

Edwin Caldwell
Tape 6 of 7
December 5, 2000

RG: This is Bob Gilgor, and I'm interviewing Ed Caldwell this morning, December 5th, interviewing him at his home at 107 Caldwell Street. Good morning, Ed.

EC: Good morning, Bob.

RG: I wanted to talk this morning specifically about one period of time, and that is the time before the decision was made to integrate the high school, and the events around that time period. And so I wonder if you would just start by discussing that period of time, what was going on, what were the issues in the white community, what were the issues in the black community, what the school board was deciding to do, and how the communities responded to that.

EC: Okay, I think we need to probably start, back at the time there was an advisory committee made up of citizens and teachers and other persons. There were maybe one or two blacks that sat on that board, I happened to be one. It seemed to me that everything was already pre-set. Whoever, the teachers from the white schools had made all the decisions that the newspaper, the mascot, everything that would come to the consolidated school was going to be pretty much Chapel Hill High. Lincoln did not have any things that they brought from the old school to the new, consolidated school. I had said to them I thought that was a mistake, however, they proceeded to do it the way they wanted to. They made their recommendations to the school board and the school board pretty much accepted that advisory committee's report in toto. There was a lot of discussion at that time, I do remember, from the black community about giving up Lincoln. The community was pretty much divided that they really didn't want to give up the traditions of Lincoln, and there were a few parents that said let my children graduate from Lincoln, man, and then we will integrate. So it was not a unanimous decision. I do know that the school board was under considerable, what is the word I want to use, where many of the white members of the community had said we don't want blacks there anyway, that's our school and whatever. And so I think there was a compromise, you know, that was introduced to them that the white children would go out at one point, and then the black children would go later.

RG: This was to the new high school?

EC: This was to the new high school.

RG: But it was originally set to be white for a while, and then it would be integrated?

EC: That's right. That was sort of the discussion that was coming up before the school board. The school board made the decision that they would accept that. Now I've

talked with several members of the school board, because I was on the school board, and they said they felt there might be violence, and there was a negative element out there that was very violent, and they were getting phone calls and they were cautious, I guess that's what.

RG: And this violence would come from what community?

EC: Um, the white community. There was just a small element at that time of die-hard people that didn't want the school to be integrated, and they had made phone calls to the school board that there was going to be violence. This was the school board's way of trying to prevent violence. That's what they said to me, many years after that. Um, so they made the decision that that's what they would do. The white kids would go out one year, and then the black kids would come the following year. After they made that decision, they had a, it came for a public hearing to the black community to talk about the decision. They met at First Baptist Church on Graham Street. That church was overflowing. And once the school board introduced what their decision was, they were getting feedback. I think the school board really was surprised, I think that would be the word, of the strong feeling of the parents. It was very strong feeling, and they asked all kinds of questions., One question that I recall was, if that was the case that the white children would go one year and the black children would go, would they continue to put money into Lincoln? The school board said no, they did not plan to put any more money into Lincoln, in fact they were even going to cut the budget, even the continuation budget, and the parents were just furious. I do recall I got up and made a speech, you know, I just thought that was a horrible decision, that they were going to have all kinds of problems, you know, if they allowed the white children to go one year and then the black children would go the next. I had said that to me, those white children would feel like that school was theirs, and blacks would be coming in, invading their school. It was my recommendation to the school board that everybody go out at one time. They went back and said that they would sort of take that under advisement, and—

RG: Was that after the meeting at First Baptist Church?

EC: Yes. I talked with, going back to that meeting, I talked with some of the school board members that said they were very afraid, they didn't want to leave the church that night, they thought the parents may attack them.

RG: So the school board was there at First Baptist Church.

EC: That's right. They had that public hearing at First Baptist Church. And the feelings and the anger were so great that they came, they told me that they were really afraid to leave, they were thinking about calling and getting a police escort to get out of the church.

RG: Was this directed, do you think, at the school board, or at the white community in general, or is it hard to say?

EC: I think it was hard to say. I think it was directed at the school board because the school board made the decision, okay. The school board made the decision to take that advisory committee's report without making any alterations. I do know that questions came up at that time, well we have a great tradition at Lincoln, why is everything, you know, coming from Chapel Hill High and we don't get the chance to have anything from Lincoln that we feel proud of? I do know that came up, and they didn't change their mind. They went out. I think that the one thing that I remember was the fact that in choosing the principal, they chose Mrs. Marshbank, who was the white principal at Chapel Hill High. I do know there was strong feeling that Mr. C. A. McDougle wasn't even given an opportunity. He became vice principal. Now you look back at that, Mr. McDougle had all kinds of graduate degrees, whereas Mrs. Marshbank did not have the same educational background that he had. He was a strong leader, he just was a magician from my eyesight, that he ran a very, very good school with very few resources. That really hurt everybody, because we thought very highly of Mr. McDougle. And I think if you look back at all the teachers, all the department heads were white, all the blacks were in subordinate roles. There were many black teachers that didn't even go to the school, or if they went, they didn't remain very long. So those are the things that were brought out at that public hearing, that mass meeting. Now this is what I remember. They made that decision that they were going to go with that same decision to carry the white children out one year, bring the black children the following year. Somebody, and I think it was somebody from the law school, brought to our attention that one way to accomplish where all the kids go to the school at the same time would be to close Lincoln. One way to do that is that they had freedom of choice. A person could decide which school they wanted to go to. It was found out that if the enrollment dropped below a certain level in a school, that school had to be closed. And that was a strategy that we used to close Lincoln. I do recall that we had a number of white students from the law school and other places working with us, going around talking to parents. I, at that time, was head of the only black political organization, but we used to work in political campaigns.

RG: PROD?

EC: It wasn't PROD, it was the Chapel Hill Civic, Negro Civic Club. But at that time I was, I had run all the political, so I knew I had all the lists of parents and that sort of thing. So I pretty much organized that, and we went around and talked to parents. It was necessary to pair off black with white to go to the homes. The blacks really need to see someone that they recognize. And we went in and talked to them that this was, seemed to be the best way to go. They were not going to put any more money into Lincoln, everybody may as well start at one time. We hate very much to close Lincoln, but Lincoln's going to be closed anyway.

RG: So you went door to door.

EC: Went door to door.

RG: And it was a black and a white.

- EC: Right.
- RG: And how did you choose the people who would talk to families?
- EC: Well you know, most did it together.
- RG: And who were the whites involved with this, where did they come from? Was it school board members, or—?
- EC: No, these were white students, these were professors, you know, at the University.
- RG: UNC?
- EC: UNC. During that time, you know, we all sort of worked together. There was a strong liberal coalition of whites that were working on things that had to do with integration and so forth.
- RG: That, excuse me, that was my next question to you. Where were you getting help? You mentioned some legal help and some University help. Were you getting help from the NAACP, were you getting help from the law school in general?
- EC: The law school. We had people like Dan Pollitt and many of the professors down there that helped us. So you know, they advised us. I mean, when you look back, people like Dan Pollitt, Joe Straley, and those persons, man, they were on a fine line for years and years and years. And they found students for us. They also participated.
- RG: When you say students, do you mean UNC students, or Chapel Hill High School?
- EC: No, UNC students. Chapel Hill High School students wouldn't be involved in anything like this. They didn't have the maturity, plus they did not, I guess the word would be, they weren't mature enough to say this is what ought to be. I think that college students probably were a little bit more. We had people like Ann Queen at the YMCA finding students and so forth to work. So it went on very well.
- RG: So your help was all local help, or did you have some national?
- EC: No, no, all local. All local. And the thing that I remember was that we worked together as a team. The whites didn't dominate, you know, they left the decisions to us. They were the support. They did not push their way in. We were the leaders, you know, and they were the supporters. That's what I remember. And then I found out that it had dropped down below, I think it was 70 people, and they had to close that school. And then the school board had to go back and make the decision, man, that everybody go out there at the same time. And in fairness to the school board, I really do think that they were caught, you know. I talk with people like Mary Scroggs, I talk with Norm Weatherly, you know. They just said

they didn't want any violence, you know, and that's the reason they made the decision that they made. They just thought there was a bad element out there that may precipitate violence, so they were trying the best they knew how, you know, to make a decision. And they told me, you know, that was the worst decision that they think they've ever made.

RG: To have the school white for a year and then black.

EC: Right. Also, not to give more consideration to compromising and making sure that some of the Lincoln tradition came to the school, you know, at the time it was made. So they went back and revisited that, and they then made some decisions to include some of Lincoln's names, mascots and that sort of thing. If you remember, Chapel Hill High was the Panthers, and Lincoln was the Tigers, and if you remember, you know, it was still Chapel Hill High Tigers. They looked at the colors, they looked at a number of things, and I think they pretty well compromised as well as they thought they did. Now this came about after the black kids rioted, you know, tore up the school and that sort of thing.

RG: But the compromise didn't occur initially?

EC: No, it didn't. It had to be, the children had to create a riot at that school for them to be considered.

RG: So when the school opened it was all Chapel Hill High colors, mascot, school song, trophies?

EC: Trophies, everything.

RG: And the teachers, too.

EC: Teachers. We were just incorporated in that school. And all of Lincoln's traditions, you know, went by the wayside. And so, you know, they came back later and tried to make corrections and so forth. At that time, that's after the riot, they created committees containing both white and black PTA members, where we sat down and we hashed out things. And I thought that it went very well. I had served at that time as one of the leaders on these committees. So I think I was about the only black leader, you know, that worked. I know they had contacted Howard, but Howard's direction had gone more toward Town Council and running for the Board of Alderman. He did meet, but I don't think he stayed there and worked that out. I do recall, you know, working with some of the parents and so forth. We worked it out pretty well. And those things were implemented. That's pretty much, you know, what I remember.

RG: When the school opened, was there violence? Did they have police protection?

EC: I don't recall it being violent. I do recall black kids being taunted, you know. I knew that those black kids were not going to take a whole lot of stuff. Now there may have been individual fistfights and whatever, I'm not sure. I do recall the

kids coming to a mass meeting at First Baptist and they were some astute, very bright black kids. One of the things that they had proposed to us is that they no longer attend Chapel Hill High, that we open up our own schools. And those kids had that thing all worked out, man, that we were going to be having school in churches or whatever, we were going to have our own schools. And I told them, where are we going to get the money from? I do remember standing up and pretty much throwing a monkey wrench in that. I told them we didn't have the money, we don't have the teachers, we don't have the resources, you know, to run our own schools. The best thing to do is to go back and let's address the issues and work those out.

RG: What were the issues? Why did they want to run their own schools?

EC: Because no matter how bright, how much they were leaders or whatever, they were in the minority, and so therefore they would always get voted down. If they ran for school president or whatever, they were not going to be elected. And they'd much rather be in their own schools, you know, this is what came through. Those kids were very, very tough, I do recall. You know, I mean they backed their parents down, and their parents were about to go along with seceding from the school system. And I just stood up and said no, we're not going to do it that way. I told the parents, man, you're in control. These are kids. And even though most of these kids I like them very well, we're not going that way. You know, and the parents went along with me. So we didn't secede from the school system. I told them that if you look at the history, in 1911 they seceded from the school system under Reverend Hackney. That's when they had their own school, Hack High. But I told them this is a different day, you know, there's no way that we can run a school, fund a school. So pretty much that's how I remember everything.

RG: Can you tell me a little bit more about the riot that occurred? How long it took for that to develop. Was that in the second year of the school being open?

EC: You know, I don't know. I think it must have been in the second year. I think it must have been. I can't remember now what year it was in.

RG: Was that something that the black community knew was going to happen, or was that totally done by the students?

EC: Totally done by the students. The students were out there, the students were the ones that were taking the abuse. The students told us about it, but we didn't have a knowledge of what was really going on.

RG: What kind of abuse were they complaining about? You touched on some of the things, but was there more besides the fact that they couldn't have leadership roles, they felt it was mainly a white school and they were a minority there and couldn't succeed?

EC: I think that was it, also every issue that came up, those kids were still trying to push the traditions of Lincoln. I'll give you an example. At the time of graduation,

you know, they select marshals. And I do recall that no black kids were selected as marshals at graduation. Well, that got to be a real controversy, and I'm not sure, something happened out there, I don't know if they boycotted or what, but I do know that it came to the administration and came to the school board. The school board handled it by, I think you had six marshals, and how the school board handled it, if I recall, was to select twelve marshals, you know, six white, six black. So it was things like that being challenged, you know, all along the way. I do recall kids complaining about not being selected to the choir, not being selected to participate in the band. We had choir directors and band leaders, man, that told these kids they didn't have talent. And so they sort of eliminated them. Lincoln had a strong tradition of music, both in choir as well as band. In fact, if you look back, we won all kinds of medals at festivals, you know, and all of a sudden none of our kids could play music, you know. Prior to that time, I'm sure under Mr. Bell, we had a hundred and some kids. We had a band of a hundred and some, which is sort of just integrated, man, when they went to Chapel Hill High. Chapel Hill High could never play with us, never. At all at Christmas, at parades and so forth, we'd just make them look sick. I hate to say it, if you would have asked anybody at that time, man, we made them look sick. They just could not compete with us. And during the parades and so forth, Christmas parades, when our band came down we were competing with Hillside, okay. Hillside was the band that we competed with, to see who could outdo each other. And we've always competed with Hillside. Chapel Hill High was just on the side, could never compete.

RG: Was Hillside a black school?

EC: Oh yes, from Durham. And I, I think if you looked at the paper, Chapel Hill paper last week, Hillside is still showing off and whatever. And I think that the kids, man, missed that rivalry, you know, competing with Hillside and whatever. To back up and just give you some, when we started out, Hillside had always had a band of a hundred and some, you know, and they were good. When we first started I think we had thirteen people in our band, probably grew to twenty something, but we still could play music, we could make more come out of those horns, man, with twelve to twenty-six than Hillside could do with a hundred. And they knew that. So we had some real rivalries, you know. Our cheerleaders, man, had homemade majorette uniforms, made by Miss Pope in the Home Ec room. We didn't have uniforms. We had white pants and blue blazers, and Hillside had uniforms. But when we got out there, we showed our stuff. And even now, when I see people from Hillside, man, they go back and, we've always just had that rivalry, you know, even though they were a much bigger school. We competed with them. Basketball, football, band, whatever, you know.

RG: That's a really interesting history. I wanted to get back to the time leading up to the riot, and I wanted to ask you about the relationship between the black students and the white teachers. And I know about the band and the choir, but what about the academic aspect of this? Was that an issue? Did the white teachers treat the black students any differently than the white students?

- EC: Well, I would say yes, but I wasn't there, and I don't recall that issue. I do remember kids complaining about not being given the same consideration.
- RG: ? consideration?
- EC: Well, body languages and so forth, for an example, tone of voice, you know, if a white kid said, oh Johnny, that was magnificent. A black kid, you know, well that's okay, you know, but not the same kind of acknowledgement. And that went on for years and years, in fact that was one of the things that the black kids would continue to say being in their school. And the school board worked on all kinds of bringing in and holding workshops for teachers, you know. White teachers just didn't think that black kids could learn. They did not think that black kids came out of good homes, you know, that supported them. They just had negative attitudes as to black kids. Now let me back up and say that wasn't universal, because there were some white teachers, man, that went overboard to work with black kids, and white kids complained to their parents, man, that these teachers give more consideration to black kids than they did to white. So those things I know went on even to the point, I remember when I left the school board. So I just didn't think that, I thought those kids, man, would fight them powers, you know, and it's hard to get in to each and every class and whatever. And I do recall even when my kids went through the school, having to go out and confront different situations, you know, which I did. But think of the number of black parents that didn't feel comfortable to go and act as an advocate for their children, and their children came back. I spent a lot of time as a school board member out at the schools, man, troubleshooting and trying to put out fires, and that sort of thing. And that really wasn't my role.
- RG: The PTA at Lincoln High School, from interviews I've done, I get the impression that it was very active, that parents were very involved. And am I hearing you saying that black parents were no longer very active in the PTA going to the school? And if that's true, can you explain why?
- EC: Well, once they integrated, black parents didn't feel comfortable going and participating in the PTAs. If you want to look in depth at what was going on, some of the same parents that they were meeting with, these people worked for. You know, it was an economic thing. If they disagreed with somebody that they worked for, man, it just strained the employer-employee relationship. So they preferred not to sit on these things. They didn't want to go. I think it was more economic than anything else. I think that black parents also said whew, we don't have to work as hard now to fund the schools. Many of the things, man, that we had, as far as uniforms and supplies and books and whatever,
- RG: School bus?
- EC: School bus, also.
- RG: You had to raise money?

- EC: We raised the money to buy an activity bus. And Mr. Smith repaired it. But those were in the later years, when they bought that activity bus.
- RG: So you had not only an emotional investment in Lincoln High School, you had an economic investment.
- EC: Yes. And that was the responsibility of the PTA. The PTA raised money, man, to supplement what should have been coming as operating funds. Each year the PTA had a project, you know, to raise money for something in their school. The senior class and so forth had a responsibility to give a gift, you know, and Mr. McDougle or somebody designated what they needed, so the classes raised money. We were always selling candy and having shows and whatever to raise money to support that school. And I would imagine once they integrated, the parents said well, you know, this is our opportunity to take a little break. We, the PTA bought the uniforms and for the first time we had manufactured uniforms. Well, they raised the money for that. They raised the money to buy band instruments. I would imagine that the PTA supplemented the travel budgets. There was a lady in town that had a bus, named Miss Susie Weaver Gospel Singers that used to sing in Durham. Well, we used her bus, you know, to travel, the football team and the basketball team, any time the band went anywhere we used the bus. I'm sure she gave us pretty much that bus at cost, you know, we just put the gas and whatever in there. And I'm sure that, I meant to call one of my classmates that was the driver, you know, and see if he remembered. I know Mr. R. D. Smith would remember, because he was the treasurer of Lincoln High School. But you know, they bought everything.
- RG: So I assume that these were things that Chapel Hill High School were provided, funds were provided by the school board? Or did they have to raise that money too?
- EC: No, they didn't raise it. No, I don't recall them raising anything. We were pretty close to them, our parents worked for them, they were just outspoken, and anything they wanted, man, they just petitioned the school board and they pretty much got it.
- RG: So separate but equal was separate but unequal when it came to funds.
- EC: Very much so.
- RG: And you know, it's easy to look back and have 20/20 hindsight, but this was a Supreme Court decision, and why didn't the black community challenge that legally by showing it wasn't separate but equal, it was separate but unequal? Or did they?
- EC: I don't think they did. I think you really have to understand what, um, Jim Crowism was all about. I mean, that was so ingrained that people didn't really feel that they could challenge it. It took the Supreme Court coming out to challenge that. It took Martin Luther King challenging the buses in Montgomery, okay. I think that

we had been beat down so much that we just didn't see how we could challenge anything. The courts were against us, legislatures were against us, I don't think that they just felt, man, that they could win that. I think they fought it in the best way they knew how, you know, if they wanted things for the children, man, they raised it. No, they didn't ask for it. I think Mr. McDougle challenged the superintendent and I think he got a lot more, he got about as much as he was going to get. When the school board gave us a budget, man, it was bare bones. And the fact that he went down and petitioned, he got a little bit more. Now, up in Hillsborough, my uncle was Leon Stanback. He had to do the same thing. You got to walk a tightrope. You know, those people got to think so highly of you that when you come in and ask for it, you can get a little bit more. But you didn't get the same that the white kids got. Now, my uncle built Central High, man, from a two-room schoolhouse to one of the finest schools that you can find. And McDougle did the same thing. I would be willing to say that my uncle probably got a lot more in Hillsborough than Mr. McDougle did in Chapel Hill. That's just the way it was. That was the way it was all over. Except for the larger places like Greensboro and Durham, and maybe Raleigh. Now if you look at the people in Durham, man, with North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, you had some strong leaders over there, and Durham has always challenged them. You know, the Durham Committee on Negro Affairs, man, always challenged them. And they always got what they wanted. You know, whether it was with the town or state government, they got what they want, 'cause you had some very strong leaders that weren't beholden to anyone. Their salaries were paid from the insurance company and the banks, and whatever that they were in, okay. So they didn't have to go in with hat in hand, you know, and say boss, ain't I workin' for you, you got a loan for me at the bank that you may call in, you know. They knew how to put the pressure on. And so people did pretty much what they thought they could do.

RG: What I'd like to do now, Ed, is have you talk about what you know about the riot that occurred at the high school, I guess it was in 1969?

EC: I guess.

RG: We'll have to check on the date.

EC: Right.

RG: And then I'd like you to get into what happened after the riot. How the community responded, and what various groups of people did to address the anger that the black students expressed.

EC: Okay. Leading up to the riot, I think there were several confrontations. I think that there were people like Mr. C. A. McDougle and Mr. R. D. Smith that were always able, you know, to keep things under control. But those students continued to feel that their concerns were not being addressed. And little bit by little bit, things began to happen, and students were very angry, and so I don't know what precipitated the riot, but I do know that the students went through and took parts

of the school. If I'm not sure, but I think that the police was called in, you know, and therefore it made the news. Maybe there were small riots that never made the news, that Mr. R. D. Smith and Mr. C. A. McDougle were able to control. But once this made the news, then it was out there. I do recall some of the school board members asking some of the community leaders to come to a meeting and to see what we could do to try to resolve some of the issues and some of the problems. I do recall serving on some of the groups and so forth where we began to break up into small committees and meet, you know, to talk about the issues and come up with recommendations.

- RG: Were there students who were parts of these committees? Members of the committees?
- EC: I don't think there were. I think it was just the parents of the children that came. I do recall that there were meetings, I do recall the kids talking to these mass meetings about some of the problems and some of their recommendations on what should be done. The students really were the ones in control. And parents not having any knowledge, but wanted to support their children, man, pretty much listened to the children. The students. Some of the proposals and recommendations that the students came in, was to secede from the school, which I did not think was a good way to solve that problem, you know, and pretty much I said that we should work to resolve, you know, some of the issues, that they should continue to go to school there. And so we continued to work in integrated committees, and I thought that we worked out some very good recommendations that were given to the school board, and I think the school board pretty much acted on them in toto.
- RG: What were the recommendations that were made to the school board?
- EC: Well, I do remember one was that the mascot be renamed Tigers. I'm sure there were others, which I can't seem to recall at the present time. I do remember them bringing trophies down which were left at Lincoln, back to Chapel Hill High and put on display. Was a strong issue, because we had been state champions. As far as the colors, I'm not sure whether, I think the school colors were switched over to orange and black, where it had been black and gold at the other school. So I think that the school colors, the mascot, bringing the trophies, and there may have been several others, I'm not quite sure at the present time. These were, I think that the trophies were the things that kids felt most proud of. And I think that the kids were proud that some of the traditions of Lincoln came to that school, even though they came late. These are the things that I remember.
- RG: What about the, the relationship between white teachers and black students? Was there any attempt to look at this, for, give sensitivity training, if there was such a thing at the time, to the needs of the black students?
- EC: I think the school board and the principal of the school felt very strongly that sensitivity training needed to go on. Getting the teachers there that needed to be there has always been a problem. Teachers that were very sensitive to the issues

of all children took these courses anyway. Teachers that needed to be there always found an excuse not to go. The school board has run sensitivity and diversity training groups every year up until now. In fact, I have led some of the diversity groups. It's always the people that came and benefited from it that had sensitivity anyway. The ones that needed to come never came. And even some that were recommended that they come always found some way to get out of coming to those workshops, seminars, or whatever. I think you would find that today. The principals of the school generally walked the fence. The principals want to do what the school board and the central administrative offices say that needed to be done, but on the other hand, they go back to the schools and the strong teachers, they don't want to offend them because that's somehow pretty much what their, where their support comes. So if a principal can't walk the line of the fence but get teachers to do what needs to be done, then whatever the school board and the central offices tries to mandate never gets down to where it needs to go. And you'll find that going on today. I think you really won't find out until something boils over in a school and it comes to the forefront, but we still have the same kinds of problems going on today, you know, pretty much in all the schools. Teachers come and go, the ones that get good training retire or take other jobs, and they are replaced by people that need sensitivity training and diversity. I think it's almost impossible to teach now in the schools, because we have such a multicultural diversity in our schools now. It's just, people come from all over the world. I do know that the schools are trying to run different humanities, you know, where the kids can participate and be in discussion groups and so forth. But you know, when you come right down to it, kids are going to gravitate to persons that they feel most comfortable with, strong, negative leaders, you know, tell kids, man, they really ought not to be, it takes an awfully strong kid to challenge the negative leaders, you know, if they want to be friends with a black or Hispanic or Asian, you know. They have a way of trying to pull them back in. If you go to the schools and just look at the tables and so forth, they're pretty much segregated, schools segregated within the school. I don't know how you break that up. I think the kids just have to do it on their own. I think participating in sports has been one way to build friendships, you know, participating in other extracurricular activities has been a way where kids say hey, he's my friend anyway, and I don't really care, you know. Prime example would be my kid, my son played tennis with Neil Alderman, you know, they're lifelong friends. They're friends today. And Neil feels very comfortable coming in and out of my home, you know. We were having Thanksgiving, Neil going to come in and pull up a chair. He just loves my son that much, they're just like brothers. And those are the kinds of things, I guess, that will eventually have to happen. I just don't know.

RG: The, before the riot occurred, was there a course at the high school in African American culture or history? And if there wasn't, how long did it take before they did get a class in that area?

EC: I'm sure it wasn't. I think that was one of the demands that the children, when they rioted, said that they want. In fact I'm sure that's one of the demands that they made. And I'm sure they got that, you know. That came from the students. Probably didn't come from the parents, came from the students. Probably there

were other recommendations that the students made. This is why I would like for you to talk to the students. Because they have a better recollection of some of the demands they made, and which ones they got, and that sort of thing. There were courses that they tried to push, and I'm not sure how many white students attended, because I think it was voluntary, you know. So I'm not sure. But at least that they got these courses in, so you probably need to talk to some of the students and maybe some of the teachers and that sort of thing.

RG: Were there any other things, any other issues that you can think of now that were discussed, any other changes that occurred after the riots occurred? And was there another riot, or was that it, just that one episode?

EC: I think it was the one episode, but from time to time there were other issues and concerns and so forth. I do recall there was one issue that had to do with the men's basketball team. Black kids not being able to make that team on ability. I do recall going and talking one on one with the coach at the time, you know, just to try to articulate the concerns and to try to come up with a system that was just not his judgement. Even today, his name was Miller, and I think he's down in Lee County somewhere. He had, we had respect, you know, he respects me for coming and talking to him. There was one that had to do with the drama, and the core course and so forth. I can't remember her name, but she just would not listen to anybody. She didn't listen to me, she didn't listen to anybody. She ran that thing the way she was going to run it. She eliminated so many black kids that wanted to be in the drama department or wanted to be in the choir and that sort of thing, you know, she had her own standards or way that she eliminated people. And I took her on, we had some knock-down drag-out battles. I went to the superintendent with these problems, But Bob Hanes. Bob's daughter was her prime singer and whatever. And the fact that his daughter, man, was selected by this director, you know, he didn't do anything about it. So I went after him. Because I really didn't think it was fair, man, that he wouldn't look into it because his daughter was receiving the benefits. That's one of the things we really violently disagreed on. The thing was, he didn't remain here too long after, his daughter graduated and he moved on to Charlotte and whatever. But we ended up, the school board ended up getting this teacher out of the, out of that, you know, out of that position. I do recall another issue that came up. We had a school reunion, and it had to do with the trophies. At the school reunion, being on the school board, they confronted me to say, we hear that we have problems with the trophies. Well I got up and said to them that we had solved the problem with the trophies, that the trophies had been moved from Lincoln to the Chapel Hill High School and they were being displayed along with all the other trophies from the old Chapel Hill High School. Well, I had egg on my face, because it was in fact true. The basketball coach just on his own decided he was going to go in and eliminate trophies, man, and he threw the Lincoln trophies in the trash. Could not believe the insensitivity of this man, because those trophies had been one of the contentions, man, that caused the riot. And how could they allow him, on his own, to pick and choose which trophies came out of that trophy case? And which ones went in the trash. Hilliard Caldwell went and retrieved as many of the trophies as he could. Most of them were broken, because they are pretty flimsy. And he

called me, you know, and then I brought it back to the school board. And I just told them, man, I just can't understand that. Can't understand it. You let one man decide which trophies come out of there. And the last time I remember, they were building another trophy case at Chapel Hill High that would be able to exhibit all trophies. That you didn't have to go in and purge. That's another example of parents being furious, you know, at somebody taking trophies out of there. And not only that, they were broken, you know. You'd have to talk with Hilliard as to how many he retrieved. But that was another example of insensitivity, you know.

RG: Was there sensitivity as well as insensitivity? Hilliard Caldwell was hired by the school board to work at Chapel Hill High School as a liaison between administration and the black students. Do you look at this as a means of being sensitive, as a sign of sensitivity on the part of the school board, which I assume was predominantly white at the time, toward the black community?

EC: I think so. I think you have to look at who Hilliard Caldwell was. Hilliard Caldwell could move in the schools as well as could move with the parents. Hilliard, just by the mere fact that he did so much for a lot of families, like bringing medical attention and using the small budget that he had, parents respected him. I think that school administrative persons, as well as teachers and so forth, respected Hilliard. When kids had problems of acting out, as well as other types of problems, you know, Hilliard was brought in, and he solved some of the problems. So Hilliard I think was a key person to be able to move within the schools, as well as outside the schools. Hilliard, even though he did not have a social work degree, was elected by his peers to lead the social work organizations. So Hilliard not only moved within schools, moved within the community, moved with other social work groups, but people on the police department and others had utmost respect for him. So if a kid got in trouble, they called Hilliard. And Hilliard would go down and resolve some things, or whatever. So Hilliard's been very key, as well as R. D. and Gigi Clemmons and other persons, man. So I think that position as liaison gave teachers somebody that they could call, man, when they had problems. So I thought that was a good move, you know.

RG: Is there anything more you want to say about either the riot or what happened afterwards?

EC: No, I think that the fact that I was on the school board, I was able to bring attention to a lot of issues, man, that could have been, potentially had trouble, okay.

RG: Were you the sole black member of the school board at that time?

EC: Oh, for a long time. But then other people were elected. You had Ted Parrish, you had Edith Elliott, you know. So we had three black school boards out of seven. But I was the only one from Chapel Hill that had knowledge of some of the problems and so forth that we had lived through. I also think that, I think that I was probably more visible to parents and so forth than maybe Ted Parrish and Edith, who parents didn't know as well as they probably knew me. They both

were very fine persons and deep thinkers, but you know, I just think that I had been here longer and I probably had, I think a lot of people probably had more respect. I had the respect of teachers, and I had the respect of everybody. I mean I could, I went into the schools a lot. I didn't go in snooping, I went and ate dinner, lunch. And I tried to make it my business to go and have lunch at all the schools. So teachers and different people sat down and told me about some problems and so forth, and then we were able to resolve these things, man, before they got to be potentially troublesome, you know. So you know, pretty much I had that kind of sensitivity.

RG: Did the white teachers sit down and discuss with you as well as the black, or was it all black?

EC: No, most of them white.

RG: Most of them were white teachers who would come to you.

EC: Yeah. In fact, everybody, yeah. There were teachers, man, within teacher organizations and so forth that used to come and talk to me all the time. So I don't really think that, and there were quite a few black teachers that came and relayed potential problems, you know, that I needed to look into. I was their advocate, I was somebody that they felt could get things solved within central office, you know. The blacks that were there used to, we had signals of things that were coming before the school board that they thought I needed to pay more attention to, they'd give me the signal, so therefore I'd get tied up until I found out what the hidden agenda was. So blacks within central office, principals, black teachers, whoever, you know, tried to tell me what was going on in the schools so I could get on top of it. And I guess that's pretty much the role that, I guess that's why they felt very good about being able to come and talk. And I had just as many white teachers coming and talking to me about issues that were pertaining to black children as there were blacks coming and talking to me about. In fact I had both black and white teachers coming to me and telling me that I needed to look into certain situations that even had to do with my own children. To give you an example, my kids were being pushed into classes, man, that didn't, I mean was lower than what they could do. And I'd just go out and say, well why is my kid being pushed into this? And you know, I just said well, as a parent, you know, I want my kids, whatever. But you got to understand about me being on school board, and a strong leader in the community, I was intimidating to a lot of teachers. And after I went and talked with them, no matter how I was able to say that in such a way to be non-threatening, it was. And they reported back to the superintendent and the school board that I was coming in and intimidating, you know. And so I let them know, okay. I'm a parent first, school board member second. And y'all not going to put that on me to make me not be an advocate for my children. So, you know, I told them that's the way it's going to be. This teacher got a problem with me, man, I'm sorry. And I had one teacher to resign, you know. But you know, I thought that we had worked it out very well. I did not embarrass her, I went in, we talked privately. I told her what I thought that she ought to resolve, and she couldn't take that. She thought that being a school board

member, I had intimidated her. Not digressing, but I just saw my role different, you know. And if I go out to the schools now, and there are teachers left around, they still remember me as a school board member. And it's surprising, that's been a long time, you know. So I still carry that respect of the schools, you know. They identify me as the black school board chairman. Now I was only chairman one year, okay, one year. But in their minds, I was chairman for many years.

RG: Well you were their chairman.

EC: And you know, I said well I was only chairman one year. Oh no, he's our chairman, you know. He's the chairman. So it's things like that. Man, I think that we resolved, and we solved a lot of things, you know, by just sort of giving them feedback. And I didn't try to push things that were black, I had a equation that I put everything in, which said if this is good for all children, it's got to be good for black children. And if black children come to me with some concerns, man, that I've got lower standards just for them, I'm the wrong person they need to talk to. They acting out, I'm not going to go and be a defender for them. You get your work just like anybody else. You adhere to the rules and regulations of this school just like anybody else. And that's pretty much what I used to tell them. And even today, kids respect me, man, that I got on their case. I mean, you know, parents let them act out, I don't let them act out. One kid, man, went to Jordan, he was on the basketball team, man he just showed his behind. I was, I told him I was embarrassed. I got him by himself, I didn't, I told him I'm embarrassed at you. You will not act out like that again. I will see that you don't play basketball anymore. And I'm going to tell your parents I'm going to see that you don't play basketball anymore. If you will not represent this school and your teammates in the way that you did, I will have you off this basketball team. And I'm going to talk to the coach. Now you go and get yourself together. And I told his parents. I see that kid now, you know, and he respects me now probably because he was wrong, and he knew he was wrong. So it's things like that. More people, more of these kids know me than I will ever know. I walk through, man, sometimes situations where I say oh lord, these kids gonna rob me. And they'll say hello, Mr. Caldwell, you know. It's that kind of thing.

RG: It's a good feeling.

EC: Yeah. I don't have anything really else to do with, I think that I can convey to you about the riots and what happened and that sort of thing.

RG: You've given me a lot of information and that's fine. Actually I would like to change the subject, and talk about one more thing. And that is that I hear from everyone I've interviewed so far that Lincoln High School was a very special place and they were very proud of it. So I want to get more into the specifics of, how good was Lincoln High School? If you could give me some information about the number of students, grades that were there, like was it from first grade on to 11th, the graduation rate, those that went on to college, any information that you have about Lincoln High School like that, I'd appreciate it.

EC: Okay. I think we go back into the '30s. Lincoln, it was Orange County Training School, and later we changed the name to Lincoln. It was viewed by people around the state as a very good school. One of the things that we were able to get more money, operating money, was because we told the school board and so forth that Lincoln trained future teachers, man, to teach in other schools, you know, throughout the state. At that time you did not really have to have a degree, you know, to be a teacher, especially in the black schools. And I would imagine you really didn't have to have a degree to teach anywhere, and if you look at both black and white, there were people teaching without degrees. We had some extremely good principals, you know, if you look back through all the principals and so forth that have been here had very high standards, high ideals or whatever. One person that I remember was Mr. Holmes. Harold Holmes. He was a very good principal, and he finally left here and went over to Hillside, and he continued to be an extremely good principal, you know, he built Hillside, built Lincoln, built Hillside.

RG: What made him such a good principal?

EC: Well, one of the things that, if you look both at administrators and teachers, this was a profession, okay. There were very few things that blacks could go into and have the recognition. Didn't get a lot of money, but people respected you as being a professional. And they took that very serious. If you look at the number of teachers, man, that taught, they went in the summers and took continuing educational courses in their fields and so forth. Mr. McDougle had his graduate degrees, and a lot of the teachers had graduate degrees, okay. The fact that they were professional, you know, they continued to try to better themselves. So it was just a pride in the profession. One of the things both Mr. Holmes and Mr. McDougle did was hand-pick, so anybody that came into Chapel Hill, he made sure that they were extremely good teachers, good reputation, whatever. If they didn't, he weeded them out quickly. So we built a faculty of extremely good teachers. These teachers may have gone on to, one person like Carl Easton used to be at Lincoln and went to Hillside. Carl Easton was the one that took John Lucas and made a tennis player out of him, that sort of thing. He had just as good a basketball team, but he had a good basketball team at Lincoln. And so that the teachers and so forth that we picked were extremely good. Not only were they good teachers, but they had contacts with the colleges and so forth. Now you asked the question, how many black kids that graduated went on to some post-secondary school, very high percentage. Even the ones that didn't have money, teachers contacted somebody on the college campus and were able to get these kids in on some kind of work study and whatever. And these kids went on to school that didn't have the money. Went on basketball scholarships, football scholarships, drama scholarships, music scholarships. So they went on. Only the ones that didn't do some post-secondary trained in the jobs that they had. And if you look at these kids, man, they succeeded. We had a high number of persons, man, that just did a lot more after school. Now, maybe the parents had something to do with that, I know the teachers had something to do with it. But it was the teachers, man, not only pushing in our heads, man, what you can do, but also contacting somebody to say hey, I've got somebody down here, how about letting

me send them up. And a lot of kids got sent somewhere, man, and finished school. A lot of kids that, like at Hampton, I used to take a bus ride up and we just toured black schools, man, and let kids see. And a lot of them just sort of ended up going to different schools.

RG: Do you have any idea of the graduation rate from high school, those that started high school at Lincoln, what percentage dropped out, what percentage graduated?

EC: We had very few people dropping out. Just about everybody that went through graduated. Even the ones that did, were not academically gifted or inclined, graduated. They just stayed in school. And somebody said, a good analogy of it is that someone said the other day, you know if I got sick, I went to the doctor. If I went up to M&M Grille, wasn't anybody up there. I needed to go to school if I was going to see my friends. So everybody stayed in school. Now we had some to drop out because they had families that they had to support. Some of the older fellows left school, man, to support other family members. I don't have statistics about how many graduated, but from just my memory, just about everybody graduated.

RG: And how big was your class, Ed?

EC: My class was 28. I would imagine up until '60-something, they grew. I look at the list, you know, the average, in the later years were somewhere like 70, you know, students and so forth. But I had a very small school class. Now if you look at the school, the school really wasn't divided until 1951, when they built the new school down on Merritt Mill Road and they separated the elementary school from the high school. Up until 1951, the elementary school and the high school were combined, so you saw everybody. Everybody went to the same school, okay. And then that's when we really realized how small that school was, you know, 9th through the 12th. I would imagine the whole school was no more than two or three hundred kids at any one time. So we had a very small school.

RG: Did you get rated by any society that rates high schools?

EC: Yes, there was, let me read this to you. There is a what they call secondary schools and, of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This is the organization that continued to rate and rank schools, and back in, I'm going to just read this about Lincoln High School. "The high school received its first rating by the State Board of Education in 1932, when it was a 2B school. However, since 1940-41, it has had a 1A rating. At that time, according to the State School Facts for July, 1941, the faculty ranked first in the state in ? training among North Carolina teachers." I think that's very significant. "On December 7, 1941, Mr. Holmes was notified that the school had been placed on the approved list of secondary schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, but it was not admitted into membership in the Association because it was a negro institution." I think that's very significant. We have many schools today that do not have that kind of rating and approval from that organization. I do know that we still had schools, when I was on the school board, that were

trying to receive a 1A rating. So the school has always been recognized as an extremely fine school. Even among other schools that were twice the size of Lincoln. We did not compete with schools our size. Two or three hundred in today's world would have made us a 1A or 2A school, if we had to participate in sports and other academic kinds of endeavors. But we competed with 4A schools, much larger student bodies and so forth. I think that the students worked with other students to make sure that they continued their academic, you know, give you an example, we had one fella that played football. He came from a rural area, he didn't know anything about football, probably hadn't seen it played before. But he was big. We needed his size. So we taught him to play football. Not only the coaches, but the peers, you know, we took him to Carolina and let him watch his position, and what he needed to do. This fella not only played football, because we needed his size, but we purchased a sousaphone. I guess you know how large a sousaphone is. Well, we recruited him because he was the only one that could carry it. And he was the only one that had the lips such, man, that he could blow the sousaphone. And not only did he play that thing, man, he excelled at it. He excelled at playing the sousaphone, okay. We also chose another fella to play the tuba. So we had a sousaphone and we had a tuba. He was big, and he could, he could carry that tuba. He also excelled at playing the tuba. On his own, he practiced and whatever, and he excelled at it. He went to the music festival in Greensboro and played a solo to be rated. He won number one rating for tuba, okay. You know, we were very proud of him. I was very proud of the football player. I mean he could play that thing, man, you know. He'd never seen a sousa, an instrument before, you know. He'd come out from the farm. But you know, that's the kind of thing that we encouraged. Hey, come on, man, we need you, okay. And I remember playing clarinet, you know. Not only did the teacher get on me, 'cause he felt I could play better than I was playing, but my cousin, you know, said man, look, I know you can do better than that. Now you're going to have to play after I graduate, so you may as well learn to play. And that's what we did. We encouraged each other, you know, we helped each other.

Edwin Caldwell
Tape 7 of 7
December 5, 2000

RG: ... interviewing Ed Caldwell on the 5th of December in the year 2000, and this is a continuation of the previous tape from this same date. Ed, you were just talking about the sousaphone player and a tuba player, and the encouragement that was given to both of these people by their peers. And were, are you saying that that was something that was the essence of Lincoln High School, this kind of encouragement from peers and teachers, or have I misinterpreted?

EC: No, I think you hit it right on the head. I think if you look at, our teachers really, I mean you could look at their eyes, man, and you could tell that they had very high expectations for you. We had high expectations for each other. One of the things that I'd like you to do, if you're here during the summer, is to come back to our reunion and just see the camaraderie, you know, and the deep feeling that these, our schoolmates have for each other. I think that the community also supported us. I think you'd have to look at a person like Mr. Morris Mason, and I've said this on one other occasion, Mr. Morris Mason was the trainer of the Carolina Tar Heel football team. Mr. Morris Mason gave us uniforms, man, you know.

RG: The high school, Lincoln High School?

EC: Yeah. I mean, he was, when we went to play some teams, man, we were blue and white, because we were playing in Tar Heel uniforms. The only thing we had to do was get it back to him, man, so he could get it back on Monday morning, you know, but it's people like that. Mr. Morris Mason was a Mason, you know. So you had people in the community encouraging you to be members of fraternal organizations and so forth. It was an umbrella that they threw over us, man, of high expectations. I played semi-pro baseball, okay, I played with the men. We had a team called Chapel Hill ?, okay. And they went into the high schools and took some of the better athletes, and we played with men. These men taught me a lot, how to hit, how to pitch, how to catch, you know. They were, they were mentors just like we did with some of the other classmates and so forth that didn't play very well. And I was taught a lot. I was probably one of the best hitters on the team, you know, that they taught me. They had very high expectations, you know. Come on, Ed, you can do it, man. And not only did I do very well playing semi-pro, you know, on this team, but was chosen to play on an all-star team. In those days, there were teams after the major leagues shut down, where players that played with the Brooklyn Dodgers and other teams, man, would do what they called barnstorming. They would travel the South, man, and play against all-star teams. And I got to play against Don Newcombe, okay. Don Newcombe's good, okay? Don Newcombe throw that ball, man, he was good. You know, and I've never seen, in all the time that I played, anybody that could pitch that fast. His fastball could be just hopping coming down. Well, I was small, and Don Newcombe eased up on me one time, threw me a change-up, and I knocked it

foul, almost out of the fence. Well I didn't see nothing like that again. He struck me out. But you know, that was a great experience. It was great experience to play against other, you know, this other black major league ballplayers and whatever. We had our own leagues and so forth.

RG: There was still a black league, a semi-pro league?

EC: Yes, yes. I think that's a loss, 'cause we don't play baseball any more. And we don't get a chance to play with adults, you know, that take us under their wing and train us. Have high expectations, not only for playing baseball, but for behavior. Work situations, they did the same thing. You know, we worked with men, and they had high expectations, they trained us. You know, they told us about life and whatever. So you know, we sort of miss seeing, we miss that school, we miss the organizations and so forth like the Masons and the Oddfellows and the Elks and so forth that encouraged us. I don't think churches encourage kids the way they used to, you know. The church was another source, you know, where we stood up and we recited and we had people, man, encouraging parliamentary procedure and that sort of thing. Leadership skills. But I think that the majority was expected from the school. I always said that parents turned over a certain amount of parental responsibility to teachers and schools, man, to train. I remember the first day I went to school, my father said to the teachers and the administration, here's my son. You do whatever it takes to teach him to learn. If he gives you any trouble, you know what to do. You have spanking privileges, you send a note home, I'll take care of it at home too. And so when we acted out, we told the teachers after they whipped us, man, don't send a note. No use getting a second whipping, you know. And parents turned over a certain amount of responsibility for parenting to the schools. That was one of the reasons that they had so much trouble when they integrated. Black kids were seeing, man, that white kids were being treated different, you; know, and so therefore it was just a different school setting that they weren't used to. Black schools were very strict. High expectations, very strict. You adhered to the rules and regulations, you didn't tear up things. Took care of what you had, because it came so hard. I think that the other school, it was a certain amount of looseness, okay, and black kids just didn't perform as well. I think this was difficult. We just didn't, we didn't survive in that kind of atmosphere very well. We expected teachers, man, to be parents, and they weren't. So we lost a lot with integration. We lost that teacher, man, telling you you can do it. We lost our black teachers. Black teachers were role models, okay. If you were having problems at home, you know, you could always go talk to your coach or you could talk to a teacher, you know, and they were there for you. You'd be surprised of how many teachers spent their own money helping students, man, you know, if they had financial needs. So those kids didn't have that when it was integrated. So we lost a lot, you know.

RG: I'm interested in the corporal punishment. I didn't realize that that took place.

EC: Sure it took place.

- RG: 'Til what grade, and 'til what year?
- EC: Um, as long as you were in elementary school, you got, you know, you got spanked. And if you got sent to the principal's office, you got spanked. Once you made high school, then you got to work, okay, in the school doing some chore or whatever. I remember we broke into the school to play basketball, 'cause we didn't have nowhere else to play. So we broke in over here and somebody said hey, here comes McDougle, when he wasn't coming, you; know how kids holler 'fire.' And kids were trying to jump out the window and they broke one of the sinks down, because they were standing on it trying to jump out. Well, we got caught. I don't know who told it, okay. All the fellas that were from high school got to shovel coal, okay. All the kids, man, that were younger, you know, we got to go to the principal's office and get so many licks on the hand. He had a barber's razor strap which was leather, you know, and you get hit in the hand with one of those things. He didn't give you but ten, man, but you couldn't take it. But it was sort of a status thing to be able to be outside of class, didn't have to go to class, and all the girls saw you out shoveling coal, and you know, you're waving back in the window and so forth. Yeah, you got punished, corporal punishment, until the 9th grade. And when they integrated, I think they began to cut that out. There were a lot of people that felt that it was abusive, and probably hurt the kids' self-esteem and all that. But it didn't hurt our self-esteem, you know, it helped us learn about rules and regulations. We knew if you broke the rules, man, you know, you had to take the punishment. So it's just a matter of how you looked at it.
- RG: I'm also interested in what happened to the role of the mentor, the friend, the teacher who helped the black students get a scholarship to go on to college to get more education. What happened in the integrated high school to the black student, and the advocate? Who was their advocate?
- EC: Well, I don't think you had many advocates, because we didn't have that many black teachers left, you know. Those teachers were systematically eliminated for one reason or another. You didn't have anybody really being an advocate for those kids. I think the schools, after it was integrated, got to be large, and it was the responsibility of the guidance counselors to find scholarships and so forth for kids. Those guidance counselors were overworked, mainly because the white community wanted them to help their kids, man, get in, take the SATs and get into some of the better schools. We had nobody really working with black kids, just sheer fact that there were not enough guidance counselors. Now let me be fair, there were some black guidance counselors, man, that did help black kids. They also had peers and so forth in colleges. But when you begin to think maybe one or two guidance counselors, man, with the number of other kids, they were just, did not have the time. That got to be a big thing among school boards and whatever, of saying who's helping the black kids? You know, you're spending all your time with the white parents, man, they give you all these transcripts and so forth and you need to send it off for their kids, just wasn't enough time. If they chose to spend a lot of time helping blacks, then the white parents complained that these guidance counselors were not giving their kids the kind of consideration

that they should get so that they could get in some of the better schools. So you didn't have very many people, you know. Number one, the fact that we didn't have very many black teachers, that system was dismantled to a certain extent, and it was turned over to guidance counselors that may not know about athletic scholarships. They were hired mostly for academic processing of transcripts and so forth. So we lost out, we didn't have that.

RG: Where did the complaints from the white parents go? Did they go to the school board, did they go to the principal of the school?

EC: Went to the principal of the school and also the school board. You'd be surprised how many white parents complained about teachers. Almost to the extent, man, that the teachers were paralyzed. Parents in this community, man, are just tenacious when they want something for their kid. They come to the school board, okay, they will take on the school board, they will take on parents. So for a long time, parents did not have the respect of being a professional in this community. This is a hard community in which to teach, you know, by the fact of so many articulate and strong parents. You got to understand that the majority of parents coming to the schools were women of professors. No degrees, no nothing, but experts on everything, okay. And they'll tell you what are your credentials, well my husband teaches, he's a professor of such and such. And he said, okay. Kids say, my father said. And if a teacher taught something and the kid went back and talked to his parent, you know, the parent said well you go back and tell that teacher she's wrong. And he would do it in front of the class, you know. Awfully hard community in which to teach. So we didn't keep a lot of good teachers here, you know. I mean, why teach in this community when I can go to Durham or somewhere else, man, and get more respect? So you'd be surprised how influential some of these parents were on designing the curriculum, having a say-so with the school board with things that would come. And they were tenacious, man, making sure that whatever was put into effect, man, was to the best interest of their kids. One of the things that I spent the whole time on the school board was to prevent them from tracking. Tracking is nothing more than pushing black kids into a lower level class, you know, and track them through the schools on a lower academic, and tracking their kids, man, to foreign languages and highly academic coursework, you know.

RG: College level?

EC: College level. And a lot of them, man, took courses at the University. Very few tracked their kids, man, into the vocational education. We've got one of the finest vocational education fields and coursework anywhere. And parents made sure that their kids didn't go into vocational education. Just the fact that we had Max Scroggs teaching auto mechanics, some went against their parents, man, and took auto mechanics. Just that kind of dual system that we operated. School wasn't very willing to stand up to parents. One of the things that you will find now is the elitist kids, man, got cars. And every one take off at lunch time and go downtown and eat, whereas the kids that doesn't have very much, man, have to remain on campus and eat in the lunchroom. Big problem. Not only with kids getting killed

down on that road, from driving fast and that sort of thing, but you know, that made the have-nots dislike the haves, okay. And it didn't have to be just white, I mean black, it could be black and white, you know, that resented the socioeconomics that came out. In this school we just have some affluence among some of these kids. And they're arrogant, snotty-nosed, whatever, man, and they let people know that they came from affluence. And they get their tail whipped a lot. They'll probably never, you know, people resent those kids. And so we run a dual school system within a system, you know. How do you, what do you do? How do you change that? I don't know. So that's one of the kinds of things, I think teachers and so forth choose up to decide, well, who are they going to spend their time with. You'll find a lot of the white teachers and so forth says hey, you white kids are going to make it anyway, I'm going to spend my time trying to bring these black kids along and encourage them. You find an awful lot of that. Parents come and complain, and these teachers tell them, go to hell. I'm doing what I need to do, okay. I don't come and tell you how to run your job, I'm going to run my job. And so those parents go to the superintendent, they go to the school board members. And one of the most difficult times that I had was looking and protecting teachers. I felt that was my job. I mean, you know, teachers need to have some independence, man, to be able to do what they need to do. And I let them know that I was going to protect them. That's why teachers came to me when I went to lunch, because they knew that I was in their corner. And when their names came up, where we looked at teacher recommendations, you know, and a teacher's excellent for so many years, and then all of a sudden she's a problem teacher, you know. I tell my peers, bullshit, you're not going to do this. And I had to threaten some of them. You know, you had to kick over a few tables, you knock stuff off and stuff, you know, you use what you have to use. And I told them, man, I'm getting the civil rights people in here. If you pull that kind of stuff, man, based on some parent's recommendation, I'm going to have the civil rights people in here tomorrow. If y'all don't believe me, test me. Alice Ballard, who was a French teacher. Excellent teacher for all these years, you just go back and look at her record. And one year, because she supported Gigi Clemmons and had to do with something against the principal, and they wanted to fire my cousin. I said it never happened, okay. My cousin been an excellent French teacher for ten years, and all of a sudden one year there's something wrong? Then if there's something wrong, we have to give her help. You're not going to fire her. Now you go back and tell that principal, man, we're not going with his recommendation. Because I happen to know why he's going after my cousin. Now R.D. Smith. The same man said that he wanted to get rid of R.D. And I said hey, R.D. got a job for life, and I want y'all to understand that. He done put in his dues with Lincoln, he put in his dues, man, resolving potential racial problems. R.D. going to retire here. If he don't ever do another thing, R.D. got a job for life. I said, now I want you all to understand one thing. R.D. lives right across the street from my parents. R.D. was my teacher, man, and he helped me when I went to school. My kids played with R.D.'s kids every day. Now, I can't walk past R.D.'s house if I let y'all get away with this. Y'all not firing R.D. R.D. got a job for life, I don't care if he don't never do nothing. Y'all find a job for him. And that's the kind of thing that I had to do with the school board. I mean, I had to keep up with what was going on, against some of these very articulate, as well as

influential, parents. And I took the parents on. I took them on. They made me chairman of the redistricting committee, where we were trying to balance the schools, you know, for racial balance and a lot of other criteria. We worked the criteria out before we applied it to the school. And we always had a vocal set of parents that didn't want their kids to move to a school, you know, they wanted to remain wherever. And I said well, we've been busing black kids, man, all along for racial balance. One kid lives on one side of the street and another lives on another, going to different schools. We have sacrificed so that we could keep these schools balanced. And you tell me you don't want your kids to go to Carrboro, okay. And Carrboro is one of our better schools. Because we put the resources in schools, man, to make it good. 'Cause see, Carrboro had the stigma of being a milltown school. Chairman of the redistricting committee, hey. But you know, they got to some of my black members and people on there, and they could not stand that pressure. They made me chairman, so it got voted in. I went to everyone and said hey, don't you ever do that again. Don't you ever let people influence you like that to make a decision, man, that's not in the best interest of children. And I said if you do it again, I'm going to expose you in the community. 'Cause you just did something, man, to me that's unpardonable. Well, it came up again, and those parents were just as articulate and whatever. But you know, I had control of that committee. I listened to them, I let them put their proposals up, you know, but their proposal was not as good because they gerrymandered things, man, in moving kids around and it just did not fit the criteria. And I told the members man, don't you all give. Don't you give. You do what's right. And you know, we voted it through, went to the school board, they voted it through. Those parents got involved in those schools, man, that they thought were not good schools, and they came back later and said you know, Ed, Carrboro is one of the better schools, man. It wasn't until I got involved that I know how good the schools were. Had the best principal, the best teachers, best facilities. But it's things like that, you just got to stand up. But you know, you don't have persons like me in all the schools, man, that's willing to stand up and challenge.

RG: Are you saying that parents tend to run the systems?

EC: Sure they do. Still run it. Yeah. They pick who's going to be on the school board, and they are at every meeting. At every meeting. At every meeting, okay. You know, you win them over and you be fair to them. I mean, they see you're going to be fair, they know where you come out, you know. But we can't have parents running the schools. But you know, they run them now, because they've got a parent group, man, that looks at everything that comes in and out of schools and makes decisions about it. I forgot what kind of parent group that is, you know. And I said to the school board members, hey, you're giving up your responsibility as school board members, you're elected. You're elected by the public to do what's right. Yeah, you can listen to that group, but you need to listen to all groups, not just to a special committee that oversees to make recommendations. Because you know, they're making recommendations basically what's best for their kids, you know. I had members of the, that I knew from the tennis club, oh man, I couldn't even get to the court sometimes, man, people stopping me. You know, Bob, I'm always late trying to get to the court, you know. And they

stopped me and wanted to discuss something that I had said, you know. Yeah, you know, I lost a lot of friends. But you know, I look at it, they were so-called friends, okay. Hey, you've got to trust me to do the right thing. Because I didn't do what you wanted me to do that affected your kid, you gotta understand, man, that I was looking at the whole system and trying to make a decision basically what's best for the total system, all kids. If you got a problem with that, then you know, I wasn't your friend anyway. You don't have to speak to me. And there were a lot, man, that did not speak to me after that, you know. But you know one thing, Bob? It just prevented me from having to speak to somebody, you know, when I came. But I felt good. I did what was right. So yeah, the schools are still being controlled by parents. Parents having a whole lot to do with the curriculum. But I think we've got some strong school board members, man, that's going to do what's right. Don't play no politics, okay. Now I was a member of the North Carolina School Board Association. I did new board training at the Quail's Roost. I did new board training as a part of that, and I indoctrinated those new people coming on, said don't forget what you ran on to get elected. Here's what you need to do. Very strong. You say you do, you have an awesome responsibility, you are responsible for the schools. You're responsible for all kids, and if you never get elected again, you do what's right. Let them vote you out of office, okay. Pretty much was able to get through to them. But you know, the schools are still pretty much controlled by parents. Well, you know, I really don't mind that, you know, we got some brilliant minds here. You will learn from it, but you can't let those brilliant minds take over, you know, and run things. We've had people involved in the school, man, only until their kids get out and then they disappear, you don't know where they are anymore, you know. So going back and looking at it, once I went off the schools, I've been appointed back to fill out somebody's term, but you know, I realize that I was older, I did not have the stamina any more that I had for the long meetings. I had more experience and knowledge and things that were coming up, man, that we had solved four and five years ago and they continue to come back up, you know. And I look at the reason for it coming back up, and it really didn't need to come back up, because I thought that what was in places was pretty good. But you know, new people need to revisit things. Now, some things that came back up, it needed to come back up, because we made the best decision at the time. Looking at all the things that came at that time, we made the best decision. It wasn't the best decision overall, and it needed to be revisited, you know, we need to fine-tune it, whatever. But you know, how do you say to your peers, man, I'm coming across like I'm some kind of guy with great wisdom, you know, I couldn't do that any more. So I really didn't need to be on there. I chose not to go to school board meetings, because people look out in the audience and see me, and they'd say well Ed, what do you think about that? Well you know, shouldn't be asking me these questions. I'm not sitting as a school board member now. You got to wrestle with that. So I'm not coming to any meetings. You're not going to ask me questions, you know, about what we did when I was there. 'Cause hey, look, I don't have all the information you got now. You get a board packet, okay, you got a lot more information than I got. So I've digressed, but I don't think that the, we don't have the systems in place for helping all students, I just don't think that I have been away from the schools, I don't think there are the support systems there for black kids, you know. I think that, I don't

know about other cultural groups, but I don't think that the system really supports black kids in the way that they were supported when I was coming through. That's my opinion.

RG: Anything more you want to say?

EC: No, I think I done said it, you know.

RG: I appreciate it.

EC: 'Cause, you know, I kind of get wound up, man, about things I feel very strongly about.

RG: Well, I can see you're really into it. I appreciate it.

EC: Okay.