GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Warren Ashby

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff, Jr.

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EUGENE PFAFF: --Library Oral History Program. I am speaking with Dr. Warren Ashby in his home on Wright Avenue concerning his memories of Al Lowenstein at Chapel Hill and his participation in the Greensboro Community Fellowship?

WARREN ASHBY: Right, yes.

EP: --in the early 1960s. Dr. Ashby, I'd like to begin by talking about the fellowship at the height. When did you become first involved with that?

WA: As I mentioned just a while ago, I'm not real sure of my memories and all things will have to be checked. I would say it began in 1960 as response to the very first sit-ins.

EP: Who was responsible for forming the fellowship?

WA: I'm not sure it would be possible to say exactly. I've been thinking about it some and I think that there are--if you are interested in certain background groups--

EP: Certainly.

WA: That go back in the fifties, even farther back, I think were sort of a natural development and then I think in talking about that I think certain names will become manifest, become clearer. In thinking a little bit since you called yesterday about the past, it occurred to me that these different groups were very important. First, of course, was the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], which I suppose more than any other group has a history of interracial activity and provided the only place in the late forties and fifties where blacks and whites could meet certainly over dinner, over a meal. So that history is important.

In addition, I think, [EP coughs] particularly because of special persons, the American Friends Service Committee should be mentioned. When sometime in the late

forties they moved to Greensboro at the southeastern region and their first headquarters, interestingly, were at the Woman's College, which I was always surprised by and never knew how that happened, and don't know to this day how that happened. In the early fifties they moved away from the Woman's College, first to Church Street and then later to West Market and then probably in the early sixties they moved over to High Point. It was a real loss to Greensboro.

In addition, there are other groups that were antecedents of the Greensboro Fellowship. There was a Fellowship of Southern Churchmen in the fifties--had a group that met irregularly in town. There was a--the Fellowship [of Southern Churchmen] was a group that went back in the South to the thirties. There was a radical or liberal, interracial, explicitly non-Communist organization, and in Greensboro in the fifties there was a group that met periodically.

EP: When you--you made a special point of pointing out that it was radical or liberal, but non-Communist. Was this something that they constantly had to be pointing out, was there this suspicion of--?

WA: No it was simply the fact that the persons that founded it--and I was not in on the founding of that group in the thirties--had themselves, had some very, I think, bitter experiences with Communists in other groups and other organizations. And they wanted to be explicit that you couldn't both hold to the principles that they maintained [and] at the same time be a card-carrying Communist. And I don't know if they ever had to make it explicit; I do know that, at least I was told, that the only person who was ever turned down for membership in the group was turned down because it was known that that person was a Communist.

EP: If I could make repeated references to William Chafe's book *Civilities and Civil Rights*--

WA: Matter of fact, I haven't read it. I was going over to get it this afternoon to read it. Yes, go ahead.

EP: Well, one thing he mentions is that the YWCA was an early leader in interracial meetings, but that even so, they had to be careful not to go too far in sponsoring interracial events, at least in the late forties and in the fifties, because there were powerful influences in the community that could make their pressures be felt on the Y. Also there was that flurry about when the Y hired a black secretary/receptionist who was subsequently hired by A&T, [North Carolina A&T State University] and that there were number of people who, I believe, actually withdrew from the board or from the Y because of that hiring. Is that true?

WA: I wouldn't know the latter directly. And I remember your mentioning of that. At the time, because of friends' relationship with the Y and Helen's [Helen Ashby] relationship with the Y, I knew of what was going on at that time. It was clear that the Y itself was ready to stick by that person. I think it was always supposed that some person in the community maneuvered her employment by A&T.

I can [can't?] remember that time--seems like I wouldn't be as sure of--you'd have other evidence for this. I would be sure of what Chafe said. I would be sure that the Y may have exercised a real responsibility. But I know--I think that it was during the same period--that they lost a lot of money and a big opportunity because they refused to cooperate when a large donor in the city wanted to give some money for a swimming pool; they gave it to Hayes-Taylor [YMCA] and the YW [YWCA] refused to go in on that. Some real loss to them at the time.

EP: I remember Chafe takes the point of view that it was seen through, at least, through his eyes and the information evidence that he had, that this was a means to maintain segregation of refusing YM [YMCA] and YW of Hayes-Taylor--

WA: That's right, that's right.

EP:--and maintaining the white Y and YW.

WA: Well, and the YW refused to go in with that, with some loss. And I would think that if they didn't take radical stances, in regards to what Chafe's comment, I think it would have to do with the fact that they weren't asked to. That said, that--they did not sponsor, for example, the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen group that came in. And when the fellowship went to ask, "Can we meet here?", there's just no question that we could meet here. And my guess would be that there was no real radical stance being taken in the community by anyone. And they were not so much taking stances themselves as, in terms of social action at that time, but they were very clear I thought. [talking over each other] Go ahead.

EP: I'm sorry. I was just going to say, what sort of issues did the Southern Churchmen take up?

WA: As a matter of fact, I can't even recall, Gene. My memory was that in those days that just the bridging of the racial gap was itself was an issue. I'm sure they took up incidental issues from time to time, when the Supreme Court made its decision in '54 [*Brown v. Board of Education*]--don't know what stand was taken [by the Southern Churchmen], I can't remember, but I'd have been surprised if there were any records they probably were not that--didn't look back and find they had met in relation to that.

Indeed in advance of the Supreme Court decision, it was through the fellowship, I think, that the chairman of the school board, Ben Smith, was persuaded to have his school board, or some of the representatives, meet with George Mitchell of the Southern Regional Council--the executive secretary of the Southern Regional Council--who was quite familiar with legal processes and knew the decision was coming. And, in advance of that, he met with the school board and told them to be sure to be prepared for it. And, while this was just one minor event, I would suppose that his meeting and the fellowship's arranging for that meeting was a minor factor--and I want to emphasize a very minor factor--in the decision the school board made on May the--when was it the sixteenth or fifteenth, 19—

EP: Seventeenth.

WA: Seventeenth, 1954.

EP: So, rather than being activist in specific issues such as desegregation of public facilities, transportation, that sort of thing, their role was in trying to facilitate communication between the races?

WA: They had been earlier on a South-wide basis in the desegregation of transportation when the first--when a first freedom ride came through in North Carolina, and probably in the late forties, they were connected with that; they didn't sponsor it, but they were associated with it.

EP: Was there a certain amount of risk, either physical or loss of reputation or employment or whatever, to church officials or members of educational institutions for being activists in civil rights?

WA: Oh, clearly. Sometimes it was easily identifiable as the case with a person like Ben Smith. I could mention other persons for whom there was real punishment, real restrictions. In other cases I think things happened, but they happened quietly so one didn't know about it.

EP: Is there any incident which you can recall where someone was actually pressured or indeed dismissed for being such an activists?

WA: Well, I would know one dismissed by a church group and that was a young woman, Jolie Fritz[?], who was the director of the Wesley Foundation at the University [of North Carolina] at Greensboro [UNCG], who was a member of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. I'm not sure, even if I thought

back, I could remember exactly when her dates were.

EP: Is this back when it was Woman's College [WC]?

WA: It was Woman's College then. I would've said it was in the early fifties or perhaps mid-fifties. It was a very fascinating element in that. I think at the same time--

EP: Would you care to elaborate on that?

WA: Well, first, I think Jolie was a very wonderful young woman--aggressive, took strong stands. I think she probably was also seeing a negro friend in her apartment, this kind of thing. It was mainly her relationship with NAACP, and her active membership in the NAACP, that caused persons on the board of Wesley Foundation in the Woman's College, caused persons on the board to ask for her resignation. A rather key person in this was, initially was Ed Zane.

EP: Who wanted her dismissal?

WA: Yes. Who felt that she had just gone too far in terms of what she had done. And I would want to be awfully careful to Ed, because there's no doubt about his integrity and also about--subsequently he became one of the key persons, it seems to me, making the transition within Greensboro and one of the real forces in easing that kind of transition. But there's no doubt that in that case he was a key person. It was located, the Wesley Foundation was located at that time in the College Place Methodist Church and Ed was a key member of that church, and he was not alone in that of course.

EP: Do you recall about when this would have been?

WA: Well I can only know that it was before '58, because we moved here [to this house] in '58 and Jolie visited us at that time. [pause] It could have been much earlier than that, it could have been as early as '53, I'd have to look up. You try to connect things with it--in 1953, the university faculty passed a resolution which got a lot of publicity advocating the university should admit students solely on the basis of their credentials, having nothing to do with race, or creed, or ethnic background. Interestingly, the [University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill faculty refused to pass such a resolution; [North Carolina] State [University] faculty refused to pass such a resolution, and it was predominately the women on the faculty here who were reluctant to take it up, but once they did they passed it decisively. And I had been chairman of that particular group, and I'm connected with Jolie Fritzs now, and I've got some incidental reaction to that. I simply remember that I had a telephone call the very moment she was visiting me by someone who--sort of

trivial stuff. And it's possible--I tend to think that call came as a response to publicity that that decision the faculty had--might have been '52 or '53, so it could have been that early, it was certainly no later than '57.

EP: Do you recall, I'm kind of jumping around here, but in terms of this people who suffered from activism and civil rights, another lady was Alice Jerome at Bennett [College]. Are you familiar with that case?

WA: No, I remember her but I don't know the case. I don't remember the case.

EP: As I recall, there was--this was during the picketing in '61 and '62 of the theatres--and that the attorney representing the theatres had pictures made of each person, and apparently turned them over to the FBI or some private investigation, and that with Alice Jerome they struck pay dirt, in that, it was--her husband was associate editor of *Time*, I think, back in the thirties, [and] had some alleged connection with [the] Communist party or took the Fifth Amendment in investigations or inquiries or was prosecuted under the Smith Act [Alien Registration Act of 1940]-- something like that. And when it was found that she was participating in this as a member on Bennett[‘s faculty], pressure was then put on Bennett and the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] such that she was dismissed by the board of Bennett. This is kind of a thumbnail sketch of what I would call--

WA: Yeah.

EP: And Dr. Elaine Burgess on the sociology faculty at UNCG mentioned that there was considerable pressure on faculty members not to allow the girls who had been arrested in connection with the sit-ins to take their exams late. I believe she went ahead and did it, but that there was certain pressures there put on by the administration under [Chancellor] Gordon Blackwell.

WA: I didn't have that. I knew that Gordon, of course, had a meeting with the entire student body and he asked them not to participate, or if they did, not to wear their jackets, and he told me that this was because he was really afraid of the violence. He had been down there himself. He may have done this with the faculty, I don't remember that. I remember giving an exam to a student while she was still in jail out at the old--

EP: Polio hospital?

WA: --Polio Hospital, yes, and visiting them out there. I can't--I really don't remember any pressure--and there may have been, and it may have been departmental, in fact it may have been from the administration, I don't know. I just didn't experience that myself that

I recall. And this is what I mean by saying that if there were any direct penalties from the officials at UNCG, I think it would have been quiet punishment, quiet penalties that were made. I was simply not aware of any--I would have to think back--there's again a limitation on me, and this may have had to do with the friends I moved around with, who wouldn't tolerate that kind of thing.

EP: Well, I know that one of the four original sit-iners, Ezell Blair Jr., now known as Jibreel Khazan, alleged that the three or four WC students who did participate in the sit-ins in the spring of 1960 were very quietly told not to return or pressures were put on them. I know one was taken out of school by her parents.

WA: Yes.

EP: But it's his allegation, and he didn't document this, that the administration found excuses to dismiss them. Did you ever hear anything?

WA: No, I would doubt that; I knew the girls fairly well. I remember one time they borrowed my car to go over to East Market Street when something was going on at the time. I knew they were very much, for good reasons, concerned about it all. Of course the parents of one of them was the manager of Woolworth's.

EP: Oh, Harris?

WA: Yes.

EP: Really?

WA: Yes, that's my memory--

EP: I didn't know that--C.L. Harris?

WA: Yes, I guess.

EP: My goodness.

WA: There were two Harris girls. There was a Bertha
Harris and then her friend, there was another Harris, what was her name? I don't recall.

EP: Do you recall any of the names of the other students?

WA: Bertha, the two Harris girls, were the ones I remember. Bertha successfully, of course, became a--is a well-known short story writer, and has published quite a bit. And I only--at the time they borrowed my car, there were only three that I knew about directly, and I don't remember any of the black students either. I would really doubt--again, they may have felt the pressure from various sources, and I would be sure that certain pressure was on. I guess that I had never had any reason to doubt that Gordon Blackwell really was afraid, in terms of the violence. And, again, I respected--I think Blackwell's record in the past had been moderately good on all that, as much as I disagreed with him about what he did in that time, I didn't—-

EP: The reason I ask this is because in Chafe's book he attributes a much more activist role to limiting the sit-ins to Gordon Blackwell, and he bases this upon the Sanford correspondence at--well, not Sanford, the Hodges correspondence, wherein he alleges that Dr. Blackwell took credit for limiting the sit-ins and preventing WC students from participating. Now this, of course, this is moot point, it could well stem from what you suggest, although he states that it was under Dr. Blackwell's initiative that the heads of the campuses involved--A&T, Bennett, and WC-- met that Friday evening in Woolworth's, February fifth, the evening of February fifth. And he--it is his allegation that that was Dr. Blackwell's initiative to try to limit or resolve as quickly as possible the participation of the students.

WA: Yes. I would image that would be the case.

EP: But you think that it stemmed from some surreptitious motives?

WA: That's right. Well, it may have. I wouldn't know that.

EP: How about [Chancellor] Otis Singletary. How would you describe his role once there was a good deal more participation by WC students later in '63?

WA: I don't believe that I could. I would have to think through that. You know, in terms of personality I can make some comments, but I have no direct knowledge at all of it. It is pretty clear that--well, I guess I shouldn't make any comments since I don't have the direct facts about that.

EP: I gather that as kind of an overall general statement that the--while the academic institutions were more tolerant, more liberal, generally, that they--as well as other organizations of influence, institutions within the community--that the pervasive feeling in Greensboro was that it's very unfortunate that this had to happen. That they felt that the status quo was--certainly in keeping with the majority of the country or this part of

the country--that, certainly, the conditions were no where near as oppressive here as they were in the deeper South, for instance. Would you say that there was an overwhelmingly conservative attitude toward preserving the status quo and a hostility toward this kind of agitation?

WA: No, I think I wouldn't. And I would give two reasons for it. I think first--for my believing this. One of them, and sort of a minor reason, was what I alluded to earlier about how the Woman's College faculty--certainly in the early fifties and even the later fifties--was predominantly female, and they did not want to take up the issue publicly about whether--and take a stand--in the early fifties, but once the issue was brought to their attention, they refused to back down and overwhelmingly said that--long before any other usually the university was willing to do it--overwhelmingly said ninety-six to twenty-five or something like that, that it should be open to all persons. At the same time, the students independently, unanimously--student government unanimously adopted such a resolution. That's sort of a minor, that's just a minor straw in the wind.

I think that more importantly for me was--and I think this even has a lead into the Greensboro Community Fellowship sometime in the late--in the early fifties, I started to say late 1940s, but I think it would've been the early 1950s--a faculty fellowship was formed, a faculty from Greensboro College, A&T, Bennett, Guilford College. And it met certainly throughout the decade, maybe even slightly into the sixties**.**

EP: Was WC a participant?

WA: Yes. Yes. In fact, it was organized at WC, but with persons coming over from the other places. And that was never a large group. It would meet monthly during the academic year.

EP: What was the purpose?

WA: The main purpose was simply to open communications between the persons. It was not predominately a social issue, but there were times when it discussed social issues. Paul Green, for example, came and talked to the group in the--about 1954, '55--it was '55, it was when was when the state was having a reaction to the Supreme Court decision. He probably came and talked about the Pearsall Plan [for school desegregation]. And when he talked, there were well over a hundred persons attended. At another time I remember Randall Jarrell spoke, and that was just a social gathering. He spoke about literature. So, it had the mixture of kind of things. It would take up specific issues, but would also take up issues in academic fields.

The point about all of this is that through that kind of contact, a fairly large number--still a minority of the faculty of the units, of the institutions--got to know each

other. And the faculty then, the white faculty certainly knew where the black faculty stood in terms of desegregation of public facilities--that, first of all. But then in terms of economic opportunities and in terms of all the discrimination. And there is no question that there is a size of minority that any administration would have known about too, I think, and it may have welcomed the kind of thing that took place with the student sit-ins.

You know, I really have a hard time—I'm sure, I know everybody was upset about it. You know, if you have students going and friends going to jail, if you have persons thinking they hear violence is taking place, you're upset about what happens, but I have a hard time believing that, certainly that there's any express, open opposition to any part of the faculty's [participation]--maybe covertly, on the part of the administration's, that's a different thing though.

EP: Was there considerable or very limited participation in these type of things by faculty members at WC and the other white faculties?

WA: It depends on what you mean by considerable. If you mean twenty, thirty, forty persons who are actively associated with it, there'll be not many. But there was never any attempt--I think this needs to be filled in too--there was never any attempt to make it a kind of a mass group. It was sort of a quiet--to my knowledge. I have no recollection exactly how that began. I know some of the persons who were connected with it, some are still around who are very active in it. But I think this is the kind of thing that lead up to the Greensboro Community Fellowship and made it very natural to have that transition. I think there's another thing that's very important in the picture, that Chafe and others may take account of, and if they haven't it certainly should, and that is that there was an interracial student group, you're familiar with that, that goes back to the twenties. This one even began in the twenties. It began in the twenties in southern places where there were different negro and white colleges nearby, in many Southern communities. Beginning in the twenties some of these groups organized. That was explicitly not a social action group--of course I was not in on that at all, but it lasted through the years here in Greensboro. Raymond Smith at Greensboro College was no doubt a key person throughout all the years on that, and it was explicitly to build bridges between the whites and negro students. I think it lasted longer in Greensboro than most any other communities in the South. It lasted well into the sixties.

EP: Do you happen to remember the specific name of this organization?

WA: I sure don't. Probably College Interracial--

EP: I had wandered rather far afield when we began by--you were showing the antecedents to

the Greensboro Fellowship.

WA: Yes, and I would say these were some antecedents, or again there's an antecedent to the fact that after Ann Queen came to Greensboro in 1950 as a secretary of Friends Service Committee college program, they began a regular--a weekly luncheon meeting of mainly Woman's College, Guilford, A&T, and Bennett faculty. And this was always a very small group--twelve, fifteen persons would just go down to the Friends Service Committee with a bag lunch. But here again all these things I think made it natural for Greensboro Fellowship to begin as a response to the sixties. And my guess would be, talking about these persons, my guess would be that Tartt Bell, who was the executive secretary of Friends Service Committee, and some other persons simply called some people and said lets get together and talk about the events at the YW.

The first times they got together there were a large number of really establishment people there as well--persons who were concerned with what was taking place. Certain steps were made and opening some communications with the mayor, with the black leadership who were sort of--were meeting at A&T at the time.

EP: Were these just general non-specific areas of communication, or were they keyed to specific issues?

WA: Yes, I'd be sure they were key to specific issues, but I couldn't identify what the issue--I'm sure that the whole thing was to try to get the City Fathers, the powers that be, to respond positively to the sit-ins and to the demands. It was out of that, very early, John Taylor became, I think, became a fairly key person. It's hard to know how leadership emerges in something like this.

EP: My understanding of Mr. Taylor's role was that, first of all, John and Betsy Taylor were very much involved in the YWCA.

WA: That's right.

EP: And that also the Holiday Inns were the first, certainly, hotels, and among the first businesses, to desegregate, and he was referred in the paper as saying, "I cannot practice Christian brotherhood on Sunday and then segregate on Monday."

WA: Yes, he had also built a motel out on the--I don't know when the bypass went through, it was even before the bypass went through, I think, he knew the bypass was going to come and he built a motel that of course was open to blacks. In fact, it was mainly for blacks in the sense that you didn't have a lot of white persons coming in and moving into the black

neighborhood, predominantly black neighborhood.

EP: Was that fairly a bold thing to do on his part?

WA: Oh yes. Certainly, the desegregation was of Holiday Inns, that was--I have no doubt that he suffered from this or that she too, but I don't know in what ways at that particular time. In any case, he took some leadership, and after the passage of some time, when things cooled down, there were some persons, again I simply couldn't possibly identify who they were, which said "let's keep meeting" and at that time, the establishment, most of the establishment people tended to drop off and the--

EP: By establishment people, you mean businessmen?

WA: Businessmen, newspaper editors, certain of the clergymen of the leading churches--though certainly Father [Hugh] Dolan was very active early in the group, as was Julius Douglas, as was Rabbi [Fred] Rypins.

EP: Rabbi whom?

WA: Rypins, who was in the Temple Emanuel, had been at Temple Emanuel for years. I would not say any of those took leadership in the early days of the Greensboro Fellowship. I would say they were active and were always there.

EP: Do you know how--you mentioned antecedents, do you know how specifically the Greensboro Community Fellowship was formed? Who or what individual or groups of individuals was responsible for forming it?

WA: I would simply say that after a passage of time and when the public issue, which had flared up had now declined, eased off, that some person meeting at the YW for lunch said, "Let's just keep meeting." And they continued to meet and I would say that at that time, probably prior to that time, probably Tartt Bell had been chairman of the first meetings. I'd say about that time maybe John Taylor picked up as being--sort of chairing a meeting.
It was the kind of thing that simply moved spontaneously, and as soon as one person said, "Yes, let's keep meeting," enough people would say, "Well let's meet two weeks from now." And they began meeting--

EP: You have been mentioned specifically by [Bennett College president] Dr. Willa Player, by other individuals as being one of the few white people who met with black leaders, first during sit-ins then through the continuing agitation, right up to the peak of the public

demonstrations in spring of 1963. Did you do this as an individual or as a member of the Greensboro Fellowship?

WA: Oh yes, as an individual. Now, there may be a little bit of the latter, but mainly as an individual.

EP: What sort of things did you do? Do you recall any of these specific incidences?

WA: Yes. I can recall, but I can't, Gene, I can't remember whether it was the first sit-in or the second sit-in
that I got Mack [McNeill] Smith involved. Now he may have been involved anyway, but not only Mack Smith, but there was another group that, again that--well, in that group, Tartt Bell and a man and Mark Freedlarens[?] and I started in the early fifties a conversation club. As a matter of fact it was all white for a few years, then in the late fifties, some negroes were taken in. And knowing some of the persons in that group like [attorney] Mack Smith and [*News and Record* editor] Bill Snider and [school board chairman] Ed Hudgins, I got some of them together to meet with some of the blacks at that time. It would be true that most of the persons, most even in that leadership had little contact with the black leadership. In fact not only had little contact with it--

EP: Were would this conversation club meet?

WA: We met at the YW. That's really interesting. My guess is that we started meeting at the YW because some of the persons wanted to be interracial from the start, and others would resist it, so when the time came we were able to--

EP: Because the YW already had this--

WA: Interracial policy and [was] the only place where you could go. You could make arrangements at some of the churches, but that was a great nuisance. I did make it a point to go to see some of the people, because I guess I felt at that time, and those times, people get so quickly isolated. I had been, during those years, very close, quite close to Bennett, largely through David Jones. I don't even know how I got to know him. He used to invite me out to speak to them, once year, that kind of thing, and I got to know Willa Player then too. And I think I was fairly close to those persons probably until 1963, and then I'm not sure what happened. In fact, I went away in 1964 for two years, that was one thing that happened.

Part of my main reason for talking with those persons was a feeling that they were isolated and didn't know, really didn't know what other people literally in Greensboro on the other side of the railroads tracks were thinking. And my relations went back to them,

with some persons [prominent local African Americans] like Vance Chavis, George Evans--I can't remember when the relations with Henry Frye and Shirley Frye began. With a man named Joe Shaw, Leonard Robinson, a man named Jarrett—

EP: Hobart Jarrett?

WA: Yes, and a number of others at Bennett. It sort of went back in a very easy and natural way back to the early fifties. It was a very pleasant, very wonderful relation from my side, you know I--if you pushed me, I could look back now and see that we didn't push things hard enough, when you thought you were pushing too hard, that kind of nonsense.

EP: Was this on a regular basis or was it periodic,
sort of in tune with the various crises?

WA: I'd say that the faculty fellowship that began in the fifties on a regular basis--or are you talking about my talking with these persons?

EP: Yes.

WA: Well, some of it was on a regular basis because the groups would meet regularly, you know, and you'd just see people then. As I think back to it now, the smaller the group, the more direct you talked about issues, and the more frank you could be. Which means that the group that met at the Service Committee, probably every Tuesday for lunch, many of the times the conversation was trivial, no doubt, just chit-chat of college teachers. And other times when they had real complaints to make about the city of Greensboro, what was going on.

And--going way back, Gene, very, very early it was pointed out to me by blacks that they viewed Greensboro as a nice nasty town. And when they would say nasty, any white person would know it's a lot nastier than it is nice for them. And if you go back too, to the housing situation in the early fifties, it's unbelievable that whole place of East Market just beyond the railroad--I don't know how Vance Chavis and I got into that, he must have been principal at Lincoln Junior High then--I have no notion how we got into it. But, that was just, those conditions were absolutely deplorable, and the only way to make them decent was to bulldoze them down, and I have no doubt force the people, force the people out to fend for themselves somewhere. I think this all of what they meant by a nice nasty town.

The fellowship then began, began in sort of a natural way, and when you think back you wonder how the negroes, how they could be as patient as they were with all of us. You know?

EP: Did the fellowship precede the 1960 sit-ins? Or did it arise--

WA: I would say it was a result of them.

EP: A result of them.

WA: That would be my memory.

EP: And it did not--this core group of people, when the more establishment people, as you say, begged off, they continued?

WA: That's right. Well it's interesting, there were some persons who have since become establishment who were very active in it, for example Vick Deuschbaum[?].

EP: He was an early participant.

WA: He was, I'm not sure Vick was an early participant, but I know he may have been. And I bet that was through Father Dolan. I don't know if you know Father Dolan or not—

EP: I met him once.

WA:--he was a great man. I never knew this but I'm just betting know that it was through Father Dolan. But however soon Vick came in, he was always very active and very committed to the various programs the fellowship engaged in.

EP: What sort of programs did they engage in?

WA: Well, I think I would want to say, first of all, as I think about the fellowship, even then, at the height of controversy, its main concern, its main contribution was to keep lines open and to keep communication open and to keep some degree of confidence with some persons and some trust alive when certainly the blacks had all reason not to have confidence or trust in my judgment. But then very early it got into--the key issue then was the desegregation of public facilities and it engaged in a campaign--it was probably thought it was major, but no doubt it was very minor looking back--whereby we targeted as many of the restaurants in town, probably all of them, and the hotels, and had persons in the fellowship go to talk with the restaurant owner or the hotel manager. We had a certain strategy with what we'd try to get them to say. First, we hoped they'd say they were ready themselves to desegregate, but we knew that not many would be willing for that. So the second strategy was would you be willing to desegregate if other restaurants would desegregate. I don't know if there was any success from that at all except for being

a softening up process with the theatres--we went to all the theatres, and the restaurants and the hotels.

EP: Were they involved in this ongoing campaign to get the separate signs on the water fountains removed and the restrooms?

WA: Very early, and when those were removed I don't remember, but they would have been involved in that, that's right, yes.

EP: In that respect they were at least partially successful?

WA: That's right. Yes, I seem to remember that I did not, I think I did not--I seem to remember some person went to the Sears management where some of the most obvious separate water fountains were right there in the store down there on Eugene Street [and West Friendly Ave.], and so they--I can't be sure, as a matter of fact, because I don't remember when those signs were removed, but that was the main thing they hit. About the same time--well, they would also make contact with the certain flash points of difficulties. I would suppose the first black who went to Grimsley, when was that, in about '57, '58?

EP: Fifty-seven. Josephine Boyd.

WA: Well, my guess is then that the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen people had tried to make some sort of contact, it didn't do much help there. Again, I think Vance Chavis was involved--he was a school person, a school man. He was interested and he thought other people ought to communicate with her, with her family.

EP: Oh, to try to encourage her to remain despite the harassment she received?

WA: Yes. You know perfectly well that many individual factors were involved. For example, I know that Franklin Parker's daughter was a close--became a friend of hers. The Parkers attended the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen--irregular meetings. They would have done it without it. But I think what happens in groups like that, you reinforce, you play on each others conscience so you reinforce people.

Then Kay Troxler was very active in the Greensboro Community Fellowship. At the same time Kay--

[End Tape 1, Begin Tape 2]

WA: --responsible, quiet in what she did, but she would just push everybody along. She got

involved in some school desegregation matters, and she'd know the details of it, I wouldn't know the details, I was involved nothing like as active as she was. Subsequently, she got involved in tutoring and the Greensboro Fellowship persons became involved in tutoring to a limited extent. So they were involved in some of the activities.

EP: Was this to make sure that the black students who were in the white schools would keep up with their work?

WA: Right. That was the main point of it, the main purpose. If you were going to do it, you need to, you need to have friends who will receive them, but they need to be given support to do as good work as they can possibly do.

I think I'd go back and say, looking back upon the Fellowship, I think the main, any main contribution it made was not so much the social activism--there was always persons who were engaging in that--but nobody quite knew how to do it and knew what steps to take. But I would say the main efforts, and the main contribution was in keeping the lines of communication [open] and, one would like to hope, to encourage both the whites and the blacks, but especially the blacks. And I think it is the case that some of the persons have been active in the--some of the blacks have been active in Greensboro public life for the city schools or school board or the early blacks on the city council. Henry Frye is a case in point--very active. In fact, I'm pretty sure Henry became, he may have been the president right after John Taylor.

EP: Did the Community Fellowship do anything specifically during the course of the sit-ins at Woolworth and Kress's between February and July of 1960?

WA: I'd say not, because that was when it was stimulated and it probably wasn't even organized until either late spring, early summer, early fall. There were regular group meetings at the Y, [they] were sort of mass meetings, they would be--memory is such a tricky thing--a small room there, dinner room was crowded, so I'd say there were fifty, seventy, ninety persons, but they were sort of a catch-all just to talk about what was going on, to ask what could be done.

EP: Were they people that would come once and not come again or did they come regularly?

WA: I think most of the persons tended to come back. It's even possible, if somebody looked back at that, it's possible that that particular group meeting had more of a conservative impact than anything else. That was certainly not its intention. Its intention was to get the powers that be--who was mayor the first time around?

EP: George Roach.

WA: Yeah. To get the powers that be to respond affirmatively. As I recall too, Ed Zane didn't get involved until the second one.

EP: Well now, he was a council member in '60.

WA: Oh, was he?

EP: And he did form this committee. And, as I understand, that it more or less kept on as the mayor's Committee on Community Relations or something like that, and that in '62, Bland Worley replaced Ed Zane as I understand it. And that--as I understand it, Zane's committee was not particularly effective in persuading the managements of the businesses to desegregate, but they did arrange meetings between the Greensboro Citizens Association that more or less took over negotiating in the students' cause, and the representatives of the businesses involved.

WA: Have you ever talked with any of the persons who used to meet regularly at the Mayfair Cafeteria?

EP: No, no. Whom are you--?

WA: I don't know. I know [Mayfair manager] Boyd Morris, he was really caught with it. Boyd was caught, first of all, I say because of his own personal inclinations [were] "segregation now segregation forever," back in those days. But he was caught because pressures came very heavy, certainly in 1963 upon him, and upon the Mayfair. But I know there used to be a group of businessmen that use to meet, that had their coffee cups up there. Oh, there must of been a mammoth number of them up there, and they would go down for mid-morning coffee. I'd be willing to bet that a lot of the key decisions and a lot of the resistance that came in the sixties came over cups of coffee down there.

EP: [laughter]

WA: Yeah that's--this is what you call a real suspicion of mine, that--

EP: You have no hard feelings?

WA: Oh no, no, and you know really decent—in fact, Boyd was a really decent guy. That's the trouble with us southerners, I guess. But you can't see any of those persons at that time, you can't see the Chamber of Commerce at that time, doing anything but resisting, and

from their perspective with very good reason to resist.

EP: Fear of loss of white patronage?

WA: Yeah, and all kinds of rational and irrational fears in terms of were the whole South was. All that stuff is so unbelievable now, just--this is what students tell you. They just simply cannot believe --

EP: What sort of irrational fears? Massive influx of the stereotype of the dirty, ignorant, slovenly black patron?

WA: Yeah, that the blacks would take over, and they didn't see that their real fears came from the shopping centers and the white suburbs, that that's were their fears really belonged. Their fears came from the other side.

EP: Do you see anything in this pattern, which some of the people, including Boyd Morris, suggest, that there was a coupling of integration in shopping centers that created the demise of the downtown business area? Of course, there would have been, in just simple growth, there would have been suburban areas anyway, but that one significant reason that suburbs grew was white flight [migration of white people from inner-city areas]. Do you see anything to this?

WA: Well now, you're asking about a theory and I have never thought about it so much. I guess I would put it mainly in terms of the short-sightedness of the downtown business persons. A short-sightedness from both sides. Short-sightedness in terms of what the consequence of--with some grace and some ease--opening their facilities to blacks; and the consequence of that is a different thing than if they do it with resistance, and the blacks know the resistance is there, you've built up a situation right away you just can't quite reconcile. But also short-sightedness in terms of--big, long-sightedness in terms of the going where the money was. No, I guess I don't think that the white flight--I simply don't believe the white flight in Greensboro came because of integration. I think it came from other, not primary to that, other motivating forces.

EP: Getting back to a more personal level, you say that since the fellowship was not formed at the time of the sit-ins but grew out of it, then what were your individual actions regarding the sit-ins?

WA: I did not participate in them. I would go down.

I probably had a closer connection with the second and first, but I'm not sure of that. I did make a point to go talk with persons at A&T and at Bennett where my entrées

were. Of course, and again I don't know whether this was the early or the later sit-ins or both, but I would say it was certainly the first of trying to keep contact with the students. I didn't have many black students at the time, but I had a few, and gave exams to several there and tried to keep up that kind of contact, that relation.

EP: Did your white students also--were they incarcerated or was this just strictly black students?

WA: I'd say it was strictly black. In fact, I don't remember that the most radical of the white students, once they were asked by the chancellor not to participate, I don't know. I think of the Harris girls. I don't know whether they continued or not, and with one of them's father being manager, that made it more difficult anyway. In fact, I remember talking to them about it, I'm sure we talked about it, I'm sure in the course of the conversation. I wouldn't have been free to give them advice if I wasn't sitting in, but I''m sure they raised certain questions.

EP: That certainly was ironic that the--

WA: It really was.

EP: --that the daughter of the manager involved would take what was an extremely radical position for a white female student in the South at the time.

WA: If we would of had enough sense to know it, we would have known that--that was the beginning of the sixties, and of the youth movement in the sixties, really, they were very early in that. Early before that, I can't think, Gene, whether it had any connection--it had some slight connection locally. Late in the fifties, I was involved with the National Student Association Program out of Atlanta and also in the nation in terms of the southern students human relations work. And I got very closely involved with that, and there were a few students from Greensboro who were also involved in that; and there was a little bit of a spillover there.

But I didn't take any direct action that I remember on my own, except trying to get some persons together, trying to get Mack Smith involved. I got to meet in the second one Jesse Jackson, talk with him, others talked with him. I do recall that when James Farmer [founder of CORE] came to Greensboro, but I don't recall which time--of course he came a number of times--for some reason one of the persons he asked to meet was John Taylor and John asked me to come out to have dinner at his home with James Farmer, and I'm sure it must have been some other Greensboro persons involved too, but who they were I don't remember now.

EP: Dr. Player remembers, specifically, one meeting between you, herself, and James Farmer, I think over at Bennett.

WA: That was the case, that was the case. And, you know, I think--I can't remember the details and for what reason I'm blocking them out I don't know--

EP: What was your motivation in going here, was it to try just to get the people to talk, to actually effect a concrete resolution or exactly what?

WA: I simply don't recall. I really don't. I would be sure it was to try to bring pressure again upon--you never quite knew who was making the decisions, you never quite knew. The mayor at the time was a focal point, a real estate and insurance man.

EP: Yes, David Schenck.

WA: David Schenck, yeah. He was away during part of this time, pressures were great upon him.

EP: How about Bill Trotter, did you speak with him?

WA: Yes. I went over to see Bill down at Southside Hardware. I can remember, recently, a person was talking to me about him and how he came through all this really fine. That was not my sense at the time. Again, he was very cordial--but look at Boyd Morris, he was friendly, too. He just said, "We're not going to do anything," and that was my impression about Bill also. It could have been, that could have been, as a matter of fact, that I was, without engaging any conspiracy, trying to pass on some of this information to Farmer and to Player.

I think it is clear, and I really want to say this: I think I did not take, I'm sure I didn't take as radical stand as Willa Player would have liked for me to take. In fact, I thought she was taking a more radical stand than I had hoped. On the one hand, for the first time, Bennett students were encouraged, they were really encouraged to participate and that was marvelous. David Jones had made a great contribution, but you couldn't see David encouraging that even though he would like--I'm sure he sort of would have liked to have it happen. He would have been more concerned for their safety; and Willa Player was really out there, and that part out it was marvelous. But what was it that--

EP: I see a certain kind of progressive radicalism. You say, for instance, you didn't take as radical stand as she would have liked, and she in turn--I don't know how much she was directly involved, but Reverend Hatchett was dismissed from the faculty, or his contract was not renewed or something.

WA: Oh, was it?

EP: And the feeling was, in certain quarters, that it was because he was pushing too hard. He, and also Reverend Bush, who were both advisors to CORE really wanted the--

WA: What was Hatchett's first name? Henry?

EP: John.

WA: John Hatchett.

EP: John F. Hatchett and James Bush.

WA: I didn't know Bush.

EP: Well, James Bush has refused to participate in this program.

WA: What happened? Have you talked to Hatchett?

EP: I'm going to.

WA: What's he doing now?

EP: He's in New York. I don't know what his occupation is. I don't know if he is connected with the church, a church or not. But it's my understanding that he was--

WA: What was the name of the man--

EP: --his contract was not renewed.

WA: I want to ask about this in just a minute. Because I think that's news to me, but I may have him confused with someone else. What was the name of the other man who was here after Hatchett who taught probably sociology at Bennett who was a real--he was the most liberal of all the Bennett faculty. Have you came across that person's name? And he went to New York.

EP: Well, now Bush and Hatchett--well, Bush was very activist, perhaps more so than Hatchett, but they were contemporaries, they were admitted at the same time.

WA: This man was a contemporary, but it wasn't Bush. What was his name? It'll come to me.

Well, I'm surprised at Hatchett. I remember he was--I knew him fairly well at the time.

EP: Well if I could ask--

WA: I'm surprised if that is the case, because my impression was that Willa Player became radicalized from '60 to '63--

EP: Well that is certainly my impression, so--

EP: --and something happened in that time that she really did. And I think it was at this time--and I was aware at the time, I had very much the same experience that I had had in Nashville in about '57 when Martin Luther King came and some other persons from Atlanta, some of whom I had known in Atlanta came--and I mention it because the experience was very much the same--and it became clear to me at that meeting in Nashville, and I think it became clear to me in talking with Willa Player--I'm not sure so much James Farmer--that the white liberals, I included, were not and could not give enough and were being passed by. And the leadership--and that part of it was marvelous, you know, that the leadership was now going where it belonged.

EP: You mean that the black leadership had more or less deferred to the white liberal leadership and that now they were taking over the reins?

WA: I would say up to that time, I wouldn't say so much they deferred to it from the position of the white persons, but I think from the position of the black persons it had been deferring. I think from the position of white persons there had been a real cooperation, a mutuality of cooperation, a mutuality of understanding. But I think that, you know, here you're back to where the white person never really knew, except occasionally, the door was open, how much, how strong they really felt, how much they had hurt, how long they had been hurting, how much they hurt for students in ways you could only experience second and third hand and I think this is what happened then. And I think subsequently the leadership did gravitate--of course, even in black hands, it seemed to be in the late sixties [that] it gravitated away from the former liberals to the radical blacks in the sixties.

EP: I get the impression that you and Mack Smith and these other individuals that were going back and forth were doing just what you said. That you were conveying the information from one side to the other to let each side know where the other was standing, where the areas of compromise were, where there was no chance of compromise.

WA: I don't know how much of that was conscious on my part, it my have been more

conscious on Mack's part; I guess it was some on my part. I'd also say that I think if there was any kind of communication and reception of that communication, the blacks were much more intelligent--to my knowledge--and much more responsive than the whites were.

EP: What, if anything, did Willa Player, James Farmer, the CORE leadership want from you?

WA: They never said. So if I would say if I didn't give them enough, that's my own reading of it. They never asked, they never--to my knowledge.

EP: They never wanted you to go back and say, "Will you tell the City Fathers that--

WA: No, and they were certainly not trying to use me or anyone else I know about. They were not demanding, "You come here or else." What it was that their own positions were just so adamant and so very clear. I can remember Willa Player's, and I had such a wonderful mixed feeling about it. I was confused because she was a different person than the person I had known. She was moving in another world I didn't know. And on the one hand she was so adamant and so clear cut--I remember going over and talking to her in her office--[both talking] I can't remember now what it was, I can remember going over to see her.

EP: The impression I get from much of the black leadership, in talking [to them], is that their feeling was even well- meaning whites were really just looking for a way to end the demonstrations. Whether they resolved the point at issue was secondary to ending the demonstrations. And, of course, from their perspective, the primacy was on resolving it by means of achieving their goals. So, do you think there was a sort of suspicion?

WA: Oh yeah, I'm sure there was. And I would hope that there was not a valid one in my case, but here's where memory plays wrong. I can't believe that, if it's the alternative--if the alternative was end the demonstrations without making any gains, without achieving any promises or continuing demonstrations, I would have been asked for my judgment on that, but I hope I know perfectly well where I would have come down then, because I know where I'd come down now. I can understand how persons would be terribly suspicious, and not only suspicious of a person like me, Gene, wondering what I was doing, but also because they knew I didn't have any power, and they knew that I was a college professor and who's that, what's that?

EP: You had no input with the city council, with businesses--

WA: Oh yeah. Yeah I knew--in the case even of the person [who] became so crucial in that, Ed Zane, my previous relationship with Ed Zane had been one of just real opposition, just

that he knew where I stood, I thought I knew where he stood. So this came--you know, when Ed moved in that direction, that was such a wonderful thing to happen.

EP: I know that he--the sense that I get is that the business community and the government community did not really understand the depth of this movement: that indeed it was a movement, that what they weren't asking for, in the words of Eric Goldman, was not just--and never was-- just to get a cup of coffee. It was for desegregation of all public facilities in all aspects of life. And Ed Zane was shocked and incensed when the students continued pressing, like, for the desegregation of Meyers Tea Room, at which point he refused--

EP: Oh really? I didn't know that.

WA: --he refused to work further with Hobart Jarrett and the Greensboro Citizens Association.

WA: Oh really?

EP: Well he said, in effect "now you asked for the desegregation of the lunch counters, we achieved that, and then now you want to do this with the tea room."

WA: I didn't know that.

EP: Apparently--to me that suggests just a real fundamental lack of--

WA: That's right.

EP: --what the black community was seeking.

WA: That's right.

EP: That they felt they'd make one confession on the lunch counters and that was it.

WA: That's right.

EP: Is this your impression of the white leadership?

WA: I didn't know that story, you know, about Zane. I didn't remember the sequence about the tea room. Now that you mention it, I knew it would come later, and I knew that--I always supposed opposition to opening the Meyer's Tea Room was simply the fact that the business people, the business powers didn't eat at Woolworth's, they ate at Meyer's. This

was my interpretation of what was going on.

EP: Suddenly you were encroaching on their--

WA: That's right, their turf.

EP: Turf, yes.

WA: But no, I'm not surprised. I would say that constituted the mentality of almost all of them, of all the ones--you know, when you talk about the Greensboro Community Fellowship, there were no, there were no really influential businessmen in there. John Taylor was a wealthy businessman, but John was certainly not in on "the know."

EP: [unclear]

WA: A person like Ed Lowenstein was in and that was very, that was an interesting one too. All I know about Ed, of course, was married to a Cone, and what his relations were with the Cones I have no idea. But it used to surprise me that Ed was, I think, always there. He was the architect that did your building down there [old Greensboro Library on Greene Street]. I think Ed, as I remember, I just was always surprised when Ed would keep showing up and making these--you know, from the standpoint of, quote "his people," these outlandish assertions and statements were wonderful. But the mentality--

EP: Outlandish assertions? For instance?

WA: Well, he understood that. He understood what you'd say about what the blacks were demanding was equality. They were demanding to, you know, to be human.

EP: And he was sympathetic to them?

WA: Oh absolutely, oh absolutely, yeah, yeah, at least that's my clear--

EP: So, with these kind of contacts, it can't really be said that the white community, business leadership community, was unaware of what the blacks were really seeking. I mean, they had people like Ed Zane and Ed Lowenstein telling them "now this is what the blacks really want." Again it suggests, like, well, they just refuse to see it or deliberately refuse to acknowledge it.

WA: That's, that's--my interpretation been what you move to toward the end. There's no telling what they could understand, but the signals were there for them. I think the

newspaper, the editors of the newspaper in town were always an enigma to me on this too, as a matter of fact. How much Bill Snider has understood of all of this I really don't know until this day, and I know Bill fairly well. When you can go back to a person like Gordon Blackwell--and this too--Gordon Blackwell has a long history as a liberal sociologist by Chapel Hill standards, and I know persons there who would have sworn by him in the late forties, but how much he really understood, maybe how much any of us understood, I don't know. But the message was there and it was told to them certainly. [both talking]

EP: It sounds like it was merely a learning process?

WA: Yeah, a lot of them would just resist hearing it, no question about that.

EP: So many cases the communication or the lack of communication was because of the preconceptions that got in the way?

WA: Yeah. Yeah.

EP: "We know what the black community wants." But not really knowing.

WA: That's right, and almost always there is some side issue that can justify a person, any of us, from seeing what the real issue is**.** This goes back to Ed Zane, for example, and Jolie Fritz. It could very well be that Ed Zane's real opposition to her was something that I don't understand at all. It's conceivable that the fact that an unmarried director of Wesley Foundation--she may have been the ordain minister, I don't know that either, she couldn't have been in those days--but an unmarried director of Wesley Foundation was seeing any male in her apartment.

EP: Much less a black man.

WA: This could have been the thing that kept him--so the issue for him with Jolie Fritz may never really have been the NAACP issue, but that's the way it came out publicly, publicly in the meeting of the Board, this kind of thing. But every time you have these issues there's always some side issue like that that can take over, that can blind people of what's going on, I think.

EP: Well I know that one of the issues was--of course this was a smoke screen, could well have been generally felt-- but I know that we have mentioned Alice Jerome. I don't know if it was at the time of the Greensboro marches or subsequently her involvement in '64, but Dr. Elizabeth Laizner at Bennett was accused of being a Communist. People from the

American Newspaper Alliance came down, Harry Boyle for instance. As a matter of fact [attorney] Armistead Sapp said to me "Well, that thing was full of Communists" and he specifically mentioned Boyle. Was there a great deal of that? Was there this kind of Communist witch hunt trying to find out the true purpose on what was going on here?

WA: Always a suspicion that they're behind it, whoever "they" are. I don't remember the details now. Charles Jones was accused of something by Burt Davis in a leading article in the *Daily News* and Jones the very day he was accused of that--[Helen Ashby asks EP if he would like a beverage]--and I can't remember what it was but he spoke at Bennett that very day and he asked me if I would arrange for him to go see Burt Davis because Burt had it just all wrong, and there may have been Communist involved in that. This had to do with desegregation of schools, so it must have been about '55, '56.

EP: Well, there were a series of letters to the editor that Charles Jones wrote in the spring of 1962 on that issue.

WA: Oh really?

EP: So perhaps this--

WA: Yeah I thought it would have been much earlier than that, but that's interesting.

EP: Well, was there a lot of left wing people coming down here either trying to exploit it or generally trying to help it or who may not have been all that left wing but were so identified by such conservatives as Armistead Sapp, and Boyd Morris and people like them?

WA: Not to my knowledge. There was a woman from Louisville, Kentucky, who came and visited us and stayed with us who was--she and her husband had the reputation of being Communist or Communist-front, but I never knew whether it was true or not.

EP: Do you mind--would you care to mention their names?

WA: I would if I could remember it.

EP: Well, [laughs] what--

WA: She was in the news not too long ago, last year, over, I think, the bombing of her home, year or year before last and again the same charges brought against her. But I don't know that--and I think she came down more recently. She probably was down in terms of the--

EP: November third?

WA: The Klan, yeah the Klan. But, I never knew that she was trying to exploit it. Then there was the woman from Winston-Salem who--did she run for lieutenant governor of North Carolina or something?--and again she had Communist-charged affiliations, and I know she knew she didn't have that much influence, and I never knew that she was trying to exploit. You know, I just don't know those things.

EP: If I could shift to a specific incident. I know of at least one meeting at the Holiday Inn by the Community Fellowship. And I was speaking to Reverend Tony Stanley, Knighton Stanley, and the meeting was about, or it became-- McNeill Smith was very upset that some of the people who had been arrested in the marches had torn up the seats of the city buses used to transport them. And he felt that CORE should offer to pay for it. And Stanley said that he was very personally embarrassed by it and so were other members of the black community, members of the Greensboro Fellowship--Greensboro Citizens Association. But that he was told privately by two members of--I believe he identified them as WC faculty--not to worry about it, not to offer to pay, and that after that he ceased to worry about it, and indeed it did cease to be an issue. I think Armistead Sapp may have brought it up at a council meeting, you know, very quietly referred. Did you attend that meeting?

WA: I don't remember it. [both talking] I sort of remember Mack, I know Mack would talk like that, that doesn't surprise me a bit. Because while Mack had been the first chairman of the State's Civil Rights Committee and had gotten out that book and so forth--and while Mack, in my view of him, would want complete equal rights. He also believed in the due process of the law. That, he came down strongest on that. And my guess is that sometimes he'd be misunderstood, and maybe properly misunderstood, because he'd come down on that side, so he's saying--my memory is so bad on this stuff, I can't--

EP: Did the Community Fellowship meet regularly during this five or six weeks of crisis in the late spring, or was it intermittently? Was this just an individual meeting or one of a series?

WA: Gene, I would be sure in the first place that we met regularly once a month at a specified time. I know that during that time, the--whatever governing body of the fellowship there was, sort of an executive committee--I know it met periodically as there seemed to be any reason. Again how it was involved, I just don't recall. But knowing that the blacks were in there, and knowing the whites were in there, I know that it was involved in it, I just don't remember. I know it didn't picket.

EP: Could you characterize the nature of the conversations at these meetings? Were there attempts to try to come up with a strategy for resolution? Were there attempts to try to find just the right sort of argument that would convince the businesses to desegregate?

WA: Yes. The main concern was to have the demands
met. And, now, if I am to remember correctly, that the demands even in '63 were for desegregation of public facilities across the board--theatres, restaurants, hotels.

EP: There were a series of demands that were eventually presented to the council by what was called the Pro-Integration Groups--Coordinated Council of Pro-Integration Groups.

WA: This may have had to do with some employment too. Did it?

EP: Yes it did, specifically within city government.

WA: Right, yeah, yeah.

EP: Increased participation of blacks in the police department, the other departments upgrading them, the integration of the schools. Of course what got the media's attention was the businesses downtown, the principally, the four targeted businesses.

WA: Again, I can not remember that the Greensboro Fellowship was ever asked by the blacks to engage in the sit-ins. As a matter of fact a lot of the blacks did not engage in the sit-ins. It was predominately a student affair wasn't it? Subsequently the adults became pulled into it and marched, but they were very careful to announce in advance what they were going to do and where they were going to do [it]. So I'm sure the Community Fellowship was never asked to participate directly, but I also would know that its whole concern during that time was to have the demands met because it believed in the demands, and it believed in the demands long before the demands were being made. I think this is something that's really missed sometime in all of this. I think it's very clear that going way, way back--

EP: So this was not just an ad hoc group. It may have been a new group, but it was the people who had been in one group or another addressing these issues--

WA: That's right.

EP: --for ten, twenty, thirty years?

WA: That's right. Addressing them in the sense that there was never any, a frontal attack upon--a demonstration attack upon segregation, but addressing them in the sense that they knew it was coming, didn't know when, didn't know how, but knew perfectly clear it was coming. The people knew that very clearly in the thirties when the NAACP started taking its cases to the court. You just knew what was going to come, and I think there were a lot of people who wanted that, and I think more than we suppose. Most people weren't even aware that segregation even existed I think, that may be a strange thing to say, but I think that's the case. They knew it was there but never it was a morale issue for them. I think for a lot of people it really was, going way back. They knew it and didn't know how to bring it about, were caught at times between various forces--

EP: Once the mayor's committee was set up--what became Human Relations Committee--and the demonstrations had stopped, what became of the Greensboro Community Fellowship?

WA: Well, the Community Fellowship--I was away from '64 to '66, and they were really, they were very fateful years for the whole country. I remember coming back and reading in a column by James Restin saying the country had changed more in those two years than the other years in its whole history. I became convinced that that was true the first time I attended the meeting of the board of the Fellowship after I got back in the fall of '66. An entirely new leadership had come in and it tended to be more of a professional leadership, both blacks and whites.

EP: Were they still addressing the social issues or had it become more establishment?

WA: I think by that time they were still addressing some of the issues, but by that time they had become organized into a professional, I mean, into institutional groups of the great society programs, beginning with blacks taking leadership of a North Carolina Human Relations Committee which has existed in the past but now it took on some sort of new life. The National Conference of Christians and Jews, which had always been--which in the past had been quite quiescent, although some of it's leadership, I think one guy named Gordon Lovejoy, began to be active in the movement. But the leadership had a different kind of professional hue when it had taken away from the amateurs and at the same time in the late sixties there was a radicalization of the black leadership I think. The fellowship continued to meet at the Holiday Inn. In fact, they began meeting at the Holiday Inn not too long after its beginning. John gave us a good dinner for a decent price. And then in the late sixties, some of the blacks--and maybe some of the rest of us--felt that's pretty far out, you know, way out there north of town, let's meet somewhere else. And the only place we could find to meet was Hayes-Taylor.

And I may need to back track on that; it may be that the blacks had felt that we

had been meeting all these years, and [told] the white community, you come meet here. So we began meeting at Hayes-Taylor. I would say, my memory is, that attendance began to immediately drop off. But I would not necessarily want to attribute that to meeting at Hayes-Taylor, because I think there were all of these other factors involved too. More radical leadership, a certain kind of strain in relations--I would have to go back to try and analyze what it was because certain friendships certainly continued, but everything was so chaotic that you didn't quite know where people were, where the issues were, what issues to hold onto next. It continued to meet at Hayes-Taylor for certainly a couple of years.

EP: But by the early seventies it had disbanded.

WA: That's right.

EP: I would like backtrack on one point, and ask that in trying to see that the demands were met, did that mean that groups of individuals or individuals were assigned to talk to certain businessmen? Like you say you talked to Boyd Morris. Did they go back repeatedly or was it kind of a one shot deal?

WA: I would say it was probably a two shot deal. But [they] did not go back repeatedly. That's right.

EP: Most of the businessmen that I have talked to say that they can remember talking to Bland Worley's committee, although they did get a letter from them. They mainly remember talking to McNeill Smith and--was his participation as a member of the Greensboro Fellowship Committee or just as an outside individual?

WA: I don't know, since Mack is sort of an independent operator. I would image it was sort of both, but we did divide up. I can't remember who all was in the groups. Normally we would go in teams of two, but some would go by themselves. I would be confident, without being absolutely sure, that Mack in the session would say, "Well, I'll talk to so–and-so."

EP: Did anyone ever accompany you or did you go by yourself?

WA: I remember John and I went and talked with a Chinese restaurant man, John talked with him by himself. I think I talked with Boyd Morris by myself; if anyone else talked with Boyd Morris I don't know, and when I went back to talk to Boyd--but that may have been to go back for different reasons, too. Somebody went and talked to a manager of the Carolina Theatre—-

[End of Interview]