

Interview

with

MICHAEL L. DANIEL

December 7, 2004

by Elizabeth Gritter

Transcribed by Laura Altizer

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

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Transcript – Michael L. Daniel

Interviewee: Michael L. Daniel
Interviewer: Elizabeth Gritter
Interview Date: December 7, 2004
Location: Louisville, Kentucky, at Coach Daniel's office at Central High School
Length: 2 cassettes, approx. 1 hour and 30 min
Notes on transcript: He refers to himself as "D" from time to time.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

ELIZABETH GRITTER: This is Elizabeth Gritter interviewing Coach Michael Daniel in Louisville, Kentucky on December 7th, 2004. So you grew up in Texas.

MICHAEL L. DANIEL: I grew up in Dallas, Texas.

EG: When did you come to Louisville?

MD: I came to Louisville in 1970 because my father worked for the Ford Motor Company in Dallas, though Ford closed it down. They decided the union was a little too strong there so they fixed them. They closed it down. My father was too old to retire, or too young to retire, too old to get another job with any kind of pay. So we had a choice to go to Kansas City, Detroit or Louisville. We chose Louisville. We knew some people here from our church. So they decided to come here. I went to a school on the West End called Portland Christian High School for one year and graduated. From there I went to a school in central Kentucky called Southeast Christian College that's no longer there. It folded because of [a] financial crunch. From there I went to Harding University and finished my degree in special education. I came back to Louisville. Bussing was just

beginning. That year before Dr. [Lyman T.] Johnson had sued the board of education for the discriminatory practices. Named in that suit was Central High School and Parkland Junior High School, now called Lyman T. Johnson Middle School. When I came to Louisville, I was on fire, ready to change the world. I applied with the board of education for Okolona Elementary School, and three or four days after I applied they called me back and said, "We have an opening at Central High School. Are you interested?" [I said,] "Okay." So I did. I've been here ever since.

EG: In what way did you want to change the world?

MD: I was a young teacher with all the idealism that comes with youth, and I just knew that I was going to be the best teacher in America when I first started. Then I found out the reality. I think I'm a decent teacher, but it looked a whole lot better from the other side looking in. I'm thankful I've been at Southeast, been at Central. I think that it was God's will for me to be here. I've learned and I've grown through the acquaintances I've made here, some of the coaches that I've made friends with. I came from a world where black folks stayed on the other side of town and you just didn't deal with [them]. Boy, was I in for a rude awakening.

EG: So did you have, before you came to Central, any kind of contact with black people?

MD: Yeah, I did. When I was-- Minimal. We had two or three African Americans that went to Southeast Christian School, Christian College in Winchester. I remember that I was in the choir, and I had a black roommate on the choir trip. My mom wanted to take me out of school. Thought that was just something terrible.

EG: Because of, in the choir or—

MD: Yeah, the school choir. There we have packing partners for the bus, two to a room so () different people's homes. We sang at local churches. Of course some churches didn't like the fact that we had some African Americans in our choir and [we] weren't invited, but I packed with Kenneth E. Moore the III, called him Doley Might, but that upset my parents and some other folks I know that--. That was kind of neat because before that I was afraid of black people because they're different. I have discovered a whole world since I've been here at Central. I'm glad I'm here.

EG: So you didn't grow up in a racially progressive home?

MD: That'd be a fair assumption. I was from the Deep South. I remember some black folks came to my house one time trick or treating on Halloween and they did not get the kindest reception. My parents have grown some, but they're still a product of the Old South. I have learned.

EG: So what did you think when you went to the choir and it was integrated and you were a partner with a black student? Sounds like it was transformative experience for you.

MD: Yes, it was. There was only like three—. Our choir had probably fifty people in them and there was one African American. There were like three or four African Americans at the school. One, Kenneth Moore was in the choir, beautiful voice. I enjoyed it. We had a good time.

EG: You said you applied to Okolona.

MD: Elementary.

EG: Now I'm not familiar with Okolona.

MD: That's southern part of Jefferson County.

EG: Okay.

MD: When bussing happened, they're the ones who had the most riots.

EG: So was that a white school and blacks were bussed in?

MD: Right.

EG: Okay. Yeah.

MD: Primarily.

EG: How did you feel about being sent to, assigned to Central High School?

MD: I thought it was God's will so I'm ready for it. I didn't know what to expect. When I first came to Central, they had never had a learning disabilities program. When I came, Joseph MacPherson was the principal. I told him my name and that I was his new LD teacher. He said, "You're my what?" "I'm your new LD teacher. "What's that?" So it was an experience all the way around. We did not have the problems some schools had. Though when our football team or basketball team would go to some places that caused some problems.

EG: What were some of the problems that that would cause or that would come up as a result of that?

MD: Racially charged comments would come from the crowd. Rocks thrown at our bus. Bricks, go out to PRP [Pleasure Ridge Park High School] or the Valley [High School], which is the southern part of Jefferson County, which was not at all favorable to bussing. This is a generalization, a major generalization. Most of the upwardly mobile people that live in this county live in the South End. The South End has more blue collar, and the West End has most of the poorer folks in town. Now this is a broad generalization because there are rich folks who live in all parts of town and poor folks

live in all parts of town, more so now than then. But Central was connected with the South End schools so we had bussed in sons of doctors and lawyers, professional people. When we had our, I guess it's the fifteenth anniversary of one class just recently, it was amazing to me some of the kids who came. They were all doctors and professionals, but they were from those first years of bussing, and they loved Central because the cliques that were at their home schools were not here. Everybody was kind of thrown in together. Central went from a school of one hundred percent black to eighty percent white overnight. That is faculty and students. Mr. MacPherson was the principal. He was an African American, but the assistant principals were all white. The counselors were white. There were a few white faculty on the staff and they stayed. But when I came to Central as a brand new teacher with no experience, I replaced an ECE teacher that was here that had thirty-five years of experience. She immediately retired when they told her she had to go to the South End school. But they replaced her with me because of the color of my skin.

EG: How did you feel about that?

MD: I didn't realize it at the time. I didn't find out until later. I didn't because I didn't understand. It was later when I met the lady that it kind of hit me, "I took your job." That kind of bothered me. But I had a learning process when I first came to Central.

EG: You said she was an ECE teacher.

MD: Exceptional Child Education. Back then they were called EMH. Today we call them MMD, Educationally Mentally Handicapped. Today we call them Mild Mental Disability.

EG: Yes, you really see all the terms change.

MD: Terms change to be more politically correct.

EG: Yeah. Yeah.

MD: Muhammed Ali was in her class. Muhammed used to be in the EMH or MMD, EMH classes here at Central.

EG: Interesting.

MD: He sat and drew pictures and was quiet. He was not retarded by any stretch of the imagination. But he was put in those classes where they learned to sew and cook and those kinds of things. Today our special needs kids are just like everybody else. They're taking algebra and geometry and English. That's why I had the group of kids in here that I had in here.¹ I was helping them with their geometry. Another one [I was] helping with a paper. Another was doing research, but they're all going to regular classes by and large, trying to get a regular diploma. So things have changed that a way since bussing, which is for the good.

EG: I read one article by this woman named Nancy Arnez and she talked about how after bussing she thought that a disproportionate number of blacks were put in special education programs.

MD: That was out in the counties. Yes, ma'am. That is correct. What happened is we have the acronyms, MMD Mild Mental Disability, EDD which is Emotional Behavior Disturbed and SLD Specific Learning Disability. In Jefferson County right after bussing I don't know the exact figures. I'm pulling some out of the air, I want you to understand. But I would estimate that about eighty percent of the retarded kids, quote unquote retarded kids were black, probably eighty or ninety percent of the behavior

disorder kids were black. The opposite was true, probably eighty to ninety percent of all the SLD kids were white because that was more socially acceptable. That in fact did happen. At Central a goodly number were black, but we had a lot of white too because I taught the SLD kids, and it was probably fifty-fifty here. Then as time went on a majority of my kids were white and now [a] majority of my kids are black. We have fifty-six ECE kids in the building and probably three or four are white. The rest are something else, mostly black. But then Central High School is like eighty percent, seventy percent black now. So that's had something to do with that too. Our basketball team is doing well. Our football team got to the quarterfinals this year, which was interesting because racism is still alive and well. When we played the team from the next county over, our kids were all kinds of "niggers" and "boys" and Coach told me one of our boys got an unsportsmanlike penalty and what was it he said. The young man across the way from him kept calling him "nigger." He said, "That didn't bother me." Then he said something about you were fat. "Now that made me mad." Yeah, racism. I can remember blatant racism happening on the football field when I first started coaching football and things that shouldn't be. For example, Coach [Clint] Lovely was the head coach and had a referee would come up and say, "Boy, I'm going to tell you--." He'd put his finger up and say, "Boy you'd better get your team on—." You know. Coach Lovely said, "My name is not boy."

EG: Right.

MD: "I want you to understand. My name is not boy. Get your finger out of my face before I crack you. I want you to understand." That kind of thing happened. Our teams weren't very good then. Like I said, our football team now was one of the best in

¹ Coach Daniel is referring to the fact that he helps kids with their academic work after school.

the state. Things have changed that way too. When bussing first started, mostly we played with ninth and tenth graders because our kids were bussed out.

EG: I heard that, I mean, I know that Central had a sports legacy before bussing and that one of the concerns was that bussing was going to dilute the sports program.

MD: It did. It did. Before bussing we had two state champions in basketball. Central was Negro National Champion for four years in a row, three years in a row in the '50s. That was before my time. But we have some trophies downstairs that show that.

EG: Negro National Champion in what?

MD: Basketball.

EG: Basketball.

MD: Our football team used to play--. There were only two teams in town that would play Central, Saint X is one. I can't remember the other. Our kids would have to go to Dunbar in Lexington, which at that time was a black school. It's amazing now because Lexington-Dunbar now is an elite white school in the suburbs. But back then it was an inner city school and it was Lexington-Dunbar. Had to go there. They'd go to East Saint Louis. They'd go up to Dayton. They'd go to Indianapolis. They'd have to go to these places to play games to find somebody to play our team.

EG: This is all before bussing.

MD: Before bussing. This happened in the '60s, early '70s. Then when bussing occurred this place was completely turned upside down. One of the problems we have now is we're going to have a ballgame here in about an hour and a half. At six o'clock the boys are going to play Butler. We've got some folks that are working the concession stand. Their average age is sixty, fifty-five to sixty. These are the alumni that help.

There is a major gap between 1975 and now. The alumni from these folks did not come back because they were forced to be here. So our alumni has been decimated. Folks from the South End, they don't come back to be a part of the alumni association. So once these folks get too old to do this, I don't know what's going to happen because our alumni are older folks, the ones who graduated in the '60s, mostly in the '60s. There's a few from the early '70s but mostly from the '60s and the '50s. The '70s, the '80s and the '90s, we don't have very few alumni that want to do anything.

EG: Why is that? You said because they were forced to be here. Did they—

MD: Yes. This school during bussing people had to be here. These folks are supporting their schools, Eastern and Ballard, they are alumni members of Eastern and Ballard and Seneca and South End schools, Trinity or wherever but not Central. Their children are going back out there. They didn't come back down here. That's why.

EG: So they didn't feel-- I know for the black community Central is a big, and still is, source of pride. But you don't see that with these white students.

MD: Right.

EG: Who were bussed in.

MD: They'll come in for their class reunions or so forth. Of course a lot of these folks that come in don't live in Louisville anymore. They're professionals in other places. But there is a major disconnect between what was and what is now. Now the children who are at Central want to be here. I would expect, I suspect our alumni will probably die off before the younger folks get involved because most of the time these alumni have been out of school for a few years before they get started. So these people

now that are wanted to be here, when they get into their thirties, late forties, they'll start coming back and being more involved too is my guess. I'm hoping they will anyway.

EG: Yeah.

MD: So Central has a rich history obviously. We're over a hundred years old. Central High School was one of two schools in Kentucky that African Americans could go to from its history. Have you seen the book *The History of Central: The First Hundred Years*?

EG: No, I haven't.

MD: Well, there is a book that the alumni sells. In fact you could probably buy one now if you wanted to hang around for the ballgame. I wouldn't be at all surprised if you couldn't purchase one for ten dollars or so.

EG: Yeah.

MD: *The History of Central: The First Hundred Years*.

EG: Yeah, that would be good to get.

MD: I have one, but I don't have it where I can show it to you right off. But that might be helpful too, showing the locations of the school. But if you lived outside of Jefferson County you probably went to Lincoln Institute in Danville. If you lived in Louisville, Kentucky, you probably went to Central High School. There was a lot of pride, a lot of pride. You didn't see kids here with disheveled clothes, dirty clothes. They were dressed to the nines or they didn't come. Back in those days if Johnny didn't come to school, you didn't get a phone call home, you got a visit.

EG: You're talking about before bussing.

MD: I'm talking about before bussing. In 1975 the Louisville school system, Jefferson County public school system merged. Before the merger, you don't hear about that much now. Before merger, pre-merger Louisville schools had a lower income. Teachers made less money in Louisville than in the county. The books were not as good. But there was a lot of pride. I've heard Dr. Johnson in our auditorium talking about when he was a young teacher here and the fact that a lot of teachers here had Ph.Ds because they couldn't teach anywhere else. But when children messed up here, you didn't get a phone call. The teacher went to the house and talked to Mom and Dad and let them know what was going on. There was a sense of community that is not present now. This is just the school.

EG: Because of bussing.

MD: Because of bussing. [chiming sound—intercom] The older folks still see that, the older folks in the community still see this as the place. Central High School still holds functions for the community on the weekends. It's still that way. But—.

EG: What sort of functions?

MD: There have been some gospelfests here. Angela Davis has been here and done some rallies. We do Black Achievers here, which is a community program. That goes on now, every other weekend. Black Achievers meets here. I can't think of anything off the top of my head. Those are the ones I can think of. We used to have the Martin Luther King rallies here on King Day. That hasn't happened for the last two or three years. It used to be every year. I usually come to those. That was kind of neat. We'd have several Central kids do things. We had one child who recited "I Have a

Dream" which brought tears. That kind of stuff, sing the black national anthem. It was really kind of neat and that was a point of pride.

EG: If you could talk about what, well, you said that it was a learning process for you to be here. If you could say a little bit more about that.

MD: Oh yes. I had a lot of racist views when I came to Central High School that I had modified. Probably the person who had the most influence on me at that time was the football coach, Clint Lovely. I remember saying stupid stuff like there were some birds over the top of the school and I'd say, "Coach, you know what those are? They're down at Central. They've got to be black birds." He'd look at me and say, "D that's so racist. You've got to--," he'd say. "Oh sorry." It's things like that. He would let me know. He said, "That was dumb." Sometimes—.

EG: He was black.

MD: Yes. Yes. He was probably my closet friend. He's retired now. He runs a Portland Community Center down in the West End. But he's retired from teaching. But we used to go to Kentucky State together. We used to go everywhere together. They called us Fric and Frac. Where he was, I was and vice versa.

EG: Did you have black friends? Well, you mentioned the person in the choir.

MD: That was the closest thing to a black friend I had. Now a goodly number of my friends are all African American especially the older folks that I know. Like I said, it was a process. It was during that learning process that I learned more about racism. I can give you a specific example. Going on trips where I'd be the only white person on the trip. We'd take athletes. Everybody, all the other sponsors would be black. I'd be the only white person on the trip. I remember going to the Dogwood Relays at the

University of Tennessee-Knoxville. This was in 1978, '79, right in there. The coach at that time was a fellow named Jerome Henderson. When we went there, he said, "Now D I want you to watch. I'm going to buy some gas. This man will not look at me. He will not look me in the eye." He was right. He wouldn't. He would not look because you don't look a black person in the eye. We were in a McDonald's. There were several lines. The line that Jerome was in, I was in, we were in the same line. His line got to the counter several people before my line. They quit waiting on that line until I got down to the same place and were going to wait on me. I said, "Wait a minute. This man here has been waiting for a long time. Wait on him first." They wouldn't wait on him until--.

That was racism. I became much more sensitive to those kinds of things when I started looking for it. I can give example here in Jefferson County. At Thornton's over on Preston Highway a young lady, African American, had run out of gas, asked the attendant, "Do you have a gas can we could rent so I can get some gas in my car?" "No, I'm sorry, honey. We don't have any." I came up right behind her and said, "Do you have a gas can?" "Oh sure here." So I bought some gas. That's racism. I've seen racism at the Bob Evan's. That I reported to the NAACP. At one time at Bob Evan's if you were white, you would be the greeter or a waitress or the manager. If you were black, you washed dishes or cleaned up tables or maybe was a cook. But since then they've been forced to hire African Americans as managers and other things. But those are the kind of things that I've learned.

EG: You reported Bob Evan's to the NAACP. Was it because you noticed that the staffing patterns were like that?

MD: Right, and let them check it out.

EG: When was this that you reported that?

MD: It was in the early '80s.

EG: Okay.

MD: That's when I became more sensitive to the fact that certain people were treated differently. It never really occurred to me when I was young that that had happened. I attribute that to what I learned here and from my relationships with some good black people that I learned from.

EG: If you could talk too more about how, well, the dynamics I guess but that dramatic change in going from a hundred percent black overnight to eighty percent white, what the problems were, what went well.

MD: Oh my.

EG: I mean, that's just incredible.

MD: We had a number of folks come and want to help us monitor our classes. A noted radio personality here, Wayne Perky, came down and helped us. His daughter went to Central. His name was Perky, but her name was Byrd. A, B, F and Q was bussed in. So his daughter was bussed in, and he came down to help try to ease tensions. We had a number of kids who took advantage of the situation. MacPherson tried very hard to accommodate everybody. We started having all kinds of things that the school had never seen before. White sports, I call white sports but club sports like field hockey and tennis and those kinds of things some of which we still have. But they came in to try to appease all the kids coming in. We tried the best we could. Of course back then we had vocational school. We don't have vocational school here anymore. So we had a number of kids who would come here half a day for reading, writing and math—.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

EG: You were talking about the different changes that took place.

MD: Yes, the different changes. During the first ten years of bussing, nothing was ever the same two years in a row. Nothing. Either they changed the bussing pattern. They changed something every single year. A person like myself who doesn't like change, that was kind of tough because the makeup of the school kept radically changing. Then about ten years into bussing the wealthier folks in town found out that if a child couldn't breathe the air down here, they didn't have to be bussed. We had kids who all-state linebacker from one school, played football at his school. Then he came down, he changed his name legally and came down here for half a year and then went back to his home school and played as an all-state linebacker. Rich folks can do some of that stuff. We tried to accommodate and appease most of these folks. We never had the difficulties that some schools had like I said. We didn't have the demonstrations out front, the protest marches. Most of that happened in the South End. I remember getting caught in one at Okolona, and I thank God I didn't have a gun because I would've probably tried to kill somebody.

EG: You got caught in a demonstration there.

MD: Had people banging on my car saying, "Honk if you hate bussing" and I wasn't honking. People would jump on my car, banging on my car, jumping up and down, hitting my car with rocks and stuff. If I had had a gun, I would've tried to kill somebody. I'm so glad I didn't. I am so thankful I didn't. That really made me angry. That's why I'm seeing racism from the other side. I can't give you a point in time when I

would say that I wasn't racist anymore. According to my friend it took a longer time than I thought did. Talk about the fact that your mouth is in gear and your brain in idle, buddy. He'd tell me more than once. Like I said we're best friends.

EG: This is Clinton Lovely.

MD: Yes.

EG: Okay.

MD: I helped him bury most of his family. We've been very close over the years. I really appreciate him. But just kind of living and kind of being and experiencing. I'd go into places where I'd be the only white person in there. Some interesting experiences. But I found that for the most part many of my African American friends are much more accepting of me than some of my quote unquote white friends. Much more accepting and I appreciated that. So I don't know what else you'd like to know.

EG: Yeah, let me look at my list of questions here. I've just come up with several. How did the students get along when Central High School?

MD: Famously.

EG: Really.

MD: Lots of black and white folks are still friends today that they made there that wouldn't have happened otherwise. I think when bussing first started it was very successful. It was very successful because again you had white people who had never seen black folks in any kind of other than on the street walking by, in classes with them, playing ball with them, doing different things. Then all of a sudden [they] found out black people are okay. How about that. Since it's gone on I think it started failing. As I

said folks started, from the country clubs, finding ways to get out of bussing. Finally bussing here died, and that's around 1980 when we started having one way bussing. That basically means that folks from the West End are bussed out but white folks—.

EG: Can stay where they are.

MD: Volunteer, right, could volunteer to come back in. Since all that's happened we've, Central's become almost eighty percent black now, seventy percent black. About four years ago, five years ago, a lawsuit negated the bussing order. Since then Central has admitted more folks. That's been good; that's been bad. The bad part is that we've started admitting folks because they were black who didn't want to get an education. The trade off is we've put a lot of kids out of here. In the last four or five years we've put several kids out of here whose grades were not good, who were discipline problems, which () a good place to be. They were sent back to their home schools. This is a magnet school. We do not have a district. We are one of three schools that don't have a district. Manual, the traditional schools do not, and Central.

EG: You said some of the kids who came didn't want to get an education. What do you mean by that?

MD: That may be a poor choice of words. We have children who are more interested in running the halls and talking to their friends and education wasn't a high priority on their agenda. Those folks cut classes and those kind of folks were asked to find some place else to go. The result is the other folks that were here decided that these folks mean business so they started working better. So from that standpoint it's helped. Also now that we are not a quote unquote bussed school our football team has gone way up. This year we played [in] the quarterfinals of the state football [tournament], and we

almost won against a five-time state champion. We got off to a bad start and the team pounded us, and they got forty points in the first half. They beat us fifty to forty-eight or fifty to forty-three. So second half we played ball and almost came back and beat them. So that was really an experience.

EG: When bussing began what was the interaction like on the playing field between, in terms of your teams here at Central?

MD: Coach Lovely did a good job of integrating the team. There was more problem on the outside than on the inside. Our kids got along well together on the football team. I guess the biggest problem is our freshmen and sophomores that were white were () we had. As juniors and seniors they go back to their home school and beat up on us. We wouldn't have had a team at all except for the ones that decided to stay voluntarily after they came. We readily got beat like fifty to nothing, seventy to nothing, seventy to six. Now that's what we do to other folks. That's what we do to other folks.

EG: Were the good athletes bussed out did you say?

MD: Oh yes.

EG: With bussing.

MD: Oh yes.

EG: What were people's response to that?

MD: I don't know. I wasn't involved enough at that time to give you an answer.

EG: Oh, right. Right. Yeah.

MD: Most people believed Dr. Johnson had a point when he said that we needed what he called "white hostages" to get the educational level here up. He was right

because when we had those doctors' and lawyers' kids here, down on the first floor you could see some first class laboratories and things. They were not here before bussing.

EG: So bussing did improve the education experience here.

MD: Yes. They had to, and that's what Dr. Johnson was trying to do. He tried to stop, well, he was really awfully old at that time. I don't think he was happy that the lawsuit came by that ended segregation.

EG: The one from five years ago.

MD: Right.

EG: Yeah.

MD: So now there are no racial quotas at Central. We can have as many people as we want.

EG: Has there been any change in how education is here as a result of that in terms of the quality?

MD: We, Central High School has had some excellent students here. We have had a number of people that have gone on to places like Harvard or Yale or places like that as well as the University of Louisville and University of Kentucky who get most of our folks. We've had several National Merit Scholars and semi-finalists. Our present student population is maybe not as--. Academics has gone down a little bit as more folks have been allowed to apply. They try to get the upper stanine kids into Central. Well, we've got some lower stanine kids here too. This year we've been identified as being a school in crisis, but that's a misnomer because every year every school has to be going on an upward trend toward 2014 or something like that where all schools in the state of

Kentucky are supposed to be one hundred percent. So some of them have a steep curve. Some of them have a more shallow curve because they're on their way up.

EG: A hundred percent of, for what?

MD: What the state says is the minimum that everybody in Kentucky is supposed to be knowing.

EG: Oh in terms of standard.

MD: In terms of standards.

EG: Test scores and stuff like that.

MD: Well, on our particular chart we were one hundredth of a point under the line, which made a point in crisis. Now the thing that makes this kind of a sticky point is unlike some schools that we did not realize were supposed to do, we had scores tested against us for kids that weren't here that had gone to Taft or to Buechel. That's an alternative school or dropped out or other things, but their scores were still counted against us and they brought us that hundredth of a point underneath, but we're still a school in crisis so we have to do some interventions. If you take all the schools in Jefferson County and compare them side by side, we are still above almost half of them. They're on different points on their particular, everybody has their own particular learning curve, to get to a hundred percent but on ours, that's why I said that's kind of hard. I think we're doing very well. We still have a number of kids—. This is the place where folks come to get African Americans for their recruiting.

EG: Oh for sports or for academics.

MD: For industry, for most anything.

EG: Anything.

MD: KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken] has a partnership with us, one primary reason because we have some of the best and brightest African Americans in the city in one spot where they can recruit. We have partnerships with a number of folks. That's something that our previous principal did, Harold Fenderson. We have partnerships with Speedway. We have Marathon, KFC, Walgreen's. We have partnerships, we have a magnet downstairs, science magnet, one of like two or three in the whole nation. We have a nursing program where a number of our kids are able to get a CNA and come out of here making a job making ten or fifteen dollars an hour as a certified nursing assistant. We have a pre-law where we have (), some of the bigger places in town have partnered with us and give scholarships to some of our kids to colleges and so forth. So it's been a good place to be.

EG: Do you think that bussing was the right thing to do?

MD: I think the school improved because of bussing. I think that some of the schools in Jefferson County panicked when our scores started coming up because it meant we were getting some of the kids they used to get. We're getting them, didn't like that. I think that from the standpoint it has been a good thing. But I believe that it needed to go because it's not the same as it was when we first started. There are so many loopholes that people started finding loopholes so their kids didn't have to come here. That meant poor kids came here and rich kids didn't.

EG: Yeah. Yeah.

MD: When we had rich kids here, our scores were way high. Right now our socio-economic status, we're one of the poorer schools in Jefferson County, but still our

scores are much above many of those other schools. They seriously are. So we're doing something right. We know have more kids who want to be here and that adds to a lot too.

EG: What were the dynamics like among teachers when Central was desegregated?

MD: That's gone through a whole phase too. When I first started coming here, teachers were really together as all in one boat, and it was really kind of a really enjoyable place to be. It was a laid back and it was enjoyable place to be, to work. That wasn't always the case through some of the years. There have been some years where the teachers were against each other. There have been some years where the white teachers and black teachers were almost having a war.

EG: Really. How so?

MD: We had some very vocal black teachers who made some of our white counterparts get out of their comfort zone. We all have a comfort zone, which we can accept, and some of our teachers were challenging those comfort zones, which caused some great resistance.

EG: Can you give an example of that?

MD: Faculty meeting where an African American teacher stood up and said, I forget what he said, about some of the white teachers here need to pay attention to their racist attitudes, and several white teachers walked out of the room. What he said was not wrong. It was true. That's something I've talked with Mr. Henderson about more than once. Most of us have some racist views that we don't even realize we have. I'm not racist. I've got a black friend. I have a black friend so I'm not racist. Don't even realize. But racism is when you let the black kids in the back of the room sleep while the white

kids learn up front. That's racism. Racism is when you treat people differently because of the color of their skin. We have had some teachers who have done that, favor the white kids here over the black kids. That's racist just as much as anything else. It's subtler. But—

EG: Is that what caused the tension between the black and white teacher or was there racism—

MD: We've had some white teachers who were racist who didn't realize it. Of course if you talked to them, they're not racist – "I'm not racist." "Well, wake up. Smell the roses fellow." I think some sensitivity training would've gone well in that area. I think our present faculty is doing pretty good. We have an administrator now who I think keeps a pretty even keel. I think we still have some racist teachers here, but it's not so much as it once was.

EG: Right. Right. Yeah. I'm going to look over my questions to you once more to see if there is—

MD: I've rambled a lot.

EG: You've been very generous—I appreciate it—very insightful. We've covered a lot of ground. What was your experience like the first day of school that you were here?

MD: I was a little nervous. I really didn't have a class yet so I was out playing hall monitor. I didn't know what to expect. Neither did anybody else. Things actually went very well. But we didn't know what to expect. So the apprehension. It turned out to be a very pleasant experience but apprehensive at first, but once we got through the first few days it was fine from my perspective. I was a brand new teacher. I really didn't

know anybody. But there was a whole of brand new teachers here, a whole bunch. It was, I guess it was okay.

EG: Is there anything we haven't covered that you think would be important to add? What haven't I asked you that's important or we haven't talked about.

MD: I think that the educational requirements for teachers teaching today were more than the educational requirements for the teachers who taught when I first started here. I think that has something to do also with our scores going up. When I first started teaching here, we had some African American teachers who taught out of their areas of certification. That doesn't happen here anymore, which is an improvement. We went through a period shortly after bussing when this became the dumping ground for troubled teachers. Those were some problems.

EG: Troubled in what sense?

MD: We had one teacher who used to smoke pot on a regular basis. I have no idea how he kept his job. He's no longer here.

EG: For troubled white teachers.

MD: Yeah.

EG: Okay.

MD: Yes. Teachers had gotten in trouble at other schools.

EG: They'd just send them to Central ().

MD: You've got to put them somewhere because they don't have a job. Send them to Central.

EG: It's interesting how the desegregation was even discriminatory in terms of that and displacing blacks from jobs and so forth.

MD: That happened the first, from '75 through probably early '80s when that quit happening. But first few years we had a big turnover of white teachers. I've been here since then, but Miss Hall downstairs I think she's been here pretty close to the same amount of time. After that most of the teachers here eight, ten, twelve years. I've been here thirty. So this is the only place I've really taught.

EG: Right.

MD: I think it's interesting I've never worked for a white principal. That's something that's probably unusual. Even when I student taught in Arkansas, I had an African American principal there. I am thankful that I'm here. I'm thankful that I've stayed. Sometimes I wondered if I've missed the boat by not moving on to some place else. But I'm a very religious person, and I think that God would want me to be here. So I'm glad I've been here. I think I've been a positive influence for kids here. My overall for thirty years I'd give this a very positive rating, very positive experience for having been here. I can't think of anything else.

EG: Has your religiosity made an impact on how you deal with students here and your changes of racial attitudes and so forth?

MD: That's my motto.

EG: I John 4:4.

MD: I John 4:4. "Greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world." I do the Fellowship of Christian Athletes here. I had an opportunity to counsel more than a few students because of my position.

EG: I guess overall in having been here over thirty years, what is your assessment of what has gone well with desegregation and what has not gone well?

MD: I think that the initial intent of desegregation was lost somewhere there in the '80s. I really do think that it was. I think the original intent was excellent. That's why I said people started finding ways to get out of it. All of a sudden if you had the money you could find ways out. It quit being what it was supposed to be because so many of the kids that didn't have to [didn't] come anymore. But I think that's when things started changing because--. And I understand that too because if I've got money and I want my child to have the best education and I don't think Central is the place, I'm going to find a way to get my child out of Central. You cannot legislate that kind of thing. Of course back then we had a plethora of private schools jump up. Many of them have folded since then. Many of them have folded. But after a certain point I think it's lost its effectiveness, and I think that maybe after that go ahead and scratching that program. We tried to have volunteer bussing. That's the idea of the magnets. I think that has been a good alternative.

EG: The magnet schools.

MD: Yes, trying to attract better kids. However again it's primarily black kids who apply here and by basically poorer black kids. We have kids come from all over Jefferson County, but the vast majority come from the West End and the poverty areas. We do not have many from the projects. So the lowest, most of those kids don't come. But I believe that this has been a good experience and a good place for kids to be. I believe it is a good place now for kids to be. I'm glad to be a part of it.

EG: That would be great. Let's see here. I'm going to leave [the tape recorder] on to ensure accuracy. So a few words that you said I want to make sure of the correct

spelling of those. I've heard of Dr. Johnson before because he was involved with the NAACP.

MD: Lyman T. Johnson was the first African American to graduate from the University of Kentucky. He integrated the University of Kentucky.

EG: Was he?

MD: Law school. He was a teacher here. He was an outspoken teacher. To hear him speak talk about when the board of education told him to hush. You want a job. Hush. Talk about all this equality stuff. You just hush. He didn't hush. He didn't hush.

EG: Okay, so that's L-Y-M-A-N then a T and J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

MD: Yeah, and there's a middle school here named for him.

EG: Okay. Because you said it was Parkland.

MD: Parkland Junior High.

EG: Junior High.

MD: And that's in one of the poorest areas of Louisville.

EG: You mentioned Kenneth Moore III.

MD: Yeah.

EG: Is that M-O-O-R-E? Okay.

MD: Yeah. I doubt he remembers me. But I remember him.

EG: The choir.

MD: Yeah.

EG: Yeah. Yeah.

MD: He said something to me, kind of stuff I would do. We were at a house where the man of the house said, "Let's all hold hands and Brother Daniel would you

please pray." Well, I had Ken's hand, "Let me have your hand, please." While I was holding hands, he was doing this to me while I'm trying to pray. That kind of stuff, tickle (). I'm not even straight faced. We had a ball. Things like that. I remember we were in Linton, Indiana and he was really nervous up there because the black people up there were not--. We hung together because--. Of course he was a super athlete, and I was just kind of mediocre at best. But that really made him nervous.

EG: What is that L-I-N-T-O-N, Linton, Indiana.

MD: L-I-N-T-O-N. That's by Dugger. That's Terre Haute.

EG: Oh Terre Haute. Okay.

MD: It's just outside Terre Haute. There was a church camp up there. I went to a denomination called Church of Christ. There was a church up there that the choir went to sing for. I remember his being nervous. I remember him taking me down to Bucktown. Bucktown in Winchester was the area where the black kids, black folks lived. Clark County is very segregated or at least it was then in Kentucky. You had the poor live in one end, the rich lived on the other end and they didn't have much of a middle class.

EG: Is that a suburb of Louisville?

MD: No, Clark County, Kentucky. That's in central southeast Kentucky. When I was at Southeast Christian College.

EG: Oh okay.

MD: Went down there and they had dinner on the grounds at the local black church down there. That was a really interesting experience. That was the first black church I ever went to. I've been to several since then. I enjoy going to black churches. I

go to the, I don't go to one now. I go to the Southeast Christian Church. I don't know if you've heard of that. Southeast is in the east of Jefferson County and is one of the biggest churches in America.

EG: Really. Okay.

MD: We've got about 25,000 members. So it's a pretty good-sized church. But that was an experience, but I really, Clint Lovely is the only person who would say, "D. that was a racist thing you just said," and made me stop and think about what I had said.

EG: About?

MD: About whatever, I'd say something and, "D that was racist." Oh. It helped me to understand. Which nobody had ever done that for me before to help me understand, and I was open enough to accept it. I think I was better for it.

EG: Did you see other teachers, white teachers, having these same sort of transformative experience while they were here.

MD: Yes, I think so. Our football staff was mostly white and that was some fun times. We used it as a—. Of course we'd get the () beat of us on Friday night. We'd hang around and just talk about it. It was an interesting time. Some of the old fellows that used to play with Clint and come around and sit and talk and just have a—. I drink my soda pop and they'd drink their soda pop, but it wasn't really soda pop. Their liquor, Jack Daniels or whatever it was. I'd just drink my soda pop. But we'd listen and hear them talk about the old times. That was so impressive to me hearing about how things used to be, and of course I was hearing second hand. I still felt like I've benefited from some of that experience. They're talking about, the assistant principal here Maud Brown Porter. Ms. Porter ruled this place. She was assistant principal, but

she was the person who the kids were afraid of from the biggest and strongest one to the littlest. They were all afraid of Maud Brown Porter. They'd talk about how she'd do things. Mostly with fondness, say boy you got a () of detention. She'd say things like, "Boy, I knew your mama and your daddy and your grandma and your granddaddy. They weren't no good and you ain't no good either. Just sit down there and be quiet."

EG: Oh my.

MD: She'd say some interesting stuff. Of course this was a community school back then. Everybody knew everybody. Of course that is no longer the case. We're a transit school. We're bussing. So it's gotten anymore like I said, many of the kids now still come from the West End. But the tradition and the roots are not here that there once was. I hope that'll develop again as bussing has gone to the wayside, and we get kids who want to be here that they'll come back and start wanting to be more part of the alumni and so forth.

EG: That will be more of the community than it was.

MD: Right.

EG: Yeah. Polly Might? I can't read my writing. I might have to call you later and ask you.

MD: Ken Moore's name.

EG: After Ken Moore's name, Dolly Might.

MD: Doley

EG: Doley. Okay.

MD: () how you want to spell Doley.

EG: Okay. Doley.

MD: Doley Mite. That's what he called himself.

EG: Doley Mite. Why did he call himself that?

MD: I have no idea. But he was Doley Mite.

EG: Doly Mite or Mine.

MD: Mite. D-O-L-E-Y M-I-T-E I think.

EG: Oh, that is unusual isn't it.

MD: I don't know whether that came from a record or where it came from. He was a local fellow from that area. He was from Versailles, I believe, Versailles, Kentucky, Woodford County. He had come to play basketball there but the basketball team didn't, they didn't have enough money so they folded the team but he stayed. It was a two-year school and—.

EG: What county did you say?

MD: Clark County.

EG: Clark County.

MD: He was from Versailles, Kentucky, which is Woodford County.

EG: That's what I was thinking of.

MD: Woodford County is by Lexington, which is Fayette County. The other side of Fayette County is a county over is Clark County. That's where Winchester was.

EG: Woodford is W-O-O-D-F-O-R-D. Okay. You said Coach Lovett or did I write that down wrong you meant Clint Lovely.

MD: Lovely, Coach, called him Coach Love but his name was Clint Lovely.

EG: L-O-V-E-L-Y. Okay. You said Saint X is the school.

MD: Xavier.

EG: Xavier, okay.

MD: They're the state champions in football this year again. It's a Catholic school.

EG: Okay because you said were one of the schools that you play.

MD: White schools that would play Central.

EG: That would play Central.

MD: Very few would.

EG: Before bussing.

MD: Well, in the early--. Bussing started in '75, and in the early '70s Saint X would play. I don't remember beating Saint X. We've come close but we've never beat them. Trinity, which is the powerhouse, was kind of a wussy school back then. It was just starting off. Flaget, which is gone now, which was a West End Catholic school.

EG: How do you spell that?

MD: F-L-A-G-E-T. It's no longer. In fact they made apartments out of the building the school was in. That's where Paul Horning, ever heard of Paul Horning—

EG: Uh uh.

MD: He played for University of Louisville and Green Bay. He was star of the Green Bay—

EG: Packers.

MD: Yeah, he went to Flaget.

EG: That's H-O-R-N-I-N-G.

MD: Paul Horning. He played for Notre Dame, all American, Heisman Trophy.

EG: Under Lou Holtz.

MD: Oh no, no no. This is Vince Lombardi.

EG: Vince Lombardi.

MD: You ever heard of Vince Lombardi.

EG: Yes. Yes.

MD: He's the one where Vince Lombardi talked about taking us back to bases and says this is a football and Paul Horning said could you go a little slower coach. Anyway. He played at Flaget.

EG: And Butler you said was a school. B-U-T-L-E-R.

MD: Yes.

EG: Eastern, Ballard, B-A-L-L-A-R-D.

MD: Yes.

EG: Seneca, S-E-N-E-C-A.

MD: Like the Indians.

EG: You said the Black Achievers program was something that's done here now. What does that program do?

MD: They have scholarships that they give to certain people, and it's like an enrichment program. There, this is all over Louisville mostly from the West End. Maybe a third of them go to Central. But they come from all over. They've had several Gospelfests here. Angela Davis has spoken here on two or three occasions. I didn't hear her speak. I didn't come down here for that.

EG: You said Dogwood Relays, D-O-G-W-O-O-D and--.

MD: University of Tennessee.

EG: And then Relays.

MD: Has the Dogwood Relays in the spring where they have some of the fastest teams from north of, this area of the country compete. That year we had a really, we had a state championship team of bussed in kids and we took them down there.

EG: That was when that guy lost for the first time but then set the record.

MD: No, that was a different time.

EG: That was at UNC.

MD: Yeah and that was in the summertime. That fellow was from Woodford County too from the University of Kentucky.

EG: You said Jerome Henderson, H-E-N-D-E-R-S-O-N and then J-E-R-O-M-E.

MD: Yeah.

EG: You said Thornton on Princeton Highway.

MD: Thornton's is a discount T-H-O-R-N-T-O-N-S.

EG: Okay, good. And Wayne Perky.

MD: He used to be the local deejay. He's retired.

EG: Is it P-E-R-K-Y?

MD: Yes. He was the number one deejay back then for all this area.

EG: You said Buechel. It's a charter school.

MD: Buechel Metropolitan. That's a school where you get in a fight or bring a gun to school or get in trouble with the courts you can go to Buechel.

EG: How do you spell Buechel?

MD: B-U-E-C-H-E-L Metropolitan.

EG: Yeah, school. And I think I have all the rest. Oh the assistant principal, Maud Brown Porter. How do you spell her name?

MD: M-A-U-D Brown Porter.

EG: Okay. Okay. Good. Great.

MD: I never knew the lady, but she must've been a saint. People talk about her say, "Yes, Ms. Porter. Yes, Ms. Porter." To hear these folks talk about her though with a great deal of respect.

EG: Yeah. So when you came there were black teachers who were here who had stayed. What did they, what do you remember about how they viewed all the changes and so forth?

MD: I don't know any of them really said I'm glad it happened or I'm glad it didn't happen or-- I think most kind of accepted it as a thing that needed to be in order for the blacks to advance in Kentucky. This school, I know, we got new books, new labs, new tile floors, new lockers, new gym. That's brand new. This courtyard out here is brand new. All that was added to bring this school up to code with some of the schools in the county.

EG: After bussing.

MD: After bussing and you had rich parents from the South End said, "No, my kid ain't going down there looking like that." So they put some money in the school.

EG: Wow. Wow. Was it, you said when it fell apart in the '80s, you attributed that to them getting their kids out to private schools.

MD: Private schools or finding the loopholes.

EG: What sort of loopholes?

MD: The most famous one is that the children could not breathe the air downtown. They could breathe out in the county, but they couldn't breathe downtown.

EG: Was there any truth to that?

MD: I don't think so. But that was one used very common.

EG: They could use—

MD: Get a doctor to say that this child cannot breathe the air downtown for asthma or whatever. So they didn't have to go.

EG: The doctors, how about that.

MD: If you've got money, there are a lot of things you can do when you've got money. As more and more got out of bussing, then the school changed, and that's why I'm saying that bussing lost its intent and effect by the number of exceptions and exemptions and so forth.

EG: Was there, do you think the decline in educational quality or did it stay the same after that happened in the '80s?

MD: When we had the reject teachers, I think things went down south. But as we started getting more teachers, more better prepared. Again as I said now the faculty at Central is better prepared academically than they were back then. I think its improving our scores.

EG: When did you get the reject teachers?

MD: Shortly after bussing. They had to fill us with somebody. So they got brand new teachers like myself and reject teachers from other schools. Okay, Ballard you've got to send a couple of teachers down there. I know who it's going to be. But I don't—

EG: ()

MD: I don't know how quickly. Yeah, real quick. I know who we're going to send. So—.

EG: That makes sense, sadly. Yeah.

MD: So by and large we've—. One thing I do remember. Incidents that happened here were blown up out of proportion more so than in the counties especially in the early bussing years. I'll give you an example. At Ballard a young man got mad at another young man and he brought a butcher knife to Ballard—.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

EG: Ballard, yeah.

MD: At Ballard. A young man got mad at another young man and went after him with a butcher knife. It didn't make the radio. It didn't make the paper. It was dealt with internally in the school system. The boy was expelled or suspended. Central High School, we had a little fellow who was beat on by a big fellow. I mean, like the guy () him two or three times in the day, threatened him, and finally the little fellow pulled out a pen knife, about a half-inch long, and stuck the big fellow. The TV crews were here, the news media—.

EG: It was a black guy who stabbed the white guy.

MD: Yeah. Yeah. TV crews were here the news media camped out front, major racial incident happened at Central High School. That's an example.

EG: With the Ballard High School was it a white student who came in with the knife?

MD: I don't know. I think it was a black student. But I don't know. I was not there. I just was told.

EG: Right. And did that person hurt anyone? Did the person at Ballard?

MD: Yeah. He stabbed the fellow with a butcher knife.

EG: Oh he stabbed him, you said that. Okay.

MD: And was suspended, sent to Buechel I'm sure. But it didn't make the paper. Here this little fellow was stuck with a penknife and all the camera crews were here. It was at Central High School so you're supposed to have all the bad stuff. Kids who came to Central and said what they were supposed to do and did what they were supposed to do left with a good impression. Kids who came down here with the wrong intent, some got in trouble. We had some kids who would want to cut school and go into the areas around the neighborhood, which are not the best areas in town, and some of them got into some trouble. But even that wasn't that bad. But this is the quote unquote bad area of town. So but I promise you that we have a much better reputation now than we used to. When Central back in the early days back before bussing, they tell me they suspended Central from playing basketball one year because of a riot that had happened. There were two or three kids that were fighting, but the cheerleaders had a cheer that they'd go out in front of the, before the basketball game and do this to the other team. Central's going to sting you. () you've done been stung after we'd beaten them badly. Back then we had some great talent. Of course most of our talent was shipped off to other schools now.

EG: Yeah.

MD: But it's more equalized now. But things have changed. It's gotten more equal. But those are anecdotal things that have happened. Some of the old folks that

used to be here can tell you more about the way things were in the '60s and early '70s or even in the '50s when things—. They could tell you about Maud Brown Porter first hand, those kind of things.

EG: Are there any black students from that time when bussing was going on that you recommend that we talk to for our project? We're looking, we want to get a wide spectrum of perspectives, and we have had a hard time finding people who were black students at that time.

MD: There's a fellow who works with the board, Carl Linton. He's in the technology department.

EG: Here in the technology department?

MD: Yeah. He's in Jefferson County technology. He's the one that wires, hardwires computers for the schools and so forth. He works for Jefferson County but in the technology.

EG: Oh works for Jefferson County. Was he here during--

MD: Yeah.

EG: Okay. Bussing.

MD: I don't remember exactly when he was here. I think it was in the early '70s or mid '70s.

EG: So if he wasn't bussed out, he was here when people were bussed in.

MD: C, P, R and L black and X could stay.

EG: In terms of the letters of the last name.

MD: Black. Coopers, Chatmans, Caldwells, people like that were here.

Rudolphs, Russells, C, P, R and X, Pittmans, Paynes, Powells and L, Linton. They were

mostly C, P and R were mostly the ones that were here. Very few black people have X on their last name. A few Ls. I think that Carl Linton was here. The Pages, Michael Page, Greg can't talk anymore. He's been injured.

EG: He was the world champion boxer.

MD: He, I remember Greg () for me one time. That was a scary thought to have him early about '77, '76. About eight years, six or seven years ago now, he was a club fighter. His world champion status had gone down, and he was in a meet up in northern Kentucky and he got hit, and he fell into the turn buckle that didn't have enough padding and severe brain damage. So he is no longer a person who can tell you about what it was like.

EG: Right. () Michael Page.

MD: Michael, yeah. Well, he came in the '80s. There are, David Baker was here in the '80s. He is a white person who still comes and especially the football games, he and his dad. Coach Love could tell you more than anything I could. I have a hard time remembering names.

EG: Would he be a good person to talk to as well?

MD: If he'll talk to you.

EG: Coach Lovely, if he will.

MD: Yeah, because he's from the transfer from the old age and the newer.

EG: Yeah.

MD: He can tell you stories from when he was a little boy stealing pies off a Blue Bird truck, stuff like that. He said one time the policeman stopped him and said, "Boy, you look like monkey. Do you climb trees? You go ooo, ooo, ooo." "Yes sir." Things

like that. He can tell you about race, first hand. He can tell about things like that.

Students from back then that lived in Louisville still—

EG: Yeah. Yeah.

MD: Our wrestling coach, Dave () was a student here and he is a coach here now. He can tell you something about and he was in the '90s I guess.

EG: He was a student in the '90s.

MD: Um hmm. And now he's the wrestling coach here. He's been on staff about three years. Clint Lovely can give you more names of his—

EG: Sure. Sure. Yeah, this is helpful. This is very good. So great. Great.

MD: I hope I've been some help to you.

EG: Very much. Very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by L. Altizer, January 20, 2005