

Edwin Caldwell

Tape 1 of 7

May 28, 2000

RG: This is Bob Gilgor, and the date is May 28, 2000, and I'm at 107 Caldwell Street interviewing my friend Edwin Caldwell. Ed, can you tell me about growing up in Chapel Hill?

EC: Um, specifically what do you want to know? Do you want to know about family, just, you just want me to sort of talk?

RG: That would be great. Anything that comes to mind.

EC: Okay. Well growing up in Chapel Hill was really unique. Being here with the University, having everything at the University I was exposed to, you know, made us different. And you can look at the number of my friends that grew up here, they just had a different perspective than a lot of other black youth from all over North Carolina. My earliest recollections was that I lived with my grandmother, her name is Alice Neal, at 407 West Franklin Street. Where that is now is the McDonald's on Franklin Street is the site of her homeplace. Those were very happy times, because I was there with two cousins, and later a third cousin whose parents died moved in, and my grandmother sort of adopted her. We were all raised like family. Let me back up and say that in the back was my grandmother's best friend, Miss Effie Taylor, and we were all related. All her grandchildren also lived there. And we were in and out of each other's house. We were all raised like brothers and sisters. The only thing is we just lived in different houses. Those were very happy times. And I don't know what to say, it's just that, it was just marvelous.

RG: How is it you grew, were your parents there with you with your grandmother, or—

EC: Yes. When my mother and father got married, they lived with my grandmother. My aunt and her husband, Aunt Frances Hargraves, also lived there. It was a big house, many rooms. My grandmother also took in boarders, so anybody that was in the house was almost like family. Miss Effie Taylor lived in back. They'd sit on my grandmother's porch, you know, and they'd just converse, and they were just the best of friends. Other neighbors also came and the porch was a social place that they talked, whatever. In the wintertime, the kitchen was the place that they got together, and there was always food, you know. My grandmother fed just about everybody in the neighborhood. So it was really a, just a great place to grow up. On Sundays and holidays, those were special times because my grandmother had a sister that lived in Durham. They came to Chapel Hill every Sunday, and they'd sit on the front porch and they'd talk. My grandmother's sister, her name was Hessie Mitchell, they raised my mother, so Aunt Hessie and her husband Willis were just like my grandparents, too. You know, you could feel the love just radiating, and for a long time I didn't understand why he loved

me so. And it was because my aunt raised my mother. So those were very special times living up on Franklin Street. I also had a grandmother that lived over on Church Street. Her name was Minnie Caldwell. And just a legacy of the Caldwell family was sort of outstanding. I didn't really understand why when people found out that I was a Caldwell, they always sort of treated me special, you know. They always said, you come from a very special family. So they were long-time five generations on both sides. I'm told, and I remember reading somewhere, that my father married my mother because my father had an uncle that gave him land, where we're sitting now, if he would marry my mother. It was just, you know, the strength of the two families. And my uncle knew that my father couldn't do any better marrying Alice Neal's daughter. So I come from very strong backgrounds, strong parentage. I grew up, my father worked at the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity house. And I grew up in that fraternity house. He started taking me up there when I was a baby. My earliest recollection of being there was that I was four years old, and he had me working at the fraternity at four. It, it was unbelievable, because I was Little Eddie. You have to understand the special relationship that my father had with the Dekes. He was sort of a mentor. And it was sort of confusing, because I grew up under segregation and I guess when I was in the fraternity house I was Little Eddie, and I was treated sort of special. Let me back up and say that everybody in the fraternity didn't treat me that way, you could always tell who were the good people from who were not so good. Um, in segregation, when I say good, in the house they always treated me as Little Eddie and I'm special. But when you'd go downtown and you'd meet a Deke, he would pass you. If he passed you and wouldn't speak to you, you'd know that he wasn't so good. He was probably adhering to the mores and so forth of the times. There were others that really didn't care, and I was Little Eddie wherever they saw me. And that's how I identify the good from the bad, if you want to call them bad. I, those Dekes took a special interest in me. There were people there like Sid Alexander, he later went on to get his medical degree. Every time that I went to clean up his room, he always sat me down and we had pep talks. He always told me, I want you to be somebody. And he helped me with homework, and he'd just talk to me about things that he thought I should know. And he just comes to mind, there were others, like, there were a host of them that were at the Business School. Roy always had a special interest in me. Even as I grew up, and when I went off to college, he'd always say how you doin' in school and that sort of thing. So I grew up with a lot of support. Now on my mother's side, my grandmother, Alice Neal, worked for Dr. Frank Graham, okay, he was President of the University. Dr. Frank, we were family. And there were many times that my grandmother took us to, we'll just say the President's house. And we played in the yard, or whatever. We didn't do that often, but Dr. Frank wanted us to come to the President's house and he also talked to us about the value of education, and whatever. I remember going in just about every year. We'd dress up, and he'd go through and he'd ask us how we're doing in school, that sort of thing. You could feel that Dr. Frank was very, very special. My grandmother, and Mr. Hubert Robertson who was his chauffeur, had a very special relationship. Now for many years, Dr. Frank was a single man. He later married, we called her Miss Marian. He, I guess there was a little friction as to Miss Marian telling my grandmother what she ought to cook for Dr. Frank, you know, and my

grandmother says, well I've been cooking all along, and I know what Dr. Frank likes to eat, you know. And so she continued to cook the way she wanted. You got to understand Alice Neal, man, very strong woman, wasn't going to let anyone tell her pretty much what to do. So those are some early recollections of what it was like. I moved about, in Chapel Hill and on the University campus, pretty frequently. In fact, all blacks moved about pretty freely, you know, on the campus.

RG: The campus was all white, though?

EC: All white. One of the things in growing up in Chapel Hill, we developed some very special relationships with some of the white kids that went to Chapel Hill High. We had some very good, I mean they were just good friends. Every year we used to go to Kenan Stadium and we'd play a football game to see who had the best football team in town. The parents didn't allow us to play together, but we pretty much decided what we were going to do anyway. We were friends, and we played this rivalry game to see who had, you know, Chapel Hill versus Lincoln, you know. And a lot of competition, we played basketball to see who would have the best basketball teams. And we really, I guess some of my best friends were, just happened to be white, you know. We had relationships as children. My grandmother's yard backed up to the white parents and so forth, and so we played football together. They had kids or whatever, and they'd come out in the field and we played. So I really didn't feel like, you know, we'd see these friends downtown and we were friends. One of my best friends was a fellow by the name of Rinnie Randolph. Just a super guy. He was a little bit older than I was, and just, I don't know, he just sort of thought the world of me. He has since moved from Chapel Hill, but we've kept a good friendship even long after we were married and that sort of thing. And others kept good friendships also, so that was pretty much some of the early recollections of what it was like. I know you want to ask me some questions.

RG: I love just hearing you talk. That's really what I want, you're doing exactly what I want.

EC: Um, we understood that when you leave Chapel Hill, that you know, your parents taught you what you need to understand to survive, okay. As a black male, they taught you the dos and don'ts, and whatever. We grew up pretty astute. Being able to read, we'll just say, the other culture. And even today I'm very perceptive, you know, from just reading body language and eyes and other, um, physiological changes. So when a person talks to me, I pretty much don't listen to the words, you know. I listen, I look at him, and one of the things that they can't hide is their reactions, you know. So I read body language, I read reactions. So those are the kinds of things that they pretty much taught us. My father, one of the things that generally was expected of a black male at that time was to say yes sir or whatever. To pretty much agree with anything a white person told you. For example, they'd say Eddie, you know, the sun is shining out there, isn't it? And it could be raining, and you would say yes sir, it sure is, you know. Just raining. And then he would come back and say, you know, he got to be a fool. He must

think that I'm just ignorant, you know. And he told me that he was only doing that because that was what was expected, but he let me know that he didn't buy into that system. You would have to, I guess, see my father as he operated around that fraternity house. And when I say that he was a mentor, then that's what he was. My father was a very important cog in that fraternity. Generally, when a white parent brought their sons to school, and if they were Dekes, they'd turn that son over to my father and say here he is, you do whatever needs to be done to make him a good Deke. And that's what my father did. He not only made sure that those kids went to school, but he taught them the social graces of fraternity. Drinking, and carousing, and whatever. But always with a focus on going to class and getting an education. When I say that he was a cog, there were many Dekes that call him on the telephone and talk to him personally, and say Eddie, we have a young man up here in Salisbury that we want you to get into the fraternity. And he, he played that role. He would say okay. Sometimes the fellas may blackball somebody that the alumni Dekes and my father thought ought to be in the house. My father was a student of men, and he could keep that tied up and make them change. Let me back up and say that my father was a Deke, okay. He was inducted into the house in 1946. Right after the war. Now, growing up in segregation, and my father being a Deke, you know, gave me mixed feelings. During that time they were palling me the pledges. In other words they had a pal, and when they were bringing them across, man, every Deke got to pal with somebody. You know, and here's my father out there initiating these guys, you know, just like anybody else. He was a Deke. And not too many people understood that he was in the fraternity. So they called upon him, you know, and he played that role. He was still the custodian or janitor or whatever you want to call him, but he did what he, however much that he wanted to do. If you talked to him, he did a whole lot of cleaning up. If you talk to me, I don't think he did too much, because he had me going up there every day. I went up to the Deke house every day. I was doing the cleaning, you know! On the weekends and things, he didn't even come up there. He bought me a bicycle so I could get up there so he could lay in the bed and I could ride to the Deke house! And I cleaned that Deke house, okay? My father loved to hunt, and there were many mornings that he went somewhere deer hunting, you know, before daybreak. Well that meant I had to get up and go to the Deke house and clean up before I went to school. You know. So the two of us, you know, took care of that Deke house. And during the holidays he'd give me a list of things, man, because all the kids would be gone, things that I needed to clean up and make sure was right. And my father'd come back and he would inspect it. You know, floors waxed, windows washed, and whatever. Now there were also some Dekes that lived in Chapel Hill, like Charlie Shafer, you know, and some others. Well they'd take a tour, and they'd give me a list. So I used to hate to see all these people coming, man, giving me these lists, 'cause a lot of times they'd be different, and everybody inspecting the Deke house, you know, to give me these things, man to do. They like worked me to death, you know.

RG: Kind of put you on the spot.

EC: Yeah. Now on the weekends, after they'd have a party or after a football game, those guys tore the house up! You know, beer cans and whatever, that house was a wreck. Sometimes they'd pull the furniture out on the front porch, and stuff, man, and well, you know, like I was saying, my father didn't go up there. It was my job to go up there and clean up. And I'd get that house back together. And I'd pull furniture in best I knew how, I guess I was 12 or 13 years old, you know. And if some of them weren't drunk, they would help me get the furniture back in, you know. But that house was spic and span by the time that they would get up. Now my father would come later, and he'd mix orange juice and he'd mix tomato juice, and he'd take it around, because all those guys had hangovers, you know. And my father would give them their hangover portions, you know. And if some wanted something to eat or that sort of thing, that's what he did. He treated those kids, man, like royally. And that's why they loved him so. Um, I went to the Deke house every day. Now I played football and basketball. I could not go to practice until I went up and cleaned up. I had this bicycle, man, if I was going to go to practice, I guess he had some arrangements with the coaches that they knew that I had to go up and, pretty much I didn't do anything but run the vacuum cleaner and straighten up, you know. And then I'd come back and go to practice. If we had to travel, that meant I had to get on my bicycle, man, and vacuum and whatever before I could go on the trip. Now I understand a little bit of what my father was doing, okay. I was the only child. And my father was determined that I was going to not grow up spoiled. So I think he sort of bent over backwards of making sure that I had chores, and that I didn't have no idle time. So I worked pretty hard as a kid. My mother was a schoolteacher, she taught school at a rural. So when I got out of school, I got out of school here, there was nobody home, so my father made sure that I was going somewhere and that I was occupied. And I used to cry, and said, you know, why can't I play football, basketball with the neighborhood kids? And he'd say, you can, after you go to work. So he was pretty hard on me, he was very strict, whatever. Now my grandmother died, his mother, when I was ten. My grandma brought a good balance, you know, to talking to him when she thought he was being too hard on me. And she would say, son, you know, I've talked to your father, you don't have to do that, or whatever. If he was going to whip me or something, man, I'd run through the field. She lived right up through the field there, you know, and I'd go to my grandmother's, man, so I didn't get no whipping. I was sort of special to my grandmother. One of the reasons is I carried the name Caldwell, and there were twelve brothers and sisters. None of the brothers had sons that carried the name. That was a big thing for my grandmother. And I carried the name on. And so I was very special. She died when I was ten, man, that was a big loss for me. 'Cause I had nobody to run interference, you know. I kind of used my mother, to a certain extent, but when the mother and father get together, man, they weren't going to, you know, one was so much that I could, I mean they were pretty together on raising me, so, those were some of the things that I remember. School, I was expected to do very well in school. I had a cousin, his name was William Hargraves, his mother was Frances Hargraves. Billy was his name, Billy was very bright. Billy was a year ahead of me, and Billy set the pace, and when I come through, teachers expected me to do, you know, the same, have the same performance as Billy. Well, I wasn't as bright as Billy, so I had, I mean that was

difficult. I was fairly smart, but I wasn't like Billy. Billy read all the time, you know, he was just very bright. So always coming behind him was difficult, you know, and we would go, we grew up like brothers. As I said, we stayed at my grandmother's until I was five or six, then we built a house over here. And my aunt built a house, you know, so we still were like brothers, except we just lived in different houses at that time.

RG: He lived right across from you.

EC: Yeah. Catty-corner, you know, my first house was two doors down. And they lived there, so we grew up in and out of each other's houses. What questions do you have, man?

RG: You had mentioned the legacy of the Caldwell family. Can you describe more about that? What was the legacy of the Caldwell family?

EC: I really didn't find out about the legacy of the Caldwell family until, I guess, I had finished college. There was a lady here by the name of Adelaide Walters, she was on the Town Council. And she was one of the ones that said I really needed to go to the North Carolina Room and look up the history of my family. But before that, you know, different people would tell you things about your great-grandfather being, I don't know the word I want to use, but community leader. I also knew that my name, Edwin Caldwell, came from a great-uncle. He was a doctor, his name was Dr. Edwin Caldwell. He was really a renowned doctor and an expert in the disease called pellagra. Pellagra is nothing but a deficiency. So as you can imagine, blacks and whites, man, weren't eating well during that time, and so they had vitamin deficiencies and so forth. Dr. Caldwell was well respected by everybody, white doctors and so forth. He, they used to expect him to come to Duke Hospital and go on rounds with the other doctors. Now, we're still back in segregation, okay. But they would not start rounds until he got there. And he went around with them on rounds. Now he had to walk to Durham, okay. There was a railroad track that runs, I know you pass it on Estes Drive, but that went to Durham, and he used to walk up and down the railroad track. He had a horse and wagon sometimes, you know the roads weren't very good. Lot of times if he got stuck up they would wait for him to come. And he later opened up a practice in Durham. But Dr. Caldwell was pretty famous. Both black and white used to come for treatment. White used to come at night, and he used to treat them in the garage. My grandmother told me, you know, they didn't want to come, didn't want to be seen coming to Dr. Caldwell to get treatment, but they came. Because they knew that he was the one that could do something for them. And well, my grandmother wouldn't let them in the house, so they had to be treated in the garage. (Laughs)

RG: Why wouldn't she let them in the house? Because they were white?

EC: Man, you know. They were white. I mean, if she had to go to their back door, then they weren't coming in her house, okay? She was just that strong a woman, okay? Um, I'm told that Dr. Caldwell raised herbs and so forth, and went into the

woods and got different kinds of herbs that he used in his practice. Let me back up and say that Dr. Edwin Caldwell was an uncle. His brother, you know, died with twelve children. And he was practicing in Arkansas. So he left Arkansas and came back to North Carolina to help raise these, his brother's twelve kids. And he said well, I got to support these kids, I may as well marry my brother's widow. And that's what he did. And he raised all those kids, man, as if they was his own. And he had one daughter, you know, from that union. When I talked with my father, he really never remembered his father. T be honest with you, his father was poisoned, okay. He worked in the chemical lab down at the University. He had a drinking problem, and one of the professors switched the alcohol, switched the ethyl alcohol, and it was labeled ethyl but it was really methyl alcohol. And when he drank it, he knew that it was poisoned, and he tried to get home. I think he got as far as the top of the hill on Church Street before he went blind, and the neighbor people called and um, and you know, I think my father said that he and his brother went up and brought him home. He didn't live too long after that. So he died. The bad thing about it was the professor bragged about killing this nigger, you know. They had a dinner party, you know, and he was bragging at the dinner party. And the lady that served it, his cook that served the dinner party came back and told my grandmother. But that was the kind of cruelty and so forth that happened during those days. I was doing research, okay, on family research. And I was doing real well, putting together the history of, the black history of Chapel Hill as well as on my own family research. When I found out about that, you know, I had to put that aside. It's hard when you see your father and your uncles and so forth crying, man, after repeating that story. And I knew that I could find out, searching the records, who we was. And I really didn't want to do that. I did some soul-searching. Because I think he, he changed the history of the family, you know, my grandmother really had it hard, man, trying to raise these twelve kids. And I was very, very angry, bitter, and whatever, and I said to myself, even if I found out who he was, it would not be right, you know, to confront his children. They didn't have anything to do with that, it was him, you know. So I put the research away, I never went back. I didn't want to know who it is. But I do know that he changed the family.

RG: That's your father's father.

EC: Yes. My, there was land that came from my great-great-grandfather, he had amassed some land holdings. How, I don't know. But all of the land from Church Street and on the other side, you know, was Caldwell land. And he passed it on to his first five sons, and from that we inherited some of the land. I built my house on our land, and pretty much the land has been able, has somehow gotten out of the family, you know. My father was an astute businessperson, and he helped his brothers and sisters, man, build apartment units and so forth on that land, you know, to give them rent. Since that time that land has, has gotten out of the family for one reason or another. One of the things I've been talking with him is that I've made sure, man, that we don't get rid of any land. And I've said to my children, you know, we will keep the land in the family. There will be nobody selling no land, okay? I have tried to buy some of the pieces of land that have gotten away from, well, it's generally happened because the person died and

therefore their spouse took the land, and they didn't have the same feelings for Chapel Hill or the land, you know, like we had. And even with me trying to buy it, they won't sell to me. That's another, it's a jealousy and that sort of thing. They'd rather let it go than to let me have it. So.

RG: What you're describing, my interpretation of it is, a very liberal family. Do you think your family was different from other black families in the area here? You interacted with whites in many different ways. Do you think others did the same thing?

EC: I think that to a certain extent, there were a lot of black families that interacted with white families. Those were mostly middle class families. Probably not to the extent that my family did. I interacted on both sides, um, you know, everybody knew who Alice Neal was. And I, to give you an example of what I'm saying, was I remember getting my first ticket, driving ticket, after I got my license. And I was supposed to go to court. Well, my grandmother went down and told the judge, as well as the chief of police, my grandson is not coming to court. He will not be in this court. And I didn't go to court. She had that kind of status, I mean everybody knew Alice Neal. I remember one night, I, I was watering the grass at the Deke house, about 1950. I forgot and left the hose on there, you know. So my father comes and says, did you turn the water off? I says, no, man. He had a truck at the time, and I got into the truck, I was angry. He sent me back up there. I left the tailgate down, and right at Franklin and Columbia, man, I took off, you know, and bottles, drink bottles in the back, man, rolled out and burst on the, on the pavement. I kept going, and I went and turned the water off, and when I came back the police were waiting for me. And they had a broom, and I, here I am sweeping up glass and so forth, in the middle of the night, you know. And they, they said, you know you were wrong. And I was wrong. And by that time, I don't know, some call came in and everybody said they, it came on the radio, they caught this fella, man, that ran off with these bottles. Well, they were going to take me to jail, okay. And in them days when they took you to jail, they beat you. They beat you with rubber hoses, okay. I mean, it's known, you're black, they take you to jail, you get beat, okay. And they were getting ready to take me off, okay. And they had handcuffs on me, man, and I'm about ready to be put into this patrol car to go to jail, and somebody said hey, take the handcuffs off him, that's Alice Neal's grandson. You don't need to take him to jail, you let him go. And that's just an example of people knowing me, okay. Deke connection, okay? There is a Deke connection.

RG: But where did Alice Neal get her power that you're describing. Is it because of who she worked for?

EC: Well, my grandmother was just a strong woman anyway. My grandfather called her a big ball of fire. I mean, she taught herself to read, and the whole bit. She was, I don't know, she just was a strong woman. She interacted with Frank Graham, okay, in a way that nobody could react, interact with. Let me give you an example of what I'm saying. There was an unwritten policy at the time that all the whites that had domestics working for them got together and made decisions

how much they were going to pay them and that sort of thing. So they kept the prices pretty low. And anybody that was a professor moving into the community, then there was a Welcome Wagon to tell them, if you hire somebody here, here's the scale. Well, my grandmother said to Miss Marian, I need a raise. I need a raise. And she said Alice, I can't afford to pay you because you know, the others, this is what they pay here. And if I did that then I would break that code. Well, you know, my grandmother looked her in the eye and said Miss Marian, I tell you what, you either going to pay me, or I'm going to take it home. Because I will feed my family. So there will be two or three pork chops that will be going home with me, you know, and I would prefer that you paid me as opposed to me having to steal it. One way or the other, I'm going to feed the family. So she got a raise. She was just that strong that she got a raise. She was just a strong woman. But you know, Frank, Dr. Frank asked her one time, Alice, why is it that when I ask the gardener or somebody a question, he always agrees to me? And she said, Dr. Frank, you know, can't you understand that you pay that man, you think that he's going to sit up and disagree with you? That's why he agrees with you. And as long as you're paying him, he don't care what he's telling you, you know. And he said oh, I never thought about that. He used to read speeches to her, you know, when he had a speech to give, he'd go out to the kitchen and say Alice, I want you to listen to this speech and you tell me what you think. And she would tell him. Sometimes she would read it while he was putting on his necktie or something. And one thing that he used to, she used to say is that there would be words in there that she couldn't pronounce. And she'd be reading the speech and she'd, aw, skip it. And she'd read some more, and aw, skip it. And he said, Alice, what is that skip it? She said I can't pronounce the word, so I just say skip it. And you know, that was, she had a real good relationship with him. I found, you know, when he left the University and he went to Raleigh, went to Congress, and they, he lost the election, won't even talk about what Jesse Helms and them did to him, you know. They called him a nigger-lover and they ran pictures and so forth, of black, you know, going to be in power, and that's the way they beat him. But he was a man of integrity, and he would not, he would not fight back. (tape runs out)

...appointed by Truman to the U.N. So he used to come back to North Carolina, he had a sister living down on Battle, Battle Lane. But one person that he'd always come back to see would be my grandmother. And they'd sit on the porch and whatever. I found records and so forth that he helped send my cousin to school, so he gave her money while she was in college, helping her with tuition and whatever, okay. This would never come out, but I found letters and so forth, you know. And that was the kind of person he was. He fathered my career, finishing college, the college that I went to he was on the board of trustees, you know, at Hampton. So we all sort of went to Hampton. And while he was there to a trustees meeting, he'd sort of look us up and that sort of thing. So I knew that I had good connections. If I got in trouble, you know, I knew that I had an ace in the hole with the trustee. I also knew that I had Deke connections, okay. Never undermine the Deke connection. Strong, okay. Even today, it's very strong. People in positions of power, you know, if my father needed to call somebody,, that's what he did, man, and things got, things were done. So, you know, my

father made me aware of that Deke connection. I, just to give you an example, I was working in Raleigh, and when Howard Lee left, you know Howard Lee gave me a job over there. When Howard was no longer over there, the next person coming in wanted to get rid of me. I can understand, he wanted to put his people in. But he played games with me. If he had come to me like a man and said Ed, no harm, but I need to put one of my persons in, would you give me your letter of resignation, and I would have given it to him. But they played games with me. Like I'd go traveling and I'd come back and my desk was out in the hall. They took my position away from me. And a lot of other things, man, that were really trying to make it so hard on me that I would leave. They put out that nobody was to talk to me. And we're social beings, man, that was the hardest thing in the world, man, sitting there and everybody scared to talk to me, you know. The, and I said I ain't going to resign. I'm not going to resign, okay. I ain't going to let them do that to me. White man, I'm black, you know, I have my dignity. I'm not going to let him do that. They had a Christmas party and they marched everybody in the department up to the new secretary's office, man, and he shook everybody's hand and welcomed them, and they had punch and cookies. Well, when I got there, he turned his back on me, and well, everybody there saw it, and so that was the beginning of breaking down, because people said man, this is not right. I don't care who it is. I will talk to you and I, you know, I don't think that's the way it should be. There was a lady there that told him off. She had thirty years in, so she could retire anyway. She told him, you know, I'm going to talk to Ed, I'm going to support him. I don't like the way you're doing this. Well, finally it got so bad, man, with the games that they were playing, is I went to Ben Ruffin, who was the minority person, and Ben told me there was nothing he could do, man, that was the governor's childhood friend, you know. And ain't nothing I can do, man. Best thing I know you to do is resign. I said I ain't resigning. I ain't going nowhere. So I called, I didn't tell my father, but he knew something was wrong with me. So I went to one of the Dekes, Kenny Roth, sent it to Kenny Roth, the most powerful man in state government, okay. Nothing happened over there unless Kenny said it happened. That's when, you know, they were very strong. The governor couldn't get his budget through, man, if Kenny said it ain't going through the general assembly. And so I talked with Senator Roth's son, and he said go talk to my father. So I went and talked with Dr., I mean Senator Roth, and I said I need your help. This man, Joe Grimsley, you know, is really making it hard on me, and I can't take it no more. I'm asking you to do something about it. Well, you know, Senator Roth says well Eddie, there's a separation between the legislative and the administration, you know, and I don't want to get involved. So I looked Senator Roth in the eyes and said, Senator Roth, what are you telling me, that you're not going to help me, not going to help Little Eddie? You're a Deke. I don't understand this. Tell me, you know, are you going to help me or are you not going to help me, okay? Now Senator Roth, I'm going to be very honest with you. What are the other Dekes going to say if you didn't help Little Eddie? Now you just tell me, are you going to help me or not? He said Eddie, that's pretty strong, okay. You write up what needs to, you know, so that I can know. So he called the governor's person and said I want y'all to leave Little Eddie alone, okay. I don't want to hear that y'all are doing these games on him, okay? Well, they stopped, Bob, for about three or four

weeks. Then they started again. I called Senator Roth and said, Senator Roth, they started again. So he got in touch with the governor's person and he said, well, we're going to transfer him. They drew up an agreement of understanding, and I got transferred to another department, and they made this thing sound official, and I had this position, and whatever, you know. And that's what happened. And I saw Ben Ruffin and he said, how were you able to pull this off? I said, Ben, you couldn't help me, I had to go to somebody that could. And he was amazed that I had these things. He said, what kind of connections you got? I said don't worry about it, okay. If anybody bothers me from now on. So now the word got out, man, you know, I mean word starts circulating real fast. Nobody messes with him, he's got political connections. And so I didn't never tell nobody, I never used that. Only use it when I have to. I mean, I never went to a Deke to say, you know, this is what I want. No, I worked for what I want. But if I need to use a connection, that's what I would do. I got the executive director for the Highway Finance Agency to resign. He called me in and said, I'm resigning. This is hush-hush. The board wants to appoint you. Are you willing to serve? And I said I was. Well, that was the best well-kept secret, because at the next meeting, he offered his letter of resignation, and the board sort of went into executive session to see who they were going to appoint. I already knew who they were going to appoint, they were going to appoint me. We had underwriters and bond council from Wall Street in New York, because we sold bonds. And they were trying to figure out, well who's going to be the next interim executive director. And they went lobbying, they were lobbying everybody, okay, all the whites that they thought may get appointed. And I'm sitting there on the wall, you know, nobody talking to me. I'm just sort of watching the dynamics. I mean they just knew they weren't going to appoint no black man. That agency had a two billion dollar portfolio, you know, to manage. They ain't going to put nobody like me in charge of all that money and stuff. So I just sort of watched, and when they came back they made the announcement, that we appoint Ed Caldwell. The place almost went wild, you know. The bond underwriters had lobbied and talked to the wrong people, so automatically they stopped talking to them and they started coming and talking to me. Congratulations, and we're going to work with you, and whatever, you know. So I said, okay. I mean, I ain't no fool, I needed their help.

RG: But your feelings were hurt?

EC: No, I wasn't hurt. They just didn't know. Just didn't think that I would be appointed. They didn't, I mean it was a business thing, okay. I had some of the administrators that I had worked with, you know, said hell, I ain't going to work for you. Ain't working for no black man, you know. Just can't work for you. You know I like you, Ed, but I just, in my history I, I just can't work for you. One guy, I told him, I said look, I'll tell you what. Why don't you go home over the weekend, you come back Monday, and you tell me whether or not you're going to work for me. I want you to have all weekend to think about it. And if you can't work for me on Monday, then I'll accept your resignation. But you talk it over with your wife and your kids, and everybody, and we'll meet on Monday. And this guy says Ed, I thought about it, I just bought a house, I got a mortgage, I just

bought a beach house, I need the job, okay. I'll work for you. One guy just refused to work. Now I just can't work for you. And everybody was telling him, man, and they were working on him. He was supporting his mother and he had a brother who had multiple sclerosis or something, and he was their sole support. And he was just stubborn. He ended up working because he needed the job. I had tough times, you know. Because even though they said that they would work for me, they'd sabotage me, you know. So that I would fail. But going back to the Deke connection, somebody in one of the financial institutions put the word out, you know, we want you to make sure that Ed succeeds. And I had the backing, man, of everybody in government, everybody in the banks, and whatever. They were going to make sure that I succeeded. The bond council and underwriters, they came to my rescue. They helped me. We were supposed to sell some bonds, I was unsure what a good time to sell bonds was, and we put it together, we sold them. So I had from the board of directors, anybody that they wouldn't work for me, fine. I only had to let one person go. This was a young lady, she wasn't working anyway, and she messed up, you know, and cost us some money, and I terminated her. That caused a lot of, well, there was a lot of mixed emotions about it, a black man firing a white person. But you know, I had John Croslin, who was a builder, the second builder in the state, in my corner. And nobody was going to run up against me, but she just needed to go. But you know, I saved that agency, man. It was difficult, Bob, I'm telling you, it was difficult.

RG: What I'm hearing, correct me if I'm wrong, is that you grew up in a situation where your family had a fair amount of interaction with whites, where there was little or less, shall I say, prejudice, in the prejudiced South, and you went to work in state government as a black man. Is that a fair assessment of what you're saying to me?

EC: Say that again.

RG: That you grew up in a family where there was a lot of interaction with white and black, but there was either little or less prejudice that you saw, with your dad and the Dekes, and with Mrs. Neal working for the Grahams, and then in the rest of your world, and especially when you went to work, it wasn't that way.

EC: That's right. But I understood that. I understood that. I mean, I worked over here at Research Triangle Park, okay, and that company Chemstrand had moved in from Alabama, okay. You know, and they had to have at least a few blacks in order to keep them government contracts. That was a difficult situation, man, that here was I, supposedly a professional, walking down the hall and you didn't know who was going to speak to you and who weren't. Some people would speak to you, and some wouldn't. The majority wouldn't. So you had to be ready, if somebody spoke to you, you had to say hey, how you doin'? You know, that sort of thing. You go to the dining hall and sit at the table, man, and have everybody get up, especially the ladies. I'd sit down, you know, to eat down on the end. And if I'd sit down to eat my dinner, they'd get up and move to another table. I mean that was a difficult situation. I had a few friends, one guy in particular, a very

bright young man. He was a genius, he had 160-something IQ. Never finished college, but just bright. And we got to be good friends, and I always encouraged him, man, Jim, go back and get your degree man, because you can't make it out here without your degree. And he just said, I don't, I can't sit in no class. And he was smarter than most of the professors. He was definitely smarter than they guy he was working for. He had a Ph.D., and he had to work for him. But I could talk to him, you know, and we became very good friends. I went out to help him work on his house. That boy could do anything, carpentry, he was the only person I knew that not only had a very bright mind, but he could work with his hands. I mean Jim would sit down and he'd think, for a while. He had five kids, and he needed the money. And he was remodeling MGs and that sort of thing, and he'd look at the thing and said, they designed this thing wrong. And he would go in and do something else. I mean he'd just sort of sit and think, and then draw it up, you know. Jim was bright. I went to help Jim with his house, and people saw me over there helping Jim, nobody else would help him, and the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in his yard, okay. And he said I'm not going to let them tell me, I'll fight it.

RG: What year was that?

EC: Um, it was in the '60s. So, we became very good friends. He helped me work on my cars, he helped me work on housing projects and so forth that I had. I remember, you know, Jim worked in the lab right next to me. And I remember Jim saying, it was Christmas time, are you going to go to the Christmas party? And I said well, I think I'm going to go to the banquet, but I don't want to go to the dance. So me and my wife went to the banquet, and they had discouraged any other blacks from coming, okay. You know, they'd talk them out of it, they sort of let it be known that their job would be in jeopardy if they went to this thing. Well they had these things at some of the better country clubs in Raleigh, that had a policy of non-integration, okay. And they asked me if I was going, and I told them yeah, it's part of my salary. You know. They're giving you all these gifts and they're giving you this dinner, and you're all eating some of the best food, I'm going. So Jim said, good for you. And so we went to the banquet and whatever, and when they got ready to go to the dance, he said Ed, are you going to the dance? And I said, no, I don't think I'm going to the dance. He said, well why not? I said well, I don't want to dance with my wife all night long. You going to let me dance with your wife? He said yeah, I'll let you dance with my wife. You know, my friend. He admitted the thing. And so when we got ready to go in there, they said ain't no more tables. So we put up a table on the outside of the dance, of the banquet, and man, his family and my family sat out there. And because of that, me and Jim became very close. And from then on we were very close. But no, I participated in everything. Bowling league, they said you gonna bowl? I said yeah, I'll bowl. Is this a company sponsored thing? Yeah, I'm bowling. I was a thorn, you know, because they couldn't do things the way they had always done. I played tennis. They said you going to play tennis, Bill Blackburn, I don't know if you remember Bill, the president of the club, Bill worked out there. Bill was the one that interested me in joining the tennis club, as well as playing on the tennis team with the company. Well they had to find

different places to play, could no longer play at the country club, you know, so they had to find public courts to play. You know, I was a nuisance. Other blacks refused to go to things. And they had, Santa Claus, man, I carried my kids. Because they were passing out basketballs and gifts and whatever, sure, I was taking my kids. But none of the other blacks would do it. So, you know, it was difficult. Really difficult working for Monsanto. I do recall there was one young lady that just would not speak, okay. Wouldn't speak at all. She came to a black club, okay, I guess they call themselves slumming, okay, in Durham, came to this black club. And there was a fella that worked with me out at Chemstrand and he said Ed, you're not going to, you're going to be surprised, you know, who's going to be in this club. This woman, man, she and her boyfriend and some others that wouldn't speak. I said really? I went over and asked them to leave. I said y'all not welcome in here, okay. 'Til you can start speaking to me in the halls at work, then you can't come in this club. I put 'em out. I put 'em out. And they left. Well, you know, too many blacks in there may start something, okay. And from then on she started to speak. I don't know why this guy didn't go over there and do it, they just sort of looked to me as a leadership person, man, to do certain things. And that's pretty much what I was doing. So I ramble.

RG: That's great. I want to go back to a couple things that you described. You mentioned that there were friendships in the black community with the white community when you were growing up.

EC: Right.

RG: And where did those friendships start? How did they occur?

EC: I think they started from sports. We all used the University. There were no recreation in the town, you know. White kids used the University for their recreation. We used it too. White kids used it, we were going to use it. I mean, we knew them, this town was too small, man, not to know everybody in town. We knew all the kids, man, that went to Chapel Hill High, whatever. I mean, you know, just walk the street, we knew them. We went to all their football games, and they came to our football games, okay. And we sort of compared notes and that sort of thing. So we just, I mean, they were interested in us, we were interested in them. During the summer, we had some semi-pro teams, they had a white semi-pro baseball team, and we had a black semi-pro baseball team. And we, they'd come to our games and we'd go to theirs. And you know, they would give us pointers, you know. And we arranged to play a baseball games, whites versus blacks. They beat the hell out of us, okay. They beat us to death. I mean, they were in a different category, man. See, you got to understand, Bob. Any player that played at Carolina played with this white semi-pro team during the summer. They had the best pitchers, they had the best, they were good. They were just in a league by themselves. And you know, we had a rag-tag, you know, high school kids and whatever, we couldn't play with them. But we played, okay, and that was friendship. I guess you heard Coach Linden, when he was at Central, played some players from Duke, okay. And they had integrated games and so forth going on, so we had integrated teams. And we made sure that we

played at least one game a year. We still never could beat them, you know, not with the college kids and so forth.

RG: How often did this interaction take place with the sports? The blacks and the whites getting together?

EC: Every year. All the time, all the time.

RG: Once a week, or—

EC: Yeah, mostly on the weekends. Like mostly on Sundays, we'd all go to see Carolina play on Saturday, and we'd arrange a game for Sunday. Some of the football players, you know, that played for Carolina used to arrange these games for us. They brought all the football equipment and stuff from the gyms and so forth, and they refereed. You know.

RG: What about the women, the black women and the white women? I can see how the black men and white men would become friends in competition. What about the women?

EC: What about them? (laughs) Now Bob,

RG: Did they interact?

EC: No.

RG: Not at all?

EC: Um, very little, I would imagine. Lot of the black women did babysit and do housework in white houses, but I don't think, I don't recall black women and, you know, from my high school being friends with any of the white women. Um, white women were, if you really want to think about it, was the most controlled person during that time, okay. I mean, white women knew, man, that they weren't supposed to speak, be friends with both black and white, whether it was male or female. Just didn't do those sorts of things, okay. It was known that black men weren't supposed to have any contact with white women. Now these friendships with males became strained if white women were around. I mean, you know, that was, you just knew that. That's just the way it was, you know, I don't know what else to say.

RG: Just the way it was.

EC: Yeah. I think after the 60s and integration, you found a certain amount of mingling. There were a lot of white women that came down from the North and some of the white colleges that came down and had register, voter registration and voting, there was some interracial parties and that sort of thing. One of the things is, I was a leader at the time, and when they came down, you know, I just said there ain't gonna be no interracial parties, okay. Well, to make it clear, our

number one objective, man, was to get people registered and to vote. We were not going to permit something like that getting in the way and preventing, you know, our goals of registering people and getting them to vote. Now if you want to come down and work, whatever, that's fine. Now if you want to go somewhere and do something afterwards, man, that's, you know, that's up to you. But I'm not going to have people coming down from the North with their whole thing, man, is to party. That's not for me. That's not why we bring you down here. So you know, that was, we had to do a certain amount of that. Just to keep, keep them from hurting, you know, what we were trying to accomplish.

RG: I wanted to get back to one other thing, and that is you mentioned the conversations that took place on the back porch in the summertime, and in the kitchen in the wintertime. Do you remember what kinds of things you discussed, or what you overheard in those conversations?

EC: Oh, a lot of family history, a lot of jokes, a lot of stories. Blacks don't write very much, but they pass family history orally. I am considered the historian for the black community. I just haven't written it down. But all the stories, I was a listener. All the stories that my grandmother had talked about, man, it's there, her experiences of growing up as a child, her experiences and so forth. The experience of when they were building the schools and the difficulties of them putting substandard building materials in the school. And all that entailed, you know. Like they were about to build a black and a white school at the same time. I think the high school cost something like \$23,000. The white high school cost \$102,000, okay. And the fights and struggles that they had just to try to get comparable things, you know, put in our school. And when they had a cost overrun, you know, then they put it in the white high school. When there were budgets and so forth, um shortfalls, they closed the black schools, okay. Schools weren't open but for six weeks at the time. They opened late because the farmers said to the school board members, we need you not to start the black schools until the crop got in, okay. So we didn't have no school. White kids going to school, we didn't have no schools, man, until the crop got in. And then, you know, the school turn was no more than about six to eight weeks, okay. If the money ran short, they closed the schools. Continued with the white schools, but they closed the black schools. So I remember my grandmother and them talking about the injustices and so forth. So all her stories were just turning. All the things, man, that they did to us. So when I went on school board, my number one objective, man, was to correct things that had happened, you know. And I guess that was one of the reasons I was effective as a school board member. I didn't go on the board to make sure that black kids got things, I felt that I would push things, what's good for black kids, for white kids is good for black kids. And if we could make sure that everything was equal, man, then black kids was going to benefit. And that was my objective, okay. Some things that they had done, you know, there were still practices and so forth, and I went in there and I made sure that those things got corrected. So you know, that was, I think that, I grew up with a lot of anger, you know. Because I mean, we were really shafted, man, from an educational standpoint. We just did not have the materials, you know, that the white kids had. I mean it was very obvious that we didn't. One of the things that

they used to say was that black kids tore up things. Tore up the books, tore up the desks. And I used to always repeat this thing at meetings. You know, I'd tell them, man, they said we tore up desks, we tore up books. Those books were tore up before we got them, okay. The janitors and so forth worked at the white high school, okay. I used to pass the white high school going to work at the Deke house. And I remember them taking those old desks and stuff out, and the white kids getting new desks, and they'd sending all that old broken down stuff over there to us. I mean the books, you know, when they assign a book you put your name in it. That place in the very beginning where you put your name. And over here they put new, good, fair, poor. Well when the books got to us, man, they were poor, okay. And we knew all the kids, knew all the white kids. We knew them by name. And we'd look in the book, man, you know, Finno McGinney, you know, and they're going to tell us, man, that we tore up these books? These books tore up before we got 'em. And I said, we don't have no blacks named Finno McGinney. That was Mac McGinney's son, you know. We don't have no guys in our school named Finno McGinney, okay. I knew all these kids, man, don't tell us we tore up now. You know, we cherished things. Our PTA bought the books to go in the library. We had sellings, man, to supplement things that the city and the county didn't give us. And that's how we were able to do certain things. We had Mr. Mason, what was his first name, he was the guy working at, for the Carolina football team. Not Charlie Mason, um, Morris Mason.

RG: Morris Mason, yeah.

EC: Morris Mason, okay. Hey. When they took the cleats off, Mr. Morris Mason, you know, they're supposed to take the cleats off when they got down to a certain way, Mr. Morris took those cleats off, man, and sent them off to us before, you know, they were supposed to. That's where we got our equipment. Mr. Morris Mason, man, he sent us our equipment and stuff, you know. I mean, he took helmets out of circulation man, before the time, and sent them over there to us. We couldn't buy no football uniforms, man. It's a wonder we didn't get killed out there, playing in that stuff, man, that we had. We may be able to buy five new uniforms a year, you know, but there are 11 people on the team. So when we'd go out there, man, none of our uniforms matched. Except one year, we played the state champions from Virginia. Roanoke, Virginia. Our colors were orange and black. But when we went to play Roanoke, Virginia, our uniforms were Carolina blue. Mr. Morris Mason got those uniforms, man, from Carolina, and we went and we played in them uniforms, but we had to get them back to him after the game was over.

RG: Did the University know that?

EC: No, they didn't know it, you know. But, you know, that's how we were able to, you know.

RG: This is great. This is going on, maybe a little longer than I wanted it to, but your terrific memory is fantastic, and you're giving me a lot of wonderful stuff. Why don't we stop here.

EC: Okay, that'd be fine.