KIERAN TAYLOR: But if we could start, if you could just for the sake of the tape, state your name, your full name and maybe where and when you were born.

P.E. BAZEMORE: My name is Philip Edmond Bazemore. I'm currently in Monroe in Union County. I'm referred to as P.E. or Phil. Seldom do you hear one call me Philip. I can recall after I came here--and I'll go back a little bit later in a minute--but I had been in Union County I guess about ten years. I'm a native of Bertie County, Windsor. I went back there, and a little boy about ten years old, appeared to be about ten, and he came up behind me and said, 'Hey Philip.' In Union County I refused to tell anybody my first name. I gave my initials. For him to say that, it just caught me real quick. But it was interesting.

Now back to my birth. I was born in Bertie County, a rural county April 11th, 1921. Went to elementary school there I guess you call one of those Rosenwald Schools, St. Paul. Finished there. After I finished elementary school, I went to Windsor's Etheridge High School for a short span of time, and somehow it wasn't working, and my mother in some way had learned of W.S. Creecy High in Northampton County and had one daughter already there, and so that's where I went. I graduated from high school at W.S. Creecy High in Rich Square. Following that, I went back home on the farm with the intention of being a farmer. I farmed during the crop production season. Then during the late July, August and early September when we didn't have a lot of work to do in the field, we would go in the pulpwood and cut pulpwood. Of course, we used a crosscut saw. We didn't have all the niceties that you have today. When we cut pulpwood with a crosscut saw, it meant that you had to bend down and pick that pulpwood up and put it on the truck to haul it out. I started doing that around sixteen years of age. So I realized that

that was something that I didn't really want to do. But it was a necessity to get ahead if you wanted to get ahead.

But I was, getting back. I'm talking in circles. It wasn't that long ago when you had to talk in circles because--. But after graduating--no, before I graduated at W.S. Creecy High School, while I was a student there, I played sports, football and basketball, and to my pleasant surprise I earned a medal in basketball. I cheated a little bit in football. My senior year I was granted permission to do something that I don't think is allowed today. But I went to school about three weeks- a little better than three weeks- of the first semester of my senior year, didn't get an opportunity to play football. But that's the time, the amount of time I had my senior year in high school to graduate because that was the first semester, and the principal and the teachers all agreed that if I did the work, they'll let me go by. They wouldn't hold me responsible for anything. I passed because school was eight months then. I passed all of the exams except geometry, and you can't learn that much geometry in that span of time. But I passed all of the other tests, and I can remember one, our coach and civic teacher was telling the class that he thought he was at fault that too many students were not making the grades that they should've on his exams. He said, 'So I read Uncle Phil's paper'--and he referred to me as Uncle Phil because I moved slow. But I played basketball and played football. But that was something, a nickname that he gave me. Said, 'Uncle Phil came here just a few days and he passed.' He said, 'Why didn't the rest of you make almost perfect scores?' But then what happened, I made it clear that I was cheated out of my last year of football and so I--

KT: Right. Because you weren't allowed to play.

PB: I wasn’t there, Rich Square. I lived in Bertie County, so I didn’t do it. So I was allowed to do a little class work and play even though I had graduated, had my diploma and play for three games the year after I graduated. So I got my time in. But after graduating from high school, I wanted to join the Air Force and volunteered but didn't meet the qualifications. That geometry that I missed kept me out of the Air Force. I just didn’t qualify, that plus one other thing. I had keloids in the back of my neck and with those keloids--they were larger then than they are now--that disqualified me for the Army. I was drafted, and of course, I did not pass. But it was because of the keloids. I could not wear a helmet.

So after seven years, I decided that the farm life and the pulpwood life was not the life I wanted to live. I decided that I would go to college. An elementary teacher in Bertie County was talking to me, and she asked me where did I plan to go. I told her I’m going to Hampton Institute. It’s Hampton University now in Virginia. She looked at me, she said, ‘Philip, you don’t have brains enough to go to Hampton.’ That irritated me a little bit. The two people that I admired most were Hampton graduates. Both of them had served as cooperative extension agents in Bertie County. I enrolled. I applied to Hampton- didn’t even apply for any other college. Most of the students in Bertie County were going to A and T State University now or Elizabeth City, but Hampton accepted me. Obviously, I graduated. But not having the military training and going to a private institution and Hampton didn't give out scholarships unless you were an outstanding student. I was not an outstanding student. They didn't give athletic scholarships then. So I didn't bother to play any sports.

KT: You were a little bit older student as well, right?

PB: I was a little older than most. But there were a lot of veterans there. So there was another fellow there, veteran, Alfred Bailey and he and I were, I believe, the oldest two in the class. Everybody else was younger than we were. But most of the men were veterans. They would not have been there had it had not been for that. I was there for four years. I graduated in four years. I worked twenty hours a week , but there were times that I worked as much as forty hours a week to be able to stay there.

KT: Sure. What kind of work were you doing?

PB: I always tell people that, it sounds good, I said I milked cows. Hampton had a dairy farm, and I milked cows, and I don't say it boastfully, but I was good. There was a friend of mine, Owens. He was a veteran. He was a native of the Wilmington area. He and I were classmates. We were very good friends. We never said that we were racing to see who would finish his line first, but we never milked unless we did race. If one had problems with the machine or anything, we would look at the other and say, 'What's wrong fellow?' But it sounded good to say you were milking cows. When you're in a dairy working like that, you fed the cows. You washed the cows. You milked the cows, and you cleaned up after the cows.

I just put milking in there, and if a person doesn't know all the details, they think well, he just milked cows. But no, I did a lot more than that. But I am thankful for the experience I had there. One teacher-one of the ag teachers-told me that you will learn to milk a cow by hand if you pass this course. Well, no one could believe that I was a farm boy all of my life and never milked a cow at home.

KT: You didn't have any dairy.

PB: Yeah, but somebody milked the cow. There were others in the family. We had our chores, and mine was never to milk. I never milked a cow before I went to college. But when I went to college, I learned fast.

KT: So was the farm in the town of Windsor or was it out on the--?

PB: It was out. We were tenants and owners about ten to twelve miles out from Windsor.

KT: But staying in the same place as tenants or did you move a bit?

PB: We moved a little bit. From the time I started school, we moved from--we were living in one location as a tenant. Now my dad's family owned some land, but we left there because it wasn't enough land because we had a large family. We moved into another area, the Woodard section of the county, and we stayed there until we bought a farm in that same area. Then I lived on that farm that we bought, and we still own that farm. It's about two hundred and eighteen acres, something like that. But we still own that farm.

KT: Does your family go back in the county for how many generations back? Was it your father that would've moved there or do you know?

PB: Well, I'll put it this way. When I was in college at Hampton, I went to Norfolk, and I saw a sign in a little store that said, 'Bazemore.' It was a blond-headed fellow there, and he asked me, said, 'Can I help you?" I said, 'Well, not necessarily.' I said, 'I just saw the sign Bazemore and I came in here.' I told him I was a student. He told me something then that I guess I have repeated a thousand times. He said, 'Every Bazemore alive is a native of Bertie County.'

KT: Is that right?

PB: Every Bazemore in the country originated in Bertie County. I did not believe him then. I mean he looks to be probably about sixty or sixty-five, and I was a young college student. I didn't think he knew what he was talking about. But he did. After I graduated from college whenever I went to a city including Hawaii, I looked in the telephone directory. I'll get back to answer your question in a minute. I would look in the telephone directory and pull out the name Bazemore and just dial one. In Hawaii, I can remember so vividly, Hawaii and Houston and in between Savannah and Hilton Head Island. There was a place in there that I stopped and called. Those are the three that I remember most. I also remember in Chicago, there were no Bazemores in Chicago. I was there to the market-Chicago Board of Trade. But I didn't see any Bazemores in the telephone directory.

Let's go back to this looking for Bazemores in the telephone directories. When I was in Hawaii on vacation, I called, and I got a fairly young fellow, young voice, appeared to be a young voice, and this was the only black voice that I called in all of my calling. Everybody else was white, but this was a black person. He said, 'No, he wasn't from Bertie County.' He said he himself was from New York. He said, 'My family are from Orlando.' I said, 'They are.' He was thinking about Orlando, Florida. I said, 'No, not Orlando. I said, 'Aulander.' He said, 'Where is that?' I said that's in Bertie County. We laughed. I think we talked for thirty or more minutes. But when I first caught him, he talked slower because I think he was under the impression that I was looking for a handout, but when he learned that I was there on vacation, then the conversation was real nice. But in Houston, I was working then as, was there with the League of Municipalities, I called, and I got, sounded like an elderly white female. When I called,

before I could say what I wanted, she hung up. I didn't blame her because there was a lot of problem that way, and she thought possibly that I was trying to do her some harm. But the one that really fascinated me is the one between Savannah, Georgia and Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. I stopped and called and got a white female who married a Bazemore. I told her what I've been doing. She said, 'Oh that's interesting.' I said, 'I'm calling to see where are you from?' She said, 'We're from Georgia.' I said, 'Yeah, you're from Georgia, but how did you get to Georgia?' She said, 'My husband said they've always been in Georgia.' 'No, you haven't always been any place.' I said, 'How did he get to Georgia?' She said, 'All she ever heard was his family been in Georgia ever since.' I said, 'What happened? 'The name Bazemore originated in Bertie County'--. Back off a little bit. Bill Lewis, Dr. Lewis at NC State sent me a clipping out of the *News and Observer* then, and it showed how that name was put together. But I lost that, and I looked for it for ages, and I can't find it. It was in the Raleigh *News and Observer* that's where the name started. But anyway when I told her about my mission and I told her that, 'Do you want to know how your husband, his family happened to get to Georgia?' She said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'Now I can only relate to you as a Dutchman told me.' I said, 'I think he was right.' She said, 'What's that?' I said, 'When the settlers were in the Carolinas,' and I said, 'In North Carolina.' I said, 'Really in Bertie County, the Indians had cleared some farmland, and it was very productive. So they drove the Indian out of Bertie County, out of the eastern part of North Carolina and drove them into Georgia.' She said, 'Well, what happened after that?' I said, 'They went to Georgia and cleared more land. They had good farmland. The settlers followed them to Georgia.' I said, 'Now this is what the Dutchman told me. They cleared land, but the settlers ran them out

of Georgia.' She said, 'Where did they go?' I said, 'Oklahoma.' She said, 'What happened at Oklahoma?" I said, "Now the first two statements I told you, the Dutchman was pretty emphatic that these were true.But the third one about Oklahoma, I have some reservations because when it got to that one, he would laugh before he said it and then laughed afterwards. But what he said was that they drove the Indian out of Georgia and into Oklahoma and there they discovered oil." She said, 'And then what?" I said, "Then they told everybody to go to hell." She died laughing. She said, "Please come by. I want you to meet my husband." But I didn't have time. I wanted to sit down and talk with them.

KT: How long ago did you talk to them?

PB: I talked with her I guess I talked with her thirty or forty minutes.

KT: They were in what Hardeeville or Beaufort?

PB: I don't recall where--

KT: One of those little--

PB: One of the little--

KT: Hilton Head--there's not much there.

PB: Not much, little small village. I just looked in the phone book and picked up a Bazemore and called, but that was really interesting, and she was just dying for me to come by to see them. I wanted to. Obviously she knew that I was a black man, and I knew she was white. But it was just the interest there, and every time I would call somebody and start talking, that was the kind of interest it would generate. So that's what happened.

Now let's go back a little bit there to--I graduated from Hampton, back to college. I graduated in 1951, and I was employed by the cooperative extension service-agricultural extension service then-in Edgecombe County, September the 1st. 1951. I graduated in '51. I began work in Edgecombe County in September of 1951. I worked in Edgecombe County as assistant agent, assistant Negro county agent was what it was then. I was promoted to the position of Negro county agent when I went to Union County. I learned then that R.E. Jones who was headquartered at A and T State University had told some of the other agents that he had planned to send me to Mecklenburg County. But when this county became available, he told me I can go if I wanted, but if I didn't want to come to Union County, it would not interfere with my promotion to another county once it became available. I had no idea that he had this in mind. But I said, 'I'll take it.' He said, 'This is a challenge.' He said, "Things are not quite what you might want them to be." I said, "Doesn't matter. We'll do it"

KT: In Union.

PB: Um hmm.

KT: What year was that?

PB: '54.

KT: '54.

PB: I worked in Edgecombe from September '51, September 1st, 1951 to September the 15th, '54. I started in Union County September the 16th, '54 and retired September the 30th of '81 When I came here, the position as Negro county agent was the lowest salary wise of all the Negro agents in this district. I accepted that.

KT: Why would this have been the lowest?

PB: I don't have the answer there. I think my predecessor was not given what he merited. I don't know the answer. His salary was the lowest. But in about nine years, from '54 until about '62 or '3, it had moved from the lowest to the highest. It wasn't that much that I did. But the wonderful people that we have here to work with. They were so supportive and cooperated so nicely that there were things that were happening that impressed the decision makers, and on that basis they just kept increasing my salary, county and state.

But that's lasted until, I mean, I was never really, well let's go back. When they moved me, continued to promote me, increasing my salary up to that level, then we went to the point of integration. Now that was the damnedest period of my life. I mean, I'm serious. As a black man, I had suffered humiliation and discrimination and all of those negatives that you can think about, but during the period of integration, in my opinion, was the worst time of my life. I was working here as a Negro county agent at that time.

I was chairman of what we had then, the Negro County Agent Association, the state level. Historically, the chair of that organization, once he served his term seemingly with possibly one exception, he caught hell. I mean, the people on the state level just chastised him. If he was progressive, he paid a price. I was mildly progressive, I think. But I paid a price in that a lot of the southern states, most of the southern states, agreed to drop their black association and become members of the white association. That's what North Carolina Agricultural Agent Association wanted. But as chairman of our association and other members on the executive committee, we said, 'No. We will merge but we will not drop ours. We will merge the two. If I have twenty years now, I will carry that twenty years over. We will be guaranteed some spots in the decision making

process on the board.' That held us up, and we were told that that would not happen. All of us were told that we would have one organization or none by the state administrator, George Hyde. Dr. Hyde was the director.

KT: What year would this have been, when the merger talks were going?

PB: This started back in about '64 or '5, and that's when things were really, really difficult. But we refused. The chair of that group is the one that's criticized most because if the chair gives in then others will probably fall. But I didn't just say no. I put a word in front of the no. I won't call, mention that word now. But--

KT: Not even for the historical record.

PB: I just said, 'It cannot happen.' I said, 'We are not going to do that.' 'We will be better off without an organization if we're going to take black people ready to retire to come in as new agents in another association.' I said, 'No.'

KT: So they would lose their seniority.

PB: Professionally no, I mean so far as employment.

KT: But within the association.

PB: But within the association, they would lose all of their seniority. It's my understanding that the other southern states accepted that to some extent, a large extent because during the first, maybe '65, around '65 in that time, we in North Carolina, the black agents in North Carolina, received many distinguished service awards. For a while we received as many distinguished service awards--this is national--as all the other southern states combined. That was because they went in without carrying the seniority. You had to have seniority to qualify. We went in with seniority.

I can recall very vividly also attending an association meeting, that the agents in Alabama somehow were discouraged from associating with us. They did, but when there were other agents around, white, they just nicely walked away. They wouldn't associate with agents from North Carolina. I was told during that time that I was the most hated black person in North Carolina. That didn't change anything. I think I was one of the more respected black persons in North Carolina because the people who said that others hated me, I was under the impression, and I still am, that they had a considerable amount of respect for me. I lived with it that way. It was no way that I could vote to yield to anything but equality.

The thing that probably has as much of an impact on me--it wasn't a difficult decision to make. It was an automatic decision, but it was hard for me to convey my decision. A friend of mine, Riddick, he used to be the Negro county agent in Richmond County, but he was at NC State then doing graduate work. He later went to Washington, DC, the Department of Agriculture. He came to visit me one Sunday while he was in NC State in graduate school. He came by to see me. We were good friends. He said, 'Bazemore,I was told'--and this was some of the movers and shakers at NC State--'that you would be the first black county chairman if you don't get involved in this civil rights mess.' He said, 'When he said civil rights mess, it automatically meant that he was bringing a message.' I didn't respond. So he and I talked about other things. He said, 'Well, I've got to go, I guess.' 'Have you decided what you're decision would be?' I said, 'My decision is what it's always been.' He said, 'What's that?' I said, 'If I don't get in this civil rights mess,' I said, 'It's going to be difficult for me to shave because I would have to shave every morning with my eyes closed because I wouldn't be able to

look at the face that I was shaving.' He said, 'Bazemore, you've given up that opportunity.' I said, 'I'm not giving up anything. I'm doing what I think is the right thing to do.' He said, 'Well, that's the message I'm to take back.' I said, 'If you take anything back, you take that back.' So they never promoted me to that point. Quite obviously, which means that today I'll go back to some of the other things that happened later. But today my retirement income is probably about two to three thousand dollars a year less than what it would've been if I had been a good boy and was promoted to county extension chair.

But back to that time, moving up through that, when we the Negro County Agents Association during the struggle emerging, my term expired, and we had an election. One fellow, L.C. Cooper, was in Warren County, and he is still alive. I don't know if he recalled making the statement, but he made a statement there to our group, he said, 'Our organization isn't going to last but so long.' We're going to have one organization and he said, 'Being chairman of the organization is pure hell.' He said, 'And nobody in here has nerve enough or is crazy enough to be chair other than Phil Bazemore. So you'd better leave him there.' So nobody would accept it. He was the vice chair, and he was supposed to move up. But nobody would accept it. I accepted the chair of our association to my knowledge longer than anybody else because it was at that point. Once that happened, back in the early '60s, late '50s, before I was elected, a fellow Fletcher Lassiter, who still lives in Winton. He went from Winton to Edenton, Chowan County. Then he got out of the cooperative extension service, but he was chair of our association. I was promoted vice chair, and when he left, of course, I went on to chair and that's how I

reached chair ahead of schedule and I stayed there until we resolved or dissolved our association.

But during that time seemingly everybody was looking for ways to terminate my appointment. If I had an ounce of intelligence, I would've responded differently, but obviously I didn't have any intelligence because I did what I thought was the right thing to do, and my appointment wasn't terminated. But it was pretty obvious that the late chair here, Jim Marsh was the chairman. It was pretty obvious that he or somebody was trying to fire me because Ed Fail was the assistant state agent, and I can't think of the person now who was district agent, came here to Monroe to have a conference with the chair and me. The district agent had a bachelor's degree. The assistant to the district agent had a Ph.D. degree. But he was black, H.M. McNeil, the late H.M. McNeil now. But the word went out. Somebody said I don't know who said that--I'm trying to think of the district agent's name now--that he couldn't supervise me. I never made a statement like that, but that came out. They mentioned that in that conference, and I didn't respond. I just continued to talk --I'll think of his name shortly--but he brought it up again. Then I stopped. I got a little bit teed off as I sometimes do, and I said, 'Number one,' I said, 'I never said that.' And I said, 'I don't care who told you that, told a damned lie, and they knew they were telling a damned lie when they told you.' Well, the next week the chairman here was demoted to agricultural agent. Somebody else was promoted in his place because that's why I know that when I said I'm certain that he was the one that was trying to fire me.

But the time that I embarrassed myself the most is when we had pretty much put the associations together. We still had a lot of stuff to work out. We (Negroes) were still

meeting, and they (Whites) were still meeting separately, but sometimes we were meeting together.

KT: This was through the ‘70s.

PB: Yeah. This was in the late ‘60s. We’re still in the late ’68, ’69. This was before the ‘70s. We had a meeting in Boone, Appalachian State University now. A fellow from Alamance County, I’m pretty certain that’s where he was from, with all of us there, black and white in the association meeting, room full I guess, about eighty percent white, twenty percent black. He stood up, and he was talking about some of the things that we were doing, and he called my name once. It didn't bother me. In other words I was a troublemaker. He called it again, and I started getting angry, and when he called it the third time or something along that line, I was no longer angry. I was mad. I stood up and told him, ‘You’re a damned lie.’ I said, ‘Now if you don’t like that, you just meet me outside, and we’ll take care of the situation.’ The chair was quiet and everybody got so quiet you couldn’t hear a sound from anyone. Nobody was saying a word because at that point I had lost my cool, and later I was embarrassed with that whole setting, I made that statement. I meant it. I mean, had he walked out there, and nobody stopped either one of us, I probably would’ve been a prisoner. I don’t think both of us would’ve walked out alive. We had no weapons. I don’t know what would’ve happened. This is the thing that frightened me at that time.

But anyway, the reason I step back to that same incident at Boone, that even though a lot of people told me that I was hated, I detected that a lot of people respected me because a lot of the white leadership came to me at the lunch break and said, ‘Bazemore, we don’t feel that way. We don’t think that way.’ He was to some extent

ostracized, and I was not. So it showed that the thinking of the agents, most of the agents in leadership positions in North Carolina had their minds moving in the right direction. There were a lot of them that were down right honorable men, most of them. To see how they gathered around me at the lunch break and how he was ostracized said a lot. That to me said we were on the right trail.

Then following that, we had another meeting on the east coast, down at Manteo or some place. This is the one that was kind of the end of the whole thing. I had to leave early, a day ahead. I went there, but I had to leave a day ahead, but the then chairman of New Hanover County and Wilmington saw me. He said jokingly, 'Oh Bazemore's leaving. He ain't fighting so he won't stay.' It was just a laugh. So my point is that's when obviously we had arrived. We had problems here so far as getting the distinguished service awards. There were people on that committee in this district who would not me for the award. I mean, that happened, but once that person got off the committee, bam. I was the first one to get it. You always have an individual , and you still do, but it turned out to be real good. So I continued here until I retired.

But let's back up now a little bit to when the chairman tried to fire me. This is my opinion. He retired about a year after. He'd met qualifications of retirement. Gene Stacy, Eugene Stacy was promoted chair. I probably would've been promoted chair, but I was a "troublemaker." But now, I'll tell the world and two more that Gene Stacy was a gentleman. He was fair. He was honorable. He was one of the better persons that anybody could ever work with. He was an outstanding person. He passed last year, but Gene Stacy was a real honorable man, native of South Carolina, but he was a full man and we had a tremendous amount of respect for each other. There was never any hostility

between Gene and me. In fact very little between Gene and anybody on the staff. Everybody on the staff wanted to succeed, not just because it was the right thing to do, but some because we wanted to make Gene look good. I mean, you had that kind of respect and admiration for the guy, but seemingly Raleigh never caught that. They never gave him the recognition that he deserved. I guess maybe that was the reason because it's no question in my mind he was a few years ahead of them so far as justice and fairness were concerned. Gene was just an unusual person. You've got no favoritism but fairness was there. He was competent. He was knowledgeable. He was just good. He was a pleasure to work under, but when he retired that's when all hell broke loose again.

I'm going back later and bring you up on the suit. M.C. Howell was promoted. I had twenty years plus and M.C. Howell had twelve years of experience. I had had the experience of being the administrator before we merged. I was the Negro county agent so the budget and all that stuff, I did, but they promoted the Four-H agent over me. We went to OEO or something, one of the civil rights organizations.

KT: This would be about what year?

PB: This was 1976. But they promoted him over me, and I told Paul Due who was then the district agent that if the opportunity ever presented itself that I could expose the hypocrisy and the racism in the cooperative extension service. 'I wouldn't hesitate to do it.' I never changed from that because I felt that there was a great need for exposure. Here was a man who had twelve years, twelve or thirteen. I had twenty-three plus. I had administrative experience. He had more hours towards a master's degree, but neither of us had a master's degree. But he was promoted ahead of me because of one thing that

I'm a black man, and they were not going to promote me. But that happened. But the suit was already filed before then.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

PB: Making his hair go gray daily, but Gene Stacy made some real positive statements about me, but he never not once as long as I was performing, separated the two. I am sad he's deceased. I had to respect him for that. He did that, and he did it, there was no love lost between us. But professionally, I never ceased to have great amount of respect for him. I think if he were alive today, I believe he would make a similar statement towards me. But my salary wouldn't have continued to move ahead if that wasn't the case because he had control over that. It didn't continue that way after he left. When he left, Blaylock, Dr. Blaylock replaced him. Blaylock's still alive. The suit was filed '71 I believe. Then it was refiled again in '72, but it was back in there when it started. We stayed with that but let me back up on the suit now. Let's talk about that suit.

KT: Yeah, tell me a little bit about the suit.

PB: What happened, for I guess seven or eight years, quite a few years we were meeting with the administration trying to get some justice by discussing the issues across the table. We were of the impression that we would succeed. At one time they had decided that--that decision was not made, but we were allowed to believe it had been made--that chairmen would be the white agent and where appropriate the black agents would be promoted to the position of associate chairmen.

KT: After the merging.

PB: That's right--this had nothing to do with our association.

KT: Right.

PB: This is what the officials, the federal government forcing to have one agency. You're going to have just one, one extension service in the county. Well, when we merged--this was in the, probably the late '60s to '68, something like that, maybe earlier than that. They made all of the chairmen white males. We had some master's degrees. We had some Negro agents with master's degrees, but not one of them was made chairman in the county.

Let's jump forward, fast forward and then I'll back up to that. While we were at the trial (suit) Dr. Blaylock said race was not a factor in the promotion decisions. Carson Blaylock still lives. But on the stand, under oath he said race had nothing to do with the promotions. I couldn't believe he would say race was not a factor in the promotions. A hundred counties, a hundred white chairmen and not one of them black, but race was not a factor?

KT: Isn't that a coincidence?

PB: To sit there, I had lost some respect for him prior to that. We can back up now to about '78 or about that time. They made M.C. Howell chairman, but he was not the caliber person that Gene Stacy was. One year on the budget, not one black person on the staff was recommended for a salary increase, and when I saw that, I responded. He wrote a note saying, 'Well, you are looking after all the blacks.' I told him, 'I'm looking after justice and fairness.' He had Blaylock to come to the county. Blaylock came to the county, and he saw nothing wrong.

That said to me if George Haitt was the director, M.C. would not be the chair. If he pulled something like that, I don't think George Haitt would've stood for it. But Blaylock not only stood for it, he endorsed it. He wrote a letter endorsing it. That was

totally wrong. You can't have black and white on a staff that have been getting the promotions all the years and the salary increases, and then all of a sudden all the white are getting salary increases, and the blacks are getting none from the county level. So nothing happened. Blaylock endorsed that. Then when he made that statement in court that just finished me off so far as my respect for him. I still see him. I smile, and I shake hands, but I can never have the respect for him as I had for Haitt and prior to that, I had greater respect for him than I did Haitt.

But since then I realize, I thought that he would've done more because Haitt was from the Midwest, and Blaylock was a native of Wilson County. I thought if he had been the director, he would've done some things differently because at one time they were talking about making some of the black agents associate chairmen, and then when the chairman retired, they automatically would be chairman. They didn't just let the associate stay there. They changed their mind. They didn't do that. If they had done that, there wouldn't have been a suit. So the administration had many golden opportunities to avoid that suit, and that suit cost the state two to three million dollars. I don't know how much more with the cooperative extension service. But they could have avoided that. They had several opportunities to avoid that. If they had promoted two or three of the black agents, they didn't have to promote me because I'm going to still do my thing. But Hernando Palmer in Johnston County was one that had his master's degree. He wasn't promoted because he was also vocal. But this is the kind of thing that caused the friction to continue to build up.

KT: How do you explain their--it seems like in the long run it would've just been in their interests to even let in a few like token hires. But they weren't even acting in their own self-interest. It was just--

PB: That's it. They finally did. But my point is--

KT: Is there any other explanation than just a kind of blanket hatred or--

PB: Racism. Discrimination. That's the only explanation you can give is racism. We had the education. We had attained that. We had our performance, everything. During the time when we merged organizations, I had the responsibility in agronomy and with the swine program. The swine program in Union County was the top of any county west of Raleigh, period. I mean we were doing things. One of the specialists was Dave Spruill. Dr. David Spruill later went to Georgia and was in charge of the animal science department at the University of Georgia. I went down to visit him when we were in Atlanta last year. The specialists never stopped putting me on top. The guys in agronomy never stopped putting me on top. When they came to visit the county or when they said we'd like for somebody to put on this demonstration or this assignment, we're trying to do some research in or some work in, they didn't hesitate to call on Phil Bazemore. I produced. The farmers here were just dolls. They were very cooperative, and they would do almost anything. I could go out there and say, 'Look, we need to do this. We don't know. We think this will work.' That was it.

KT: Try it.

PB: They'll try it. They'll say, where do you want to select the place. What kind of area are you looking for. Where do you want it located? I would say and that was it. That was the end. It would be there. So the agronomy field and the swine people kept

me rated high because I was producing, and the specialists, when they wanted something done in several areas of the state, they knew that they could get it done here because we would do it. We had farmers here that were very cooperative. But you still had that problem that they would not promote us. Since that time they started, later they started promoting some. But token promotions at that time would have been more effective than the promotion that they finally end up doing after the Supreme Court ruled against them because at that time it wouldn't have required. If they had promoted three or four people that all the black agents looked to and knew that they were performing, then they would know. They would feel that okay, if this is the case, all I have to do is perform, I can get there. But they, people that all of the black agents looked to and admired and respected by performance and all other ways, they were not being promoted. So you didn't have anything left, and when they saw the court ruling against them, then they changed and started promoting black employees.

The cooperative extension service today, back up--I don’t think it will ever come back to where it was. I think that has contributed to some of it. But when we started the suit, Julius Chamber’s firm was the first one, Becton, Charles Becton, actually Judge Becton now, he was Attorney Becton then. I believe his office is in Raleigh now. He put together the first suit, and then because Julius was on one of the state boards and he had to get out. Had his law firm stayed there, it would not have gone that long. It would’ve been a much shorter span of time, and in my opinion the thing would’ve happened much sooner. But then he said his firm would have to drop it.

KT: What was the difference though in the suits? His was just much more direct or--how would you describe it?

PB: I think with that firm there, they were pushing the--well, I think I can answer this better by saying this. When I was doing some graduate work, I never did complete the graduate work. I got into politics, but I got twenty-two or twenty-three hours or maybe about twenty-three or four hours at Appalachian State University. But one of the instructors there said that the Chambers' firm probably knew more about the civil rights laws than all the other firms in the state of North Carolina combined. So Chambers then referred us to another firm, two white lawyers, and somehow they weren't together too long themselves before they separated. Then we had to move again. So we ended up with the firm that worked with us until it was finished, but we lost time by going from one firm to another. You're going to lose a year or two in the process. But the problems during that time, are keeping us together.

KT: Yeah. I'll bet.

PB: That is a point that few people realize. I mean, few of us realize the effort that went into keeping us together. But at regular intervals I would send out communication, and the good part about it sometimes we put some things in the communication that we wanted the administration to get. Some of us would always make certain that the administration got a copy of the letter. We knew that. We didn't know it at first, but when we learned that, we said we can't let that stop us. We're going to do it anyway because we have no other way to communicate with our people.

But back up again. Before we got to this suit, this was probably in about '65 or about '66 or something like that. We went to Washington, DC and Bill Seabrum, the late Bill Seabrum was the civil rights person, guru with the Department of Agriculture. He worked with us. This is the thing that any of us, all of us were stupid because he said,

'Fellow, hold out your hands.' We held out our hands and wondered what in the world he was talking about. Bill is blind, was blind. He said, 'Well, when you get back to Raleigh, the administration can say hold out your hand and he could tell you that you guys are fired. What for? Your skin's the wrong color,' because we were not covered by the civil rights law. The cooperative extension service was not covered by the civil rights law. When that law passed, we were not covered. But it was through his effort and through the effort that we put forth in this state that helped get the cooperative extension service covered.

KT: Why weren't you covered under the initial?

PB: When the bill was written under Johnson, it was something in there that did not include us. I don't know what it was. But we were not included in that original bill.

KT: I didn't realize that. Was it just Department of Agriculture employees?

PB: I think it was the cooperative extension service.

KT: That for some reason was exempt.

PB: Was exempted from that because see the fact that we--I think it was because that we were employed by the federal, state and county governments. We had three governments, and this is my opinion. I have no knowledge as to what it really was, but we were not covered, and he told us. He said, 'Do you boys want to still go, you fellows want to still go through with this?' We said, 'We're here, and we don't intend to stop.' You had Hernando Palmer, the late D. O. Ivy, Jim Wright, I'm trying to--of course I was there. I think that was before Fletcher Lassiter retired. I'm not sure, but that's when--it was hot. But Bill Seabrum is the guy that I think spearheaded that through the house and senate, the people in charge of those bills made sure that we were covered. But we were

not covered in that original bill. We knew this. I'm not sure that Raleigh knew it. I don't know that they knew it, but we knew it. We were told because we were there. Soon after we started the trial, it was time for me to retire. In '76 I was overlooked for promotion. I was denied the promotion. Overlooked is a nice word. I retired as soon as I got thirty years. My plan was to retire three years later. I had planned to work three years longer, but I just didn't have it in me because I no longer enjoyed the work. I enjoyed the people, but I no longer enjoyed being in the office.

KT: Well, I was wondering about that. How did, just this constant pressure, how did that affect your work as an agent? It must've been difficult.

PB: It took more out of me. But the people in the county were so understanding, and that made my work easier. I worked with them just as easy. It never impacted my work in the county. But I got a phone call. This is back up a little bit. While we were in the trial phase we were just starting real good, I had I think it was about fourteen acres of corn. But I would get somebody to plant it for me and all that, and I would have a little old tractor I would prepare the land, and somebody would plant it for me and all that kind of stuff. But that year we had, it was dry at planting time. You put chemicals down, and the chemicals did not work early enough. The corn came up, but so did some morning glories. Then when it rained, it prevented the other grass and stuff from coming up, but the morning glories were there. So when we got ready to harvest corn, it wasn't a good crop because it was dry, fairly dry that year. This was in the southeast part of the county.

A fellow from Statesville had a plane, and he came over here and put chemicals on to kill the morning glories so that we could harvest the corn. I'm in Raleigh in court, and of course, I had just retired then, but I was in court in Raleigh, and there were no

black people in that area that had that. So all the people that were down there working around me were white. So they got – I received a call from one of them and told them--. They called me, and said did I want mine sprayed. I said, 'Yeah.' They had the fellow to spray my corn, my fifteen acres or whatever it was, while I was in Raleigh. They told the guy with the airplane why I was not there, and they gave me one hundred percent justification for what I was doing. These are white farmers.

He called me, still while I was in Raleigh in the suit for his money. I said I was waiting for a bill. I said, 'How much is it? Let me know what it is. I'll send you a check.' He told me what it was. I said, 'Well, I'll just go ahead and send you a check. You still send the bill.' I said, 'How you want me to make it out.' He told me. I said, 'Okay, I'll put it in the mail today.' He didn't want to hang up. He said, 'I want to tell you something. He said, 'I've got to tell you this.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'It doesn't make a bit of sense to put roses on a person's grave when he's dead. He can't smell them.' I wonder what in the world he's getting around to. I said, 'No. You're right.' He said, 'But I had an experience when I sprayed your corn that I've never had in my life, and I never thought I would.' I said, 'What was that?" He said, 'All the people around there were white. There was not a black person there. They told me where you were and what you were doing. Every one of them supported what you were doing.' He said, 'It was justification.' He said, 'I never thought I would ever hear that in my life.' He said, 'I thought you need to know this.' But I knew those guys. They were just--we got along good together, I mean, all over the county.

I know one person down there, back up a little bit. He was building a hog house under my leadership. I went down there, and they weren't pouring the foundation

correctly. I kept boots in my car. I was kind of rushed, but I got out and said, 'We're going to do this thing right.' He was gone, but he left his son and son in law there, and I got out there in the hot sun, and we put that concrete down right and we did it right. Nobody taught me how to pour concrete, but I just did it anyway. But he told, I think, everybody and his brother what I did. He said, now in other words he didn't say call him I won't be coming out there to do it. But if he's there and he sees it's going on, he's going to make certain, said I will make certain it was done right. That was one of the things that Dr. Spruill said he had given me credit for. He said, 'If a guy came up and put up something fancy, if it wasn't right, then I would tell him without any hesitation, you've got to take it down.' They would do it and put it back right. So my point is, we never stopped working.

It was difficult but my retirement was three years ahead of time because my time in the office was so stressful. It was just too stressful. Out in the field was never stressful, it was relaxing. Too often, in fact most of the time I would go to the office twenty, thirty minutes before anybody else, do what I had to do there and be gone, spend the day mostly in the field. That's how I survived, but when the time for retirement, I didn't hesitate to retire.

To go back to Dave Spruill, I retired September 30th, '81. Dave Spruill was head of the department at University of Georgia, and he came to my retirement. So my point is, I don't know if he may have done that for others, one other person, a white fellow he probably would've done it for, but that's about the only one he would've done it for. So that's September 30th, 1981 is when I retired, before I retired, everybody knew that I was retiring.

George Miller, elementary principal here in Union County and I met between the courthouse and city hall; we met between the two-we stopped and started talking, and we decided that we should organize an effort to support N.H. Mann for his reelection. N.H. Mann had been appointed, and he had been elected for one term, and we thought he was going to run again. He hadn't said he was not. So that's when we organized some people in Monroe to support him financially and otherwise. But before we got to that point, Mann told us he wasn't going to run.

KT: This is running for?

PB: City council.

KT: For city council.

PB: When he said he would not run for City Council, then that same group decided that we should select somebody to run. There were three people considered, George Miller retired principal now, but his schedule was there; John Crowther was working at Belk, but I was with the cooperative extension service, but I was getting ready to retire. So they decided that I would be the person. I ran and was elected. Of course, I've been re-elected ever since.

KT: How many members on the council?

PB: Six council members and the mayor. It's a total of seven.

KT: All right. So the mayor's the tiebreaker.

PB: No, the mayor votes on all issues.

KT: The mayor, so is a working council member.

PB: The mayor votes.

KT: Six members, how many black members?

PB: Two, there are two of us.

KT: Two. When you ran in ’81.

PB: N.H. Mann was the only black before me. Then I was the second black elected.

KT: Now do you know when the first black member was elected?

PB: The first black member was elected, he was appointed before, but he was elected four years before ’81. That would be what, ’77. ’77. So he was appointed probably around ’75.

KT: Before that Monroe was all white.

PB: All white. We have now and I'll get on the tallest building in the country and say we have in my opinion, one of the better councils in the country. I mean, we work together as a team. No one has any ego problems. Nobody has any personal agenda. You’re looking after the best interests of the city. That’s what we do. Now you can ask me a question.

KT: Yeah. Let me go back. There’s any number of topics that you’ve touched on that we could get into. One just a real kind of basic thing. I was wondering if you could give me a sense for what the structure of the extension was say when you started in ’51. Was there, so obviously there were a black and white agent, and then there was a black and white assistant in each county, or were there more employees than that?

PB: There were black agents. There were white agents in one hundred counties. There were black agents when I came in in about forty-five counties, in the counties where we had heavy black populations. In some of those counties, they had a black assistant agent, and I started as the assistant agent.

KT: Depending on the numbers.

PB: That's right, the population there and--

KT: For say for instance Edgecombe County, what, tell me a little bit about the work of the agent in Edgecombe and what would you be doing.

PB: My work in Edgecombe County was one hundred percent with the Four-H club program. I worked with the boys and girls and the various crops and livestock. But also in organization and things of that nature and really getting them motivated to move ahead. Some of them probably in my opinion ended up going to college who would not have gone had we not been there and working with them and working with their families. So even though we did some work agriculturally, it was connected with the Four-H club program. Only if there was a farmer out there with livestock, field crops, and this boy was there also, so regardless to what the educational needs that that farmer had, we would provide it, but my sole responsibility was with the Four-H club program.

KT: Was that because you were the assistant or--

PB: That's right.

KT: So the assistant worked with the kids most of the--

PB: All the time.

KT: All the time.

PB: Not most of the--

KT: Then the agent was spending more time with the farmers.

PB: Right.

KT: How strict, I'm imagining it's pretty strict that the white agent would never or maybe seldom work with black farmers and that the black agent would probably never work with white farmers.

PB: That was pretty much so in Edgecombe County. It was so for a long time in Union County. But I started working with some white farmers long before the federal or state said do it.

KT: Is that right?

PB: I mean, they would call on me. They saw what I was doing. They'd call on me, and I would respond. So it was just one of those things that happened. I went out of the county before the civil rights laws passed, I went out of the county with some white farmers to buy breeding stock. So my point is there were some I worked with, and when they merged and had that responsibility, it was automatic.

KT: Was that a problem then for--were there territorial issues say for the white agent if you were at times working with white farmers? Did they feel threatened at all?

PB: No. He had a level of competency that it wasn't any problem. You only felt challenged in my opinion if you were incompetent. If you were competent, you don't worry about what somebody else does. You wouldn't want somebody to come out there and screw up what you've been doing, but as long as you're carrying out or promoting or perpetuating that that's in place, there was no problem.

KT: Now in Edgecombe were you working out of the same office? Did you have, was there a building that you would report to in the morning?

PB: Yeah, we were working. The black agents were in the basement and the white agents on the first floor. That was an improvement over what it was when I came here.

KT: What was it here?

PB: We were on the second floor of a building actually at the corner of Franklin and Church Streets, but it's no longer there in that order. But we had one stove in there for heat. It was close to that, related to that potbellied stove. But that's what we had to keep warm in. We did not have any air-conditioning. But white agents had the agricultural building, and they had the comfort, and we didn't. We had to go up some steps that bam, bam, bam, made a lot of noise. It just wasn't conducive to anything, but we accepted that and went ahead.

KT: When did they get rid of the separate buildings? Was that mid '60s?

PB: That was the late '60s when they merged the offices. Of course now, what happened, this is the thing that I like about Union County, one of the other things. That building we were in was hectic. So the old Belk property here, they had a small house in the back of it, nice warm comfortable house where I guess was the maid's house. The big Belk house was still standing there. The county fixed that up so we'd have an office there. That was as comfortable as any other place. We didn't have air conditioning, but it was comfortable. That was oh in the early '60s. So we were out there about four or five years before we merged. When we merged then everybody came to the agriculture building.

KT: Now when you came to Union County, how many employees would there have been of the cooperative service?

PB: We had one, two, three--four or five white and one black. That one black, the four or five white covered the various areas of agricultural--

KT: I see, they had specialties.

PB: The one black covered all the areas.

KT: How about a woman?

PB: The women had, we had one female. They did home economic work. The white had two. I know there was two. I think they only had two at that time, but black had one.

KT: So you did have a woman.

PB: Um hmm. That's right.

KT: Did every county have, every county have at least one white woman and then about half the counties have a black woman.

PB: Every county had a white woman. But about half the counties had black and depending on the black population.

KT: So as the agent, so you're covering all the areas, but in Union County what does that mean you spend most of your time? Is it livestock? Is it cotton?

PB: It's no way that I doubt if I could've given you that answer a month following the previous month. You ask me that question a month early, I couldn't have answered that question because you were doing some of everything all the time. That was never a day that you spent on any one thing. You did some work in agriculture, did some work in livestock. We did a little work in poultry. But you had to do it because that's how they got the help. It was impossible for me to be as competent in agronomy as a white agent because that was his specialty.

KT: That’s all he had to do.

PB: It was impossible for me to be as competent in the swine industry or livestock as the white agent. So my point is that you worked night and day to do the best you could do. But it’s one of the reasons today that the black farmer is having a greater difficulty because he didn’t get the same level of help. There was no way that we could provide the same professional level of help as the white counterpart because we covered a wide range of subjects, and the competency just wasn’t there. Now yes, we worked--

KT: To say nothing of the bank loans, resources--

PB: That’s right. Where we could not, for one example the late Charlie Simpson used to be both a farmer and he served on county commission, but I was working then with everybody. That’s after the civil rights, we merged. He used to say, ‘Before Bazemore started working with me, I used to go, got ready to buy a piece of equipment and get a loan. I’d go the bank and sit down and sweat and sweat.’ Said, ‘But after he started working with me and I had my hogs and everything thing going, I can call the dealer and tell them I want a tractor and they’ll bring it out there. I can call the bank and say I want a loan.' He said, 'I can go to work.’ ‘Then I come up the next day or two to sign the papers because this is the kind of thing that was moving.’ You cultivated some competency in those fields when you said, you’re working this area. You’re working that area. The specialists, NC State University had some first class specialists, and some of them, don’t get me wrong, some of them were racist. But a lot of them were down right good specialists, were not racist. I don’t care. Some of the black agents said they were. But I could see none of that in them. They were just people. If you wanted help, they provided it and if you want to waste time, they didn't bother you. Now it was just that

simple. But if you wanted the help, you wanted to get out there and do something, they provided everything. Any time I would call specialists, they would respond.

I remember one call I made to Bynum Driggers, he was engineering department at NC State, and I saw a magazine where a farmer was building a hog building. He could lay his own block and what he could do, and it would be twenty-five percent stronger than the conventional method. I was talking to Driggers, and I thought I had found something. I was talking, and Driggers never kept quiet. I don't care. I think if he had a gun in his face, he still couldn't keep quiet, but I was talking, and Driggers wasn't saying a word. After a while it occurred to me that this a long distance call, I'm talking to Driggers. I said, 'Well, what do you think?' He said, 'Phil.' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'If the conventional method is strong enough, 'what in the hell do you want it twenty-five percent stronger for?' I've been retired twenty years. I think that took place ten or more years before I retired. That's a statement more than thirty years ago. It rings a bell. He was good. Don't get me wrong. Bynum Driggers was good. I liked the rascal, but he was as outspoken as anybody could get. I could call on him.

I could call any of them and in economics, Clyde Weathers or others, a guy in the field of economics, Charlie Pugh. I called on those fellows whenever I wanted, and they responded. But you gave me a specific area of work and the competency moved up in comparison to others.

I can remember the first time they let us, one of the early times they let us attend NC State University. Now we couldn't go there at first. We were there one summer, and there was a test, and I never will call the name, but I was sitting between an NC State graduate and a Clemson graduate. When the test was given, these were guys I was

teasing and went on with all the time, but I could kind of sense that they didn't think I had quite what it took to do the work. They went ahead and did their work, but when the paper came back, mine was, my score was higher than both of them. You could tell then that seemingly the closeness of the three, the respect, if not the closeness, the respect just built up real good. They realized then that this perception, you're black, you don't know left and because here you're in a classroom. You're performance equals or superior. So that worked out real good.

I had a lot of varied experience, enjoyed life. Married the prettiest girl in Franklin County. She went to Edgecombe County. Then she went to Greene County. That was too far. So I married her and brought her here. From that, I have one daughter. We named her Ina, I-N-A. My wife died in '87. Ina married just a few years ago, and in October of last year the first grandchild was born. I became a senior citizen my birthday last year, which was when I reached eighty, I became a senior citizen on my terms, and then when the first grandchild was born, I became an old man. So I'm now an old man because I have a five-month-old grandchild.

KT: What's his name or her?

PB: Her name. She is named after her grandmother, Camilla. The nice thing about that, Ina and her husband told me to come out there, wanted to have dinner with me. They wanted to take me out to dinner. Normally, when I go by there, we would get in the car and go on out to the restaurant for dinner. They built a house in Union County. Yeah. They're in Union county. Up here I always say they are in the high rent district, in the western part of the county. They have, just the two of them have more floor space on the first floor than I have on my house and same thing with the second floor. But

anyway, they didn't go to have dinner as usual. They sat down and talked, and they weren't talking the way they normally talk. Ina's already told me she was expecting. She was pregnant. I was elated and I think it was about then that they learned that the baby was going to be a girl. But they said, 'We were thinking that what would you object'--then they kind of were hesitating, said, 'Would you object if we named the baby Camilla?' I looked at them a little bit for about ten second. I said, 'That was what I was going to suggest.' And that really was what I was going to suggest, haphazardly hoping that they would take it. They were hesitant because they weren't sure I would approve. But the baby's name is Camilla.

KT: When did you and your wife marry?

PB: We married in December of '54.

KT: Okay. So shortly after you moved here.

PB: Yeah, I came here in September and married in December.

KT: Did you, have you always lived in town or did you ever live--

PB: Always lived in town.

KT: Because you have some land outside.

PB: Yeah, bought a little farm out there.

KT: Still have the land?

PB: No. No. No. No longer have it. But bought a little farm out there to play with and that's what I was doing.

KT: So you're not doing any farming now.

PB: Nope. I quit all that after I became a senior citizen, but a little bit older. I did some farming until, oh I guess, about '82 or '3.

KT: I was wondering as the agent, was a lot of your program was it coming from NC State or was it coming from, I'm sure it came from both, but to what degree was it coming from the needs of the farmers? To what degree was it coming from the state? Were they saying, you need to implement these programs. This is what you need to be doing or is it mostly coming from the farmers who are saying we need help on this, this, this and this?

PB: It was mostly from the farmers. NC State would, we would say here's what we need. There was some of both of course. But the specialists had all of the research and all in the various areas, and they would make certain that we were kept abreast on what was available, what research, not only the research that was out there, but research that was in progress. So the farmers would let you know working with them what they needed, and this was coming to us from the specialists by way of NC State University, by way of research we have, and we would share that with the farmers. We would not just share that, our obligation was to provide this information to the farmer and encourage his action. It was meaningless if we didn't get some action. So we had to get--

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

KT: May have needed to encourage the farmers to pick up on and to change their farming techniques.

PB: All right. And the swine industry for an example, about ninety percent of the hogs produced in Union County when I was given the responsibility of the swine were produced openly on the ground in pastures. I would say when I retired, there was close to ninety percent of them produced indoors that we had farrowing houses, farrowing crates and fed them on the floor. In other words from birth to the market, they never touched the ground. So that was one, and some of the farrowing units in particular, you didn't, we didn't design any, but we took the plan that NC State had and adjusted them to some extent to what the farmers wanted. There are several farmers in Union County that have buildings, swine usable swine buildings that were not the plan that NC State gave, but it was a copy from what Bynum Driggers had. But we did it a little bit differently. This was done because going around to various places and seeing what Bynum had to offer, we made some change. So from outdoors to indoors and--

KT: Why do you want your swine indoors? What's the advantage?

PB: Efficiency. The size of unit, you're limited to what you can do outdoors. You have them indoors, you can produce them to an extent that you have space for them. Outdoors, you put them out on a lot, feed them out, you've got to have a lot of land because after two or three years, this becomes, this land becomes infested with parasites and other things. So you have to move them and move them, and then you're going to put a lot of feed out there that's going to waste.

KT: So you're able to control your feed when it's indoors.

PB: You can control the feed; you control the health of the animal because you saw each animal, one, two, three times a day. When they're out on the field, you may go a week without seeing some of them. But you saw every animal every day, and that was necessary because as soon as the animal starts falling back by virtue of disease or anything, you were there; you saw. That made, that increased the efficiency of the producer. The size of the unit in which he operated. Once they start using the buildings, they increased their production one to five hundred percent or even more over what it was earlier.

KT: On one hand I can see where the hog would be healthier out in a free range.

PB: No. No.

KT: That's not right.

PB: No. No.

KT: Why not? Putting them all together by logic, I would think it's harder to manage in terms of healthful. The disease would be more concentrated.

PB: Well, now if you have them out loosely what you're talking about, they may be healthier, but they'll grow slower, and it takes longer to get them to market. It doesn't necessarily mean that the disease would be controlled because if the disease is out there, you have no way of combating it. But if there's a disease that's in the confinement, you can disinfect that area and kill everything so you can start all over new. You can start with a new building any month that you want to by cleaning everything out and thoroughly disinfect that building, clean it up real good. You have an almost a new environment. See, at the level that a hog can reach, you have concrete or metal, no wood.

So you clean that up you have removed all that harmful bacteria or what not that would be there. So you could do a much better job indoors.

KT: Complete certainty you've got a disinfected environment.

PB: See, now of course now we don't, most of the farmers that produced hogs then are not in the business now because things have changed. Dr. Spruill and I, when I visited him in December in Georgia, we were talking about what we did back then was the right thing then. But it is not the right thing now because we knew then and we talked about it as to when swine production would be on contract same as the way poultry is. We didn't think it would come so fast, but it's here.

KT: Is it as big in Union County as well?

PB: No. It isn't as big here as it is elsewhere, and I don't know, well I do know. It isn't as big here. I don't know of the volume that is here now. It is not what it was. It's less than it used to be.

KT: What are other kinds of, well, I've spent a little bit of time in the Mississippi Delta, Holmes County, Mississippi. I had stayed with a black farmer in his house while I was doing some research. He was telling me of just a real thriving community of black farmers at one point in Holmes County, which by the time I was there in the mid 1990s had dwindled down to just a handful of farmers where he could, I think he could count on both hands the number of actual black farms. But it had been really been decimated from hundreds down to a handful. I'm wondering what the experience here was.

PB: It's the same thing or worse. We have now, of course now, since I retired, I said five years after my retirement, ninety percent of the contact that I had with farmers ended. I mean ninety plus percent, ninety-five or ninety-eight percent. So I know very

little agriculturally now. Often people are still calling me about agriculture information, and I say, 'Uh uh. Not me.' I said, 'I will tell you what was twenty years ago. That isn't anymore.'

KT: I can tell you how we did it in the '70s.

PB: That's right. I don't know. A lot of the land that was there, a lot of the black farmers lost. A lot of it has been lost, and a lot of it was sold. When the mom and pop reached age, they didn't have that constant contact with the cooperative extension service as they once had. So the guidance wasn't there, and the offspring scattered. So they sold it. Somebody came up and offered them what they thought was a good price, and they sold. So a lot of land that was in the hand of black people is no longer there. Secondly, it was, they couldn't, going back in the '50s and '60s and early '70s, they couldn't borrow the money to expand. So when you reached the point now where you've made a living on that hundred acres of land, you can't even begin to come close to doing that now. It takes a thousand acres. So you were unable to expand when the expansion was available. You didn't get the information you needed that would enable you to. So you lost what you had. Some are still there. They maintain the land and rent it to others, but a lot of it was lost. You had in this area of the state, we had '85-'6 along in that time, we had extremely dry weather, and we had hundreds of acres that were planted and never harvested. You put all the money in the ground, and now there's nothing.

KT: Didn't have the money to harvest it.

PB: It wasn't anything to harvest. The dry weather, the crop was lost, I mean, completely lost.

KT: Was it mostly cotton as far as the cash crop here?

PB: No, now, but cotton is just about five years old in Union County.

KT: No, I didn't realize that. Driving in I saw a lot of cotton fields.

PB: Cotton now, maybe a little bit more than five. I would say maybe ten years ago, but cotton is expanding each year, but now prior to that from about 19--I would say--60 until maybe 1980 or '90, or 1965 to '89 there wasn't any cotton in Union County. But in the '50s we had forty, fifty thousand acres of cotton. In the '70s and '80s we may have had twenty acres of cotton. Now we're back up again to large acres.

KT: How has it come back?

PB: Two things, you controlled the boll weevil and mechanized. Those are the two answers. No other way you can put it except those two. You can, you have better herbicides too. You can control weeds.

KT: I'm guessing they're not family-owned cotton farms.

PB: No, not any more.

KT: No. Who are the big owners in the companies in the area?

PB: Well, now correct, in Union County they're mostly family owned, but it's just a few families that controls it all.

KT: That controls thousands of acres.

PB: That's right.

KT: Would these be old Union County families or?

PB: Yes. All, they used to be Union County families, very few--I don't know of any it could be, but I don't know of any successful or sizable farmer in Union County except natives here.

KT: Okay. So not newcomers or--

PB: Not newcomers. These are people--

KT: But I'd imagine they're, they have pretty strong linkages with outside financing.

PB: Yes. Yes. Um hmm. The point that bothers me is that if you have a dry year, and we've had two or three of them in a row, but in 2001 we had a dry year and reasonably good crops. I don't know how in the world that the crops were as good as they were with the weather as it was. Now, what happened, it rained seldom, but it rained fair when it fell. The crop was, I mean, it wasn't a bumper crop, but it was close to average and that's--but now had last year 2001 been a failure, a lot of other farmers would've been gone. We had fellows here now who used to be the big farmers and no longer in agriculture because those dry years, and the price of farm commodities is horrible. You're getting the price for farm commodities now that you got forty years ago. The price of producing it is multiplied. So you've got well, it just means that it's difficult to survive. I'm afraid that the land here will be cultivated by fewer and fewer people each year. But what's happening in Union County also is having an impact on it is that when we were producing all of those acres, we had a population of about seventy-two to eighty-four thousand people. Now it's 123,000.

KT: In Union County.

PB: Yeah, in Union County.

KT: Where's that growth been? Has it been in Monroe and the outskirts?

PB: No, most of it west of Monroe between Charlotte and here.

KT: People coming out from Charlotte.

PB: That's right. They're leaving Mecklenburg County and moving here. Somebody, I don't have this officially, but I was in a meeting last fall and one person who has more knowledge population wise as to where people are migrating from said that seven out of ten people that migrated to Monroe, to Union County came from Mecklenburg County. That's a pretty high percentage, but I doubt if it's quite that high, but it's proof that a lot of them are leaving there and coming here. One of the big reasons is the schools. We're still, [sigh] well, we have a lot of improvement to do. The gap between the black and white in Union County is larger than it is in other counties. You're putting a lot of expenditure fund in the west of Monroe, and it's where the schools are going up, and that's where the people are coming in. East of Monroe, the population in some areas east is less than it was ten years ago. But west it's many times over.

KT: As far as, are the schools fairly well integrated or in the wake of the '60s did they set up the white academies here as well?

PB: They've got white academies, but we had a unique experience in Monroe.

KT: What's that?

PB: In the '60s, we had a school to burn. The black school burned. So you had to integrate. It worked.

KT: Even before Charlotte.

PB: No, Charlotte was integrated. But we didn't have the hassle and the hostility because of the city of Monroe, you had city school system then and a county school system. But in the city school system, the black school burned in the spring. So in the fall they had to go to the white school.

KT: What year was that about?

PB: Oh, I don’t know. It was in the late ‘60s. It was, you still hear people ask today “ who set that fire?”

KT: I was wondering about that.

PB: I don’t think you will ever hear who set that fire, ever know who set that fire. But I’m convinced that Mother Nature didn't set that fire. I’m convinced that that was not an electrical shortage.

KT: Or careless smoking.

PB: I’m totally convinced that that fire had some help, but it worked. The school that the part that was burned was old and kind of dilapidated. So you didn't lose that much. You needed to rebuild it anyway. So it just worked. But then you had more of the academies to spring up, and now the schools I guess in Monroe are sixty, seventy percent black, and in some schools in the county are about three to six percent or maybe ten percent, the highest.

KT: In terms of the town’s population, what would the racial breakdown?

PB: The racial breakdown now, you have about twenty-five to twenty-eight percent black. We’re saying fifteen percent Hispanic, but it’s more than that. But in the county we’re about somewhere between twelve and fourteen percent black. I haven’t seen the latest figures. We were sixteen percent in the 1990 census. I haven’t seen the 2000 figure.

KT: The town would be a little bit more African American than the larger county.

PB: Yeah, but the point is now, Monroe is, the percentage in Monroe of black may be less because we have annexed areas, some of the areas are ninety percent white,

or ninety-five percent white, and those areas have been annexed as part of the city. But being one of the forty counties that the civil rights people have some control over, you had to get permission before you can annex anything. It's pretty obvious, and I made it rather emphatically clear to the Justice Department, if it ever reached the point that Monroe would not vote to elect black qualified candidates, I would be the first one to be on the step of the civil rights office saying that we should have district representation.

KT: So you're all elected citywide.

PB: This is the way we want it. We had to go to the justice department to be able to continue this.

KT: I see.

PB: Others go to the justice department to get it. We had to go there to avoid this because we were annexing a large area, and it was ninety plus percent white. It was reducing our ratio from thirty-two or three percent down to about twenty-eight percent, and they were not going to move. Now here's kind of one of the unique things about that. When we went to the justice department to get this done, the person, we didn't speak to the head, but this was possibly second-tier leadership, attorneys with the Justice Department, but he knew one of the attorneys with the Justice Department that handled our, that was involved in our suit. They used to run together. After everybody left he asked me, 'Did you live in Monroe, are you related to the Bazemores that was involved in that suit?' Then I told him that I am that Bazemore, I had already stated in the meeting when everybody was there that if the day ever came that Monroe would not vote for a black candidate, I would be there to ask that they get district representation. He and I talked I guess about ten minutes after everybody else was gone, and I said, 'Do what you

can for us. If you put us in districts, you will be doing us an injustice.' I said, 'We would get less.' I said, 'Black people would get less in districts than they're getting now.' That's a fact. He said, 'I will do everything I can to help you.' We got it. So now when we get ready to annex an area, the phone rings, it's the Justice Department saying, 'Mr. Bazemore.' 'Yep.' 'What about this?' I said, 'They may not want to be annexed, but we want to annex them.' Said, 'If that's going to impact the strength of the black population voting rights with this.' I said, 'No. It isn't going to have any bearing on that.' So far, none of the elections have done this. You have a unique situation here in Monroe. To give you an example, when we were in that suit, this paper said, 'Phil Bazemore, P.E. Bazemore candidate for city council.' Next week P.E. Bazemore, the suit against the state. I had friends here, and all over the state said during that time. 'Bazemore, you can't be elected to be a dogcatcher.' 'You're coming out all this stuff about the suit, you're charging white people for discrimination and you think you're going to be elected.' But I was. That's the caliber of people that lived here then and today are still here. I mean, it's when I try to explain to some of my friends who live elsewhere of the caliber of people that live here. They say, 'How can that be?' I say, 'I don't know,' but when I tell them about the suit and I was elected, everybody says, 'Well, you have a unique situation there.' The people here, I'm talking about natives. I'm not talking about those who migrated here. The natives here, people who have spent a lifetime here are just outstanding people. We have quality here I think and race relationships that I think are superior to most. Now there are some blacks and some whites here that will say just the opposite. But if you apply yourself here now or in the past fifteen years, I mean, well, go beyond that because from the time I've been on the council, it's been really open.

When I came on the council, I think there were two persons serving on committees. Now they're all over the place, and nobody thinks anything about it. The chairman of one committee told me today, there was a young lady he met her recently, but said, 'The way she talks and the way she seemed to be knowledgeable, I'd like to have her on my committee.' We have rotating committee. When I came on the council, we did not have rotation. As I said there were two blacks, and I was one of them. But the chairman of the committee was chair until he decided to get off. When somebody else got off, he decided who would come on. So when I came on the council, I said we need to do it differently. We need to have rotation. They formed the committee. Lynn Keziah, the clerk and I were the three people on that committee. We came back. I told them we need a rotating system. So we came back and recommended that, and there were some on the council that said it wouldn't work. But it wasn't long before they said that was the best thing that could happen, and we've been doing that ever since.

KT: Opening up the process.

PB: That's right. You're getting so many more people involved. It makes it a lot easier to govern even though we spend a lot more time. Of course, the complexity of the city government now is much more than it was twenty years ago. I think we kind of estimate that we were getting close to a dollar an hour when I was elected. But we're getting considerably less now, considerably less than a dollar an hour. So if you're here to try to make a dollar, forget it. You don't get it. You're here because you want to serve.

KT: Twenty years, I'm wondering if you could sort of give me the highlights of your twenty years on council. Is there a particular--

PB: I don't know if there are any highlights. The thing that, see we're not guilty of the thing we're accused of. There are people in Monroe now who would say that Lynn Keziah and I control the thing. We don't. But we are the oldest two on there, not in terms of age--I'm the oldest by age, but I'm talking about tenure, we're the oldest two. That's the basis for which they say that. But that is not true. But I don't know what would be the highlight. I think one of the things that I'm real strong on, I think I played a major role in getting emphasis put on educating our school children. In North Carolina, municipalities have nothing to do with schools. But my contention is forget about who has the responsibility. Look at the youth that need help, and we're doing some work in that area. That's something that I feel proud of.

The Head Start in Union County now, seventy-five percent of the Head Start are in facilities owned by the city. The city has built another structure recently about three-quarters of a million dollars and not the county, but the city. Head Start is a county/federal program, not a city. The city doesn't have anybody on the board. The county, a third of the board members are county people. I mean, county commissioners represent a third of the board. The city represents none, but it's no problem somebody has to spearhead those kind of things.

We have what we call the CDC Community Development Corporation that concentrates on affordable housing. We brought that in, and the city bought into it. We haven't been able to sell it to the county, but the city bought into it, and we're supporting that organization. So those are some of the things that are not too old that are done. The rotation of the committee. I mean, I don't care what happens, is it done more collectively. We have now, we used to have a committee where somebody was head of

a code enforcement, but now we've changed that and came up with, we had a staff member that came up with idea of land development committee. Lynn Keziah chairs that committee. I serve on it. We pretty much have what would go in the code. Now the housing stock today isn't as good as it's going to be tomorrow, but it's better than it was yesterday. Where in most places it's about level. Sometimes it's deteriorating, but we're requiring some things that the developers don't like. Lynn and I always use this statement that we're not trying to win a popularity contest. We make certain that the quality of houses that are being built in the city of Monroe are going to meet standards, so we don't allow people to just throw up something and rent them and then have them fall apart. They have to have quality. One of the big things that happened, not recently, that should have happened years ago, Lynn and I and one of the staffers, she's no longer here but was head of the planning department, we would ride out to an area - predominantly black - where they had nice brick veneer houses and gravel drives. I said, 'That's disgusting.' We stopped and looked at that and decided right there, it was that day that we decided to bring before the land development committee the idea that all driveways from here on in, I don't care where you build a house, every drive has to be hard surfaced. You couldn't use anything else. Some of the developers raised a fit. There are a lot of people who are not developers, they convinced them that we were going to price them out of a home.

KT: Is that for new construction?

PB: New construction, all new construction.

KT: So every one else is grandfathered.

PB: Everything else is grandfathered. If it's already there, that's it. But every new construction whether it's an infield lot or whether it's a development, we put more than that on there, but if it's an infield lot, we don't change it from R8. It stays there because it's grandfathered. But you still have to put the hard surfaced drive. That makes a big difference. It's a little thing, but it makes a big difference. Now in the development that you build, if you're going to build it, we dictate the minimum size of the houses. You can't put a house so small, and there has to be a two-car garage or carport. There has to be storage. You can provide storage attached or unattached. These are some things that we said will just have to be. We're being criticized, but being on the team that makes this happens is some of the things that we think real strong about. Lynn Keziah is chair of the civic center committee. We have an aquatic and fitness center that we named recently, the fitness center part of it, the *Lynn Keziah Fitness Center* because he spearheaded that, but all of us were there, and it's one of the best operated aquatic and fitness centers in the state. When we built it about four years ago, we were sweating. We said if we can get twenty-five hundred members, we could break even. Our goal was to do that in two years. We reached that in less than six months. Now we're up to about nine thousand members.

KT: Where's the center?

PB: It's out near the mall. I'd like to take you out there before you leave just run by there.

KT: Yeah, we could do that.

PB: I'd like to take you by where we're going to build the civic center. We're working on this, and it's going to be a real meaningful civic center. We don't know

whether we'll have a theatre connected with it or not but a performing arts center will probably be included in the civic center.

KT: The numbers suggest that you can support this, the demographics, the annexations.

PB: Yes, we do this from the whole county. Even though it's done in Monroe. The financial obligation is strictly Monroe, but on the aquatic and fitness center we have them coming here from South Carolina. So they're coming here from every place. The fee is less than any place else. We haven't changed the fee yet, but there is no reason to because we're operating in the black. There's a net, a sizable net each year.

KT: Well, coming down here the, I guess the only two things I knew about Union County were Jesse Helms's connections, and the other thing would be the little bit I know about Robert F. Williams, which does Jesse Helms still have family connections here? I would think--

PB: I would think so. I don't know of his family here.

KT: I saw there was a Helms, an attorney just off the square--

PB: That had nothing to do with that but if you come in on Highway 74 in Wingate, he has the Helms Center, I mean a huge structure.

KT: What goes on at the center?

PB: Well, you get some of the most outstanding people in the country who speak there. You've had, you name them - secretary of state, everybody. They come here.

KT: Is that right? So it's like an auditorium of some kind.

PB: Embarrassingly, I shouldn't say that on tape, but I haven't been in it yet. But, eventually I will have to. The city manager, the mayor and I went to Washington a

couple weeks ago, maybe a little bit more than that. We need some help financially. We're working with a group, kind of a lobbyist group that's helping us do this. They scheduled a meeting with Senator Helms, Senator Edwards and Representative Hayes, Robin Hayes. Edwards told them he would not be available. So we did not see Senator Edwards. But the most cordial person that you would ever see was Senator Helms.

KT: I've heard this. I've heard this before.

PB: I couldn't believe it. Fifteen years ago, that same Senator Helms, we went to see, we scheduled a meeting with him during National League meeting along with one or two other municipalities, and he all but turned his back on us. Didn't address the issue that we asked at all. But after we came back, we reported to the press. So he sent somebody down here to correct it. But my point is, he was unreal. I mean, it was an experience that I will always remember. He was just fantastic. I believe that anything he can do to help us, he's going to. That was a good experience.

You read in the paper that he wished he had done more about HIV/AIDS. I was saying that the same man that I knew, and then when I went up and met him, I'm sorry. It's there. I mean, he may not have changed, but I'll tell you the truth, you couldn't convince me that he hasn't. It's fantastic.

KT: So maybe he's just getting older, coming to the end of his career.

PB: I think the end of his career may be a factor, and I'm not sure. I don't know what it is. It's just hard to put my hand on it. I think about George Wallace. George Wallace was a decent man racially. Then he got beat in an election. So he became an extreme racist and got shot and he turned, went back to Alabama and reversed himself. So I don't know. You don't, I think some times--well, I talked with some people from

Alabama, and they said one of the best persons we had, that we ever had in the governor's chair was George Wallace. Of course, he had changed so much from what he was. So I don't know. Jesse hadn't been shot, not by a gun, but I think the man is just as sincere as he can be. I really admire him now. I didn't admire his attitude before. But when he goes out, if people who get to see him and sit with him now are going to have a different attitude about Jesse Helms than the people who don't get that opportunity because it's a different person.

KT: So he doesn't currently have a home in Union County anymore.

PB: No.

KT: Would you have known his father who I think he was the sheriff?

PB: No, he was sheriff before I came here. When I first got to know Jesse Helms, not in person, is when he was on television in Raleigh. Phew, when I'd go to Raleigh see him on television, I flip it off. It was horrible. To see that man on television and see this man today, it's unreal. But I rather for a person to die right, to live wrong and die right than to live right and die wrong. I like to think in the end he's going to do something that's going to make up for much of what he had done otherwise, and I think this is happening. Okay, what's your next question?

KT: The other, your time with, you got here before, well, right about the time I think, Robert Williams was--

PB: Robert Williams activities I think was in the early '60s. I came here in '54.

KT: So you would've lived through all of that here in Monroe. Tell me a little bit about what that was like.

PB: Well, let me go back to after Robert Williams left here with white people when this was kind of heated. He was in Cuba or China. I made the statement fairly frequently that one of the better things that happened to Monroe was Robert Williams. Sometimes people, white people in particular, would kind of look at me and say what's wrong with him. Then I would say, that he taught all of us that the importance of race relations. Had he not been here, we would've had the same burning and the devastation that other municipalities had but because he came through here, because he did what he did and you had all of this. We realized that it was more important to sit down and see if we can work out some of these things. So we didn't get to that point. During that time, this is the thing that bothers me. I still think about it now, and I realize that we could've had greater gain in Monroe and Union County than we currently have. We had biracial committees, and we would meet regularly. We had a beautiful committee, oh I guess about ten or twelve blacks and about fifteen or twenty whites. After a short period of time, there would be ten or twelve whites, one black, sometimes two blacks.

KT: What was happening? Why would it have done that?

PB: I could never put that together. I never could understand why they no longer would come. Insecurity, felt that the white people were not sincere, and I think all of that was wrong. I would still go, and I can remember Claude Eubanks who used to be vice chair of the bank, American Bank and Trust at that time. He made a statement to me that I thought--the late Claude Eubanks--that I thought was meaningful. This is tied in with the Robert Williams era. He said, 'Bazemore,' 'I have some fellows that work with me on my farm and they said, " Mr. Claude, if you were black one weekend you wouldn't ever want to be white again.' He said, 'They're happy.' I smiled and looked at

him. I said, 'Mr. Eubanks, we learned a long time ago from slavery, we can get more from you if we say what we think you want us to say.' I said, 'They didn't mean that at all.' 'After you left, they said everything just the opposite.' I said, 'They did not mean that.' He said, 'Well, what do they want?' I said, 'You look in the mirror and say what do I want.' I said, 'They want the same thing.' I said, 'That's the best way I know to tell you.' I said, 'But they felt, they think that they could get more from you, and you would be fairer to them if they say the thing to you that they think you want them to say.' I said, 'That has nothing to do with the way they're thinking.' The thing that impressed me is that Claude Eubanks realized at that moment that that was the situation. He never questioned anything else. He was instrumental in having me speak at Central United Methodist Church. They had a special program at nights, Sunday nights. He said, 'You have to come and speak to us.' It was no such thing as us going down there, but I went. There wasn't a black person; it was a group of white folks sitting there. I put the cards on the table. But following Robert Williams's era, now let's go back to the time you had the riot here.

KT: This would've been the swimming pool riot?

PB: Yeah, on that. We had a lot of people from outside of Monroe who came to Monroe at that time for everything. But my point is, that shows you how stupid I was. When all of this was taking place, to my wife and I said let's drive across town. This was 1960 or '61. We drove from--no, I believe the real riot must've been '61 because we were living on the southwest side at the time. We had moved from the northeast side. Northeast was predominantly black. Southwest had blacks but not as many. When all of this was going on up town, with a lot of these white folks from out of town, I came right

through town and after two years after that I said that was stupid. But right then, I always said that you can't defend yourself in a situation like this. I always thought about what I would do. I said I will make certain everybody will know who did it. I kept Drano in my car all the time. That was the weapon if anybody starts anything with me, Drano is going in his face. You would know that that was the person, but nothing ever happened.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

PB: I said, never happen. There was no reason for it. I think Robert Williams, and I still believe that his contribution to Monroe is far greater than what black or white will ever say it was. I think the race relationship here would not be as good today if he hadn't come this way. I feel that way strongly. I've said that in many settings. I said it back then when it wasn't popular to say it. But it was my firm belief, and I still believe it that he is part of the reason that we decided we need to sit down and discuss issues. And as I was telling you about Claude Eubanks, but now other people, First Baptist Church had me to meet with their men one Sunday morning. But all of this was because we sat down and talked about issues of what we need to do and how we can get it done.

I can't think of the person's name, but he was the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. His office was in the big Belk building. We were in the cooperative extension service office building behind the Belk Building.. He and I were talking one day. He said, 'Bazemore, you won't believe this, but we had a conference with our board of directors, chamber board, and we decided who was the most radical black person in Monroe, I mean in Union County or Monroe.' I said, 'Well.' He said, 'Know who they said it was?' I said, 'Who?' He said, 'You.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'Yeah. But before you start running wild, let me say this.' He said, 'This guy is radical, radical, but he does it with common sense.' Said, 'Long as you do things with common sense nobody is going to hate you for it.' But he said, 'You are the most radical black person in town.' I laughed. I said, 'I didn't know I was radical, but see the suit and all that stuff was picking up. So I was a radical person, but I never lost respect of the leadership, black or white, in Monroe, in Union County.

But Robert Williams, in my opinion, played a role in this. If any recognition for him, and I think there will be some, but I don't think black and white people would get involved even today. Black people will do it, may do it anyway, but it would be for, in my opinion, the wrong reason. Not the greatest thing, they'll do it for something else. But his greatest contribution, I think, was race relationships in Monroe.

KT: Was it that the way it worked that white people saw what the alternative was?

PB: Yeah. That's right. It was the kind of thing that, the thing of meeting together started in Washington, of course. But they realized once these race riots happened and people all over were burning buildings and all that, this could easily happen here. There were times when it could reach that point because I know that I was involved, we were involved in meetings, and the group that was supposed to come here from Chicago, and elsewhere and we said, 'No.' 'They'll come here. Some of our young hotheads will be killed and they'll go on back.' So I said we were meeting to prevent that. But we had, and I'm convinced that all of these weren't white. I think, we had some black people that contributed to this - persons that were supposed to be involved in bringing the people here that were going to create a noise. The county manager named a meeting that was held. I said, 'What?' I said, 'At that meeting number one, I was not presiding.' I said, 'I'm not the chair. I said, 'Let's get one thing straight.' I said, 'Now that meeting, we've put together an organization to discourage local people from getting involved if they came.' I said now we can't prevent them from coming, but we were putting together an organization to discourage local participation. I said, 'But this is what we get.' I said, 'We get one thing straight.' I said, 'If they come here and

decide they're going to burn this city down,' I said, 'I'm going to take my wife and child and get the hell out of town and let them.' I said, 'I'm not going to do a damned thing to prevent it or nothing.' I said, 'I'm through.' I said, 'When you're trying to do what is good, and then you come up with this kind of crap,' I said, 'I'm through.' He said, 'Wait, wait.' I said, 'No, you've already said enough.'

KT: So this was about the time, what was it SNCC volunteers came in and people from CORE?

PB: They were coming in. But they never came here to the extent that they were planning to come.

KT: Oh I see.

PB: It never happened.

KT: Because I know Mr. Williams did encourage some people, outside organizations to come in.

PB: I'm talking about after he left.

KT: This was later.

PB: After he left. But while he was here, yeah, some came in. But after he left, this is what popped up.

KT: Did you tell him personally?

PB: Yeah.

KT: Yeah, and what sorts of reflections do you have on him just interpersonally?

PB: Well--

KT: He seems to have been a really unique guy.

PB: He was unique. Robert bitter. I mean, somebody white did him or somebody close to him a terrible injustice, and that bitterness was there and he couldn't shed it. It was a part of his personality. But he wanted to see progress today rather than to go along a little bit slower. He wanted to see what you would get in two years, he wanted to see it in two days. I mean, that's just about the way he wanted it. Somewhere between two days and two years is what you end up getting. He was a forceful person, and I'm convinced, a lot of people here are convinced, we have no idea who was involved, but he got out of town with the help of a white person.

KT: Is that right? Somebody that you--particular person you suspect.

PB: I will never call that name, but the answer is yes and don't ask because I'm not going to say.

KT: I'm not going to ask you.

PB: But we think, some of us think we know who was instrumental in getting him out of town.

KT: Why, because they wanted him out of town or because they were sympathizers?

PB: No. They thought that it reached the point that there could be some racial problems. If they could've gotten him then, they think some white person would've shot him. They thought to prevent him from being harmed, they got him out of town, not to prevent him from doing what he was doing, but to save his life. We are convinced that a white person moved him out. That kept that scar from being on Monroe. But just moved him right out of town and financially and got him on his first journey. So my point is, there have always been some real downright good people in Monroe.

KT: Yeah. I know that early on he had some support from people like the Boyte family.

PB: Yeah.

KT: Have you seen the recent biography the *Radio Free Dixie* that's been done on Robert Williams.

PB: No. No. I heard about it but I haven't seen it.

KT: I was surprised to read about even in the mid '50s that he and Harry Boyte and some other people through the Unitarian Church, I believe, had been talking about race relations.

PB: He was NAACP chairman, I believe, for a while. He was working with Dr. Perry and others. But Williams was doing a lot of good things here all along. Some of it was a little ahead of the time, but we had some black people who said Martin Luther King was ahead of his time. My point is if not now when? This is the kind of thing that I thought Martin Luther King was going it as slow as he should go, but that was too slow for Robert Williams. Even Malcolm X was not moving as fast as he wanted to go. But you take that combination of people, and you get a lot of things accomplished. At that time, people that ran away from Robert Williams would run to others, and then you end up pulling some things together. He made a tremendous contribution to race relations in Monroe, and I still believe that part of it is still here. I don't think that the race relations here would be as good as they are today had he not come this way.

KT: Did you know Mrs. Williams, Mabel Williams as well?

PB: I didn't know her as well. I knew her, but I didn't know her as well. No.

KT: He had some close supporters in the neighborhood.

PB: Yeah. I knew his supporters. One fellow that I'm trying to think of his name now, helped me in my first campaign.

KT: I'm not sure if they're still here.

PB: Some of them, no most of them are dead, are gone. Most of them are dead. But there are still some people who criticize him for going to Cuba, for going to China. If he hadn't gone there, where could he have gone? I mean this is, I don't look at--no, I was anti-Cuba, anti-China, but if not there, where? He had to survive; he had to do some of the things he did. I don't think he was interested in doing exactly what he did, but he did what he had to do to survive.

KT: You say there may be some kind of, you think at some point some memorial--

PB: I think so. I think a scholarship or something like that will come up.

KT: A scholarship. I think you mentioned that you didn't think most whites would be too interested in that.

PB: No. But I think--

KT: How do they look back and remember the Robert Williams years?

PB: I think we will be able to get some of them to put a sizable contribution to a scholarship fund in his name, but not right now. It will take another effort; it would take an effort by somebody that those white individuals respect. To point out what I've just said, the value of Robert Williams was to this community, and I think we'll get some if the scholarship fund is developed, and I think it will be because I'm going to play a small role in doing this. I will not play the leadership role. I said, 'I think that's a splendid idea,' and I think it's going to develop and if we get it developed, I think we will get

some sizable contributions from some of the white people. He was a radical. When they say I was a radical you can see how I kind of had to step back. But now he was a radical, but he was a radical for justice. People lose sight of that. He was a radical for justice. There's nothing wrong with that.

KT: Well, let me switch gears slightly. I want to get back to your case. We didn't even go over your, this is a case that went to the US Supreme Court. This was after what the state I guess would've been the federal district court.

PB: Yeah.

KT: Had rejected your suit.

PB: And the appellate court, I guess, the one in Richmond was a three to one rejection. That one was from Chapel Hill. He was the one that said we had legitimacy in that, and that's how it got to the Supreme Court.

KT: You went up to hear the arguments.

PB: Yeah.

KT: When would it have been, 1985 or '8--. '85 was the arguments and '86 the decision. Tell me what that was like at the US Supreme Court.

PB: That was the one and only time in my life that I can say outright that my heart stopped beating. People look at me and say what are you talking about? You're sitting there; you're calm. There are others that are coming forward. It's not excitable, but when they said *Bazemore versus Friday,* and I really believe my heart quit right then and there. I don't know why, but for a few seconds nothing about me was normal. I couldn't breathe. There was nothing. A few seconds it came back, but it felt like a long time, but it had to be just a few seconds. It was a frightening experience. It's something

that I still haven't been able to adequately describe. You were there at the US Supreme Court. They've already heard a couple of cases, and you're sitting there while that's going on and, then this comes up. Your name is called in that body of people. It was just frightening. It was an experience. That's one experience that nobody forgets. Don't let anybody kid you. Nobody forgets that. But we were there. We were in Richmond, and we were there (U.S. Supreme Court). Wherever they went, we were there.

KT: Particularly I suppose to hear your name named in the suit. I mean, and then also with the work that you'd put into it, it must've been in some ways you had a real sense of pride and--

PB: After that, that was pride. I don't know what it was that drove me to doing it. But no, let me back up a little bit when I was a boy. White children had buses to go to school. Black children walked to elementary school, and they didn't have transportation to high school when I was a boy. My parents, my father bought a bus. I think he was charging five cents or ten cents a week or something like that, and half the people didn't pay him, but he was taking people to high school, and that's how some of them got to go to high school. One day, my mother was there, and Dad was kind of a quiet guy. He wanted to do things, but he didn't make a lot of noise. But my mother had people swinging out the windows and all around, loading that little old bus, hanging everywhere. They drove by the superintendent's office to get attention so they could get some buses for black folks. That had nothing to do with the fact that happened. The state just did it. But my point is when I talk about demonstrating and what not, I said, 'Look my family was demonstrating long ago.' But that's way back when I as a little boy in

elementary school. I wasn't in high school. I was in elementary school. My two oldest brothers were in high school.

But that kind of thing happened. When you come back to where we are to the Supreme Court, it's a frightening experience, but at the same time you realize that you've gone this far. Of course, I had retired then. I said, 'We'd need to go as far as we can.' I admired the quality of legal help that we had. I mean, I think we had first class, outstanding attorneys representing us. It was no way that we could've gone that far if they didn't put in the kind of work that had to be done. They had loads of paperwork. They worked nights--there were some nights I was up until midnight with them. The thing that was encouraging getting ready for the district court in Raleigh that I could sit there and call people who had said heck they weren't going to get involved, and I could call them and say we need you in court on Wednesday or in court on Thursday. They never failed, never failed. This is the unreal. That one person who died recently, McDaniel, George McDaniel from Goldsboro, Wayne County, they said, 'He was through.' So when I called him, and he told the wife he's going to Raleigh to testify. She told him, 'I thought you were through with that group.' He said, 'But Baze called. I've got to go.' He was there and did an impressive job, but the thing that we, the way we differed from others in getting to the Supreme Court, we had a lot of us involved, not just one or two. The nucleus of it was just four or five of us, and as chair I made certain that that nucleus, we stayed focused. We were focused, and we worked continuously. We met regularly. I didn't take, I don't think I had for ten years more than two or three weeks of vacation time. All of my vacation time was tied up with this. So when I took a day of vacation, this is what we were doing. So I didn't, so far as taking a vacation, take my

wife and family places. I didn't have time for more than ten years. But it took that to get it done. We were able to do it. But I never thought that I would have the feeling when I got to the Supreme Court that I had. I think it was fear; it was joy; it was a little of everything. But I think getting back, with that case too. I was home one day, and one of the attorneys who is in Washington, practicing law in Washington, called me, and he said, 'Mr. Bazemore. I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm sitting here reading.' He said, 'You standing.' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Well, you mind sitting down.' I sat down. He said, 'Are you sitting now?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'I thought you might,'--this was minutes after the announcement was made. He said, 'We won.' He said, 'Three out of the four issues won. We lost the fourth one on a five to four vote.' I told him, 'I'm glad I'm sitting because if I were not, I'm not sure that I wouldn't go beyond that. Squire Padgent is his name. He was one of the attorneys with the Justice Department. Nothing happened to me in association with the cooperative extension service that measured up to that one time. That would be, if there is a highlight, of course I was out of the service, retired at that time, but if there is a highlight of anything that I did at the cooperative extension service was to stay with that suit until we got to the Supreme Court and then with that victory because that helped a lot of black agents to be more focused. We kept stressing the idea that you have to perform. You don't lose sight of that. I think some of them were better agents, better employees as a result of that. Of course, you always find some that would be just the other way around. But I think some were better employees as a result of that.

KT: Well, what could be better affirmation of what you had been contending for twenty or thirty years but to hear the highest court in the land saying yes, you were right?

PB: That's it. Short of dying and going to heaven, there isn't anything else. I didn't mean to put it quite that strong, but that to me if you're talking about Utopia on an issue of anything. That's it. You don't get higher than that in this world on an issue of that nature that you've put so many hours, you and others have put so many hours and days in and effort. We put a lot of our individual money in this effort.

KT: I was wondering about that. Did you just all finance it as individuals?

PB: The legal part the NAACP Legal Defense Fund contracted with the attorneys. The last group of attorneys and said, 'Now you handle this,' and when the suit is settled they were going to be compensated. Now whether we won or lost they were going to be compensated. So since we won, they were compensated out of the money that was awarded to us.

KT: So you won on the issue of promotions.

PB: Promotion, salary, and employment.

KT: Salary and employment. You lost on the issue of--

PB: Four-H Club, segregating the Four-H Club and the home economics club. They said that's volunteer. They won't have to be, but four said you were wrong. Five said that it's. So we lost that on the five to four vote.

KT: Were the other three issues, were those nine to nothing?

PB: Nine to nothing.

KT: Is that right?

PB: Yeah.

KT: But they split on the integration of the 4H.

PB: That's right. An attorney here, and I won't call his name because we were working together at that time. I must say something on this tape that I probably shouldn't, he said, 'Phil, the people in the extension service must have been kicking your ass real good for Rehnquist to vote for it.' 'When the Chief Justice votes this way,' he said, 'you must've been kicked real hard.' I said, 'Well, over the years it has been difficult.' It had been difficult, but that to me justified everything that we had gone through up until that time knowing that this was the situation and that we, the whole world knew that an injustice was done.

But now let's back up a little bit. Before we got to the Supreme Court, the under George Haitt, they did a re-evaluation of the salaries before it got there and closed that gap tremendously and strange enough, it didn't affect me one nickel because mine was already there. It didn't affect me. I didn't get one nickel out of that, but they put in a bushel of money, the General Assembly or somebody made a big appropriation and kicked the salaries up. So it would've been much worse, but once this got started, they made that--

KT: You know they weren't going to kick those salaries up until you started organizing.

PB: No.

KT: They didn't decide from the goodness of their hearts.

PB: This was the decision, well, the defensive decision. They knew that this was coming.

KT: They were vulnerable.

PB: So they were trying to close the gap in that respect. Another thing that has happened, once the senior law students at Chapel Hill requested that I come there. So I went there and talked with a group of them once. But I've been asked if I would go to some other states for that. This was a part of their coursework, law school course work, Mississippi—and other universities.

KT: I've seen where your--

PB: Stanford.

KT: Your case has been cited, and it has become important as far as case law. What was it, Fordice, Mississippi versus *Fordice versus State of Mississippi*. A couple of cases where you're cited.

PB: They've asked me and I said, 'No. I'd rather that I not.' But the reason that I went to Chapel Hill because this same attorney, I can't think of his name right now, that is the reason we don't have district representation in Monroe, he is practicing law in Raleigh now. He called me and asked me if I would do it. Now when he said, I had no choice. But had this school, law school at Chapel Hill called, I would've said, 'No.' But when he called.

KT: Why wouldn't you go to Stanford or Mississippi or Chapel Hill or--

PB: To me, I didn't feel that it looked like you're trying to make an issue or make me what I'm not. I didn't want that. I want, you have it recorded. That's the way we can let it stay. Don't try to make me what I'm not, what I was not. What I did, it would be difficult for me to discuss it without saying something about the penalties about my losses. I didn't want to put emphasis on that. Somebody would have pity on me. I didn't want any damned pity, excuse my French. But I felt that the best for me to do is not get

out there, not try to say what I lost or what I did. I want you to look at the case and go at it from there. If you really want to get down to the real roots of it, get one of the attorneys that was in the suit, that was involved. I feel that way strongly.

KT: I think you're being modest. I'll play devil's advocate here. You're the best living spokesman for the suit. You have the experiences of why the suit came about anyway.

PB: But that isn't important to me. What's important that the suit took place. We won it. The Supreme Court said you have to correct a wrong. That's the bottom line. That's what it was all about.

KT: The Supreme Court decision wasn't the end of the line was it?

PB: No, it sent it all the way back. It came back, and we lost. Each time it got started back, Richmond didn't bother with it, but a little while, but once it got back to Raleigh, Manning did. I have to say this because I feel strongly about it. Young Manning had his first experience before the US Supreme Court and--

KT: This was his first--

PB: Yeah. His father was head of the case, but that was his first time at the US Supreme Court.

KT: This was Howard Manning, Sr., Howard Manning, Jr. They were just for the record representing Friday?

PB: He didn't do too well. Howard Manning Jr. didn't do too well at the US Supreme Court. It was obvious to everybody that he was nervous. If he wasn't, he wouldn't have been human. I mean, let's face it. He was nervous. But this is a point that I'm getting to, recently his ruling on the school situation, the gap between the

disadvantaged and what not, what the state had to do. I was telling our state representative that I have to go by there and shake his hand and say thank you. She had the audacity to say, but he's a Republican. My point is, she was the val on a Duke class; she graduated from Duke University.

There were other people there of her persuasion, political, and I thought maybe I was off balance. They couldn't find out where that fit in. I mean, because you're a different party, you don't shake hands if somebody done something. But I think he-Judge Manning - has and is doing a magnificent job. A lot of people don't agree. But I think the fact that he did, and the governor said we will not appeal, spoke highly of the governor because that was some stuff in there, not being an attorney, I feel certain that they could've appealed and won, but he said, 'No, we'll let it stand.'

But getting back to the case again. That's, I still don't know how to really express my feelings as it relates to that. But I still think that I should not be a person, I should not go out and talk about that case except that one of the attorneys that was involved asked me if I would go here or go there, then I would. They're going to be there, then I would feel comfortable in going, but other than that, I don't feel, my answer would still be no, and it's been a long time ago, but my answer would be no.

KT: How did it play out after it came back to Raleigh? I mean, essentially this is, they were required then to what, follow the lead of the Supreme Court directive?

PB: They stopped promoting, but I could be totally wrong. Maybe I'm biased. The hypocrisy of it was, as I see it, that black women had never been a challenge to the administration, and that's who they started promoting. They've never been a challenge. Take agricultural counties, some of the politicians from those counties start looking

down on the cooperative extension services because they looked at it as being a male thing. The importance and I'm convinced that some of the decline in the importance of the extension service on the part of the General Assembly stemmed directly from the fact that in some of those major agriculture counties, they promoted too many women as head of the county. There, nothing wrong with that, but you've got to look at the mentality you're dealing with. They have that mentality that these are fairly mature, I won't say old, but men that are up in their age. They look at some thing as being a man's responsibility. I think some women should've been promoted. But I think the ratio of female to male promotion was wrong.

KT: So they did implement structural changes in terms of salaries, hiring, and promotions.

PB: Actually they didn't do much on hiring because soon after that, everything started going down. The appropriation from the General Assembly started going down. So it was just a matter of the promotion that was taking place.

KT: What about in terms of restitution and penalties?

PB: No, restitution, they gave a lump sum. It was about a million dollars, something like that, divided between--it was a class action suit. The attorneys have to be paid out of that. The remainder of it went to the black employees.

KT: So then you all have to figure out how to divide among yourselves?

PB: The attorneys figured that out, and we had nothing to do with it. They figured that out and decided how much they would put on weighted issues and they did that.

KT: My guess is that, how many, not among the class, but how many plaintiffs were there? Was it fifty?

PB: It was fifty, something like that.

KT: I'm imagining that the sum that you ended up with was nowhere near, once it was all divided had nothing to compare with the economic sanctions that it had cost you.

PB: No, I would've done that for one dollar. I mean, it wasn't that much. I think all totaled it was about twenty some thousand dollars, something like that that I got. But heck, I had put more than that in it.

KT: Probably in a few years.

PB: So that was beside the point. The point is that it had to go that way. If postage stamps were as high as they are now, I wouldn't have been able to do it. But a postage stamp was much less. I sent out bushels of letters. I made a bushel of phone calls. Those of us, I say about six of us, were not compensated for what we spent. Out of that group I think the big portion, a large portion of the expenditure I spent it because as chair I made the phone calls and the mailing I did and the travel, all of us did traveled.

KT: Many of the men, of course, didn't live to see the final disposition.

PB: That's right.

KT: Which is absolutely tragic.

PB: It was tragic. D. O. Ivy in Iredell County, about a month before he died, one had to put his head close to him to hear and he said, 'Bazemore, don't let those guys get away with it. Make certain they pay. Don't let them get away with anything.' That bothered me. Here's a man dying, and instead of, I hope there were other times he

thought of the niceties of the world, but his thoughts then on his dying bed was the injustice that had been inflicted on black people. That to me was possibly the saddest experience that I had in the whole thing. That was worse than my loss. I mean, to hear a man at that level, a person who normally weighed close to two hundred pounds, he weighed a little better than a hundred pounds then. You could hardly hear what he was saying. But he was saying it loud enough for you to know, now he said, 'Don't let them get away with it. Stay with it. Make certain they pay.'

KT: Unable to die in peace.

PB: That's right. That was the saddest part of the whole thing in my opinion. That is something that I can never forget. That feeling there and when you're left Statesville, you were so sad. It was almost dangerous to be driving because I was sad. I was mad. I wasn't angry; I was downright mad because here was a man angry, extremely angry for the treatment that has been, that black people had suffered. He was dying, and that was still number one on his mind. Those are the kinds of experiences that you go through in a situation like this, and it's hard to forget. With the years past, I should've forgotten most of this stuff. But when you get your rump kicked as we did, you don't forget that. A lot of it stays with you.

KT: I don't know if you've seen this in a long time?

PB: It's been a long time, yeah. It has been a long time.

KT: This is this article from the *Independent*. One of the points that that article makes is that at some point it doesn't even seem the state was behind the suit that it seemed kind of a personal campaign of Howard Manning, Sr.

PB: The state was behind it.

KT: They were.

PB: Yeah. The state was totally, George Haitt and that extension administration was totally behind it.

KT: They were. They stayed.

PB: All the way. They made certain. They knew that they could make one error and it would, even George Manning would've changed. But when, well, as I told you earlier, when Carleton Blaylock said the hundred county with the hundred white chairmen, race had nothing to do with it. I mean, he listened to that, and accepted it, but everybody in there knew that was a lie. There was no question about it, but that was accepted. This was I believe, we did this on on Saint Augustine College campus.

KT: Was it just this--I'm sorry go ahead.

PB: It when they came out there and started talking I knew then, I never thought that the *Independent* was going to carry it that far but--

KT: I thought they did a good job.

PB: I thought so too. One or two of the quotes I think in there from George Haitt said something about I had charisma. That it wasn't that bad, but I was able to get people to follow it. Lord, they were so behind it because they too had been kicked. It was a matter of finding something that you could fall in line with and be a part of, that could relieve you or relieve future generations of the suffering that you have had, then you just come on board. That's what happened. I don't know how I would have that posed. I didn't know if I could stand up. The guy took several pictures. I guess he took ten or fifteen different pictures, but that's the one that came out. But there was no reason for

laughter so that was no smiles on my face even though I want to, always like to grin a little bit before the camera.

KT: I think that's an effective picture.

PB: Thank you. Thank you, but there was a degree of anger there and--

KT: It's underscored with that.

PB: That anger preceded our court date. It went beyond the court date. So it's more than eighteen years of anger and injustice, but that's just what it was.

KT: How long after '89 did the actual when was the case resolved in terms of payments made and--

PB: It was made in the late 80's or early '90s. I don't remember.

KT: So it still took a couple of years--

PB: Yeah. It was in the late 80's or early '90s before it got back to Raleigh. So it took a long time.

KT: But the service, you think they were that invested that late in maintaining white power basically.

PB: Yeah. We feel, we felt, and we still feel that the Department of Agriculture is the most racist department that you have in the country. I'm talking about from Washington all the way through. The extension service is just one arm of that. But the entire Department of Agriculture, we feel is the most racist of all of them.

KT: That's the case that the black farmers are making.

PB: Yeah. And they're so right. They're so right. There are a lot of farmers today here and elsewhere who would be successful farmers today if the opportunity had been even close to being equal, you would get your loan later. You would only get half

what you had to have and never what you needed. It was a case where it was designed to make you fail. That wasn't the intent, but black farmers didn't know how to put together a real intelligent loan application. By the time they learned how to do this, then the interest rate got high, and those who were able to borrow then as a result of civil rights, they got too deep in debt and you had some disadvantaged situation, and you lost what gain you had. You couldn't move ahead. If you had that base to start with, then you could grow. But you can't start from zero in the kind of interest rate you had and then move. But then that was different. Had the loans, the money, been available to black farmers earlier that would have changed things.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 3, SIDE A

KT: Anything that we haven’t covered that you think is important to get on the record either in terms of your life, your public service work, the case?

PB: I think so far as my life, I think the case took a lot out of me so far as time that I could give to my family, and I regret that. I mean, I deprived my family--I had a wife and daughter--I did not give them the time that a husband and a father should give. I put a lot of time fighting for justice. It was something that had to be done. Somebody had to do it. That was possibly as much of a regret as anything else to desert your family for an issue that never should’ve existed. That bothered me. I’m not as bitter; I’m a pauper now and I will die a pauper. But the fact that I’m getting two to three thousand dollars a year less than I would’ve had the promotion been there, if it corrects something that needed correcting, then this doesn’t bother me because I don’t miss any meals unless I want to. But I think this is something that yes, do I need the money? Yes. Did I want the money? Yes. But will I have done the same thing over again under the same circumstances? I would not have done the same thing.

I think I was a failure in the whole structure on one issue. There was a time when demonstration was popular and effective. I believe I could’ve recruited a thousand people and surrounded Ricks Hall, that was the extension headquarters, so that nobody could get in and out, and I think we could’ve gotten some quick results. But I and the other four or five persons that were providing leadership believed that we could solve, get the problem corrected without that. I feel that I-this was my responsibility. I alone could’ve changed that, and I didn’t. I think about that a lot, why didn't I? I wonder what would’ve been the result. Would that have prevented going to court? I don’t know. But

during that same time there were demonstrations being held, and you got almost immediate results, and I think that we could've done similarly. I thought that we could do it without it. I was fearful that most of the people out there demonstrating would not be cooperative extension employees. If you didn't have cooperative extension employees, agricultural extension then, in the group, it would be a failure. I don't care what else you did. To me, inwardly it would've been a failure, and I was afraid that they didn't have the courage to do that. That was a degree of fear that prevented action by me.

KT: You didn't have the base.

PB: I just didn't feel that, I thought if we could've gotten fifteen, would be the maximum if we could've gotten that. I doubt if we could've gotten more than eight or ten. That would've been a disaster in my opinion. But we would've had the total number there, but it would not have been a success.

KT: In a sense you played by the rules. You trusted the system.

PB: I played by the rules, and I lost. Well, I won't say that I lost. I don't know that I lost, but I didn't accomplish what I think could've been accomplished.

KT: As much as--

PB: Quicker.

KT: Well, the one thing you'd mentioned that your wife passed in 1987, which is three years or so before the final end of the suit, which is just, I mean, it strikes me as tragic that she was unable to see the end of it as well. I'd imagine that it had been her struggle as well.

PB: She struggled. She knew that I was gone all the time. When vacation time came, I never took them on long trips. My daughter teases everybody now that I didn't

know what a vacation was. I thought a vacation was a long weekend. That was the extent that I had a vacation. When we went to Florida for vacation, we would leave Thursday evening, come back Monday morning or Tuesday morning at the latest, back on the job working. Often the next weekend I would end up, I would have to take a day or two off on this case. Because of the case I deserted my family to a large extent. We just-that I regret. But that's another sad part about it.

KT: I'm not supposed, as a good oral historian, my job isn't to editorialize but just to ask leading or neutral questions. But a couple of things you mentioned really struck me as in some ways what I think of the real costs of racism that people just, white people have a hard time understanding. The two things you mentioned are, your friend on his deathbed, having to think about this case. Robbing him of his last, his final moments that he should be thinking about his family. That's white privilege right there. We don't have to think about those kinds of things. Then the other thing is you mentioned is just while maybe your case was decided in your favor, I mean, what sort of victory is that to have to make the kind of sacrifices that you did?

PB: It was for me individually- I don't know. I don't know if it was a victory for the state. I mean, I'm sincere. I don't know if the state really won. We won the case, but everything has been going down since then. So did we really? What is it we won other than the fact we proved to the world that we were being mistreated? That's the only thing that I can say we won? The extension service, the Cooperative Extension service for the five to ten years afterwards did not move forward to the extent that it could. I was sad. Sadness has exceeded the gladness in that there were so many steps along the way that the Cooperative Extension service could've ended this suit. It never had to go that

far. But they refused to yield one inch. So it required going to court to get this done, and this is a sad part about it.

The court does not change the minds of people. We know that we were dealing with the same minds that were there before. They were just covering it and doing it in another way. There again, the employment and promotion, the ratio of promoting females over males, black females over males was pretty obvious. Call it what you want, but the black female has never been a threat to the system. It's the black male that has been a threat to the system. The white female has never been a threat. It's the white male that's always the one that put the lid down. So because of that, that bothered me.

It still bothers me today when I see people who were with the Cooperative Extension service. They were forced out. Look at a young employee-was then a young lady in Greene County-who was destroyed by the Cooperative Extension service. When they finished, she was not able--she made an error. She committed a wrong, but she wasn't able--I don't think she has been able to work for the state since. They destroyed her. But the situation there was far greater. She was forced from the Cooperative Extension. My point is you could find other situations in the state where if a black employee violated the rule a little bit, it was termination and destruction, and a white, tapped on the wrist and said don't do it anymore. Or you may have to go out of the extension service, but you can resign. So your record is still clean. But the black went out terminated.

KT: (   )

PB: You had a fellow in there that followed Blaylock. He was with the economic department. I believe he changed it to some extent. He was one of those guys who I

think would've never been a part of what took place earlier. I mean, after all these years, you forget names. But he was head of the extension service, he was the extension director, Cooperative Extension director. He was one that came out of the economic department. The others came from other areas. But I just think he would have been fairer had he been there earlier. I don't think we ever would've gone to court. There was another assistant who was killed in an accident coming from Rocky Mount- Smith I believe his name. Had he lived, we never would've gone to court. Had Smith lived, I don't think we ever would've gone to court. He was a local boy. Smith would've put pressure on people to make the adjustment to do what was right. But you look at those kind of things, and maybe it was intended that we go this distance because here's a person that I think would've done better. He didn't get there. Here's another that was killed before anything could happen. Smith was the second in command I wouldn't say he was a racist. I think that would be the wrong term. He believed in racial separation, but he believed in a degree of fairness that was real fairness. I'm not talking about black fairness and white fairness. I'm talking about the word fairness, I think that is what he believed in. I think it would've been good had he lived.

So I don't think we have accomplished that much. I'm not sure some of the people that are still in there have changed the mentality of the Cooperative Extension service very much. I can be wrong, but I don't think it did. The changes that were made were made based on the fear of the US Supreme Court coming back on them. But other than that, there were no real change. I think this is the sad part of it.

KT: They at least have to think about what it would cost.

PB: That's it. That's it. I think the loss--

KT: Which is something.

PB: Yeah. The mindset in a lot of them, I think went with them to the grave of those who are dead. That didn't change. I don’t think Dr. Haitt changed. But as I told you earlier, I still respect him because the suit started while the Cooperative Extension Service was under his watch. He never cut my salary increases. He said ugly things about me, but he didn't cut my salary increases. But my point is, I can live with that. To me he was a kind of person that you kind of halfway had to respect. Now a lot of people didn’t like him. I didn't, but I respected him. I think that’s far more important. I liked and respected Blaylock, but I turned around. My respect for him just went almost to zero. I mean, when you stand up there and say race had nothing to do with something like that, no. Then when he came here with the salary situation as it was and said there was no discrimination in it, legitimized not giving blacks a salary increase and you’re the extension director. Somewhere along the line you should’ve said, no, let’s come up, have somebody, your supervisor evaluate the program, see who is performing, assess something, do something, but he did nothing to even pacify the blacks. He did absolutely nothing. This to me represents where he was and where he stayed. That is a sad part, and I hate that is as I see him now.

When the current commissioner of agriculture was elected, we both were there. Of course, I worked strenuously in her campaign. But we both were there. We shook hands and we both grinned. I still can’t forget, and I don’t know whether he remembers or not. I have no way of knowing that. But I think the state is better off as a result of what we did than it would’ve been had we not done it. I think the state would’ve been even better off had they made those changes, those corrections without going to court. I

think everything would've been better had the heart changed, the mindset had moved to the extent that those corrections could and would have been made without the suit. Okay. Come on with your next question. I get carried away sometimes.

KT: No, not at all. I was just, kind of (   ) up and say, is there any last thing that we didn't cover?

PB: I don't think. Somebody made the statement, would you be on the city council now if this hadn't happened? I think I would have. I don't think that made any difference. But what this has done and this is the thing that is interesting. The two black retired agents', male and female--I'm the male--contribution to the community exceeds-let's see-one, two, three, four, five, about five or six retired white agents. They had, once they retired from the extension service with the exception of Gene Stacy, nobody has provided any leadership. That's it.

KT: They just retired.

PB: They retired. They were out of there, but they weren't respected as leaders. But the home economist who still lives cross the street from me, the two of us are looked at not by just blacks but black and white as persons who continue to work for the public. Just last year I was named the *Man of the Year* for Union County. Here you're talking about a population of 123,000 people and you're named the man of the year, not man of the year for blacks but man of the year for Union County (approximately 13% black). She has received a similar award a few years earlier. It suggests to me that at some point, somebody in the cooperative extension service from way back then if they would say to some of the agents now or someplace that we apologize and that things are going to be fair from here on in. That would make all the difference in the world to those of us who

are still alive. It would not impact us financially or any other way, but it would say that at least I'm sorry or said something. In fact, we haven't heard a word. I think that's worthy of some statement from somebody after all these years and what we went through. They know the suffering we went through.

KT: Even with the final payments and all, there was no acknowledgement.

PB: Uh uh. No. None. Still haven't admitted they were wrong. They have yet to admit that they were wrong. They were well, they were elated when the judge in Raleigh said, 'Nothing, everything's clean.' But we were lucky to get the judge in Richmond that one judge to deviate, or we never would've gotten to the Supreme--

KT: Bump it up.

PB: That's the only way we got there. When you think about all that and all the things you went through getting there, in fact I don't allow myself to think about it anymore than I have to. I think about the fact that I did not give to my family what I could've and would've and should've, but I think about the statement that D. O. Ivy made on his deathbed. Those are the things that stand with me strongly, and when I think about those, when I lose sleep thinking about this, those are the kinds of things that cause me to lose sleep. It's a degree of regret and a degree of, I don't know a degree of anger that creeps up, and this is when I hate me- when I allow myself to get angry. As the situation I mentioned earlier in Boone, when I made that statement, I don't appreciate me when that happened. I just hate me. Well, I don't necessarily hate me, but I don't appreciate me at all when I allow my temper or I allow my emotion to carry me beyond that point.

There are times when a black person was with the Farm Bureau. He came here and I thought he-I still think that he came here to get some information from me that was

going to be shared outside of the black community. I told him to go to hell, and I walked away and went on about my business. He just got in his car and went back to Raleigh. I told him I didn't want to be bothered.

KT: Was this somebody you think sent by the lawyers during the suit?

PB: No, I think this is somebody sent by the cooperative extension people. It was before the suit got going that he came here. He said that wasn't so. He has told other people that was not so. He came to help, but it was nothing he could've done to help. The only thing he could do was get me to say something he could take back for somebody.

KT: He wasn't ostensibly doing an oral history, was he?

PB: No. He was with another organization, but he had at one time worked with the Cooperative Extension Service. I shouldn't have done what I did, but at that time, it was so many things hitting that it just, I lost control of myself because he asked the wrong questions, and I just flew off. I told him, he said, 'Well, you know, somebody wants to fire you.' I told him, 'Frankly speaking I don't give a damn.' I said, 'But get one thing straight.' He said, 'What's that?' I said, 'Tell them to hurry because I want to die rich.' Got in my car and went on about my business. That was the end I heard of that. Of course, I don't and I didn't harbor any animosity towards him, but I felt that he was a tool in the black community just as I feel that when I sent out letters, somebody would always get it to the administration. It was that kind of thing that happened. You have to learn to live with that. This is where the sadness comes.

The real sad part about this whole thing, one that I didn't mention, I said this. We changed our names to the Friends of 1890. That's the only way we could get through the

suit because we merged the organization, so Friends of 1890. 1890 is the 1890 land grant university, the black university. You could be, if you want to join the Friends of 1890 you could, didn't care whether you were white or not. But no white person is going to leave NC State to join the group that created A and T. We had that, and after the suit was over and a few years later, some of the young black agents were avoiding getting involved. They thought everything was all right. They were discouraged from getting involved and they didn't. They decided we'll change the name to minority or something like that. They dropped the words Friends of 1890. They've had individual after individual kicked out of the cooperative extension service. So this was done; it may have been encouraged by the administration, but this was what we did to ourselves, (what they did to themselves). I think that's a part of the loss. Part of the gain that we didn't make would've been made because that was there. The attorneys that represented us had already asked us if we would request it, would we go to other land grant universities as Friends of 1890s; other 1890 universities and let them know what we have done.

KT: Other states.

PB: Yeah. We agreed. But before we could really get this cranked up, they terminated it. The Friends of 1890 no longer existed. That hurt some of us. I'm included.

KT: That was the name that you chose for yourself.

PB: Yeah. I didn't go to A and T. I'm a graduate of Hampton. Hampton is a private institution. It's not a land grant university. But agriculture was there at that time. In the state of Virginia I think they shared--Virginia State was getting part of the land grant money, and Hampton was getting a part. But this was something that you could

hang your hat on forever. They got rid of that. When they dropped that, you dropped, the seemingly interests of the attorneys that represented you. You just dropped the whole thing.

KT: The solidarity, the power. Yeah.

PB: Then some of us even though retired, we were regulars with that. We met with them at times, at regular and financially and otherwise meetings. But when they dropped that, I said uh uh.

KT: Did other states pick up and try to ( ) agents?

PB: They never did.

KT: Seemed like it would've been a slam-dunk case once you'd established the precedent.

PB: It could have and should have, but now this is what they did or some individual did. You had some of the other land grant universities in some of the other states make some changes as a result of what we did. It impacted some of the other states more than it did North Carolina, but they knew it was coming. I've heard others say it was that case that made them start changing minds, and they moved. So I think it benefited black agents in seventeen southern states. There's no question about that. I think it was widespread.

KT: But nobody else initiated a campaign parallel to what you did.

PB: No. That never happened. There was talk. It would have if that name wouldn't have been changed.

KT: Yeah. I suppose part of the reason too is that you got, you started the case while you were still an employee. The other agents in other states I guess it would've

meant them beginning their involvement probably after they'd retired, when they're in their seventies.

PB: But no, they had an opportunity to--you would involve both the employed and the retirees.

KT: Retirees.

PB: So you wouldn't separate the two. It was an opportunity, but you need a vehicle. They had some individuals that stood out and did some in some of the other land grant universities, but an 1890 university, but not to pull together the group as we did. I think if we hadn't changed the name, we could've done more of that because some of the attorneys had indirect connection with some of the other universities and had already been talking with us about this. I just thought it was a golden opportunity, and we dropped the ball. When you drop a ball like that, you can't pick it up. Once you drop it, it's gone forever. I think some of the things that happened at A and T now positive have some bearing on that. I think A and T benefited from it, the School of Agriculture. I think the other 1890 institutions lost. I have to be impressed with Mississippi. The state of Mississippi contributes percentage wise more to the 1890 institutions than North Carolina.

KT: I think that's come out because of the Ayers case. That's been a battle.

PB: I said, wow.

KT: I think that's a battle that may be longer than you guys. I know the Ayers case was going on when I was there in the '90s. It goes back to the '60s.

PB: It's a kind of thing though to me that what does it take to get some people to change theie minds, attitude and approach to justice. What does it take? I mean, when

at times you can do so little and gain so much. But they won't do that. I heard a person say once that if a person had the courage to apologize and say, I'm wrong, it takes a much bigger man to do that than it does to keep going and knowing that he was wrong, but I'm not going to admit it. I wonder if that's the case, then if that's the situation, we have a lot of little men in big positions. That's unfortunate. Once we get a good person, what do we do to keep him? I don't know.

But I think the experience there, I've been asked was told years ago quite frequently, 'Why don't you sit down and write a book?' I said, 'The answer is no.'

KT: Why?

PB: My concern is not yesterday. It's today and tomorrow. I never took the time to do it.

KT: But what if your reflections on yesterday would benefit somebody, a young person coming along reading about your experiences. I mean it seems like the younger generation of agricultural agents would really benefit by hearing about your experience.

PB: If you look at the experience I had here with agricultural agents they didn't have to read a book. I could be there in person. They disappeared. They wouldn't show. So that's the thing that was discouraging. I just never thought about writing a book. Minnie Brown used to be an administrator, she's since deceased. She used to persuade me. I mean, she stayed on me regularly. 'Write a book.' I would tell her, 'I'm sorry.' I don't think I ever had time.

I feel about writing a book--I could've taken the time--similar to the way I feel about golf. The City of Monroe has a golf course. The golf pro and others there used to beg me, 'Come on out. We'll cheat a little bit. You won't have to do what everybody

else does.' It's just a good sport. I know I could've gone out there. They would've done everything in the book to teach me to play golf. I said, 'When I get time, I'll go.' I used to lie about it, but I stopped lying now. I'm not going. From I guess 1975 until the '90s I was going to play golf. But I just stopped saying it now. I say, 'No. I'm not.' But it isn't that I don't think I would enjoy it. It's that I feel that I can make better use of my time. Now that's the whole bottom line.

Last night I was in Raleigh from Friday (   ), but that was political.   Tuesday and Wednesday, I'll be in Raleigh again. I serve on boards of nonprofits that work primarily to help disadvantaged. Everywhere I look, I'm on one of those boards. I give a lot of my time and energy to doing that. The benefit that I can give, the help that I can give to disadvantaged--I'm disadvantaged myself--but if they don't know it's coming from me, I enjoy giving it, but I don't want them to ever know that I'm making the contribution. I want to do it, but don't worry about who is doing it. Just make certain you get some of the things you need. This is what I like. This is the kind of life that I think I should live. This is what I want to do. When I retire, if I ever do, that's what I want to retire from. That would be the kind of retirement that I think I would enjoy. But right now I work four to twelve hours a day. With the exception of when I worked for the city, it's all volunteer for disadvantaged. But that's a part of me.

I had the opportunity when I retired, there were people in South Carolina swine producers who used to come here, and I went over there, went to South Carolina a couple of times. They would guarantee me two days a week every week of my life if I would serve as a consultant and worked with them. I said, 'No.' That was not what I wanted to do. If that were the situation, I would've completed those other eight or ten hours of my

graduate work and go on and start at the community college. But that was not what I wanted to do. I'm doing what I want to do.

KT: You had mentioned wanting to show me a couple of things in town.

PB: Okay.

KT: Do we still have time?

PB: Yeah, let's do that.

KT: All right. Let me just clean up here.

PB: Okay.

KT: If I forget to say--

END OF INTERVIEW

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