PRESERVING OUR HISTORY: ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: FRED LOPP

INTERVIEWER: KATHELENE MCCARTY SMITH

DATE: May 15, 2008

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

KS: My name is Kathelene Smith, it's May 15, 2008 and I'm here with Dr. Fred Lopp for the Greensboro Rotary Club oral history project. Good afternoon Dr. Lopp.

FL: Good afternoon.

KS: Thank you for meeting with me today.

FL: Happy to do so.

KS: Well, please tell me when and where you were born.

FL: I was born in Lexington, North Carolina, November 11, 1940.

KS: Great. Did you grow up in Lexington?

FL: I did.

KS: So tell me about your family and your home life growing up.

FL: Well, of course the first part I remember when I was about three or four years old was my dad going to service – into the military. And at that point I had a brother a year younger than I, and my mother felt like she could manage and look after one of us. And my brother went to live my aunt for about two years, which was about six blocks from our house, but that's the first memory I have of life changing or being different or something. And then the transition when my dad came home from service of reintegrating a family, and then I had a younger sister born a couple of years later so then there was the three of us. We lived in the same house until I was about ten and then moved to a slightly larger house and basically lived there until I went away to college.

KS: So tell me about your family and home life during that time. What did you like to do?

FL: Oh. My brother and I were always into sports. We started playing football when we were six, and we were playing basketball by the time we were nine and tennis by the time we were ten, and then by Junior High running track and continuing the sports which we played through high school and into college. My brother played football in college, and I played tennis in college.

KS: So where did you go to high school in Lexington?

FL: Lexington Senior High. At that time there was one white high school and one black high school.

KS: Now when you were in high school, besides sports, what subjects did you like the best?

FL: I liked math, chemistry, physics, the sciences.

KS: And thus, becoming a doctor.

FL: That's right. That's right.

KS: You liked sports and math and science. So when you graduated, what did you do next? Did you go straight to college –

FL: I did.

KS: – did you take a while off?

FL: No, I went directly to college. I went to Davidson College.

KS: Did you!

FL: In Davidson, North Carolina.

KS: Great school. And how did you like college? Was it a fun experience?

FL: No.

KS: No?

FL: No. I went to college at a time Davidson – when nobody liked Davidson. It was a great school. It was an all-male school – it was trying to be the Princeton of the South. Grades were tough, competition was tough. There was the fear if you didn't do well – a hundred percent of the class had to be in the top two thirds of the class – so it was a very stressful, competitive time at Davidson. I think all of us, when we left Davidson and went to grad school, realized what a wonderful education we'd gotten and from that point on have loved the college and been

supportive ever since, but many of us were not happy students at Davidson, we felt we were overworked and it was too hard. In addition for me personally, I played on the tennis team and I worked forty hours a week, so I had no life except study and work and play on the tennis team. So I had no social life, I was outclassed academically because I had come from a poor public high school. Seventy percent of my classmates had gone to prep school and I was just socially and academically outclassed all the way through college.

KS: Now did you work in the college system?

FL: Yes. Yes. I did things from file books in the library to take attendance at vespers and chapel to wait tables in the dining room to being treasurer of the fraternity and keeping the books for that. So, I had a series of different jobs.

KS: So they had a fraternity system within Davidson?

FL: They did. Fraternity systems there were just social eating houses. You didn't live in them, you didn't have parties in them, you didn't do anything but – they were just social eating houses.

KS: I didn't realize that Davidson was all-male at one point.

FL: Oh, it was all male probably from the1850s until the 1970s.

KS: Really. So hopefully things picked up in graduate school. [Laughs]

FL: That's right, they did, they did. I got to graduate school.

KS: And where was that?

FL: That was at UNC-Chapel Hill and dental school. And graduate school for almost all Davidson students was a breeze after Davidson. It was just – I mean you could just coast through dental school based on what you had in Davidson. Same thing in medical school, you could coast through the first two years of medical school based on what courses at Davidson, which we all took – you could skip those in medical school. That's how tough Davidson was and how well it was accepted by the medical school. They'd say, "We use the same course notes that Professor Puckett at Davidson uses, so if you passed his course, you can skip this course in medical school."

KS: That is amazing. So did you go to medical school first and then dental school? How does that work?

FL: No, no. It was just that's how strongly, how highly respected Davidson was by medical and dental schools. In dental school, there were no courses we could skip because Davidson didn't have any specific dental courses, but I had a background

for most courses at the dental school that often exceeded my professors. I found that in my freshman year, I often knew much more about the biology and chemistry than the professors did that were teaching the courses. They just knew the basics of teaching what they'd been taught, whereas at Davidson, we'd been taught the background behind the background, you know.

KS: The theory.

FL: The theory and concepts, yes. That was a challenge because we were taught to challenge things in college. In dental school we were taught not to challenge anything, just accept what you're told.

KS: So you liked Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill was a fun place to live?

FL: Yes. And looking back on it, I enjoyed living at Davidson, it's just that the constant pressure of academic achievement was so great at Davidson and at Chapel Hill there was no pressure.

KS: So you graduated – when did you graduate from dental school?

FL: In 1968.

KS: In 1968. And then what did you do? Did you go right into practice?

FL: I went right into my specialty training. So I specialized from '68 'til '70 and then I joined – in lieu of going into service – I joined the faculty to teach and do research. At that point, there was a shortage of teachers and you could fulfill your military obligation by teaching.

KS: Now was there a forced military obligation?

FL: Absolutely. One hundred percent of dentists had to go into the service. If you hadn't been in before you went to dental school, you went in after dental school, or if you specialized, you went in after specializing. Yes, unless you were 4F or something like that, one hundred percent of dentists were going into the military then.

KS: Unbelievable. So you taught at Chapel Hill for awhile. So how long did you teach?

FL: I taught three years full time and then four more years on a part time basis.

KS: So you did a lot of teaching.

FL: Yes. I enjoyed teaching and research.

KS: But you decided that you wanted to go into practice at some point?

FL: Yes.

KS: Well, so tell me about that decision. Did you start practice in Chapel Hill?

FL: No, I came immediately to Greensboro. I would have stayed in teaching probably but I was – had a wife and three young children, and a failing marriage and just needed to make more money, and so the practical thing was to leave teaching and come into practice. And I often thought that I might go back into teaching at some point later in my career but the clock is kind of running out on my doing that.

KS: So – well, that's not true. So you were married with a family in Chapel Hill and that's where you started private practice?

FL: No. I was teaching there, but when I started in private practice, I started in Greensboro.

KS: You started in Greensboro.

FL: And the reason I came to Greensboro was Greensboro needed a periodontist, I was close enough to Chapel Hill to go back and forth to teach, and it was a big enough town to have other periodontists to be in association with.

KS: So what year was it that you moved to Greensboro?

FL: Nineteen seventy-three.

KS: So how was Greensboro in 1973?

FL: I viewed it as a city, one of the leading cities in the state. And the thing that appealed to me was the diversity of industry without the traffic congestion. I looked at Charlotte. Charlotte had huge traffic congestion – twenty minutes or thirty minutes to get anywhere. I looked at Raleigh, which I didn't think was growing as much as Greensboro, and it was smaller at the time. And Greensboro seemed to have a wonderful diversity of industry with banking and insurance, and Cone Mills and Burlington Mills, and various industries as opposed to Winston, which seemed to have primarily a tobacco-based industry – and so I liked the diversity. I thought the parks and the community arts situation was better in Greensboro. The social stratification didn't seem as great to me in Greensboro as Winston. And it was closer to Chapel Hill, so it just seemed to be the right place for me and has proven to be.

KS: And you were raising a family? You said you had three children?

FL: I had three children at that time, yes, and a fourth daughter later.

KS: So they've all grown up, and all of your children have been raised in Greensboro for all practical purposes.

FL: That's right. That's right.

KS: Great. So how has Greensboro changed since you've lived here?

FL: Well, to me the biggest change was losing the banks, and then losing the mills, and then, ultimately, losing the insurance – which I guess we didn't lose, but we lost the local identity. And Blue Bell and other things that were strong local businesses became multinational with headquarters in other places, and stuff like that. So to me it didn't have the – I think there were more Fortune 500 companies here in the '70s than there are now, and so that loss of strong locally built businesses doesn't exist that was here. That to me is the way Greensboro has changed, the most significant change, which I view as somewhat negative, but maybe in the bigger scheme is OK too. That there were corporate mergers and we just lost out in terms of being headquarters.

KS: Well also there seem to have been a lot of – well I'm originally from Texas, and as a tourist there seemed to be a lot of social issues going on, even in the seventies.

FL: There were.

KS: You know the sit-ins here, of course, before then and then you had that 1979 issue with the Klan and the Nazis. What was it like living through that in Greensboro?

FL: Well, for me it was very interesting because when I had been at Chapel Hill, the Durham students had started organizing the hospital workers to get better pay, and of course, when I was in college it was the Martin Luther King era when many of us wanted to leave on weekends or drop out of school to join the cause and things like that. But we didn't, we knew that if we'd done that, we would have been drafted right away, so it kind of kept us in school, so to speak. Well, I was aware of what was going on at Duke and they were starting to organize it also at Chapel Hill. And being in dental school, which was right beside the medical school, and seeing the workers being organized there, that was the background that I had, and those doctors, as they finished school back there, came here and started organizing the Cone – the Cone Hospital workers. So that was kind of the genesis of how the Nazi-Klan issue evolved in this town.

I never knew those people personally 'til after the attacks, but I was aware of the mindset of the students and the young professionals that these employees needed better recognition and better pay and working conditions and that that was an aspect of the South that was not ready to give that to workers, so I was sympathetic to that cause but never caught up in it. Subsequent to that attack –

and I happened to be in Seattle at a national meeting when that occurred, and I just couldn't believe it – several of those people became patients of mine who had worked through that. So I got to know, particularly – not the Klan people – but the Communist Party, and the organizers of that became patients of mine, also the presidents of several black colleges were patients of mine and retired presidents so I got to hear their stories.

KS: Isn't that interesting.

FL: Yes. Dr. Warmath, who taught Jesse Jackson, was a long term patient and personal friend so he would share stories about, you know, working with the students. And George Simpkins, who was a black dentist, I played tennis with, and George told me his stories about recruiting the students and starting the sit-ins and all that. So I got to hear it from people who were involved in doing it and realized that it was a more planned and organized event – all of the sit-ins, the integrating of golf courses, all these things were not just people on the spur of the moment who decided to do something, but people who spent months and months if not years and years, talking about or figuring out how best to achieve integration.

KS: So do you think Greensboro has a particularly good environment for things like that to happen?

FL: Yes I do, absolutely.

KS: And why do you feel that way?

FL: I think that anywhere you have colleges, you have a nidus for social change because there tend to be more liberal thinkers. I think the faculty tends to be so, and I think particularly with two black colleges we had the stimulation of these students to think toward these issues, especially as a follow-up to Martin Luther King's being here. And I think you have particularly the Quaker influence, with Guilford College. So I think with the universities here, you have a wonderful base for social change.

KS: Even more so than Raleigh?

FL: Oh, much more. I do, yes.

KS: Even though that is the state capital. That's interesting.

FL: And I think Greensboro has been more open to it. If you look at Durham, for instance – a much higher percentage of blacks, black colleges, white colleges, so it is probably a bigger college town proportionately than Greensboro, and yet they don't seem to have the openness that Greensboro had. We had enough acceptance

or openness that blacks would dare to make stands and take positions to cause these changes.

KS: Do you think that maybe it was because of the groups that settled it? I mean you had the Quakers, you had a strong Jewish influence, you had a diverse group of people settling the area maybe?

FL: I think you had that, and I think we had some uniquely bright black people here who were in touch with some important people in the NAACP at the national levels, who knew what was going on and, frankly, could work with and use the students here to help implement change.

KS: Well, from what I understand, when Jesse Jackson was here, he was very peaceable, much in the line of Martin Luther King.

FL: Yes, I think that's true.

KS: And seemed to work with the community. It's very interesting.

FL: Yes, and even the blacks, in my opinion, who were part of the "Death to the Klan" march were peaceful people with peaceful intent, but wanting to make a statement.

KM: I know it was in their neighborhood. They were victims when they didn't even know it was coming, in many cases. Horrible. So what about some of the issues facing Greensboro now like population growth, economic growth, leadership; what are your opinions on that?

FL: Well, I think we've had an issue with shortage of water which has been here really since back in the seventies, and I think perhaps could have easily been and almost addressed in the late seventies, early eighties and then there was a change in our congressional leadership and Randleman Dam got deferred and is just now coming online. So I think we'll solve our water problem with that.

Leadership in Greensboro I'm kind of out of the loop on, but my impression has been that Greensboro was controlled by wealthy people who were the benevolent dictators of public policy and social policy and government and education and all those things, doing what they thought was best for the community. And I think that's how it was run prior to the seventies and through the seventies and into the eighties, and then as we went to more of a districting system and they lost some of the overall clout, it's now gone into Action Greensboro and Greensboro Development. And you know, I think the same people, not the same people, but the same system is behind it now – that there are powerful, influential people who largely influence the direction and growth of Greensboro. I think they're well meaning and sometimes their decisions are best, but I think because there has not been an openness to it, there's been a lack of

leadership among the populace in terms of wards or districts selecting people who then become leaders who are truly leaders of the town. In other words, I think the leadership in Greensboro is not the city counsel or the county commissioners – it's the individuals of some of these corporations.

KS: Really, isn't that interesting. Has that changed, or do you think that that was the way it always was?

FL: Well, I think it was the same thing in a different form before. I think that before it was the presidents of companies or something, but with losing the companies you get these foundations or you get, still business entities that kind of go together and decide that – you know, amongst us the head of a tobacco company plus the head of this company and the head of that company and this company – we should sit down together and decide what we, as chief executive officers of our respective businesses think is best for Greensboro and how best to implement it. And we did that with Vision 20/20, Action Greensboro, all sorts of – Greensboro Development Commission – I think that all these things are essentially controlled by the same people and that that has precluded a strong leader like a mayor or chair of commissioners that is highly regarded and respected that provides leadership and direction in Greensboro.

KS: That's a very interesting perspective. Well, a lot of people in control have gotten behind philanthropies. There are some really great philanthropies.

FL: Yes, absolutely. Yes, many of these people – and that's how they're doing the control is from the use of philanthropic dollars to do things – you know, city parks, you know, the baseball stadium, Bryan Park – many of these things came from these people who were quote, in my mind, "the leaders of Greensboro." Not politically, maybe, but certainly effectively in terms of influencing what was going to happen and what would not happen. Yes.

KS: Now what about race relations at this point? Do you think that they've pretty much stabilized?

FL: In my mind, yes, I'm not aware of any strong racial divide issues, although I frankly think that this country is a somewhat racially divided country anyway. I think that we're – as opposed to other countries that I've been to in the world – I think that there is much more division by race, but I think that Greensboro is one of the most progressive in addressing that and dealing with it.

KS: Now we're about to celebrate a two hundredth birthday coming up, so what do you see in the future for Greensboro?

FL: Well, I'm hoping that the new industries that are coming to town like HondaJet, FedEx will open up a whole new avenue of business industry development. I don't know yet whether it will be computer orientated with computer chips and

this sort of – I don't know which direction that will take, but I think that's going to be our future. I think we're developing a wonderful transportation system here and, of course, FedEx flights and then highway interstate connections that go through and around Greensboro so I think we should be a hub – a distribution hub at least, if not a manufacturing hub – and I see that as the future.

KS: I think some people are afraid of Greensboro getting too large. Do you have fears about that? Do you think it should try to remain the size that it is, or do you think it should try to expand?

FL: Well, I like the slow, carefully controlled growth it has had. I wouldn't mind it growing a little more rapidly than it has, but to me, we've not had the uncontrolled, unplanned for growth that Wilmington and Raleigh and Charlotte have had recently. I think Greensboro's growth had been carefully thought out; we've been able to react generally pretty well to expansion plans, so I think we should continue to grow but grow slowly and frankly, that is what I expect will happen.

KS: Now what do you think is the best way for Greensboro to improve its quality of life for its citizens?

FL: Well, I think to continue to build on our parks and recreation system, one, and secondly, I think we have the potential to be the cultural center of the state. I think with the Greensboro Symphony, the Greensboro Opera, the ballet, the music school – that the one unique thing that we could have, that could make Greensboro unique in all of North Carolina, would be an emphasis on the arts. Be it developing an opera country and young opera singers to go on, or through the music school, musicians that go on to greater things. But I think that we have the bases with our college systems here and our private involvement of the symphony, opera – people are amazed how good they are that come from Raleigh and Charlotte, that we have equal or superior performances of these performing arts right here in Greensboro. And I think if we could follow up on one of the Action Greensboro plans of putting on the cultural arts, that that would be something that would put us on the map in a high quality way that's environmentally sensitive and green – and just expansion of arts, just I think, improves the quality of life for everybody. And people who have moved to Greensboro specifically because of the Weatherspoon Art Museum – they want to be a part of current modern art in a community that develops and promotes that art. And one of those people recently gave $250,000 to the University, so these are people that are artists of national reputations, and they said the reason they came to Greensboro was because of our art museum. So I think to expand these art facilities we will be able to attract and can attract some wonderful people.

KS: Now are you involved directly with any of the arts?

FL: Yes, yes.

KS: So tell me about that.

FL: Well, my involvement really is as a board member and officer in several of the organizations. So I'm not an artist in any way or a musician in any way, but I've been involved with the School of Music and the Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Greensboro Opera Company and all those things in terms of trying to promote and expand the quality and quantity of art in Greensboro.

KS: Well downtown certainly has embraced things like that. There's a great venue for that.

FL: Yes, absolutely. I just think we are on the cutting edge of being able to explode and expand in that in quality and quantity if we want to. If we could get the powers that be to give us some money for a nice auditorium or – I like the Santa Fe model. What they did, they decided to pay like $25,000 to recruit one fine pianist to come there and live. Well, this was back in the sixties, and they brought in a big name pianist, who brought in students who wanted to train under him. He also brought in other pianists who wanted to play and practice where he was. So from bringing in one, they ended up with five or six major name pianists, all of whom had wonderful piano programs and students, and for a small investment it just multiplied on itself because like attracted like. That one guy that decided let's do Santa – Santa Fe is a town of about 35,000 people, has an opera program, you know probably one of the – probably the tenth largest opera program in the country and they just decided, "Let's make that our emphasis and build on it." And people come from all over the country to go to an opera at Santa Fe. And I could see that happening in Greensboro easily. I mean, we're poised to be the strongest opera company between Atlanta and Washington.

KS: Really!

FL: Yes, as a matter a fact, we probably are, but, you know, we just need another year or two of performances just like we've had in the last few years under our belt and we will clearly be that, and I think it will be between Atlanta and New York before long.

KS: And how do people in Greensboro respond? How are they responding to the opera company and the symphony? Is there a lot of support?

FL: I would say there is. Although there are empty seats and although we could accommodate more people and we'd always like to have more people involved, I think there is good attendance and good interest and growing interest and yes, certainly compared to what I know is going on in Raleigh and Charlotte and Wilmington, I think we have many more people interested in the arts and participating in the arts and supportive of the arts than any other town or city.

KS: So do you travel around the country in this capacity too? Are you interested – do you go to see opera companies and symphonies in other towns?

FL: I do, and other countries too. When I go abroad, I always go to operas.

KS: So do you like to travel?

FL: Yes.

KS: So what do you like to do when you travel? Do you travel for business purposes or pleasure, or do you combine them?

FL: Initially, I went for dental meetings in foreign countries and combined it with some sight-seeing, and then I decided it wasn't worth the potential deduction – I would just go purely for sight-seeing. So mine are travel trips for maximum education, you know, I try to stay in local hotels, eat in local restaurants, go to local performances – particularly of opera or symphony or music – because arts are so much stronger in so many of the other countries, and they receive state support and are able to be stronger. I spend a lot of time in museums and at historical sites.

KS: So where are some of your favorite places, opera-wise, that you've been in Europe?

FL: Vienna, Coventry Garden, the Paris opera house, Milan. I've been to Buenos Aires opera.

KS: That's great. But you don't sing or play an instrument?

FL: No.

KS: How did you get interested in all of this?

FL: Well, I saw an opera when I was in the sixth grade and it just turned me on, it really stimulated me to learn about it but the – I guess the next step for me was when Greensboro started an opera company, and I went to an opera and I realized how little I knew about it. And I'm a Bridge player, and the same thing happened to me in Bridge. I went to play Bridge, and I realized how little I knew about Bridge. So I just decided that I was going to better at those things so I started reading about opera, studying operas and decided to go to Europe and take a crash course, attend five or six or seven operas. And the more I got into it, the more I got hooked on it, and so that's how I got into my interest in opera. Interest in Bridge was the same way. I was asked by a neighbor to go play in a Bridge tournament, and I played in one and I couldn't believe how – what a different level of Bridge it was – and I decided, "I'm going to become a good Bridge player." So, I studied Bridge and became a Light Master quickly. And so I think

what happens is, if I get exposed to something I am embarrassed I don't know enough about it, I decide I'm really going to hone in and study this thing whatever it is.

KS: But you've got a lot of passions! You have your work and then you have some really great other passions too.

FL: Yes.

KS: That is great. Well do you have any connections with the local colleges or universities? Are you involved with the music school?

FL: School of Music, yes, and Weatherspoon.

KS: Weatherspoon also. So what role do you think the local colleges and universities should play in the economic and cultural development of the community?

FL: I think exactly what they're looking to do now – develop research, which will lead to new industry or expanded industry; to offer professional advice in newspaper articles, which they do; to lead discussions of topics of expertise; to offer conferences that they can draw on the faculty to attract conferences to Greensboro because of specialists within our college communities. I think all of these are things that we should do more of – we are doing some of – but we should do more of. And our nationally recognized music school attracts thousands of kids to camps, music camps and stuff. We had an opera camp at one point that attracted kids to it. So, those are things I think that the university is uniquely set up for – camps in the summer. And I think that they are all capitalizing on that, and I think that's wonderful, but I think using faculty as expert consultants is something that we need to promote and push and I do think, Pat Sullivan in particular, has done that.

KS: Well, you'd be great in teaching in that venue also. Have you done anything like that?

FL: I haven't. I enjoy teaching. I loved it when I was in teaching, and I loved the research I did and that was probably the happiest time in my life doing those things. And I've often thought about going back into teaching, and I think there are lots of things I could teach, and actually I've taught – I've had two or three assistants who have gone on to become dentists because they had the ambition, and I would tutor them to get them enough in schools. One hygienist became an orthodontist. Just last week one of my assistants graduated number one in her class in hygiene with the highest national ratings on her national boards of any students at that school and it all came from having worked here for a year because she had not even been able to get into hygiene school, and I said, "Come here, work for me a year, I'll get you in and you'll do well."

KS: That's great.

FL: I've had assistants go on to be PhDs at universities.

KS: I'm sending you my son, that's all I have to say. [Laughs]

FL: So I enjoy doing that and I have done a lot of that with foreign students. Recently, I was in China last year, our tour guide was a Chinese attorney who was working as a tour guide who wanted to come to this country but couldn't get in, and I arranged to get her into the graduate program at UNCG. So she's now here working on a Master's in Business degree, and she'll get her CPA while she's here as well, and she'll be a wonderful resource for someone. She's got a Chinese law background with a CPA and a business degree.

KS: What a combination.

FL: My assistant is from the Philippines. I just enjoy reaching out. I guess because I've visited other countries and realized how much we have in common and how we need to help each other, that I tend to try to help foreign students when I can and help them come to this country. I've had a couple of foreign exchange students live with me and my daughters when they were growing up.

KS: Have you ever thought about moving over there or doing some extended work over there?

FL: Yes. Absolutely. Yes. And that, I guess, was one of my regrets that I didn't quite get around to doing was stopping practice sooner, going back to teaching, and going to foreign countries and teaching maybe six months at a time. Actually, I was to go to Vietnam to teach for two weeks in the dental school over there on September 15 of 9/11, and there were fifteen of us from all over the country that were going. And travel plans got so disrupted that that trip just didn't happen, and I never scheduled another trip like that. So I think in retirement I'll do some dental treatment in other countries, but it won't be the same as – like I would have loved to have gone to Italy and taught for six months, you know, and lived in the culture and then say France or Germany or other – Sweden. And I even went over there to some of those countries to take extended courses like "Implants." Dental implants were started in Sweden, they were successful there. That was the world leader in dental implants so when I went to do dental implants I went to Sweden for my training. I'm very comfortable going to other places and trying to be part of that culture.

KS: Well have you thought about doing that when you retire?

FL: Yes. Yes. I still have a few – I want to give Bridge another shot, and I want to do that in retirement. I came along at a time when the Italian Blue Team was the top Bridge playing team in the world, and they wanted some strong American teams,

and they were recruiting the Dallas Aces and a team down in Florida. Wealthy business men were funding these kids to become professional Bridge players and I missed out on that by just a little bit. My parents were glad to see me miss out on it because I would have been writing Bridge books and maybe a Bridge column, being a Bridge player, but maybe not making much money. They felt like dentistry was a better career for me. Now I look at these guys and they're the top of the Bridge world now and I enjoy going to national tournaments and playing against them but I haven't ever done enough of it to see–

KS: It's not out of your blood yet.

FL: That's right. So I have a passion to give that a try. Spend a year or two focused on that. Whether I will do that or not, I don't know. That would be one interest I would like to pursue.

KS: Well, obviously that game really grabs you. Wasn't it Omar Sharif who started Bridge, and I think he has devoted the rest of his life to it, basically. I think I read something about it at some point.

FL: Could be. I know he was an actor. He bought the Gorham Column syndication and he does that, yes. Interestingly, I've never seen him at a Bridge tournament, but the last tournament I played in, I played with a guy named Peter Lynch. I think he was head of the Magellan Fund or one of these big mutual fund things that make multi-millions of dollars you know.

KS: Is it just the way your mind thinks that make business men do very well in Bridge?

FL: Well, I think actually he plays because his wife is a world class Bridge player, but yes, he does have the mind to think like that. And that is another neat thing about Bridge – you're all equal, you know the person who is a computer guru with the CEO from a company. You know, when you're sitting at a Bridge table, you're all Bridge players.

KS: So you've traveled a lot with Bridge also?

FL: Yes, well yes, I've traveled from New York to New Orleans, Florida, Philadelphia – [tape stops]

[End of Tape 1, Side A] [Beginning of Side B]

KS: So have you ever become involved in politics?

FL: Dental politics on the state level and general dentistry at the regional and national level in periodontics. I was president of the regional, eleven Southern states, in periodontics and served on several committees on the national level and then was

editor of *The North Carolina Dental Gazette*. And on the Board of Trustees for a number of years and things like that and so on that level of leadership in dentistry, I did. I reached a point where the politics was more cutthroat than I was comfortable with, so it was time for me to stop.

KS: And of course, you've been on a lot of musical boards in and around town, what about any other kind of volunteer organizations or philanthropic organizations?

FL: Yes. When I first came to Greensboro, the first year, I joined Family Life Council and worked on that because I was going through a divorce and I wanted the connective, you know, support and what I could learn and contribute to that board. And then I worked as a guardian ad litem for several years with the court system here, which is probably the most special volunteer work I know of. It's certainly one of the most – these are people who become guardians for children who are from families where their parent are not qualified to be good parents or guardians and the state has taken over custody of these children. The parents are involved in their lives but the guardian ad litem, somebody like me, is appointed to make the parental decisions about the best interest of the child and report these to the courts, and the courts implement almost always what the guardians recommend. And I was able to see children reunited with parents after – you know, because parents, after they'd lose a child would be willing to work at overcoming whatever their issues were to get custody back – and to see kids who came from such disadvantaged backgrounds have the will to achieve and succeed and amount to something from situations that were really pretty horrible was such an inspiration. That would be an easy thing for me to give full-time retirement time to.

KS: Now is that like temporary legal guardianship?

FL: Yes. And temporary can be for several years. Yes, but it is, that's right. Now the child doesn't live with you. The child might live in a foster home or may live with a grandparent or an aunt or uncle, you know, but you would have – I would sometimes counsel a parent once a week and see the child once a week, just to boost and pat them on the back. You know, take them out for a break or to the park or something to give them a break from their situation and a little bit of a lift and encouragement that someone was there and cared for them and then write reports that represent what I viewed was the best interest of the child to the courts.

KS: Would you go to the courts along with the child like part of a family service team perhaps?

FL: Yes, that's right. That's right. We'd work with social workers – somewhat I guess under the guidance of social workers – in the guardian ad litem system which is just a great program.

KS: So how do you see that Greensboro's nonprofit sector has changed through the years, or have you?

FL: I have – I think that it's grown tremendously, and I think that it has done very well. The formation of Community Foundation by Cynthia Doyle was just an absolute wonderful concept. But I think our original founders were great philanthropists as you noted – they set up foundations that are working to do that. I think the concept of giving back to community is very strong in Greensboro. I am very impressed with the number of people who volunteer time, talents, and money to nonprofits and to the arts and things like that. So I think they're doing well. They can always do better. I think Urban Ministry has been a wonderful thing in what it's been able to achieve. Women's Resource Center is just – I think something that no city in the state can match what Greensboro has done in those areas.

KS: So when did you join the Rotary Club of Greensboro?

FL: I joined it in 1975. I joined a different Rotary Club. I joined Crescent Rotary initially. I had a dentist who invited me to join there. I had been aware of Rotary in high school because I had been a student who – the Rotary Club in Lexington where I grew up had high school students come as members at each meeting for a month or something like that, so Rotary represented the leaders of the community. And so, I was aware of Rotary and was interested in becoming a Rotarian. So I joined in '75, and when I moved my practice and my schedule changed, about '77 or '78, I changed clubs to the Greensboro club or the downtown club. And I've been there ever since.

KS: It's a great club. I went to speak there just to say hello. I don't know if you were there a couple of weeks ago.

FL: Yes, I was. Yes.

KS: What a nice group of people.

FL: Yes, they are, and again, everybody is equal at a place like that. And it is a nice group of people, and it's a diverse group of people, and that was a special thing to me. The diversity of Greensboro, the diversity of the Rotary Club, brings me in contact with people I wouldn't be in contact with any other way.

KS: It seemed like everyone was really enjoying each other, genuinely liked each other, was glad to see everybody. That was nice to see.

FL: Yes. And there is such an interweaving and interaction between so many of the people because so many of them are involved in different careers, at least social interests or community interests or volunteer areas that overlap, so a great

camaraderie comes out of it in a synergy to do more and to make things better for Greensboro.

KS: So what is your involvement with Rotary Club? Have you done anything specifically with them?

FL: I've hosted two foreign exchange students for them and, frankly, that's pretty much it.

KS: That's a lot. [Laughs] Where have they been from?

FL: One was from Peru, and one was from Turkey. And then, I'd take them on family vacations – skiing in Utah, to D.C., to different places – but as much as anything just to learn their culture, share their culture, and let my kids have the experience of living with someone from a foreign country.

KS: What a great idea. Well, I think that's all my formal questions. Do you have anything that we haven't covered that we need to?

FL: I can't think of anything [Both laugh]. But I'm not sure what the parameters are, but I think we've covered a lot.

KS: There are absolutely no parameters. What haven't we covered that you would like to mention?

FL: I think we covered it all.

KS: Well thank you so much for meeting with me today. This has been a real pleasure.

FL: Great. I've enjoyed it.

[Tape stops, tape starts]

KS: You collect art also?

FL: Yes and that grew out of being involved with the Weatherspoon, meeting artists there and getting to know them personally. There was one artist whose worked I started collecting, and I have works now through six decades of his career.

KS: And who is that?

FL: Walter Barker. And I have the second biggest collection of his work to the Pulitzer family. The Pulitzer family from St. Louis has the biggest collection of his work, and I have the second biggest collection of his work.

KS: Now, is he a painter or a sculpture? What kind of work does he do?

FL: He is a painter. He died a few years ago, but he was a student of Max Beckmann, and I have a piece of his that could almost pass for a Beckmann. And then I started collecting other faculty members: Roy Nydorf at Guilford College and I think I have probably the biggest collection of his work of anybody else in Greensboro. And Fritz Janshaka –who is an Austrian Surrealist, internationaly known painter – and I have become a friend of his and collect some of his work, and he's done some commissions, he calls them commissions, for me. I'll give him an idea and he'll paint a series of pictures. Then as a buyer, I feel obligated to buy it. [Both laugh] And, you know, all of which I love. It's just great.

KS: And you just gradually worked your way into that also?

FL: That's right.

KS: Well, do you have any special themes that you like to collect or do you just like an eclectic mix?

FL: I tend to collect artists and the evolution of their work over time. I'll be drawn to their styles and like examples of it. So in other words, I would tend to pick a painter whose work I like and like his work over a twenty or thirty year period of time rather than having pieces of fifty different artists, for instance. My collection has no more than ten or fifteen artists in it, but I have numerous pieces they've done. And they'd usually be people that I've gotten to know personally so I could know what they were trying to do with their work, what was their intention in this piece of work.

KS: Mostly local?

FL: All of mine are local artists. Yes. And I would have lunch with them like this one, I'd have lunch with once every three weeks for twenty years, you know. And he'd tell me about, he was German by background and trained under Beckmann and how he evolved as a painter and influenced by different people and influenced by the war and all these things and how that was reflected in his paintings. What he was trying to accomplish and show and things of that sort. So I'd get to know the artist and what their theme was, what their intent was, what their focus was. And those were the pieces of art I would collect.

KS: All painters?

FL: All painters. I've started collecting now some sculpture pieces, small sculpture pieces and small glass pieces. Penland has some quite strong glassmakers and Center College in Danville, Kentucky, has a very strong glass program and faculty, and I just see glass as a wonderful medium that they can do so much more with than ever before that I just find it fascinating.

KS: So you're not only interested in the style and the beauty, but almost the psychological evolution of the artist himself.

FL: That's right. That's right. Yes. And people tell me that they think a lot of my art has a spiritual side to it. I won't say that I necessarily picked it because – consciously because I saw that. There are some pieces that I did pick specifically because I saw that, but I think that many pieces seem to have a kind of spiritual purpose or theme in them, and that would probably be the central theme of all my art with the exception of the major people I collected just because I was collecting their work.

KS: But you didn't necessarily seek it for that, it's just something that revealed itself.

FL: That's right. That's right. I happened – I see something in the work that says that to me.

KS: Well, is it spiritual in the sense of being soulful? In what sense do you find it spiritual?

FL: In the sense of being peaceful, connectedness – those forms of spirituality.

KS: The universal?

FL: Yes.

KS: The universal whole?

FL: Yes. That's right. Yes. The things that probably any religious or spiritual person would find spiritual. My particular interest in religion is Zarathustra and through getting there, studying ancient religions to some extent. And what I see in them more than anything else is the interconnectedness of people and all living creatures and earth and all this, and so art pieces that demonstrate or show that sort of connectedness are what I'm drawn to.

KS: Do you find that your musical tastes pull into that too?

FL: Yes, to some extent they do. Part of my music is driven by wanting to know the classics better, and the opera's the same way. To know the classics, to know the stories behind the librettists, the composers, the story that it was based on, the story behind the story it came from, who the characters were who the composer had in mind when he wrote the piece. So a lot of it is what I'd call more academic or intellectual. I like to be able to listen to music and quickly pick out who the composer was. I might not know the name of the piece but, you know, I could know who the composer was of many classical pieces.

KS: But music has an elemental spiritualism, it seems like too.

FL: Yes, it does, yes. And I do buy music from all over the world that's spiritual music of different religions and I find a sameness to them and a peacefulness and a calmness to them that's attractive.

KS: Do you have a favorite theme in music or composer?

FL: Oh, well, for opera, I love Wagnerian opera.

KS: Do you? That's strong.

FL: That's right. And symphonic music, I particularly like Chopin and Liszt and Mendelssohn, and Rachmaninoff; pianists. Which also brings up the Eastern Music Festival, what a wonderful event that is in Greensboro and how that's grown so wonderfully the past few years.

KS: Now are you involved in that? Talk about that a little bit because that seems – I just don't seem to hear as much about that. I mean I see the signs but have never really talked to anyone who has been directly involved with that.

FL: Well, my involvement has been probably from a distance a bit. I've been an attendee since probably the mid- to late seventies and it was a growing program for quite a long while with bringing in better students from further distances to be participants in the program and faculty that was nationally recognized faculty. And it was a wonderfully strong program, and then it got into severe financial programs and almost went under and within weeks – the community raised $400,000 to save it. Again, something I don't think could happen anywhere except Greensboro. And since then, it has just taken off again and is just doing wonderfully well, and they are expanding from their typical just classical music and training students in classical music into Blues and Pops and all sorts of other things. So they're expanding their venue to various places to play, to various types of music – so it's a very expanding thing under the leadership of Stephanie Cordick. They're just doing great things.

KS: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

FL: Thank you.

[End of interview]

[End Tape 1, Side B]

*The foregoing transcript of the oral history interview of Dr. Fred Lopp, taken on May 15, 2008, was reviewed and revised by Dr. Lopp. The original

recording and transcript are housed at the University Archives and Manuscripts Department, Walter Clinton Jackson Library, The University of North Carolina Greensboro.