**UNCG in the 1960's Oral History Collection**

INTERVIEWEE: Robert M. Calhoon

INTERVIEWER: Joshua Shiver

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RC: It's—it's just as important as events in '68.

JS: Yes, I've looked at '65, I know it was a big year for UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

RC: That's right. It was the first full year as UNCG. [1964 was the first full year as UNCG]

JS: Yes.

RC: And I got here in the fall of '64.

JS: Okay.

RC: And that was the first, that was the first, it was the previous spring, early '64 that they made the change.

JS: To co-educational?

RC: Yes, and so they had—there were eight men [Editor's note: 282 undergraduate men enrolled in the fall of 1964] and thirty-five hundred women in that first semester—and the men, who didn't live at home, lived in a dorm up here on Mendenhall Street, and it was an old house on the corner of Mendenhall.

JS: Was it the fire house?

RC: The fire house, yes. So the fire house was the dorm for the men and the dean of men was a former coach named Clarence Shipton and all the women kidded him because he was made dean of men in the spring, and so the first man was admitted and then it was about seven weeks before they got another application and so during that seven weeks, they all kidded him that he was the "Dean of Man." [laughter]

JS: There was only one man that whole time?

RC: There was only one man. Eventually they got up to seven.

JS: I wanted to start out and ask you some preliminary questions.

RC: Yes.

JS: What universities did you attend for your undergraduate education?

RC: Okay, I went to the College of Wooster in Ohio—a liberal arts school. And I went to what was then "Western Reserve University," and is now "Case Western Reserve University."

JS: For graduate school?

RC: For graduate school, both my masters and my Ph.D.

JS: Okay. And what brought you to UNCG, I know you—in 1964?

RC: The placement office in Cleveland at Western Reserve just got a teletype that they needed a—that there was an opening for an instructor in history, and so I applied.

JS: And received the position.

RC: And was lucky to get the position.

JS: What was your first impression of UNCG, I know it was probably a little different from other universities out West.

RC: Well, I had been in North Carolina a few times. I had been in Durham, because I had friends who went to Duke and I had been to Charlotte where my uncle lives, but I had never been to Greensboro. I didn't even know that Greensboro was a real city. When I first got this lead on a job there, I asked someone from North Carolina, I said "What's Greensboro like? Is it just a sort of a crossroads and a gas station?" He said "No, it's a big city." [chuckling] So that's how little I knew and so by the time I got here, I knew more about it. But I drove down from Cleveland with a UHAUL trailer, and came up—got to the corner of Aycock [Street] and Benjamin Parkway—and looked at my map, I'd seen Benjamin Parkway, and I didn't see where they crossed each other, so I said "This can't be right, these streets on my map, they don't connect"—but they did. But I drove on up—I drove down Spring Garden Street and I ended up—sort of spotted Foust, it looked like an administration building, and I went in to see if they had a list of apartments in the area, and nobody in Foust knew anything like that [unclear] but I found one in about an hour—an old house down here on the edge of College Hill—It's torn down now. It was a—it had been built in the twenties by the owner of the Ford agency, so it was really a nice house for the twenties. Really big apartments, so I lived there for the first year.

JS: What was it like being a male faculty member coming to—

RC: Well, there were a lot of male faculty members here, and so probably half the faculty was male.

JS: In the history department or just in general?

RC: In general. Yes. Especially in history. Maybe more than half and a lot of that had to do with—I mean the biggest thing I noticed when I got here was Mereb Mossman. All I knew was that she was called—she had the title "Dean" and she—but the chancellor, Mr. [Otis] Singletary, sent me my formal appointment letter and sent out a formal recommendation from the history department to the dean of the university, Mereb Mossman. But she was an incredible—she was just an incredible person—and she was the dean for a long time, and she was tough and she was absolutely dedicated to making the old Woman's College—because that's what it was when she came here—to making it a really outstanding academic institution, but they really didn't have the resources necessarily to do that and so she tried to figure out how do you do that if you don't have a lot of money to work with, how do you make this North Carolina woman's college into a great center of scholarship? And she figured out that there must be male scholars, her ideals of men are probably better than those of women, because she really favored men, or she appeared to.

But at any rate, she did a lot of recruitment herself for faculty. Every time there was an opening for a senior scholar, she would—she personally picked the person. She wrote letters, made phone calls, and found someone who could really—and appointed them. Whatever search procedures—she just did them as dean. And her idea was that there are—she figured that she could spot a really distinguished scholar who really would love to teach—and she picked, the people she picked were just the backbone of the faculty. She was dean of the '50s and early '60s, dean for about twenty years—'50s and '60s. And the people she brought here herself were the back bone of the faculty. People like Frank [Melton]—and a lot of—mainly men—and History had a lot of new hires. And they were mainly people from the Middle West. She'd rather hire people from—she thought it would look provincial if she hired graduates of [the University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill or Duke [University]—so she hired people according to how the university [unclear].

JS: It's kind of a trend that still continues today.

RC: Yes, we always have a lot of intellectual ties to the great universities of the Middle West and in a way, not the Ivy League, but places like Cornell and Pittsburgh and Western Reserve, is well known [unclear] and which had some really good people there. So, she the most important fact about this institution in 1965—she was right at the pinnacle of her—and she ran every—she kept tabs on everything. There were exactly thirty-eight desks in every room in McIver [Building] because that was the maximum number of people you could get in there and so that was the cap for every big survey class in history and in literature and in language. So, once I wanted to take a chair and use it for something else and boy, the secretary came in "You can't take a chair out of that room without getting Miss Mossman's written permission!" [chuckles]

JS: Yes, Trelease [in his history of UNCG] talks about her being a micro-manager.

RC: That's right! She said "You put that chair right back, but she—right away she noticed that I was interested in research and that I taught, but I also kept giving papers at conferences and did the things that a young faculty member was supposed to do and she wrote me a little note saying that she was happy—she sort of signaled me that she was—that I was doing the right sort of things and that was a good reason to stay here. If the dean liked you, it might

not be the case somewhere else.

JS: I know there was a lot of problems—a lot of students had a lot of problems with faculty—as the university was changing from a woman's college to a university and the focus moving from just teaching to teaching and research. Was Mossman trying to get the school to rise as a university?

RC: Yes, that's right. And she started way back, fifteen years before it became a university to make that her primary goal. So she brought a man named Kendon Smith, who is just a world famous psychologist, and he built up the psychology department. She brought a historian named Richard Current, who is a great Abraham Lincoln scholar, he won the Pulitzer—the year he came here he won the Pulitzer Prize for a biography of Lincoln.

JS: And he was on the faculty in the history department at UNCG?

RC: Yes, that's right, at UNCG. And, yes, he—when he got—this was in the mid-fifties he came, 1956. So when he—she had sort of picked him—she went through the formality of it, and so John Beeler—who was a great English Medieval historian who taught here—asked Current, he said "What do you want to come here for? You're a full professor at the University of Illinois." Which is a major—which had been Beeler's graduate school—or undergraduate school—and you know, Woman's College wasn't in the same league as the University of Illinois at Urbana—and Current said the legislature ran out of money last year so they didn't give any raises to any of the faculty at the university, and then the administration said "Well, if you get an offer from another school and the offer is for more than your current salary, of course, then we'll meet that salary to keep you from leaving." So, he applied for this job in Greensboro just to get an offer from another school, and then he—Illinois met that salary—and he wrote back to Miss Mossman and he had considered it carefully but he thought he would stay in Illinois after all. She knew exactly what he'd done. He used her offer as a lever. But then the more he thought about it, he thought "I should've taken that job in Greensboro, that's really a nice place." And what he also thought was that Greensboro would be a really nice place to live and he would have more time for research. He would buy a nice house within a fifteen minute walk from campus, and it just appealed to him. So he wrote her a letter saying "Is that job still open?"—it was to be department head of the history department—"Is that job still open?" He knew it was, he knew that she hadn't found anyone else and she wrote back and said "Yes it is open," and he said "Well, I'm really interested in the job." And she said "Good, you're appointed." So he got here—so she wrote him a letter formalizing the offer and offering a salary of exactly one hundred dollars more than what she had offered him a year before—which was a way of saying "You manipulated—you played a trick on me a year ago and I'm still glad to have you come but I'm not going to fork out a whole lot of extra money now." And he thought to himself "She's one tough lady," and he respected that tremendously. So, that's the sort of person she was.

JS: So you think she had more to do with UNCG today?

RC: Yes, because she—there were two after Jackson, Walter Clinton Jackson whom the library

was named after, he was a chancellor [1934-1950] in the—I guess right after World War II, he was probably chancellor when they built the library after something they used to call Home Ec. was in the two matching buildings. But then he retired, and they had two really big names, but they were big names from Chapel Hill, and they were both ineffective, and there was tremendous dissension and the faculty didn't get along with them and they just couldn't do anything right. But it didn't matter because she [Mereb Mossman] was running the college and making all the decisions, making them look good. And finally, what was his name, I forgot which one—it wasn't Edward Kidder Graham, [Jr,]—it was Blackwell, Gordon Blackwell. Gordon Blackwell finally fired her because you know, she was making all of the decisions really without consulting him—as he saw it—and so he fired her. He was going to appoint his own dean. And when Bill Friday heard that, he fired Blackwell. [laughter] You couldn't get away with firing Mereb Mossman, of course Friday was a great administrator and—he was a young—he was just new in the job, but that was a very important moment in the college's history—she won out on that power struggle.

JS: And she was rehired?

RC: She was rehired, oh yes. [Mossman was never fired and served in her position until retirement in 1976]

JS: I know that in 1965 Richard Bardolph was the faculty head [of the Department of History]. Am I correct in that?

RC: Yes, he had been since '60, since—Current had been here for five years and they did get a big job at the University of Wisconsin, where he got his PhD, so he went back to Wisconsin, and Bardolph became the new head in 1960. And then Current decided after a few years at Wisconsin, again, he should have stayed in Greensboro. So the first thing they did when they changed it from a woman's college to a university is to create a distinguished professorship, and it went to history—it was great, we were really lucky—and they brought Current back and he came back for the rest of his career and had a huge influence on the history department—on all of us. So Bardolph was head from '60, he was head when I got here and hired me, and I guess about time he retired, he stepped down—must've been in the late '70s.

JS: So he had to have seen a lot of change at UNCG. He—I believe I read in Trelease that he actually participated in some political activities on campus. Did you notice that UNCG had any type of political leanings during this time, as a whole, the campus?

RC: Well, I mean there was campus politics. Because the Woman's College had been sort of very intensely political—you know, struggles to try to take over curriculum and so in that sense it was political. It never was a liberal—it never was a big liberal—it never had a reputation as liberal in national politics or state politics like Chapel Hill did. But it was pretty lib—for North Carolina, it was liberal.

JS: Excuse me, do you mind if I close this [closes door]. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you.

RC: That's all right. So, for North Carolina, yes, it was—the majority of the faculty who were politically active, you know writing letters to editors and writing books and things, well let's see—I guess there were two exceptions to this rule. Richard Current was probably generally liberal in national politics but on foreign policy he was very conservative. He had been an isolationist back before World War II and in his early career he had written diplomatic history and tried to help the isolationist cause [by] showing Washington was an isolationist [unclear]. And then Blackwell Robinson was a very conservative old line Southern guy in North Carolina history. He actually ran for Congress as a Republican and it was a big year for the Republicans, 1962, and he lost. He was the only Republican in Guilford County who lost because the party didn't like him. So there was—sort of people knew what people's politics were. So in that sense, yes, it was political.

JS: I know that it translated—I know that in 1965, the United States entered Vietnam. Was there any type of response on the part of the students at UNCG?

RC: Oh yes, tremendous, and that's what I talk about in the interview about 1968. In 1968, the—I mean, there were two upheavals, one in sixty-eight and one in sixty-nine. The one in sixty-nine I wasn't here for, I was on leave that year and I was at Chapel Hill. So I was close enough to sort of hear about it—I wasn't actually here, I didn't see it—and that was right after Kent State—you know, the shootings at Kent State in Ohio. [Editor's Note: Kent State shooting took place in 1970, Dr. Calhoon may mean he was on leave for the 1969-1970 academic year] But the one I was up to my—the one I was really involved in was in '68 because the chancellor, James Ferguson, was from Mississippi, and he was an old line Mississippi liberal. His father had been a Methodist minister, and sort of working quietly for a revolution in Mississippi, which was really tough to do. And Ferguson taught in Mississippi for fourteen years before he came here. He was sort of chased out of Mississippi by white citizen's councils because he stood up to them. So, he quietly appointed a racial policies committee to figure out ways of getting rid of the vestiges of segregation on campus, and he put me on the committee. And then in 1968, the cafeteria workers went on strike—you read about that I assume?

JS: Yes.

RC: And so the racial policies committee that I was on, we sort of had the job of investigating the grievances and recommending to the administration, see to it that they were treated fairly, and one of the people most involved in that was the Presbyterian campus minister, Jim Allen, who later was dean of students for a long time but was just the Presbyterian campus minister then. I remember Jim and I sat over against the wall in the auditorium in Cone Ballroom in Elliott Center during a mass meeting about what to do about the cafeteria workers and how could we use student support—so the student body—the student body leadership was very liberal, like students generally were. And there were two factions—there were—the cafeteria workers were either older African Americans or they were A&T [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University] students who were male.

So here were radical black males on a white female campus allied with the white student government leadership—and threatening—and a group of white students and black

students, particularly white students and black cafeteria workers who were A&T students, so they really were undergraduates—what they wanted to do was have a big mass demonstration and get TV cameras in here and what would happen if they had done that. Well, so they were debating whether there should be a big demonstration or whether the student body leadership should try to work quietly with the administration, get the strike settled on fair terms. And the meeting was getting out of hand and it looked like things were going to be decided by a voice vote, and so the student body president, whose name was Randy Bryant, she disappeared and she came back after about half an hour and said she had just been on the telephone with the chancellor—but she tried to get the chancellor on the telephone, but the line was busy because he was on the phone, there was just one phone in the chancellor's residence. He was on the phone.

JS: This was Ferguson?

RC: Ferguson, talking to the president of the A-R—the food service company.

JS: I think it's A-R-A.

RC: ARA, yes. The president of ARA—who just left the strike to the local manager to handle and said "Look this is becoming a major racial confrontation here and it could lead to violence" and he said "You've got to help us get this thing resolved"—and that meant in the middle of the night, eleven o'clock at night, giving the president of ARA sort of a short history of race relations in the South and why campuses were hot spots and how volatile the whole situation was. The next day the vice president of ARA was here with a new contract offer. They settled real quickly. And so Randy Bryant couldn't get through to him, the chancellor, and so she just came back and said "I have just talked to the chancellor and he has promised me that he will speak with the—he will address the student body tomorrow in Aycock Auditorium at ten o'clock. Let's wait and hear what he has to say." She just gambled that Ferguson would honor that [laughs]. And when he found out—because she knew him—of course he was really grateful that she had done that, because that defused—there were two hundred city policemen in riot gear and gas masks, tear gas masks, out here on First Avenue[?] who were waiting to arrest all of these students when they stormed out of—and if they tried to march on the chancellor's house, which is what they were talking about doing, it just would've been a mess. It would've been—there had been violence on other campuses where the police clashed with student demonstrators, and so we just barely avoided that.

JS: Well, Trelease actually says—he says that it was more—he states that "Activism was limited to a minority; often a small majority of the student body and that student apathy was a source of serious concern to the faculty."

RC: That's right, yes. It was just the SGA [Student Government Association] leadership, which he's right, was a small group but they were—it was strategically well placed and tried—they claimed that they represented the whole student body.

JS: So in 1965 I mean, we're going into Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement is huge, and

UNCG's—the student body is just kind of quiet?

RC: Well, there were four kinds of students here—that was the first thing I figured out when I started to figure out how to teach. There were the students from suburban high schools—Reynolds, Grimsley, the Charlotte suburbs—they were just like suburban students in the Midwest. And then there were students from small towns, from what were called "good families" in small towns in North Carolina—young women who couldn't get into Chapel Hill until they were juniors because Chapel Hill would only take women as transfer students in their junior year—but whose fathers were lawyers and doctors—really the leaders of these small communities. And so these—they were great students because they were accustomed to discussing literature and history and philosophy with their parents and with their older brothers and brothers who did go to Chapel Hill. And then there was a third group and that was the New Jersey—New Jersey had a very inadequate higher education system—Rutgers was still a private school. And so, New Jersey families found that the Woman's College in Greensboro was cheap and it was high quality, so there was this big presence of New Jersey and New York area students who were all into drama and the fine arts. And then there were the students who were first generation to go to college in their families—and they were just trying to figure out how to cope with these, these more sophisticated suburban girls and New Jersey girls.

So I would—I'd come in with this prepared lecture, and my great fear was that I'd finish the lecture and there would be twenty minutes left in the class. [chuckles] "What do I do? What do I do?" So, I didn't sort of have a reserve, then, of material that I could talk about. All I had was that lecture outline and the clock was behind me so I couldn't keep—it was really terrifying, because if I did run out of material and I asked the students to discuss it a little bit, "What do you think about this?"—they were just paralyzed by self-consciousness, and they would all just look at their desks and there would just be this terrifying silence. And a friend of mine in the Middle West, the first time that happened to him teaching in the Middle West, he simply—the next that—the first time there was silence when he tried to start a discussion and the students were effectively sabotaging his teaching, the next time he just walked into class, stood behind the lectern, and waited [laughs]and five minutes passed, and ten minutes passed, and by the time half an hour had passed, he said the tension in that room was just, was just excruciating—and finally somebody blurted out "Industrial Revolution!" And he said "Good! Let's talk about the Industrial Revolution!" and he wove that single remark into a kind of back and forth dialogue of the class, which they really knew a lot, they had a lot of stuff to say, but they only—it took that much pressure—and I never had the nerve to do that.

So, one day I said to one of these, one of the girls from New Jersey who was a theater major—and she was used to performing—and so she came to class and said "It must really be hard on you that these North Carolina girls won't talk in class." I said "Yes, it's a problem." So we decided—she volunteered to play a—to try an experiment. A publisher just published this book "Opposing Views of Historical Issues" in which there would be two articles on the same subject directly contradicting each other. And, and so I had a desk copy because I might use it sometime, and so the next day's class was "Why the United States Wanted to Enter World War I" which was in the spring, the second semester, current[?] history topic. And I said, I said "Read these two articles on why the U.S. Entered World War I and you pick one you like and tell me before class which one it is." and so she

picked the much stronger argument and so I simply gave the other argument as my lecture and every two minutes she raised her hand to go, she said "But! Don't you realize that according to—" she just said chapter and verse, she knew it so well—she just said chapter and verse—and she just demolished this lecture I was giving, which was our arrangement. And at the end of the class there was just stunned silence and as soon as the students got out into the hallway and going to their next class, a whole bunch of them surrounded this girl and they said "If you ever do that again, we'll find some way to get you—make you realize [unclear]."

JS: So do you think it was the Southern gentility?

RC: Yes, yes. So then I guess I told them that the class that this—and they were really unhappy with me. They thought it was terribly unfair.

JS: So that Southern gentility is kind of what kept them from being so vocal about Vietnam and civil rights?

RC: Well, it wasn't just the civil—the girls with Southern gentility, the girls from the old Chapel Hill-educated families in small towns, they'd talk. If it looked like, you know—if the teacher knew how to get the discussion going in an entertaining way—but I didn't know how to do that. I didn't know how to entertain. [laughs] And I knew it because I had entertaining teachers, I didn't know how to do it myself. But it was the suburban girls, who were the majority, who just resented everything. It was bad enough that they had to read assignments and take tests but they would come well prepared for tests; they was graded. There wasn't any effective way to grade class discussion and they knew that, so they weren't about to cooperate.

JS: Still goes on today.

RC: Yes! Right. So that's—it was the dynamics of that different constituencies of students I remember being the defining.

JS: So in 1965, I mean, we're going into Vietnam, student protests are beginning to erupt as the year goes on.

RC: Yes, and of course in '69 [1970], the day after Kent State, the students planned another big mass meeting and someone got the idea of having a debate. So they got Blackwell Robinson and John Beeler, a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat, in the history department, to debate Vietnam. Out here in—I wasn't here, so I don't know where it occurred, but I think it was out there in front of the library on a little platform—like Lincoln and Douglass going at it. And then the students heard that on other campuses, campuses were just shutting down early and students were going to go off and spend May and June in radical political activity ‘cause the presidential election was coming up—and so that's what students here said—I think that UNCG stopped—closed about three weeks early. They had to come up with some quick guidelines about the grades—faculty could take the average as of that day in May and that would be the final grade.

JS: There was a lot of talk in his [Allen Trelease's] book about grade inflation during this time. You know, a lot of students left early, and they had to shut down the school. I mean, was that a really big problem in the history department with the grade inflation?

RC: Yes, it probably was. You know, because Bardolph would talk to us about it. I'm sure I contributed to it because I was trying to juggle research and teaching and so that meant sort of putting a cap on how much time you spent working on teaching so that there'd be several hours in the day left to do the other work. So that tended to—It was harder to be a really tough grader. [pause] I think easier grades were really to sort of bribe the students off [so]they wouldn't complain about your teaching, you know, [if] they got a B, but if they got a C, "Yes, it wasn't a very good course!" Then they complained and there weren't any teaching evaluations then so it was only in extreme cases that people complained about teaching, and so I think yes, I think out of just sheer self-interest—I contributed to that, a lot of us did. Just as a way of sort of getting through the year.

JS: Yes, Trelease talks about that also actually that a lot of faculty were struggling with trying to balance research and teaching but a lot of the former students are very—they seemed to be kind of bitter about the move towards research.

RC: Yes, yes.

JS: I also wanted to ask you, I know I always go back to Vietnam, but I'm very interested in military history. As our troop numbers increased in Vietnam, did you see the political voice at UNCG kind of grow as we got more involved?

RC: Yes. [pause] At first there was pretty widespread support for Lyndon Johnson because Johnson sort of sold himself as someone who didn't want to be in Vietnam, but his hands were forced—the country's hand was forced—and he would get us out more quickly than say Barry Goldwater who ran against him for president [unclear] and then as the military situation deteriorated, opinion changed, just about the way it has in the Iraq war—it took about three years and then moderates and conservatives turned on Johnson.

JS: And that's when the student protests began to pick up?

RC: Yes, it was at the height of that.

JS: I wanted to ask you also about civil rights. I know that in 1964 there were only one hundred and nine black students at UNCG. How did their enrollment affect the student body? It seems to me that, from what I've read and what you've said, that they kind of—they got along. It wasn't a lot of tension.

RC: Yes, the UNCG early on got a reputation with black families as a good place for black women students, because it had been a woman's college so there were a lot of women. It was a great majority of the student body was still female. And then Harriet Burgeoson [Elaine Burgess], in Sociology, was a major scholar in sociology, and even though Currant was sort of only mildly liberal, was conventionally liberal in politics, he was a leading, he

was one of the leaders in the reinterpretation of Reconstruction. He and Trelease were both national leaders in that. And of course that was what historians were discovering for the first time, was how—well, what white historians were discovering for the first time in the '60s—was that Carpet-Baggers and Scalawags were pretty decent people and deserved a fairer treatment than what they had gotten before. So they were rehabilitating. So that was history being brought to the service of public issues in a way that it probably never had been before—or it hadn't been, it only had happened, really during the isolationist/internationalist spate of 1940-41. Campuses were—the faculties were sharply split. So that was an event reinterpretation of Reconstruction in the '60s was a hot scholarly issue which fed directly into—you know, it gave the student movements and the black Civil Rights Movement, the adult black Civil Rights Movement just powerful ammunition to use. It made any college campus where there was a Reconstruction expert—we had two here—really a white hot place for intellectual argumentation.

JS: So, we know Trelease says that the black and white students sort of self-segregated themselves voluntarily and a lot of the black students would go over to A&T.

RC: That's right, yes.

JS: So would you say that there wasn't a lot of tension between them like we see on other campuses? I remember my mom talking about high school, of chairs going through the window and race riots and stuff. It wasn't like that here at all?

RC: Well, I remember the—well, the committee that I was on, the Racial Policies Committee, we interviewed black students one time, and I remember that one student said, she said "Look, I'm the first black student who is going to be a business education major" and she said "All my professors are white and all of them make it pretty tough for me. None of my teachers in my major have befriended me in any way and I felt like I've had to work twice as hard as white students to get the same grades. But that's the price of becoming a business ed—getting this degree," which I guess would be an entry point into teaching and maybe jobs in business, the business world too. And she said "These are not years I'm going to look back on with any happiness, but it's an opportunity. It's just what I have to do to succeed in my chosen field."

JS: And to break through that barrier?

RC: Yes, there was a real—she made a really good case of her trouble—and you know, I think most of it, I think it may have been probably what was in—called then the business department, it wasn't a separate school, the faculty were probably more white southerners and they weren't racists, but they were—had grown up with the habits of segregation and those persisted.

JS: Among—Between faculty and students, and between white and black students?

RC: Yes, and then I think—I remember liberals like myself, I'm a moderate now, but I'm sort of conscious of politics—white liberals, we were really obnoxious because one of the neat

things to do, I guess a way of relieving tension, was to tell—to find humor in the—in racial conflict. I remember telling jokes in the presence of black students thinking "They'll think this is funny too."

JS: Telling, like, black jokes?

RC: Well, it was academic jokes. It was sort of intellectual jokes about noticing the ridiculous in the white behavior and black behavior. And as liberals, we thought since we were liberals, that we could do that, and it was horrible. Our education in race relations was just beginning, like everybody else's was.

JS: How did the students react to those jokes?

RC: I just remember this polite smile on this black student—and I thought later on—it wasn't very long after that I thought "Oh geez, that was an awful thing to say," to tell her as a joke. We were just sort of bantering after class one day and I was just joking with a white colleague of mine, and we both thought it was pretty funny. Well, it was a terrible thing to do, so we were learning only in subtle ways the amount of pain that—there was a—the "War on Poverty,"—Johnson's war on poverty spawned a whole bunch of small agencies which pretty much burned themselves out—the money ran out because it was when the Vietnam War began. But, one of them sent teams of white or black students to jump start some local racial activism. And so they had low budgets, so they put on a Saturday conference for faculty members at A&T and invited faculty from all of the campuses in Greensboro to come and so someone, probably Richard Bardolph, suggested "You oughta go to that, you might learn something." So the upshot of it was we all committed that we would do some kind of race relations event at UNCG and what it meant was bringing people from local black leaders from the eastern part of the state—where the racial ratios were much—a lot of the eastern counties were probably fifty, sixty percent black, and of course the power structure was in the hands of the white minority—and people who were struggling within that situation, to come over here to Greensboro and to tell us about it.

So students and faculty spent a whole Saturday in small group sessions with these—these were people—black people whose education stopped at the eighth grade in segregated schools, but who wanted their kids to go to college and who had to try and walk a narrow line between supporting the Civil Rights Movement when it came to a small eastern North Carolina town and not getting themselves killed or fired. They just—with great dignity and eloquence, they told us these stories, and it was all tremendously eye-opening for everybody who had not been in that situation. And then one of the—so then the culmination of that was to be a big event of the evening and we had a panel of speakers and I guess the panel were mainly people from Greensboro, the black community in Greensboro. The issue which came up was the issue about mowing grass—keeping the grass mowed in public housing projects—which was almost entirely still hard to find [unclear] without African Americans. That was a real issue. The city was pretty careless about that, about maintenance of those. So that sort of practical question—mowing the grass—became the focal point of a really interesting civil rights discussion and I remember one student saying he thought the Civil Rights Movement was this big radical frightening movement, but it was just about mowing the grass. I said "I can understand that." And it

was a—so, that was an event that—By the next year, that agency was out of money and it was out of existence. And clearly, it was sort of a wasteful way to spend money, but it did give these kids—these college—these biracial teams of students a valuable learning experience at federal expense for a year.

JS: Do you think there was maybe a disconnect between the black students and the faculty at UNCG? I know you were telling me about the jokes you would make and how the black students would react.

RC: Yes, yes. Well, one of the questions we always got asked was "Why don't you hire"—I mean at this conference—"Why don't you see to it that UNCG has at least twenty or twenty-five percent black instructors next year?" And that was easier said than done. None of us were in a position—instructors weren't in a position to—and so it was a long time before the English department hired Linda Bragg, who was a black poet who taught here for a number of years and didn't get tenure. Here we had this creative writing program with these brilliant people like Fred Chappell, Randall Jarrell, a world famous poet, and so the white writers had an advantage. But, they knew enough—they had intellectual skills that the rest of us didn't have—so I think the writers were able to allow black students to feel comfortable. I know Fred Chappell was a genius with that—so he had a following of students in which race didn't really seem to matter—but there were really good black students in the creative writing seminars, creative writing program in his department. That was one place—then of course the other place where, you know most black students, your parents said "you make sure you can get a job—we don't know anything about higher education, somehow we're going to get together the money and send you off to UNCG. You make sure when you graduate that you get a job." They were counting on that salary. So they took practical things like business and it was a much bigger gamble for a black student, to say, want to major in history and go on to graduate school in history.

JS: Did you have very many [black students] in your classes in the history department? Did you see very many in history?

RC: Yes, I remember in sixty-eight, we joked that the second or third day of class you knew the names of all of the men in the class—there were only two to three of them—and then you knew the names of all the black women in the class—there were only two to three of them—but the rest of the white girls, it took a while, a long time to learn their names.

JS: So, I wanted to look at James Ferguson as chancellor. Now he had a lot to do, I mean, with the social and political upheaval on campus. I know it wasn't as bad as other campuses say in the Midwest or Northwest but he had a lot to do with—

RC: He did. There were two crises. There was the crises of sixty-eight over the ARA strike, and he managed to resolve quietly and amicably—and I remember I was—the afternoon after the big, the day after the big mass meeting which almost exploded but got defused—there was a guy walking in chinos and a white shirt and looked like any other white male student walking along there, and someone said "Do you know who that is?" And I said "No." He said "He just flew in from Madison, he's an expert. They've heard in Madison—Madison,

Wisconsin—the big center of the student radical movement—that Greensboro is about to blow. And they sent him down here," somehow the money was available for him to hop on a plane and come down here and give tactical advice to a lot of the students, and it didn't blow up. So he went back to Madison disappointed. So that was the first one. And then the second one was the Neo-Black Society upheaval. I forget the date of it but it was in the '80s. The Neo-Black Society had—there was sort of a white conservative takeover of student government—and the first thing they did was to de-fund the Neo-Black Society. And so a group of white and black students demonstrated in the old Foust administration building—they had a sit-in in the lobby—and by the time Jim Allen was dean of students—of course, Ferguson was chancellor—and so Jim came out and said to the students "You know, there's a state law against obstructing access to a public facility." And he said "People can't walk through the door and into the chancellor's office, you know, that's technically an illegal situation and in theory the chancellor will have to call the police and have them removed." But he said that "But the chancellor understands that you're trying to make a serious point here" and said "Is there a way we can compromise? Could you scrunch yourselves far enough apart so that there's footfalls so someone could actually, stepping carefully make their way through the door and walk through the sea of protesting students and actually get to an office?" Somewhere along that first hallway. And the students agreed to that compromise. And then Ferguson ruled that the building was not to be illegally obstructed and then he appointed a committee, a faculty committee, including Franklin Parker who was the great Latin American historian here and he was Quaker and studied Black America as a problem in conflict resolution. This committee quickly recommended that the Neo-Black Society ought to get its funding back and if there were some questions about it, they could be handled—there could be a fair and just way to consider criticism of the [Neo-] Black Society, without making it a political struggle at two in the morning at the end of an SGA meeting. That resolved that crisis. And Ferguson thought those were the two high points of his fourteen years as chancellor, resolving both of those. Either of those events could have led to police coming on in riot gear and making arrests and probably violence and he was able to find creative ways to prevent that from happening in sixty-eight and then, I forget when it was, sometime in the '80s.

JS: So do you think UNCG didn't erupt in large part because of Ferguson, that it didn't just explode?

RC: Yes, very much. Ferguson, when he stepped down as chancellor—he stepped down in sixty-two [Editor's note: Ferguson retired as chancellor in 1979] so he could come back and teach for three years—he was sort of a habitual man—he retired in sixty-five. So I go to know him really well then because we were teaching together. There was a student who had gotten into trouble, he was the editor of The *Carolinian*, or he was on the staff of *The Carolinian*, and all *The Carolinian* people smoked pot, and so an undercover agent went into this kid's dorm room and said "You got any grass?" and he said "Yes, there's some up there, help yourself" and he was in handcuffs a minute later. But his father had been a college professor—a college classmate, a graduate school classmate of Ferguson's—so Ferguson went to see the judge and said "You know, this is a really good kid and he shouldn't have had the pot in his room." And he was charged with distributing, so there was potentially prison time. So Ferguson worked behind the scenes and got this kid off and then

talked to him and said "Look, you need an activity, something that doesn't involve the newspaper. That's not a good environment for you." So he decided he would become the president of the history club, which was sort of defunct—and turned the history club into this really powerful—and Ferguson went to all of their events and always told this kid "If I can help you in anyway, let me know." His name was Pete Walker, he said "I want you to talk to the History Club about your years in Mississippi" [to Ferguson]. He had been really involved in racial drama in Mississippi when he was there, at Millsaps College, which was this liberal Methodist school in Jackson, Mississippi, and Ferguson remembered that he promised to do anything Pete asked him to do for the history club. So instead of just coming in and talking off the top of his head, which he as chancellor, he could do that, he had written out about a fourteen page, double-spaced typed history of white supremacy in Mississippi his own exposure to it. And he was nervous as he read that and he didn't take his eyes off the text, he read it word for word—and I said "That's an interesting story, I'm going to study, I'm going to do research on that." I always knew that if I did I could use his lecture as the basic outline, as a basic document. After he died, I went to look for that in his papers in his office, it was gone, and I think he threw it away—he didn't feel comfortable leaving something about himself in which he was the hero. Because he really faced down white extremists in Mississippi at a very personal cost. But then I found enough people who knew him that I was able to reconstruct that paper without his and I was able to recover all the information. And I gave two papers about Ferguson and I think they're in—I have copies of them if you'd like to see them.

JS: Okay, Yes, that'd be great.

RC: And it pretty much tells the story—Allen Trelease used it so pretty much the information is the same information I've got but he used my research. The second time I talked on Ferguson, [Chancellor] William Moran had just come, as Ferguson's successor, and he never talked to Ferguson. Ferguson didn't want to seem to be, as he told me, he said "I don't want to look like I'm looking over my successor's shoulder," so they stayed far apart and neither one felt comfortable sort of reaching out to the other. So I knew that Moran was genuine—I had done an interview like you're doing about the transition between the two administrations—there was a long gap in the oral history of the university—and realized that Moran was generally perplexed by his predecessor who had built up this great faculty and a library but had let the Physical Plant—he [Ferguson] didn't know how to manage the finances of the Physical Plant—that was something that Moran had to do on an emergency basis to fix the place up again. So when I was going talk about Ferguson, I told him that this oral history had put him in traditional southern liberalism/racial liberalism. I just dropped Moran a note and I said that "Chancellor Sullivan can't be there so you won't be upstaging her if you come and you might just slip in and find you're interested in what I'm going to say." So I finished the lecture and I was comparing Ferguson and a man about a hundred and fifty years earlier who played a similar role in the late eighteenth century at Chapel Hill, which I thought was a neat comparison. And he [Moran] came to me afterwards and said "Something else tied these two men together—Ferguson and this earlier figure—that you didn't tell us about. What was it?" And I thought "I told you everything I knew. Certainly everything that's important." Suddenly it hit me, and something that I said to him [phone rings] well, they were both "historic moderates" and—

[Calhoon answers phone, redacted]

And I never used that term "historic moderate" before—I hadn't used the word "moderate" very much in my research, but suddenly I thought that's exactly what Ferguson was. Not a moderate, but a historic moderate. That is, someone who understood this long history. And I expected Moran to say to me "How do you define 'historic moderate?'" And since I never used the term before and I knew it was complicated and went back a long way in history, I was going to say to him, "Well, that's a long story." But he didn't ask me. He just smiled and he liked that answer a lot. The next morning I woke up, I thought "Long story, that'd be a book." And—I'll show you something here since you asked. [Calhoon reaches in a drawer for a manuscript] Just last week, I finished the book that came out of that conversation about Ferguson. [chuckling]

JS: When is going to be published?

RC: It'll be a couple of years. I just sent it off to the publisher and they'll consider. So it turned out to be a real [phone rings] something I really learned a lot from.

[Calhoon answers phone, recording paused]

So I have the stuff I've written on Ferguson and I'd be glad to let you see it.

JS: That'd be great, that'd help a lot.

RC: None of it ever got to the point where I was satisfied with it yet, so I haven't published any of it yet. Ongoing project.

JS: I know we're running over on time, do you mind if I ask a couple more questions?

RC: Yes, I've got email—I've got to get an email out this morning, so, you know—let's—go ahead and ask, and we may come back to it later.

JS: One question, the real big question was, I know the sixties saw a lot of use of illegal drugs. And how prevalent was it on campus? I know that marijuana was used a lot. Was it a big problem, did it affect the student body pretty badly?

RC: Well, like it affected Ferguson's young friend Pete Walker. The Residential College where I taught for a time had a bad drug problem the first year. But because it was a small and self-contained program with a lot of counseling—academic counseling built into the program—they were able to deal very effectively and by the second year, the "RC" was no longer a druggy place.

JS: So the campus as a whole wasn't affected as much?

RC: Well, the men's dorms were. By the '70s, early '80s, a lot of the men here were hell-raisers and a lot of the women were serious students, and now I think there's been—that kind of disconnect between genders has been worked out. Better male students have been recruited; the university has made a real effort to get some more serious male students here by providing financial incentives, probably, and encouraging them. But it was a real problem when male enrollment got up to about twenty-five percent. A lot of them really shouldn't have been here but got in because we were trying to build up and trying to admit any qualified male that would apply. That created a pretty, I think, ongoing drug problem—more alcohol abuse than hard drug abuse, in the men's dorms here.

JS: Last question, is there anything else that I haven't talked about that you feel is important for this project on UNCG in the 1960's? Anything I've missed?

RC: No, you've really covered it well. I remember the old [Brown] Music Building, which is now being renovated down there on the corner of Tate Street and Walker [Avenue]. It would—the bank, the grass bank on the corner became a kind of sanctuary because the hippies—particularly people who would engage in public drug use—felt they could hop up on the grass there and they'd be on the campus, and police would be much more reluctant to come on to the campus to arrest the student—to arrest someone who was publicly using drugs on a public street. And so Ferguson got the person in charge of landscaping, Charlie Bell, he said "Is there a kind of bush you can plant there that would take care of this problem?" and Charlie Bell said "Yes, there's a bush that has needles that are like steel pins that are about that long" [chuckling] and we could plant those and no one would hop up too close to that. Those bushes were there for several years before that problem sort of went away, and they dug them up and planted more user-friendly landscaping.

JS: That's pretty ingenuous, actually I think.

RC: Yes.

JS: Well, that was all the questions that I had.

RC: This has been fun.

JC: Yes, this is really, really—this is gold, right here.

RC: Good. Come back next week when I've had time to dig up my Ferguson stuff.

[dialogue regarding scheduling redacted]

[End of Interview]