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INTERVIEWEE: Jake and Betty HIll

INTERVIEWER: William Link

DATE: November 7, 1988

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

WILLIAM LINK: This is William Link and the date is November 7, 1988, and we're at the home of the Hills. I wonder if each of you would mind telling me a little bit about yourselves, where you were born, and how you came to be in Greensboro.

BETTY HILL: I was born in Athens, Georgia, in '28. And I came to Greensboro, followed my husband who had started working here. And that was in fifty--what Jake?.

JAKE HILL: About '52.

BH: Yeah, in '52. And we've been here ever since. I had my formal education in the public schools of Athens, Georgia. And I went to Clark College in Atlanta for two years, and then was unable to graduate at that time because we didn't have the money to go back. And living in Athens where that University of Georgia was, I felt that if it had been not segregated I probably could've gone on to school and finished at that time. But--

WL: This would have been in the 1940s?

BH: Yeah. That was '48.

WL: Right after the war.

BH: Yes, I finished high school in '45. And it was '47 or '48, somewhere around that time. Yeah, '47, 'cause I married in '48. Yeah, married in '48. And that was how I came here. He was teaching here and we came--our two little children and I came in January. He started in September, didn't you Jake?

JH: Yes.

WL: So you came to Greensboro. Where were you from originally?

JH: Athens, Georgia. [laughs]. I was born in Athens, Georgia. I never attended public schools there. I went to a private school, Knox Institute, which no longer is in existence. It was a Methodist school. But in about, oh, second grade, my family moved to Chicago. I finished elementary school and one year of high school in Chicago. Then I came back--came to Greensboro to attend Immanuel Lutheran College, which was a high school, junior college, and seminary. I completed my high school work at Immanuel Lutheran, and from there went to college at--completed college at Virginia State in Petersburg, Virginia, and did my graduate work in Atlanta University. I finished with a master's degree in 1956, I believe it was. Served three years in the Army Air Force in World War II. Of course, that was before I completed my master's.

I came to North Carolina, to Shelby, North Carolina, about 1947. I worked in the public schools there, Cleveland County, for four years. [I] had an opportunity to come to Greensboro and started teaching here at Mount Zion Elementary School here in 1951. That was the beginning of my teaching career here in Greensboro. And retired in 1979.

WL: When you all came--you came to Greensboro in the 1940s, late 1940s or early 1950s?

JH: No, 1951, actually. I started teaching here in the fall of 1951. But my wife came the following February, I believe it was.

BH: January.

JH: So we've been--January. Well, that's the winter, so we've been here, in fact, I guess, since about 1952.

WL: In that sort of atmosphere in the late 1940s, did you get any feeling that--well, especially in your service in the war--was there any sense that segregation was going to change, or any sort of feeling about that that you all might remember?

JH & BH: [Together] Not really. No.

BH: I didn't feel anything like that. It was just a part of it.

WL: Pretty much.

JH: Particularly in my case, I served in an outfit--all black, actually the only all-black unit in the, what was then the Army Air Force. It's a separate branch now. The 332nd Fighter

Group, which was the only one of its kind, and we were black from top to bottom. It was--the commanding officer was General B.O. [Benjamin Oliver] Davis, Jr., who's retired now. So, no, there was no feeling whatsoever that anything was going to change, because I ran into segregation from the beginning, when I was inducted in Fort Benning, Georgia, till I was busted out at Fort--Camp Gordon, in Augusta, Georgia. I really had no idea that things were going to be any different.

WL: Were the--the officers were black as well as the--

JH: All officers--

WL: So it was all entirely--

JH: --a completely black outfit. Probably the only outfit in the armed services of that kind.

WL: Did--when you first started teaching, there were obviously Cleveland County, and later on Greensboro--what were some early impressions of how the school system was--let's say in Cleveland County, the black school system versus the white school system. Big differences between the two?

JH: Well, I can point out some big differences. See, Cleveland County was, and still is, a cotton producing county. When I started working there--by the way, I really came there because my mother had taught in Cleveland County for about twenty-two years so she knew quite a few people, and a friend of hers was instrumental in getting me a job there. They had what was called a split session, and the reason for that was this: In about September and October, when it was time to pick cotton, all of the black students couldn't go to school. So consequently, they--school opened in July and August, and closed sometime in August until about Thanksgiving or until the cotton was picked. And then it reopened and continued on for the rest of the year.

WL: So you couldn't go to school even if you wanted to?

JH: They couldn't go to school and we ran it--well, it was very interesting, because even--for example, they would have to set a date when school would re-open and teachers would report to duty. And I remember sitting in classrooms with two students. I was teaching at that time, I wasn't an administrator. And we would have two and three students in the class that normally would be maybe twenty-five and thirty kids. I remember distinctly that when we sent in our attendance reports, we were instructed that we had a class full of children then. Those instructions came from the central office [laughs]. So you see, we went along with it.

I don't remember, I believe by the time that I came to North Carolina to work, the salary schedule for blacks and whites had become the same. But I knew that for many, many years, because [of] the fact that my mother had worked in the same area, blacks and whites worked under different salary schedules. I think, I'm not sure about the date, but I believe around '46 or '47 was when they all began getting paid by the state on the same schedule.

WL: Did that work out in practice to be equal? I mean was it--

JH: Yes, now when they started, yes, it was actually equal then.

WL: Did--you worked for the county schools?

JH: Cleveland County schools, right.

WL: Was there much contact between--I'm just curious--between the superintendent's office and teachers in black schools? Or was it done through--was there a black supervisor that worked, do you remember?

JH: Yes, I remember very well. There was practically no contact. In Cleveland County, as with many counties in North Carolina, the schools were more or less supervised by what they called a school committee. In Cleveland County, at Camp High School[?], where I worked, the chairman of the school committee was the most influential black person in the community there, Mr. Camp. The school was named after him.

The contact was between Mr. Camp and the superintendent, what there was. There was absolutely no contact at all between teachers and central office personnel. But Mr. Camp, who was chairman of the school committee, and sometimes, I'm not in a position to say how much, the principal of the school probably had some slight contact, but not very much. So, for example, this Mr. Camp--I keep getting back to him because he was a very powerful man--you abided by his rules and regulations or you didn't work there. During the four years that I was there, I have known--I knew him to get rid of people that didn't do the things that he wanted. He was not an--I wouldn't say he was an ignorant man. He had no formal education. He knew very little about the needs of school children and such, but he was a big man in the community.

WL: What were some requirements he might have had? What were the--where would you run into trouble if you ran afoul with Mr. Camp?

JH: Well, one that I can remember very clearly. He had an agricultural teacher who wanted to--Camp High School was in the county area, and he wanted this teacher to live across

the street from the school in a house owned by him. And this man had to stay out there. He stayed out there for many years--he was there when I came, but he wanted to move into Shelby and to build a home. After a few years of working out there, he eventually was able to get into Shelby and buy a home, have a home built. He moved into the city of Shelby, and the next year he didn't have a job. That was one of the things. Let's see, what else--

BH: He hired the principals like he fired them, didn't he?

JH: He hired--that's right--now that's, I'm glad you--all right. He got rid of one principal while I was there and hired another one. All you had to do was disagree with him on any matter. I mean, he was just more or less a czar. If Mr. Camp didn't want you, you just didn't stay there.

And I remember when I went--I had worked there--as I had mentioned before, the school opened in July. I worked the term July and August of 1951 and I went home. I got a call from a person in Greensboro offering me a job here and I was considering it, so I had to go back to Shelby to see about getting a release. When I went back and talked to Mr. Camp, he said, "I'll give you a release, but I can do even better than that. I'll make you principal here."

Well, I said, "Mr. Camp,"--at that time I was doing graduate work in Atlanta University in Atlanta. I said, "But I'm not qualified to be a principal. I have only an undergraduate degree, and don't have a principal's certificate." And he said, "Well, that doesn't make any difference. If I want you to be principal, I'll let you be principal." But, anyway, I turned it down. But that gives you an idea of the influence that he had. He could have made me principal. Didn't make any difference whether I was qualified or not. That's more or less the way it, the way it worked then.

WL: What about, what about facilities? Were the black--to what degree were black school facilities and white school facilities unequal?

JH: Well, the white schools for the most part were brick. Camp High School and most of the black schools in Cleveland County were plain buildings. When I would go to school in the morning, I had to light the fire in the pot bellied stove--I don't know if you're familiar with any of those.

WL: Yes.

JH: One of the students--we didn't have a regular janitor. One of the students was a part-time janitor and he would set the fire at night. And when we went in, in the morning, we would light the fire in our classroom. As far as cleaning up, I think they did have some

cleaning--part-time people who cleaned the building after us.

WL: Did they provide wood?

JH: They provided the wood, yes. Now, this was an area that was very much interested in basketball. No football whatsoever in the high schools, because no black high schools had football because they weren't large enough. Not a single black high school in Cleveland County had a gymnasium or anything resembling a gymnasium.

I was a basketball coach in addition to teaching social studies and English. We practiced on an outdoor basketball court. The only time we saw an indoor court was when we played our regular game. We had--I think every, practically every school in the county played in the Cleveland High School gym, which was a city--was owned by the city school system, so we'd arrange our schedule so we could play there. That's when we played inside.

The city was a real hotbed of basketball. At the end of--to climax the basketball season we had a big tournament, which was played in the armory there, which was a good facility. And that involved--what, Betty? I guess from fourth grade through twelfth grade. They had--they all practically closed school for about a week and had a big basketball tournament. The emphasis on really getting a good education just wasn't there. Had a lot of other activities, but I would say that actually, maybe--well, supposedly, you were to have 180 days of teaching a year. We probably taught maybe 150 days, if that many. There were a lot of distractions.

WL: Officially a 180-day term.

JH: Anybody played on teams that wanted to. I remember my first year there, I started basketball practice, that was probably maybe in November. We were getting ready to start playing a game, and maybe around the first of January this tall boy comes to school. I hadn't seen him before. I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm coming out for basketball. I thought I'd want to play on the team."

To give you an idea, there weren't any restrictions or regulations on who could play, or what type of average you had to maintain or anything. He came to school in January every year to play basketball as long as they would let him play. That's about the size of it. [laughs]

WL: When you came to Greensboro, teaching at Mount Zion--and that was in the county school system at that time?

JH: That was the county school system at that time. Mount Zion was a very small school when I came. There were four teachers and a principal. Had one building, and a little

temporary building across the road from the school. They had grades one through eight, and I was the seventh and eighth grade teacher when I came. I taught the seventh grade--seventh and eighth grades about six years. And Mrs. Avery[?], who was the principal, retired, and she recommended me to Mr. Ivor[?], the superintendent, and I was made principal there. It was a county school at that time, but soon after I became principal the school began to grow because--are you very familiar with Greensboro?

WL: Fairly familiar.

JH: Let's see, I'm trying to remember how that was. We were getting students--Mount Zion is located on Huffine Mill Road--

BH: Where Bessemer school--

JH: Right, where Bessemer Elementary School is now. Well, Mount Zion is about three or four, five blocks below Bessemer Elementary. It's closed now. Anyway, at that time, Mount Zion school would bring students from Willow Road, which is what, about five or six blocks over here. All the way from Willow Road all the way down to Blackwell[?] Street. That's really what is [Interstate] 85 now. So our, our attendance district included all of the students who presently attend Hampton Elementary School.

BH: And Bluford [Elementary School] too.

JH: And Bluford, some who now go to Bluford school. I was trying to remember just how that--

BH: Was it English Avenue? But it was called Cottage Grove then.

JH: I was trying to remember how--I believe--

BH: Franklin Boulevard too, wasn't it?

JH: I believe at that time, all of that area was a part of Guilford County [school district]. I don't think it had become part of--I know what to call it--all of that area at that time was a part of the Guilford County school district. The Guilford County school district and the Greensboro city limits weren't necessarily the same. That's what it was. The school district--the county school district extended all up into the city of Greensboro. Willow Road was a boundary then. Everything down to Blackwell and back over in that section was a part of the county school district for many years.

WL: So they sent them on to where?

JH: Actually, until about 1964, they decided, I think, to make the school lines the same as the city limits and so forth. At the same time they brought Mount Zion Elementary School and the old Bessemer High School into the city school system. So we just came in as a part of that package. And when we came in, I kept my position as principal, and Bob Clendenin--I don't know if you--he's presently principal of Page High School--he was principal of Bessemer High School at that time. He came in and kept his position as principal of Bessemer High School.

BH: Was it Bessemer--when did Bessemer Elementary, [when did] they build that building? Didn't they use to be up there with the high school, too?

JH: They were what used to be called a union school, grades one through twelve. But soon after Bessemer High School, or Bessemer Union School and Mount Zion Elementary School, which by that time was going grades one through nine, soon after we came in to the City of Greensboro, they had Southern Association [of Colleges and Schools, SACS] accreditation. And as a result of that accreditation program, Mount Zion, which had grades one through nine, the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades were eliminated, because we knew we didn't have the facilities and all the students to have a junior high school.

Greensboro at that time was only 6/3/3 for elementary, junior high, and senior high. And also at the same time, approximately the same time, Bessemer High School was eliminated and it became an elementary school. And soon after that they built the Bessemer Elementary School that's down there on Huffine Mill Road now.

WL: What--let's get back to when you first came to Mount Zion. Did you--was there a big difference between Cleveland County and--must have been a lot of differences.

JH: Not a whole lot. When we first came to Greensboro I think we still had those--an old building, we still had those old wooden stoves. Well, we burned coal here. I taught for two years in a wooden building, which had been a cannery across the, right across the road from the regular school. The main school consisted of a brick building with four classrooms and I guess what you'd call today a multi-purpose room, which was used as--a stage was the library and the lower part was a classroom area. They had four teachers, I was the fifth teacher. So the facilities weren't all that much.

And when I became principal, I really got to see kind of the inside of it. A Mr. Lowdermilk[?], who by the way is still living--I see him when I play golf sometimes. He owns a golf course out here off of [Interstate] 85. He was the chairman. They had a school committee. He was the chairman of the school committee there. I guess technically the principals of Mount Zion and Bessemer supposedly would meet with this

school committee to make plans for the school year and so forth. I never met with the Bessemer school committee. I met with Mr. Lowdermilk. I think Bob Clendenin probably met with the Bessemer committee. I never knew any of the other committees--members of the committee. I would meet with Mr. Lowdermilk about, oh, a couple of weeks before school would open. And he would say, "Well, Hill, if you need some teachers, go on and hire your teachers. Whoever you get, I will approve. So we're going to leave it up to you, you take care of it," and so forth. That's kind of the way it operated.

As far as facilities, if we asked for desks, most likely they would send us some desks from Bessemer school, used desks, and then send some new ones to replace those that Bessemer sent to us. Now I know this to be a fact. During the time that I was working at Mount Zion as teacher and principal, very seldom did we ever get a new textbook. When we would requisition textbooks, Mr. Ku[?], who was, who preceded Bob Clendenin, was principal at Bessemer, I would go up to Mr. Ku, and he would make arrangements for me to get these books. And most of the time, they were old used books. I would get the old ones, and then he would in turn requisition new books for his school. And it was like that for most all of the materials and supplies that were supplied by the county system.

Now the thing that really saved us was Title I [One], I believe, and I--is that what it was called originally? Under Title I, I think the--well, the federal, federal program to give materials and supplies for public schools. And we, of course, when that money was made available, we got, say, record players, or microscopes, any type of science equipment, they had to send the new ones to the school. That, that changed things quite a bit then.

WL: So as soon as you get federal aid, then--

JH: Federal aid really made a big difference.

WL: And that would have been in the early sixties, I suppose?

JH: That's right.

WL: So the local committee sort of gave you a great deal of autonomy as a principal, and you could do what you wanted to do, and more autonomy, than say Clendenin had--Bob Clendenin had?

JH: I don't know, but I would imagine so. I really, I couldn't say definitely.

WL: Probably hard to say.

JH: As I say, my only contact with the Bessemer school committee was Mr. Lowdermilk.

WL: The chairman.

JH: I never set foot in Bessemer High School, so I couldn't answer that question. But knowing Bob Clendenin, I would think that he had quite a bit of authority there.

WL: Yeah.

JH: And I know Mr. Ku did. Mr. Ku was principal before him, and he was--well, he ran that district. And all of them are organized the same way. All of the other county schools had the school committees, had the black committee and the white committee. And it's the chairman who really worked with the principal.

WL: So the chairman had a great deal of power?

JH: That's right.

WL: Yeah. Did you--when--at what point did you get the feeling that things were--that there was going to be desegregation either at Mt. Zion or Greensboro generally? Nineteen fifty-four is the big *Brown* [*v. Board of Education*] decision--

JH: Nineteen fifty-four didn't make any, didn't have any impact whatsoever.

WL: Didn't even notice?

JH: None whatsoever.

WL: Was it any feel--did it get that much attention at all?

BH: No. I was not teaching, but I was around it, and--

JH: What year did you start teaching?

BH: It was '66.

JH: Sixty-six. No, we didn't get any feeling at all, because in our meetings with the superintendent, for example, in Guilford County--this was before the two schools came into the city of Greensboro as part of the Greensboro system. All right, our meeting with the superintendent, we would go up there, and for part or maybe for about forty-five

minutes, all of the administrators would meet together.

And we had a supervisor named Earl Whitley who was black. After about forty-five minutes of meeting, or whatever time that the superintendent wanted to say what he wanted to say to everybody, then he would say, "Mr. Whitley, I guess it's time for you to meet with your group." As black principals, we knew that it was time for us to get out [laughs], and we would go on and meet with Mr. Whitley in a separate meeting. So a lot of things probably were being discussed and so forth after we left that we never knew anything at all about.

WL: So something controversial might be--they'd wait for black principals to leave, and then--for example *Brown*, they might, they might not talk about that.

JH: That's right.

WL: So as a principal, you didn't hear about that at all, I mean, officially?

JH: About?

WL: About the *Brown* decision.

JH: No. Oh no, that was never discussed in any, in an official meeting of any kind.

WL: It's not really, I suppose, until the sixties, that you begin to get a feeling that--

JH: Well, as I say, with the beginning of federal aid you begin to see that things might possibly get a little bit better. And then, I'm trying to remember just what--

BH: When it came into Greensboro, did it make any difference?

JH: Yes, it did. When we came into Greensboro we found that things were quite a bit different. I have never been to a segregated principal's meeting in the Greensboro school system. We all met in the board room in the Administration Building downtown. Mr. [Phil] Weaver was the superintendent at that time. That was a big change.

The facilities--well, he came out there soon after we became a part of the Greensboro system, and he told me, "We're going to get rid of this old building here." And they got started on it that summer. They knocked down the old building and put us an almost, a new office area, a new library. They just kept two classrooms, which had been added on to the old building that were fairly recent, up-to-date and modern. So we got an entirely new administration building soon after we came into the city.

So, they had a different system too. They allotted us so much money for supplies

and so forth at the beginning of each year. And we could requisition those things on our own, we didn't have to go ask for things. They said, "Well, this is--according to your enrollment and so forth, this is your allotment and it's up to you to use it to the best of your knowledge," and so forth.

[recorder paused]

WL: So the city school system was a little bit more systematic than the county? Thorough maybe?

JH: At that time, it was a better school system. You can't say that now. I know it was more democratic and more liberal.

BH: He can't say that. The city schools just blew us down.

JH: I'm not saying that [laughs]. I'm talking about at that time. I've been out of it for nine years.

BH: I don't think it's any better.

JH: She's still teaching.

BH: I'm teaching, yeah. I don't think there's any any better, anywhere, than my school. That's all I can--officially, I guess we all work the same. And I know at my school it's a real good atmosphere and the materials that we have. It's just, it's good.

WL: You started teaching in nineteen sixty--

BH: Six.

WL: [Nineteen sixty] six. And where was your first?

BH: My first was at Gillespie, right down here. It was--not kindergarten, it was first through ninth when I was there.

WL: Was it an integrated school?

BH: Supposedly. But the whites had all, just about all had moved out. We had integrated faculty, and a white principal, and one or two white students. And then after a year or so, it was completely black students, because all the whites had moved.

WL: Was that because of the neighborhood change?

BH: Yes. The neighborhood changed. There was very little busing. They only brought in people from out off of Alamance Church Road, in on the bus. We had one bus, and the others walked to school.

WL: Well, how many--say about the time you began, how many schools in Greensboro were integrated. Was there much integration?

BH: Not too many. Not too many.

JH: Not in ’66.

BH: No, when they had this, even in--when did I go to Joyner? I had been out to Gillespie five years.

JH: About ’71. Integration was really beginning.

BH: It was beginning a whole lot. But when I went to Joyner [Elementary School], it was about five or six black, or maybe ten or fifteen black students at Joyner; it was completely white. They had a few black teachers. And they bused over some EMH [special education] kids from--where? I forgot now where they came from. And would put them in your classroom so that it would be integrated, which was bad. Those EMH kids--

WL: EMH stands for--

JH: What’s EMH? Educable Mentally what?

BH: Might not been then. They changed it.

JH: EMR.

BH: EMR. Well, whatever it was, EMR, or whatever they called it--

JH: Educable Mentally Retarded, that’s what it was.

BH: Yeah. And they brought those in, and would put them in the classrooms, mainstream them, and with the students at Joyner at that time, it was really a big difference. If they

were going to bring some over, they should have brought some students that were academically qualified to compete with them. But those kids were just completely out of place. And instead of letting them [unclear]--they were before then in a regular classroom, you know, to stay there themselves. But then, as I said, they brought them--put them in your classroom, they'd go up to that other class. And it was just awful.

WL: Was there, was there much, when you were at Gillespie, was there, was there much contact between predominantly black schools and predominantly white schools in, say, sports teams or--to what extent?

BH: Well, we had--the junior high, the junior high part had their basketball. They didn't have a football team.

JH: Did they play white schools back in that time?

WL: Did they play white schools?

JH: I don't think so.

BH: I don't know who they played because I was in elementary.

JH: I wouldn't--

BH: They played Allen [Jay Elementary School]--

JH: They did?

BH: --when Allen integrated, Allen, Lincoln [Junior High School]--

JH: Well, that's one way I think they began to integrate, was to have the athletic teams begin to play each other sometime. I'm kind of--

BH: I don't--I'm fuzzy on this.

JH: --shaky on this. I wouldn't want to be quoted [laughs]. I don't want to give you any bad information. Being at the elementary level, I couldn't--I don't remember too much then.

BH: I was in the, school was one through nine, but we would, an elementary school, it was just--we would have meetings together, faculty meetings together, but it was still different. I didn't have to stay for basketball games. When school let out at three thirty--

no, quarter to four, I would stay there until about four o'clock and then I'd come on home.

JH: Do you remember whether they played--

BH: I don't know who they played.

JH: --formally at all white schools?

BH: I don't know who they played.

JH: 'Cause I think, for a long time--

BH: I don't think they did.

JH: --only the--J.C. Price, which is a junior high school, and Lincoln played each other quite a bit. But I don't know that they were--you know.

BH: I don't know who they played. They played, they played someone in the evening, 'cause they played after school, but I really don't know who they played.

WL: I was just wondering if they had, if this might have been sort of earlier--earliest form of integration.

BH: I don't think they played Kiser [Middle School], and I don't think they played Mendenhall [Middle School].

JH: And I know on the high school level they did not have any contest between the high schools until total integration.

WL: Yeah.

JH: I remember that very well, because Dudley High School was the black high school, and Grimsley and Page were the white ones at that time. They were in different conferences. They had a very good team back in that, at that time. I remember they played for the state championship, 'cause they were playing against all-black schools. So that was just before, you know, the total push for integration.

BH: Was that freedom of choice at that time, too?

JH: Yeah, we had that freedom of choice where--

WL: Neighborhood system. You could technically go to any school you wanted to.

JH: Technically you could. The only black students--some black students were choosing to go to white schools. No white students chose to come to black schools. I didn't have any at Mount Zion. And the same thing was true at most of the other black schools.

BH: That's right, 'cause over there on Summit Avenue was a school.

JH: Aycock [Middle School]?

BH: Yeah, no, not--Aycock, not Summit, behind it. And they didn't play Aycock, that's right, they sure didn't. No, they didn't play, it wasn't integrated. It wasn't integrated.

WL: In the case of Mount Zion, that was effectively integrated once it came into--well, Mount Zion was closed after it came into the city system.

JH: It closed after--yeah, it was integrated then.

WL: And then it became integrated. So--

JH: Actually, I left Mount Zion before it became integrated. It was all black, all black student body and staff. I left Mount Zion in 1968 I believe it was, and let's see, I went to Craven [Elementary School] as principal over there, and spent about two years there before integration really got started. My first year at Craven, we had about, we had--Craven had regular elementary school and in addition, they had three classes for--they changed this terminology so much, what did they call it? AT--Academically Talented we called them when I first went there. They have another term for them now.

BH: AG [Academically Gifted].

JH: They had fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. And they were selected from all, supposedly from all elementary schools in the city system. As I recall, I think there was one--there were one or two black students in the AT Program when I went. As far as the regular program, we didn't have any black students for about two years. I guess it was about--you probably know these dates since you've been looking into this. I think that they really began to push for integration, what was it, about '71 or '72?

WL: Seventy-one.

JH: Was it seventy-one they began the cluster?

WL: Right. The court, court order came in ’71.

BH: That’s when I went to, when they clustered, I went to, no, I left Joyner and went to Cone [Elementary School]. Let’s see, it was Bessemer, Cone, and Joyner. And since I was teaching on a fourth grade level, I went to, went over to Cone because Cone was third and fourth grades, Bessemer one and two, Joyner five and six. And see, it was a cluster.

WL: Yeah. They clustered schools together apparently.

JH: We were strained enough. Mount Zion, Morehead [Elementary School], which is over beyond Muir’s Chapel Road--Morehead, Mount Zion--Morehead was the first and second grade school in the cluster. Craven, no, Mount Zion was the third and fourth grade. And Craven was the fifth and sixth grade in the cluster. And that is when we really began integrating both staff and student body.

WL: How well did that work? I mean, what were some of the things that worked well and some things that didn’t work so well? You all were at different schools at that point?

JH: Yeah, always.

BH: Yeah, I never worked for him.

JH: Don’t brag about it. [laughs]

BH: No, I just said I never worked with him, I didn’t. I’m not bragging. That’s what Dr. House[?] told me, when I was interviewing, that I wouldn’t work for my husband.

WL: Condition of employment, I guess.

BH: I don’t think it’s good anyway.

WL: No.

JH: You were asking how it was working, I’d like to say this. When I was sent to Craven, it was really a kind of an experiment to see how it would work out, being the only black person in the whole school.

WL: That was before--

JH: That was before total integration. This is in ’68. Mr. Weaver really did a lot of work on that. He met with the prominent people in the community, and I’m sure they discussed all this before he ever thought about who he was going to send over there. But I found the atmosphere was really good.

I, the two or three years that I was at Craven before total integration, I really enjoyed it because I got a lot of cooperation from those folks. The--particularly the PTA officers and so forth, and it was pretty, real smooth. I don’t recall any negative things happening at all.

And I remember one incident that had the potential to really be something. One of the teachers was in the auditorium practicing a play or something, and a youngster was coming down the steps and he fell and hit his head on the steps, the corner of the steps. They called me. He was completely out.

The secretary got in touch with his parents. We kept a file where we could get in touch with parents. The father came out there. We didn’t do a thing until he got there. He said, “Well, I want to take him to the doctor.” We took him to the doctor’s office in my car. The doctor took one look at him and said, “Call an ambulance.”

And that night they operated. He had damage to his brain and so forth. Actually, I was told that he actually expired on the operating table and they were able to bring him back to life, and he got along all right. Now, that could have been a really dangerous situation there, but it worked out all right. But as far as protests from parents or anything, I never--I didn’t really face with anything there. And I think the reason for that was--I know the reason was that Mr. Weaver laid the groundwork pretty well before he sent me over there.

BH: I think they chose the teachers to go into these schools quite well. They--I don’t know how, you know, what method they used, because when I went to Joyner, Mr. Hammond--Hammonds--

JH: Hammonds[?].

BH: Yeah, because he called before I got back, I was down in Nassau--not Nassau--Freeport, Bahamas. He called, he wanted to see me, so I went over. So he said, “You came well qualified and recommended.” He said, “Highly recommended.”

I enjoyed over there, but not as well, because it was that team teaching thing. And it was, they had this big wall cut out, and each teacher had thirty-five kids. Now, that was seventy kids in a classroom, and it, it--the situation, which was all over, I think, that was what was at the going time. And also the NCAT, this new math, was a new math program that they had. And it was just sort of [a] stressful situation because of all these new

implementations and that.

But as far as the parents, I had no problems. There was very good relationships with the parents. The students were good. But there was just so many kids with that team teaching and then the NCAT, it was just kind of stressful. Well, it still is stressful. Teaching is stressful period.

But when we went to Cone, it was good there too. We went in as--the first year was non-graded. Everybody had some--I think it was the first year--everybody had some third and some fourth. You just had your class. That was team teaching there, too. They cut the wall, and mainstreaming, putting those EMH, or whatever you call them, in the classrooms--EMRs. 'Cause I had one boy that he couldn't sit back in the room, he had to sit by me. And he had to go out to go to his room, the resource room. When he left my desk, as he went by, you heard noise, because he'd bother everybody on his way out the door to go to the classroom. When he came in, he started bothering them as he came back in. Just really should not have been in that room. But that was something new going on.

JH: I don't think that was related at all to--

BH: No, that wasn't related to integration.

JH: --desegregation or anything. It was just one of the ideas that was coming along, this idea of mainstreaming, where before they had had mentally, educable mentally retarded students in a self-contained classroom to themselves. When some of the experts came up with the idea that they ought to be mainstreamed, it was hurting them emotionally and socially being isolated, so let's put into the regular classroom and then bring them out for special instructions. But I don't think that--

BH: No, that didn't have anything--

JH: That was just a new idea that came along.

WL: Probably one of these new things, these new innovations that were all brought in just about the same time.

BH: But, a lot of our black kids got a little shortchanged, because the discipline--I think some of the white teachers didn't know how to discipline the blacks at that time. And if they rebelled in any way, they just isolated them, put them out in the hall, put them in the corner, and didn't bother. Whether they were afraid, or I don't know what it was. But, I didn't have that problem. But I guess that was because I was accustomed to discipline and I disciplined everybody.

WL: So they disciplined black children differently from white children?

BH: Yes.

WL: How would they discipline white children as compared to--they would be more severe or less severe?

BH: Less severe.

WL: Less severe.

BH: Yeah, less severe.

WL: And do different things? For example, they wouldn't put the white children out in the hall?

BH: Very few. And you did have some that would, but it seemed as if--and the, I think it was a reaction. The children didn't know why they were reacting that way. But they felt something wasn't right. And they would rebel against the being--the way they were treated. I don't know whether the white teachers--I'm not telling all of them, because there are some that--now you know some quit. They couldn't take it, they just quit. And I think they should have. But I think the child didn't know why they felt that way, and they rebelled. And of course, you know, each time it got worse.

WL: Did--how did the--when you had all those new things come with desegregation, how did the new mix of teachers work in terms of teachers who hadn't taught before?

BH: A lot of times they had problems. Most the time all--as I say, we have a lot of teachers still there that came together, white and black, at Cone. We still have some, but most of the time we got along pretty good. They had workshops too, human relations workshops.

JH: Oh yeah.

BH: They would bring those in so that you could learn to accept each other. And that was good, that helped.

WL: Did they try to air some things out?

BH: Oh yeah, they would air, oh, a lot, oh yes. 'Cause actually when you had those workshops, you just about bared your soul. [laughter]

JH: They were very helpful, I think.

BH: And when everybody finds out that you're all human, and you have the same kinds of situations, the same types of feeling, then you understand. And I think that helped. In fact, I know it helped. And like I say, a lot of them couldn't take it, so they just quit.

WL: Kind of a shaking out process, more or less, after a year or so?

BH: You know, when you, like I say, when you have these workshops and you, you, you're talking confidentially, just you, two of you, and then you tell everything, I mean somebody had to get up behind you and tell you what they said, what you told them, and then you get up and tell what you told them, and everybody could hear it and see it. Then, they say, that's baring your soul. Bringing out all of these things. And then that opens up--say all right--

WL: So you go in the workshop and you say whatever you wanted to say to a third person. And then that third person--

BH: You see, yeah, the two people--you pair off, and they give you so many minutes to talk to each other. And then when they get through--at the time, you didn't know what it was, first time. You hear what I'm saying? All right. You're talking--y'all talk and just tell each other--maybe set up a situation or whatever, I don't know exactly--but when you get through, and then they say stop, then they'll say, "You choose who wants to be first." And then that person stands up behind you and tells the whole group what was told to her. And then--

WL: The group reacts to that?

BH: Then the other person get up and tells what you've told them, things like that. And it went all the way around. So that meant that [laughs]--that here it comes, all these things that happened to you and how you felt. And when you come out like that, then you can see, and you have a feeling, you either change or you get worse.

WL: How did the teachers--what was the reaction among teachers--let's see you were at--

JH: At Craven. First, I forgot to bring this in. Before I went there--because, see, I was the first black person, you know, [who] became the administrator in the white school in Greensboro. Mr. Weaver met with the staff over there and gave anyone an opportunity to be transferred if they didn't want to work with a black principal. I heard--and that's the

only way I could get this information because, you know, that's something they wouldn't tell me about--I heard that a couple of people decided they didn't want to stay, and they were replaced, so--

As I said, my experience there was pretty nice. I think right in the beginning--and say, plus the fact that he had paved the way. I remember distinctly my first staff meeting. We were all in the library meeting. And I got my notes and my agenda together and I'm trying to go through it. And this very attractive young lady back there just continued to hold her conversation with the person sitting next to her. And I noticed it, I guess, for maybe about five minutes. So finally, when I determined her name, because I wasn't too familiar with them, I just stopped what I was saying and I said, "Miss so-and-so, if you don't mind, suppose you just share with the whole group what you're discussing with your friend there." And, of course, that was a little embarrassing for her and she stopped.

And that was the only time that I could see any--I took that and maybe I was sensitive--of course, I was a little, in an uncomfortable position, too. I took that as kind of saying to you, "I'm really not going to pay too much attention to what you've got to say." But after I spoke to her, and I tried to be as polite as possible, she stopped and we went on with the meeting. And she became one of my staunchest supporters on the staff there. And so I never had any real problems with any of the teachers while I was there.

WL: Did you stay at Craven through the '71 period, so you were-–

JH: Yeah, I stayed with Craven from up until '75, I think it was. I was there for six years.

WL: Craven was then, so you watched Craven go from being--

JH: From being a totally--

WL: All white.

JH: --segregated, all white, to a totally integrated school. And we had problems. I wouldn't sit here and say there weren't any problems. But--

WL: The teachers were integrated, then, beginning in 1971?

JH: The teachers were integrated --

BH: Yeah, that's when they sent teachers. Now, when I went to Joyner, to say that was just the beginning, they were selecting teachers [and] sending them. And, oh, I think the only meeting that I was sent--

JH: Do you mind if I smoke? [laughs]

WL: No, by all means.

BH: The reason I was sent there [was] because they took away the elementary school from Gillespie, and just made it a junior high. So they had to place all of us somewhere. And I was sent out to Joyner.

JH: [unclear].

BH: Yeah. And then the next year is when they had the total shake-up all over. It was [unclear] somewhere, Jake. When I came back, you met me on the plane and said that they had changed--

JH: You mean the total integration?

BH: Yeah. Where was I calling from? I don't know where, but somewhere, but you picked me up at the airport and you told me.

JH: You were at Cone then?

BH: No, I was at Joyner.

WL: This is when the news came down.

BH: It was done while I was away that summer.

JH: It was done in pretty quick fashion during that summer.

WL: Court order.

JH: Actually it was court order [unclear--all speaking at once]. I remember going to meetings down in the boardroom, and all these maps they had up there and so forth. So it had to be done by a certain time.

BH: I was trying to figure out where was I? 'Cause you met me at the airport, say, "Well, they have completely totaled the [unclear]." You said, "You're in a cluster." And at that time, I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know whether I was going to stay at Joyner, or go to Cone, or go to Bessemer.

WL: So you found out over the summer--or that day.

BH: I found out just before school opened--

WL: Oh yeah.

BH: --where I was going. But Mr. Hammonds called and asked me what would I like do.

JH: I believe it was at that time--previously when you, I believe you, when you signed the contract, didn't you sign it to go back to a certain school?

BH: Used to, before then--

JH: You signed the contract every year, and in this contract, the school--they would specify the school where you would be assigned for the coming year. I think this is another thing--

BH: That's when they changed.

JH: Integration brought on this change where in your con[tract]--you were hired by the Greensboro Board of Education without any assignment in your contract, so that--and I could, and I could see the reason for that--so that they could make the changes as they felt were necessary and transfer people who wanted to be transferred and some who needed to be.

BH: And you wouldn't really know until about two weeks before school opened. They would send you a letter and tell you where you were going.

WL: That first year that they were at—

BH: On several years--

WL: Oh, several years, yeah.

BH: But even now, even now--

JH: They don't, they don't tell you nothing.

BH: They don't tell you now.

WL: Is that right?

BH: If you don't get a letter, you know you're going back to your school. But usually the principal will send out a letter and say what, you know, what school, what time to come, and, you know, what work--well, we know the workdays, but, you know, just--they welcome you back, that type of thing. But you sign your intent, you sign a letter of intent in March or April stating that you plan to come back to teach, or you plan to retire or resign. Of course, you can do it anytime, but usually they get you to do that. And you don't know whether you're going back to the same school. Same--it's the same way.

WL: How, how do you, how do you all think desegregation worked? I mean, looking back at it now, it's been seventeen years since 1971, eighteen years? Has it been a great success, partial success, not a success at all, somewhere in between?

BH: I still feel that some of our black kids are cheated. I really do.

WL: In what respect?

BH: And maybe it's not because of the--I don't know. It's a success in that the kids get along. These kids don't know anything about segregating, see. But it's something missing, because teaching before they had that, there was a willingness to learn, and they really wanted to learn and you could really teach them. You can't teach them manners now. You just can't--I don't know, it's a difference. And the children--the parents backed it, that's another thing. The parents--some of them back them now, but we have so many single parents, there are so many parents--latchkey kids you could say. Going--leaving school, going to nursery school, that the kids just--and divorce, it really, really shows up in the kids. And then when you think about all of that, then I don't know, it's just society, and whether it's integration or what, it's just a change in society. So I don't know whether that's what shortchanged or if just that's it, I mean, you know.

WL: It makes it harder to compare, because you've got all these other changes in the world.

BH: So I think--I guess just society changed, the students' attitude changed, the parents--see, I'm teaching some kids that I taught their parents. I have a little girl in my room now that I taught her parent in fourth grade. And it's the same, fourth grade--I taught her mother in fourth grade and I have her in the fourth grade. And, it's, it's just a difference, you see, with these young parents, and their attitudes are different, society's attitudes are different.

JH: Are you saying that it's better now with the younger ones?

BH: They're wiser, but--

JH: I mean the parent's attitudes towards it. The children don't know anything about--

BH: The children don't know anything about integration.

JH: --segregated schools.

BH: No, they don't. And it's just the fact that a lack in academic achievement--the parents act like they want them, to you. But then the way the child is acting and the responses you get--it's not, not like it's really sincere, for a lot of them. And it's so many of them. And like you're struggling.

WL: It makes it hard to teach.

BH: Yeah, and you have so many interruptions. So many interruptions.

JH: For one thing, there's problems with discipline and I think--

BH: Yeah, that's it!

JH: --that was an outgrowth partly of integrating schools. You had many more discipline problems. And at the same time, it became almost impossible to do anything about it, because they had such restrictions on what you could do to students. You couldn't, you couldn't--it was almost, it was impossible to expel a student. You could maybe suspend one for a few days.

[End Tape 1, Side A--Begin Tape 1, Side B]

JH: --is on the actual amount of teaching time that teachers were able to get in during a classroom day. And it was so low, it was really amazing how little time was actually spent on instruction during the teaching day [audio malfunctioning][because so much] time was spent in trying to get [order and] discipline in the classroom.

But, you know, the question about--from my standpoint, I agree with her about the things that she said about the, maybe some black children really were put into some pretty bad situations. From the standpoint of an administrator, integration really opened our eyes to a lot of things. We began to get the same type of materials and equipment that white schools had been getting all down through the years, because it was impossible--and then of course they had the federal government coming in and checking every once in a while with teams and so forth. So we really began to get much better materials and

equipment than we had ever gotten before. We were getting a fairer distribution of the money allotted for instruction. That was one, one, that was one of the big advantages that I could see in integration. But they say there were a lot of things in the classrooms that were happening that maybe weren't as, weren't so good.

WL: Do you think by, by integrating--I've talked to several people who've said that there was something lost in having the old predominately or all black schools being closed, many of them as a result of integration. Is that--

JH: Yeah.

WL: Do you think that was a bad thing, or a good thing, or what do you think?

BH: Yeah. Because the leadership--you learn by doing. And if you don't have the opportunity to lead, then you don't learn, you see. The student body president would be black. Every class president would be black. Everything would be black leaders. But when they went into the integrated school, you might get one every now and then that would be selected or elected to be a leader. And if they were elected, they were so outstanding that they couldn't do anything but elect them if they decided to run.

And then you have this modeling thing. They did have maybe one or two principals, a lot of them assistant principals, but Greensboro, you have to give Greensboro as a school system--they do have black principals, black assistant principals--you have to give them credit. They do that.

JH: And the central office personnel.

BH: Central office, too. They do have that. But in some systems they didn't. But, as I say, I think [the] Greensboro system is outstanding, as it always has been. Sometimes we might go too far over, getting on to, jumping on these new programs that come along. But what they're doing, they're trying to get the best that they can. Like the NCAT. I think that was a mistake. They went with Dr. Michaels. Was that Michaels?

JH: Reading, Dr. Michaels Reading Program[?].

BH: Reading Program with his phonics isolated, taught in isolation. Uou can't teach phon[ics], teach phonics in isolation. Then Dr. [Alvin] Granowsky's books. They went into that. See, they would jump into--

WL: Go from one to another?

BH: --different things and the other. And like the team teaching, they would cut, they cut all the walls out. They just about put the walls back up now.

JH: Well, you know the real problem with that was that they would adopt a new program, but they would not give the teachers sufficient in-service [instruction] so that they understood. They, they really didn't understand. And if a teacher doesn't understand the thing--

BH: She's not going to do it.

JH: --there's no way she's going to do a good job. I think that was a big thing.

BH: Well, they would give you some kind of in-service, but in the evening, or one a day, one day, or something like that. But that's not enough. And you'd look at a film, and then you'd talk. And this expert comes in and tells you this--what they do this, and they show you what they did and all. But that's, that's not really enough in-service.

JH: You can't do it in one day. What she said--I think Greensboro did an outstanding job in preparing parents, students, and staff for integration, which made it go along, I guess, about as smoothly as it, as it could possibly be done. Because I believe at one time we had nine assistant superintendents and three or four were black. Yeah, I think it was three or four. And like, in many systems across North Carolina, for example, to integrate high schools in a smaller city, what happened [is] the black high school was closed and the black students were assigned to the white high school. That meant a black principal [was] out of a job. I guess about the early seventies you didn't have ten black high school principals in the state of North Carolina.

WL: They were just wiped out?

JH: Yes. They just wiped them out completely. But in Greensboro, again, the ratio remained just about the same all through the desegregation process. So I think they deserve a lot of credit--I think that was due to Mr. Weaver and Dr. House.

BH: Yeah.

JH: They really showed a lot of leadership there.

WL: Interesting. You mentioned that, that desegregation was especially hard on black children. Do you think it was more so than white children, is this the case?

BH: Yeah, in a way, because who was shifted out? The blacks. Their schools closed, they were bused in. Who had to do the desegregating?

WL: True.

BL: And then--now, that was most of--then when we really had the busing, that's when they had the big fuss, when they had to go from one side of town to the other. All of them felt that. Like the three, like my cluster. See they would go from over, way over on this side of town over to Joyner, come from Joyner over here, and Cone--see, it was one here, one in the middle, and one over there. All right, they're busing all back and forth all across. So all affected. So I think all of them felt it then.

JH: I think one of the complaints on that, too, was that for the most part, primary students, kindergarten through third grade, the black children usually were the ones who were bused across town. The white children were able to more or less stay in their own neighborhood. That was one of the unfair things about it.

WL: What about reaction to busing? Did--how did--

JH: I'm going to tell you the truth, I don't think anybody liked it. It was really hard.

BH: Yeah. Children leaving at seven o'clock in the morning.

WL: Yeah. Especially young children.

BH: Yeah. Cold, dark, because at seven, it's dark in the winter time. Have to get out and get on that bus.

JH: I expect if you had asked parents, 90 percent of the parents would have said they didn't like busing. It was an added burden on parents. And of course we went along with it, because we understand--understood the reason for it and why, but it created a lot of difficulty. And it caused us to have to get a lot, a whole lot more buses, and it was just tough.

BH: It's still a lot of busing though, because we don't have too many kids walking at Cone now. And it's supposed to be neighborhood school.

JH: Cone is?

BH: Yeah. But we're the school that we had the ESL, English [as a] Second Language kids

come in, we bus those in. And the kids that need to go to these daycare centers. We have all kinds of daycare buses coming in.

WL: After school programs?

BH: After school program, where they usually come to our school. Because they have certain schools that these buses can come to and the parents ask them to come there. Because the parents got to go work. They'll drop them off in the morning, [telephone rings] and some buses bring them in the morning. And then in the evening, these buses come to pick them up. The Y[oung Men's Christian Association] bus, the KinderCare on Lawndale, the KinderCare on another street, Seawell[?], Baines[?], all of those buses come to pick up the kids from the houses. And then we have walkers that, well I guess about fifty in all, out of about five hundred kids--

WL: --who walk to school.

BH: --that walk. And of course, some of car riders, too, that come and pick them up. And then we have the other buses. So it's just a difference now.

WL: How do you--what do you think about the future of desegregation in the schools? That's a very broad question.

BH: I guess it's, it's so ingrained now, I think they wouldn't even think about anything else, other than the parents moving out. They're moving, moving their kids out, because I noticed that our ratio now is becoming more black. Used to be that I had maybe eight or nine. Now it's eight or nine whites. It's, it's--I noticed that this year. And unless they do some more changing the lines, something is going to be--well, I guess the Greensboro city is going to be just about black, because it will be an inner city. And that's why the county, I think, is--

WL: The merger.

BH: Yeah, merger's coming. I probably won't be there. But merge is coming. And also the career ladder is coming.

JH: For the teachers?

BH: Yes. And I don't know how all this is going to work. But it's just coming. It's got to. I don't, I don't see how a free system can continue to go like they going, competing against each other in the same county. I just don't see how--

JH: And particular with the examples in Winston-Salem and Charlotte that it is--

BH: And Wake County.

JH: Wake County, it is working. I guess at least as far as we can determine, it's working in those, and I'm sure it's saving a lot of money, too. That's a major consideration.

WL: Well, anywhere in the country, really, you get a comparable county, city.

JH: Education is so expensive, they got to find ways of cutting down on that expense, and I feel that's one way to do it. And, too, as neighborhoods become more integrated, that's going to help to solve the problems. That's a long, I'm sure it's a long ways down the road. But I think that is really, that would be the ultimate solution for the whole thing. I would like to see all this busing cut out. I think most parents would like to see it.

BH: It's dangerous when it's snowing and icing, all those buses. They're trying to get the adult drivers now, which makes it a little safer.

JH: One thing that came out of a busing was a whole lot of problems in discipline--

WL: On the buses?

JH: --on those buses. And I can understand that. It wasn't particularly racial, either. Just a bus full of kids riding from anywhere from a half an hour to an hour on a bus.

WL: And one driver.

JH: And then they're children [laughs]. And with a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old in charge of it. So you had to have discipline problems there.

WL: Well, they love to ride the bus, as far as they're concerned, the kids.

JH: Well, I'm sure--

BH: Yeah, the kids do, they don't mind it. It's the parents mainly. Oh, they don't mind that [laughs]. They're not there. But it does make a difference with an adult on the bus. It makes a difference.

JH: And with an adult driver.

BH: Yes.

[End of Interview]