CIVIL RIGHTS GREENSBORO DIGITAL ARCHIVE PROJECT

William Henry Chafe Oral History Collection

INTERVIEWEE: Joe Flora

INTERVIEWER: William Chafe

DATE: September 26, 1974

WILLIAM CHAFE: —from the period 1900 to 1950, and I would like to hear what your thoughts are on that.

JOE FLORA: That grew out of the fact that before I came to Greensboro, I was at Union [Theological] Seminary in Richmond. And my professor of pastoral counseling was Dr. W. Taliaferro Thompson, Sr. And as soon as he learned that I was coming to First Presbyterian Church he said, "Well, there is one individual in that church that I knew," of course, he says, "he's dead now, but founder of] Pilot Life Insurance Company, by the name of A. W. McAlister." And he said, "He was one of my dearest friends, and I learned more from him about brotherhood than all the books I have ever read and all the people I have ever met." Well, of course I had never heard of A. W. McAlister, but then after I came to Greensboro, I found that he was instrumental in bringing the National Conference of Christians and Jews to Greensboro, and apparently a man who was way beyond his time in this area, now instrumental in starting the Greensboro Country Club. A very close friend of the Rabbi, Rypins, Fred Rypins, who, I guess, for twenty years was at Temple Emmanuel here in town.

And I think Rypins and McAlister and others who worked together at that point to bring the National Conference of Christians and Jews to Greensboro, and whose efforts had so much to do with the acceptance of this community with the Jewish population. It seems to me that the integration of Jews in Greensboro in the twenties and thirties into the country club, into the power structure, in the business world, the president of the [Greensboro] Chamber of Commerce or mayor of the City of Greensboro, had a whole lot to do with the whole cultural atmosphere of this town, when you add to it universities and colleges as well. It had a lot to do with what happened after [unclear].

WC: Yes, that's a very interesting phenomenon, I think. I suppose it's true of some other industrialized areas—maybe industrialized is the wrong word, maybe urban—urbanizing and cosmopolitan areas, but I think Greensboro clearly is—maybe Charlotte and—

JF: But I know I was so surprised to find the freedom with which, even in the early fifties, there was a marriage between the Jewish community and the gentile community, some of the movement back and forth between First Presbyterian Church and the synagogue, that there was absolutely no feeling on the part of anybody in that church about Rabbi Rypins coming to talk to a youth group. But if I invited a Roman priest in, they might really be up in arms.

WC: That's interesting.

JF: But the dialogue between the Jewish community and the rest of Greensboro had been so open and free that this was not a threat at all.

WC: Had the Jewish community, prior to that or subsequent to that, been in any way outspoken on the racial issue?

JF: Well, they were very much involved in the racial issue after 1950. Now, before that I can't answer. I don't know.

WC: After 1950 were they involved as individuals, in an institutional way, or—?

JF: Involved individually and then, as I remember, organizations like—I forget what it's called now. The Jewish women would be instrumental in starting—oh, gracious, they did so much to get nursery schools started—I mean I should say daycare centers—in under privileged areas or especially in black communities.

WC: Did they do that as Jewish women alone or with other women in the community?

JF: I believe it was started by the Jewish—organization of Jewish women [National Council of Jewish Women?]

WC: I see.

JF: But now it was picked up on and expanded so that it has become something much bigger than just a Jewish women's project. But I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, they started the one in the Henry Louis Smith homes.

WC: And it would have been around 1950?

JF: I can't remember the date, but I suspect it was the late fifties or early sixties.

WC: That's interesting because I have really not been into the Jewish community as yet. That's one of the things I need to do.

JF: One other thing about this McAlister fellow, just for human interest, he died in '45, I believe, at the age of something like eighty-five. And his funeral was the first one conducted by John Redhead, who was then pastor at First church; he'd just come from Charlotte. And his will stipulated that his funeral was to be conducted by his pastor, a Presbyterian minister, in corporation with a Jewish rabbi, a Roman priest, and a black minister. And that was the way—of course, it could not be conducted in the church that way, but it was conducted in his home in Irving Park. And they couldn't get a Jewish—I mean they couldn't get a Roman priest, so they had a Roman layman to fill that gap. But Rabbi Rypins and John Redhead and a black minister—I don't know which one—participated in this man's funeral in 1945.

WC: So he must have had at least some contact with the black community. Interesting.

JF: That's almost ten years before the [*Brown v. Board of Education*] Supreme Court decision, you see, and at a time when this man was eighty-five years old. And it was this kind of flavor that you had here—dialogue with [North Carolina] A&T University and I guess the impact of this school here, as well as you had the Quaker institution at Guilford College, which I'm sure—I was not here before 1950. I don't know how, but I'm sure there must be ways that they made an impact.

WC: You came in 1950?

JF: I came in '52.

WC: And you had been teaching at Union Seminary?

JF: I was a student.

WC: And where had you come from before that? Where had you grown up?

JF: I grew up in North Carolina, went to Davidson College in '52, then the navy, back to Davidson, then to Union Seminary.

WC: So you were very much a part of the area?

JF: I'm very much a part of the area. I grew up very much as a racist in eastern North Carolina. I was trained well by my rural background. And I began to have some

fascinating experiences in seminary, where through intercollegiate council activities I was associated with blacks for the first time in my life in some kind of relationship other than form of employee or a housemaid. A rather traumatic experience.

WC: How did that happen?

JF: Really by accident to start with. I had not involved in anything but the intercollegiate council until one day my roommate came in and said, "Well, they're having a picnic this afternoon."

And I said, "Where?"

"In Petersburg."

And I said, "Who in the hell wants to go to Petersburg on a beautiful Saturday afternoon for a picnic?"

And he explained, "Well, this is an intercollegiate council picnic, and we should have representatives from the seminary. It would just be unthinkable for the seminary not to be represented."

And I didn't realize the significance of this. I didn't know he meant because of the black-white issue. So I went, and I have never been more uncomfortable in my life, because I suddenly found myself in an integrated situation, a socially integrated situation that I had never been in before. It was my first experience. I wished that I was somewhere else and I was embarrassed to make a scene to leave or get out. There was no graceful way to do this, so I went. And, you know, roasted hotdogs, played volleyball, sat on a log in the park eating next to a black girl or black guy and found them to be people. And went back wretchedly miserable, because I had discovered that all I had been taught and believed, I suddenly was discovering it to be a lie. And it was like a conversion experience. It was really—it shook me to tilt of my being and started the process for me.

WC: That happened when you first got to Union Seminary?

JF: That happened in 1949 or 1950, about two years before I came to Greensboro.

WC: Did you sort of develop a—did the question of race and change and race relations become something, not obsessive, but of primary concern for you after that point? I mean was it that kind of an experience?

JF: No, I wouldn't say it was of primary concern, but I would say it was a growing concern, just enlightened awareness of the fact that I had been trained to feel and to respond emotionally to situations in a way that had been purely training, the cultural mindset of eastern North Carolina. So I was very much grateful for the opportunity to be in an integrated situation. [I] found myself still uncomfortable sometimes emotionally, but I

went ahead anyway, and of course began to do some reading and thinking in terms of the religious implications.

Perhaps some of the most helpful things was in ‘62—I’m just going to be personal. I left First Church in ’59 to do some graduate work and then went to Laurinburg [Presbyterian Church], where I was associate pastor and worked with students while St. Andrews [Presbyterian College] was being built. And discovered to my surprise that there was a very fine Negro prep school there, and I was invited to speak on a Sunday night at a USA Presbyterian Church located across the street from the prep school, and found that about a hundred and fifty were members of the congregation were from this prep school. That resulted in not being invited back to speak to a chapel program, and that resulted in my being asked to come for small discussion groups on each floor of the dormitories in which there was a real open give-and-take between myself and these students about why the attitude of the church and why the attitude of the South—many of these were Northern students. But it was a unique experience for me, but one that I have always been very grateful for.

WC: And this was ‘62?

JF: Yes, this was ’61 or ‘62.

WC: So it was really—?

JF: Then I came back here in ’62. And I was here from ‘62—I was at First Pres from ’62 to’72.

WC: So you were at First Presbyterian from ’52 to’59 and then from ‘62—?

JF: Seventy-two.

WC: Seventy-two.

JF: Seventeen years.

WC: When you came to Greensboro, did you find that integrated situations were readily available or that they had to be sought out?

JF: In ‘52 they had to be pretty much set up, as I remember, and when there was one, it was noteworthy. I began, pretty soon after I came, to try to get our young people involved in some kind of black/white situation. And so we invited the director of the Metropolitan

Day Nursery School to come and speak to our young people, and this resulted in a project of their helping [unclear] giving a Christmas party, and that kind of involvement.

But eyebrows were always raised if you invited the black to come to a white church to speak. It was not done just routinely. Everyone was aware of this, usually some comments made, and there was always the question with whether or not I really had any base of support for doing this sort of thing. The First Presbyterian Church—sometimes you were made to feel like, "No, you have really don't." Certainly the elders and deacons don't support it. They may not tell you, "You can't do it," but in those days, I simply did not have the freedom to invite somebody to come to the church for a weekend and expect them to assist in service on Sunday mornings. Even in the early sixties, we had a black minister who was a guest with a church for events during the weekend, and it took an act of accession in a rather frustrating meeting to approve his reading the scripture. And since then we have come a long ways, but even in '62 that was still difficult.

A lot of white ministers went to black churches, and there were exchanges of pulpits, more with the Methodist churches. West Market [Street United] Methodist [Church] was—of course, I guess Methodists had been a little more liberal or a little bit more progressive when it comes to social action than many, many other Protestants. So you had an exchange of pulpits around town, but probably not at First Baptist and certainly not at First Presbyterian. And it has been, I guess, since nineteen—we had a black minister in the pulpit, I guess, since 1970 in the First Presbyterian Church. I guess that's the first time since the Civil War days. [laughter]

WC: How about you yourself, would you have associates in the black community on a personal basis, not necessarily in your function as assistant—associate minister bringing people in the church, but did you have an opportunity yourself to meet blacks, or were you in any way associated with whites who were involved in interracial activities?

JF: We had a number of people at First Presbyterian Church who were involved. For example, one is Mrs. John Gillespie who is a member of our church and the Christian Education Committee and is always very active in school affairs, interested in the board of education meetings and this sort of thing. Perhaps the one that most people thought of when you mention the word integration and white people at First Church would be the John R. Taylor family. You probably heard this name, especially with Warren Ashby. John was offensive to a lot of the people at First Church, but he did a lot of things in his business, invited a lot of groups to his home, and tried to set up meetings in town that created dialogue. It created a lot of controversy sometimes.

WC: Why was he offensive?

JF: John was offensive because he couldn't understand the Southern mindset. He couldn't understand the emotional reaction that a dyed-in-the-wool Southerner who had been raised in this kind of background had. This was due to the fact that he had been born and raised in China of missionary parents, and he simply never experienced emotionally what most of his contemporaries in this country experienced when they got into an integrated situation. For example, he could never really quite understand what happened to me on that intercollegiate council picnic, the fact that I would have liked to have fallen through the bottom of the bus and this [unclear]. He can't understand it.

WC: His wife, though, was a native of Greensboro?

JF: Yes, but Betsy was an individual who was a real organizer from the word go. She was a very dominant type personality and didn't like to take no for an answer. She liked to set up things and push them through to conclusion, sometimes almost to the point of running over you. Betsy, she wanted to just take the bull by the horns and run with it, which meant that sometimes—I'm speaking very candidly—sometimes she was not the best chairman of a committee or even member of the committee, because rather than waiting for consensus or for people to move together, Betsy preferred to grab the reins of leadership and follow through with where she thought it ought to be, and some of them would arrive with her but most of them would fall by the wayside. And so this is why they both became offensive sometimes to people.

WC: Can you think of examples of that kind of thing, the kind of thing which would have really gotten people of the congregation upset?

JF: I can think of several things that got people in the congregation upset. I don't know that necessarily it would—I can't think of anything specific offhand with John Taylor. I'm having real difficulty recalling some specific instance where John was concerned, either his business or what he'd said about—maybe he would be quoted in the newspaper about making a statement that he would be willing to sell property to a black or something like this a lot of people would make comments to. One of the things which became upsetting at the First Church was when the choir became integrated. Gee, this was like '63 or '64, the first black person to sing in the choir.

WC: On a paid basis?

JF: No, on a volunteer basis.

WC: Volunteer basis.

JF: The minister of music and I both were given credit for having gone to the black community and searched these people out, how we had forced this on the First Church. Actually, they were both volunteers, but they both showed up in the same week from different sources, which was hard for people to believe.

The Poor People's Campaign created a lot of negative reaction. Anybody who seemed sympathetic or was thought to have made a contribution to the cause, this was [rock the boat?]. We had a—I guess this was about '63 or '64 somewhere along in there, we developed a coffee house in the First Presbyterian Church that was sponsored by—this was something that developed naturally; it was not really one of those things that a staff person had planned. Young people had been to Montreat [College] for a conference and came back a little more aware and things, and decided that they ought to get together with all other churches in town and sponsor a coffee house for young people. So several young people at First Church began to call the leadership at First Baptist and West Market Methodist and branch out to the black community, and finally when they got a pretty broad basis of support and then began to look for a place to have a coffee house. It ended up that we had it at First Church, not without an awful lot of frustration [unclear]. And after about three weeks, it was pretty well dominated by the black community, so we were having a hundred, a hundred and twenty-five blacks come into the basement of First Church, music, and dancing, and ping-pong, and pool, maybe a couple of beer cans outside the next morning and so forth.

WC: A whole lot of flack. [laughter]

JF: We got an awful lot of flack within the staff and from members of the church, all this kind of thing. I think—my mind is jumping now to something else completely. Thinking about members of First Church, the name of Mike Weaver comes to mind. Has that been mentioned to you?

WC: No.

JF: This comes further down. Mike was fourteen when I came to Greensboro. He was in my youth group in '52. His father, Herman Weaver, started the W. H. Weaver Construction Company, which became a real going concern. So by the time that Mike was about thirty, I guess, he'd taken over as president for two or three years. And some, maybe, seven or eight years ago—I can't remember exactly—I can still see the full page ad in the afternoon paper in which he announced his decision for open housing as far as apartment rentals was concerned with the Weaver Construction Company. He was really one of the ones that helped with the breakthrough for housing here. He was—his real estate company was managing a big block of apartments out behind the [Simmons?] shopping center. Last time I was talking to Mike about this was probably at least two, maybe three

years ago. But at that time he was still managering about a fifty-fifty split of black and white.

WC: That's pretty good.

JF: And he did it by—simply by manipulating his advertising. There began to be more black than white, and he stopped advertising in the black newspaper in town and began to put his ads in the white newspaper, and when it became too white, he'd cut out the ads in the white newspaper and begin advertising in the black newspaper again. And he had been doing that for several years and had about a fifty-fifty split and there had been no problems. And other properties around town that had been managed by this company had been increasingly open so that an awful lot of blacks—maybe in comparison to some communities, maybe not many in terms of total numbers, but a lot of blacks in those apartment sections around town.

WC: This would date back to the late sixties?

JF: Yeah. But you don't hear anything about it, and you still get more and more sales of housing. Of course, the [Woodmere?] Park episode that you probably have heard about was a medium-priced housing development, twenty-thousand, twenty-five-thousand dollar housing, I guess you'd call it—maybe beginning at eighteen-thousand, out near WMFY-TV off of Summit Avenue and Highway 29 north. Somebody sold a house or two there to blacks and that community has been in a real transition for the last, I guess, ten years. A person which could help you a great deal on that would be Jim Miller, who was the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Cross right out at WFMY-TV.

Jim did a fantastic job of leading the elders and deacons in that church to arrive at a point that they would stay and minister to the changing community. And so they are an integrated church with an integrated a kindergarten, integrated church school, an excellent day care program, recreation program for the summer. And the church has been identified with any kind of community development concern, business or other concerns, school concerns and so forth in the community. They came to that church, organized their meetings, and probably the meetings were held in that church. But he has done so much to help keep the lid on that section, which I think is one of key things which has happened is that since 1954 on, as all of these developments have taken place, we haven't had violence, not in terms of the violence that so many cities have had. We have not had the looting, we have not had the burning, the shooting. We had the sit-ins, we had the marches, but there has not been an outbreak. Somehow we have managed to avoid that.

WC: There's an awful lot of good, stable leadership in the black community, as well as the white community.

JF: Well, I think this is true. Some of the individuals that deserve some credit—we had a young man at A&T College—and I guess this was during the days of the demonstrations, which I think were the early sixties—a young minister named "Tony" [Knighton] Stanley, I believe a Yale graduate, a very articulate young man with a bit of charismatic flair. He had real appeal to college students and they would listen to him, plus the fact that he knew the explosiveness of the situation. He kept Dr. [Lewis] Dowdy, the president of A&T, informed on what he was doing and where he was and how he was doing it, so that he didn't lose contact with the administration of A&T. And [he] deserves so much credit for the fact that the students at A&T and Bennett [College] in those days didn't really [unclear]. But he was in the middle of it. He was only at the university because of—[knock at the door]

[Recording paused]

JF: Sometime in the fifties, the Reynolds family, Reynolds Metals [Company] in Richmond, Virginia, gave a fifty thousand dollar grant for ministry to black institutions. And I don't think many people in Greensboro ever knew about it, but John Redhead, the pastor of First [Presbyterian] Church was instrumental in helping to raise, I think, some ten or fifteen thousand dollars in this community from interested businessmen. And I believe A&T was the first place to have a campus minister through this foundation, and Tony Stanley, I think, was the very first one and very fine one. Later, I think he taught at Bennett College and took a pastorate out in St. Louis or someplace.

WC: That's interesting.

JF: But Dr. Dowdy could fill you in on some of that. But men like Stanley or Otis Hairston—Julius Douglas, now, was a very powerful influence but he was also one of those that created a lot of negative response. Dr. [George] Simpkins, who was the president of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]—they were just a little bit more aggressive and hostile than some, and yet never took it to the point that—I don't know. With Stanley and others, the black community never rose up in arms so to speak, and the dialogue continued, which I guess was the key.

WC: Do you recall any episodes during the fifties which would have caused consternation and division at the First Presbyterian? For example, when the school board voted to desegregate the schools, things like that, do you recall any kinds of reactions to that?

JF: Yes, one reaction was the possibility of private school with church facilities used, which was quickly squelched. I never had any interest in this, but there were some members of

the church somewhere along in that period—I can't remember just when—but this is one suggestion that came up to avoid integration. There was an awful lot of reaction among some of the people—Boyd Morris and the Mayfair Cafeteria. Boyd was an elder in our church. Of course, I guess part of this is—I can't remember whether this is late fifties or early sixties now. This all runs together for me.

WC: Yeah, the Boyd Morris thing is '63.

JF: Sixty-three. By being an elder in the church, there was an awful lot of sympathy for Boyd among the staff of the church.

WC: Staff?

JF: I mean elders, officers of the church. And I guess he's relatively inactive down there now, and he feels sort of maybe his church let him down a little bit. I talked with Boyd and I think some of his comments to me weren't necessarily off the record; it's the kind of thing he expressed to others. As far as he was concerned, blacks were not people; they were simply animals. I'll never forget the night that I think I was out in the back yard cooking a steak, and the phone rang and it was Boyd saying, "I want you to come to my office right now."

And I said, "What's up?"

And he said, "Well, you have been coming to see me and urging me to go ahead and open my restaurant to blacks. I want you to come here right now and see what it is you are asking me to do." He said, "You won't believe it. You're got to come see what you're asking me to do."

So I left and went to his office. And, of course, the blacks were lined up at the front door. It was a fantastic experience. I stood there with Boyd and this black student from A&T or from Bennett would come up, very nicely dressed, mannerly individual. "Mr. Morris, sir, may we come in and eat dinner at your restaurant? That's all we'd like to do, is eat, sir."

And he would look at this young person and could not help but respond positively and he'd say, "Look son," —in some sort of familiar term that showed that he had some respect for this individual as a person—"I'm sorry. I can't let you do it." Almost apologetically, "I'm sorry. I can't let you do it, and you are standing on my property. If you don't stand back two feet and move on, I'm going to call the officer over and have you arrested."

"But sir, all we want to do is eat," very calm, never a raised voice. There was no ugliness, no shouting, and I guess I stood by while he had several of them arrested. There was not one word of obscenity. There was not one loud shout from anybody in the crowd

or from any of the students that came. This was really a nonviolent approach. And each time, “I’m sorry sir,”

“I’m sorry son.” [laughs] “I will not let you do it.” And then he would call the police over and have them arrested and they would put them in a paddy wagon and take off.

A little bit later Boyd and I went back to his office and I said, “You know, I don’t understand your attitude about this. You cannot help but have your voice reflect your respect for these kids who came—their appearance, their manner, everything about them as persons—and then you tell them no. Why?”

He said, “They’re not people. Blacks don’t have a soul.” And I guess he was firmly convinced, and yet this was hard for me to really comprehend.

WC: He called you down there to see that?

JF: He called me down there to observe.

WC: Why do you think he did that?

JF: Because he felt like this mass of humanity is descending on his place. This black mass was just so disgraceful and so impossible, so out of the question, he thought if I could come down and witness this, it might help me to agree with his point of view. And it only convinced me [unclear—phone rings]. But I don’t know that Boyd has ever [unclear—phone rings].

WC: Back in the fifties again, when the—let’s see now. The decision was announced in 1954 and the school board met the next night and voted to desegregate the schools or to comply, and there is a three year period before they actually complied and desegregated [Greensboro] Senior High [now Grimsley High School]. Were any of those school board members in your church: Ed Hudgins, John Foster—let’s see, who else was there—Sarah Mendenhall Brown, Howard Holderness?

JF: Howard Holderness was. Brown, Hudgins, I don’t remember that combination. He was [unclear] Jefferson [Standard Life Insurance Company]. He I think, the key—his attitude was really a vital key. Holderness was a more conservative individual and yet I think probably went along with this, but he was not a progressive individual as a member of our congregation. As a member of the session [of the church], he certainly would have been voting with the conservatives.

WC: He would have been?

JF: Yes, he certainly would have.

WC: On what kind of issue?

JF: Almost any issue. Activities for young people, he would probably vote on the conservative side of the question. If it was inviting Roman priest to speak to young people, he would have been very strongly outspoken against a Roman priest coming. He finally consented on a Jewish rabbi. But on one occasion when we did invite a Roman priest to speak, he was very vocal and led the opposition it this, so it was defeated ultimately. But he had a lot to do with the fact that [unclear]. And yet I think he was a practical man, from a business point of view. [unclear—phone rings] As far as the problems of the community as a whole were concerned, I think he would've said, "This is something we've got deal with and move on," but in the church itself, no. If it had been a social experience, he would have said no. If it was inviting blacks to come and join the church, I think he would have said no. In public education, "Well, we don't have much of a choice here." [unclear] But if there is a social relation or worshipping together, no. I can't remember offhand any other member of the school board that was—I don't remember who else was on the board at the time.

WC: Well at the point, J. C. Cowan.

JF: He was Baptist.

WC: George Norman came on later. Is he First Presbyterian?

JF: No.

WC: Richard Hunter.

JF: Well, now, Richard was.

WC: That was later.

JF: Richard was. Of course, his wife is still here, but he's dead.

WC: How would you describe his attitude on this kind of question?

JF: As I knew Richard—of course, he was [from Ohio?] so he didn't have a southern mindset. He came into North Carolina. Dick had a pretty—as I knew him—a wholesome, positive approach to this, a very constructive approach. And I think Hudgins and Dick

Hunter and, of course, Ben L. Smith, who was superintendent of schools, and [unclear] Weaver, all of these men deserve a tremendous amount credit for what happened here. And it seemed to me that we had more progressive leadership in the board of education of the public schools in town than we did in the business community as such. Some of the things that happened in the business community happened sort of after the fact. A lot of—the chamber of commerce, especially in more recent years, has taken a very positive, constructive attitude. But I think some of this was an inspiration from what had happened in the public schools.

WC: Where would you date the chamber of commerce's changeover?

JF: Probably beginning in the early sixties. Of course, I was gone '59 to '62, but I would say in the early sixties you really began to see a much more positive approach to this thing. In the last ten or twelve years they've done a lot of things in terms of really bringing in black businessmen representatives in the chamber of commerce and creating a dialogue with the community and so forth.

WC: Do you know—was Hal Sieber at all connected with you or your church?

JF: No, but Hal did a real good job in this, and I think deserves a lot of credit for what took place with the chamber of commerce. I hate to see Hal leave.

WC: Yeah, I've heard very good things about him.

JF: Of course, Andy Gotschall was another guy during the sixties that did a lot of yeoman work between the police department and the black community and the business community as the National Conference of Christians and Jews secretary. Andy's still in town and I believe teaching sociology at Guilford College.

WC: How do you spell that last name?

JF: G-o-t-s-c-h-a-l-l, something like that, Gotschall, Andy Gotschall. He's a Presbyterian, but Andy was a member of the Sedgefield Presbyterian Church. But he really did—he always knew exactly what was going on. He had contacts with A&T. He had contacts with the police. He kept everybody informed and served as sort of a listening ear for the community. And if there was a possibility of an outbreak of violence or some disturbance, Andy knew about it, the police was informed, and preparations were made to keep the lid on before the fact. He had a lot of respect from both segments of the community, and I think he deserves it. I can't remember who was—the name of the man

before Andy in the fifties. But, anyway, Gotschall was [unclear]. I'm not being a lot of help to you. The fifties I'm forgetting.

WC: Oh, you are. That's okay. This is enormously helpful. Do you recall your own kind of reaction or perception when things were—the *Brown* decision came down and the school board voted the next night to comply, and then the Ministerial Association took a position on that. Do you recall your own feelings about what was happening in that period?

JF: I was tremendously proud of the school board, for one thing. I was just grateful that they had been willing to take that kind of response. I thought it was indicative of something of a progressive attitude that I [didn't?] associate with Greensboro, and so that was my first reaction. Second reaction was how are we going to affect this and sell it to the community? And I guess the greatest disappointment from '52 to '72 was what I call the lack of real creative leadership from the churches. We got announcements and endorsements and resolutions and so forth from the Greensboro Ministerial Association, but that was—that didn't really do a whole lot. It was a sort of a stamp of approval on some of these things. I never really felt like especially First Presbyterian or First Baptist—West Market Methodist more than the other two—but I never really felt like these three churches gave the kind of creative leadership, positive leadership that they could have. Sermons were preached to these churches, and West Market Methodist did some dialogue groups, but so far as getting together through the power structure of the three churches or even the power structure of First Church, which put together could have been the power structure of Greensboro, a much greater positive impact could have been made than what was, but there wasn't the willingness to do this.

WC: There are three of four things that I really want to follow up on that you just said. First of all, when you said that the power structure of First Presbyterian could be the power structure of Greensboro, can you tell me who those people are? I mean who are the kinds of people you have in mind there?

JF: Howard Holderness, president of Jefferson; Charlie Myers, president of Burlington Industries; Nat Hayes, president of Carolina Iron and Steel—what's the name? I don't remember—C. M. [Benster?], president of North Carolina National Bank, and I think chairman of the board. So you've got North Carolina National Bank, you've got Jefferson, you've got Burlington, besides that, Spencer Love [founder of Burlington Industries].

WC: Was he a member of First Presbyterian?

JF: He was at First Presbyterian Church, too. Plus the fact that the wife of [former Burling Industries president] Julian Price—Ralph Price, the son of Julian Price—Ralph was Roman Catholic, but his wife was a member of First Presbyterian Church. All of these people were at First Church, plus any number of lesser employees of Jefferson and Burlington and lawyers like Brooks, Adams and [Klemeyer?] and Charlie Hagan. These are representatives of the lawyer structure of Greensboro.

WC: Thornton Brooks?

JF: Thornton Brooks, sure.

WC: He was the chairman of the school board?

JF: Yeah, that's right. They were all in First Church. So the thing of it was, we had Jack Redhead, who was a marvelous individual and excellent preacher and so forth, but he was a Mississippian. And from 1954 to 1964 he could no more have taken up the leadership of that group than he could have taken a rocket to the moon. It was just beyond him.

WC: It was beyond his—?

JF: It was beyond his—

[End Tape 1, Side A—Begin Tape 2, Side B]

JF: —four or five, somewhere along there, during the demonstrations. I remember an encounter with him at a staff meeting in which some negative comments were said about another associate of mine being involved in some integrated meetings at First Church and so forth. So we really began to dialogue on this thing even more. Obviously we were pretty much on our own. We were not going to get a lot of a support from the upper two ministers on the staff.

WC: Who were—?

JF: Jack Redhead and Bill Curry. And yet the more we talked, the more they began to ask questions. And this resulted in a sermon that Jack Redhead preached to First Church—I guess maybe middle sixties, possibly late or early '64—in which he said to the congregation, "You know, I don't dialogue with members of the staff. I have come to realize that I am way behind the times, that the church has gotten up and gone way beyond me, and with the statement of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church that we should lead in this thing and not follow, it says some things to me that I am

unable to do." And then he goes into a history of the relationship of the Presbyterian Church to social action, going back to the fact that in the 1860s, the Presbyterian Church adopted a theology or philosophy or relationship between the church and society, a doctrine that was called the "Spirituality of the Church," which meant that you are concerned about personal piety and the salvation of the individual, but you are not concerned about the salvation of society. And so this was sort of a division. And this went on until we began to get the influence of Dr. E. T. Thompson of Union Seminary in the 1930s, who was a professor of church history and way out in the forefront of things, and the awakening of our church to social action and social concerns. He [Dr. Redhead] said, "You know, the truth is that doctrine was built on a lie. The heritage of the Presbyterian Church from its conception has been something else. And we did this defensively in the 1800s as a reaction of slavery when we did not want to come out and make a pronouncement. We had to find an excuse, and this is what we did. We've believed this lie ever since. It's now my heritage and yours, and I'm here to tell you that its wrong, but I don't feel it inside. Intellectually I know it; emotionally I can't feel it. And that's why I cannot give leadership to it." But it was one of the bravest confessions that I've heard a man made, and I admired him much more for that.

And from that time on I had sort of a new job at First Church. I guess about a year from that time, maybe two years later, I was—I had been minister of education—I was made an associate pastor and asked to, as associate pastor, to be responsible for developing any program I could that had to do with social action, community involvement. And he was not going to give leadership to it, but he'd arrived at a point in time when he could say, "If you can get these people to do it, I'll back you over here. But you take it and go on." And so we worked on a number of things that lasted three or four years [unclear]. But it was interesting to see his development take place during that same time.

WC: But you saw the development taking place mostly in the sixties, not during the fifties?

JF: I saw more development in the sixties, yes. And the fifties to me, it was more of a—actually after the sit-ins, the quieter acquiescence to it, sort of. Of course, a whole lot more happened in the sixties after you began to get forced busing. But I don't have any real sharp memories about say, '56-7-8 and -9 of racial incidents.

WC: Well, go ahead—the statement—you said a few minutes ago there that it was your greatest regret that the churches had not done more, and you talked about First Presbyterian and First Baptist and West—well, West Market Street you said was further advanced. The power structure of Greensboro is inside the church. Did they not come together to act because they were not asked, because they did not want to? How would you sort of access that?

JF: Well, they certainly were not asked to by the staff. Because I was in no position to do this; I was third man on the staff—or Lee Atkins was third man on the staff. We were both associates at the time. Bill Curry and Jack Redhead's stance was injustice is wrong and segregation is wrong, but social integration, which is what they felt the church was, was not right. So they'd be strongly opposed to any sort of bringing together of young people in a social setting. If they were going to come together to study the Bible, they might have justified that. But if they were going to come together and study the Bible and then have Cokes and something later or go to a dance together, that was out, as being a social integration. And, no, they were never asked to.

WC: And there's no one—

JF: We passed on to the—Jack Redhead, I can remember on more than one occasion, would report to the session the action of general assembly. That is, he might pick up the minutes and read the latest pronouncements and say, "It is my duty to inform you what our church is saying."

WC: And that's how he'd say it?

JF: And he said it just this way.

WC: Which was in a sense a cue?

JF: Yeah, almost as a sense of duty, almost regretfully. In fact, I can remember a sermon at First Church that he preached when he informed the congregation of the actions of the general assembly. He prefaced it by saying, "It is my painful responsibility to tell you what the assembly has said."

WC: If there was leadership, it was in the other direction?

JF: Not actively.

WC: Not actively?

JF: But in a passive sort of way, I guess. It encouraged foot-dragging.

WC: Now, was there anyone to go the other way—to give leadership going the other way?

JF: You mean in the church?

WC: In the church or on the staff.

JF: Well, I guess, staff-wise I was branded as the one, and so what was done—but then that was a very strange position to be in, because in the fifties, I was an assistant, and so I was limited on what I could do. Then the sixties I became an associate later, and was sort of given the green light to develop some [unclear]. And so we were doing things with a black daycare center and financed our own daycare center. And we developed a community recreation program with Temple Emmanuel and Holy Trinity [Episcopal Church] in which maybe a few blacks were involved, and with the idea that we were going to begin to minister to the possibility of transition of that community, because the apartments might need a little managing, they were going black, and it was obvious in a few years the possibility of larger integrated ministry would develop. So we had that going long-range. But I never felt I never got the support enough to really develop any kind of ministry that brought blacks and whites together [unclear]. It was more a paternalistic kind of thing. We will come to your community and do this; we'll do a nursery school or we'll do a daycare center. In the housing development—they would give money for this—but we had trouble opening the church for the blacks to come in.

There was a lot of trauma when we celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the St. James Presbyterian Church, which grew out of First Church. Julius Douglas was still pastor, and they—well, Julius Douglas called me and said, "We would like to have this celebration at First Presbyterian Church. And we would like for as many of your members as possible to come." And so I was sort of given the job to call the white people who would be likely to come. And I think we probably got fifty or seventy-five of our members who came and sat and ate dinner and participated in the celebration in the dining hall of First Church. And then Julius Douglas said, "Let's do this kind of thing at least once a year together." And I was told very quickly, "No."

WC: Who told you?

JF: Well, Jack Redhead told me, for one thing. He let me know that he couldn't support this kind of social integration other than for the kind of purpose of the celebration [unclear]. If you're going to do this on a regular basis, this was far beyond which he couldn't go.

WC: What year was that?

JF: Golly, I cannot remember. A wild guess, I'd say '65 or '66.

WC: Did Jack Redhead come to that celebration?

JF: Yes. And yet I suspect that Jack Redhead would feel differently today, because I saw this man growing. And as I say, I gained increasing respect for him as the years went by because I knew from my own experience how painful it had been for me to change when I was twenty-four. And here he was facing the same kind of trauma at sixty-four or sixty. And yet he did face it and struggle with it. I wish he could have gone further, because I could have seen some tremendously exciting things happening. But we never arrived at a point where we really asked these elders or the leadership of that church—there was never any attempt to bring some of these key business leaders together and say, "Look, you all are—" [knock at the door]

[Recording paused]

JF: —if it was ever done, I was not aware—to bring Charlie Myers and Howard Holderness and Neil Vanstory, Ralph Price, Spencer Love, some of these people that could have been brought together. With Jack Redhead's appeal to them, a lot could have been done to get the business power structure of Greensboro behind what was taking place. As I see it, that didn't really happen until the chamber of commerce did it in the sixties.

WC: Were any of those people that you just mentioned—would any of them have wanted to, or have been able to, provide the kind of leadership we're talking about?

JF: No one person in that group really emerged as a charismatic leader of Greensboro. We had a lot of good men. But as I saw it, no one of them ever really surfaced as one who was going to rally his comrades around him and say, "Let's take this direction, and let's do it with a solid front." And I never felt that happened.

WC: Were there, among that group, people who you think would have liked to have given that kind of leadership or whose own—who had deep convictions themselves about this?

JF: I think there were several who had deep convictions, and would have—some of them might have welcomed Jack Redhead doing it or another minister from say West Market Methodist or First Baptist. Yet the minister from First Baptist was about the same age as Jack Redhead, and I think that probably made a difference there—a very fine well respected man, who retired just two or three years ago, also. And I think—I don't know so much about Spencer Love, but I think that Charlie Myers, for example, and Howard Holderness—I think those two might have done more and gone further than they did if someone had emerged to lead it, but I don't think they were willing to take the stuff one way or another. I think they had some very kind feelings toward the changes that were taking place and were willing to be a part of a constructive effort to bring it about, but

they were not going to take leadership in it. At least that was my reaction, being part of the staff of the church.

WC: Would Charlie Myers have been the most liberal of the group?

JF: Probably so. My estimation of him is that he was a very aware, open-minded, solid individual, without racial biases of any magnitude. But I don't know whether it was the degree to which he had been settled, or the responsibilities of Burlington, or whether maybe his father having been the pastor of that church for twenty-five years before Jack Redhead, to keep a low profile on that sort of thing, I don't know what his thinking was. I always felt like there was a strongly liberal dimension there that supported this, but just sort of quietly in support but never really articulating this for the community.

WC: Tell me if you can, or if you will, what your estimate was and your impressions were of Spencer Love?

JF: I didn't know him that well. Jack Redhead was very close to Spencer Love, but I was not. So I really—other than being a fantastic businessman. As I heard one person say, he had never seen anybody who could pick up a financial statement of a company like Burlington and take one look at a whole page of figures about the financial condition of that institution, and after glancing at it once for about thirty seconds, put it down and discuss it with you for an hour and a half. He had that kind of mind. He must have been really a business wizard. And I know that he was interested in his church and made contributions to it. And, like I said, I know he was close to Jack Redhead, but I never really knew him.

WC: Was he around very much?

JF: I didn't see him at church very much. I know that often I was aware of Jack Redhead having a conference with him about this that in the other in terms of [unclear] involved in [unclear]. That was more for prestige. His involvement was often more in name in the church than he was active in the issues. So I never really got to know him.

WC: Was Bill Snider a part of the church?

JF: Oh, yes, and another delightful dimension. But here again, maybe because of his—maybe he felt like two [unclear] in newspapers was about all the involvement he wanted. Bill was a good, solid dimension to that session, and, of course, you know how he writes and what his position is. But he never was willing—or never did, for some reason, emerge as

a leader in that session. If a racially-related issue came up, I pretty well knew how Bill was going to vote. He might get up and express himself briefly, but he was not—

Well, again, the same thing happened in the session at the First Church that happened in the power structure of Greensboro. We had something like sixty or seventy-five elders in the church, but no one of them ever emerged as the leader of the conservatives or the liberals or the pro or the con forces. It was a very fluid situation. And Rich Preyer was in this group, and his father, W. Y. Preyer, was in this group. And W. Y., even as an older man, was a very liberal fellow in comparison for a man his age. But no one of these men ever really dominated the session of that church or emerged as a leader in that session.

WC: Rich Preyer didn't either?

JF: Rich Preyer never did either, or his brother Bill Preyer, nor Charlie Hagen, who was there, or Thornton Brooks, who was there. You see, they were all in the session. Ed Mack, comptroller at Burlington, was in the session as well. That's what I'm saying. God, the leadership and the power in that session was absolutely fantastic.

WC: And they all hung back?

JF: But they hung back. They hung back.

WC: Why do you think? Were they afraid of each other? Were they afraid of deviance from each other?

JF: That's a hard question to answer. It was—some of them genuinely felt like that if they went too fast, they'd destroy the church. Others felt like the church should not be involved in social issues. I haven't thought about this in a long time, but now that you've asked me the question, I think probably the greatest reason was just the desire to avoid conflict, just desire to avoid conflict. And yet it was almost always a pretty even split. The night we voted on whether or not to invite a Roman priest, the vote was twenty-one—forty-one elders present—there were forty elders present, and the vote was 20-20. Jack Redhead voted to break the tie, and voted in favor of bringing a Roman priest to speak to the [unclear]. But the verbal reaction on the part of a few was so violent after the meeting that we had a call meeting the next Sunday, and it was voted unanimously that the priest couldn't come.

WC: Unanimously?

JF: Unanimously.

WC: Who was leading that reaction?

JF: [unclear]

WC: Why?

JF: I never knew. I never understood it. So far as I was concerned, it was an almost an irrational reaction.

WC: Anybody else?

JF: Well he and his brother Turk was not on the session, but he felt the same way. Golly, I can't think.

WC: That sort of directly involved you. You would have initiated that, right?

JF: Well, John Taylor and I together. John was teaching a senior high class, and so we brought the request. Of course, there's a history behind that. There's an explanation, but that is not a total explanation. In the late forties, before I came to the church, a Roman priest had been invited to speak and he spent the entire hour of lambasting the Presbyterian Church and the protestant church in general. And a couple of the kids were very upset about this and their parents then got upset. And it was reported to the session, and so around '48 or '49, '50, somewhere in there a few years before I came, a resolution was adopted that a priest could never speak in the church again. But by the time we made this request, we thought enough water had gone under the dam that we might bring it through. But it still—I guess they went back to that. Some of them could remember. And then others—I never really—that was not enough of an excuse for me for the way the session voted, because after twelve or thirteen years, you would have thought that there had been enough change in the session that it would have been forgotten. But we were still strongly split. But Howard Holderness, as I remember, was one of the most vocal ones, and I don't remember another individual standing out, except that he was a key opponent to it. Now since, we have had priest to come and participate in services, but this was because when Jack Redhead retired and the new man came in, he didn't know that there had ever been a resolution that you couldn't do this. [laughter] So he just went ahead and invited somebody to come, and nobody had the nerve to create the problems they had had. It was the desire, again, to avoid conflict.

WC: It's a very pervasive thing.

JF: Yeah. And yet I can remember when they were voting—I guess it was on the issue of black membership in the congregation, and it was going to be a consideration of whether or not if a black presented himself for membership, what we should do. And on an issue like that, saying that then we would consider it on an individual basis kind of thing, it was still not a, just a "This is what we will do, [we'll open the door?]." But it was a positive, "We will give consideration in the next step." And I think the vote was something like, out of thirty-five elders, 25 to 10 or 26 to 9, which was a pretty solid majority in favor of the more positive approach. And, of course, voting in that majority would probably have been persons like—I don't know who was there—but I would have found Thornton Brooks and Bill Snyder and Rich Preyer and his father, Charlie Myers, all of these men, Jack [Klemeyer?], and Charlie Hagen probably would have all voted in favor of a more positive approach. And this was there all the time, but never with the leadership or with the enthusiasm to go ahead and break out and do something.

WC: What was the role of the women in First Presbyterian Church?

JF: We had a very strong, able, women's group. Of course, until just a few years ago, they could not be officers, elders, or deacons. But that has been changed, so there are a number of women now that are elders and deacons there. But they always were a very, very positive and influential force in that church, through any one of a number of ways. They always played key roles in the youth committees, offered this youth program that was venturing out, and so there were strong individuals that were supporting this. They always gave very strong leadership to the Christian Education Committee, if there were any efforts to develop a dialogue group or something like this in the fifties. When I was minister of education and not given this other responsibility, offering any attempts I made to do something about racial overtone, I did it through the Christian Education Committee because it was the only committee I had access to. But I always tried to work through committees, rather than doing it on my own, because that created more negative reaction. And so I worked through the Christian Education Committee.

WC: Who would be some of the women on that?

JF: Oh, people like—well, I believe Marion Hunter was on this at one point. She certainly taught in the church school. I can't remember that she served on that committee, but she was active in the church. Mrs. John Gillespie [Lillian] was a key one. Betsy Taylor, Mrs. John R. Taylor, was involved. I guess they would be two of the most important ones. Rich Preyer's wife [Emily Irving Harris] was on those committees from time to time. A couple of the McNary[?] sisters on the kindergarten committee in the fifties—Dorothy McNary was one. They were school teachers, school principals. Mrs. [Loren?] Bryant, whose husband teaches music and she is the city schools in the library system, and she

was very much involved. Ed Mack was involved in this Christian Education Committee. He was chairman, and a couple other men who helped there. But I would say that Mrs. John Gillespie and Mrs. John R. Taylor were two of the key ones, as far as the education committee was concerned. And a number of other individuals who worked with the Women of the Church organization, but it was often through the Christian Education Program that we sort of [unclear].

WC: Yeah. Any women involved in the United [Council of] Church Women organization?

JF: Mrs. John R. Taylor, in particular, and I guess she would be the only one worth noting.

WC: Is Chick Holderness Howard Holderness' wife—or was that a nickname for Howard?

JF: That's a nickname for Howard. Adelaide was his wife. And Turk, T. T. Holderness, is his brother. And, of course, they come out of Tarboro. He has a brother down there who is just as liberal as Turk is conservative. It's an interesting family.

WC: That's interesting. Did you feel yourself carrying [pause] the banner of liberalism in the church? I mean, did you feel that you were in a sense placed in that position either by your own choice or by the impression of others?

JF: I think the reaction of the church sometimes made me feel that way, simply because certainly in the fifties, and from '62 to at least '67 or '68, nothing happened in the church in the way of an integrated program. An invitation of a black group or a black individual or a project involving the black community, if it originated at First Church, it originated through some committee or department that I was connected with. So occasionally I got ugly letters about being a liberal "nigger loving" preacher, but not a great deal of opposition. It never gotten the point of being uncomfortable, although I was aware of the fact that I was considered the young liberal, being twenty years younger than these other men. Sometimes it was a little uncomfortable because I knew we were doing things that I didn't have broad support [unclear].

WC: When you left in '59, was there any reason for leaving besides the desire for change of venue, change of [unclear]? [laughs]

JF: Well, I had about all I wanted of the large institution of the church and the slowness with which change takes place, and I was a little weary of that. Then I had been there seventeen years and that seemed like long enough, and, of course, Jack Redhead retired.

WC: You left '59, right?

JF: I left in ’59. That was just to take a refresher course.

WC: I see.

JF: I felt like I had to get some things together for myself. I thought you meant coming over here in ‘72.

WC: No.

JF: No, the main reason for leaving in ‘59 was the feeling that there had to be something more to Christian education than what I understood it to be then or I had to get into something else because I couldn’t see spending the rest of my life doing what I was doing unless I had some new understanding of what it was all about. A year with [Bill Kennedy?] gave me some new perspectives, which was enough gas to last me another ten years. Came back with some new insights, and some new perspectives [unclear]. When I went through seminary in ‘49, ‘51 and ’52, I felt like we got a very weak theological base, unfortunately. And that’s what I felt like I had gotten when I went back, is that I got some theological understanding of the church and of Christian education. It gave me an understanding of what it was I was trying to do and how I was trying to go about doing it. I didn’t feel I had that before. Then I got invited back [unclear]. I never regretted it.

WC: McDaniel Lewis, was he someone who played any kind of a major role in the church?

JF: He was not in our church, so I don’t—

WC: He wasn’t?

JF: No.

WC: I swore someone told me he was a First Presbyterian elder.

JF: No, he wasn’t. I know the name, but—and I don’t know how—I have no idea at all what sort of role he played in his own church, but he was not in ours.

WC: Was [Clarence Leroy] Shuping in your church?

JF: No.

WC: Gene Hood?

JF: [No.]

WC: [pause] Something you said earlier about the Poor People's Campaign—the Poor People's March was kind of interesting. The church didn't want to hear anything about that?

JF: They wanted to avoid it if they could.

WC: They wanted to avoid it. Why do you think they wanted to avoid it?

JF: [pause] Well, maybe again to avoid conflict. I don't think they had much sympathy for the whole idea of going to Washington [D.C.] because they figured this was going to result in more conflict. [unclear] I guess that was the main reason.

WC: Were you involved in trying to get some support for it?

JF: To some degree. We had a number of volunteers at the coliseum to assist and so forth. Of course, Orange Presbytery got involved, and there was a lot of criticism about that, quite an uproar in our board of deacons that Orange Presbytery made a contribution to housing here, and [brought it to the coliseum and gave ten thousand dollars?]. I got credit for giving an equal amount. Too bad I couldn't have done it, wish I had had it to give.

WC: You got credit for giving ten thousand dollars?

JF: My wife and I got credit for giving ten—this was a wild rumor around First Church was that we had given ten thousand dollars to the Poor People's Campaign. Isn't that great? [laughter]

WC: Orange Presbytery, that would be—

JF: That's the local judicatory of the Presbyterian Church.

WC: I see. Orange—coming out of Orange County or—

JF: Yeah, and including an area, at that time—its larger now—but it included Chapel Hill to the east, Sanford to the south, High Point and Winston[-Salem], up to the Virginia line including Reidsville. The church extended committee met and decided that this was the appropriate emergency thing to appropriate funds for and they had the money and they gave it. [laughter] So there was quite a bit of uproar. Our board of deacons at First

Church was always a lot more conservative than our session, which is really interesting. So the howl about this in First Church—which the executive secretary was invited to come and explain how this went about and how they had a right to do it, how money from First Church would be appropriated this way and so forth. All of this came from the board of deacons [unclear] session of the church.

WC: What happened when the first—or had there always been any black parishioners, worshippers, on Sunday morning? What happened then?

JF: You know, the interesting thing there has always been a few. There would be an occasional black worshiper when I first came to Greensboro in ’52, and I guess there had been for years. And they were always seated without any question, maybe simply because the size of the church. And I guess that and the academic community created an atmosphere in which this would happen, say, even in the late forties. Oh, you know, there’d be comments about it, but nobody got terribly upset about the fact that a black or two—they always, I think, assumed that they were from Guilford College or from the university—so I always assumed that they were not really out to make trouble but they came and worshipped with us. Pretty much I think that’s what happens when you’re in an academic community. And so it was not unusual at all in the early fifties to see a black in the congregation, but usually just one or two.

WC: If you had to, or if you wanted to, make contact with someone in the black community, who would be your contacts in the black community, let’s say in the late fifties or early sixties?

JF: In the early sixties, Tony Stanley would be the person, or Otis Hairston. I guess they would have been the key two, Tony in particular. I thought that you could so easily sit and talk with him. Also in the late fifties, I guess, the key man would have been the chaplain at A&T.

WC: Cleo McCoy?

JF: Cleo McCoy, a very approachable guy who was not going to get involved in demonstrations and was not going to—really not going to get involved, not going to rock the boat as a member of the staff of A&T, because he was a part of the university. And yet he is a very articulate man and very willing to be cooperative. He would come to our church and meet with the youth group and this kind of thing, answer their questions, try to help them understand, maybe come and bring some of his students or put on a program at Senior High.

One night we did a panel with a couple of the black students, couple of white students, with Cleo there. And if I ever wanted to have an integrated meeting with senior highs in which I felt like maybe the black high school students or black college students needed someone for moral support—in that kind of a situation, you know, needed some adult—the first person I would think of would be Cleo, who would be just a good, solid, stable, steady influence on what we were trying to do—a very constructive kind of thing. So he may have been the first one I would turn to in the late fifties.

In the sixties, when the uproar was taking place with demonstrations, we got Tony Stanly, partly Otis Hairston.

WC: Is there more communication going on now than there was in the fifties?

JF: That's hard to say. Although there is I suspect—I've been over here three years now, so I'm pretty much disassociated with what's happening with the churches and have been almost totally involved in the university, but it's awfully hard to get dialogue between blacks and whites even in the university, as far as students are concerned. My general feeling is that except for what's happening in some of the parents groups in public schools and so forth, or possibly the chamber of commerce, I think maybe we're in a period of time when there is less dialogue than there was in the sixties, and probably back more to what it was like in the fifties. We sort of made our gains and decided that now we will go back and live our separate lives, which we'd always planned to do anyway.

WC: Except that there is more interracial housing?

JF: More interracial housing, more interracial contact and more integrated employment and that sort of thing, but so far as real dialogue between blacks and whites, in my feeling we are back where we were in the fifties. In the sixties there was a feeling, I think on both communities, especially the black community—now, here you are a historian so you can [unclear]—but I think there was the desire to see relationships and dialogues develop and constructive things happen.

And I get the feeling now out of the black community on campus here—we've had some minor uproars and I've spent some time with the black students the last two years—the need for black identity found among themselves and the acceptance of their own blackness sometimes is what I feel it really comes down to. It's almost a theological issue in that if you want to put it in theological terms and understanding, that to be accepted by God is to accept myself with what I am and who I am, and I have to begin from there to make progress. It seems to me that this is in a sense almost a religious thing that's happening to many in the black community. It's a retreat from this aggressive, positive, integrated effort, to pulling away and deciding who am I and accepting myself as a black person in society. Then once I really have made that adjustment, I might

sometime later turn around and in a positive, creative way begin working toward what we call integration again. I've got to do my own thing first.

We see that here at the university with the Neo-Black Society. The big issue last year and this early fall and spring before was whether Neo-Black should be open to whites. Neo-Black didn't want to open to whites, but some of the white students made an issue out of it. What I heard the black students saying is, "Look, this thing is to help us come to grips with who we are. Now, leave us alone for a while." Then technically it's open to whites, but maybe one or two have joined for some reason. It is still essentially a black organization and that's the way they want it.

And you have a few exceptions to this. We had a black boy on our council here, very active in [unclear], and living in my home this fall. But he's one like a number of other students on the campus who was having trouble with his blackness, and he was much more at home with the white community in some respects—in his thinking, his understanding of life—and that created problems. But those few black students in that category probably are not members of the Neo-Black Society, and they are living with white students in a dorm somewhere and have all white friends. But they are the exception. They are an exception.

My feeling has been, in the last two years here, that I have more difficulty getting dialogue with—between blacks and whites—I don't mean from the point of view of black students, but the point of view of white students. I see more racism with white students now than I did among my high school and college age—

[End of Interview]