was being, will we be able to move the children and have facilities to put them there. And the next one was the movement of some students and teachers, as I described to you previously. And as far as the public's concerned, it's very much like, it's always true in public schools, the public is concerned generally, how's it going to affect my child? But they wasn't too concerned about what's going to happen over yonder on the other side of the county as they were what's going to happen here with my child or my grandchild. But anyhow, that's what we lived and expected with.

You asked me a question of demonstrations. Yes, we had one sizable demonstration, I can't tell you the date right now. But anyhow, I'm not sure what year it was, but that was one you probably heard of, where we had a demonstration at the Board of Education office, where it is now, I guess it's the

same place it was when I left. It was down beside the school garages, that's where it is?

MM: Yes.

YA: Well anyhow, had the demonstration out in front of it. And they had about 200 people or so, 2 or 300 people gathered out there. They were Indian people. And there's some interesting things about that demonstration. They had had a meeting the night before, and I can't tell you where, but it was somewhere in the Pembroke area, preparing them to come. Now that was led by--not by our Lenoir [Robeson] County Indians, that was led by a western Indian, Native American people from the tribes out--I can't tell you which state. There was one named Dennis Banks. He was one of the leaders. And then there was another one named Russell Means, have you ever heard those names?

MM: I have, yes.

YA: Russell Means. And Russell Means and Dennis Banks came, and had a meeting somewhere in Pembroke the night before. We heard it, and the sheriff, Malcolm McLeod, knew about it, warned us it was coming. And then he said that there was some talk that they would take over the education building and there would be some destruction of property. So it was the sheriff's advice that we hold them up at the door, and we did as the crowd gathered.

Amazingly so, I would make a comment here, one of the things that was most notable about that demonstration is that you could look out there, and Robeson County had various leaders, among them Native American people, prominent people, that were leaders at that time and we worked with, and they worked with us, they were very good people. I have great respect for our Native Americans, the Lumbee people. But anyhow, what I want to tell you, while we're talking about this demonstration, before I go any further, the people who were demonstrating were identifying themselves as Tuscaroras. I don't know whether you have anybody identifying that way now or not.

MM: Some people.

YA: But they were identifying themselves, they were Tuscaroras. Most of them were from the Maxton area, back in that direction.

Most of who were demonstrating, what I started to tell you, they recognized people who were the leaders around Pembroke and all across the county, among the Native American Indian people, there wasn't any of them there participating in the demonstration. They could not be seen. They were not there. And they'd get up, and the people who were speaking and people's encouraging, there was people I'd never seen or known before. I told you that they had 2 leaders from a western tribe.

The argument that they had for protesting at that time, when you sat down with them, the leaders, was that they were opposed to integration of the school, and mixing of the schools, because the mixing of the schools would greatly destroy the Indian culture, and they were protecting the Indian culture. Right interesting argument, and even the fellows who was leading the demonstration seemed to be intelligent and fairly well educated, I think. But that was their argument, and that was the reason for demonstration. They did have a march in Kinston one time, and I will send you a clipping from a newspaper with a picture of them demonstrating and marching down the street in front of the courthouse in Kinston. Not Kinston, I'm saying, Lumberton.

MM: Lumberton, okay.

YA: Pardon me, I spent the last 26 years since I left here, and I was superintendent here for 14 years before I retired. So pardon my words. Other than demonstration, there was no violence, no destruction of property or that sort of thing. We went at it the best we could, and I thought we got through it very well. The people we worked with were very good people.

You said, what was the most problem with the people in school desegregation? Well, I'd answer that question by saying, getting people to give their full cooperation was a problem. Most all parents, as might be expected, were looking after their own children and their own communities, and not

greatly concerned about what happened over yonder in the other communities. But we were working with all the communities. There were 5 city units, I'll explain that in a minute, that they had 5 city units, white children and black children attended those white schools, but very few Indian children did. They said that our doors are open to you, if you will come. But no, they wanted to go to their Indian schools.

And who were persons that helped, you asked me that question. That did so much to help us. Well, I could name persons that were, and I couldn't name them all, I couldn't do that. But there were people, we had some good leadership in the county at that time. Mr. Albert McCormick from Rowland was chairman of the Board of Education, and he was about the least one of prejudice that I ever knew. And he did a fine a job. And Mr. Harry Locklear was another member of the Board of Education who made a fine contribution during the integration years. And there was another board member, Mr. Thurmond Anderson, who was a black board member. He was from down the Rowland direction. Others who helped so much--it's difficult for me to start naming some without leaving out some of the most important. One was Albert Hunt. I don't know whether you know Albert Hunt or not.

MM: Mm-hm, sure.

YA: And Grady Oxendine was a very good worker with us. And then Ms Ethel Hayswood was a black supervisor, and a very fine lady, her husband was a black pastor there in Lumberton. Mr. and Mrs. Grace Epps, Mr. Epps was the principal at Magnolia School, and that was one of the bigger schools in the county at that time, of the Indian schools. And Mrs. Epps was a supervisor in our office. Many principals, teachers made a fine contribution. People like J. C. Humphrey, the business manager. And as I say, just people like Howard Hunt and principals from one side of that county to the other. I was just proud that we had some good principals that they worked with.

You asked a question here I find difficult to answer. You had, describe a situation at Prospect School in the early '70s. I don't know that there was any great differences in Prospect and other places. Prospect would have to be, it had a lot of pride in the community, with a very strong church across the street from it, you know what I'm talking about?

MM: Mm-hm, I do.

YA: And it had a lot of pride. Early on, there was some talk, not a proposal for the school board or the school system, but there was some talk that we might consolidate Prospect and Pembroke. Now, I'm talking about in the '70s there. The early '70s, '60s, somewhere in there, with Pembroke High School. Prospect community strongly opposed any such talk of that. And they had

some strong principals up there, they had Mr. Dial, and then Mr. James Jones, Mr. Danford Dial, Mr. James Jones. We had another leader up there who later served on the Board of Education, Mr. Harbert Moore. And he was very active and very outspoken. Made a good board member.

Prospect, as I said, had one of the fine churches across the street there, and we had some of our strong teachers at Prospect. And a strong principal there all the time. So I don't know, as I told you, it's any different from. I said I could say about the same thing for any other schools. So does that answer your question?

MM: Yeah, I think so. I know that a lot of people in Prospect have talked about their intense pride in the school, as you mentioned, and some of the situations that they had there--let's see, I'm trying to think--about African Americans coming to the school in particular. But in my interview with Mr. Jones, as well as the teacher assignments, some of the parents at Prospect seemed upset about that. But mostly I guess I was thinking about the sit-ins, of the students who were assigned, I think it was to Oxendine School.

YA: Yeah, Oxendine was a school that was way up there. It was an elementary school, and it was about nearly to the county line, but halfway between Maxton and Red Springs, on that highway that went--close to that highway. It was the longer distance, Oxendine School.

MM: Right. There were several hundred students, it sounded like, who didn't go to that school who were assigned to it, and instead went to Prospect. That was something that Mr. Jones talked a lot about.

YA: Yeah, let me tell you this, there's one thing I want to emphasize. The Native American Indian people of Robeson County had a great pride in their schools. And they had a pride in their schools, and the background further to it, it was needed that up prior to the desegregation years, the Indian schools had been pretty much, very much controlled by local school committees. And those school committees, they decided who they wanted as their principal, and even though legally you could outrule them, a Board of Education, was almost impossible to do. And the next is that they hired their teachers. Now, I'm not putting them down any way, but there was a lot of feeling that special folks and families and so forth were being looked after when they selected their teachers. That somebody with the right connections with that committee would get that position. Well, as the time came by, we began to get more control of having professional people selecting the teachers. So that came about, it wasn't really an easy thing to get into, and the committees, they made some fine contributions also. So I'm not putting them down, I don't mean to be doing that. They're saying that was one of the changes, that you had couldn't carry this out county wide, integration, desegregation, without somebody looking

over the whole top of it. So it was good, it had a lot of things, Oxendine was up there, it was a feeder school for Prospect, but there were those--.

And you realize too, the one thing that I have not discussed to this point was the 5 city school systems, Lumberton had a city school system, Red Springs had a city school system, they had a special school tax, Red Springs had a special school tax. Fairmont became a city school systems while I was there, a teacher, it became one, and Maxton did. That gave you 4 city school systems. Then you had Fairmont, Maxton and St. Paul's, Lumberton, and Red Springs. They had city school systems, and they had in those cities, schools for white children and schools for black children.

But the Indian children went to their Indian schools. And the fact is, they would tell you right quickly if they were here, any of those city school people here, if they were on the line with us at this time, that they would let it be known that they would accept Indian children who come, but the Indian children went to their own schools. They preferred to go to the Indian schools. I remember efforts at some times trying to take a school bus route out of the city unit, so they'd go to school there, but no no, don't take our school bus away from us, it's taking me to Magnolia. Do you follow me?

MM: Mm-hm, yes.

YA: It's taking me to the school we want to, or taking me more to our school, or my school. It was our school. And you have to give this, in fact, that Indian people were proud of their schools. And proud enough, if you're in the superintendent's office, if they had a problem of facility or need for something, they were as quick to let you know as anybody could be. That's fine. I think they spoke out for their community schools, very much so. Have I answered your question about Prospect, and the other schools?

MM: Yes, I think so. If I could ask you, why do you think those city units were created, especially in such small places like Maxton?

YA: To have their own community. The first place, remember this, Robeson County is the second largest county in geographical area in North Carolina. We've got 100 counties, and it is the second largest. Sampson County has very few square miles more than Robeson. So you had people going to school from Maxton, or up there at the Smiling School, you know where I'm talking about?

MM: Yes, it's out on the Eastern part.

YA: Anyhow, from there to the other end of the county, the eastern side of the county, is a long way. It was always, they used to take them from down there at Barnesville. Do you know where Barnesville is?

MM: Sort of.

YA: Below Fairmont, not far from South Carolina line. The Columbus County line, not far. And from there to Parkton, you've got a good long distance. So it's a large county, and the interest of people looking out where they knew, they didn't know much about Parkton way up yonder, a good distance north of Lumberton, up there near Cumberland County, not far from Fayetteville. They were closer to Fayetteville than they were to Lumberton. So that was a part of it, and then you had the district. So they felt more closer to it if they had a little Board of Education there.

I think to great extent, the Indian schools with their school committees served as a little Board of Education to start with, and that was good to have that community participation, but also you've got to have some professional guidance in it. And that's where I said the employment of personnel and so forth would sometimes get out of hand. Looking after my daughter or my sister's child or whatever it is, when you're looking for a teacher. But I want to say this, we had some mighty fine teachers. Pembroke State, and most all of our teachers that went in Indian schools or went through Pembroke, and I give credit to Dr. English Jones for doing his best to push to get good people through there and provide us the teachers.

You've got another question that you asked me about the federal government and H. E. W. H. E. W., the Department of Health, Education, and

Welfare, was not respected anywhere in North Carolina. Many of those working in the field had little or no respect for the local leaders and little knowledge of public education. I'm going to give you an example. One time, while I was superintendent, one principal said there were some people he found, some strangers, in his classroom. And they were in there looking at students and counting students and that sort of thing, and they didn't come by his office. And I called up one or two other school principals, they had the first thing too. They just appeared and disappeared. And a little bit later I found out that they were college students that had been employed on a temporary basis by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. They'd go around. Well, Malinda, I never turned in to my knowledge a false report of any kind, as to how many there were of this race or that race. I hadn't filled out the records to the best of the information that we could get from school principals, and I don't think a principal changed any racial designation. But anyhow, they were in the schools counting. Well, that happened. I know that I had them all come by and send my check to the office. And anyhow, they disappeared, they went away.

But anyhow, I'll just go a little bit further while I'm on this topic. Sometime later, not long later, I received an appointment by the President. President Nixon was the President. I received an appointment to serve on the Presidential Committee on School Desegregation. The first meeting was in the Oval Room of

the White House. It was the first time I'd been in the White House. But I met in the Oval Room in the White House. It was the President's office at that time. I believe I'm right.

And anyhow, it was there that the President began to come up with questions, and I advised the committee and the President what had happened with the stranger that came in checking my school that we didn't know about. And the President said, "You mean they came and didn't even report to the superintendent or the principal?" I said, "They certainly did." But he said that would stop immediately. He'd never heard of that before. So anyhow, it did, we did get a letter right soon saying that that would be ceased. We didn't get a letter was sent to superintendents all over North Carolina, and I assume to other states, too, the way it was addressed. But that was the reason that, that sorts of things.

For instance the next time that the H. E. W. came, they didn't come to my office, they came down and reported to the transportation man who looked after the school buses. I mean, that's the sort of thing that you didn't get very much respect from some of the folks that worked with you. So that basically would answer your question relating to H. E. W.

You asked the question there, why was it any more difficult to desegregate the schools in Robeson than it was other school systems. Well, I think first, we didn't have just two races. We had four races by North Carolina law.

And in the early 1920s, they had a group of people that claimed to be Indians and identified themselves as Indian, but they went to the Indian schools and were not able to get in. And they ended up by taking it to the courts. And the courts recognized that, and they made a ruling, and you probably have heard of the ruling. It said only Indians could identify who was Indian. The Committee of Indians had decided that the Smilings were not Indian. They were not their Indian people.

Anyhow, as a result, North Carolina Legislature had to pass an act and set up a fourth race school for the Smiling children, and they had a little wooden school up there on the Maxton-Rowland Road, right off, and then we came back later and built a small school out there, that was a Smiling school. I remembered going to school one time there, and when they graduated the first student from high school, and I marched in with the principal, Mr. Bullard, and myself marched in, and the speaker, who was an attorney from Rowland, to make the graduation address with one student. I doubt if any other superintendent could say he walked in with one student, with cap and gown. I had the cap and gown that

they asked me to provide for. And they had a real sheepskin diploma. I wish I knew who he was. But it was a boy.

But anyhow to answer the question why was it difficult, we had four races. And North Carolina recognized them as four different races.

And then the distribution of races, the second reason that it was so difficult, is the distribution of races was not equally distributed in the county. For the areas between Lumberton and Maxton, and I don't know what it is now, but back then, from out there where the county home was, to Maxton, the edge of Maxton, for a stripe that would be several miles wide, there were very few whites or blacks living there. Back then, there were very few white children at Pembroke or anywhere around Pembroke, or black children. At one time, we had a little black school down there, and that was, I think it was closed when I went to Robeson. But it was down there somewhere not far from where the fairgrounds are. Or, where the fairgrounds are where they were when I saw them last. But that was a little small school. So then, that made it more difficult.

And another reason for making it more difficult was those five city school units. There was five city school units for black and white children, but there were no Indian children for us to do it.

MM: To integrate?

YA: And then we said the doors are open for the Indian children, those Indians here expected those school buses to pick them up and take them, if they lived over close to Maxton or Red Springs, to take them to Oxendine or Prospect. The same thing would be true of those who were living out towards Magnolia. They expected the buses to take them, and there were those who argued, like when they had the demonstration here, that was a black-white situation, and it shouldn't be affecting them. You couldn't help them feeling that way, but that's the way that many felt. I said the distribution of students, for example, you take out there where Littlefield School is now, you know where that is?

MM: Mm-hm.

YA: There were very few that, we had never had a black school between Lumberton and the Bladen County line. There wasn't black schools there. Or up from Magnolia. We had one down in Proctorville, that's the southern part. But not any black schools. Had a few scattered ones, black children, but they had always gone to school in Lumberton. And so they didn't have the area. As we had then, I told you, just almost solid Indian from Lumberton to Pembroke to Maxton. And of course, we finally built the Rex-Rennert School up there to take care of the few Indians that was in the northern part of the county up towards Parkton, but that didn't last very long. So anyhow, I put all that together, and it

didn't make it very easy. Now what are some other matters I have not answered?

MM: Well, I'm sort of wondering about the county school board.

YA: ()

MM: I'm sorry? Say that one more time?

YA: What are some other matters that I have not answered?

MM: Well, I'm sort of wondering about the county school board office and the board itself, when more Native American and African American people came on to the board and--

YA: On the school board?

MM: Right.

YA: It was no problem at all. The reason it wasn't, because back beforehand, it was soon after I began to be there, it might have been before, they had requested the legislators, to let's put some blacks and Indian people on the board. Then they got the legislators, not election--

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YA: --people, first Indian that I ever worked with on the board was Mr. Harry Locklear. I don't know whether you know Mr. Locklear or not. I'm sure you didn't, he--

MM: No.

YA: He was killed in an automobile accident many years ago. And then there was the first black that I knew was Mr. Thurmond Anderson from down, oh, between Union Elementary and Rowland. What's that little community? Purvis?

MM: Yeah.

YA: Mr. Anderson was a fine man. He had a lot of sense. He was outspoken. And I say that there's no question about it, he represented the minority well, and so did Mr. Harry Locklear. And of course you had later the others elected. Mr. Harbert Moore was elected while I was there. He was from Prospect. He was very outspoken and a very good board member. I'm just saying it didn't affect, and everybody was glad to have them. And the first ones we had were very good people. The fact is, all I ever worked with certainly were.

MM: Okay. Why don't we talk a little bit, if you don't mind, about the 1980s. Some of the things.

YA: The 1980s, that's when we'd pretty well gotten it done, and we were into that, and we concentrated then on improving instruction. Adding the courses we needed to add, to check and see very closely, we had people come in and check our school, are we teaching in the sixth grade what sixth graders need to know to go to the seventh, and are we reaching the level. And school accreditation become an important part to us in the '80s. And you had an opportunity to work out the kinks. Well somebody was riding too far, or

somebody was not--. We had problems with all this, that you had, it was a slow, difficult process to get people to say, well, this school down there is my school, and it's a black school and it's still my school. Do you follow me?

MM: Mm-hm.

YA: And the same thing would be for somebody that lived, a child went to school at Oxendine up there at Prospect but lived over there in the edge of Maxton. And when you began to close up and say, you go to these schools here, that was a slow process to sell. And it took some time to do it. And they will do every sort of thing in the world to get around it. For instance, they're living with an aunt, the aunt lives over there close to the school that I want to go to, you know.

MM: Right.

YA: They'd find every way in the world to try to get there. So that's all the problems we had. And I think that we had to go over--Miss Maynor, I don't know that much we could have changed would have made any difference with the resources and the staff that we had then. You didn't have the resources or the staff that you have now.

MM: Right. So you wouldn't say on the whole there was anything you would have done differently or anything you would have been able to do differently?

YA: What's that?

MM: Was there anything you would have done differently?

YA: I don't know what I could have done differently that I could have, that's right. I might have, if I'd have had the resources and the people to do it with. I feel that I went through it, and I have no, I left with no ill will toward anyone. And I have love, appreciation for all of the people regardless of their race and their cultural background, or whatever you want to refer to. So I feel good about my stay in Robeson County, and I just think that I have so many people I love, I could go right down, I don't know. The last time I went down, it's been nearly 10 years, 8 or 9 years that I went to Pembroke. And I went to Pembroke and we went in a restaurant up there. And we went in to the drugstore there and after spending all those years I did, I think I finally found somebody that knew who I was. So things turn over.

MM: They sure do.

YA: And many of the ones I had that moved on, passed on, that I worked with, and I worked with some mighty good people. Now I talked with some, I talked not long ago with Albert Hunt. Do you know who I'm talking about?

MM: Yes, uh-huh.

YA: Huh?

MM: Yes, I do.

YA: I said, he was one who worked very good. He was an assistant superintendent with me. I think Mr. Grady Oxendine worked in my office, that was mighty good. He handled all the federal programs in the county. Federal money. Contributing and using it, supposed to see it was used properly. But I think he's passed away.

MM: Yeah, I believe he has.

YA: And many of those that I worked with--time'll fly, 26 years is, a lot of things happen, and I came here, with a smaller school system, not as complicated as Robeson. But I wasn't losing, we just reached a time with my own family, I had 3 daughters born and reared in Robeson County, went to school in Robeson county, and they're all fine. Two are married, and I have 5 grandchildren. One's not married, she's the one that travels all over the world. But, what else did I tell you?

MM: Well, tell me what year you left Robeson County to go to Kinston.

YA: I left, I think about '77.

MM: Okay. And you were the superintendent in Kinston until you retired?

YA: I was superintendent of Lenoir County. I was the county superintendent in Lenoir.

MM: And that was for how many years?

YA: Oh, 13 or 14. I think it may been 14. I served about the same number of years in both school systems. Not more than a year difference.

MM: Well, Mr. Allen, I think that's about all the questions I have. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't talked about?

YA: No. I want to maybe just say one or two things. I was looking at something here, and--the other day, and I went through some old notes and I remembered one, it would be right interesting. I remember one, only one time, two or three times in the superintendent's office, that I had a group of students come with a complaint. And I don't know, one or two times my whole career that they come to the superintendent's office. And one I remember is, I had 7 or 8 high school juniors from Pembroke High School came to talk to me, they made an appointment. And they all marched in, said they were 7 or 8, I don't know what it was, but I had to get 3 or 4 more chairs to get in my office to sit down. They all were dressed so neatly and nice and smiling. And I don't know what year it was, but it's been a long time ago. And their concern was that they wanted to have a prom--I told you that, didn't I?

MM: Mm-hm, but tell us for the tape recorder.

YA: At Pembroke High School. They wanted to have a prom, a dance. And anyhow, said that other schools around had them. Why couldn't they have a junior-senior prom where the juniors put it on and the seniors were the honored

ones? And then Mr. Elmer Lowry, good old Mr. Elmer, did a fine job for many, many years, been there a long time, he was not far from retirement when I first knew him. But he would not agree. Wanted me to see about having a prom. Well, I can't tell you what the reaction was. I talked to Mr. Elmer about it, and he said, well, he said too many dances ended up with fights and so forth. But anyhow, I think they worked that out and are having some good proms, and I hope they are.

MM: Mm-hm, I expect so.

YA: Is there anything else I could tell you?

MM: I don't think so. I think that about covers it. I really do appreciate your time.

YA: Well, I hope to do it. Are you going to publish this? If you will look, I got a new book, I haven't had it a year. The Robeson County Heritage.

MM: Right.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Melanie Miller, March 2004