

Interview

with

CHARLES R. SUMMERS, SR.

August 3, 2005

by Elizabeth Gritter

Transcribed by Emily Baran

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

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**Transcript – Charles Rich Summers, Sr.**

Interviewee: Charles Rich Summers, Sr.  
Interviewer: Elizabeth Gritter  
Interview date: August 3, 2005  
Location: Louisville, Kentucky, at the parlor of the Gallery House Bed and Breakfast  
Length: 1 cassette; approximately 90 minutes

**START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A**

EG: On August 3, 2005, Louisville, Kentucky. And I'm just going to make sure it's recording. It is. That's good. And why don't we go over this life history form first.

Do you have a middle name?

CS: Rich.

EG: Okay. And so you have a suffix? Are you a junior or a senior?

CS: I'm a senior. The one in Raleigh is a junior.

EG: Oh okay, so you're Charles Summers, senior. Okay. What's your date of birth?

CS: Six twenty-three twenty-four.

EG: Okay.

CS: Long time, ain't it?

EG: So you're eighty-one.

CS: Eighty-one.

EG: Wow. I there's something really special about being eighty.

CS: [laughter] I hope.

EG: Yeah, my great uncle in California, he just turned eighty and had a birthday party. And where were you born?

CS: Greenville, Kentucky, Muhlenberg county.

EG: What county is that?

CS: Muhlenberg.

EG: Muhlenberg? How do you spell that?

CS: M-U-H-LE-N-B-E-R-G.

EG: Okay. And what's your wife's name?

CS: Summers, Betty.

EG: Betty, Okay. With a Y?

CS: C, yeah. C. Summers.

EG: Okay. And do you have any children?

CS: I've got two boys.

EG: That's right, the one in Raleigh.

CS: One in Raleigh, one in ( ), Charles Summers, Jr., is in Raleigh. He's the oldest.

EG: And when was he born?

CS: He was born in '51, June the seventeenth, 1951.

EG: Okay.

CS: David lives here, David—

EG: Okay.

CS: He'll be fifty September the third, so he's forty-nine.

EG: Okay.

CS: Almost fifty. So that makes me (    ).

EG: On September the third.

CS: Yep. It's five, he was born in 1955.

EG: Okay, 1955. And what's your educational experience?

CS: I've got, you mean my schooling? I've got a rank one, which is thirty hours above a master's.

EG: Okay.

CS: You have to have that in order to be a principal.

EG: Okay.

CS: It's about the same as a doctorate but I didn't have to write a thesis.

EG: Oh, well that's nice. [laughter]

CS: Yup.

EG: Where did you do that work?

CS: I got my undergrad hood at Western—

EG: At Western Kentucky?

CS: Western Kentucky University.

EG: Okay.

CS: I got my master's here at U of L. And I got my rank one back at Western.

EG: Okay. What did you major in?

CS: I majored in P.E. undergrad.

EG: And when did you graduate?

CS: '55.

EG: Okay. And then when did you get your master's?

CS: Maybe it was '64.

EG: Okay. Was is it a master's in education?

CS: Yes.

EG: Okay. And you're rank one?

CS: Yes.

EG: At Western Kentucky?

CS: Western.

EG: When was that?

CS: I got that, I think I finished about '73.

EG: Okay. And your occupational experience?

CS: That's just about it. Teaching.

EG: Teaching? Okay, so when did you start teaching?

CS: I started teaching in, oh, nineteen and forty-six.

EG: Okay. Where at?

CS: At a little coal mining community in Muhlenberg called Pevier-Clayton. It's two little coal mining camps and they have one school.

EG: Pevier-Clayton in Muhlenberg?

CS: Muhlenberg County.

EG: Okay.

CS: It was an independent school owned by the coal mines.

EG: Really? Oh how interesting.

CS: And it's gone now. And I taught there two years.

EG: Okay. I just want to make sure that we're picking up okay. I'm going to move that [the microphone] a little bit closer to you, I think. So you taught there from '46 to '48?

CS: Right.

EG: What grade?

CS: Fifth and sixth in the same room. And I coached basketball. I was the basketball coach.

EG: What grades did it go through?

CS: It went through twelve.

EG: Okay. And then after that?

CS: After that I went back to school awhile because I hadn't finished my degree when I started, and I went back to school and I got married in '49.

EG: Okay.

CS: So, about '49, let's see, I think '51 and '52, I taught at Greenville, my home town.

EG: What school was that?

CS: Greenville High School.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: I taught there two years.

EG: From '51 to '53?

CS: I think it's '50, '51; '51, '52.

EG: Oh, okay. And what did you teach there?

CS: Phys Ed.

EG: Okay.

CS: And I still hadn't finished my degree. I was going in summertime, and I finally finished my B.S. in '55, and I went to a—I can't remember these years—1953, I went to a little town called Sacramento.

EG: Like Sacramento, California?

CS: Yeah.

EG: Okay.

CS: ( ) Kentucky.

EG: Yep.

CS: And that's in McLean county. I taught there five years and coached.

EG: What school was that?

CS: It was Sacramento High School.

EG: So you taught there until 1958?

CS: I taught until '57.

EG: '57? Okay.

CS: I may get some of these dates wrong, but, 'cause I know '57 was when we came to Louisville.

EG: Okay.

CS: 1957.

EG: And you found a teaching job here?

CS: Yes.

EG: Okay.

CS: I taught one year at Southern High School.

EG: So for '57, '58?

CS: Yeah. And in '58 I went to Fairdale, and I stayed there twenty years till I retired in '78.

EG: Okay. And when you started at Fairdale, were you a teacher?

CS: Well I taught one year—

EG: Okay.

CS: And then I became counselor for five years, and I was assistant principal for nine years, and principal for five. Does that add up to twenty? [laughter] I was there twenty years.

EG: Okay. So let's see here. You were principal from—

CS: '73.

EG: '73 to '78. Okay.

CS: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

EG: And the one year you taught there, what did you teach?

CS: Where?

EG: At Fairdale.

CS: Phys Ed.

EG: Phys Ed? Okay, so you were a Phys Ed teacher all the way through until you became a counselor?

CS: Yeah, I taught other things but mostly P.E.

EG: Okay. Great. Okay.

CS: It's a nice place here. What do you all, rent it or own it?



EG: Oh, well we're staying here. We're just here for a week, and it would be wonderful to live here [laughter] full-time, but yeah, it's this Gallery House Bed and Breakfast, and the owners are husband and wife.

CS: They live here?

EG: They live here, and the wife is a professional chef, and the husband is an artist, so some of his artwork's on the wall. So yeah, we love staying here, and they're so nice. They can let us use the parlor for interviews so, so yes it's worked out well. Okay, well, let me get my question sheet here. Did you have, with your teaching experience before you were at Fairdale, any experience teaching in desegregated schools?

CS: No.

EG: Okay. These were all white schools that you had been at before?

CS: Right.

EG: Yeah, that's what I assumed. And well, let's begin at the beginning. What did your parents do for a living?

CS: My dad was a mechanic, and my mother, she didn't work. She was a housewife.

EG: Oh, sure, yep.

CS: Yeah, my dad was a mechanic for forty years.

EG: My grandpa, he was a carpenter, actually. Yeah, those trades, so forth. What are your earliest memories of Black, White society? Did you have any contact with Black people growing up?

CS: Oh growing up we had the, there was one school in Muhlenberg county and that was at Drakesboro. But the elementary school was there in Greenville and we'd go out there and play basketball with them on their dirt court.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: They didn't have a gym. Yep, that was my, I guess, first contact with them. You know, they were pretty good at basketball, still are.

EG: Right, right.

CS: And we'd go out there and play on the outdoor court a lot of times. Yeah, I got to know several of them.

EG: Sure. Did you become friends or was it more just through playing the sports?

CS: Well, it ( ) friendly, yeah.

EG: Yeah, sure, sure.

CS: Yep.

EG: And what made you decide to want to be a teacher?

CS: I don't know. I played—well my hearing aid shut off—I played basketball in high school, and I just figured I wanted to coach and be a P.E. teacher.

EG: Sure.

CS: So I think that was the reason I got into teaching.

EG: Yeah. Did you, were you a coach at most of the places where you taught?

CS: Yeah.

EG: Okay.

CS: All of them except Fairdale.

EG: Okay. You were a basketball coach?

CS: Yeah, at every place that I've been except [Fairdale], I coached for nine years.

EG: Okay.

CS: Then when I went to Fairdale I got into, well I started getting into administration because I started working on my master's so I could be a counselor. Then I moved up to assistant [principal], and then on in to principal.

EG: Sure, sure, yeah. And what made you want to be an administrator?

CS: Well, I don't know. I was in it so long I felt like I needed to move up. Try to make a little more money.

EG: Sure. What about being a counselor? What made you interested in being a school counselor?

CS: Well, the main reason, the counselor's job came up before the assistant, before they would put on assistant principal.

EG: Oh, so it was a—

CS: When I went there they had a woman. They had one coun--, they had a lady counselor. And they were going to add another counselor the next year, which would have been '59.

EG: Okay.

CS: So I went to school that summer enough to get enough hours to get a certificate for counseling. And I became a counselor.

EG: Oh, sure, sure. And you said you were a counselor for five years.

CS: Five years.

EG: So, most of your experience with teaching and administration in the five-year stint is the school counselor. So, you were obviously principal when desegregation first happened?

CS: '75.

EG: What do you remember about the anticipation of that?

CS: Well, of course, we had many meetings that summer, with specialists telling us what to expect. And they all kept telling me that Fairdale was going to be a hotbed. And I believed them, and it got pretty nasty in my area. It got pretty nasty. Because most of the people are blue-collar workers at Fairdale. Very few professional people. And a lot of them had moved out of the West End of Louisville to Fairdale to get away from the Blacks. And then here they send them out there. And well, all of them just got real—well, in fact, the service station close to school, where I did business with him selling me gas, it's like it's my fault.

EG: Really?

CS: Yep. They wouldn't sell me gas. They wouldn't service my car. I had to go someplace else. And it's just like it's, that I had caused it.

EG: Right.

CS: You know that the kind of people [who] were out there, they were rednecks, put it that way. Lot of them, now not all of them. A lot of them accepted it. But some of them, you know, some of the rednecks, they didn't accept it. Some of my best friends turned against me. They wouldn't go to ball games. They wouldn't do anything with the school. They just, just quit. But thank God it's better now, I'm sure. I know it is, it's better. But the first two or three years, that's, well that's one reason I got out when I did. I

was only fifty-four when I retired. And I would have stayed on at least sixty, but after I got my thirty years in I left. It wasn't like running the school. It's like being a cop.

Breaking up fights and taking knives off of people, and it wasn't worth it.

EG: Yeah.

CS: So I got out when I could.

EG: Yeah, that, well reading, just reading about the violence, it makes a lot of sense that you would want to leave.

CS: Yeah, yep. It was pretty ugly. I used to get up in the morning and my stomach would just start turning. I said, "This isn't good. I keep on, I'll have an ulcer." So I had to have three years of it before I could retire. I was in it three years.

EG: That was the minimum—

CS: '75 to '78, yeah.

EG: Yeah. If you would describe the first few days of school when the students were first bused, as best you can recall.

CS: Well I remember the county police chief was a Fairdale boy—he was a man. I had the Jefferson County Chief out there. I had state troopers. I had a few city police. I had the state fire marshal. They were all in the building. Cars everywhere. And, in the publicity and all, they had said that there would be a protest area and we had to rope it off outside of the school. We did, but it didn't do a lot of good. That afternoon, well, the buses got there pretty well in the morning, but that afternoon they started gathering. And we knew there was going to be a problem so we took the buses out another way. But they still got to them. They rocked the buses and cussed them, you know. It was rough, that first day. But nothing—I guess you probably know this but—the first year of busing was

also the first year that the city schools merged with the county, and that made it--. We'd been on a quarter plan. And they'd been on semester plan. And we couldn't get any records. We'd have students say, "Well I'm a ninth grader," "I'm a tenth grader," and we'd find out when we finally did get some records that they were in eighth grade and didn't even belong there. So, I'd say the first month we just had them visiting, coming and going and trying out the schools. We couldn't get any records.

EG: Wow.

CS: So you can see, I tell you, it was a bad fit. But I guess it, you know, we made it through. After we got all of the records and we got everything straightened out, it settled down some, but it wasn't very peaceful. Well, you couldn't have a pep rally because they'd always end up in a fight or something. You couldn't have any kind of assembly program because the speakers, they would disrupt it. So, we just had to do away with those things for awhile.

EG: Because the students would be disruptive at the pep rally and assembly and so forth?

CS: Yeah. Well, I'll tell you, you take a--. Of course I didn't have anything to do with it but, they went about it all wrong. I think when [blacks] entered, they should have started in the lower grades, and gradually moved up. Of course they didn't bus seniors, but you take a junior--and we got him from Shawnee High School right down in the western ( )--you take a junior out of Shawnee and send him to Fairdale, he has no allegiance. Now those that wanted education were fine, but those that didn't, all they wanted to do was disrupt. They had no allegiance to Fairdale. They could care less about football or basketball or going to class, anything like that. But of course you had some

that wanted an education. And they were fine, and they would try to help with the ones that didn't want an education. But it was rough.

EG: How many students were bused to Fairdale?

CS: I'm not real sure. I'd say about three hundred.

EG: And how big was Fairdale?

CS: I think at that time I had around twenty-seven or twenty-eight hundred students.

EG: Oh, so very big.

CS: Yeah, big.

EG: And were students bused away from Fairdale?

CS: Yeah, yeah. You know I don't remember exactly now the letter, but they had certain letters going to be bused certain years. So, yeah we had buses going, White students going to Shawnee, and then Black students coming to Fairdale.

EG: And how many people were bused away?

CS: About the same number.

EG: Three hundred, yeah.

CS: About three hundred.

EG: So how did the racial ratio change?

CS: I don't remember what it had, it had to be a certain percentage and I don't remember exact, seems like it's around twenty-seven percent had to be Black.

EG: Okay.

CS: Of course then we had to redo our cheer--, we'd already elected cheerleaders for the year. We had to do that over again, because you had to have so many Blacks on

there. And that's always amazed me, that on the cheerleading squad, you'd have to have so many Blacks, so many Whites. But on the basketball team, they're all Blacks.

EG: Yeah.

CS: Huh [laughter]. That way, of course I don't think they're doing much about it now, that's the way it was then.

EG: Wow. And before then, there had been very few Black students at Fairdale?

CS: We had three families.

ES: Three families, okay.

CS: Three families and I guess about four or five students. And the funny thing about it, back then, one of the students was a cheerleader. She was very popular. So we had a Black cheerleader long before that.

EG: Yeah.

CS: I think there was three families and they were nice, good people, good family.

EG: And the socio-economic makeup of the school? Was it mainly working class—

CS: Right.

EG: Backgrounds of the students?

CS: Very few professional people in that area. There are now, but there wasn't then. Most of them were just good, hard workers, good people until busing started and then some of them weren't so good. I had lost friends that I thought were friends, you know, like it's my fault, and of course it wasn't.

EG: Right.

CS: I had to do it. I didn't have any choice.



EG: How did you feel about having to be the one who was—

CS: Well it kind of hurt for awhile, but finally some of them saw that well, it's not his fault. He's just doing what he's got to do it. I think they finally adjusted. I lot of them, they never did. But most of them came around later, as the year went on, things start picking up a little bit. We could starting having a pep rally or two later on in the year, when we couldn't for, oh I'd say the first three and half months.

EG: Wow.

CS: You didn't get them together at all.

EG: So, when they were in school, was it segregation like within the school?

CS: Oh no.

EG: I mean in terms of did students, the Black students congregate around one another and White students—

CS: Yeah, mostly.

EG: Did you see at all, any of the White families who were opposed, moving away, being part of this White flight, or going to private schools, or were they too poor to be able to afford that?

CS: No, they couldn't, I don't think many of them, some of them might have moved away but they couldn't afford a private school. A few of them might have, but not very many.

EG: Sure, sure. Yeah. And I also talked to Ken Rosenbaum, I don't know if you know him at all, he was head of the City Teachers Union during—

CS: I've heard the name but I don't know him.

EG: During busing, and he too emphasized how it wasn't just the segregation. It was also a merger at the same time.

CS: Right, yeah. The city system went bankrupt and we had to take them over. And as I say we had different, different systems and everything. Plus the busing. We had to, it took us a long time to find out where the students belonged. [They said] they'll be a junior and they might be in the eighth grade or ninth grade.

EG: Wow.

CS: We were forever getting them straightened out.

EG: How long did that take?

CS: Oh it took a good month or so to even find out where they really belonged at Fairdale or ( ) Valley or someplace.

EG: Right.

CS: It took awhile.

EG: Now was your teaching staff too changed at a result of desegregation?

CS: Right.

EG: How so?

CS: It had to be the same ratio, and I don't remember exactly, but I'd say about twenty percent. We had a few Black teachers before that but after, that year we had to get a Black counselor, we had to get a Black assistant principal. I don't remember how many, several teachers. But I had around a hundred teachers, maybe a little over.

EG: Wow. That's a really big school. Yeah, and so some of your teachers were bused away, I assume, as well?

CS: Right. So we had junior and senior high at Fairdale. We had some sixth grades. They don't anymore, I did then. I had a junior high. We didn't have middle school then. We had the seventh and eighth grade junior high in a different section of the building. I had an assistant principal of it. And then nine through twelve, I had an assistant principal, about two up there, try to do that.

EG: And one of them you said was Black?

CS: Yeah.

EG: As a result of the desegregation.

CS: Yeah, the junior high principal came in, was Black.

EG: Yeah, I remember that it was that way at Pleasure Ridge Park from another oral history I did. And I saw too—

CS: Who did you talk with?

EG: I talked with a student at that time.

CS: Oh did you?

EG: Vincent Jarboe, who now has a State Farm Insurance [Company].

CS: Oh, yeah I've heard of him.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: Yes, ( ) to Fairdale was built and opened the same year.

EG: Were they? Oh, okay.

CS: 1958.

EG: Oh yeah. Oh, so you were there close to the time, you started close to the time that it opened at Fairdale, if I remember the chronology correctly? You were at Southern, and then you were there the year it opened at Fairdale?

CS: Yeah.

EG: Okay.

CS: '58.

EG: Sure, sure. I, well with Pleasure Ridge Park, I'm aware too that right away when busing started that there was a football game and a lot of violence broke out after the football [game].

CS: Yeah, that was Fairdale.

EG: If you would talk about--. They were playing Pleasure Ridge Park.

CS: Right.

EG: Okay.

CS: It was sched--, I was on the phone I guess about four o'clock that afternoon and they had decided that, the game was supposed to have been at Fairdale, and they were afraid to hold it there, and I was on the phone with the police chief and the superintendent until about five o'clock, and they finally decided to switch it to Pleasure Ridge. Of course then they had to get it on the radio and on television, so the people would know. And we played at Pleasure Ridge. When it was the end of the ball game, we saw big flames going up out in front of the school. They'd built a fire blocking the intersection. When the game was over, the security took us out through, well we went over curbs, sidewalks into a subdivision and got out. We got back to Fairdale. We got to Fairdale and they had a fire in front of the school, but they didn't bother us. They let us get back and get forth into the shower room, but they didn't bother us. But that same night they had trouble at Southern, they had trouble at Valley, and of course, at Pleasure Ridge.

EG: Yeah, I saw that like a hundred and ninety-two people were arrested that night.

CS: A policeman or somebody lost their life, I think at Valley.

EG: That night, okay. You mentioned how the service station wouldn't serve you, and some of your friends turned out really not to be your friends, did you experience any other repercussions personally as a result of this?

CS: Well my phone was unlisted. But my son, Charles Rich, was in the phonebook, and he got some threatening calls from the Klan [who would] tell him, "Your dad did this and ( )" and I called Russell, the police chief, Russell McDaniel, and I talked to him about it. And, overnight he had his phone changed, made it unlisted. ( ) Yeah he got a lot of threatening phone calls for me.

EG: Yeah.

CS: And we felt like we needed, during the ball games, to run a bus down to Shawnee, students who want to come out there. And I'd get a call at school, well "You'd better not send that bus," and you'd make an announcement over the intercom, so they knew it was coming down there. But some of these kids would go home and tell their parents and I'd get a call, "You'd better not send a bus down there or we're gonna go and blow it up."

EG: A bus—

CS: They never did, but—

EG: To pick up the kids for—

CS: To bring the Black kids out for a ball game.

EG: For the ball game, right.

CS: We tried to do that and they would threaten us. But I don't think anything ever happened, just threats.

EG: Did you have any contact at all with the Klu Klux Klan?

CS: No.

EG: Aside from—

CS: Just phone call, just call.

EG: Okay, because I'm aware that they really came out and were active.

CS: No—

EG: Not really?

CS: I didn't see them. They could've been in the crowd that first day but they didn't have their robes or anything.

EG: Oh, okay, sure.

CS: They could've been there.

EG: Yeah. How long did these demonstrations last?

CS: Oh, I'd say about a couple of a weeks. ( ) they'd died down. But of course you've got the repercussions all the time. I would get phone calls all the time. Anytime I was going to be at the PTA or something like that, they'd tell you, "You'd better not send a bus down," and all that. They never did really do anything, just talk.

EG: Did you constantly have security presence?

CS: Oh yeah. Well we had the state police and the county police in our building, I guess, oh at least three months. I don't know, I don't remember exactly, but within we had two security guards. They were assigned; they were just regular. They had been

trained of course, but they weren't uniformed. They were just a man and a woman. They just walked the halls and make sure the kids had a pass, and stuff like that.

EG: And were they there the rest of your time there?

CS: Yep, they were there for the, yeah they were, I think one was still there when I retired. I wonder if they still have them around; they may still have security.

EG: Sure. That's probably even more common now as compared to back then with school shootings and stuff like that.

CS: Oh yeah.

EG: How did it go with the teachers, when desegregation occurred? How did the teachers feel about the situation?

CS: Experienced teachers could handle it. Now some of the younger teachers would really get nervous and upset, and you'd have to try to take them out of the classroom, the ones that were causing trouble. But I'd say the majority of the teachers, if they could get them in the room, they taught them. Sometimes it's hard to get them to go to class.

EG: Yeah.

CS: Especially until we got everything, all their schedules straightened out and everything like that. Most of the teachers handled it very well. You had a few that were very bitter, but most of them handled it pretty well.

EG: With the ones who were bitter, did they change over time at all?

CS: No. The ones I knew, they tried to transfer and get out, they say the East End is, you know, more professionals, doctors and lawyers, and they wanted to get out that

way, a few of them transferred but many couldn't. So, they handled it pretty well, I'd say, but most of the teachers handled it pretty well, and they were a big help, a big help.

EG: What about your fellow administrators?

CG: Oh I had the greatest. If I hadn't, a couple especially, well one of them followed me—I had both of them to recommend—but one of them followed me as principal and the other one got [to be] a middle school principal. If it hadn't been for them-- And I had a counselor that had been in Thomas Jefferson, which was sort of an integrated county school at that time, they had Blacks and Whites, and he was familiar a lot of the problems, but he was a big help to me.

EG: Yeah, oh that's great.

CS: Yeah.

EG: So you did have a support network within the schools?

CS: Right.

EG: Did you have human relations teams come at all to your school?

CS: Right.

EG: How did that work?

CS: Well they had a human relations person, I guess, for each school, they had about three schools. They'd come around and have meeting with students and they formed some committees where they met with other schools like Pleasure Ridge and Valley and some of the others. Five or six students would meet and talk about some of the problems and what they were doing and all. I think probably they had a countywide human relations committee, seems like they did. But most of it was in the certain region, you know, where schools had similar problems, they met and talked about it. I remember



one little girl that was on a committee. I think they'd met at Southern or somewhere, she came back and said, "Mr. Summers, I want to tell you something. Here is some of these other students, they can't even get in to see their principal if they want to. And I told them that our principal's door is always open."

EG: [laughter] That's sweet.

CS: Doesn't that feel good, yeah. She said, "I let them have it. I couldn't believe the things some of them were telling me. Mr. Principal, some of them just locked themselves in and made them hard to get to."

EG: So you had a lot of contact with the students and made a big point of that?

CS: Right.

EG: What did you observe over time? You said initially it was very hard to do any student-related activities like pep rally, but how about over time? How did it change?

CS: Well I'd say even the second year it got better. You know the juniors, they became seniors, and they'd been there a year, and they were beginning to settle in. And the ones that didn't want to go to school were sort of weeded out; they quit, you know. And the second year wasn't bad at all, and of course the third year, the last year I was there, we had very few problems. We could have pep rallies and you could have somebody come in as a speaker and not be embarrassed, you know. So it took three years to get better, then of course I'm sure it gradually got better, a lot better. But the first year, a nightmare. It drove me out, drove me out early.

EG: Yeah. I saw too, you mentioned in [your] testimony before the Civil Rights Commission, that you had a problem with students boycotting the classes. [Mr. Summers

testified when the U.S. Civil Rights Commission conducted in 1976 a hearing on school desegregation in Louisville.]

CS: Yeah, some. I know we had a call one morning, one of the buses was having a problem coming from the west down here. Somebody, something has riled them up on that bus, and they came in the building just tearing up jack, and I got the assistant principal. We went down there and got them back on the bus, and I said, "Get in here and get every one of their names. We're going to suspend every one of them." Well they was giving us John Doe and Mickey Mouse and everything else. And I wrote, we wrote up what suspensions we could, but it didn't do any good. The next day I had, oh I forgot what his name was, Elliot, he was a reverend down here.

EG: Charles Elliot?

CS: I believe he was, yeah.

EG: Okay.

CS: Yeah. Came out there and if we didn't reinstate those students and all--. I think like it happened, and we just--. I just had somebody from the Board come out and meet with me and we tried to explain to him why we had to have some order. You couldn't let them just take over the school. It was Charles Elliot, you probably heard of him, haven't you?

EG: Yeah, we—

CS: From somewhere else. I don't think Mr. Louis Coleman was old enough back then.

EG: Oh, I've heard of him too.

CS: Yeah, he's very active now, activist. Thirty years ago, he was a young man. But Elliot, Charles Elliot. That was his name.

EG: How aware were you of the civil rights movement events going on, I guess particularly in the 60s?

CS: Not too much about it. Of course you heard about the case in Alabama, and Governor Wallace and all that, but I, you know, you didn't pay much attention. You thought, well I don't think it will, it will never come to us. Then, it wasn't long until it did.

EG: Yeah.

CS: I don't remember what year that was, that they had so much trouble in Alabama. Was that in the '50s?

EG: I think throughout the '60s and '50s, and then with him running for president in '68 and so forth. I saw too, that you [said] in the civil rights testimony [that you had] counselors on the phone talking to parents, trying to get them to send their kids to school.

CS: Yeah. I'd forgotten about that.

EG: Was that successful? Were they able to finally convince the parents?

CS: Finally, I think yeah. Of course they had trouble with some of them, but finally I think they did. They found out they were going to have to send them. How did you get my name and all, through this—

EG: It was through the commission testimony. I had talked, in one of our first research trips, to, do you know Bob Cunningham at all? He was head of the Kentucky Alliance and has been involved in different civil rights issues, and he gave me a copy of the testimony and said, you know, all these witnesses would be good people to talk to.

And so I saw your name in there, and then we looked in the phone book, and so that turned out well. Because we talked to people at Pleasure Ridge Park, and some other schools, but I also wanted to talk to people where there was the most resistance, because I think that's a very important part of the story.

CS: Have you talked to any other principals?

EG: I, you're actually the first administrator I have interviewed. One of my colleagues this afternoon is talking to Bernard Minnis—

CS: Yeah.

EG: Also, he's talked before to Joe McPherson [an African American who was former principal of the historically black Central High School].

CS: Joe was in the hospital recently, did you—

EG: I heard about that.

CS: Carjacking.

EG: Oh.

CS: I like Joe.

EG: Yeah, very sad. And Dan Withers is another person who is now, I guess, principal at Central.

CS: Yeah, I know who he is. He was at Fairdale for awhile after I left.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: He came to Fairdale as assistant.

EG: Yeah, sure. And I think there might be one or two other administrators my colleagues have talked to.

CS: A lot of them have passed on that went through it.

EG: Yeah, we've had more luck finding teachers and students of that time. Let me look at, consult my list here.

CS: Go ahead, go ahead.

EG: Alright. How are we doing for time? ( )

CS: I thought you—I'm not familiar with downtown but ( ) was one-way going South.

EG: I think there is a part of it that's one-way, yeah.

CS: And I thought when I turned on it I was on the wrong place.

EG: Oh, well I'm glad you—

CS: It was coming both ways, you know. You know what, going down I couldn't read these signs well, so I came back and saw Magnolia so I parked right across the street.

EG: Oh, perfect.

CS: Not bad.

EG: Okay, great. Oh, I saw again from your testimony that you said there was a problem with late buses. Did some of the buses arrive late and that disrupted the school schedule?

CS: Yeah, I don't remember too much about that. I'm sure we did, because they had fights. They had to stop and get the fights, keep them from fighting. I don't remember, I'm sure they were late for especially the first few days, until they got all the routes down. Because you know, our drivers, they weren't too familiar [with] the area where they were going, whether to take the interstate, or whether to take the back roads, or what to do. Until they got it worked out, I'm sure they were late.

EG: And you said too that for the first quarter, a lot of it was playing catch-up—

CS: That's right. To find out, as I told you, we didn't have any records, and lot of them were in the wrong grade, and we tried to put them on certain levels, but you couldn't get any IQ scores or anything on them. We couldn't, you just couldn't get it. So we had times we had to test them and do that. We finally got it straightened out but it took awhile. And of course that disrupted class because the students were in the, couldn't read, they couldn't do the work. So what do they do? They just want to cause trouble. Yeah, that went on for quite a while.

EG: Let's see here. Did people vandalize the school at all?

CS: No, not much. We didn't have much vandalism.

EG: Yeah, I saw the—

CS: The only thing we had vandalized, they were going to fight a lot of times, vandalize each other.

EG: Yeah—

CS: I don't recall any, you know, too much vandalism.

EG: And how was discipline handled?

CS: Well the assistant principals stayed busy. They'd try to get a hold of their parents, they called their parents, a lot of times it wouldn't do any good, and you didn't do much about suspending because they didn't want you to. That was the last resort, suspending them, so they'd try working with the parents, and some of them cooperated, I'd have to say. But some of them, you couldn't get a hold of the parents. They worked, or they were living with an auntie or something. It just, it made it rough. You couldn't reach them.

EG: How much did you work then with your superiors and supervisors during this time? The superintendent, assistant principal—

CS: Well, before school started, we had several workshops with people who had been through this in different places and then they would come out after school started, they would come out in the school and talk with the faculty and see how things were going and give advice and tell them what they think they should do and all this. And that went on for almost all year. I know we had a, I can't remember what his title was, but he had about three schools, and he'd come out and stay with you as long as you needed him. He could talk, he was good with students, he could talk them into going to class and things like that.

EG: So this went on before busing started and then throughout the year?

CS: Right.

EG: Was that helpful?

CS: Yes it was.

EG: Yeah.

CS: Yeah, it was helpful.

EG: You said that you were prepared for some of this, did you expect it to be this violent and this disruptive?

CS: No, I really didn't know what to expect, but I didn't think it'd be that bad. I think the biggest problem was if we had had records and could have had the classes ready for them, put them in the right place and they were in the right level, I don't think we'd have had the problem we had. But we didn't have them. We didn't have the records and they weren't in the right class. So until we got that straightened out, it was a mess.

EG: Sure. Also I saw that again from the testimony, you had a football team greeting the buses, like on the first day.

CS: Yeah.

EG: And how things went in terms of sports—

CS: Well, it wasn't too bad, now just that first game I said we had to move from Fairdale to Pleasure Ridge, and then after that--that was the first week of school--I don't remember exactly but it seems like the second game ( ) got better. I don't remember where we played, but it was better.

EG: I'm just going to check the tape a second and make sure that it's okay.

CS: I'm going to stretch, if that's alright.

EG: Okay, sure.

**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A**

**START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B**

EG: Let's see here.

CS: Where are you from, what state?

EG: Oh, I'm originally from Michigan—

CS: Michigan.

EG: Yeah, and I lived in the Washington, D.C. area for six years. I went to school at American University there, and I've been in North Carolina since I've been pursuing my graduate work. Let's see here, I know overall it was a very chaotic atmosphere and it did not go smoothly the first year. Were there any parts of the school or places like the sports team or certain classes where things did go well? Or was it across the board chaotic?



CS: I don't guess it's every place. Some of your stronger teachers were essentially men but then some women too, that had the students that, like I said, really wanted an education. And we tried to get those ones that didn't out, and into different classes with stronger teachers. They worked out pretty well. And some of the Black students really were helpful. They would know some of these kids that were misbehaving and they would talk with them and they'd help. I had one or two that were real good, big help, they really helped. They kept a lot of trouble down.

EG: They would talk with—

CS: They'd get them off to the side and talk to them. I guess they knew them from school before.

EG: So they would talk to the Black kids who were disruptive. Oh, okay [telephone rings] Yeah, sure. Were there other strategies or ways that you tried to maintain order and deal with the situation?

CS: Well I don't recall other than, as I say, we had a lot of support teams from the Board. They were the ones who'd come out all the time and try to help and do what they could and give us advice. This Bernard Minnis was a good help. I guess he's retired now.

EG: I imagine, yeah.

CS: Yeah, yeah. He was a help, he was a big help.

EG: Did you form friendships with any of your fellow teachers or administrators who were Black?

CS: Yeah, oh Joe Mac, I had a lot of meetings with him—

EG: McPherson?

CS: Yes, Joe McPherson.

EG: Yes, that's right, "Mac" is his nickname.

CS: I saw his picture in the paper, I mean on television. He was lain up in that hospital bed, didn't much look like him. They got his car, didn't they? And shot him, I think, something or other.

EG: That's what I heard, yeah.

CS: Yeah. When I heard that name I said, "Oh, I didn't know Joe was still around."

EG: Have any of these friendships still continued?

CS: No, I don't see them anymore.

EG: Yeah.

CS: You know I don't get around like I did, and we used to meet--we had a fellow that, I don't know whether he's even living or not, that tried to keep up with some of the retired principals. We'd meet about once a month and have breakfast, and we played some golf for awhile, but that's all. I guess we've all gotten too old. Can't do it.

EG: Sure, well it's been awhile too, almost thirty years—

CS: Thirty years.

EG: Since you've retired. What were your views at the time about busing?

CS: What was what?

EG: Your views, what were they about—

CS: That's it, I just think they went about it wrong.

EG: Yeah.

CS: I believe if they started, I don't know where to start, third, fourth grade, and just gradually moved up, I don't think we'd have had that problem. But when you take

sophomores and juniors out of their school, they're unhappy. They didn't have any allegiance to Fairdale, and I can see their point. And I think it would have helped too, I don't know if [it] would have helped that much, but I believe [it] would have if they had just started out with the younger grades and just gradually, you know, moved up until they finally got them all bused. But I don't think now they do that. They go where they where they want to, don't they?

EG: I think it has evolved to that pretty much, so yeah.

CS: Yeah, I think it has too.

EG: Was your sense that most of the community [in] the area where Fairdale was, was opposed to busing?

CS: Yes, it was very much opposed.

EG: Yeah. Were you living in that area at the time?

CS: No, at that time I was living right where I am now. I've been out there thirty-one years. I live over in Highview, live close to Fern Creek.

EG: Oh, okay, is that a predominately White area?

CS: Yeah. I think I had about twelve miles to drive to Fairdale, twelve or thirteen miles.

EG: Did you see any change with the three years you were there, when desegregation is occurring, in terms of housing patterns? Did any Blacks, more Blacks move into that area after it—

CS: No, they just sure didn't. So as I said, a few of the Fairdale people moved out but not many.

EG: So it pretty much stayed White working class?

CS: They stayed, yeah. They stayed there, yeah.

EG: Well, and after all that violence, you wouldn't think a Black family would move into that area. What do you remember about what politicians were saying at the time about desegregation, if they were helpful or hindering the process?

CS: I don't remember too much about it. Of course, they were like everybody else, it was new to them, and they did what they could. It seems like that first day I think Harvey Sloan was, was the mayor of Louisville, and it seems like he was out in my school sometime that week. I can't remember. But they came around and they tried to show up once in awhile to support you, yeah. They did that. I know Russell, the police chief of the county and also the city police chief came out there, because there were some city officers in my school too and some state troopers. The parking lot was just full of cars. And I think that helped to keep it down some.

EG: Having that—

CS: They were there for at least, I guess, the first month. And then they started like gradually putting some of the county police state around. And they had their cars out front, parked, and that helped too. But I don't remember too much about the politicians. I think they stayed hidden.

EG: You said it was like you were a cop, more than you were a principal.

CS: Seem like you was always trying to put out the fire.

EG: How long would you say that you felt more like a cop than—

CS: I'd say most of that first year, most of that first year it was, I was glad to see it end. The second year wasn't that bad really.

EG: Yeah, if we could talk some more about the second year and the third year and what was different and what was similar.

CS: Well, I guess we knew more about each other and we had them probably as near as we could in the right classrooms. And the ones that wanted it, and most of them were beginning to see that it was here, there was nothing they could do about it, and so they settled in, the majority of them, I'd say. Of course you still had a few, and you a few Whites that, they don't come to school for an education, they come because they have to and then they want to disturb. But I'd say the second and third year—I never get this, I guess it's the last year I was principal, '78—we had a paper, a fellow with the WHS, of course he's retired now.

EG: What's the WHS?

CS: (     ), television station, the WHS. His name was Bud Harbmeir, he's retired, he lives in my neighborhood. They always sent somebody on the first day of school, and he was out there the first day of school, opening school, and we had a smooth opening, I mean we, it just went like clockwork. And what did he do? Here's a mother going out of the building because she had to drop her little seventh grader off, she was going out the front door crying, so what did he do? He went and interviewed her, and that night on the news, instead of saying we inter--, got opened at Fairdale, he showed this mother crying. And she'd have been crying if it hadn't been busing. And I told him off later. I got a chance to see him. I said, "Why couldn't you have said something good?" He made a remark to me. He said, "Well that a good opening. You really got them out of the halls in a hurry and in class." I said, "Yeah." And then he put something like that on the news.

EG: That's frustrating.

CS: That's right.

EG: After, you know, it was so successful compared to the first year—

CS: That's right. Of course they're looking for something like that. But that's better than listening, than watching, than just smoothness.

EG: Yeah.

CS: But we had a good opening that last year.

EG: The second year?

CS: The third year.

EG: The third year.

CS: The last year I was there, that was it.

EG: Okay.

CS: Well we had a pretty good opening second year, but we had a, you know, pretty much where they, the classes they should be in, and ( ) so it was a lot better. And the third year it was even better.

EG: But did you still feel you had to deal with a lot of racial incidents?

CS: Oh yeah, you still had to stay on your toes all the time.

EG: In the second and third years?

CS: It wasn't as bad though, but there was a few that you had to watch and you had to be pretty careful.

EG: Like the scale of it, it seemed like the first year it must have been daily incidents—

CS: It was, yeah.

EG: And, well multiple times a day—

CS: Right.

EG: Things. How, what would you say the scale of racial incidents was, like the second year?

CS: Oh I don't know. It was down over, over half it was down. I don't think we had half as much trouble that second year.

EG: Okay. And what about the—

CS: Then the third year I was there, it was almost, not normal, but almost normal.

EG: Oh, wow. But you had been so burnt out from the first year and that was why you decided to do the early retirement?

CS: Right.

EG: Yeah, because it still was affecting you and you still had to deal with it to some extent in the second and third year.

CS: I drove over to Frankfort three or four times to see if I could retire in those three years. But I finally could.

EG: Did you think about going to another school?

CS: No. I'd had thirty years in teaching and I had four years of military credit they gave me, so actually I have thirty-four years.

EG: What was on Frankfort?

CS: That's the teacher retirement office.

EG: Oh, okay. And you were in the military?

CS: I was in World War II.

EG: Oh were you?

CS: And they gave, because it interrupted--. I was in school to become a teacher, and I went in the service, and I got credit for four years by just paying into retirement whatever those four years, what they were paying.

EG: So what years were you in World War II?

CS: I went in in '43 and came out in '45.

EG: In what branch of service?

CS: I was in infantry.

EG: Infantry?

CS: Infantry, yeah. I was in the Battle of the Bulge.

EG: Really? Wow. So where did you serve? Where were you stationed?

CS: When I went in I was stationed at Camp Alton, Texas. That's where I took my basic training. Camp Alton, Texas. And I transferred from there to Camp Blanding, Florida, and then from Camp Blanding I went overseas.

EG: And where were you overseas?

CS: Well, let's see, D-Day was June the sixth, and I was in New York waiting for a boat. So, we left about the end of June. So I was about a month behind D-Day, and going over we landed at Liverpool, England. And then we went across the channel and we landed at Omaha beach, but we didn't have to take it; they'd already taken it. But we did land at Omaha beach.

EG: Wow.

CS: And I was in Normandy, and then all through France and Germany, and Austria. I was in Austria when the war ended.

EG: Wow.



CS: Innsbruck, Austria. Beautiful, beautiful country.

EG: What part of Austria?

CS: Innsbruck. They hadn't bombed it. The electricity was still on there, everything was still on, the lights. Beautiful country.

EG: Did, I know it's very different, but the school desegregation, when you were experiencing that, did that remind you at all of—

CS: [laughter] Felt like a battlefield, right. Yeah, sort of. ( ) not quite as bad, but it's bad enough.

EG: One of the people who we talked to, I guess the last research trip, he was a national guardsman and patrolling the buses during school desegregation, and his wife, who sat in on the conversation, was telling us how he would get dressed up as if he was going to war, when he was just riding the buses with the kids.

CS: Yeah, who was he? That was in this county?

EG: Ken Miller, and he, I forget what, he was in Louisville, yeah Jefferson County. I forget what school that he accompanied the kids to, but yeah, really something. Let's see here. Would you say your experience was typical compared to other administrators going through busing?

CS: Well I think one or two of the schools might have been as tough as Fairdale. I think Southern was bad, and Pleasure Ridge I'm sure was bad, and maybe Valley. But I think Fairdale was a hotbed, and of course they had trouble in all the schools, but not as much as we did. Not as much. I guess we got more publicity.

EG: Why do you think it was the worst there?

CS: I think, I don't know. I think because of the area and, well, now, of course Valley and Southern and PRP [Pleasure Ridge Park], they're mostly blue collar workers. They don't have too many professional people, but I don't know. Fairdale, we just had that name. In fact, when I went to Fairdale from Southern, I taught one year at Southern, they said, "Why in the world do you want to go to Fairdale?" They said, "That's the worst bunch of kids in the community," I said, "Well, assistant principal ( ) was going to be principal and he said he wants me to go with him." I guess the best move I've ever made. I'd still have been teaching if I would have—

EG: If you had been at Southern?

CS: Yeah, because I moved up, I taught one year and then got moved up to counselor, and then assistant principal, then principal. So it was a good move, but that year, but the busing and merger, that was, I think if we'd had just one of them, maybe not be merged, it might have been different. I don't know, because we were on a different system and they were on a different system. We couldn't find out anything about students. We had two hundred and fifty, three hundred students and we didn't know whether they were in the right place or not. And that was the biggest headache and I think that was the biggest problem. Now we had a lot of them shopping around, they'd be at Fairdale and I'd get a call from Pleasure Ridge, well, "One of your students are over here." I said, well, they're shopping around, see what school they want.

EG: Oh my. That just sounds so bizarre.

CS: [laughter] Yeah, the buses would run down here on the West End and they'd just get on. They didn't know what schools they were going to.

EG: How chaotic.

CS: It took awhile.

EG: Yeah, now so Fairdale was considered—I know Southern was a site of a lot of resistance, but Fairdale was considered the worst? [doorbell rings]

CS: What's that?

EG: That's the doorbell. I wonder if, I guess I better check it. Excuse me, I wonder—[tape stops]

EG: Okay, oh we were talking about, I guess, Southern versus Fairdale. So Fairdale was considered even worse than Southern in terms of possible resistance and that sort of stuff.

CS: Yeah. But I'm sure they had problems too. But we were just, I don't know, we were just pinned, earmarked, I don't know, maybe that's why we had so much trouble, because we attracted it.

EG: Because they what?

CS: Because we expected it, see.

EG: Oh, yeah. How were you able, I mean you had to stay there, you said even though you tried to get out, what gave you the strength to actually stay in that environment for three years that you did?

CS: I just felt I had to. Because they weren't going to send, it wasn't any use to ask for a transfer, because everybody was having a time, and I knew I just had to stay with it. And if I hadn't had the two men that I had with me, I could have never made it. I still tell them today. They helped me through it. They were good.

EG: In what ways were they supportive? How did they help in the process?

CS: Well, they handled most of the discipline. They took it all, yeah, most of the fights and all, they'd go break them up. I wouldn't have to. Some of them I did, but they'd be in the middle of them and then, they were just good. They weren't afraid to work and they did. And ( ) they were good people, and both of them became principal.

EG: Oh, now were these both White or was this—

CS: Yeah, those two were White. And the Black assistant was in the junior high and he didn't have a whole lot of trouble with them.

EG: Was there a difference between the high school kids and the junior high kids?

CS: Not too much. But there's one thing that I learned, of course I was a boy's counselor so I could work with the boys. Girls are harder to deal with than boys. I had a couple of Black students that had a fight on the bus and one of them had a knife in her purse, and they were arguing over something that happened back in the third grade. You know a boy will beat it out and forget about it, go on, but they had held this grudge. Something that happened back in the third grade, and here they were seventh or eighth graders. And that's something I just wasn't accustomed to.

EG: Right.

CS: You find that true the places you've taught?

EG: Well, I have noticed that in one of the interviews I did this morning, I actually brought up that—that is one of our questions, differences between boys and girls—and she talked about that too, about how the girls just carry grudges around and it lasts so long, and the boys fight it out and they're—

CS: It's over.

EG: It's over, yeah. Right.

CS: Yeah, I found that to be true. They would hold a grudge that went from the third, I think something happened in the third grade. I said, "My gosh. Get over it."

EG: Right, sure. Did you observe any difference between how Black girls were treated versus Black boys who came in?

CS: Didn't have too much trouble with the girls in high school. Some, but mostly boys. The girls, most of them, seemed like they wanted to make the best of it, be there and do a pretty good. Now some of them were not, but I'd say the majority of the girls did alright.

EG: Yeah, were there any cases at all of interracial dating while you were there?

CS: No, for the three years that I was there, I don't recall any.

EG: Yeah, that's what I figured.

CS: It was later, and it's going on now too, isn't it? In Michigan, I guess you were integrated, weren't you, pretty much?

EG: Well, I actually went to a Christian high school and that was predominantly White, a private school. So I really didn't experience school in an integrated setting. But, so I'm not exactly sure what the public schools are like in Michigan. I mean I know it's integrated, but I'm not sure the extent to which it's integrated. I mean I'm aware, like it's probably like across the country, where the schools that are inner-city are predominantly Black and the private ones and the county schools are predominantly White.

CS: Right.

EG: Yeah, probably. We've talked a lot about the difficulties with desegregation and drawbacks of it, would you say there are any benefits to it?

CS: Well, not then. I don't see any then. I'm sure there were, but at that time I don't recall any benefit. Of course I was there for three years and it could've been later.

EG: Looking back, do you see any benefits at all of—

CS: No, in fact they're kind of getting away from it, so I think that maybe they saw that it wasn't too beneficial. So I think now they're letting them go pretty much where they want. But I think it could have been worked out a little, I don't know whether it could've been worked out any better or not, but I just feel like it could. I just think they should have started at, as I said, lower grades and gradually moved up, and I don't think it would've had the problems we had.

EG: Have your views changed over time at all in terms of how you've looked at busing or desegregation?

CS: No, really not much, no it hasn't changed. I think because it was forced on us and then because I had so much trouble, that I'd rather forget it. [laughter] I'd rather forget it. But a good experience. I'm not sorry I went through it.

EG: Oh, oh really?

CS: No, I'm not sorry, but I'm sorry that some of the things had to happen, well my kids being called on the phone and all, but they weren't bothered, they were just threatened, and things like that. But I know that that happens.

EG: If you had to do it over again, would you go through the same thing again?

CS: I guess I would, yeah.

EG: Really? How come?

CS: I don't know. I guess if I was that young again, fifty, that's not too young, or it's young, I probably would, because I had to, you know. I more or less had to then. No

way around it because I couldn't retire. But we had a good two, let's see I was principal in '73, two years I was there before busing, and we had two good years. And then this was thrown at you and it sort of interrupted things. But we got through it. We got through it.

EG: Well, it obviously made the impact on you in terms of loss of some friendships and in retiring early, what other ways has it made an impact on you? Any longer term impacts?

CS: No, I don't think any long term. Some of the people that turned on me I've talked to, and some of them have apologized. And others, well in fact I haven't seen the man that wouldn't sell me gas, but before that, before busing, the fellow at service station did all my work came over for night classes to get his G.E.D. And we became good friends. I helped him get his G.E.D. and all, and then here comes busing. I never saw him and he wouldn't talk to me. Things like that kind of hurt, but you have to consider the source. They, I guess they had viewpoints they couldn't, they couldn't do anything about it; they were bitter. But some of them, as I said, some of them started coming back to ball games, and coming to PTA. Gradually, they got back to helping us out at school, but it took a little while. Of course it was new to all of us. It's something new.

EG: What was your interaction with parents like?

CS: I had [it] a pretty good with most parents, of course I had White parents at Fairdale, that [said] "Don't touch my kid," or "You don't dare touch him." I had one family, boy, if you laid a hand on one of theirs, they'd be over to the school, they'd be on the telephone, they'd be over there in five minutes.

EG: White or Black?



CS: White, this is back before busing.

EG: Oh.

CS: And they were so unreasonable, well finally the boys, as they got older--they had two boys-- got to be seniors at all, they sort of understood their parents shouldn't have interfered in what we did. But we weren't going to hurt them. But most of the parents I had a pretty good relationship with. Even a lot of the Black parents that would come out to PTA, that really were interested in seeing that their kids behaved, that helped. They wanted them to behave. They told me, "If you want to paddle them, you paddle them. If you don't, I'll come out here and ( )."

EG: Oh really? They'd give you permission to just—

CS: We had some like that, yeah.

EG: Did you have to meet with any groups at that time that were pro- or anti-busing?

CS: Well, I know we had to meet, as I said, with Elliot, the one that when we suspended so many of the students that didn't want to go to classes, they just wanted to disrupt. I sent them back home on the bus, and we got the names of the ones we could. But we had a big meeting on that. The parents came out there and we talked, and we finally got it settled and I let them come on back to school. I didn't suspend them three days, I think it was a day. But the parents came out and we talked, we got it settled.

EG: These were all Black students that you suspended at that time?

CS: Pretty much, yeah. I don't know, they left downtown here on a bus upset, and they got to school, they were still upset and they [were] going to disrupt the whole



school, so I put them on a bus and told the assistant principal to get the names he could. Then afterward we had a meeting, and a lot of parents came out and we got that settled.

EG: Probably having some kind of counseling experience helps in terms in how you were an administrator and able to handle those things.

CS: Well, yeah. Right.

EG: You probably [did not] anticipate that when you were a counselor, that it would be helpful that way.

CS: It wasn't in my program when I was taking counseling.

EG: Yeah, sure. Let's see here. We covered most of these questions. Did you have any input at all in the policies that were driving desegregation?

CS: Not much.

EG: Yeah.

CS: I think everybody was kind of feeling their way, and we were getting a lot of advice from people that had gone through it. And I know they got a man, made him an assistant superintendent, that had been through it someplace, and then he helped them with a lot of their policies. And of course we had a principal's meeting every week or two, and we'd discuss things like that, and then he'd come and tell you what you should be doing, what you shouldn't be doing. That helped.

EG: So it sounded like you had a lot of support in terms of administration, not just in your school but with the larger administration as well.

CS: I think the superintendent's still there. You haven't interviewed him yet?

EG: Oh, who is that?

CS: Ernie Grayson. I think he's still living.

EG: Okay. Ernie—

CS: Ernest Grayson. I'm not sure, I haven't heard from him in a long time. But he went through it.

EG: So, yeah, that's a great recommendation. I didn't, wasn't aware that he was still living.

CS: I think, now I'm not positive, I haven't seen him in several years, but I think he's still living.

EG: And it's okay to use you as a referral?

CS: Oh definitely, you interviewed me and I mentioned his name.

EG: Okay.

CS: I don't know what kind of health he's in or anything about him, but he was superintendent during this.

EG: Wow, what a time to be superintendent, again. Yeah. Were there other forms of White resistance that we haven't covered? I know we've discovered there's just kind of different forms of resistance that people have brought up in interviews.

CS: I don't know. I don't recall any other than as I said, they wouldn't come to ball games and they wouldn't come to PTA and they wouldn't do anything. But they been going to the school for a long time and gradually they came back. Worst resistance came that first day or two when they were out there throwing rocks at the school, that's just [laughter] a mess.

EG: After you retired, did you have any more association with the school system or did you keep up with it?

CS: For a long time. I'd go back to Fairdale every, well I'd go back to a ball game or two, and they had me out there a time or two for homecomings and crowned the queen. They used to--they don't anymore, I started it--[have] a Christmas breakfast with the faculty, and they invited me back for that for about, oh I'd say, four or five years after I retired. But they've done away with that. They've had about, let's see, one, two, three, four, this is the fourth, I believe the fourth principal now since I retired.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: And I've been out there once since he became principal. He had us out there one in-service day before school started to talk to the faculty. That was two years ago. I guess that's the last time I've had with them. But they still invite me back once in awhile.

EG: Do you get any sense from those contacts of how things were going in terms of desegregation?

CS: It's going good. ( ) only had about eight hundred students.

EG: Eight hundred now? Oh, so it's really gone down.

CS: Oh yeah, they have four grades, they have four grades.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: And eight or nine hundred students, and they've gone from a 4A in football to a 3A. See they, when the enrollment goes down, we were 4A then in football.

EG: Wow.

CS: They don't have any ranking in basketball. But they did in football. So it's really gone down. I guess, I don't know how many they have this year, but last year they had eight hundred students.

EG: Was the football team then integrated the years that you were there?

CS: Yeah. They didn't have to be but they were.

EG: Was that a problematic area too, integration of the football team?

CS: Well, we didn't have any troubles, the coach's not going to have any trouble [laughter].

EG: Right.

CS: They're not going to have too much trouble.

EG: Yeah, that's been a kind of theme that we've found. Like at Pleasure Ridge Park and other schools, that integration went well in sports, and you have to because if you're on a team, you have to get along in order to win.

CS: That's right.

EG: How would you evaluate the power influence that teachers and administrative staff exerted the course of desegregation?

CS: Their power?

EG: Yeah, how much power they had in terms of how it actually happened and how it went.

CS: Oh I don't think they, I mean we didn't have a, they didn't have too much power. Oh actually they had a lot of input, but as far as policy or anything, I don't think they had much to do, except in their classrooms. They had what they needed and what they wanted to do, and they got support from just about everybody, unless you had somebody that was way out. And you know we get some way out teachers. They get these high ideas and all, and you can't do everything that you want to do, when you're dealing with integration and where White students and Blacks, some of them [haven't

had?] the same courses or anything, and hadn't had the lead up that some students had. So they had to be careful about that, and most of them were.

EG: Sure. In terms of your background, did you grow up in a home that was racially progressive or where you raised with beliefs that were common at the time among Whites?

CS: We had a few Black families where I grew up. My dad had, as I said a mechanic, and one of his mechanics was Black, and I had a good relationship with him, and I think finally he came to Louisville, but I'm sure he's dead now. Last I heard he was up here working at the car wash.

EG: Oh really?

CS: [laughter] But that's been fifteen years ago. But he was, yeah. I had a lot of contact with them.

EG: So you weren't raised in a, it doesn't sound like a prejudicial environment or discriminatory?

CS: No, my parents really weren't. Of course they didn't have a whole lot of contact. Now my dad did. My dad had this Black mechanic and he had a lot of work for some of the Black people. I know there was a Black funeral director there and he worked on his hearses, he kept his hearses and ambulances going. So, he had a good relationship with everyone. He could get along with anybody.

EG: Sure. Well, is there any major topic that is important that we haven't covered that we should talk about?

CS: I don't know, I think we talked about everything. I didn't know if I could remember all of these things, and I'm sure I don't.

EG: Well this has been great.

CS: I don't know everything, I'm sure there are a lot of things that I missed that I just don't recall. A lot of times, you know, when you at night you wake up, you get stupid stuff on your mind and you got back to some of the stuff that happened to you and you think, "What in the world? Why did I do that" or "Why didn't I do that?" and it's amazing. Of course I've been in this for eighty years. That's a long time to be on this earth.

EG: Yeah, it is.

CS: But I guess I did pretty well. I'm still driving, I'm driving into town. I don't like to, but I do, I try. We drive to Florida, we go to Florida in the last of December.

EG: Wow.

CS: Stay three months.

EG: Where do you go in Florida?

CS: Naples.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: Have you ever been there?

EG: No.

CS: Beautiful.

EG: I've been to Gainesville and to Orlando and Miami.

CS: Oh, I've been to Miami.

EG: Oh, okay.

CS: I had a friend that lived there, I went there awhile. But we've been going to Naples about fifteen years.

EG: Oh, yeah. My grandparents for awhile went to Mount Dora, which is near Orlando, and they did that for several years. I love Florida, it's such a wonderful place to be.

CS: I don't know how much longer I can keep going, because my wife won't drive anymore, makes her nervous. And I do all the driving. But she's going to have to start, I'm afraid, sometime.

EG: Pardon?

CS: She's going to have to start back driving one of these days. Because I do most of the driving.

EG: Sure. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently in terms of your experience with being an administrator during desegregation?

CS: No, I don't think so. I can't think of anything.

EG: What would you say are the lessons of your experience with school desegregation or the lessons of school desegregation?

CS: I don't know, I think you just have to have a lot of patience and do a lot of listening. That's just about all you can do. But it does take patience and just don't lose your cool. You can't lose your cool, and that doesn't help. Just communicate, that's a main, big thing is communication. I don't think there's enough of that that goes on. You need to communicate. But I don't know of anything else I would have done differently. I can't think of it.

EG: What at the time did you see as the goals of school desegregation?

CS: What?

EG: The goals of school desegregation, the purposes of it.

CS: Well, I think the goal was to give everybody an equal education. And I think that was the main thing, to provide an education for everybody.

EG: Do you think that that has succeeded?

CS: I think so. Yeah, I think it's better. I don't think it did for awhile, but I think it is.

EG: Would you call yourself a supporter of busing or opponent of it?

CS: Well, I'm not an opponent. As I said, I just think it might have been handled differently. I don't know.

EG: At that time—

CS: You don't, you just don't, you don't know. Maybe that was the right way to go but I just think it should have been handled, as I said, starting with the lower grades and gradually bring them up. I don't think we'd have had any the problems if we would have--.

EG: So at the time too, would you have characterized yourself as not an opponent of it, but you thought it should have been done differently?

CS: Right, right.

EG: Sure. I guess, is there anything else you want to add at all?

CS: I don't know of anything.

EG: Alright. You've been very helpful and this has been great.

[The interviewee/interviewer ended the tape confirming spelling of proper names]

**END OF INTERVIEW**

Transcribed by Emily Baran. September, 2005.