

**TRANSCRIPT—STELLA NICKERSON**

Interviewee: STELLA NICKERSON  
Interviewer: Bob Gilgor  
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BOB GILGOR: This is January the 20<sup>th</sup>, in the year 2001, and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Stella Nickerson at her home on Crest Drive.

Good morning Stella.

STELLA NICKERSON: Good morning.

BG: I appreciate your talking to me this morning. I'm going to start out with a very broad question, that is, tell me what it was like growing up here in Chapel Hill.

SN: I always think that's an interesting question, because I have nothing to compare it to, because basically this is where I've lived all my life.

I guess you can say I had a typical normal childhood during the time that I was growing up. I spent a lot of time with my grandparents before I started school. And then I moved with my parents once I started elementary school. And I just went to see my grandparents on the weekend. I guess it was your typical ( ) back then. We have a very large family. We have a close-knit family, and it's always been that way. As I've said, I have nothing to compare it with because this is where I've been all my life.

BG: Was your large family all here, or mostly here?

SN: Mostly here.

BG: And you say that you had a close relationship with your grandparents. Did they raise you for a while, and then you went to live with your parents, or were you all in the same house?

SN: No, no. My parents lived in Chapel Hill. My grandparents lived out on University Lake Road. I guess you called that the "country." And when my parents were working during the week, I would be out there, with my grandparents, and I would come home on the weekend. And then, once I started elementary school, it was reversed. I lived with my parents during the week and my grandparents on the weekend.

BG: What kind of work did your parents do?

SN: They both worked for the university.

BG: What work did they do for the university?

SN: My father was a custodian at the dental school. And my mom worked for the laundry for a while.

BG: Stella, what kind of relationship did you have with your parents? Were you closer with your mom, or closer with your dad?

SN: I guess you could say that when I was in school, it was about equal. I spent time with both of them. But now I guess you could say I'm closer with my mom. I guess that happens with females. But when I was growing up it was about the same. I spent time with both of them.

BG: Who ran the house?

SN: [laughs] Your mom did, of course.

BG: Was she the boss of the family, so to speak?

SN: Oh, yes.

BG: Did your parents talk about the work that they did?

SN: I'm sure that they did. I'm trying to remember exactly what they said. I can't, but I'm sure that they did.

BG: They didn't hide it from you?

SN: No.

BG: Did you ever go to see where they worked, or go to work with them?

SN: I went where my dad worked, because I went to the dental school to have dental work done. But actually going to the laundry where my mom worked, no, I never had a reason to go there.

BG: Did you have brothers and sisters?

SN: I have one sister.

BG: Is she older, younger?

SN: Younger.

BG: She's still in the community?

SN: She's still in the community.

BG: How many years separate--?

SN: Three.

BG: What kind of a house did you live in? Did you own it or did you rent it?

SN: It was a rental.

BG: Did your parents ever buy a house?

SN: My mom eventually did.

BG: What was the rental house like?

SN: It was two bedrooms, bath, kitchen, living room, large yard.

BG: Did you have central heat or air conditioning?

SN: No air conditioning, but yes, we had a furnace.

BG: Did you always have enough to eat growing up?

SN: Oh, yes, that was not a problem [laughs].

BG: So you didn't feel poor?

SN: I didn't feel poor. I didn't feel deprived. No.

BG: And where was the house?

SN: First we lived on Lindsay Street, and then we moved to North Graham.

BG: How old were you when you moved to North Graham?

SN: I was entering fourth grade, I think.

BG: Did they rent in North Graham, also?

SN: Yes.

BG: Did they want to buy a house?

SN: Oh, sure. They eventually bought some land in Lincoln Park. But once they divorced they sold the land.

BG: How old were you when they divorced?

SN: Oh, I had finished college.

BG: So after some years of marriage, was it a shock?

SN: No, not really.

BG: They didn't get along very well?

SN: They got along fine. But, you know, you grow up in a house and you just sort of pick up things.

BG: Was your father abusive?

SN: No.

BG: Verbally or physically?

SN: No, no.

BG: How were you disciplined?

SN: [laughs] It all depends on what you did. Basically, you were restricted to the house. And if you did something really terrible, like you got in a fight with your sister or something like that, you may have gotten a whipping. But, you know, it was all for the good.

BG: Who did the whipping?

SN: Oh, my mom.

BG: So your father didn't hit you?

SN: No.

BG: Did you feel that the community parented you at all?

SN: Oh, yes. Basically, you really didn't have to worry about whether or not somebody was going to be around or—it wasn't something you thought about. You always had your neighbors next door, or across the street. That's who looked out for you.

BG: So you had the feeling they were looking out for you?

SN: Right. So it wasn't as if—I guess it wasn't as if I was home alone. There was always somebody around, somebody in the community. I never needed anyone but I knew they were there.

BG: Could they discipline you if they saw you misbehaving out in the community?

SN: Oh, they could say something to you, and by the time you got home your mom would know about it.

BG: So they were quick to tell. And was there ever a question about what an adult had said about a child?

SN: No.

BG: So your parents accepted what was told to them, and dealt with that, without calling the other parents back or arguing?

SN: No. There was never—basically, everyone knew each other and they were friends, they got along. My mother would tell them the truth [laughs]. So you basically just watched yourself. Which was good. It all turned out for the good. I have no complaints whatsoever.

BG: You have a big smile on your face, like you're remembering happy times. Did you feel like your childhood was a happy time?

SN: It was.

BG: Were your friends all black?

SN: All black.

BG: When did you first meet up with white children?

SN: When I started working.

BG: So you went through your youth almost--?

SN: Well, let me rephrase that. My first year—when I was at Chapel Hill High, my last year, as far as going to school or being around whites a lot, was my last year at Chapel Hill High. Because they were in the classes with me, and I had for the first time white teachers.

BG: Did you have an opportunity to develop friendships with whites at that time in school?

SN: That wasn't my goal at that time. My goal was to finish. And so that's basically what I concentrated on, finishing school. It was my last year, we were in a new location, and so I just concentrated on--.

BG: Did you think it was different, growing up a black female versus a black male, in who they socialized with, who they met, or their exposure to the white community or to segregation? That's a broad question.

SN: Sure is.

BG: Let's just localize it down to the experiences that they had with the white community, black male versus black female.

SN: I think it was probably different because when we were in high school, the majority of the black guys, they got jobs. They had jobs after school, whereas we as females we probably didn't. So they had more contact with ( ).

BG: So you didn't work after school?

SN: No.

BG: Was there fear that was transmitted to you by your parents or the community of your sexuality among whites?

SN: No.

BG: Was there ( )?

SN: No.

BG: So I can't ask you that. Next question: what was school like? Where did you go to grade school?

SN: I went to Northside.

BG: And what are your memories of Northside?

SN: Hmm. [pause] It was a good memory. I don't remember anything bad about Northside. We walked to school, we walked home. Big classrooms.

BG: You walked in groups, or did you walk by yourself?

SN: We had groups. Because we all lived on the same street. We were going in the same direction.

BG: It wasn't for protection or anything--.

SN: No. I was never put in a situation where I felt threatened, that I needed to walk in a group to and from school. Even when I started at Lincoln and we walked to school, I never felt as if I needed to have a group around me so I would get to school safely. I didn't—that wasn't there.

BG: I don't want to put words into your mouth. But what I'm hearing, I'm interpreting, and I'd like you to validate and tell me if my interpretation is true—it seems as though you grew up in a segregated town without fear.

SN: No, I did not have any fear. Maybe I just didn't know what was--. And it wasn't something that was talked about that would have caused fear. You know? My parents probably knew things that I didn't know. But they did not talk about it to cause me to be afraid to walk up town or to walk to school, or, you know--.

BG: In your community, did you see much alcohol excess?

SN: No. I'm sure it was there, but it wasn't—it wasn't something where you had people that were loud or causing problems at night. We lived on a quiet street.

BG: Did you see much absentee fatherism?



SN: Hmm. I was trying to sort of think back to--. Yes, there were a couple of people that I knew, that their fathers weren't ( ).

BG: How would you compare that with what's going on today—the same, more, less?

SN: I would say it's more, now.

BG: Were most of your friends from families that were two-parent homes?

SN: Hmm, good question. Now that you ask that question, there were some that were from single-parent homes. But it was no big difference from those that had both parents at home. The ones that had both parents at home, their parents were working. And the single parent, they were working. The difference wasn't pointed out. It wasn't something we concentrated on. It wasn't something we talked about.

BG: Do you remember your teachers at Northside? Do you remember their names?

SN: Now that you asked me. I can remember. I can sort of picture the classrooms. My first grade class was right off the gym. My second grade class was right off the gym. We had to go out through the gym to get out of the building, or the auditorium. My fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, I had the same teacher, all three of those years. Which was what they call a ( ) nowadays, which was the way it was set up.

BG: Did the teachers live in the same area that you lived?

SN: Yes, some did. The principal lived on the street behind us.

BG: Mr. [Peace?]

SN: Mr. Peace. He lived behind me when I was at Lincoln. Mr. McDougle lived sort of diagonal from me.

BG: They were right out there in your face.

SN: Oh yeah. And some of my teachers went to school with my parents. Or went to school with my aunts, or somebody in my family. So, you know--.

BG: Did they socialize with your parents or with people in the community?

SN: Yes.

BG: Did they go to the same churches?

SN: They'd go to the same churches. Or I remember a couple of teachers were friends of my aunts. And they still are. Yes.

BG: Did you look at the teachers as friend or foe?

SN: They weren't foes, so they must have been friends [laughs].

BG: What happened if you misbehaved?

SN: Ooh. Well, it's basically, you got it at school and you got it again when you got home. You got a lecture at school and you got a lecture when you got home. It wasn't as if what happened at school stayed at school. Your parents would find out about it.

BG: Right away?

SN: Well, by the time you got home.

BG: That's right away [laughs].

SN: Well, it wasn't like two or three days later. And so basically you just behaved yourself. I wouldn't say I was a behavior problem. By the time I got to the next grade I tried a couple of things and I learned very quickly that wasn't going to go so I, you know, straightened up.

BG: How important was the school to the community?

SN: I would say it was very important. It was a connection. It was something that the communities could say was definitely theirs. It was a gathering place. And Chapel Hill was very proud of Lincoln High. It's not just the band, or the football team. But we had very high standards in the classroom. You didn't slough off there, you worked. And if you didn't work, then there were consequences.

BG: Let's get away from Lincoln High for just a moment and go back to some other things. And then we'll come back to that. That's really what I want to focus on, and I haven't yet.

Did you get encouragement at home regarding your education? Did your grandparents, or your parents, or aunts or uncles—was a focus of their discussion with you on school, or encouragement about school?

SN: Oh yeah, there was no question about that. You had a time when you were expected to be sitting there reading, or doing your homework, or—yeah.

BG: Did that come from your parents?

SN: My parents.

BG: What about your grandparents? Did you get any of that from your grandparents?

SN: No, because both of my grandparents had passed by the time I was out of elementary school.

BG: How about when you were in elementary school and they were still alive? Did they have any involvement with your schoolwork?

SN: If they did I don't remember.

BG: What kind of resources did you have at home to help you learn? Did you have a dictionary? Did you have an encyclopedia?

SN: We had a dictionary. We had a set of encyclopedias.

BG: Did you see that in other homes?

SN: I can't remember. I can't say it was there or wasn't there.

BG: Would you say that your family was economically better off than other black families in the Northside area? Or about the same?

SN: I'd say we were about average.

BG: How important was the church in your ( )?

SN: Oh, we had to go to church. Church was definitely every Sunday. It was. It was something that we did.

BG: Do you have any idea of what percentage of the black community went to church on Sunday when you were growing up?

SN: I would say the majority of them.

BG: So you would say over 50 percent.

SN: Yes.

BG: Not 90 percent.

SN: No, I wouldn't go that high.

BG: Did your whole family go to church on Sunday? Your mother, your father, your sister and you? Your grandparents?

SN: No. My father only went every once in a while. But my mom went every Sunday.

BG: And you went--.

SN: Yes, I went every Sunday.

BG: Did you have special clothes for church?

SN: Oh, yes. You had special clothes for church, you had special clothes for school.

BG: And what did the church mean to you?

SN: That's a good question. That one I have to think about. There are so many things that you—when you're growing up, it's just there, it's a part of you and you really don't get really into, well, what does it mean? It's just something that was part of your life.

BG: Did you learn your morals, your ethics, right from wrong, at home, at church, at school?

SN: Combination of all three.

BG: Where do you think you picked up most of your values?

SN: At home. But I think what you picked up at school and also what you heard at church. It all sort of fits in together. It wasn't as if you would go one place and hear one thing, and there were no consequences. I mean, you had rules, things you had to follow at school and if you didn't you had consequences. The same thing at home. And then you heard it again at church. So it was a combination of all three.

BG: Now you had what I would consider a life of service, teaching. Where did you pick up this idea of service?

SN: My first memory of it was when I was in elementary school. The teacher I had. You know, you change your mind two or three times before you finish high school.

But by the time I was in eleventh or twelfth grade I decided that was the way I wanted to go.

BG: Did you get encouragement regarding that from your parents?

SN: Oh yeah. I was going to college. Whatever I decided to major in was my decision. But I was going.

BG: Where did you go to college?

SN: I went to Fayetteville State.

BG: Let's talk about the high school and what the high school meant to the black community. Maybe we should talk about your experience in high school first, in Lincoln High School. You went to Lincoln High School from what, seventh to eleventh grade. And what are your memories of Lincoln High School?

BG: Oh, other than the classes? The fun time when we had breaks, we called them recess. Watching the band practice, or the football team practice. Everybody was there in the same place. Everybody was outside at the same time. The classes and the teachers and their expectations—I think about it sort of comparing it—there was no question. I mean, you didn't get away with anything. Not that you would try.

BG: So it was pretty strict.

SN: Yeah. Quiet in the halls, quiet in the classrooms. You see scenes now on the news or in movies where students walk in to the classroom making all this noise—yelling and screaming and throwing things. No, that didn't happen. I don't think anyone even thought of doing anything like that. That was not the type of atmosphere.

BG: So discipline stands out in your mind, and the togetherness of your friends.

SN: Yes. And when I say discipline, I don't mean that someone was always shouting the rules at us. You knew it. You knew how you were expected to behave and you did. It wasn't as if someone was always preaching it to you or whatever. You just knew.

BG: What were the teachers like? Could you generalize? Or if you can't generalize, talk about specific classes. You don't have to mention teachers' names.

SN: They were—well I know that the teachers, I basically looked up to them. They were respected. And the classes were all business. Some made it very fun. Some made sure that you definitely went as far as you could go, as far as introducing information to you and making sure you knew how to do certain things.

BG: Did you feel they encouraged you?

SN: Yes. I guess it was a silent encouragement. I think it's basically the way they treated the students in the class and then the dedication they had for what they were doing. That was an encouragement for you to try.

BG: How did you see them as being dedicated?

SN: Because of the fact that they were there for the students, they talked to the students. It was not just coming in the classroom and doing your lessons and then leaving. They would stop and have conversations with you on how things were going, if you needed help with anything. If you needed to stay in during the recess time to work on something, they were there to help you out.

And also they were very strict, too. If there were something you hadn't done, you had to stay in and get it done.

BG: Did they focus on brighter people in the class? Or did they focus on everyone the same? Did they spend extra time on the people who needed help or were lagging behind? Do you remember any of that?

SN: When I went through, the students were divided into three different groups. You had the top group, the middle group, and what we called the vocational group.

BG: Were they separated in classes?

SN: They were separated in classes. It was like that all the way through from elementary school.

BG: So you had tracking.

SN: We had tracking. We didn't know what it was then, but that's what it was.

BG: But let's say in the top group, there had to be some people in the bottom of that class, who didn't learn as quickly as those at the top. Were they treated any differently? Was extra time given to them? Did the teacher push the whole class--?

SN: Pushed the whole class. There were groups within the class, but I do not remember any particular group within the class that were treated any differently from anyone else.

BG: Were you into any extracurricular activities?

SN: I played basketball for a while. Yeah, I think I played for one season.

BG: Were your parents involved in the school?

SN: Sure. My mom was very involved with the PTA.

BG: Did she ever talk to you about the PTA?

SN: Not that I remember.

BG: Did you ever go to a PTA meeting with her?



SN: I may have, but it doesn't stand out.

BG: When she would go to a PTA meeting, do you remember whether it would be a long meeting, a short meeting--?

SN: I don't remember.

BG: What did the PTA do for the school?

SN: Good question! Because I can't answer that one [laughs]. I'm sure they did a lot, but since that --it wasn't something that was readily shared--so if I attempt to answer that question, I will be comparing it to what I know PTAs are doing now.

BG: What were the other activities that were at Lincoln? You had football, basketball. You had band. What other things were there? Did you have singing groups or acting groups?

SN: You had a chorus. I'm sure there was a drama group but I don't remember that one. Athletics. They had student council. I just can't [pause].

BG: It's a long time ago.

SN: Yes it was a long time ago. A very long time ago.

BG: How important were sports at school?

SN: Sports were very important. In a sense it was sort of like a crowning glory. We had a very good football team. We had a very good band. And it gave you something to be proud of.

BG: Did the band play very often?

SN: Yes.

BG: Every week?

SN: No, I wouldn't say every week. But I just remember them out on the field practicing. They were always in parades, or--.

BG: Did they ever get sent to other areas to perform?

SN: Um, I'm sure they were involved in Durham's parade or something like that.

BG: What made the band something you had so much pride in?

SN: They were very good. It was a very good band.

BG: So they played well.

SN: They played very well, they performed well. They were just a good looking group, they really were.

BG: What kind of uniforms did they have?

SN: They were black. They had uniforms, they definitely had uniforms. It wasn't, you know, black pants and shirts. They had a uniform.

BG: Do you remember where the money came for the purchase of the uniform?

SN: No.

BG: Did you look forward to going to school?

SN: Yes. Everyday.

BG: Did you ever feel that school was irrelevant?

SN: No. Never.

BG: Did you feel that you were learning more than the subject matter from your teachers?

SN: No, I didn't, but I'm sure I was. I'm sure I was, but it wasn't something I thought about.

BG: Did the teachers come visit your home, meet your parents?

SN: They knew my parents, but whether or not they actually came to my house or not, I can't say. They knew my parents from the community. My mom had been involved in school.

BG: You've given me a lot of positive things about the school--.

SN: I can't think of any—I'm sitting here trying to think of negative things. I really can't. I don't remember anything. I do not remember any negative experiences.

BG: Was there a dress code at school?

SN: Other than you came looking your best? Yes, that was about it, that was the dress code.

BG: Could you wear pants?

SN: No.

BG: Could you wear stockings?

SN: You could. But it wasn't the school so much as it was your parents. You didn't wear stockings to school in seventh grade, seventh-eighth grade. And it wasn't the school, it was basically coming from home.

BG: What about hairstyles? Was there a code about how your hair should be done? Or your shoes?

SN: No, I mean if you walked in—I can't even remember anyone walking in and their hair wasn't combed.

BG: Was there smoking in the school?

SN: Oh, heavens, no!

BG: You never saw anybody smoke on the school grounds?

SN: No. No.

BG: What about alcohol?

SN: No. I mean, there may have been some, maybe prom night or something like that out in the parking lot.

BG: Graduation?

SN: No. I'm sure that, you know, but this wasn't open. It wasn't common knowledge.

BG: Did the teachers hesitate to discipline?

SN: No. Not that I know of. I never saw it.

BG: I've heard stories about the principal, Mr. McDougle. I heard that he had a master's degree from Columbia.

SN: I'm not sure.

BG: Can you characterize Mr. McDougle? How important was he to the school?

SN: I would say he was very important. I think that his expectations for the students were basically what drove a lot of things. I remember him walking up and down the hall. His door to his office was open and he was sitting at his desk but he could still see out in the hall.

BG: So he was right there with you?

SN: Yes, he was there. You saw him. And he knew you by name.

BG: He knew you by name. Did he know everyone by name?

SN: I'm almost—if he didn't, he knew their parents.

BG: So he wandered the hallways. Could you hear him coming?

SN: Not that I--.

BG: No. He wasn't a strong footed, big footed--.

SN: He had a distinguished voice also.

BG: Oh really? Tell me about that.

SN: I don't know. His voice was just—when you heard it, you knew that's who it was. There wasn't anyone else that sounded like him.

BG: Did he get on the loudspeaker system?

SN: Everyday.

BG: Everyday? When did he do that?

SN: I would say it was basically in the morning. You heard his voice everyday.

BG: What kind of message was he giving everyday?

SN: I can't remember anything particular right now.

BG: Was it positive?

SN: It was positive. It wasn't--.

BG: It wasn't, "Stella Nickerson, you need to come to the office to talk to me."

SN: Oh, if he needed you to come to the office, he would call you to the office over the intercom. But it wasn't, "Oh my gosh." You know.

BG: Did he greet the students at the door in the morning?

SN: I wouldn't say he was at the door. But he was around somewhere.

BG: Did he ever sit in on your classes?

SN: If he did I don't know.

BG: Did he ever teach?

SN: Not in any of my classes.

BG: So if the teacher was absent--.

SN: I don't remember a teacher being absent. I'm sure they were. But I honestly cannot remember anyone not being there. But I'm sure there were times when they weren't.

BG: So you were at Lincoln from seventh through eleventh grade. And in eleventh grade, in twelfth grade, in 1966, when Chapel Hill High School opened. So you started at the new high school as a senior. How much time before this school opened did you know that you were going to go to Chapel Hill High School? Did you know that the year before, or just a couple of months before?

SN: That is a very good question. Because I can't remember. I don't know if I knew it, if I found out my junior year, or if I found out during the summer. I honestly can't answer that.

BG: Do you remember having to vote on whether you wanted to stay at Lincoln or leave Lincoln and go to the new high school?

SN: No, I don't remember that.

BG: Do you remember discussions at home about what how you were going to spend your senior year?

SN: No.

BG: Do you remember any discussions in the community about whether the new high school was going to be segregated for a year or integrated immediately.?

SN: I don't remember those discussions. Basically, when I started hearing about it, it was going to be everybody was going. So anything that happened before then, I don't remember the discussions.

BG: So tell me what the differences were that you remember from Lincoln High to Chapel Hill High.

SN: Well, the difference was that it was an integrated situation. Like I said it was the first time I had white teachers. The year I was at Chapel Hill High School, we had no cafeteria. We had to bring our lunch every day. We had classes without windows. Because they had interior classrooms, there were no windows, which was something to get used to, but anyway. We thought of it as a huge school because it had two floors, it wasn't like Lincoln.

BG: How big was Lincoln when you were there? How many students were in your class?

SN: I can't remember that. All I know is when I graduated from Chapel Hill High, it was like 250 of us.

BG: That was small, 250 graduating?

SN: Yes. Compared to now, yes.

BG: How would you compare the white teachers with the black teachers that you had had at Lincoln?

SN: I don't—my first thought would be that they didn't take the time to get to know the students in the class. I don't remember—there's only one teacher I remember when I was at Chapel Hill High School that I had any contact with outside of the classroom. And that was basically because I was in the Future Teachers of America club. And she was in charge of it.

BG: Was she a white teacher?

SN: Yes she was. But the others, I had no contact outside of the classroom

BG: Did you feel that you were treated any differently from the white students by the white teachers?

SN: I didn't.

BG: You didn't. Did your friends?

SN: I'm sure, yeah, some of them did. But I guess that wasn't—I wasn't focusing on that.

BG: What were you focusing on?

SN: Well, I was ( ) in the ( ). It was a change. And I knew it was a change. And my concentration was to make sure I kept my grades up so that I could graduate. That was it.

BG: So you wanted to go to college. And you wanted to be a teacher. And your struggle was your personal struggle, if I interpret it, to just get it done, get your good grades, and go on and get your education and then teach. Not all the things that were going on around you.

SN: Yes, and some of the things that I heard that were happening that year—I had no idea. I really didn't. Because that wasn't, you know. I didn't. I really didn't.

BG: Was there anger that you felt from your friends?

SN: No.

BG: You didn't feel the anger that the students who had gone to Lincoln couldn't graduate at Lincoln?

SN: No, I didn't pick up on that.

BG: Mr. McDougle, who you described as very important to the character of Lincoln High School, was now a vice-principal--.



SN: Assistant principal.

BG: Did you have any feelings about that?

SN: Um [pause] no. Well, if you asked me now I'd say he got a raw deal, but back then I didn't--.

BG: Now you say you think he got a raw deal.

SN: I really do. I think he could've worked something else out.

BG: Why did he get a raw deal?

SN: Because basically he's coming in—he's ( ) and I'm sure they had a lot of discussions and they did a whole lot of things that we don't even know about as far as making that decision. And he may have decided to go that way. He may have decided, "No, I want--." We don't know. I don't know.

But for him to have been a principal at Lincoln High School, and then once it was combined he was given the assistant principalship. It could have—I can see it could've been worked out where it could've been co-principal—one principal in charge of one area and another--. And I'm not talking about one in charge of the white students, one I charge of—I'm not talking about that—but responsibilities could have been divided.

BG: He was an in-your-face kind of principal?

SN: I don't remember seeing him that much when I was at Chapel Hill High.

BG: Did you know where his office was?

SN: No.

BG: Did he roam the halls?

SN: I don't remember seeing him.

BG: Did he greet the kids? Did he get on the loudspeaker system? Did he inquire into grades, any of that, the way he had at Lincoln?

SN: I don't—my contact with him there was--.

BG: In looking at the core curriculum teachers, it seems to me the first year, there were no black teachers teaching core curriculum courses. Did that strike you at the time?

SN: It didn't strike me at the time, but now that you said it, I'm like, you're right. Yes.

BG: Did you feel like the black teachers that came from Lincoln to Chapel Hill High, that they were well represented, that there were enough black teachers there? Or did you feel that they were not well represented? Or you didn't give any thought to it.

SN: I really didn't give any thought to it. But I didn't have any. I only had one and that was in home ec.

BG: Miss Pope?

SN: Miss Pope, yes.

BG: Did you look at her from teaching any differently from the white teachers?

SN: No.

BG: Do you go back to Chapel Hill High reunions?

SN: No.

BG: Do you go back to Lincoln High reunions?

SN: I may go with my mom every now and then. Yes.

BG: Well why don't you go back to--?

SN: Chapel Hill High wasn't ( ). When Chapel Hill High, when the class of '67 is organized, when a reunion is organized, yes I go. But Chapel Hill High doesn't have

the type of reunions that Lincoln has, where everybody shows up. Chapel Hill High is basically by classes. When Chapel Hill High, when the class of '67 has a reunion, I attend that. Or when there is a reunion of all the block [black?] that went through Northside or Lincoln, I try to go to that.

BG: Did you see smoking at Chapel Hill High?

SN: No.

BG: Did you see any pot used, or alcohol abuse on campus? None of that.

SN: None of that.

BG: Did you think that the discipline was different at the two schools?

SN: The way I see Chapel Hill High the year I was there, I see it as very quiet and very calm. If any stuff was going on, like I said, I didn't know about it. I know that, once I went off to college and I started hearing what was happening out there, I was like, "What?" Because it was a transition, and I think people were just beginning to find out how different things were going to be. And I know there was a big struggle over the school mascot and teachers and things like that.

BG: Who was the school mascot when you went to Chapel Hill High? Was it from Chapel Hill High or from Lincoln? Do you remember?

SN: You know, I don't even remember if we had a football team. I mean, we didn't have a field. Where did they play? We didn't have a gym. So where was the basketball?

BG: What about school colors, school trophies?

SN: School trophies were [pause]. If they were there, they were downstairs. And I don't remember, I don't remember seeing anything at all.

BG: Are there other things that you remember from Chapel Hill High that struck you as different from Lincoln High? Books, resources, libraries?

SN: Oh, the library, good grief. It was completely different.

BG: How so?

SN: It was much larger. You had two stories. At Lincoln, we were all in just a small room. You had a lot more resources than we did at Lincoln.

BG: Now at Lincoln you didn't have new books. You had books that had been used. Did you have any new books?

SN: I don't remember having any new books.

BG: Were the books that you used defaced?

SN: Not that I remember having. I remember that there were some with the covers falling off, but I don't remember having any in my class.

BG: Are there other questions or other things that you'd like to share with me about your experience at Lincoln or Chapel Hill High or comparisons between the schools?

SN: Not right now, but I'm sure once you leave and I'm driving along, I'm like "Oh, yeah." I'll think of some things.

BG: You can E-mail me. I'd love to hear if you think of some things that you forgot, I could use them from the E-mail.

SN: OK. Now I was just sitting here thinking it was during the civil rights demonstrations that we all—the majority of us—walked out of school that day.

BG: In '66? You were still demonstrating in '66?

SN: '66. Yes. '66, '65.

BG: I read about the demonstrations of '63-'65. But I didn't know you were still demonstrating in--.

SN: We were not at Chapel Hill High. We were still at Lincoln.

BG: So you were involved in that?

SN: Yes. I didn't get in trouble for leaving school either [laughs].

BG: You didn't get arrested.

SN: Oh, yes, I was arrested.

BG: Did you go to court?

SN: Yes.

BG: Were you tried?

SN: No.

BG: They dismissed the charges?

SN: They dismissed the charges. It was juvenile court.

BG: How did you feel you were handled by the police during the demonstrations?

SN: Oh, I have a scar on my lap. I used to wear a ponytail all time. I remember distinctly we were on Franklin Street at the main intersection of Franklin and Columbia. And a patrolman came and pulled me by my ponytail.

BG: Dragged you on the ground?

SN: Yes.

BG: Were you ( ) if they took pictures of the ( )?

SN: No, I wasn't.

BG: Do you know who that was?

SN: I'm sure if I saw it again--.

BG: Were there photographers out there?

SN: There were always photographers around when we had big demonstrations like that.

BG: Did those pictures make it into the newspaper?

SN: I can't say if they made it into the newspapers. I know they made it into some books.

BG: Anything else that you'd like to share with me?

SN: No, but I'll E-mail you if I think of something.

BG: All right. Well, I'd just like to go a little further about your history and what you did after—you went to Fayetteville State and you got a teaching certificate. And then did you come back to Chapel Hill immediately?

SN: I came back to Chapel Hill immediately. At the time that I finished Fayetteville State you could finish your student teaching in half a semester. You didn't have to go the entire semester. So I finished at Spring Break, which was in March, so I came back home. Mr. McDougle and Mrs. Mc--.

END OF SIDE A

[Flip tape immediately; 053 left on the counter]

START OF SIDE B

BG: Ok, so you were saying, Mister and Mrs. McDougle had kept in touch with you?

SN: Basically, when they found out that I was finishing up and on my way home, he asked me to come over and talk to him. So I went over, and "what is it you want to do?" So he said, "Well, be at the office on Monday morning." So, Monday morning I got up and I was there. They knew I was going to be there, he had told them I was coming. So I substituted, I got a job substituting.

BG: At the high school?

SN: No, I was in elementary.

BG: What did you teach? Oh, just elementary.

SN: Elementary. So I substituted at the elementary. And then—that was in March—at the end of April it was found out that there were some teachers that were going to be leaving. I was offered a job and I accepted. And I've been at Frank Porter Graham ever since.

BG: And Frank Porter Graham is middle school?

SN: Elementary.

BG: How long did you teach at Frank Porter Graham?

SN: I was in the classroom for eighteen, nineteen years. Then I became assistant principal. I was assistant principal for ten years. This is my year as a principal, interim principal.

BG: You're a principal--.

SN: I'm an interim principal this year.

BG: Do you want to stay on there as principal?

SN: My plans right now is I will be retiring ( ).

BG: What are the problems that you see in schools today?

SN: The problems I see when I first think about is, the lack of African Americans really getting involved in what's going on in their schools. The parents are really staying away. They are not there as our parents were there. They are not there for the meetings. They are not there—the only time they will come is if their child is in a play or something like that. But that's about it. They do not come to special events. I think they need to be more and more involved. Even if you try to set things up for their interest. Getting them there is hard some times.

BG: Why do you think that's so? Do you think that they don't have the feeling of ownership?

SN: The feeling of ownership, and I think a lot of them may have had bad experiences themselves in school. Or they don't feel—the majority of the teachers are white teachers—I don't think they feel as if that's a place they can go and be comfortable.

BG: Do you think there's a socio-economic thing going on here also?

SN: In Chapel Hill? Oh, yeah!

BG: Between the teachers and the parents? The white teachers and the black parents?

SN: Oh! No. It happens not only between white teachers and black parents. It happens between teachers and parents period. Which is a shame, it really is.

BG: Why do the blacks not get more involved in the schools?

SN: I really think they do not see it as their school. They just happen to live in the neighborhood and their children go to that particular school.

BG: Where do you think that stems from?



SN: Because the majority—I'm thinking back to the parents we have now—they didn't go to a Lincoln High or a Northside. They were always in an integrated school. They didn't have the ( ) experience that we had to say that this was "our" school. They never had "our" school.

BG: What do you think could be done to give ownership to the blacks in the community so that it's "their" school? Do you think there's anything?

SN: One thing that's going to have to be done is going to have to be a change of attitude of not only the teachers in the school but also the parents. It's not just one side that has to do it; I think both sides will have to work on it. Parents—and it doesn't matter what color they are—need to start going into the schools and asking questions. You have the ones that are there all the time that are asking questions. But then you have this group that the only time they're there is when there's conflicts or whatever. They're not there, asking, you know, why isn't my child doing this, why isn't my child in enrichment? They just basically take whatever is told and don't ask any key questions. Trying to reach out to them and trying to get them in there is hard.

BG: You don't have a magic cure for getting them involved?

SN: No. And also in Chapel Hill, the number of African Americans in schools is decreasing. It really is. And you look at a lot of them, the parents didn't even grow up in Chapel Hill. They moved here from somewhere else. So the African-American family that actually grew up here—the parents grew up here, the grandparents grew up here, and all that—that number is decreasing.

BG: Now I had asked you something about socioeconomic. You were about to jump on it. Then I specified about socioeconomic. But I would love to hear what you were going to say about the socioeconomics of the black community. Could you recall?

SN: Yes. I think that it is still in decreasing. We almost headed back to the haves and the have-nots in Chapel Hill. And that's sad. There was a time when it was all beginning to blend. But now I think we're moving up to the ones that have and the ones-- . And the have nots, they have, but when they compare to what it is that when you think of—I call call off some neighborhoods here. It's obvious.

BG: The difference. Economic success between the black community and the white community. Is that fair to say that you're saying that?

SN: I'm saying that. But the white communities, the ones that are living there, moved into Chapel Hill. They did not grow up here. The majority of them are moving in from somewhere.

BG: Do you think that most of the blacks who went on to get college degrees have had the same opportunities to get jobs here in this area as whites who have the same level of education?

SN: Are you talking about now or then?

BG: You can pick and choose. Both.

SN: I think at the time that I graduated, the playing field, they were trying to even it out. They had to be very careful not to offer the same opportunities.

BG: So the blacks got a better deal.

SN: Or they got a fair chance, it was made sure that they had a chance. Because then, it was like, you did not use race as a factor for not hiring someone. Now, I think the

tides are swinging back to, if you are black, you are going to have more than a degree or something behind you. You are going to have to have a little bit more something special going for you.

BG: Are you saying that affirmative action is still something that the black community needs?

SN: Oh, yeah.

BG: And is that feeling strong in the black community, or is that just a personal feeling?

SN: That's just a personal feeling.

BG: So you don't have the pulse of the community.

SN: No. But I just really—you are going to have to—we've always had to work harder and prove ourselves more, but it's getting back to the point where we really have to do it now. You're going to have to have a little bit more.

BG: I want to go back a little bit to Chapel Hill High School and ask you how you felt you were treated as a black person your first and only year at Chapel Hill High. Did you see the white students treating you any different from the way they treated the white students, their own?

SN: If they did, I didn't focus on it. I really didn't.

BG: Did you see the black students treating the white students any different from the way they treated their own?

SN: It was obvious, as it is now. If you walk into any school cafeteria or classroom, you learn that all the blacks are sitting together and all the whites are sitting together. There may be one or two of them that are mingled out among the groups. That's

the way it was. There wasn't a lot of intermingling going on. The blacks stayed together and the whites stayed together.

BG: Do you see this today at all levels, or do you see some mixing?

SN: There's more mixing.

BG: And where do you see this mixing?

SN: When you're out and about. I'm sort of looking at our kids when our kids go out together. You're going to have a group of just all blacks. Then you're going to have another group where it's a mixture. Then you're going to have another group of ( ). It's a mixture.

BG: I appreciate your answer. But what I was referring to was at the level of school. Do you think that that mixing is occurring more at an elementary level, or junior high level, or senior high level?

SN: I would say it's going to occur more at the elementary. I think the older they get, the less they mix.

BG: Any other words of wisdom that you'd like to share, memories that you'd like to share?

SN: Not at this time.

BG: Well I thank you very much for taking the time.

SN: Oh, sure, it's been interesting.

END OF SIDE B