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K.2.8. Southern Communities: Listening for a Change: Desegregation and the Inner Life of Chapel Hill Schools

Interview K-1104
Charles L. Thompson
23 March 2001

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ABSTRACT—CHARLES L. THOMPSON

Interviewee: CHARLES L. THOMPSON

Interviewers: Mike Conschafter and Matisha Wiggs

Interview date: 23rd March, 2001

Location: Thompson's Office, UNC General Administration Annex, Chapel Hill, NC

Number of cassettes: 1 (approximate total length 75 minutes)

Thompson was a UNC student who participated in Civil Rights protests for the desegregation of public accommodations in Chapel Hill in the early 1960's. He was arrested in 1963 after a sit-in; also twice more subsequent to that case. The main themes of the interview are: activism and why he became involved; stories he remembers about the fate of protestors; memories of his own time in jail (about six weeks total); the roles of Quentin Baker and John Dunne; successes and failures in local protest strategy; and the local movement's sense of its place on the national scale. A major effort was made by the interviewers to learn from Thompson specific places that were targets of protests of which he was a part or of which knew. Thompson provides many especially interesting details about assaults on the protestors. He also discusses his current role on the Governor's Education Cabinet. There, he continues to deal with the issue of segregation as schools in North Carolina increasingly re-segregate themselves.

FIELD NOTES—CHARLES L. THOMPSON

(compiled 23rd March, 2001)

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Interviewers: Mike Conschafter and Matisha Wiggs

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Tape No.: 3.23.01CT (cassette 1 of 1)

(approximate total length 75 minutes)

THE INTERVIEWEE: Charles L. Thompson attended UNC-CH from 1961-1965 where he received a degree in Radio, Television, and Broadcasting. During his time as a student, he participated in a wave of the protests organized against segregation of public accommodations. He worked mainly under the organizational leadership of Quentin Baker and John Dunne, two Chapel Hill activists. Thompson was arrested on three different occasions and spent a total of approximately six weeks in jail with other activists. His trial came after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and therefore, he was not convicted of the charges against him. He now works for the Governor's Education Cabinet which looks at education issues across North Carolina's public schools, community colleges, and universities.

THE INTERVIEWERS: Mike Conschafter is a senior political science and history major at UNC. Matisha Wiggs is a junior history major at UNC. Both are participating in Southern Oral History Program director Jacquelyn Hall's Oral History class. Both interviewers were encouraged by Chapel Hill *Herald* writer Perry Young to seek out Thompson. They decided to conduct a joint interview to make certain all their individual questions were answered by Thompson.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview was conducted in Thompson's second floor office in the General Administration Annex, Raleigh Road. The office was of medium size, filled with filing cabinets, large bookshelves, and a small round conference table, at which we sat to conduct the interview. His desk and all the shelves were filled with paperwork. It was cluttered, but a very nice, comfortable atmosphere. Thompson seemed very at ease with sharing his memories. Though we had developed an outline, we were unsure how two interviewers

would work in conducting the interview. It turned out very well. Thompson was receptive to all our questions and tried to work our interests, which we discussed with him beforehand, into his narrative. He expressed great interest in our project and told us several times how he thought it was a relevant project because of the continuing problems with things such as the race test gap in schools. He was very pleasant, possessed a good memory, and still emotionally attached to the subjects we discussed, even having to stop for a moment early in the interview because he was near tears.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW: We focused on Thompson's time in college. Why he got involved in the movement, his impressions of who else was involved, and the places he or others held sit-ins. He gave several vivid descriptions of the treatment of protests, his memories of his jail time and the interaction of jailed protestors. He discussed local leaders Quentin Baker and John Dunne, successes and failures in local strategy, and the local movements place in the national landscape of Civil Rights activities. Thompson also provides great details about places involved in the sit-ins. We also discussed present-day race relation problems, especially as they relate to schools, based on Thompson's work in the Education Cabinet.

NOTE ON RECORDING: We used the SOHP's Sony WM-D3 cassette recorder and Sony Electret Condenser Stereo Microphone. The tape quality is good.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Charles L. Thompson

Interviewers: Matisha Wiggs and Michael Conschafter

Location: Thompson's Office, UNC General Administration Annex, Chapel Hill, NC

Date: March 23rd, 2001

Number of Cassettes: 1 (approximate total length 75 minutes)

BEGIN:

MC: ...Wiggs and Mike Conschafter. The date is 23rd March, 2001. We are in the UNC General Administration Annex, Chapel Hill. First we'd like to background from you- your date of birth and place?

CT: I was born in Greensboro in February 1st 1944. So I'm 57 years old.

MC: And how about your parents and their occupations?

CT: My father worked for what was then Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, now Jefferson Pilot as a mortgage loan analyst in Greensboro. My mother actually ran, for a time when I was in high school mostly, a branch post office in a shopping center not far from our house out on Friendly Road.

MW: And did you have siblings; brothers and sisters?

CT: Yeah I had three brothers: one older brother and two younger.

MW: So why did you decide to come to Carolina, what was your goal in being a student here?

CT: I actually was a finalist for a Morehead scholarship and liked the experience. I didn't actually get the Morehead scholarship, but they offered me a small scholarship and I was a offered a scholarship at Duke too. But Duke was much too expensive by comparison [even] with

the scholarships involved. And I think I just, I liked Carolina, I liked the kind of feeling of the place, and I don't think there was a lot more involved than that. It was kind of the state university [was] an attractive place to be, it had a reputation among students for being a great place to go to school, so I think that's roughly how I made my decision.

MW: Good. Can you tell us your years here too?

CT: 1961-1965.

MC: How about your academic studies, what degrees did you get?

CT: My actual degree was in Radio, Television, and Motion Pictures, which is now something else. And I did work in English and Journalism and mostly things that had to do with writing in one way or another, and ended up in RTMP for complicated reasons, It had something to do with the civil rights movement actually, but that's another story.

MW: You're welcome to tell it now if you want to.

CT: I think that by comparison with the civil rights stuff that I was doing the English courses seemed dry and boring, and RTMP had a little more life to it, I thought at the time.

MW: OK. We want to ask about the activism on campus. First of all, when you got here, what was kind of the atmosphere on campus? How did [it] acknowledge segregation and this rising tide of civil rights?

CT: It didn't. I mean everything was segregated and it was pretty much taken for granted. No, I take that back. Not everything was segregated, but nearly everything was segregated throughout the South. Chapel Hill probably had a few restaurants that were desegregated and was a little less rigid than many nearby cities or towns. But there was a very, you know, still a late [19]50s feeling of fraternities, and very kind of not much sense of political involvement or political consciousness, not much in the way of protest around segregation, very conventional campus.

Everybody in nearly identical modes of dress. If you didn't have your weejuns and your London Fog raincoat and your umbrella and certain other objects, then you were completely marginalized. So it was a very conventional place in the early 1960s.

MW: What was the campus's relationship to the community? Were you really aware of not just segregation in the community but the actual people there?

CT: Not much until I got involved with the Civil Rights movement a bit, and even then it was a little dim. Chapel Hill and the University and the town were sort of very different worlds.

MC: Was there a relationship with Lincoln High School at all during the protests?

CT: I wasn't conscious of it. I'm sure there were students from Lincoln High School that were involved, but I wasn't conscious of it at the time.

MW: Let's ask, how did you become involved, what was your motivation?

CT: I told Perry this story recently, actually. When I was, my first two years here I got to know a black student from Winston Salem whose name is Karen Parker. You all may have run across [her]. Karen is now actually at this point an editor of the *Winston Salem Journal*, and she was actually over at our house recently for a sort of mini reunion. Karen was probably the first black person that was similarly educated, same age, similar interests, that I had known and we got to be friends -- not really close friends. Karen, in sometime during the fall of [19]63, Karen was arrested in a demonstration. And I was just, I remember being really shocked and upset about it. I mean, I found it, curiously, [it] shouldn't have been curious that she was arrested, but I was just appalled that Karen would be arrested for trying to eat in a restaurant. It just struck me as a completely outrageous state of affairs, and that very personal contact gave me a completely different perspective on a whole system of segregation than I had ever seen before. I went from being shocked to being angry, to being ashamed, to be part of a system that would end up with

Karen being arrested. First I was angry at the police and at the owners of the restaurant and so forth, but it wasn't very long before I was pretty angry at myself as well for sitting still through this, and felt I couldn't. And I don't think I immediately decided to get involved in sit ins, but I went to a meeting. I don't actually know formally who convened it. It was, I know the two guys who were the big leaders of the demonstrations here, John Dunne and Quentin Baker were key in it, but I don't know organizationally whether it was SCLC or SNCC, so it was a little vague exactly who convened it. Speaking of places, I've been trying to identify for myself a little more clearly the place. We should look at a map sometime. It was at just into the edge of Carrboro from Chapel Hill, and I have the recollection that somehow it was on the second floor of a brick building and may have been above a funeral home across from, up near, not far from where Crooks Corner is now. But down that, either down that street or one of them that's parallel to it. I'm not, I haven't really been able to place it quite since I've been back in Chapel Hill.

MW: Ok.

CT: But that was where we always met. There was a rally-like meeting and there were several people who talked about the plans for the Civil Rights movement. Actually they didn't talk about plans, they talked about the issues. And at the end of the session, at the end of that meeting he said, "Well I'm ready to go out and sit in, who wants to go?" And while there were a lot of people who had been very fired up during the meeting, it kind of fell silent. I was just too, I felt too, I don't know what--. I think it had a lot to do with being embarrassed and being ashamed of being part of this system, and so I volunteered. We went immediately down to some cars and went out to sit in and sat in at -- there used to be the Pines restaurant down here now where Aurora is, down in that area -- the geography had changed a little bit, but I think the restaurant was probably associated with that motel down there, that was where we sat in the first time.

MC: Was there an atmosphere or a type of spirit that drew you to the protests, that kept you involved with the activism?

CT: Yes, it was very powerful. An extraordinary sense of, a lot of people I didn't know, I didn't know the people I was sitting in with, and after we were arrested we went--. You know where the, at that time, you know where the homeless shelter is now? You know that that's where the police station and the jail was? The jail was downstairs there. There were a couple of, the only cells that I remember there were two. I know that they were four person cells, and most of the time there were many more people than that in them. And there was a lot of, in order to keep people's spirits up, there was a lot of singing and talking about what we were doing- it was a very compelling thing to feel part of. Across not only racial lines- but there were people from Chapel Hill, there were a few Duke students involved, and then during the some of the subsequent demonstrations particularly, there were guys who essentially moved here and there across the South sitting in for SNCC and SCLC and other organizations, and they were amazingly compelling people. I particularly remember this young kid, even though I was, what, 18, 19 at the time, this kid was maybe 16 from Greenville, Mississippi and when we sat in--. Diagonally across from where the police station is there used to be, I forget what it is right now, but then it was the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop. I can also identify that building for you. And so we started to sit in there, the people inside saw us coming and went in and locked the door. The thing that you did in those circumstances was you sit in right in front of the place. And we were, I was sitting right on the steps, next to this kid from Mississippi, black kid from Greenville, Mississippi. The people who were inside after we sat there, they opened the door and they started kicking this kid and they were just kicking whoever they could reach. I didn't see exactly what's going on even though he was sitting right beside me. And then when we were going into

the police station, by that time we had agreed to walk down the stairs rather than be carried down the stairs because it was hard on the policemen. They had slipped discs and so forth. And so he was going down the stairs and he fell down, he just couldn't walk, and they took him to the hospital and he, he --. I'm sorry. This makes me very emotional to talk about this.

MW: It's ok.

CT: They took this kid to the hospital and taped him up and he came back and he told me what happened, and I was really furious about that, [and I cursed them], and he said "They're just scared."

MW: Wow.

CT: There were other people that struck me as incredibly brave and also just amazing sort of. Partly insightfulness and partly just generosity of spirit. Experiences like that, I mean, you couldn't turn back. I couldn't once I was involved.

MW: How do you think other people perceived you in the movement?

CT: I don't know, there's several, I mean I thought a lot about that. I was scared to death. I was scared to death the whole time. I was scared every time I went out, just terrified. And the only thing though was I was just more ashamed and angry than I was scared. I had police, other people, I don't know exactly how they were feeling. People didn't talk very much about that. So I'm not sure, I know my parents, whom I didn't notify at all -- a typical [adolescent], when I think back about it now -- my parents had grown up in Anson county in a very poor part of the state, and they were completely unprepared for this. They were just totally surprised. But they were extremely, very supportive. And I found out later they took a lot of grief for my involvement, and actually there were bomb threats against my house, and I'm sure that my father had, [it] caused him difficulties where he worked and so on. But they actually didn't say

anything about it until much later I found out about these things. But I did feel, I felt--. So that's sort of about family and how I felt about myself. We, most of us felt, I think, [felt] pretty isolated on campus. It felt, it didn't feel as though, we felt like we were a small minority. You know, it was very marginal to the campus. I think there were more people in town that were more sympathetic to the movement than we realized, and people did things like bring food, and there were a lot of little things that happened that gave you a little sense that there were people that cared what happened to you. Probably the most encouraging, heartening thing that happened to us was that the *Daily Tar Heel* came out in support of us, of the demonstrations and demonstrators, and that made a huge difference in the way we felt. It really lifted morale a lot for me. I don't know whether it did for some people who weren't really at Carolina or involved, but I still remember Gary Blanchard and David Ethridge were the editors of the *Tar Heel* at the time. They've both gone on to do interesting things in life. I don't know where they are now. But that was very important, so you had some sense, that not, it wasn't the entire university and university community who saw you as an outsider and troublemaker and a problem. People within the movement, that was what sustained you, because there was a strong sense of solidarity. It's a very interesting question, that's a very good question to ask people. There's a lot of complexity there.

MW: Let me ask who in the university community did see you as a troublemaker? Who spoke out against you?

CT: I don't know that people spoke out against us, it was that just there was a kind of silence. There wasn't a sense that, I never, the administration didn't say much one way or another, I don't think. But there wasn't a big rallying of students to the--. It was a relatively small number of us that were involved, compared to the total size of the student body.

MC: So there was a lot of off campus involvement too?

CT: Yeah, there were mostly kids, or at least young people. Black folk, kids from town, some of them were probably from the high school. I don't, I really wasn't sure exactly what people's ages were, up through our very early twenties. [There were] relatively few, I don't remember anybody older than that who was black who was involved. There were a few people who were older, white, who were involved from time to time. Including some the people who were not necessarily the key leaders, but a guy named Pat Cusick and Lou Calhoun were a little bit older than we were. Do you all know the book *The Free Men*?

MW: Yes.

CT: I think John Ehle did a pretty good job with that, there's a lot of--. I read it once and felt it was pretty accurate and fair. And learned some things I didn't know at the time cause I was, just as we said at the time, a soldier in the army. Some of us didn't know what the grand strategy was. For example, you never knew where you were going to sit in until you actually got there. When we left we would leave the meeting place, somebody from the leaders of the demonstrations would call the police at a certain point where you know they couldn't prevent us from sitting in, but the police would arrive soon after you got there, which turned out to be extremely important in at least a couple cases that I know of.

MC: So a certain leader would choose a place?

CT: Yeah, as far as I know, I think John and Quentin would decide, you know, sort of what the next target was going to be. And we didn't know, at the time of the meeting, where we were going to go. In some cases, some of these places--. The Tar Heel Sandwich shop of course I knew because it was right downtown. I could walk you to the building easily there, but there were other places that were more obscure. Like, speaking of places that don't exist anymore, at

where Estes crosses Franklin St., just out Franklin St., maybe, oh, less than half a block, could have been really on the corner practically, there was a little place called Carlton's Rock Pile, which was actually just a little country store, and it was literally made out of rocks. And that place was--. Some friends of mine sat in. This was actually on New Years Eve when [19]63 passed into [19]64. I was already in jail, luckily for me. Some friends of mine sat in there, and when they went in, they went in to be served, and although it was just a grocery store, the guy wouldn't serve black people. And so they went in to be served there, and generally the guy would give you a shout and tell you to get out and so forth. But what he did is he went to the front door and locked that, he went to the back door and locked that. And then he got out, he got out Clorox and ammonia and poured it all over them, and then he would hold people's nose until they would have to breathe and he would pour Clorox and ammonia down their throat. And so, and you, one of the things you agreed before you went out was you would not, you would not attack in response. That was the one, the one big rule. You know they taught you a little bit about how to cover up and so forth. And so at about 10:30/11:00 on that New Years Eve they brought these people in, they had to take them after the arrest to the hospital to have their stomachs pumped out and put ointment on where the Clorox and ammonia had burned them. So nobody knew that that was going to happen that night, nobody knew they were going there.

MW: Did you ever sort of figure out the master plan behind their targets?

CT: No. You know, funny that you asked, I didn't think much about it. They did, in retrospect, they did target several places where you could count on there being some level of violence or something near it. Another place was the Watts Motel, I don't know whether y'all know where that was, but on the road south of Chapel Hill [down] towards Pittsboro -- they've just torn it down, literally, within the last two or three months -- across from Southern Village there was a

place over there. The Watts Motel had, there was a restaurant there too. That was another place that sat in one night, I happened not to go that night. That was an amazingly ugly scene, it was really dirty, you know, a lot of shouting and screaming. It's even embarrassing to tell about it, but one of the waitresses urinated on the guys that were sitting in there. So you just couldn't, you know that a place like--. I'm sure that they knew that a place like Watts Motel, that there was considerable potential for bad things to happen, or this Rock Pile. But I don't think they knew just how bad a reaction to expect. Downtown you could, well, the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop was pretty violent too. Many things, as you know, that were a hell of a lot worse than this were happening in towns all over the South. And so if you imagine this is sort of stuff that was happening in Chapel Hill, you can imagine what was happening in Birmingham, Alabama, or Selma, or other places like that, some of which we've heard about and seen, and some of which you'll never hear about.

MC: Was there a distance between the leadership and the body of the protestors? How close were you to the people at the top who organized it?

CT: That's interesting. I knew John Dunne just cause he actually got a Morehead Scholarship. I probably met him during that time and then I had known John. There was a group of people [who] used to hang out where, that's now, I don't know what it's called anymore -- I guess its called Woody's or something like that, right next to the Post Office -- it was Harry's in those days. That was a kind of place where a lot of people who were sort of on the fringes of the more conventional Chapel Hill society would hang out, and I knew John through that group of folks, and he was a friend of mine. But during the movement itself I saw him very little, if at all. So I didn't feel a distance in the sense of an emotional distance or alienation, but there was, there wasn't a lot of communication at any sort of personal level about all this. We didn't sort of all

talk strategy through. I'm sure there was a group of people that talked strategy through, but I wasn't part of that and it didn't particularly bother me that I wasn't. That was ok with me.

MW: Actually let me go off this for a minute and ask, we were discussing in class the concept of the liberal mystique in Chapel Hill, and to know how you felt about that. Do you think Chapel Hill is really a liberal town, or have you seen the other side of it too much to think that anymore?

CT: Well, you know, there's always been, there's always been a strong liberal strain within Chapel Hill, but as a town overall--. It certainly was more liberal then and it may still be than the surrounding state. It was a little disheartening that more people didn't get involved. I didn't feel as though I were completely turned against the place, turned against Chapel Hill. I didn't feel that all of that had been just a veneer, and I might easily have. But I think I just didn't expect, a pretty shocking thing to do, you know--. I didn't expect regular real people to see the world the same way I did, so I don't think I was disillusioned particularly by it.

MC: How about on the campus? We talked about at the beginning how a lot of people were the same. Was that true on the campus?

CT: Yeah I mean it was dominating you know. I felt, at least when I came here, that it was, that the sort of pecking order on campus was clearly the fraternities and those guys largely. And it was almost an exclusively male campus then who were members of fraternities, and then everybody sort of flowed down from there you know. So yeah, that was pretty clearly the hierarchy, and it was very clear that that hierarchy was very would be strongly opposed to what we were doing. There weren't sort of unpleasant, I don't remember any incidents where university students were active in the taunting particularly, but I wouldn't have been surprised if it had happened.

MW: Lets get back to your story specifically, how long were you in jail for that first period that you were arrested?

CT: Well, I have trouble reconstructing it exactly, but our idea -- speaking of strategy, failed strategies -- was that we would try to flood the jails to the point where they would have to move people, and then ultimately just sort of to let everybody out, and we were never successful in doing that. So I did stay in for, I think, probably from the time I was first arrested to the time I got out was maybe ten days or two weeks or something like that, then I was arrested two or three more times, two more times. I stayed in jail about a month or six weeks something like that in all, I suppose, probably more like a month.

MW: Well, what were some of the specific protests that you were involved with, [and] the places that you specifically protested?

CT: The three places were, that I actually sat in -- as distinguished from marching or whatever else -- were the Pines, another restaurant that doesn't exist anymore called Brady's which was -- what's the fancy Italian? Oh, Siena Hotel -- in that vicinity. It was a kind of down home country cooking sort of place, and had I'm told wonderful fried chicken. [I] never got to have any Brady's. And then the third place was the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop. And in each of those cases --. An arrest in the Civil Rights movement was, would always end up being two arrests. You'd either be arrested for trespassing, or in the case of the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop, we were arrested for blocking the sidewalk and then for resisting arrest cause we always, you know, went limp and had to be dragged in. So I had like six counts against me at the time.

MC: Can you recount any specific, do you have any specific memories from those protests?

CT: Oh yeah, very vivid times. One of the most vivid times actually was that New Years Eve, which was one of the most shocking times because we were, people kind of trying to keep your

spirits up being in jail on New Years Eve. What would happen is that the--. There were two cells, and they were supposed to be for four but it would usually be ten or a dozen of us in there, six or eight at least. I think it was only six or eight in the men's. The women's cell was just across the way, but there was a wall between us, and so we would--. The poor women. We would sing. And so they would sing, and then we would sing, then they would sing, and then we would sing, and mostly we were distinguished by our volume, but they were wonderful singers. I mean, they were just unbelievably pretty, I really, I still remember that cause that evening we had been--. Fewer of us were around and it was New Years and all that. It was almost a kind of New Years Eve celebration, a kind of spirit when suddenly these people came in. That was very vivid. I remember, well, this kid from Mississippi made a deep impression on me, as you know. I remember, a guy I met in jail who was a little older than we were, maybe three or four years older at that time. It seems like a big deal. His name was James Foushee, [and he] had been one of the people that sat in at the Colonial Drug. There was a picture in the paper recently of, I noticed, of a sit-in at Colonial Drug, a guy named John Carswell who ran Colonial Drug. And for reasons that elude me, James Foushee went by the nickname of TT. And I remember TT telling me that when he went to sit in at the Colonial Drug that John Carswell got a shotgun out, and he put [it] in his face and said, you know, "Get out of here," and TT said, "No, I'm not leaving." And Carswell actually cocked the shotgun and said, "Get out," and TT said, "No, I'm not going." I was just, I mean, he didn't tell me this -- he was just telling me this as a story as though it was just a story you'd tell about something that had happened to you. In fact, he was sort of laughing about it, but I was--. People did amazingly courageous things. So that, those two and the Watts Motel thing was just so appalling.

MC: How did you, how did the students get together with the people that weren't students, and where did you meet?

CT: We met up at this, I don't know what to call it. It was, I think it was above a funeral home, which sounds implausible but it was like a--. It had a sort of large meeting hall feel. It wasn't exactly a church, but it wasn't, I don't know how else to describe it. I forget how I knew that that was where--. I think people just told me. It was kind of word of mouth that that's where the meeting was. And at that time, you know Chapel Hill and Carrboro were even more distinct, were much more distinct then they are now. It was clear that you know Chapel Hill was university town and Carrboro was this mill town, and the white/black differences were [that] Carrboro tended to be more black. But that's how, we just met at the meetings themselves, and then you got to know people in jail. You know, you talked a lot about things.

MW: Did you get the sense that there were several factions operating?

CT: Yeah, I couldn't have drawn a very clean boundary among them, but yeah, there were. I'm sure there were. There were the students, there were people, there was a sort of the leadership with--. I would say the main leaders were obviously were John Dunne and Quentin Baker, but also Pat Cusick and Lou Calhoun, and then there was a set of people who tended to come through, who were associated either with SNCC or SCLC. The most amazing people were those folks who just essentially traveled the South sitting in. SNCC [had] probably the most impressive people. And they were, they ranged in age. Mostly they were fairly young, but there was, they went from this kid who was sixteen years old [who] I was telling about to people who were in their late twenties, early thirties. Then there were people, some people from the town who were, I had a feeling were probably, in talking with the leadership and doing things like bringing food and showing up outside of where we were sitting in, I think they were present as

witnesses somehow, but it wasn't very clear to me exactly who they were. So there were identifiably different groups, but it didn't feel like there were factions that were split, but I wouldn't have known about the splits. The only thing I know, there's a fellow actually locally who I don't know whether you all have talked with or whether Perry mentioned him to you, his name is Bob Brown. Bob used to run some sort of little publication. I forget what it was now. Bob argued that Quentin Baker and John plunged too quickly into civil disobedience, that if they had built it up with marches and so forth, kind of step-by-step, that we would have had more people on board from the town. So Bob would be an interesting person to talk with. I talked with, I didn't know him at the time, but I talked with him about it afterwards. I don't actually ultimately buy Bob's argument, but it's worth hearing cause there was an awful lot of talk. Bob is not Southern, I forget where Bob--. Bob's from New York City in fact. But Bob, there was an awful lot of talk at the time about how, ok, you know its true we've got to desegregate, segregation's wrong and so forth, but we're not ready yet. I just interpreted Bob as being somebody who was giving aid and comfort to the enemy at the time. I don't think that was really true, I think he really probably had a point. It will be interesting for me to know what you all find about sort of where the different groups were and came from. I was conscious that there were some Duke students who were involved, whom I wouldn't have run into otherwise. So there were at least those kind of identifiable groups, [and] that's how the world broke down from my point of view, but I don't know whether that would be a conventional account of what the different factions were.

MC: Did you develop close ties with any specific members of the protests? And did you develop a sort of group within the group?

CT: I felt very close to this guy TT at the time cause he was a little older and a kind of a mainstay and kind of helped keep everybody's spirits up. You know, it's boring being in jail for long stretches of time, and just inactivity has a depressing effect. And so he was a big help. I had two very close friends -- my girlfriend at the time and then a very, a close friend of mine were also involved. And so that kept up a, I wouldn't say that there were--. Other than that, it was like if you were involved then, it wasn't even a very dramatic sense of solidarity, it was like sort of an unquestioned sense of that these other people -- if they're involved, then they're good people - - a very strong sense of that you had to feel that way. Cause we would be sometimes twenty people in a cell for four, so we'd end up sleeping on the floor on your side with people, you know, one person's head that way and the next person's head that way, sort of sandwiched in like that. But I don't remember beyond that, beyond sort of admiring certain people and being grateful for their support, I don't think there was a, more of an undifferentiated sense of all these folks being involved in committing.

MC: Did you admire the leadership of John and Quentin?

CT: I didn't see that much of them. I thought that they were probably doing, you know, I thought on the whole they were doing a good job. But it just, when you see somebody right before you being kicked and beaten and then show the kind of response, it just was stunning. So there actually was a guy that came through from, who was with I think Southern Christian Leadership Conference also who just was extremely articulate and had a kind of crackling energy about him. His name was LaVert Taylor. I never, I only saw him for a very short stretch, but he struck me as a very charismatic guy. These days, it's not a, his son is not a widely admired figure in Durham, but Floyd McKissick was a kind of an amazing guy, he was our attorney. I don't know whether you know about McKissick, but he was the first, the first black admitted to

the law school at Carolina. And I think it's true -- it may just be lore -- that he went all the way to the US Supreme Court to get admitted, and he was [admitted]. So he was our attorney when this all actually went to trial in the spring of [19]64. And I, he made a motion at the, this was at the courthouse in Hillsborough, and none of us knew quite what to expect, and we were all pretty nervous. And one of the first things he did was to make a motion that our cases be removed to federal court on the grounds that we couldn't get a fair trial in any of the courts in North Carolina, and I remember that the judge being absolutely infuriated by this. He told McKissick it was a "scurrilous attack" on the courts of North Carolina and the people of North Carolina and so on, but he had no choice and it went, it was a very shrewd move, delaying tactic cause it went to federal court, and that took a while and came back, and by the time it actually went to trial, or they had to decide to whether to prosecute, the Civil Right Act of [19]64 had already passed. And by that time there was no strong reason to prosecute most of us. In fact there was no reason to prosecute anybody cause what we had done was no longer, would no longer be against the law, and the only people they went after were the leaders. John, I think, people that served time in jail--.

FIRST SIDE OF TAPE ENDS

CT: Yeah, the, the people who were actually sentenced, and I think they served like two or three months, were the leaders, the four main leaders of the whole thing.

MC: That would be John Dunne, Quentin Baker, Pat Cusack and....

CT: Cusick and Calhoun. I think its Cusick rather than Cusack. C U S I C K, Pat. I heard recently actually what happened to Pat but I'm not, I'll have to see if I can recall. John Dunne, after he got back out, he got out, I don't know--. One of the interesting things to ask, if you could find out, would be whether he was at, whether he was expelled by the university or he decided to

go elsewhere. But he went, he ended up going to Harvard to finish undergrad, as an undergraduate, and I think he went to law school at Harvard. I know I bumped into his wife years later, actually.

MW: How did, how were your academics effected by all this?

CT: Ha ha, dreadfully, just terrible. You know, this was very dramatic stuff and you know studying was, by comparison -- how could you study? And I did, I think I flunked at least one course because I was in jail at the time of the exam. I don't know that I would have done much good had I gone to the exam, but my grades went seriously downhill. Not that they were that distinguished in the first place, but I think [that] probably happened to a lot of people over the time. I mean now that I think about it, I guess I could have taken my books to jail and studied, but it seems kind of an improbable image in retrospect.

MW: Did the university, besides, you think maybe Pat Cusick got kicked out possibly, but do you think--?

CT: Dunne may have. I don't know that Cusick, I can't remember whether Cusick was a student. It's conceivable that he was a graduate student, but he was older than we were. I don't whether, I don't know what action the university took. The university didn't ever, never said anything one way or the other to me. It was interesting. They did when I was arrested. Somebody in the university did notify my parents, and they said, you know, "We're not--" I think they actually said to my parents-- "We're not either condoning or condemning what Charles has done, just want to inform you that this is what's happened." So I suspect that the university, the leadership of the university may have felt themselves in a tight spot and they probably were scrambling to figure out what to do. Are you all going to interview Bill Friday?

MW: That's a good idea. I don't know if anybody's talked to him yet, but it would be a good idea to interview him to see that perspective.

CT: You know he's just--. You know where his office is?

MW: Is it the Friday Center actually?

CT: No.

MW: No?

CT: Actually, it's right on campus. You know what I still, I don't know what it's called these days. I think of it as Graham Memorial, the old student union.

MW: Yeah.

CT: He's right there and he's in a little tiny office that's no bigger, in fact smaller than mine, and is there fairly often. And is still living, he lives just a couple blocks down from the president's house. You should go talk to him.

MW: That's a good idea, yeah.

CT: I mean, he interviews lots of people, you should go talk to him and ask him what's going on. The other person--. Well, ask him who else to talk with too, who was involved in the administration. I bet he would talk with you.

MW: There were some teachers involved we know, we've been told--. Did you have any connect, contact with them? I think they may have been doing some other chunk of protests. I'm not really sure.

CT: There were people around at the time -- names are going to be a little vague for me--but I had the sense that there were some members of the faculty who were involved. There's a guy--. I can't be sure about names, [but] there's a guy who's now an emeritus professor here named Lyle Jones. Lyle used to be the head of the psychometric lab with the rest of the psychometric lab,

and he's a wonderful person. Lyle knew, Lyle actually had a fairly central position, like a vice provost or a provost or something like that. I don't know whether he was during the time of the movement, but he would know, he would have a perspective on what was happening in the faculty at the time and would probably talk with you. He's a wonderful person. He has an office in, what's that dreadful building right next to Coker, Howell?

MW: Howell.

CT: Yeah, where the psych building is. He has an office in Howell, but he also lives down towards Pittsboro, and I think he'd be very responsive if you'd call him. I don't think he was involved in the movement, but I think he'd have a view of what was going on within the university at the time. I want to make sure I've got places established for you cause, I mean, there was the Pines, I told you about where the Rock Pile was. Brady's was almost adjacent to the Rock Pile, just a little farther down Franklin St. on the left.

MW: Right, ok.

CT: And then Tar Heel Sandwich Shop, suppose you were suppose you were walking, suppose you were on Columbia and you had crossed Franklin going north. Then in the next block, in that next block about--. I don't know whether it's the last building or the next to the last building on the right, that's where the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop would be. There was a, I don't know what its called now, I really don't know what's there. I'll look next time I go by there. But that was one of a lot of, there were then more real, true, local eateries that had a more Southern feel to them, and that was what the Tar Heel Sandwich Shop was one of those.

MW: Ok.

CT: Then the Watts Motel was another place that was--. If I could place this, maybe I'll ask around a little bit more and get somebody to help [who] could do a better job of placing this

meeting hall where we met. If you have trouble doing it, call me back because I'm sort of curious if I go up there and walk around if I could really make it come back for myself, if it's still there.

MW: Ok, sure.

CT: And the only other, another place that a lot of people would have run in to each other who were involved in the movement was Harry's, which is where, I think its called Woody's now. The downtown churches, surprisingly, at least not all that surprisingly I guess, were not involved. Black churches were more, much more, felt much like a home base.

MC: You were involved with sit ins. Were you also involved with marches or protests in the street?

CT: Yeah, there were, in between these sit ins there were a lot of marches going on in the street. We didn't actually, it was a, it was a sort of cat and mouse game with the cops. There would be times when you'd--. I think the whole idea was to kind of keep everything really on edge cause you know they didn't know whether you were going to go and sit down in the street, and they'd have to be there for arrests or not, and there would be sort of--. It was clear at times that we were acting as though we were going to sit in the street and then didn't, and so there were marches and then there was some picketing of businesses, including, do you know where Vespa is now? If you're going out Franklin St. on the right.

MW: Yes.

CT: Just before that now, I think it may be a bike shop or something, on the right hand side there, there was a food store -- a couple actually -- food stores, and neither of them hired anybody black, and we picketed there. So far as I know as a local phenomenon, this was a completely unsuccessful set of marches and so on. I don't know of a single place that was

desegregated as a consequence of this. The only, the only [way] this made a contribution was just generally to the sense of general unrest in the South at the time. I felt that it helped, it was one of the awful lot of places that helped keep the pressure on for some sort of action at the national level.

MC: So even though you didn't hammer out some concrete, direct change, the whole pressure, keeping the pressure to liberalize, I guess, kind of helped out in the grander scheme of things?

CT: Yeah, that was the real strong sense we had when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed.

The public accommodations, mostly it was about public accommodations--. I don't think I realized how frustrating an experience it had been until the law was actually passed, and you had some concrete results, and you could feel like you maybe accomplished something. But that would be the only way I think we made any real contribution.

MW: So you felt a part of the grander movement of the national movement?

CT: Oh, yeah, that was without question. One of the things that helped was people coming through to talk. I mean, people from SCLC, SNCC, James Farmer--. Ah, which of these, whether he was Southern Christian Leadership Conference? And then I remember reading Martin Luther King at the time and feeling -- that was a real strong sense and a part of that -- I felt sort of unquestionably part of that movement. I did a lot of reading. I don't know if it was really during that, I guess it was sort of mixed in, reading after reading, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin. Those are the things that really stuck in my mind.

MC: So your connection to the activism on a grander scheme of things kind of helped you, sustain you in the movement, I guess, gave you hope?

CT: I think this is what sustained me was the local connections, which were very intense. A combination of being scared to death, and then having people who were in there with you, and

then these kinds of instances that I've talked about, they just were so compelling. That's what really, that's really what kept me engaged. But it, it was almost as though the-- Well, it wasn't almost, it was really literally true that the sort of broader philosophical rationale and understanding of the movement, and what it was about, and cry non-violence, and the history of segregation and desegregation, that came after. That wasn't what moved me to get involved. That was sort of sense making after the fact.

MW: Let me ask, how do you view Chapel Hill now? Do you think that your activities were for the better, or do you still see a lot of problems in Chapel Hill that you wish you could have done something more about?

CT: Well yeah, sure, you know I still work with the same problems. Look where I am, right? Here's your result. I don't think of it as Chapel Hill, though I don't, to me-- Chapel Hill just happened to be the place where I realized it was taking action. That sounds contrary to what I said about sort of local connections and all that, but I see it was a much more general, now I see it as a much more general phenomenon and set of problems. At the time I felt, it was very difficult -- this is not a question you asked, but it is occasioned by what you asked so I'll tell you -- one of the terrifically difficult things to deal with was being a white southerner, figuring out how to come to terms with really identifying with a region, which I still do, and yet being very, literally ashamed and angry, ashamed of being part of a segregated system and being angry about what was going on. It was very hard. It took me literally years to figure, to come to terms with that, maybe ten, fifteen years. I don't know how long it took. There's actually a fabulous essay by William Faulkner called "Mississippi" which is very hard to figure out while your reading it. You can't really quite figure out what it's about cause it seems to be wandering, as Faulkner will, but near the end there is a phrase which helped me reconcile this whole thing, which is about the

South. He says, "Not because of her virtues, but in spite of her faults" as in a way of talking about his own devotion to the South, and that doesn't sound like much, but it was a, a sense of somebody also having struggled with the same problem and come to a, that sort of resolution was a help. So yeah, I mean, one of the things I've discovered-- I've lived in Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, Michigan, Colorado, several others -- and you know, when I first left the South, that racism was a Southern problem. In fact I worried that in the Northeast my Southern accent would mean I was, that black folks would react against me. And that was very interesting cause I never had any experience on that score except that black people would recognize my accent and would talk about, you know, "Are you from North Carolina? Well, I used to spend time there in the summers," or, "My family is from there," and so on. That still amazes me to this day, but happens to me all the time. So I guess what I'm trying to say, [is] that I see it as a much more general problem. I've seen racism at least as flagrant and as bitter in other parts of the country. When Boston, the schools were desegregating was terrifically-- Or you take Chicago area, Cicero and all of that. So I guess I see an enduring set of problems, and a much more general set of problems. [It's] certainly one that where I think the South has a special sort of historical burden, but it's an American problem rather than a Southern problem exclusively. Do you all know *The Strange History of Jim Crow*? Have you read it?

MW: No.

CT: It's a fabulous book. I forget who the -- it's terrible -- C. Vann Woodward -- very interesting book about the imposition of Jim Crow laws in the years after the Civil Rights movement -- no, [not] Civil Rights movement -- after the Civil War, and what accounted for that. You should read it. It's a short book, very accessible. It's a good book.

MC: What has been your continued, has there been continued involvement in activism on your part? To what extent have you been interested?

CT: So you know, some during the Vietnam War, a little, although not nearly as intense as the Civil Rights movement. There were just marches and that sort of thing during the [war]. So, I think rather than sort of direct action and activism now, my involvement is more in the research I do. I'm still interested in trying to figure these things out and what might be done about them. So it isn't, doesn't have the same sort of drama about it, by any stretch of the imagination, but it's a continued sort of, a continued preoccupation for me. I'll tell one thing that's interesting, this is something that you probably won't [encounter] unless you ask about. You should ask questions about this. One of the hardest things for people, those of us who were involved, many of us who were involved with the Civil Rights movement was the Black Power period. And I was in Philadelphia in the late [19]60's and you know, a terrific transition from a sense of solidarity and joint struggle by black and white, black and white together, to, what really I think brought that to an end as much as anything, was a sense of, a period of what I understood of militancy that said, "You're no longer welcome as part of this movement." I wasn't mystified by that or even necessarily angered by it, but it was painful because there was a sense of sort of nowhere to go with this cause for a while, the whole period of moving from Martin Luther King to people like Rap Brown and then Malcolm X, and a period where people like Martin Luther King were considered practically Uncle Toms compared with Malcolm X. To this day I still admire King far more. I mean, I think he, he did put his life on the line repeatedly in ways that a lot of the people who, Stokely Carmichael who mocked him never showed nearly the courage that King showed, in my view. But that period, that transition was a very interesting one. I don't

know what, I don't know much about how that played out in Chapel Hill. I had left here by that time.

MW: But did it, did that point in the movement, it soured you a little bit on it, is that what you're saying?

CT: Soured maybe, but it certainly left me without a, I was no longer, there was no way to be part of it. And I could see why that would be--. Black folks didn't want a lot of white do-gooders doing them favors, and basically the attitude was "go away." I remember actually, I remember when Martin Luther King was killed, and I was in Philadelphia, and I went with a bunch of other people downtown to a memorial service to memorials for him, and the mood you could just see, the mood and the whole relationship just had changed. And the black people that were there were angry, and those of us who were white who were there--. Even though we were there in a sense of solidarity, we were not welcome. That was a hard time. There was no problem understanding what was going on, and no problem even having the sense that it was justified. I knew then that I would feel exactly the same way, or only more so. But what it meant was, when you talk about, "So where did the activism go?" there was not, you know, a "Where did you go, what did you do then." Some of [the] people moved into, some of it moved into the protests against the Vietnam War, some of it was dissipated in the drug culture generally. But it lost its momentum.

MW: I was going to say, earlier than that in Chapel Hill, did some of the people involved in your type of movement move into things like dealing with speaker ban and things like that?

CT: Well, you know that I'm sure that many people did, I wasn't really quite as, I wasn't much involved with that. I mean, I know how I felt about it, and I remember this ridiculous scene of people sitting on campus. I don't know, you probably may have seen pictures of this. In front of Graham Memorial, people sat on campus on this side of the stone wall while Herbert Aptheker,

who was a member of the Communist party, stood on the other side of the wall and spoke to the group. It was clear that it was pretty outrageous, but I wasn't, didn't feel I was part of that, of the protest against that.

MW: Well, let's see, I guess we're up to now. How did you get a job with the university? I guess they weren't too offended by your movements earlier.

CT: Well, I don't think anybody thinks about this anymore.

MW: It's kind of a distance.

CT: I doubt anybody, you know, I doubt when I came here anybody had any recollection of who the people were involved. I don't think it was ever a question. I came back here, I'm actually not with Carolina but with the University System, and some people here knew, know that I was involved with the movement, but most people would be very surprised to learn that this old gray haired guy was ever involved in such a thing. I don't think there's much sense of residue of that. I wondered whether, you know if I had come--. I was away from North Carolina for a really long time. I was away for thirty years. I will say that when I left, I was very angry in some odd way at the state and, partly around racial issues. I'll tell you what I did after leaving Chapel Hill was I went to work for a project that was started by Terry Sanford in Winston Salem, which was a desegregated, the first desegregated boarding school, state sponsored boarding school in North Carolina. It was called North Carolina Advancement School. The notion was you'd bring kids who were able, who had--. The term was underachievers, you know, kids were supposed to be able, but not doing much or doing very well in school--. A substantial amount of that had to do with the racial history. I got into education partly as a sense of a continuation of the struggle by other means at the time.

MW: Let me kind of build on what you said. From my own experience of learning in this class and I think probably some other people's experiences, segregation seems like kind of a distanced history. Do you think we've distanced ourselves too much from it, that we've lost a lot of what you've possibly learned?

CT: You know, it's very dramatic to me. Let me show you something if I can find it. Did you all see Tim Simmons' stuff in the News and Observer?

MW: I haven't seen--.

CT: There's articles about--.

MC: Were those the recent?

CT: Well, what's happening is the state school system is very rapidly resegregating. After the Civil Rights movement and in the early [19]70's, say Charlotte for example--. One of great civil rights, one of the great decisions in the desegregation of schools was the Swan case. And so when the Swan decision was handed down, the Charlotte community said, "Well we have to make this work. If it blows up the whole community's going to go to hell. We're going to hell economically, we're going to be split apart, its going to be a miserable place to live." So they had the pro-business, pro-growth people together with the sort of old elites in Charlotte together with the civil rights leaders, the Churches, the civic clubs, and so forth, [and] said, "We're going to make this work. We're going to make busing work in Charlotte." And you had busing in Charlotte for, until what, the late [19]80s it certainly continued. And then you had, with the Reagan Administration speaking out against busing, forced busing is the terrible thing. Government is the problem, [] Reagan was when things were going down in Selma. In the end, that plus a lot of people moved to Charlotte who had been, who were from other parts of the country where there was no -- didn't have the same history. They didn't understand what had

happened, and where the schools were better, probably better funded, but also while [they] never had been segregated de jure [they] were often segregated de facto, if not by race then by class. And so you had a lot people who moved into Charlotte who began to complain bitterly about the desegregated schools in Charlotte, even though on average Charlotte schools, kids scored better than national norms. So you got a retrenchment from a court challenge, and you went to a magnet school and a so-called control choice system, which has actually resulted -- that itself has resulted in substantial race segregation in Charlotte. And then there's been further resegregation, now, then there was a challenge to magnet schools on grounds that preference was being given to black kids to get into magnet schools. They had another wave of retrenchment. The number of schools in North Carolina that are eighty to eighty-five, eighty-five percent black segregated schools has doubled in the last decade, and now you have about over 220 schools out of about of 2000 some schools, just over 2000 schools North Carolina, maybe 2200. And so segregation is not a thing of the past. If you had to say one way or the other right now, in North Carolina and in most of the country, you would say that segregation is the wave of the future. And you don't have law and you don't have the courts to do anything about this. And I frankly can't see how this trend is going to be reversed. And what you'll also hear, this is a matter of, you know, is it so important that black kids and white kids sit together in school? Yeah, it matters. All kids in substantially segregated schools learn less. It matters in terms of student learning. As Tim Simmons documented that black lower class kids are hurt the most, but it's also true that white kids learn better in desegregated environments, in terms of just student outcomes on standardized tests. So there's a lot of talk now about minority achievement gaps and how to close these gaps. And people want to talk in terms of quality schools, and that's important to do. I'm in favor of that, that's what I do for a living, but it isn't as though segregation doesn't matter. It matters. It

affects very large numbers of kids, and increasingly large numbers of kids. There's whole belts down east where you have very substantially segregated schools. So it's, it's unbelievable to think about it. I grew up with white and black drinking fountains. You went to the old bus station [and] they had a black waiting room and a white waiting room. The busses were -- you know the story -- the busses, swimming pools, restaurants, motels, schools, if you could think of it, it was segregated, theaters, lunch counters and everything. But so you don't have that, but it's not a past phenomenon.

MW: What does your job now enable you to do to effect change in the university system?

CT: My job right now is not so much--. While I work in the university system, I work for something called the Education Cabinet in North Carolina, which is convened by the Governor. It includes the state board chair, the superintendent of public instruction, the president of the university, the president of the community college system. What we do, most of what we do is to bring together existing research on major policy issues that they're struggling with. And of course the question of achievement gaps is one of those major questions right now so [we're] working on--. At a broad level it's pretty [much] why these gaps exist, but in a more detailed level, it isn't clear what keeps them going from generation to generation, and why do they continue, what mechanism recreates the gap at each new generation, and what role to families play in that, what role do schools play in that, what role does the economy play in that, and so on. So a lot of what I do, I'm actually working--. My main [questions] off these great sheets of paper are about this topic, trying to look at, starting with early childhood education and going all the way through school, and what phenomena reproduced the gap from generation to generation, and what interventions might eliminate it? So I feel as though I can speak to the problem, and at this point, we're at a point now that I think you can't solve this problem by direct action -- like a

sit in. I could be arrested as many times as I like, and the test score gap isn't going to shrink any. But I do feel as though this job gives me an opportunity to work on the problem and make some contribution to what's known about how to address it. Which is, it's personal to me, it's got to do with being Southern and goes back to this time and farther than that. I mean, I grew up in Greensboro and Birmingham, Alabama -- two places not distinguished for their enlightened racial histories.

MW: Well, I think our final big question is there anything that we haven't covered that you feel is important to get documented, to be here on this tape?

CT: Well, you asked very good questions, and I don't think so. If I think of something I'll email you, I think you've covered most of the interesting stuff. I think that asking for specifics is extremely helpful because, while it's a sort of a story of big issues and big ideas, it's also a very personal story for all of us. One of the things that would really mean a lot to me would be to really know more about what happened to other people who went through this. Some people I've been in touch with, and others not.

MC: As a percentage, how much of the actual protest do you think you were involved in?

CT: In Chapel Hill? How many times did people sit in? Maybe thirty or forty, maybe a tenth? It went from about November or so early in to [19]64. *The Free Men* might give you a sense of that if you want to know how many total demonstrations there were.

MW: Ok, I think we're done.

CT: Thank you.

MW: Thank you.

END TRANSCRIPT.

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